

SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES, IMAGINED HIERARCHIES: A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN
FROM POST-SOCIALIST COUNTRIES WORKING AS DOMESTIC WORKERS IN
ISTANBUL

by

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**SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES, IMAGINED HIERARCHIES: A CASE
STUDY OF ‘SOVIET’ FEMALE DOMESTIC WORKERS IN ISTANBUL**

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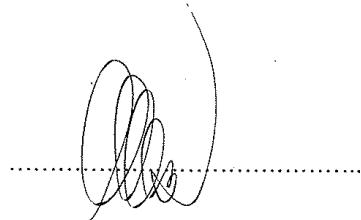
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This study analyzes the different layers of the “boundary work” within Turkish private households employing migrant domestic workers originating from the Former Soviet Union countries. I suggest that in the specific encounter of these two categories, Turkish employers and female domestic workers from the former Soviet Union countries, symbolic boundaries are more determinative of employer/ employee relations in comparison to physical boundaries. The relative modesty of migrant domestic workers’ wages entails a ‘democratization’ of the possibility of hiring migrant domestic workers. Hence, in many of these middle-class households, physical boundaries are either insufficient or non-existent. In addition, in some of the cases, we witness a contradictory class mobility. The situation is rendered even more complicated due to the incommensurability of cultural capitals acquired in different settings. Based on in-depth interviews with ten employers, and fourteen migrant domestic workers, this paper signals the emergence of a more interactive and dynamic employer/employee relationship in contemporary times. The possibility of transformation is due to the flexible nature of the new category of boundaries, i.e. symbolic boundaries. Depending on the quality/quantity of the interaction between the inside and the outside, the roles of both parties are constantly redistributed within the private households. In this sense, the substitution of physical boundaries by symbolic boundaries can be interpreted both as a source of tension and a source of hope.

**SEMBOLİK SINIRLAR, HAYAL EDİLMİŞ HİYERARŞİLER: ESKİ SOVYETLER
BİRLİĞİ ÜLKELERİNDEN İSTANBUL'A EV İŞÇİSİ OLARAK ÇALIŞMAK
ÜZERE GELEN KADINLARA DAİR BİR SAHA ÇALIŞMASI**

Seda Doğan

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2011

Yard. Doç. Ayşe Parla

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göçmen ev işçileri, mekan siyaseti, ev, eski Sovyetler Birliği ülkeleri, Türkiye

Bu araştırma eski Sovyetler Birliği ülkelerinden gelen göçmen ev işçilerinin çalıştığı İstanbul evlerindeki ‘sınır çalışması’ni incelemektedir. Benim önerim, bu iki kategorinin karşılaşması durumunda, işveren/ işçi ilişkilerinin fiziksel sınırlardan ziyade sembolik sınırlarla belirlendiğidir. Göçmen ev işçi maaşlarının görece düşüklüğü, göçmen ev işçi çalışma pratığını bir anlamda demokratikleştirmiştir. Dolayısıyla, işçi çalıştırın bir çok evde sınırlar ya yetersiz kalmakta, ya da zaten hiç var olmamaktadır. Ek olarak, bazı durumlarda zıt sınıf hareketliliğinden bahsetmek mümkündür. Durum, farklı ortamlarda edinilen kültürel sermayelerin karşılaşırılamaz olması dolayısıyla daha da karmaşık hale gelmektedir. On işveren ve on dört ev işçi ile yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelere dayanarak, bu çalışma günümüzde daha interaktif ve dinamik bir işveren/ işçi ilişkisinin ortaya çıktığına işaret etmektedir. Değişim imkanı yeni sınır kategorisinin, sembolik sınırların, esnekliği dolayısıyladır. İçerisi/dışarısı arasındaki etkileşimin yoğunluğuna ve içeriğine bağlı olarak ev içerisindeki işveren/ işçi rolleri sürekli olarak yeniden dağıtılmaktadır. Bu anlamda, fiziksel sınırların yerini sembolik sınırların alması hem bir gerilim, hem de bir umut kaynağı olarak yorumlanabilir.

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To my grandmother, my mother, and all the women who helped me grow up.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is the third day of Kurban Bayramı. Pleading the occasion, all the “members of the family” have come together at “grandma’s” house who is actually totally unaware of what is going on around her due to her dire illness, Alzheimer’s disease. Besides the family members, there are two other women in the household: Galina who is the caregiver of the grandmother and Oksana who is the caregiver of the grandmother’s grandson. Oksana is playing cards with the grandson while Galina is serving Turkish coffee to the guests. The indifferent attitude of Oksana while the coffee is being served not only irritates the family members, but also bothers Galina who refuses to figure in the family picture taken at the end of the meeting. Just then, indistinguishable from the other members of the family, Oksana smiles at the camera.

Oksana, by refusing to serve at the grandmother’s house appears to be trying to set her boundaries. She is indeed a domestic worker, but her work is bounded by her employer’s house. In this house, she also is a guest. In short, her domestic worker identity is contextual and not essential. Even though she is “obliged” to serve the coffee at her employer’s house, she absolutely does not have to help in another setting. In addition, the fact that Oksana is playing cards at the moment does not mean that she is enjoying herself. In fact, Oksana is still working since she is “playing” with the son of her employer and thus keeping him busy and “out of the way” of the adults. However, nobody seems to question if Oksana is bored of this mission. As an adult person she may very well have preferred to sit among the adults at the other side of the sitting room. As to Galina, her expectations of class solidarity -since Oksana and Galina are both migrant domestic workers from Moldova- seem to evaporate following the attitude of Oksana. In the kitchen, she does not hesitate complaining to me: “The *kokona* (i.e. coquette) considers herself equal to the employers.”

As illustrated by this opening vignette, the paid domestic labor relationship is an enormously complicated one. In a context where boundaries are difficult to predetermine, every step of “boundary-setting” -within and outside the private households- demands serious negotiations of the parties involved. It is this very process of negotiation that comprises the subject of this thesis.

In this research based on a case study of the relationship of migrant domestic workers from the Former Soviet Union countries to their employers in İstanbul, I try to understand the different aspects of the boundary-setting processes within the private households employing live-in migrant domestic workers. Is there a difference between the local domestic worker/employer relationship and the migrant domestic worker/employer relationship? How is the experience of living in, and more specifically living in with a cultural difference, handled by both parties? Are physical boundaries, and above all a certain kind of space consumption, sufficient in the organization of the relationship? If not, how can physical boundaries be supported? How does the interaction with the outside, of both the employers and the domestic workers, affect the relationship within the household? In other words, to what extent can the employer/domestic worker relationship be considered as idiosyncratic?

Finding answers to these questions will hopefully provide us with some hints concerning the nature of the live-in migrant domestic worker/employer relationship, i.e. a relationship usually lived out of sight due to the sacredness of the setting in which it occurs. In a context where the physical conditions of many private households remain inefficient to ensure “distinction”, I assume that physical boundaries will be backed up by a second set of boundaries. The outcomes of this second set of boundaries will probably differ from the outcomes of the first set which are settled once and for all. Thus, I presuppose that there will be a more interactive/dynamic process in contemporary İstanbul households, an ebb and flow-like relationship, where employers and domestic workers will come close to each other at some points, and grow away from each other at others.

2. MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORK IN THE PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS OF ISTANBUL

The intricate relationship between gender, class, globalization, migration, and domestic labor has been stressed by many authors throughout the world (Constable, 1997; Anderson, 2000; Parrenas, 2001; Ehrenreich, 2003; Hochschild, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007; Lutz, 2008). Scholars from a wide array of disciplines have tackled the subject from different angles, coining different phrases to describe similar phenomena, for example, “the feminization of migration” (Raijman& Schammah-Gesser& Kemp, 2003; De Regt, 2010), “the global redivision of women’s traditional work” (Ehrenreich& Hochschild, 2003), “care drain”, “global heart transplant” (Hochschild, 2003); “the international transfer of caretaking (Parrenas,2000)”, “the globalization of social reproduction (Mattingly, 2001)”, “the feminization of survival” (Sassen, 2006). While some authors (Parrenas, 2001; Anderson, 2000), as well as some edited books (Ehrenreich&Hochschild, 2003; Zimmerman& Litt& Bose, 2006; Lutz, 2008) adopt a cross-national perspective in order to point out to the differences/similarities between the living/working conditions of domestic workers in different countries, others prefer to focus on a single national context (Hondagneu-Sotelo& Avila, 1997; Mattingly, 2001; Keough, 2006). However, the striking resemblance between the numerous stories gathered from the different parts of the globe seem to illustrate that we are dealing here with a global phenomenon. While some of the authors focus more on the conditions of migrant domestic workers in the receiving countries (Lan, 2003; Yeoh&Huang, 2010), others study the conditions of those who are left behind (Parrenas, 2003). But whatever their research interest, all the authors seem to accept that it is no longer possible to deny the importance of transnational ties, and to consider sending and receiving countries as separate entities with no connection at all.

While still an understudied field in Turkey, the relationship between gender, class, and domestic labor has recently been the subject of several important feminist publications

(Kalaycıoğlu&Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2001; Özyegin, 2001; Bora, 2005). Since the transition of Turkey from a country of emigration to a transit country, as well as a country of destination (Parla, 2007; İçduygu, 2010), various authors from Turkey (Kaşlı, 2005; Kaşka, 2005/2006; Keough, 2006; Akalın 2007; Akalın, 2010) have added the dimension of migration into the equation of gender, class and domestic labor.

This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by deciphering the different layers of the employer/live-in domestic worker relationship within the private households in İstanbul. In this study, I adopt a Bourdieusian framework. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1984) underlines the centrality of the “aversion to different life-styles” which constitutes “the strongest barrier between the classes.” The result is a “class endogamy.” According to the author, those who promote class endogamy are, in general, members of the dominant classes: “The most intolerable things for those who regard themselves as the possessors of legitimate culture is the sacrilegious reuniting of tastes.” In parallel to Bourdieu’s assumptions, I aim to understand the different stages of the boundary-setting process within middle-class private households in İstanbul, those in which migrant domestic workers are living. While not rejecting the importance of physical space in the concretization/preservation of the power relations (Akalın, 2010), I am suggesting that the “democratization” of the opportunities of hiring a migrant domestic worker (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007) has increased the role of immaterial boundaries in the creation of a hierarchical employer/employee relationship.

For the sake of this research, I have decided to divide the existing literature into three main subcategories. In the first part, I will focus on the consequences of the construction of domestic labor as an inherently female activity. In the following section, I will concentrate on the intricate process which has brought forth the meeting of two categories of people who are at first sight quite far-out from each other, that is female employees coming from FSU countries and their Turkish employers. Finally, I will take a look at the new forms of power exercise in the contemporary world. Thus, I intend to understand more fully the current dynamics of the power relations within private households.

2.1. DOMESTIC LABOR

2.1.1. Unpaid Female Domestic Labor

As Das et al (Das&Ellen&Leonard, 2008) state, home is “the site of several domesticities.” That domestic labor is gendered has been especially underlined by numerous authors (Ehrenreich, 2003; Bora, 2005, Lutz, 2008). Pointing out to the feminist theories of the second half of the twentieth century, Ehrenreich (Ehrenreich, 2003) claims that “all women were workers, and the home was their workplace – unpaid and unsupervised to be sure, but a workplace no less than the offices and factories men repaired to every morning. If men thought of the home as a site of leisure and recreation – a ‘haven in a heartless world’ – this was to ignore the invisible proletariat that kept it cozy and humming.” The author calls this “a symbolic enactment of gender relations”. In addition, one has to take into account the historicity of the nature of the relationship to the domestic space. According to Özbay (Özbay, 1999) who analyzes the evolution of middle-class households in İstanbul, “the relationship of women, men and children to living space in flat or house has changed along with basic shifts in social structure and culture.” Thus, change is both horizontal and vertical.

Whatever the responsibilities of both the male and female figures outside the private household, a new bargain between men and women rarely seems to be in sight in the private households (Anderson, 2000; Kalaycıoğlu&Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2001). The product is the pressure exercised by both the multiple household chores and the paid labor outside¹ – or inside– the private household. Özbay (Özbay, 1999) underlines “the double standard of modern society that expects a woman to be a ‘lady’ outside the home and still something of a servant within it.” Finally, a third layer of oppression is introduced when the discourse dictating how to be a proper mother (Davidoff, 2002; Badinter, 2010) is put into circulation in the public sphere. Naturalized via the reiteration of a dominant version of the discourses on domesticity², the codes of the

¹ The “double shift”, a term coined by Arlie Hochschild.

² If one leaves aside the socially constructed and dominant definition of the good mother, there are actually infinite ways of mothering. Hondagneu-Sotelo for example, analyzing the emergence of a new type of motherhood, i.e. “transnational motherhood”,

perfect mother infiltrate into the minds and bodies of women who then constantly struggle in order to meet the demands of the society.

2.1.2. Paid Domestic Labor

In a context where men are socially constructed as people of no relevance in relation to household chores and care of the children³, and where the government continues to take a “hands-off approach” (Uttal, 2006), women are obliged to make alternative arrangements between themselves in order to alleviate their burden. According to Ehrenreich (Ehrenreich, 2003) this is “the microdefeat of feminism in the household.” Since women are unable to challenge “the everyday rituals that affirm patriarchy in the home” (Romero, 2006), a symbiotic relationship – paid domestic labor – emerges between the female members of different classes. Thus, the resemblance of the responsibilities of the housewife and those of the paid domestic labourer is underlined by many authors (Cheever, 2003; Lan, 2006). These authors realize a continuity, rather than a rupture, between the role of the housewife, and that of the paid domestic worker and underline how “the boundary between madam and maid is fluctuating and permeable” (Lan, 2006). However, diagnosing this continuity must not prevent us from seeing the exploitation dimension of the relationship which contributes severely to the reproduction of class. Depending on their class membership, women deal with the burden of ‘second shift’ quite differently. While middle-class women usually rely on paid labor of lower classes, the latter is obliged to ask for the help of kin (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Hochschild, 2003; Chang, 2006).

rejects the hegemonic definition that marginalizes all the alternatives: “The ‘cult of domesticity’ is a cultural variant of motherhood, one made possible by the industrial revolution, by breadwinner husbands who have access to employers who pay a ‘family wage’, and by particular configurations of global and national socioeconomic and racial inequalities.” As one can observe, according to the author, the definition of legitimate motherhood is pragmatic. This in turn allows its manipulation depending on the time/space changes that occur.

³ Depending on the configuration of the household, one must add the disabled and the elderly.

2.1.3. Migrant Domestic Labor

As already mentioned in the end of the previous section, the consideration of domestic work as female work has provoked on the one hand the mobilization of kinship relations, and on the other hand, the emergence of alternative arrangements between total strangers, i.e. women of different classes, as well as different races. However, when “the globalization of the market economy has extended the politics of reproductive labor into an international level” (Parrenas, 2000), a third actor has been included into the picture: Undocumented migrants who “are generally willing to work for low wages and eager to follow orders” (Folbre, 2006). “In 1990, for every 100 men who migrated internationally, 91 women did so, making women about 47 percent of the global international flow of people” say Zimmerman, Litt, and Bose (Zimmerman& Litt& Bose, 2006). However, “being cheap and flexible labour for the service sectors” (Anthias, 2000), these women are automatically absorbed by specific –and mainly informal- categories of the work industry. Hence, even though migration can be considered as a personal choice, domestic work must certainly be considered as an obligation (Ehrenreich, 2003). The end product of this migration is the emergence of a “three-tier transfer of reproductive labor among women in two nation-states” (Parrenas, 2006). In the same vein, that migration is a privilege reserved to the relatively affluent categories of the population has been stressed by numerous authors (Lan, 2006, Anderson, 2000).

Even though different actors may have different motivations when migrating, what is common to all the individual cases is that there is a combination of the push and pull factors of both the sending and receiving countries (Ehrenreich&Hochschild, 2003; Sassen, 2006). According to Ehrenreich and Hochschild, the push factor is poverty, while the pull factor is ‘care deficit’. In the same vein Sassen points out to the gravitational force of the “global city” which produces “a strong demand for migrant workers.” This demand is satisfied by the “survival circuits” which “produce an expanding supply of workers who can be pushed or sold into those types of jobs.”

Pointing out to the importance of the “global city”, Sassen is also underlining a transformation in the exercise of power. Power, bypassing national boundaries, is

operating at the level of the global city in the contemporary world. Soysal (Soysal, 1998) emphasizes a similar transformation with the emergence of “postnational citizenship.” Sassen and Soysal are among the first set of authors who believe that the nation-state is losing its grounds in the current state of the world. On the other hand, a second set of authors reject this argument by showing concrete illustrations about how nation-state boundaries are still consequential in many instances. The research of Kaşlı and Parla (Kaşlı&Parla, 2009) on the visa policies concerning the post-1990s Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria show for instance how the state is still able to shape the living and working conditions of migrant women by constantly manipulating the existing regulations: “The state lays down rules for immigrants by constituting the boundaries of legality/illegality not as continuous but broken lines....visa policies, as ‘instruments of exclusion’, resemble the broken lines that allow one to cross over to the next lane and return as long as the traffic is not disrupted.” Similarly, Eder (Eder, 2007) underlines how the neoliberal state reproduces its power through the preservation of the inconsistency concerning its regulations and practices. The constant manipulation of the inclusion/exclusion process leaves the individual at the mercy of the neoliberal state which can always change its mind.

A closer look at the lives of migrant domestic workers also reveals the ongoing importance of the nation-state boundaries. That states do not always exercise their power directly must not be misleading. According to Cheng (Cheng, 2006) for instance, “employers and employment agencies....become governmental instruments in regulating alien labor, masking indirect state control.” Thus, one can decipher the macro –the state agenda on migrants– by concentrating on the micro –the employers’ attitudes towards the domestic workers. Similarly, Enloe (Enloe, 2006) underlines how employers’ treatment of their domestic workers is an extension of “the government’s immigration regulations and its bureaucracy’s way of administering those rulings.” This is why “household-based neo-slavery” (Ong, 2006) can come into existence much more easily in the case of undocumented migrant domestic workers. This is also why migrant domestic workers themselves were not able to attend in person the press release against *anneyiz.biz*⁴. Even though the subject directly affected their living and working

⁴ Anneyiz.biz is an Internet site related to the Hürriyet group. The site does not only inform the audience about the new developments concerning mothering, but also gives them the possibility to share their mothering experiences. However, while trying to ease

conditions, they had to be represented by their local colleagues out of fear of deportation.

2.2. MIGRANT DOMESTIC LABOR IN TURKEY

That Turkey has recently become a country of transit, as well as a country of emigration, has been underlined by many authors (Kaşka, 2005/2006; Parla, 2007, İçduygu, 2010) By pointing out to the constant procrastination of the execution of the already established legal regulations (Law no. 4817, 2003), many authors underline the fact that Turkey still continues to consider itself as a country of emigration (Erder, 2010, Pusch, 2010, İçduygu, 2010). However, the new law (law no. 5683 “Yabancıların Türkiye’de İkamet ve Seyahatleri Hakkında Kanun”) which will be put into force following February, 2012 has raised serious question marks. According to the new law, migrant domestic workers without a working permit will not be able to legalize their status by leaving Turkey for a very short period time since they will not be allowed to come back for a total of ninety days. This inevitably implies the termination of the work relationship. The obtention of the working permit demands the cooperation of the employer and the employee who have to overcome together the difficulties of the obtainment process. Nevertheless, according to many – including people from the Migrant Solidarity Network - the will to control the undocumented worker category will only contribute to the proliferation of the number of irregular migrants since employers will not be keen on dealing with the burden.

2.2.1. A new encounter: Female employers from Turkey meet female domestic workers from the Former Soviet Union countries

Until the 1960s, paid domestic labor does not seem to exist in the Turkish context. Instead, we see the use of “adopted” daughters [*evlatlık*], occupying an intermediate position between slaves, and biological children (Özbay, 1999). These “adopted”

the lives of some women, it brings more difficulties into the lives of other, less privileged, ones. On one occasion, an article on the website gave the following advices to the potential employers of live-in migrant domestic workers: to confiscate the passport right at the beginning, to cut back the wages of the first three months, and not to give the live-in women more than 500 YTL.

children are easily distinguishable from the other members of the household: “Adopted daughters are usually dark-skinned and ugly young girls. Their ugliness is sometimes explained with their being Kurdish, Armenian, or Anatolian peasants....Through her outlook, the middle-class family was in fact announcing to the outside world that she was not one of them” (the translation is mine).

1950 seems to be a landmark year. Severely criticized, the adopted daughter institution gradually fades away; the law prohibiting its exercise is put into force in 1964 (Özbay, 1999); horizontality is replaced by verticality with the emergence of tall buildings, and finally İstanbul receives a large internal migration. These three factors explain together the emergence of a new figure: The job worker [*gündelikçi*] who starts to be employed in middle class households (Özbay, 1999). There seems to be a consensus on the socio-economic profile of this new figure, the “sadık hanım” [*the loyal lady*] in Kalaycıoğlu and Rittersberger-Tılıç’s vocabulary: Coming from a rural background, these women are mainly members of the first generation of migrants (Özyegin, 2005; Kalaycıoğlu & Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2001). Kalaycıoğlu and Rittersberger-Tılıç position the domestic workers and their employers on the opposite ends of the traditional-modern continuum. The former are considered as traditional, while the latter as modern.

Even though female employers and their female employees are portrayed as tête à tête within this relationship, there is a prompter at the backstage. Analyzing the interpersonal relations between employers and local domestic workers, Özyegin points out to the crucial role played by a third actor, i.e. the husband of the domestic worker who, by supervising the working conditions of his wife, protects her from the exploitation of the employer in the Turkish context. Hence, a source of oppression (from the gender point of view) becomes surprisingly a source of emancipation (from the class point of view).

A second turning point –after the 1950s– for the Turkish domestic work industry is the decade following 1990. The profile of the domestic worker radically changes following the arrival of women coming from the post-socialist countries in order to work in the middle and upper-middle class Turkish families. The entrance of these women into the Turkish market is also crucial since Turkish employers become aware of the existence of an alternative arrangement, that is the live-in arrangement.

Many authors underline (Remennick, 1999; Hormel&Southworth, 2006) the distinction of women in the Former Soviet Union countries who were not only highly educated people, but also active participants of the labour market of the FSU countries. In addition, despite “the complex and controversial nature of Soviet-type patriarchy” (Remennick, 1999), women were the principal mediators between their families and the official bodies. Even though women were the first workers to withdraw from the labour market when the economic crisis erupted (Hormel&Southworth, 2006), they were also the first ones to adapt to the new living conditions by finding alternative arrangements to the existing ones. Thus, many women from the post-socialist countries have contributed to the “feminization of migration.” However, this was usually at the expense of a “substantial occupational, economic and social downgrading” (Remennick, 1999). Being undocumented in the receiving country and lacking “competences to enter the local job market in position compatible with those they have had in the FSU” (Gvion, 2011), these women were unable to find jobs in accordance with their acquired qualifications (Raijman&Schammah-Gesser& Kemp, 2003).

Numerous studies seem to confirm this argument in the specific context of women from the Former Soviet Union countries working in Turkey. Studying Moldovan domestic workers in İstanbul, Kaşka (Kaşka, 2005/2006) for instance underlines how these women “had formal education and had worked outside the home before coming to Turkey”; in another study on sex workers from FSU countries, Kaşka and Erder (Kaşka&Erder, 2003) arrive at the same conclusion:

In fact, they often had a considerable degree of education and it was not rare for young foreign women, aged between 20 and 25, with different professional backgrounds to be found working as prostitutes in Turkey. The police were astonished to find even highly qualified professionals including medical doctors among them. This social decline could only be explained by the socio-economic and political collapse in their home countries.

In the same vein, Rutishauser (Rutishauser, 2010), in her research on the Armenian community working in İstanbul, observes the same downward mobility. The “brain waste” (Lutz, quoted in Kaşka, 2005/2006) argument is especially valuable in the case of middle-aged women coming from the FSU countries whose educational and professional backgrounds are usually disregarded.

In short, all these studies illustrate perfectly the radical change in the domestic worker profile following the articulation of migrant women from FSU countries into the domestic work industry in Turkey. The domestic worker no longer has to be an uneducated, rural woman. This new category of workers, despite their privileged cultural and social capital due to their Soviet background, accept living and working in worse conditions when compared to their local colleagues. Hence, while paid domestic work has been the illustration of upward mobility for many local women, it has been the indicator of downward mobility in the case of at least certain categories of the migrant domestic workers community. It is because temporary downward social mobility will be compensated by economic upward mobility in the homeland that these women accept the current living/working conditions.

In many instances, these downwardly mobile women work in upwardly mobile households in the case of Turkish private households. Identified as “the counterattack of the capital” (Boratav, 2003), 1980s have been the period when “significant steps were taken in the direction of liberalizing the trade and capital account regime and transforming the Turkish economy from an inward-oriented to an export-oriented direction” (Öniş, 2004). As a result, new ideological terms such as “free market economy”, ‘free enterprise’, ‘orta direk’, ‘köşeyi dönme’” (Boratav, 2003) began to be circulated within the public space during the government of Turgut Özal, the Turkish prime minister following the 1983 elections. This is a period where ethics are kept in the background, where the sole criteria of success becomes wealth (Bali, 2002). This is also a period when new centers of industrialization, and new industrialists emerge. This new middle class can be differentiated from the previous ones by its desire to be articulated to the rest of the world through the possibilities offered by globalization (Pamuk, 2007). This new lifestyle, called “yuppiedom” (Bali, 2002; Öncü; 2000), is characterized by an economic capital that has rapidly increased, and a cultural capital that is lagging behind. In this context, one can talk of rupture, rather than continuity, between the lifestyle of this new generation, and that of their parents. In parallel to the rise of this new middle class, product of neoliberal politics (Öncü, 2000), we witness the emergence of a new provincial political elite replacing the old ones. This new political elite no longer glorifies the rootedness of “Stambouliote” origins (Erder, 2000). In short, following the 1980s, the rules of the game – and consequently the power

relations – have radically changed in the Turkish context. Many people have benefited from these changes.

2.3. NEW FORMS OF POWER: WHERE HAVE THE BOUNDARIES GONE?

2.3.1. Ubiquitousness of Power in Contemporary Times

While naming it differently, an important number of theoreticians have pointed out to the same phenomenon, that is the emergence of a new form of governance in contemporary societies: Foucault (Foucault, 1982), a lynchpin in the analysis of power, has underlined how contemporary power was not only infiltrating into the subject, but also it was the very source which made the individual subject; Agamben (Agamben, 1998) pointed out to the “zone of indistinction” between “*zoē*⁵” and “*bios*⁶”, that is that which belongs to the individual, and that which reflects the collective will, in modern democracies; Deleuze (Deleuze, 1992) told us about the transition from disciplinary societies to societies of control; and finally Negri and Hardt (Negri&Hardt, 2000) signaled the emergence of the “Empire”, that is a society that “reacts like a single body” since nobody can stay out of the reach of power which has become “entirely biopolitical.”

According to these authors, the “modern” individual is thus the victim of a major illusion. The more s/he thinks s/he is gaining control over her/his body and life, the more s/he is being modified in order to become more effectively integrated into the system. Thus,

it is almost as if, starting from a certain point, every decisive political event were double-sided: The spaces, the liberties, and the rights won by individuals in their conflicts with central powers always simultaneously prepared a tacit but increasing inscription of individuals’ lives within the state order, thus offering a

⁵ Agamben uses this term in order to express “the simple fact of living common to all living beings. At the level of *zoe*, there seems to be no significant difference between “animals, men or gods.”

⁶ According to Agamben, it is “the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group.” Thus, a social layer is added.

new and more dreadful foundation for the very sovereign power from which they wanted to liberate themselves (Agamben, 1998).

Here, we have a definition of power which is immaterial, ubiquitous, and thus difficult to locate. As a result, the system reproduces itself without encountering any strong resistance from the individuals subjected to it. Hence, even though with different words, all these thinkers signal a similar transformation: The passage from a visible form of power to an invisible one. In such circumstances, the exercise of power is much more efficient since one can no longer separate the space of the biological and that of the social. The two mainly overlap. Thus, whenever one hears someone use the pronoun “I”, (s)he must automatically understand it as an incarnation of the pronoun “we”, since all the Is have been ideologically shaped according to the aspirations of the “we” in contemporary societies.

2.3.2. Blurred boundaries in the professional world: Care work as a striking illustration

Power relations within the labour market have also radically changed in contemporary times. The traditional power relationship between the factory owner and the factory worker is no longer the dominant pattern. Alternatives have multiplied following the rise of other sectors such as the information, the informatique, and the service sectors during the decade following 1970 (Akalin, 2007). The heterodoxe definition of labour as something strictly physical/visible has currently been challenged by the recent discoveries of new forms of labour. These new forms are flexible, invisible, and difficult to measure. In turn, they can easily be overlooked.

Due to “the complex nature of the commodity being exchanged”(Akalin, 2007), I believe that care work is one of the most interesting domains that give the opportunity to analyze the dynamics of this new form of labour. This is because in the care bazaar uniting care receivers and caregivers, the caregivers are mainly marketing their personhood, and not their ‘labour power.’ (Anderson, 2006) Here, understanding where work ends, and the non-work starts seems impossible. Work surrounds the body of the worker and leaves no space of autonomy for the expression of individuality.

In the following chapter where I will be analyzing the data obtained during my fieldwork, I will try to understand the different stages of the artificial boundary-setting process within middle-class private households employing migrant domestic workers in İstanbul. In the same vein as Lutz (Lutz, 2008), I presuppose this interaction to be a reciprocal one: “The employer-employee relation cannot be characterized merely as a relationship of exploitation but rather as ‘boundary work’ between both sides.” By focusing on boundary work, I intend to decipher the different strategies used by employers, as well as domestic workers, in order to deal with the anomie nature of affective labor. While not rejecting the importance of physical boundaries in the formation of domestic hierarchies (Akalin, 2010), I believe that they must be backed up by a second set of boundaries in the case of more modest households which are barely able to afford such an option. In these households where physical boundaries are either lacking or insufficient, the creation/preservation of personal spaces demands a second set of boundaries, that is symbolic boundaries.

3. METHOD OF THE STUDY

Twenty-four in-depth interviews were recorded during this research and were later transcribed: Fourteen were with female migrant domestic workers who were working (or had worked in the past) as live-in domestic workers, and ten with the employers of migrant domestic workers. At the beginning of the research, I had no intention of interviewing women from the FSU countries only, but due to my networks, it transpired that way. Given this fact, I found it apt to include a discussion of the transition from the Soviet regime to the current state of affairs. Among these fourteen migrant women, five were from Turkmenistan, four from Moldova, three from Georgia, one from Uzbekistan and one from the Crimea. Four of the women were caring for children and doing housework; while the others were caring for elderly or disabled people and doing housework. The ages of the majority varied between 40-50 years old. At the two extremes were Begül (18) and Galina (65). Five of them were married, five of them were divorced, two had lost their husbands, and finally two were single. Five of the women were university graduates and an important majority had no experience of domestic work prior to their arrival to Turkey. It is possible to claim that many had experienced social downward mobility in İstanbul. None of them had a work permit, whereas only the two women from Georgia had a residence permit. Four of the women were no longer living in the houses of their employers at the time of the interview: Nakita was living alone, Bahar was living with her Turkish boyfriend, Nadya was sharing an apartment with friends, and finally Seher was residing in a room within the workplace of her husband who is also working in İstanbul. As to the employer interviewees, six were women, and four were men. The ages varied between 40-45 while at the two extremes were Ersan (35), and Cevat (95)⁷. A grand majority were married and almost all of them (except Nurcan) were university graduates. Only two of

⁷ Following the interview, Cevat has deceased.

them – Elvan⁸ and Cevat – were the direct care-receivers. The rest had mothers, children or disabled relatives who needed to be taken care of.

I mainly used my own networks in order to access the interviewees. Due to my middle-class background, this was not a very difficult task since many people within my extended family were employing (or had employed in the past) migrant domestic workers. In some of the cases, I interviewed both the employer and the employee: Nurcan and Narin, Zerrin and Nana are such examples. However, I quickly realized that this was not a beneficial method since my identity as “the relative of the employer” was obviously affecting the responses of the employee women. My promises about confidentiality did not assuage their anxieties. Hence, in order to minimize auto-censorship, I asked these women to tell me about their previous experiences with other employers. This gave the women some relief that the answers given would have little effect on their employer-employee relationship in the future. However, interviewing the employer in the living room, and then going into the migrant women’s room in order to interview her was an awkward experience demanding a transition from one role to another. In addition, when I was meeting the worker through the employer, there was an issue that disturbed me enormously in many of the cases: In order to interview an adult woman who had travelled long distances by herself, I was first obliged to get the permission of the employer. This alone seemed to illustrate how difficult it was to talk about boundaries in the case of live-in domestic work: The stories of these women are at the same time the stories of the private lives of the employers. Thus, the employers think of themselves as people having the authority to decide whether “their” domestic worker will talk or not. Ceyda for example warned me a couple of times about not asking questions concerning the present work relationship between her and the domestic worker. She wanted me to focus on the previous experiences of Oksana since she didn’t want the interview to have any consequences on their future relationship. Another problem was that some of the employers did not hesitate asking me whether their employees were content with their living/working conditions once the interview was finished. I always answered by saying that because of the ethics of research, it was not possible for me to answer this question.

⁸ Elvan decided to hire a domestic worker when she learnt that she had cancer. She is no longer sick and her domestic worker is now solely responsible of household chores.

As a final note, I was interestingly not able to use the snowball method. In many of the cases, the “illegal” nature of this work put a barrier between me and the interviewees who constantly asked how I was going to use this material. Even during the interviews with people I already knew personally, I was repeatedly warned about the fragility of the situation of the undocumented workers. Thus, the possibilities of gaining access to other interviewees through people I had already interviewed diminished in parallel to the decrease of familiarity. The workers did not want to take any risks.

My sampling is biased in the sense that I probably reached domestic workers with better living and working conditions. Had there been a serious problem within the household, I would have gotten a negative answer right after my request of interview. Yet, in this study, I am not interested in third page stories about extreme cases. I am rather concerned with the grey zone, that is with reading between the lines. The majority of the employers/employees are neither absolute demons nor pure angels. This statement of course does not imply the non-existence of power relations. To the contrary, power relations are ubiquitous, even though in subtler forms. Another bias of my sample stems from the language barrier, I only had the opportunity to interview women with a certain knowledge of the Turkish language. Even with them, I sometimes had to use the Turkish-Russian dictionary.

All the employer interviews (except the interview with Korcan) were made in the private households of the interviewees. Similarly, the majority of the employee interviews were made within the private households where these women worked/lived. The exceptions were the interview with Nadya (at her house), Bahar (at a café), and Cennet (at my house). I would have preferred to interview all the migrant women outside of the private households of their employers. However, many were working round the clock and had little time for an interview. In addition, the undocumented status was a great source of anxiety imposing restraints on every aspect of the lives of the majority of my interviewees⁹. Our meeting with Cennet is the most dramatic example I can give in order to illustrate this point: Cennet is a young and divorced woman working in the house of an elderly. She has been in İstanbul for three years. She has no friends or relatives in İstanbul. However, she seems very motivated about

⁹ I would like to stress once again that among my interviewees only two women coming from Georgia were legally staying in Turkey. All the others had neither a residence permit, nor a work permit.

working here since she hopes to guarantee a better life for her only son who is now in a private college in Ouzbekistan. Cennet especially requested to be interviewed in a private setting. However, she probably could not ask her employer. Thus, I picked her up from a place near the house where she was working. When we met she was already agitated. However, when a police vehicle parked at the other side of the road, her agitation turned into full-blown panic. When we arrived, she immediately sat at the back of the car thinking that she would be too conspicuous due to her uncommon looks in the front seat. I offered her a hat, and sun glasses and she felt relieved only after we arrived safely at the place where I live.

As to the content of the interviews, I cannot claim that there was homogeneity. At the beginning of the research, my interviews were guided by formal, questionnaire-like questions. However, as the research evolved, I got quite dissatisfied with the superficial answers I was getting in some of the interviews. I radically changed my questions and started using only a few open-ended questions, letting the interviewee lead me during the interview. I abandoned focusing solely on the present (the work experience). Therefore, personal histories prior to migration were also included in the interviews. I regret not doing this right from the beginning since such an approach not only gave a more realistic picture of the migration experience, but also helped the interviewees to forget about the existence of the tape recorder.

During the field, my position as a researcher was very ambiguous for the migrant domestic workers failed to grasp why I was interested in their stories, why I was staying in the kitchen with them while the rest of the invited guests were eating, drinking, and laughing “inside” in conformity with the requirements of a middle-class reunion. Right at the beginning of this research, when my subject was not limited to migrant domestic workers, I had interviewed a Turkish job worker who was also an activist. I still recall how violently she scolded me asking why a middle-class, Sabancı University student should be interested in such a subject. She was really suspicious about how I was going to use the data since otherwise my interest made no sense to her. On the other side, the employers also were having hard times understanding the choice of such a subject. Many found it too idealistic and some even could not at all understand how I was spending time listening to these women who were, in the end, just maids.

4. RESULTS OF THE FIELDWORK - BOUNDARIES WITHIN THE HOME

“Employers are continuously negotiating these terms of distance and closeness, as are servants, trying to push the boundary in one direction or another through a constant process of manipulating all the markers....From employers' points of view, servants must be both similar and different; employers must find the balance between transforming servants into less threatening members of the lower class and preventing them from thereby gaining unacceptable power and becoming too much like the family (Dickey, 2000).”

As illustrated by Dickey, the employer/employee relationship becomes extremely complicated in the live-in paid domestic work arrangement. Both employers, and employees struggle in order to preserve what they believe to be the ideal distance that has to be neither too big, nor too little. According to Hondagneu-Sotelo, two possibilities are available within the process of negotiating distance: *Maternalism* – “a unilateral positioning of the employer as a benefactor who receives personal thanks, recognition, and validation of self from the domestic worker”– and *personalism*– “a bilateral relationship that involves two individuals recognizing each other not solely in terms of their role or office (such as clerk or cleaner) but rather as persons embedded in a unique set of social relations, and with particular aspirations” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007). Thus, when maternalism is at play, we see the emergence of a hierarchical relationship concealed behind the veil of affection, whereas when personalism is chosen, one can talk of a more balanced power relationship.

The fact that the choice of the appropriate strategy to be adopted mostly belongs to the employer must not be misleading. Thus according to Lutz (Lutz, 2008), ‘boundary work’ is an interactive process involving both sides. Domestic workers are also active agents within the employer/employee relationship. Quoting Simmel, Davidoff claims for example the following: “There is quite a complicated relationship hiding behind the image in which one is totally dominant, and the other is totally passive; the relationship between a superior who is constantly trying to prove the legitimacy of his/her

governance, and an inferior who is constantly trying to reaffirm his/her value by searching “resistance pockets” (the translation is mine, Davidoff, 2002).” Constable also stresses the dialogic relationship between the power of the dominant and the resistance of the dominated: ‘Nor do employers have a monopoly on power and workers a monopoly on resistance. Rather, power and resistance coexist and constantly reassert themselves against each other’ (Constable, 1997). Thus, both parties are capable of exercising power in some instances, and resisting the exercise of power in others.

Despite the ubiquitous presence of the power/resistance struggle within all sorts of work relationships, such struggle becomes extremely crucial in the live-in arrangement which obliges the uninterrupted coexistence of two different life-styles within the same physical space. The separation of tastes becomes even more complicated when the employer owes his/her current position to upward mobility, while the live-in domestic worker is the victim of downward mobility: Not an unusual phenomenon in the case of migrant women from the FSU countries working in private households in İstanbul. In addition, the incommensurability of the cultural capital of the employer, and that of the domestic worker acquired in different settings further beclouds the settlement of hierarchies. Thus, even though coming from a rural background, migrant domestic workers from FSU countries can possess the “legitimate taste” (Bourdieu, 1984) reserved to the upper-middle classes in the receiving country. Acquired naturally during their socialization in Soviet times, the “true culture” of migrant workers can unmask the “‘academic’, ‘scholastic’, ‘bookish’, ‘affected’ or ‘studied’” nature of the cultural capital of the employers in some of the households.

Leaving aside the lifestyle problem, the employer/employee relationship gets even more problematic because “the back region where performers can choose to ‘drop their front’” (Yeoh&Huang, 2010) is situated within the private space owned by the employer. Thus, boundaries between work and leisure time, as well as between the employer and the employee, become blurry. One can no more talk of two lives intersecting at some point, but rather of the life of the domestic worker being absorbed by that of the employer. This is because, in Anderson’s formulation, “the migrant domestic worker slips into the analytical space between body as personhood and body as property. For the domestic worker is selling, not her ‘labour power’ (the property in the person) but her personhood” (Anderson, 2006). By making such a contribution,

Anderson is criticizing the Marxist theory according to which “workers sell their commodified ‘labour power’” and which presupposes that “labour power is, in this fiction, not integral to the person and can be traded in the marketplace with buyer and seller constructed as equals.” Such an argument undermines how it is nearly impossible to distinguish “care as labour” and “care as emotion.” Akalın, focusing on the affective dimension of the employer/employee relationship, adds another layer to this argument: “The services that they [*employers*] buy from their migrant domestics are not their personalities as fixed entities, but the capacity to mould them” (Akalın, 2007). Hence, the personhood bought is not respected as such, but it is radically modified.

It is more possible to talk of labour power in the case of live-out domestic work where both parties have a space of their own when the work that unite them is done with:

“The live-out cleaner leaves the home of the employer every time her work there is done, handing over a clean and tidy apartment, to go to her own home. She is always outside the boundaries of guilt that the employer herself experiences when she is unable to match a domestic task with the right kind of affective state (Cowan, 1992: 390), as the cleaner only sells her labour for the limited periods of time she spends in the employer’s home (Akalın, 2007).”

Thus, Akalın underlines the potential of a professional relationship between the employer and the domestic worker. Work’s boundaries are more clearly defined in the live-out arrangement: X amount that must be done in Y time which is concretized in the “clean and tidy apartment.” Right after the attainment of the goal, the domestic worker leaves the household of the employer since she has another life off duty, a life of her own. In such circumstances, employers and job workers have to put much less additional effort into the negotiation of personal boundaries which are more clearly defined. Consequently, “weekly house cleaners and their employers rarely experience blowups” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003).

This chapter will analyze how the live-in domestic workers, as well as the employers of live-in domestic workers use a double set of boundaries in order to deal with the tension of living together. First, spatial/physical/visible boundaries, and second, discursive/emotional/invisible boundaries will be discussed.

4.1. SPATIAL/PHYSICAL/VISIBLE BOUNDARIES

I have organized this section as comprising of two subcategories – the maid's room and the rest of the house – since I believe that the inclusion of the domestic worker into the private household of the employer automatically divides the domestic space into two main distinct constituents. The room of the “woman” is the most private space of the household from the point of view of the domestic worker while it becomes the most public part of the house after the settlement of a “stranger” from the point of view of the employers. Similarly, the rest of the house can be considered as a private space from the point of view of the employers while the domestic worker has to check her hair and tidy her outfit before crossing the border separating her private space from that of the employers.

4.1.1. “The room of the woman” : The private space of the domestic worker, the public space of the employer

S: If you had such an opportunity what kind of a room would you give yourself? What's the room of your dreams?

Narin: My child, the room of my dreams is the room in my own home. The bedroom in my own home (she smiles bitterly).

S: How is your own room?

N: Normal. But it's my bed, my own bed, my own pillow, my own quilt.

The room of the domestic worker is probably one of the most controversial spaces within the private households employing migrant domestic workers. First of all, I intend to examine which room is considered as suitable for the domestic worker. Before doing so, the following needs to be noted. As I have already mentioned in the previous chapter, the use of domestic help is not at all reserved to the most upper-middle classes. It is precisely the relative modesty of the wages of migrant domestic workers that incite the less privileged categories of the middle-class to consider the possibility of hiring a migrant domestic worker. Thus, in “three room, one living room [3 oda, 1 salon]” houses where a couple lives with their children, there is usually only one room that can be reserved to the use of the domestic worker: “When I moved here, we had our previous domestic worker and when she came here she automatically had a room. According to the arrangement we made, there were the child's room, the bedroom, the

woman's room, and the living room" says Mine. However, in some cases, one cannot be sure whether there is a real obligation or just indifference towards the comfort of the domestic worker. Here is an excerpt from an interview with Nurcan and her daughter, Deniz:

D: Mother, her room is not a chic one. An armchair, a wardrobe, the old books of my uncle. A tiny room. I remember a place where they had given the lady an extremely beautiful room with a beautiful view. It is true that we don't have such a room with a view. But even if we had one, it would absolutely not be given to the lady. In our house it is always the most out-of-the-way, the worst, the smallest room that is given.

N: Then, we would have to give the living room since mom always uses this room [the room in which we are doing the interview]. Then we would have to give the huge living room and that would be absurd. Is there another possibility? You tell me.

D: You may be right. The room you gave was the most appropriate but the thing is I don't think that you would give a better room if there was one. She came here to work. She must not have any further expectations. That is what you think she deserves.

In conformity with Deniz's last words, many employers do emphasize the fact that these women are here to work. It is an incontestable truth that the majority of the migrant women are in Istanbul out of material need. However, employers exploit this situation by turning a blind eye to all the other needs – such as the need of affection, of entertainment, of socialization – of these women.

This said, there are also extremely luxurious and huge villas with multiple rooms that can be offered to the use of live-in domestic workers. In this case, one may obviously talk of a choice, rather than a necessity. Thus, the availability of a range of choices implies that the room chosen for the domestic worker will also give a clue about the meaning attributed to her presence by the employer (Akalin, 2010). "Their rooms, their bedrooms, their wardrobes... They give us a small room. A tiny television. There is no luxury here. There is a difference between their rooms and ours. I also worked in villas. They give you a room in the basement. But I even thank god for this" says Nakita who now works as a live-out. Nana who has never worked in villas, but has heard about people who had such experiences also makes the following contribution: "In villas, the domestic workers sleep in the basement. I would not be able to sleep in the basement. I

would immediately be sick. There is no air there. I would immediately die.” However, reality may not always be as unpleasant as presented in Nakita and Nana’s words: “I liked the room they gave me a lot. I was also surprised since I was going to live and sleep in such a room. I am telling you, it was very beautiful. It had a balcony with a very beautiful view. A table and chairs in the balcony” says Nadya, now working as a live-out.

In some cases, the domestic worker is given the room which is in a better shape: Güray for example lives in a house with three rooms. One room belongs to her wife who has MS. However, between the two other rooms, he has reserved the smaller one for himself. Here is his explanation to his decision:

“I gave her the big, the comfortable room since there was a big wardrobe there. In the wardrobe there are all the belongings of my wife, all the sheets, the towels. I did not choose that room because she would always knock on my door ‘Güray abi, we need towels, we need this and we need that’. That would be annoying. So I chose the small, comfortable, calm room.”

A similar pragmatism can be observed in the words of Nurcan: “That room was near my mother’s room. It is a room from where she can always run to my mother, where she can always help her. It is right next to my mother’s room.” As can be observed from the quotations of Güray and Nurcan, the domestic worker is constructed as the shadow of the care receiver who must be on call twenty-four hours a day. Akalin points out to the emergence of a new form of labor – affective labor – in order to define such ambiguous situations: “Working, labour, these are not just some stuff done in an eight hour shift. We should be able to think about labour in a larger sense. We should understand that a job involving non-stop affection towards a human being is extremely weary.”

Finally, in some cases, there isn’t even a room reserved to the use of the domestic worker. In such circumstances, the domestic worker may share a room with the children. Nini, who now works as a live-in for another family, tells me about her previous experience:

“In the first house, I had no room. There was no room for the domestic worker. I don’t know how they saw me but I was sleeping in the child’s room. I was sleeping on the couch. There was a big couch. It was difficult. Sometimes I had

to wake up early. The boy stayed late at night, he was studying. I wanted to sleep since I was exhausted in the evening. Cook, do this, do that. Now for example when I am done with the work, I come to my room, I watch the television, I read, I do whatever I want to. This was not possible in that house.”

The phrase “I don’t know how they saw me” is significant since it illustrates how employers are inclined to see their employees as children. However, in spite of a new bed bought for the child, there is an old couch reserved to the domestic worker. A similar problem about privacy may arise when domestic workers care for elderly people who are in need twenty-four hours a day. The following is an excerpt from Gümüş’s interview:

“The mother wasn’t able to sleep at night. She used to get up. I had to help her go to the toilet. Then there was the risk of not hearing her get up. So I started to sleep in her room. It was a little difficult since I had just arrived. I could not sleep. Just as I was going to fall asleep, the mother would call me. Then I would get up to help her. From that moment on, I stayed awake till the morning. Not because of the mother, but because I was always thinking about my children.”

In the quotation above, the uneasy situation results from a need. But, it may also be the result of abusive intentions. Nana for instance remembers with anger her days with her previous employer:

“Every human being wants to relax at night, right? You work all day long. So, you have to take a good rest. She used to tell me ‘I am scared, sleep with me.’ So I slept in her room for twenty-five days. She was not a sick person. When this mother [*the mother of the disabled man she is now caring for*] was sick, I used to sleep in her room. This is no problem because we are talking about a sick person here. I maybe unable to hear her voice. But that woman was not sick. She could walk and talk. It was only a caprice. There, they gave me a room but I could never enter it. You are neither at ease in the mornings, nor at nights. During those twenty-five days, I felt ten years older.”

Nana was fortunate enough to have the courage to quit. However, this courage may also be the result of her “quasi-legal position¹⁰” in Turkey. Since she is from Georgia, she is

¹⁰ Even though Nana does not have a work permit, she has a tourist visa for three months.

allowed to stay in Turkey for three months. This gives her the possibility to visit Georgia once every three months in order to legalize her situation. Kaşlı and Parla (Kaşlı&Parla, 2009) point out to the different treatment of migrants coming from different countries depending on the interests of the receiving country:

“the status of the immigrants are subject to change as long as the terms and conditions of migration are shaped and determined by the sovereign states that dictate who/how/why will be allowed to enter/stay/leave a national territory. Therefore, we argue that both the policies and the attitudes toward any group of migrants are contextual and relational, and are constantly reshaped according to the political and economic needs of the state.”

In order to avoid imposing my own subjective preferences – my passion with privacy – upon the discourses of the domestic workers, I must quote Nakita who seems to be more interested in affection than privacy. When I ask her which room she liked the most –she worked in several households until starting to work as a live-out in the house of her current employers– she gives the following answer:

“The family was great. The old man was also very good. The only thing was that he was not sleeping during the night. He was always going to the toilet. He was old, one hundred years old. So we were sleeping in the same room. I was not able to sleep at night but I was sleeping during the day. The old man’s wife and daughter were cleaning the house during the day. They were preparing the food and then they were waking me up. ‘Wake up child, the meal is ready’.”

While sleeping in the room of the children/disabled/elderly may be necessary in some cases, I still believe that in many other examples the allocation of the same room points out to a certain indifference towards the individuality of the domestic worker who is reduced to her role as a carer. Even though many employers claim that they have no other choice, one still asks if their words reflect reality, if they are not benefiting from the precarious position of these women, and finally if they are really unable to afford live-out domestic workers whose wages are higher compared to the wages of live-in domestic workers. Here, it would be interesting to quote Hamit’s – the father of Deniz, words who has also lived as a migrant worker in Germany for many years: “My son’s mother got sick in Germany. In the hospital, they called me and they made a contract. They asked me many questions and we did not have a say at all. They gave us three rooms. They said one belonged to the domestic worker. We were even afraid to criticize

her. Everything was determined by her.” In the absence of such specific rules defining the employer/employee relationship, the employers and the employees manipulate the power relations and negotiate the space within the private households according to their personal skills. However, there is no doubt that the advantageous side is that of the employers.

Another important aspect concerning the room of the domestic worker seems to be its decoration. However, even the reactions to my question “What room arrangements did you make when you decided to hire a live-in domestic worker?” seem quite revealing. Many employers lived a confusion following my question and claimed to have made no specific arrangement. To the question “How must a domestic worker’s room look like?”, the answers given by the employers were variable. On the one hand, there are employers such as Ceyda who worry about providing a nice room for the domestic worker:

“She has to have a bed of her own, a wardrobe, shelves. She has to have a table where she can put her belongings. There has to be an armchair. The room has to have sunlight. It has to be big enough so that she can move in the room. If she wants Internet, she must have it. She has to have a TV. The woman has to benefit from all the technical equipments available in the house. In short, her room must be like her own house.”

However, despite all this friendly discourse, Ceyda reserves the smaller room to Oksana while the bigger room awaits to be occupied once in a week by her mother-in-law who comes to visit them. In other examples, the effort of providing a beautiful room results from the employers’ concern with privacy. The following excerpt is taken from the interview with Güray:

“The domestic worker has to feel at ease. She has to have a room that she can appropriate. This also assures that she does not walk around too much [*etrafa da fazla buluşmamasını*]. For example, there must not be a common television. Everybody has to have one. It must be a place of comfort for the woman so that she does not intrude too much into your life when she does not look after the patient....You have to give her this opportunity so that she can feel in a little Moldavia or a little Uzbekistan when she shuts the door of her room.”

On the other hand, there are employers such as Nurcan who think that a domestic worker must be contended with a bed and a wardrobe:

“She only has a wardrobe and a bed in her room. She also has a clock. She did not have one. She asked for it. She does not have a television. She asked for an iron. I gave it to her. There has to be a telephone but we could not give it since they talk without any restriction. Normally, there has to be a television but my mother can't stand any noise. But there can also be abuse. If I give her all this, she won't do anything but watch television. Am I not right?

In the excerpt above, Nurcan is totally aware of the deficiencies within the room of the domestic worker. However, by constructing the domestic worker as a potential abuser, she avoids bearing the blame. In some arrangements the mediocrity of the rooms given to domestic workers is compensated by the fact that the migrant women live alone with elderly or disabled people with almost no mobility. In such cases, the whole house seems to belong to the domestic worker and the importance attributed to a private room tends to decrease. As a result, to the question “Do you prefer to keep the door of your room closed?”, women living in such arrangements give answers like the following : “The father sleeps and does not get up when I am not around. I lay down. I hear a noise and if he wants anything the door is open” says Tahna who cares for Cevat, a ninety-five year old retired soldier. The words of Galina who cares for an eighty-seven year old Alzheimer patient are also similar: “The door is always open. Why should I close it? If there were any children here, I would close it. But why should I close it now?” All my interlocutors claim that the door of their rooms remain open during the daytime. Hence, there seems to be a difference between the day (when the employers are mostly at work or at school) and the night (when the household members reunite in the household): “I close it when it's night. But when everybody is at home, the door remains open. They can ask for something and I may not hear them when the door is closed” says Nini and the following excerpt has been taken from the interview with Güray:

“They naturally close it at night. Otherwise, I would be disturbed. But what is advised is that the door stays a little open so that the patient can make herself heard. There were people who tried to close the door. I told them to close it at night but not during the day. Close it when you change your clothes, but then

open it. The patient cannot scream, her voice is limited. She has to hear her in order to ask what she wants. This can be water, or this, or that.”

An open door implies the risk of being controlled. Deniz for example complains about the intrusive behavior of her own grandmother in the following excerpt:

“I don’t think that the poor woman has a space. My grandmother disturbs her even in her room. She always follows the lady just like a shadow. She controls everything. She did not give up despite her age and her diseases. I observe her. She gets up with many difficulties but I know the reason of her getting up. She wants to control. I saw how she disturbed the poor lady in the bathroom the other day. I witnessed it. The woman was taking a bath. She opened the door in order to make her uncomfortable. In order to say ‘Aren’t you finished, when will you be finished, get out.’ The lady had to get out of the bathroom in a hurry.”

However, there are also employers who are much more respectful than Değer, the grandmother of Deniz. Here are the words of Güray: “I had to enter the room 1-2 times when she was absent. There were forgotten things I had to take from that big wardrobe. I only entered the room with that intention and what I saw was a very tidy room. Looking at her belongings, these are things beyond me. I don’t have such a culture.” And these are the words of Cevat, the ninety-five year old ex-soldier: “I just take a glance at it when I walk in front of her room. And that is to understand if this person is tidy. Otherwise that is a private space which belongs to her.” Whatever the attitudes of the employers are, many employees take their precautions right from the beginning: “Whenever you cannot manage to tidy your bed or whenever you have to hide something, you close the door until the evening” says Bahar.

In short, what all these quotations point out to is that even a very simple object, a door, can render concrete the existing power relations within the private household since it marks the physical boundaries between the personal space of the domestic worker and that of the employers. “The door schematizes two strong possibilities, which sharply classify two types of daydream. At times, it is closed, bolted, padlocked. At others, it is open, that is to say, wide open....Why not sense that, incarnated in the door, there is a little threshold god?” (Bachelard, 1994) However, a closed door does not automatically mean that there are no transgressions of the personal boundaries. Primarily, many

employers do not hesitate to stuff the trivial objects within the households into the rooms given to the use of the domestic workers: “On the top of the drawer, in a box, there were the books of the son of my employer. I threw the box and I arranged the books. There were also some old pieces of iron, something like a faucet. I did not want them to stay in my room since they made me feel bad. They were spreading negative energy. So I asked the lady and she gave them to the junk dealer” says Narin. Many domestic workers have to live in similar conditions since many employers do not seem to have any concerns about putting their less used family belongings within the room of their employees: “One of my wardrobes is in her room since we could not find any place to put it” says Cevat and “my son’s belongings are on the top drawer. She designed the other parts according to her own taste. This had to be like this since we don’t have enough wardrobes in the house. If I had extra space where I could put my son’s clothes, I would of course give the whole wardrobe to her” says Ceyda. In some cases, the words of the employer contradict those of the employee. This does not mean that the employers are lying. It probably just means that they do not care so much. Here are the words of Nana:

S: Who else enters your room?

N: The employers since there is a closet in which there are the plates and the glasses. There is also the fridge. So they come in case of need.

And here are the words of Zerrin, her employer:

S: Is there anything that belongs to you in her room?

Z: No, not really. Maybe some old things from my mother... A blanket?

The intrusion might be slightly disturbing as in the previous examples. However, they can also have serious effects on the domestic worker’s living and working conditions: “There was a place. I worked for one week. I was sleeping there. It was a small room with nothing, except a bed. No TV, nothing. In the same room was a washing machine which was working until midnight. It’s impossible to think it is your room. I could not take it. I worked for one week and I quit” says Bahar.

Whatever is said about the privacy of the domestic worker's room, in the end the room is situated within the household of the employer: "In the past, I had an ant problem....So I never give permission to bring food into the room. Whether this is the child's room, the parents' room, or the babysitter's room does not make any difference" are the words of Ceyda. And the following quotation is taken from the interview with Mine: "I won't like it if she paints her room with a color I don't like. Even though she uses the room, it is a part of my house." In short, there seems to be a continuity rather than rupture between the room of the domestic worker and the rest of the house.

When one looks at the perception of "the rooms" by the domestic workers themselves, (s)he mostly encounters ambiguity. Studying the perception of "their rooms" by Slovak au-pairs, Burikova claims that au-pairs adopt a dual attitude towards these in-between spaces. There is on the one hand, "a desire to settle and appropriate a space" and on the other hand, "an equal desire not to be present or not to make an impact upon this space (Burikova, 2006)." This contradiction can partly be explained by the nomadic nature of migrant life as expressed by Bahar:

S: Did you decorate your room in any sense?

B: Maybe some flowers since I like flowers a lot.

S: Anything reminding you of Moldova?

B: No. You don't know the house you are going. You work for 1-2 months. You don't want to carry many belongings. Only a luggage. You like it here, you work. You don't, you travel elsewhere.

In the majority of the cases, the only decoration of the rooms seem to be the photographs of the beloved ones: The husband, the children and other relatives or friends. However, considering their stay as temporary, some domestic workers have been living in the same room for years. The following are the words of Galina who has been working for the same household for more than six years: "Why should I decorate the room of a stranger? I did not settle here. I am planning to go back. Does that room belong to me? It is only the room where I sleep but the room belongs to them." In her response, one interestingly senses the existence of a resentful tone. However, her reaction is not exceptional. Nakita also tells a similar story:

N: You can never change the room. You have to keep it as they hand it to you. You can only clean it.

S: What if you don't like something?

N: Pity. It's not your house. It stays like that. I just want to work and earn my money. I never made any comments about my room. I came here to earn money, not to choose a room. 'I did not like this room, give me another room.' There is no such thing.

Despite the indifferent tone in Nakita's discourse, she is currently working as a live-out and living alone in an apartment where she decorates her room according to her own taste.

Like Nakita and Galina, many migrant women do not seem to care about how their rooms look like. This kind of attitude may also point out to the fact that many of the migrant domestic workers relieve themselves by considering their situation as temporary, and thus tolerable. Here is a quotation from Narin's interview:

S: Did you like the room they gave you?

N: What do you mean? The room does not belong to you. It's your workplace. Whatever they give you is OK.

Many have answered to my question "What have you changed in your room?" with a question: "What can I change in here?" I think this was also a telling remark about the repulsiveness of the room. The employers' answers also seem to confirm the employees' answers: "What can they change radically? I won't intervene in it but there is not much to change. These are our conditions, the conditions that we give" says Zerrin. The fact that many do not communicate their complaints with their employers also seems significant since it foreshadows a communication problem between employers and employees: "I did not say anything because it's her house. Will she change anything for me, will she do anything? If I don't accept the conditions, she will hire another person. You know that." says Bahar. This quotation is very revealing since it expresses an incredible despair about being taken into consideration by the employer. The employee considers herself as replaceable and refrains from making any complaints. However, in some cases, the domestic worker is able to improve her living/working conditions without feeling the need to inform the employers (who live elsewhere) about what is going on within the house. Thus, caring for an elderly and living alone with this elderly mostly guarantees more liberty for domestic workers such as Galina:

G: I just changed the bed.

S: Tell me more about it.

G: But then won't this hurt the feelings of my employers?

S: What?

G: Won't my employer say "you have told everything".

S: Your employer will not read this. But say as much as you wish.

G: They gave me a very small bed at the beginning. A neighbour of ours had thrown out her own bed. The bed was in good shape but she wanted a better one. So I took that bed. If I had not done so, my employer would have bought me a new one. But why should she spend extra money? This is also in good shape. It is not torn or anything. I am happy with it.

In summary, the room of the domestic worker is a very problematic space. On the one hand, it belongs to the employer since it is situated within the boundaries of the private household; on the other hand, it belongs to the domestic worker who may use it for several years as in the case of Galina. This ambiguity in turn makes of the room a space of constant negotiation of authority between the employers and the employees.

4.1.2. The rest of the house: The public space of the domestic worker, the private space of the employer

The fact that the boundaries separating the room reserved to the domestic worker and the rest of the household are not totally impermeable does not mean that these boundaries have no meaning at all. In reality, there seems to be a clear distinction between the two spaces to which opposing meanings are attributed by the employers, as well as the employees. Thus, the room of the domestic worker – a private space from her point of view – seems to be the least private space from the point of view of the employers. Similarly, the rest of the house, considered as a private space by the employers of the house, seems to be a rather public space where one has to control her physical appearance, her clothing, and her behavior if one adopts the point of view of the domestic worker.

However, it is obligatory to avoid such a simplistic distinction since “the rest of the house” is itself not a homogeneous space at all. It is constituted by many different spaces to which different degrees of sanctity are attributed. An emotional meaning is attributed to the dining room where the family gathers in order to eat and converse. On the one hand is situated the bedroom of the children/the elderly/the disabled to which

domestic workers can and must have total access, and on the other hand, there is the bedroom of the adult employers to which access is regulated by the introduction of multiple rules. Finally the bathroom becomes an issue of controversy not only because of the clash between differing habitus concerning hygiene, but also because of the gender dimension. Thus, each space is differently negotiated between the employers and the employees in every different household setting. Let us start with the dining room since the eating ritual seems to be a major issue in many of the households.

Firstly, food does not seem to constitute a subject of controversy in the case of domestic workers caring alone for disabled or elderly people who have lost their mobility. Not only do the domestic worker and the employer usually eat separately, but also it is mostly the domestic worker who feeds the employer. Hence, there is no opportunity for a simultaneous act of eating. The problem emerges when the domestic worker lives in with other categories of employers. Nini for instance remembers her experiences with one of her former employers very bitterly:

“Once, she set the table. I was unaware. They eat and then you eat. I was really shocked and I cried a lot. This was very rude. How was I going to work in this house? I was treating them like my family. But obviously this was not how they saw me. I cried a lot that night. I did not know. I would not act like this if I knew. They ate and drank. The table was like a war scene. Then sit there and eat. I didn’t do it. The second day I realized. I was supposed to eat alone.”

Eating alone seems to be more often the case when the domestic worker lives with a nuclear family: Husband, wife and their children. Ayperi’s words seem to confirm this argument:

A: I don’t eat with them. I finish until they arrive home. This is my choice. I leave them alone.

S: How did you decide to do so since you say you are part of the family?

A: I am part of the family. But the family, everybody has... The couple has things to talk in private.

There seems to be an unspoken deal between the domestic worker and the employers. The statement above also shows the schizophrenic nature of the “one of the family”

statement that will be discussed in the following section. In the quotation below, the domestic worker Nakita considers the act of eating alone normal. However, this time, the acceptance has a condition of being “different, but equal”: “Of course, you will not eat with them. But I will feel humiliated if they offer me the leftovers after they have finished eating. It means they think you are inferior to them.”

Even though the necessity to eat separately is legitimized by the underlining of the emotional dimension of food, i.e. eating considered as a family activity in many of the interviews, there is a class dimension concealed behind many of the discourses. By eating separately from the domestic worker, the employers exhibit their distinguished nature: “Eating habits....cannot of course be considered independently of the whole life-style. The most obvious reason for this is that the taste for particular dishes....is associated, through preparation and cooking, with a whole conception of the domestic economy and of the division of labour between the sexes”. (Bourdieu, 1984)

In some cases, it is very difficult to understand the real dynamics of the relationship since what is said by the employer is not confirmed by the employee: “I always want my woman to sit with us, to eat something. My previous woman, Nilgün... I never saw her eat for five whole years. Similarly Nini is like that. She never sits with us at the dining table. However, she is always welcome to do so” says Mine. Now, here are the words of Nini:

*S: Do you eat together now?
N: No, but I'm used to it.
S: Was it your own choice now?
N: (silence and smile) I don't know...*

Disadvantaged within the power relations, Nini tries to express herself by remaining silent, whereas Mine does not hesitate to put forward her questionable generosity.

In short, what I want to point out is that the dining room is a problematic space in many of the households and the problem is solved differently in every setting depending on the power of negotiation of the employers, as well as the employees. The second problematic space that I will be discussing is the bedroom of the adult employers. In total contradiction with the permeability of the bedroom of the children/disabled/elderly

(let us remember how many domestic workers share rooms with the children/disabled/elderly), the bedroom of the employer is surrounded with very thick symbolic boundaries. The publicization of the rest of the household following the arrival of the migrant domestic worker within the private household seems to be compensated by the strengthening of the boundaries surrounding the bedroom of the employers. Elvan's following statement is the illustration of such an argument: "You have to be careful while conversing with your children, your husband. There are very private things you share with your partner. But you cannot make such conversations in the living room when there is a stranger in the kitchen. So all these things have to be discussed in the bedroom. You draw the lines." As will be discussed in the following section, Elvan's discourse about Begül, her domestic worker, is enormously surrounded by maternalism. However, in this quotation Begül suddenly becomes "a stranger" for the family. Migrant domestic workers, such as Narin, are usually extremely aware of the sanctity of the bedroom of the employers: "I only enter the room in order to clean it. But I try not to enter it when *teyze* is not at home. I try not to open her closet or to enter her room." I ask her the reason of such an effort. Here is her reply: "My nature is like this. I don't like to expose my private life, my private things to other people. So I act in accordance with this." One also suspects if this has anything to do with avoiding any accusation of theft since I heard from many elderly people that their domestic workers were not honest people.

The last problematic space about which I want to talk about is the bathroom. In villas or large houses, a separate bathroom is reserved to the use of the domestic worker. This seems to be a great source of relief for both the employers and the employees, especially in case of male presence within the household: "We did not use the same bathroom. We had a bathroom within our room. I used to take a shower there. When work ends in the end of the day, the man is also in the house. You cannot take a bath in such circumstances. I don't know, at least I can't do it" says Bahar. However, a separate bathroom does not always imply an independent domestic worker. Every corner of the household is under the employer's supervision in many of the cases. Here is the answer of Ceyda to the question "What can't you tolerate in the household?": "Her not cleaning the toilet she uses. But I would also be angry towards my husband or my son. This is the definition of going too far according to me. Or if she leaves her hair after taking a shower. I cannot stand it." "I would also be angry towards my husband or my son"

phrase seems to be an effort of legitimization and it is not a strategy used only by Ceyda. I heard similar statements in some of the other interviews with the employers.

The comfort of villas does not exist in “3 oda, 1 salon” households where employers and employees share the same bathroom. Here are the words of Ersan:

“You have to be careful since there is a female stranger within the house. Let’s say I want to take a shower. No, you cannot. She is home. Somewhere in the house.... Where is she? You had to wait for a certain hour since she used to retreat into her room when her “shift” was over. So you wait for her to go into her room. But you cannot decide to take a shower when she is around working. Now, it is much easier.”*[Ersan and his family have enlarged their house which now has two stories. The domestic worker, Oksana, sleeps upstairs while the nuclear family sleeps downstairs]*

Thus, Ersan for example was trying to make time arrangements when they were sharing a much more limited space with the domestic worker. In the context of Güray’s household, the domestic worker caring for his wife had developed another strategy: “Our bathroom has a key hole, like all the bathrooms do. I once realized that one of them had put cotton into the hole. I found it out by accident. Of course I would not spy on her while she takes a bath.... It’s the last thing that I would do!” The bathroom crisis totally disappears when migrant women are caring for elderly or disabled people. In some cases, these employers do not even use the bathroom. In others, they cannot use the bathrooms without the help of domestic workers who almost become an organic extension of their bodies.

Migrant domestic workers’ wages are quite modest when compared to the wages of local domestic workers. This in turn means that the hiring of a migrant domestic worker is certainly not a privilege reserved to the most well-off categories of the Turkish society. Thus, in a context where the welfare state is certainly not present, many middle class private households turn to the migrant domestic worker option without giving a second thought about the appropriateness of the physical conditions of accommodation of their household. The need of help precedes concern with the comfort of the domestic worker. The inevitable consequence is the emergence of a series of conflicting situations concerning the redistribution of the restricted physical space between the

employers and the domestic worker. When physical boundaries turn out to be inefficient, or even inexistant, both employers and employees have recourse to immaterial boundaries, which I will call discursive/emotional/invisible boundaries, in order to alleviate the tension of living together. The following section will analyze this second set of boundaries which fill in the gap left by the first set.

4.2. DISCURSIVE/EMOTIONAL/INVISIBLE BOUNDARIES

In this section, the negotiation of this second category of boundaries – i.e. the ‘one of the family’ discourse, the use of maternalism, the citation of the overheard worst-case scenarios, the use of stereotypes, the good cop/bad cop game, and the rejection of otherness – will be discussed. Even though most of these strategies are usually at the service of the employers, and thus contribute to the reproduction of the already existing power relationship, one must not consider migrant domestic workers solely as victims. The latter also strategize in order to enlarge their space of maneuver.

4.2.1. “One of the family” discourse

“I loved my mother very much. So whenever I see elderly women, I feel like they are my mother. I want to hug them without any reason. But you cannot hug them since they are strangers. But when there is a football game, when there is a goal....I hug her. My employer was first surprised by this. I said gooooal (*she raises her fist*). Now, she got used to it. But not everyday, once in a year... A human being feels the need to hug. You know, I tidy up her bed in the morning. She smells so nice. The lady... A human being needs a human being. I smell her bed. Could I make my point? I miss everybody so much! [Weeps]”

I intentionally chose this excerpt as a starting point since I believe that it reflects quite well the contradictory nature of paid domestic labor: Cennet, a thirty-four year old Uzbek woman who has been in Turkey for more than three years, works as a live-in domestic worker in the house of an elderly Russian woman. The lady constantly reminds Cennet of her dead mother – once her biggest support in life – who was nearly the same age as the employer. The mother is now buried faraway in the homeland. The impossible desire to hug the real mother seems to be transformed into the desire to hug a quasi-stranger at the same age as the mother. However, Cennet has to find excuses –

such as football games – in order to satisfy this desire since the person of desire is also her employer and there are certain boundaries that cannot be transgressed. In addition, regardless of the nature of the relationship between the employer and Cennet, the employer probably does not feel such a need to hug since she is surrounded in many instances of her life by her biological children and grandchildren. As a result, the disparity of the two conditions seems to be balanced by the introduction of an invisible contract. A hug once in a year and for a specific reason. In between the annual hugs, Cennet has to contend herself with the smell on the bed. No one knows if the employer is aware of the existence of such a connection. Hence, we see how the professional dimension (the tidying up) and the emotional dimension (the smell) immensely interlace with each other in a context where it is extremely difficult to trace the boundaries between what is work and what is affect. In the very end of her words, the reader starts to understand why Cennet feels the need to personalize the work relationship. Residing in a foreign country as an undocumented worker, she longs for her beloved ones –and especially for her only son– left in Ouzbekistan. From my field notes, I can also add that Cennet stays inside the private household almost all the time. On the rare occasions she does go out (still in the car of the employer), she is mostly accompanied by the elderly employer: The latter always gives Cennet advices about how to avoid getting involved in dangerous situations with the state officials. To obey these advices also means to restrict one's life to a great extent. She has no relatives or friends working in Turkey. In short, in the absence of a relationship with the Ouzbek community in İstanbul that could compensate for her precarious and isolated position, Cennet inevitably overestimates the role of her employer in her life.

From the example above, one may understand more easily why the expression “one of the family” is constantly pronounced during the interviews with live-in migrant domestic workers. However, I certainly do not mean that Cennet’s case is representative of why “one of the family” discourse works in the paid domestic work context. For a migrant domestic worker who stays legally in İstanbul, who has contact with the Ouzbek community, or who can rely on a Turkish boyfriend, the discourse may lose all of its meaning/power. In addition, different employees may attribute different meanings to the discourse according to their differing conditions of working and living: The need to minimize the feeling of being a stranger, the expectation to be treated better, the possibilities of benefiting from profits reserved to family members, avoiding

extra work, or simply a feeling of familiarity due to the length of stay in the employer's house are some of the possibilities. The same can be said in the case of the employers. "Neither employers nor domestic workers are monolithic groups."(Lan, 2003)

Interestingly, many employers warned me at the beginning of the interviews about the fact that they were probably not the best examples for such a research since their relationship with the domestic workers were almost like a family relationship. Here are the words of Mine:

"It has almost been a year that the person who lives with us in our house is with us. You have to see her like that [*as a member of the family*]. I always look at life with empathy. She is one of us [*bizden biri*], a member of the family. Those things you see [*she shows the ornaments on the table*], she bought them for the Bairam. I never miss her birthday. She never misses a birthday of our house, or a New Year's Eve. In short, she is a part of the family.... I only understand that I employ a woman in my house when I give her the money at the beginning of every month....She is one of us. Besides, she must be like us....[Ben ona iyi tarafından bakmalyım ki o da bize aynı şekilde yatay yansıma yapsın.]"

Even though Mine is only one employer among many others who claimed that the domestic worker is like a member of the family, I intentionally chose this excerpt since it appeared very revealing to me: the phrases which follow each other perfectly illustrate the contradictory nature of the "one of the family" discourse. First of all, throughout the whole quotation, we see how Mine distinguishes between the domestic worker and her family by using the pronoun "our" before the word "house". Hence, on the one side there is the "we", and on the other, the "not we", the Other, i.e. the domestic worker. Mine tries to prove the existence of a family-like relationship between them and the domestic worker by showing me tangible objects (such as the gift given by Nini on the table), the celebration of special days, et cetera. However, her claim about how Nini "must be like us" also shows the non-egalitarian nature of the relationship. The adaptation is expected to be unilateral. The employers will remain the same while Nini will try to adapt herself to the new lifestyle: "Yet employers do not acknowledge that their 'personal space' has changed, that it has become another's workplace. It is the worker who must change (into a family member, an invisible servicer) a re-make facilitated by this denial of personhood" (Anderson, 2000). Özbay (Özbay, 1999) underlines the same phenomenon when she says: "While 'stranger vs family' dilemma is

present, the others, i.e. the stranger women.... are exposed to be abused to get the title 'daughter of the family'. For a woman, the state of being 'one of us' is usually a gift in exchange of the abuse of her sexuality and labour" (translation is mine). Finally, in the end of her statement, Mine reveals why she should be nice to the domestic worker. In doing so, she guarantees a better service from her. Thus, there is an interest – in total contrast with the affectionate tone she uses throughout her discourse – in treating Nini as "one of the family".

I have encountered the promise of "conditional love" in many of the interviews since a grand majority of the employers believe that a direct correlation exists between good treatment and good service. In many of the cases, the employers want to preserve the fragile status quo at any cost. Children get used to the babysitter; the disabled/elderly relative develops an affectionate relationship with the caregiver. Thus, "concession" becomes inevitable. The following has been taken from Zerrin's interview:

"A certain boundary is inevitably drawn. In the end, I am the employer, and she is the employee, right? There has to be something but we do not exaggerate it. We want them to simulate a family life for my brother. I want them to watch TV with him, to make him enjoy life, to give him part in their conversations. I want them to talk in Turkish with him. The child is really more full of life now. After the death of my mother he wasn't watching TV, he wasn't giving any reactions. He was always crying since he was in a great depression. But now he likes these women. He smiles at them. Of course this makes me happy. I appreciate it a lot."

Illustrating exactly this point, Parrenas states that "there seems to be a cycle of dependency defining employer-employee relations in domestic work. By treating domestic workers 'like a human being', employers can induce domestic workers to 'do a good job'." However, Parrenas continues as follows: "Domestic workers may similarly attain the treatment they so desire to be 'like one of the family' by doing a good job"(Parrenas, 2001). Thus, we see how the same statement can be differently manipulated by actors with contradictory intentions in order to maximize their profits within the same power relations.

The correlation between good service and good treatment also implies bad treatment for "bad" service. Nakita's sad story illustrates this point:

N: I hurt my back. There was a flower, a big one within the house. I lifted it and I hurt my back.

S: Did they pay for your medical expenses?

N: I paid everything. They did not give a penny.

S: Do you consider this normal?

N: No, it is not normal. I worked for a year in their house. This happened in their house.

S: Did they visit you in the hospital?

N: No, they did not come. They never came.

Interestingly however, in many cases, the expectation of a good treatment is mixed with fear: “The domestic worker of her sister cut the hose of the vacuum cleaner and left....And you know why? She broke the glass of the oven. The husband asked her why she broke it. She got angry and cut the hose before leaving” are the words of Gülnur whose statement illustrates perfectly how migrant women are easily perceived as potential criminals by some of the employers. Here is another quotation from Güray: “My fear is as follows: If you restrict them too much, they can treat your patient in a cruel way. The patient cannot complain. So, it’s beneficial to treat them right.” Berk also has a similar claim: “Of course you have to treat them humanly. It is very important. Otherwise she can brew the old tea and put it in front of my grandmother. So, there are things that must come from the heart. If you treat them badly, you won’t get something nice. It’s a very natural process.” All these quotations indicate how domestic workers are considered as non-professional and instinctive people with whom things can easily get out of control. However, as one can see, the stigmatization of the domestic worker as a potential criminal also surprisingly gives the domestic worker the opportunity to construct a private space of her own.

The illusion of being one of the a family also unfolds whenever a male (and adult) member of the household comes into the scene. Here are the words of Ersan, a thirty-five year old married man, employer of Oksana: “Let’s say my wife counts on me. But you can’t know what the neighbors [*konu komşu*] will gossip about. Let’s say my neighbor thinks differently. He says ‘ah, look at that man! He is in the same house with the caregiver. Her wife is out.’ He may think like that about me. I cannot know.” Güray, a man still in very good shape despite his advanced age, also makes a similar remark:

“At the beginning when she was asking me in the kitchen ‘What will abla eat tonight?’, I used to raise my voice before answering. Still, I recall her [*his wife*] shouting ‘What are you talking about?’ from her room. It is very difficult for the patient, you have to think about her psychology. She cannot get up when her husband is with a female stranger. Whether thin or fat, young or old does not make any difference.”

Thus, the fact that the stranger in the house is a female is always a source of tension. A final illustration of the gender tension is the following. The maternal tone¹¹ Elvan uses throughout the interview totally changes when it comes to concerns about employing an eighteen year old beautiful girl in the household:

“My husband is a man. You are a woman and she is a woman. Your womanly feelings are always present. You monitor. The clothes, the attitudes, everything... I warned her about one issue. I told her that her cleavage shouldn’t be visible while in the house. I set up a rule like that. Besides, I even don’t wear such things. I use a prosthesis now. I did not wear such a low-cut dress myself. Thus, my husband is not used to it....Men may have weaknesses. They can disappoint you. So, I guess it was a precaution.”

One can clearly see how employers’ criteria of judging the domestic workers are limited with themselves. Even though much younger than Elvan, Begül still cannot wear a low-cut shirt since Elvan does not wear such things. A similar “precaution” was taken in the household of Güray and his sick wife:

“There was once a young one. She used to wear very short skirts and shorts. She also used to go out in that outfit and it was weird. There is a man, there is a woman. The woman is sick. And the almost naked caregiver gets out of the apartment. This did not look nice. In addition, I don’t like it. A dress slightly longer would not make her sweat. So I gave hints once or twice. Then, she compulsorily corrected it. That was also a Moldovan woman.”

What is named as a precaution by Güray who thinks about the psychology of his wife is at the same time a major intrusion into the body of the young domestic worker. At the same time, it illustrates once again how complicated the boundary setting process is complicated in paid live-in domestic work. In addition, despite the age gap between Ersan and Güray, their quotations are very similar since they both legitimize the restriction put on the outfit of the domestic worker referring to the potential rumors that

¹¹ This issue will be elaborated in the following section.

could circulate within the neighborhood. Hence, it is no more possible to consider private households as hundred per cent closed spaces immune to the reach of the public. Even though to a limited extent, their boundaries are always permeable.

A close relationship between women and men with no familial ties is regarded with suspicion in the majority of households adhering to more or less traditional values in Turkey. As a result, a rigid barrier is put between the male employer and the female domestic worker who share the same domestic space. However, despite the existence of such barriers, the young and beautiful migrant women category is still considered as a dangerous one. This in turn automatically affects the hiring process: “I recall a dialogue. Ceyda told me. When Ceyda said that she had chosen Oksana, Oksana asked Ceyda: ‘Why did you chose me? Is it because I am not beautiful?’” says Ersan.

Whether there is a risk of intimacy or not, the gender dimension seems to affect the responses given to the question ‘Do you consider your domestic worker as part of the family?’ The following is the answer of Cevat, the ninety-five year old ex-soldier, employer of a fourty-eight year old Georgian woman, Tahna: “That’s impossible. You constantly feel that she is a stranger.” And here are the words of Korcan, a fourty-nine year old mathematician, employing a domestic worker who cares for his elderly mother:

K: She is not one of the family. She is a stranger. But it's not because she is a foreigner or a domestic worker. I also do not consider my aunt as a member of the family. All the people who live outside the home is outside the home.

S: But this woman lives inside the home?

K: Yes, but she is not one of us. Her culture is not my culture. We did not have a childhood together. We don't have a friendship. Why should she be member of the family? There is no need for such an idealism. I respect her rights, I pay attention not to harm her, not to make her sad....But defending her rights and seeing her as a family member are two different things.

The blunt rejection of the family relationship by male employers may result from the fact that the employers of domestic workers are mainly women. Thus, female employers can benefit from social networks and discuss the best strategies of manipulation of the employer/employee relationship during get-togethers. In turn, the effectiveness of the “one of the family” strategy can be circulated. This opportunity seems lacking in the case of male employers who are much less in number.

When I ask the employees whether they prefer to be considered as “one of the family”, many underline how there must be a certain distance: Thus, they try to stay neither too close, nor too far. The women have repeated several times how it’s ideal to stay in the middle: “I stay in the middle. Sometimes I think... I am not part of the family. I work here....I know that this is my boss. I don’t get too close and I don’t stay too far. I always know that she is the boss.” However, in another passage, Nini’s words makes allusion to the existence of a certain kind of intimacy with the members of the household: “We did not buy any cakes since we are all on a diet.” Many domestic workers remember how the employers have prepared a celebration on the occasion of their birthdays: “The most beautiful day... I never forget it. A friend of mine was working there like I work now. I was caring for the father and she was responsible for the housework. We celebrated her birthday. We celebrated like a family. We made a cake together....That made us so happy. We are foreigners here, we have nobody, you know. They videotaped us, we celebrated. It was so great. I don’t forget it. Neither does my friend!” says Bahar. Thus, while maternalism is usually used by the employers in order to extract more labor from the domestic worker, Bahar’s quotation also illustrates how some domestic workers may prefer the existence of a family-type relationship when one is in a foreign country. Secondly, even though the preservation of the ideal distance is learnt through time, I argue that the choice of a specific arrangement also depends on the sociocultural background of the domestic worker, as well as that of the employer. Thus, more upper-class families, as well as domestic workers who are university graduates might prefer a more distanced relationship, while employers and employees with rural backgrounds and less education might prefer a closer relationship: Elvan who had grown up in a village of Kastamonu was the employer who most often used a maternalist discourse and Nurcan who had only a high school degree could not give any meaning to Narin who preferred to read and knit alone in the room reserved to her use. The following excerpts belong respectively to Narin, and Nana, both university graduates: “I don’t have an answer to that question. I don’t know my dear. Everybody is nice to me. Everybody is respectful. I can say that. But feeling like one of the family is a very special thing for me. It’s something else. No, I guess there is no such thing”; “No, too much closeness is not good. There has to be a more reasonable distance. There has to be a certain distance. Whether this is a boss, a friend, or whoever it is keeping a distance is good.”

As a final note, the words that come out of the mouths of the domestic workers do not always reflect reality even though this does not imply that they are lying. The following phrases have been taken from Galina's interview: "I got used to them, to all of them. They are like my own relatives even though we do not have a blood relation. They also got used to me." The very same woman, after six years of employment in the same household, had to return to Moldova due to diabetes after the interview. However, she did not even leave a telephone number behind. I believe this is a perfect illustration of the falseness of the "familial ties" between employers and domestic workers in many cases.

In conclusion, the "one of the family" discourse seems to be one of the most effective obstacles to the introduction of clear boundaries arranging the interpersonal duties and responsibilities within the private households employing migrant domestic workers. Even though attributed different meanings by the employers and the employees, the discourse is always somewhere in the house. But it would be unfair to automatically make a judgement about the use of the family analogy: Depending on the case chosen, it may have its benefits and pitfalls for both sides –employers and employees.

4.2.2. Maternalism and infantilization of the domestic worker

Related to the "one of the family" discourse, maternalism is another strategy commonly used by employers of domestic workers. Remembering the expression "büyüklerimi saymak, küçüklerimi sevmek" [*respecting the older ones, loving the younger ones*] within the Turkish oath could be helpful in understanding the effectiveness of such a discourse: Such a formulation positions respect and love as two different attitudes targeting two different audiences. Thus, while older people can be respected, younger people can be loved. So returning to the domestic work discussion, I believe that maternalism/infantilization, by replacing respect with love, relieves the tension between two adult women: one giving orders to which the other is obeying. The class dimension of the relationship is rendered invisible by the introduction of a real –or invented– age gap that normalizes the ordering process. In order to express this point, Anderson (Anderson,2000) makes the following contribution: "Maternalism is based on the superordinate-subordinate relationship, with the female employer caring for the worker

as she would for a child or a pet, thereby expressing, in a feminised way, her lack of respect for the use of the term “girl” to describe the adult woman.”

Even though maternalist discourses are present in many of the interviews I have made, Elvan’s –a retired schoolteacher– case seems to be the most striking one since “her” domestic worker –“bu çocuk”– is the only woman under the age of thirty: “Also I preferred a young girl. She is nineteen. I would not accept her if she was forty-five” says Elvan. When I ask her why she prefers such a young employee, she gives the following answer: “I can’t educate her since she will already be educated. I may not be able to accept her way of doing things. But this child... She really did not know anything. I trained her according to my intentions. It has been like a school for her. She has learnt a lot.” This statement seems to be a very good illustration of Akalın’s argument according to which employers are not in search of personalities as fixed entities. Not satisfied enough with the young age of Begül, Elvan has also guaranteed obedience by making a direct hire from Turkmenistan: “The girl who left, said to me “abla, you might get tired since you may not be able to communicate in Turkish but those who stay here for one year open up [açlıyor]. At least you can raise this [woman] according to your own methods .¹²” These examples seem to illustrate Constable’s (Constable, 1997) following argument: “The advantage of a direct hire is that she is new and you can break her in the way you want. A finish contract knows her way around, but she may not be as easy to break in.” Staab and Maher’s study on Peruvian domestic workers in Chile also points to the same issue: “The policies regulating domestic service in Chile have not served to formalize and raise the status of domestic work more generally as much as to generate demand for new, relatively disempowered feminine populations to fill a role in a traditional patrona–empleada relationship that persists despite state regulation. In some ways, this pattern looks familiar, a ‘race to the bottom’ in which a globalizing economy and transnational migration permit ever more powerless groups of workers to replace those who have organized” (Staab&Maher, 2005). Not only Elvan, but an important number of employers show a clear inclination towards the hiring of newcomers since these women are not yet familiarized with the Turkish context. Thus, not having seen any other household configuration, the domestic worker will most probably be satisfied with whatever the rules of the current household

¹² Interview with Gülnur.

are. The woman will have no significant social network, no knowledge about the İstanbul lifestyle, and finally no clue about how to deal with being an undocumented worker. As a result, the employer will be the main translator between the worker and the outside world. One can almost say that this category of employers are in search of the “virgin” domestic worker who cannot compare them with other employers and thus question the living/working conditions provided.

Interviewing Begül, I clearly see that the plan of Elvan has worked. Begül seems to appreciate a lot the motherly attitude of her employer : “I learnt all the things I had not learnt from my own mother from Elvan mother [*Elvan annem*]. I sometimes ask myself what would it be like if Elvan hanım was my real mother. But that’s not possible.” From this quotation, one can easily see how Begül seems undecided whether she should use Elvan annem or Elvan hanım when talking about her employer. When I ask her if she would have preferred to have Elvan as her real mother, she surprisingly answers in the affirmative. However, I believe that this attitude also has to do with the recent death of her grandfather which has been concealed from Begül for a certain time under the strict order of her parents: “When I came here, my grandfather was still alive. In August, my grandfather died but I did not know about it. They [*her parents*] hid a lot of things from me. Like the death of my grandfather.” She also seems to have serious problems with her “real” father: “My father did not have any interest in us. He drank a lot. He would always drink and argue with my mother when he was back home.” The mediocrity of the familial relations of the young woman empowers Elvan who skilfully fills in the gap left by the parents: “Elvan annem told a lot of things to me....She told me to be patient even in the hardest days, to watch my work and myself wherever I am. She showed me how to live.” I find this quotation very interesting since the advices that Elvan gives Begül are all double-edged: Not only will they better Begül’s life, but also Elvan will be able extract more work from the domestic worker. Begül has to pay attention to her work in Turkey and she has to be patient despite all the difficulties she confronts while employed in the household of her employer. When I ask Begül what she does on her free time, first she does not understand my question. When I insist and explain to her, she answers as follows: “Sometimes I use the computer of my “mother”. She gives me permission. I do my work. She asks me if I am done. Then we surf on Internet and look at Facebook together.” As one can see, even her “free” time is under the gaze of her “mother” who surfs on Internet with Begül controlling every move she makes. Since

Begül does not have a Facebook account of her own, she uses the account of her “mother”. This seems pretty revealing to me since Facebook is used by millions of minors who have, in the majority of the cases, their own accounts. Does the lack of a personal account result from a personal choice or is it an imposition? Or is the imposition perceived/presented as a personal choice? How can we locate Begül’s personality and agency in this picture? Relying on another statement of Elvan, one thinks that they are almost non-existent: “There is no television in her room because she does not have time for that. She has to sleep. There must be no television in her room because then I cannot control her sleeping time. I also cannot control the shows she watches which is also important.” When I ask her to elaborate on this issue, she goes on as follows:

“She might watch a sentimental show. She is away from her home [*gurbette*]. She will then be melancholic. People sometimes need that kind of emotion too. But people in this position –and this is my personal opinion– do not have the luxury to fall in love, to love... This is of course a need. Like hunger, like thirst. But in their program of coming, this is not included and I know that living such a thing will be a disadvantage for them. I have learnt from them that they should not live a very animated life. You format [*format atmak*], and you trace a destination for yourself. You should not transgress the boundaries of it.”

I already said that Elvan acted like the mother of Begül. But as this quotation shows, Elvan even acts as Begül. Concealed behind the veil of empathy, she invades her personality and leaves no space for the young woman. The words used also point out to this dimension: Formatting and program are concepts that are used in relation to machinery. In another passage, Elvan says: “I consider her as a deposit [*emanet*]. This female child is a deposit for me. I have to return [*iade etmem*] this deposit without hurting or damaging it.” We once again see how Begül is reified. By making such a claim, Elvan finds an additional pretext for the supervision of the young woman working in her home: Not only is Begül her domestic worker and a female stranger in the private household who must be supervised, but also a “deposit” that must be returned as received. With the help of patriarchal norms and in coordination with the uncle [*dayı*] who also works in Turkey (and employs Begül during her day off), Elvan guarantees a hundred per cent deferent employee. My personal experience also seems to confirm this situation. When I ask Begül to show me her room, she asks for the permission of her employer in order to show “her” room on the first floor of the villa.

Despite all this maternalist rhetoric, Elvan seems extremely worried about the femininity of her young domestic worker. As I have already mentioned in the previous section, she mobilizes various strategies in order to block the way of a potential attraction between the domestic worker and her husband. The use of infantilization and maternalism can very well be one of these strategies if one considers the taboo of incest and the fear of pedophilia within the public opinion.

In addition, a minor crisis seems to be sufficient enough to expose the real nature of the relationship: “Fifteen days passed until she could recover [*after learning the death of her grandfather*]. But I need the work of my employer. So I try to preserve her motivation. We did our best to help her recover but it took fifteen days. In the end, my husband even said that we were at a limit point, that we should let her go.” What kind of a mother would complain about a daughter mourning for her dead grandfather for only fifteen days? As a final note, Elvan pays Begül 400 \$ a month which is a very low amount with regard to the current wages. This seems to confirm Anderson’s (Anderson,2000) following argument: “For the employer there are clear advantages to the obfuscation of the employment relationship, since it seriously weakens the worker’s negotiating position in terms of wages and conditions –any attempt to improve these are an insult to the ‘family’ and evidence of the worker’s moneygrubbing attitude. The worker risks forfeiting ‘good’ relations with her employers by making too many demands.”

I believe that Begül’s case is very indicative of the problematic nature of maternalism. Even though domestic workers can, in some cases, benefit from the infant label, the infantilization discourse, by rejecting the already acquired sociocultural capital of the domestic worker, creates a wide space of manipulation for the employer. Elvan, with the active consent of Begül, creates a new person out of the young girl while Begül is latently asked to put aside the eighteen years of her personal history: “Having allegedly sold her personhood, the domestic worker is both person and non-person....an employer can purchase the services of a human being who is yet not a real human being –with likes and hates, relations of her own, a history and ambitions of her own– but a human being who is socially dead” (Anderson, 2000). Thus, in a context where boundaries are extremely slippery, the maternalism discourse destroys the personal boundaries of the domestic workers in order to replace them with new boundaries favoring the interests of

the employers. These domestic workers can really be “infants” like in the case of Begül, but they can also be grown up women infantilized by their employers who have difficulty giving orders to women of the same age.

Finally, in the case of grown up women, I believe that the language barrier – at the beginning– serves as an appropriate background that facilitates the emergence of the infantilization discourse. Here are the words of Gümüş, a thirty-three year old woman from Turkmenistan:

“There is the dictionary. I read and read but cannot remember. So, if the mother says bring the ‘baston’, I go into her room. What does ‘baston’ mean? Even though she told me a couple of times, I forget. I came here. She wanted francala bread. I walked out the door. ‘Francala, francala, francala’ I repeated. But I forgot until the moment I arrived at the bakery. So I told her that there was no such bread left in the bakery.”

She continues with a story told by a friend. The ubiquitousness of very similar stories points out to the fact that language constitutes a major problem at the beginning of the migration process for many women: “I have a friend also working for a couple. They were lawyers or something. The man wore a tie [*kravat*]. We call the bed, ‘kravat’. So, the man asked for a tie. She entered the bedroom and thought ‘how will I be able to carry this bed?’ She told me about it and we laughed.” Surprisingly, the inability to talk in Turkish seems to have a contradictory effect on the employer/employee relationship. On the one hand, it creates a huge gap between the employer and the employee: “These women don’t know Turkish at all. This newcomer did not know a word. This was a real difficulty for me. And still, she does not understand certain things” says Gülnur, the first employer of a Turkmen woman who migrated to Turkey. But on the other hand, the same ignorance ensures the creation of a bridge between the employer and the employee since the former tries to teach the latter how to talk basic Turkish. The unilateral act of teaching not only reproduces the unequal power relations, but also introduces a certain degree of intimacy into the relationship. Here are the words of Nadya, a forty-two year old Crimean Turk who is now working as a live-out:

“The first days, my Turkish was not so good. So we could not get along. I showed everything with my hand. ‘Bu ne?’ (laughs) I only knew two words. Bu ne? Buna ne diyorsunuz? It was difficult. ‘Sandalye’ means shoe in our language. We call it ‘sandalye’. My boss said ‘there are sandalyes on the second floor. Go, bring them’. I went, I looked and looked. I could not find anything. I came and said ‘There is no such thing’. He said ‘How come?’ Then he went and brought it himself....The man laughed a lot. The first month, I was not able to talk. It was very difficult....After they left for work, I was left with the four year old kid. That kid taught me Turkish.”

4.2.3. The preservation of the peace of mind through the citation of the overheard worst-case scenarios

As already underlined, private households are not closed entities. Their boundaries are permeable and occurrences within the boundaries of the home are in many instances transformed into mythical stories that circulate not only from one household to another, but also from one country to another. The agents of transmission are the employers in some cases, and the employees in other cases. Gümüş tells me a story she has heard:

“A lady told me in Turkmenistan. I was first afraid to work here since I heard about those stories. She told me that she would kiss the soil of Turkmenistan. She got off the plane, she screamed and cried. She started cleaning a house. For one week, there was no problem, they treated her nicely. She was sleeping downstairs, in her room. The man of the house came, she did not open the door. However, the man opened it with his key. Do you call it a rape? He wanted to rape her. She immediately ran up to his wife but the wife battered her and put her in front of the door pulling by her hair. She was left with nothing, except her pajamas. She told me ‘I can live without bread or food in Turkmenistan, but I won’t go back to Turkey once again.’”

Compared to Gümüş’s story, Nini’s story is a much less tragic one. However, it is directly experienced by Nini who still seems to be quite annoyed when telling me about it:

“I heard a lot of things but I also witnessed things myself. I once found a job through an agency and it was awful. I would not believe it if I had heard it from someone else....There was a lady who lived alone with her dog. I was supposed to look after the dog when she was out. She showed me everything when I first arrived. The second day she asked me what she was going to give me to eat. I was surprised. Whatever she was going to bring, I was going to prepare it. She brought a liter of oil, and bread. She said to me ‘do whatever you want’. What can one do from oil, bread and cheese? Ah, and there were beans. I did not eat

anything for three days. I did not touch anything. Then I apologized and told her that I could not work for her.”

Such stories are not unheard of. Due to their undocumented status, these women are quite open to exploitation. Here are the words of Gülhan Benli¹³:

“I haven’t witnessed it directly but we have friends who have had such problems. Sasha is one of them. Her employer goes abroad and comes back. She asks for a massage. The woman [*Sasha*] goes into the bathroom in order to wash her hands. ‘My body is cleaner than your hands, how could you go and wash your hands?’ says the naked woman. Catching her by the hair, she pushes the poor woman down the stairs. You have to see her. She is an extremely kind woman! She threatens the woman by saying that she would report her to the police. The woman leaves unable to take any money or any personal belonging. I have not experienced such things directly. Those who have such experiences come and find us.”

As one can clearly see, Gülhan fights not only for the rights of local domestic workers, but also for the rights of migrant domestic workers who are in a more vulnerable position. As undocumented women, these migrants are working in the private households of their employers. Thus, they are totally dependent on the conscience of their employers in many of the instances. In the following excerpt, Güray unconsciously points out to the same issue of precarity from which he certainly takes advantage:

“One of them used to feed my wife who was able to eat and chew back then. If there were meatballs for dinner, you had to give them in very small pieces. One day, I was preparing my own food in the kitchen and she was feeding my wife. Suddenly I heard a heartbreak cry, ‘Güray abi, Güray abi’. I ran and saw my wife, all black-and-blue....I hit her back and a huge meatball came out of her mouth....I told her that if anything happened to my wife, I would kill her. Because I have nobody else in life. I will kill you and nobody will do anything to me because you are a foreigner and you work undocumentedly.”

¹³ Gülhan is not only a domestic worker, but also the president [genel başkan] of EVİD-SEN, Ev İşçileri Dayanışma Sendikası, founded on 15.06.2011. EVİD-SEN is defending both the rights of local domestic workers, and those of the migrant domestic workers. The major demand of the union is the recognition of article 189 of the ILO agreement by the Turkish government since the already existant Labor Law (No. 4857) does not consider women working in the domestic sphere as “real” workers. The non-recognition of the worker status in turn entails the inexistence of many social rights reserved to the other categories of the working class.

Leaving aside the automatic reaction at that moment, Güray does not hesitate describing the same scene to me almost with tears of anger in his eyes. Even though employers, just as the employees, very often use their social networks in order to minimize such risks, a great range of possibilities are still awaiting them due to the private nature of the work relationship. Thus, the importance of luck (or faith) was constantly repeated during the interviews: “Before I came here, I talked about this with God. If it is OK with you, I will go. You know that I need to work. You send me where I am supposed to go....The employer called me and found me. I believe that God made us meet. As a matter of fact, the employer also tells the same thing. That this is from God, that God sent me.” Here is another example: “I always pray. Not one day, but everyday. I ask God to make me meet good people and my Lord accepts it. I haven’t seen any badness from my two employers. Sometimes I hear domestic workers telling that their employers throw them glasses. I have never seen such a thing. I am telling the truth¹⁴.”

One of the questions asked to the employers during the interviews was “Do you think your domestic worker is happy in your house?” Interestingly, the response of many employers was very similar. They assumed that their domestic workers were happy because other domestic workers –about whom they heard– lived and worked in much harder conditions:

“Deniz! According to what Nehir hanım says...The woman that you saw downstairs, the doctor...She worked for a well-known family in Turkey. A three story, triplex villa. She was caring for twins. They gave her babies who were just three days old. Can you imagine? She told us about how the use of the phone was prohibited. That was a very rich family. And they, her kids were calling Nehir from abroad and she could not even answer these calls. She used to call our domestic worker in order to ask if she could call her homeland in order to ask if the children were OK. She has so little time, she is always in a hurry. She is responsible for the laundry, the ironing of the clothes, the meals of the children, their nap, taking them out and all the other work in the house. And I heard several times from our domestic worker. They are even unable to find any food in that wealthy house. I was shocked.”

As can be understood from the above quotation, the narration of such stories are used as tools of relief by the employers. The comparison made between the horror stories and

¹⁴ Interview with Cennet.

the actual living conditions of the domestic workers (even though they are not as good as they should be) alleviates the inner conflicts of the employers who feel reassured by the existence of such bad people. These women could have met much worse people had they not have the chance to meet them. Thus, the mentioning of such examples not only conceals the exploitative nature of the actual relationship, but also creates an illusion of heroism in the case of the employer. Once again, let's hear respectively from Elvan and Güray:

“Next week, I will change her day off and guarantee that she goes to see a movie with my daughter....I taught her how to swim. Who else does this? Which employer? I know a neighbor with the same status. She employs a worker. The girl sits at the seaside but does not swim. But I take her hand and teach her how to swim....The kid entered the sea for the first time in her life.”

“ ‘Güray abi, you treat me very nicely. There was a man in the previous house. He behaved as if he had bought us with a couple of dollars.’ I don’t mention the harassment of the men. The normal men behaved as if they had bought the woman, they had bought a slave. Do this, do that. They were complaining about the abundance of guests despite the presence of a sick person in the household. They had to do all the work, the coffee, the tea, the cooncan parties until the sunrise... Some put white covers, bought white furniture and had a dog. The dog came in the house and put his paws on the armchairs. Then the employers scolded them asking why they hadn’t cleaned the place. So, they told me that they felt at home in my house. And I don’t think that this was a lie.”

Taking into consideration the last quotation, I personally know that the conditions of Güray’s household are far from satisfactory. Due to the limited quantity of food offered, women who start working in the household automatically start losing weight at the end of the first month. Thus, I am not sure about how to judge the statement “feeling at home” made by the domestic worker in question: It may be a strategy of empowerment used by the woman in order to mobilize the conscience of the old man since many women intentionally tell their new employers about their bad memories with previous employers in order to give them the opportunity to prove their distinctive humanitarian nature. On the other hand, it may also be an illustration of the limits of the expectations of an undocumented female domestic worker in a foreign country. The following examples seem to illustrate the last point: “ I don’t think she has another chance. If there is a better place, she can go (*laughs*)” says Mine. Another example is from Gülnur: “I think she is very happy. Recently, I told her if you don’t want to work here,

bye bye, go to another place.” Relying on such responses, one has the impression that these women are considered as easily “disposable bodies.”

In short, the communication of previous negative experiences can either be used as a tool of empowerment by the domestic workers (since a flattered employer can feel obliged to deserve the compliment), or inversely, it can be used as a tool of empowerment by the employer who will limit the power of negotiation of the domestic worker since a lot of dangers are awaiting her outside the boundaries of the household if she does not accept what is already offered to her. I believe that the same statement is manipulated by both sides according to their personal interests. Reality is the combination of the two opposing alternatives, a constant struggle between the two camps. The result is the preservation of the status quo in the majority of the situations: Neither the employees nor the employers (especially in the case of care for the elderly, the children and the disabled) are eager to start over the whole process of searching for the right person.

4.2.4. The Use of Stereotypes

Migrant domestic workers from the ex Soviet Union countries disrupt the already existing categories within the minds of the employers. They reverse the traditional/modern dichotomy in many cases, not only with their physical appearance, but also with their social/cultural background. Among my domestic worker interviewees, five were university graduates, while three were graduates from teknikum (which is the equal of lycée). Employers’ reactions to this unusual cultural background are not the same. I believe that we can talk of two main categories. The first category of employers despise the social and cultural capital of the domestic workers. Thus, Cevat who was asleep while I was interviewing Tahna, the woman who cares for him, is really surprised when he sees that Tahna has already prepared coffee for me: “These women have a limited knowledge of things. They don’t know about society [*cemiyet*] life. Hence, I am glad that she prepared coffee for you” he says to me. Tahna of whom he is talking about is a university graduate who has taught the Georgian language for ten years in her homeland before migrating to İstanbul. I have also taken some field notes concerning similar derogatory attitudes within casual conversations: For instance,

during a family gathering, an elderly middle-class Turkish woman who found out the subject of my thesis expressed her doubts about the professional background of the domestic worker of a friend of hers since the woman was really clumsy with the housework. In addition, she was unable to understand why such prestigious women were migrating in order to do such degrading work. Thus, her conclusion was that these women were probably lying.

However, I have also encountered the opposite reaction. An important proportion of the employers are aware that most of these women “raised with the Russian discipline” are working in İstanbul as victims of downward mobility. Güray, for example, tells me about a past experience:

“She was also very cultivated. I was once listening to the radio. From the kitchen she asked, ‘isn’t this the Swan Lake from Tchaikovsky? I used to go to the opera when I was in Erivan. It was an interesting moment....Since I am a musician, when I was playing the violin, she used to listen from the kitchen. In fact, several times she asked me if she could sit and listen. She came into the living room after asking for my permission. She listened while I was playing. Then she thanked me and went into the kitchen.”

Here are the words of Bahar from Moldova:

“I was an economist in the homeland. I graduated from commerce. I worked in a big market....But there is no work in our country. Really. They closed down all the factories. I put my son to several schools. He quit. He came here and saw several times how I was working. He tells me ‘Mother, you graduated from university and look how you are working. It is of no use. There is no need to study. Even though I study, where will I work? What will I do?’”

The majority of the employers believe that migrant women are far more cultivated when compared to local women. However, employers do not always consider this as a virtue: “In a middle class family like ours, a university graduate woman will not work. What will she do with my grandmother? She will get bored!” says Berk. His mother adds: “It is better if they are not that... When they are educated, you will have to deal with the ruses that emerge.” Thus, she seems to imply that educated women are less exploitable than those who are not educated.

An interesting outcome is the reflection of the cultural background of some individuals onto all the members of the community: “I don’t know exactly but her education is good. She has at least graduated from lycée....and maybe even from a university” says Ersan when I ask him about the educational background of Oksana. Nevertheless, when I talk to Oksana, I learn that she is a high school graduate. However, this also does not seem to be saying much since the Turkish system and the Soviet system are incommensurable. The following quotation is also taken from Oksana’s interview:

O: Our opera in Odessa was the best. There was socialism (she uses a different word) until 1991. Until then, the opera and the theater in Odessa were the best. It was very beautiful.

S: Did you go there often?

O: We used to go sometimes. We used to go to the theater.

S: Do you remember those times? The operas that you have seen?

O: There was Tchaikovsky, there was Giselle. I don’t know how to say it in Turkish. Then, there was Hamlet, we had a very good actor playing in it.

Other than the cultivated woman stereotype, we see the circulation of “the victim” stereotype. “The suffering body has imposed its own legitimacy where other grounds for recognition were increasingly brought into question ” says Fassin (Fassin, 2001). Similarly, Ticktin (Ticktin, 2006) in her piece *Where Ethics and Politics Meet: The Violence of Humanitarianism in France* tells us about “the global meritocracy of suffering”: “People become objects of charity, and not objects of law.” Finally, according to Keough, IOM also has a similar definition of the migrant body. She offers us the adoption of a different perspective: “We might better conceive of these women not only as victims, but as agents in traffic. They are driven by the political-economic situation in their countries which forces them to travel and work illegally to get by, but also driven and assertive mobile workers trying to better their family's lives as well as their own” (Keough, 2003).

In total conformity with these three authors’ analysis, the migrant domestic worker can only play one role if s/he wants to be respected by the receiving society: Many employers accept the legitimacy of the female migration only when the women internalize the role of the breadwinner mother, longing constantly for her children and husband, and suffering alone in the big city due to the lack of any other option of survival within the homeland. All the other roles that may symbolize the existence of an

empowered actor are refused to the migrant woman. Thus, for instance, when Oksana, single and without children, buys a massage chair for herself, or when Gümüş finds herself a boyfriend in İstanbul, their presence, as well as the difficulties they encounter, automatically become unworthy of attention. They begin to be considered as greedy individuals. “I don’t know what to do. A mother does not leave her child. I want to have a house, to have...*(weeps)* Both of us, me and my husband, we are not bad people. We hear sometimes, women come here in order to do bad things. We are not like these people. I miss my children a lot.” First of all, I certainly do not consider Seher’s tears as part of a performance. However, that tears are crucial in the communication of the migrant experience between the employer and the employee is an undeniable fact. By pointing out to the lack of alternative solutions to the hardships encountered back in the homeland, they become the tangible proof of the difference from the bad/greedy women. Such a performance would not be required from men whose honor does not seem to be the concern of society: “blame for social disorder in Moldova is placed upon migrant women—especially those who choose to work in Turkey, who are represented”as irresponsible mothers, immoral wives, and selfish consumers” says Keough (Keough, 2006).

A third, and a very dominant, stereotype is of course that of the Natasha: A possible contamination of this etiquette puts extreme pressure on all women coming from FSU countries. This in turn implies the consolidation of the boundaries dividing the migrant community since it separates the good women from the bad women. Here are the words of Korcan, the employer of a Turkmen domestic worker caring for his mother:

K: These women usually rent a house collectively. They all have their days off on different days.... Or they market their bodies [kendini pazarlamak].

S: Is this a known fact?

K: Sure. A good number of them work in Ataşehir. One hundred dollars for a night.

S: How do you know about it?

K: My friend told me since he was also going there.

S: Then how do you know that these women are also the same women who work as domestic workers?

K: I don’t know if they are the women who work in my house but of course they are the same women. From Turkmenistan, from Kirgizistan, from Ouzbekistan, from Roumenia. That these women work in the houses is a well-known fact....Once a student of mine had told me....When the caregiver looking after her grandmother left, the porters of the neighborhood all started mourning.

In order to increase the chances of meeting the “good” women, employers attribute certain characteristics to certain nationalities. Employers are not aware of their racist tone while expressing their opinions: “They told me that the majority of those who claimed to be from Azerbaijan were actually Armenians. They told me that the most gentle ones were the Turkmen.” Gülnur is referring to the historical events that occurred between the Ottoman Empire and the Armenian community. While acting as “gatekeepers” (Bakan&Stasiulis, 1995) between the employers and their potential employees, agencies also contribute to the reproduction of such stereotypes. Thus, while positive connotations are attributed to some nationalities, others have to struggle with the consequences of stigmatization. As a counter-strategy, migrant women also appropriate these stereotypes and increase their “exchange value” within the market. Here are the words of a Moldovan woman, Nakita: “The Moldovians are hardworking. They don’t talk back. Ouzbeks and Turkmen talk behind your back. Once I worked in a building. There was an Ouzbek woman downstairs. The employer used to say ‘tövbe’ to the Ouzbeks. The employer said: ‘If I say one word, she replies ten words.’ Then she fired her and got a Moldovan woman.” Consequently, one cannot talk of a united migrant community. The majority of my interviewees’ social capital is limited to their compatriots. This also contributes severely to the reproduction of existing stereotypes: “When the first woman you hire is a good woman, the following ones are also like that since you find them with the reference of the previous ones¹⁵. ” Hence, we see how the vicious circle keeps reproducing itself. Employers and employees simultaneously take part in this reproduction.

4.2.5. The Good Cop/Bad Cop Game:

“When my mother called the woman ‘animal’, I yelled at my mother telling her that she has no right to insult a human being” says Korcan, in order to illustrate how he tries to release the tension between his mother and the woman who cares for her. Thus, one of the very interesting findings of my fieldwork was the –conscious or unconscious– adoption of different roles by different members of the family towards the domestic worker in order to preserve the status quo. The nature of the male employer/employee,

¹⁵ Interview with Güray.

the female employer/employee, and finally the disabled-children-elderly/employee relationship are all different from one another. In every household setting, there seems to be a different configuration with different actors balancing each other's positions. The choice of the bad police seems to differ depending on the demographic constitution of the household in question. In households where the domestic workers care for the elderly people alone, the tampon agent category is usually composed of middle-aged female members of the family who pay regular visits: "We sit with Nurcan abla, we eat. I go upstairs to her house and we have breakfast together. She sometimes comes here." says Narin caring for Değer, an elderly woman. When I ask her if it would have been more difficult was there no Nurcan abla to talk to, she answers as follows: "I don't know. Now, there is Nurcan abla and I thank God for it." Here is an excerpt from the interview with Nurcan who has told me elsewhere that she will remain friends with Narin when the work relationship is over: "I try to help her as much as I can. She goes out to throw the garbage. To throw the garbage takes five minutes but she sometimes does not come for two hours. Mother asks where she is. I tell her that she has gone to throw the garbage, that she has to drop by the bakery afterwards. She takes a walk, she probably gets bored from time to time. I tolerate this and I handle the situation" *[with the mother]*. The hardships of caring for the elderly – changing diapers, carrying them around, dealing with the caprices – are compensated in many instances by private conversations, promenades, and the exchange of gifts. Gülnur tells me about the working conditions of the domestic worker of her friend: "We have a friend who is a doctor.... Her mother has Alzheimer. Our friend says that the mother puts the cigarette out on her hand." When I ask her why the domestic worker continues to work for her, she answers as follows: "It's the same as our situation. I already told you that she *[the domestic worker who works for Gülnur]* had come to our house with a pair of slippers, that I had bought her everything. Birthday gifts... She is also that kind of a person. Maybe, that is why she *[the domestic worker working in the friend's house]* is tolerating the hardships." Gülnur implicitly underlines the close relationship between being destitute and being exploited.

Even though it is mainly the friendly attitude of some members which ensures the continuation of the work relationship, the female tampon agents of the family are sometimes criticized by the other members who are more sympathetic of a rather

professional relationship. The following quotation has been taken from the interview with Berk, the twenty-eight year old son of Gülnur:

“With your previous experiences, you realize that you have to show the boundaries very clearly....Recently my mother asked for a swab in my room. She [*the domestic worker*] washed it and handed it to my mother. I said ‘Why are you handing it to my mother? Run along. Take it from my mother’s hand and you wipe it.’ While I was saying this, I was smiling. She was smiling too. She told me that I was right. She started wiping. If you don’t do these kind of things –consciously or unconsciously– abuses arise and that’s what I am talking about.”

Berk severely criticized her mother during the whole interview since according to his criteria, the mother was not being a professional boss. The mother also complained about how in the past, she had been constantly abused by her previous employees who did not know where to stop. Here is another excerpt from his interview:

“Gümüş [*the former employee*] knew how to behave. She was aware of the distinctions. This one had never been in an urban setting. She arrived to İstanbul not knowing how to use a knife or a fork. We had to teach her how to talk, or to act. We normally call them to our table and eat together. But this time I especially did not want her at our table when my mother was thinking about whether we should call her to the table or not. This was because she had no idea about how to behave. Since she was such a [*hat hut böyle girişen bir kadın*] woman... Just a second, you do your work, you set the table, we first eat, and then we will see. I made her set up our table just for once in order to give that message. Then we ate with the family.”

The power relations seem to change when domestic workers are hired in order to care for children or do the housework. In such cases, due to the identification of women with the household tasks and the discipline of the children, the bad cop usually becomes the female employer, whereas the male members of the family try to remain neutral. Ersan’s quotation confirms this argument: “The real boss is Ceyda. She must essentially listen to what Ceyda says since she spends much more time with her. So, even if I have an opinion about something, I believe that it is more appropriate that she thinks that it is Ceyda’s idea. So I advise Ceyda to tell her to do this and not that....She has to feel that it is Ceyda who is the boss.” Thus, in order to preserve the power relationship between the domestic worker and his wife, Ersan avoids direct communication with the domestic worker even if he has things to say. In this context, even though many children have the potential to imitate the attitude of their parents towards the migrant women, the tampon

agent usually becomes the child due to the affectionate nature of the care relationship: “We used to sit a lot in the room of the girl. She would call me. She would open the computer, she had a lot of new songs. The little boy used to join us. The bosses used to come and knock on the door. They used to ask us what we were doing inside” says Nadya who claims that she was the only one to know all the secrets of the adolescent girl. The affective nature of the care relationship alleviates the burden of work in many instances. The following excerpt has been taken from Oksana’s interview:

“No, I mean I don’t feel like it’s a job. I’m connected with the kid, for example. It took me a while, that one. It took me very long time to connect with him. Because it was quicker with other ones but it’s hard to leave a kid you looked after for two years. Because, yeah you accept him, but not as a job. I never considered anyone as a job. I mean job as in a real job. For example, I worked in a backpack factory. That’s how I treated that, as a job. That was my job, alright. But with people, there wasn’t such a thing. I’m here and I’m doing my job. No way. Maybe, I wouldn’t have felt as one of the family then, if I stood away saying that’s my job. Because I have such friends, you know. This is my job. I do my job. That’s all.”

Even though Ceyda clearly benefits from this intimate relationship based on trust, the same intimacy has also been a major source of conflict between her and Oksana in the past. The latter recalls of times when Ceyda came home from work and the child still did not want her to leave. According to Lan (Lan, 2006), “migrant caregivers are trapped in an emotional predicament at work: They have to assure their madams that their temporary presence will not shake the status of biological mothers, but they also feel traumatized if their emotional ties with the employers’ children are only ephemeral.”

In short, in every household, there is a different employer/employee relationship configuration. Different members of the family play different parts in order to balance the work dimension and the affect dimension. Thus, while some members eliminate the invisible boundaries by creating a mainly affective relationship with the domestic worker, others adopt a more professional posture in order to assure that there are still certain symbolic boundaries that must be kept up. Thus, even though the actors may change, the rule remains untouched “It is all about the distance of a heater. If you get

too close, you burn. If you stay too far, you feel cold¹⁶.” By taking different positions, the household members try to find this ideal distance.

4.2.6. The Rejection of Otherness

I have already mentioned above the existence of a rather unilateral relationship between the employers and the employees: The employers expect change from the employee, while they seem to have no worries about changing themselves. Throughout the interviews, I have encountered several times an emphasis put on similarity: “We once employed a Ukrainian woman. She was totally different. She used to smoke in every occasion. This woman [*from Turkmenistan*] also smokes but she smokes in the balcony....The lifestyle, the culture of these women are very similar to ours¹⁷.” The same employer tells me about a previous experience which she almost considers as a trauma: “She was secretly drinking alcohol. When my mother was asleep...Thank God we realized it!...My mother is a *hacı* woman. A Muslim. She does not want those kinds of things in her house.”

The otherness is mostly concretized in the issue of food. Thus, many employers have underlined with a humiliating tone how the meals of the migrant workers were different when compared to the Turkish meals. As a result, women were not able to cook their own meals in the employers’ houses. However, exceptions were also possible and domestic workers who had such considerate employers were talking of them with gratitude. Nadya is one such woman: “They were always allowing me to cook my own meals. Nadya you may have missed your own meals. Cook it and we will eat together. Then, I was cooking our böreks, our cookies, our *çig böreks* and everything.” The national cuisine of these women can also be promoted on special occasions. For instance, I have personally witnessed how the employer’s announcement “and now is the time for the Ouzbek rice” was received with enthusiasm during a family gathering. In Ceyda’s house, cultural differences are quite successfully tamed. Oksana does not eat meat since she is on a special diet. Thus, a totally different shopping list is made for Oksana who cooks her food

¹⁶ Interview with Güray.

¹⁷ Interview with Zerrin.

separately. Once again, we can talk of the idiosyncratic nature of live-in domestic work.

In some households, one of the major differences is related to the topic of religion. Oksana is an Adventist and thus she absolutely cannot work from Friday evening till Saturday evening. This sacred rule provides immunity to Oksana since she is out of the reach of her employer for an uninterrupted twenty-four hours. Thus, otherness can also imply the preservation of a personal space. However, things are not always black and white. According to what Oksana says, the same employer has no regrets about prohibiting the use of the Moldovan language while she is talking on the phone with her relatives¹⁸ or about changing her name from Oksana to Okşan (a name disliked by Oksana) due to security concerns: “We were talking about that subject. A friend of mine said: ‘I don’t want them to call me Ayşe. I already have a name. Then, I told her. What difference does it make? They changed my name because they think it is more convenient. I know my own name but if you prefer this what is wrong about it? They don’t humiliate me. So, I accepted it as normal.’”

Even though Oksana seems to have no serious complaints about her name change, we clearly see how difficult it is to locate the boundaries separating the space of the domestic worker from that of the employer when we are analyzing the live-in domestic work arrangement: What can remain out of the reach of the employer when s/he can even find a pretext for changing the very name of “her” domestic worker?

4.2.7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991), in *The Production of Space* claims that “(social) space is a (social) product.” In another passage he goes on: “(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: Rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a

¹⁸ This “precaution” was taken in order to correct the accent of her son who had started to imitate the way Oksana was talking.

sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object....Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others.” Thus, in every private setting, a *sui generis* social space is constituted depending on “the outcome of past actions” of both the employers and the domestic workers. This social space constantly shelters the possibility of change.

Employers, as well as domestic workers manipulate a double set of boundaries in the production of this social space: Physical boundaries and symbolic boundaries. Physical boundaries are the main tools of distinction in the case of vast households: “Spatial deference is clearly displayed in the floor plans of upper-class residences. The servants’ quarters or the maid’s room, usually of a limited size and with bad ventilation, can be found in the attic or basement in dramatic contrast to the spacious bedrooms in the main part of the house” (Lan, 2003).

Even though “reproductive labor has long been a commodity purchased by class-privileged women” (Parrenas, 2001), we are now witnessing a “democratization” process. The migrant domestic worker option is becoming increasingly affordable by more modest categories of the middle class. Thus, in the case of smaller households, “intrusion on privacy is almost unavoidable for both employers and domestic workers (Lan, 2003).” It is exactly in this context that symbolic boundaries become the principal means of boundary-setting. I suggest that today, symbolic boundaries are increasingly coming into prominence and replacing physical boundaries. In addition, in a context where the employer and the employee are the subjects of contradictory mobilities, and where their successive capital is incommensurable, physical boundaries (even though they may exist) may not suffice to guarantee the consolidation of a hierarchical power relation between the migrant domestic worker and the employer. Consequently, the illusion of a distinguished employer may oblige the assistance of symbolic boundaries. Thus, in a context where both employers and domestic workers are beginners, imagined symbolic boundaries come forward as auxiliary troops that bring some order to the anomie/chaos of the domestic sphere:

“Some characteristics of upperclass employers also facilitate the pattern of distant hierarchy. These employers usually have longer experiences of hiring

domestic workers and have thus embodied class ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1977), such as carrying more condescending verbal expressions and distant body language toward the workers. And these households often have a spacious residence that allows sufficient physical space, as well as social distance, to exist between workers and employers” (Lan, 2003).

5. RESULTS OF THE FIELDWORK - BOUNDARIES SEPARATING THE INSIDE AND THE OUTSIDE OF THE HOME

“Outside and inside are both intimate –they are always ready to be reversed, to exchange their hostility. If there exists a border-line surface between such an inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides” says Bachelard, one of most influential French philosophers. In the case of private households employing live-in domestic workers, this pain seems to multiply. The following quotation from Dickey (Dickey, 2000) illustrates why this is so: “Employers' accounts project an image of a household whose perimeters need to be carefully and constantly buttressed against the disorderly mixing of categories (cf. Douglas 1966) that servants' entrances and exits entail.” This is because “the movement of servants from their own homes into and between employers' homes actually has a number of effects –including the distribution of information, labor, material and cultural capital, as well as the creation of social networks across classes and neighborhoods.” Constable (Constable, 1997) also points out to the tension caused by the awkward nature of domestic labor: “The relationship between a household worker and her employer is potentially far more intense than the relationship between other workers and their employers. A domestic worker works in the employer's personal and private domain and thus observes behaviors to which only the closest family members are otherwise privy.” Pointing out to the causal relationship between the “spatial shrinking” of the city and “the increasing social distances between different groups and classes”, Bartu and Kolluoğlu (Bartu&Kolluoğlu, 2008) claim as follows: “The only contact they have with the working classes is through the services they receive from waiters, delivery boys, porters, security personnel and caddies, and most intimately from nannies, domestics, drivers and gardeners.....The knowledge and information about the rest of the lower classes are filtered through the media and draped in fear and anxiety.”

However, employers are not the only people attributing a crucial role to the boundaries marking where the private starts and the public ends. In the case of undocumented migrant domestic workers as well, boundaries are considered as life savers: “many migrants are excluded from the public spaces of the city despite its vivid diversity. Undocumented migrants seek invisibility due to their fear of facing police; very few of them feel free of strolling in the streets or visit other districts than their own” argues Danış (Danış, 2005/2006) in her research on Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian migrants in Istanbul.

However, one also has to take into account that it is not possible to make a generalization about the undocumented domestic worker category as a whole since depending on various criteria –legal status, length of stay, the work arrangement, the existence of a house rented collectively with other migrant women, the presence of friends and relatives among the migrant community, as well as among the Turkish citizens– different meanings are attributed to these boundaries. Thus, while they can be of primordial importance for a young newcomer who has no relatives or friends in the receiving country, they may be dispensable in the case of an older domestic worker who knows how to deal with the state officials and who has already established multiple connections with the migrant community in İstanbul.

I have divided this chapter into three main sections: In the first section, I will look at the possibilities of domestic workers leaving the domestic space. In the following section where I will question the possibilites of the outside penetrating the domestic space, I will analyze the discourses surrounding the issue of the domestic worker inviting guests into the household of her employer. Finally, in the last section, I will probe into the analysis of available technological means of interaction that give the opportunity to bypass employers’ regulations that limit the movement of domestic workers from one space to another.

5.1. GETTING OUT

All the migrant domestic workers I talked to were grown up women. Most of them were married and had their own children. However, entrance into paid live-in domestic labor

seemed to be a major turning point in their lives since their independence was seriously restricted once they had started working/living in the employer's private household. Above all, the domestic workers were obliged to ask for the employer's permission in order to leave the private setting even for a short while.

Nevertheless, it is not possible to make a general claim about the dynamics of this process. It can be more or less problematic depending on the context chosen and on the people involved in the relationship. For instance, it is not uncommon to see little children or mobile elderly holding the hand of a migrant woman in the parks of upper-middle class neighborhoods. However, in the case of women living alone with immobile elderly or disabled people who are in need of twenty-four hour supervision, going out during the day does not appear to be a feasible option. The dependent condition of the care receiver binds him/her to the caregiver. This in turn binds the two to the private household. Hence, as long as there is no other individual who can look after the dependent person, the domestic worker has to be physically present within the household. Scrinzi (Scrinzi, 2008) studying the Italian labor market confirms this argument when she says: "Elderly dependants, who need care 24 hours a day, and who get little help from the state, rely on live-in care assistants, who are expected to be available round the clock. In this context, there seems to be no solution to the question of flexibility in domestic and care services. This ultimately leads to work relations that rely on the 'availability' of migrants....since local women also have a life of their own." Here are the words of Galina, a sixty-five year old Moldovian woman caring for an elderly person dealing with Alzheimer's disease:

G: I go out on Saturday. I have a friend, she looks after a person who has the same disease. I go out to have some fresh air. I don't go out during the whole week. So I have to get some air. I go out, I tour in the park, I get fresh air. I get fresh air a few hours in a whole week.

S: Don't you ever leave her during the day?

G: No no no. I only go to Migros, to BIM since it takes five to ten minutes.

Galina seems really fed up with her loneliness.

S: Do you and the elderly lady do anything together?

G: No. What can I do with her? She does not move. I feed her, I clean her, I wash her. What can I do other than this?

The daughter and the granddaughter of the elderly woman only drop by once a week in order to confirm that everything is alright. Analyzing a different context, childcare, Hondagneu-Sotelo (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007) points out to a similar relationship between the caregivers and the relatives of the care receivers: “For working women who pay nanny/housekeepers and cleaners, the organization and rapid pace of their life – what Hochschild calls the ‘Taylorization of home life’– often lead to their viewing a personalistic relationship with the nanny/housekeeper not as a means to gain personal satisfaction or a feeling of superiority, but rather as one more time-consuming burden. They wish to minimize, or, if possible, avoid altogether such interchanges.” Thus, while trying to minimize the interaction with Galina, the employers do not seem to realize the extent of her depression.

Oksana who is also from Moldova cares for the grandson of the elderly woman Galina cares for. On her day off, she comes and stays with Galina since she also has a room in that house. However, as I have mentioned at the beginning of this paper, there seems to be conflict rather than solidarity between the two women. The following are the words of Galina:

“She [*Oksana*] comes here to sleep....Why does she come here? She bought a massage bed here. She comes here because of that....She gave three thousand dollars for that bed....She comes once in a week, on Friday and goes on Saturday evening....We do not talk too much to each other. She comes tired. She wants to relax. I don’t know what she does there but obviously she gets tired....What will she talk about? It is me who needs to talk. She does not have such a need. She already talks there with the lady, with the husband, and the child. She is already fed up with talking. So, she comes here but does not talk. She asks how we are doing and goes to her room. I need to talk. I don’t talk with anybody during the whole week!”

Thus, elderly care and childcare occasion two different types of communication. In the former, there is a one-way communication, whereas in the second, one can rather talk of an interaction. Consequently, Galina needs a conversation, while Oksana needs a massage. Those who care for disabled people usually have similar experiences to those of Galina. However, Nana –a forty-five year old university graduate from Abazia– is an exceptional case since she shares this burden with another migrant woman. In that sense, Zerrin, the sister of the care receiver, seems to be a reasonable employer. Hence,

Nana, as well as the other domestic worker, are able to go out once during the day while the other woman is taking care of the patient during their absence. Here are the words of Nana: "It was very difficult [*she is talking of the past*]....Going to the market does me good. I can at least go out once during the day. If I hadn't gone out for one whole week, I would have gone crazy." As illustrated in this quotation, work can be considered as pleasurable when it gives the possibility of going out, and thus breaking from the routine.

In Narin's case, a fifty-six year old university graduate from Turkmenistan, the situation is slightly different. This time, the replacement is not another migrant woman but the daughter of the elderly woman she cares for: "I try to help her as much as I can....She goes out to make her phone calls. She stays out quite a lot. One day, I was curious. I went out and looked. She was sitting in the park. I felt sad. She was sitting alone for quite a long time. So she feels the need of such a thing" says Nurcan, the daughter who acts like a tampon mechanism between Narin and her mother, Değer. The need of mediation clearly shows the pressure exercised on the domestic worker by the elderly lady who is actually only dependent on the migrant woman for her meals and her bath. Otherwise, she is perfectly capable of walking or using the toilet, i.e. surviving. While still not able to accept the presence of a stranger within her home, she always wants the woman to be around within the private household. The continuous presence of the domestic worker seems to be the confirmation of her authority.

However, since these escapes are not prearranged, they usually do not alleviate the loneliness of the domestic workers whose social capitals are mainly constituted of other migrant domestic workers who also work as live-ins. Thus, arranging spontaneous meetings seems difficult in many instances. Nadya's former work experience seems to be exceptional since she used to work in a gated community where there were lots of migrant domestic workers living nearby: "I started bringing the little child to the park. There, I met a lot of girls, a lot of caregivers. We started paying visit to each other....I made a lot of friends. We were meeting, the children were playing with each other and we were sitting and having coffee together. It was really good" she says.

Finally, the fact that many domestic workers are able to get out of the household during daytime when their employers are out does not mean that their movements are not

controlled by other actors who cooperate with the employers, in their absence: “Of course we keep track of it. First of all, there are the porters of the neighborhood. They tell us about everything. Who meets who and where? Where does she go? Does she go out during the day or not? Does she go around too much? Or does she stay home? They tell me all about it” says Korcan, employer of a migrant domestic worker who cares for her elderly mother.

In many of the interviews, the employers told me that they were occasionally “bringing” [*götürüyorum*] the domestic worker with them when they were going out. The choice of the word “bringing” seems to be the illustration of the perception of the domestic worker as a “carry-on” thing, or perhaps a kid, instead of an individual who can decide whether or not she wants to accompany the employer. In reality, what is considered as a favor may very well be considered as a burden by the domestic worker who may actually prefer enjoying the absence of the employers, a possibility rarely taken into consideration by the employers: “When we go to the summer villa, I take her with us so that there can be a change of air....It’s a one-day activity. We feed the animal, we take the eggs of the chicken, we take a walk. We take her with us so that she does not always stay in the house.” By doing such a favor to the employees, some of the employers think they are displaying their generosity. Elvan’s quotations is a perfect illustration of this point:

“When she first arrived, she had never seen the sea and was very curious about it. I took and brought her. Here is the sea. I brought her to the seaside....Let’s say I am going shopping. I take her too. When I go out with other ladies, I take her too. I want her to see different kinds of people, the worlds of these people. I bring her to my relatives, to my mother, to Çamlıca. I want her to be happy. I want her to know life [*hayati tanımak*], to become familiar with Turkey.”

Thus, Elvan believes she is accomplishing her mission as the educator of Begül, an eighteen year old young girl from Turkmenistan. But somehow Begül ends up helping with the domestic chores during these visits presented as favors: “My mother is old. When we go there... Let’s say we are outnumbered or not. My mother prepared everything. Somebody has just to serve what is prepared....I observe, the child immediately gets up and works as if it were her own house. She does not act indifferently. She does not sit even if you tell her to do so.” It could be useful to remember once again the trouble created by Oksana who refused to help with the

preparation of the coffee during the Bairam day. Probably, Oksana was also brought to this Bairam meeting as a favor.

Other than these informal pretexts for getting out, all domestic workers have a day off within the week. This day off is crucial for two reasons. First, it gives the women the opportunity to get out of the employer's household and do things not related to work; and second "social interaction with other migrant women in different settings ...helps these women develop a particular set of values, practices, and collective advice that act as a basic work culture, thereby establishing a more structured framework to their position as domestic workers" (Raijman&Schammah-Gesser&Kemp, 2003). Thus, occasioning the sharing of experiences, the day off also empowers the migrant women in their work relationship.

Live-in domestic workers only have one day off during the whole week. Depending on their age, their social capital, the length of their stay et cetera, they benefit from this day off differently. Begül for example who has recently come to Turkey (10 months) spends her day off with her uncle: "On my day off, I go to my uncle. He has a small room. I do the laundry and the housework. I clean the house. I wash his things if he has any. He has no wife here." Because of her age, she remains under the supervision of her uncle whenever she is not under the supervision of her employer. In addition, because of her gender, she works for her uncle on her day off. In short, paid employment is replaced by unpaid employment in her case. Zara is also a newcomer. Here are the words of her employer, Gülnur: "This one does not know much. She even says 'I won't go out abla.' In order to avoid spending the money on the day off." Gülnur seems to be quite pleased with the attitude of Zara.

In addition, longing for open air seems to be a luxury reserved to women who have been in İstanbul for quite a long time. For the newcomers, being outside is a totally different, as well as frustrating, experience: "I was scared. When I was outside, I always thought that everybody was looking. They are looking and why are they looking? I thought like that. Who is looking? Nobody! Now I go, nobody is looking at me. At the beginning I had such thoughts" says Tahna, a forty-eight year old university graduate from Georgia. Galina thinks that there is nothing to be scared of if one is a middle aged domestic worker such as herself. She makes an interesting distinction: "Why should I be scared

of? When I see them [*the police*], I salute them. We salute each other. They are interested in young people. Beautiful young people. Why would they be interested in me?" Gümüş who is a thirty-three year old woman from Turkmenistan fits perfectly into the young and beautiful category. In conformity with Galina's argument, she was once stopped by a policeman. However she managed to convince him not to report her. When I ask her how she succeeded, she says 'I won't tell you' and laughs. Now, she is more cautious when she goes out: "I don't put any hat but I use sunglasses. They even notice us from our way of walking. We don't act like you. I mostly go to places visited by tourists....I go to Sultanahmet, to Eyüp Sultan. I go to Eminönü very often. I go to Aksaray in order to send things to my children. In Kumkapı there are a lot of people from Turkmenistan" she says.

The collective renting of a house by migrant domestic workers is a common strategy used by undocumented migrant women. In this way, not only do they get rid of the fear of deportation but also they are able to socialize with other members of the migrant community in exchange for a modest amount of money. Here are the words of Nini from Georgia:

S: Is there a house that you have rented collectively with friends in order to go during the days off?

N: Yes. They live with their families.

S: Who are they?

N: Friends. They also work but they have rented a house. We go there.

S: And do you feel at home there?

N: I feel more at home when I am there.

S: Are all the people there from Georgia?

N: Yes yes. We prepare our own food, we speak our own language, we watch our own TV channel and we talk.

Even though Nini underlines how she also feels at home in her room in the employer's house, she still seems to be longing for a home populated by people from Georgia, a place where one can consume "her own food, her own language, and her own TV channel." This longing also seems to be telling since it implicitly illustrates that there is no permission for her to prepare her own food in the employer's house.

Usually, migrants rent houses with their relatives and their friends. Besides, during the interviews, it was obvious that the majority of the migrant domestic workers preferred

to make friends with people of the same nationality as themselves: “People we already know. Me, my sister... Friends of my sister, my friends. The son of my uncle, as well as the son of my aunt work here” says Gümüş. In some cases, an important part of the social capital of my interviewees were also working in İstanbul. This in turn clearly alleviated the feeling of isolation.

When a private apartment is rented, a symbiotic relationship may be built between the undocumented migrant domestic workers and their neighbors: “We used to do the ironing of the whole building. In exchange of money of course. We were cleaning the apartments for one hundred million. You can earn the same amount if you wipe the windows. We used to make the Turkmen pastry and they used to love it” says Gümüş. However, she also underlines that this is quite a precarious relationship in many instances: “The people from Turkmenistan hire apartments. On our day off we go to these houses. They drink, they listen to music or fight and as a result the neighbors report them to the police. Then they get caught.” As a result, this option is regarded with suspicion by some of the interviewees. Ayperi is among this category:

A: There, I am rather... I like here [the house of the employer] more.

S: What happens there?

A: There I am a little uneasy (laughs).

S: Why?

A: Since we are all foreigners...

S: But the house is a private space.

A: The house is closed, yes. But no one knows. We are (lowers her voice) fugitives.

From the excerpt above, one can see how the undocumented nature is capable of disrupting interaction and solidarity among women. The constant paranoia isolates the individual. In addition, not all domestic workers want to socialize during their day off. Seher for example whose husband also works in İstanbul as a ironmonger prefers to stay at home with her husband on her day off: “I rest on my day off. I close my cellphone and I rest. I don’t meet anybody. I go to the bazaar. We do our weekly shopping. We come home and watch TV.” As to Nakita, she has been deported once. Since she thinks that she has been reported by another migrant domestic worker, she prefers minimum interaction with the migrant community in İstanbul. Hence, once again we see how paranoia entails loneliness.

Employers' authoritarian attitude may extend to the off days of their employees since some are even concerned with the activities of the women on their free time. This concern is mainly centered around the concept of "honour". Gülnur for example asks the source of the bruises on the neck of her domestic worker when she returns back at the end of her day off; Elvan checks the appropriateness of the clothes of Begül before she leaves since she may not know how dangerous İstanbul is for a young girl. Many employers legitimize the control that they try to exercise on the domestic workers by arguing that what is done on the off day may have serious consequences that can also affect the life of the employers. According to Gülnur, for example, a woman who betrays her husband¹⁹ may very well hit on her husband or her young son. Thus, she legitimizes her authoritarian behaviour. Once again, the boundaries get extremely blurry. Human Rights Watch (2006) report also points out to this issue: "Employers....often defend these practices as necessary to protect the employer's household, the privacy of the family, and the personal security of the domestic worker, and to prevent workers from running away." Thus, every restriction exercised on the private life of the employee is legitimized as a precaution in order to protect the private life of the employer.

Among my interviewees, four women, Seher, Nadya, Nakita and Bahar were working as live-outs, after having worked for many years in their employers' households, Seher for example, lives in a room with her husband while still working as a caregiver; Nadya lives with other migrant women and is a job worker; Nakita has only one employer, a married couple who ask her to clean the house and prepare the daily meals. Finally, Bahar has been living with her Turkish boyfriend for ten years. Studying the undocumented Latina migrants in Israel, Rajman, Schammah-Gesser and Kemp (Rajman&Schammah-Gesser&Kemp, 2003) claim as follows: "Live-out arrangements are viewed by migrant women as a substantial improvement in their quality of life, allowing them to control their time and private life, to mix with the Israeli society, to learn the Hebrew language, and to get firsthand information regarding both the Latino community and the wider Israeli context." Thus, these four women are quite empowered when compared to the average migrant domestic worker. Bahar's words absolutely confirm this argument:

¹⁹ Gülnur thinks that Gümüş, married to an alcoholic man left in the homeland, is having an affair with the so-called "amcaoğlu."

“A friend of mine started working. I saw that she was going in the morning and coming back in the evening. She was free....When you are working as a live-in you are even afraid of eating sunflower seed. You don't feel like it's yours even if nobody tells anything....There is no liberty when you are a live-in....Liberty is important. It is really important for me....No matter how tired I am, I come home, I eat, I take a beer and all the fatigue is gone. There are the neighbors, we sit outside....It has been 10 years. So the neighbors know me. We sit outside at midnight. You know, live-in is a totally different story.”

Hence, those who work and live in different settings can more easily distinguish between work time and leisure time. They are more able to say “stop” to the demanding employer by creating a space of their own, out of the reach of the employer. However, living-out is not a feasible option for every member of the migrant domestic workers community. It is more of a privilege reserved to women who have stayed for a relatively long time in the country of residence and who have accumulated the economic and social capital necessary for such a transition. Thus, once again, this shows how it is not possible to homogenize the migrant domestic workers community which is also stratified by power relations depending on various criteria. On the one side of the continuum, we have Nadyas who work as live-outs, who have Turkish boyfriends and Turkish friends and who would never tolerate an abusive act of the employer, while on the other side, we have Begüls who can almost be qualified as the puppets of their employers.

5.2. LETTING IN

I have tried to show how getting out may be problematic in many contexts. This automatically increases the importance of letting in:

“Since she cannot go out, I have no problem with a friend visiting her. She can come, they can eat together or drink tea. She must have a friendship that would eliminate the feeling of being imprisoned. But I don't want it to be transformed into staying overnight since it is not a hotel. They are ready to abuse it. They start telling you 'I have a friend, can she stay here for two days, she is jobless at the moment'. I don't accept this. But paying visits...There are people they know in the same neighborhood. They can come and go. I even prefer it since it is not normal for a human being to live imprisoned. It will explode from somewhere else. You have to release that pressure.”

Korcan seems very pragmatic in his response to the guest issue. Friends must come over, but they must not stay over since his home is “not a hotel”. I have encountered the hotel analogy quite a few times. The employers wanted their domestic workers to feel at home. However, whenever they felt too much at home, the home was beginning to be identified with the hotel. Second, in Korcan’s account, we see the emergence of a potentially abusive domestic worker stereotype. This stereotype is repeatedly reproduced in the employer interviews. Third, the vocabulary used by Korcan is full of contradictions. On the one hand, he is underlining the humanity of her employee who cannot be imprisoned, but on the other hand he is using a dehumanizing language by using the expression “taking the pressure of that gas.”

Among my employer interviewees, Ceyda, the employer of Oksana, has set the most rigid rules concerning the guest issue: “I told her right from the beginning that I did not want any guests. But she can go out whenever she wants for an hour or two. Or if her friend comes, they can talk in front of the building. But I never accept them home.” In the following excerpt, we clearly see how boundaries of privacy get blurry:

“The women who work for me are honest people. They only think about their work. But there are also people who come to Turkey for the purpose of prostitution. Thus, they can always be reported. The concentration of foreign women in a house gives different impressions and I live in a building where there are also workplaces. Hence, I don’t want people to see people from different origins circulating around my apartment. And if I give permission to one person today, it will be another person tomorrow. I won’t be able to stop it. In order to protect the confidence and love among us, I have set the rule from the beginning. She never manipulated it.”

With the use of the expression “I won’t be able to stop it”, we once again encounter the reproduction of the potentially abusive domestic worker stereotype. The prohibition of guests is awkwardly legitimized by the existence of some “other” women coming from the same countries and working in the sex industry. Hence, one has to ask how will talking in front of the building make a difference if the problem is socializing with a sex worker. Does the risk of being reported disappear when the two do not enter the private household? In short, we see from the quotation above how domestic workers –a category mostly composed of grown up women– are rendered powerless by being

labeled as irrational and exploitative infants who do not know where to stop. This is of course unless the employer surrounds them with clearly defined boundaries.

Interestingly, Ceyda's husband Ersan has a very different point of view. According to him, the domestic worker can/must invite her relatives, her friends, and even her boyfriend to the household if she is done with all her professional responsibilities. He constantly repeats the sentence "unless it hinders her work..." According to Ersan, the adoption of such an attitude has multiple advantages. First, it motivates the employee who already uses only a restricted portion of his/her capacity while working. Second, the acceptance of guests also means increasing knowledge concerning the personal life of the employee. The availability of such hints gives more power to the employer who can control the employee more efficiently. However, since Ersan tries to remain invisible in this relationship between women, his opinions are of no value.

As to Oksana, the caregiver of Ceyda's son, she accepts the status quo as it is. However, from her look and her silence, I could tell that this restriction was considered as quite offensive by the domestic worker: "I don't know. It felt quite weird at the beginning but now I am used to it. If there is trust between us, he also is my brother for example... You trust me, I trust my brother. My brother was in İstanbul and we were not able to meet. We could only meet outside. The rules of the workplace!" Oksana seems totally aware of the hypocritical attitude of her employer. Confiding her most precious possession in life, her son, to Oksana, Ceyda still thinks that the migrant woman is not capable of judging who deserves to be accepted within the boundaries of the household and who has to remain outside. As a result of this strict prohibition, Oksana can only meet her cousin –who also works as a domestic worker in İstanbul– in the open air. This of course could have been a less problematic issue if Oksana and her cousin were not undocumented migrants trying to survive in a dangerous environment unwelcoming their presence.

A reaction that was surprising to me was that of Nakita, a domestic worker now working as a live-out. In the following excerpt, we are talking about her past experiences as a live-in:

S: And did you bring any guests?

N: No.

S: Wasn't it permitted?

N: There was no permission.

S: Do you consider this normal?

N: Yes, I believe it's normal.

S: Why?

N: You cannot deal with the guest if you have work. Whether you sister, or your mother. It will be a disgrace towards your employers.

S: But what if you have nothing else to do in the evening?

N: But then I want to rest. The body has to rest. If the body does not rest, if you chat you cannot work the other day.

After thinking on Nakita's response for some time, I decided that there was nothing surprising about it, that this did not mean that Nakita was contributing to her own subordination. The words of Nakita were actually illustrating the heaviness of the workload within the domestic work sector. In such difficult conditions, she could only spare time for her own reproduction. In conformity with Nakita's response, many other women repeated the heaviness of the workload in the villas.

Even though none of my interviewees were as strict as Ceyda, they were all putting the criteria of "the same gender" before accepting a guest into their households: "They are people of the same sex. They can even stay overnight. A friend of hers comes. They sleep in the same bed. The next day the friend goes to work. Putting a restriction even to this request would give an impression of a concentration camp" says Güray for example. Even though with other words, Nurcan points out to the same issue: "What will happen if she wants to bring a male friend? She can't bring him. If she does, it would mean that she went too far. My mother takes pills. Then she sleeps. They will be alone in the house. We heard about such things. That would make us really angry." What the two quotations have in common is a homophobic behavior concealed behind the pronounced words. The accepted category of guests is composed of only women since homosexuality is considered as non-existent by the majority of the employers. The other sex is also only accepted when there are officially recognized familial ties between the employee and her guest: "When I first hired my worker, I told her 'This is your house and you are the woman of this house. Yes, I am the boss. [She explains to me] These people call you boss. But you are the lady of this house. Do whatever you would if it was your own house. She has a son. I have nothing against her bringing the

son during the summer “ says Mine and “I can bring my guests. Not every guest but I can bring my son and my daughter” says Ayperi.

Even though the guest issue is negotiated openly during the hiring process in many examples, there are also cases in which the two sides do not even feel the need to communicate verbally on the subject. However, this may be an ineffective way of dealing with the issue since the employee may distort the content of the message given by the employer or the employer may fail to give the right message. In the following example, we clearly see that the message is appropriately received: “Here nobody said anything but the mother is used to living alone. She does not say ‘Don’t bring anybody’. My sister came once and my employer did not do anything. But I understood that she was disturbed. Why should I bring a guest if I know that she feels uncomfortable?” says Gümuş.

However, in the following example, the incompatibility of the message given and the message received has caused the emergence of a major conflict within the household. Interestingly, while I arranged the interview with Nurcan, the “guest crisis” was still an ongoing issue. The domestic worker Narin’s granddaughter had come to visit Narin and had prolonged her stay to ten days. This was considered as a major transgression by Değer, the mother of Nurcan. When I arrived, Narin was sitting in the kitchen with her granddaughter and her nephew. Here is an excerpt from the interview with Narin:

S: Can you bring guests into your room?

G: Yes. My nephew works here. She comes to visit me. My granddaughter also came.

S: So there is no restriction?

G: No, there is no restriction. I am thankful to them, they give me permission.

And here are the words of Nurcan, the employer of Narin:

“My mother told this lady not to bring anybody else with her. She is an old woman. She says she is scared. We read and hear a lot of things, right? In the newspapers, on television. My mother told the lady herself that she did not want anybody. But her sister came with her daughter. They stayed for one week. Then suddenly another grandchild came with the nephew. My mother justly asks if this place is a hotel. My mother is already a nervous person. Her disease gets worse. Isn’t this abuse?”

The statement above makes use of the culture of fear (Furedi, 1997) in order to justify the rejection of the social circle of the domestic worker. The worries could definitely be taken into consideration had the object of fear not been a ten year old girl within the house.

The potential of conflict concerning the request of bringing guests also seems to depend upon the availability of domestic space. Conflict is likely to arise when the employers/employees have to share a limited physical space. Obviously, Nadya who worked in a huge villa did not have such problems: “My girlfriends came over. I had two girlfriends. At the end of the night, one slept in the guest room, and the other in my room.” This is also an illustration of how different arrangements can simultaneously have their advantages and disadvantages. While not preferred for the workload, the villas may offer more privacy to the domestic workers. That is of course if the employers are reasonable people.

In conclusion, once again we see how the negotiation of the guest issue is idiosyncratic. However, what is common to all the cases is the obligation to ask for permission before inviting a guest into the household. Such an obligation may be interpreted as a symbolic act of authority. No matter how equal the employer/employee relationship is, the domestic worker is herself always a guest within the household of her employer. This is why Zerrin says “On Sundays, they have friends and they come over for a coffee. We give permission. I would be very angry if they invite people without my permission” and this is why Nana –who takes care of the disabled man together with another migrant woman– has to call Zerrin every Saturday.

5.3. STAYING PUT: OVERCOMING BOUNDARIES BY USING TECHNOLOGICAL MEANS

Many authors underline “the way in which migrant lives cut across national boundaries” (Raijman & Schammah-Gesser & Kemp, 2003). The emergence of a transnational space between the receiving and sending countries gains enormous importance when migrant women leave behind their beloved ones, and above all their children. Hondagneu-Sotelo

emphasizes how transnational mothers manage to create alternative ways of mothering built upon emotional closeness, instead of physical contact:

“Transnational mothers seek to mesh caregiving and guidance with breadwinning. While breadwinning may require their long-term and long-distance separations from their children, they attempt to sustain family connections by showing emotional ties through letters, phone calls, and money sent home....They maintain their mothering responsibilities not only by earning money for their children's livelihood but also by communicating and advising across national borders, and across the boundaries that separate their children's place of residence from their own places of employment and residence” (Avila&Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1997).

No wonder, technological devices play a crucial role within this process. Thus, their importance has been repeated quite a few times by many domestic workers in the interviews I made. Here are the words of Oksana²⁰ who recently bought a laptop for herself:

“Skype is very good. When I talk to them, I feel like I am with them, at home. I sometimes feel like I am just sitting somewhere in the room (*laughs*). So, I don't feel much pain. I can talk to my sisters and brothers through Skype. Thus, I don't miss them so much. Of course, I still want my home but I don't feel the longing too much because I see them.”

The use of technology is crucial for the creation of an “imagined community²¹” as Oksana’s words illustrate. The preservation of a connection seems very important since domestic workers tend to have difficulties in attributing a meaning to the time spent in İstanbul which is considered more in terms of rupture than in terms of continuity. Once again, Oksana makes the following contribution:

“I don't know how I will be able to articulate these years... Disconnected from my homeland, years are passing. In the end, I will be able to put these years side by side but I cannot join them together. There, I was in Odessa for twenty years. I had my home, my mother, my father. I could add those years to one another. I lived in Odessa for twenty years. I was still not home. But I was able to go home whenever I wanted to. Those years can be articulated. But these eight years are a little disconnected from the rest.”

²⁰ Ceyda who put the most rigid restrictions to the guest issue is Oksana’s employer.

²¹ A term coined by Benedict Anderson.

Oksana's following words clearly show how Internet plays a central role in her life: "It is very good in a foreign country. I don't know how long I would have stayed here had there been no Internet. Maybe, I would not have been able to stay." The same allusion of a gap can be observed in many of the domestic worker interviews, especially when children are left behind. Here are the words of Gümüş: "When I came here, my younger boy was unable to talk. He was able to say very few words. Mom, dad, things like that. He now talks on the phone, he tells me about everything. Everything! I miss him so much. I miss the older ones too but the younger... I always see him in my dreams." Nini's words –who uses the laptop given by her employer– also confirm how the use of technological devices is crucial to the perpetuation of motherly duties in the case of transnational mothers who act as if they were not living far away from their children: "A few days ago, it was his anniversary. I called him from the computer. I made a surprise and I asked a friend to prepare a cake for him. She wrote his name on it. I told him 'your mother loves you a lot' (*weeps*)."

While looking at the discourses surrounding the use of technology, we once again observe the idiosyncratic nature of domestic work and the unequal living and working conditions of the members of the migrant domestic worker community in İstanbul. Some women, illustrated in the examples of Oksana and Nini, are quite lucky. However, others are not at all that fortunate. Here are the words of Cennet:

"I want to talk through Internet, to see him [*his son*]. But how will it be possible? You cannot do it. I can't even imagine it. I earn 500-600 dollars, I send it for the school of my son, I pay the amount needed for food, the school depenses. I only have a hundred dollars left. I put 50 dollars aside in case my son calls someday asking for extra money."

Very tragically, Cennet does not share her sorrows with her son when they are able to communicate through the phone or on the rare occasions when she goes to an Internet cafe. When talking to her son, Cennet invents an imaginary world she has seen on television and presents it as if it was the life she is living in İstanbul:

"My son does not know anything. He is too young. He asks me what the country looks like. I answer him 'go to the university, I will hopefully bring you to Turkey.' I tell him that it is a beautiful place. I never tell him about how much I suffer. He asks me 'Mother, do you go to the parks, to the theater?' I tell

him ‘Yes, my son, I go everywhere.’ I lie to him so that he keeps on studying. God is great!”

The phone and the computer do not only ensure the communication with the homeland, they also connect the home to the rest of İstanbul. Such a connection seems crucial since, as already mentioned, these women are mostly undocumented workers who have limited access to the urban space. Below is a quotation from Begül who works for her uncle on her only day off. Thus, she can only communicate with her friends –who also work in İstanbul– through her cellphone:

“It has been eight months since my arrival....My uncle does not give me any permission. ‘Did you come here to work or did you come to see your friends?’ he asks me. I answer ‘Of course I am here to work’. ‘Then work! Do not ask me if you can see your classmate or another friend.’ I said OK. So, I talk to my friends via the phone but I never meet them.”

Begül’s working conditions seem to confirm Pappas-Delucas’ (Pappas-Delucas, 1999) argument according to which “to work as a live-in domestic worker, however, is a culturally acceptable alternative, primarily because the young, single migrant is not considered to be moving out on her own. Rather, it is understood that she is moving to live under the authority of a new household: moving from one patriarchal household (her family’s) to another (her employer’s)”. Thus, the employer of Begül, as well as her parents in Turkmenistan seem happy with this male authority that protects the beautiful young girl in this foreign country. However, nobody seems to care about the cruelty of prohibiting friendship to an eighteen year old girl whose life has been reduced to domestic work.

As to Oksana, she uses Skype as a means of contacting her friends in İstanbul, who are also members of the same church. According to what Oksana says, a local person reported to the police that the church in question was being visited by undocumented workers. As a result, the church was raided by the police who deported twenty-two people. Fortunately, that day Oksana was elsewhere. After that event, many domestic workers decided not to visit the church anymore. Oksana was one of them:

“I could not take the risk. I am not worried anymore on my days off. I can also do the things I do in church –reading, listening– in my room. Of course, it was a meeting place for us. But now, we have Internet and the phone. We still talk

on the phone, we share things. But we don't see each other anymore. Nobody wants to take a risk. Everybody has a goal. Everybody needs to work and earn money here. So, we contact each other through Internet even though we don't have a church anymore. We pretend like there is a church owing to Skype. We talk, we read from the holy book."

In summary, one can easily understand how important the phone and the computer are in the lives of migrant domestic workers who are trying to deal with a serious rupture in their lives: no liaison, except technology, seems to connect the pre-migration period to the post-migration period. Yet, very few of the employers want to recognize this since for the majority, it only implies the inflation of bills. The following is a conversation between Nurcan, and Deniz. The latter has been living in Germany for many years:

Deniz: I know that the poor lady is longing for a laptop since last year. You may not be able to buy a computer but she even does not have an Internet connection in her room. She desperately wants to read Russian newspapers. She does not have such an opportunity. She immensely feels the lack of it. She does not have a phone in her room. Could I make my point?

Nurcan: Deniz, nobody gives permission to such things.

Deniz: This is so in Turkey. I believe that this is a kind of slavery. Such consciousness has not developed in Turkey.

Nurcan: Deniz, that's not possible. That's too much.

Deniz: Mother, you say no to the most basic rights.

Nurcan: Then she will sit in front of the computer and she will forget about her patient, Deniz.

As one can clearly see from the quotation above, employers imitate each other when exercising power on their employees. They are doing so because others are also doing the same thing. Hence, they can be relieved. Thus, one can also talk of an "imagined community" of employers. A similar attitude to the one quoted above is quite bitterly experienced by Nana, a forty-five year old divorced woman, with a daughter left behind in the homeland:

"I just remembered now. I wasn't calling anyone. But there were people calling me. I also have a family and I have a cellphone. It was even a problem to use it. I don't like to talk for hours....But they call me and when they do, I don't talk for hours. Maybe my child will call. But that lady was always complaining 'phone calls, phone calls, phone calls.' My girl used to call from my cellphone to ask how I was doing. 'Aaaah! Phone call! What is she talking about?' I say I am not desolate. I have friends, family. I have just been hired. So they are curious, they ask me how I am doing. Are you hungry? Are they treating you well et cetera?I just remembered. You want to forget bad memories."

Hochschild claims that “the suffering of migrant women and their children is rarely visible to the First World beneficiaries of nanny love....The nanny’s love is a thing in itself. It is unique, private –fetishized.” In the case of Nana, the nanny’s love seems to be replaced by the care-giver’s care.

In conclusion, the rules concerning the use of technological means once again differ depending on the household in question. In some cases, the domestic worker is not authorized to make any phone calls, in other cases, she is not authorized to receive any phone calls. Similarly, in some cases employers give an extra computer to the use of the domestic worker or authorize the use of their personal computer, whereas in other cases they prohibit the use of the computer as an expensive source of distraction. Finally, the issue is not even debated in households where middle aged women care for elderly people. Thus, Galina for example did not use the word “Internet” once during her interview. Hence, it is possible to claim that the use of the computer, as well as the technologies related with it have a generation dimension. The younger generations seem more likely to consider easing the pain of separation through the use of Internet while the older generations are still inclined to rely on the use of the traditional means, i.e. the phone.

5.4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In her study *Workers and Strangers: The Household Service Economy and the Landscape of Suburban Fear*, Maher (Maher, 2003) points out to both the parallelism and the contradiction of two phenomena: On one hand, we see the proliferation of the tendency to fort up with more and more people buying homes within gated communities; on the other hand, we witness the emergence of a lifestyle which causes a new relationship of dependency between the “gated” individuals and the others, i.e. strangers working in the service sector. Paid domestic labor is probably the most problematic illustration of this paradox since the stranger lives within the private household. In the same vein, Dickey (Dickey, 2000) claims that “servants are crucial for maintaining class standing, yet all of these boundary crossings threaten that standing.” It is because of the existence of such a tension that the negotiation of the boundaries separating the home from the outside become a great source of conflict between the

employers and the migrant domestic workers. Once again, the pretension of the employer to preserve the privacy of the home clashes with the right of independence of the migrant domestic worker. Thus, there seems to be an inverse ratio between the interest of the employer and that of the employee: Every concession given to the domestic worker is considered as an intrusion to the privacy of the household from the point of view of the employer, while every concession given to the employer is considered as an intrusion to her independence from the point of view of the domestic worker. As a result, “getting out” and “letting in” become a subject of negotiation dealt differently in every household employing a migrant domestic worker. Employers are certainly more powerful in this process. However, depending on multiple criteria –the legal status, the length of stay, the work arrangement, the existence of a house rented collectively with other migrant women, the presence of friends and relatives among the migrant community as well as among the Turkish citizens, domestic workers are also able to increase their chance in the bargain.

6. CONCLUSION

“Our house is our corner of the world” says Bachelard (Bachelard, 1994). However, nowadays this corner is also inhabited by a stranger, a migrant domestic worker who has traveled long distances in order to earn a living. In this sense, one can say that since the beginning of 1990s, Turkey is witnessing the revival of a practice forgotten for almost twenty-five years: today, the adopted daughters of the past (Özbay, 1999) are returning back to the stage. However, they differ from the previous generations by their foreignness, and their wages.

The arrival of these women is both a relief, and a source of tension. On the one side, it alleviates the burden of the female members of the household, on the other side, it invalidates the traditional definition of the private space. Since these women arrive with their differences, that is a different lifestyle, a different habitus, and a different capital in Bourdieusian terms, our shelter can no longer be identified as “a ‘closed’, immobile space of familiar, personal ties and intimacy” (Yeoh&Huang, 2010). It can no longer stay intact of the effects of globalization.

Many authors (Yeoh&Huang, 2010; Lan, 2003; Akalın; 2010) point out to the crucial role of spatial deference in the diffusion of this tension. Thus, Akalın for instance, analyzing the relationship of employers and the “intimate Others” (Lan, 2003) in the upper-middle class villas in gated communities, underlines the intricate relationship of architecture and power relations. A specific design of these villas facilitates the construction of the employees as both “present and absent” depending on the will of the employers. However, different from Akalın’s sample, the employers I interviewed were rarely inhabitants of villas. The majority were living in apartments with restricted space. Thus, spatial deference alone was not sufficient in the prevention of “the reuniting of tastes (Bourdieu, 1984)”. In addition, even in cases where space was vast enough, the newly acquired status of the parties involved obliged having recourse to a second set of

boundaries. This argument was mostly illustrated in the case of Elvan and Begül. Coming from a rural background, the three story villa did not satisfy Elvan who preferred to hire an eighteen year old inexperienced girl with very limited capacity of negotiation.

Naming this second set of boundaries as symbolic boundaries, I have argued that it is mainly this second category of boundaries that organize the employer/employee hierarchy in contemporary times in the majority of private households. One can interpret the transition from physical boundaries to symbolic boundaries in two different ways. A pessimistic approach will underline the impossibility to identify/locate these boundaries, and thus the difficulty to challenge them. Thus, s/he will argue that such a transition will be at the expense of the migrant domestic workers. However, a positive approach will point out to the possibilities of manipulating these boundaries which are not created once and for all as in the case of clearly determined physical boundaries.

Home as a private space is a mythical construction. Thus, while mainly focusing on the power relations within the domestic space, this study has also taken into consideration that which is in the background, i.e. the quantity/quality of the interaction between the inside and the outside of the private household. Without the existence of such a background, the employer/employee relationship would be a total idiosyncrasy. The outcomes would solely be dependant on the individual performances of the employers and the employees; and with no exception, the victor would be the employer who would be leaving no space of maneuver to the domestic worker due to her undocumented status. However, such a perspective would fall short of giving meaning to the experiences of many empowered migrant women such as Nadya and Bahar. By marginalizing this category of migrants, it would falsely contribute to the reproduction of the stereotype of the victim migrant domestic worker. Thus, while not denying the extreme pressure exercised by the undocumented status, this study has tried to point out to the creation of different subjectivities of migrancy, and to the existence of multiple “resistance pockets” (Davidoff, 2002) within the private households. In short, it intended to illustrate how “the ‘other’ is not monolithic but consists of degrees of ‘otherness’, accentuated by the coming together of different cultural worlds which diverge from and/or resonate with one another in multiple ways.” (Momsen, 1999) The power to manipulate the symbolic boundaries seems to depend on this degree of

otherness, that is to the quality/quantity of the relations with the employee community residing outside of the household. Thus, Begül, who for the time being has a limited power of negotiation vis-a-vis her employer, can empower herself by strengthening her ties to the outside world.

Finally, this study has tried to point out to the width of the grey zone when live-in domestic work is concerned. The majority of both the employers, and the migrant domestic workers, are neither totally evil people, nor pure angels. Thus, exploitation is partial and subtle in the majority of the cases. The problem may be related to accommodation in one case, while to food (guests, going out et cetera) in another one. However, whatever the form of its embodiment is, the reaffirmation of authority exists in all employer/employee relationships which are in the end relations of power. Paid domestic work relationship between the employer and the employee is always a precarious one. In this sense, the employer and the domestic worker resemble acrobats trying to walk on the same tightrope. The tension affects both since the risk of falling is common. However, what makes the difference is the ground on which they will fall. While the former will land on the safety sheet, the latter will smash on the firm soil, for the employer has a whole “reserve army of labour²²” waiting for his/her call, while the employee only has a ticket back home.

²² An expression coined by Marx.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWEE PROFILES

Employees

Görüşme ci Adı	Yaş	Ülke	Yıl	Şu anda baktığı kişi	Medeni Hal	Eğitim/Önceki Meslek	Kalma izni
Oksana	50 civarı	Moldova/Ukrayna	8	Çocuk/Ev işi	Bekar	Ortaokul/Terzi	Yok
Begül	18	Türkmenistan	1	Hasta/Ev işi	Bekar	Teknikum/Resim	Yok
Bahar	46	Moldova	10	Gündelikçi	Dul	Üniversite/Ekonominist	Yok
Gümüş	33	Türkmenistan	10 ay	Hasta/Yaşlı	Evli	Halı Dokuma	Yok
Ayperi	40-50	Türkmenistan	6 yıl	Çocuk/Ev işi	Dul	Lise/Banka	Yok
Seher	30-40	Türkmenistan	2	Çocuk/Ev işi	Evli (Kocası da burada)	Ekmek fırınında çalışıyordu.	Yok
Tahna	48	Gürcistan	??	Yaşlı	Evli	Üniversite	Yok??
Cennet	30-40	Özbekistan	3+	Yaşlı	Boşanmış	Tekstil	Yok
Nana	45	Abazya-Gürcistan	5	Hasta	Boşanmış	Üniversite	Var
Nadya	42	Kırım	8	Gündelikçi	Boşanmış	Teknikum	Yok
Nakita	45	Moldova	4	Gündelikçi	Boşanmış	Lise/ Ameliyat Hemşiresi	Yok
Narin	56	Türkmenistan	2,5	Yaşlı	Boşanmış	Üniversite/Reklamcı	Yok
Galina	65	Moldova	6+	Yaşlı	Evli	Ortaokul	Yok
Nini	40	Gürcistan	2	Çocuk	Evli	Üniversite	Var

Employers

İsim	Yaş	Okul	İşveren	Meslek	Medeni Hal
Zerrin	47	Üniversite	Hastası var	Emekli öğretmen	Evli
Cevat	95	Deniz Harp Okulu	Yaşlı- İşveren	Amiral/Emekli	Dul
Ceyda	38	Üniversite?	Çocuğu var	Satış yöneticisi/Şu anda çalışmıyor	Evli
Korcan	49	Üniversite	Yaşlısı var	Matematikçi	Boşanmış
Elvan	58	Yüksekokul	Kanser-Evişi	Emekli öğretmen	Evli
Ersan	35	Üniversite	Çocuğu var	Özel bir firmada çalışıyor.	Evli
Mine	37	Üniversite	Çocuğu var	Turizmcı	Evli
Güray	78	Devlet Konservatuarı	Hastası var	Konservatuar Hocası/ Opera Sanatçısı/Emekli	Dul
Nurcan	65	Ortaokul	Yaşlısı var	Adli Tıp Kurumu/Emekli	Boşanmış?
Gülnur	59	Akademi	Yaşlısı var	Ev hanımı	Evli

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

LIVE-IN DOMESTIC WORKERS

1. İstanbul'a gelmeden önceki yaşamınızdan biraz bahseder misiniz? (Mesleğiniz, aileniz, eviniz, odanız, gününüzü dolduran aktiviteler, sorumluluklarınız, boş zamanlarda yaptıklarınız, arkadaş çevreniz, yalnız kalabilme sikliğiniz, size ait alanlar)
2. İstanbul'a gelme kararını nasıl aldınız? Ne kadar süredir buradasınız?
3. Şu anda çalışıyor musunuz?
4. Çalışığınız aileyi anlatır misiniz?
5. Çalışığınız evi anlatır misiniz? (Kaç kathı, kaç odalı...)
6. Evde size ait bir alan var mı? (Oda, kat...)
7. Size ait odayı biraz tarif eder misiniz?
8. Oda size verildiğinde nasıl bir yerdii? Odanızı ilk gördüğünüzde neler hissettiğiniz?
9. Siz odaya yerlestikten sonra neleri değiştirdiniz?
10. Odaniza sizden başka (ev sakinlerinden) kimler girip çıkıyor? Gelirlerse kapınızı çalışıyorlar mı?
11. Siz yokken odanızı kilitliyor musunuz?
12. Odaniza tanıdıklarla alabiliyor musunuz?
13. Odanızda kendinizi evin geri kalanından bağımsız hissedebiliyor musunuz?
14. Hangi saatler arasında çalışıyorsunuz? Herhangi bir saatte de sizden bir şey istenebiliyor mu?
15. Gece kendi odanızda mı (yoksa yaşlı bakılıyorsa yaşının yanında) yatıyorsunuz?
16. Odanızda kendinizi evinizde hissediyor musunuz? (Başka bir yerde evinizde hissediyor musunuz?)
17. Odanızla ilgili hiçbir sorun, bir tartışma yaşandı mı?

18. Odanızdan herhangi bir şikayetiniz var mı?
19. Bu şikayetinizi iş vereninizle paylaştınız mı?
20. Odanın size ait olmadığı hiç size hissettirildi mi?
21. Sizin elinizde olsa kendinize nasıl bir oda verirdiniz?
22. Evde sizin giremediğiniz yerler var mı?
23. İşvereninizle ortak alanların kullanımında hiç problem yaşadınız mı?
24. Hiç işvereninizle birlikte aktiviteler yapıyor musunuz? (Evin içinde ya da dışında)
25. Kendinizi aileden biri gibi görüyor musunuz?
26. Ülkenizdeki evinizde neleri özlüyorsunuz?
27. Burada kendi evinize çıkmayı düşünür müsunuz?
28. Haftada kaç gün izin yapıyorsunuz? İzninizde neler yapıyorsunuz?
29. Arkadaşlarla kiraladığınız bir ev var mı bu izinlerde gittiğiniz? Orada kendinizi evinizde hissediyor musunuz?
30. Burada çalışma izniniz var mı?
31. Rahatlıkla dışarı çıkıyor musunuz?
32. Çıktığınızda nerelere gidiyorsunuz?
33. İstanbul'da dışında olmak size ne hissettiriyor? (Özgürlek, korku, rahatlık, stres...)

Yaşınız:

Medeni Haliniz:

Eğitim Durumunuz:

Çocuk sayısı:

Gelinin Ülke:

EMPLOYERS

1. Ne zaman ve niçin evinize bir yardımcı almaya karar verdiniz?
2. Evinizde birini çalıştırmanın ne gibi avantajları var?
3. Evinizde birini çalıştırmanın ne gibi dezavantajları var?
4. Yardımcınızı aileden biri gibi görüyor musunuz?
5. Kan bağınzı olmayan biriyle aynı evde yaşamak nasıl bir deneyim?

6. Yardımcı birinin varlığında evde rahat hareket edebiliyor musunuz?
7. Evde bir başkasının olması dolayısıyla eskiden yapıp da artık yapamadığınız şeyler var mı?
8. Yardımcınızın kendisine ait bir odası var mı?
9. Odada neler var?
10. Sizce bir yardımcıının odasında neler olmalıdır?
11. Yardımcınız sizden ne isterse size gereksiz bir lüks gibi gelir?
12. O odayı ona vermeye nasıl karar verdiniz?
13. Yardımcınızın odasına misafir getirme hakkı var mı?
14. Yardımcınızla evde nasıl bir alan paylaşımı yaptınız? Evde onun giremediği alanlar mevcut mu?
15. Yardımcınızla aranızda alan paylaşımından dolayı hiç problem yaşanıyor mu?
16. Yardımcınız ne zamanlar dışarı çıkabiliyor?
17. Yardımcınızın sizin evinizde mutlu olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
18. Daha önce aranızda hiç tartışma çıktı mı? Veya çok sinirlendiğiniz oldu mu?
Tartışma konuları nelerdi? Nasıl halledildi?
19. Yardımcınızın kendine ait bir alanı olması gerektiğini düşünüyor musunuz?
20. Yardımcınızla ortak kullandığınız alanlarda hiç problem yaşanıyor mu?
21. Yardımcınızla hiç ortak alanlarda birlikte vakit geçiriyor musunuz? Muhabbet ediyor musunuz? (Birlikte kahve içme vesaire)
22. Size göre yardımcıınız evin içinde ne yaparsa/yapmak isterse çok ileri gitmiş olur?
23. Yardımcınız kendi kaldığı alanı ne şekilde değiştirirse çok sınırlenirsiniz?

Yaşınız:

Eğitim durumunuz:

Mesleğiniz:

Medeni Haliniz:

Çocuk Sayısı:

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