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Filipina Caregivers and Domestic Workers in Southern Taiwan:
Communities and Human Rights

By
Katie O'Brian

A Thesis Presented for the Requirements of
the Degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

This thesis is an ethnographic explorative case study of Filipina caregivers and domestic workers in Taiwan, based on seven months of field research. It combines participant observation, interviews with Filipina household workers and migrant worker NGO representatives and church workers, and a review of written materials from these NGOs. Using Arjun Appadurai's (1996) theoretical framework on landscapes and the production of locality, it explores how Filipina household workers create locality in the production of transnational ethnoscaples, as well as how they demand the recognition of their rights within the transnational ideoscapes of human rights. I found that Filipinas create locality through the creation and use of Filipino spaces, including the Catholic Church, Filipino restaurants and shops, and public spaces like parks. With respect to human rights, I found that Filipina household workers demand the recognition of their human rights through the assistance of the Church and migrant workers NGOs, but with limited success.

To the Filipina caregivers and domestic workers in Tainan
who generously let me into their lives and shared their stories with me

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Finally, the NGO and church workers around Taiwan, who tirelessly advocate on behalf of and support migrant workers, day in and day out, in order to give these men and women a better life in Taiwan, not only as workers but as human beings. Thank you for your time, for answering my myriad of questions about migrant labour in Taiwan and for explaining the fine details of lobbying, advocacy and case work to me. I am truly inspired by the work that each one of you does and hope that this thesis stands as a testament to that.

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat.

Katie O'Brian

October 2010

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List of Acronyms

BLA – Bureau of Labour Affairs, located in each city in Taiwan, manages local labour affairs

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CLA – Council of Labour Affairs, located in Taipei City, manages national labour affairs

ESA- Employment Services Act, the Taiwanese act which sets forth the employment and regulation of workers in Taiwan

HMISC – Hsinchu Catholic Diocese Migrants and Immigrants Service Center, in Hsinchu, Taiwan

HSA – Household Service Act, drafted by migrant worker NGOs in Taiwan to protect the rights of household workers

HWC – Hope Workers’ Center, in Chungli, Taiwan, the first migrant worker NGO in Taiwan

ILO – International Labour Organization

IOM – International Organization for Migration

LSA- Labour Standards Act, the Taiwanese law that sets forth the wages, contracts, working hours, annual holidays etc. of workers in Taiwan

MECO – Manila Economic Cultural Office, the Philippines representative agency for Taiwan

MENT – Migrants’ Empowerment Network in Taiwan, a network of 11 NGOs in Taiwan that work to improve the human rights and labour rights of migrant workers in Taiwan

MWCD – Migrant Workers’ Concern Desk, a Catholic NGO in Taipei, Taiwan

OFW – Overseas Filipino Worker, the common term for Filipinos who work abroad, also used by Filipinos themselves

OWWA – Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, an agency of the Philippine Department of Labour and Employment tasked with the welfare of OFWs

PAHSA – Promotion Alliance for the Household Service Act, a network of migrant worker NGOs in Taiwan, MENT’s predecessor

POEA – Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, tasked with monitoring, regulating, and promoting the employment of OFWs

SIMN – Scalabrini International Migration Network, an international Catholic NGO with a branch in Taipei, Taiwan.

SMISC – Stella Maris International Service Center, in Kaohsiung, Taiwan

TIWA – Taiwan International Workers’ Association, a Taiwanese NGO that concerns itself with the welfare of all foreign workers, not only migrant workers, run by Taiwanese staff.

TECO – Taiwanese Economic Cultural Office

UN – United Nations

Introduction

I met Maria back in 2006, when I was in Taiwan for the first time. A Filipina domestic worker in her mid-forties, Maria was employed in the house of a wealthy Taiwanese family: the parents were doctors, the youngest daughter attended a private bilingual school in Tainan, and the eldest daughter attended high school in the USA. A-Ma, the children's elderly grandmother, also lived in the house. I was working as an English teacher at the time and met Maria in the house of her employer, where I gave the youngest daughter private English lessons once a week. While our interaction never progressed beyond a few minutes of conversation, questions about her children, and some idle chit chat - and always took place in front of A-Ma or my student - I saw her every week, and she always greeted me with a friendly smile.

Since both parents worked long full-time hours, A-Ma supervised Maria. In her work, Maria was tasked with the housekeeping and cooking, caring for the youngest daughter, as well as looking after A-Ma and her needs. Due to our limited interaction, I never found out if Maria was ever given a day off, where she went on her day off, or if she knew other Filipinas in the neighbourhood. Whenever I was there, A-Ma, who spoke no English and rarely smiled, treated me, the Western English tutor, with respect. How she treated Maria was a different matter. Although I never saw A-Ma actually yell at her, it was obvious to me that Maria was treated in a subservient and dismissive way. My student, for her part, never thanked Maria for the snacks Maria brought her or for carrying her school bag upstairs each day; in fact, my student barely even acknowledged her presence.

Life in Taiwan for Maria was not so kind. I showed up one day and found Maria teary-eyed and upset. I asked her what was wrong. She said she was going home. I smiled uncertainly and said, "Oh, that's good - you can see your children!" She shook her head sadly and told me she did not want to go home. She informed me that A-Ma had decided that she no longer liked Maria and so she was being deported. She had to leave the next week. I was shocked. "Why?" I asked. She didn't know. She just told me that A-Ma no longer wanted her working in the house. Just like that? I thought. I wonder what Maria did to deserve this. I wonder if she really did anything or whether A-Ma had just decided

Maria was not subservient enough or she didn't obey her orders or... maybe she just didn't like her? But could you really fire someone over that in Taiwan?

A few weeks later, I showed up as usual for class at my student's house. Instead of Maria, I found another, much younger, Indonesian domestic worker. Friendly, timid, and with no English ability, she was the new Maria.

Maria's story has stayed with me ever since. My interaction with her was the first real glimpse I had into the lives of foreign domestic workers and caregivers in Taiwan. When I returned to Canada two years later, in 2008, I decided to focus my research on caregivers and domestic workers in Taiwan - Maria's story was one which I wanted to explore in more detail. I went back to Taiwan in 2009 to begin my research into the Filipino community in Tainan. I also returned to my previous part-time teaching job at a private English cram school or *buxiban*. During the week I spent my time around Taiwanese children, tutoring private students in their homes, and working alongside locals. On Sundays, I entered the Filipino world, conducting ethnographic research in their community - one surrounded on all sides by Taiwanese society, yet in a very different world.

As an English teacher working in Taiwan my life differs drastically from migrant workers. I am paid almost twice the monthly salary of a local teacher and three times that of a migrant worker. I can renew my work visa every year as long as I have a job, and could settle permanently in Taiwan if I wanted to. In fact, after five years of living consecutively in Taiwan, I am eligible for a permanent alien residency card. The state places no controls on my living arrangements and allows me to freely transfer jobs as often as I like. Such are the luxuries of an educated Westerner. Migrant workers, on the other hand, are barely paid the minimum wage and as temporary contract workers, they have three-year contracts, at the end of which they must leave the country for at least one day. They are allowed to work three contracts, for a maximum stay of nine years. Their living conditions are highly restricted, controlled, and they live under constant conditions of surveillance, by both the state and their employers. They live in their employers' homes or in factory dormitories, where they pay monthly fees for their lodging and food, and are subject to curfews. All foreigners in Taiwan have to undergo mandatory health check-ups.

As a ‘white collar’ worker, I only have to get these check-ups once a year. As blue collar workers, migrants from Southeast Asia have to undergo physicals every six, eighteen, and thirty months. While we are both ‘foreigners’ working in Taiwan, there are huge differences in our lives. These were just some of the issues that I was to discover in my field research.

As I delved into the literature on transnational domestic work and caregiving, I realized that what most interested me was what Filipina household workers in Taiwan do *outside* their work, on their rest time. As the following section will demonstrate, much of the scholarship on domestic work focuses on the nature of the work itself and the relationships between workers and employers. I wanted to move beyond the workplace and into the community, and look at the ways in which these women create a sense of community, of *Filipino-ness*, in a transnational setting like Taiwan. How do these women connect with other Filipinos? How do they participate in the Filipino community? How do they spend their days off? How important is the Catholic Church in terms of creating community? With this in mind, I sought to answer the following question: *How do Filipina caregivers and domestic workers create locality in the production of transnational ethnoscapes?*

Coupled with this, I also wanted to explore how domestics and caregivers demanded their rights as foreign workers. In Maria’s case, she was given no choice in the matter of her deportation. If she had had access to a non-governmental organization would she have complained? Do most domestic workers and caregivers stand up for their rights when faced with similar problems? If so, how do they do this? How important is the Catholic Church in this regard? How active are the NGOs in Taiwan in lobbying and advocating for these workers’ rights? Also, what kind of complaints do these women have regarding their jobs or their lives in Taiwan? I thus put forth a second research question: *how do Filipina caregivers and domestic workers demand the recognition of their rights within the transnational ideoscapes of human rights?* As the literature review illustrates, I used Arjun Appadurai’s (1996) concepts of ‘scapes’ and his theory on the production of locality as a broad theoretical framework for my thesis.

In an exploratory, inductive fashion, this thesis is an attempt to answer the preceding questions. The following section provides the theoretical framework for my study and looks at the relevant literature on domestic work and caregiving around the globe.

Literature Review – Theoretical Framework of the Thesis

This study on Filipina domestic workers and caregivers in Tainan was inspired by Arjun Appadurai's (1996) work on contemporary trends in globalization. His work is particularly relevant for this study as it addresses, amongst other things, issues of mass migration, a key feature of today's highly globalized worlds. And nowhere is this more present than in the sector of domestic work. Appadurai believes that there is disconnect or 'disjunctures' between today's economy, culture, and politics. He theorizes that one needs to look at the relationship between what he terms the "five dimensions of global cultural flows" (Appadurai 1996: 33): ethnoscapas, technoscapas, financescapas, mediascapas, and ideoscapas. Within the global arena of 'scapes,' Appadurai emphasizes that these global flows are 'irregular' and chaotic, and believes – as he states repeatedly - that there are fundamental 'disjunctures' among and between them. He also theorizes on the 'production of locality', a term which I use to describe community-building and the creation of 'Filipino-ness', for Filipina caregivers and domestic workers in Taiwan. Within locality, he discusses 'neighbourhoods', which are the concrete forms which locality take, and involve the conscious and deliberate actions of people (1996: 178-9, 182-183). The following concepts are central to my research in Taiwan:

Appadurai's 'Scapes'

Ethnoscapas: The landscape of people who are constantly on the move: tourists, immigrants, guest workers, refugees, exiles, etc. This landscape makes up our "shifting world", a world which is increasingly mobile (Appadurai 1996: 33)

Technoscapas: The flows of technology, 'high' and 'low', 'mechanical' and 'informational', which move across borders at very high rates (Appadurai 1996: 34)

Financescapas: The flows of global capital and finance: currency markets, stock exchanges, commodity speculations which is a "more mysterious, rapid, and difficult landscape" than it has ever been before (Appadurai 1996: 34-35)

Mediascapes: The landscapes of images distributed by media – newspapers, magazines, television and film production studios – to viewers around the globe. They are made up of ‘narratives’ and ethnoscapas (Appadurai 1996: 35)

Ideoscapes: The political and ideological images present in today’s world, including concepts like freedom, sovereignty, welfare, representation, democracy and rights. These terms have different meanings and thus become different forms of ideoscapes in different national and transnational contexts (Appadurai 1996: 36-37)

For the scope of this study, Appadurai’s ethnoscapas and ideoscapes will both be used as broad theoretical frameworks as a way to explore the experiences of Filipina caregivers and domestic workers. With respect to ethnoscapas, transnational Filipinos in Taiwan are an excellent example. Caregivers and domestics workers, in particular, are part of an international sector of workers who cross borders at high rates, often numerous times, moving to different parts of the globe to take advantage of better economic opportunities. While these ‘ethnoscape’ flows of domestic workers have been occurring for decades now, in recent years there has been a huge increase in people’s mobility; as Appadurai argues, these ethnoscapas, guest workers among them, move across borders more than ever before.

Ideoscapes are also significant here, especially the global discourse on human rights. As Appadurai argues, these ideoscapes are complicated, since ‘diasporas’ of intellectuals – in this case, NGOs and church workers – are constantly bringing new discourse on democracy – and rights – into different settings around the world (Appadurai 1996: 37). The human rights of transnational migrants like domestics and caregivers are important issues to explore, in order to gain a better understanding of the challenges and the lives that these women lead. Appadurai states that these two landscapes have a ‘disjunctive’ relationship with each other, constantly interacting, yet occurring amidst global cultural flows which are following “nonisomorphic paths” and are happening at an unprecedented ‘speed, scale, and volume’ (Appadurai 1996: 37).

Appadurai’s work has been critiqued by several scholars, among them, Jonathan Friedman (2004). Friedman believes that Appadurai’s discussion on the “transformation of the nation-state”, one consisting of a “contractual system of degree of participation and membership” places too much emphasis on the individual (Friedman 2004: 164). He states

that little is known about the ‘strong’ transnational groups which Appadurai proposes will come about with this transformation, and he questions just how much “individual autonomy” (something Appadurai emphasizes) these transnational corporations will actually allow, given the lack of evidence to support this (Friedman 2004: 164). In a different article, Friedman also critiques the new “transnational discourses” (of which Appadurai is part) and states that they are “ideological agendas”, part of what is “clearly a top down elitist program” based on “the experience of flying;” he thus believes this is a discourse of the rich and well-travelled. (Friedman 2002: 33). As Friedman argues, this discourse assumes without proof that the entire world is “on the move,” something which he vehemently opposes. While his argument is well-founded, given that much of the global population does not in fact travel (for example, the poorest of the poor are usually in no position to travel or migrate), Friedman does not address other aspects of Appadurai’s global cultural flows. While ethnoscapas constitute an essential part of Appadurai’s ‘scapes’ theory, his remaining four scapes are very much part of the new configuration of global flows, too and are not ‘elitist.’

Josiah McC. Heyman and Howard Campbell (2009) also critique Appadurai. They do not argue for a dismissal of Appadurai’s work, since they agree that there should be a focus on the “multiplicity of flows” (Heyman and Campbell 2009: 132). However, they propose placing more ‘weight’ on capital flows, especially financial (Appadurai’s ‘financescapes’) and to a lesser degree on “centralized political power” (Heyman and Campbell 2009: 132). By looking at global flows in this other way, these anthropologists believe it “helps us to understand global inequalities and the continuing importance of boundaries better than Appadurai’s approach does, and enables us to broach the topic of differentiated rights and treatments of mobile goods and populations” (Heyman and Campbell 2009: 132). Given the importance of capital financial flows in the current global environment, (and the fact that migrant labour cannot be separated from the financial capital flows which occur as a result of such labour) their argument is well-made.¹ Furthermore, Heyman and Campbell do not see the great ‘disjuncture’ which Appadurai

¹ Financescapes are beyond the scope of this study; however they are very much tied up in the Filipino ethnoscapas and ideoscapas present in Taiwan. In this vein, it would thus be worthwhile to pursue research on remittances (themselves financescapes) and their effects on and for the families of migrant workers working in Taiwan.

emphasizes, and they believe that one needs to move beyond the “rhetoric of disjuncture or irony” (Heyman and Campbell 2009: 135). Moreover, what they find really problematic is Appadurai’s argument that the present world represents a massive change from the past. They emphasize that this “obscures and simplifies the past”, disregarding the complexity of the past, the “intersecting flows” that have always occurred, and the fact that motion and mobility have always existed (even if not to the same scale as presently) (Heyman and Campbell: 136).

Appadurai, Friedman, and Heyman and Campbell all make strong arguments, and their respective views have contributed to the ways in which contemporary anthropologists and other scholars have examined and continue to examine global cultural flows. While Heyman and Campbell prioritize capital financial flows, this thesis focuses on ethnoscaples and ideoscapes, as I believe these landscapes are the most relevant for exploring community creation and the demand for the recognition of human rights for Filipina caregivers and domestic workers in Taiwan.

In addition to Appadurai’s work, this thesis addresses scholarship on international domestic work, as well as on human rights and resistance. In the following pages, the literature is divided into two parts: 1) international domestic work and caregiving and 2) human rights.

International Domestic Work

Along with Appadurai’s theoretical framework, this study addresses the rapidly expanding body of literature on international domestic work. With the continued demand for international domestic workers a common feature in today’s globalized world, there is now a very rich scholarship on international (paid) domestic work, something which Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo calls “large and theoretically sophisticated (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001: 207). In the past ten years alone, there has been an explosion in anthropological, sociological, historical, economic, and other disciplines of research on transnational female migration and domestic work. Ethnographers, in particular, have contributed extensively to the field of gendered migration, through their holistic and contextual approaches in this area (Mahler and Pessar 2006).

As Nana Oishi (2005) and Patricia R. Pessar (1999) argue, it was only in the 1980s that gender migration began to receive academic attention; prior to this, little attention was paid to the “gender dimension” of migration (Oishi 2005:7) and gender was not theorized as a concept in migration studies; instead it was seen as only one of the many variables involved (Pessar 1999:579). Furthermore, scholars on gendered migration found that the traditional approaches to migration did not suffice to fully explain female migration (Oishi 2005; Chant 1992). As Oishi argues, approaches such as neoclassical economic theory and structuralist theory tend to be “gender-blind” (Oishi 2005:7). In the past decade, the veritable explosion of studies has sought to address this gap in the gendered analysis of migration. However, as Sarah J. Mahler and Patricia R. Pessar (2006) argue, gender is still marginalized in the field of migration studies, and as such, there is the need for more research to be conducted here. In recent years, moreover, scholarship on migration has focused not only on gender aspect, but also on class, race, ethnicity, nationality, and identity (Glenn 1992; Rollins 1985; Pessar 1999; Cheng 2006; Lan 2006; Sills 2007a; 2007b; 2004). As these studies prove, it is essential to analyze domestic work not simply from a gender framework, but from one which incorporates all these dimensions.

The transnational migration of domestic workers has been referred to as the “nanny chain”, the “global care chain” (Hochschild 2002), and the “international division of reproductive labour (Parreñas 2000). Literature on the international division of labour (Nash 1983), and the gendered division of labour all point to the increased feminization of labour around the globe. This labour falls into the sectors of domestic and care work, health care, entertainment, and manufacturing and textiles (Piper 2008). The majority of studies, however, focus on domestic work and reproductive labour. Mary Romero’s (1992) ethnographic study on Mexican Chicanas in the United States was one of the first to explore the situation of transnational domestic workers. While her work focuses more on what she terms ‘job work’ (‘live-out’ domestic work, rather than ‘live-in’) her study is seminal to the field. Along with Romero, much of the previous research focused on transnational domestic work in Western countries, like Canada (Bakan and Stasiulis 1997; McKay 2005; Stasiulis and Bakan 2005; Pratt 2004), the United States (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007; 2003a; 2003b; 1997; 1994; Mary Romero 1992; Judith Rollins 1985; Bonnie Thornton Dill 1988); and England (Anderson 2000).

Since the mid-1990s, there has been more focus on non-Western countries, especially those in Asia. With the growing prosperity of the Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) in East and Southeast Asia, and the subsequent demand for domestic and care workers, this is not surprising. The feminization of migration is especially strong in Asia, as there are many intra-regional migratory flows in this area (Oishi 2005; Piper 2008). Research on foreign domestic work and caregiving in East and Southeast Asian countries is abundant: from Nicole Constable (2007; 2002) and Vivienne Wee and Amy Sim's (2005) work on Hong Kong, Christine Chin's research on Malaysia (2005; 1998), to Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Shirlena Huang (1998), Brenda S.A. Yeoh, Shirlena Huang and Joaquin Gonzalez III (1999), and Brenda S.A. Yeoh, Shirlena Huang, and Noor Abdul Rahman's (2005) research on Singapore. Graeme Hugo (2005) and Anne Loveband's (2004) work on Indonesian migrant workers is also significant, especially for the Taiwanese perspective, as this nationality of women now outnumbers their Filipina counterparts in Taiwan. On the macro level, Nicola Piper (2008; 2006; 2004), who has written extensively on migration policy and politics, and the rights of female migrant workers in East and Southeast Asia, points out that there is currently a dearth of theoretical research on the politics of international migration, especially with respect to gender. While the macro level is beyond the scope of this thesis, Piper's, along with Stasiulis and Bakan's (2005) work on citizenship and domestic work, and Chin's (1998) work on the 'evolving' state involvement in dimensions of gender, class, race and ethnicity, are important areas into which to pursue further research.

The Philippines is now the biggest labour-exporting country in the world, having recently overtaken Mexico (Asis and Piper 2008: 425). It is thus not surprising that the scholarship on Filipino migrant workers is some of – if not the – richest documented. The Manila-based Scalabrini Migration Center, for instance, publishes extensive academic literature on migration each year, especially through its quarterly journal, the *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, contributing enormously to 21st century migration scholarship. With respect to the Philippines, scholars such as Parreñas (2009; 2008; 2005; 2000), Maruja M.B. Asis (2005) and Stephen Sills (2010; 2007a; 2007b; 2004) have all focused specifically on this nation and its workers in their research.

Much has also been published on transnational migration to Taiwan. Pei-Chia Lan (2009; 2008a; 2008b; 2007; 2006; 2005; 2003a; 2003b; 2003c; 2000), Shu-Ju Ada Cheng (2006; 2004a; 2004b; 2003), Sills (2010; 2007a; 2007b; 2004), Sills and N. Chowthi (2007), and Chin-Ju Lin (1999)'s work all examine migrant labour in Taiwan, particularly Filipino workers, although Anne Loveband's work (2004) and some of Lan's research do discuss Indonesian caregivers and domestics. Hsiao-Chuan Hsia's (2007; 2006; 2003) research focuses primarily on Southeast Asian foreign spouses in Taiwan, an area which deserves more attention, given the number of marriage migrants entering Taiwan each year. With the exception of Stephen Sills, who conducted research in the southern city of Kaohsiung, research in Taiwan has been focused on the northern cities of Taipei and Taoyuan, where the most domestics and caregivers are employed. Conducting my study in the southern city of Tainan will thus provide a new geographical perspective through which to analyze international domestic work.

As laid out above, this proposed study will focus on Filipina domestic workers and caregivers' production of locality and the demand for human rights. As previously mentioned, Appadurai maintains that in today's globalized age, the production of locality is an "inherently fragile social achievement" (Appadurai 1996: 179). Not only that, but the very concept of locality is "relational and contextual" (Appadurai 1996:178). Locality thus differs in every transnational setting. The difficulty of achieving this is especially true for transnational migrants like domestic workers, who often struggle to create their own diasporic communities in foreign lands, restricted as they are by local, state, and cultural restraints. Most prior research on domestic work has focused on the interpersonal relationships between domestics and their female employers (Romero 1992; Rollins 1985; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007; Lan 2006) as well as these women's lives within the job itself (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007; Lan 2006). Therefore, as Brenda Yeoh and Shirlena Huang argue (1998), there is the need to move "beyond the domestic sphere" and examine community or 'locality' as Appadurai terms it, in these transnational Filipino 'ethnoscapes.' In order to contribute new ethnographic research to the field and fill the gap in the literature, I focus on the production of locality which occurs *outside* of the work sphere; in the area which Lan (2006) calls the "backstage." Parreñas' (2008) theory on placelessness is particularly relevant here, as it speaks to these women's sense of spatial displacement, as

they have no fixed geographic space to call their own. Yeoh and Huang (1998) also address this by pointing out the ‘marginal, residual’ nature of the public spaces these women appropriate. Rollins’ theory on ‘spatial deference’ is also applicable; although she refers to the domestic sphere in the household, this can be applied to migrant women’s actions in the public sphere as well, as they struggle to create a sense of community and to build cultural spaces for themselves, away and separate from their workplace.

Human Rights

In Appadurai’s framework on the five landscapes, human rights are one example of an ideoscape. The transnational ideoscapes found in this context are those ‘images’ of human rights which pertain to migrant workers, as well as to the Taiwanese state’s ideologies in this regard. As Appadurai argues, these ideoscapes are complicated, since ‘diasporas of intellectuals – in this case, experienced non-governmental organization (NGO) workers – are indeed bringing new discourse on human rights into the Taiwanese migrant worker context. In Taiwan, caregivers and domestics are poorly protected from abuse and the violation of their human rights. These transnational ideoscapes involve the various rights set forth in international instruments, such as the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), and numerous UN and International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions pertaining to migrant workers. Due to Taiwan’s political status and resulting exclusion from international bodies like the UN, ILO and International Organization for Migration (IOM), it is difficult for NGOs and workers to lobby for state policy improvement using international human rights instruments.² Moreover, lobbying the Taiwanese state for policy change is a struggle in itself for NGOs. Using Appadurai’s

² The People’s Republic of China (PRC), which has never governed Taiwan even for a single day, claims that Taiwan is an integral part of its territory. Due to PRC diplomatic influence, Taiwan is excluded from most international organizations including the UN General Assembly and the ILO, although it is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), has official diplomatic relations with 23 states, and maintains substantive diplomatic relations with many others, including Canada. Debates about the political status of Taiwan lie beyond the scope of this thesis. For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to keep in mind that Taiwan cannot be a signatory to UN documents, does not attend ILO and other meetings, and has no observers from such organizations. Local NGO activists, including those described in this thesis, thus have no direct access to such international bodies. Like their counterparts in other countries, however, they do use international legal texts as a basis for moral and political persuasion. As a result, Taiwan, anxious about its international status, often implements domestic laws and policies that accord with international declarations and conventions. This situation, which gives leverage to NGOs and churches in Taiwan, forms the larger context of the political and legal struggles for recognition of human rights described in this thesis.

ideoscapes, the second part of this study addresses how Filipina domestic workers and caregivers demand the recognition of their human rights, an area of study which necessitates looking at literature on resistance and human rights in ethnography.

The concept of human rights has undergone a major shift in the past fifty years, evolving from one which focused on liberal theory and civil and political rights, to one today which incorporates collective and cultural rights, as well as social and economic ones (Merry 2001). Thus the way that anthropologists look at and study human rights has shifted. Sally Eagle Merry argues that, “Over the past decade, anthropologists have developed a far more unbounded and contested understanding of culture” (Merry 2001:31). At the same time, human rights have changed, developed, and expanded thanks to globalization, the growth of capitalism, and the “explosion” of international NGOs (and thus international civil society) and international discourse and UN conferences (Merry 2001:31, 35).

Similarly, Marc Goodale (2006a; 2006c) maintains that since the mid to late 1980s, anthropology has played a more active role in the discourse on human rights. He argues that studying human rights through an anthropological lens – as this thesis does – requires a new critical anthropology on human rights. This relies on the blending of cultural critique, ethnography and other “hybrid methodologies”, intersubjectivity, and should also include political engagement and philosophical reflection. In addition, this new critical anthropology should strive towards what Goodale calls “normative humanism,” which constitutes a middle ground between the universal rights set out in the UNDHR and the ideas of cultural relativism. This is an anthropology that looks at how local people in specific situations organize themselves together to claim their human rights; how they organize in order to create “conditions for meaningful interactions” that put forth a “basic set of human-centered values,” values that “balance the whole breadth of local cultural and social possibilities with common cognitive, physical, and emotional imperatives” (Goodale 2006a: 492). This new critical kind of human rights would have to depend on the ability of populations or groups of people (‘collectivities’ in Goodale’s words) to organize themselves on the terms outlined above (Goodale 2006a: 492).

Goodale also argues for an “ecumenical anthropology of human rights”, one which both critiques contemporary human rights regimes and yet stays “politically and ethically committed” to these rights regimes (Goodale 2006b: 5). In a similar vein, Richard Ashby Wilson (2006) also argues for a new approach to the anthropology of human rights, calling for an ethnographic approach which addresses the “plural” and “fragmentary” nature of the international rights regime, rights which Jane K. Cowan (2006) sees as both “enabling” and “constraining.”

Activist anthropologist Shannon Speed’s (2006) work on critical activist engagement is also pertinent, since she calls for the merging of political action with cultural critique; an area which is particularly applicable for migrant worker NGOs in Taiwan in their work with domestics, caregivers, and other migrant workers. With respect to women’s rights in particular, Merry (2006) addresses issues of violence against women, stressing that only recently has such violence been deemed a human rights violation. These rights are an important part of rights’ studies, as they are new and are considered ‘marginal’ by many rights institutions (Merry 2006). The recent June 2010 ILO’s conference on the creation of a convention for international domestic workers is perhaps evidence that (more areas of) women’s human rights are finally on the path to being recognized and debated more fully.

In order to approach a new critical anthropology of human rights, Goodale posits that anthropologists must collaborate with activists, local intellectuals, and a number of social actors (Goodale 2006a). Furthermore, Merry (2006) argues that ‘intermediaries’, like community leaders, NGO participants, and social movement activists are essential in their role as ‘translators’, translating ideas from the ‘global arena down’ and the ‘local arenas up.’ Following this standpoint, I have collaborated with activists and social actors, through migrant worker NGOs, in order to better practice this anthropology.

With respect to transnational domestics and caregivers, much has been written by anthropologists, sociologists, and feminist scholars about notions of resistance and human rights. Many scholars argue that these women’s success in changing the meanings or the conditions of their work is limited (Lan 2006; Constable 2007). Domestic workers are constrained by restrictive state policies and fearful of losing their jobs and being deported (Tierney 2008; Cheng 2006; Constable 2007); thus, they usually do not resist in outright,

formal ways. Nevertheless, they are not passive victims, no matter how accommodating or deferential they seem to be (Constable 2007; Romero 1992). Following in the footsteps of several anthropologists who believe that too much emphasis has been placed on ideas of resistance (Cheng 2006; Brown 1996; Abu-Lughod 1990; Groves and Chang 2008), I too shy away from 'romanticizing' resistance; or, as Michael F. Brown (1996) terms it, "resisting resistance." Brown calls instead for a sense of "balance and rigor" rather than a "sense of 'moral self-validation' (Brown 2006: 733)." For her part, Shu-Ju Ada Cheng (2006) finds herself in a dilemma, in that she too, does not want to place too much emphasis on the notion of 'resistance', as she also wants to address the "material reality" of these women's "structural victimization" (Cheng 2006: 145). Echoing Foucault, Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) suggests in her work on Bedouin women and the ways in which they resist, that we should examine resistance as a 'diagnostic of power.' She maintains that many studies of resistance are "more concerned with finding resisters and explaining resistance than with examining power" (Abu-Lughod 1990: 41). According to her, it is essential that we look for and consider "nontrivial" all kinds of resistance. However, rather than considering these as "signs of human freedom", we should use them to learn more about the kinds of power that exist and how people are "caught up in them" (Abu-Lughod 1990: 42). We thus need a greater understanding of the complexity and forms of resistance.

With respect to Filipina domestics and caregivers in Taiwan, several ethnographers have pointed out the different forms of resistance that exist. For the most part, these are low-profile and non-traditional forms of resistance, unlike the more overt types of staged protest (such as union protests) of others groups of marginalized peoples. These include the use of linguistic capital (Lan 2006), discursive resistance (Constable 2007), chicanery, cajolery and negotiation (Dill 1988), and types of deference, such as linguistic forms (Lan 2006; Rollins 1985; Scott 1990) and the staged deference which domestics employ, pretending to be "unintelligent, subservient and content with their positions," in order to keep their jobs (Rollins 1985: 227). Nicole Constable (2007) argues that this type of deferential behavior can be both a form of resistance and accommodation. These women also make use of James Scott's (1990) 'hidden transcripts', a term which describes the ways in which subordinate peoples resist their situation, in low-profile ways, "offstage" - that is, beyond the direct observation of "powerholders" (Scott 1990: 4). Scott includes in

these 'hidden transcripts' the following: "rumor, gossip, folktales, jokes, songs, rituals, codes, and euphemisms" (Scott 1990: 19). In her work on domestic workers in Malaysia, Christine Chin (1998) borrows Scott's term to address what Indonesian and Filipina domestic workers say and do 'offstage': their version of "how and why they are treated in particular ways, and their responses to employers' behavior" (Chin 1998: 127).

Other forms of resistance, particularly in Taiwan, include the ways in which domestics meet collectively in parks or individually, how they take refuge in their employers' bathrooms in order to use the cell phones their employers have forbidden them to use. My intention here is not to romanticize resistance to the point of seeing it everywhere, since that would be misrepresenting the reality: that domestic worker and caregivers lack power in changing their working conditions and do not resist overtly. Moreover, as Michael Brown (1996) reminds us, the main goal of 'disciplined ethnography' is to let our 'interlocutors' "show us their social world in ways that make sense to them" (Brown 1996:733). Echoing Dill (1988), who argues the black domestics in the USA 'negotiate' power within their jobs, Filipina domestics in Taiwan do indeed negotiate power in certain aspects of their jobs, employing low-profile types of 'resistance', such as those mentioned above. As such, they are not simply passive, oppressed victims. To portray them like that, as Constable (2007) argues, would "neglect and conceal" other forms of "coexisting and competing forms of power and agency." Moreover, it would do injustice to how they perceive themselves; as Constable argues, even though these women may be subordinate, subservient and lack power, they do not see themselves as "passive pawns" (Constable 2007:202).

In order to contribute new ethnographic knowledge to the field, my research has examined the work of migrant worker NGOs in Taiwan in more depth than other ethnographers. While I focused my attention on the Filipino community in Tainan, my research on NGOs and the overall human rights of domestics and caregivers took me around Taiwan, thus providing an up-to-date, country-wide perspective, through which to analyze the advocacy, lobbying and case work that these organizations do on behalf of transnational migrant workers.

The goal of this exploratory research is thus to understand how Filipina domestic workers and caregivers create a sense of community and Filipino-ness as migrant workers in Taiwan and to explore how they demand the recognition of their human rights as foreign workers. The objectives of this study are to document and analyze how these transnational Filipinos produce a sense of locality, as well as demand the recognition of their rights as transnational migrant workers.

It must be noted that Filipino factory workers (male and female) are very much part of this study as well. Along with their caregiver and domestic worker counterparts, they too make up the Filipino community in the city of Tainan, and around Taiwan as a whole. As such, I refer to these workers numerous times, often as a way to compare and contrast the respective experiences of these two sets of workers, and also because, as Filipinos, they have similar experiences in Taiwan; their struggles and problems, and both the positive and negative experiences that come with being a transnational migrant worker. While caregivers and domestic workers are at the heart of this study, it would be remiss of me not to speak of factory workers as well.

Methodology

I began my field research in May, 2009. What I had envisioned as three months of field research took me closer to seven months to complete. This was due to the difficulty in arranging interviews, and the fact that I was working full-time during this period. This thesis was the result of an ethnographic, qualitative case study of Filipina domestic workers and caregivers in the city of Tainan, Taiwan. I employed triangulation methodology, using the following three methods: participant observation; semi-structured and open-ended interviews; and review of written materials from migrant worker NGOs and other organizations.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is an important aspect in any ethnographic study and an excellent way to immerse oneself in the culture. As Stephen Sills points out, ethnography is exploratory and flexible in nature, and necessitates the ethnographer's participation in "the process of discovery" (Sills 2004:45). Aside from the information gleaned from

interviews, I gained a lot from simply spending time with Filipinos, whether at church or elsewhere in the community.

In Tainan, there are three Catholic Churches which hold English masses for the Filipino community: St. Peter's, St. Bartholomew's, and Holy Cross³. Before I officially began my field research, I attended mass at Holy Cross a few times, in order to meet some of the community. Holy Cross has the largest congregation of all the Filipino Churches in Tainan (there are usually 200-300 Filipinos each Sunday) as it is closest to downtown where the migrant worker neighbourhood is located, and the mass is in the late afternoon, a convenient time for many workers. However, I found it difficult to meet caregivers or domestic workers there, since most parishioners leave after the service and there are no religious or social groups. After asking a Filipina friend, I found out about St. Peter's and St. Bartholomew's, and soon began attending both churches on a regular basis. There are also several Protestant churches in Tainan. I went to two Full Gospel Christian (Born Again) churches (also called Pentecostal churches). The first one, named Assembly of God, I attended several times to observe and meet Filipinos, although I did not conduct any interviews there. People there were very friendly and helped me make contact with a few respondents. The second Full-Gospel Born Again parish, Church of God, I attended twice and conducted three interviews there. There are a few other Filipino Christian churches in the Tainan area of various denominations, but due to time constraints, I did not visit them.

From the start, I was well received in the Filipino community. At every one of the churches and community gatherings I went to, I was welcomed kindly and in a friendly manner. In fact, at both St. Peter's and St. Bartholomew's, on my first day there, I was immediately approached and greeted. The fact that I was a foreigner, and above all a Canadian⁴, helped me integrate into the community. In my opinion, being Canadian definitely helped people trust me more readily than they would have a local Taiwanese. In addition, as a woman, I could more easily integrate into the world of domestics and caregivers, than a man could. Not only that, but on a personal level, I could identify with

³ Unless indicated, all the names of people and churches have been changed in order to protect people's confidentiality, privacy and anonymity.

⁴ Most of the Filipinos I talked with or interviewed in Tainan want to work in Canada. Many of them know someone, either a family member or friend, who works there.

them and their feelings of “otherness” seeing as how we were both foreigners in Taiwan.⁵ Nevertheless, I was very aware of the marked differences between us, such as our social status in Taiwan and my privileged background as an educated Westerner. The Filipinos I met were fully aware of this, too. Due to this, on four separate occasions, Filipina women asked me for loans. I was also approached several times by Filipinos and asked to help them secure jobs in Canada. At some of the events and churches I attended, I was treated with deference and called “ma’am” (a respectful term Filipinos use to address their employers). Initially, I was treated as a guest; as such, I was not permitted to help prepare meals or clean up. While I know they did this out of respect for me, it made me feel awkward and embarrassed, and I often had to tell them not to treat me like that. I tried hard to overcome this, and with some of the members of the community I did.

During my field research, I spent considerable time in the Catholic Church and answered Filipinos’ questions about my religious background and beliefs honestly (I am agnostic), even on occasion entering into debates on various religious issues. Never did I feel like I was being judged for my lack of Christian beliefs. Rather, what I felt was a genuine interest and curiosity from many of them about my life as a foreigner in Taiwan, my opinions on Taiwan and migrant work, and my Canadian background and lifestyle. Many of them also had questions about Canada. Some of them, I know, found it funny or surprising that I, as a Canadian, would want to research Filipino migrant workers in Taiwan. However strange they found this, they were interested in my research and always willing to help me out, by answering my numerous queries about the Philippines and Filipino workers, finding respondents for me, or putting me in touch with other Filipinos who could answer my countless questions. In addition, for many of the Filipinos whom I interviewed and spent time with, I was the first Westerner that they came to know in a non-working capacity, and for some of them, I became their first Western friend.

I spent almost every Sunday at one of the local Catholic churches, as well as in the migrant worker neighbourhood, and immersed myself in the local Filipino community. After a few months of research, I became easily recognizable in the community - there are very few Westerners in Tainan who hang out in these Filipino spaces. Most Sundays, I

⁵ In his thesis on Filipinos in Kaohsiung, Stephen Sills too comments that his identity as a foreigner helped him to “identify with Filipino otherness” (Sills, 2004:128)

attended both St. Peter's and St. Bartholomew's, sometimes going to mass, but always spending time with the mass-goers after the service. I sometimes conducted interviews, but the rest of the time I just hung out and joined them in whatever activity they were participating in, from parties, to meetings, to religious and social events, to simply relaxing. At St. Peter's, I usually joined the church council group's Sunday lunches, where I experienced the camaraderie and fun-loving nature of the Filipinos, and ate delicious Filipino food. I always marveled at their "irreverent spirit" (Groves and Chang, 2008:249), given how tiring, consuming, and demanding their jobs are. It was impossible to tell that some of them had just come off 12-hour night shifts at the factories or worked six impossibly long days housekeeping and caring for their elderly wards. While most of them spoke to each other in Tagalog or in local dialects, they would usually translate what they were saying into English for me. The priest there - also a foreigner and non-Filipino like me - and I would often converse together, talking about my research, the migrant worker community in Tainan City, and other cultural and global issues. I also attended St. Bartholomew's Church. The ambience here differed from St. Peter's, as the congregation there is much smaller and there are a larger percentage of caregivers and domestic workers in attendance. I got to know the community at St. Bartholomew's quite well, and was lucky enough to participate in many activities organized there, including numerous birthday and farewell parties, a Christmas party, fundraisers, raffles, group meetings, and event-planning meetings. From the outset of my research, I was invited to pretty much every Sunday event they had. I was even invited to sit-in on official church group meetings where everything from funding, parties, and religious prayer was discussed. Even though these were largely conducted in Tagalog, I always felt at ease; whenever something relevant or of interest to me was discussed, or whenever I asked, someone always translated for me.

Throughout my seven-month research period, I attended religious celebrations at church, like the annual Santa Cruzan Fiesta in May, as well as large-scale social events, like National Migrants Sunday, an event held by Filipino communities around Taiwan each September. I also joined Filipinos on outings downtown, into the migrant worker neighbourhood, to shopping malls, parks, and to the Filipino disco and karaoke bars. In addition, I accompanied some Filipino friends to the small town of Gangshan, in Kaohsiung

County, where I met a large group of Filipinos, mostly factory workers. In June 2010, I had the wonderful opportunity to meet a fellow researcher, American sociologist Stephen Sills, who had also conducted ethnographic research in the Filipino community in Taiwan. I met him at a Filipino church in Kaohsiung where I sat in on a group interview with five factory workers, giving me the chance to hear firsthand from a different group of Filipinos. In addition, I visited a male Filipino factory dormitory in Tainan several times, which gave me insight into the (sometimes abysmal) living conditions of foreign factory workers in Taiwan.

I also conducted ethnographic research outside of the Filipino community. In October 2009, I attended a three-day workshop-seminar run by NGO Stella Maris International Service Center in Kaohsiung, entitled, “Developing Enriched-Facilitative Skills in Guidance and Counseling for Migrants and Trafficked People.” This was held to give NGO workers in Taiwan concerned with the welfare of migrants, a chance to come together to talk about their experiences and learn more about counseling workers. It was an excellent opportunity to hear what these NGOs are doing to advocate and lobby on behalf of migrant workers. I also attended the December 2009 International Migrants Day Rally in Taipei, run by the Migrant Empowerment Network of Taiwan (MENT), a national network of migrant worker NGOs. This gave me the chance to see how NGOs around Taiwan are fighting publically and vocally for migrant’s rights; not to mention, I also got to see all four nationalities of migrant workers - Filipinos, Indonesians, Vietnamese, and Thais - gathering together to raise their voices in protest.

Interviews – Sampling and Questions

Sample A – Caregivers and Domestic Workers

In May 2009, I ventured into the Filipino community with introduction letter and consent forms in hand. I had previously only written English versions, believing all Filipinos to have excellent English skills. At the request of the ethics committee at my university, I had these documents translated into Tagalog and was glad that I had. While the majority of Filipinos do in fact speak quite good English, some do not. The Tagalog version thus helped put my respondents at ease.

I reached the majority of my caregiver and domestic worker sample at or through St. Bartholomew's and St. Peter's. I employed non-purposive snowball sampling, asking respondents to refer me to other caregiver and domestics who would be willing to do an interview. I had a great deal of help from one of my first respondents, Anna, a caregiver in her thirties, and a parishioner at St. Bartholomew's. She was invaluable in helping arrange interviews for me and contacting and approaching fellow caregivers. Other respondents also helped put me in touch with women whom I could interview. Samuel, the only factory worker that I interviewed, put me in contact with the pastor at the Full Gospel Born Again Church, Church of God, where I interviewed three women. While some women agreed right away to be interviewed or did so after speaking with other research participants, some of the women I approached did not want to be interviewed. This was due to time constraints (many caregivers and domestics have very limited days off), embarrassment over their poor levels of English, or simply because they did not want to, for whatever reason.

I interviewed twenty Filipina women in total.⁶ Sixteen of the twenty women were 'caregivers' by contract. Out of these, nine women cared for elderly wards, five did mostly housekeeping, and two were nannies for young children and housekeepers as well (I address the ambiguity of the term 'caregiver' a little later in this section, when I discuss terminology). Out of the four remaining women in my sample, one woman had previously been a caregiver but at the time of our interview, had recently transferred to factory work. One woman had previously been a nursing aide in a senior's home and was now employed as a factory worker. Two women were factory workers by contract; however, they lived in the homes of their employers, where the family business/factor was, and did a great deal of housekeeping before and after their work in the factory each day.

Sample B - NGO Directors, Representatives and Church Workers

In order to obtain a clear picture of the kind of work the NGO community was undertaking for and on behalf of migrants, I interviewed seven NGO directors, representatives and church workers from all over Taiwan. Two of these were foreign church workers in Tainan, whom I met through my time at St. Peter's and St.

⁶ See Appendix 2 and 3 for demographic information on these women.

Bartholomew's. Four respondents were directors of migrant worker NGOs in cities in northern, central, and southern Taiwan respectively. Of these, three were male foreign missionaries and one was a local Taiwanese. I also interviewed one female church worker, who is a representative from a migrant worker NGO in the north of Taiwan. In order to find out more about the Filipino community in Tainan, I also interviewed Samuel, a factory worker in his thirties, who was a very active member of the community and organized a number of social events for Filipinos during his time in Taiwan.

I contacted a few respondents via email or on the phone, through information I had found in online publications or newsletters. I initiated contact with some NGO directors myself, sending them an introduction email, and faxing them copies of my introduction letter and consent forms. The two church workers in Tainan and Samuel also helped me contact a few NGO directors.

Interviews

I conducted qualitative semi-structured and open-ended interviews for both sets of interviews. For the caregiver and domestic worker interviews, I had a list of interview questions prepared, which aside from demographic information, involved the discussion of various themes (see Appendix 4A). As is often the case with interviews and ethnographic research in anthropology, we often deviated from the questions and talked about other topics as well. Interview times varied: the shortest was twenty-six minutes and the longest one hour and four minutes, with the majority being between thirty and forty minutes. All but five of these interviews occurred on Sundays. They took place at a number of different locations, all chosen by my respondents. The majority were conducted at church, while others took place in public places like parks, university campuses, plazas, coffee shops, and McDonalds. With one domestic worker, I conducted half the interview in my home and finished it a few weeks later in the foyer of the clinic where she worked. I only interviewed one caregiver at the house of her employer; we sat outside while her elderly wards napped.

For my interviews with NGO directors, representatives, and church workers I asked questions on the following themes: the work they do and the impact it has on migrant workers; funding; their experience with Filipinos and how it differs from working with

other nationalities of migrants; the biggest struggles facing migrants, household workers in particular; the broker system; the role of the Church; networking with other NGOs; international human rights instruments; global links; Taiwan's challenges as a non-recognized state; among others (see Appendix 4B). For the most part, these interviews took place at the NGOs themselves. Two interviews were conducted over Skype. Interviews with the two church workers in Tainan were conducted at their respective places of work. All interviews took place at times chosen by my respondents, on all days of the week.

Review of Written Materials from Migrant Workers NGOs

Information obtained from written documents by migrant worker NGOs has also been incorporated into my thesis.⁷ These papers were invaluable sources of information, as they provided up-to-date, in-depth analysis on migrant labour in Taiwan. Several reports included 2008 and 2009 statistics from migrant worker NGOs, including notes and statistics on all forms of complaints and casework conducted at these organizations. From these, I gleaned information on the following: the four different nationalities of migrant workers and their governments; the broker system, placement and broker fees, the Labour Standards Law; contracts and salaries; direct hiring; tax laws; forced savings; illegal workers; medical check-ups; police and court system; forced repatriation; image of migrant workers in society; occupational health and safety; abuse; and human trafficking. Although these are not academically refereed articles, and fall into the category of 'grey literature', they provided me with pertinent and very up-to-date information. These materials were written by missionaries and NGO staff with extensive experience in working with and on behalf of migrant labour in Taiwan, and were therefore, extremely useful documents.

Terminology

The term 'domestic worker' is a rather all-encompassing term in the literature. Live-in domestic work can refer to any or all of the following: housekeeping (not only limited to the place of employment), caring for children, the elderly, or the sick, and any

⁷ These were all English documents, as the majority of migrant worker NGOs are run by English-speaking Catholic missionaries. I did not read any Chinese materials for this thesis. The one Taiwanese NGO director whom I interviewed publishes NGO materials in English quite frequently.

other jobs that the family may give their worker. In Taiwan, this job can also include working at the family business, a small factory, restaurant, or shop (work which is all illegal). In her research on Taiwan, Pei-Chia Lan (2006) addresses the ambiguity of the terms 'domestic worker' and 'caregiver', choosing to use the term 'domestic worker.' I make the distinction between these two terms when relevant; however, for the most part I use both terms, as well as 'household worker', to refer to those women who live and work in people's homes. Moreover, most of the women I interviewed identified themselves as 'caregivers', not domestic workers, and the majority of them were on caregiver contracts, even though their work may not have involved any 'caregiving' per se. I address the ambiguity of the terms 'domestic worker' and 'caregiver' in Chapter 2 and discuss what these terms mean in the context of Taiwan.

I use the term 'Filipina' in order to refer to female Filipinas, as this is the word that Filipinos themselves use. When discussing Filipinos in general or the Filipino community, I use the "o" ending.

Finally, I employ the term 'migrant worker NGO' to refer to those service centers and organizations, run largely by foreign missionaries and some local Taiwanese, but not by migrant workers themselves, although some migrant workers do volunteer and work there. From what I observed, migrant workers do not run these organizations as they do not have the time since they all work full-time, nor could they do this sustainably as their contracts are of short duration. These organizations lobby, advocate and raise public awareness for migrant workers' rights, provide legal and immigration counseling and assistance, working on behalf of migrants all over Taiwan. I make a distinction between these NGOs and those organizations founded by migrant workers themselves, such as religious groups, music groups and ethnic-based organizations. I explain the distinction where necessary.

Research Limitations

Given the small size of my sample, my data is not representative of all Filipinos in Taiwan. As such, I do not want to generalize the situation for all Filipinos caregivers and domestics in Taiwan. Rather, my attempt is to shed light on the experiences of these

twenty women and the Filipino community in Tainan, in order to give their respective and collective community experiences a voice, and illustrate the ways in which they create community and demand the recognition of their human rights. In addition, like Stephen Sills (2004), I found the majority of my sample at or through the Church; thus my findings may be not be representative of those who do not attend church on a regular basis. In addition, I conducted a large part of my research at Catholic churches; thus, my findings are not necessarily indicative of those Filipinos who attend non-Catholic churches. I also got varied levels of responses to my interview questions: some were lengthy, while others were one-word answers. Much of this depended on my respondent's level of English and how comfortable they were answering a particular question. For instance, for those with lower levels of English, I had to repeat questions a few times and respondents sometimes chose to skip a question because they did not understand. Some women did not feel comfortable answering questions about human rights in their jobs and any complaints they might have. Several answered these questions quickly or said everything was "fine" or "ok" in a tone that implied that maybe this was not the case. In some instances, therefore, I did not get the whole story. Overall, I would say that my respondents were more comfortable discussing their days off, church, and the Filipino community, than they were discussing their employers or problems at work.

Context of the Thesis

The City of Tainan

Located in the south, Tainan is the old capital and the oldest city in Taiwan. It is the fourth-largest city in Taiwan, with a population of approximately 760, 000 (Tainan City Government 2010). However, with the recent amalgamation of Tainan City and Tainan County, whose population is approximately 1 million (Tainan County Government 2008) this figure is now closer to 1.8 million.⁸ Tainan has a small-town feel to it and is more traditional than the north, with a great many temples, historical sites, and traditional snack foods. Similar to other cities and a notable feature of the economic landscape, Tainan has many small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). As Fu-Lai Tony Yu (2009) argues,

⁸ Due to this and because many migrants workers work in the county, but attend church and spend their day off in the city, I treat Tainan City and Tainan County as one entity in this thesis.

many of the small businesses are family businesses. Several of the women I interviewed worked as domestic workers for families who owned a small business, often a factory. In addition to housekeeping, several of them also worked in the family's factory during the day, thus doubling as domestic-factory workers. Two women I interviewed actually had factory worker contracts, but did a large amount of housekeeping before and after their factory work. Another woman I interviewed had a caregiver contract but worked in her employer's factory during the day. This is quite common in Taiwan, even though this kind of work is non-contractual and illegal. Tainan is also home to many factories and several science parks. Migrants work in textiles, metalwork, plastics, and machinery parts (Tainan City Government). Chimei Corporation, for instance, one of the best known Taiwanese companies and a leader in petrochemicals and optoelectronics (Chimei Corporation 2003) employs a large number of Filipina women in their electronics sector.

As of August 2010, Tainan had 6,675 registered migrant workers, with 17,707 migrant workers in Tainan County (Council of Labour Affairs 2010 Table 14-16).⁹ In Tainan City, there are approximately 4225 caregivers and domestic workers, according to a telephone interview with the Tainan Bureau of Labour Affairs. In comparison, in August 2010, Taipei City had 38,718; Taipei County had 52,434; Kaohsiung City had 12,703; Kaohsiung County had 14,886; Taichung City had 15,342; and Taichung County had 31,523 caregivers and domestic workers (Council of Labour Affairs 2010, table 14-16). As such, Tainan's migrant worker community is much smaller, and the 'migrant worker neighbourhood' of businesses catering to foreign workers, is noticeably smaller. Stephen Sills (Sills 2004: 121) points out that southern Taiwan has fewer resources for migrant workers than the north. Tainan, unlike Kaohsiung, has no migrant worker centres or NGOs.

The Economic Crisis

I began my research in the spring of 2009, in the midst of the economic crisis. The crisis is therefore very much part of the context of this study. It affected a great number of migrant workers in 2008 and 2009, as many were laid off and sent home. In July 2009, the Council of Labour Affairs (CLA) announced that companies had laid off approximately 37,000 foreign workers (Huang 2009e). Due to a slowing of production in Taiwan, the CLA

⁹ These figures only include legal migrant workers. There are thousands of undocumented migrant workers in Taiwan.

cut foreign labour quotas in the 3D industries¹⁰, so as to give locals more job opportunities (Huang 2010c). Filipinos were especially affected, since many of them work in the high-tech sector, one of the areas hardest hit by the economic downturn. Interestingly, the number of caregivers did not decrease and actually increased in 2009 (Fuchs 2010: 3). Throughout 2009 and up until the beginning of 2010, there were articles in the English newspapers quite regularly about migrant labour in Taiwan. These included stories on local labour groups' opposition to migrant labour; cuts in the foreign labour force; NGOs and foreign labour groups protesting the conditions of domestic workers and caregivers; reaction to a proposal to abolish the minimum wage for migrant workers; and editorials about the poor working conditions of these workers. At the time of writing in the summer of 2010, the Taiwanese economy had recovered somewhat. As a result, many workers who had been laid off during the crisis were hired back again, and thousands more migrant workers arrived in Taiwan. In August 2010, the number of foreign workers was at an all-time high of 372,146, compared with 344,599 in August 2009 (Council of Labour Affairs 2010 Table 14-16).

Human Rights Discourse in Taiwan

Human rights discourse occurs at all levels in Taiwan. I conducted my research in a setting rife with human rights debate and discussion. In recent years, the Taiwanese government has been actively attempting to shed its image as a nation with a poor human rights record. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government of President Chen Shui-Bian, in power from 2000-08, sought to differentiate itself from its predecessors, the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) using the slogan, "Rule by Human Rights." Chen's government made a number of important reforms to migrant labour policy during these years (Kung 2006). The current KMT government of Ma Ying-jeou, in power since 2008, is also intent on improving Taiwan's human rights situation, or at least showing voters that they can compete with the DPP on this issue. In March 2009, the government ratified two UN covenants, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. As Taiwan greatly wants membership in the UN and the ILO, it has been striving in recent years to improve its

¹⁰ Also known as the 3K industries, 3D jobs are considered 'dirty, difficulty and dangerous' and include manufacturing, construction, seafaring, and domestic work and caregiving.

human rights record. In 2009, Taiwan passed an anti-human trafficking law, which has already made inroads into combating trafficking, and has elevated Taiwan to Tier 1 status in the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report 2010, from its Tier 2 status the previous year (US Department of State 2010).

Not surprisingly, within civil society, human rights are an especially hot topic for debate, especially amongst NGOs and in the Filipino churches. The Chinese Association for Human Rights (CAHR), for instance, is the oldest non-governmental human rights organization in Taiwan. Founded in 1979, the CAHR focuses on issues such as the promotion of human rights and the advancement of human rights laws. They conduct human rights research, as well as participate in international human rights events, and have relationships with international human rights organizations.¹¹ There is also the Taiwanese Association for Human Rights (TAHR), one of the oldest independent human rights organizations in Taiwan, which actively monitors the state and proposes amendments to the state so as to conform to international human rights standards.¹² The Taiwan International Workers' Association (TIWA) is another NGO which concerns itself with protecting and advocating for the labour rights of migrants. TIWA works alongside ten other migrant worker NGOs in a national network of NGOs and church organizations, called the Migrant Empowerment Network in Taiwan (MENT), founded in 2003 (Chapter 4 discusses MENT in more detail). Individually and through MENT, these migrant worker NGOs are very active around Taiwan, lobbying, advocating, and fighting for migrant workers' rights. Several of these NGOs have international connections with other human rights' organizations in the international community, which strengthens their capacity to lobby for policy change, and inform and educate workers on their rights.¹³

Filipino churches around the island also play an integral role in disseminating and discussing human rights discourse. Many of the priests at these churches (the majority are foreign missionaries) give talks and seminars before or after Sunday mass, educating workers on their rights and providing them with important labour education. The Episcopal

¹¹ For more information on CAHR visit their website: <http://www.cahr.org.tw/english.php>

¹² For more information on TAHR visit their website: <http://www.tahr.org.tw/site/english/engintro1.html>

¹³ For more information on the history and development of human rights discourse in Taiwan refer to Mab Huang and Shu-fen Lin's 2002 article, "Democratization in Taiwan and Its Discontents" (Huang and Lin 2002).

Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, for instance, also publishes a magazine, which includes write-ups and contact information on many of the NGOs working with and for migrants. A number of these foreign missionaries also give papers at international conferences on the rights of migrant workers. Church workers also make visits to the factory dormitories where Filipinos live, providing not only pastoral services, but also labour-related counseling. The majority of migrant worker NGOs are run by Catholic missionaries and operate in or through the auspice of these churches.

Furthermore, the two major English newspapers in Taiwan, *the China Post* and *the Taipei Times* often carry news stories on issues relating to migrant labour in Taiwan. Many of these stories report on state migrant labour policies and NGO lobbying, as well as on some of the abuses these workers face in Taiwan, domestic workers and caregivers in particular. On occasion there are even op-ed pieces and letters to the editor concerning these issues. There are also occasional human interest stories about workers' positive experiences.

Thanks in part to pressure from migrant worker NGOs and from the international community, the rights of migrant workers is an issue that is being debated and discussed more and more in Taiwan. As such, these ideas of 'human rights' are not Western notions that I am bringing into the forum and imposing on my respondents; rather this discourse is already there and I am exploring it from that standpoint. Inspired by Goodale's normative humanism, I seek to show how particular forms of human rights are formulated in Taiwan by social actors in a specific social and historical context.

The Role of the Philippine State

Overseas employment from the Philippines, as Stephen Sills maintains, is "highly organized and bureaucratized", and run through an Inter-Agency Committee made up of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), and the Bureau of Immigration (BI) (Sills 2004: 134-5). Given the importance of these workers to the national economy, the state has named overseas foreign workers (OFW) "modern day heroes", paying tribute to them for their enormous economic contribution (overseas remittances in 2009 equaled US\$17 billion (Sills 2010)).

The state is also involved in the protection and support of its overseas workers. From May 3 to August 31, 2009, the government initiated the Philippine Campaign on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, in collaboration with labour organizations, NGOs, faith-based organizations, local and overseas domestic worker groups, and with support from the ILO. The campaign's objectives were to "generate massive public support in the advocacy to extend decent work standards, effective legal coverage, and protection for Filipino domestic workers" (International Labour Organization 2009). One of the goals was to raise national support for a UN convention on domestic workers.

In the case of its workers in Taiwan, the Philippine government is more active than other sending countries in protecting and supporting their overseas worker (which Chapter 2 illustrates). Their representative office in Taiwan, the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO) is responsible for the welfare of OFWs and deals with, amongst other issues, labour contracts, employee/broker/employee relations, rape and sexual harassment cases, repatriation, accidents, deaths, health issues, etc. MECO is in constant contact with migrant worker NGOs, referring workers to these centers and organizations, as well as coordinating efforts to aid any migrant workers with problems. Understandably, there are limits to what MECO can do. As one NGO worker told me, if MECO pushes or lobbies the Taiwanese state too much for policy improvement, Taiwan may decide not to hire as many Filipino workers in the future. Nevertheless, MECO plays an active role in safeguarding the welfare of OFWs in Taiwan.

Ties between the Philippines and Taiwan

The Philippines and Taiwan are separated only by the Luzon Strait, and are a mere one and half hour flight from each other. While it is not that common (because of monetary costs), some workers do return home for a visit during their three-year contracts (flights operate out of Taipei and Kaohsiung, and offer special rates for Filipino workers). Economically, Taiwan and the Philippines have strong economic ties. As of 2008, bilateral trade between the two nations was significant: Taiwan was the Philippines sixth largest trading partner, while the Philippines was Taiwan's fourteenth largest partner. In addition, Taiwan was the seventh largest foreign investor in the Philippines. In 2007, Taiwan was the sixth top destination country for Filipino OFWs (Taipei Economic and Cultural Office

in the Philippines 2008). Taiwan is also home to a number of Filipina foreign spouses (also called new immigrants by the state and NGOs) married to Taiwanese men, as well as Filipino-Taiwanese and Taiwanese Filipinos. Since Taiwan began importing foreign labour in 1989, increasing numbers of Filipinos have entered as guest workers (in demand particularly for their English ability and their comparatively high levels of education). These workers have established social ties in Taiwan, often providing a “support network” for recently arrived migrants (Sills 2004: 196). Filipinos have been and will continue to be a constant presence in Taiwan.

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter 2 presents a background on transnational Filipina domestic workers, globally and in Taiwan. I look at how Filipinas’ ubiquity as global workers, concentrated in the ‘care industry’, is an example of the worldwide feminization of labour. In order to understand this phenomenon, it is important to look at the macro, meso, and micro factors (and the relationship between these factors) that are sending these women abroad. Turning to Taiwan, I explore how there is a growing demand for transnational labour to fill in the gaps in the 3D industries. However, the introduction of migrant labour in the later 1980s was and continues to be fraught with problems, due to the stigmatization of migrant workers and their lack of acceptance in Taiwanese society. This chapter also examines the history of transnational domestic work and caregiving in Taiwan, as well as Filipino migrants compared with other nationalities of migrants. Finally, I give background information on the broker system, and the labour laws and contracts which govern these workers’ lives in Taiwan.

Chapter 3 discusses the production of locality of Filipina domestics and caregivers in Tainan. Answering my first research question, I found that these women produce locality through the creation and utilization of Filipino spaces, which include the Catholic Church, Filipino restaurants and shops, and public places like parks. I discuss the importance of the Catholic Church at length, since it acts as a key spiritual, cultural, emotional and social refuge for these workers. I discuss the importance of the migrant worker neighbourhood and the use of public spaces, like parks, which allow workers to partially overcome their ‘placelessness.’ I devote one section to household workers in

particular, as their attempts to produce locality are often fraught with more difficulties than their factory counterparts.

Chapter 4 looks at how Filipina domestic worker and caregivers demand the recognition of their human rights. Using Appadurai's ideoscapes, I found that caregivers and domestics demand their rights through the assistance of the Church and migrant worker NGOs, but with limited success. Due to these workers' persistent fear of deportation many workers do not stand up for their rights. In this chapter I look at several international human rights instruments and their relevance for migrant workers and then examine how churches in Tainan act as de facto NGOs in the absence of any real ones. I then explore how migrant worker NGOs around Taiwan are actively lobbying and advocating on behalf of workers and assisting them in many areas. In order to understand why workers do not stand up for their rights, I look at their reasons for remaining quiet and then turn to what exactly their complaints are. I conclude by arguing that even though most women do not overtly stand up for their rights, they do resist using non-traditional means and negotiate power in low-profile ways, and are thus not passive victims.

In Chapter 5, the concluding chapter, I sum up my arguments, turning once again to Appadurai and his theories on the production of locality and his landscapes, as well as the literature on ethnography, human rights and resistance.

Chapter 2 –Filipina Household Workers and the Migrant Labour System

This chapter lays out the background on transnational Filipina household workers, both as global workers and as contract workers in Taiwan. It will examine the various ‘push’ factors that send these women around the world to work as nannies, caregivers and domestics: the state’s promotion of overseas work, the lack of employment opportunities, the culture of migration in the Philippines, and the desire to improve their family’s welfare. The following pages will also look at the ‘pull’ factors in Taiwan that draw these women to work there: the unwillingness by locals to do certain types of jobs, an increase in double-income households and the resulting care deficit are a few of the factors. In addition, this section will give a brief history of migrant labour in Taiwan and the stigma surrounding this work, with particular focus on Filipino migrants. In order to fully analyze and comprehend their situation as migrants, it is also essential to compare Filipinos to other nationalities of domestic workers and caregivers in Taiwan, since their respective experiences are different, and for a number of reasons. Finally, this section will discuss the broker system, the labour laws and the contracts that govern Filipina domestics and caregivers in Taiwan.

Transnational Filipina Household Workers: Essential Players in the Worldwide Feminization of Migrant Labour

As the literature review in Chapter 1 illustrated, there has been a ‘feminization’ of migrant labour in recent years. In the mid-twentieth century, a number of scholars predicted the end of domestic labour, as women entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers and demand for domestic workers declined. However, in the late 20th century demand rose again and women began crossing borders at hitherto unprecedented numbers (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001: xii). In some countries, such as Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines, women comprise between sixty and eighty percent of those people migrating abroad (ILO 2006). This feminization of migrant labour has seen millions of women migrate worldwide to work in a very limited number of sectors: entertainment, health services, and domestic work (Castles 2000:11). In addition, female migration is primarily independent migration (Parreñas 2008:1); as a result, these women leave behind their families, husbands, and children to obtain contractual work abroad, for often undetermined

amounts of time. For the most part, labour migration in Asia is independent and temporary migration. No country in Asia provides domestics or other 'unskilled' workers with immigration or permanent residency status (Lan 2006: 33). In fact, only a small number of countries around the world grant this, including Canada, Spain, and the United States (Parreñas 2008:59).

Filipina women, for their part, are an essential component of this 'feminization' of migration. They are recognized the world over as global workers, and are perhaps the best known example of international domestic workers. As Rhacel Parreñas argues, they are the "domestic workers par excellence of globalization" (Parreñas 2008:3). Their prevalence in this sector has even, on occasion, led the word 'Filipino' to be equated with the term 'domestic worker' (Asis 2005:27). As transnational domestic workers, caregivers and nannies, Filipina women can be found in more than 160 countries worldwide (Parreñas 2008:3). Along with other nationalities of female migrants, Filipina domestic workers' main destinations are no longer core northern countries. Rather, larger numbers now go to the Middle East and East and Southeast Asia. As of 2005, the top ten destinations for Filipina domestics were Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, United Arab Emirates, Taiwan, Singapore, Kuwait, Italy, the UK, and Brunei (Asis 2005: 25).

Pei-Chia Lan notes that there is a four-tier 'system' or hierarchy of destination countries that comprise international domestic work. While Lan applies this to Asian migrant domestic workers in particular, I would argue that it could be applied in the global sense as well. On the bottom rung of this ladder is the Middle East, where wages are low, benefits and human rights are few, yet entry is relatively easy. This tier attracts Muslim women in particular, especially those from Indonesia or Mindanao Province, in the Philippines. The second rung includes countries like Singapore and Malaysia, where wages are higher than in the Middle East. Both of these tiers draw women with fewer financial resources and lower levels of education. The third rung consists of countries like Taiwan and Hong Kong, where workers are protected by a minimum wage and earn higher wages. These women are somewhat more qualified and have previous international experience. At the top of this hierarchy are countries like Canada, where wages are much higher and more importantly, women in the Live-in-Caregiver Programme can apply for permanent

residency after two years of work (Lan 2006:196; Langevin 2000:23). Furthermore, the bottom rungs are often used as stepping stones, so that these women can obtain more experience in order to work in higher tier countries. This was something I found to be true during my field research. Many Filipinos in Taiwan, men and women alike, spoke of their desire to go to Canada or other Western countries. Many of these workers knew someone in Canada or Europe that wanted to help them move there for work.

With respect to statistics, exact numbers for Filipino household workers are hard to determine, as there are a large number of undocumented – i.e. illegal – workers. Huang et al. (2005:397) put the number of Filipina transnational domestic workers overseas in 2005 at approximately one million.¹⁴ Currently, these female migrants outnumber their male counterparts. For the Philippines, the importance of migrant labour cannot be understated: it is not only the biggest labour-exporting country in Asia, but the biggest one in the world, having recently overtaking Mexico (Asis and Piper 2008: 425). As of 2004, an estimated ten percent of the population were overseas workers, with over sixty percent in Asia alone – something which demonstrates the extent to which Asia is increasingly absorbing its own migrant workers (Lan 2007:45; Asis 2005: 28).

Many scholars attribute Filipinas' dominance in the domestic sector to the fact that these women are highly-educated – most have high school degrees, and many of them also hold post-secondary and master's degrees – and the majority of them speak English (Lan 2006:10; Constable 2007:69). This therefore gives them a competitive edge in the labour market. Conversely, this also contributes to a substantive 'brain drain', hindering development in the Philippines (Lan 2006:46). To illustrate their advantages in this field, Filipinas comprise the majority of those hired in Canada's Live-in Caregiver Program. This is due to the fact that they fulfill the (comparatively high) requisite levels of education and experience (McKay 2005:307-8). However, their education, experience, and language abilities can also be a disadvantage for them in the labour market. Lan (2007 et al) and Cheng (2006 et al) argue that in the case of Taiwan-bound migrant labour, recruitment

¹⁴ Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) statistics, in "Table 7: Deployed Overseas Filipino Workers – New Hired 2008, Top Ten Skills by Sex" show that 50,082 household service workers (2,240 male and 47,842 female) and 10,109 caregivers and caretakers (595 male and 9,514 female) were newly hired in 2008, accounting for almost 18% of all overseas Filipinos newly hired in 2008; both sets of numbers are higher than in 2007. http://www.poea.gov.ph/stats/2008_stats.pdf.

agencies (in sending and receiving countries alike) tend to stereotype Filipinos as educated, with excellent English skills, and good childcare and nursing qualifications. Yet, these agencies also portray them as assertive, demanding of their rights, and more troublesome (Cheng 2006:93; Lan 2007:76-78; Constable 2007:40). As a result, nowadays, many employers in Taiwan prefer to hire Indonesian women as domestic workers and caregivers, since they are seen as more obedient, submissive, and loyal (Lan 2007: 76-7). This is a theme which will be further explored in Chapter 4, when I look at how Filipina women demand their rights.

What is Sending Filipina Household Workers around the World?

There are a number of push and pull factors that explain why Filipinos go overseas to work. In order to fully understand this phenomenon, one has to look first at the push factors, and from multiple angles: the macro - the Filipino state and widespread national unemployment; the meso or community level; and the micro - the individual or family reasons for migration. It is then essential to look at the interface between these three factors, since the decision to migrate can often come about because of a combination of these factors.

On the macro-level, one reason that overseas work is so prevalent in the Philippines is due to the state's role. The Filipino government is vital to the migrant labour system, as it actively promotes, encourages, and regulates migrant labour leaving the country. Labour export began in the mid-1970s, during the oil boom in the Middle East, when the state took advantage of the growing labour shortages there (Lan 2006:45). At this time the majority of migrants were male (Cheng 2006:7). The Marcos administration implemented the "labour export policy" in 1974, which in turn became known as the Labour Code of the Philippines. While meant as a temporary solution to widespread unemployment, shaky employment conditions, and a means through which to accumulate foreign currency, labour migration has instead become a permanent fixture in the Filipino landscape (Asis 2005:27; Lan 2006: 45). As Lan (2006:45) maintains, this thought-to-be 'temporary' solution, has become "permanently temporary", especially in the face of continuously high rates of unemployment. As an illustration of just how pervasive migration is to the country, many Filipino presidents, from Marcos to Macapagal-Arroyo, have coined the term the "new

heroes” to describe these workers’ contribution to the national economy (Asis 2005:27). During most of the 1970s, labour migration remained officially in the hands of the state, which controlled the Overseas Employment Program and forced overseas workers to remit a portion of their earnings. However, post-1978, migration became privatized and began being controlled by private agencies, with the government keeping a regulatory and supervisory role. In 1986, Corazon Aquino’s administration stopped forced remittances, instead choosing the indirect method of increasing import taxes on the appliances which migrant workers brought home from abroad (Lan 2006:45-6).

While there are currently over 3000 private labour agencies in the Philippines alone, the government has created special labour export agencies which function to regulate migration flows, deal with recruitment, train migrants, and promote their workers in destination countries (Lan 2005: 31; Asis 2005:35). The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) were created for these purposes. What is particularly interesting about the state’s role in this regard is that women, in particular, are encouraged to migrate (usually as domestic workers). This is a common occurrence in a number of labour exporting countries. Many states believe that encouraging women to migrate result in substantial remittances for the national economy; in 2009 alone, US\$17 billion was sent home to the Philippines in remittances, accounting for over ten times the amount of direct foreign investment in that year (Sills 2010). Furthermore, states also know that women are more likely to remit their wages (rather than spend it on themselves), than are their male counterparts (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002: 7). This would correspond with statistics showing that ever since the 1980s, Filipina migrant women have been outnumbering their male counterparts, accounting for over half of Filipinos migrant workers (Cheng 2006: 7).

At the community level there are several reasons for migration. In recent years, a number of ‘network’ theorists have examined the social ties and networks that migrants create while they are working abroad. These act as important triggers for migration, a theory which is supported by a large number of empirical studies (Oishi 2005: 8). Social migration networks are essential to migration (and the study of migration), since they make migration easier and more acceptable, while at the same time, creating extensive diasporic

migrant worker communities abroad (Asis 2005: 27). In addition to these overseas networks, labour migration has also created a veritable 'culture of migration' within the Philippines. In fact, National Migrants Day is celebrated every June 7, as a way to publicly acknowledge overseas workers' contribution to the country. As Maruja M.B. Asis (2005: 27) argues, there is a general acceptance of migration as being part of Filipino life.

Finally, there are also significant trends to explore at the micro level. Individual Filipina women have varied reasons for migrating. Above all, one of the main factors motivating women to migrate is the chance to improve their family finances. As Lan points out, many migrants see working abroad as a temporary solution to financial problems (Lan 2006: 196). Accordingly, the majority of women I interviewed stressed how important working abroad was for their family. By working in Taiwan or elsewhere, they could pay for their children's education, buy property, or help their family pay for other expenses. In addition, by working in a 'third tier' destination country such as Taiwan, workers can gain experience and save money for "onward" or "step" migration to fourth-tier destinations like Canada, the USA or Europe (Sills 2004: 187). Due to the lack of employment opportunities in the Philippines and the comparatively low wages, overseas work offers an enticing alternative. For Filipinos, supporting their family is indeed so vital, that many women will endure inhumane working conditions, abusive employers, and other negative job aspects in order to improve their family's economic welfare. Lan argues that Filipinas also go abroad in order to "expand life horizons" and "explore modernity" (Lan 2006: 3). Working overseas offers these women a chance at something different and possibly exciting; it takes them to many different parts of the globe, allowing them to interact with international communities, as well as form transnational neighbourhoods abroad. Some Filipinos are also motivated to work abroad in order to be near friends who are also there (Sills 2004: 187). Asis also points out that international migration is a way for Filipina women to get a 'de facto' divorce. For women from this Catholic country, working abroad can be one way to escape an unhappy marriage (Asis 2005: 37).

Whether at the macro, meso, or micro level, all the above factors must be taken into consideration. Moreover, the relationship between the three is relevant. Nana Oshi's "social legitimacy theory" looks at the link between macro-level policies and micro-

individual factors. She argues that this ‘social legitimacy’ of migration is important to the study of female migration, since the “degree to which society accepts and legitimizes international female migration significantly influences the decisions women make” (Oishi 2005:173). As the paragraph on community factors pointed out, there is a pervasive culture of migration at work in the Philippines, which makes such widespread migration not only commonplace, but largely accepted in Filipino society.

As Stephen Sills argues, migration to Taiwan is a pragmatic choice for many Filipinos, for various reasons:

Taiwan’s proximity to the Philippines, relative low cost of travel, relatively high salary (compared to the Middle East), relative low risk (compared to illegal migration to Korea or Japan, or dangerous work in the oil fields of the Middle East), high demand for Philippine workers (due to comparatively higher education and English ability than other Southeast Asian sending countries), and most importantly established social ties with Taiwan (Sills 2004:196)

A Brief History of Migrant Labour & Filipinos in Taiwan

The previous section discussed the push factors sending Filipinos around the world. This section aims to shed light on the pull factors that are drawing Filipino migrant workers to Taiwan. The following pages will also discuss how the introduction of migrant labour was fraught with controversy, due to the simultaneous need but lack of desire for these workers. The stigma surrounding migrant labour is an ongoing reality which these workers are faced with while working in Taiwan. Finally, it will discuss foreign caregivers and domestic workers, offering a brief history of this work in Taiwan.

Pull Factors in Taiwan

In recent years, Taiwan has begun to depend more and more on its migrant labour – while it struggles to deal with the simultaneous lack of desire for these workers. Similar to western industrialized countries and to other newly rich Asian countries, Taiwan now relies extensively on workers from the less developed ‘south.’ There are several trends which help to explain this. With the growing prosperity of the Newly Industrialized Countries, such as the Asian Tigers, and countries in the Middle East (including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait

and United Arab Emirates), there has been growing demand for labour in these places (Lan 2006: 2). Locals in these destinations no longer want to do low-paid, low-status jobs, such as domestic work and caregiving, thus forcing states to address significant labour shortage problems. Such is the case with Taiwan, where in the past twenty years, locals have been showing an increasing unwillingness to do these “3D jobs” – dirty, difficult, and dangerous - or as Tierney (2007: 207) states: “dirty, *demeaning* [my emphasis], and dangerous.” The younger generation no longer want to work in these sectors, as a result of increased education and standards of living, demand for higher income, and changing “cultural values” (Cheng 2006: 48). Moreover, similar to other industrialized countries, the service sector in Taiwan has expanded significantly, a result of liberalization, globalization and “economic restructuring” (Cheng 2006: 48). As such, labour shortages in sectors like domestic work and caregiving, work in nursing homes, construction, manufacturing, and seafaring needed to be filled.

In the past few decades, therefore, Taiwan has seen an increased demand for flexible, transnational workers to fill the gaps in the labour force, especially in housework, childcare and eldercare. A growing number of women have joined the workforce during the past few decades, which has created an increasing number of dual-income households (Lan 2005:512). The resulting ‘care deficit’ has therefore shifted the ‘reproductive work’ from the household to the market (Yeoh et al 2002: 2). There has thus been increased demand for workers to care for young children and elderly parents, as well as take care of the housekeeping. Similar to other Asian countries, Taiwan also has an aging population, resulting in a large demand for caregivers and nurses for the elderly (Lan 2003a: 528). Moreover, unlike the west, where elderly people often live in seniors’ or nursing homes, the majority of elderly people still live with their children (61 percent), while 28 percent live alone or with their spouses (Lan 2006:35). Interestingly, the state promotes the privatization of elder care by favoring three-generation households. These families receive tax cuts and public housing subsidies, and are inundated, along with the rest of Taiwanese society, with ‘moral education’ that places the family as the ideal model of “filial care” (Lan 2002: 171). In addition, while many elderly do still live with their families, there has been a decrease in three generation co-habitation, as more young couples are choosing to

live apart from their parents, thus calling for more caregivers and domestics to take on this 'care work' (Lan 2005: 212).

Finally and quite significantly, migrant labour is considerably cheaper and easier to fully exploit than local labour. While caregivers and domestics in Taiwan do receive the minimum wage - unlike in the majority of countries in Asia – they majority of them pay large placement fees on arrival and monthly broker fees; therefore, they often spend their first few years, if not more, paying off this debt. Furthermore, due to the nature of their contracts, they are essentially always on call. They have no regulated working hours or overtime pay, unlike their counterparts in construction, manufacturing and fishing.¹⁵ At half the price of a local caregiver or domestic worker – and without conflicting family demands of their own – they effectively serve as a “live-in stand-by service.” It is thus no wonder that foreign domestics and caregivers are such a popular phenomenon nowadays in Taiwan (Lan 2002: 171).

Migrant Labour: An Undesired Necessity

Unlike other industrialized or newly rich countries, Taiwan only began importing migrant labour in 1989. At this time, there were an estimated 300 000 to 400 000 undocumented migrant workers already working in Taiwan (Cheng 2006: 48). The decision to legalize migrant labour was not a unanimous one: government officials and legislators argued at length on both sides of the issue. Anne Loveband argues that Taiwan's decision to bring in migrant labour signified a “cautious move within a tightly controlled arena rather than a throwing open of the doors” (Loveband 2004: 338). Some government legislators believed that allowing in migrant workers would have negative effects on Taiwanese society as a whole and lead to a number of conflicts. In 1989, the Legislative Yuan Bulletin quoted one legislator as saying, “The permanent stay of foreign workers will have severe consequences in religion, customs, and education, etc. Their presence will, at the least, affect public safety and social stability. It will definitely lead to conflicts in its most severity” (Cheng 2006: 48). Also opposed to temporary migrant labour were local workers' unions, which believed (and still do) that migrant labour would worsen

¹⁵ For further information on the contracts of fishermen, construction workers, nursing aides etc. see MECO's downloadable forms section at <http://www.meco-labor.org.tw/Download.aspx>.

local unemployment. In recent years, some labour unions have even called for the complete abolishment of the temporary migrant worker program (Tierney 2008: 487).¹⁶ On the other side of the argument were those in favour of legalizing migrant labour. They believed it would benefit society since foreign labour would support local industries and improve national economic development (Cheng 2006: 48).

Both sides, however, agreed on what Cheng (2006: 48) calls the “paradigm of undesirable difference”; that is, the notion that migrant workers from Southeast Asian are often denoted as racially, culturally, and religiously different from the Taiwanese; “imaginary differences”, as Cheng (2006: 47) argues, that become “analogous to their assumed poverty, criminality, low work ethic, and backwardness.” In fact, the term for foreign labour or labourer in Taiwan is *wailao*, a generic term that applies specifically to all the Southeast Asian migrant workers in Taiwan - Filipinos, Indonesians, Vietnamese, Malaysians, and Thais (Cheng 2006: 5). Lan (2006: 59) argues that this term has a racial and class “stratification”, since it only refers to the above workers; the Southeast Asians on short-term contracts, doing the 3D jobs. I would argue that this term is somewhat derogatory, since it labels these workers right away as “Other”, placing them in a different category than other foreigners in Taiwan. According to the 1992 Employment Service Act (ESA) of Taiwan, foreigners can be hired in eleven work categories. Following Cheng’s (2006: 46) description and the ESA itself, the first six categories are white-collar and “respectable” jobs, including teachers, coaches and athletes, priests/missionaries, business executives, and artists. The following four categories include blue-collar, ‘unskilled’ work, seen as less respectable and lower class: household work, seafaring/fishing, construction and work associated with economic/social development needs (much of which would include manufacturing work) (Employment Service Act 2008: Article 46) (The final “other” category includes any other specialized work for which a local is not qualified). ‘Foreign labour’ usually refers to those four last categories, to migrants working in the domestic sector, as nursing aides, and manual labourers in construction and manufacturing. As a foreign English teacher in Taiwan, I am not considered a *wailao*. Rather, I am a

¹⁶ This was an issue which came to the forefront in 2008-2009 during the economic crisis, when a number of local unions and groups protested migrant labour in Taiwan. See the following newspaper articles for further information: “CLA says it has cut foreign workforce by at least 30,000” *Taipei Times*, 23 July 2009, p.2 (Huang 2009e); “Groups oppose more foreign home workers” *Taipei Times*, 4 Dec 2009 (Huang 2009b).

waiguoren, a Mandarin Chinese word which literally means ‘outside country person’, but which translates into ‘foreigner.’ This term is not used for migrant workers. Since I am a Westerner and employed in a white-collar sector, I am not grouped in the same category as migrants – even though we are all ‘foreigners.’

This stigmatization of migrant labour is an ongoing problem in Taiwan. Migrant workers are seen as the cause for a number of social and health problems (Sills 2007: 8). These social ills include rising crime rates – even though it has been proven that the crime rate among migrant workers is actually lower than for Taiwanese citizens. They are also seen as dirty and backward, due to their different cultural and living habits (Lan 2006: 66-67). These misrepresentations of foreign workers have led to a degree of fear and prejudice on the part of locals. Even the media tends to sensationalize stories about migrants, portraying them as, “disdained aliens with poor hygiene and low moral impacts (Lan 2006: 66). These media images of migrant workers would be an example of Appadurai’s ‘mediascapes.’ Overall, this has contributed to a largely negative view of migrant labour. Consequently, the issue of migrant labour in Taiwan has always been and continues to be a controversial one.

Domestic and Caregiving Work in Taiwan

Domestic workers and caregivers make up almost half of all migrant labour in Taiwan. According to the Employment and Vocational Training Administration of the Council of Labour Affairs (CLA) as of August 2010, there were 372,146 migrant workers in Taiwan; 135,976 were male and 236,170 were female (Council of Labour Affairs 2010 Table 12-5). This number includes only those legal workers, and not the large number of undocumented workers. With respect to Filipino workers in particular, POEA statistics show that in 2008 there were 83,070 temporary Filipino overseas workers and 2,885 “irregular” (undocumented) Filipino workers in Taiwan (POEA Statistics 2008). Out of the 372,146 migrant workers, approximately 183,573 were workers in “social welfare”, which includes nursing workers and household workers (or home-maids, as the CLA calls them) (Council of Labour Affairs 2010 Table 12-2). Although there are no current government statistics that show the breakdown of the different nationalities of household workers, Peter O’Neill provides figures from 2008. He writes that at that time there were approximately

168,000 household workers: 109,300 were Indonesian; 33,813 were Vietnamese; 23,287 were Filipino; and 1,666 were Thai (O'Neill 2008). These statistics show that Filipinos are no longer the majority of household workers in Taiwan; Indonesian and Vietnamese women now outnumber them. With regards to Taiwan it is interesting to note that in 2008, Taiwan had the highest number of new hires of Filipina caregivers of any other destination country worldwide, accounting for 6,251 of the 10,109 worldwide total (POEA 2008 Statistics Table 25).¹⁷

As the preceding section illustrated, the decision to allow migrant labour into the country was not arrived at lightly. In 1989, after much debate, the Taiwanese government put forth a special measure allowing in foreign workers to work on a large-scale national development program (Cheng 2003: 173). During this time, the Indonesian, Malaysian, Filipino, and Thai governments entered into official bilateral agreements with Taiwan concerning migrant labour (O'Neill 2005b: 1); Vietnam became the fifth sending country in 1999, when bilateral agreements were signed between the two countries (Lan 2006: 41).

In October 1991, the private sector was legally allowed to employ migrant workers. In 1992, the state finally legalized the employment of foreign domestic workers (Cheng 2003: 173). At this time, work permits were granted to “domestic caretakers” to take care of the severely ill or disabled. A small number of quotas were later released for “domestic helpers”, women who could work in households with children under the age of twelve or elderly members over the age of seventy (Lan 2006: 8). Nowadays, the Taiwanese government has stopped issuing quotas for the employment of domestic helpers. However, there are no state restrictions on hiring caregivers. As a result, many families will apply for a caregiver using forged medical documents and then give their worker household or childcare responsibilities (Lan 2006: 8). Other employers will temporarily transfer an elderly member of their family into their household (O'Neill 2002). A number of the caregivers I interviewed supported this finding, emphasizing that their job included almost everything around the house; something which speaks once again to the ambiguity of the term ‘domestic worker’ and ‘caregiver’ in Taiwan. The Taiwanese state also stipulates that employers can hire a foreign household worker on the basis of need - for elders, children, or

¹⁷ For more information on statistics for Filipino overseas workers, visit the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency's website and the section on “Statistics” <http://www.poea.gov.ph/html/statistics.html>

ill patients. This differs from countries such as Singapore and Canada, where eligibility to hire a foreign domestic worker, caregiver or nanny is based on a minimum household income (Lan 2003b: 137).

Foreign domestic and caregiving work is also temporary in nature, just as all migrant jobs are in Taiwan. Migrant workers are not allowed to reside permanently in Taiwan. During the early nineties, foreign workers were employed under one year contracts, extendable for an additional year. In 1998, this was extended to three years and in 2002, to six years (comprising two three-year contracts). Since July 2007, migrant workers are now allowed to stay in Taiwan for a maximum of nine years, equal to three three-year contracts. After a maximum of three years, at the end of each contract, they must leave the country for at least one day. That way, they are not eligible for permanent residency (O'Neill 2005b 1; 2008).¹⁸ Moreover, each time they return to Taiwan on a new contract, they must pay a new placement fee. As the last section on the Broker System, Labour Laws and Contracts illustrates, these placement fees are exorbitantly high. Unless they are directly hired by their employer, which rarely happens, they have to pay these fees. In addition, as Stephen Sills writes, educational requirements and placement fees are lower for domestics and caregivers, than they are for other categories of migrants; therefore, many more of them are from the poorest parts of the Philippines (Sills 2004: 105).

Filipinos Compared with other Nationalities of Migrant Workers

In order to gain an understanding of Filipino migrant workers and their lives in Taiwan, one must look at other nationalities of migrant workers as well. While these workers do similar types of 3D jobs, their experiences both on and off the job can be markedly different from one another.

Overall, Filipino male migrants are largely concentrated in capital intensive manufacturing, while Filipina women are concentrated in domestic help and care. The majority of Indonesian and Vietnamese workers in Taiwan are women employed as household workers. Thais, for their part, are concentrated in labour intensive manufacturing and in the construction industry (Tierney 2008: 486). Robert Tierney (2008: 483) asserts

¹⁸ In comparison, foreigners such as English teachers, business executives, etc. can apply for a permanent Alien Resident Card after five years of consecutive residency in Taiwan

that migrants are “racially” categorized in the labour market, but in different ways; something that Lan found as well when she examined the divergent ways that Taiwanese labour brokers portray different nationalities of caregivers and domestic workers (Lan 2006: 76). As a result of these stereotypes, Tierney argues that some nationalities have better working and living conditions than others. As an illustration, on 21 August 2005, 300 Thais employed as construction workers for the Kaohsiung mass transit authority rioted: they set fire to office and cars to protest the “degradation” they felt in the workplace and dormitories, while also objecting to the “shady connections” between their employers and broker agencies (Tierney 2007: 224). It was later found out that they were being grossly underpaid and were banned from smoking, drinking alcohol or using their cell phones in their crowded dormitories (Lan 2006: 54). Compared with other nationalities, Thai workers are perceived by the Taiwanese as the lowest-class of all nationalities of migrants. They work in the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs, and are considered “buffalo” by many Taiwanese employers and brokers. This stigma refers to their supposed “intellectual stupidity” and “political docility” (Tierney 2008: 483).

Other nationalities are also racially stereotyped by brokers and employers alike. Indonesians, as mentioned above, are seen as more subservient and obedient. Vietnamese women, for their part, are viewed as hard workers, with “mild personalities” and an “affinity for Chinese culture” (Lan 2006: 76). Filipinos, due to their higher levels of education and their English-speaking abilities, have a competitive advantage over other nationalities of migrants. As an illustration, Taiwanese factory owners prefer hiring Filipinos over Thais, since the former can read English instructions on imported machines and equipment (Lan 2003b: 138). However, as mentioned before, Filipinos are also more likely to stand up for their rights, and as such, are often seen as more troublesome than other nationalities. As Tierney (2008: 487) comments, Filipino men are more likely than other nationalities to “organize and struggle.” In addition, thanks to their large collective presence in many factories, they have more collective power, compared with Thai workers or with domestics, who are isolated in their employers’ homes. As a result, this has led Taiwanese employers and brokers to label Filipino men as “complainers”, “whiners” and “troublemakers” (Tierney 2008: 487).

Moreover, Filipina caregivers and domestics are more likely to insist on a day off than are their Indonesian counterparts, since many of the former refuse to accept the “no-day-off rule” that their employers request (even though their contract clearly stipulates one rest day each week); nor do Indonesians need to attend a Sunday mass, like so many of the Catholic Filipinos in Taiwan do. Indonesians are more likely to give up their day off, often signing a paper which states they agree to take no days off or only one day off a month (Lan 2006: 78; O’Neill 2002: 2).

Filipinos also tend to be older and more educated than their Indonesian counterparts. The majority of Filipina female migrants are in their late twenties or early thirties and college-educated, while Indonesians, tend to be in their twenties or thirties (or younger) with relatively low levels of education. Both the Philippines and Indonesia have minimum age requirements for overseas workers. For Indonesians the minimum age for women to work abroad is twenty-two years old, and they must have a letter of permission from their father or husband (Lan 2006: 50). For Filipina women, the minimum age is 23.¹⁹ While these age requirements are similar on paper, one NGO worker with whom I spoke stated that in reality many Indonesian women work abroad when they are as young as sixteen or seventeen. This worker argued that Filipina women are more mature when they come abroad, and are less willing to put up with abuse than their Indonesian counterparts.

Another distinction of Filipinos is their community-oriented nature. This is a theme explored at great length in the following chapter on the production of locality. Much of this has to do with the support they receive from the Catholic Church and other Christian churches around Taiwan. Not only do they receive emotional, spiritual and legal support from the Church, but it also provides these workers with a physical space where they can spend their free time. For the most part, Thais, Indonesians, and Vietnamese have no such communal spaces, besides their factory dormitories; as a result, they mostly gather in public spaces like parks and in restaurants on their days off. Filipinos are also the most socially organized of all migrants and have a large number of active civil organizations and social groups in Taiwan; this echoes the socially active nature of Filipinos back in the Philippines.

¹⁹ I received this information from a representative at the MECO Labour Office in Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

Many of these organizations and groups in Taiwan are run through the Church, but are not necessarily religious groups.

Finally, I would argue that Filipino overseas workers are more supported by their government than are Indonesians, Thais and Vietnamese. I base this argument on my discussions with various NGO workers, as well as on the broker fee policies set forth by each labour sending country. As the following section shows, the Philippines has the best (i.e. the lowest) placement fee policy of all four sending countries. In addition, it seems that the Filipino government, through the auspice of the Manila Economic Cultural Office (MECO), is more willing to work with the migrant worker NGOs in Taiwan to support and improve their overseas workers' rights. MECO has more regular meetings with these organizations than do the Indonesian and Thai governments. The Vietnamese government, for its part, never meets with the migrant worker NGOs in Taiwan. One NGO worker stated that meeting with them was pretty useless, since the Vietnamese state does not seem that concerned with protecting its citizens' rights.

The Broker System, the Labour Laws & the Contracts that Govern the Lives of Filipino Workers in Taiwan

Migrant workers in Taiwan work in a very tightly controlled environment. Pei-Chia Lan argues that transnational migrants, such as domestic workers, circulate in a "bounded global market." Through various economic, political, and legal regulations, host states control who and how many migrants enter, under which means (usually as temporary contract workers) and for how long (Lan 2006: 57). Unlike other foreigners in Taiwan, migrant workers' lives are dictated by the broker system; the labour laws that determine their salaries and regulate their working hours (or fail to do so in the case of domestics and caregivers); and their contracts.

The Broker System - "It's Evil and Has to Go"

The broker system is integral to the migrant labour landscape in Taiwan. In fact, this is a feature unique to Asian countries, where labour migration is largely organized by recruitment agencies and labour brokers (International Labour Organization 2006). For the most part, foreign labour is run by intermediaries on both sides of the border: broker

agencies in each of the sending countries, as well as in Taiwan. In the Philippines, as mentioned above, there are some 3,000 labour agencies that deal with recruiting and placing overseas workers. However, in 2004, approximately half of these were not in good standing: they had licenses which had been cancelled, revoked or not renewed (Asis 2005: 35). The corruption of the broker system is a common theme throughout Asia – Taiwan is no exception - as these agencies profit from charging migrants exceedingly high fees, and often do not provide the services promised.

These ‘man-power agencies’, as they are called in Taiwan, act as the go-betweens for employers and workers. When the first group of migrant workers entered Taiwan in 1989, they were hired directly through their employer. Shortly after that, however, Thai brokers back in Thailand realized the huge profit that could be made by facilitating this labour into Taiwan. Peter O’Neill argues that it was at this point that the “corrupt brokers system began” (O’Neill 2008). Within a few short years, the broker system became developed and entrenched, as employers in Taiwan realized how convenient it was to use man power agencies to hire new migrant workers.²⁰ The broker’s market soon become highly competitive, as agencies all tried to take advantage of Taiwan’s growing need for migrant labour. As a result, employers started selling their “migrant quota” to the highest bidder – the broker agency who offered them the most money (O’Neill 2008). Taiwanese companies can employ up to 30 percent migrant labour. Such tight quota controls means that the demand from migrants for jobs in Taiwan is higher than the actual number of jobs. Consequently, labour brokers can exact high “recruitment”, “placement” and “service” fees from these workers. Employers gain significantly from this practice, since many of them receive commissions or ‘kickbacks’ from the brokers. Former chair of the Taipei Association of Manpower Agencies, the employer association for brokers, was quoted as saying that most broker agencies charge kickbacks. As he claimed: “If the Taiwan employer has a [CLA] quota of 20 foreign workers, he can get as much kickbacks as NT\$1.2 million [annually] (Tierney 2007: 223). All of this illustrates just how much

²⁰ In Taiwan, brokers are not only used in the migrant labour market. There are brokers for almost everything: local labour, marriage, housing, travel, etc. As an English teacher in Taiwan, I could find work through an agent if I wanted to.

employers have invested in the broker system, and how much they benefit from it. It also demonstrates just how common corruption is in the system.

Each of the four sending countries has very different broker fee policies – or a lack thereof - that they require Taiwan-bound migrant workers to pay. The “placement fee”, paid to the placement agency in the sending country, is paid prior to departure. The CLA suggests that labour sending governments should cap their placement fee at a maximum of one month’s salary.²¹ However, none of the sending countries follow this suggestion. In fact, only the Philippines and Thailand have official policies for placement fees (O’Neill 2007). The Philippines placement fee policy for Taiwan bound workers is one month’s salary plus processing fees, which totals NT\$30, 000 (CAD\$962). However, NGO workers around Taiwan have found cases where Filipinos are actually paying their Filipino placement agencies as much as NT\$35,000 (CAD\$1,123) to NT\$90,000 (CAD\$2888) in cash; although the receipt they are given only shows they paid NT\$30,000. Since this fee must be paid in cash, many workers borrow money from a lending agency – usually owned by the placement agency – which charges a high interest rate (O’Neill 2008).

Thailand’s placement fee policy is NT\$58,000 Baht (NT\$58,000NT). Factory workers and construction workers, however, are paying their Thai placement agencies NT\$120,000 (CAD\$3,850) to NT\$150,000 (CAD\$4,800) in cash.²² Neither the Indonesian state nor the Vietnamese state have placement fee policies for Taiwan bound migrants. As a result, their fees are exorbitantly high. Indonesian factory and construction workers pay fees as high as NT\$180, 560 (CAD\$5,800) in total, including NT\$150, 000 (CAD\$4,800) in Indonesia and NT\$3,056 per month for ten months which is deducted from their salary after arriving in Taiwan. Indonesian caregivers and domestic workers, on the other hand, must borrow money from the China Trust Indonesia Bank at a 19 percent interest rate in order to pay for their placement fee – even if they have the money and do not want to borrow it. With monthly deductions, bank administration fees, monthly bank management fees, and fees to their Indonesian placement agency, their entire placement fees can be as

²¹ Currently, the monthly salary for factory and construction workers and fishermen is NT\$17,280 and for caregivers and domestics it is NT\$15,840.

²² According to Peter O’Neill (2008d), domestic workers and caregivers from Thailand are banned from working in Taiwan until they are protected by the Labour Standards Act.

high as NT\$106,750 (CAD\$3,425). The Vietnamese government charges the highest of any sending state. Factory and construction workers have to pay NT\$115,500 (CAD\$3,700) to NT\$214,500 (CAD\$6,885) in cash, which includes the 8 percent tax that workers pay the government. Domestic workers and caregivers, on the other hand, pay NT\$172,000 (CAD\$5,520) to NT\$187,000 (CAD\$6,000) as salary deduction. This amount does not include the 8 percent government tax which totals NT\$45,600 (CAD\$1,480) over three years (O'Neill 2008).

In addition to these placement fees, migrant workers also pay monthly “broker fees” to their broker in Taiwan. The CLA introduced its broker fee policy in 2001, where it stipulated the amount that brokers could charge workers for service and transportation fees: 1st year – NT\$1800 (CAD\$60) per month; 2nd year – NT\$1,700 (CAD\$55) per month, 3rd year – NT\$1,500 (CAD\$48) per month. Over three years, this totals NT\$60,000 (CAD\$1,925). In addition, the Taiwanese government allows employers to deduct up to 30 percent of the migrant worker’s monthly salary as collateral to prevent the worker running away. This practice is called “forced savings”, since if the worker refuses, he or she can be sent home (Lan 2006: 52; O'Neill 2005b: 5). According to Regina Fuchs (2009a: 2), even though the practice of forced savings is, in fact, illegal, it is still very common. In essence, as Pei-Chia Lan posits, a worker’s three-year contract is divided into three phases: the first year to pay the debt, the second year to “balance the costs”, and the third year to actually save some money (Lan 2006: 52). However, many workers remain riddled in debt throughout the entirety of their contract. Due to the illegal costs charged by placement agencies in sending countries and brokers in Taiwan, many workers struggle to save anything.²³

As the section on Filipino workers illustrated, broker agencies facilitate migration, making it more efficient, while helping explain the increase in labour migration within Asia. However, both in sending countries and in Taiwan, these agencies are infamous for charges

²³ In 2001, the CLA introduced a “food and board” policy stipulating that employers could deduct up to 25% (NT\$4,000) from the monthly salaries of migrants to pay for their food and lodging. As caregivers and domestics are excluded from the LSA, this policy does not include them; they get free food and lodging as part of their contract. In July 2007, the minimum wage was increased by NT\$1,440 to its current wage of NT\$17,280. The CLA allowed employers to increase food and board to a maximum of NT\$5,000. Peter O'Neill argues that while workers are now receiving a higher minimum wage than previous years, the food and lodging expenses actually lower workers’ wages even further (O'Neill 2008).

of abuse, corruption, and exorbitant recruitment, placement, and monthly broker fees. Countless stories abound of fraudulent agencies which have failed to deploy workers, charged them for services not rendered, and abused some of their workers. As the preceding pages showed, the broker system in Taiwan is fraught with such problems. Taiwan has also been heavily criticized for human trafficking, an issue which is exacerbated by deceptive placement agencies, Taiwanese brokers, and employers, who force these workers into doing illegal work (O'Neill 2008).²⁴ Migrant worker NGOs hope that the 2009 Human Trafficking and Prevention Control Act will address this issue, protect the victims of human trafficking to a greater extent, and punish offenders with harsher sentences.²⁵

Migrant worker NGOs around the country are constantly lobbying the government to abolish the broker system, believing it to be *the* biggest problem with regards to migrant labour in Taiwan. They are advocating the implementation of direct hiring in every sector and for every migrant worker. In fact, the Filipino and Taiwanese governments signed a direct employment agreement in 1999 for manufacturing-based workers. The two governments signed one for domestic workers and caregivers in March 2003 (O'Neill 2005b: 4). In August 2009, the Filipino and Taiwanese governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that came into effect January 1st, 2010 and will extend direct hiring to every sector. Taiwan also opened up a Direct Hiring Service Center in each city in 2008, to make direct hiring more efficient.²⁶ Therefore, direct hiring is now possible and some migrants and employers are now taking advantage of it; however, it is still being underused and not utilized to its full potential. A few of the caregivers I interviewed had been directly hired, and some of the factory workers I know have been, but not many. As mentioned above, the broker system is quite profitable for company employers. With respect to caregivers and domestics, most employers do not want to go

²⁴ For more information on human trafficking in Taiwan see the US Department of State's *Trafficking in Person Report 2009, 2010* and the section on Taiwan.

²⁵ Published in June 2010, the US Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report 2010* states that Taiwan is now in Tier 1, having improved on its 2009 Tier 2 status. The report maintains that Taiwanese authorities have made some improvements with respect to anti-human trafficking law enforcement in the last year, thanks in part to the enactment of this 2009 anti-human trafficking act (US Department of State 2010).

²⁶ For more information on the direct hiring service centers in Taiwan, visit <http://dhsc.evta.gov.tw/eng/intro.html>

through the endless paperwork and processes that the CLA requires in order to direct hire an employee (O'Neill 2005b: 4) – something which several women told me was the case with their bosses. In recent years, some companies have made the move to direct hiring, in order to avoid using brokers, just as some caregivers' and domestics' employers have done, knowing how much it lessens their workers' financial burdens. However, it remains to be seen if this MOU will actually be used to its full effect. As of now, the broker system shows no signs of disappearing anytime.

Labour Laws Governing Foreign Workers

There are two laws which pertain to migrant workers in Taiwan: the 1992 Employment Services Act (ESA) and the 1984 Labour Standards Act (LSA). In July 1992 the CLA introduced the “Regulation on Employment and Management of Foreign Workers”, and in October of the same year, implemented the ESA (O'Neill 2008).²⁷ Peter O'Neill (2008) comments that it was with this Act - specifically Chapter 5, entitled “Employment and Administration of Foreign Workers” - that the Taiwanese state created their foreign worker policy. As mentioned on page 9, the ESA sets out the categories of jobs under which foreign workers can be employed. Under this act, migrant workers can only be employed as a household assistant (which includes caregiving, domestic work, and working as a nursing aide), for work in national major construction projects or economic/social development needs (factory and construction work), and as a crew member on a fishing vessel or as a marine fisherman. Under the ESA, foreign workers have rights and are entitled to these and to benefits as set out in the LSA.

The LSA dictates foreign policy as well, since it sets forth wages, labour contracts, working hours, recess and annual holidays (Labour Standards Act 2009). Factory workers in the manufacturing and industrial sectors, construction workers, fishermen and nursing aides or caregivers employed by institutions for the elderly are all protected by this law (O'Neill 2008). As such, they are entitled to the minimum wage, maximum working hours, overtime pay, health insurance and are given paid national holidays. These workers receive

²⁷ The ESA has since been amended, with the latest version being published on August 8, 2008. See the website Legislation Taiwan and search under Labour Law – Employment Services Act for more information: <http://www.lexadin.nl/wlg/legis/nofr/oeur/lxwetai.htm#Labor%20Law>.

a monthly pay of NT\$17,280 (CAD\$554).²⁸ Domestic helpers and caregivers, on the other hand, are excluded from the LSA. Due to this, they are paid a lower monthly wage of NT\$15,840 (CAD\$508) and do not have regulated working hours, overtime pay or guaranteed national holidays. In April 1998, for nine brief months, caregivers and domestic workers were brought under the law, only to have this right taken away from them nine months later. Some of the reasons behind their exclusion from the LSA include the fact that the CLA still does not consider “the home” a place to make profits; also, that it is difficult for the government to distinguish between ‘work time’ and ‘stand by’ hours (Huang 2010f). For years now, NGOs around Taiwan have been fighting to have these women protected under the LSA, but to no avail. In recent months, due to pressure from NGOs, the CLA put forth a draft bill which, if passed, will bring caregivers and domestic workers under the LSA. The proposed amendment would grant these women the minimum wage, along with overtime pay, and a host of other rights (Huang 2010f; *China Post News Staff* 2010). It remains to be seen if and when the Legislative Yuan will pass this bill and if so, whether these women will actually receive the rights set out in it.

Domestic ‘Helper’ and Caregiver Contracts

Each migrant worker contract lasts for two years, and is extendable to three years. As previously mentioned, migrants can now work in Taiwan for a maximum of nine years. In order to get around this law and return to Taiwan, a number of workers will ‘name change’ and enter Taiwan again on a forged passport. Labeled “ex-Taiwan” by their fellow migrants, these workers are sometimes encouraged by their employers to return under a false name, in order for the latter to keep the same nanny, caregiver or housekeeper that they have become used to (Lan 2006: 53). With respect to the actual contracts themselves, there are no differences between that of a ‘domestic helper’ and that of a caregiver. In these contracts, it stipulates that they receive free accommodation and food; as such they receive less salary than their factory counterparts. If the employer wants the worker to live outside of the home, then he or she needs to provide the worker with the adequate housing allowance to do so (MECO Employment Contract-Caretaker 2009); something which is

²⁸ However, in April 2010, Premier Wu Den-yih said that the government had put forth a proposal to ‘scrap’ the minimum wage for migrant workers; this was met with protest from migrant labour groups, as well as some state officials (Huang 2010c). At the time of writing, it was unclear whether or not this proposal would pass.

highly unusual. While living inside the employer's home, many workers sleep in the same room as children or their elderly wards, and the majority of them are subjected to very strict curfews (O'Neill 2008). Similar to factory and construction worker contracts, the first forty days of a caregiver or domestic worker's contract makes up the "probation period", during which the employer can fire the worker if he or she feels the worker is not suitable for the job or if the worker requests a weekly rest day. This makes these women extremely vulnerable and leaves them at the whim of their employer. As one NGO worker argues, during this period they are "covered by nothing."

Even outside of this probationary period, their contract does not protect them much from abuse, an issue which will be explored further in Chapter 4. One of the major problems with these contracts is that nowhere in them does it clearly state a caregiver or domestic worker's job description. Nor does it set out a limitation of working hours. As a result, many of these women work 12, 14, 16 or even 18 hour days, taking care of the elderly and children, as well as cleaning houses; often, with no day off (O'Neill 2008). The Filipino domestic helper and caregiver contracts clearly stipulate that workers receive one day off in a seven-day period, while other holidays are "subject to agreement between employer and employee" (MECO Employment Contract-Caretaker 2009). However, many women do not receive a weekly day off, much less holiday rest time. In addition, contracts vary depending on nationality. For instance, Filipinos, Thais, and Vietnamese are guaranteed a day off in their contracts, while for Indonesian women "holidays for employee is subjected to mutual agreement" (O'Neill 2007: 2). Furthermore, employers can ask workers to sign what is known as an "addendum" or another such form, giving up their right to a rest day or waiving their right to a free return air ticket to the Philippines, both of which are rights clearly given to Filipinos in their contract. These contracts, therefore, do not protect these women adequately. Given how vague and undefined these contracts are, it is no wonder that so many caregivers and domestics suffer from abuse, are overworked, and have a very limited set of rights as migrants in Taiwan. As the next chapter sets forth, it is amidst these challenging working conditions that Filipina women strive to create a sense of community.

Chapter 3: The Production of Locality

“Because for them [Filipinos] to have a group is very important. Community. So if you go back to the home country, you understand that it’s so important this kind of thing. Because for us, community spirit is a must.”

---Sister Grace, NGO worker

In order to shed light on their experiences as transnational migrant workers in Taiwan, it is essential to examine how Filipina domestics and caregivers create a sense of community. Numerous ethnographers have looked at the nature of domestic work job itself and the relationship between employees and household workers. However, few ethnographers have examined the ways in which these workers create community off the job, in their free time and away from their place of work. Following Yeoh and Huang’s (1998) argument, there is the need to move “beyond the domestic sphere” and into the community, into the public spaces that these workers appropriate on their days off and in their free time. Therefore, as the introductory chapter put forth, this chapter aims to look at the production of locality for Filipina domestics and caregivers in Tainan City.

Arjun Appadurai (1997) believes that in this globalized age, locality is extremely difficult to achieve. Locality must be sustained carefully “even in the most intimate, spatially confined, geographically isolated situations” (Appadurai 1997: 179). Moreover, the concept of locality is not “scalar or spatial”, but rather “relational and contextual” (Appadurai 1997: 178). This means that locality differs drastically in each transnational setting, something which holds true in today’s highly mobile world, where millions of people cross borders to work and travel. Locality is based more on the interactions and links between the “sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts” (Appadurai 1997: 178). Appadurai’s five dimensions or landscapes of global cultural flows – ethnoscaples, ideoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, and financescaples – and the divergent, subjective ways in which they interact in global transnational settings, address this issue of locality production. This chapter looks at Filipino ethnoscaples and the production of community, while the following chapter examines the ideoscaples of human rights.

As the first chapter illustrated, Appadurai uses the term ethnoscapes to refer to all those people in today's "shifting" world; people who are constantly on the move: tourists, immigrants, guest workers, refugees, exiles, etc (Appadurai 1997: 33). The Filipino community in Taiwan is an excellent example. Temporary, transnational Filipino migrant workers live and work in foreign settings, where they are viewed as the Other and not readily accepted into the culture. In Taiwan, most of them do not speak Mandarin Chinese. Along with the millions of other migrant workers around the globe, these workers travel overseas to earn money to support themselves and their families, in order to build a better future back in the Philippines. While in Taiwan, these ethnoscapes of Filipinos unquestionably want to create a sense of *Filipino-ness*. They want their own spaces and their own physical areas in which to gather. Additionally, they want their own *neighbourhoods*. Appadurai argues that neighbourhoods are always ethnoscapes to "some extent", as they involve "ethnic projects of Other" and the "consciousness of such projects" (Appadurai 1997: 183).²⁹

This desire for locality, for the production of neighbourhoods and community, is present in all of us when we move abroad, however temporary or permanent that move is. As a result of this desire, and the active effort put into creating it, transnational migrant worker communities are formed in Taiwan. Even given the enormous challenges these workers face while trying to build it – especially the female household workers at the heart of this study – these workers succeed. Appadurai's "diasporic public spheres" are thus created (Appadurai 1996: 10). With their reputation as ubiquitous overseas workers, Filipina women serve as an excellent case study of how exactly locality or community is created, especially in a transnational setting like Taiwan – where migrant workers, for the most part, are not truly accepted, and thus, building locality can be challenging.

As the introductory chapter set forth, my aim is to answer the following question: How do Filipina domestic workers create locality in the production of transnational ethnoscapes? I found that these women produce locality through the creation and utilization

²⁹ In a 2008 interview, Appadurai builds on this argument and discusses how 'agency' plays a role in the production of locality. This agency is not only individual, but 'collective agency' and argues that the production of locality is a "symptom of collective agency." This agency involves "action" and "activity." In this light, he believes that there is a social dimension involved in the "project" of producing locality and thus, the production of locality can be viewed as "agency that involves design and vision" (Appadurai 2008).

of Filipino spaces; places like the Catholic Church, Filipino restaurants and shops, and public spaces like parks. In the following pages I demonstrate how significant the Church, the migrant worker neighbourhood, and public spaces are for Filipino migrants in Taiwan. Moreover, I look at how socially active many Filipinos in Taiwan are, through their participation in civil society organizations and groups. In the last section, I focus specifically on domestics and caregivers and look at how community creation for them is even harder to achieve, as compared to their counterparts in factories. Looking at these varied Filipino ethnoscares and neighbourhoods allows for a greater understanding of the challenges and realities that these workers face as outsiders in Taiwan and as transnational workers in a foreign environment.

The Church as Home: A Religious, Social, and Community-Oriented Space

The importance of the Church for Filipinos cannot be understated. As a devout Catholic country, with 83% of the population Roman Catholic (Giga Catholic Information), religion and the institutional Church play an immensely important role in the Philippines and in many Filipinos' lives. This is true for Filipinos in transnational environments as well, in places like Taiwan where thousands of workers migrate each year. I would even argue that, in some respects, the Catholic Church actually plays an even more important role *outside* of the Philippines - since it acts as a veritable support system for migrant workers. This support comes in a variety of ways: from the legal and labour-related services that the Catholic migrant worker NGOs and church workers provide; to the religious and spiritual; to the emotional and psychological; and to the social and community outlets and benefits that the Church also offers. For many Filipino migrants, the Church is the one place where they can feel truly at home in Taiwan. This is the case for household workers, in particular, and is something I had the opportunity to witness and experience first-hand during the past year.

Following Appadurai's theory on the production of locality, the Church is an excellent example of 'a neighbourhood.' The Church functions as an "ethnic project of Other" (Appadurai 1996: 183). Filipinos (along with the other nationalities of migrant workers), are one of the most obvious examples of Other in Taiwan. As the last chapter illustrated, their physical appearance and concentration in the low-skilled job sector sets

them apart from local Taiwanese and other ‘professional’ foreigners, such as English teachers or engineers. These differences are one of the reasons for the (varying degrees of) discrimination and racism that these workers feel from the local Taiwanese. Moreover, the Church - and the Filipino community created within this space – acts as a neighbourhood since there is a consciousness there, of it being a *Filipino* space; one where Filipino culture is celebrated, embraced and enjoyed. As Cheng argues, the church has become ‘home’ for Filipinos in Taiwan; one which has to be actively made (Cheng 2006: 217). This construction of home is an excellent example of locality production at work, especially for household workers who, when they are away from the homes of their employers, actively build a home for themselves at church.

Church as a Religious and Spiritual Center

The Church represents a large range of things for many Filipinos. First and foremost, it is a place of worship. For the majority of migrants working in Taiwan, the Catholic Church plays a significant role in their lives. Sixteen of the twenty women I interviewed identified themselves as Catholic, while three identified themselves as members of the Full Gospel Church, and one woman identified herself as a Methodist, although she attends Catholic Church regularly.³⁰ Of the fifteen Catholics, the majority of them stressed how important attending Church was for their spirituality. For the most part, these women had grown up attending church back in the Philippines. Sally, 27, a former caregiver who has since transferred to factory work, said that going to church was a big part of her life and that she attended church a lot back in the Philippines. She commented that she goes to church, because “since birth, I am a Catholic. Not only Catholic, but my family, they are religious.” Other women may not necessarily be extremely religious, but they attend mass because it is a family custom and tradition, and thus a normal part of their life. Daisy, 40, a domestic worker in a family-owned factory, said that she attends because, “Since I was in the Philippines, I am...not really a religious person, but maybe because my family, my grandfather, my grandmother, my mother, always go to the church every Sunday. And honestly, I feel comfortable every time I go to the church.”

³⁰ Refer to Appendix 2 for more demographic information on the domestic worker and caregiver sample.

When asked what their reasons for attending church were, many Filipinas pointed to these religious and spiritual reasons. Amelia, 40, a Catholic domestic worker, commented that, “maybe it’s my spirituality...every since I was in the Philippines, I am a member of the church...maybe that’s my life.” Danielle, 26, a caregiver / domestic worker who works in a doctor’s clinic, believes that, “for us Catholics, it’s a responsibility.” Vanessa, 34, a caregiver who works for a Taiwanese-American family, asserted that she and fellow Filipinos attend church “because we want to serve...not only to the people, to the God always, always.” For many of these women, going to church is a way to be closer to God: to “spend time with God”, as Claudia, 34, a caregiver, maintains and to “hear messages from God”, states Beth, 40, also a caregiver. In fact, when I asked my interviewees what the most important thing for them to do on their day off, thirteen of them responded with “church” or “attending mass.” Carmela, 28, a domestic worker and nanny for two children, is a very active member of St. Bartholomew’s Church (even though she only receives four hours off each Sunday). She told me that, for her, church is the most important thing to do on her day off: “I visit church. It’s my life every Sunday.” Malea, 35, a Full Gospel Christian, attends Church of God, and is a former nursing aide in a nursing home, but is currently working as a factory worker. She put it succinctly when she said: “I attend church because...I need to, you know, to feel my spiritual food. It needs [to be felt]. It really needs.” This need for spirituality was a common sentiment I heard expressed continuously throughout my time in the Filipino community.

Friendliness and Hospitality through the Church

Churches in Taiwan are also the place many Filipinos meet for the first time. For many newcomers to Taiwan, this is an excellent way to integrate into the community. Danielle, 26, says that she met other Filipinos in Tainan City this way: “When I first attended church [it was] because I wanted to meet the community.” Several women commented that, upon arrival in Tainan, they immediately sought out the church. Often, locating a church for the first time can be problematic for household workers, especially if the worker’s employer does not help in any way. Several caregivers commented that they asked their boss or another Taiwanese person for this information. Claudia, 34, told me that it was through her boss that she found out that St. Bartholomew’s Church was only a

few blocks away from her workplace: “because I’m asking [my boss] I want to...attend the mass. And they told me, you have a Catholic church, there.” Anna, 34, a caregiver for an elderly woman, told me that her female boss helped her locate a church, only two days after she arrived: “Actually the first time in Tainan, my boss takes me to church (*laughing*) because I don’t know where is the church.”

Other women had to rely on the help of others outside of their workplace, and some had to wait for longer periods to locate a church. For Daisy, 40, it took her almost six months before she found a church. She told the story of how she found St. Peter’s Church for the first time:

Daisy: [in my first six months] I never seen church before. And then it was a surprise when one of the workers, one of the employees in the factory, asked me a favour to clean the house of her mother, one Saturday - one Sunday. For extra payment. And then I finished almost about 4.30-5.30, then she asked me a favour. And then – she gave me a favour. And then she asked me where do you want to go - in a department store?

Oh, she was going to drive you somewhere.

Daisy: Yeah, on her motorcycle. I asked her honestly: find me a church.

Ohhhhh.

Daisy: That is the way.

That is how you found out! That’s cool.

Daisy: Yeah. So the first church we go is – I don’t know if it’s St. Bartholomew’s or Holy Cross. And then it’s closed. So she said there is another one. So I found the St. Peter’s. It’s about 5.30 pm. And I meet one of the El Shaddai³¹, the old – Sarah. Sarah. Sarah is now in the Philippines. She is almost twelve years here. And then...I pray and I said I thank God, because I found a church.

Finding a church is also a good way to make contact with their fellow nationals. Many migrant workers arrive in Taiwan not knowing anybody, so attending mass is a good way to make that first connection into the community. A number of caregivers and domestic workers asserted that in addition to religious reasons, church was a place to find friends. Carlita, 27, a domestic worker and caregiver for an elderly woman, said, “Of course I want to hear the gospel every Sunday. And go to church, we can also find a lot of friends. Making friends, yeah... of course you can make friends.”

³¹ El Shaddai is a Catholic Charismatic movement founded in the Philippines.

Filipinos are also extremely friendly. This friendliness extends to foreigners, such as myself, and most definitely to their fellow Filipinos. Filipinos themselves speaks of this quality openly, something I heard expressed on more than one occasion. When asked how she met the Filipino community, Carlita responded with: “Oh, you know, Filipino community is very friendly and very nice!” For migrants first arriving in a foreign country, especially caregivers who are relatively isolated in their workplace, this automatic friendliness and hospitality is greatly appreciated. NGO director and foreign missionary Father Carl reiterated this, by saying:

Father Carl: And I do not know...hospitality for us, does not only mean welcoming strangers in your house. Hospitality for Filipinos happens everywhere. Even in the park. Even in the market when you see a Filipino.

Yeah, I've felt it.

Father Carl: ‘Hi! Hello!’ We don’t wait for the setting of the house and the food and the cuisine and all this gastronomic session. For us Filipinos, for us to define our hospitality, it’s just automatic.

As I observed on several instances, newcomers are always welcomed immediately and adopted at once into the existing group. At St. Bartholomew’s I was often introduced to newly arrived Filipinos. Within a few weeks, I would observe that these newcomers looked as if they had been attending mass there for quite some time, given how comfortable they already seemed within the group. There really was this sense of instant acceptance, of old-timers taking newcomers under their wings and making them feel settled and welcome. Whether this was done by inviting them to sit together at mass, extending an invitation to join the church council group or prayer group, or informing them of upcoming parties and lunches, people were always made to feel welcome and at home. I got the impression that these Filipino workers, knowing exactly how it felt to be new and out of place, wanted to make their fellow nationals feel at ease, as they had been made to feel when they first attended church. Sister Grace, an NGO worker and foreign missionary whom I interviewed, explained Filipinos’ friendly and social nature, arguing that getting together is a key way for them to relax:

Sister Grace: [This community and social spirit] is very common, because this is directly our Filipino people. They have been Christianized as groups, because this

is our history. So that when you go back, you will understand this. In the Filipino setting, the priest is very important to them, because it looks like he is the priest there for the spiritual but it is extended to other aspects of their life. And the civil will be the center of their lives. You know, the Filipinos when they go to church, they will not leave the church right away. They will look for their friends ah?

Yeah, of course

Sister Grace: They sit down and then talk and chat and all that. ‘Where are you from?’ and all that. And then – this is what happens in the Philippines. Even a small group that you organize and become a church, a church group - you will find out that they will hang around. Right? Chinese won’t do that. No. Finish business, finish you go home! You have your outing. But these kinds of people, not because maybe they are forced - also the situation is because they have no home, to go there or...you see, they ask for day off. Why they hang around? The laoban all say: Sister, you think they are really resting? I said: that’s their way of resting.

Attending mass is thus a way for Filipinos to meet up with their friends regularly on their weekly day off. As I heard reiterated throughout my field research, Filipinos truly love being together. One of the ways they can do this is through church, since it acts as a social outlet; in fact, for many Filipinos it becomes the center of their social life in Taiwan (Sills, 2004: 259).

The Church and Its Filipino-Ness

What I also encountered was the real sense of home and *Filipino-ness* that the Church embodies. Following Stephen Sills, I too found that the Catholic Church is indeed an “enclave institution” and a “cultural refuge” (Sills, 2004: 17, 262) for the transnational Filipino community in Taiwan. Participating in the weekly mass, joining one of the religious or social groups, eating together after the service, or simply hanging out at the church all day are all ways that these workers create community and a sense of home. And for Filipinos, this locality is vital. The word *Filipino-ness* is fitting here: the English masses offered at these churches, while open to anyone, are almost entirely attended by Filipinos. The various churches around Tainan, regardless of denomination, all constitute Filipino ‘neighbourhoods’ in a Taiwanese city. Cheng argues along similar lines, when she comments that the church has been “constructed and transformed into a national space for Filipina domestics and the Filipino community as a whole” (Cheng 2006: 215).

The Church, more than any other institution in Taiwan, provides workers with the most “solidarity and connectedness” with their homeland (Sills 2004: 251). In his study on the transnationalism of Filipinos in Kaohsiung, Stephen Sills, asserts that these workers are ‘marginalized migrants’, since there is, “evidence of material and non-material culture of both communities, but little in the way of integration into the host society and even possible exclusion from the society of the homeland” (Sills 2004: 23). As he argues, their frequent contact with their homeland culture limits their assimilation into their host society. Similar to what I discovered in my research, Sills found that 100% of his respondents had some kind of “continued contact” with family or friends back in the Philippines (Sills 2004: 242). This sustained communication with their homeland occurs not only through contact with family and friends back home, but also through participating in Filipino festivities, eating Filipino food, having only co-nationals as friends, or the Church. As these churches embody Filipino-ness, they provide workers with a sense of family, too. In this way, spending Sunday at church is a good way, as Malea, 35, strongly believes, to “prevent [being] homesick.” Worshipping and singing in both Tagalog and English, eating Filipino dishes, spending time with co-nationals, even reciting the OFW prayer before mass, are all ways that these workers create a Filipino environment and atmosphere in their transnational setting.

Through her research in the Filipino community in Taipei, Cheng (2006) found this as well. One of the women she interviewed said that, in addition to the mass, she attended church because she felt “very Filipino there.” She said that, “I got to meet my own people and speak my own language. I got to see a lot of things Filipino. That’s important” (Cheng 2006: 214). Judy, 40, a caregiver/domestic worker in Tainan for more than ten years, says that she likes to attend church, “because of the homily of the prayers and to communicate with other Filipinas, like that.” As she argues, caregivers and domestics spend “the whole week inside, only to clean, work”; and thus need a break from the monotony of their jobs. For these caregivers and domestics in particular, it is an essential release on their day off, a place to go where they can be themselves, away from the watchful eyes of their employers. This is their “backstage” area as Lan argues (2006), and is a place where these women can relax and escape the demands of their jobs.

As Filipino neighbourhoods, these churches, Catholic, Born-Again and Full Gospel alike, are almost one hundred percent Filipino. To my knowledge, it is only Filipinos who attend the Born-Again, Full Gospel services at these churches. At the Catholic Churches in Tainan, there is little to no interaction on the part of Filipinos with the few local Taiwanese parishioners, during the mass or afterwards. Cheng observed this in Taipei as well, where Taiwanese and Filipino mass attendees would pass one another without saying a single word (Cheng 2006: 217). This is echoed in public areas as well, where most Taiwanese avoid venturing into the migrant worker sector, and if they do, they rarely stop at any of the shops or restaurants, or speak to migrant workers. There is not much interaction with other foreigners at church, either. Filipinos tend to stick to their own, as do most other nationalities of migrant workers, something which I will address in the section on the migrant worker neighbourhood.

The Role of Foreign Missionaries

Each of the four Catholic Churches in Tainan offers Sunday masses in both Chinese and English at different times throughout the day. The Chinese masses are attended mostly by Taiwanese, while the English masses are attended by Filipinos, some foreigners, and a small number of Taiwanese people (some of whom are Filipino-Taiwanese). While the Catholic Churches belong to the Tainan diocese and are run by local Taiwanese priests, each church has a different priest who is in charge of the migrant worker communities there. To my knowledge, none of these priests are Taiwanese. They are all foreign missionaries: from the Philippines, other parts of Asia, and a few Western countries. Father David, a foreign missionary and migrant worker NGO director, lamented the fact that in his diocese, there is no local Taiwanese priest interested in working for migrant workers. Another foreign missionary and migrant worker NGO director, Father Antonio, commented on the church's role and that of the foreign priests who work with the migrants:

Well, of all the things that happen for the protection of migrants, it is always the church – the church is always there. Yeah. The NGOs, mostly church-based, are organized by church people. So...a lot of things. Advocacy-wise, the Catholic Church is very vocal. Very vocal. But most of the people that are vocal are mostly missionaries. Not the – you cannot see local priests or local people. So...since we are in Taiwan and we are under the local church in Taiwan, so we bring the name of the church in Taiwan. The local church in Taiwan is only active because of the

missionaries. Missionaries who are doing their job properly [when] it comes to social affairs or to advocacy.

Through my interviews with NGO workers and my ethnographic observation in the Filipino community, it became apparent that with a few exceptions, the affairs of migrant workers are largely left in the hands of foreign missionaries and dealt with by migrant worker NGOs, which are mostly run by foreign missionaries as well. At the Catholic churches, the Taiwanese parishioners and priests do little to include Filipino parishioners in their festivities. On one particular occasion, I was sitting on a bench outside St. Bartholomew's Church one Sunday morning, conducting an interview with a caregiver. It was just after the Taiwanese mass had ended, when we were approached by two female Taiwanese church-goers. These two women came up to us and asked me, in English, whether I wanted to join them for lunch. I politely declined and said that I had lunch plans with my Filipino friends. Now, if I had not been there, and it had only been my caregiver friend, would they have approached her and asked her to join them? Of course, I could never know for sure, but I highly doubt they would have invited her; after all, the Taiwanese parishioners had never invited any of them prior to this.

When I asked the foreign priest at St. Peter's, Father Paul, if there was any interaction between the local and migrant worker communities there, he said that at holidays, like Christmas, they sometimes celebrate mass together, as well as organize some activities together; however, I got the impression that was more of an exception than a normal occurrence. He thinks that since Catholicism in Taiwan is not very widespread, more interaction between the two cultures would be mutually beneficial: "But the local church, you know, in Taiwan is not really strong, so somehow if we mix it up, they can learn from both, they can learn from the faith of the Filipinos and the Filipinos also can learn the culture of the Taiwanese, something like that. It's really nice." When I asked if there were any locals who helped out with the church council or any of the activities Father Paul said yes, but that it was not "obvious help." If he or any of the Filipinos asked, the locals were willing to help; with things such as food donations, ordering flower arrangements, or obtaining city permits for religious processions (where Mandarin and local knowledge would be needed) among other things.

Parishioner interaction aside, it became apparent to me that what is quite important for the Filipino church community in Taiwan is the support of their local parish priest. If they do not receive this, it can make their attempts at community creation challenging. At St. Bartholomew's, for instance, not once did I see the Taiwanese priest go out of his way to smile or welcome any of the Filipinos; rather, he kept his distance. A knowledgeable research participant even argued that: "In fact, he cannot drive the Filipinos away. Although I know that he has that in mind. But he cannot. Because the Filipinos are poor." This is in stark contrast to the local priest at St. Peter's Church, who actively supports the Filipino community there. He allows them to use the high school facilities across from the church for many of their large gatherings, religious celebrations, and their annual basketball league. Not only that, but he attends these events, mingles with the crowd, and photographs the celebrations; he later posts these pictures on a bulletin board outside the church, commemorating the events. And throughout it all, he does it with a smile - something which I know the Filipinos notice and appreciate.

A Sense of 'Place'

One of the most obvious things that these churches provide Filipinos with is a physical meeting space. This is significant because most migrant workers in Taiwan have no real space to call their own. Robert Tierney (2007; 2008), in his studies on migrant workers in Taiwan, found that these workers' only environments are often their workplaces and the company-owned dormitories. As he points out, they have little time to rest outside of their demanding working hours (Tierney 2008: 483). As a result, many factory workers tend to spend their days off close to their dormitories, while many caregivers do not usually venture that far from their workplaces. Parreñas (2008) addresses this lack of space through her theory on 'placelessness.' She argues that in the 'dominant spaces of society', migrant workers lack their own spaces. Due to this exclusion from the main sectors of the host society, they form ethnic enclaves in specific areas (Light et al 1994). This can be seen in most countries with significant immigrant populations, from the ubiquitous Chinatown in most North American cities, to Little Italy, Little India and Greektown. The same can be said in Taipei, where the Filipino sector has been dubbed "Little Manila" and "Philippines City" by the Taiwanese (Lan 2006: 183), since it houses a church attended by

thousands of Filipinos each Sunday, as well as Filipino stores, restaurants, and remittance shops.

The placelessness felt by so many migrants in Taiwan is partially countered by the formation of neighbourhoods and physical spaces. The church is an excellent example, since it provides Filipinos with a physical space which they can appropriate and make ‘theirs’, even if only once a week. This is especially important for household workers, who lack their own personal spaces in their employers’ homes; many do not even have their own room and share a room (and sometimes a bed) with their elderly ward or employer’s children. The church is often used as a hangout by many caregivers before and after mass. At St. Bartholomew’s, several caregivers arrive before mass to relax, cook, listen to music, and rest upstairs in the building adjacent to the church. On several occasions, I heard women comment that the church is a quiet, peaceful place; somewhere away from their workplace where they can unwind with friends. However, as Parreñas correctly points out, these workers can only use these spaces for a limited time each week. She argues that this makes churches and church centers “not truly places that migrant Filipina domestic workers can call their own” (Parreñas 2008: 105). Nevertheless, even taking into consideration the limited time these workers have to spend at the church, it does provide them with a Filipino space, where they can get away from their employers, along with the disapproval, judgment or stares of local Taiwanese in other public spaces.

The actual physical size of churches varies: St. Peter’s can seat a few hundred people, while St. Bartholomew’s and Holy Cross can each fit between 300 to 400 hundred parishioners comfortably. The Born-Again and Full Gospel churches are much smaller in size; at the ones that I visited, less than one fifty people attend their services and the rooms which hold the services are quite small. Aside from the actual church space itself, most mass attendees at the Catholic churches congregate outside the church, or in one of the small rooms allocated to them by the local parish priest. These rooms are not large, by any means. St. Bartholomew’s has a small room for the Filipinos, which can hold approximately 40 to 50 people. At St. Peter’s, there is a small kitchen, and a room at the back with space for about 30 people to eat lunch, as well as a room upstairs for larger events. Father Paul wishes there was a bigger space in which the Filipinos could socialize,

a center just for migrant workers: “You see that the place they have lunch and they cook, it’s very small, it’s not really for their own. Because I hope that if we can open like a centre, only for the foreigners, so they will have more places for them.” However, funding is almost always a problem in the Filipino church community, so they must make do with what they have. These spaces may not be big, but the Filipinos manage to worship, sing, play music, prepare food, eat, and enjoy themselves, regardless of the physical constraints.

The churches in Tainan also serve as temporary places to stay and sometimes even as shelters for some workers. From time to time, workers spend the night at St. Peter’s, in the upstairs bedroom. As the next chapter discusses in further detail, Tainan has no migrant worker NGOs. As a result, the church acts as a de-facto NGO and sometimes shelters runaways and migrants waiting to transfer to new employers. Sally, 27, a former caregiver now working at a factory, said that she twice spent a week or so living at the church, waiting for transfer to a new employer. In other cities around Taiwan, various church centers run their own shelters for migrant workers; these are often in close proximity to the churches that Filipinos attend.

Spending the Day Off at Church: A Cheaper Option than Going Downtown

Spending the day at the church is also a way for migrant workers to save money. The majority of migrant workers come to Taiwan in order to support their families back home; as such, many workers remit a large percentage of their salary home each month. Nicole Constable (2007: 210) argues that regardless of what country these women are working in, the situation is similar: “The game is the same: work hard, earn money, and remit it home.” Most migrant workers in Taiwan go downtown at least once a month to remit money or to buy some personal goods at the Filipino, Indonesian, Thai, or Vietnamese stores down there. Some of them try to limit their time there for fear of spending too much of their salary. Due to the pressures of providing for their families, many migrants shy away from places where they know their hard-earned money will be spent. Therefore, a number of migrants prefer to stay in the church all day. Vanessa, 34, a caregiver for an elderly woman, said that she stays in church for most of her day off, “because if you go out somewhere, you need to spend some money.” This lack of disposable income may limit their choice of activities on days off; however, staying at the

church is not seen in a negative light. Rather, many people enjoy spending all-day-Sunday there. At each of the churches I visited, meals are cooked each Sunday. These are simple lunchtime meals, cooked by the workers themselves. The food is bought with collective group funds from the church, the weekly mass collection and the workers themselves. At St. Bartholomew's, one of the church workers will often bring homemade dishes from home, to supplement other dishes and snacks, so that the caregivers and domestic workers who come will not have to cook (since this is what they have to do every day). This church worker says: "And then they go [out of their workplace], they want to eat, so they eat [here], there's some coffee. You know, I want them to feel at home."

A Safe Place to Confide, Listen, and Find a Sympathetic Ear

As Chapter 5 will address in more detail, the church is a safe place where these workers get help with their problems. It is also a resource for "developing the skills to overcome the hardships of their lives in Taiwan" (Sills 2004: 274). Moreover, many migrant worker NGOs are attached to or in close proximity to the churches. Whether this support comes in the form of advice from fellow Filipinos, spiritual guidance from priests or nuns, or psychological counseling from qualified church workers, Filipinos and other migrant workers can voice their problems and be listened to. Many migrants suffer abuse and experience trauma while working in Taiwan. The church, more than any other organization or government body, is often there to help them deal with it. Even if it is not in an official or legal capacity, the priests, nuns, church workers, and the parishioners themselves help fellow Filipinos talk through their problems and offer advice and solutions. Furthermore, as Cheng argues, it is a 'political space' where "consciousness about their collective experiences" is raised, through discussion of "strategies of negotiations and disobedience" (Cheng 2006: 235).

In addition to its political role, Cheng also believes that it is a social site where migrant workers' experiences can be discussed and compared (Cheng 2006:235). Filipinos get a chance to complain to their friends about difficulties at work, and receive sympathy and understanding in return; from those who have had similar challenges or problems, and who can identify with their problems, given their cultural background and similar work experiences. This is an important part of community creation, since it builds trust

relationships, friendships and brings the community closer together. Anna, 35, said that, she and other Filipinas can, “give [a Filipina with a problem] advice, or what else...And of course some people, some of our friends they complain, they say I am tired, like this, like that...so sometimes we feel sad for her.” Moreover, gathering with the Filipino community at church is also a way to forget one’s problems. Malea, 35, said that she attends church not only to “feel her spiritual food”, as stated above, but also: “And then in here I forget problems. I heard my problems. I feel much lighter you know.” Surrounding themselves with other Filipinos, these workers can forget their troubles for a while, even if only for a few hours. In some ways, time spent at church is even more essential for household workers than for factory workers. These women need this weekly time to meet up with other Filipinos, speak Tagalog or their ethnic dialects, discuss their work, and get a break from the isolation and demands of their jobs as live-in housekeepers and caregivers.

Social Events Run through the Church

The church is also the site at which a great many social events are organized and run. I was astounded to find out just how active the Filipino community in Tainan is, especially given their limited rest time, their lack of funds, and their small size, compared with larger communities in Taipei and Kaohsiung City. These obstacles do not prevent or stop them from organizing, planning, and celebrating, and sometimes on a large-scale. In fact, what I found out was that Filipinos will always find a way to get together and have fun - since they do truly love being together as a community. I wondered if this was the same for other nationalities of migrant workers as well: do Indonesians, Thais, and Vietnamese seek out community as much as Filipinos do? When I asked this question of Father Paul at St. Peter’s, he told me that, in his experience, the Vietnamese migrant worker community is not the same as the Filipinos:

One really very good advantage is Filipinos love being together. That’s why if you organize some activities, a lot of people can come and they will support. But the Vietnamese, a little bit different. They already work harder, because the money [broker and placement fees] is more than the Philippines. So they really concentrate on working. So if they have free time, they just want to relax, and relax by themselves. So it’s more personal. It’s not...really as a group.

When I asked him if there were any organized activities in the Vietnamese community, he told me: “We tried to organize some...but they’re not really willing to join. That is the difference [in] culture.” As my research does not focus on Indonesians or Thais, I did not get as much insight into the ways in which these workers create locality. I think, however, that it is much harder for them since they do not have the same support system, through the Catholic Church, as Filipinos do. In my experience, and from all that I have read, Filipinos seem to be the most socially active and organized of all migrants in Taiwan.

I was invited on numerous occasions to Sunday lunches, birthday parties, meetings, and other informal gatherings, usually through the church, but not always. For instance, I was invited a few times to visit a factory dormitory where members of St. Bartholomew’s church live. There were also a number of large, official events that I had the opportunity to attend and be involved with. St. Bartholomew’s, for instance, holds an annual raffle each summer. Churchgoers and church workers sell raffle tickets all over Tainan and in the surrounding counties for a few months leading up to the draw, and use the funds raised to buy prizes (first prize in 2009 was a computer), and more importantly, to raise money for other events that year. This is a fun event, since it brings together a large group of more than one hundred Filipinos from all over the city, from various factories and churches, and turns into a large social gathering, complete with live music, entertainment, and refreshments.

Another large-scale event that I had the opportunity to be involved with was National Migrants Sunday, held in September 2009. This is an annual celebration hosted by Filipino communities around Taiwan each September. Usually held in church halls, this is a way for Filipinos to gather together and celebrate being migrants, through prayer, music, dance, and food. I was lucky enough to be included in the planning for this event, and saw how well Filipinos organize themselves together for parties such as these. Through a series of meetings with numerous civil and church groups from around Tainan City and County, groups decided who would bring what kind of food and refreshments and what performances would take place. The celebration was a lot of fun. After a morning mass, a buffet lunch was served, followed by a number of performances. These included dance numbers, band performances, drama pieces, as well as interactive games and activities to

get the crowd moving and mingling. There was also a cultural dance performed by a group of Vietnamese migrants. While National Migrants Sunday is an event open to any and everyone, other foreigners and Taiwanese included, the vast majority of people who attend the celebration each year are Filipinos. Attempts to include the Indonesian, Thai, Vietnamese and foreigner community are difficult due to language barriers and the lack of interaction between these different nationalities. Each year, however, there is usually a small group of Vietnamese who attend, and last year was no exception.

Another event that must be mentioned is the mini-Olympics competition that took place over Chinese New Year holiday in February 2008. While I was not in Taiwan at the time, I heard about this event on numerous occasions during my research. In fact, to this day, Filipinos are still talking about its success. From everything that I heard, this was an amazing display of Filipino locality creation at its best. One of my respondents, Samuel, a factory worker in Tainan in his mid-thirties and a leader in the Filipino community, was instrumental in organizing the Mini-Olympics. During the three years he spent in Taiwan, he was a very active member of the church community and was integral in organizing a number of social events in the community. For the Mini-Olympics, Samuel wanted to bring Filipinos around Tainan together for a few days of fun and games. In the Philippines, they have a similar kind of mini-Olympics competition, so he wanted to start something like it in Tainan. He organized a meeting of all the Filipino workers in the area that were interested. In total, there were fifteen civil and religious groups who fundraised, organized, and planned the mini-Olympics, which they called *Hataw Pinoy*. Samuel told me his reasoning behind it: “I said to them, I said that I wanted to know you more, I wanted to know more of our Filipino friends. We have this to have a unity. We can show unity in the community area. Show [that] the Filipinos are like this.” It was held over Chinese New Year, the only time of year that Filipinos who work at factories get a one-week holiday³²; this thus gives them the opportunity to travel to other cities and participate in events such as these. Over the course of three days, hundreds of participants came together and competed in a range of outdoor and indoor games. Similar to the Olympics, the Mini-Olympics included an opening ceremony with a torch relay and a parade of teams, and ended with an

³² As I will discuss in the last section on community creation for household workers, many caregivers and domestics do not even receive Chinese New Year as a holiday.

awards ceremony. The event was a great success. The organizers were only expecting 300 to 400 people to attend, but over 1000 Filipinos came from all over Taiwan, most from Tainan and Tainan County, but also from as far away as Taipei, in the north.

Filipino basketball leagues also play a large role in locality production. These leagues exist as a kind of a mini-neighbourhood, as once again, these are Filipino spaces, created specifically to give these workers a sense of home and enjoyment on their days off. In Tainan there are two (all-male) Filipino basketball leagues that run each year: one held at the high school facilities across from St. Peter's, and one run by Assembly of God Church, at a local Taiwanese basketball court. As countless Filipinos told me, basketball is their national sport and many Filipinos are crazy about it (Thais, Indonesians, and Vietnamese, I was told, prefer soccer). These annual leagues are thus a great way for players and fans alike to gather together on their days off, compete, let off steam, and relax. The various teams are made up of men from the same factories, church groups, or social groups. Each team raises money to buy uniforms or finds a sponsor (for example, one team is sponsored by one of the local Filipino karaoke bars), and pools money to pay the league and court fees. I attended the opening ceremony of Assembly of God's basketball league as a judge, and got to see firsthand how these workers spend their days off.

Funding for Social Events & the Effects of the Economic Crisis

All of the aforementioned social events are largely facilitated through the Church, from the provision of physical space to the active support that the church workers provide. Funding for these events often comes from the church as well, but it is often not enough; outside fundraising is usually necessary and is almost always challenging. Needless to say, the Filipino community in Taiwan is not wealthy: migrant workers barely make the national minimum wage, pay large placement, broker, and food and lodging fees, and they remit a large portion of their salary home each month. It is thus difficult for church workers and community organizers to collect enough money from workers for social events. As Father Paul said:

This a little bit hard for us because you know, especially during this economic crisis, so they don't have [money]...sometimes we have to ask from the community, from our Salesian priests to help. Or they also have to try their best to have raffle tickets

or basketball league. [With] this also we can earn a little bit, and the people also know very well that we get their money, but we also serve them and the rest we also [use] for the church, so not for our own.

Money collection depends a great deal on the size of the congregation at church. One of the churches in Hsinchu City, south of Taipei, for example, has about 1500 mass attendees every Sunday; while one of the churches in Tainan has less than 50 mass attendees each week. Needless to say, the larger the congregation is, the larger the weekly mass collection will be. The congregations in Tainan are significantly smaller in size than in larger cities, such as Taipei, Kaohsiung, or cities like Hsinchu, where the Hsinchu Science Park employs thousands of Filipinos; as a result, it can be harder to raise funds for large-scale events in Tainan. As an illustration, Samuel and the organizers needed to raise a substantial amount of money for the mini-Olympics. They had to pay for expenses like food, trophies, medals, prizes, and t-shirts. They came up with the idea of a raffle, and solicited funds from the shops and establishments in the Migrant Worker Neighbourhood, asking for donations. In return, Samuel and the organizers gave businesses free advertising on posters hung up around town, promoting the event. They raised approximately NT\$270,000 (approx. CAD\$8,560), which they used to pay for expenses and give cash prizes to the winners. Some of the money also paid for an outing for the organizers to a nearby scenic area. Gathering these funds was not easy, and took a great deal of time and networking, which is all the more challenging given migrant workers lack of rest time.³³

Fundraising for these events has become even more challenging because of the recent economic climate. Along with many locals, the migrant worker community in Taiwan was greatly affected by the economic crisis. A knowledgeable research participant in Tainan told me that at one of the factories, she found out that overtime pay was not being given to the workers for several months in early 2009. Not only that, but that their food and lodging fees had increased by double, she confided to me. Similarly, Father Carl informed me that during the economic crisis, many migrants were sent home, which meant fewer churchgoers, thus smaller weekly collections, which in turn meant less funds to

³³ Samuel almost lost his job in the months leading up to National Migrants Day, since he spent so much time on the phone and in meetings for this event every Sunday. His boss expected him to work overtime on Sunday and was not pleased when Samuel had to refuse.

pursue and continue services for the workers. Sister Grace also commented on the negative effects of the crisis for migrants:

The economic crisis affected so much, because like before we used – Filipinos were many here before. But when the economic crisis came, well they have to lay off factories and all that. And many of those who hired the caregivers, they said they cannot afford anymore. So it has affected. Cut down a lot of workers who come. And the people, like one of the things that happens, is that when they find it difficult to maintain, one migrant worker will say – I don't know if it applies to all migrant workers - but they will say: I cannot give you your salary anymore. So they say you are already here, paying so much and then, you're sent home. So a lot of people are roaming around, looking for transfer. Which is not easy.

Due to the economic downturn, the Filipino community was not able to organize a second mini-Olympics in 2009, and some of their annual events were postponed or outright cancelled. As a result, it was quite difficult for the community in Tainan to collect enough donations and funding for the aforementioned National Migrants Day in 2009. A knowledgeable research participant, who always helps organize this event, told me that one of their usual sponsors for the event, one of the largest corporations in Taiwan, refused to donate money this time around. In the face of such harsh economic conditions, and in spite of this, it was therefore amazing to witness how the Filipino came together. There may not have been as many parties or celebrations in 2009, but people still gathered. And when it mattered most, they came together even more. In addition to social events, the Filipino community around Taiwan, with the help of the Church, donated money and clothing to the victims and families affected by Typhoon Ondoy, which hit the Philippines in late September 2009. Throughout the fall, church communities around Taiwan collected donations. One Filipino church that I visited in Kaohsiung County had raised PHP\$26,700 (approx. CAD\$610) over the course of a few weeks, thanks largely to donations from its migrant worker congregation. A migrant worker center that I visited in Hsinchu City had also been collecting: the hallway in the center was lined with dozens of black garbage bags filled with donated clothing from the migrant worker community. This is a testament to how much Filipinos unite and come together, not only for entertainment, socializing, and prayer, but also in order to support those back home in the Philippines.

The Migrant Worker Neighbourhood

After the Church, the second area or ‘neighbourhood’ that embodies Filipino locality production is what I term “the migrant worker neighbourhood.” This small, confined area is located in downtown Tainan, in close proximity to the train station, and within walking distance from a Catholic and several Christian churches. This space consists of two or three blocks of shops, restaurants, and other establishments that cater specifically to migrant workers, of all nationalities. These include restaurants, remittance shops, clothing stores, karaoke bars, discos, internet shops, and small-sized supermarkets. It would be unrepresentative to call this space Little Manila, since unlike Taipei, this neighbourhood also has Indonesian, Vietnamese, and Thai establishments and businesses. Overall, however, a large percentage of them are run by and cater to Filipinos. These businesses are largely nationality-based and are usually owned and operated by foreign spouses or Taiwanese-Filipinos; migrant workers cannot own their own businesses. However, aside from official stores and establishments, some Filipinos have unofficial businesses on the side, everything from selling international calling cards to money-lending. Moreover, some migrant workers work part-time at some of these businesses on Sunday. For instance, one caregiver that I met worked one Sunday a month at one of the karaoke bars in the area. This is an excellent way to make a little extra money on the side.

The migrant worker neighbourhood is an essential locale for community production. Similar to the church, this area is a common meeting place for Filipinos and other nationalities of workers on their days off and is where many workers make initial contact. Several of my respondents commented that this was where they first met other Filipinos. Sally, 27, a former caregiver, now working at a factory, asked her employer where the Filipino stores were. When her employer dropped her off in front of one of the Filipino stores, she was almost immediately approached by a fellow Filipino:

Sally: When I go there, so I was standing and some Filipinos approach me: hi, miss, hello!

Filipinos are so friendly!

Sally: Yes! *(laughs)*

Filipinos are amazingly friendly, it's really wonderful.

Sally: Yes, they are so friendly! And they heard me, ‘I am new, I am new here.’ ‘Ok, I will take you [to] a nice place, where you can go. That was John [one of the leaders of the church group she later joined]

Oh! So he’s one of the first people you met here?

Sally: Yeah, John. And he brings me in St. Peter’s.

While relatively quiet and empty during the week, this neighbourhood comes alive on Sundays. Southeast Asian migrants of all nationalities can be seen hanging around on the streets, eating at restaurants, singing karaoke, and relaxing. National music blares out of the restaurants, as shopkeepers barbecue skewers of Indonesian meats, cook bowls of Vietnamese pho, and workers sing along to Tagalog and American pop music on karaoke machines. Dozens of migrants dance to American pop music in the darkened discos in the Black Building, unwinding after a long week of demanding work. Workers pour out onto the street, making the most of their days off and enjoying themselves amongst fellow nationals. Couples walk down the street arm in arm, on their way to eat at or shop for national goods, or on their way to the nearby local park for a stroll. Groups of friends loiter outside remittance shops and supermarkets, drinking beer and eating imported snacks and dishes from their home countries. These establishments not only sell goods and products that are often cheaper than at the Taiwanese shops, but they also provide these workers with a taste of home. Along with the church, the migrant worker neighbourhood helps migrant workers to partially counter their sense of ‘placelessness’, even if it is only for one day a week or even a few hours.

This area also includes a 12-story building nicknamed “the Black Building,” which along with a dozen or so shops, restaurants, and remittance shops on the first floor, also houses three or four Filipino discos. There is also a cheap hotel in the building, with rooms to rent by the hour, the day or the month. On Sundays, it is common for Filipino, Indonesian, Thai or Vietnamese couples to take advantage of these cheap hourly rates. Some workers even pool their money together and rent rooms by the month. On one occasion, I attended a birthday party in one of these hotel rooms, eating and celebrating with a group of Filipino men and women. Two Filipino men were renting the room on a monthly basis, as a way to escape the confines of their factory dormitory and allow themselves some freedom to entertain friends and visitors.

The Black Building and various other shops in the area also provide internet services for migrants. Through Skype, MSN, Facebook, Friendster, email, or other online chat sites, these workers connect to their families and friends back home, or to other OFWs around the world. Many of my respondents spend a few hours each Sunday talking to their children and families back home this way. Danielle, 26, told me that sometimes she will spend all day in the internet café talking to her children and family via webcam. Others take this time to communicate with friends around the world, asking them questions about jobs, visa applications, and life in other countries.

This idea of ‘connecting’ is something vital for Filipinos (and something which many caregivers and domestics are deprived or struggle with because of the isolation and lack of time off in their jobs). Sister Grace explained this idea of connecting, saying that in the Philippines, “There’s also a word, *ugnayan*. *Ugnayan* is get connected. Like internet, like networking sometimes. This kind of thing goes well with the (*laughing*) personal idea of the Philippines.” She then went on to tell me that “the highest texters in the world may be Filipinos.”³⁴ After spending a few months with the Filipino community, I would probably agree with her. Most of the Filipinos I met either have two cell phones or two SIM cards - one for local calls and the other for long-distance calls to the Philippines. Most of my respondents said that they text more often, since it is cheaper. Many Filipinos have a ‘roaming’ number, which means that they can make cheaper international calls. Sister Grace commented that Filipinos are very skillful in the IT sector, and that this is because “they want to be connected. Never mind that they spend so much. They will say at the end you get the result (*laughing*). This is basically Filipino value.” Filipinos are always connecting, whether through the internet, texts, or phone calls; they communicate with their families, friends, and community back home because it is so important for them – even if it costs them a lot (something which exemplifies Appadurai’s ‘technoscapes’). For instance, Danielle, a domestic worker in her mid-twenties, told me that she spends one third of her salary on phone calls to the Philippines, so that she can communicate with her two children every morning. Father Antonio remarked that some migrant workers spend NT\$4000 to

³⁴ I was curious about this so I searched the internet and found the following information about text messaging on SanDiegoAccountantsGuide.com: “The largest average usage of the service by mobile phone subscribers is in the Philippines with an average of 27 texts sent per day by subscriber. In Singapore the average is 12 and in South Korea 10” (SanDiegoAccountantsGuide.com).

5000 (CAD\$125-160) of their monthly salaries on phone calls. With access to cheap internet services, this amount can be greatly reduced. Many Filipinos, especially mothers, spend good parts of their days off - and their salaries - calling home or using the internet services in these shops.

Within the community there is competition between various business owners. There are several remittance shops which compete for customers by charging varying rates. These shops are an essential part of any migrant worker neighbourhood, in any part of the world. In Taiwan, while many of the businesses that cater to migrants may be closed during the week or only open a few days, remittance shops are usually open more often; this service is in high demand. There, Filipinos remit money home once a month and also buy *balikbayan*³⁵ boxes, filling them with presents and international goods, clothes and electronics, and sending them to their families in the Philippines. One such business, EEC Elite Express (its real name) can be found in cities all over Taiwan, and caters to a range of other Asian and international countries.³⁶ Along with remittance services, this popular store sells Filipino magazines and newspapers and a range of other Filipino products and goods.

While the area is home to different nationalities of shops, most migrant workers stay within their own groups. There is little cultural interaction. NGO director, Father David commented that, “because of cultural and language differences, the migrant workers have a tendency to stay in their cultural ghettos.” As a result, Filipinos for the most part tend to hang out in Filipino establishments, while Indonesians go to Indonesian shops, and so forth. One exception would be for some caregivers who, during the week, take their elderly wards to parks and meet up with other nationalities of caregivers and strike up friendships that way. Another exception is one of the discos in the Black Building, Sayaw

³⁵ This is the common term for a Filipino returning home – *balik* means return and *bayan* means country (I asked one of my respondents this). I came across this term on a Philippines custom form when I travelled to the Philippines in 2010. *Balikbayan* boxes are big business in countries where there are large numbers of Filipino overseas workers. All over Canada, for instance, there are balikbayan delivery services. See the following website for more information: <http://torontoseeker.com/balikbayanboxesintoronto.htm>

³⁶ EEC Elite Express was founded in 1992. According to their website, they hold 60% of the market in Taiwan, and boast large customer bases in the US, Singapore, Korea, Hong Kong. They also cater to freight forwarding companies in Canada, the US, Italy, the UK, Germany, Singapore, Tokyo, and countries in the Middle East. See their website for more information: <http://www.eec-elite.com/>

at Indakan. The largest and busiest of the Filipino discos, it is probably one of the only places where different nationalities of migrants and foreigners mingle together. While the majority of people there are Filipinos, there are also Indonesians, Vietnamese, Thais, Cambodians, international students, English teachers, and Indian engineers who gather to dance, relax, and drink cheap Filipino beer on Sunday afternoons.³⁷

There is also little interaction with local Taiwanese in this area. Similar to what Cheng (2006) found at the Filipino church in Taipei, where Filipinos and local Taiwanese parishioners pass each other without a glance, the same happens in this neighbourhood. It is rare to see locals patronize any of these shops or interact with the migrants there. While this neighbourhood is surrounded on all sides by Taiwanese businesses, along with the city's train station, bus stations, and a busy shopping district, in the confines of the migrant establishments themselves, Taiwanese tend to stay away. A Malaysian-Taiwanese Master's student that I spoke with about my research even remarked that he had never walked down these streets because he had heard it was "dangerous." This was something which I heard a few times from local Taiwanese. This idea of 'the dangerous, drunken migrant worker' was a falsity that I had to dispel on a few occasions. As a white, female Westerner walking down the streets there, I am fairly conspicuous, and always get my fair shares of stares from the Indonesian, Vietnamese, Thai, and Filipino workers who frequent this area; however, these looks are more curious, interested and friendly, than anything. I have never felt uneasy or felt like I was in danger. Not to mention the fact that this neighbourhood shuts down quite early on the weekends – most activity occurs during daylight hours and early evening on Sundays.

Use of Public Spaces

Along with churches and the migrant worker area, workers also spend time in other, more public, open spaces. The most common park to see foreign workers in is Tainan Park. Located downtown Tainan, on the edge of the migrant community, it is one of the largest and most well-known parks in the city. Taiwanese visit the park in droves on the weekends,

³⁷ Even amongst the Filipino community, there is disapproval from some who believe that the disco and the karaoke bars in the Black Building are bad influences. Based on my experience, this was more commonly felt by Born-Again Christians, than by Catholics.

especially Sundays, enjoying the well-kept flower gardens, the view from the central pagoda, and the paths that circle the park. On Sundays, it is also quite common to see groups of migrant workers of all nationalities spread out around the park, sitting on the benches overlooking the central pond, eating picnics and barbecued food, drinking beer, playing the guitar, and relaxing on the street bordering the park and the edge of the migrant worker neighbourhood. Often, groups of friends seclude themselves in the many little gazebos and roofed-in table areas. Similar to the migrant worker neighbourhood, workers gather according to nationality, and rarely mingle with local Taiwanese. This park is an oft-visited place on days off, since it is a large place in which to unwind, relax and spend a few hours, until their nightly curfews.

Similarly, through her research in Hong Kong, Nicole Constable found that Filipinas gathered together in the thousands on Sundays, in Statue Square and Chater Garden, both in Central District, Hong Kong's financial district (Constable 2007: 1-2). Along with Lan (2006) and Cheng (2006), Constable found that locals complained about the presence of foreign workers in these public areas. In Hong Kong, migrant workers are accused by locals of doing "private things in public places" (Constable 2007: 167).³⁸ In addition, Stephen Sills' Filipino research participants told him that in public places in Taiwan, they were often subjected to "disapproving looks, staring, and sometimes even rude or abusive language. They reported frequent, unwelcome comments of a sexual nature, from Taiwanese taxi drivers and occasionally from men on the street or at work" (Sills 2004: 205).

Several NGO directors and church workers mentioned how local Taiwanese complain over noise coming from churches on Sundays. Sills also addresses this, noting how one Filipino Pastor in Kaohsiung received complaints about the "noise" of the gospel choir (Sills 2004: 126). I find this to be a kind of 'cultural' discrimination, given the number of noisy temple celebrations, fireworks displays, elections parades and advertisement trucks (blaring slogans out of loudspeakers) that occur at all times of the day,

³⁸ Constable observed that on Sundays, Filipinos in Central District give each other massages, pedicures, and manicures, while some women set up unofficial businesses, like hair-cutting and selling international calling cards (2007:167).

on a daily basis in Taiwan. Notwithstanding the fact that Filipino masses are held on Sunday mornings and afternoons, a perfectly appropriate time for singing and celebrating.

The way these women use public places like parks or even churches, for their 'private' or 'backstage' activities, is thus often contested by locals. As Lan argues, the presence of migrant workers has generally been accepted by locals as long as they remain "marginal, spatially and socially" (cited in Sills, 2004: 210). Furthermore, Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Shirlena Huang, in their study on migrant domestic workers in Singapore, also maintain that "construction of 'the other', groups which are considered of residual or marginal status, have a spatial dimension" (Yeoh and Huang 1998: 585). Migrant workers' use of public space to produce locality is limited and constrained by their existence as 'the Other (Ruddick 1996: 133 cited in Yeoh and Huang 1998: 585)' thus making their attempts at community creation all the more harder. The Filipino community in Taiwan is much smaller than in Hong Kong and there are fewer Filipina domestic workers there; however, Filipinos' use of public spaces as central gathering areas on their days off is much the same. As the next chapter discusses, this collective gathering is one form of resistance.

For Indonesian, Thai, and Vietnamese workers in Taiwan, these public places are important too. They venture into the city, in order to escape the confines of their factory dormitories and enjoy what little freedom they can on their days off. In Taipei, as Lan discovered, the Indonesian migrant worker community is more "decentralized and spatially fluid", than the Filipino community (Lan 2006: 188). Unlike the Filipino community in Taipei, who appropriate the shops and establishments around St. Christopher's Church – the "Filipino Sector" as Cheng (Cheng 2006: 213) calls it – and the church itself on Sundays, the Indonesian community only have more open, public, and Taiwanese spaces to use. As Lan observed, Indonesian domestic workers often congregate in and around Taipei Railway Station, where they sit on the ground-floor lobby to eat homemade Indonesian dishes, chat, nap, and read Indonesian magazines from the nearby shops. These workers also venture to the nearby small dance clubs and karaoke bars in the area, run by Indonesian-Chinese (Lan 2006: 189). Like other nationalities of migrants, they too are tolerated as long as they remain on the periphery. That these workers use certain spaces and not others, and often ones into which locals do not venture, speaks to Judith Rollins'

“spatial deference” (1985). Although Rollins uses this term to refer to what occurs in the workplace itself, one can also apply it to these workers’ actions outside. With respect to Indonesian workers in Taipei, Lan comments on their use of peripheral spaces:

The spatial locations of Indonesian workers’ Sunday activities clearly symbolize their social status of ‘marginal insiders. They gather at the *corners* of Taipei’s train station; they eat and dance *behind* the prime public area in Taoyuan; and they tend to shop *underground* rather than in skyscraper department stores. They are seen in public but only at those corners less visible to Taiwanese (Lan 2003c as cited in Sills, 2004: 210)

Compared with Taipei, the Indonesian community in Tainan is much smaller in size and is not as highly visible; these workers tend to hang around outside the Indonesian shops, on the streets in the migrant worker neighbourhood, and often frequent Tainan Park, along with other nationalities of workers.

Similar to the church and the migrant worker neighbourhood, migrant workers’ use of public areas like parks, streets, and train stations is another example of attempts to counter the placelessness they feel in Taiwanese society. Filipinos, Indonesians, Vietnamese, and Thais appropriate these spaces in order to create locality, however limited this may be – as these spaces are usually only frequented on Sundays. During the week, however, it is largely caregivers who come to the park with their elderly wards or employers’ children. In most parks throughout the city, foreign caregivers are easy to spot. More often than not, it is a Filipino or Indonesian woman pushing an elderly man or woman in their wheelchair down the street, not a local. In parks throughout Tainan, caregivers gather together in the mornings and afternoons, parking their elderly wards and chatting together in their local languages.

At the beginning of my field research, I met a small group of Indonesian caregivers in the park on the campus of National Cheng Kung University, situated in central Tainan. Each afternoon at the same time, they pushed their elderly wards in wheelchairs to the park, to meet up with each other. I also met a Filipina caregiver, Andrea, there. For months, she hung out with these caregivers since there were no other Filipinas in the park (she later met a few Filipina caregivers in the park and stopped hanging out with the Indonesian women). Even though Andrea and the Indonesian women could not speak the same language

(Andrea spoke very little Mandarin Chinese, while the Indonesian women spoke little to no English), they managed to communicate well enough together. They grouped their wards' wheelchairs together in the shade, standing around, making jokes, and chatting. The Indonesian women brought treats to share with each other and played Indonesian music on their cell phones. Over the course of a few months, I took to visiting them once a week, chatting with Andrea in English, and doing my best to speak Chinese with the Indonesian women. While the focus of my research was not on Indonesians, it soon became apparent to me that foreign caregivers of all nationalities appropriate the park in similar ways. In addition, caregivers of different nationalities will often befriend one another (especially if they do not have the opportunity to meet one of their co-nationals) and use the park as a meeting place for morning and afternoon walks with their elderly wards. This experience showed me just how important parks are for these women, as it allows them to meet up with their fellow nationals, speak their own language, and even gather together with other nationalities of caregivers, with whom they share similar work experiences in Taiwan.

As the last section will discuss, a large number of caregivers and domestics in Taiwan do not even receive a day off; they are unable to attend church and only go to the migrant worker neighbourhood on occasion. Therefore, this time spent in public parks is essential for them to meet, chat, and spend time with their fellow domestics and caregivers. It also proves just how difficult locality production can be for these women. Unlike factory workers who have more leisure time and are less restricted in their jobs, caregivers and domestics often have to strive much harder to create community

A Thriving Civil Society in a Transnational Filipino Ethnoscape

Filipinos also find community through creating and joining different social organizations. As the section on social events described, many Filipinos are involved in organizing community events. This is often done through the auspice of organizations, which can be both religious and non-religious. With respect to the former, many Filipinos join their church's different organizations. These include groups which gather together to pray and say the rosary every Sunday, as well as groups which organize social activities and events through the church. The church is a convenient place for this, as the workers

can use the church's resources, including funding, meeting spaces, and can get help and support from the church workers themselves.

At St. Peter's, for example, there is both a religious and a social group, and many of the members belong to both. In addition to weekly lunches, and prayer meetings, these groups congregate to plan outings, parties, parish activities, and even to organize community service in the city. At St. Bartholomew's, the group there has monthly meetings to discuss everything from prayer, to upcoming parties and events, and other related issues. At the Born Again churches I attended, there are similar groups, which organize meals, services, music events, and so forth. Interestingly, I found that some members of these groups are actually more active in the Church in Taiwan, than they were back in the Philippines. Vanessa, 34, is one such example. She was not an active member of the Church back home, but in Taiwan she is. She attributes this to her husband (whom she actually met in Taiwan), who is extremely active: "Only here [am I active]. Maybe because my husband is...even when he was in the Philippines, my husband is so active in the Philippines, active in the church. Maybe he takes care of me to come here...because he told me that his one week is not complete without going to the church to serve."

There are also a number of non-religious, civil, Filipino organizations around Taiwan. Many of them originated in the Philippines and were formed in Taiwan by the migrant workers themselves. Here, I make a distinction between the various migrant worker NGOs around Taiwan, which are run by foreign missionaries and have countless migrant workers who volunteer their services, and those organizations and associations run by migrant workers themselves, less for legal, work-related issues, than for social ones. A number of the latter are ethnic-based groups, formed according to different regions, dialects, and ethnicities in the Philippines. For instance, there are large groups of Ilocanos, one of the major ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines, who have joined together to form social groups in Taiwan, just as they do back home. Samuel, the Filipino factory worker that I interviewed, said that Filipino workers, "when they came here, because there are a lot of Filipinos that belong to this place, so they form a group." He mentioned that there was a well-established Ilocano group, Samahang Ilocano (its real name), which exists in the Philippines and has also formed in Taiwan. There are also associations for Kapampangan,

Pangasinan, and Bicolanos, along with those from the Vizayas and Mindanao region and from the northern regions of the Philippines. Theresa, 27, a domestic worker, also mentioned Samahang Makata International (SMI), a Filipino writers, poets, and artists' association. She has contributed a poem to the newspaper that SMI publishes. Samuel also informed me that there is a social group for foreign spouses. In addition, given the musical proclivities of many Filipinos, it is not surprising that workers in Taiwan also form musical groups, bands, and choirs; some professional, some amateur and purely social, and some run through the Church and some organized outside of it. For instance, one of my male friends at St. Bartholomew's, a factory worker in Tainan, plays in a Filipino rock band with several other factory workers. They travel around Tainan, Tainan County, and Kaohsiung County to play paid gigs for local parties and events.

Filipinos are thus a very socially active group, no matter their limited rest time. When I commented on this, Samuel and others informed me that this was a normal occurrence for them; back home in the Philippines, there is a strong sense of civil society and many Filipinos organize themselves in a similar fashion. Nicole Constable demonstrates that Filipinos have a more "extensive and developed" civil society back in the Philippines, compared with Indonesians. As she argues, there are more Philippines NGOs and advocacy groups for migrant workers (Constable 2007: 213). Thus, it should come as no surprise that they do this in a transnational setting like Taiwan, despite the various challenges like lack of money, time, and travelling distances. Also, in the past year, due to the financial crisis, many of these groups have faced additional challenges. Along with problems of funding, many workers have been laid off and returned home, and some of these groups have consequently split up or ceased their meetings. It also seems that some Filipinos in Taiwan may be even more active in these types of social organizations than they would back home, since it is an excellent way to socialize on their down time and is a great way to obtain a sense of Filipino-ness (since so many of these groups celebrate Filipino culture). As Stephen Sills points out, workers create formal groups and organizations that outlast their own respective contracts, groups that continue on far after these migrants have returned home (Sills 2004: 237). In addition, the social ties that Filipinos forge through these organizations and the commitment that they make to the migrant community can also contribute to making a migrant stay on longer than they had

intended (Sills 2004: 198); something which several of my respondents attested to as well. Finally, it should also be emphasized that overall, factory workers are more active in these groups than are caregivers and domestic workers, given the former's comparatively regular days off and freedom in their work. This is something which will be addressed in the following section.

Community Creation for Household workers

The preceding pages have set forth the ways in which Filipinos in Tainan create community for themselves. This section focuses more specifically on household workers and details their respective challenges with regards to locality production, along with what exactly they do to achieve it. This is often a struggle for these women. Caregiving and domestic work are time-consuming, demanding and isolating jobs and often make these women vulnerable to abuse at the hands of their employers. The introductory chapter made reference to the ambiguity of the terms 'caregiver' and 'domestic worker', since most women employed as either a caregiver or domestic worker, simply put, do everything around the house (When I asked many of these women what they did, several of them actually responded: "everything"). Most often, this involves cleaning, cooking, taking care of elderly family members and / or children, along with other household tasks. Often, it can involve other extraneous tasks and chores. This includes cleaning the houses of employers' family members (which is illegal) which Theresa, 27, a domestic worker, and Jennifer, 32, a factory worker-domestic worker each had to do. It can also include cleaning the houses of their employers' friends (also illegal). Theresa also has to massage her male and female boss every night, and often has to sit for hours picking out her female boss' white hairs.

Along with the demanding nature of the job itself, are the long hours that many of these women work. While the focus of this chapter is not the actual job of caregiving and domestic work itself, it is important to mention what these women do at work and what the nature of their job is, since it affects how they are able to create locality. As I discussed in Chapter 2, nowhere in their contracts does it stipulate the number of working hours; as a result, it is quite common for caregivers and domestic workers in Taiwan to work

extremely long hours.³⁹ Many of them wake up between five and six in the morning and work until 10:00, 11:00 or 12 o'clock at night. This is the case with Jennifer. Although her contract says she is a factory worker, she does the workload of a housekeeper, nanny, and factory worker: she wakes up at 5:00 am, cooks breakfast, and cleans the factory and the adjoining house of her employer; from 8:00 am until 5:00 pm she works in the factory; from 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm she works in the house, cooking, cleaning, ironing, doing laundry, and taking care of her employer's children; after which, she goes to bed. Unfortunately, though the working hours and household tasks may vary, I heard this story more than once during the course of my interviews, and migrant worker NGO directors and workers reiterated it. Apart from a mid-day break or nap (a custom in Taiwan), many caregivers and domestics work steadily until late at night; making this job a type of live-in, standby service, as these women are virtually always on-call. Unlike factory workers, who are covered by the LSA and are thus entitled to overtime pay after eight working hours, these women work long hours for the same monthly pay: regardless of how many actual hours they work, they still receive NT\$15,840.

Furthermore, some household workers are not allowed to leave their place of employment during the week. This speaks to what Peter O'Neill calls "arbitrary deprivation of liberty", where some workers are never allowed to leave the house except with their employer (O'Neill 2005a). This is just one example of the ways in which employers (especially the female ones) attempt to control their live-in workers; a theme I found common in my interviews. Some women are not even allowed out on the weekends, even when their bosses have a rest day. This differs greatly from factory workers, who live together in dormitories and have nights off to do what they want. From conversations with Filipino factory workers, I found out that most of them hang around their dormitories at night, abiding by curfews set by their employers. However, some of them are allowed to leave the premises, and sometimes visit other dormitories to see friends, boyfriends or girlfriends. As a result, they have much more freedom than household workers.

³⁹ In a *Taipei Times* article entitled "Group says caregivers need rest" Shelley Huang maintains that caregivers, foreign and local, work on average 14 hours a day, and thus have almost no free time for themselves (Huang 2010e).

Caregiving and domestic work is thus very isolating for Filipinas. Many of the women I interviewed said they do not see any of their friends or fellow Filipinos during the week. Those that do, usually meet up with fellow caregivers and domestic workers who live nearby, and go to the park with their elderly wards. These daily get-togethers are a way for these women to vent, offer and receive advice, share, and speak their native language. This is especially true for those who have no day off at all. Camille, 44, is a caregiver for an elderly man and has no day off. She lives alone with her elderly ward (his family lives two hours away and visits once a month). She enjoys the fact that it is just her and her ward in the house, and as a result, is quite happy with her job. Each morning and afternoon, she pushes her ward in his wheelchair to the park across the street and meets up with her close friend, also a Filipina, pushing her own elderly ward in his wheelchair.

Many household workers are not that lucky during the week. Carmela, 28, a domestic worker and nanny for two young children, told me she never goes out on her own during the week. She only goes out with her employer's family: "No, I go out with them. But it's Sunday, now they allow me to go out, all by myself. But weekday, work time, no." Carmela did not receive a day off for her first three years. It was only recently, after Carmela told her employer that she had to trust Carmela, and that she would not do anything irresponsible or dangerous, that her employer allowed Carmela to go to church on her own; previously, her employer would drop her off and pick her up again. However, Carmela still only receives the afternoon off: she leaves around 1.30 pm and has to be back at her employer's house by 5.30 or 6:00 pm each Sunday. Carmela's rest time is thus quite limited; usually, she only has time to go to church, but sometimes goes downtown to remit money or buy some personal things.

Other women made similar comments about their days off. Sarah, 31, also a domestic worker and nanny for two young children, did not receive a day off her for first few years, either. While she now receives one, her employers usually only allow her to go out in the mornings; in the afternoons she travels with them to Kaohsiung, where Sarah takes care of her boss' elderly mother. Some Sundays she does not even receive a day off. Theresa, 27, had a similar situation: for her first three years her employers did not give her a day off. She did not know anyone before she came, and because of her lack of a rest day,

she did not make friends with any Filipinos for a few years. After her first three-year contract, Theresa finally met another Filipina, Carmela, who told her about the church. Up until that point, she had had no Filipino friends and had only met a few Filipinos randomly, when she was at the hospital with her elderly ward. Last year, her boss finally gave her a 'day off.' However, this is limited to two or three hours. As she told me: "Yeah, just only attend the mass and then [church] meeting and then go back home." Like Carmela, she never really ventures downtown to the migrant worker neighbourhood, unless she needs to remit money.

Out of the twenty women I interviewed, only eight got a full day off each week. Danielle, 27, and Vanessa, 34, each receive two Sundays off a month. Malea, 35, a former nursing aide in a nursing home (now a factory worker) only received two to three 'days off' a month, and these were never on the same days. They barely count as days off, however, since she was only allowed to spend a total of two hours outside her workplace. This made it very difficult to meet up with the Filipino community in Taiwan. Therefore, as she explained, it was a long time before she met anyone else in the Filipino community, aside from her four Filipina coworkers. Hannah, 28, a caregiver for an elderly woman, says her day off depends on her boss's work schedule: "Days off. It depends. Like for example, my boss today has no work and I [get to] go out. But if he has to go to work on Sunday, I have to stay with A-Ma." Two caregivers, Camille, 44, (mentioned in the preceding paragraph) and Naomi, 40, do not receive a day off, since they both live alone with their elderly wards, whose families live in different cities; the families usually visit once a month, at which time they each get an afternoon off to go out. These women are not completely isolated, however, since, respectively, they have got to know other Filipinas nearby their employers' homes and as such, have contact with the Filipino community.

Overall, the majority of women I interviewed get irregular, shortened and limited days off, while a few do not even receive a day off at all.⁴⁰ In addition, they all have curfews on their rest days. Over Chinese New Year holiday, when their employers receive

⁴⁰ I should point out that the women I interviewed were mostly women who *did* get some form of day off, (however irregular and limited it was). The only exceptions were the two mentioned above, Camille and Naomi, whom I interviewed right outside their place of work, while their elderly wards were sleeping. There were other Filipina women I met in the park or in other public places who do not receive a day off, and as such did not have the time to be interviewed.

up to a week off work, many women do not even get one single day off. Chin-Ju Lin, for instance, comments that during family reunions or Chinese festivals, household workers have to cook and serve for all invited guests and relatives (Lin 1999: 33). Many of my respondents reiterated this as well. Moreover, even for those women who do receive a full day off each week, they sometimes have to give this up at the request (or order) of their boss who may need them to stay in for some reason on Sunday. As the next chapter will illustrate, these women cannot really refuse these requests, since many of them are worried that if they displease their bosses, they will be sent home. Even though it stipulates in their contracts one rest day per week, employers have final say when it comes to this issue.

The lack of regular days off undoubtedly affects just how much these women can create a sense of home and belonging in Taiwan. Throughout my months of research, I attended St. Bartholomew's church quite regularly and noticed which caregivers came each week and which ones every other week or from time to time. When I asked where a certain churchgoer was, my Filipino friends would frown and say, "Oh, this week she does not have a day off" or "this month, she has to work every day." This was quite common. Sometimes, a caregiver would not show up at the church for a month.

Making the Most of Limited Time

The ones who do receive time off, even if it is only for a few hours, make the most of it. As this chapter has illustrated, many Filipina women spend their day off going to church. In addition to attending mass and church group meetings, and socializing at the church, caregivers and domestic workers spend their days off patronizing the shops in the Migrant Worker Neighbourhood, especially in the Black Building. They sing karaoke, eat Filipino dishes, or chat with their families and friends via webcam in one of several internet cafés. They walk around parks, and shopping malls, often posing for photographs with each other (something which Filipinos love to do). These Sunday afternoons are the only time during the week when large groups of Filipina women (and men) gather, coming together to form the Filipino ethnoscaapes that, during the week, are largely invisible.

I often met up with various Filipino friends and went window shopping in the nearby shopping mall, or joined them as they browsed some of the cheap clothing shops

and electronics stores on Beimen Road, one of the central shopping areas in Tainan City, a few minutes' walk from the Black Building. Their monthly salaries are not large and most of them remit money back home each month, therefore, on their days off caregivers and domestic workers try to limit their spending. They go to places where they know they can find cheap goods and food. Many caregivers eat at their employer's house before going out or eat at the church. They buy Filipino dishes at Filipino stores or at some of the nearby fast food restaurants. Through her research on the Filipina domestic worker community in Rome, Rhacel Parreñas (2008) found that these workers practiced a "self-imposed restriction of leisure spaces." She argues that domestic workers "restrict their leisure activities in public social spaces so as to minimize their expenses" (Parreñas 2008: 94). She cites Filipinas not eating at Italian restaurants as one example, something which parallels the situation in Taiwan: many Filipinos prefer to eat at Filipino stores or Western fast food joints and pizza places.

On their days off, most caregivers and domestic workers get around on foot or use public transportation. Unlike a number of factory workers, who have scooters or bicycles, and can thus get around easily on their days off, these women usually take the city bus downtown or share taxis if there are enough of them. Three of the women I interviewed ride bicycles, which their employers had lent or given them while they are in Taiwan. Only one of the women I interviewed drove a scooter. Based on my experience, driving a scooter is quite rare for household workers.

As I heard on a few different occasions, Filipinos will always find a way to be together. For household workers this is harder; however, they almost always find a way. Whether this is through the church on their rest day, get-togethers in the park during the week with their elderly wards or quick encounters on the street, Filipina household workers seem to find a way to connect with other Filipinas. For some this is understandably harder, but it seemed to me that overall, most Filipinas make some kind of connection with their community in Taiwan. In Taipei, Lan comments that household workers often meet up at places related to their jobs: supermarkets, hospitals, schools, and parks; the same occurs in Tainan. In these 'backstage' areas, these women "can take a

break from the observation of employers and connect with their national fellows” (Lan 2006: 164).

In addition, caregivers and domestics get together outside their employers’ houses to throw out the garbage each day. One of my Canadian friends, also an English teacher in Taiwan, teaches two students privately in their home, one night a week. She told me that whenever she arrives at their house, she sees a small group of Filipina women clustered together, waiting for the garbage truck, trash in hand. As they wait, they chat and gossip with one another in their native dialects, taking advantage of this daily ritual to get a break from the confines and isolation of their jobs. As Lan remarks, early evening is one of the only chances during the day that these women have to leave the houses of their employers’ (Lan 2006: 59). This largely invisible population of household workers congregate on the sidewalks, alongside local Taiwanese, who Lan argues, have “mixed reactions to their presence, from indifference to curiosity, and sometimes even aversion” (Lan 2006: 59). While this time is extremely limited, this is a common way for household workers around Taiwan to communicate with each other. Sister Grace emphasized this resourceful aspect of Filipinas, telling me: “One thing with the Filipinos: they know how to find a way. Yeah. Creative. Find a way to gather. Even if they gather in the midst of throwing the garbage, it’s ok! They can laugh at that – their problems.”

This notion of finding a way to gather and connecting with one another is important for Filipinas, as I discussed earlier in this chapter. Similar to the way that Filipinos connect through the internet on their days off, through texting and calling on their cell phones, this in-person connection is essential as well. By texting and calling each other during the week, caregivers and domestics greet each other and set up plans to meet up on their upcoming days off. As I heard from several NGO workers, Filipinas want to be connected. When they cannot get connected, due to a lack of freedom in their workplace and no day off, this hurts them. When I asked Sister Grace, what one of the biggest struggles for caregivers and domestics in Taiwan was, she responded by saying:

The greatest struggle is that, I think this is very much connected to their own world view. For example, they are not given day off. Well, that’s a big thing for them. To get connected to friends. Ok. And to be connected to be allowed to use the telephone. Because then to connect to their families is

very important. If you don't connect them to their families, it's...So their struggle will be there.

Similarly, Father Carl answered the same question, stating that these women's number one struggle is their lack of day off. The second thing he mentioned was the fact that these women are "deprived of their communication." As a result of this isolation, locality production is harder for Filipina household workers than it is for factory workers. Many of these women do find a way to create some form of community, even if it only involves meeting up for garbage collection or in fleeting encounters on the job. This makes the already difficult production of locality even harder for caregivers and domestic workers in Taiwan.

This chapter has examined the ways in which Filipinos create community in Tainan as transnational migrants in Taiwan. Appadurai's assertion that the locality is difficult to achieve is especially true for household workers in Tainan. Filipinos in Taiwan accomplish and create their own neighbourhoods and sense of locality in a variety of ways, and to varying degrees. Most of this community creation takes place in spaces outside the dominant sphere, away from the spaces of local Taiwanese, in migrant 'neighbourhoods' and spaces. The Church's role is unquestionably important, as it provides a space for these workers to gather together on Sundays to enjoy their days off. Migrants can fulfill their spiritual needs, make friends and meet up regularly in their leisure time. They can also share their experiences as migrants, offering and taking advice from each other. Churches around Tainan are excellent examples of Filipino neighbourhoods, as they exude Filipino-ness and celebrate the culture and the love of community which are so important for Filipinos. Just as Stephen Sills argues, the church can act as a "bedrock to the construction of a community of migrants" (Sills 2004: 262). The church is the site where a great many social events, large parties, and religious celebrations are organized, thanks to the avid support of the foreign missionaries and church workers who work for and with the migrant community in Tainan. Alongside the church, the migrant worker neighbourhood also exists as a Filipino neighbourhood, mixed in with the shops and businesses of other nationalities of migrant workers. In this area, workers come to unwind, speak their native language, and

spend their days off enjoying a taste of home. They also connect with their loved ones and other OFWs via the internet. Many workers also go to Tainan Park to relax on Sundays, congregating in small groups or in couples, amidst local Taiwanese. Filipinos also spend Sundays meeting up with the various groups they belong to. Whether ethnic-based, religious, social, or formed through similar interests such as music, many Filipinos form and join various civil groups, proving just how much they enjoy being part of a community group.

Of all migrant workers, caregivers and domestic workers have the least amount of freedom in their jobs. Their lack of regular working hours and limited and irregular days off mean that creating a sense of locality can be challenging; and for some, it can be almost impossible. Some women spend a few years in Taiwan with barely any association with their fellow nationals, proving just how isolating this job can be. However, as the preceding pages have emphasized, most women will find some kind of way to make a connection with their community. Even if this occurs while throwing out the garbage, these women manage to meet up with other Filipinas. For all Filipinos in Taiwan, a sense of community is essential. When caregivers and domestic workers are denied this, it hurts them a lot. Many of them thus have a more difficult time in their work compared with counterparts in the factories. Their isolation in the homes of their employers opens them up to all kinds of abuse, something which the following chapter examines in more detail.

Chapter 4: The Demand for the Recognition of Human Rights

As many scholars have pointed out in their studies on live-in domestic work and caregiving, this job opens women up to all kinds of abuse. These women suffer from isolation and a lack of freedom. Human rights are therefore important to examine. In his theoretical framework Appadurai discusses ‘ideoscapes’, and included in these are human rights. As I discussed in the introduction, transnational ideoscapes are all those ‘images’ of human rights which relate to migrant workers, as well as to the Taiwanese state’s ideologies. Like Appadurai argues, these ideologies are complicated, since “diasporas of intellectuals” – in Taiwan’s case, experienced NGO and church workers – are certainly bringing new discourse on human rights into the Taiwanese migrant worker context. Caregivers and domestic workers working in Taiwan are not adequately protected from abuse and violation of their human rights. As an attempt to explore this issue, this chapter examines how Filipinas demand recognition of their human rights within the transnational ideoscapes of human rights. I found that they demand this through the assistance of the Church and migrant worker NGOs, but with limited success.

In the first section of this chapter, I give a brief background on human rights in anthropology and ethnography and then discuss various human rights involved in these transnational ideoscapes, including the UN and ILO conventions that pertain to migrant workers. Taiwan’s political status and its exclusion from these major international bodies make it very difficult for migrant worker NGOs to lobby the state for policy improvement using these human rights instruments; not to mention the difficulties in lobbying the Taiwanese government for policy change. The second section looks at how the churches in Tainan act as de facto NGOs and how Filipinas seek assistance there. Churches in Tainan, whatever the denomination, serve as important resources for these women; whether it is to complain to friends or church workers, seek advice, or to get help with employer or broker problems. Since they do not offer the same legal services that NGOs in other cities do, churches will often refer workers to these organizations. The third section then turns to a discussion on migrant worker NGOs in Tainan, looking at how they support, advocate and lobby for migrant workers around Taiwan. These are largely Catholic NGOs and depend greatly on the work of foreign missionaries. I also discuss the work of MENT, the Migrant

Empowerment Network in Taiwan, the coalition of migrant worker NGOs around Taiwan, and illustrate how their collaborative efforts have effected some positive change in government policy.

In the fourth section, I explore why household workers do not stand up for their human rights more. Much of this can be explained by migrant workers' persistent fear of deportation, something which leads them to put up with all sorts of abuses. Due to exorbitant (legal and illegal) placement and broker fees, these workers do not want to be sent home until they are finished paying off their debts. However, I was also surprised to find that many a number of women did not have any complaints about their work, and some even spoke of how well they were treated by their employers. In section five, I then look at what exactly these workers' complaints are. While many of my respondents did not complain outright, many women shared with me tales of long working hours, demanding working conditions and some spoke of the racism and discrimination they felt from locals. Others complained of their employers or brokers. Finally, in the last section I show that these women are not passive victims. While they may not act on their complaints or resist in outright, formal ways, they do resist and negotiate power in their own ways. They are not powerless and passive as so much of the literature suggests.

Background on Human Rights in Anthropology and Ethnography & Relevant International Human Rights Instruments

As the introductory chapter set forth, human rights as a concept has undergone a large shift in the past fifty years. As a result, anthropologists have also changed the way in which they examine rights. As a discipline, anthropology has begun to play a far more active role in the discourse on human rights, from critically examining the existing human rights regimes, to engaging in critical activist work (Speed 2006), to arguing for a new critical anthropology of human rights (Goodale 2006a;2006c; Wilson 2006). In recent years, more attention has been paid to women's rights, especially violence against women; however, as Sally Eagle Merry (2006) argues, women's rights are still considered marginal. A number of ethnographers and other academics have also explored resistance and human rights. With respect to transnational domestic workers, several scholars have spoken of the tendency to romanticize resistance (Abu-Lughod 1990; Brown 1996; Groves and

Chang1999), something which I do not want to do in this thesis. Instead, following Michael Brown, who states that ethnography's purpose is to let our interlocutors show us their world in "ways that make sense to them", I want to address resistance in a different way (Brown 2006: 733). Resistance in this context takes on less overt, less public and non-traditional forms. These transnational workers negotiate power in a variety of ways, employing low-profile measures. By addressing these different types of resistance and the negotiating of power, I avoid over-emphasizing or romanticizing it.

With this in mind, I now turn to examine the various international human rights instruments which pertain to migrant workers and apply them to the Taiwanese context. There are a number of UN and ILO conventions which are relevant to labour migrants, and thus to domestic worker and caregivers. The UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) lays out several rights which are applicable in this instance. Article 23 (1)⁴¹ and Article 24⁴² are perhaps most significant. The latter article addresses one of the primary issues for which migrant workers NGOs through MENT are lobbying the Taiwanese state: the lack of a day off for domestic workers. There is also the UN 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which sets forth all the rights that migrant workers (and their families) should enjoy, regardless of their state, race, sex, etc.⁴³ However, to date, only 43 countries have ratified this convention, and none of them are major labour receiving countries (United Nations Treaty Collection).

Also significant is the UN's 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 2005, with respect to female migrant workers in particular, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women decided to issue a general recommendation on some categories of women who might be "at risk of abuse and discrimination" (CEDAW – General Recommendation 26 2008: 2). This is General Recommendation 26 (GR 26) on Women Migrant Workers,

⁴¹ "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment" (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23)

⁴² "Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 24)

⁴³ For more information on the UNDHR visit <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>; for more information on the Migrant Workers' Convention visit <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cmw.htm>.

which was published in December 2008. Regina Fuchs, a lay missionary from the well-established migrant worker NGO Hope Workers' Center (HWC) in Chungli City (northern Taiwan), published an article entitled "CEDAW: Alternative Report, Taiwan" (Fuchs 2009b). She discusses the broker system and migrant domestic workers and caregivers respectively, and applies the abuse and violations found in these areas to specific CEDAW and GR 26 articles. She maintains that the broker system in Taiwan violates GR Articles 4, 5, 6, 13, 15, 17, 20, and 21. Likewise, she points out the major violations and problems in caregiving and domestic work, which violate Articles 4, 5, 6, 13, 15, 17, 20, 21, and 26. Sections of Article 15, for instance, refer to domestic workers in particular, with respect to rest days and debt bondage:

Workers in female-dominated sectors may not be paid for weekly days of rest or national holidays. Or, if they are heavily burdened by debt from recruitment fees, women migrant workers may not be able to leave abusive situations since they have no other way to repay those debts (CEDAW General Recommendation 26 2008: 6)

Article 20 refers to the abuse of domestic workers:

Women migrant workers are more vulnerable to sexual abuse, sexual harassment and physical violence, especially in sectors where women predominate. Domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual assault, food and sleep deprivation and cruelty by their employers (CEDAW General Recommendation 26 2008: 7)

There are also several International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments which are relevant to labour migration and set forth international labour standards. As Patrick Taran argues (2009: 3), along with the UN's Migrant Workers' Convention, there are two ILO conventions which "explicitly define the application of human and labour rights" to migrant workers: ILO Convention 97, Migration for Employment (1949) and ILO Convention 143, Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention (1975). Stephen Sills also notes that the ILO's Fundamental Conventions are relevant in this regard (Sills 2004: 286, n99⁴⁴). More recently, the ILO held the 99th International Labour Conference, in June 2010, where delegates from governments, worker and employer

⁴⁴ Sills mentions Freedom of Association, Abolition of Forced Labour, and Equality. For more information on the ILO's eight Fundamental Conventions visit the ILO's website: http://www.ilo.org/global/What_we_do/InternationalLabourStandards/Introduction/ConventionsandRecommendations/lang--en/index.htm

organizations formally gathered to discuss whether domestic workers should be covered by an international labour standard, such as a convention or recommendation (Decent Work for Domestic Workers in Asia 2010). Father David told me that the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)⁴⁵, a regional network of NGOs, associations and trade unions of migrant workers and individual advocates in Asia⁴⁶ had been lobbying the ILO to create this convention. Through their membership and association with the MFA, two Taiwanese migrant worker NGOs, HWC and Hsinchu Catholic Diocese Migrants and Immigrants Service Center (HMISC), are involved in the efforts to push through this convention. It will be groundbreaking when this convention is enacted, since the international labour community will be formally recognizing the impact these workers have and the struggles that affect domestic workers the world over, and seek to protect them through international agreement.

However, as the introductory chapter made clear, Taiwan's political status makes the use of these conventions a problem. As the state is not officially recognized by the majority of nations as a country, the state is excluded from the majority of international bodies, most significantly, the UN and the ILO. Due to this, it is difficult for migrant worker NGOs in Taiwan to pressure the government using conventions and articles. I will address this further in the third section, when I look at how MENT and migrant worker NGOs lobby the Taiwanese state.

Churches as De Facto NGOs in Tainan – Seeking Assistance through the Church

I have mentioned a few times throughout this thesis how the churches in Tainan act as de facto NGOs. When I began my research I wondered why Tainan, as the fourth largest city in Taiwan, did not have a migrant worker NGO. There are NGOs in Taipei, Kaohsiung, and Taichung, the three largest cities, as well as ones in the smaller cities of Changhua, Chungli, Hsinchu, and Taoyuan. As an area that is home to a large number of factories employing migrant workers, with approximately 24,000 foreign labourers⁴⁷, including

⁴⁵ Hope Worker's Center (HWC) in Chungli is an MFA member and the Hsinchu Catholic Diocese Migrants and New Immigrants Service Center in Hsinchu (HMISC) is a network partner. The director of HMISC used to be on the executive committee of the MFA.

⁴⁶ For more information visit MFA's website, www.mfasia.org.

⁴⁷ I combined the May 2010 figures for Tainan City (6,526) and Tainan County (17,616) to get this figure. For more information, visit the Bureau of Labour Affairs, Tainan City Government and follow the links for "Labor Statistics." <http://labor.tncg.gov.tw/english/about.asp?Title=a&TitleName=AboutUs>.

approximately 4225 caregivers and domestic workers work (CLA 2010 Table 14-16), it struck me as odd that there would not be an NGO. When I asked church workers in Tainan about it, they lamented this fact and said there was need for one. One church worker in Tainan, who numerous Filipinos call if they have a problem, commented that an NGO is needed, “because, you know, there are so many Filipinos. Sometimes I am not [enough] for them. I’m inadequate. I’m only one person.” Father Paul told me that he had asked the Bishop of Tainan about this issue. Due to a lack of personnel, funding, and the difficulty in finding a place for a migrant worker center, it has not come to fruition yet. However, according to him, there is a move towards establishing one, so it may happen sometime in the near future.

Most of the women I interviewed did not know of any NGOs in Taiwan. A few of them had heard of Stella Maris International Service Center in Kaohsiung (SMISC) or the ones in Taipei. When I asked my respondents if they thought there should be an NGO in Tainan, to help workers like themselves with their problems, I received mixed responses. Out of the fourteen women who responded directly to this question, two women answered “I don’t know.” Four women said they did not think an NGO was needed: Carmela, 28, said she was satisfied with what St. Bartholomew’s provided her, while Daisy, 40, spoke of how St. Peter’s helps out financially when there are accidents involving OFWs. Malea, 35, believed that MECO and the CLA were enough, and Melissa, 44, said that because she has no problems with her employer, she is not interested in NGOs. The remaining eight women answered that there should be one in Tainan. Vanessa, 31, said an NGO was needed because some caregivers do not get a day off and have no one to talk about it with. In addition she maintained that Kaohsiung (where the nearest NGO and MECO office are) is too far and that sometimes when you call MECO, they ignore you or are too busy to deal with your problems. Sally, 27, also believed that there should be an NGO for migrants, since MECO and the local Bureau of Labour Affairs (BLA) sometimes cannot help because there are too many people asking for their help. Trina, 23, said there should be an NGO in Tainan because calling MECO or the CLA (BLA) would do no good. She said that many OFWs have problems with their brokers or their bosses, or their contracts are different from the actual jobs they do. Moreover, many workers do not seek out MECO because it is too

far away. For household workers who have such limited rest time and often have no opportunity to leave their employer's house, a trip to MECO in Kaohsiung is not an option.

In the absence of a real NGO, the churches in Tainan do their best to address the needs of the workers. Church workers listen to workers' problems, whether they are work-related, spiritual, emotional or psychological. Workers can get advice from fellow parishioners and church workers and talk about their problems that way. At Church of God, the Full Gospel Church I attended a few times, I interviewed three women. Each had had respectively difficult, demanding, and unpleasant experiences in their jobs, though to varying degrees. When I asked them individually if they had sought out MECO, the BLA or an NGO for help resolving the issue, they all said they had not. Instead, they looked to their pastor and fellow churchgoers for help. Trina, 23, a factory worker-domestic worker (she also cleans the family business and the home of her employer) said she has never called MECO for advice with her problems. She says, "But we can't call MECO because – the Filipinos told me - if you call MECO, you will go back to the Philippines." Along with many Filipinos, she was scared of causing trouble by complaining and worried that she would be deported if she did. Therefore, she looked to the church: "We just pray! With all the workers here, with the pastor, for the improvement of my work." As laid out in Chapter 3, Jennifer, 32, is a factory worker by contract, but cleans, cooks, and minds her employer's children, along with her daytime work at the factory. She works from 5 AM until 10 PM every day. Like Trina, she did not want to complain to MECO, even though friends at church told her to, given how much she was being exploited by her employers:

But I think if I will say this one to MECO, it's a big problem only. So, my pastor say I need to pray and pray and I have to give to Jesus what my problem is, and then Jesus will, our God will decide whether it's like this or not. If he don't want me to be here, I will accept it. He like me to be here, I will accept it. I want to praise God and give to the God all my problems about my situation. And then...so I think church help me so much to decide what I can do.

In Jennifer's situation, along with prayer, her friends at church convinced her to talk with her boss about improving and changing some of her work responsibilities. She took their advice. Fortunately, her boss listened to her, and as a result, she no longer has to care for the children or clean as much. For her, therefore, the church was an enormous help and she is tremendously grateful for their support.

Churches in Tainan also help workers by referring their problems to the correct channel, such as MECO, the BLA, SMISC, the Legal Aid Foundation, and so forth. Some church workers will take workers to these places themselves. A church worker in Tainan whom I interviewed will also sometimes accompany workers to the BLA in Tainan if they have a serious problem. On occasion, this church worker has also helped domestic workers and caregivers runaway from abusive employers, usually taking them to SMISC, where they can get the proper legal and labour-related support. As the last chapter illustrated, some workers also seek shelter in churches, while they wait for transfer to new employees. The labour attaché and representatives from MECO in Kaohsiung also visit churches in Tainan on a regular basis to relate new labour or immigration laws, give updates, and answer workers' questions (they also send officials to register OFWS to vote in upcoming Filipino elections). Given the lack of NGOs in Tainan, these visits are an important way to relay new information to Filipino workers.

Migrant Worker NGOs in Taiwan

In October 2009, I was invited to attend a three-day seminar-workshop in Kaohsiung, run by SMISC. The first of its kind, the seminar, "Developing Enriched-Facilitative Skills in Guidance and Counseling for Migrants and Trafficked People," brought together NGO workers from around Taiwan. Participants included local Taiwanese from women's and labour groups, foreign missionaries, foreign spouses working as case workers at NGOs, several MECO employees, and numerous NGO workers; I was the only student. Along with an introduction to the issues of migration and human trafficking in Asia, there were presentations by two professional counselors from the Philippines on developing peer facilitating skills, multicultural counseling, ethical standards in counseling, healing crisis and trauma, as well as interactive and contextualized simulation exercises for us participants on dealing with trafficked people. Participants shared stories of their work with migrants, of dealing with abused and trafficked victims, of their hardships and struggles, but also of their success stories. This was a wonderful opportunity for me to interact with NGO workers from around Taiwan, and a chance to learn about what these organizations are doing on a daily basis to actively fight for these workers' rights.

I saw firsthand at the workshop just how strong the grassroots movement in Taiwan is. There are numerous well-established NGOs in Taiwan concerned with the welfare of migrant workers. The majority of these NGOs are run by foreign Catholic missionaries and are found in the three largest cities, Taipei, Taichung, and Kaohsiung, along with Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Chungli, and Chunghua. The first NGO to begin working with migrant workers was the Hope Workers' Center (HWC) in Chungli, which was founded in 1986 by the Colomban Mission Society.⁴⁸ Originally founded to help local workers, HWC decided after 1995 to specialize in the field of assisting migrant workers, given the large number of undocumented migrant workers using their services, along with the rising numbers of workers entering Taiwan. Since then, as more foreign workers have entered Taiwan, service centers and NGOs have been established all over the island to address their needs.

One of the main areas of focus for NGOs is domestic workers and caregivers' rights. In 2003, migrant worker NGOs around Taiwan came together to draft a new law called the Household Service Act (HSA), to protect the rights of both local and foreign caregivers and domestic workers and to address their exclusion from the national Labour Standards Act (LSA). In 2004, these organizations formed the Promotion Alliance for the Household Service Act (PAHSA) in order to lobby government legislators to sign the HSA. While they got the required number of signatures for the act to be discussed in the Legislative Yuan, this did not happen.⁴⁹ In 2006, PAHSA changed its name to the Migrants Empowerment Network in Taiwan (MENT), as it was now lobbying the government for a host of other issues as well (O'Neill 2009). As several NGO directors and representatives respectively told me, there is strength in numbers and more gets accomplished when there is unity. At present, there are eleven members of MENT, including the Catholic migrant worker NGOs, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan Labor Concern Center in Kaohsiung, and Taiwan International Workers' Association (TIWA) in Taipei.⁵⁰ Within MENT, while the majority of NGO workers are foreign missionaries or foreign spouses and Filipino-Chinese, there are

⁴⁸ The Colomban Mission Society is a Catholic religious order which has been active in Taiwan since 1978. Beside their work with migrants, they work with handicapped children, youth, aboriginals, and other groups of marginalized people. Visit this site for more information on their work in Taiwan: <http://columban.org/2010/02/15/history-taiwan/>

⁴⁹ As I write this thesis, the issue of bringing these workers under the LSL has still not been resolved.

⁵⁰ For more information on TIWA visit their website <http://www.tiwa.org.tw/>. For a full list of MENT member organizations, see Appendix 4.

approximately twenty local Taiwanese who are involved or employed. The degree of local involvement in these organizations was something which greatly interested me and which I asked each NGO worker I interviewed.⁵¹

In order to bring foreign workers' issues into the public eye, MENT has organized rallies every two years in Taipei, ever since 2005. Previously, migrant labour organizations used to join the annual May Day Rally with local workers; however, NGO workers found it very difficult to get migrant workers' issues onto the platform. In addition, NGO director and MENT member, Father David, maintained, "There has been a history of animosity from the local workers towards the migrant workers ... many of the local workers feel that the migrant workers are stealing their jobs."⁵² I had the wonderful opportunity to participate in the December 2009 International Migrants Day Rally. Over a thousand people gathered outside Taipei Railway Station for the rally: migrant workers, labour rights groups, Filipino-Chinese, Taiwanese, a handful of foreigners and a small group of Aborigines. Protesters carried placards with slogans like "Domestic Work is Work!" "Wake up CLA!" and donned headscarves with the words "Still No Day Off" (the theme of the protest)⁵³ written in five different languages, along with a "No Slavery" sign in Chinese. We marched through the streets of Taipei, chanting slogans and singing until we reached the CLA building, where there was a stage set up for several cultural performances. The rally culminated in the entire crowd enthusiastically throwing plastic slippers at the front doors of the CLA building (the word for slipper in Chinese sounds very similar to the word for 'delay' or 'putting off a task'). Father David commented about these rallies:

It's a good way of empowering the migrant workers. Because sometimes workers need a positive outlet and also it's a good opportunity to bring the migrant workers from the four nationalities together. Because of cultural and language differences,

⁵¹ Father Carl told me that at his center there was a local, retired immigration officer who had been volunteering there for years as their legal consultant. This man knew the ins and outs of the Taiwanese legal and court system and drafted many letters for the NGO. This director told me that this man said the following: "I'm not a Catholic, I am a local, but I'm willing to stand with the migrant. I am for the migrants, Father."

⁵² This is something which came to a head during the economic crisis, as local labour groups protested the hiring of foreign labourers.

⁵³ MENT is fighting for five issues in particular. Along with including household workers under the LSL, MENT wants to abolish the broker system and implement country-to-country direct hiring; allow free transfer between employers; eliminate the 9 year maximum working limit; and allow migrant workers to form their own unions. See Appendix 5.

the migrant workers have a tendency to just stay in their cultural ghettos and when we have the rally, they're mixing together. It's a fun day.

Another positive outcome is that over the years, these rallies have been attended by more and more local people, especially university students and professors. These rallies thus increase local awareness of migrant workers' struggles. Furthermore, it also puts pressure on the CLA to take action to improve labour rights for migrant workers. The 2009 rally put further pressure on the Ministry of Labour to draft a law to protect the rights of household workers, something which MENT wanted the ministry to do by Chinese New Year 2010.⁵⁴

Since Taiwan is not party to most international organizations, MENT has difficulty using international human rights instruments to lobby the state. Being a member of the UN or the ILO makes a big difference in this regard. Father David informed me that migrant workers in Hong Kong have forwarded their struggles to the ILO, since workers can unionize in Hong Kong, and the ILO is a tripartite organization.⁵⁵ As a result, the ILO came to inspect the Hong Kong government.⁵⁶ Workers in Taiwan cannot do this. In May 2009, President Ma Ying-jeou signed two UN covenants, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – making them legally binding in Taiwan - as a move to show the international community that the state was trying to improve its human rights; however, these were rejected by the UN Secretariat due to Taiwan's political status (Ko and Loa 2009). Therefore, NGOs have to resort to other means to pressure the state. What they do is employ what Father David calls 'the shame tactic.' This involves publicly shaming the state through press conferences and other forms of media. Father David states: "For example, if the media in Europe or the United States or wherever come here or if I go overseas and they ask for an interview, then I just tell the truth. Now, when I tell the truth,

⁵⁴ MENT had seven meetings with the Ministry of Labour to address this issue. However, MENT boycotted the eighth meeting since the Minister of Labour had only shown up to their first meeting. When they finally sat down with the minister in July 2009, she told them that she needed six months to draft a law to protect the rights of household service workers. NGOs gave her until Chinese New Year to present that draft. As of June 2010, they still had not made this draft bill public.

⁵⁵ The ILO is the only UN organization that is tripartite. It works with governments, employers, and workers. For more information visit the ILO website, "About the ILO" http://www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/lang-en/index.htm.

⁵⁶ According to this director, this was because the Indonesian Migrant Workers' Union and the Coalition for Migrants' Rights in Hong Kong filed a formal complaint with the ILO for under-payment of Indonesian workers.

I also point out where the Taiwan government has come out with a new regulation to protect the rights of the workers. So we use that strategy.” If the ILO implements its proposed convention on domestic workers, MENT would then use that convention to put pressure on the Taiwan government to put forth a law to protect the rights of domestic workers. The Taiwanese state desperately wants to be part of the ILO; by implementing such a law, it would show the rest of the world that Taiwan is serious about cleaning up its human rights record.

In addition to its work with international organizations, migrant worker NGOs work on a large range of issues. This includes lobbying the government for improvement in labour laws, as well as advocating on behalf of migrant workers, foreign spouses (also called new immigrants), and for marginalized groups like Filipino-Chinese.⁵⁷ MENT members cooperate and network with one another on a regular basis, through monthly meetings. In order not to overlap in their efforts, NGOs often tackle different areas or issues, in order to function in the most efficient manner. The Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN)⁵⁸ based out of St. Christopher’s Church in Taipei, is a Catholic NGO run by a Taiwanese woman with extensive experience in the field of migrant labour. SIMN mostly concerns itself with policy work, and also helps and advocates on behalf of stateless Chinese, foreign sex workers, and foreign spouses, organizing rallies and press conferences to publicize their issues.⁵⁹ Every Sunday, SIMN also trains members of the Migrant Sending Committee, a group of Filipino volunteers at St. Christopher’s, on labour laws so that the latter can then educate other workers. In order to inform workers about new laws and policies, SIMN staff also sends out text messages to migrants on a regular basis. The organization also organizes cultural activities and contests for migrants, which are effective ways of allowing Taiwanese to better understand these workers and their

⁵⁷ Many NGOs provide services for newly landed immigrants and their families, such as language classes, skills classes, religious study, and integration seminars.

⁵⁸ SIMN is a non-profit organization with branches all over the world. It concerns itself with the plight and rights of migrants, refugees, seafarers, itinerants and ‘people on the move.’ Along with SIMN, two other NGOs in Taiwan are Scalabrini-affiliated, Stella Maris in Kaohsiung and Migrant Workers Concern Desk and are run by Scalabrini missionaries. Visit the SIMN website for more information: <http://www.simn-cs.net/index.html>

⁵⁹ For instance, SIMN formed a new association called CAFC – Concerned Alliance for Filipino-Chinese in Taiwan to address the issues facing this group.

cultures.⁶⁰ While the organization addresses special cases of migrant workers, it leaves much of the actual case work to its neighbour, based out of St. Christopher's as well, the Migrant Workers' Concern Desk (MWCD), a long-established Catholic NGO.

Around Taiwan, these organizations deal with a large load of case work and crisis intervention. Workers call in or visit service centers to seek help with problems or complaints, including late or lack of salary, illegal salary deductions, illegal work or contract substitution, lack of overtime pay, broker's or placement fees, repatriation, sexual harassment, and abuse.⁶¹ NGOs also deal with victims of human trafficking, an area which according to Father David, is "closely connected with household service workers because they're so vulnerable." In addition, during the economic crisis, many factory workers complained of 'no work, no pay', along with '*bu ban*' and '*tiao ban*', all illegal 'policies' which employers implemented to save money, and avoid laying off workers (knowing that the crisis would lift in six months).⁶² NGO work often involves mediating disputes between workers and their employers or brokers. Other times, it involves providing counseling to traumatized and abused workers. Father Carl, who has professional counseling experience, stated that in order to fully address migrant workers' problems, one has to examine the issue from all different levels: the spiritual, psychological, emotional, legal, and so forth. He argues that, "Intervening with migrants, you cannot say: I will only go for the spiritual. Or could you only give me your psychological problem and never mind the legal or the marital?"⁶³ In addition, these NGOs refer workers to the correct legal or governmental channels, as there are limits to what non-governmental organizations can do. Building good rapports with these government channels is essential. With respect to

⁶⁰ One example is the migrant worker poetry competition, which the Taipei City Government helped run. Winning entries were posted in public places like metro stations, in the workers' own language and Mandarin Chinese.

⁶¹ Hope Workers' Center listed 28 different problems that workers complained of in 2008. See Regina Fuchs, "Report HWC 2009", in my bibliography, p.6 for a full list of case problems.

⁶² "No work, no pay" is illegal salary deduction because of lack of work at the company, from lack of work orders etc.; '*Buban*' (literally 'no work') is the illegal "substitution of regular working hours with unpaid overtime work" – basically workers 'paying back' the hours they did not work during the crisis that they were paid for; '*Tiaoban*' is a "change of work from a working day to a day off or a public holiday" and is legal as long as the worker agrees to it. So if the worker does not complain, then silence means acceptance of this 'policy' (Migrant Workers' Rights: Information Resource 2008:11)

⁶³ This NGO director further believes that there should be a separate program in university for guidance and counselling for migration. He argues that migrants' "psychological needs are totally different from ordinary troubled people."

Filipino workers, if NGOs do not have a good relationship with the current MECO labour attaché, it can be hard to get things accomplished.⁶⁴

NGOs also have to deal with the corruption and exploitation of the broker system. As Chapter 2 set forth, this is without a doubt one of the biggest problems with the migrant labour system. When I asked what one of the biggest struggles facing migrant workers was, Father David vehemently stated, “the corrupt broker system. That’s the biggest. It’s evil and it needs to go.” Most of my other NGO respondents concurred.⁶⁵ One foreign missionary and NGO director said that not only was the broker system “terrible”, but that he had received death threats from a broker for helping a migrant worker. He argued that the government needs to do something about it, because it is putting workers at a great disadvantage. He commented on the corruption involved:

And it’s becoming like that because the government is supporting it - to make their job easier. And the factory owners are allowing it, conniving with the government, because it makes their work easy. One concrete illustration: if there’s a broker, the owner of the factory does not have to be the one to necessarily bring the worker to the area for medical check-up or be there for one month of medication while they meet an accident in a factory. They just call the broker: chup! Bring this worker to the airport, deport right away! Or connive with the broker to accuse the worker. The brokering system in Taiwan is becoming complicated - I should say - problematic, because of the support of the government. And the big man-power and multinational corporations are supporting it – altogether, to make their job easy.

In addition to information gleaned from my interviews, most of the literature I have read on this topic illustrated how brokers were, for the most part, on the side of the employer. Stephen Sills also found this in his study on Filipinos in Kaohsiung: “Likewise brokers were found not to be supportive of workers in disputes with employers” (Sills 2004: 164). As Chapter 2 illustrated, the broker system is rife with corruption. Sills points out that government agencies take little action against these illegal actions, even allowing brokers to make workers sign “side contracts” upon arrival in Taiwan; contracts which often stipulate additional monthly fees (Sills 2004: 155, 161). As such, NGOs often have to deal with

⁶⁴ However, as Stephen Sills points out (2004: 128), MECO is only a pseudo-governmental agency (since Taiwan is not recognized as a country) and thus cannot intervene directly when a migrant is “being forcibly and illegally” deported by the employer.” Therefore MECO often calls migrant worker NGOs to come and intervene.

⁶⁵ Similarly Stephen Sills found the biggest problem facing workers to be the “coercive relationship” between placement agencies in the Philippines and brokers in Taiwan (Sills, 2004:290)

corrupt and abusive brokers when they resolve disputes with workers. However, Father David did tell me that not all brokers fall into this category: “We’ve come across one or two reasonably good brokers. So there’s the corrupt broker system, but within the corrupt broker system, you occasionally come across a reasonably good broker.” NGOs keep contact with these ‘good’ brokers in order to help workers waiting in shelters get new jobs. Having these kinds of connections to brokers is important, since workers only have sixty days to transfer to a new employee. Furthermore, NGO workers try to counsel workers on the benefits of direct hiring - which would cut out a broker altogether. Father David told me that he counsels workers to broach direct hiring with their boss in their last year of contract, since many employers do not know about it:

Father David: Maybe you’ve got six months left and you start talking with your employer: ‘Oh, I’d like to come back. Will you invite me?’ ‘Of course we want to invite you back!’ ‘Oh, can I come back with direct hiring? And then the employers say, ‘oh, what’s that?’ ‘Oh, I’ll give you information. And then I’ve heard success stories where the migrant worker has done that. Because some employers don’t like the broker. But they think that –

-They have to do it?

Father David: -They have – that, that’s the only way of employing a household service worker, is to go through the broker. But now that’s not the case.

In order to deal provide workers’ with the best service, NGOs employ case workers from different nationalities. The Hsinchu Catholic Diocese Migrants and Immigrants Service Center (HMISC) in Hsinchu is run by a foreign missionary with almost twenty years experience working with migrants in Taiwan. To address the needs of all the nationalities, the center employs Filipino social workers, an Indonesian, a Vietnamese, and a Taiwanese social worker.⁶⁶ This is essential as many migrants have problems communicating in anything but their native tongues. The director comments that, “there was the myth that, ‘Oh well, all Filipinos speak English, so you don’t need a Filipino-speaking case worker. But then I found out that, when it comes to legal matters, they have to be educated in their own language.” Due to the HMISC’s affiliation with the Church⁶⁷

⁶⁶ There are two Thai social workers at HWC in nearby Chungli so HMISC refers Thai workers there. Most migrant worker NGOs have staff of all different nationalities.

⁶⁷ Given that most NGO directors are Catholic and have their own parishes in Taiwan, pastoral and NGO services often overlap. For instance, at St. Joseph the Worker’s Parish in Nantze (Kaohsiung County), the foreign missionary gives weekly sessions on labour laws, taxation regulations and other issues at the end of

and their excellent record of serving the Filipino community, more Filipino workers seek out the center's services than other nationalities⁶⁸; however, with the recent addition of a Vietnamese and Indonesian social worker, workers in those communities are hearing about the center through word of mouth and coming in larger numbers. Similar to other NGOs, social workers at HMISC visit detention centers to talk with and counsel detained workers and to assess whether they are victims of human trafficking. Staff also visit hospitals and nursing homes where caregivers and domestic workers are employed and factories where workers have problems. Several NGOs, including HMISC and SMISC, have state-subsidized shelters.⁶⁹ Victims of human trafficking, those who have been abused, are awaiting transfer, or have run away from their employers and become undocumented⁷⁰, can seek refuge there. One of HMISC's current projects is getting household workers 'organized'⁷¹, something which is difficult since they are very isolated; organizing factory workers is a lot easier. On an educational level many NGOs, including HMISC, also have labour education seminars, computer classes, Chinese classes, and a host of other cultural and skill-based programs.⁷²

Migrant worker NGOs are thus very active in Taiwan. They lobby and advocate tirelessly to improve the rights of migrants and to increase local awareness. Over the years, they have affected some positive change. The lifting of the pregnancy ban was one important achievement. Previously, when a migrant woman became pregnant in Taiwan, she would be deported immediately. In 2003, after much pressure from local and international migrant labour groups, and in order to comply with the 2002 Gender Equality in Employment Law, the state got rid of periodic pregnancy tests: women are now given a

each service. He finds this is an effective way to reach the most number of people and answer commonly asked questions.

⁶⁸ This is true for most of the migrant worker NGOs in Taiwan, as the majority of them are Catholic. Several directors commented that because of this Filipinos feel safe and at home going to these centers.

⁶⁹ However, as one NGO director told me, shelters only get state subsidies for cases which are not criminal. NGOs can apply for state subsidies for workers with problems like unpaid salaries, overtime, and substitution of contract. For cases where workers are accused of stealing or seducing the boss and so forth, there are no subsidies.

⁷⁰ These workers are called TNT, a Filipino term for an undocumented worker.

⁷¹ In order to do this, HMISC has invited a social worker-organizer from the Asian Migrants Center to come and train the staff on organizing migrant workers, as organizing people requires special skills.

⁷² In addition to these services, both HMISC and HWC both run 'reintegration seminars' for returning migrant workers and have created Reintegration Savings Groups (RSG), which educate workers on what to do with their savings upon return and encourage them to create a small business in the Philippines.

pregnancy test before and after arrival only (Lan 2006: 43; O'Neill 2008).⁷³ They also no longer have to leave Taiwan if they are pregnant.⁷⁴ NGOs also lobby continuously for domestic workers and caregivers to be included in the LSL (as I have mentioned a few times). As footnote 54 illustrated, in 2009 migrant worker NGOs put great pressure on the Ministry of Labour to draft a bill by Chinese New Year 2010, which would give household workers the same rights as other workers who were covered under the LSL. According to the China Post, in January 2010, the CLA announced that it had drafted a bill and would submit it to the Cabinet for deliberation, before it was ratified by the Legislative Yuan. In response, however, many labour groups protested that the CLA had not laid out clear stipulations on regular days off, daily working hours, and the calculation of overtime pay, all vital issues for these groups. Furthermore, these NGOs want household workers' rights to be the same as those put forth in the LSA (*China Post News Staff* 2010). As of June 2010, after speaking with NGO director and MENT member, Father David, I found out that the CLA has yet to make this supposed draft bill public, which begs the question of whether or not a draft bill even exists. Once again, the CLA is delaying the issue. It is thus unclear at the time of writing whether this bill will even make it to the legislative floor for debate.

Why Don't Household Service Workers Stand up for their Rights?

Most foreign workers do not complain or stand up for their rights, a theme which I came across during my field research, in the literature I read and in anecdotal stories from workers themselves. At the beginning of my research, I wondered why this was the case, given how many of them have justifiable cause to go to the local authorities and report incidences of abuse, contract substitution or violation of any number of rights. Sills commented in a similar fashion: "What is most surprising is that the majority of workers do not complain" (Sills 2004: 16). I soon found out that, above all, workers do not want to risk being repatriated or deported; which makes their lack of resistance not very surprising. If they complain, they are worried that they will be sent home. Robert Tierney addressed

⁷³ All migrant workers have to undergo mandatory medical check-ups every six, eighteen, and thirty months. Previously they were every six months (O'Neill, 2008d.)

⁷⁴ However, as Pei-Chia Lan points out (Lan, 2006:263, n.22) it is unclear how this policy is being enforced, since women often go home voluntarily or are coerced into leaving. On a separate note, one of my interviewees was a pregnant caregiver, whose employers allowed her to keep working and have her baby in Taiwan, something for which she was really grateful. She returned to the Philippines a few months after giving birth.

this in his research as well, stating that, “Deportation by the state is the migrant’s greatest fear” (Tierney, 2008: 486). If workers are deported, they have no way of paying back the debt they have incurred from high placement fees in the Philippines and loans they may have taken out to secure their job. They are thus in a form of debt bondage, which as Sills argues, restricts “their ability to voice dissent” (Sills 2004: 161). In addition, many of these women support children and relatives back home, so they do not want to risk their jobs by complaining. When I asked Daisy, 40, a domestic worker, who from time to time also works in her employer’s factory, why more Filipinos do not complain about their working conditions, she said that:

Daisy: Before, I heard that one of the Filipinas signed an agreement to transfer to another job because they don’t like her. Just like that!

For no reason?

Daisy: Yeah! They – the employer find a reason, a good reason, so they employee cannot complain. Maybe because she is worried to go back to the Philippines. Because they need a job! Sometimes you cannot blame Filipinos or whatever...they do not complain because they always think that: I’m almost six months here! I’m almost 3 months here! I will complain, then I go back! How about my family? How about my money I [borrowed] in the Philippines? How can I pay? How?

Several other respondents made similar comments. When I asked Melissa, 44, a housekeeper and caregiver for an elderly man in Tainan County, if she knew any Filipinas who had stood up for their rights or formally complained, she responded with the following:

Melissa: Yeah, but they still...it’s still fight but no action.

Ok. Nothing happened from it?

Melissa: Yeah! Yeah.

It’s hard. It’s a very...it’s an uphill battle.

Melissa: If you fight, you know, if you fight, you [are] sent back to the Philippines.

Yeah, and that’s the danger.

Melissa: Yeah. So they keep on silent.

Ok. Yeah, I think most people do that.

Melissa: Yeah, so that’s so sad.

Malea, 33, former nursing aide in a home for the aged, now a factory worker, spoke of workers’ fear of complaining because of their lack of power as temporary workers. She commented that:

Because even if we protest, even if we talk back to our employer or our co-workers or supervisors, we are still the loser here because we are the – we just a factory worker, we are just contract workers. So...we just stay low-profile, even if it's already hurting in the – you know (*laughs*). So [we] stay low-profile.

I spoke with NGO representatives about this issue and several of them explained that, in addition to their fear of repatriation, workers are very vulnerable in their first few years in Taiwan, because they only have two-year contracts (which are extendable to three years if the employer agrees to it). Father David said that he understands workers' fear of losing their jobs; however, in their third year, he tells them that there is nothing to be afraid of because their contract protects them from being fired or sent home:

If they wait until their third year [to complain] then I say to them: you got nothing to lose. 'Oh, but Father, we're afraid of being sent home!' 'You can't be sent home! You've got your contract.' The government there now has protective barriers. No migrant worker in Taiwan can be illegally repatriated. Your employer – if your employer wants to terminate your contract before your contract is up, they have to take you to the BLA and in front of the BLA social worker, the social worker will ask: do you want to go home? 'No, I don't.' And your employer can't send you home. But if you say yes, I do, well...that's your problem. If you're so afraid of your broker or your employer and you say 'yes, I do', well...that's – you have to overcome your fear.

In a similar vein, Pei-Chia Lan (2009) found that since migrant workers are so shackled by debt, they only “exercise overt resistance” when the end of their contract is inevitable. According to her, “open confrontation” only occurs near the end of a contract or when employers try to “terminate” a contract (Lan 2009). Often, workers will come to a service center and voice their complaints to case workers, but will then refuse to take further action, usually out of fear. This frustrates NGO workers, because as Father Carl comments, “we want to illustrate and demonstrate publicly that this case can be won.” Father David also explains that migrant service centers, as service-oriented centers, can only operate if there are migrant workers asking for their services. He continues on to say that:

And then because they're asking for our service, this is the dynamic: that in order to lobby the government for change in policy, you need actual real life cases. And I explain this to the workers that when you come to our center it helps in two ways. That we offer you a service, but then you're also offering a

service to the 360,000 migrant workers in Taiwan, because if you stand up and speak out, then we bring your story to the government and your story helps to change unjust structures and unjust laws. And that's the way the Taiwanese government works. You can't go to the Taiwanese government and say 'household service workers are vulnerable to rape, sexual harassment and physical abuse. Where's your evidence?'

Needless to say, it is very hard for some of these workers to come forth with tales of maltreatment and abuse, especially of a sexual kind. However, by doing so, they help their fellow foreign workers by assisting NGOs to fight for improvements in foreign labour policy.

I also asked my respondents, hypothetically, if there were a rally in Tainan to protest or fight for the rights of domestic workers, caregivers and other migrants in Taiwan, would they participate? I got varied responses. Several women said they "did not know." Some women said "no" outright. Amelia, 40, a domestic worker, commented that she would not want to. She said: "I don't want to be an activist. It's too hard." A few other women said "no" due to lack of time. Other women said "no" because they had no problems with their bosses. Melissa, 40, stated that, "I don't think so because...I don't want to get my employer in trouble." Several women did not want to out of fear that they would get in trouble and be perceived as troublesome migrant workers. A number of women, however, stated that they would in fact participate. Most of these women asserted that if it were for the right reasons they would join. For instance, Carmela, 28 said that she would join if the rally was for the right reasons, but not if it was just a "mess on the street." She commented that if they were fighting for, "brokers' fee, the rights, the rights of the OFW, I will support that." Danielle, 26 commented that, "If it's about our rights, why not?" Sally, 27, who was fully aware that she had had her rights violated as a caregiver (and had since transferred to factory work), stated that she would definitely participate: "Because I'm a victim too!"

Interestingly, one of the other reasons that household workers and other migrants do not formally stand up for their rights is that some of them have nothing to complain of. Unlike Stephen Sills (2004), who interviewed his sample of domestic workers and caregivers at a shelter (and thus found they all had serious grievances), I found mine at churches. What surprised me most in my interviews was that many of these women had no

serious complaints about their jobs. When I asked whether they thought their employers were violating any human rights or if there were any human rights they wish they had as OFWs, only four of my twenty respondents responded with ‘yes.’⁷⁵ Most women felt that they were being treated fairly. One of my other questions dealt with job satisfaction. To my surprise, thirteen respondents said they were ‘satisfied’ with their job. One of these women even responded with “Of course! Very, very, very!” A number of them commented on how well their employers treated them. Eight of my twenty respondents used the words “treat like/as a family”, “like a sister”, like a “younger daughter” to describe their relationship with their employer and family members.⁷⁶ Another respondent, Theresa, 27, a domestic helper, made the point that even though her work is demanding and hard, her employers and she have a “good relationship” and that because of that the work is “ok.” Hannah, 28, a caregiver for an elderly woman, cleans houses other than her employer’s. When I told her that this was actually illegal, she said, “I don’t have complaint with my boss because he treats me well. But the illegal part – it’s ok, it’s ok!”⁷⁷ She then said that if her boss abused her, she would call the CLA or another authority, but since they do not, she is “ok” with her situation. Only four women did not use very positive adjectives to describe their relationship with their boss, and two of these women commented on how controlling and mean their female bosses were.⁷⁸ A domestic worker or caregiver’s job satisfaction is thus very dependent on her employer: if the employer is nice and treats her well, the worker can be satisfied⁷⁹; conversely, an employer can be abusive, controlling and very demanding, and thus the job can be unbearable. Unfortunately, these women have little control over this, and cannot choose their employers. St. Peter’s priest, Father Paul, compared this situation to gambling, and said that their job situation and employer are all a matter of luck.

⁷⁵ These rights violations included: lack of extra pay for extra work; discrimination and treated like ‘slaves’; low salary and long working hours; lack of overtime salary and paid holidays.

⁷⁶ Pei-Chia Lan argues that employers will develop a more “personal relationship” with workers when more care work is involved (Lan, 2006:231). Overall, I found this to be true in my research as well.

⁷⁷ Household workers are supposed to be paid extra if they do this kind of work. However, Hanna was not.

⁷⁸ In her study on foreign domestic workers in Malaysia, Christine Chin (1998) notes that female employers are almost always named as the abusers in domestic workers’ stories (Chin, 1998:156).

⁷⁹ According to Pei-Chia Lan workers’ relations with their employers are better when the latter have lived or spent considerable time abroad (cited in Stephen Sills, 2004:175).

During my interviews, I heard from different women about the demanding nature of their jobs and the long hours they worked, but many did not seem to complain about this outright. Some of them confided to me in casual conversations about how they worked fifteen, sixteen, seventeen hours days and how tired they were, and how they knew this was not right. A few women complained about working very late hours to entertain their employer's family over Chinese New Year, but they never complained to their bosses or any authorities about it. Several women said that if they did have a serious problem, they would seek help. Only a few women told me of serious grievances they had. Perhaps the other women I interviewed had them too, but did not voice them to me.

Complaints of Household Workers

Although many household workers do not lodge formal complaints with authorities or even seek counselling from NGO service centers, these women do have complaints. My respondents shared some of these grievances with me. In addition to talking of the long hours and demanding nature of their jobs, some women spoke of the non-contractual work they perform. This includes cleaning offices or the houses of employers' relatives but also working in businesses. A few of the women I interviewed worked in the factories of their employers and also cleaned the factory and the home. In his study, Stephen Sills remarks that all of the domestic workers he interviewed were involved in some kind of non-contractual work (Sills, 2004:176)⁸⁰.

A few women also spoke of the low salary they received. Malea, 35, now a factory worker, told me how hard her previous job at the nursing home had been. She and five Filipinas were in charge of 40-45 bed-ridden ICU patients and worked twelve-hour shifts. When I asked her if she thought her boss had violated any human rights, she said: "I think it's the salary. They're not giving the right salary. The overtime pay." As a nursing aide in a nursing home, she was supposed to be covered by the LSA and thus get overtime pay.⁸¹ She did not. Regina Fuchs addresses this in her report on Hope Workers' Center 2009 statistics, maintaining that, "working conditions for migrants working in nursing homes are

⁸⁰ Stephen Sills states that illegal work is seen by the CLA to be the fault of the employee and the employer. Employees have to pay a large fine and can be deported (Sills, 2004:176-77).

⁸¹ The majority of women I interviewed had not heard of the LSL. However, when I explained what it was and how all other foreign workers were covered under it (and thus got overtime pay and regulated working hours) several women said that they knew about it.

very often exploitative. Although the workers – theoretically – are covered by the Labour Standards Law, this is not yet implemented” (Fuchs 2010: 3)⁸². In Malea’s opinion, the “salary [was] not worth it”, given how demanding the workload was. Even though she and her co-workers called their broker about this, their broker said it was company policy and there was nothing she and her co-workers could do. In the case of Melissa, 44, a caregiver for an old man, she had a great relationship with her employer; however, she too complained about caregivers’ low salary, comparing it to other migrant workers: “Workers here like me – I work so hard and the payment is just only basic. So we need the extra pay, like overtime pay, like the factory workers. Because we’re the same.” She also went on to say that many domestic workers, including some of her friends, do not get paid holidays, even though this is stipulated in their contracts. This was echoed by a few of my respondents.

I also heard complaints about brokers. Sally, 27, had to call her broker several times before he helped her with her problems; it was only after she contacted the BLA that her broker took action. Carmela, 28, a housekeeper and nanny for two children, strongly argued against brokers, since she felt she was paying too much money and getting nothing in return:

Carmela: Every month we have to pay for the brokers, and sometimes the brokers do nothing for us. What is the use of that money?

I agree.

Carmela: I don’t agree [with] that one. I want to abolish that kind of broker, agent. Broker’s fee.

Carmela has since been rehired through the direct hiring system, and therefore no longer has a broker. However, many of her friends have not been as lucky. A number of the women I interviewed expressed their desire to be direct hired and told me how they had asked their employers to help them do this. However, their employers told them they were too busy, it was too much of a hassle, and they did not have the time to fill out all the paperwork. When I asked Father David about this, he remarked that “a lot of employers don’t like the bother of having to do the paperwork.”

⁸² Fuchs also mentioned how workers in nursing homes often work for many days with no rest day and have to take care of too many patients (up to 25 or 30), at a time (Fuchs 2010: 3).

Only one woman I interviewed spoke of sexual harassment on the job. Carlita, 27, told me that her previous employer's father, a 78-year old man, offered her money (about US\$200) to have sex with him. She transferred jobs because of this. Then, she told me that her present employer, a 72-year old man, offered her a cell phone to have sex with him. She was remarkably candid about both experiences and even laughed while recounting it (meanwhile, I was quite shocked). When I asked Carlita if she had called MECO, the BLA or CLA to lodge a complaint, she said 'no', because the men did not force her into anything.

Interestingly, one of the worst stories I heard about a Filipina caregiver being badly treated, was one which involved her female boss – a fellow Filipina.⁸³ Sarah, 31, a domestic worker and nanny, said that her female boss was “not good.” She tried to control Sarah by monitoring her cell phone calls and restricting her days off. Sarah's employer sometimes insulted her cooking, even refusing to eat meals that Sarah had cooked. Sarah also complained that one of the children she minded often pulled her hair so hard it made her cry. As a result, Sarah often cried herself to sleep and when I asked, told me that she wanted to transfer jobs.

A few women also brought up how badly they were treated by Taiwanese. They spoke of racism and discrimination, and how they felt like they were being looked down upon, whether at the hands of their employer or by locals in public. For instance, when I asked Danielle, 26, a domestic worker in a doctor's clinic, if there were any human rights she wished she had at work or in Taiwan in general, she told me that, “I think there are times that you will feel discrimination.” Trina, 23, a factory worker by contract, who also works as a domestic worker in the factory and her employer's home, expressed a much more negative view of Taiwanese. When I asked her if she thought her boss was violating any human rights, she did not give any specifics, but said (*laughing*) “Many, many, many!” When I asked her what rights she wished she had as a foreign worker here, she responded by saying: “In our job, of course we want the treatment to be nice, because they are so mean. People here -” (*she made a face and pointed to the floor to indicate a low level*). I sympathized with her and she continued: “They must also consider us better and the same

⁸³ This woman is married to a Taiwanese man, whom she met when he was attending medical school in the Philippines. This is not uncommon: there are many Filipino-Chinese/Taiwanese in Taiwan.

with them, because mostly they look to their Filipinos as very, very like slaves. They do not consider us.”

In order to gauge household workers’ voluntary interaction with locals, I asked my respondents the following two questions: 1) whether or not they felt comfortable frequenting Taiwanese shops and 2) whether or not they had any desire to make friends with Taiwanese people (and if they had any Taiwanese friends). Most women responded to the first question by saying that they felt comfortable shopping at Taiwanese stores, even if they spoke no Chinese. Only one woman said outright that she did not feel comfortable at these places, but did not expand on this statement. With the second question, I got mixed responses. Of the eighteen women who responded directly to this question, ten women said “yes”, they want to be friends with Taiwanese people. Sally, for her part, said it depended: “because some people are good, sometimes not. If the people approach me on good terms, I will talk to them in a nice way.” For the remaining seven respondents, their answers were “no.” Two women said no because of language or communication difficulties. The other five, however, said no for other reasons. Claudia, 35, said that she didn’t have any desire because “we are not the same nationality, so I cannot adjust myself sometimes.” Carlita, 27, looked uncomfortable when I asked her this question and responded: “I don’t feel like [it].” However, when I asked her how she felt about other foreigners (non-Filipinos), she said, “they’re very nice...because sometimes in Taiwan – we’re the same foreigner here!” One caregiver said that she did not want to befriend any Taiwanese and that she was only friends with the Taiwanese husbands of her Filipino friends, since she could trust them. Finally, Carmela commented that she was “scared” to befriend locals, since she cannot speak Chinese, and also because, “It’s very hard to find a trustworthy person nowadays. Especially as we are OFWs. We are – they look at us very down. So we have to care for ourselves.”

Even if some of the caregivers I interviewed did not have serious complaints or any at all, almost every one of them had anecdotal stories of a friend, fellow Filipina, or Indonesian caregiver who had faced harsh treatment; this included food deprivation, abuse, bad living conditions, lack of any rest time, non-contractual (illegal) work, and not being

allowed to use a cell phone, among others.⁸⁴ In my experience, they tended to share these more readily than they did their own experiences. I also found that both of the women who had previously been caregivers, Malea and Sally, but had since transferred to factory work, were more willing to talk about their work than those who were presently caregivers. This may be due to Malea and Sally's personalities or their particularly bad working conditions; either way, it made me realize that it is easier to share these stories with someone in my position (i.e., not a close friend) when you are no longer in that situation, since it has no chance of getting back to your employer; thus you feel safer sharing.

Not Passive Victims

As the last few sections have illustrated, many women do not complain outright about their grievances. Their success in changing their working conditions is thus quite limited – especially given how little their contract protects them. Nonetheless, I observed that household workers are not passive victims. As Nicole Constable (2007) argues, there is a tendency in the literature on domestic work to portray these women as passive and powerless; however, this does them an injustice since it ignores the degrees to which they often resist in their own, subtle ways. This often takes the form of less overt types of resistance, which includes linguistic resistance (Lan, 2006:73) and discursive resistance (Constable 2007: 172-179). Lan argues that Filipinas often “manipulate English as a means of resisting employers’ demands (Lan 2006: 73), while Constable states that through language, jokes, and humour, Filipina domestics make fun of their employers and temporarily, “reverse the patterns of dominance and subservience, in order to cope with the difficulties of their jobs (Constable 2007: 177). Household workers also resist their position as excluded members in Taiwanese society by collectively gathering in parks, train stations, and other public places en masse. This is particularly true in Hong Kong, where there is a large population of Filipinos (see Nicole Constable 2007), and also occurs to a lesser extent in Taiwan. Christine Chin, in her study on Filipino and Indonesian female domestics in Malaysia, speaks of the “infrapolitics” of subordinate and marginalized groups of people, (Chin 1998: 126) a term she borrows from James Scott (1990). Within these ‘infrapolitics,’ Chin posits that domestic workers employ Scott’s ‘public’ and ‘hidden

⁸⁴ This is similar to what Stephen Sills found in his interviews with caregivers and domestic workers in Kaohsiung (Sills, 2004:165).

transcripts.’ The latter includes the ways in which these women resist in “disguised, low profile, undeclared” ways, either individually or collectively (Chin 1998: 127). Other kinds of non-traditional resistance occur when domestics and caregivers go against their employers’ rules in covert ways. Several NGO workers told me stories of women going into the bathroom in order to use their cell phones secretly, since their employers forbid them to use them. While this may not be the type of resistance which elicits overall structural change, it does show that these women do not allow themselves to be completely oppressed. As Constable argues, domestic workers and caregivers may seem to be ‘accommodating’, and do indeed support “existing structures of power” (i.e. they obey their bosses) in order to keep their jobs (Constable 2007: 13-14). However, as the above illustrates, they are not completely passive.

A few of my respondents did stand up and fight for their rights. As mentioned previously, Sally knew full well her rights were being violated. As she says, “yeah, I know my rights!” She thus called the BLA to transfer jobs, and although her broker was less than cooperative, she did manage to transfer jobs in the end. Other women do not ‘resist’ per se, but do negotiate power within their working situations. This includes talking back to their employers when the latter get angry at them and not putting up with unfair criticism. Others offer suggestions to their bosses when they feel something could be done better. For instance, upon starting her job, Melissa, 44, told her employer right away that she was capable of forming her own work strategy and schedule. She told me, “because you know, I feel if your employer feels you are lower, you will be lower. If she feels she cannot make you lower...” Her boss accepted this and admired her for it as a result. Several other women called MECO or the BLA to inquire about labour issues or the legalities of their contracts. Other women listen to the Sunday morning radio broadcast on International Radio Community Taipei (ICRT)⁸⁵, where they can hear about updated labour laws and get contact information for migrant worker NGOs. While many women do not act on the advice given to them, they know what their rights are. As I mentioned in the preceding section, several caregivers and domestics also told me that although they currently have no

⁸⁵ First broadcasting out of Taipei in 1979, ICRT serves the foreign expatriate community in Taiwan, while also acting as a “cultural bridge” for local Taiwanese. It focuses on news, music, and entertainment. On Sunday mornings, ICRT DJ Tito Gray broadcasts “AsiaNation” from 6am-10am, which includes programming specifically aimed at migrant workers (International Radio Community Taipei).

grievances, if they did, they would call the CLA or MECO. As I set forth in Chapter 1, this is not an attempt to romanticize resistance, but rather an attempt to shed light on the ways that these women do indeed resist their positions or negotiate power in various forms.

Moreover, as I demonstrated in Chapter 2, in comparison with other nationalities of workers, Filipinas tend to assert their rights more. Filipina household workers are more likely to receive a weekly day off than their Indonesian counterpart, something which has led them to be perceived as aware of their labour rights, troublesome, and likely to organize and struggle (Lan 2006: 76; Tierney 2008: 487). Thanks to the support of the church, the Filipino government (largely through the MECO offices in Taiwan) and migrant worker NGOs, most of these women are educated on their rights. However, as Father David argued, Filipinos are well educated on their labour rights, but “Whether they act on the education we give them is another thing.” For all the aforementioned reasons, especially their fear of deportation, most workers do stay quiet. They are at the mercy of a national migration system which restricts their rights, a corrupt broker system which charges them exorbitant fees, and are poorly protected by their contracts. Their resistance and dissent thus takes other, more subtle forms. Nevertheless, this does not make them passive or powerless victims.

In this chapter, I have examined how Filipina household workers demand the recognition of their human rights in these transnational ideoscapes. These women have limited success in this regard due to their persistent fear of repatriation. Shackled with high debt, most workers put up with abusive and demanding working conditions, in order to support their loved ones back home. In Tainan, churches act as de facto NGOs, supporting and advising these women and other migrants with their labour-related problems, as well as referring them to NGOs in nearby Kaohsiung or to the local BLA. In the section on migrant worker NGOs, I illustrated just how well-established their work is, as they lobby and advocate tirelessly for the rights of all migrant workers. Using rallies and other types of social action, MENT organizations are continuously fighting for the CLA to enact a bill that would protect household workers and bring them under the protection of the LSA, like other migrants in Taiwan. When the ILO passes their convention on domestic workers,

MENT can use this human rights instrument to put further pressure on the state to better protect these workers. At NGOs all around the island, case workers listen to and counsel workers on their labour grievances, and aid victims of trafficking, detainees, and other workers who have had their rights violated. They counsel workers on the best course of action and refer them to the appropriate legal channels so that their cases can be dealt with. However, many NGO workers lament the fact that many migrants do not complain officially. If workers did come forward more, it would improve MENT's lobbying efforts. NGOs also have to constantly deal with the corruption of the broker system, which makes their work challenging and frustrating; since, for the most part, brokers are on the side of the employers. While direct hiring mechanisms have been in place for years between MECO and the CLA, this system is being underused; as such, the broker system shows no signs of disappearing.

Migrant workers' fear of deportation leads many to remain quiet and avoid official complaints. Due to the nature of their contracts, household workers are very vulnerable, especially in their first two years. While several women spoke of their problems with me, a number of women did not express any; instead, they spoke of the good relationships they have with their employers and how satisfied they are with their jobs - even given the demanding and tiring nature of their work. The complaints I did hear included demanding work responsibilities, low salary, issues with brokers, and the negative treatment from locals. As a result, several women said they had no desire to befriend any Taiwanese people. Even if some of the women I interviewed had no complaint of their own, everyone I spoke with told me anecdotal accounts of other Filipinos or Indonesians who were treated badly or abused by their bosses, performed illegal work, or had had their rights violated in some way.

Finally, I put forth in this chapter that these women are not passive victims. While they may not resist directly and officially to local authorities, these women do resist and negotiate power in subtle, low-profile ways. This may involve standing up to their employers, asking for the help of an NGO or the church, or calling the BLA to transfer jobs. It can also mean something as undeclared as linguistic or discursive resistance, which many women employ amongst friends on their days off. Unfortunately, these women are

working within the confines of a highly exploitative system, in which their contracts do little to protect them from being abused or exploited. Unlike their counterparts in the factories, household workers' contracts do not lay out clear working hours or grant them overtime pay. Furthermore, many women are not given their stipulated rest day. Recent MENT lobbying efforts to push through the CLA's bill on household workers shows promise; however, it remains to be seen if this bill will even pass into law. And if so, whether it will improve their work, make them less vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and protect them, so that if they do wish to complain or lodge formal grievances, they need not fear deportation by the state.

Conclusion

Filipina domestic workers in Taiwan work in the homes of the rich and the newly rich, minding children, taking care of the elderly and sick and doing the housework. Similar to other industrialized countries, Taiwan has become increasingly dependent on foreign workers in the past twenty years, in order to meet its labour needs. Foreign household workers from the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand comprise a large percentage of this foreign labour, and account for over half of all migrant workers in Taiwan. Exploring the experiences of Filipina household workers in Taiwan, as this thesis has done, is an excellent way in which to shed light on the many transnational challenges these women face while working in the 'care sector.'

As Chapter 2 illustrated, the introduction of foreign household workers into Taiwan in 1992 as temporary guest workers was the state's response to labour shortages and unwillingness by locals to do 3D types of jobs. Hiring foreign domestic workers was also a solution to Taiwan's growing labour need for caregivers for the elderly and young children, as recent years have seen an increase in dual-income households, as well as a decrease in three-generation co-habitation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the number of foreign household workers in Taiwan has increased each year. More often than not, the women you see pushing the elderly in their wheelchairs down the streets of Tainan are foreign caregivers, not locals. In 2010, in the midst of a global economic recovery and some twenty years after the first Filipino household workers arrived in Taiwan, these women are even more of a necessity in Taiwanese society - however undesired they may be. Although Indonesian caregivers now outnumber them, Filipinas are still a large population in Taiwan. Moreover, they are a more visible population than their other Southeast Asian counterparts. Their attendance at Church, their (comparatively) regular days off, and their love of community, means that they are seen in larger groups in Taiwanese society.

The goal in writing this thesis was to look at how Filipina household workers create a sense of community and "Filipina-ness" as migrant workers in Taiwan and to explore how they demand the recognition of their human rights as foreign domestic workers. It attempted to address the gap in literature on a) community building or the production of locality, thus moving "beyond the domestic sphere" (Yeoh & Huang, 1998) and b) the

demand for the recognition of rights within a migrant worker context, especially with respect to female domestics. In addition, this thesis sought to contribute new ethnographic knowledge to the field, adding to the already rich theoretical base of scholarly work on international domestic work. By doing this, it is hoped that these women are given a voice, so that their experiences can be brought to light. Through my research, I found that Filipina domestic workers in Taiwan produce locality through the creation and utilization of Filipina spaces, including the Catholic Church, Filipino restaurants and shops, and public spaces like parks; and that they demand human rights through the assistance of the Church and migrant workers associations, but with limited success.

A) The Production of Locality

Appadurai argues that in today's intensely globalized world, locality is very difficult to achieve. Locality is not spatial or 'scalar', and thus cannot be tied down geographically, since people - ethnoscapas – are constantly on the move. Rather, locality is relational and contextual. It depends on the transnational setting in which these ethnoscapas find themselves. The phenomenon of mass migration is more and more prevalent in the 21st century, resulting in millions of people crossing borders each year, many to build a better future for themselves and their families. When these ethnoscapas of people begin work in new lands, they undoubtedly want to create their own spaces, their own communities, and their own neighbourhoods. Thus transnational communities emerge, and interact with their host environment in a multitude of ways. This is especially true of Filipinos, given their reputation as ubiquitous overseas workers. This global movement of workers results in the creation of Appadurai's 'diasporic public spheres', e.g. of Filipinos in communities around the world.

The production of locality can simultaneously be called the 'creation of community.' In this context, it means the creation of "Filipino-ness", of a Filipino community in a Taiwanese environment, one where Filipinos are temporary guest workers. As Appadurai argues, ethnography's role is to find the nature of locality as a "lived experience" in this globalized and deterritorialized world. As an extremely community-oriented culture, the production of locality is very important for Filipinos. In this project, I observed that Filipina caregivers and domestics produce locality through the use of Filipino

spaces. In Taiwan, these spaces include the Church, and its essential religious, cultural and social role; the 'migrant worker neighbourhood', comprised of Filipino and other nationalities' restaurants and shops; and finally, public spaces like parks, where migrants, including caregivers, meet on their days off and during working hours. Most often on Sundays, these workers gather collectively in Lan's (2006) 'backstage' areas, away from the 'frontstage' of their work environments. These spaces are actively constructed by these transnational workers in order to build a sense of home and community away from home. They make up Appadurai's "neighbourhoods," ethnoscaping in themselves since they consist of 'ethnic projects of 'Others.' For Filipinos working in Taiwan, given their experiences as low-class, temporary migrants, not desired but greatly needed, their construction of locality is that much more important for them. By creating and using Filipino spaces, places mostly associated with outsiders, 'residual and marginal' (Yeoh and Huang 1998), these workers produce community. As Appadurai argues, this is a 'structure of feeling' created intentionally and resulting in material effects.

The Church & Its Importance for Filipinos in Taiwan

The Catholic Church is undoubtedly one of the most important influence on and an essential ingredient for transnational Filipinos' community creation. Not only is this where many migrant workers go for spiritual fulfillment, but it is also the site where many Filipinos initially meet each other when they arrive in Taiwan. With a (much deserved) reputation as friendly and outgoing, Filipinos embrace newcomers. The church is a regular gathering place for large numbers of Filipinos on Sundays and as Cheng (2006) and Lan (2006) both argue, it is a social networking site. It truly serves as an 'enclave institution' in the community. While the Catholic Church may be an international organization, for Catholic Filipinos, the church in Taiwan effectively serves as an example of a Filipino ethnoscape and one of Appadurai's 'neighbourhoods.'

Every Sunday, the three Catholic Churches around Tainan City, along with several Born-Again and Full Gospel churches are filled with Filipinos, who come together for mass and prayer, and also to socialize. Foreign missionaries preside at these churches; however, interaction with local Taiwanese at these churches is quite rare. Religion holding the importance that it does in the Philippines, it is no wonder that attending mass or worship is

one way for these workers to feel a sense of home, community, and family in a foreign land. In addition, some of the women I spoke with commented that when they go to church, they can get together with other *Filipinas*, something which helps prevent homesickness. Moreover, some Filipinos are actually far more active in the church in Taiwan than they were back home, since it is one of the primary ways to socialize, relax and get support for their problems.

The church is also an alternative to going downtown and spending money. Many Filipinos, women in particular, prefer to stay in the church all day. A number of other women also stated that attending church helped them forget their problems. They can feel safe there, away from their employers' homes, surrounded by others from a similar background and culture. Moreover, for caregivers in particular, who have no home (or factory dormitory) to call their own, the church is a place of refuge and a hangout where they feel at home, partially countering what Parreñas (2008) terms the 'placelessness' of transnational migrants.

Furthermore, the church is so essential for locality production because of the number of social events that are run through it. In addition those of a religious nature, the churches in Tainan organize social events, like annual basketball leagues, and large-scale events like National Migrants Day, to name a few. These events are attended by Filipinos regardless of their religious affiliation, testifying to just how much they love being together in very large groups. Even during the economic crisis, when funds for these events were even harder to procure, workers still managed to organize a number of social events, many through the church. Without the support of the church, these social events would not occur.

The Migrant Worker Neighbourhood

The 'migrant worker neighbourhood' is also essential for Filipinos' locality production. Like the church, this is a common meeting place for Filipinos and other migrant workers on their days off, and is often where they first make contact with their community. Migrant workers of all nationalities gather on the streets outside the various migrant workers' stores, remittance shops, restaurants, and inside the Black Building to enjoy their day off. For the most part, migrant workers have a tendency to stick within

their own ‘cultural ghettos.’ Several internet shops can be found here as well, where migrants can connect with their families and friends back home or around the globe, something which is extremely important for Filipinos. This neighbourhood provides these workers with a taste of home, giving Filipino workers and other nationalities a sense of ‘place.’ Frequenting the establishments in this area, however limited in size, is thus an active attempt on the part of these workers to counter ‘placelessness’ and create locality. Moreover, this is truly a *migrant* community: it is rare to meet Taiwanese locals in any of these establishments, as many of them stay away from the migrant worker area due to preconceived notions of ‘dangerous’ migrant workers.

Filipinos’ Use of Public Spaces

Public parks also act as key sites for community creation. Similar to what Constable (2007) found in her research in Hong Kong, Filipino domestic workers in Tainan gather in public parks on their day off. Tainan Park, the biggest and most well-known park in Tainan, is popular with both locals and migrants and is filled with large groups of Indonesians, Thais, Vietnamese and Filipinos on Sundays. This area is a place for migrant workers to go besides the shops, bars or restaurants and besides their factories or employers’ homes. However, migrants’ use of public space is often contested by locals.

For Filipinos, these public places are outdoor spaces to frequent after morning or afternoon mass and a place in which to relax and stroll about. For caregivers, these parks are even more important. In addition to going there on their days off (if they do receive one), these women frequent public parks during the week with their elderly wards or employer’s children. There, they meet up with other caregivers, most often Filipinas, but also Indonesians and Vietnamese. For many of them, it is often the only time during the week they can chat with their friends. Going to public parks to gather is not only a way to create a sense of community, but also a way to assert their collective presence as migrants.

A Thriving Civil Society, Even in a Transnational Setting - or Perhaps Because of it?

Filipinos also have an amazing ability to organize themselves into civil organizations. Back in the Philippines, there is a thriving civil society - something which is recreated in the varied transnational contexts where Filipinos work. A number of these

groups in Taiwan are run through the church although they are not necessarily religious in nature. Given the large number of ethnicities in the Philippines, Filipinos often organize themselves into groups according to their ethnic background. Whenever I marvelled at the ability of Filipinos to organize themselves socially (as compared to other foreigners in Taiwan), my Filipino friends would tell me that this was natural for them, as it is what they do back home. In a transnational setting like Taiwan, they have even more reason to organize, in order to actively and consciously create a Filipino community or neighbourhood. In these types of groups, factory workers are much more active, due to regular working hours and (comparatively) more free time. Domestic workers do partake in these groups and clubs; however their attendance is much more irregular.

Community Creation for Household Workers

Due to the nature of their work, community creation is much harder for Filipino household workers compared with their counterparts in factories. Many of the caregivers in Tainan City and in other cities get irregular, very short days off and some get none at all. This affects the degree to which they can create a sense of community for themselves. Many of the women I interviewed receive only a few hours off each Sunday – enough to go to church, go downtown to remit money and buy some personal items, but not time to do much else. For some, throwing out the garbage is the only time during the day or week they can get together with other Filipinas. Compared with factory workers, these women have less freedom in their jobs to leave their place of employment during the week. Their working hours are highly unregulated, as their contracts do not stipulate basic working hours. While most household workers do find a way to get together with other Filipinas, this is often difficult due to the controls their employers exert over them. Moreover, the very nature of domestic work and caregiving is isolating, since domestic workers are alone in the household, with no company other than the family of their employer. While factory workers work and live together, often in very large groups, domestic work is not a social or communal occupation. As a result, the *already* difficult achievement of locality production in transnational ethnoscaapes is even more difficult to achieve for these workers.

B) The Demand for the Recognition of Human Rights

As transnational ideoscapes, human rights in the Taiwanese context are all those ‘images’ of human rights which pertain to migrant workers, as well as to the state’s ideologies in this matter. As I laid out in Chapter 4 and as Appadurai argues, these ideoscapes become complicated because intellectuals like experienced NGO directors and staff, are very much so bringing new discourse on human rights into the Taiwanese migrant worker context. Caregivers and domestic workers are poorly protected from abuse and the violation of their human rights in Taiwan (just as they are in many other destination countries as well). The transnational ideoscapes relevant here involve the various rights set forth in the UNDHR, the UN’s migrant workers’ convention, CEDAW, and the numerous ILO conventions pertaining to migrant workers (and which will soon include the ILO’s ‘domestic worker’ convention). Due to Taiwan’s political status and resulting exclusion from international bodies like the UN, the ILO and the IOM, it is much harder for NGOs and workers to lobby for government policy improvement using international human rights instruments. In addition, lobbying the Taiwanese government for policy change is a struggle in itself for these NGO workers.

As Chapter 1 put forth, the very concept of human rights has shifted a great deal in the past fifty years. In the last twenty years in particular, anthropology has begun to play a larger role in the discourse on human rights. In recent years, more academic attention has been given to women’s rights; however, they are still considered marginal. Many anthropologists have also explored human rights and resistance. Several scholars have pointed out anthropologists’ tendency to romanticize resistance and see it ‘everywhere’; something which prevents us from seeing the reality - which is that women like domestic workers and caregivers negotiate power and resist in low-profile and subtle ways.

Following Goodale’s (2006a) argument – that studying human rights through an anthropological lens requires a new critical direction, that of the blending of intersubjectivity, ethnography and other hybrid methodologies, and cultural critique – I collaborated with activists and other social actors in my field research, in order to best practice this kind of anthropology, and approach Goodale’s normative humanism. In both sets of interviews, during my ethnographic participation, and the review of written

materials, I was able to glean much information about the transnational ideoscapes of human rights in a migrant worker context in Taiwan.

Chapter 4 explored how these transnational Filipina domestic workers demand rights within the transnational ideoscapes of human rights. As I set forth, they demand the recognition of these rights through the assistance of the Church and migrant worker associations (NGOs), but with limited success. These workers demand the recognition of their rights, labour or otherwise, by seeking help from their church – be it Catholic, Born Again, or Full Gospel – and through the help of migrant worker NGOs. They have limited success in changing their working conditions, and for a number of reasons: their refusal to stand up and complain for fear of repatriation, the lack of state and labour protection and Taiwan's exclusion from international human rights and labour organizations. However, all these things aside, these women are not passive victims and they do resist, albeit not in traditional, overt ways.

Seeking Assistance through the Church

In Tainan City there are no NGOs for migrant workers. If migrant workers have work-related problems or other issues of a legal or human rights matter, they do not usually seek out the services of NGOs; rather, the majority of the time they call MECO in Kaohsiung City, the local Bureau of Labor Affairs in Tainan, or they seek help through their local church. Many of them, however, remain silent, out of fear of being repatriated back to the Philippines and losing their jobs. Those who do speak up, often seek assistance from the church. In Tainan, Filipino churches act as de facto NGOs. Priests, pastors, nuns and churchgoers alike support their fellow Filipinos by listening to their problems, offering advice and helping these workers contact government bodies if need be. Many of the women I spoke with stressed how important the church was for them in terms of help and support. Before and after mass, they can have their problems heard, be supported, and have the opportunity to share their problems with one another. Some women commented that through this type of counselling or talking, the church gives them the strength and courage to persevere in their jobs and lives as migrants in Taiwan. As Lan (2006) and Cheng (2005) both argued, the church is an important site of resistance and collective organization, as the church advocates on these women's behalf. Therefore, in addition to its vital role in

community creation, the church is a key site for the demand of the recognition of human rights, however active or subtle this may be.

Migrant Workers NGOs in Taiwan

While Tainan has no migrant worker NGOs, as Chapter 5 showed, there are a number of *very* active ones in other cities around Taiwan. My research took me around Taiwan and I had the opportunity to see for myself the work that these organizations are doing. The majority are Catholic-based organizations run by foreign missionaries, and lobby for and advocate on behalf of all migrant workers in Taiwan, taking on cases for all natures of abuses and offenses. They network with other NGOs, legal aid and local governments, run shelters through their centres for abused and trafficked migrants (as well as foreign spouses) and those waiting for transfer to new employment. Several centers also have programs and services specifically for immigrants (foreign spouses, in particular) and their families, something which is increasingly important due to the large numbers of foreign spouses arriving in Taiwan each year. Larger cities like Taipei and Kaohsiung and cities with numerous factories and/or science parks are home to larger numbers of Filipino workers than Tainan; these places have well-developed NGOs and countless Filipino civic and religious organizations. However, even in the larger cities, it is hard for these organizations to get domestic workers to organize themselves politically. In addition to being prevented from forming unions, household workers get irregular days off, and are thus a much harder sample to mobilize.

The majority of these NGOs help more Filipinos than other nationalities, since more Filipinos are aware of them, given their association with the church. As Lan (2006) pointed out and several NGO workers affirmed, Filipinos are also more likely to seek these organizations out and stand up for their human rights than are other nationalities of migrants. Filipinos are more aware of their rights as workers, more educated, and they are better supported by their government than the other nationalities of migrants. In recent years, the number of Indonesian and Vietnamese workers has increased substantially, so there has been more of an effort by NGOs in Taiwan to reach out to these populations as well.

In 2004 NGOs formed MENT in order to solidify and strengthen their lobbying efforts. The network has been instrumental in organizing press conferences, staging rallies and protests, publishing reports and lobbying the government for change in foreign labour policy. MENT focuses its efforts in five policy areas (see Appendix 5), as well as concentrating on combating human trafficking in Taiwan, an issue which Taiwan has been repeatedly criticized for in past few years. To illustrate, Taiwan was placed in Tier 2 in the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report 2009. According to the recent June 2010 report, Taiwan is now in Tier 1, an improvement which the US Department of State cites as having to do with the enactment of Taiwan's 2009 anti-trafficking law. It remains to be seen, however, if law enforcement in human trafficking will continue to improve and whether Taiwan can maintain its newfound status.

Why don't Household Workers Complain or Stand up for their Rights?

Most migrants in Taiwan do not make formal complaints or take action against their employers or brokers – even when there are gross violations of human rights. Many of these workers do not want to stand up for their human rights due to fear of repatriation. They are afraid that if they complain, go to the government, or take legal action against their employer or broker, they will be sent home. This was a prevalent theme I heard repeated again and again throughout the course of my fieldwork, both from migrants themselves and from NGO and church workers. This is especially true for caregivers who are scared to complain about anything - particularly since their contract fails to protect them from being fired on the employer's whim. Their priority as overseas workers is to support their families back home and pay off the large debt they have accrued from high placement and broker fees. If they are sent home, they will have no means to pay off this debt and will often need to take on more debt to pay it off. Several NGO workers lamented this fact, saying that they wished these workers stood up for themselves more, as much of the time, they have just cause to do so. In addition, if they stand up for their rights, this provides NGOs with tangible evidence to then lobby the government to improve policy, thus doing other migrant workers in Taiwan a big service.

Many women felt that their rights are not violated. Although several women told me they were afraid of losing their jobs and being sent home and thus did not voice their

complaints, a number of the women I interviewed had no problems with their employers or jobs (or at least they did not voice these complaints to me). They felt there were no violations of human rights being committed and they thus had no grievances. Some of them even stated how much they liked their bosses and how much their bosses respected them. Some felt that they were treated as ‘one of the family.’ I had mistakenly assumed that most of these women would not like their employers (especially their female bosses) that they would have tales of abuse, and that many of them would want to transfer jobs. However, less than half of the women I interviewed had complaints and problems with their jobs.

In addition, not one of the twenty women I interviewed sought the help of an NGO for a work-related or human rights problem. The majority of these women did not know the names of any migrant worker NGOs in Taiwan; although when asked, several said there was the need for one in Tainan. Rather, those with problems first sought the help of their friends at church, their priest or pastor or called MECO for assistance. In a few cases, women contacted the BLA or CLA directly. In a few other cases, women directly confronted their employers about problems they had with their job and the way they were being treated. All of this proves that they are not simply passive and will speak out. The majority of women I interviewed, however, did not complain about their jobs (at least not to me). Nevertheless, most of the women I spoke with knew of or had heard of someone in Taiwan – a friend, a friend of a friend, a relative – who had suffered some sort of abuse at the hands of their employer, whether it was physical, sexual or inhumane treatment, to name but a few. While they themselves had not been abused or had their human rights violated, they knew specific stories of others in the community who had.

The Complaints of Household Workers

The complaints that these workers *did* have mirror the problems of migrant workers across Taiwan. As a number of NGO workers stated, migrants’ problems and those of household workers are the same all over Taiwan. In addition to wishing they had regular days off, several of the caregivers I interviewed complained about the long working hours that their jobs entail. As Father David commented: “they are not robots!” Some of them complained to me about this, while others did not and spoke of it matter-of-factly. A few

women spoke of their low salaries and a select few lamented the lack of overtime pay, which by law employers are not required to pay caregivers, as these workers are not covered by the LSA. This makes these women very vulnerable to abuse on a number of fronts, coupled with the fact that they are extremely isolated in their employer's household. Inclusion under the LSA is one of the main issues that NGOs are lobbying the government for, since it will curb a number of these abuses.

Several women also complained about the exorbitant placement fees and broker fees they are forced to pay. The majority of migrant workers in Taiwan, irrespective of nationality, pay far more than what is legally required. Nevertheless, the corruption of these broker agencies runs rampant. These women (and other migrants) are at the mercy of the broker system, and it shows no signs of being abolished. Almost every NGO worker that I interviewed spoke of how corrupt and exploitative this system is. While recent efforts have been made by the Taiwanese and Filipino governments to implement direct hiring, in all sectors of migrant work - especially caregiving and domestic work - this is not being used to its full potential.

In addition, some women complained about the discrimination and racism they felt from Taiwanese (and as such, a number of these workers have no desire to make Taiwanese friends). There is no doubt that migrant workers in Taiwan are looked down upon as inferior and as 'the Other.' On several occasions I had arguments with Taiwanese people about this very issue, arguing that these workers were hard-working and family-oriented, just like the Taiwanese. Often in vain, I would tell them that, contrary to what they may believe, many Filipinas are college-educated, speak excellent English, and are skilled professionals back in the Philippines; also, that Filipino migrant workers are not dangerous or prone to stealing, contrary to the way the media portrays them.

Not Passive Victims

The majority of these women have not have acted on their complaints. Their success in changing their working conditions is thus rather limited. Nevertheless, as I stipulated in Chapter 4, and following Cheng (2006), Constable (2007) and Romero's (1992) reasoning, I do not think that they are passive victims. The majority of these

women may not resist in overt, official ways by lodging formal complaints with MECO, the CLA or even NGOs, but they do resist in other ways. This follows Constable's (2007) argument that there is a tendency in the literature on domestic work to characterize these women as powerless and passive; however, as she believes, even if these workers seem to be 'accommodating', they are not completely passive. Needless to say, 'resistance' can take on more active forms, such as attending protests and rallies, but in this context, it more often includes subtle forms like discursive resistance or linguistic resistance (Constable 2007; Lan 2006), gathering collectively in parks or disobeying one's employer in covert ways; all of which are types of low-profile and 'undeclared resistance.' Some women negotiate power by standing up to their employers when they feel they are not being treated fairly and by making requests in their jobs. In addition, several of the women I spoke with said that if they *were* to be abused or their employers were to commit human rights violations against them, then they would seek help. Thus, to generalize these women as passive is to do them an injustice since it ignores the differing ways in which they negotiate power within their jobs and the ways in which they may resist. Their resistance may not be as overt as demanding better working conditions from the government, their boss or their broker, and does not alter the overall structure of their jobs; however these women do stand up for their rights in their own, subtle ways.

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to shed light on the Filipina domestic worker and caregiver community in Tainan, Taiwan. By exploring how these household workers produce locality in the creation of transnational ethnoscapas and how they demand the recognition of their rights within the transnational ideoscapas of human rights, this study has given these women and their experiences a voice. Through the publication and dissemination of this thesis, it is hoped that their situation in Taiwan will be made more public, so that more Taiwanese people will become aware of how these women live in this transnational setting. Many locals may be surprised to find out just how hard life is for many of these household workers, and how hard-working they are – a trait which is highly valued by Taiwanese people. These transnational workers live amongst the Taiwanese, in their homes, taking care of their children and their elderly parents and their households - but they are not really accepted by them. This is not a phenomenon unique to Taiwan;

rather it is an all too common theme seen in many domestic worker contexts around the world. By shedding more light on the production of locality and the demand for the recognition of human rights for these female domestic workers, their experiences can be brought to the forefront. Through this, the globalization of migrant domestic workers and their respective experiences can have a more human face and we can make greater progress towards improving their working conditions.

Ethics Approval Notice

Social Science and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Scott	Simon	Social Sciences / Sociology	Supervisor
Katie	O'Brian	Social Sciences / Others	Student Researcher

File Number: 02-09-04

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

Title: Filipina Domestic Workers in Southern Taiwan: The Production of Locality and the Demand for Human Rights

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
04/14/2009	04/13/2010	Ia

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:

N/A

Université d'Ottawa University of Ottawa
Service de subventions de recherche et déontologie Research Grants and Ethics Services

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the application for ethical approval for the above named research project as of the Ethics Approval Date indicated for the period above and subject to the conditions listed the section above entitled "Special Conditions / Comments".

During the course of the study the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove subjects from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the study (e.g. change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment documentation, should be submitted to this office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at:
http://www.rges.uottawa.ca/ethics/application_dwn.asp

Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer 4 weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at:
http://www.rges.uottawa.ca/ethics/application_dwn.asp

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5841 or by e-mail at: ethics@uOttawa.ca.

Signature:

Leslie-Anne Barber
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Barbara Graves, President of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB

Appendix 2: Demographic Information for Caregiver and Domestic Worker Sample

Name ⁸⁶	Age	Marital Status ⁸⁷ , Children ⁸⁸	Religion	Education	Previous Job before Taiwan	Time in Taiwan, Contract #
Camille	44	M, 4	Catholic	Dress-making, cosmetology	Beauty parlour and dressmaking	7 years 7 mth, 3 rd contract
Anna	35	M, 1	Catholic	High school Dressmaking	Farm work, Kuwait for 10 years (DW) ⁸⁹	3 years 2 mth, 2 nd contract
Amelia	40	M, 1	Catholic	Dental medicine	Dental training	9 months 1 st contract
Theresa	27	S	Catholic	BA Secondary Education	No	5 years 2 nd contract
Danielle	26	SP ⁹⁰ , 2	Catholic	3 rd year Accounting	Electronics factory and call centre	7 months 1 st contract
Vanessa	34	M, 1	Catholic	2 years of midwifery college	Nurse's assistant in clinic	6 years, 5 mth 3 rd contract
Sally	27	S	Catholic	BS in Agri-Forestry, BA Secondary Education	-----	1 year 6 mth, 1 st contract (2 transfers)
Sarah	31	S	Catholic	Computer Science Degree	10 years at Toshiba as systems support	1.5 years 1 st contract (transferred from factory)
Carmela	28	S	Catholic	Electronics Technology Degree	Contract work	Almost 6 years 2 nd contract
Claudia	34	Widowed 2	Catholic	Computer secretarial course	Desk clerk	Almost 9 years 3 rd contract
Judy	54	M, 1	Catholic	-----	Sewing at a factory	13 years More than 3 contracts ⁹¹
Daisy	40	SP,1	Catholic	BSc, 9 units of MA	Small store (merienda)	3 years 10 mth, 2 nd contract
Hannah	28	S	Methodist	AP Economics	Contract factory work, mall cashier	Almost 6 years, 2 nd contract
Beth	44	S, 1	Catholic	1 year midwifery	family convenience store	5 years 2 nd contract
Melissa	44	S	Catholic	High School,	-----	10.5 years ⁹²

⁸⁶ All names have been changed to protect respondents' privacy and confidentiality

⁸⁷ M means married, S means single.

⁸⁸ Number of children

⁸⁹ Domestic worker

⁹⁰ SP means separated

⁹¹ Some women return to Taiwan under false names in order to circumvent the working term limit.

				dressmaking		
Carlita	27	S	Catholic	2 nd year BS in Education	Worked at pharmacist	5 years 2 nd contract
Trina	23	M, 1	Born Again Christian	3 rd year Nursing	No	8 months 1 st contract
Jennifer	32	M, 2	Born Again	Commerce degree	Bank in Manila	Almost 1 year 1 st contract
Naomi	40	M, 2	Catholic	-----	-----	6 years 2 nd contract
Malea	35	Separated	Born Again	-----	Stewardess (ferry)	5+ years 2 nd contract as factory worker (previous work as caregiver)

⁹² See above footnote

Appendix 3: Hometown and Language of Caregiver and Domestic Worker Sample

Name	Hometown, Native Region	Language
Camille	Pangasinan	----- ⁹³
Anna	Zamboanga	Cebuano
Amelia	Patangas, Bicol	-----
Theresa	Vizayas	Karaya
Danielle	Bicol	Bicolano
Vanessa	Laguna	Tagalog
Sally	Bicol	-----
Sarah	Manila	Tagalog
Carmela	Mindanao	Cebuano
Claudia	Luzon	Ilocano
Judy	Bacalod	Ilonggo
Daisy	Luzon	Tagalog
Hannah	Luzon	Ilocano
Beth	Manila	Ilonggo
Melissa	Luzon	Batangas
Carlita	Laguna, Cebu	Cebuano
Trina	Isabella, Luzon	-----
Jennifer	Nueva Vizcaya, Luzon	-----
Naomi	Cagayan Valley, Luzon	Ilocano
Malea	Cebu	-----

⁹³ I did not obtain this information.

Appendix 4A: Question Guide for Interviews with Domestic Workers and Caregivers

Demographics:

Age

Marital Status

Religion

Ethnic group

Education

Previous occupation in the Philippines

City/town in the Philippines

Work-Related

Years spent in Taiwan

how many contracts?

Official job title – caregiver, etc.

Work responsibilities, including those not part of official job description

Employer Characteristics

Description of employers

Their occupations

Number of children

Relationship with Employer

Nature of relationship with employer(s)

Level of Satisfaction with & degree of freedom in work

Level of satisfaction with current job

Desire to switch jobs

Freedom to leave place of employment during the week

Days Off

Day off usually received – why that day?

Existence of a curfew

Preference for another day off

description of a typical day off (activities, errands, places visited);

most important things to do on day off

desire to do things on day off that have not been done before or are unable to do that would like to do

favourite places to shop, eat, hangout; description of other public places visited on days off

opinion of whether or not there are enough Filipino restaurants, shops, hangouts in Tainan and what else there should be

recent openings of new Filipino shops, restaurants, hangout

Taiwanese shops or restaurants frequented and level of comfort frequenting these places

Church Involvement

reasons for attending (religious and other)

types of services offered at church

frequency of use of these services and reasons for doing so

opinion of other services that should be offered at the church

level of interaction with Taiwanese at church

Migrant Worker Associations / NGOs

knowledge of organizations/NGOs in Tainan that offer Filipina domestic workers services

description of these organizations

types of services offered

use of these services (regular, sometimes, rarely, never)

opinion on other organizations/groups that should be made available for migrant workers

Community Contacts & Communication:

description of initial integration into Filipina community in Tainan (contacts made before arriving in Taiwan or after)

level of contact with friends and Filipino community during the week (work days)

means of communication (cell phone or meet in person?)

Technology Use:

cell phone use

text messages from friends or migrant worker associations and nature of these messages (personal, legal, work-related)

degree of contact with family/friends back in the Philippines

Contact with Non-Filipino community:

level of contact with non-Taiwanese and non-Filipinos (for example, other migrant workers or European/Canadian workers)

desire to make friends with local Taiwanese or other foreigners

Human Rights:

What would you change about your job?

What rights, if any, do you think your boss is violating?

What rights (work-related or not) do you wish you had?

Have you ever talked to your boss about changing or improving your work conditions?
How do you think you could improve your work situation? (Is there anything you could do personally?)

Have your friends ever done anything to stand up for or demand their rights?

What is your knowledge of and opinion on the Labour Standards Law?

How does the church support you in your demand for human rights?

How do migrant worker associations or NGOs support you?

Have you ever sought out these organizations to help solve a work-related or legal problem?

Have you ever had any legal trouble?

Have there ever been any migrant worker rallies or protests in Tainan (that you know of)?

If there were any in the future, would you participate?

Have you ever participated in a migrant worker rally or protest march to demand better rights?

Do you know of any migrant workers who have participated in them?

What is your reaction to these rallies/marches? (Do you think they are beneficial for those involved?)

Do you seek out (current) information about migrant worker rights and labour, and if so, how?

Do you read the newspaper (ex. *Tinig Filipino* or English language newspapers, like the *Taipei Times*) or use the internet to find out about international rallies/protests or other migrant worker/domestic worker issues?

Transnational Filipino (Domestic Workers) Communities

How do you think Filipina domestic worker experiences are the same worldwide?

Domestic Work in Taiwan

How do you think Taiwan compares to other countries in their treatment of domestic workers?

What is your opinion about other countries and their domestic work sector?

Future Plans

How much longer will you stay in Taiwan?

What are your future plans?

Will you return to the Philippines after your contract is over or will you find work in a different country?

**Appendix 4B: Question Guide for Interviews with Migrant Worker NGO
representatives / Church Workers in Taiwan**

1. What type of work does your organization do?
2. Describe how your work impacts the lives of domestic workers in Taiwan.
3. What are some of the positive impacts that your advocacy has accomplished? Please be specific.
4. What are some of the projects currently underway in your organization?
5. What are some of the biggest struggles or problems of advocating on behalf of domestic workers?
6. How are your challenges in (name of city) different from those in other cities?
7. Where does your funding come from?
8. How many domestic workers, would you say, use the services you provide? Who are they in terms of countries or origin, age, gender, etc.?
9. Are local Taiwanese involved in any of your projects/advocacy work?
10. In your opinion, what other services or organizations should there be in (name of city) to help foreign workers (domestic workers)?
11. What are your links or relations with other NGOs/associations concerned with the protection of human rights on the global scene?
12. How do these global links facilitate/help your work? What improvements can be made in this respect to better serve migrant workers here in Taiwan?
13. What is your opinion about human rights instruments on the global scene? (Especially with respect to the protection of migrant workers)
14. Are these instruments appropriate for migrant workers in Taiwan? And for those in (name of city) in particular? Why or why not?

Appendix 5: Migrants Empowerment Network in Taiwan (MENT)

Member Organizations

Center for Migrants' Concerns, Central Taiwan (Chunghwa)

Hope Workers' Center, HWC (Chungli)

HMISC – Hsinchu Catholic Diocese Migrants and Immigrants Service Center (Hsinchu)

Migrant Workers' Concern Desk, MWCD (Taipei)

Missionary Society of St. Columban, Taiwan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Office (Chungli)

The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan Labour Concern Centre (Kaohsiung)

Scalabrini International Migration Network – Taiwan (Taipei)

Stella Maris International Service Center (Kaohsiung)

Taiwan International Workers' Association, TIWA (Taipei)

UGNAYAN – Migrant and Immigrant Mission (Taichung)

Vietnamese Migrant Workers and Brides Office, VMWBO (Taoyuan)

MENT's 5 Key Lobbying Issues & Goals

1. Bring household workers under the Labour Standards Act
2. Abolish the broker system and implement government-to-government direct hiring
3. Eliminate the working time limit
4. Make transfer between employers easier and more accessible
5. Allow migrant workers to form unions

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