

**Class Inequality among Third World Women
Wage Earners: Mistresses and Maids in the
Philippines**

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(Abstract)

This dissertation is geared toward a deeper understanding of the complexity of the multiple positions of women in the "Third World," and on how these positions create, sustain, and reproduce inequalities. I examine class inequality among employed women in the Philippines in the context of mistress-maid employment relationship. Using feminist fieldwork approaches, my gatekeeper, Merly, and I conducted extensive interviews and focus groups with thirty-one maids and ten mistresses between May and August 2000 in a medium-sized city in the Philippines. Recorded interviews were transcribed and processed using QSR NUD*IST N4.

Domestic workers, who started as child laborers, live in their mistresses' homes where they perform household chores and carework. Aside from their "job description," they carry out additional tasks within and outside the household. The maids' relationship with their mistresses is based on maternalism, in which the mistresses integrate them into the family, engage in gift giving, provide educational support, but at the same time, control their bodies, times, spaces, and relationships. Except in cases where maternalist behavior becomes violent, both maids and mistresses approve of maternalism. In looking at the factors that may contribute to the mistresses' maternalist behavior, this study found that mistresses who are subordinate relative to their spouses and their workplaces are more likely than those who are not subordinate to engage in maternalist behavior with their maids. As maids prefer maternalist relationship with their mistresses, they accommodate their mistresses' dominating tendencies. When reprimanded, they respond through culture-specific rituals of subordination. However, when their threshold of tolerance is breached, they apply a combination of subtle and blatant resisting strategies.

Younger maids perceive domestic work as a stepping-stone toward a more comfortable future, while older maids view it as a dead-end occupation. From a global standpoint, class mobility is examined based on the domestic workers dialectic positions within the

international division of reproductive labor. Throughout this dissertation, women's inequality in the context of mistress-maid relations were analyzed from various angles, shifting the analysis from micro to macro dynamics; from class to the intersection of gender, ethnicity, age, and class; and from local to global. In addition to providing a sociological understanding of this phenomenon, I put the varied voices of "Third World women" at the forefront of this study.

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Preface

The validity of this research project is measured by the extent to which I am reflexive toward my subject matter. As Locke et al. point out (1993, 110), "Direct presence as part of the research process means that the entire biography of the investigator - values, habits of perception, intellectual presumption, and personal dispositions - becomes potentially relevant to gathering, analyzing, and understanding the data." Thus, disclosing my biography is essential in this study.

My interest in the relationship between the domestic helper and the employed female employer stems from my experience of having a wage-earning mother and being tended by paid caregivers. Based on the Philippine standards, we belong to the middle class. My mother started as a schoolteacher and is now a school principal, while my father shifted careers from government employee to private-practice lawyer. My parents' combined income was just sufficient to send their five children to receive a higher education. If my mother had not been employed, that would have been an impossible accomplishment for our family.

Over the years that I lived with my parents, our household had employed many domestic helpers whose ages ranged from fifteen to fifty. Some were single, some married, and others separated from their husbands. A few had children who also stayed with us. Their educational attainments varied from three to eleven years. Knowing that domestic work would not offer them long-term rewards, my mother aided some of them to attend evening high school. On the average, our helpers would stay with us for about eight months; then they moved away, and I never knew what happened to most of them. Some who had been to college stayed with us temporarily, while they searched for better-paying jobs. A number of them probably returned to their rural villages, a few may have married and settled into their own homes, while others sought higher-paying employment opportunities in cities like Manila or abroad.

As my educational training in the USA progressed, I was exposed to feminist theories and movements that raised my consciousness about the different standpoints among women. Through exposure to feminist writings, I came to recognize the "other" in the category women: the "women of color," as opposed to "women," which refer to

the white middle class. The next recognition was that I am a "woman of color," a racialized identity imposed on me when I entered the United States, an ethnic category that has not been applied to me. As I grappled with the "differences among women" described by feminists of color, I recognized my own privileged position based on my middle-class status in my home country in sharp contrast to the life experiences of my poor Filipina sisters. It was within my own consciousness-building journey that the topic and approaches for my dissertation came to life. As an emergent feminist, I was prompted to re-examine my family's experience with domestic helpers. For me, reliance on domestic servants was a "natural part" of our "worldview," as everyone else I knew had domestic helpers. We rationalized that we treated our domestic helpers like part of our family and that we helped them by providing them employment. Most of our domestic helpers, however, always called my parents "sir" and "ma'am," and I understand that class boundaries and status distinctions were clearly established. Awakened by the work of Rollins (1985), I also now grasp that, by redefining these workers as artificial members of our family, we exploited their "emotional labor" (Hochschild, 1983) and their loyalty, in addition to the physical labor for which we paid them. At the same time though, I am aware that our helpers wanted to be part of our family.

I wondered why very few educated Filipinas have made a study about domestic helpers in the Philippines. As my former professor commented, domestic service is one "phenomenon which is glaring us in the eyes, but really nobody thought of doing a study here."¹ Perhaps it is because we, the scholars, the educators, the researchers have enjoyed the services of domestic helpers so much that we are blind to the differences between their life conditions and our own. Gill (1994, 7) points out that many women who think of themselves as feminists were insulted by her analysis of exploitative mistress-servant relationships in Bolivia because they felt that her description of Bolivian domestic service demonstrates "uncomfortable parallels to their own experiences." In the past, I never questioned the institution of domestic help in the Philippines, and I never realized that I was in a more privileged position than the women who worked for our family. Now, however, I am aware of my social location in my analytical framework: I come from a family with domestic helpers. Given that recognition, I have to take care that my status characteristics do not

¹ This is taken from an e-mail correspondence with Imelda Pagtolun-an on March 16, 2000.

distort the way I analyze the worldview of my informants or cause me to silence the voices of poor women who spoke to me.

I have drawn upon a lifetime of personal participant observation of domestic servants in their workplaces. As I grew up in the South, I have observed and lived with helpers for twenty-three years. When I pursued my graduate studies in Manila for two years, I was exposed to the way *Manilenos* (people from Manila) discriminate against the *probinsyanos* (people from the province, especially from the south). Since I was studying in an elite university, I associated with rich students, visiting them at their houses, and meeting their helpers who are *probinsyanos*, particularly, *Bisaya* like me. I would gladly talk to these domestic laborers, taking the opportunity to speak in my own mother tongue. When I moved to the U.S., I was forced to recategorize myself into two lower statuses – that of a racial minority and that of a “non-resident alien” as what the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service labels foreigners. As I have studied in an American state university, I have interacted with the middle-class group, both white and non-white. I, however, was increasingly educated about the plight of Filipino overseas domestic workers and about the problems of Filipino journalists, lawyers, and teachers who work as domestic workers or nannies in the U.S, some of them are my own friends and classmates in high school, which was considered an “elite” school in our city.

While I am not a domestic worker myself, I have observed the structure of domestic service and the experience of the Filipino domestics at the provincial, metropolitan, and international levels, side by side with my graduate work. This dissertation hopes to unlock the intimate stories of domestic workers and their employers that have been kept private, yet a common knowledge among Filipinos. By presenting the worldview of domestic workers in the Philippines, I hope to trigger public discourse about domestic workers’ labor rights that will lead to the passage of the House Bill 8862, “Magna Carta for Household Helpers” authored by Cagayan Rep. Jack Enrile, into law to protect domestic workers from over-exploitation. The bill includes provisions on minimum wage, minimum age, working hours per day, Social Security System and health insurance coverage, 13th month pay, and access to education for helpers below eighteen years old.

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Introduction

Paid Domestic Labor in the World Economy and the Philippines

As affluent women have increased their participation in the waged labor force, there has been an expansion of the global domestic service industry (Elfring 1989). In the First World, upper and middle-class women benefit from the domestic services of poor women of color (Rollins 1985; Romero 1988; Glenn 1992) and recent immigrants from peripheral countries (Constable 1997; Mendez 1998; Yeoh, Huang et al. 1999; Anderson 2000; Parrenas 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001) who have very few employment options outside the lowest paying jobs. These more privileged women are able to "buy detachment from domestic work, [by] passing on the responsibility to working-class women" (Mendez 1998). A similar pattern has been observed in Third World settings, where upper- and middle-class wage-earning women maintain one or more domestic workers (see Tellis-Nayak 1983; Gill 1990; Kothari 1997; Elmhirst 1999). In the Philippines for example, the more affluent the household, the lower is the ratio of family members and domestic workers to assure the comfort of each family member. Upper-class women employ several live-in domestic workers, i.e., housekeeper, cook, babysitter, and laundry woman (*BWYW* 1988).

What I have just illustrated is a simplified version of the global differential status of women. On top of this hierarchy are women in the rich countries who utilize the household services of women of color, who comprise the lowest economic classes in those core areas. At the periphery, affluent women in elite and middle-class households employ the domestic services of those at the bottom of their own societies: impoverished and less educated women. The latter Third World relationship is the context for my study.

Like many developing nations, the Philippines is a highly polarized society in which a small elite group controls most of the wealth and resources while a majority of the people live in desperate poverty. Consequently, impoverished women are a cheap source of labor. To help support their families, low-skilled, poorly educated young women migrate from rural areas in search of urban jobs, most often as domestic helpers (Costello 1987; Lauby 1987). Filipino middle-class, wage-earning women capture much of this labor supply,

delegating to domestic workers the "dirty work," (Anderson 2000) of reproductive labor, and therefore, free to fill higher-paying jobs outside their households. As a result, Filipino women now comprise 23.9% of the government workforce, 32.8% of administrative and managerial posts, and 16.7% of the seat holders in the upper house of the legislative branch (*The World Guide 1999*).

With a population of 76.5 million, speaking more than 70 dialects, the Philippines is the thirteenth most populated country in the world (NSO 2001a).¹ In this predominantly Catholic country that consists of more than 7,000 islands located in the Southeast Asia, forty percent of the population is impoverished (DOLE 2001). Most of these poor households subsist on less than a dollar (U.S.) a day (*Microsoft Encarta 2000*). Because of this economic polarization, the Philippines has a negative migration rate (-1.04), the country exporting more than 600,000 people annually over the last decade (NSO 1999).² In the same period, these migratory laborers remit an annual average of US\$2,837 million dollars (NSO 1999). Almost half of these overseas contract workers are women, and the vast majority of them work as domestic workers. As of 1999, around 231,000 overseas domestic workers were documented to be in the top employing countries: 104,000 in Hong Kong; 40,000 in Saudi Arabia; 40,000 in Singapore; 39,000 in Taiwan; 6,000 in the USA; and 2,000 in Japan (NSO 2001b).³

Consequently, the export of laborers, especially women, comprises an important element of the globalization agenda of the Philippine government. Because they help pay the country's enormous foreign debt, national leaders hailed these migrants as "heroines of the Philippine economy" (Rosca 1995). While women bolster the country's ailing economy, the Philippine government assigns little priority to protecting the human rights of many Filipino women who work abroad in deplorable conditions. Since the Philippine economy cannot provide stable jobs to many of its women, even Filipinas with college degrees

¹ This population is based on the 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

² More than 10 percent or 9 million of its population is based overseas NSO (2001). Highlights of the survey on overseas Filipinos (SOF) 1997-1998. Manila, National Statistics Office.

³ See table at: <http://www.census.gov.ph/data/sectordata/1999/of9905.htm>.

often accept employment abroad as domestics (Lane 1992; Layosa 2000).

Recent studies about Filipino domestic helpers in other countries document racial discrimination and physical abuse by their female employers and sexual exploitation by males (Constable 1997; Chin 1998).⁴ Migrant Filipinas risk human rights violations to seek higher wages than they can hope to earn in their homeland. Although low in comparison to the earnings of citizens of the country to which they migrate, their wages are several times higher than what they would earn in the Philippines.

Contributions of This Study

While the difficult working conditions of the Filipino women abroad have been widely researched, not much is known about domestic laborers within the Philippines. While there are a few published studies about the working conditions of domestic workers (Dumont 2000; Palabrica-Costello 1984), scholars have often ignored the employment relationship, particularly with the mistress.⁵ Inside the Philippines, poor domestics have been left voiceless and invisible in the confines of their middle-class workplaces. By focusing on the employment relationship between the domestic helper and the female employer, this study pinpoints the class inequality between two hierarchical strata of wage-earning women in a Third World setting.

Moreover, this study contributes to the growing feminist discourse on the social construction of differences among women (Baca Zinn and Dill 1990; Collins 1989; hooks 1984; Hurtado 1989; Parpart 1993; Romero 1988). While much of the debate has focused on racial differences, little attention has been directed toward class

⁴ For example, one Malaysian female employer chained a Filipino maid outside the door, out of fear that the servant would eat the family's food while she was out of the household (Chin 1998). Another Hong Kong employer kept the Filipino maid locked inside the house (Constable 1997).

⁵ Dumont (1995) has given a conception of the helper's position in the household, including a generalized characterization of the mistress-maid relationship. Palabrica-Costello (1984), on the other hand, had different goals in her study.

differences among women. Paid domestic work is an ideal case to demonstrate women's inequalities based on class, race, ethnicity, and/or nationality. Furthermore, this study calls into question the tendency of many Western feminist scholars to homogenize women in poor countries. In reality, these so-called "Third World women" have experienced the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and class in complex ways that were ignored in earlier studies. Dumont (1995, 2000) and Palabrica-Costello (1984) overlooked the power play between the Filipino live-in domestic helper and her employed mistress.⁶ This research addresses that research gap.

In addition to the class inequality analysis, this inquiry contributes to the growing field of "new ethnographies" that are grounded in feminist field research methods and reporting strategies. As one of those new ethnographies, this project is "an intercalation of mixed genres of texts and voices" (Strathern 1985, 17). For example, it inculcates methods and reporting techniques that allow informants to speak in their own voices. It recognizes that I, as the researcher, and my reactions are "constituted as part of the data, rather than being mysterious hidden hands" (Strathern 1985, 17). To emphasize my being part of the data, I apply the first person pronoun throughout the text, rather the third person orientation, which portrays a positivist, detached sociologist.

Furthermore, it makes an important contribution to the scholarly discourse about feminist fieldwork methodologies. There is noticeable silence in such literature about the difficulties encountered by an indigenous woman who conducts research about women in her own peripheral country. I have advantages over Western researchers because I share the language, ethnicity, color, and religious heritage of my interviewees. I, however, am a member of the employers' class. Consequently, I faced difficulties with my own life experience biases, and I encountered research barriers that are caused by the class distance between poor and more affluent women, as I elaborate in Chapter 2.

⁶ Live-out domestic service is not common in the Philippines. Usually, a domestic receives board and food as part of her compensation. In this way, the employers can call on her services anytime day or night.

Research Questions

To explore the class inequality and employment relationship among Third World women who work for wages outside their own households or families, I investigated the following research questions.

1. What are the different class positions of the female employer and the domestic worker?
2. What are the working conditions experienced by domestic helpers?⁷
3. How does the female employer exert power and dominance over the domestic? Do employers engage in "ideological camouflage" (Patterson 1982) in order to deny their exploitation of domestic helpers?⁸ Do employers construct a relationship based on maternalism (Rollins 1985; Romero 1987) that combines coercion with positive benefits for domestic helpers?
4. How does the female employer's subordinate position in relation to her husband and in relationship to her status in the workplace affect the way she exercises control over her domestic?

⁷ See examples of working conditions of Filipino domestics abroad: Constable, N. (1997). Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Filipina Workers. Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press. Chin, C. (1998). In Service and Servitude. Foreign Female Domestic Workers and the Malaysian Modernity Project. New York, Columbia University Press. Anderson, B. J. (2000). Doing the Dirty Work: The Global Politics of Domestic Labor. London, Zed Books. Parrenas, R. S. (2000). "Migrant Filipina Domestic Workers and the International Division of Reproductive Labor." Gender & Society **14**(4): 560-580.

⁸ Orlando Patterson defines such ideological camouflage as cultural and social myths used by employers to shroud their exploitative labor practices behind claims of decency and morality.

5. How does the domestic helper accommodate or resist the power exerted by her female employer and other members of the household?⁹
6. Under what circumstances, does the domestic helper gain some degree of autonomy over her workplace?¹⁰
7. What are the typical work life patterns of domestics? Is domestic service a dead end or a "bridging occupation" (Broom and Smith 1963), a stepping-stone to higher-waged jobs?

Definition of Terms

Below, I provide definitions of terms that I use in this study.

1. Maid refers to someone who performs housework or carework for families as an occupation. In this study, I use other terms to refer to the maid, including domestic worker, domestic helper, laborer, helper, domestic, maid, *yaya* (nanny), or *labandera* (laundry woman).
2. Mistress refers to the female employer who directs the domestic worker in her job. In this study, the mistress is also employed.
3. Reproductive labor refers to housework and carework activities. This term is taken from the domain of social reproduction, which refers to the "array of activities and relationships involved in maintaining people both on a daily basis and intergenerationally" (Glenn 1992, 1).
4. Third World is a term initiated by the United Nations in the 1950s to refer to underdeveloped areas, which were undergoing liberation struggles against colonialism. The term was meant to distinguish these poor countries from the richer developed First

⁹ See an example of coping mechanism of Filipino domestics abroad: Cohen, R. (1991). "Women of color in white households: Coping strategies of live-in domestic workers." Qualitative Sociology **14**(2): 197-215.

¹⁰ See how Chicanas gain more autonomy by modernizing the domestic service from live-in arrangement to day work in: Romero, M. (1988). "Chicanas modernize domestic service." *Ibid.* **11**(4): 319-334.

World and the communist/socialist Second World. Today, this term is used to refer to those countries of the world defined as poor.

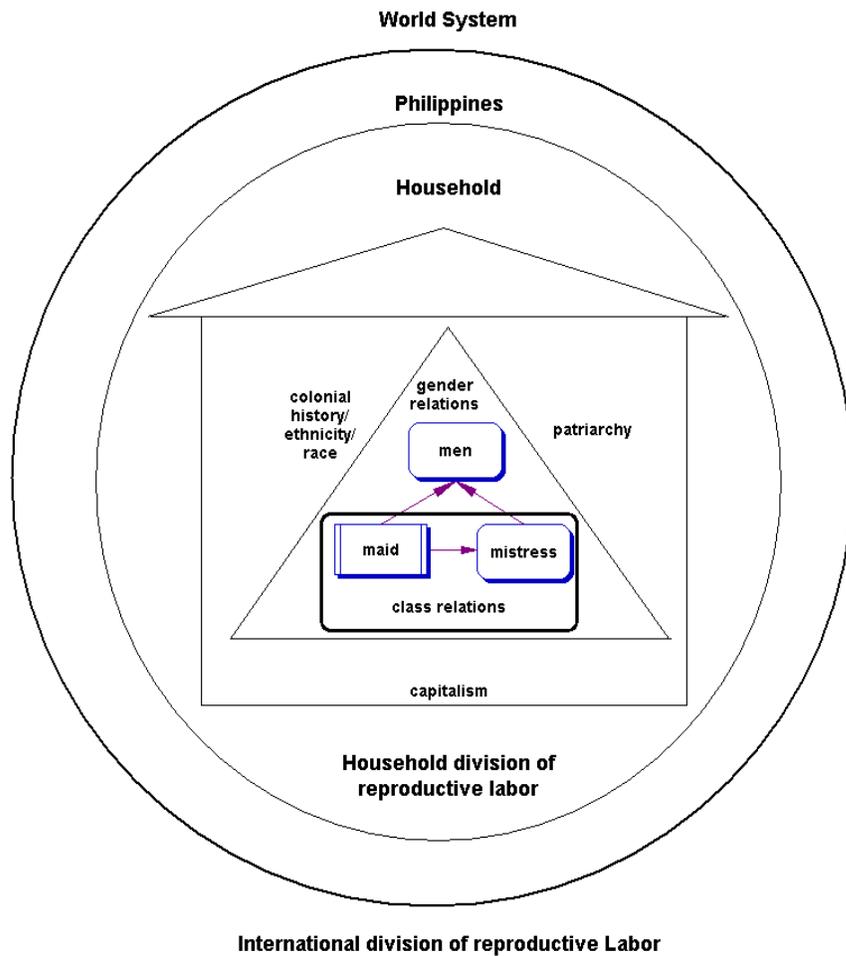
Theoretical Perspectives

The core of mistress-maid relations is the avoidance of reproductive labor by a class-privileged woman, who passes the responsibility acquired by her subordinate position in the gender hierarchy, to a negatively privileged woman based on class, race, and/or ethnicity. This hierarchical relation in mistress-maid arrangement had been examined from various theoretical standpoints, including gender, race/ethnicity, class, and the interaction of these three structural systems of domination.

I analyze women's inequality in the context of mistress-maid relations from various angles. I shift my analysis from micro to macro dynamics, from local to global, and from class analysis to the intersection of gender, ethnicity, age, and class. Figure 1 captures the conceptual framework of my dissertation. This seemingly micro-level, class-based relationship between women is shaped by the larger social forces such as patriarchy, capitalism, the legacies of colonialism, and the international division of reproductive labor. The direction of the arrows in Figure 1 points to the more dominant individual/group in the power relations.

I begin my analysis by considering women as sharing one thing: an ascribed sex status, which makes them subordinate to men within the system of patriarchy. These women, however, differ in class positions, and this class-based inequality enables middle-class women to exploit the domestic services of poor women. Fundamentally, I see class inequality as making such an employment relationship possible, but the complexity of mistress-maid dynamics can be understood better, when the interaction of gender, age, and ethnicity to class is also explored.

Figure 1 Class Relations between Women in the Household within the Context of International Division of Reproductive Labor



I examine the class relations among wage-earning women in a medium-sized, relatively ethnically homogenous city, in a Third World setting. While poor women are also likely to be ethnic minorities, my informants are not ethnic minorities, at least, not in relation to their current employers. Considering the absence of racial difference and the slight variation in ethnic composition of my informants, the bulk of this dissertation is guided by a class analysis, which covers Chapters 3-5, and 7-8, wherein I discussed the class backgrounds of maids and mistresses, the maids' working and living conditions in their workplaces, the maternalist relationship between maids and mistresses, the maids' resistance to domination, and class mobility.

This class relationship is examined from Marxist and Weberian traditions. Marx's concept of class is built around four structural properties, namely: 1) classes are relational; 2) class relations are antagonistic; 3) antagonisms are rooted in exploitation; and 4) exploitation is based on social relations of production (Wright 1984). Exploitation, in this context, refers to the "antagonistic interdependence of material interests of actors within economic relations" (Wright 1997, 10). It is antagonistic because the "material welfare" of the exploiter depends on the "material deprivation" of the exploited. The exploiter, therefore, is dependent on the effort of the exploited to achieve his or her material interest (Wright 1997, 10). I examine the mistress-maid employment relations as antagonistic in that it is rooted in the mistress' exploitation of the maid's reproductive labor power. The mistress-maid relations are exploiter-exploited relations, involving mutual dependency and a sustained pattern of dominant-subordinate interaction. I examine the exploiter-exploited relations between the mistress and her maid within the system of maternalism.

A derivative of paternalism, *maternalism* is a system of power relations wherein the maid is under the mistress' protective custody, control, and authority. It is characterized by mistress benevolence, as well as coercion, control, and authority, with the mistress treating the maid as a dependent child, and the maid is expected to perform the "rituals of deference" (Rollins 1985), as well as to remain loyal towards her mistress. These traits show indicators of status differentials, in which the mistress gains positive privileges (i.e., freedom from housework and deference and loyalty from the maid), while the maid faces the disprivilege associated with carrying out the physical labor of paid housework, and being under the domination of her mistress. This

relationship is exploitative with the mistress appropriating the maid's labor power at the guise of maternal beneficence.

Unlike Marx who depicts class in purely economic terms, Weber takes a multidimensional approach to class, including non-economic indicators, such as the unequal distribution of social honor or prestige and social power. Weber (1965, 428) describes social status as a "claim to positive or negative privilege with respect to social prestige." Social status is a relational concept; it can only be observed in a comparative manner. As Omodei (1982, 197) aptly argues, "The social esteem, lifestyle and other associated factors are symbols only, the critical defining characteristic is in terms of power relations – of rights, duties and privileges." This power relationship, as Omodei further posits, is that of dominance-subordination. The mistress-maid power relations demonstrate this relationality of status, of dominance and subordination. Deference and respect are associated with mistress status while the opposite is linked to maid status.

Following Weber's integration of status into the class relationship, I examine mistress-maid relations from other status markers, such as ethnicity and age, in interaction with gender and class. In the Filipino culture, older people, regardless of gender, enjoy positive prestige associated with their age. Therefore, when the maids are older than their mistresses, the latter treat the former with deference. On the other hand, very young maids are most likely to be exploited. Likewise, with ethnic identities, mistresses apply a lesser form of domination toward maids who share their ethnicity, and a greater form of domination when their maids come from a different ethnic group. I grounded much of my discussion of my informants' previous employment relationships in these ideas about differences in ethnicity and age between mistresses and maids. Finally, I examine whether domestic service permits workers class mobility in local and global standpoints.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 summarizes the state of the field with respect to feminist discourse about differences among women and empirical investigations related to mistress-maid relations. In Chapter 2, I describe my methods of investigation, discussing in detail my reflexive analysis of the problems encountered in the fieldwork process. Chapter

3 situates the positions of maids and mistresses within the class/status hierarchy. I lay out the socio-demographic background and typologies of maids and mistresses in this study, as well as examine the negative status associated with paid domestic worker.

Chapter 4 discusses the working and living conditions of the domestic helpers with emphasis on the class and status differentials between them and their mistresses. In Chapter 5, I offer a description of the system of maternalism, which is grounded in the power relationships between mistresses and maids. Through small forms of beneficence, mistresses engage in ideological camouflage to conceal and to justify their exploitation of domestic helpers. Chapter 6 identifies several factors that shape the mistresses' maternalistic styles toward their maids. In this study, mistresses who are subordinate under patriarchal and capitalist relations most likely create and sustain maternalistic relations with their maids. I find at least two interpretations of maternalistic behavior among these subordinates.

Chapter 7 explores the maids' accommodation and resistance strategies toward exploitative conditions. Chapter 8 considers paid domestic work from a life-cycle perspective and explores the question whether domestic work is a bridging or dead-end occupation. The Conclusion of this dissertation lays out a household perspective of the world-system analysis to examine mistress-maid relations, where I elaborate on the global component of my conceptual framework.

Chapter 1

Feminisms, Women's Inequality, and Domestic Work

Introduction

The quest for gender equality has been the most important aspiration of feminisms, and up to now, feminists continue their struggle to achieve a level playing field with men. Over the decades, especially in Western societies, women have made significant impact in waged work. Compared to the sixties, more women are now working side by side with men, job segregation by gender has declined, and the gender wage gap has narrowed. Although gender equality is yet to come, an enormous change on the status of women, or to be more precise, the status of middle-class women, has taken place.

While considerable work has been done on the study of gender inequality, little attention has been devoted in examining the growing inequality among women. There is as much class inequality among women as there is among men (McCall 2001). An examination of the class relations among women points out significant insights about women's aspirations to gain equal status with men at the expense of other women. Parkin (1982, 175) described this process as a social closure initiated by the "excluded as a direct response to their status as outsiders." In other words, gender-based subordinated women, who are restricted access to certain social and material resources, likewise restrict other women, who are negatively privileged by class and race or ethnicity, from whatever pool of resources they are likely to control. In this chapter, I will examine the enormous contribution of women of color in advancing our knowledge about women's differences. Then, I will focus the discussion on a specific form of women's inequality as played out in the mistress-maid relations in core and peripheral nations.

Feminist Perspectives on the Differences among Women

Postmodern theorists have questioned the significance of the category "women," as it is a limited concept to describe the varying

experiences of women, and that it is exclusionary (Kristeva 1984; Butler 1990). The category "women" in the Western world has oftentimes been used to refer to white middle-class women, while those who do not belong to this group are labeled as "other" and are given add-on labels, like "women of color" or "Third World women" (Trinh 1986). In addition to this, the "other" in the category of women is usually constructed as a monolithic entity.

Just as women in the Third World have been sweepingly generalized as poor, until relatively recently, women of color in the U.S. had been viewed as a homogeneous category whose oppression is based solely on gender. Such thinking, however, is biased by white and Western orientations (Baca Zinn 1982; Collins 1986; Mohanty 1988; Hurtado 1989). In the early 1970's U.S.-based feminists of color raised the issue of the differences among women, voicing a widespread concern that their experiences were misinterpreted, and that their oppression was not the same as that felt by white middle-class women (Baca Zinn and Dill 1996). Unlike white middle-class women, women of color simultaneously experience class, racial/ethnic and gender subordination (hooks 1984; Collins 1989; Hurtado 1989). Furthermore, they face oppression from men of their own groups and from whites of both genders (hooks 1984; Hurtado 1989). According to hooks (1984), white women have participated, directly or indirectly, in the oppression of black women, either by being passive about the unjust structure or by employing paid domestic services of black women.

Since the 1970's, feminist theorizing has undergone a shift from gender inequality to gender differences and then lately, to differences among women (Fraser 1997). Women's differences specifically arise from inequalities of power and privilege (Baca Zinn and Dill 1996, 1) attributed by their differential locations in the social hierarchy of class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. As hooks (1984) has argued, some women occupying more privileged positions, including feminists, tend to disregard the situation of their lower-income sisters; sometimes they even participate in the exploitation of labor power of their so-called poor sisters.

Besides class, women's inequality is associated with gender and racial/ethnic relations, with a few women of color scholars arguing that such inequality is rooted on their relationship to white men (see Hurtado 1989; Glenn 1992). From this viewpoint, white women enjoy a higher status than women of color because they are closer to white

men who are the most powerful in the U.S. society. As Hurtado (1989, 834) observes:

The conflicts and tensions between white feminists and feminists of Color are viewed too frequently as lying solely in woman-to-woman relationships. These relationships however, are affected in both obvious and subtle ways by how each of these groups of women relate to white men.

So far, the discussion above focused on women's plights and on conceptualizations of women's differences in the United States. When viewed at the global level, women's differences and activism become even more distinct, as such differences are not only based on class, race, and ethnicity, but on nationality and culture as well. Women's activism outside the United States come in such diverse forms that no single feminism or a single Third World feminism could encompass such diversity. Women define their realities and their movements from different standpoints, and they create goals that would respond to their needs. Their endeavors, therefore, vary depending on their identities. Due to these differences, feminisms take a plural form. Women characterize their identities based on their historical, cultural, racial, sexual, and class backgrounds. Third World feminisms around the world are named in different ways depending on how women identify themselves to be. Some African Americans like Collins (1986) and hooks (1984) distinguish themselves as black feminists while another African American woman like Walker (1983) calls herself a womanist, thereby removing all identification with white, middle-class feminism. Latina activists, like Isasi-Diaz (1993), think of Latina women's activism as *Mujerista Theology*, which integrates their religiosity, their history, and their language into their struggle for liberation. Likewise, while some African women call themselves African feminists (Steady 1987), others argued against the use of the label feminism to define their political activism, and instead, offer to label their movement as African womanism (Hudson-Weems 1995).

A common theme found in the activism of women of color in the U.S. and women in the Third World is the transcendence of gender as the sole source of women's oppression. In fact, although gender equality is a very important concern, it is not the number one priority of Third World women's movements. A common context of struggle among Third World women around the world is colonialism and imperialism by the powerful countries (Jayawardena 1986; Mohanty 1991; Aguilar 1998). Third World feminisms, therefore, integrate

issues of race, class, colonialism, and imperialism in their struggle for survival and liberation. While white middle-class women fight for equality with men in their society, Third World women struggle for continued existence. Their projects include the very basic aspects of life such as literacy, primary health care and reproductive health, livelihood, ecological protection, and national liberation.¹ As a Sri Lankan feminist, Jayawardena (1986, 2) voices it, feminism in the Third World is "used in its larger sense, embracing movements for equality within the current system and significant struggles that have attempted to change the system."

What needs further discussion is the extent of unity or polarization of women's activism within the Third World. Because they are lumped into the "Third World women" category, their differences are often ignored. *I contend that there is a similar concern between white middle-class feminists in the core and the ethnic majority, middle-class feminists in the periphery.* Both these groups are educated and have better economic and social options compared to the working class women in their societies. These groups initiate women's movements in their countries, with the middle-class feminists in the periphery oftentimes patterning their activism from that of the core, thereby raising antagonism from the ethnic minority, working-class women within the periphery.²

Feminism, as a concept, carries with it the identity of white middle-class women and their goal of gender equality with men in their class background. The political term, Third World feminism developed as a response by U.S. women of color and Third World women to differentiate their struggles from those of white, middle-class women. Within the Third World, however, women who espouse feminism are likewise middle class and are labeled as having a Western or a colonial mentality. While Third World feminists would argue that their feminism is rooted in their culture, the reality remains that most of them (including me) have received a Western education

¹ For Internet sites on women's movements in the Third World, check the following: <http://www.rawa.org>, <http://www.madre.org>, <http://www.comdares.org>, and <http://www.twinside.org.sg/>.

² Consider Third World feminists like Uma Narayan, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Clenora Hudson-Weems, and Nawal El Saadawi as middle class, with some Western education. For example, see Narayan, U. (1997). Dislocating cultures: Identities, traditions, and Third World feminism. London, Routledge.

and have imbibed much of the Western orientation. Like U.S. women of color who are critical of white middle-class feminisms, working class women in Third World societies believe that feminism is an intellectual concept that only works for middle-class women. A maid, for example, may have as her mistress, a feminist whom she cannot call a "sister."³

The predominance of paid domestic workers is a reliable measure, not only of difference, but also of social inequality among women. In her book, *Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation*, Cock (1980, 5) asserts that domestic workers in South Africa "are among the most exploited groups in a society marked by extreme inequality . . . [as they are] situated at the convergence of three lines of along which social inequality is generated – class, race and sex." Aside from being poor and being women, most domestic workers come from racial and/or ethnic minority groups, both in First World and Third World. They take on the role of reproducing their female employers' relatively high status (Anderson 2000), while keeping their own status as low as possible. In fact, as Coser (1973, 36) argues, the "fully reliable domestic" is someone without an "autonomous personality." It is no wonder then that a well-educated domestic worker has to feign ignorance to keep her employer's status higher than hers (Layosa 2000).

As a lowly occupation, domestic work is "highly diffuse and non-specific, and it involves only tasks that are considered menial and hence below the dignity of the master and his wife" (Coser 1973, 32). There are no well-defined evaluation criteria; the judgment often depends on the mistress' mood. Therefore, the domestic worker lacks control of her work (Gill 1990). In addition, she remains "invisible" in the household (Romero 1992) and is often ignored during conversations (Rollins 1985).

Empirical Works on Mistress-Maid Relations

Paid domestic work has been examined in the context of migration, feminism, class, race, identities, and globalization, and in such diverse fields as anthropology, sociology, and geography (Itriago 1990; Chin 1997; Kothari 1997; Adams 2000; Anderson 2000; Dickey

³ We might, then, ask this important question. Can there be a "global feminism" when privileged women in the First and Third Worlds engage in social closure to gain equal status with men?

and Adams 2000; Lan 2000). In many of these studies, the mistress-maid asymmetrical power relations have considerably been explored (see Cock 1980; Tellis-Nayak 1983; Rollins 1985; Kaplan 1987; Romero 1988; Hansen 1989; Gill 1990; Barnes 1993; Dumont 1995; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). Maternalism has been depicted as a common system of relations to many of these studies. One interesting variation between domestic workers in the First World and Third World is the domestic workers' response to their mistress' maternalistic practices. Most domestic workers in the First World countries resist the mistress' maternalist tendencies, while in the Third World most domestics are more quiescent because of the benefits they accrue from maternalism. In the First World, most domestics live outside their employers' households, so there are fewer opportunities for maternalistic behavior.

Most of these studies agree on the complex power relations among women, made visible in the intimate nature of mistress-maid employment contract. Such complexity involves exploitation (Cock 1980; Rollins 1985) and resistance (Cohen 1991; Constable 1997), contradictions and tensions, and sisterhood and cooperation (Romero 1988). The mistress-maid relations are marked with ambiguity, of conflict and accommodation, as the maid, whose labor the mistress exploited, is coerced to establish and sustain a personal relationship with the mistress because of her own feelings of isolation (Gill 1990).

In the First World, women of color feminists are the ones who conduct most of the studies about the power relationship between the mistress and the maid. Usually, the analysis is focused on oppression based on race and class. In these studies, domestic workers are often portrayed as resisting oppression, i.e., seeking to modernize domestic service by making themselves experts of the field, by shifting to day work and treating the mistress as a client, and by minimizing interaction with the mistress (Romero 1988). Domestic workers who are citizens of the First World have more control over their work and are less at risk of experiencing maternalism from their mistresses than are immigrant workers from poor countries. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) argues that Mexican domestic workers seek closer or more personal relations with their mistresses due to their generally isolated working conditions and their being foreigners in the United States. Likewise, Filipinos in Toronto accept gifts and encourage their employers to continue their one-way gift-giving practice (Cohen 1991). First World domestics more often try to avoid this practice, as it would obligate them to perform additional tasks for their employers. For Filipinas in

Toronto, however, they view their mistresses' gift giving as a "leveling mechanism," a strategy in which they could obtain extra incentives when their wage is low (Cohen 1991).

Scholars studying the mistress-maid relations within the Third World speak of "precarious dependencies" (Gill 1994), "patron-client" relations (Tellis-Nayak 1983), and "internal colonialism" (Dumont 2000). These are all different aspects of maternalism. Certain conditions in the Third World make maternalism functional to both the mistress and the maid. An example is their common experience of colonialism, in which domination was deeply ingrained in people's mentality. In addition to colonial mentality, maternalism is an alternative to the welfare system, such that workers are obligated to employers for benefits not available from the state. For example, Indian domestic workers are often viewed as wards while the mistress plays the social roles of a parent and moral educator (Tellis-Nayak 1983). While the maid is structurally exploited, her mistress also protects her, assuring her of health care, job security, food, lodging, and old age pension

The live-in arrangement facilitates maternalistic relations. It is structurally exploitative because the laborer's time is under the total control of the employer. The live-in domestic worker is intensely exploited through the "like one of the family" ideology, veiling the inequality (Stiell and England 1997). Furthermore, live-in work is characterized by oppressive material conditions, including isolation, loneliness, powerlessness, and invisibility (Stiell and England 1997). For example, live-in Filipina and Indonesian domestics in Malaysia report various forms of abuse by their employers and poor working conditions, i.e., sleeping on the kitchen floor or corridor, working for eighteen hours a day, and having inadequate meals (Chin 1998).

Social distancing is a common practice among employers all over the world (Dawes 1974; Duden 1983; Cohen 1991; Gill 1994; Bakan and Stasiulis 1997; Constable 1997; Chin 1998). For instance, employer-employee relations can be marked along employer statuses of race, class, and citizenship (Thornton Dill 1983; Rollins 1985; Cohen 1991; Romero 1992; Milkman, Reese et al. 1998). Social distancing within the household functions as a class marker to keep the domestic helper in her subordinate position as a servant and to preserve the dominant position of the employer/members of the household. In her novel, *And They Didn't Die*, Ngcobo (1990, 200-201) exemplifies the

social distance between Jezile, a black maid, and Mrs. Potgieter, a white employer in South Africa:

Jezile felt hemmed in and every day brought new restrictions. She was not allowed to listen to the radio nor use the carpet-sweeper. She hated asking permission to do even the trivial things like eating at the kitchen table on rainy days. She hated eating outside, leaning on that concrete stand everyday. She hated being refused the use of her electricity in her room. She hated entering by the back door. She felt powerless and vulnerable, trapped inside the home. She hated baking because she never ate the cakes. She hated cooking meat because she never ate the roast. She just lived to fulfill Mrs. Potgieter's every wish - totally steeped in the life of this alien family and stripped of her life as she had known it. She had lost her name, her past, her friends and relatives, her language, her initiative, and she felt that she was just a shell of her real self. But more than anything, she felt lonely.

Historically, employers maintain social distance from their domestics to keep the power hierarchy within the close proximity of the household. In nineteenth-century England, employers and employees constructed an upstairs-downstairs relationship in which servants were prohibited upstairs unless they were performing their duties (Dawes 1974). In contemporary societies, class-conscious employers maintain social distance by designating servants' quarters, requiring a uniform, forbidding the servants to enter through the front door of the house, and prohibiting the servants to relax in the employer's family areas of the household (Ngcobo 1990; Constable 1997; Chin 1998). In Hong Kong, female employers set the boundaries of social distance from their Filipino domestic workers by controlling the laborer's time, physical appearance, eating habits, and spatial region. Constable (1997, 87) explains it this way:

A domestic worker is viewed and is expected to view herself as a "maid" at all times, but especially in her employer's home. She must obey her employer's rules, even at night and in her own room. She may be told when and where to bathe, what time to go to bed, and what she can and cannot wear. Only on her day off is she at all free to express herself outside the role of domestic worker. But even on her day off she is under the watchful eye of the public.

Domestics in the Philippines

In a rare study of domestic service in this country, a male French ethnographer, Dumont (1995) characterized a general conception of domestic service arrangement in Bohol, Philippines.

Aside from the enormous services she rendered, a helper shared to a large extent the life of the household. Not only was she constantly present . . . but she was housed, fed, and sometimes clothed by her employers, and depended upon her employers for the payment of her tuition and school supplies as well as for pocket money rather than - or in lieu of - salary. When home, she prepared meals for the household, in addition to maintaining the general cleanliness of the house, washing clothes, dishes, and so on. Most importantly, she was in charge of the household's younger children, over whom, age gave her authority. Her relations with the different members of the household were not uniform. A maximum of formality was to be expected with the "master" of the house. With female teenagers, she was likely to have developed a teasing and a joking relationship while male teenagers most often remained slightly less distant and formal than their father.

Unlike feminist researchers who are critical in their accounts, Dumont maintained a safe distance, more descriptive than evaluative, more general rather than specific, more objective rather than subjective. Additionally, his characterization of the relationship between employers and maids is minimal. His description of mistress-maid relations is nothing more than three sentences in the whole article.

The helper's most complex relationship was established with the matron, who retained her figure of authority, but to whom she also provided immediate companionship and cooperation. And while the matron ordered the helper around, the two women could often be observed in the kitchen deeply involved in some culinary preparation, and all the while gossiping and laughing together. Restraint and distance could alternate with amazing fluidity, with familiarity and intimacy, as the days passed and as activities changed (Dumont 1992, 185).

However, Dumont does stress the ambiguity of the domestic helper's position in the household.

With her own sleeping quarters within the household, with meals sometimes taken apart and after the rest of the household and sometimes shared at a common table, with a pretense of distance and that of shared intimacy, with her familiarity with children, with the trust that her employers had to grant her, with the discretion she was supposed to maintain about the lives of the household, the helper had a uniquely ambiguous position at the margin of the household to which she belonged and did not belong. She never was and yet always was a member of the household. No matter how long she had worked in the household, she was in it, and yet not of it. No matter that she happened to be a distant relative from a quite unfortunate rural branch of the extended family, she remained locked out, without being a stranger at all (pp. 185-186).

While I compliment Dumont for his perceptive analysis of the ambiguous status of the domestic helper, I find his analysis lacking in depth. While he is reflexive in this research by acknowledging the limitation of his status as a foreigner, his status becomes the crucial deterrent to his entry into the subtleties of the mistress and maid relations. While he does bring some outsider insights to bear, his status precisely limited the degree to which he could explore the worldview of Filipino women. His data were limited to his observations and to scanty information from domestic helpers. In fact, Dumont silenced the voices of the helpers themselves, for he did not quote anything from the domestics.

This study seeks to overcome the shortcomings of previous studies of Filipina domestic laborers by focusing on the structural and social complexities of the working relationship between maids and mistresses.

Chapter 2

Methods of Investigation

This research is guided by a Third World feminist standpoint epistemology, which is primarily based on Smith's (1990) *women's standpoint*, except that it draws particular attention to the varying experiences of Third World women.¹ Like the black feminist standpoint that puts importance on the knowledge of black women (Collins 1989), this research puts Filipino women's voices at the forefront in such a way that I document their real standpoints as diverse strata rather than approach them as part of a homogeneous category that is too often called "Third World women." In other words, this is a "view from the bottom," a qualitative research that situates Third World women at the center of analysis, and it places high priority on giving voice to oppressed women. In discussing feminist standpoint research, Olesen (1994, 163) suggests:

To understand that everyday world of women, as it is known by the women who continually create and shape it within the materialist context, the researcher herself must not create it as an object as would be done traditionally in sociology, which would divide subject and object. She must instead be able to work very differently than she is able to within the established sociological strategies of thinking and inquiry.

The Target Area

The fieldwork was conducted in a medium-sized city in southern Philippines between May and August 2000.² I have selected it as the major site of my study because many young women are initiated into paid domestic work in this region. Southern Philippines provides much of the country's labor supply of domestic helpers. This city is most

¹ The term "Third World feminism" is used in contrast to First World, white-centered, Western-oriented feminism.

² I withhold the name of the city to protect the identities of my informants. One of the helper key informants was interviewed in another southern city, where she currently works as a volunteer of a non-government organization, which aims to help domestic workers, particularly child domestic workers.

likely to be the first stop of women who are migrating from the neighboring countryside. After they have gained sufficient experience, they either move to higher paying domestic work in the city or move to other major cities like Manila; a few will probably migrate to other countries. Overseas Filipino workers are least likely to move directly from this region into international domestic service; they must first migrate to a domestic position within a large urban area of the Philippines (NSO 2001d).

Methods

This research is ethnographic in nature. My three-month fieldwork involved participant observation, interviews, and focus group discussions, collection of newspaper clippings, and writing of a reflexive diary about the data collection process. While my semi-structured interviews with domestics and female employers required only three months, my situated knowledge and experience about domestic work in the Philippines is based on my being a member of this society.

Participant Observation

I have associated with domestic workers all my life in the household of my family of orientation, as well as in my friends' households. I have been living in the Philippines for most of my life, and have observed the lives of domestic workers as an outsider. I refer to myself as an outsider because I have not been a live-in paid domestic worker myself, and I cannot consider myself as one of them. Still, my formative years were greatly influenced by our domestic helpers; my preschool years were filled with memories of our domestics who were my role models at that time. I would imitate their makeup methods, and I would interact with their boyfriends. One helper brushed my hair, taught me to sing, and coached me as I joined the singing competition for children. She would tell us (my sister and me) horror stories and fairy tales. I also remember another helper who left our house wearing my mother's dress, having stolen several items. Even though my life is filled with such small recollections of our helpers, I have forgotten or never knew much about the realities of those women's lives. Writing my reflexive diary helped me to realize how narrow and selective those memories.

Because of that past selectivity in observing our servants, I tried to be extra conscious of the presence of domestic workers in the households that I visited. On several occasions, I talked to domestics informally and observed them in their workplaces. I quickly recognized that there were research data about domestics everywhere. When I would take the public transportation, I would overhear women comparing their domestic helpers, either praising or criticizing their domestics. When I would go to fastfood centers, I would hear the same conversations, and when I would go to the countryside, I would meet young women about to leave for the city to work as domestics, and catch their elder friends advising them to negotiate for a day off and a higher salary.

Focus Group and In-depth Interviews

Thirty-one maids and ten mistresses participated in the project. They were selected through snowball sampling and recommendations gatekeepers. Among the maids, twenty joined in the focus group discussions and eleven in the individual interviews (see Figure 2). The small focus groups were used (a) to obtain a general picture of the working conditions of the maids and (b) to devise appropriate questions for in-depth interviews. In the four focus groups, five participated in Village A, six in Village B, five in the Cathedral Park, and four in Village C. Village A is a low-cost housing subdivision, composed of middle-income residents. Village B is a mixed neighborhood, comprised of middle- and upper-income households. Village C is an upper-middle class community. Focus group participants in the Cathedral Park reported to have middle-class employers. These three villages were selected through purposive sampling to represent the lower-middle class, the middle-middle class, and the upper-middle class. The participants in the Cathedral park was a contingency measure, as the invited participants from another middle-class neighborhood were not able to come.

The focus groups were conducted on Sundays when domestics have their day off. I used gatekeepers to help facilitate the focus groups and to help me identify informants.

Figure 2 Focus Group Discussion with Domestic Workers at the Cathedral Park



In a second stage, I conducted in-depth interviews of eleven domestic workers who were identified through gatekeepers, focus groups, and snowball sampling. None of the focus group participants were approached for in-depth interviews, as much of their time was already consumed for this research.³

I employed different techniques to interview the maids. Places of interview varied, depending on the key informants' preference. In one Sunday school, I interviewed working students with the assistance of

³ There was an occasion that I scheduled an interview with Ed, one of the focus group participants. The following week, however, Ed left her employer, and there was no way I could find her.

the school principal.⁴ In cases where I asked permission from the employers to interview their helpers, I went to their residence or the helpers' workplace. During the interviews in the employers' residence, there was no one else in the house except the helper and me; both employers were working and the children were in school. In a few instances, the informants preferred to be interviewed in my home.

The in-depth interviews focused on their life stories. I asked about their family of orientation and procreation, and the background of their becoming domestic helpers. After which, I proceeded to inquire about their work histories as domestic helpers. Depending on their experience and availability, the interview time ranged from fifty minutes to two hours. The first few minutes of the interview were devoted to building rapport. I introduced myself and explained the purpose and format of the research project. To facilitate the building of rapport, I was sensitive to the subtle ways to make the informants more comfortable with me. I wore casual clothes, such as T-shirt and jeans, and I adjusted my language to reflect the dialect and educational background of the informant. Most interviews were conducted in Cebuano, and a few in Tagalog.

Besides the helpers, I also interviewed ten wage-earning female employers.⁵ To obtain a diverse view, I interviewed female employers from different professions, including a lawyer, a medical doctor, a school teacher, a college professor, a social scientist, a social activist, a businesswoman, a secretary, a nurse, and a campus minister. Even though I expected some reticence on the part of female employers, my class background minimized their defensiveness. In fact, all of the employers that I interviewed appeared to be comfortable and vocal during their interviews. The conversation with the employers included issues related to marital life (i.e., decision-making, division of labor), their waged work, and their practices of hiring domestic helpers. I asked about their motivations for hiring, their attitudes and behaviors toward their domestic helpers, and the workload that they assign to

⁴ A Sunday school is a special high school curriculum intended for working students. Classes meet only on Sundays from 7:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

⁵ Mistress and maid informants belong to different households, except in one occasion wherein the mistress informant agreed to have her maid interviewed as well. In this case, the maid was interviewed when her mistress was not present in the house, and vice versa. For ethical consideration, I avoided to interview a mistress and a maid from the same household, as it might cause unprecedented conflict between these women.

their helpers. I started with broad questions, and then focused on specific employer behavior patterns that had been identified by the domestics. I approached the interview with the intention of understanding how the female employers defined their situation in relation to their domestic helpers, and I never criticized the way they handled that relationship. Because Rollins (1985, 94) found that the employers who participated in her study were more liberal and more progressive, I made an attempt to interview employers from both conservative and liberal backgrounds.⁶

The in-depth interviews for domestics and female employers were semi-structured. I allowed my questions to flow from the information presented by the interviewees themselves. To insure that I covered all essential questions, I referred periodically to an outline of topics. Interview schedules for employers (Appendix A) and domestic helpers (Appendix B and Appendix C) are provided.

All interviews and focus groups were tape-recorded. Since some people were not comfortable talking into a tape recorder, I placed the machine where it did not distract the informant. I used 90-minute tapes, so I would not have to replace them frequently. While I was always prepared to resort to extensive note taking, all informants agreed to have their interviews recorded. By asking for their assistance in this project, I added to the daily burden of impoverished and over-worked women. For that reason, I provided limited compensation in the form of small gifts, such as toiletries, towels, or food; I also reimbursed their transportation expenses.

Collection of Newspaper Articles

Though it was not a primary need of my research project, I collected newspaper articles about direct experiences of domestic workers within and outside the Philippines, as well as government and non-government programs and policies protecting the human and labor rights of these domestic workers. Obtaining these news materials was easier, as on-line newspapers in the Philippines made it possible to search for old articles.

⁶ Only one employer refused to be interviewed, citing her "strict" approach toward her helper.

Hindrance to Gathering Reliable Information

The paramount hindrance to my gathering of reliable information from the domestic helpers was my class position. What the domestic helpers saw during the focus groups and interviews was a doctoral student based in the U.S.A. An example of the intrusion of class difference between a researcher and an informant can be seen in the work of Saadawi (1983) who examined the life of Firdaus, a prostitute jailed for killing her attacker. In her initial interview, Saadawi appeared to be cool, professional, and in control of the situation. Firdaus' initial refusal to talk to her, however, made her reflect about her privileged status as a doctor and intellectual. Saadawi's privileged status was a hindrance to her building trust with Firdaus who had been abused by so many men and had been oppressed by people of Saadawi's class. Firdaus initially suspected Saadawi to be "one of them." Saadawi's research is an example of reflexive research. She was constantly reflecting on her status characteristics and that of Firdaus. The reader of that book knows as much about the author as about the prostitute she was portraying. Saadawi is not the typical detached, unmoved positivist researcher; rather, she shows her humanity, her biography.

Saadawi's experiences with Firdaus alerted me that I might encounter similar distrust from maid-informants. I myself have my own biases about my class position and that of the working class. To mitigate my own class biases and constraints I utilized three strategies. First, I maintained verbatim reports by recording the focus groups and interviews with domestics and employers. Second, I relied on a gatekeeper to guide and enlighten me about my own class biases. Third, I maintained an ongoing reflexive journal that addressed my own biases and reaction to informants.

Use of Key Informants and Gatekeepers

Because I belong to the employer class, I expected to have difficulty establishing rapport with the domestics who would take part in my research project. Thus, I identified a gatekeeper (see Bailey 1996, 46) who introduced me to the domestics and helped facilitate trust. Whyte's (1943) "Doc" was the kind of gatekeeper I was seeking. Constable (1997), a white researcher, employed the same technique by asking her own domestic worker to introduce her to other Filipino domestics in Hong Kong. Even though my gatekeeper, Merly, used to

be a domestic helper, she also has interviewing skills acquired from her employment as field supervisor of a research institute. While she was immersed in data gathering for survey research, she had worked as a domestic helper in her teen years - a nanny, an all-around helper, and a *tindera* (variety store sales girl). Now she has a helper of her own. I must emphasize that Merly's diverse background as helper, employer, and researcher was very beneficial in this research.

Merly, who is about twenty years older than me, led me to the world of domestic helpers, and she taught me how, when, and where to approach them. In short, the gatekeeper prepared me for the subculture of the domestics before I talked to them. I have known Merly for four years now. I met her in one of the research institutes that I have visited. When I came back to the Philippines in 2000 to gather data for this dissertation, I met Merly again, and she offered her help for the fieldwork. I told her that I was looking for a gatekeeper for my study, someone who is or used to be domestic worker. Suddenly, I heard another part of Merly's life, which I never knew before.

Reflexive Journal

I kept a diary of my fieldwork experience in two parts. One part was fieldwork notes that were jotted down before, during, and after interviews. The other part was a personal reflection about my own biases, and about how I developed methods to insure that my biases did not silence the voices of the interviewees. This includes thoughts and feelings regarding my fieldwork, as well as emerging and changing consciousness about the women involved in this study. Through such reflexive writing, I was able to see how my own life experiences and worldview affected the way I conducted the interviews or focus groups.

I began my reflexive journal during the proposal-writing stage of this research project, continued it while doing the fieldwork in the Philippines, and finalized it when processing and analyzing the data in the U.S. I would write my impressions after every interview and my reflections about the whole day's events at night. One significant process that I had to undergo during the fieldwork was a battle between my idealism and the reality. I wanted to live out my idealism in dealing with domestics within my parents' household. As I was living at my parents' house during my fieldwork, I had to discuss with them our family values and our practice of dealing with domestics. I had

verbal confrontations with my mother, as I wanted to change her ways of doing things in the house. In the end, I had to let things be, as it was not my household. In addition, I went through an internal struggle of readjusting into my middle-class Filipino lifestyle, which was enormously different from the independent lifestyle that I had assumed in the U.S. As I wrote in my 30 May 2000 journal:

I feel at odds with myself. I am studying the employer-employee interaction, yet I am a part of it. I play a role in this whole study; I have a part of the structural roles assigned to employers and employees. The helpers have internalized their part, and they are doing it well. What am I supposed to do?

When I would come back from my fieldwork for example, I would find my bedroom cleaned, my scattered books and notes arranged, and my soiled clothes gone. Even when I asked our helper not to clean my bedroom, I would still find my belongings rearranged when I returned. I understand that I was treated not only as the employer's daughter, but also as a guest, and I am also aware our helpers received specific instructions from my mother. If I started sweeping our living room, our helper would come over and say, "*Ako ra Ate*" (Let me do it Ate). I was shocked that our helper seemed to feel threatened by my attempts to do housework. When I asked our *labandera* not to include my clothes, she asked, "Why? Don't you find my output good enough?" I said it was not meant to insult her performance. What I did after that incident was to join her, when she would do the laundry.

Part of the reflexivity of this research is the feedback given by my advisory committee about my own subtle mental traps as I was writing this dissertation. For example, while my goal is to give voice to the mistresses and maids, my adviser and advisory committee would demonstrate to me how I silenced the women's voices in my draft chapters by attributing feelings and motivations of domestic workers that they did not clearly express during the interviews and focus groups. Likewise, my adviser showed to me how silenced my own voice by presenting quotes from my informants without providing sufficient analysis. Furthermore, my committee mirrored to me how I was trapped into my own criticisms of previous works. It is indeed reflexivity in action. What I learned from writing this dissertation is to be critical of myself, knowing that I am trapped in a global system that

reproduces inequalities, and recognizing that my worldview is limited by my own social location.

Strategies for Protecting Identity of Informants

Prior to the interview, the key informants were fully informed about the study, and their informed consent was sought. They were asked to sign a document affirming that they had been informed and signifying their consent to participate in the study (Locke et al. 1993, 31). I told them that their identities would be kept confidential. To maintain confidentiality of the records, I changed their names and other identifying details. For many of the key informants who were domestic workers, I only knew them by their chosen pseudonym, and I will never be able to find them again.

Data Collection Problems

I was able to manage and to resolve several problems during the data collection process. These include 1) identifying key informants; 2) gathering the domestic workers for focus group discussions; 3) determining who the mistress is, and who the domestic worker is; and 4) facilitating the focus groups.

Identifying Informants

Since I avoided interviewing my friends or their helpers, the process of identifying informants was more difficult.⁷ First, the helpers

⁷ One time, I asked my friend Chandra to let me interview her helper. Chandra however, declined my request, saying that she is strict with her helper. Although I told Chandra that I am hoping to acquire varied experiences in my study, and her case might contribute to the diversity of my research group, I did not insist. Later she told me that she is frustrated with her helper, as the latter seems to be very slow in following instructions. She hired a helper to ease her burden, but what happens is that she also has to educate her helper. Although she already instructed her helper not to mix the feeding bottles of her two-week old infant and her 1.5-year old daughter, the helper forgot to follow the instruction. This led to the two-week old infant using the feeding nipple of her 1.5-year old daughter.

were not allowed to entertain visitors at home. Some employers prohibit their helpers from letting a stranger inside the house. Second, when Merly and I tried to schedule a focus group on a Sunday, the helpers tend to be undecided. They would say, it is up to their employers, and when we asked the employers, they would tend to "protect" the helper by saying, Sunday is their only day off. We understand that the employers did not want their helpers to be interviewed, as some employers suspected that the researchers were into underground activities, i.e., organizing the helpers, recruiting the helpers, etc. Knowing that not all helpers who say "yes" to our invitation for the focus group would come, we made it a point of obtaining a "yes" response from at least ten helpers, expecting that only five would come.

We conducted our focus group meetings in the public elementary school closest to the helpers' households. The school is clearly a neutral ground. To make our project legitimate, we notified the *barangay* captains (village leaders) about the study and asked for his/her assistance.⁸ We also asked permission from the school principal to let us use the school facility for the focus group.

The third focus group was almost a disaster. No one came to our scheduled Sunday afternoon meeting. Like in the previous focus groups, Merly and I planned to hold it at the nearest elementary school. After waiting thirty minutes, we decided to pick them up. Half of those who confirmed were not in their houses, while the other half could not leave because there was no one else to stay in or guard the houses. For that particular meeting, thirteen confirmed that they would come. Failure to keep an appointment is a common practice in the Philippines. Our strategy of obtaining ten affirmative responses for a meeting that only required five participants, sadly, was unsuccessful.

Our alternative plan was to go to the Cathedral park where people from lower to lower-middle income groups gather after the mass. I was reluctant to do this because the helpers were there to relax, to talk with their friends, or to meet their boyfriends, but my research requirements forced me to do it. This is how Merly invited the helpers to participate in our focus group. While she was asking them about their work, a group of men approached them. These men expressed interest to make friends with them. The ladies did not want to, but the men persisted. Jumping to the defense of these young

⁸ The *barangay* (village) is the basic political unit in the Philippines.

women, Merly pretended to be the aunt of one the women, and summoned the group to leave the area. She said, "Let's go Katrina" (a name she made up because she did not know their names yet). Choosing the lesser evil, these young women followed her, and they agreed to join the focus group.

The focus group meeting was uncomfortable because they were in a hurry to go home. In this circumstance, the divergent pressures of our very different work demands came into play. As a researcher with my own agenda, I feel compelled to "make them talk." In contrast, the helpers were afraid that their employers might reprimand them for returning late. Additionally, the street children (i.e., a six year old taking care of his two-year-old sister) were surrounding us, asking for money and food. Somehow, we had enough snacks for the helpers and some street children. We asked the helpers if they could stay for one hour. It took some time before they started to talk. Two of the five were extremely shy. It was difficult to stimulate responses, but somehow we managed, without insisting that they talk more often.

Identifying the Maid and the Mistress

Class positions of maids and mistresses in a middle-class household are not that well defined, especially if both women are at home. When at home, the mistress will change into a housedress and will not wear any makeup. This makes it difficult to identify whether the person you are talking to is a mistress of the house or a house helper. A friend of mine told me a story of how her mother, who is employing a domestic worker, was mistaken to be the helper. It was a Sunday morning, and her mother was tending to the plants in the front yard. A sales agent came over to the gate, and asked if her *agonal* (master) was around. Annoyed by the mistake of the sales agent and wanting to get rid of him, her mother said that her *agonal* was out of town. The sales agent left. On another occasion, another sales agent came over, this time, the agent thought that she was the *agonal*, and offered to sell her his product. Wanting to find an excuse not to entertain the sales agent, her mother told the agent that she was just the helper of the house and that her *agonal* was not around. The agent left immediately.

I narrate the above story, because my gatekeeper and I committed the same blunder on two different occasions. Merly was recruiting participants for our focus group discussion. In one house

that she visited, the helper rejected Merly's invitation for a focus group, but referred someone else who lives next door. After thanking the helper, Merly proceeded next door, where she saw an ordinary-looking woman in her thirties, wearing T-shirt and shorts, relaxing on a bench outside the house. Thinking that the woman was a domestic helper, Merly approached her, introduced herself, and invited her to the focus group. Immediately the employer told her that she got the wrong person and that she is an employer, not a helper. Trying to save the employer's face, Merly commented, "Oops, I'm sorry Ma'am. I already doubted that you are too pretty to be a helper."

A similar incident happened to me. I was hoping to talk to a woman who had worked as a domestic worker abroad. Another gatekeeper, this time, our *labandera*, Manang Linda told me that Estrella, who is living in our neighborhood, used to work in Hong Kong, and that she would be an excellent person to interview. So, I went to Estrella's house and introduced myself. I did not want to tell her immediately my intention. I noticed that there were piles of ready-to-wear clothes in her living room, so I assumed that she bought clothes while in Hong Kong, and planned to sell them in the Philippines. She also had a domestic worker in the house, but it did not surprise me, as many overseas domestics have their own helper in the Philippines. The most embarrassing moment in my fieldwork came when I asked if I could interview her about her domestic work experience in Hong Kong. She was a businesswoman who went to Hong Kong on a tourist visa to shop for clothes to sell in the Philippines. Manang Linda, my trusted gatekeeper, gave me the wrong information. When Estrella went abroad, Manang Linda assumed that Estrella was a domestic worker. This time, it was I who lost face. How could I be so gullible? Why could I not differentiate between employer and helper? Why did I not verify Manang Linda's information? I apologized to Estrella and stayed to chat with her about her buy-and-sell business.

Facilitation of the Focus Groups

In the first focus group, I asked Merly to facilitate the discussion, thinking that she might be able to establish better rapport with the helpers. In a similar study in South Africa, Cock (1980), a white researcher employed the services of a black to interview black domestics with the hope to obtain more substantial responses. This approach, however, did not work effectively. During the first focus group that was facilitated by Merly, I noticed that she talked more

often than the helpers did. In the second focus group, I facilitated the discussion in order to compare the quality of the information gathered in the first two sessions. I reflected that while Merly had been a helper, her current employer status might cause her to have blind spots. Because her most recent experience is that of an employer, she might tend to make judgmental comments toward informants. I did not discount her dual experience as domestic helper and as experienced interviewer. She is a sensitive employer because she went through the experience of a helper. In the succeeding meetings, I facilitated the discussions, with Merly acting as co-facilitator, following up on the things I missed to ask, and probing for questions that were not quite answered by the participants.

Data Processing and Analysis

I have very high respect for the women that I interviewed. Their oral history database is enormous and complex to interpret. I continued my journey of trying to see what the data want to show to me. Doing qualitative research, I feel that I have to stay very close to the data and my field notes to obtain the context of their answers. I came to realize that what I must do is to show the patterns and relationships among the themes, show the contradictions, the struggles, the connections, and the wholeness. Increasingly, I became more committed to the goal of giving voice to the domestics and employers who had taught me.

The recorded interviews were transcribed. The accuracy of the transcript was later crosschecked, by listening to the tape and by reading the transcript at the same time. Data analysis was based on verbatim reports from transcribed interviews and my field notes. All these qualitative documents were entered into a qualitative data analysis software called QSR NUD*IST (Gahan and Hannibal 1998; Richards 1998).⁹

QSR-NUD*IST N4 expedited the retrieval of qualitative data. As I want to let women speak for themselves in this project, I quoted from

⁹ Richards (1998:10) introduces QSR NUD*IST as "a computer package designed to aid users in handling Non-numerical and Unstructured Data in qualitative analysis, by supporting processes of coding data in an Index System, Searching text or patterns of coding and Theorizing about the data."

them extensively. The original language of the narratives is retained in the report, and an almost-verbatim translation is placed on top of the original narratives. The structure of the content analysis was based on the research questions posed in this study. I drew common patterns and differences of domestic helpers' experiences as well as the female employers'. NUD*IST QSR has given me an enormous help in terms of being the venue of recording thoughts, and creating themes, variables, and other concepts. In addition, categorical data, such as socio-demographic and economic information were processed using SPSS. While no statistical tests were done in this study, SPSS was advantageous in creating cross-tabulations, as well as for computing means and percentages.

The process of my analysis was based on *grounded* theory (Becker 1998). I scrutinized the data, reading and rereading the narratives, and discerning emerging patterns based on my research questions. The concepts and patterns evolved through working with the data, not from an imposed theoretical perspective. If I had focused only on mistresses' exploitative behavior and maids' resistance, I would have neglected half of the complex ideas that these women provided me. Therefore, I decided to use one of Becker's (1998) tricks, worked on the data, and let the data define the concept. Sometimes, however, I would become confused about my data and my concepts, i.e., on how to categorize women, and on whether I take their word as it is or should I read between the lines and check for other clues. Occasionally, I followed my intuition and my stock knowledge about the workings of the Filipino culture. As a member of this society, I understand very well that Filipino informants tend to say one thing and mean the opposite. To get to the bottom of things, Merly and I always probed their answers, and sometimes, we even restated the question to see if we would obtain the same answer.

Ultimately, I have learned as ethnographer that "data never speak for themselves." As Trouillot (1995, 153) has observed:

Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance).

On the one hand, my researcher's voice blended inequitably with those of the participants at three points when I was "making their narratives." On the other hand, my dialectical voices as member of employer class and researcher cannot be absent from the chorus that I gather on the page to make points that are meant to enlighten or to raise the consciousness of others. Like Trouillot (1995, 149), I have come to understand that the women I interviewed "carry history on themselves" and that I must exercise tender care in the construction of new knowledge from their indigenous transcripts.

Chapter 3

Class and Status Differentials

In this chapter, I will examine the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of two categories of women who are both engaged in waged labor: the mistress and the maid. A glimpse at their life stories, including their perceptions of paid domestic work, provides a fundamental basis of the mistress-maid relations.

The Backgrounds of Domestic Helpers

A high percentage of domestic helpers in my study begin their waged-labor careers as child laborers. Among my informants, the mean age when they entered domestic service is 16.58 years (see Table 1). Ten out of thirty-one began working before reaching fourteen, and one started to work at the age of nine. This incidence of child labor gives us a powerful clue about the extent of poverty among their parents and the lack of work options for them (see Figure 3). The maids in this study come from large families; the mean number of siblings for never-married helpers is 7.25, way higher compared to the Philippine-wide Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 5.0 in 1981 when these maids were born (*Population Reference Bureau 1981*).¹ Their fathers are mostly engaged in subsistence-level occupations, such as farming, fishing, fish vending, and carpentry, while their mothers are primarily involved in unpaid household work. Occasionally, their mothers earn an income by sewing clothes or through agricultural wage work. My typical informant fell in the middle (3.65) of the age-order of her siblings, making them partly responsible for the sustenance of three younger siblings. This is where “children as investment” is put into use in the Philippines. Many parents initiate their children into paid domestic work; some even collect their children’s monthly wage from the employers. Older children in the family, as young as nine years, join the pool of domestic workers to support themselves, and to help their parents and siblings.

¹ The mode age among never-married maid informants is 19 years old. Thus, the 1981 Philippine TFR was used.

Among my maid-informants, the mean age is about twenty-five; the youngest is barely fifteen while the oldest is fifty-five. The group is generally young, only Lourdes, Teresa, Petra, and Merly belong to the older-than-40 age group. The average years in paid domestic work are 6.31 years. The average shortest employment is 5.73 months while the mean longest single employment is 42.6 months.

Table 1 Descriptive Data of the Domestic Helpers

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
age	31	15	55	24.87
years in school	31	3	14	7.52
age at first domestic work	31	9	40	16.58
number of children (among ever-married informants)	7	1	4	2.57
number of sibling	24	3	13	7.25
rank in the family	23	1	9	3.65
months in domestic work	31	2	456	75.74
number of employers	31	1	10	3.58
longest single employment	29	5	216	36.31
shortest employment in months	22	1	18	5.73
current monthly wage (in pesos)	26	750	2000	1159
lowest monthly wage (in pesos)	25	8	1000	578
Highest monthly wage (in pesos)	26	800	3000	1300

Of the thirty-one cases, five are not receiving any wage. Gay is currently unemployed; Merly is no longer a helper but an employer; while Carmen, Jennifer, and Luisita obtain free education in exchange for their domestic work. The average current monthly wage is Php 1159 (US\$ 26.76), slightly higher than the proposed legislation for provincial domestic workers pegged at Php 1,000 (US\$23.09).² Accounting for variation, however, the lowest paid helper in this study receives Php 750, while the highest paid worker makes Php 2,000 (US\$ 46.19). The helpers were also asked what their highest salary was. The result shows that average highest salary is Php 1,300 (US\$ 30.02), which means that the helpers have made higher wages in their previous employment. *The helpers' wages, therefore, do not always*

² 1US\$ is equivalent to 43.30 Philippine pesos as of June 30, 2000. Php stands for Philippine pesos.

increase as they acquire more experience in domestic work, since the employers dictate the wage. Most often, the employers provide a low starting wage, and later, increase it as the helpers show improvement. If the helpers stay longer, the wage also increases, but whenever the helpers change employers, the wage reverts to the employer-specified starting level. Furthermore, the wage level depends on geographical location, in which helpers in the major cities, especially in Manila, earn higher wages than those working in the provinces. Among my informants, the highest wage ever received is Php 3,000 (US\$ 69.28) by Ed who had worked in Manila.

The employers determine the wage based on several factors, in combination with the helper's level of expertise. As Table 2 illustrates, age seems to be a factor in determining the wage. While only five out of twenty-six helpers make lower than Php 1,000 (US\$ 23.09), most of them (4/5) are in the youngest age group.

Table 2 Current Wage, Years in School, and Marital Status by Age Group

Age group	Current monthly wage (in pesos)			Years in school			Marital status (1-single, 2-married, 3-separated)			
	Below 1000	1000 and above	Total	1-6	7-14	Total	1	2	3	Total
15-19	4	9	13	10	4	14	14	0	0	14
20-29	1	7	8	5	5	10	9	0	1	10
30-39	0	2	2	0	3	3	0	2	1	3
40-49	0	1	1	0	2	2	0	1	1	2
50-59	0	2	2	2	0	2	1	1	0	2
Total	5	21	26	17	14	31	24	4	3	31

Figure 3 Examples of the Domestic Workers' Households



The top photo shows a house from the highland, while below is a fishing neighborhood.

Giselle, who belongs to below-1000 wage and 20-29 age groups, is twenty years old. Age is equated with maturity and expertise, and consequently, employers are more likely to pay higher wages to helpers above twenty years old. Among the currently highest paid helpers (Teresa, Heide, and Crisanta), we can identify some factors that explain their higher wages. Teresa is a breadwinner of her family, fifty-five years old, the wife of her employer's nephew, has been rehired after twenty years, and performs all the housework, except the laundry. Heide has cared for a special child for about three years. Like Heide, Crisanta is also in charge of childcare and has been employed in the same household for five years. These cases reflect that a number of factors determine the current wage, including considerations of the helper's family obligation, blood relations, length of employment, and the burden and importance of the assigned task. As one of the two helpers in the household, Giselle has the lowest wage in this study. She takes care of housekeeping, while the other helper is in charge of babysitting. Justifying her low wage, she admitted that she has less workload and has ample time to relax.

The average schooling years among the maid-informants are 7.42 years. Only two of the informants graduated from college. A majority (24/31) of them have never been married. Considering the live-in arrangement, this occupation would best fit single women.³ Furthermore, the informants' marital status in this study does not reflect the Philippine national distribution; the national mean age of marriage for women in the Philippines is 23.8 years (NSO 2001c). Among my informants, fourteen belong to the "15-19" age group while 10 belong to the "20-29" age group. Focusing, however, on the marriageable age, the "20-29" age group, only one has been married and is now separated. This leads me to suspect that domestic work is a deterrent to early marriage. It is also likely that separated women return to domestic service. Of the currently married informants, one is taking a leave from domestic work, one is no longer a helper, one is living with her husband and children in her employer's house, and the other only sees her husband and her children on weekends.

³ This finding is contrary to Vergolino's (1989) study of Brazilian domestic workers who mostly married but live-out helpers.

Types of Helpers

Difference is an important theme in this research. Even in this quite specific group of workers, there are variations in their motivations for entering this occupation. On the one hand, the informants and focus group participants agreed that domestic work ranks lowest in terms of prestige and that they entered this work because they lacked other options. Poverty, therefore, is a shared experience of these domestic workers. On the other hand, these women have used domestic work as a means to achieve different goals. After pondering on the helpers' life histories, I have categorized them into seven, basing on the primary use of their wage. The seven types of helpers are working students, working to study later, working mothers, working daughters, working adventurers, working to escape family conflict/violence, and self-supporting women. These categories are not mutually exclusive, that is, some of my informants belong to more than one category.

Working students

Working students consider domestic work as a stepping-stone toward a better future (see Chapter 8 for a thorough discussion of class mobility in domestic work). Young women seek employers who allow them to attend school while working. Some of them are working during the day and studying at night, while others attend a specialized Sunday school.

1. Sixteen-year old Luisita is in third year of high school, and she has been working for two years in exchange for educational support. Her employer pays for her tuition, books, and school projects. What she receives is Php 5 (US\$ 0.12) daily allowance. She is in school from 7 a.m. until 4 p.m. Before and after school time, she helps in the household chores.
2. Due to economic hardship, Ivy had to abandon her studies for three years. Her mother is unemployed, and her father is deceased. Since her mother could not afford to send her to school, Ivy decided to work her way to finish her education. When Ivy entered into domestic service, her female employer allowed her to continue her studies. Ivy, who is now twenty-two years old, is enrolled in the third year of high school at a Sunday

- school. Her main task is to care for a one-year old child. She receives Php 1,000 (US\$ 23.09) monthly income, and it depends on her to budget for her transportation, Php 375 (US\$ 8.66) monthly tuition, and school supplies.
3. Jennifer is a twenty-year-old third year high school student in the Sunday High School. She is from Bukidnon, and she has been working since fifteen. Her current male employer is an ambulance driver while the female employer is a cashier at the Bureau of Treasury. Her employers have two children aged three and five. Among the five siblings, Jennifer who is the fourth child is the only one who reached high school. Jennifer's father is a forest guard, and her mother has already passed away. Jennifer does not earn any wage because her employer provides for everything that she needs in school, including tuition fees, books, school supplies, toiletries, and P200 monthly allowance. She also receives an annual vacation with Php 2,000 (US\$ 46.19) allowance.
 4. In trying to survive, and sometimes, in her desperation to find housing to stay, Carmen first sought to work as a domestic helper with a meager monthly wage of Php 600 (US\$ 13.86), half of what the other helpers in the household were receiving. After several employers, Carmen was finally employed in her current position. Twenty-five-year-old Carmen is completing her third year of college in a prestigious university in the area. She aspires to be an elementary teacher. Although she does not receive any wage in her current "job," she handles insurmountable responsibilities, which range from budgeting to taking care of the children. The mother's role has been shifted to her as the domestic helper, while the real mother, without the support of a husband, works to bring in money for the family's needs.

Working to study later

Some young women failed to find employers who are willing to support them in their education. Instead of staying jobless and being an out-of-school youth, these women work and save money to support themselves in the future. Most of them, however, are unsuccessful in saving money because they send most of their income to their families. There is a kind of contradiction between their dream to save

money to study and their constant turnover of wages to their parents. The longer they stay in domestic work, the lower their desire to go back to school.

1. Nelda is a seventeen-year-old elementary graduate who belongs to a family of seven siblings. Her father is a carpenter, while her mother is a housekeeper. She was born in Iligan, but she considers her ethnic identity as Chavacano. After she graduated from grade school, Nelda started to work as a helper, at the age of twelve with the hope that she would be able to continue with her studies. With her very low wage of Php 200 (US\$ 4.62) a month, however, she was not able to save enough to go to school. Now in third employment, she receives Php 800 (US\$ 18.48), quite enough for schooling. However, she is now too shy to study, as she is already a lot older compared to her would-be classmates who are only thirteen years old.
2. Seventeen-year-old Enriquita did not finish grade school, as her father's income in farming could not support her education. Out of economic hardship, she was forced to work as a helper at age sixteen. All of her earnings, however, are sent to her family, and she is not able to save money for her education. She is now on leave; she just left her second employer after one year of service.
3. Alma is nineteen years old, and she has been working as a domestic helper since she was thirteen. At that time, her elder sister was employed as a domestic helper, and she also decided to work due to poverty. Alma is the sixth of thirteen children in her family. Her father is a farmer who could not afford to educate all his children. Alma only finished the fifth grade and could not continue her studies. She had to walk several kilometers to reach the school, she did not have any allowance to buy food, and when she would ask money from her parents for school projects, her parents could not give her anything. So she decided to quit school and work instead. She constantly prays to God that she will be able to go back to school and graduate from elementary school. It does not matter to her if she is older than her classmates. This is now Alma's third experience in paid domestic work.

Working daughters

Another type of helper is the working daughter. Children are considered an investment in the Philippines, especially in the rural areas. The helpers in this study, as discussed earlier, come from very large families. With the father working on a minimal income, the children have to help the family, as soon as they can work. In this study, the earliest age is nine, and the parents would ask their daughters to work to help support the family.

1. Crisanta is a twenty-five-year-old, who has never been married, and is high school graduate from Misamis Oriental. Her father is deceased, and her mother is a housekeeper in her own household. Of the ten siblings, Crisanta is the fifth. She started to work as a domestic helper to help support her mother. Throughout the six years that she has been working, Crisanta has only one employer. She is afraid to move to a different household and risk working for someone who will not treat her well. With a monthly income of Php 2,000 (US\$ 46.19), Crisanta has one of the highest salaries among my informants. She wears eyeglasses, which is very rare among the lower class especially those who are not in school. She is also neat and has a light complexion.
2. Heide is a twenty-eight-year-old elementary graduate who has never been married. Her main motivation to work is to help her family. She has had three employers: in her first employment, she lasted for less than a year; in her second, she stayed for less than a week; and in her third, she stayed for five years. In her first two positions, she complained of tiring work, strict rules, and few privileges. After her second employment, she went back home and remained jobless for about a year. Then, she sought employment again and found her current employer, whom she gives a high approval rating. Her main work is to take care of a special child, and she is not expected to execute other tasks, as there is another household helper. Since Heide has been in the household longer than any helper has, she is tasked to orient the new helper about the job. Heide realized that as she stays longer, she is given more tasks other than childcare, i.e., cooking, washing of clothes, cleaning.

3. Irma is a nineteen-year-old high school graduate. She is third in a family of five children with a deceased father and an unemployed mother. After graduating from high school, Irma thought it would be helpful for her family if she would work. The only job that she could find was domestic work. She has had two employers. In her first employment, she only stayed four months because she was not paid regularly. She has completed the first year of her second job in which she feels satisfied. She sends money to her mother regularly. She has delayed her own education in order to aid her elder brother who is a graduate of Nautical Science. Her elder brother promised to support her studies in due time.
4. Esther is nineteen years old, single, and the youngest of eight siblings. Her father is a farmer, and her mother works at home. When Esther's mother became ill, her father asked her to work to help the family afford the medical costs. Esther has had four employers so far; her salary now is Php 800 (US\$ 18.46), a dip from her previous employment where she was making Php 1,200 (US\$ 27.71). Her longest stay in one household is eight months while the shortest is four months.
5. Giselle is a twenty-year-old elementary graduate from Bukidnon. Her father is a carpenter while her mother is a dressmaker. There are twelve children in the family, and Giselle is the fifth. She started to work at age of sixteen. As her elder sister was also a helper, she was encouraged to do the same line of work, but her highest hope was to continue her studies. She intends to work until she can complete her education, or get married. Although she only receives Php 750 (US\$ 17.32) a month, Giselle likes her employers. She joins them in their meals, and she is allowed to use all the appliances. Furthermore, she considers her female employer like her own mother, and she is treated like her employer's child.
6. Ella is eighteen years old and single. Her educational attainment is grade five in elementary school. The eldest in the family of eight children, she is financially supporting three of her younger siblings' education. Her father is a fish vendor while her mother stays at home to take care of her younger siblings.
7. The eldest of eight children, Lourdes only reached the fourth grade. She began domestic work at the age of twelve to help her

mother support her younger siblings. Most of her wage goes to her family. Lourdes is now fifty years old, never been married, and still in the domestic service. She has worked as a domestic helper for six employers in a span of thirty-eight years. Her shortest employment time is four months and the longest is eighteen years where she is currently working.

Working mothers

Those who have children of their own stop supporting their parents and siblings to focus their energy on their young ones. Although younger women fantasize about quitting their jobs once they are married, older women in this study are forced to work either to earn supplemental income or to be the breadwinner of the family. For separated women, they become the sole means of support for their children.

1. Teresa is in her mid-fifties, married with three children. Due to the partial disability of her husband, Dindo, she is the primary breadwinner. Her eldest son, who was her hope to bring the family out of poverty, left for Manila in 1990 to seek employment, but the family has not heard anything from him since then. As a result, Teresa continued working as a domestic helper; she worked for ten years for a Chinese employer, seeing her family only on weekends.
2. Ed is in her mid-thirties, separated, and is supporting a twelve-year old child on her own. She began her paid domestic work at eighteen, and from then on, she has worked for employers from diverse ethnic and class backgrounds. Owing to her diverse employment experiences and a relatively higher level of education (having completed thirteen years in school), Ed has a sophisticated, in fact, sociological view of domestic work and the consequent helper-mistress relations.
3. Gay is in her early thirties, high school graduate, married and mother of four. Her husband works at a construction site as a low-waged carpenter. Before Gay went abroad, she worked as a live-out laundry woman for several families. She used to receive 100 pesos per day and washed two to three times a week. Between 1996 and 1998, Gay worked overseas as a domestic worker to support her family. Her youngest child was then

- seventeen months old and did not recognize her when she came back in 1998. She has been to Kuala Lumpur, Brunei, and Singapore. She came back to the Philippines to be with her family again and brought Php 60,000 (US\$ 1,385.68) with her. She wanted to start a business, but her family quickly absorbed her savings. Her husband did not work regularly and was always drinking. Eventually, she migrated abroad again, returning in 2000. At the time of my interview with her, she was planning to go back to the agency, and apply for another contract. While working abroad was physically and emotionally hard for her, it is the only way she could help her family improve their living conditions.
4. In her early forties, Petra is a college graduate with three children. The eldest is in fourth year college, the second is first year in college, and the third is in the sixth grade. Petra's husband is a construction worker who earns Php 150 (US\$ 3.46) per day. This is Petra's first experience in domestic service. Prior to this, she worked as a server in a small restaurant. Petra's explanation of why she quit her former job is that she got tired of working in the restaurant, and decided to work as a live-in domestic helper. All her wage goes to her children. Her current employers are a university professor (male) and a government employee (female).
 5. In her mid-twenties, Marge is married with one child, and she has worked for six employers. Her first employment was with her cousin where she only lasted nine months as she was reprimanded her frequently. Then, she moved to Manila and became a storekeeper. When she returned to her province, she married a truck driver and stopped working for three years. Two years later, she learned that her husband was having affairs with other women, so she broke up with him, kept the baby, and moved in with her father. Now, she supports her child by working for their neighbor.

Self-Supporting Women

One of the most common motivations to work is to support themselves. Some helpers are in a stage where there is neither a need to support their parents nor their children. Therefore, all their earnings are appropriated for their own needs and wants.

1. Inna is sixteen years old. A light-hearted person, Inna's way of coping is by "not taking life seriously." There are eight children in her family; her mother works at home and her father works as a tree cutter. Inna was a full-time high school student supported by her father. She was more interested, however, in hanging out with her friends than with her studies. When she received failing marks, her father reprimanded her, so she quit school and went somewhere else. The easiest job to find was domestic work. Reflecting on her life situation, Inna sees domestic work as a situation of deprivation in which she cannot do as she pleases. As a domestic worker, she has to rise up early and work, unlike when she was at her own home, where she could do as she liked. This is where she clearly draws the line between being a worker and being a part of a family. As a domestic worker, she is paid and she has to work for it.
2. The sixth of seven children in the family, Annie is nineteen, single, and an elementary graduate. Both her parents are farmers. Annie became a helper out of her desire to go to different places and to enjoy life. She has been in domestic work for four years, and she has had three employers. The longest that she stayed in one household was two years, while the shortest, eight months. She likes the family that she is presently working for because the couple does not have small children. On the other hand, Annie's reason for leaving the family where she worked for eight months was her male employer who was addicted to drugs, and she was afraid of being raped.
3. Merly was also studying in high school, when she and her friends decided to take a summer job in another town. In doing so, Merly justified that she would learn different things like housework, babysitting, and storekeeping. At the same time, she would earn money, which she could use for anything she likes to buy. At a young age of thirteen, Merly worked as a domestic helper in summers and studied full time during the school year. Now forty-eight years old, Merly is no longer a domestic worker: she is now the employer of a domestic worker.
4. Bella is in her mid-twenties, originally from Southern Mindanao, and came to the city to work to experience city life. An elementary graduate, she has been working as domestic helper for six years, and this is her third employer. Her salary is Php 1,000 (US\$ 23.09). She is satisfied with her current employer,

- and she feels like she is at home in her own family. Her employer gives her clothes and gifts, and brings her out for family recreation, like going to the beach.
5. Sylvia used to help her father on the farm in Bukidnon. When her aunt suggested going to the city to work, Sylvia decided to join her. This is Sylvia's first employer, and she has been here for two years. Her initial monthly wage was Php 500 (US\$ 11.55), and now she is making Php 900 (US\$ 20.79). While her main job is childcare, she also cooks and does the laundry.
 6. Due to her being the youngest of nine children, Sussie does not have any obligation to help support her family. Her father is already dead, and her mother subsists through farming. Originally from Bukidnon, she moved to the city with her sister who just got married. When Sussie's sister-in-law looked for domestic work, Sussie went with her, and from that time on, Sussie has worked for five years and for three employers.
 7. Paula is fifteen, the third of four children in the family, and is from Bohol. Her father is a farmer, and her mother is a homemaker. Her educational level is only until the third grade, as she was forced to work as a helper due to their poverty. As she does not have many younger siblings, she keeps most of her wage for herself. Paula has been working for two years, and has had two employers.
 8. The fourth of ten children of a farmer and a housekeeper, eighteen-year-old Esmi began to work at the age of twelve. Employed by a Chinese couple, this is Esmi's sixth job, and she has been with this family for more than a year now. Although Esmi has six younger siblings, she did not allude to sending money to her parents to support her younger siblings.
 9. The second of nine children, Sweetie is sixteen years old, and has completed elementary school despite their poor economic condition – her father being a subsistence farmer and her mother, a housewife. Sweetie never got a chance to step into high school, as dire economic need forced her into domestic service. She has been into this occupation for four years now, seemingly in a constant move, as she has been to eight different employers. She would average six months in every household. Her longest employment is twelve months, and she was able to

survive that long out of sacrifice. Her shortest, however, was only one month, as she could not bear the way her employer treated her. Sweetie does not like domestic work, but she was forced into this job, being her only decent option to earn and to buy things that she likes.

Working as an escape from family conflict or domestic violence

There is a subtle relationship between family conflict and girls/women seeking domestic service. This is hard to detect, and only shows when the researcher listens to the women's life history, especially about their families of origin and the pressures that may have pushed them into domestic service. Having experienced conflicts with their families or domestic violence, some women escape by entering domestic service in another household. Petra, Virginia, Carmen, and Yolanda are examples of this category.

1. Although Petra's experience belongs to this category, I must clarify that Petra did not tell me about her personal problem in our interview. Petra only talked about her children and did not make comments about her husband. Her employer, who is my acquaintance, commented in a separate interview that Petra wanted to flee from her battering husband, and the safest place seemed to be another household.
2. Virginia's family was in deep chaos, with her parents fighting constantly and her mother beating her always. At thirteen, she realized that her mother did not love her, so she ran away. After two months, she found a job as a domestic worker and stayed there for five years. She left this job when her male employer began making sexual advances toward her. Out of that hard life, Virginia developed a strong personality, and was determined to not let anyone belittle or insult her.
3. Like Virginia, Carmen ran away from her family at seventeen, after she graduated from high school. Desperate for housing, she accepted employment with a monthly wage of Php 600 (US\$ 13.86), half of what the other helpers in that household were receiving. Since then, she has worked as a domestic helper to nine families in a span of eight years. In between domestic

employments, she tried working in fastfood chains and hotels. Carmen experienced cruelty with her doctor employer, kindness but jealousy with a jeweler, and friendship and dependence with her current employer who sends her to school despite her own difficulty in raising her own family single-handedly.

4. Yolanda became a domestic helper at nine when her parents broke up, and neither had any job. Subsequently, her nine siblings were separated, as each tried to find a living on their own. Forced into domestic work out of economic necessity, Yolanda also experienced many kinds of abuse from her employers; including overwork, house imprisonment, domestic violence, and inadequate food.

The Low Status of Domestic Work

An overwhelming majority of my maid-informants perceive paid domestic work to be a low status occupation.⁴ When one's work is only *pambalay*, which literally means "for the house" or domestic, they perceive it to be of less importance, therefore, low stature and low paid. The occupation brings with it several domestic worker stereotypes, including *bogok* (stupid), *walay talento* (no talent), and *walay grado* (uneducated). Crisanta wants to finish her studies to improve her status. As she articulates, "As a helper, my status is very low."

Merly: If you have already reached your ambition, would you continue to work as a helper? [Kung pananglitan, makab-ot nimo ang imong ambisyon magpahelper ka pa lugar o dili na gyud?]

Crisanta: Not anymore. [Dili na.]

Merly: If your child would tell you that she would work as a helper, what would be your reaction? [Kung pananglit osa sa imong anak ang mosulti nga Ma magpahelper ko unsa man?]

⁴ This finding is reflective of many studies, including Vergolini's (1989, 136) study in Recife, Brazil wherein most maids perceive that their work is less valued compared to other occupations.

Crisanta: For me, I don't want that she will experience what I have gone through. [Ako, dili ko kay dili ko gusto nga ang akong naagi-an maagian niya.]

One helper, Yolanda, offered another colorful metaphor to illustrate the low status of domestic workers. She said that some employers treat their helpers "like pigs." The helpers' perception of a high-status job is an office-based work or waged employment that is associated with high education and prestige. Heide differentiates this house-office work status dichotomy in her own words:

Heide: People will look down on you just because you are a helper . . . but not all people though. People will say, "She is a helper." It's like that, or, "She's pretty, but she's a helper . . . she's uneducated." These are the differences compared to an office worker who is decent-looking, sexy, just holds a pen, and sits the whole time. [Ubos ra kaayo ang pagtan-aw sa tawo sa imo kay ngalan nga helper oy, kaminosan ka sa mga tawo bitaw peru dili sab tanang tawo. . . "Hoy, kuan man na siya atsay man na siya", ana, "hoy, kuan man na siya hitsura-an bitaw na siya peru helper man na siya. Wala man nay grado." O, ingon ana, ingon ana ang naka deperensya bitaw kung opisina kay desente man kaayo na siya, seksi kaayo opisina ra ballpen ray hawiran, lingkod-lingkod lang sa lingkuranan ingon ana ra.]

Bella recounts the negative status of domestic work compared to office work. Loss of ownership of their own time is one of the worst impacts of live-in paid domestic work. Most of the laborer's waking hours are devoted to service for their employers. Bella further articulates this non-ownership of time as follows.

Bella: There are occasions when even your supposedly private time is not yours because almost all the time that you have, are utilized to serve your master. In times when you want to go out, you don't have the time, and even if it is your day off, you still think that your employer's eyes are watching you. You cannot remove from your consciousness that you are merely a paid laborer. All the rights are theirs (employers') even the way you dress up, and if possible, they would dictate the way you think . . . It's really hard to be a helper, but what can we do, given our low education, that's the only job we can take. [Dunay mga higayon nga gusto ka nga

magkinaogalingon sa imong private nga uras peru dili gihapon mahimo tungod kay hapit tanang uras imo mang iserbisyo sa imong agalon. Sa panahon nga gusto ka nga molakaw, dili imo ang oras kay duna ka may agalon bisan pa ug imong day off maghunahuna gihapon ikaw nga ang mata sa imong agalon nagtan-aw kanimo. Dili ka makapagawas sa imong hunahuna . . . nga sinoweldohan kalang nila. Ang katungod ilaha tanan lakip gani ang imong kaogalingong pamayhon kung mahimo diktahan pati ang andar sa imong hunahuna . . . Lisod bitaw gyud ang osa ka helper peru unsaon taman ra sab diha ang nakab-ot nga grado.]

Bella offers another point that is enlightening. One pertains to what Wright (1997) asserts about the power of the exploited over the exploiter due to the exploiter's dependency on the exploited's efforts. After enumerating the bad sides of domestic work, Bella identifies the importance of this "profession," as she calls it: "For me, we should not be ashamed that we are helpers, because our role makes us so special to our employers. They cannot do anything, if there is no one willing to be enslaved, so this is an important profession. How can they work if no one will take care of their house and their children?" Answering her own question, Bella laughs as she remarks, "They cannot do anything without the helper."⁵

Even though they recognize the low status of this occupation, some helpers take pride in the significant monetary contributions they make to their families. Teresa, for example, asserts that while domestic work is a low-status job, it has assisted her family through difficult times. Her children grew up and were able to reach high school due to the hard work she exerted in domestic labor. It does not matter what her job is, as long as there is rice on the table and education for the children.

⁵ Bella is not alone in her reference to domestic services as a profession. As Benjie, an advocate for paid domestic workers, argues, we need to change the employers' mindset and assign more social value to paid domestic work. When domestic work is viewed as a profession, it is given more importance. A different way of viewing domestic work as a profession would be a shift toward specialization of tasks, which has already been in existence in affluent families (see also Romero 1988). When a domestic worker is specialized to execute a certain task, i.e., cooking, childcare, gardening, she has increased autonomy over her work.

For others, however, no matter how much they try to justify the importance of domestic helpers to the Filipino middle-class families, they know that domestic work is associated with low wages. It is not only them who perceive that their work is lowly; their employers also view their work as such. Consequently, many of them are more critical of their occupation because they are forced into it by circumstances associated with poverty.

The Mistresses

Age is an important factor on the playing field of power relations between the mistress and the maid. The mistress-informants are categorized into younger and older mistresses. The younger group is composed of those who are between thirty and thirty-six years old, while those in the older group have ages ranging from forty-eight to sixty-one. Six of them belong to the younger age group while four are in the older group. Gloria, Aileen, Geraldine, Helen, and Jary form the younger group, while Merly, Lolit, Babsie, and Rosita comprise the older group.

Four of the mistresses have college diplomas while six have post-graduate degrees. Most of the graduate-degree holders are concentrated in the 48-61 age group (see Table 3). Of those with post-graduate degrees, the areas of specialization include medicine, sociology, education, religious studies, and law. On the other hand, those with baccalaureate degrees have majors in economics, medical technology, and agricultural education. Table 3 illustrates that among the employer class, older women have higher educational attainments and higher income. Women may pursue a higher education in the latter part of their life, obtain a promotion, and earn a higher income. In addition, the number of currently employed live-in helpers seems to associate with the employer's age. The younger employers are more likely to hire two live-in helpers because they still have children in the

household. Typically, older mistresses hire only one helper because their household labor has diminished over time.⁶

Table 3 Employers' Education, Income, Number of Children, and Number of Helpers by Age Group

Age Group	Education (1= college grad; 2= graduate degree)			Monthly Salary (in Philippine Thousand Pesos)				Number of Children			Number of live-in helpers		
	1	2	Total	<10	10-20	21-50	Total	1 - 3	4 - 5	Total	1	2	Total
31-45	3	3	6	2	3	1	6	6	0	6	1	5	6
46-60	1	3	4	1	1	2	4	1	3	4	4	0	4
Total	4	6	10	3	4	3	10	7	3	10	5	5	10

Younger Mistresses

Aileen, Geraldine, Gloria, Helen, Jary, and Rosalinda belong to the category of younger mistresses, whose ages are between thirty-one and forty-five.

1. Aileen is in her early thirties, married, and has four children – all below seven years. Her husband, Jude is a physician. Working as a university staff, Aileen works forty hours a week for a monthly salary of Php 9,000 (US\$ 207.85). Despite her almost yearly activity of delivering babies, Aileen has never experienced taking a long leave of absence from her work. This was made possible

⁶ One pertinent question would be: is the employer's motivation to hire two or more helpers mainly due to her needs, or is she concerned about her helper's welfare? Many lone helpers say that they often feel lonely being solitary at home during daytime. In this study, all older employers only retain one live-in helper, indicating that the helper's concern for companionship at home while the family members are in school or at work, is not an employer's priority. While two of the four older employers hire another live-out laundry woman, it does not really address helper's isolation, as the laundry woman only comes once or twice a week.

- because of the domestic helpers would care for the children while she worked outside the home. During the first three years of her marriage, her residence was merely a fifteen-minute walk to her workplace, so she was always home during lunch break to breast-feed her children. Becoming a full-time mother is her ultimate dream. Due to financial concerns, however, she has to work to supplement her husband's income. Currently, she has two helpers: one is thirty-three years old, while the other is just seventeen.
2. Geraldine, a thirty-three-year-old mother of a two-year old boy, works as a medical technologist. Her physician husband, Sam, is on the fifth year of residency training in a Davao-based hospital, some 400 miles away, and comes home only for two days every month. Geraldine had a two-month maternity leave and went back to work afterwards. At that time, her two nieces, who she financially supported in college, took care of housekeeping and baby-sitting during the day, while at night Geraldine would relieve them from housework. One of them already graduated from college, while the other left and continued her education. Her nieces would take a lower load of fifteen units, so that they would be able to balance their studies and their job.⁷
 3. Gloria is a thirty-year old lawyer/women's advocate, mother of two, and married to another lawyer. She works for a non-government organization dealing with international issues, particularly on the north-south relations, and provides free legal services to women victims of domestic violence. With her kind of social involvement, she works more than the average working person, at about fifty hours a week, sometimes even on weekends. Her husband, June, works for the city government. It is about a two-hour drive from their home, and June comes home on Wednesdays and weekends. Gloria and June have been married for seven years; they decided to hire a househelp, when they had their first baby, Melissa. They have always had two helpers, not that the working load is too heavy for one, but being alone can be very lonely for the helper, Gloria justified. So they hired two helpers, Libby and Nelle. Libby is the daughter of Gloria's mother's former helper / distant relative, and has been with her for six years. She would go home when she gets bored

⁷ In most Philippine colleges and universities, the regular load is twenty-one units.

- working, and comes back when gets bored staying at her mother's house.
4. Helen is a thirty-one-year old medical technologist, married to Jose who is working in a transnational corporation and teaching engineering in a local university. Helen works forty hours a week with a monthly salary of Php 15,800 (US\$ 364.90), slightly higher compared to Jose's Php 13,000 (US\$ 300.23). Helen and Jose have a two-year old daughter. The baby is not actually the reason for hiring a househelp, as Helen already had one even when she was still single. Immediately after they got married, they hired a helper. Since then, Helen has had three helpers hired one at a time. Daisy, Helen's current helper, has been with her for six months and is assigned primarily to attend to her daughter.
 5. Married to a psychiatrist, Jary, who is in her mid-thirties, has two children, and teaches parasitology at the college of medicine. Here is a doctor who had to quit her job for a year to take care of her baby. This is not very common in the Philippines; wage-earning women do not usually quit waged work when they have a baby. In Jary's case, however, she had to quit, as she was not able to find a helper at that time. Besides, she does not trust any helper to care for her baby. Jary seems to be the only employer among my informants who quit her job after giving birth; others only took a forty-five day maternity leave and went back to work afterwards. Regarding her relationship with her helpers, she admitted that there exists a social gap between her and her helpers. She qualified her answer, however, that such a gap should not be too wide that would make both of them inhibited to express what they feel about each other. There are conflicts that need to be resolved through a dialogue. For example, Jary cannot express her dissatisfaction about her helper's performance. As she said, she feels inhibited (*maikog*) and shy (*maulaw*). Her helpers neither join them in their meals nor eat ahead of them. In addition, her helpers call them, sir and ma'am, even if she did not tell them to call them by those titles.
 6. Rosalinda is in her mid-thirties, married, and has two children. With a bachelor's degree in Economics, she has been working as a community organizer for seven years, and has been deviating from the eight-to-five normal working hours, as she travels to

communities, and works on Saturdays and Sundays. She gets a break on weekdays. Rosalinda has had five helpers since she got married. At present, she has two helpers who take charge of each child. One has been with her for two years, while the other, for two months. Rosalinda prefers to work, rather than become a full-time mother and housewife, but at the same time, she also fantasizes about being in the house the whole time. Her only concern is that she gets tired of taking the full responsibility of childcare. So what she does is to make sure that her after-office hours are devoted to the children.

Older Mistresses

Babsie, Lolit, and Rosita are older mistresses who are aged 46-60.

1. Babsie is in her mid-fifties, medical doctor, and professor at the college of medicine. She is married to an executive, and they have a daughter, who is in her twenties, and who just left their home to look for a job somewhere else. Babsie works for less than twenty hours a week, a privilege for high-ranking professors. Babsie and her husband immediately hired a helper after they got married. It was like a spontaneous thought that did not require a lot of discussion. The issue was clear: they were both working, and they needed someone to do the housework. Comparing the past and the present in hiring a helper, Babsie said that it was easier to get one in the past. Now, hiring is more complicated, as she really has to choose well. Her current helper has been with her for six years. The starting salary was Php 700 (US\$ 16.17) and now, the helper is receiving Php 1,200 (US\$ 27.71). She gets almost Php 100 (US\$ 2.31) pesos yearly increase. Aside from her salary, the helper gets social security benefits and health insurance. Furthermore, whenever Babsie travels, she buys presents (*pasalubong*) for her helper who also joins them in their meals. Ultimately, Babsie treats her twenty-something, sixth-grade helper like her daughter. If her helper does not marry, she will employ her as long as possible. She has transferred to her helper the control of household matters, so she neither gives instructions nor supervises the time of the worker.

2. Lolit is in her late forties, married for sixteen years, and has four children. A senior researcher and professor in a leading university in the city, Lolit is a devoted mother and wife to another academician. Officially, Lolit works for forty hours a week, but whenever she is bombarded with several projects at the same time, she would work beyond the forty hours to meet the deadline. Aside from Bambie, her live-in helper, Lolit also employs a live-out laundry woman, Bebing who has been with her since she was single. Bebing used to be the laundry woman of Lolit's mother. By the time Lolit got married, she thought that it would be most natural to continue Bebing's services. Bebing's wage is Php 120 (US\$ 2.77) per working day, while Bambie receives Php 1,000 (US\$ 23.09) every month. Bambie was recruited by Lolit's cousin. Her starting wage was Php 800 (US\$ 18.48), and then she got a raise of Php 100 (US\$ 2.31) every year.
3. Rosita is in her sixties, married with three children who all have left the house. Rosita and Miguel hired their first two helpers a few months after their wedding in 1960s. As both of them were teaching at that time, they relegated all household tasks to the helpers. When their eldest daughter was born, they hired another helper for the baby. Rosita commented that it was easier to hire a helper before when they did not have any children, compared to when they have many children. In the same way, when the children grew up, it was again easier to hire and to keep the helpers, since the children could help.
4. Merly's earlier life, particularly the years where she engaged in paid domestic work, has been discussed earlier. When Merly found a white-collar job as a research field supervisor in a research institution, and when she married a middle-class salesman, she moved up to the group of middle class. As she was out of the household most of the time, when her children were young, she hired a domestic helper, and she became an employer. Merly is the only informant I have who, in her lifetime, has been in both worlds: the domestic helpers' and female employers' separate worlds. Having been in the domestic helpers' world, she applies to her helper what she has learned when she was a domestic worker. At the same time, she separates herself from the group of domestic helpers, and like many employers, perceives the domestic workers as being in that occupation because they lack intelligence and initiative.

Employers' Ideological Camouflage

Most employers in this study have ambiguous perceptions about domestic helpers. On the one hand, they pointed out that the work title, "domestic helper" (*katabang*) already defines the tasks. The word "helper," according to them, refers to someone who "assists" the employer, not someone who executes all the work. As such, domestic helpers should not be assigned all the household tasks. On the other hand, they perceive that they pay wages for the helpers' labor and provide board and lodging, so they should be able to demand more from the helpers. In addition, these employers believe that if they hire two helpers, there is no need for mistresses to engage in housework, that they should be able to shift all domestic tasks to the helpers.

These employers recognize that helpers are necessary before mistresses can succeed at their multiple roles as wage earners, professional mothers, wives, and/or social activists. According to mistress Aileen, helpers assume responsibility for housework and child care. In addition, helpers guard the house against thieves, providing the employers with a sense of security, which is priceless. Little wonder, then, that the helpers' presence in the house is tantamount to their being available anytime.

Despite their recognition of the helpers' contributions to their households, these mistresses engage in "ideological camouflage" (Patterson 1982) to justify their exploitation of their workers' cheap labor. As Patterson points out, these employers construct cultural and social myths and negative stereotypes about their workers in order to shroud their exploitative labor practices behind claims of decency and morality. Like Bolivian employers who regard their servants as "childlike and irresponsible" (Gill 1990, 129), many employers in this study described helpers as though they act like children and work irresponsibly. For example, many employers complain that their helpers waste detergent, cooking oil, and water. These employers deem it necessary to explain to their helpers the high cost of living; otherwise, these helpers, who are not paying for these resources, will only squander them.⁸

⁸ See Chapter 7 for a discussion of these helper behaviors as resistance.

Employers also stereotype helpers as “stupid.” Citing that some helpers cannot follow simple instructions, mistress Merly believes the helpers’ mediocre mental faculties caused them to end up in domestic work, which is repetitive and requires minimum mental processing. It is striking that Merly holds this lowly opinion toward the domestic helpers because she was a domestic helper in her teenage years. Obviously, she has now absorbed the ideology of her employer class.

Domestic helpers are the brunt of stereotypical jokes within the employer circle, and these helper stereotypes are exaggerated by the mass media. These stereotypes include ignorant, provincial, uneducated, ethnic minority, rural, and unaccustomed to city life and household appliances. Below is a joke about domestic helpers that illustrate the point.⁹

One day, while the domestic helper was cleaning the house, the phone rang.

Master: Inday, please answer the phone.¹⁰

Domestic helper: Yis sir. ¹¹

Domestic helper: (picking up the phone) Hello - hello - hello

(The helper cannot hear the voice because she has turned the phone upside down. The master told her to turn it around. Instead of turning the phone the other way, the helper said.)

Domestic helper: LLO - HE - LLO-HE - LLO- HE

Master: (very angry) That is not what I mean. I mean, turn the phone around.

Domestic Helper: Phone-tele, Phone tele.

⁹ This joke, which was originally written in Tagalog can be accessed at: <http://www.globalpinoy.com/jokes/jokes-tagalog11.htm> (as of November 10, 2001).

¹⁰ Inday is a generic name for domestic helpers in Manila. While in the south, Inday is both a nickname and a form of endearment, Manilenos who usually obtain their helpers from the south have gotten used to calling their helpers Inday.

¹¹ Note the spelling of “yes.” It was intentionally misspelled by the writer of the joke to emphasize that helpers mispronounce Tagalog and English words.

Summary

As shown in Table 4, a wide class gap exists between mistresses and maids, requiring us to rethink the way we analyze gender relations. Women's experiences vary depending on their positions in the class structure, not to mention the racial structure. In terms of education, the employers' mean educational attainment in this study is a post-graduate degree, while that of the helpers' is far less than a high school degree. The helpers' educational attainment is largely determined by their parents' capability to finance higher education. In terms of income, the maids earn only 7.7% of the income level of mistresses. This disparity is far greater than the gender income gap, in which Filipina women earn 45% of what Filipino men receive (NCRFW 1995). Mistresses work nine hours a day while the maid's workday spans fifteen hours. While the mistresses can choose not to help in housework after their waged job ends, the maid's work continues until 8 p.m. Moreover, the mistress' job security is sanctioned by the state while the maid's security depends on her relationship with her mistress and the household she serves. The mistresses' work benefits are fixed by written contract, including thirty days of sick and vacation leave, forty-five days of maternity leave, health insurance, thirteenth month pay, bonus, and retirement security. In sharp contrast, the maids' benefits again depend on their mistresses' benevolent maternalism, as there is no law regulating the working conditions of the domestic workers.

Western feminists have generalized that women are oppressed in part because they do the "second shift" (Hochschild 1989), that they do the housework when their waged work is over. This second shift argument, however, conceals the complexity of Third World gendered relations. Filipino middle-class women, for instance, cope with their dual roles by hiring live-in domestics to free themselves from housework and childcare. By capturing poor women's cheap labor, these employed mistresses go home to a well-cleaned house, assured that their children are cared for, and that dinner is prepared. When at home, they play with their children and sometimes cook dinner with their helpers' assistance. The maids, on the other hand, left their own households to care for someone else's household, in exchange for a low wage plus room and board. As most of my informants are single, they do not have their own childcare worries. The few who have a family and young children have asked another household member or

relative to do the unpaid job, which the domestic workers have left behind.¹²

Table 4 Class Positions of Mistresses and Maids

Indicators	Class Position	
	Mistress	Maid
Mean Education	Post-graduate degree	First year high school
Mean Monthly Income	Php15,000 (US\$ 364.42)	Php1,159 (US\$ 27.77)
Mean Working hours/day	9	15, including rest periods
Job security	Yes	Depends on employer benevolence
Work Benefits	Fixed	Depends on employer benevolence
Childcare	Optional; mostly done by the maid	No child; done by unpaid family member
House work	Optional	done by unpaid family member
Retirement	Secure	None, except for 1%
Vulnerability to domestic violence	Vulnerable	Vulnerable

Besides class differences, there is also a great status disparity between the mistresses' so-called *office work* and the helpers' *domestic work*. As pointed out by the domestic workers earlier in this chapter, professional labor is associated with positive prestige while paid housework is stigmatized. Because of the very low status associated with domestic work, all employer informants found it unthinkable to see themselves in paid domestic work. They can easily visualize themselves doing domestic work in their own homes, but never as paid workers for other women's households. Indeed, it is far easier to consider paid domestic work when one belongs to the lower class, not when one experiences the comfort and privilege of being served a servant.¹³ Not all mistresses in this study may be satisfied with their current jobs, but none of them ever imagines taking the very low status of paid domestic work.

¹² Maids and mistresses share in common a vulnerability to domestic violence instigated by men in the household, especially by the mistresses' spouses. See Chapter 7

¹³ The mistresses in this study are different from the Filipino mistresses who chose to work as domestics in rich countries. See Chapter 8.

Chapter 4

Working and Living Conditions

Have you realized how important household helpers are to some families? Some families need them so someone could wash the dishes; sweep the floor; vacuum the carpet; clean the bathroom; water the garden; wash everyone's clothes; press everyone's clothes; put away the clothes in closets; wash the dogs; set the table; clean the table; open the gate; close the gate; and (phew!) cook breakfast, lunch and dinner for them. Imagine how many things a household helper must accomplish in a day! (Jeiflyn Dizon, grade school student)¹

In the narrative above, Jeiflyn has provided a typical picture of a helper's workload in the Philippines. Indeed, helpers do all these things for the upper and middle classes who can easily afford to hire several helpers, so that the family members can be freed from housework. As a grade school student, Jeiflyn has observed that helpers do all the work at home, even the mere opening and closing of the gate. Helpers' experiences, however, vary from one household to another. The normal workload of the helpers is determined by a number of factors, including the size of the house, number of children, number of house helpers or the extent to which family members help in housework, age of houseworkers, technologies available for the houseworker, and standard of cleanliness set by the employer. A big house, several young children, a greater number of non-houseworking adults, and an employer with high standard of cleanliness contribute to an increased burden. The helper's workload becomes heavier when the helper-to-family-member ratio gets smaller, as this translates into more food to fix, additional dishes and clothes to wash, and more mess to clean up. The scenario may be different when the children are older (i.e., at least eleven years old), and are trained in housework. The presence of several domestic workers and the availability of housework technologies also ease the helper's work. If the helper uses a washing machine, she saves one to two hours of work and avoids back pain associated to prolonged squatting during manual laundry. Only a few

¹ Dizon, J. (2000). Our household helpers. Philippine Daily Inquirer. Manila.

helpers, however, utilize the washing machine.² Higher income, better incentives, higher degree of autonomy, good living conditions, and harmonious relationship with the family members and other helpers are non-task related factors that contribute to a healthy working atmosphere. An interesting but not very significant determinant of a helper's positive working atmosphere is the female employer's work status. Some prefer their mistresses to be employed outside the house, so they can work "freely," while others prefer to have their mistresses at home often, so they can have someone to talk.

This chapter explores the domestic workers' working conditions from the domestic workers and employers' perspectives, as well as my own. In relation to their working conditions, I examine the domestic workers' living arrangements in their workplaces, taking account of the sleeping area, eating pattern, and access to household appliances. An example of an upper middle-class house is shown in Figure 4. I analyze the helpers' living conditions in their workplaces in relation to their employers', and partly, in relation to their own households.

Figure 4 Example of an Employer's House



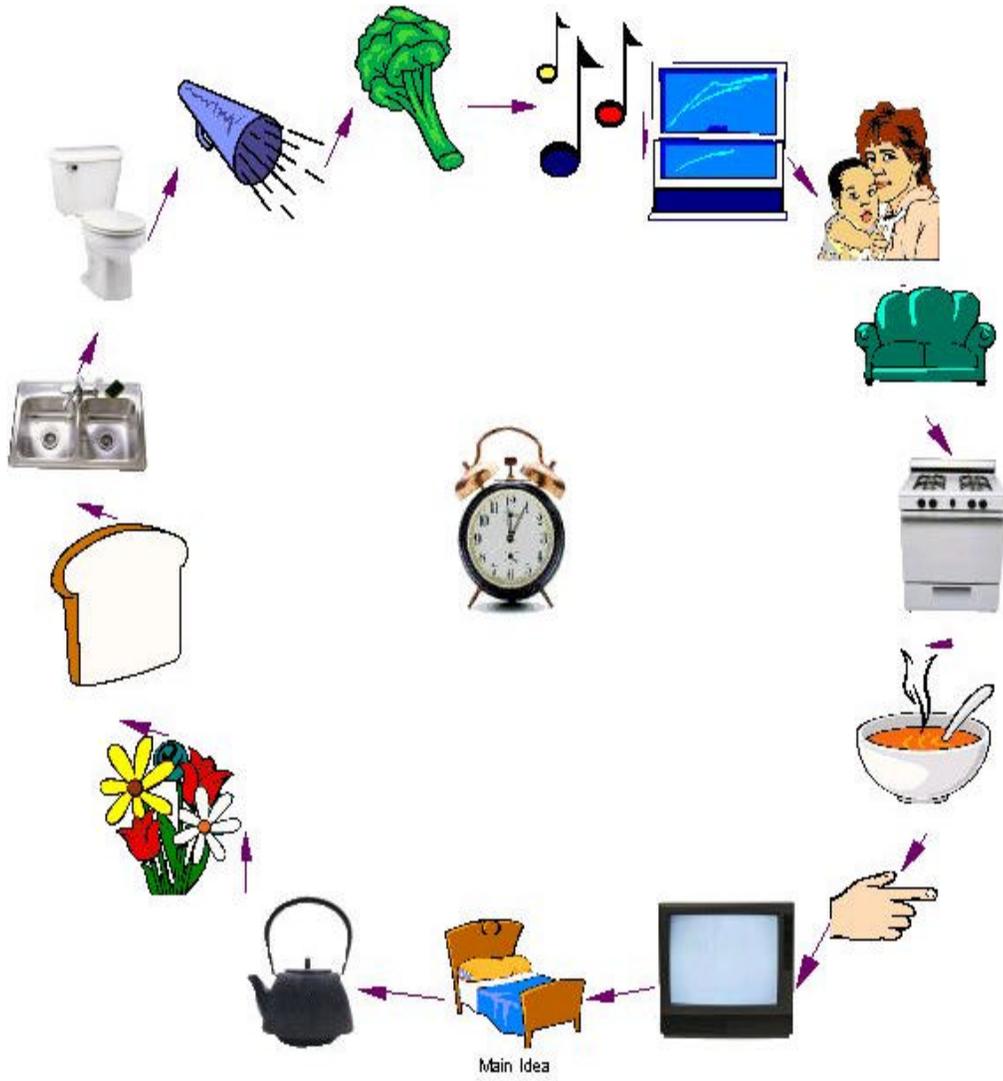
² Some families with washing machines only use them when their helpers quit, or when they have extremely high load of laundry. Many helpers are therefore rarely allowed to use the washing machine.

Types of Work Assignment

Female domestic workers are basically categorized into *careworkers* and *houseworkers*. Careworkers are the *yayas* (nannies), while the houseworkers include the cook, the housemaid, and the laundrywoman.³ The *yaya*'s main tasks include sterilizing feeding bottles, preparing baby food, bathing the baby/child, and sometimes, sleeping with the baby/child. Houseworkers do the cleaning, cooking, and the laundry. Figure 5 illustrates a typical daily schedule of the houseworkers. Usually, they wake up earlier than the *yayas*. In the morning, their first activity is to boil water and to cook rice. While doing that, they also irrigate the plants and sweep the backyard. Then, they cook breakfast, have breakfast, and wash the dishes. Afterwards, they clean the bedroom, the living room, and the bathroom. Daily cleaning involves dusting the furniture and the windows; mopping the floor (see Figure 6), applying floor wax and manually scrubbing the floor, or vacuum cleaning; making the bed; scrubbing the sink, tiles, and toilet seat in the bathroom; and dishwashing by hand. Cooking is done twice daily, if the employers and the children take lunch outside; otherwise, the helpers cook three times, where each meal takes about an hour of preparation. Laundry requires less effort when there is a washing machine; otherwise, washing by hand lasts about two hours each day for a family of five members who change their clothes daily. Hand washing involves four steps: the first involves wetting the clothes to reduce dirt; then soaping, scrubbing either by hand, a brush, or with a *palo-palo* (a wooden pole), and squeezing; rinsing three times; and hanging on the clothesline. Some clothes need to be soaked overnight, while whites have to be bleached under the sun. The afternoon can be spent pressing the clothes and returning them to the closets. After ironing, it is time to cook for supper. By the time, the dishes are washed, it is already 8 p.m., and the helpers either watch television or retire to bed. If a laundry woman is hired aside from the domestic helper, the latter saves about four hours of work each day for a family of five.

³ Male domestic workers are also hired for gardening, driving, and sometimes, even for housework.

Figure 5 Typical Daily Schedule of the Maids



Housework and carework often overlap, contingent on the employing family's class status and the internal arrangement among helpers. In this study, the line between housework and carework is not well defined. Many helpers who claimed to be in charge of childcare also cleaned the house. Likewise, those who were in charge of housekeeping were also involved in childcare, as well as doing the laundry when the laundry woman could not come. I noticed this contradiction, when the maid-informants were asked about their main roles and daily schedules. For example, Sylvia is primarily assigned to childcare, but her schedule includes non-childcare activities. What follows is her account of her daily schedule:

Sylvia: I would boil water and place it in the thermos . . . then, I would cook rice . . . then, clean the house . . . then, wash the clothes. [Kuan, kanang mag-init ko sa tubig nga isulod sa thermos . . . dayon maglung-ag ug maglugaw . . . dayon maglimpyo na sa balay. . . dayon manlaba.]

Merly: Ah, so you are an all-around helper. [Ah, so, all around diay ka.]

Sylvia: No, because I rarely do the laundry. It's *Ate* who does it, and if she does not work (in the office), she does all the housework, while I only care for the child. [Dili sab kay panagsa ra man ko manglaba. Si Ate man gyud, kung wala siya'y trabaho iya man tanan ang buhat, ako igo ra magbantay sa bata.]

Merly: At noon, what do you do? [Sa pagka-udto unsa na man pod ang imong buhaton?]

Sylvia: I would let the child sleep. After feeding the child, I would clean her . . . then, I'll play with her, then feed her again, and put her to sleep. [Kuan magpakatulog sa bata human ug pakaon sa bata kay trapohan man dayon dula-dulaon ayha na dayon ipadidi kung mangayo na dayon matulog.]

Merly: When the child was asleep, what would you do? [Ikaw, kung matulog ang bata, unsa may imong buhaton?]

Sylvia: If I were not sleepy, I would listen to radio drama, while wiping the furniture. [Usahay kung dili ko katulgon maminaw

sa drama sa radio dala trapo sa mga lingkoranan sa TV sa salog.]

Merly: Then, in late afternoon, what would you do? [Dayon pagkahapon, unsa na man sab imong himuon?]

Sylvia: The same thing, cook for supper. I would only prepare the rice, because *Ate* cooked the viand⁴. I'd let the child eat, wipe her, play with her, put her to sleep, then I can also go to sleep. [Mao gihapon magluto sa panihapon. Kan-on lang kay si ate man ang moluto sa sud-an, dayon pakaon sa bata trapohan duladulaon dayon matulog na matulog sab ko.]

Note that Sylvia is the only helper in the house, and she was originally hired for childcare. Yet, her daily schedule shows that she also cleans the house, cooks their meals, and does the laundry. When probed, she articulated that she does not perform these tasks regularly, that it is always her *Ate* who does the housework and the laundry. Sylvia, however, does not mind the additional tasks of housework when her *Ate* fails to do domestic work. Likewise, Virginia does not limit her activities to childcare, but also contributes to other household chores. As there are two helpers in the household, Virginia cooperates with them to complete the tasks.

Virginia: I would wake up at 7 a.m., then I would collect the soiled clothes from the bedroom and I would wash them, while the child was still asleep. After washing the clothes – it does not take so much time to finish the laundry – the child would be awake by then. I would feed the child, wash her, and give her a bath. After that, sometimes, I, or whoever is free would cook for lunch. Then we'll feed the child, and we'll eat, then we'll watch TV. [Momata ko sa karon, mga alas 7:00, dayon mangoha ko ug mga bolingon sa kwarto ug akong labhan kay tulog pa man ang bata. Onya human nako'g laba kay osahay dali ra man ko mahuman ug laba momata na ang bata, ako nang pakan-on ang bata. Hugasan ang bata o kaha ligoon. Pagkahuman usahay magluto ko ug paniudto o kon kinsay bakante namong duha. Pagkahuman mangaon, pakan-on ang bata, mangaon ming tanan dayon manan-aw mi sa TV.]

⁴ Viand or *sud-an* refers to the other dishes (i.e., meat, fish, or vegetables) that go with the rice.

Figure 6 A Domestic Worker Performing Her Task

Rest Period

Romero (1992, 127) argues that, "Structuring breaks and time off is a particularly serious problem for live-in domestics, because the hours, tasks and obligations of the job are constantly redefined." The helpers may be assigned additional workload at anytime, depriving them of fixed break time. The female employer's work status, however, may contribute to the helper being able to control her work schedule, as there are no interruptions or orders from the employer. When the mistress is not around, it is hard to control the helper's movements, unless the latter is assigned too many tasks to complete each day.

While the mistress' absence in the house during daytime contributes to the helper's relaxed working atmosphere, breaks are connected to the completion of each set of tasks. Some helpers find time to rest in between tasks while others do not. Other than the available technology, size of the house, and number of houseworkers,

the helper's speed is also a factor. Some helpers accomplish the same tasks in the same conditions faster than the others. Age can be a factor too: younger workers get things done faster and without exhaustion, while older helpers, like Teresa, are relatively slow-paced, and therefore find little time to rest. Teresa talks about her ten-year daily routine with her Chinese employer, where she cooked, cleaned, and laundered clothes. She would wake up at 4 a.m., prepare breakfast, and clean the house. By 1 p.m., she would do the laundry. When asked about the time for her to take a rest in between work, she responds:

Teresa: Around 10 p.m. [Ah, mga alas diyes.]

Janet: In the afternoon, would you not take a nap? [Kanang hapon makatulog pud ka?]

Teresa: No, I didn't have time to nap, because I still had to press the clothes, especially on Sundays. [Di na makapatulog kay agpas na man dayon ug pamalansa. Labi na ug Dominggo.]

Unlike Teresa, Bella's work schedule includes a short break in the afternoon. Sometimes she would nap, at other times she would assist in the other helper in the *sari-sari* (variety) store.⁵ Among the informants, Petra is the earliest riser. She is up at 3 a.m., but she finds time to nap from noon until 2 p.m. As she is alone at home the whole day, she entertains herself by singing along with the karaoke system or by watching TV. After resting, she would iron the clothes and prepare dinner. When asked why she wakes up so early, she says:

Petra: It's early because there were many tasks to do. At 3 a.m., I would cook rice – boil water . . . cook the viand . . . prepare packed lunch for sir and the children . . . pack the spoon . . . and water – they also bring water. [Sayo man kay daghan man ang (trabaho) . . . Alas tres. Maglung-ag pa. Mag-init ug tubig. Magluto. Magputos sa baon ni sir. Sa mga bata. Putoson ang kuan kanang kutsara. Mga tubig baonon pud.]

⁵ Variety store is the direct translation for *sari-sari* store. It is a small-scale version of a convenience store. Lower- and middle-class Filipinos tend to buy household needs in retail (i.e., ¼ bottle of cooking oil, one sachet of shampoo, a piece of tomato, a bottle of beer, etc.), and variety stores, which are available in almost every street in any village, sell these items.

Late Evening Orders

Most helpers retire to their bedrooms between eight and ten in the evenings. Their employers no longer call on them, except for occasional cases, such as opening and closing the gate, preparing a sleeping mat for the dog, or “simply” talking to the employer who needs someone to talk to, thereby engaging in “emotional labor” (Hochschild 1983). There are times when Petra’s sir would call her at night.

Petra: “Petra, get up.” It’s like, I’m the wife. [“Petra bakod sa.” Murag ako na man noon asawa.]

Janet: Why does he ask you to get up? [Nganong ipabakod man ka?]

Petra: “Spread a mat for the dog” or, “Come here. Let’s have a chat.” “I’m already sleeping.” “Hurry up.” [“Buklari sa nang iro. O “Dari sa ta. Magchika-chika sa ta.” “Tulog nako” “agpas diha uy.”]

Additional Tasks

Aside from their job description, helpers often perform others tasks requested by the employers (Romero 1992). These may include doing errands, paying bills, assisting in the employer’s business venture, such as preparing unsweetened cocoa for sale and cleaning the community chapel. Rosita, for example, would ask her helper to help clean the community chapel. Parishioners take the responsibility in maintaining the chapel, and sometimes, it gets so convenient to include the helpers in this activity, justifying that the helpers are doing the community and God a favor.

Rosita: [I like a helper] who goes with me to church every Sunday. During the time when I was the president of our pastoral council . . . ah, I really needed the help of our helper in maintaining the cleanliness of the chapel.

Some employers who assign their helpers additional work also provide them with extra pay. This incentive improves the helpers’ job satisfaction, as their extra effort is justly rewarded. Crisanta and Alma are among the helpers with high job satisfaction, associated with extra

pay for extra work. Crisanta earns an additional allowance every time her employer would ask her to do any extra work. Alma assists her employer in selling AVON products, and she receives a percentage of her sales. In a way, Alma also earns an extra income for helping her employer. As a result, Alma is encouraged to improve her sales. She uses her day off to sell AVON cosmetics to her friends. Other helpers, however, do not receive extra pay for extra work. Whenever the employers have houseguests, they sometimes request the helpers to wash their guests' clothes:

Virginia: Sometimes, when there's an emergency — for example, when they have a guest, I get to wash their clothes. [Na-a usahay kanang emergency. Pananglitan naay ilang bisita makalaba man gyud ta sa ilang sienna.]

Janet: You would wash their clothes? [Labhan nimo ang sinina?]

Heide: It depends, if our employer would order us to. If not, then we won't. If the mistress would give the order — naturally, that's your mistress. [Depende kung sugoon sa amo peru kong dili di dili sab. Kung amo ang magsugo alang alang imo god nang amo.]

When the *labandera* (laundry woman) fails to come for some reasons, the live-in helper is asked to do the laundry without extra pay, while the employer profited from the situation, saving one-day worth of wage for the *labandera*. More significantly, helpers are not only asked to do additional housework other than that stipulated verbally in the job description, they are also asked to assist in their employer's take-home work, such as making charts, collecting payments, and informing people about a group activity. Luisita's employer sells unsweetened cocoa to supplement her income, yet Luisita prepares it without getting additional income. Luisita also does other things for her employer's job.

Luisita: For example, I would prepare the charts for her class instruction . . . and when she had appointments, she would let me do the errands to inform other people. [Ay, kanang sa eskuylahan lugar mga chart ako'y maghimo . . . Kana sab ug kuan bitaw, duna siyay mga appointment ako ang maglakaw . . . Kana bitaw ang dunay iyang kuan sa mga tawo . . . Kanang duna siya'y toyo ba kanang "Day, palihog ra ko ug ingon adto ni kuan Day, nga."]

In addition to assisting their employers' job-related tasks, some helpers also work on their employers' bodies. Employers' "requests" can really get very intimate, such as asking their helpers to remove underarm hair or white hair and to perform a body massage. Many helpers do not mind working on their female employers' bodies. As Lourdes justifies, "it is like being sisters." Most of them, however, would never do the same task for their male employers' bodies. Below are the helpers' reactions about attending to their employers' bodies.

Lourdes: I do give my mistress a body massage, but for my male employer, not once. That's offensive! [Ako makahilot ko sa akong amo nga babaye, peru sa lalake, aw wa pod kalain man pod ana!]

Virginia: I was asked to pull white hair from my mistress' armpit (laughs). Our male employer would ask us to remove his white hair too, but whatever happens, I would never do it (laughs)! [Ako, gipa ibot ko ug uban sa kili-kili sa akong agalon nga babaye (laughs) kanang among amo nga lalake moingon nga mag-paibot ug uban matay ug moibot ko bahala man diha oroy.]

Alma: I have a big admiration on my male employer. He is a very kind person, but if he would ask me to massage his body, I would never do it. He's too old (everyone laughs), but for his third son – I would make an exception (laughs). [Bilib gyud ko anang akong agalon nga lalake. Buotan kaayo si kuya, peru kung mahitabo sab oy dili sab ko mohilot! Oy dili gyud ko katigulang na ana niya (everyone laughs). aw, gawas nuon anang iyang anak nga ikatulo (laugh).]

Petra, however, often gives her male employer a body massage. Note that she is close to him and that she joins him in the meals. When asked if it is all right with her to do the massage, she said, "Maybe, it is okay!"

Petra: He would ask for a body massage, when he is about to sleep. If he arrives home early, he'd ask for a massage. Yesterday, he asked for a massage, and he slept well because he had dinner first. [Matulog siya. Na magpahilot pa na siya. Kanang sayo siya makauli, magpahilot siya. Kadtong naa pa ang anang igsoon magpahilot siya. Gahapon nagpahilot siya, maayo ang iyang katulog. Kay nanihapon man daan.]

Petra is concerned about a possible negative reaction from her female employer, but he would assure her that his wife would not mind. To feel safe, Petra would ask one of the children to stay in the room, while she worked on his body.

Help Extended by the Family Members

If ever there is anyone in the family who helps do the housework, it is usually the female employer. Below, Bella and Petra talk about how their mistresses would engage in housework.

Bella: Sometimes, she attends to the flowers, cleans their bedroom, and cooks especially when her husband is around. [Usahay siya ang mag-areglar sa mga bulak, maglimpyo sa ilang kwarto, usahay sab magluto labina kung naa si manong.]

Petra: She'd (mistress) say, "Petra, let's cook for dinner." [Moingon, "Pin magluto ta ug atong panihapon."]

Janet: You cook together? [Mag-uban mo ug luto?]

Petra: We do it together — and for breakfast too. [Uban mi. Sa buntag mag-uban mi.]

Janet: Does she also work at home? [Motarbaho pud siya sa balay?]

Petra: She really works in the house. She's not lazy — ma'am is not lazy. I like ma'am's character. [Na magtarbaho na siya. Dili tanga. Dili tanga si ma'am uy. Ganahan ko sa batasan ni ma'am.]

Several mistresses work on particular tasks themselves, such as cooking and ironing clothes, for different reasons. Some feel that their helpers cannot accomplish certain tasks well enough to meet their standards, and they often find themselves following up their helpers' work, just like in Gill's (1994, 90) study in Bolivia. Others are obliged to cook for their husbands who are accustomed to their cooking. Still, a few actually empathize what the helpers go through during the day, and want to give the helpers a break at night when they are around.

Whenever the mistresses contribute to housework, they have the option to choose which type of task they will do, unlike the helpers. Usually, they perform the lighter side of the task, while the time-

consuming and more “dirty” part is delegated to the helpers. For example, some employers insist that they cook by themselves once they arrive home, while the helpers prepare the ingredients, i.e., thawing, peeling, and slicing. As can be gleaned from the narratives below, employers describe the helpers’ tasks as “assisting them” and “cleaning afterwards.”

Merly: When I would get home at 5 p.m., I would do all the tasks, and my helper would just assist me . . . sometimes I would ask her to buy something. [Mao ra na iya, pag-alas singko na wala na. Ako na dayon tanan. Na kuan na lang iya, pananglitan suguon na lang siya ug palit ba didto ug unsa ba na diha.]

Jary: My helper does not cook very well, so if I am at home, I do the cooking myself, even if she is around. I really do the cooking. She just takes care of the cleaning. [Ang sa pagluto karon, akong helper dili kaayo siya maayo moluto. Kung naa ko sa balay, ako gyud na ang moluto, bisan tuod naa siya, ako gyud ang moluto. Sa limpiyo lang na sila, limpiyo, laba, and then . . .]

Aileen: At least, I don’t have to clean anymore or wash the dishes. I don’t do those things anymore because we already have helpers. I just cook because I really like to. [At least dili kaayo ko kanang . . . ako pa ang manglimpiyo sa balay, manghugas ug plato. Dili sad ana kay naa na may helper. Magluto. Gusto man gyud ko magluto.]

A few female employers cook for their husbands. Based on the mistresses and maids’ accounts, some husbands insist that their wives cook for them, even if there are hired helpers who can readily do the task. Esmi explains how her Chinese male employer has grown so habituated to his wife’s cooking that he only eats when his wife prepared the food.

Esmi: She cooks just for her husband, because it’s different . . . because my employers are Chinese. Yes . . . so she cooks for her husband, because he does not eat anything else, except those prepared by his wife. Even if he would go on a tour, he would bring his wife to cook for him. [Moluto siya ug sud-an para ra sa iyang bana kay lahi man kay kanang akong amo Intsik man. Oo, busa siya ang magluto para sa iyang bana kay

dili man mokaon kung lain ang magluto, bisan gani asa siya, kanang mag-tour dalaon gyud iyang asawa kay aron maoy magluto. Peru para sa iyang mga anak, kami ra ang magluto.]

Like Esmi's employer, Merly cooks because her husband prefers her cooking. Whenever her husband goes out of town, however, she feels so relieved that she does not need to cook anymore, and she lets her helper cook anything.

Merly: I do it. There was not a time that I did not prepare our meal. Even if I had a helper, I would still take charge of food preparation. It's really different. My husband has gotten used to my cooking, that he would not eat if I were not the one who prepared his food. He does not even eat my children's cooking. He would always tell me to cook for him. Even if I were tired, Net, I would still cook. I'd have a big celebration, if my husband goes out of town, as I don't need to cook anymore. [Ako na gyud. Wala man gyud ko sukad nga dili ako ang magdigamo. Bisag naa koy . . . ako gyud ang magdigamo. Igna ngano. Lahi man gud ang pagkuan . . . busa tingali akong bana, Net, maanad nga dili mokaon kun dili ako gyud mismo, maskig ako pang anak ang . . . Ambot. Ay dili man sab. Maskig . . . maskig ako pang anak ang moluto, moingon gyud na siya nga, "Ikaw magluto." Bisag kapoy kaayo ang akong lawas, Net, moluto gyud ko. Magpista lagi ko kung wala diha ang akong bana. Parehas karon wala man diha. Magpista ko kay, ah, di man ko magluto.]

Geraldine's two helpers attend night school, so she takes over the housework, while they are gone. She presses the clothes at night while her helpers are in school. During daytime, when she is at work, her helpers do the housework.

Some female employers are too tired to help in housework, and a few helpers empathize with their mistresses' situation. These helpers do not expect their employers to participate in the household chores anymore, and they are often contemptuous of the minimal contributions made by their employers.

Sweetie: Yes, sometimes she helps in housework, but she is also working. [Oo, osahay motabang peru kay motrabaho man god sab siya.]

Merly: What kind of housework does she do? [Unsa may iyang buhaton kung motabang man siya sa buhatonon sulod sa panimalay.]

Sweetie: Sometimes she cleans the house. [Usahay manlimpio sab?]

Janet: Does she also cook? [Magluto ba sab siya?]

Sweetie: Oh, no. She cleans, but she does not cook. [Nah ! dili, man limpio lang peru dili moluto.]

Enriquita: Sometimes, but usually no. [Usahay peru kasagaran dili man.]

Alma: During her day-off, either on Saturday or Sunday, *Ate* cooks for us. Sometimes, she does the laundry, but since I have already done most it, she only washes a few clothes. [Kung day off nila kanang ma sabado ug dominggo, si ate ang magluto. Usahay siya ang manlaba peru kay nanglaba na man ko kana lang mga ginagmay ra.]

Lolit and Rosita do not contribute any housework at all when they have helpers. For Rosalinda, she only helped when she had one helper. Now that she has two, she maximizes her time at home by playing with her children.

Rosalinda: If I had only one helper, I would help in the housework, like pressing the clothes. You would feel sorry for your helper. My own feeling being a mother is that, it is not easy to care for the child the whole day. How much more if the baby that you are caring for is not your own? [Basta isa ra, trabaho gyud ko pag-abot. Tabang gyud na, mamalansa gyud ka ug apil. Malooy man pud ka, kay sus ang akong feeling, ako gani nga nanay ko, dili inana kasayon ang magbantay ana the whole day ug bata. How much more sila nga dili gani na nila anak?]

Rosita: Practically all the chores are assigned — all the chores at home are assigned to the household helpers because when I'm at home, I work some kind of preparation for classroom instruction . . . I check the test papers, and record the results, then, prepare some visual aides.

From the helpers' perspective, it is rare for male employers to help in the household chores. When they are at home, they play with

their children, and sometimes they prepare a meal for everyone. Adult male household members, however, contribute little or nothing toward housework.

The children do not seem to help, not even in the household where there is only one helper. On her part, Petra commented that the children avoid housework, even on weekends. Similarly, Lolit's children, some are in their teens, concentrate their energy on their studies, and are not asked to help in household labor. Others are too young to help, and are actually the reasons why employers hire a nanny. While the helper is often considered as part of the family, one thing that debunks this metaphor is the children's contribution to housework: while the real children are not asked to help in housework, the helper's primary reason for being in that family is to do housework (see also Young 1987).

Living Arrangements

Since the helpers are residing in their workplaces, their living arrangements are part of their working conditions. Live-in work can be very helpful for the helpers financially, as they no longer need to pay for rent, utilities, food, and transportation to and from their workplaces. However, live-in work is exploitative, because 1) the employers can call on the domestics anytime, 2) it is associated with "like one of the family" ideology, coercing the helpers to perform additional tasks, viewed as acts of love, and 3) it is characterized by oppressive material conditions like invisibility, isolation, and powerlessness (Stiell and England 1997). This invisibility can be best described in Gill's (1994, 9) terms, in which "the private sphere of the employer is the public sphere of the employee." Since the home is the private sphere, and it is the public area of the live-in helper, what becomes of her private sphere? She may not have any, as live-in arrangement, according to Coser (1973, 33), "severely curtails . . . [the] servants' privacy and freedom of movement." In what follows, I will examine the living conditions of domestic workers in their workplaces to show the class and status differences between employers and domestic workers within the household in terms of sleeping arrangement, eating pattern, and access to appliances.

Sleeping Arrangements

Sleeping arrangements relative to their employers is a factor being considered in this study. Which place of the house do the helpers sleep? If they are in a bedroom, where is the bedroom located? Is it located at the back of the house, in the kitchen area, in the underground? If there is no extra room, where does the helper sleep? What kind of bed does she have? Does she sleep on a folding bed, on a hard bed, or on the floor with a mat, a mattress, or foam? Does she sleep with other helpers, with a daughter, with the child she is taking care of? I classified the helpers' sleeping rooms as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, based on the relative difference with their employers' and other family members' bedrooms.

The employers that I interviewed usually have three bedrooms. Rosalinda, Jary, and Lolit have three bedrooms, while Rosita and Gloria have four. Aileen's, Rosalinda's, Jary's, and Gloria's two helpers share one bedroom. Lolit's helper shares a bedroom with Lolit's daughter, while Rosita's helper has her own bedroom.

Teresa, Inna, Jennifer, Ivy, Petra, Sylvia, and Crisanta have relatively better sleeping arrangement compared to the other helpers, as they have their own bedrooms. In Petra's case, her two employers and their children all sleep in one bedroom, while Petra sleeps in the other room. Ivy, Jennifer, and Sylvia's employers also have two bedrooms, which they share with their children. In households with two or more helpers, one bedroom is assigned for all the helpers. Some have better beds than the others. Enriquita, for example, has a soft bed, while Lourdes sleeps on a folding bed. A few sleep with family members. This is often the case for the nanny who has to be up at night to look after the baby.

Every time the helpers sleep with the baby, they are more likely to be satisfied about their sleeping room. Virginia appeared pleased and proud, when she told the other helpers in the focus group that she sleeps on a soft mattress in the baby's bedroom, not on a hard bed. Some helpers are sharing a bedroom with their employers' daughters.

The helpers obtain a temporary upgrade in sleeping arrangement, when their employers travel. Like Luisita, some helpers would then sleep in their employers' bedroom. Sharing a bedroom with the female employer when the husband is not around is also popular.

Aside from sleeping on a better bed, the helpers get emotionally closer with their female employers as they share stories before they sleep. Crisanta sleeps beside her female employer when the husband is out of town.

Most houses have fewer bedrooms than household members, so bedroom sharing is widespread among children, and sometimes, between children and helpers. In situations where there are not enough bedrooms for everyone, the helper is the most likely candidate to sleep in the living room. For example, the house where Ann works has three bedrooms, but she sleeps on a folding bed in the living room. She used to have a bedroom of her own, but her employer's newly married daughter and her husband now occupy that room. For Ann, however, it is tolerable, as she still has a place to sleep, and she has an electric fan. Geraldine's house has only one bedroom, so her two helpers sleep in the living room, on the floor, while Geraldine and her baby sleeps in the bedroom.

In one of Carmen's previous employments, she and two other helpers slept in designated servants' quarters located in the kitchen area. This space was in appalling condition, such that when it rains, it drips, but their employers did not care about their condition.

Carmen: We slept in the kitchen area; there's a room there When it rains, it pours in that room. I complained. I cried. "My God, in my own house, I was satisfied with my life." I was complaining. "Why is it like this? Maybe, life is like this." I told my co-workers there, "You know what, my hands used to get wet only when it is eating time, and if ever we would get wet in the rain, my mother would panic. She's scared that we might get sick. And here – " yes, we would get wet in that there when it rains. [Dun kami sa kusina na may kwarto dito. . . . tapos nag-uulan tumutulo pa. Nagreklamo ako. Umiiyak ako, "Diyos ko sa bahay namin sapat na ang buhay ko." Nagreklamo ako. "Bat ganito. Siguro ganito talaga." Sabi ko sa mga kasam ko dun, "Alam nyo nababasa lang yung kamay ko dun pag kumakain na. Tapos pag nabasa kami sa ulan, natataranta na yung mama ko. Natataranta na dahil baka magkasakit kami. Tapos dito . . ." O, natutuluan kami pag ulan.]

Eating Patterns

Food quality and eating frequency are important factors in determining the helpers' working conditions. While the helpers do not expect to eat excellent food, they are sensitive about the quality of their food in relation to their employers. A secondary concern is the mealtime, and whether the helpers eat together with the employers or afterwards (see Figure 7).

The helpers' experiences vary, with some eating the same food, on the same table, and at the same time with their employers. For those who eat together with their employers, a few commented that while they are abstemious eaters, their employers still observe the amount of food they consume. Sometimes, the employers control their food consumption either through disapproving stares or by personally serving them with different, low quality food. Sweetie experienced being told by her employer's child not to eat too much. Upon hearing it, she felt so embarrassed that she stopped eating. Esmi shares her own story:

Esmi: With my mistress in Kauswagan, I was offended, because when we eat, she would serve the food herself, as she was concerned that we might take too much food. She would serve us sardines. For breakfast, she would only give us one piece of *pan de sal* (rolls). [Ang amo gyud nako sa Kauswagan kay, nakuan gyud ko, kay kung magkaon 'mi siya ang magsukad kay basin daghan ang among kaanon. Tinapa ang iyang ihatag sa amo. Kung mabuntag pod isa ra ka buok pandesal ang ihatag. Usahay maniudto ala 1:00, alas tres kay daghan man god tawo, kay carenderia man to.

Figure 7 Example of Domestic Worker's Eating Pattern



Below is a newspaper-published account of a mistress, Leah de Velez (2000), in which she openly expressed her disgust with her helper's eating habit, that it destroyed her food budget. She did not only remark on her helper's huge food consumption, but more significantly, she emphasized her helper's height and weight.

Leah: The third maid came a month before I gave birth. Only 16 years old and under 5 feet, this girl had the girth and weight of a police general before Panfilo Lacson's [chief of Philippine National Police] time, accentuated by a missing neck. She was obese, and for a good reason: she could consume huge amounts of food. For her, we had to adjust our grocery budget. Five kilos of rice that was normally enough for two weeks lasted only a week. A kilo of meat that we could stretch to three meals was gone in one sitting. Once I had the misfortune of bringing her to my mother's birthday party, and she ate half of the birthday cake (which measured 16"x12"). We opted to look at the positive side: no food was being wasted.

Some helpers observed with resentment the stark difference between their employers' food and their own; describing their

employers' food as delicious, while theirs as ordinary. Carmen, for instance, complains silently why her employers' meal is different from hers.

Carmen: Their food is tasty, but our food is just fish. The fish, however, is still freshly cooked. They also let us eat tasty food, if they have leftovers. [Sa kanila yung masarap. Pero sa amin yung isda . . . ganun lang. Pero talagang bagong luto. Pero pinapakain din kami ng mga bagong pagkain yung ulam nila yung lang mga tira na lang nila na example may natira diyan sa niluto nila na masarap na pagkain, so ibigay nila . . . Sige iulam nyo rin yan. Ganyan.]

One domestic worker, Maria, associates the helper-employer food differences with ethnicity. She explains her observation as follows:

Maria: I have experienced eating inferior food intended for the maids. In Manila, the maid eats corn and the viand is dried fish. In Marawi, because they (employers) are Maranao (a Muslim ethnic group), their viand is fish, the large one, but for us helpers, only *Galunggong*, the cheapest kind of fish. In my present employment, however, whatever my employers eat, I can also eat. [Nakaagi man gyud ko nang ug pila ka agalon, nang, lahi ang pagkaon sa maid. Sa Manila, ang maid mais, ang sud-an bulad. Sa Marawi ang ilang sud-an, kay Maranao man, sila ang ilang sud-an isda aw, Carabao kanang isda nga dagku peru sa amo-a Galunggong. Peru diha, kung unsay ilang makaon, makakaon sab mi kung isda. Isda.]

A number of helpers eat with their employers. Petra eats with her sir, who often comes home after all the family members have eaten. Her sir would ask her to join him at the table while he eats. Her ma'am, on the other hand, would be sleeping by then. Yolanda also experienced having a good employer, who invited her to join the family in the meals. Sweetie, Lourdes, Giselle, Alma, Nelda, and all the focus group participants in NHA said that in their current employment, they would eat together with the family, and they eat the same food. Nelda once told her employer that she would rather eat afterwards, so she could focus on serving the family, but her employer would not hear such kind of reasoning, and would always urge her to eat with them.

Nelda: The way they treat me is just like part of their family, such that I can eat whatever they eat. [Ako kay ang ilang treat sa ako kay mora ra pod ko ug kanang ka pamilya ra pod nila kanang manga-on unsa pod ang ilang makaon kaon pod nako.]

A few employer informants encouraged their helpers to join them in their meals; however, the helpers would often decline. In Jary's case, her helpers would not even eat ahead of them, even if there were times, when she and her husband would arrive home late. Although, she asked her helpers not to wait for them, the helpers were still reluctant to eat before them. Gloria faces similar situation:

Gloria: I don't know. Sometimes, when June and I are alone, I would let them join us, but they don't. Sometimes I eat alone, and I ask them to join me, because it is so boring to eat alone. Sometimes, Libby would join me. [Ambot nila ana, usahay ako lang ug si June, usahay ipadungan man nako piro di man! Usahay ako ra gani usa. Ako ganing ingnon nga ubani sa ko ninyo bi, kay lain kaayo mag kaon nga ako ra isa. Usahay si Libby modugan sa akooa.]

When Merly was engaged in paid domestic work, she would not join her employers in their meals because she was ashamed. Being the domestic worker that she was, she preferred to eat after them, conforming to her low status. Likewise, Marge, Esmi, Enriquita, Virginia and Heide do not join their employers. Virginia was particularly conscious that her employer would watch her while she ate, so she preferred to eat after everyone had eaten, even if she was already starving. All the focus group participants in the Cathedral Park agreed that they do not like to eat with their employers because of the shame associated to eating with people with higher status, particularly their employers. Alma, on her part, refuses to eat with her employers, as it would interfere with her serving the family, preferring to focus on one task at a time. On rare occasions, like when the mistress' spouse is not around, the helper might join her mistress in eating.

Access to Household Appliances

Appliances have two functions for the helpers: there are appliances that make their work lighter and there are appliances that improve their quality of life. Vacuum cleaner, dishwasher, washing machine, gas range, and microwave oven facilitate a speedy completion of housework. Vacuum cleaners and dishwashers are not common in the Philippines, but washing machines are widely available in middle-class households. Most people, however, still prefer hand washing, especially for delicate clothes. Gas range and/or electric stove are a good improvement from the not-so-long-ago firewood-based cooking. Television set, VHS/DVD player, CD component, computer, telephone, air conditioner/electric fan, and other household appliances make house living entertaining, comfortable, and fun.

In this study, some helpers have full access appliances at any time, while other are restricted to some appliances. I will not quantify how many helpers are given the opportunity to use everything in the household, because the helpers have had varying experiences depending on their employment history. What follows are the helpers' and employers' accounts on the use and non-use of these appliances.

Crisanta, Alma, and Petra are allowed to use all appliances in the household. Crisanta's mistress imposes restrictions on the use of appliances to other helpers, but not to her. As she is the most trusted helper in the household, she is given the key to the appliances, which are obviously locked.

Four employer informants – Aileen, Babsie, Rosalinda, and Helen – expressed that their helpers are free to use all the appliances, that they do not have any restrictions.

Helen: Television, computer – sometimes she (helper) would play with the computer, so they will have fun. It's fine with me, no problem. What I am concerned or strict about is the way she cares for my child, because I am scared of what might happen. [Kanang TV, kanang computer. Usahay kuanon nila ang computer nga para malingaw sab ang usa. Pwede ra walay problema. Dayon ang ako lang, istrikta kaayo ko sa bata ba. kay mahadlok ko ug unsa ang mahitabo ba.]

Babsie: Yes, because she also likes that. She is free to watch. When we are not around, she is free to turn on the TV. She is free to use all . . . telephone. All. [O, kay gusto man sab siya ana. Free siya motan-aw. Anang wala mi, free man siya. Free gyud siya mo-open sa TV, ana tanan. Basta tanan okay . . . telephone. Tanan.]

Aileen: I don't count that against them because they are always around, and I can also call them anytime to do the laundry, to wash the dishes, so they can also do what they want in the house. I don't prohibit them from watching TV. [Dili na ko makwenta sa ila. Kay pwede ra gud nako sila tawagon para manglaba, para manghugas ug plato . . . They can also do what they want in the house. Ingon tag, di man pud ko bawal ug mga TV.]

Rosalinda: For the appliances, they are free to use them. My baby likes music, so I play music while the baby is sleeping. So I would teach them how to operate the appliances. My husband also placed a radio in their bedroom. [Sa mga gamit, free sila. Kanang . . . labi na pag-anak nako kay ssa music kuan . . . Pagtutugan nako natulog ang baby lugar. Katudluan nako para sila ang makakuan. Ako pung husband, kuan pud kaayo siya nga butangan pud bitaw sila ug ila pud. Kuan like radio. Pamalitan ug radio sa ilang kwarto.]

Although these helpers are given a free hand on the use of the appliances, many do not dare to operate these machines for various reasons. Coming from a lower class background, many of these helpers are unaccustomed to hi-tech household electrical devices. Many lack the knowledge to operate them, so they avoid the use of these technologies, fearing they might destroy these machines, when they press the wrong button. Sylvia and Jane are quite selective on what they use.

Sylvia: There are no restrictions, but I also do not touch anything. I do not use them because they might be destroyed. I only use the cassette player. [Wala man, pero dili man sab ko manghilabot. Dili man ko paalig-alig ug gamit kay basin maguba hinuon. Kini ra ang cassette kay kanunay maoy akong magamit.]

Jane: As I have noticed, we were not prohibited from operating the appliances, but we just have this prerogative not to use them, because we're scared that we might destroy them. The other thing is, we do not know how to operate them. There are exceptions for the little (cheap) ones like cassette player, iron, stove, or things that we use daily for housework. We always have an electric fan in our bedroom. We can use the aircon in their bedroom . . . the computer, we don't know how to use it. The CD component system, sometimes we operate, but we don't intentionally use it because we also have other tasks to do. For the TV, we can watch if we like to, but we are too tired to watch. It's better to sleep to let our exhausted bodies acquire some rest. We are also allowed to use the phone. [Sa akong namatikdan wala may ginadili kanamo, peru kami man lang ang dili mogamit tungod kay mahadlok man sab kami nga madaot ug osa pa dili man namo mabal-an kung unsaon ang paggamit. Gawas nuon sa mga ginagmay sama sa cassette, plantsa, stove, aw kanang mga gamitonon sa panimalay nga adlaw adlaw gyud gikinahanglan maoy among gamiton sab ang electric fan naa man sa among kwarto syempre among magamit ang aircon atu-a ra sa ilang kwarto, ang computer syempre dili mi kabalo dili sab mi mogamit. Ang component, usahay magkantakanta peru dili man gyud ingon nga among tuyoon kay wala man sab mi panahon maghimo ana. Ang Tv' Kung gusto mi manan-aw okey ra nga among ablihan pod ug manan-aw kami peru kapoy man pod maayo pag matulog kay makapahulay ra atong lawas. Ang telepono pwede man pod among gamiton.]

For others, their non-use of the appliances is their way of respecting their employers.

Nelda: We have to think it over; we have to respect our employers. If someone calls me by phone, I would tell the caller, especially if it becomes too frequent, not to call me often, because I would get embarrassed to my employers. [Kanang, unsa na, morag maghunhuna pod ta ba, magrespito pod ka sa agalon Ba, kung naay manawag, ingnon lang pod nako nang manawag labina ug sige ayaw lang pagsige ug tawag kay maikog ko sa akong agalon.]

Jane: Because I consider this house like my own, I have to take very good care of the things inside. [Sama nga nag-isip ako nga

amo kining kaogalingon gyud nga panimalay mao nga mag-amping usab kami sa mga gamit sulod sa panimalay.]

While Jane, in her narrative above, takes care of her workplace the way she does to her own home, she failed to mention that in her own household she would not hesitate to use any available appliances.

Citing their helpers' overuse of the telephone as an excuse, some employers resorted to restrict their helpers from using it, while allowing access to other appliances. Below are the employers' justifications regarding access or restriction to household appliances.

Gloria: They can use everything, except the computer. They don't have access to the computer. As to the telephone, they don't have access to long distance calls. [Tanan, except sa computer, wala silay access sa computer.oy! piro ang telepono wala silay long distance long distance ako nang gina close and direct dialing.]

Geraldine: Yes, except for abuse of telephone use; they would use the phone at night, until midnight. There are times, when their boyfriends would call for like one hour. It's not that I restrict them, but it's an unholy hour. Sometimes, I would wake up to hear their giggles. [O. Except lang kanang telepono nga magtelebabad ining tungang gabii. Kana bitawng usahay manawag ang mga boyfriends nila nga dugay kaayo. Abtan ug isa ka oras. Ana bitaw. Na dili man ingon nga gai-restrict nako pero di ko gusto anang unholy hour. O. Makamata ka kay naay nag-agik-ik didto sa kilid.]

Rosita: I really don't tell them to – to use any of the appliances without – whenever we're not around, because I would not want them to manipulate – ah, any of our appliances, because they might be destroyed . . . The TV – I really wouldn't want them to manipulate it themselves. And then – even our karaoke, component. I really wouldn't want them to operate those. Not even the telephone. They will only answer some calls. I would not want them to . . . use it themselves because they are the only ones left at home. And if I would give them

that privilege to do so, then, chances are, they just engage themselves in some ah, what you call, *telebabad*.⁶

Aside from electricity cost, a few employers, like Rosita, prohibit their helpers from using their appliances rationalizing that the helpers do not know how to activate the machines, and fearing that these might get destroyed. This is consistent with Tolen's (2000, 71) research in India where, "[r]ecounting an incident where the peon had turned the mixie (blender) without holding down the lid, splattering chutney all over the kitchen, one bungalow amma [mistress] said, 'we don't let the servants run the gadgets. Because of ignorance, they don't know how to use them'."

Some helpers are not permitted to use washing machines. Furthermore, some helpers like Inna, Ed, and Luisita are restricted from watching the television. Officially, Inna is allowed to watch television when her employers are around. She often disobeys this regulation, however, and just works it out wisely that she is not caught. In addition, some family members are around during the day, so she frequently watches with them. So far, Inna never missed her favorite show, a Mexican telenovela, "Rosalinda," which is shown every evening.

Her employer's restriction from television use offends Ed, as she does not have any other form of entertainment, and it can get lonesome at home, especially because her mistress also prohibits her from hanging out in their neighbor's house to chat with their neighbor's domestic worker. Similarly, Luisita is prohibited from using the appliances. To avoid their employers' wrath, Ed and Luisita abide by this restriction. Indeed, they are quite scrupulous in their behavior at home -- they did not even let me come to their workplace to interview them.

Summary

While the domestic helpers' role is supposedly to assist the employing families, the reality shows that helpers perform most of the housework, with some employers extending occasional assistance.

⁶ *Telebabad* is a new word formed from the combination of English and Tagalog terms, telephone and *babad*, which means to soak. *Telebabad* refers to hours of conversation in the phone.

Exploitation of the helpers' labor extends beyond the normal work hours and the job description, as many employers pass on to their helpers a part of their own paid work, which they take home. The helpers' labor power is not only utilized for domestic purposes, but is also extended to their employers' non-domestic involvements, such as economic, religious, or socio-civic activities. These domestic helpers follow all orders from their *agonal* (masters), and they never caution their *agonal* that the tasks assigned to them are already outside their role as domestic workers.

Living in their employers' homes put the domestics under a twenty-four hour work cycle. Occasionally they are roused from their sleep to attend to their employers' nocturnal requests, and yet, they always begin their work at dawn to have everything prepared when their employers wake up. Residing in their employers' house does not mean, however, that they share their employers' middle-class lifestyle, as there are certain restrictions on household appliances, electricity, and water. For the employers' part, restricting helpers from too much use of water or appliances boils down to saving on cost or possible repair. On the other hand, if employers restrict their helpers from using appliances for fear they might get destroyed, they could teach the helpers how to use them properly. For the helpers' part, their domestic servant role makes them reluctant to operate expensive household appliances, which they do not own.

The helpers' living arrangements are indications of apparent class divisions in the household, of letting the helpers know where they stand and what their roles are in the household. The inferior quality of helpers' sleeping arrangements demonstrates the apparent class distinction in the household. While sleeping in the baby's room offers the helper a comfortable sleeping atmosphere, it also translates into nocturnal work, as she is expected to be up at night to change diapers, feed the baby, and put the baby to sleep again. Sharing a bedroom with the mistress' daughter may mean that the family does not have enough bedrooms in their household, and that the daughter does not mind sharing it with the helper. Class distance, therefore, is shaped by employer's financial capacity to dissociate herself from her helper. Sharing the bed with the mistress, when the husband is out of town, is again an act of *emotional labor*.

The helpers' inferior living arrangement offers another example of the "ideological camouflage" (Patterson 1982) of employers. Experiencing the stigmata associated with servanthood, these

domestic helpers sleep in less comfortable areas of the house. Assuming they have their own bedrooms, these bedrooms are designated servants' quarters. In less affluent employing households, where there is insufficient number of bedrooms, the helpers sleep in the living room or in the hallway. It seems that the employers only apply the "part of the family" dogma when such practices benefit them, and they abandon this philosophy when the practice functions for the helper's advantage. For example, to motivate the helpers to work longer hours, employers verbalize this "part of the family" myth, hoping this will encourage the helpers to perform a labor of love for the employer household. By redefining their workplace to be their home and by casting their employers as the equivalent of parents, employers conceal the intent of their demands that helpers perform additional tasks within and outside the employing households.

Disparities in food arrangements also indicate class distance. In terms of eating pattern, many domestic workers eat after their employers, with either leftover or a different, less expensive meal. When their employers let them join their meals, these helpers perform additional tasks of serving emotional labor tied to family members' conversations. Furthermore, some of them have to eat less; lest, they receive disapproving stares, if not a blatant remark, from the family members. The employers' restriction on household appliances is another indicator of domestic workers' marginal position in the household. Even if these domestics are given access, many of them still refrain from operating these machines, based on their consciousness of their non-ownership of these technologies. Furthermore, they may be asked to pay for the repair of broken appliances.

Chapter 5

Maternalism in Mistress-Maid Relations

Mistresses exert dominance over the domestics through maternalism, a strategy that camouflages the mistresses' exploitation over their domestic workers' reproductive labor power. In this chapter, I examine how maternalism is formed, sustained, and reproduced in the mistress-maid relationship in the context of a Third World, medium-sized city, in which there is little ethnic difference between employers and domestics. Maternalism is a dialectical process. On the one hand, the relationship is exploitative because it is founded on one woman taking advantage of the cheap labor power of another woman. On the other hand, the circumstances under which this relationship is played out between women is particularistic and conditions are repeatedly negotiated between mistress and maid. I will examine the forms of maternalism, describing how the mistress uses it as an ideological camouflage to hide oppressive practices. I will also explain the ways in which maternalism can be both beneficial or destructive to the helper.

Forms of Maternalism

Previous studies on mistress-maid relations have stressed maternalism as a powerful asymmetrical bond between women. Some feminists have analyzed maternalism as the mistress' guise to exploit her maid's labor power (Glenn 1980; Rollins 1985; Romero 1988), while others interpreted maternalism in a more neutral if not positive way of patronage (Tellis-Nayak 1983; Ozyegin 2001). In this study, maternalism is examined as a continuum of support and control, ranging from "part of the family" ideology, the *utang na loob* system of obligation, to control and exploitation of the maid's body, time, space, and relationships.

"Part of the Family" Ideology

In this study, the mistress demonstrates maternalism toward the helper by integrating her into the family, using kin terms, treating her like a child, giving gifts, and providing financial, educational, and

emotional support. The other side of the coin is that the mistress controls the domestic helper's body, time, space, and relationships, as will be discussed later in this chapter. In other words, maternalism functions as an ideological camouflage, a strategy that seems to be helpful for the helper and hides exploitation at the guise of "part of the family" idiom. As Anderson aptly states, "[b]eing told that you are 'part of a family' often conceals the real power relationships at work, and this leads to confusion and exploitation" (Anderson 2000, 31). Kin terms are often used between domestics and their employers. Employers described their relationship with their helpers as similar to mother-daughter connection, the employers regard the helpers as their own children needing guidance, direction, and/or punishment.

Likewise, the maids' initial responses also corresponded to the mother-child bonding, which the employers portrayed. In general, the helpers' responses towards maternalism focused on the positive side, an indication absorbed loyalty towards their mistresses. Many likened their mistresses to their own mothers with whom they feel emotionally and financially attached, especially when kin terminology is applied to dissociate them from the servant role.

Janet: So, how was your life in Manila? How did your master and mistress treat you? [Unya kamusta man ang imong kinabuhi didto sa Manila? Kumusta ba ang imong mga amo?]

Jennifer: They were kind. [Maayo man pud sila.]

Janet: Did you not have any problems with them? [Wala ka nagkaproblema?]

Jennifer: No. They were very kind. They even called me daughter. [Wala. Boutan kaayo sila na. Anak man gani ang ilang tawag sa akua.]

Janet: They called you daughter? [Anak ang ilang itawag?]

Jennifer: (Nods head. Imitating her employer) "Daughter, bring me that thing. Please. ["Anak kuhaa sa to ang kuan bi. Palihug."]

The use of kin terms is very common in Third World countries, like in India (Tellis-Nayak 1983; Dickey 2000), Nepal (Shah 2000), Indonesia (Adams 2000), the Philippines (Dumont 1995), and Peru (Young 1987), among other countries. Instead of the formal name-calling like ma'am or Mrs. Rodriguez, many employers suggest to be

called *manang*, *ate*, or auntie.¹ Additionally, a one-way gift giving initiated by the mistress is related to the whole notion of being part of the family. When Giselle was asked why she likened her mistress to her own mother, she associated it with her mistress' giving her gifts.

Helpers favoring maternalism and seeking companionship also prefer to have unemployed mistresses. In this way, both women sustain the system of maternalism. While the mistress' absence in the house at daytime facilitates a relaxed working atmosphere for the domestic worker, lone helpers have to deal with their need for interaction. Due to their relative isolation in the house at daytime, lone helpers are likely to prefer unemployed mistresses, so they can interact with someone. Maria speaks of her previous experience wherein her employer only comes home in the evenings:

Maria: As for me, I prefer to have my mistress around, because when I used to work in Manila, my mistress would only come home late at night. Because her office was in Makati, and we lived in Quezon City, she only came home at night. I didn't like it because there's no one I could talk to when I had problems. I prefer my mistress to be just in the house. [Dili ako lahi sab ko, mas ganahan ko ug naa diha akong agalon, kay didto sa maynila kay nakakuan ko nga ayha ra ko olion ug magabie. O, kay ang iyang kuan adto ang iyang office layo man tua ra sa Makati, onya Quezon city ra god ko, magabi-e ra ko olion, dili ko gusto ug ingon ana kay dili ko kasumbong kung unsay akong problema. Mas ganahan ko nga naa ra sa balay ang akong agalon.]

While class-based exploitation is rampant in the mistress-maid relations through maternalism, women also go beyond the boundary of class difference to support each other, and they work together to help fulfill each other's needs. The helper provides enormous assistance to wage-earning women in the Philippines, enabling them to have a hassle-free domestic life. The mistress in turn, can go beyond her employer role, and help the maid fulfill some of her potentials by sending her to school and encouraging her to have a positive outlook

¹ *Manang* and *ate* are Cebuano and Tagalog terms, respectively, used by a younger sibling to address an older female sibling in lieu of the elder sibling's name to show respect. Younger individuals also use *Manang* or *Ate* to address older women.

in life. The female employer can also be there for her helper, whenever the latter goes through a painful process, like those related to love life or sexual concerns. It is in this kind of atmosphere that the mistress and maid can form a solid bond, which facilitates a long term-employment, and can even continue even after the employment contract. This is maternalism expressed in a positive sense. Below are the ways in which the positive aspects of maternalism are practiced.

Mistresses extend educational support to their helpers and are concerned about their helpers' progress in school. Some mistresses, who send their helpers to specialized Sunday schools, personally register their helpers, attend parent-teacher meetings, buy clothes for them, and follow up on their assignments. Jennifer's employers belong to the lower middle-class, yet they reach out to help Jennifer finish her education.

Jennifer: "Jennifer, when is your exam?" "On this date Ate." "Go study!" My mistress would treat me like that. Sometimes, when I have a problem with my assignment, I will share it with both of them, and they will help me. ["Jennifer kanus-a ang inyong exam?" "Sa kuan te." "Study sa dinha," inanaon man sab ko nila. Usahay kanang naa lugar koy problema sa assignment, I-share nako sa ila. Ila pud kong tabangan.]

Supporting the helpers through their education is probably the biggest contribution a mistress can ever give to her helper, as it will have a long-term impact, and can enable the helper to leave paid domestic work and enter into a more prestigious job. Some employers include the helper in their plans, like hiring the helper on a non-domestic work position when the helper completes her education. Brenda, who is currently in law school and is supporting Carmen through college, promised Carmen that she would hire her as a secretary when she starts her private practice. Employers who provide educational support to their helpers hope that, through hard work and determination, these helpers will abandon the domestic servant role and have a better future.

Various literatures often report about the emotional labor performed by the helpers for her mistresses, such as listening to their stories and problems (Rollins 1985). Indeed, domestic workers in this study perform massive emotional labor for their mistresses, but so do some mistresses for their helpers. For example, there are reported cases in which female employers provide listening ears and encourage

their helpers to work hard to obtain college diplomas, despite the difficult circumstances. There are cases where female employers not only listen, but also extended material support.

Clearly, there are different interpretations for similar behavior. When the domestic helper listens to her mistress' problems, it is perceived as an emotional labor expended by the domestic worker. When the mistress, however, is the one who listens to her domestic worker's problems, it is viewed as a maternalistic behavior. Whatever interpretations available in the academic world, what is important at this point of analysis, are the helpers' interpretations of their mistresses demonstrating concern about their lives. Most of the helpers, whose mistresses showed interest in their lives and are listening to them, expressed considerable satisfaction about their work. This is because their relationship with their mistresses is a very important aspect of their job satisfaction. The following is Jennifer's account on how her female employer would show concern in her studies.

Jennifer: Sometimes, they (male and female employers) would advise me to study hard, especially that I am poor (laughs), that I should continue my studies, so that I would not remain a helper. I should take a course that can really help me improve my life situation. [Ila pud ko usahay tambag-tambagan, inana pud, "Eskwela na lang gyud ug kuan kay pobre man mo, eskwela na lang gyud aron inig kahuman dili na pud ko nila, dili lang pud hangtud sa katabang gani. Ang akong kuhaon. Kinahanglan nga mo-improve pud ko ba. Ana man pud sila sa akooa.]

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

Social involvement is another venue where domestic workers can help other domestic helpers, especially the child laborers and the victims of domestic and sexual abuse. Yolanda's employer, who was

then heading a non-government organization, which aims at protecting child laborers, asked her if she would be willing to do advocacy work. Presented with an opportunity to embark on a more challenging work, to continue her studies, and to help other domestic workers, Yolanda ventured into a different world: working in an office, providing a listening ear to young women who come for help, and speaking on radio programs about her experience when she was still a domestic worker.

Beauty competition poses, yet, another challenge where helpers can demonstrate their intellect, talents, and skills, and debunk the helper-stereotypes. While there are mistresses who are threatened by pretty helpers, there are also employers who enthusiastically support their helpers to join in beauty pageants. Having observed that her helper has good looks, Babsie encouraged her helper to join in domestic helpers' beauty pageant, promised to buy her clothes, and everything that she needed to win. Class distinction, however, is at play in this context. While Babsie recognized her helper's beauty, the kind of beauty pageant that she suggested to her helper was a class-based beauty pageant – a beauty contest for the domestic helpers.

The helper's meager income becomes evident when helpers often need to advance their wages. While the helpers obtain free board, they need cash to send to their families. Understanding the situation, many mistresses offer advanced payment to their helpers, in addition to extending material support. Whenever the helpers go home for a weekend visit, some mistresses pack food or used clothing for the helpers' family, and drive them to the bus terminal.

Enriquita: They would also send me off at the terminal, and Ate would give me a lot of bread, so that I can bring some kind of gift to my younger siblings. [Ihatod man sab ko nila sa terminal dayon padalhan man ko ni ate sa daghan pan para duna pod koy mahatag sa akong mga manghud.]

This is reminiscent of Ozyegin's (2001) research in Turkey wherein the mistress would fill a bag of food every night for her live-out domestic worker's family. The difference lies in the manner domestic workers perceive their mistresses' act: while Turkish domestics take it as their mistresses' obligation to them, many Filipina workers in my study view it as a performance of kindness and generosity. In general, my maid-informants accept their employers' small acts of benevolence that indicate that they are family members

too. They do not only interpret their employers buying them clothes as benefiting them economically, but also as an act of caring and concern.

Carmen: What I like is she (mistress) shows to me that she is kind. She is taking care of me. Whenever it's my birthday, we would eat out, and she has a gift for me. [Basta ang gusto ko lang kasi, pinapakita niya na mabait siya. Pinapakita niya na inaalagaan niya ako. Tapos pag during may birthday ako kumakain kami. Lumalabas kami. Tapos may regalo siya sa akin.]

When Enriquita was asked why she has remained with her current employer for several years, she responds:

Enriquita: Why? . . . because they are kind, they are kind. [Ngano man?...Buotan man sila, buotan man sila.]

My employer informants admit that they are treating their helpers as part of the family, and their gift giving is part of that familial treatment. However, many of them acknowledged that their primary reason for their buying their helpers deodorant and other personal hygiene needs is to keep their helpers clean and tidy, especially when these helpers handle their babies. It is imperative for them that the one caring for their baby is spick and span.

When the helper imbibes the ideology that she is a part of the family and not merely a helper, the mistress then, is in a position to control her helper's life, using subtle and obvious manipulation tactics. It also enables the mistress to ask her helper to do additional tasks including emotional labor, thus reaping more of her helper's labor power. The "part of the family" ideology and control of the helper's life are reinforced by the Filipino system of obligation, *utang na loob*, which sustains the maternalistic relationship between mistress and maid. This cultural system is a keystone of the ideological camouflage of employers.

Utang na Loob

One of the very powerful Filipino value systems in the Philippines is *utang na loob*, or debt of gratitude.² *Utang na loob*, which literally means inner debt, is a “system of obligation” in which “one favor demands another” (Andrews 1998), thereby creating a “circle of Filipino relationships” (Tanner 2001). Hollnesteiner (1973) described it as contractual reciprocity. *Utang na loob* functions in a way that certain favors can never be repaid with any amount of money, i.e., saving one’s life, recommending someone to an important position, and raising children. In many instances, those who have acquired *utang na loob* from someone pay back the debt or favor in other forms and with interest (Hollnesteiner 1973). It can happen that the former lender of *utang na loob* will become the receiver in a different occasion, and so the relationship based on debt of gratitude may continue and form a solid bond between individuals.

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

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

Back in the 1930s, there was a young, penniless woman who sought medical help from a doctor. Because she did not have money to pay, she offered her domestic services to the doctor. This poor woman was separated from her husband and had one daughter who stayed with her in the doctor’s house. When this doctor got married, the

² For a discussion on the relation between slavery in the Philippines and *utang na loob*, see Scott, W. H. (1991). Slavery in the Spanish Philippines. Manila, De La Salle University Press.

woman continued her services to the family. She and her daughter attended to the doctor's eight children; one of them was Babsie, my informant. When the woman's estranged husband retired and could not receive his veteran pension without his family with him, he took back the woman and her daughter. After the woman's husband died, the woman and her daughter came back to Babsie's family. Years later, the woman died from cancer. The daughter remained, got married, built a house at the back of the house of Babsie's mother, and died at seventy. This daughter also took care of Babsie's children.

Like in the above story, Geraldine's helpers are the children of her mother's helper. Geraldine's mother employed her helper Narcisa, who was a distant relative, when the latter was only ten years old. Narcisa remained employed until she got married. She then moved into a different house with her husband, and delivered her six children. When her husband left her, she moved back to the house of Geraldine's mother and brought her six children with her. Eventually, Geraldine's mother donated a small house for them, located very close to her own. Geraldine saw Narcisa's children grew up, and when it was Geraldine's time to marry, she took two of the six children in her own house and supported them through college, gave them a monthly salary, and let them budget for their expenses. The other children were spread to relatives who could send them to school. Through such maternalism, the employing class keeps dependent servants locked into intergenerational poverty.

Maternalism and Control

Control, an indication of power, is a given component in the mistress-maid employment relationship. In this study, the forms of control range from mild to extreme. In live-in arrangement, the mistress' control over her helper is greater, as it "severely curtails both factually and symbolically, [the] servant's privacy and freedom of movement" (Coser 1973, 33). The restrictions discussed below are indications of mistress' control of the maid's body, space, and relationships. Because the helper is working full-time, day and night in the household, every waking hour is subject to the employer's regulation. The only exception is the weekly half-day off. Even during the helper's day off, some employers would give suggestions on the kind of clothing the helper should wear. The employers have their own ideologies to justify these control measures, claiming the restrictions

are for their own good or for what they perceive to be “for the helper’s safety.”

Control of the Maid's Body

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

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

Janet: Uh-huh

Lolit: and a toothbrush.

Gloria: If you have helpers with underarm odor, your children are most likely to get bad odor too. That’s why I like those helpers who are neat. Like Libby -- before, I would really include a deodorant for her in my grocery list. I would encourage my helpers to apply deodorant. [Kanang mga helper nga bahug iluk, pati imong anak mabaho na hinoon. Kanang mga limpyu pud ba.kana si Libby sa una ako man gyud nang pakuanon gyud, apil gyud na sa akong grocery, tagaan nako ug tawas, sila tawas pamutang mo ana ha?]

At times, the mistress’ “involvement” in her maid’s body can really get intimate, and can cost the employer a few pesos. Aileen buys panties, brassieres, and sanitary napkins for her helpers.

Aileen: Yes, toiletries -- I buy those for them, because one time, when I came home, I caught one of them using the baby diaper as sanitary napkin. [O, mga toiletries -- Ako nay magpalit ana kay aguy pagmuuli usahay paghimuon na lang ug pasador mga lampin sa akong anak didto. Guy nasakpan ko ma na.]

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

Sylvia: Sometimes, she (mistress) gives me some of her clothes and she buys me panties. And I am free to use everything, even the lotion and body powder. My employers are kind; they are like my siblings. [Usahay sab hatagan man ko niya sa iyang

sinina o palitan man sab ko niya ug pante dayon libre man ko sa tanan lakip gani lotion, ug polbos. Mga boutan man sila mora ra pod sila ug akong mga igsuon.]

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

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

Luisita: I can only take a shower once a day. Sometimes, she (mistress) would instruct me to take a bath less frequently, as I might catch “panuhot” (an illness characterized by having cold air inside the body), but I understand that it is the rising water bill that she is worried about. [Maligo ka osa ra sa osa ka adlaw, usahay man ingnon ko niya nga dili magsige ug kaligo kay panohuton peru makasabot ko nga tungod sa bayronon, dili na lang ko magsigi ug kaligo.

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

Aileen: [My husband] and I would call the attention of our helpers when they get too sexy, like wearing mini skirts. They like to wear whatever is in fashion. [O. Badlungon pud namo ni [husband] kay naa say pagka-arte gamay. Magsanina sab anang mga mub-bo, kung unsay uso karon mao sab nay ila.]

This finding is consistent with a study in Madras, India, where employers restrict their servants from wearing “showy” clothing, and instead, advised them to put on a “plain white dress shirt and dark pants” (Tolen 2000). On the positive side, the helpers in this study are not asked to dress in uniform, which goes with the ideology that they

are “part of the family.” As long as their clothes are not too revealing, it is acceptable to the employers.

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

Yolanda: There are employers who do not understand what the helpers feel or how painful the treatment is. They cannot feel it because they come from well-to-do families. The way they look at you is that you are a helper; they pay you, so they can treat you like a pig. For a little mistake: kicking there, slapping here, and pulling of hair. [Kanang for example naa man guy employer nga kanang murag dili kasabot unsa na diay tong ilang na feel. Unsa na to kasakit ang ilang pagtratar sa ilang ano . . . Di nila ma-feel kay sila naggikan sila sa maayo nga pamilya. ikaw ang tan-aw nila sa imo katabang. Swelduhan ka so baboyon ka pagtagad. So gamay nimo nga mali, sipa didto, tamparos dire, hala bunotan ka ug buhok.]

Janet: Oh my God! [Hoy Ginoo ko!]

Yolanda: Yes, it was terrible; I was still nine years old. My experience was intense. My head hit the cement floor. She (mistress) held my hair, and pushed me down. [O, grabe nine years old pa ko. Grabe na ang akong experience. Nabunal ang akong ulo sa semento. Iyang gunitan ang akong buhok dayon ilamba.]

Janet: Just a moment. How did you react to all this abuse? [Time pa . . . unya giunsa man to nimo nga gipasakitan ka?

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

koy mahimo. Mohilak na lang ko. Moana na lang ko nganong inana. Nganong inana man modala ang tawo nga unta pareha ra man unta tao. Kibalo man sila nga tao ra sab. At the same time kung sila ang maka-experience ana sigurado sab nga masakitan sab sila.

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

Yolanda: It was fiesta . . . then, it was like, I was going crazy, because I was exhausted. I could not understand myself, and I did not know what to do first. The peanuts got burned. When she (mistress) saw what happened, she took the hot pan—I got wounds here (shows the scars on her arms). [Fiesta to sa ilaha. Gipasangag pa gyud ko ug mani. Unya, murag na buang-buang nako, kay kapoy. Murag di na nako masabtan ang akong sarili kung unsay buhaton. Unsay unahon nga trabaho. Napagod ang mani. Wa nako na . . . pagtan-aw niya nga napagod gikuha niya ang kalaha nga init. Mao ni siya ang mga samad-samad nako o.]

Janet: Oh, my God!

Yolanda: The peanuts were sticky and so hot. She was not contented with that, she took the burning firewood and hit my back with it. [Mamilit ang mga mani. Init ud kaayo nang mani kaaso. Di pa gyud siya kontento gikuha niya ang kalayo gihapak niya sa akong likod.]

Control of the Maid's Space

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

Mistresses presented three ideological rationales for this type of control: (1) so that the helpers could focus on their work, (2) so that the helpers would get punished for their mistakes, (3) so that the house would be secure from thieves (if it is locked), and (4) so that the helpers would know where they stood in relation to their employers. To what extent can the mistress impose her regulation and how do the helpers respond to such kind of restriction? Some of the helpers would still hang out at their neighbor's house and devised ways so they would not be caught. Others did not violate the rule at all. Some employers were shrewd – they knew if their helpers disobeyed their rules. Employer Merly would know if her helper went out to visit their neighbor's house, as her children or her neighbors would tell her. To be certain that their helpers stay inside, a number of employers would lock the house every time they would leave. In Yolanda's first experience being employed, she would be locked in the bedroom, whenever she made any mistake, which happened very often, considering her very young age, and she would only be let out to do the dishes.

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

Esmi: Now is our rest day, so we can go out, but on other days, never. It's not like when you are at your parents'. On the other hand, our mistress are responsible for us; if something bad will happen to us, our mistress will be blamed. That's why our mistress is not careless, and we should not abuse. [Parehas karon rest day namo, makagawas mi peru sa uban nga mga adlaw dili gyud. Dili parehas anang na-a ka sa imong ginikanan kay kung unsa man sab ang mahitabo sila ang agalon maoy ma-blame pod sa ginikanan mao nga dili pod sila magpasagad ug busa dili sab ta mag-abusar.]

Janet: Okay, how about the others? Enriquita? [Okey, ang uban, unsay ilang ikaw Enriquita?]

Enriquita: It's just the same. We have to behave well; we should not go out so often or we will be subject to suspicion, especially if our employer does not know us. Like now, I am not yet at home. I have bad feelings. My mistress told me a while ago, "Take care, Enriquita. Watch out, don't fool around." I said,

“No, Ate.” (Everybody laughs)]. [Parehas ra gihapon sa iya, magbinuotan gyud sa amo, dili pa kuan kay kung magsige ka ug lakaw-lakaw osa man gyud na nga ka dudahan ka ilabina ug amo nga dili makasinate sa imong kinaiya, diretso lang dayon ka, parehas sa ako karon wala ko kaoli patay nakuyawan na ra ba ko kasab-an na gyud ko giingnan ra ba ko nga pag-ayo-ayo ping ha bantay kaa basin magniyabag ka. Ingon ko nga “dili lagi te.”]

Control of the Maid's Time

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

Esmi: For us, this is a demanding job, and it is not like we are in our own home. If we want to rest, we cannot rest whenever we want to – not even when our body is exhausted, or when we feel ill – because we are only waged laborers. [Kami, lisoran man mi ana nga trabaho kay dili man gyud na amo-ang balay. Kung gusto ta mopahulay dili makapahulay bisan among lawas kapoy ug dunay gibate motrabaho lang gihapon kay dili man atong ginikanan igo ra man tang gisweldohan. Motrabaho man gyud sab ta kay aron atong mapalit ang atong mga gikinahanglan.]

Nelda: Our own house is a lot different compared to our workplace, because in our own house, we are not obliged to work, or we can work at our own pace, we can work slowly, and no one will get angry. In our employer's house, we are reluctant to do as we please, because we are paid. Even if our employers are kind, we watch our every move, and we are ashamed if we are not doing anything, because we are paid for our actions. We should not wait to be given orders. In our own home, no one orders us around. [Lahi ra gyud kaayo ang atong balay kaugalingon kay sa mangagalon kita, kay didto sa atong balay, dili ta mapugos nga motrabaho gyud. pwede maglangan langan sa buhat wala may masuko. Sa atong ipangamohan, maolaw man ta tungod kay gisweldohan god ta sa atong mga lihok bisan ug mga boutan pa ang atong mga amo, duna gyud ta"y kaolaw gihapon. Dili na man ta maghulat nga sugoon pa. Peru sa atu-a pwede ra onya onya-on way gabuot.]

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

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

mahimo tungod kay hapit tanang uras imo mang eserbisyo sa imong agalon. Sa panahon nga gusto ka nga molakaw, dili imo ang uras kay duna ka may agalon bisan pa ug imong day off maghunahuna gihapon ikaw nga ang mata sa imong agalon nagtan-aw kanimo dili ka makapagawas sa imong hunahuna sama sa imong buhaton sa imong ginikanan tungod kay imong gihunahuna nga sinoweldohan kalang nila. Ang katungod ilaha tanan lakip gani ang imong kaogalingong pamayhon kung mahimo diktahan pati ang andar sa imong hunahuna. Maayo lang kung makatunong sa agalon nga sama aning ako-a karon, peru mao man gihapon magdaginot gyud gihapon kita sa atong lihok. Magbantay sa kanunay para walay estoryahonon. Lisod bitaw gyud ang osa ka helper . . . peru unsaon taman ra sab diha ang nakab-ot nga grado.]

Control of the Maid's Relationships

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

Geraldine: My second helper left because I scolded her for not telling that the man that she was seeing was already her boyfriend. "I did not tell you not to have a boyfriend. What I am concerned about is that he is a real man and that he would visit here at home. What will happen if, God forbid, you will get pregnant? Who will be the man that I should run after, when I do not know him? [Kadtong second actually mihawa to siya sa akua kay permiro ako lagi siyang nasultian. Nakabsaan gyud nako siya. Kay ang iyang boyfriend, boyfriend na day sila wa siya nagsaba sa ako. "Wala baya tamo giingnan nga dili mo manguyab. Ang ako basta kay insakto nga lalake.

Mamisita dinhi. Ingon ana. Kay unya simbako mabuntis mo, kinsa manang akong gukdun? Nga wa man ko kaila?"]

Lolit: My helper told me that there is a guy who likes to visit her. I said, "You are alone in the house. Just let him come in the afternoon when we are around. Don't let him come when I am not here." [Nananghid siya sa ako nga [basig] nay gusto mamisita dinhi . . . Ingon ko nga, "Ikaw ra man gud isa dinhi dire . . . kuan lang, kana lang sa hapon. Kanang naa mi. ayaw lang nang wala ko."

Rosalinda: I have only one policy. If I do not know the person, or if there is someone that they would invite to come inside the house, they should introduce this person to us. If we are not around, they should not invite anyone to come in, unless they know that person. [Pero isa ra gyud ang akong kuan, kong dili gani nako kaila or kung naa silay [tao] nga ipasulod, ila gyung ipaila sa amoa. So, dili gani, wala gani mi, dili magpasulod ug tawo. Pero okay magpasulod ug tawo kung kaila sila.

Employer Aileen instructed her helper that if she would get pregnant, she would have to go home, because the employer would not accept additional person in her house. Aileen employed domestic workers to care for her children. If the domestic worker was pregnant or if she brought her child in the house, then, she would not be able to concentrate on the needs of Aileen's children. In addition, there would be a high likelihood that the children would fight, prompting the domestic worker to reprimand her own child regardless of fault, before the mistress would find out. As a rule, the child of the domestic worker would have to absorb the identity of a domestic worker's child, and therefore, play a subservient role in relation to the mistress' children.

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

In Aileen's case, the extent to which an employer is willing to help out the domestic helper becomes quite apparent. Aileen did not have the willingness to assist a pregnant helper, as it conflicted with her own interest to have someone work for her family. Instead, Aileen would be called on to care for this pregnant helper, who would be an

“added burden.” Gloria’s stand is different from Aileen’s. When a tricycle driver impregnated her first helper, Nelle, she would have wanted to let Nelle stay. However, the employer was rarely at home, so she never noticed the change in her helper’s body. On the sixth month of her pregnancy, Nelle asked to go home, promising that she would be back. She never returned.

Gloria: People were gossiping that there was a pregnant helper in our subdivision, but I did not know! My helper asked to go home for a short time, but after three days, I was wondering why she has not returned yet. Then, my neighbor, who was also my officemate, told me, “Glo, I will just tell you, because perhaps you are still expecting that Nelle would come back. Do you know that she is pregnant?” I said, “What? I didn’t know!” Then, I found out that Nelle’s father beat her up – so she came back and stayed at Bibet’s. I would have wanted to adopt her, because I was so sorry for her – and the guy would not admit that it’s his baby; the usual story . . . he said that there were many men in her life. [Nga buntis diay siya, naa kuno’y buntis diha nga katabang wala ko kabalo. Unya niuli siya ba kay naa sa kuno siya’y kuanon, Unsa man to akong katabang nga wala paman niuli, ingon man to siya nga 3 days after mouli. Unya, giingnan sa akong silingan who was my officemate at the time nga . . . Ann ,sultian ta nalang ka daan kay basin nag tuo ka nga mouli pa to si Nelle. Kabalo ka ba nga buntis to siya? Ingon ko nga ha? Wala ko kabalo! Unya I found out nga gikulata kuno to siya sa iyang Papa. So nibalik siya, diha ilang Bibet. Ako untang plano nga pa anakun siya diri sa balay kay looy man ka ayo siya. Unya ang Lalake dili pa gyud moangkun kay nag usual nga estorya nga daghan daw sila.

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

Dependency and Maternalistic Styles

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

Maid-Dependent Mistress

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

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

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

Below is a feature article published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer, describing the family members' dependency on their helpers.

EVERY morning, says a little girl, the name of "Chenelyn" resounds throughout their house. "Chenelyn!" her father yells and at once "the pots and pans start screaming . . . the kettle starts whistling . . . the dishes start clattering and the spoons and forks start rattling." "Chenelyn!" her brother shouts, and at once "the light turns on inside the bathroom . . . water thunders into the pails . . . toothbrushes, soap, shampoo and towels appear." "Chenelyn!" her sister wails and all of a sudden "the iron starts heating up . . . the ironing board gallops into place filled with wrinkled clothes . . . and in an instant Ate has neatly-pressed clothes" (David 1999).

The narrative shows evidence of how a helper's name, "Chenelyn" is called very often, even when Chenelyn is not yet done with her current task. Notice the way the little girl in the above narrative describes how Chenelyn's name reverberates in the house: it is associated with yelling, shouting, and wailing

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

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

Most of the world's wage-earning women do not employ domestic servants while raising children. So there is another factor at work here. The employer's claim "I cannot do it myself" is ideological camouflage, which conceals her class-protecting behavior and her unwillingness to engage in conflict with male household members. On the other hand, doing the work herself would lower her status among her class peers and would reflect negatively on her class position as a wage-earning woman. On the other hand, employing and exploiting cheap domestic servants will deter the employer from resisting the paternalistic system, which victimizes both mistress and maid. Thus,

by deciding she cannot do the work herself and must hire help, she maintains the paternalistic system, which puts her in this paradoxical position in the first place.

Mistress-Dependent Maid

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

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

businessman. [Wala koy masakaaan. Mianhi ko sa ciudad wala ko miduol sa akong auntie kay mao ra man gihapon kon moduol ko sa akong auntie diha kara man gihapon sa ilang balay unya pugngan ka unsa imong mahimo. Pugngan ka bitaw, ana. Unya dayon asa man ka mangita imong pagkaon? Asa man ka maguha sa imong . . . para sa personal nimo anang sabon, toothpaste, asa man ka ana manguha? Unya pagkahuman wala pa gyuud kay mapuy-an. Mag-lodge lugar ka? Magbayad ka ug binulan? On the way lugar nagsakay ko ug bus paingon sa ciudad, mao gyud ang akong huna-huna, "Lord, hatagi ko ug kuan magpa-helper na lang ko ani." Kung magpa-helper ka, libre man ka tanan. Naa ka nay puy-anan. Libre ka na tanan. Wa kay gasto, pakan-on ka pa. Ang imong sweldo nga madawat, intact gyud na. So unsa akong gibuhat? Bukidnon bus man sa una, dinhi pa sa Mercado ang terminal. Naglingkod ko diha. Kutub sa akong makita nga taxi ba, naa man gyud nay monaug nga murag donya bitaw. Moduol ko diha, "Ma'am magkinahanglan mo ug helper?" Ingon siya nga, "Kay ngano man diay day?" So nakakita ko ug kuan . . . Mrs. Enriquez. Kanang kuan bitaw kanang announcer siya sa kuan kanang TV host na siya karon. Ana. Si Mrs. Enriquez. Siya announcer man siya sa radyo, dayon ang bana ahente.]

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

When the mistress becomes aware of the high dependency of the helper toward her, the mistress tends to shift maternalistic styles. She may start immediately with strict rules and strong control measures. Knowing that Carmen badly needs a place to stay, Carmen's first mistress gave her only 50% of what the other helpers in that household were receiving. Likewise, Yolanda's first mistress beat her, locked her in the room, and gave her minimal food whenever she committed mistakes.

Mutual Dependency

There are certain conditions that mutual dependency between mistress and maid develop, and when this occurs, the level of asymmetry decreases, but not eliminated. Mutual dependency is most likely to occur when both women have no other support systems within their own social networks. An example would be Brenda and Carmen's mutually dependent relationship. Brenda is a battered mistress who separated from her spouse and has children to support, while Carmen, the maid, ran away from her family due to domestic violence and seeks for a "new family." While this type of relationship is still primarily mistress and maid, the circumstances affecting their lives – the shared experience of domestic abuse – transforms the nature of the relationship, making it supportive for both and less exploitative for the maid.

Some poor women enter into domestic work to escape family conflict or domestic violence. Petra, Virginia, Carmen, and Yolanda fall into this category. Not all of them landed with a mistress who shared the same field of experience, only Carmen did. Carmen witnessed how her male employer abused Brenda, her mistress. She was there when Brenda broke up with her spouse, and she stayed on while Brenda struggled to support her (Brenda's) children financially and emotionally. Carmen and Brenda's relationship is an ideal case for mutual dependency. Brenda needs Carmen to care for her children, while she works in Manila. Carmen needs Brenda to support her college education. Brenda is concerned about Carmen's ambitions, and Carmen wants to get a scholarship, so as not to become an additional burden on Brenda's depleting resources. Brenda, however, does not like Carmen to have too much pressure on her studies, as this would influence the way Carmen handles her children. They worked it out that Brenda would shoulder all of Carmen's school expenses, while Carmen assured Brenda that she would take charge of the house and the children. While Carmen is not earning any wage, she receives and budgets the money that Brenda sends for the children's tuition and allowance, utility bills, house amortization, and Carmen's own needs. This mutually dependent relationship shifts the relationship into a different level. It is no longer an employment relationship, as wage, which is the basis of an employment relationship, was already removed from their arrangement.

Mistress-Maid Interaction Patterns

The nature of mistress-maid interaction is reflective of maternalist power relations. In my interviews, I asked the helpers and employers about the ways they interact with each other. Part of the question was whether they think it possible for the helpers and mistresses to become friends. I categorized the responses as follows: mutual interaction, mistress-initiated interaction, maid-initiated interaction, and mutual distantiation (see Table 5). Mutual interaction means that both the mistress and the maid are open to share their lives to each other. Mistress-initiated refers to a more active disclosure on the part of the mistress, but passive response by the maid. Maid-initiated interaction is the opposite of the mistress-initiated pattern, and mutual distantiation refers to a minimal interaction on both sides and is mostly work-related conversations.

Table 5 Types of Mistress-Maid Interaction Patterns

	Mistress Interacts (+)	Mistress Withdraws (-)
Helper Interacts (+)	Mutual Interaction (++)	Helper-Initiated Interaction (+-)
Helper Withdraws (-)	Mistress-Initiated Interaction (-+)	Mutual distance (- -)

Mutual Interaction Pattern

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

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

Mistress-Initiated Interaction

Expectedly, the mistress-initiated maternalist interaction is a common pattern. The mistress, holding a more privileged and powerful position compared to the maid, is least likely to have any inhibition in starting any form of interaction with the maid. As Glenn states, "[t]he supposed inferiority and differentness of the domestic made it easy for the employer to be generous and to confide in her. The domestic is not in a position to harm her or make excessive demands, and secrets were safe with someone from a completely social world" (Glenn 1986, 159). The mistress can use the maid's time anyway she pleases; she can ask the maid to stop working and listen to her stories or her problems, and most often, the maid cannot protest, but succumb to her mistress' requests.

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

Bella: Because she is not my mother. Sometimes, she would tell us (helpers) not to hesitate to talk to her, but we are really shy.

When it comes to money, however, I would tell her that I needed to advance money to send to my family for birthday or fiesta celebration. She would give me money, but she would not deduct it from my wage. It's like giving me money. [Dili man gud nako mama. Usahay, moingon man siya nga ayaw lang mo kaulaw sa akua pero maulaw man gyud mi. Kay pananglit sa kwarta kanang mosulti ko nga nagkinahanglan ko ug kwarta bale advance ko kay akong ipadala sa amo-a kay birthday o fiesta ba kaha. Mohatag man siya pero dili na deduct sa akong sweldo morag bale hatag ra niya.]

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

Withdrawal from this type of maternalist interaction can be considered a form of professionalism (for example, see Romero 1988). By keeping such distance, the maid prevents the mistress from asking "more" from the domestic. Social distance also helps the domestic maintain psychological privacy, which is extremely important

especially when physical privacy is already deprived from her. Many Filipino domestics in Taiwan prefer to maintain this certain level of social distance with their employers, so they are “more able to separate their work and their private space, [and] thus minimizing the interventions of employers into their private lives” (Lan 2000). Consequently, the helpers are engaging in a form of resistance, which will prevent employers from expanding their intrusion into – and eventual control over – their personal lives.

Maid-Initiated Interaction

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

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

Rosalinda: I know about their activities, they do tell me about their life. It’s just that, sometimes . . . in the past, when I first hired helpers, what I would do every time I arrived home was to go directly to my bedroom, and locked up myself. That was when I was pregnant. And I was quiet. I would not talk to them. It was not my intention to ignore them (helpers). It’s just that I just came from work. [So kay kibalo ko sa ilang lakaw. Kanang mag-istorya sila. Mga ilang kinabuhi. Pero usahay lang kanang . . . sa una kadtong bag-o pa ko nag . . .

naa koy mga helper, ang akong buhaton usually pag-abot nako sa balay, magkulong lang ko ug kwarto. Kadtong buros pa ko. Ana. Plus maghilom. Dili kaayo ko gaistorya. Dili nako intensyon nga dili nako sila gusto nga mag-istorya-istorya. Pero kanang gikan sa trabaho –]

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

When company-seeking helpers fail to obtain sufficient attention from their employers, their job-satisfaction level decreases, and this prompts them to seek for other employment. Some helpers expressed that part of the reason why they are more likely to leave their employer is when they are alone and bored in the house. As Maria earlier noted (see Chapter 5), she disliked the arrangement in her previous employment where she would only see her mistress at night because she did not have anyone to talk.

When her third helper quit, employer Leah was puzzled:

We thought everything was well with her--I mean, she only cleaned, cooked, washed and kept house for two nice people--until the day she packed her bags and told us she was leaving. Her salary was a non-issue and so was the workload, she told us. She just couldn't stand spending long hours in an empty house during daytime (de Velez 2000).

Mutual Distance

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

Employer Jary reports that her interaction with her helpers is not sufficient. "They don't always speak with me. It seems that they perceive that there is a gap between us. It's not like in other relationships that --" she pauses. ". . . and then, when they address

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

Summary

This chapter has examined the complexity of women's power relations as embodied in the system of maternalism. Three forms of maternalism were analyzed: 1) "part of the family" ideology, 2) "*utang na loob*" as a system of obligation, and 3) mistress' control over the maid's body, time, space, and relationships. The "part of the family" ideology is a very strong force that draws the helper toward the mistress and the employing family. In general, Filipinos belong to close-knit families, and they tend to create fictive kinship outside their own families. When the helper is considered a family member, she obtains a high job satisfaction, considers remaining with the family, and sometimes, even forgetting her marginal position within the household. At the same time, the "part of the family" ideology is a strategy that masks exploitation of the helper's labor power; a potent tool creates and reproduces maternalism. Responses from both helpers and employers are important in this analysis, as both view maternalism acceptable and functional. Although maternalism is exploitative, the maids participate in the reproduction of maternalism because of the economic benefits they derive from such arrangement. Except in isolated case of domestic violence, mistresses and maids in this study found maternalism beneficial in their employment relationship. In maternalist relations, they obtain employment-related incentives that are not available in the absence of maternalism. This

explains their aspiration to find employers who would consider them as family members, since these employers will take care of their medical bills when they are sick, give them gifts, support their education, and bring them to social/religious gatherings. In exchange for the incentives derived from a maternalistic employer, domestic workers perform additional tasks, and to a relative extent, do not resist their mistresses' intrusions to control their relationships and bodies.

This chapter has also examined three maternalistic styles. While the mistress is structurally in a position of power over the domestic worker, her (mistress) level of helper dependency affects the level of authority she imposes on the helper. As presented earlier, the maid-dependent mistress is more likely use incentives and positive reinforcement maternalism. She structures the helper's working conditions, wage, and other incentives so that the maid will remain in her employ. In the second maternalistic style, the mistress-dependent maid seeks for maternal benevolence and refrains from negotiating for improved conditions.

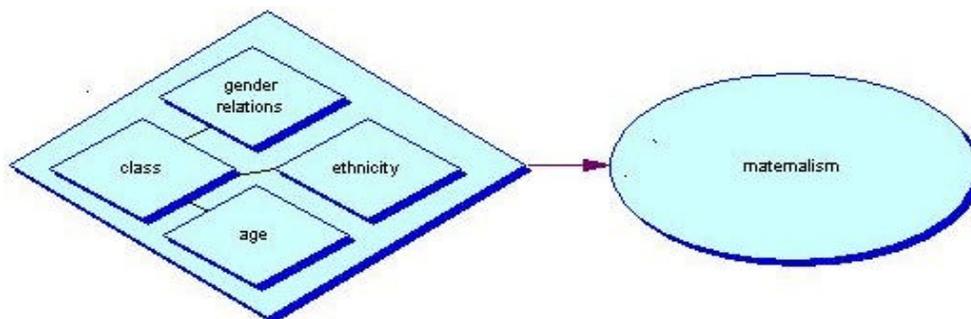
Four patterns of mistress-maid interaction were discussed, including mutual interaction, mistress-initiated interaction, helper-initiated interaction, and mutual distance interaction. Maternalism appears to be most apparent mistress-initiated interaction. It also operates in the other three interaction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

Chapter 6

Through the Lenses of Gender, Class, Age, and Ethnicity

The power relations between women are embedded within the intersecting forces of gender, ethnicity, age, and class. This embeddedness explains the complexity of their relations. In the previous chapter, the mistress-maid dynamics were explored based on maternalism. In this chapter, I examine the co-relation between these maternalistic styles and the mistresses' and helpers' varying positions in the gender-class-ethnicity-age hierarchy (see Figure 8). Gender and class play key roles in the formation of mistress-maid relationship in this context, with ethnicity and age complicating such relationship. It is within the patriarchal structure of gender relations that men are able to hold power over women's reproductive labor, such that women are expected to contribute more to housework and carework. Moreover, it is within the capitalist structure of class relations that the owners of production hold control over women's productive labor in the waged work.

Figure 8 Factors Affecting Mistress-maid Maternalistic Relations



The hiring of domestic worker, therefore, aims at freeing the middle-class woman from the burden of housework expected of her by the patriarchal-capitalist society, so that she can perform her exploitable labor exclusively in the productive sphere. While the mistress is seen as the exploiter of the maid's labor power, the ultimate benefactors of

the mistress-maid maternalistic relations are the middle-class men who are the middle-class women's spouses and the capitalists who are the middle-class women's bosses. It is within this framework that we continue to analyze mistress-maid maternalistic relations.

Several indicators are derived to determine the mistress' subordination in relation with her husband, including (1) the husband's little to no participation in housework, (2) domestic violence toward the wife, (3) the wife's lower wage relative to her husband's, and (4) the wife's subordination in economic decisions. Likewise, the mistress' status in the workplace is examined through job satisfaction by income, education, and age. First, I will discuss the effect of mistress' subordinate relations with her spouse to her power relations with her helper, and then I will explore the co-relation between the mistress' status in her workplace and her maternalistic relations with her helper. Finally, I will pinpoint some problems associated in analyzing gender and class as independent factors affecting mistress-maid dynamics. I proceed into a different level of analysis, showing the interacting positions of women in the multiple systems of domination, integrating the role of ethnicity and age into the discussion.

Gender

Wage-earning women's maternalistic relationship with domestic helpers has to be understood in the context of gender relations. Men are an intervening variable in the mistress' dependency on maid: the more men become less involved in domestic affairs, the more maid-dependent the mistress gets. Women are expected to take the leading role in domestic labor and are often advised against taking paid work too seriously. When asked who, between her and her spouse, would be absent when they did not have anyone to stay with the children, Gloria said that it was always her, despite her higher-earning capacity in relation to her spouse. On occasions when her helpers would go home at the same time, she would be left on her own to care for her children and attend to housework. Sometimes, she could get help from her mother-in-law; at other times, when she failed to grab anyone else, she had to be absent from work.

The mistress is trapped in a dialectical class position. Victimized by a paternalistic system that shifts household labor away from the men and defines male wages as more important, she is expected to

take responsibility for several contradictory labor roles. Wage earning conflicts with child-rearing and household maintenance, but wage earning is the basis for her class position. Domestic servants liberate the mistress to enter the wage labor force.

Domestic violence is the second best indicator of a wife's subordination. In this study, however, none of the informants revealed during the interviews that they were subjected to spousal abuse. A year after my fieldwork though, I learned that one of my informants broke up with her spouse, triggered by one incident of domestic violence. During our conversations, this mistress was already applying positive maternalistic styles with her helpers even before the abuse and the breakup. Maternalism and dependency, however, were strengthened greatly, as she came to depend solely on them to care for her young children, while she earns a living. She provided them incentives and gifts, and strongly incorporated them into her fatherless household.

The third factor in wife subordination is income disparity. Of the ten female employers, four reported that their husbands are more dominant in decision-making; four claimed that both of them make the decisions, and two reported that they make most of the household decisions (see Table 6). Six of the ten employers have lower wage compared to their spouses, three have higher, and one has about the same income as her spouse.

Table 6 Mistresses' Income Relative to their Husbands' and Dominance in Decision Making

Income relative to husband's	Dominant Decision-maker			
	Wife	Husband	Both	Total
Lower	2	2	2	6
Higher	0	2	1	3
Same	0	0	1	1
Total	2	4	4	10

Combining income and dominance in decision-making, nine classifications of mistresses were derived based on their income and domestic power relative to their husbands. These classifications are the following: lower income, but dominant; lower income and inferior;

lower income, but egalitarian; higher wage and dominant; higher wage but inferior; higher wage but egalitarian, and; same income, but dominant; same income, but inferior; and same income and egalitarian.

A close examination whether income determines dominance in decision-making shows that the two women (Rosalinda and Geraldine) who dictate decisions in the household have actually lower salaries than their husbands. Here is the context of this arrangement. Rosalinda and Geraldine share one thing in common: their spouses are both on medical residency training, and are barely at home. Practically, Geraldine runs the household by herself, makes the major decisions, budgets the money, and responds to crisis situations. She earns a monthly income of Php 10,800 (US\$ 249.42), including benefits, while Sam brings in around Php 15,000 (US\$ 346.42). The truth, Geraldine admitted hesitatingly, is that Sam's sole contribution to the household as of this time is purely financial, and nothing else. In cases of emergency, Geraldine relies on her judgment to make sound decisions. If she finds the chance to discuss the issue with Sam over the phone, he would always say, "*Bahala ka na*" (It's all up to you).

Similarly, Rosalinda feels that she is the one literally running the household. Although she admitted to discussing household issues with her spouse, in most cases, she just decides on her own. Her husband, Edmund is a physician on residency training. Even though he goes home every night, he works everyday, from Monday to Sunday, and this leaves Rosalinda to make the major decisions in the household. Regarding their finances, Rosalinda holds and budgets the money, including Edmund's salary, and she only provides him with a weekly allowance. This has always been the arrangement, since they started with their marriage. Rosalinda, however, clarified that this is only temporary and will end when Edmund will finish his residency in Orthopedic, which is very demanding of his time.

Women having lower income and being subordinate to their husbands is the norm in most societies. In this study, Aileen and Merly fall under that category. Aileen admitted that her husband makes the major issues in the household, although he would first consult with her. The same is true for Merly's case.

Jary and Babsie are both physicians, yet they have lower incomes than their spouses. Their lower income, however, does not put them in a subordinate position in relation to their spouses.

Describing her marital relationship as egalitarian, Babsie claims that whenever there are major household decisions to be made, she and her husband discuss the issues thoroughly, and they reach a consensus. Like in a typical Filipino family, Babsie holds the purse, while her husband hands in his wage every month, an old fashion that they have grown accustomed to, and in Babsie's view, is very convenient for the wife. According to Jary, it is her husband who makes the decision, but he first asks for her opinion, and almost always, he would follow what she says. For her part, Jary does not decide on anything without consulting her husband, and she also concedes to her husband's wishes. I find this arrangement tantamount to an egalitarian relationship.

None of my informants reported to have higher income and more dominance in decision-making. Two out of the three women who have higher income than their husbands admitted that their husbands are more dominant. Regarding decision-making, Helen initially articulated that both of them make household decisions, but when probed as to who is more dominant, such as the financial aspect, Helen revealed that it is Jose who influences the major decisions. In Gloria's case, her husband only makes half of what she is earning, but she still pointed to her husband as more dominant.

One informant, Rosita, earns more than her husband, but she claimed their relationship is egalitarian, that decisions are achieved through consensus. She insisted that both of them decide on major expenses or projects together. In this study, only Lolit reported to have the same income with her husband, and that no one dominates in decision-making.

Mistress' Subordinate Relation with Spouse and Maternalistic Styles

What, then, is the effect of a mistress' subordinate position relative to her spouse on her maternalistic relationship with her helper? Based on the above classifications, two categories of mistresses need to be analyzed further in relation to their helpers: 1) those who have lower wage and inferior to their husbands in terms of decision-making (Aileen and Merly), and 2) those with higher wage, but are still inferior to their husbands (Helen and Gloria). Let us consider the maternalistic approaches of these two categories of employers.

As can be gleaned from Table 7, all the mistresses who are subordinate to their spouses integrate helpers into the family and encourage the use of the kin term, *Ate* or *Manang*, rather than the formal salutation, i.e., ma'am. In addition to this, all of them would present gifts to their helpers that include used and new items depending on the occasion. Helen for example, would give transportation allowance to her helper during her helper's day off. None of the mistresses is currently sending their helpers to school. All except Helen have exerted some form of control on their helpers' relationships. Merly strictly prohibits her helper to have a boyfriend, while Gloria and Aileen want to be informed whenever their helpers engage in serious relationships with male friends. As discussed in the previous chapter, Gloria's regulation is culled from her previous experience of her helper who got pregnant without her knowledge, thus she failed to support this pregnant woman. In addition, Table 7 demonstrates that control of the helper's body is present in Aileen's and Gloria's relationships with their helpers. Both Aileen and Gloria buy their helpers underwear, sanitary napkins, and deodorant. These two mistresses are particularly concerned about their helpers' bodies who handle their babies. On the other hand, Helen's style is a bit different from the two women, although she also has a baby whom she assigns to her helper for care taking. She never dictated her helper to keep her body cleaner than it should be, as she did not encounter any hygiene-related problem with her helper.

Class

The mistress' work status is tantamount to class position, which is grounded in education, occupation, and income. As Table 8 illustrates, class and age intersect to affect job satisfaction. None of those who only obtained a college degree is satisfied with their jobs. In sharp contrast, all of those who have had graduate degrees are satisfied. Two out of three mistresses who have monthly wages below Php 10,000 (US\$ 230.95) are dissatisfied, while all of those with monthly income between Php 21,000-50,000 (US\$ 484.99-1154.73) are highly satisfied. Employed mistresses with leadership positions who receiving above average income are, therefore, most likely to have higher job satisfaction than those whose current employment has fewer opportunities for promotion. Older key informants (i.e., Lolit, Babsie, and Rosita) with the exception of Merly are more likely to have higher job satisfaction than the younger ones (i.e., Aileen, Geraldine,

Gloria, Rosalinda, Jary, and Helen). Except Merly, older employers have post-graduate degrees and higher salaries, and consequently, they occupy important positions in their workplaces.

Table 7 Mistresses' Subordinate Position and Maternalistic Styles

Mistress' Maternalistic Styles with Current Helper	Mistress' Relationship with Spouse			
	Lower Income and Inferior		Higher Income, but Inferior	
	Aileen	Merly	Gloria	Helen
Part of the family	∕	∕	∕	∕
- use of kin terms	∕	∕	∕	∕
- gift giving	∕	∕	∕	∕
- educational support	X	X	x	x
- emotional support	X	X	∕	x
Mistress-Initiated Interaction Pattern	∕	∕	x	∕
Utang na Loob	∕	X	∕	x
Control of maid's body	∕	X	∕	x
Control of maid's time	∕	∕	∕	∕
Control of maid's space	X	∕	x	x
Control of maid's relationships	∕	∕	∕	X

Legend: ∕ = practiced; x = not practiced

Table 8 Mistresses' Job Satisfaction by Age, Education, and Income

		job satisfaction		Total
		satisfied	not satisfied	
AGEGROUP	31-45	3	3	6
	46-60	3	1	4
Total		6	4	10
education	college grad		4	4
	graduate degree	6		6
Total		6	4	10
salary scale	below P10,000	1	2	3
	P10,000 - P20,000	2	2	4
	P21,000 - P50,000	3		3
Total		6	4	10

Mistress' Subordinate Position in the Workplace and Maternalism

The research question asks how the mistress' subordinate position in her workplace affect they way she demonstrates her dominance toward her helper. The earlier discussion points out that job dissatisfaction is related to lack of promotion and stability, or being placed in a dead end of one's career, implying permanent subordination. Table 8 also shows that younger mistresses, college graduates, and low wage earners are most likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs, while the opposite obtains higher satisfaction. In relation to their helpers, younger mistresses who are likely to be subordinate in the workplaces have younger children to attend to, and therefore, are very dependent on their helpers to fill this caring role while they are at work. On the other hand, older mistresses have grown up children, and compared to the younger mistresses, have less need for helpers.

Merly, Helen, Geraldine, and Rosalinda are ones who are labeled as subordinate in their workplaces. They are generally dissatisfied with their current jobs. Merly was retrenched from her job, and now, she is only employed sporadically. Helen enjoys her work, but is already thinking of moving on into a different field, as she does not see any other way up in her career as a medical technologist in her workplace; she wants to put up her own business, an Internet Café. Table 9 illustrates mistresses' subordinate status in their workplaces and their maternalistic relations with their helpers. As Merly's and Helen's relations with their helpers were already discussed, I will only present Geraldine's and Rosalinda's work status and relationship with their helpers.

Geraldine, the medical technologist who has been working for twelve years, articulated that although she is relatively happy with her job, she has not reached the peak of her career, as there is no more room for promotion in her current employment. She regrets that most of the equipment in their small laboratory has not been updated, and she never had a hands-on experience with high-tech apparatus. Other concerns that she raised include low salary and lack of computers. Most of Geraldine's helpers are her nieces whom she supported to school, until they finished college, and left to look for professional type of work. She works at home in the evenings as her helpers leave for the school. While Geraldine is not so satisfied with her own work, she tries to encourage her maids to study hard to have a better future. However, her concern for her helpers cannot be so much explained by

her subordinate position in her workplace than her relationship by blood with her helpers. Blood relationship is also related to ethnic similarity, thus ethnicity could be an explanatory factor in Geraldine’s effort to support her helpers in their education.

Table 9 Mistresses’ Status in their Workplaces and their Maternalistic Styles

Mistresses’ Maternalistic Styles with Current Helper	Mistresses with Subordinate Status in their Workplaces				Mistresses with Non-Subordinate Status in their Workplaces and Households			
	Geraldine	Rosalinda	Merly	Helen	Babsie	Jary	Lolit	Rosita
Part of the family	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	X	☒	☒
- use of kin terms	☒	X	☒	☒	☒	X	☒	X
- gift giving	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	X	☒	☒
- educational support	☒	☒	X	X	X	X	X	X
- emotional support	☒	X	X	X	☒	X	X	X
Mistress-Initiated Interaction	☒	X	☒	☒	☒	X	☒	☒
Utang na Loob	☒	X	x	x	☒	x	☒	x
Control of maid’s body	x	X	x	x	X	x	☒	x
Control of maid’s time	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	x	☒	☒
Control of maid’s space	x	x	☒	x	X	x	x	x
Control of maid’s relationships	x	x	☒	x	X	x	x	x

Legend: ☒ = practiced; x = not practiced

Like a parent, Geraldine always reminds her helpers to inform her of their whereabouts, and to call if they would be late in coming home. That is all she asked from them, as she would start to worry when they are not yet home at 9:00 p.m. She would start to speculate whether they went out dating or they had an accident. This makes her apprehensive since she feels that she has to answer to her helpers’ parents if anything wrong happens to them. Because of this responsibility, she feels she has to regulate her helpers’ time outside the house.

Rosalinda, the community organizer, enjoys her fieldwork, the flexibility of time, and the relative work autonomy, but she wishes to move to government service, where she can obtain a higher salary and security of tenure. Her concern for tenure came about when she

realized that her children are growing up, and may need more financial support. In addition, Rosalinda, who is in her mid-thirties, feels that her body is aging, and soon, she will not have the energy that her job requires. Rosalinda's relationship with her helpers used to be distant (see Chapter 5), and she attributed this to her being exhausted by the time she arrived home, that she no longer cared to talk to her helpers. At the same time, she believes that there should be a social distance between her and her helpers. Because of this belief and exhaustion, she did not initiate any interaction with them other than business-related matter. Consequently, she also refrained from giving emotional support, and she never tried to control her helpers' bodies, spaces, and relationships. She let them be as they are. As I see it, Rosalinda exhibits professional relationship with her helpers, and minimizes the personal or maternal relationship.

Mistress' Non-subordination and Maternalistic Styles

In many cases, the mistress-maid dynamics are not entirely explained by the mistresses' subordinate relationship with their spouses or by their subordinate position in their workplaces. In addition, those who are subordinate to their husbands but successful in their careers may show a different pattern. By focusing the analysis to those who are subordinate, we neglect the mistresses who are neither subordinate in their relationship with their spouses nor in their workplaces. Therefore, I deem it necessary to examine the mistresses' non-subordination and their maternalistic styles. Table 10 below shows dominance in household decision-making by age group among those who are highly satisfied with their jobs. Six mistresses are satisfied with their jobs because of their high income and significant position. Of the six, two have their husbands as the major decision maker, while four are having an equal power sharing with their spouses. Babsie, Rosita, Lolit, and Jary neither belong to the subordinates in the household nor in the work place. They cases are exemplars of "non-subordination."

Table 10 Household Decision-Maker by Age Group among Those Satisfied with their Jobs

<i>job satisfaction satisfied</i>					
		decision-maker			Total
		wife	husband	both	
AGEGROUP	31-45	0	2	1	3
	46-60	0	0	3	3
Total		0	2	4	6

Babsie, the medical professor, is generally satisfied with her career and her egalitarian relationship with her business-oriented spouse. She only works for twenty hours a week, and has plenty of time to do leisure activities. All she wants to do in her life is to travel abroad. Babsie has had a comfortable life. She is kind to her helpers, and she never experienced a time that she had to do the housework herself. She treats her current helper as part of the family, such that when they go out together, the helper is often mistaken as her daughter. Her helper has a high level of autonomy, and manages her house quite efficiently. As she told me, she goes home for lunch without knowing what her meal is going to be, or how her furniture will be arranged.

Rosita is due to retire in a few years. Fighting tears that were falling down from her eyes, Rosita expressed that she can now look back in all the years that she has worked, and she can say that she did her best, that her hard work was well rewarded.

Rosita: Oh, I find myself self-fulfilled. After all, I just have very simple dreams . . . Aside from being a working mother and career woman, I am successful . . . I find myself very self-fulfilled, because thanks to the Lord, I am already about to finish my forty years in the (teaching) service.

Believing that she has reached the peak of her career and motherhood, Rosita does not have any dreams any more. When asked how she reached this level of personal fulfillment, she responds:

Rosita: Prayers and hard work, because I found out [that] there was no time for me to go anywhere and [to] enjoy. Not even to

the movies. The only places I go to are the church, [the] school, and [the] market or grocery store (started to cry).

Rosita's relationship with her helpers is equated to an authoritarian maternalism. Because she works hard, she also has high expectations from the people that she works with, including her helpers. Among my informants, Rosita gives the highest wage to her helpers, but also expects a quality output. Her helpers usually call her ma'am, and the type of interaction she has with her helpers is often mistress-initiated. Her relationship with her current helpers is partly professional and partly based on *utang na loob*. The latter applies to her nephew's wife who is working in her household. Rosita does not control her helpers' relationships and usually does not ask questions about her helpers' private lives, unless it has any concern on their work. She provides her helpers with their own room, and does not prohibit them from visiting their neighbor's house, so long as their work is done.

Jary, the medical doctor, is generally satisfied with her profession, though she made it clear that between her family and profession, her family comes first, as evidenced in her quitting her job when she was pregnant and returning when her baby was two years old. Based on the four indicators of the helper being part of the family, Jary seems to depart from this practice. Her helpers call her ma'am. She does not provide educational or emotional support to her helpers. In addition, she avoids constant gift giving, maintains social distance, and refrains from interacting with them about things that do not concern their work. Jary does not control her helpers' bodies, spaces, time, and relationships. She lets them do whatever they like to do in the house and whenever they like to do it.

Lolit, the researcher, has a high job-satisfaction level. Being the highest paid professional among my informants, Lolit enjoys high autonomy in her work, which she enjoys so much that she intends to work in the same field and institution in the near future. Lolit applies the "part of the family" ideology in her relationship with her helpers. Preferring to be called "Ate," Lolit gives her helpers gifts whenever she comes back from an out-of-town trip. However, she does not provide educational and emotional support to her helpers, as they probably do not need such help. Their interaction pattern is mistress initiated, since her current live-in helper is too shy to interact with her. While *utang na loob* is not at work with her live-in helper, it does apply to her live-out laundry woman who has been with her for over ten years.

Although she no longer needs the services of a laundry woman, she feels obligated to continue the woman's services. On the other hand, Lolit's laundry woman returns the "kindness" by making herself available to perform all the housework every time Lolit's live-in helper quits.

The last two sections presented the role of gender and class in mistress' maternalistic styles toward the maid. In this context, middle-class women who are subordinate under patriarchal and capitalist relations are more likely to practice controlling maternalistic styles than those who are not subordinate. There are three interpretations of maternalist behavior among subordinates: 1) it could be a subordinate's (mistress') need to mother or protect someone (maid) just as she (mistress) is "protected" by men under patriarchal system; 2) it could be that the mistress wants to put the maid under her protective care as both of them are abused by patriarchal capitalism; or 3) it could be that the mistress wants to be in a position of power, as she is always in a subordinate position within patriarchy and capitalism. By engaging in maternalistic relations, the mistress controls, under the veil of protection, the maid's life.

Age

In addition to gender and class, age plays an important role in mistress-maid relations. In Filipino middle-class households that I am studying, older domestics exercise more work autonomy than their younger counterparts. When the domestic is older than the mistress, the mistress is likely to dominate the maid in culture-specific ways. Mistress Jary, for example, expressed her difficulty in giving a feedback to her helper because of her helper's older age. She feels very uncomfortable to give instructions to her older helper. Although, she wants to maintain social distance with her helpers, she cannot tell her older helper to refrain from lying down on her bed and watching television in her bedroom. She is inhibited because her helper is older than her. While the younger woman obviously holds authority over her older helper based on their employment relationship, the older helper possesses power over the younger woman based on age. Filipino cultural norm dictates that younger people respect the older ones. In cases where older domestics work for younger employers, the name-

calling is reversed. The mistresses are the ones who address their helpers as "Ate" or "Manang," the kin-terms associated with respect for older women. This makes one point clear. When a domestic helper addresses her mistress as "Ate," it is not due to the mistress' status as employer, but as an older person. This is made clear in a situation wherein the domestic is older than the mistress: the mistress is the one who calls the domestic "Ate" or "Manang."

The Philippine example disputes Glenn's (1986, 157) description of mistress and maid relationship as a "pure form [of] the relation of superior to inferior." While the mistress-maid relationship in the Philippines is that of a superior-inferior, it is not a pure form. Rather, it is a complex form. In this study, the Filipino culture of regarding an older person with respect plays a role in making the mistress-maid power relations more complex than it appears to be.

In the employment relationship between an older maid and a younger mistress, class and age intersect to form a complex maternalist relationship, wherein the younger mistress and the older maid take turns in practicing maternalism toward each other. The younger mistress expresses maternal instinct toward the older maid based on her class position, while the maid extends her maternal intuition toward her mistress based on her age. The forms in which the mistress practices maternalism with her maid had been thoroughly discussed in the earlier chapter. When dealing with an older maid, however, this can change, as the maid has her age as an edge. The mistress' economic form of maternalism, however, is still very much applicable in this situation. The mistress would be likely to extend gifts and other extra incentives to her maid. She would be less likely, however, to control her maid's body and space.

Ethnicity

Regarding ethnicity, none of my employer informants were members of minority group while employing a majority group domestic. However, some Christian domestic workers were employed by Muslims.¹ In the Philippines, Muslim ethnic groups are a minority group in terms of number and power. They comprise a mere 5% of the population. Christian domestic workers expressed strong resentment

¹ Majority-minority relations in the Philippines can be expressed as Christian-Muslim dichotomy.

toward their Muslim employers, and they often attributed their resentment to their employer's ethnicity. Similar feelings are expressed toward who are Filipino-Chinese. In situations of conflict, the helper who shares her mistress' ethnic identity calls attention to their economic disparity as being the source of conflict. However, when the helper has a different ethnic identity from her employer, she attributes the conflict to ethnic-based stereotyping.

I have not interviewed a mistress whose maid comes from a hostile ethnic group. I suspect that the mistress' maternalistic style toward her ethnically different domestic leans toward tougher domination. For example, when Carmen, who comes from Mindanao, worked in Manila, her Tagalog employer gave her half the salary of a regular domestic worker. The gate was always locked, and her sleeping area in the house was in deplorable condition. Likewise, Maria, a Christian who had a Maranao mistress, complained about harsh treatment and physical abuse by her mistress (see Chapter 7). Maria made a connection between her mistress' unacceptable character and her mistress' Maranao ethnic identity.² Maria singled out the ethnic identity of her mistress as being the cause of her unfavorable behavior toward the helpers. As she said, "Maranaos are really different." Likewise, Enriquita explained her mistress' atrocity based on ethnicity, particularly, based on her mistress' Muslim ethnic identity.

Enriquita: She is wicked because she has a Muslim blood. She would speak in Maranao to me, and little did I know that she was already cursing. All I did was to cry. [Maldita kaayo kay kaliwat man sa Muslim. Mag minaranaw na siya sa ako, dili ko kasabot kuan na man diay to sa ako-a pamalikas. Maghilak-hilak na lang tawon ko.]

Similarly, Nelda identified her cruel mistress as a Chinese "old maid." Nelda felt so bad because she was not given wage when she left her employer. In her comment below, Nelda was not simply referring to "her" mistress, but rather, she used the term "they," generalizing her statement to all Chinese, old, single women.

Nelda: Yes, Chinese old maids – they are like that, they would look for something wrong in you especially if you fight back. They

² Maranao is one of the Muslim ethnic groups in Mindanao. Muslims are stereotyped to be "unreasonable, barbaric and violent" (Jumaani 2000).

don't like you. But what I did was not about fighting back. I was just explaining my side, but she was really looking for trouble. [Oo, intsik, tigulang daga . . . ingon ana man na sila mangita ug bikil labina ug magsukol-sukol dili ka nila angayan, peru dili man to ang ako-a sukol, nitubag ra mang ko sa katarungan ba peru nangita man gyud lagi ug gubot.]

The examples about ethnic differences demonstrate the mistresses' negative or controlling maternalistic styles. In this situation, partly because of their ethnic differences, the maids disapprove of their mistresses' maternalistic behaviors.

Summary

Gender, class, ethnicity, and age complicate the mistresses' maternalistic styles. As shown on Table 9, mistresses who reported to be neither subordinate in the workplaces nor in relation to their spouses are less dominating in their maternalistic styles with their helpers than those who are subordinate.³ Aside from gender and class, maternalistic relations are likewise influenced by ethnicity and age. Ethnic similarity between the mistress and maid may lead to positive maternalistic styles, while ethnic difference may result in a more controlling maternalistic styles. A wide age gap between the mistress and the maid, may result into contradictory phenomena. When a mistress employs a child as a domestic, this child is most likely to be abused (see child labor experiences of Yolanda, Carmen, Lourdes, and

³ Since my study is limited only to middle-class mistresses, I could not compare the maternalistic behavior of mistresses in the upper and middle classes. Gallop (in Young 1987, 368) found that, "[w]hereas in the upper-class family distance is maintained between the domestic servant and the patroness, the middle-class family tends to incorporate her, and in particular, encourage her to further her education." Structural conditions may have put social distance in place between the upper-class families and their domestics. The house is a lot bigger, and there are several domestic workers, such that domestic workers limit their association to their peers. Additionally, class difference may not be the only factor that promotes social distance in upper-class households, but there may also be cultural and ethnic differences. The more complex the differences between employers and their domestics, the more elaborate the social distance.

Virginia). On the other hand, when a mistress employs a domestic worker who is much older than her, the maternalist power relations become more complex. The mistress may practice maternalist behavior based on her class position, while the maid engages in the same way based on her older age relative to her mistress (as demonstrated in the later domestic work experiences of Maria, Lourdes, and Jary's helper).

Considering the different effects of gender, class, ethnicity, and age on maternalistic relations, it is not possible to simplify the experiences of these women in mistress-maid employment relationship. By exploring the intersection of gender, ethnicity, age, and class, I hope to have succeeded, at least partly, in showing the complexity of this relationship.

Chapter 7

Autonomy and Resistance

Although there are complexities in mistress-maid relationship, it is inherently exploitative. The working and living conditions of live-in domestic workers are structurally exploitative in two ways. First, labor power is appropriated to enrich the employers' class. Second, employers deprive domestic workers control over their bodies, time, relationships, and space. While domestics obtain board and lodging, class distinction between them and their employers are clearly defined. Helpers sleep in substandard rooms, eat leftovers or low-grade meals, and are restricted access on some household appliances.

The previous chapters discussed the extent in which mistresses exploit their domestic workers' labor power. In this chapter, we explore the mechanisms through which domestic workers resist the maternalist intrusions of their mistresses. Wright (1997, 12) explains the context as follows:

The dependency of the exploiter on the exploited gives the exploited a certain form of power, since human beings always retain at least some minimal control over their own expenditure of effort. Social control of labor, which relies exclusively on repression is costly and, except under special circumstances, often fails to generate optimal levels of diligence and effort on the part of the exploited. As a result, there is generally systematic pressure on exploiters to moderate their domination and in one way or another to try to elicit some degree of consent from the exploited, at least in the sense of gaining some level of minimal cooperation from them. Paradoxically perhaps, exploitation is thus a constraining force on the practices of the exploiter. This constraint constitutes a basis of power for the exploited.

Considering the exploitative working conditions of the helpers, this chapter addresses several questions, such as: 1) how does the helper's work autonomy (or the lack of it) impact her working conditions? 2) how does the Filipina domestic resist her mistress' and master's exploitation, domination, or subjugation?

Work Autonomy

Autonomy is closely associated with initiative. Depending on their mood, some helpers go beyond their assigned task and carry out other household chores. Carmen is one of these highly motivated helpers. In her previous employment, baby-sitting was her primary task, and someone else was assigned to do the laundry. Carmen, however, would engage in housework when the baby was asleep to avoid boredom. In her present "employment," Carmen takes a heavy responsibility, and she is no longer considered a paid helper, but a trusted family member. Her work does not only include housework, but also budgeting, paying for bills, marketing, and caring for her employer's children. Oftentimes, she feels overwhelmed by this enormous responsibility, but this autonomy also gives her authority in the house and over the children, and this pleases her.

Pleased to have found such a trustworthy and responsible helper, Babsie relinquishes any worries associated with domestic work, and lets her helper manage her house. Babsie's helper makes financial arrangements with the money given to her for food, and she plans and prepares the meals.

Babsie: (Laughs) It's so easy. Even the budgeting of our food, I let her do it – she does everything. I just give her the money, and she decides on our food. Like now, I don't know what's for lunch. But that's how I usually deal with my helper. I just work with her at the start, but once she knows, I leave her on her own. [Hahaha. Hayahay gyud lagi kaayo. Even kanang budgeting sa food, siya . . . siya tanan. I just give her money. Unya siya na ang magbuot kun unsa among pagkaon. Even karon di ko kibalokun unsa among paniudto . . . pero usually inana ang akong helper. I just start nga kanang inana. Pero kung kibalokun ko nga maayo na sila, inana, kuan na gyud na.]

Aside from budgeting responsibilities, being given a free hand in the house is a preferred working arrangement by many helpers. Sweetie's mistress does not give orders, conditioning Sweetie to plan her own work and move according to her own pace.

Sweetie: She lets me be. It depends on me to find things to do. As long I work, they don't get angry. It's not like with other employers who always scold their helpers . . . tso tso tso

(everyone laughs) . . . so strict. [Pasagdan ra, ana-a ra sa imo kung unsay imong buhaton basta molihok lang ka dili man sila masuko dili parehas sa uban nga amo nga mangasaba ingnon nga tso, tso tso (all laughing) estricto kaayo.]

Domestic workers have varied reactions regarding work autonomy. Some like to be left on their own while others do not. Nelda is one of those who dislike too much work autonomy. She prefers to be given detailed instructions to be assured that she is doing the right thing. Inna is used to being given instructions on what to cook, such that whenever her employer fails to instruct her, she will ask for details. While admitting that she has some cooking skills, she adjusts her cooking to suit her employer's preference. This explains why she will always ask before proceeding with any task. When asked if she takes the initiative to rearrange the furniture in the house when she feels like doing it, Inna replied her employer rearranges the furniture, and all she does is to wipe them.

Many employers prefer to have helpers with initiative to work on their own. As these employed employers are preoccupied with their own waged work, they desire to have as little to do with domestic work as possible. Employer Jary prefers helpers who work on their own, as giving detailed instruction is additional burden on her part. She complains, however, that her helpers do not have any initiative, and that they do not do anything without her telling them. Referring to her older helper, Jary muses:

She does not think, "What should I cook now that my employers are not home yet?" She always asks, "What shall I cook?" She is not like other helpers who check what is inside the refrigerator and cook anything they like. It's always I who tell her what to cook. If she would just do it on her own, it would be a lot better for me.

Passiveness about work is a form of resistance, which helpers employ to try to prevent their mistresses from increasing their already overburdened workload. By taking a passive approach to their work, they do not only avoid overworking themselves, but they also avoid being blamed for mistakes, as they follow their mistresses' instructions, word for word. Waiting for instructions is also one of the helpers' strategies to let their mistresses think about housework to assign to the helpers. As discussed earlier, the thinking part of

housework is also something that employers wish to delegate to their helpers, so they are completely freed from housework.¹

In the First World where live-out domestic work is more common, work autonomy is very important for the helpers, as they can leave the house after completing their tasks, and they can work for multiple employers in a given day. In this case, however, where domestics live in their workplace and have fixed monthly wage, they would not do themselves a favor if they take the initiative to work more than the minimum requirements. To resist further exploitation from their employers, a few helpers engage in passive approach to work, and sometimes, apply the helper stereotype “stupid” or “ignorant” to their advantage (refer to Linda Layosa’s story in 8). When helpers are regarded by their employers as stupid, the employer expectations and demands go down (for example, see Merly’s low regard of domestic workers as discussed in Chapter 3). Other helpers want to take an active part in the work process; thereby, gaining work autonomy is a form of empowerment, although it also reduces the domestic concerns of their employers. When work autonomy is seen in complementary ways by mistresses and maids, it works to the advantage of both women.

Common Sources of Conflict

Employer-employee conflict often arises from incompatible interests in the control of the labor process. The helpers in this study usually accommodate their employers’ controlling behavior to avoid further conflict. However, when their threshold of tolerance is breached, they apply resisting strategies within their means.

¹ This is why mistresses hope to employ their *ideal helper*. The combined traits sought by employers in a helper include the following: resourceful, mature, honest, trustworthy, neat, religious, widow, obedient, skilled, has good interpersonal relations, good with children, not a TV addict, does not spend hours on the phone, does not hang out at neighbor’s house, and does not flirt. The long list of desirable traits implies that although helpers are low paid workers, their employers have very high expectations on them. On top of the employers’ list is initiative. When their helpers have initiative, these employers no longer have to think about domestic work.

Work-related conflict usually stems from employer dissatisfaction of the helper's output, resulting in the employer reprimanding the helper. In situations where domestic workers are reprimanded, their usual form of accommodation is admitting their mistakes, apologizing with bowed heads, and responding to mistresses' reprimanding with *pailob* (humble tolerance). Merly described quite aptly when she said that as a helper, one has to bow down to her mistress, follow her instructions, and humbly accept any corrections from her.

Merly: It is truly different, because even if you have a kind mistress, the fact that you are a servant, you have to bow down always. Sometimes, you are yelled at, when you commit an error. [Lahi man kay bisag maayo pa lugar kaayo ang agalon, sa ngalan nga kuan gud ka kuan gyud magpaubos gyud ka permi. Usahay masinghagan gyud lagi ka kay kuan man.]

Unless they are asked to reply, helpers usually avoid talking back to their employers. When they have to reply, their voice should be lower and softer than their employer's. Accommodation, expressed through rituals of subordination, is a form of agency against employer aggression. By appearing to admit their mistakes or to bow to their employers, helpers avoid further disagreement.

Fatalism, a Filipino trait best symbolized in the expression, *bahala na*, or come what may (Agoncillo 2002), is another accommodation strategy employed by the helpers, justifying oppressive conditions as a fate they have to live with. As Crisanta expresses it, "But what can we do?" Fatalism affects the helpers' behavioral response toward mistresses' dominance. Some helpers perceive their mistresses' scolding as "natural" that they often tolerate it. When I asked Ivy about an incident in which her mistress reprimanded her, Ivy responded that it was "not actually scolding. It was only a comment."

One of the employers' sources of frustration is the inability of their helpers to master the work; therefore, they have to either do the work or redo their helpers' task. This is a scenario, where the helpers can make their mistresses engage in housework. It is a very subtle form of power, but quite effective. In this case, the helper is able to make her mistress work, despite her mistress' resistance.

In many cases, employers are complaining that the helpers do not mind wasting the family resources, i.e., cooking oil, laundry soap,

because they do not spend for these things. Therefore, mistresses see the need to explain this issue to their maids. One mistress, cynically commented that her helper has no idea how much those resources cost. Below, Lolit vocalizes her frustration about her wasteful helper.

Lolit: You have to discuss it with you helper. You can tell your helper, "the soapy water that you used for white clothes can still be used to wash the rugs; don't throw it." You have to tell the helper that, for she will just think, "Hmmm, I am not paying for the bills." One time I told my husband, "Dad, our helper is rich." And he would ask, "Why?" This has something to do with the cooking oil. Usually, after frying something, you can still reuse the cooking oil one more time. We, Filipinos are like that, right? Perhaps the Americans don't do that, but we Pinoys would recycle it. The oil that you use for frying fish can still be used for frying dried fish later. But my helper would just throw it away. And when she fries something, she would pour too much oil. . . my helper is perhaps truly rich. [O, istoryahan gyud nimo. Kanang sabon bitaw nimo day nga kanang sa puti, pwede ma na nimo after dili nimo iyabo. Butangi sa mga trapo. Sultian nimo. Di bitaw ako ang gagasto ani. Kay one time I have a helper nga, "Father ang atong helper sapian." "Kay ngano man." Kay kana bitawng mantika bitaw day. Usually kung mag-fry ka, magamit pa ma na nimo pagkahuman. Di ba inana man ang mga Pinoy? O siguro ang mga Amerikano. Pero sa mga Pinoy, atop bitaw na nga gai-recycle. Kanang gipirituhan nimo sa isda pwede ma na nimo gamitan sa bulad later. So gipangyabu-yabo lang day. Unya kung magpirito danghan kaayo mantika nga kuan . . . sapian gyud tingali na atong helper.]

This accusation, that helpers have no idea about the cost of household resources, is inaccurate. Coming from the disadvantage class, these helpers do not need explanations from their mistresses how hard life is. Helper's wasting of water, cooking oil, or detergent can be their forms of resistance to domination.

Resistance

The other response that the helper adopts against employer's domination is resistance, which can be subtle or blatant. Many helpers

resist in subtle ways. This subtle, "covert" resistance refers to what Scott (1989, 8) calls, "everyday forms of resistance" employed by the weak against their oppressors. It frequently occurs in situation of domination in which open, collective action is not viable. Everyday forms of resistance include "footdragging, false-compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth. . . . They require little or no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual self-help; and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms" (Scott 1986, 6).

When Inna, a naturally happy person, was reprimanded, she would just smile. Sometimes, she would not speak and would just stare at the person giving the "lecture." She never talked back. In the Philippines, talking back to parents, elderly, or persons in authority is considered a sign of disrespect. At a young age, children are socialized against talking back to parents. Helpers, otherwise known as servants, are expected to be like children and should not to talk back to their employers. The other strategy that Inna utilizes is to play deaf.

Inna: I don't speak. I play deaf. I don't care. I do approach her, when she calls me, but only after some time. "Why are you delayed?" "Oh, I did not hear you." But I did hear. Whenever I get annoyed, I will do that. [Di ko motingog ba. Magpabungol-bungol ko. Bahala na. moduol ko unya taud-taud na pud. "Nganong dugay man ka?" "Agay wala ko kadungog." Pero kadungog baya ko ato. Basta maulit ko ba, mao na ang akong gabuhaton.]

Inna's strategy is that she never takes her employer's reprimanding seriously. She does not act on the reprimands, and she feigns ignorance. Other helpers, however, are easily angered, and because they do not dare to talk back, they absorb the negative energy, such that they would end up frowning and grumbling under their breath. Even though they attempt to hide their negative emotions from their employers, their employers understand their prolonged silence as an indication of being offended.

Geraldine: Yes, she did not like that I scolded her. She did not speak to me for two months. [O. dili siya ganahan siguro nga nakasab-an nako siya. Wala ko niya gitingogan for mga two months.]

In the event that the mistress detects her helper to be unusually quiet, she responds in either of the following ways: simply waits until the helper feels fine again and moves on, or she asks the helper if something is wrong. When asked by her mistress if the reason that she was frowning was that she was angry, Irma denied it and said that nothing was wrong, that she was not angry, even if deep inside, she was. Below are the resistance strategies employed by helpers when they were angry at employers.

Alma: I will not speak; just frown. They will know if there is anger within me because I will not speak – If they call me, I will come without saying anything, and just wait for their order. [Dili lang ko magtingog, magmug-ot. Mahibaloan man nila nga duna ko'y kasuko kay di man ko magtingog-tingog . . . kung tawgon ko moduol lang ko dayon walay tingog hulat kung unsay ilang isugo.]

Giselle: As for me, I would frown when they were no longer around, and I would slam things while working. I would give her (mistress) youngest child a hateful glance. [Ako kay, magmog-ot gyud kung wala na diha akong agalon magbundak-bundak ko. Sipat-sipatan nako ang iyang anak nga kamanghuran.]

Alma: Aha, that's why most of your glasses were broken – you smashed them (Laughing). [Aah, bantug ra nga nangabuak tong inyong baso kay nagbundak-bundak diay ka.]

Giselle conceals her anger from her employers, but she resists in covert ways. Inanimate objects and the employer's powerless toddler receive the brunt of this helper's resistance. Breaking drinking glasses and pretending later that it was an accident is a very strong form of economic sabotage. Giselle displays the expected deferential rituals toward her employer, pretending to be subdued and careless. Oftentimes, she gets away with her subtle resistance, i.e., breaking glasses, by saying it was an accident. In turn, the mistress' comment to her spouse or friend would be something like, "I told you, she's dumb! She can't even handle drinking glasses carefully."

In addition to breaking glasses or slamming doors, the helpers engage in economic sabotage through excessive use of their employers' resources. As the employers are out during daytime, they cannot monitor their helpers' actions. This makes the employers

insecure about this situation. Whenever the employers are out to work, the helpers are in charge of the house, and they can do as they please. They often violate their employers' restrictions. For example, while Gang is prohibited from taking a shower too often, she still takes her shower twice a day. She takes her shower when her mistress is out. Similarly, other helpers violate their employers' policy regarding household appliances.

Helpers' resistance may become more overt, when their covert resistance strategies no longer work for them. Earlier, I mentioned that Filipinos are socialized against talking back to those who are older than they are, as well as to persons in authority. Still, helpers operate within a threshold of tolerance. Martin Luther King, Jr. powerfully articulates, "There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and [people] are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the bleakness of corroding despair" (Lynd 1966, 467). When this threshold is breached, the offended helper either withdraws from (quits job) or confronts (fights back) her oppressor. Usually, Teresa tolerated her mistress' routine scolding, and she would let it pass. In her tenth year of service, she just could not tolerate it anymore, so she left her employer, without helping her mistress find a replacement.

Maria and another helper, Bibing, were eating, when their mistress called Bibing, who in turn responds, "We are still eating Ma'am." The annoyed mistress came over, slapped Bibing's face, and admonished that she should not eat, when there are still orders from her. Defending her co-worker, Maria confronted her mistress.

Maria: I told her, "Is your character like that Ma'am? I have experienced several employers, Ma'am: Iranian, Tagalog, Chinese — but you have the worst character." [Ingon ko nga maam ingon ana diay inyong batasan maam? Naagian gyud nako maam, Manila, mga Iranian pa akong agalon maam Tagalog, Intsik, pero ikaw maoy grabe ug batasan.]

After that confrontation, Maria's mistress mellowed down and modified her behavior. When asked why she did not tolerate her mistress' dominance, Maria responds:

Maria: Never, I would never — I really talked back, so that she would know. After that incident, she changed her ways. The Maranaos are different, quite appalling. I had lived with them

for five years. [Na, dili gyud, dili gyud ay sus, nitubag gyud ko nang kay aron gyud hibaw-an kung unsa gyud ang batasan sa tawo. Na, kay nabag-o man siya adto nang, dili na siya magkuan-kuan nga o unsa man ana. Lain gyud kaayo nang Maranao, lain kaayo ang Maranao, nakasuway gyud ko lima gyud ko ka tuig.]

Another helper, Nelda, talked back to her mistress who became so infuriated by this show of disrespect. Nelda's mistress ordered her to wipe the furniture, but Nelda responded that she had already done it. Her mistress fired her because she (mistress) did not like a helper who talks back.

Nelda: I told her, "I talked back to you, Ma'am, because I have already wiped the furniture. Why should I do it again when I have other things to do?" My mistress really got angry and insisted that I do it repeatedly. [Ingon ko nga gitubag ka nako ma'am kay nahuman na god na nako ug trapo diha. Unsa pa may trapohan balik-balikan ana nga nahuman ko na man na sa pagtrapo, nganong balikbalikan man nga na-a pa man ko'y laing buhaton. Mao tong nasuko lagi kay patrapohan gyud ug pabalik balik.]

Giselle: Soon, you will wipe her face (everyone laughs). [Kadugayan siya ang imong trapohan.]

Notice the side comment of the focus group participants. Whenever they were is a space not controlled by mistresses, helpers freely express their opinions, and made fun of their employers. In this case, Giselle suggested that next time, Nelda should wipe her employer's face with the same cloth used for wiping the dusty furniture. Earlier, another participant, Alma, concluded that Giselle who was slamming things when her employers were not around may have intentionally broken the glasses, but pleaded not guilty to her employers. As the helpers were laughing at such a conclusion, it is very likely that this is a routine form of covert resistance among them. In addition, notice that the employers were complaining that their helpers were wasting cooking oil, detergent soap, and other household resources. Although this is not true to all helpers, wasting resources is another way helpers can get back at her employers. These cunning forms of resistance are very much like what Cely in *Color Purple* did when she secretly spits in the water before she extends it to her verbally abusive father-in-law (Walker 1982).

Many of those who fight with their employers eventually quit their job. Some of those who cannot settle their differences with their employers before leaving suffer the consequences. Part of the employers' controlling behavior of the employers is to disallow their helpers from leaving the house by refusing to give permission, withholding the wage, or locking the helpers inside the house. Thus, helpers have to devise ways on how to escape from their employer's maltreatment. They often have to create stories that employers consider as "reasonable" to let them go home. Acceptable excuses include ailing parents, pursuing education, or providing assistance in their parents' farm.

Accommodation with and Resistance from Master's Domination

Domestic workers must not only confront their mistresses, but also with their masters, the children, and other household members. In their relationships male employers, some helpers have experienced mild to severe forms of exploitation. Some of them would receive verbal forms of sexual harassment. Virginia's employer, for example, courted her, despite his being married. As Virginia puts it:

Virginia: My male employer told me that he developed a special feeling for me, because I am the one who wakes up at dawn to prepare his breakfast and pack his lunch. [Giistorya sa akong amo nako nga na-developed kuno siya sa ako-a kay kana laging momata sa kaadlawon kay syempre o god na nimo di momata ka gyud ug kaadlawon kay magdigamo sa iyang pagkaon, iyang balon.]

Even though she is fond of this couple, Virginia resisted her master's jealousy toward her male friends. When he made sexual advances, she defended herself and almost killed him with a knife. When she told her mistress about the incident, the latter defended her husband, and instead, accused her of flirting with him. After that incident, she immediately left her employment.

Virginia had the will power to take risks to get away from sexual abuse. Others, however, may not be as lucky as Virginia. One informant shared a story about a friend who was raped by her master who threatened to hurt her if she would squeal. Out of fear, the helper neither told her mistress nor filed a complaint against him. Instead,

she left the following day, without any wage, and realized weeks later that she was pregnant. This was how Enriquita told the story:

Enriquita: She told me the story while crying. It started when her master ordered her to get something from the master's bedroom. At that time, her mistress was in Manila. Then, she was asked to give him a body-massage. . . . Since this person is also a womanizer, he got my friend's "womanhood" . . . she was raped. She had bruises and she tried to get away, but she was not able to open the door. [Nisulti siya sa iyang problema sa ako-a. naghilak. Sugod gyud adto nga gisugo siya sa iyang amo nga lalake nga dunay ipakuha didto sa sulod sa ilang kwarto. Atong higayona wala diha ang asawa kay gilarga sa Manila. Dayon gisugo siya nga ipahilot wala . . . Mao tong nahitabo gyud labina kay chicks tirada pod tong lakiha mao nga nakuha gyud ang iyang pagkababaye . . . Gi-rape gyud to siya kay duna man gani to siyay mga bun-og kay naningkamot lagi nga makagawas sa kwarto peru bisan gi- unsa gyud niya wala man siya kaabli sa pultahan.]

One of the focus group participants, Esther, reported that her master would ask her to massage him whenever his wife was not around. During the massage, he would touch the private parts of her body. She never told her mistress, as her master warned her against doing so. For sometime, Esther would let her master caress her body every time his wife would go out. When she could not bear it anymore, she quit her job. Other informants, including Lourdes, Virginia, and Ann admitted that their masters would frequently touch (*hawid-hawiran*) them.

Lourdes was only twelve and in her first employment when her master (who also happened to be her teacher) crawled on her back while she was sleeping. Her mistress was out of town that night attending a seminar. She was extremely scared that she ran away. Lourdes was already cautious with her male employer, as he had a bad reputation of kissing his students who were just Lourdes's age.

Lourdes: We were the only ones left in the house – the children and her husband. We all slept in one bedroom, including my male employer. I could not sleep because he was always moving. The children were already sleeping. Then, somehow, I also fell soundly asleep. Then I felt that someone seemed to be crawling toward my head. I tried to pinch my employer's child

who was sleeping beside me, but not matter what I did; the child did not wake up. I don't know why the child did not wake up. Probably, she was very tired. So what I did, I got up and ran toward the door, but he caught me. I wriggled, got loose, opened the door, and ran home. I did not come back anymore. My siblings went there to get my clothes. [Kami ra lugar ang nabilen mga bata ug iyang bana. Onya isa ra 'mi adto ug kwarto nga katulganan iyang bana mao ra sab nga kwarto ba, onya dili ko pakakatulog tungod kay morag samok ba kaayo siging lihok lihok siya . . . Mao to nga kuan wala ko makakatulog. Ang mga bata nangatulog na. onya morag nakatulog na siguro ko adto, nahinanok na siguro ko adto, akong nabatian nga morag diha sa akong olohan naay nagkamang. Kadtong iyang bata nga akong tapad akong gikosi kay aron makamata ba pero bisan unsaon wala man gyud makamata. Ambot nganong wala makamata, siguro gipangkapoy tong mga bata-a . . . ug kay wala man kamata ang mga bata mao to nga ako na lay nibangon ug nidagan ko paingon sa may pultahan sa balay ba . onya kay iya man gyud kung gihawiran ba peru naabli gyud nako ang pultahan ug mao tong nidagan ko nipaoli sa amo. Wala na ko mobalik ang akong mga sinina gipakuha ko na lang sa akong igsoon.]

Some masters express concern about the maids' welfare. However, part of this concern, is paternalistic intervention into the maids' personal relationships. Bella's employers are not aware that she has a boyfriend. One time, her master saw her talking to a young man outside their house. Later, he asked her if the man was her boyfriend. Inhibited to tell the truth, she lied that the man was her cousin. In the succeeding days, however, her master would always see them talking outside the house. After confronting the young man about their relationship, the master learned that this young man was Bella's boyfriend. That night, Bella received a long sermon from her master, where he advised her to refrain from lying about her relationship, and commented that if this person was truly serious about his feelings toward her, he should ask permission from them (employers) to visit her in the house. Meeting her outside the house, according to her master, gives a bad impression on the woman concerned. It would appear as if she is giving him an opportunity.

There are also male employers who actively participate in exploiting the labor power of domestic workers. In one of Yolanda's employments, she was tasked to do housework in the morning and

factory-like work at night. Together with eleven other children, Yolanda's night shift was to repack floor wax for retail market and to place the repacked floor wax in boxes, ready for shipping. One day, the master claimed that he lost several boxes of floor wax, and he accused one of the child laborers of stealing the boxes. Threatening the children with a gun, the master asked each one of them to admit to the crime, but no one did. Eventually, he locked the child laborers in the storage house (*bodega*) for a week. While inside, they continued their task of repacking the floor wax. Within that week, they were given minimal food and water to keep them alive and to enable them to work. Yolanda and the other children wanted to escape, but it was difficult to find a way out. One day, they were able to break out from the storage house successfully. One of them found an iron pole, which she used to break the window. All of them escaped through the smashed window. The male employer almost caught them; he released his vicious dogs to catch them. The children ran for their lives. They climbed the walls surrounding the compound, jumped down, dashed to the neighboring houses, and hid there, while their employer searched for them without success.

Yolanda: I thought that it was the last moment of my life, and that I would die, that I couldn't go home anymore. [Feel nako maonato ang last nako nga kinabuhi, mamatay nako, di na ko kauli.]

Virginia also had an experience where her male employer reprimanded her for not following instructions. She was ordered to fry a two-day old steamed rice that was already starting to mold and smell. Virginia complained, but her male employer insisted, so she washed the rice, fried it, and served it to her male employer and other male workers who were around at that time. Expecting her to eat the fried rice, her male employer was mad when the rice was served to him. He muttered at her, "What do you think of me, a pig? Why are you serving that rotten fried rice to me?" Virginia retorted back, "Do you expect me to eat that rice?" Her male employer was swearing at her, but Virginia would always talk back. In his extreme anger, he grabbed a knife and threatened to attack her. Virginia, likewise, grabbed another knife and warned her male employer, "Go ahead! Attack! I will not be defeated, even if you are President Ramos."²

² Fidel V. Ramos was the Philippine president at the time this incident occurred.

Somehow, the male workers in the room were able to stop them from killing each other. Virginia quit her job after that incident.

Summary

This chapter has examined the conditions under which domestic workers resist exploitation from their mistresses and masters. Their isolation in the household limits their opportunity to build communication network and collective action with other domestics, and so they usually employ "individual acts of resistance" (Scott 1986, 27). However, while Scott emphasizes the non-confrontational nature of resistance in everyday life as the "weapons of the weak," a few helpers in this study dared to confront their employers. One of them even responded to her employer's violent behavior with violence as well. Typically, the helpers utilize covert resistance strategies and minor economic sabotages. In some instances, their resistance becomes overt and physical. Older helpers are more likely than the younger helpers to verbalize their opinion to their employers. Having older age enables the helpers to gain relatively more control of their lives and work. If the helpers have been working for the same employers for a long time, they would gain sufficient knowledge on how to handle their employers, such that they would not be marginalized further in the household as they already are. In addition, mistresses are more likely to trust and respect older helpers in terms of the quality of household work and childcare, and mistresses are less likely to be threatened by older helpers' physical looks. Age, therefore, is a deterrent to the mistress' domination over her helper. When the helper shares ethnic identity with and is much older than her mistress, the conflict between them becomes more complex.

Chapter 8

Class Mobility in Domestic Service

Two opposing views of class mobility in domestic service prevail. One view is that domestic service is dead end, that is, without any possibility for upward mobility; whereas, the other notion is that it is a “bridging occupation” (Broom and Smith 1963), a stepping-stone toward a relatively higher-status job or life in general. In the First World, many scholars support the “bridging occupation” argument (Coser 1973; McBride 1974). For example, in France, there was a significant intragenerational upward mobility among domestic servants after they married, with one-fourth of the marriages being upwardly mobile (McBride 1974). In the United Kingdom, nearly two-thirds of the domestics, in the late nineteenth century, shifted occupation to factory work, a relatively more prestigious occupation. In the United States, class mobility of domestic servants varied by race, with white women more likely than women of color to leave their jobs after getting married (Katzman 1981). Unlike their White counterpart, Japanese Americans, Chicanas, and Blacks experienced no mobility at all, as race interacted with class to block any access to opportunities and resources (Glenn 1981; Katzman 1981; Romero 1987).

Globally, domestic service is associated with women who belong to racial/ethnic minority groups (Smith 1973; Glenn 1981; Tellis-Nayak 1983; Hansen 1989; Bacan and Stasiulis 1997; Radcliffe 1999; Andall 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). This connection to ethnic minority contributes to the lack of class mobility among domestic workers. In Peru and Bolivia, paid domestic work is a job for the “indios,” a disparaging term for the indigenous people. As Smith (1973, 193) puts it, “Servants tend to be concentrated among the shorter, darker-skinned, black-haired, [and] barrel-chested” women. Likewise, in Manila the maids are stereotyped to be a *Bisaya*, someone from the southern region, who tends to mispronounce Tagalog or English words (see Dumont 2000), an indicator of inferior education. Like in Latin American societies, helpers in the Philippines usually have darker complexion than their employers, have longer hair, and sometimes, have body odor.

Within Third World countries, with few exceptions (Smith 1973; Radcliffe 1999), domestic service is seen as a dead end (Palabrica-

Costello 1984; Cock 1989; Dumont 1995), with little chance to move up the economic ladder. Smith (1973, 1993), in her study in Lima, however, argued that domestic service is a channel for upward mobility "within the broad spectrum of the lower class." While upward mobility is not elaborate, Smith presented several mechanisms in which the domestic worker can move on to a better life, through another type of job, obtaining a college degree, or marrying up.

Class Mobility within the Philippines

What determines class mobility among domestic workers in the Southern Philippines? Is it education, marriage, working abroad, or knowledge gained about the middle-class life? The types of domestic workers based on their motivation to work are the following: working students, working to study later, self-supporting women, working to escape to domestic violence, working daughters, and working mothers. The first four types of helpers view paid domestic work as a bridging occupation while the last two perceive it as a dead end.

Age and experience shape the helpers' varying perspectives about their work. When they first entered into this occupation, none of them considered domestic work as a life-long career. Instead, they viewed it as a stepping-stone to achieve a better life. The working students went into domestic service to continue their education. Merly, whose life is an exemplar of class mobility, moved from one domestic service to another until she obtained a college degree. Even after she graduated from college, she continued to work as a domestic helper while searching for a professional-level occupation. A few months later, she finally escaped from paid domestic work for good. Of the thirty-one maid-informants, five are currently studying, and one of them is in third year college. Considering the limitation of my data, I cannot predict the likelihood that they will eventually graduate from college and end up in an office-based, non-janitorial job. This phenomenon, however, of domestic helpers pursuing high school and college

education, indicates a hopeful attitude about the helpers' class mobility in the near future.¹

Yet, among the employers that I have interviewed, only one supported her helpers throughout the years, that is, until the helpers graduated from college. A few have supported their helpers' education at some point, but not continuously. This leads me to suspect that, there is a small chance for these young women to achieve the goal of obtaining college diplomas and enter into better-paying positions, since their education comes last in their mistresses' priority list. Furthermore, reaching college is no guarantee of escaping from paid domestic work. Ed, who has completed three years of college, is still stuck in domestic work for more than a decade. While a college degree is the surest way to avoid the risk of remaining in paid domestic work, at times, even a college degree is not an assurance that one will land into a job outside domestic service within the Philippines. As we know from Chapter 3, Petra has a bachelor's degree, and used to work as a clerk. Later, her career regressed into a restaurant helper, and recently a domestic helper. The point here is that, while education is a strong predictor of class mobility, a college diploma is not a 100% guarantee of a paid-domestic-work-free career. Most young helpers, however, have very positive outlooks about their future, determined that despite the many obstacles, they will eventually finish their education and live comfortable lives. Luisita, who is studying in high school, wants to take a computer-related course, because of the high demand for computer experts, in addition to good incentive package. Likewise, Crisanta wants to complete her education, believing that she can quit this job once she earns her college degree. Realistically, this optimism about class mobility in the near future is inversely proportional with age; it dwindles as the individual ages.

Some helpers got into this work to save money for their education. Many of them, regrettably, failed to save enough, as the little money that they have set aside, goes to the families' needs. Some of them are currently supporting a sibling through college. Self-

¹ The literature about domestic workers in the First World made no discussion about live-in domestics who are sent to school by their employers. U.S.-based scholar, Mary Romero, worked as domestic while doing her Ph.D. out of economic need, but she engaged in live-out arrangement with multiple employers, had a high degree of autonomy, and little interaction with her employers. Judith Rollins, likewise, worked as a domestic, but it was primarily a part of her dissertation research.

sacrifice and delayed gratification are at work in this situation. Due to the large family size and poor economic condition in the Philippines, poor families provide educational support to one child at a time. Younger siblings quit school for several years, and give way for an elder sibling. Sometimes, they work to help support this sibling. Once the eldest child obtained a college diploma and has found a job, this person is expected to send the younger siblings to school. Most of the domestic workers who are supporting their families hope to have a delayed gratification, that once their sibling graduates, they can quit domestic work, and in turn, be supported by their sibling.

If the dream to have a higher education could not be fulfilled or if higher education itself cannot take them out from domestic work, many of these young, never-been married helpers hope to retire from this job once they are married. They hope to find a partner who will support them and their would-be children. In addition, they desire to take care of their own home and children, and to engage in a small-scale business.

Bella: My plan is – after my wedding, I will live with my husband, and because he is working at Del Monte as a driver, I will just look for a small place for us to live, and I will just engage in retail sales. [Ay, ang akong plano – nga human sa akong kasal magpuyo ako uban sa akong bana ug kay nagtrabaho man siya karon diha sa Packing del Monte driver, mangita nalang ako ug gamay nga pwesto nga among mapuy-an dayon magtinda-tinda ako.]

Some helpers are already saving money for their wedding, while others are still looking for prospects, and are willing to forego education once they find affluent boyfriends to marry. Weighing her option between education and a rich husband, Alma declares excitedly:

Alma: Me too, I hope I will be able to study, but if I can find a man with lots of money, I will not study anymore. [Ako mao onta pod, makaeskwela unta ko, peru kung dunay lalake nga akong makit-an nga kwartahan, dili na ko moeskuyla.]

Many of the helpers aspire to become instant members of the middle class. Marrying up is the easiest way since it is a lot more convenient than a hard-earned, four-year college degree. Marriage alone, specifically marriage within their own class, does not liberate them from domestic work. Among my maid-informants, six out of

thirty-one are married or separated mothers who are still in paid domestic work, debunking the hope of the young ones that marriage is the way out of domestic service. The reality faced by married women is that their husbands' income is insufficient to raise their families, and so they are forced to work outside their homes. They clean someone else's home and care for someone else's child, leaving their own children without any assurance of care, as they only see their families on weekends. Fifty-five year old Teresa is the oldest among my informants. As housework was the only skill she possessed, she has worked as a domestic all her life, even after she was married. Teresa used to perceive domestic work as a bridging occupation, hoping to quit after she and her two sisters would be able to build a house for themselves (see Chapter 3). Now, it has become evident for her that domestic work is a dead-end and life-long occupation. Without any state policy specific for domestic workers, Teresa will soon retire with no pension or retirement benefits.

Like the working mothers, working daughters view domestic work as a dead-end occupation, for neither have educational or marital options at hand. As their parents and siblings depend on them for economic support, their personal needs become a secondary concern over that of family needs. In the Philippines, the daughter who is expected to care for her parents is likely to end up single for life. In this study, three out of the eight working daughters age between mid-twenties to early fifties. All of them have never been married as they put their family on top of their priorities. Fifty-year old Lourdes, who has been a domestic worker for thirty-eight years, is the oldest in this sub-group, and is also the eldest among her siblings. She has accepted that, with her elementary-level education, she will never find a job outside domestic work. Likewise, with her advanced age, she is resigned to being single for life.

In this study, only Gay had a chance to work abroad in many parts of South East Asia. After four years of working as a domestic outside the country, however, the living conditions of Gay's family did not improve much. The money that she sent was barely adequate to sustain her family, as her husband who was a construction worker, was no longer as hard working as before Gay left the country. He seemed to have depended enormously on her. The little savings that she brought with her when she returned vanished so fast that she thought of leaving again.

The only area that contributes to domestic workers' class mobility is the knowledge they acquired about the middle-class lifestyle, which they witness in their everyday lives in their employers' households. They learn to speak the dominant language, use electric cleaning and cooking tools, cook different kinds of dish, view a variety of television shows, and travel with the employing family. Although they always maintain their domestic servant role, they have the best glimpse of middle-class life through their "up close and personal" interaction with their employers.

The knowledge and skill they acquire about middle-class housework procedure is also an added advantage. Although the employer determines the helper's wage, a helper with longer experience is more likely to be offered a higher wage than someone without any domestic work experience. In addition, helpers who are experts in their craft are more likely to be "pirated" by other employers and offered better incentives. Besides knowledge about middle-class life, helpers also learn to adapt to urban ways of living. Whenever they have extra money, they buy new clothes, shoes, and makeup, and they dress up during their day off. The self-supporting women are most likely to splurge the small amount of money they receive on payday.

Romero (1987) suggested that Chicana domestics failed to penetrate their employers' social network that might offer opportunities for them or their family member. Unlike Romero's finding and similar to that in Madras Railway Colony (Tolen 2000) research in India, many helpers in this study infiltrate their employers' social networks through their maternalist relationship with their mistresses. For instance, if the mistress' spouse is in a position to hire or to recommend employees in his workplace, the mistress might ask him to assist her helper's spouse to become a company driver, messenger, or clerk. Likewise, the helper's children might be offered educational support. Geraldine's helpers provide a case of intergenerational class mobility through maternalist relationship. The mother of Geraldine's helpers is the helper of Geraldine's mother. Geraldine invited the two daughters of her mother's helper to work for her, and she supported them in their education until they graduated from college, left to practice their profession, and became middle class.

In terms of perception, younger workers are more optimistic view about the impermanence of their work, considering it as a bridging occupation. The strategies through which they believe they

could leave domestic service would be finishing their education and/or marrying up. None of them hopes to become an overseas domestic worker. On the other hand, more mature women and/or those who have important family responsibilities are more pessimistic about class mobility. Based on their long experience in domestic work, they have accepted that this is the only job they are qualified to do.

As this is a qualitative study, the data that I have acquired do not allow me to analyze fully the work life pattern of domestic workers. I do not have a comparison group, as I did not interview middle-class women who were formerly domestic helpers. The only reason Merly became an informant was because I searched for a gatekeeper who could help me with my research. Merly, who has field research experience, volunteered her story of being a domestic worker in her teenage years. Merly is the only case among my informants who used to work as a domestic, obtained a baccalaureate degree, found a professional job, married a middle-class man, and hired a domestic helper for her own convenience.

My informants have imparted stories of domestic workers they know who became middle class by marrying their employers. Employer Gloria told me about Bonnie's life story, a neighbor, friend, and cousin of her helper. At the age of sixteen, Bonnie worked in her aunt's house and cared for her aunt's children. Incidentally, this aunt had an extra-marital affair, and left her husband and her two young children with Bonnie who replaced her maternal role. Fourteen years later, the marriage of Bonnie's employers was annulled, and Bonnie married her male employer. In another case, the female employer worked abroad, and when she returned, the helper and the male employer already had an intimate relationship. The female employer filed a legal separation with her husband and went back abroad. Meanwhile, the helper and her male employer continued living together. Since the helper was already sharing her male employer's bed, she was no longer considered a helper, but a live-in partner. These are isolated stories, and are not a common route for the helper to achieve a middle-class status. These stories, however, show that the mistresses' jealousy toward young and pretty helpers has basis.

To gather insights about the domestics' work life pattern, especially those who have elevated themselves in the class hierarchy, I asked the employers if they had knowledge about their helpers' whereabouts after leaving their employment. The common reasons, which the employers raised, include returning to school, helping

parents to harvest crops, and caring for ailing parents. These reasons, however, as discussed in Chapter 7, are usually “excuses” they convey to their employers since these are the only acceptable explanations for the employers to let them go.

A few employer-informants have also mentioned that their helpers were tired from working and wanted to take a rest. After sometime, some of these helpers returned to their previous employers, if they were in good terms. Otherwise, they would look for another domestic employment. Others eventually went back to their rural village, got married, and engaged in subsistence farming or a small-scale, buy-and-sell business. Domestic work for them was only a venue to experience urban life or a part of their teenage and twenty-something years. Many would prefer going back to the simple, rural life rather than the city life, but deprived of private time, space, and sometimes dignity.

What has been discussed in this chapter, so far, was focused on the dead end nature of domestic service within the Philippines. While there are isolated cases of inter-class mobility, the trend is they remain within their class position. Like in Young’s study, whatever class mobility experienced by the domestics in this study, it was generally intra-class mobility within the working class. The middle-class knowledge, which they acquired as domestics, remains at the knowledge level and cannot be practiced once they are back in their own households. Although they may have become accustomed to cooking on electric stove, using a tiled bathroom, watching cable television, and using the telephone, they discard these practices as they quit their job. In their own households, these domestic workers usually cook on firewood, fetch water from public faucets or deep wells, use outdoor rudimentary toilets, and worry about their next meal or medical expenses. This deprivation explains the helpers’ uncomplaining stance about the living conditions in their workplaces (see Chapter 4). It has to do with the ambiguous class mobility they experience in their employers’ households. While their workday can last up to fifteen hours, they do not have to work as hard in their employers’ houses because of available technologies and cleaning agents that facilitate housework. They do not need to collect firewood to use for cooking. They do not need to walk for one kilometer and queue to fetch water. They do not need to work in the farm under the scorching heat of the sun. Their lifestyles within their employers’

houses do not expose them to sunlight, so they acquire a lighter complexion, similar to their employers.²

Globalization and Class Mobility

Can domestic workers achieve upward mobility through any means other than marrying up or obtaining a college diploma? In line with this question, I present a three-pronged argument about class mobility and social status of Filipino domestic workers. First, the upward mobility of Filipino domestics is contingent upon their situated position in the international division of reproductive labor. Second, the extent to which Filipino women are accepted for overseas domestic work depends on their social status in their homeland. Third, the Filipino domestics hold a dialectical class position. In their homeland, First World employment augments their social standing. The closer their workplace is to the core or the First World, the greater their upward mobility within their homeland. In the First World, however, their social status decline because domestic work is defined as “lower class,” and they are racialized based on color, ethnicity, and nationality.

Class Mobility and Situated Position

The first argument centers on the role of the individual’s situated position in the international division of reproductive labor on her upward mobility. Under this contention, class mobility is least likely when the individual works in medium-sized cities in the periphery, more likely in metropolitan areas of the periphery and in semiperipheral countries, and most likely in core countries.

² Developing a lighter complexion is comparable to what Radcliffe (1999) postulated about “achieving whiteness” as a way of class mobility. In Ecuador, domestics live out the lives of their employers by achieving whiteness not only in terms of complexion, but also about seeming to live like a middle class. Like the Ecuadorian domestics, when Filipina domestics visit their place of origin, their friends admire them for their lighter complexion, their new hairstyle, and their urbanized clothes.

Provincial level, Small- to Medium-sized City

My study is situated in a medium-sized city, and no considerable inter-class mobility was observed besides Merly's isolated case. Palabrica-Costello (1984, 240) made a similar conclusion in her survey of domestics in the same city. Taking the dead end argument Palabrica-Costello claims that, "the servant role is clearly not a career occupation, at least not in Cagayan de Oro. Fewer than one out of twenty of the maids in our sample was aged 30 and over, and most had been working at their job for a relatively short time" due to the "universal rejection of married servants." But what happens to those domestic helpers after they got married? Are they living a better life? Palabrica-Costello did not address this question in her paper. She argues, however, that these women neither moved on to better-paying jobs like factory work or commercial help. By looking at the occupational history of factory workers and commercial helpers, Palabrica-Costello found that only 7% of the former and 21% of the latter have ever engaged in domestic service, leading her to conclude that a "great majority of servants are not progressing into higher status jobs" (p.248).

Dumont (2000, 31) formulates an analogous argument in his study of domestics in Bohol, Philippines. While recognizing that Filipino domestics in Bohol are also working students, implying for a possibility for these young women to get out of this job, he pointed out that "a female 'helper' has little chance to escape from her condition and from her performance of alienated work." He did not categorically explain why the female helper, who is also studying, has little chance to break out from this alienating domestic work. I suspect that Dumont would make the same argument I raised before about the little possibility of their completing college and finding better-paying jobs.

Let us take a closer look at the geographical locations where Palabrica-Costello's and Dumont's studies were conducted: Bohol and Cagayan de Oro. Bohol is an island province in central Philippines, and is known to be the best supplier of domestic helpers in the country. Bohol has a small city, Tagbilaran. Cagayan de Oro is a medium-sized city located in Mindanao, another source of domestic workers for Manila. The two areas are provincial cities, supporting my claim that there is little class mobility for domestic workers in these areas. Smith (1973, 198), likewise, argued that servitude in the province is a dead-end occupation; it is inferior, prone to paternalism, lacking in chance

to see the metropolis, housed in poorer living quarters; and pays less. The metropolis, however, poses a different context, enabling the domestics to change occupation from domestic to factory work.

Third World Metropolis

Domestic workers in the metropolitan cities of peripheral nations face a different experience and may have more options to enter into "higher-status jobs" compared to their counterparts in the provinces and medium-sized cities. Because of numerous opportunities presented to an individual in the country's capital, at least, in comparison to the province, there are more jobs, no matter how menial, for the migrant workers.

Carmen, one of my informants coming from Southern Mindanao, migrated to Manila at sixteen. In her dire need for shelter and food, Carmen begged a female medical doctor to employ her. She accepted half of what the other domestic helpers were earning in the household. At that time, she might even have settled for food and household in exchange for her labor. Six months later, Carmen moved to a different household, this time earning a higher wage. Within three years in Manila, she left out from domestic work and ventured into other types occupations, such as waiting in restaurants and cleaning hotel rooms.³

In support of my argument that there is greater upward mobility for domestic workers in metropolitan areas, I would like to point out that Smith's study about domestic workers' upward mobility is situated the bustling city of Lima, the capital of Peru. Likewise, in Quito, Ecuador's capital, domestic service is seen as the entry point for rural-migrant women, as they seek better opportunities like vending and factory work. In this city, only one-third of female migrants were still in domestic service after working for ten years (Radcliffe 1999).

Class Mobility through Core Migration

Dumont (2000) described the status differences between the Filipina local helpers and the Filipina transnational domestic workers. He used the term "domestic worker" exclusively to refer to an

³ Eventually, Carmen returned to domestic work and continued her college education through her mistress' support.

overseas domestic and applied the term “domestic helper” to local domestic. Dumont characterized the domestic workers as having higher prestige in the Philippines compared to the helpers who are poorer, less visible, and more vulnerable. Furthermore, domestic workers earn more state recognition than the domestic helpers. As mentioned in Chapter 1, transnational domestics are significant to the national because of their remittances back to the Philippines.

Let us now examine the extent of upward mobility for Filipino domestics in a few core and semiperipheral nations. The monthly wage of Filipino domestics is highest in Japan, Germany, the USA, United Kingdom, and Italy (*The World Guide* 1999). Likewise, domestics who remit the U.S. dollars, the Japanese yen, and the euro home to the Philippines are transmitting the most stable currencies in the world economy.

Employing a domestic helper back in the Philippines is something that overseas domestic workers brag about to lift their demeaning status in the core and semiperipheral nations. Indeed, most overseas domestic workers are paying domestic helpers in the Philippines to take care of the dirty work that they left behind to emigrate for higher wages (Lan 2000; Parrenas 2000). Having a helper is already a status symbol for them, although this is not a significant status symbol in the Philippines, considering that a factory worker can easily hire a domestic helper.

Social Status in the Philippines and Possibility for Overseas Work

The second argument deals with the impact of social status on the possibility of an individual to work abroad, particularly in the core. The extent to which an individual can reach a core nation depends on her social status in her homeland. The closer to the middle-class level her class position gets, the more likely that she will be hired abroad. Middle class would mean at least a college degree and/or a moderately prestigious job. Filipino professional women, therefore, are more likely than the non-professionals to be selected by the recruitment agency for paid domestic work abroad. This is because of the filtering process that takes place in the hiring of overseas domestic workers. As there are professionals who join this pool of applicants, they are more likely to be selected over those who have lower qualifications. In addition, middle-class women are more likely to pay the huge sum of money as placement fee to the recruitment agency. High school graduate,

working-class applicants that are able to get a job abroad may have to indenture their future labor to the recruitment agency as a guarantee they will repay their transportation costs. These employment agencies are so expensive that it will require the domestic workers to work a year to pay back their charges.

Middle-class professionals who have saved enough money and/or have connections abroad utilize the direct hiring method. Out of desperate economic need, Linda Layosa (2000, 150) abandoned teaching to become a higher-paid domestic worker in Hong Kong in 1986.

I had been a private school teacher for 14 long years. They were good and fulfilling years, and I never entertained the thought of leaving the profession. I enjoyed teaching young children and training them to be good declaimers and spellers who inevitably emerged as gold medalists in school competitions. For a time, I also became the faculty president. But with three young children to feed, clothe and send to school, an unemployed and not too responsible husband, a smart little brother to send to college, and ailing parents to support, I was forced to ask my eldest sister to find me an employer in Hong Kong.

Linda had to sacrifice the status associated with her job in the Philippines to earn more money to support her family.⁴ On the last day of her teaching position, she was sent off to the airport by her rich student's family.

I was booked for a flight four days before Christmas. The thoughtful and friendly father of one of my honor students offered to take me to the airport in his black Mercedes Benz. It was one of the many gestures of gratitude and affection that I received from my students' parents. What a great way to go to the airport, I thought – de luxe service for a soon-to-be servant de luxe! My students and their parents were aware that a couple of hours later, the "Ma'am" they used to address me would be addressing her female employer in the very same way (Layosa 2000, 151).

⁴ Note, however, that Linda Layosa eventually became an editor of a magazine for the domestic workers in Hong Kong. Her experience is an isolated case of class mobility within the rich nation.

Some middle-class women travel to a First World nation, such as the U.S.A., on a tourist visa, hoping to find jobs and remain in that country as illegal aliens. Their relatives in the First World provide them with food, shelter, and other needs until such time that they can financially cope on their own. There are numerous reports about Filipino professionals, including journalists, lawyers, and teachers, who migrated to New York to become domestics and nannies (Herrera 2000). The *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, a national newspaper reported:

Four highly educated Filipinas — a journalism graduate and a social science graduate from the University of the Philippines, a law graduate from San Beda College and a masteral graduate from De La Salle University--came to Manhattan seeking to make it big, only to end up as nannies and maids (Herrera 2000).

These Filipina professionals are in a dialectical class position. Domestic work may be seen as humiliating in the core, but that same work elevates their class position in the Philippines. The money they earn is sufficient for them to build a house, send their children to schools, and/or start their own businesses in the Philippines. Therefore, it is worth the effort, for the “losing of face” associated with demeaning paid domestic work is temporary.

Dialectical Class Positions in the Core and in the Periphery

The third argument deals with the dialectical class position the domestic worker in the core holds. While there is a need for a considerable level of social status in the homeland to be able to go abroad, once the individual reaches the core and engages in domestic work, she is stereotyped as someone fitting to the domestic servant role. Although she would earn more money, and most likely, acquire upward mobility in her homeland, her social status within the core declines due to racialization based on color, ethnicity, and nationality. The teacher, Linda Layosa, held high esteem as a professional in the Philippines. However, Layosa's (2000, 154) Hong Kong employer stereotyped her as ignorant. Linda (Layosa 2000, 154) writes about this experience:

When they gave me instructions, I obeyed them to avoid arguments even if I knew a better way. On my first week, my male employer called me and said, “Linda, do you know

what this is?" He was referring to the television set. My naughtiness got the better of me. I pretended not to know and instead asked him, "Please tell me, Sir, because I do not know." He told me with an air of superiority, that it was a television set and he showed me how to turn it on and off. I smiled secretly, for I had made him feel he was the boss.

Filipinas who once employed domestic helpers in their homeland become domestic workers serving white middle- or upper-class women in the core or semi-peripheral nations. Thus, the more privileged identities they held in the Philippines disappear in the face of core discrimination based on race/ethnicity, class, and nationality. Let us consider several examples of this dialectical class position. In Hong Kong, the term Filipina is equated with domestic worker. Unmindful of the domestic worker's high level of education, Filipina domestics in Hong Kong are stigmatized as lesser beings. Filipina domestics are stereotyped as dumb, stupid, or ignorant (Constable 1997; Layosa 2000). In Taiwan, a Filipina domestic works as many hours as possible to earn as much money as she can. Yet, she might donate hundreds of dollars for her high school homecoming fundraising activity. When asked why she donated so much amount, she explained that among her peers, much is expected of those who are working abroad, and therefore, she has to live up to their expectations to protect her class position (see Lan 2000). Filipina domestics in Ontario say that they cope with the hardships of domestic work because they know their jobs are temporary, that when they go home to the Philippines, they do not need to scrub floors anymore (Cohen 1991). Likewise, Filipina domestics in Rome and in Los Angeles claim that once they return to the Philippines, they will become the employers who enjoy being served by their own helpers (Parrenas 2000).

Summary

The basic issue posed in this chapter was whether domestic service is a dead end or a bridging occupation. I argue that we need to depart from the typical dichotomous analysis of domestic work either as dead end or as a bridging occupation. I contend that we need to analyze the class locations held by domestic laborers within the world economy. Class mobility in domestic service needs be examined from a global perspective and from the domestic worker's social location in the many spheres of international division of reproductive labor. With

our world as a “global village” (Brecher and Costello 1994), domestic workers’ migration patterns are not simply from the countryside to the city within a country; they extend beyond national boundaries. The analysis of class mobility in paid domestic work, therefore, becomes complex as the workers’ varying positions in the world-system (i.e., core, semiperiphery, periphery) produces different levels of mobility, as well as dialectical positions.⁵

The different contexts for class mobility of domestic service within the world-system illustrate different layers of relationships between domestics and their employers, as well as different layers of experience. As cited previously, the closer the helper is to a core nation, the more likely that she gains upward mobility within her homeland. At the same time, it is more likely that her social status will decline in the core, as the class distance between her and her employers become increasingly complex. If a helper traveled from the *barrio* (rural village) to a medium sized city, the basis of power relations between the helper and her mistress would most likely be grounded in class difference. If a helper traveled from the *barrio* to a Third World metropolis, these power relations would be grounded in both class and ethnicity. If the helper migrates to a First World country, the layers of difference would be complicated by the intersection of class, race/ethnicity, and nationality. Her class position will decline significantly because her racial, ethnic, and nationality differences place her in the bottom strata of the core country.

⁵ The world-system, according to Chase-Dunn and Grimes (1995, 139), is a “set of nested and overlapping interaction networks that lines all social units of analysis – individuals, households, firms, towns and cities, classes and regions, national states and societies, transnational actors, international regions, and global structures. The world-system is all of the economic, political, social, and cultural relations among the people of the earth.”

Conclusion: Towards a Global Approach

In conclusion, I now situate my analysis of mistress-maid relations into a global perspective, integrating gender, ethnicity, and class within an "international division of reproductive labor" (Parrenas 2000). The gender division of reproductive labor is the backdrop for mistress-maid relations, with class and ethnicity interacting to enable some women to rid themselves of this unwanted set of tasks. I have focused on women's class relations in a Third World country, demonstrating the mechanisms by which women in two different strata participate in the patriarchal and capitalistic "relations of ruling" (Smith 1990, 14-16).

On the one hand, the mistress is an exploiter of the maid's labor power. On the other hand, both mistress and maid are subordinated to the patriarchal system of power relations. Consequently, the class-privileged woman is not the ultimate beneficiary of this structurally exploitative arrangement.

Division of Labor

Socialist feminist writers focus on the gender division of labor in patriarchal societies (Hartmann 1981; Acker 1988), where women's work is undervalued and is unpaid. Within the household, patriarchy privileges men, assigning them the power to control women's reproductive labor (Hartmann 1981). The wife, despite her waged work, performs most of the housework and caring tasks (Beckwith 1992; Bond and Sales 2001). In the paid labor force, patriarchy again privileges men through job segregation and higher wages. Intellectually stimulating and better-paying jobs are assigned to men while mothering and carework are unpaid or low paid work of women (Hartmann 1976; Acker 1988).

Women's disadvantaged role in the gender division of household labor is a highly significant women's issue. Not all married/cohabiting women, however, face this double burden of waged work and domestic labor, that is, not all women have to do the "second shift." Indeed, some women who are privileged by their race/ethnicity and class buy themselves out from housework, as they can easily hire poor women to perform that job for them. This is where the connection of

feminisms, "sisterhood," and housework meet. While white, middle-class feminists idealize sisterhood with all women, "women of color" critiqued this idea (hooks 1984; Collins 1986; Hurtado 1989; Baca Zinn and Dill 1996). Third World and women-of-color feminists assert that some white, middle-class women enjoy their class and racial advantage by utilizing the reproductive labor power of women of color (Rollins 1985; Romero 1988; Glenn 1992). As women of color heightened their consciousness about the differences among women, the issue of the sexual division of reproductive labor took a racial flavor. Glenn (1992) advanced her theory of the "racial division of reproductive labor," as evidenced in white, middle-class women avoiding housework through the employment women of minority-group domestics. By examining the division of reproductive labor through the interaction of race, gender, and class, Glenn (1992) contends that white women's oppression and the oppression of women of color are interlocking in the sense that white women played a role in the oppression of women of color by letting the latter perform white women's supposedly reproductive labor (i.e., domestic service, slavery). While white middle-class feminists protested men's inadequate contribution to reproductive labor, women-of-color feminists criticized the ways in which white, middle-class women shift this dirty work to poor, women of color. Consequently, poor women of color perform reproductive labor within their own households as well as those of white middle-class women.

Parrenas (2000, 567) extends Glenn's (1992b) framework of "racial division of reproductive labor" by applying it to the global restructuring of economy which facilitates the migration of cheap domestic laborers from poorer countries to richer countries. Parrenas has conceptualized a three-tiered framework of the international division of reproductive labor based on her research of Filipino migrant workers in the U.S. and Italy. In her framework, Parrenas situates the middle-class women in the receiving nations at the top of the hierarchy of the international division of reproductive labor. In the middle of this hierarchy are the Filipino migrant domestic workers who, while doing reproductive work for the middle class in the core, are also maintaining domestics in their home country. At the bottom are the "Filipina domestic workers in the Philippines who are too poor to migrate."

The international division of reproductive labor is much more complex than what Parrenas has described. Her contribution is significant, but what she really meant by "international division of

reproductive labor” was only the international direct linkage of three groups of women: the employer from the core, the domestic worker in the core who is also an employer in the periphery, and the domestic worker in the periphery. Excluded in Parrenas’ analysis were the employers in the Third World and the domestic workers who are citizens of the First World. Although she patterned her concept from Glenn’s racial division of reproductive labor, Parrenas disregarded what Glenn stressed as the “relational” aspect among women globally, that even if they are not engaged in face-to-face communication, they are “connected in systematic ways” (Glenn 1992).

Viewing Parrenas’ framework from the world-system perspective, her three tiers of international division of reproductive labor can be called core, semiperiphery, and periphery. On top of the hierarchy then are the middle-class women in the core. In the middle are semiperipheral women who are situated in dialectical positions in the world-system, sharing the identities of employers and domestic workers. At the bottom are the domestic workers in the periphery.

I will begin my analysis from Parrenas’ third tier, the women at the bottom of the international division of reproductive labor. This is where I disagree with Parrenas’ conceptualization. Women in the periphery are not just poor. They are also affluent women who utilize the labor power of poorer women.

The Gender-Ethnicity-Class Hierarchy

Many feminist scholars (Anderson 2000; Leonard 2001) point to men and capitalism as the ones who are privileged most in paid domestic work. The mistress is the immediate beneficiary of this arrangement, but the mistress’ spouse is one of the ultimate beneficiaries, as he is no longer pressured to contribute to household chores (Leonard 2001). In Glenn’s (1992, 33) words, within the U.S., “the availability of cheap female domestic labor bolstered white male privilege by perpetuating the concept of reproductive labor as women’s work, sustaining the illusion of a protected private sphere for women and *displacing conflict away from husband and wife to struggles between housewife and domestic*” (emphasis mine). Analyses of women hiring other women to do reproductive labor have demonstrated a significant division among women along class and ethnic lines. Once middle-class women are emancipated from domestic

labor, they participate in the perpetuation of the capitalist-patriarchal society by exploiting poor women. As more and more women hire domestic workers, the women's movement has not achieved its goal of liberating women by changing men's ways. Rather it has achieved in the liberation of some middle-class and elite women from housework through their employment of women situated in lower class positions. When we view women's liberation this way, it becomes problematic, as the root of the problem is not resolved. The unwanted task of housework is merely passed to a racially and economically disadvantaged member of this gender. And the "liberated" female employer maintains the inequalities of the patriarchal system that keeps both classes of women subordinate to men.

The Household Perspective

Women's hierarchical relations with other women are situated within the broader structures of class, gender, race, and ethnicity in the world-economy. I would like to offer another theoretical framework by examining mistress-maid relations using the household perspective of world-system analysis (Smith, Wallerstein et al. 1984).

Ward (1993) suggested the need to integrate gender in the world-system perspective. Ward is critical of the perspective's overemphasis on exchange, accumulation, and class and its neglect of the gendered nature of production, and the links between the formal sector and the women's informal sector and domestic labor. She argues that Smith, Wallerstein and Ever's (1984) household perspective ignores the conflicting interests of men and women within households and conceals the connection between women's socio-economic roles in waged and non-waged labor. "When gender is considered by some world system theorists, they most commonly pursue a strategy of studying households in the world economy . . . rather than recasting world system theory to put gender at the center of analysis" (Ward 1993, 52).

Dunaway (2001, 8-11) points out that the world-system perspective "masks the power struggles and inequities within households." While Ward was unclear about how to bring gender to the center of world-system analysis, Dunaway argues that engendering the world-system perspective can be achieved through analysis of the commodity chain, which is grounded in women in the household.

Dunaway (2001, 8) asserts, "To accomplish this task, we must enter through the doorway of the household. It is beyond this portal that we find the forgotten woman, and we will find her working longer hours than men to contribute surpluses that do not appear in the account books or in the tally of the Gross National Product."

It is not sufficient to recast the world-system perspective by putting gender at the forefront of its analysis of the household. While the "forgotten woman" becomes visible in this analysis, it conceals the inequality among women within the household. It fails to show how women of color's reproductive labor have been imported into white, middle-class women's households. By integrating gender, race/ethnicity, and class into the study of the households of the world-system, we will see that the "forgotten woman" as Dunaway calls her, has different faces, depending on the location of the household in the global class structure. Oftentimes, in middle-class households, the "forgotten woman" who works longer hours is not the wife, but a paid domestic worker hired from a pool of poor women of color and migrant workers, while the middle-class mistress escapes her household for wage-labor, trying to become "like men" (Ozyegin 2001). Simultaneous with our effort to integrate women into world-system analysis, we must recognize that the "forgotten" women occupy different positions of power in the household.

I use the intersection approach to explain the power relations among subordinate groups – the forgotten women – within the household in the international division of labor. As the framework in Figure 1 illustrates, maid and mistress relations are grounded in their class differences and possibly ethnic differences. Besides class and ethnicity, mistress-maid relations are embedded in paternalistic gender relations, in which the middle-class man (mistress' spouse) is released from reproductive labor while the working class man (maid's spouse) may be obliged to do additional housework as his wife is working for another woman's household. Additionally, mistress-maid relations are situated within the structures of patriarchy, capitalism, and postcolonialism. The world-system perspective links mistress-maid relations in the household to the global pattern of accumulation and unequal exchange, as exemplified in the international division of reproductive labor. First World women import Third World women to do their private household chores. It is through commodified reproductive labor that women are linked and segregated. As Mies (1986, 3) astutely describes, women are "both divided and connected by commodity relations."

Economic restructuring and globalization have, among other things, resulted in feminization and racialization of poverty, in which women of color from the Third World are the most badly hit. The current phase of globalization has a dual effect for women: proletarianization and professionalization (Moghadam 1999). These seemingly contradictory trends depict the differential statuses of women, as exemplified in my study of professional women exploit poor women to do their housework. From the Marxist class perspective, the relationship is likened to bourgeois and proletariat, in which the exploitation of the proletariat's labor power is necessary to gain more profit. Out of the need to survive, the proletariat gives his/her labor power to the bourgeois in exchange for an income that is hardly sufficient to reproduce labor power. The proletariat, by selling his/her labor to the bourgeoisie, is alienated from the means of production. The harder the proletariat works, the more profit the bourgeois gains while nothing is gained by the proletariat, except exhaustion and alienation from the means of production. The professional woman belongs to the new class of capitalists. Her education and professional skills are her capital, in addition to her membership in a privileged class position. The professional woman utilizes the domestic helper's labor power to free herself from her traditional role in the household. The more the domestic worker performs effectively, the more surplus value the professional woman accumulates. The domestic worker, therefore, is alienated from the means of production, as it is not her own family that she is looking after but another man's/woman's. Although the professional woman benefits from her relationship with the domestic worker, the patriarchal capitalists, in turn, exploit her labor power within the commodity chain. Ultimately, the patriarchal capitalist world-system accumulates wealth from the oppressive employment relationship between the employed mistress and her maid.

The experience of colonialism in Third World countries has an essential part in this framework. For example, we can understand gender and class concerns in the Philippines within the context of its colonial history, as class and gender relations are linked to a global capitalist and patriarchal model of accumulation, and therefore, the history of imperialism and colonialism. Although many Filipino mistresses and maids share nationality, language, ethnicity, and religion, the structure of mistress-maid relations, which is patterned after centuries-old master-slave or colonizer-colonized, divides women along class and ethnic lines. I argue that the existing structure of mistress-maid relations is rooted in the Philippine colonial experience

between 1521 and 1946, mostly founded on Spanish colonization and perpetuated during the American occupation.

Among its many legacies, the Spanish colonial rule formed a distinct class structure and promoted male dominance and racist ideology (Eviota 1992). Spanish colonizers exerted their authority over the Filipinos and treated them as “indiyos,” meaning members of the inferior race who are consequently ignorant and lazy. Women who were working as servants in Spanish households experienced wide social distance from their employers. Servants were told to regard their employers with a high level of deference (i.e., use of *senorita* and *senor*, bowing down when speaking to employers, and speaking in a lower and softer tone). Colonial mentality still manifests itself in Filipino racial privileging of lighter skin, long nose, and tallness. These biological traits are not inherent in the Filipino genes. At the ideological level is a desire to control or to colonize just as Filipinos had been colonized. Employing a servant, and treating her in the traditional/colonial manner, is one way in which a wage-earning wife, who herself has been subjugated through the system of patriarchy and capitalism, can exercise power and authority over another woman from the lower class, thereby, easily shifting identities from being controlled to being in control.¹

Situating mistress-maid relations within a broader analytical framework provides us with a comprehensive understanding of women’s class relations within major systems of domination, such as racism and colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy. By looking at mistress-maid relations from a global framework, we do not only view this relationship as that of exploiter-exploited. Rather we examine both of them as exploited by global capitalism, patriarchy, and their common history of colonialism.

¹ This is very clear in Parrenas’ study of Filipina migrant domestic workers who promised that when they return to the Philippines, they would let their “maids” carry out all the work.

Appendices

Appendix A. Interview Guide for Female Employers

Personal and work history

1. Demographics (age, marital status, number and ages of children, education, ethnicity, place of origin)
2. Profession, number of working hours per week, monthly salary
3. How do you feel about leaving your children (below 7) while you work?

Marital situation

1. Between you and your spouse, who usually makes the major decisions?
2. Who usually does more in household division of labor?

History of hiring domestics

1. When did the family first decide to hire a helper? Why? Who suggested it? You or your spouse?
2. How did you hire your domestics? Is it easy to find one?
3. How many domestics do you usually have? How many rooms are there in your house? What are the duties of your domestics?
4. How many hours in a day do they work? What time do they wake up? What time do they sleep? Do you call on them after 8:00 PM?
5. How much is their monthly salary? How long does it take to get a raise in their salary?
6. What are the benefits involved? What is their day off?
7. How restricted or free are your domestics? What are your policies? Did you give any restriction on the use of household appliances? Which of your appliances are free for your helper's use without your permission? Which require permission? Which appliances are restricted?
8. What is the average length of service of your DH?
9. What are the common reasons for leaving?
10. How dependent are you on your maid?
11. What do you do about the house work when you are temporarily without a maid? What does your husband do?
12. What are the traits that you are looking for in a helper?

Relationship with Domestics (current)

1. How does your helper address you? Did you suggest this title or did your helper automatically use this term?
2. How do you address your helper? Did she ask you to call her by that name or you automatically called her by that name? If the latter, why?
3. How well do you know the background of your domestics? Are you updated with the events of your helper's family?
4. How often do you interact with your domestic? What is the nature and content of this interaction? What are the things that you talk about? What sorts of things does she tell you? What sorts of things do you ask about her.
5. Do your helpers usually join you for meals?
6. Do your helpers usually join the family for TV watching after dinner in the evening?
7. Where does your helper sleep?

Perceptions and attitudes

1. Can you imagine yourself becoming a paid domestic worker? Why or why not?
2. Do you consider yourself successful?
3. How did you achieve this level of success?
4. What more would you like to achieve in your career?
5. Do you consider yourself a feminist? If yes, do you see any connection or contradiction between your being a feminist and your hiring domestic helpers?

Appendix B: INTERVIEW GUIDE for Domestic Helpers

Personal History

1. Demographics (age, marital status, education, ethnicity, place of origin)
2. Activities before taking the job as a domestic helper
3. Motivation for becoming a DH, who recruited you?
4. Lowest salary, highest?
5. Number of years in the DH work, number of employers
6. Average length of stay per household. Longest. Shortest. Reasons for leaving.

Background of the household where the DH is working

1. Size of the house, number of rooms
2. Number of residents (children, adults)
3. Number of DH
4. Professions female and male employers
5. Age-level of employers

Working conditions

1. Daily routine from the time you wake up until you sleep (make a schedule, including breaks)
2. Available technology that you can use to lighten your work, i.e., washing machine, range,
3. Access to appliances (The presence of the appliances does not mean that the DH has access to them. Some employers instruct their DH to do a manual laundry, use firewood in cooking, and to refrain from watching TV or listening to music)
4. Job satisfaction. Do you find your workload manageable? Too heavy or just normal? Are you satisfied with your wage? Incentives? Any day off? What day? Full day or partial? Social security benefits?
5. Autonomy. Do you have a certain level of autonomy in your work or does your female employer provide you with detailed instructions on each task. examples:

- a. does you plan the meals?
- b. Can you rearrange the furniture anytime you like?
- c. Can you use all appliances in the household?
6. How often do employers call you at night? (very often, sometimes, rarely)
7. Any other issues related to your working conditions that you want to talk about?

Relationship with the female employer and other members

1. Name calling. How do you address your employer? How does your female employer address you? How does this name-calling affect the relationship? Do you like the way your female employer address you?
2. Spatial/ social distance. Did your female employer or any member of the household segregate you from the other members of the family?
Examples:
 - a. invited to watch TV with the family?
 - b. Invited to relax in the living room with the family?
 - c. Share same bedroom with some members of the family?
 - d. Eat together with the family on the same table or eat alone after the family members have eaten
 - e. Join in family conversations?
3. Did your female employer ever shared her problems with you? If yes, how did you feel about her sharing stuff with you? Did you give advice or just listen?
4. Did you share your life story with your female employer? Did she ask you to share or you voluntarily shared it with her? Did you want to share or you feel obliged?
5. Does your female employer help your family in any way? How? Did she give you bonuses and gifts? How did you feel about her giving you gifts?
6. Did she ever reprimand you? How often? Why? How did she reprimand you? Did she call you names? Did she lay a finger on you?
7. Did any other member of the family reprimand you? Who? How often? Why? How did she/he reprimand you? Did she/he call you names? Did she/he lay a finger on you? How did the female employer react?

Appendix C. Focus Group Discussion Guide Questions

1. Nganong nagpahelper? Unsa ang inyong pagtan-aw sa trabaho? Unsa ang inyong gusto nga itawag sa inyong trabaho, i.e., helper, maid, suluguon, katabang, muchacha?
2. Unsa ang kinabuhi sa usa ka helper? Unsa ang posisyon sa usa ka helper sa panimalay? Unsa ang iyang relasyon sa mga miyembro sa panimalay?
 - a. modungan ba siya sa pagkaon? Pareha ba ang iyang sud-an kumpara sa ubang miyembro sa pamilya?
 - b. Motan-aw ba siya ug TV kauban ang pamilya?
 - c. Moapil ba siya sa diskusyon sa pamilya kabahin sa bisan-unsang isyu nga walay labot sa iyang trabaho?
 - d. Kani ba nga mga sitwasyon kagastuhan sa agalon o sa katabang?
3. Unsa ang kasagarang buluhaton gikan sa buntag hantog sa gabii? Unsa ang orasa makapahulay? Unsa ang mga kasangkapan ang ipaggamit sa helper? Unsa ang dili?
4. Aduna bay otonimiya ang katabang sa iyang trabaho o ginahatagan ba siya ug detalye nga instruction sa iyang agalon? Unsa ang iyang gusto, hatagan ug detalye nga instruction o adunay igo nga otonimiya?
5. Palihog ihulagway ang relasyon sa katabang ug sa agalon nga babae. Sa unsang pamaagi nagkalahi ang ilang ilang posisyon sa panimalay? Sa unsang pamaagi nagkapareha?
6. Sa unsang mga pamaagi ipakita sa agalon ang iyang gahom o otoridad sa katabang? Sa unsang mga pamaagi mopauyon-uyon o mo-resista ang katabang sa otoridad sa agalon?
7. Unsa ang alas ang gihuptan sa agalon? sa katabang?
8. Unsa ang ambisyon sa katabang?

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Publications

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Professional Presentations

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