Filipinos in Tasmania

A Gendered Analysis of Diaspora and Resistance

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by

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Statement of originality

I certify that this thesis contains no material which has been previously submitted for the award of any other degree at any university, and that, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously written by any other person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the experiences of Filipino women who have migrated from the Philippines to Tasmania, Australia. Commonly referred to as 'mail-order brides', the women discussed in this thesis have migrated to Australia for the purpose of marriage, usually after a process of letter writing and friendship. Utilising the theoretical sociology of Pierre Bourdieu and other postmodern theorists such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, this thesis argues that Filipino women in Tasmania do not regard themselves as 'victims', as suggested in many scholarly and media representations of 'mail-order brides'. Instead, based on the accounts of Filipino women living in Tasmania, this thesis provides new insights into the 'mail-order bride' phenomenon, questioning and challenging the many assumptions that are often made about their migration. The ultimate aim of this thesis is to provide alternative realities to the stereotypes of Filipino women married to Australian men. It will be argued that many of the Filipino women who migrate to Australia for marriage cannot be regarded as 'victims', but rather as autonomous *agents*: they often resist and challenge dominant social and gender regimes at various junctures in their lives.

To provide a sense of social and historical depth to these arguments, this thesis will examine some of the cultural conditions in the Philippines that may influence Filipino migration to Australia. I explore how neo-colonialism in the Philippines has had both a positive and negative influence on Filipino women. I also examine some of the underlying structures of patriarchy in the Philippines in relation to ideology, sexuality and labour. In this section of this thesis, I utilise Bourdieu's theories of capital and empowerment to further understand the complexities of gendered migration to Australia.

This thesis also engages with issues of identity within the context of multiculturalism and social divisions in Australia. I show how social policies on multiculturalism do not adequately account for the hybridity of interracial subjects such as Filipino women who migrate to Australia. Furthermore, this thesis offers a theoretical account of how Filipino women and their families are sites for the development and articulation of a hybrid identity.

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I am indebted to all the Filipino informants from Tasmania who shared so openly their stories with me. I have learnt so much and gained new friendships, which may not have been possible, had I not been invited to be a part of their lives. I am also thankful to Josie Wallace from the Migrant Resource Centre in Launceston for sharing with me some of the common issues that are important to Filipino women's settlement. I also wish to thank all the members in the Philippine Studies Group in Canberra for helping me with stimulating discussions and new ideas, as well as giving me a broader understanding of the Philippines in general.

I am extremely thankful to my parents who have encouraged me from a very young age to explore Asia and make friendships with people who do not always feel at home in Australia. My children Peter, Tristan and Alina also deserve my warmest gratitude. I am especially grateful that my husband Marshall was able to spend his evenings with my children each night so that I could work on my thesis. He has provided me with constant support and encouragement.

Introduction

"After all, 'living between Asia and the West' is itself a complex borderland experience, made up of multiple crossings of peoples, traditions, knowledges, histories".[1]

Living between Asia and the West has involved a steep learning curve throughout my adult life. As a high school student I had friends from Vietnam, China and Cambodia. I also studied Japanese, which was the only available language at my school. I then travelled to Japan as an exchange student for two months which was my first experience living in Asia and learning to negotiate two cultures. At university I studied Chinese for four years and then studied in Beijing for a year. Eventually, after learning Chinese for about six years, I met my husband-to-be, a lecturer in Indonesian, who regularly visits Indonesia for research purposes.

Accompanying my husband, I have raised three children in Australia and Indonesia and taught Asian languages at the high school level. All of this experience has given me a strong desire to learn about people from different backgrounds from mine. During my first stay in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, as a parent of a two month old

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[1] Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), p.167.

baby and a two year old toddler, I found that as a mother I was much more involved in the local village life than when I had visited previously as a student. I had to learn very quickly how to 'mother' in a different culture. This brought many challenges as well as rewards. I moved from living in a house in Australia that revolved around my immediate family of four to living in a village that involved me living inter-dependently with many other women and children. Although I did not have the material comforts of living in Australia, I had the help of a whole village to raise my children.

Since 1990, I have been living between Asia and the West. I have experienced racism and have also seen how I am positioned in the world because of my colour and gender. It is for these reasons that I have long been inspired to learn more about how women from Asia experience their world of living between Asia and the West. It is my hope that through this thesis, women caught between two worlds – women like myself in many ways - will be able to gain new understandings of how these two worlds can be experienced as one.

My focus is on Tasmania, where I have lived for three years. After forming a friendship with a Filipino woman and later discovering that she had migrated to Australia under unusual circumstances, I thought it would be interesting to find out more about other women who had similar experiences. Initially, I found this area of research a challenge because the Philippines was one Asian nation I had not yet had the chance to explore. Furthermore, in Australia the Philippines do not receive the same media profile as other neighbouring Asian countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Filipino migration to Tasmania is a relatively recent phenomenon: the first Filipino women arrived in Tasmania in the early 1980s.

In 2003 there are over six hundred Filipino women in Tasmania, the vast majority of whom are married to Australian men.[2] Between the years 1992 and 2000 there were one hundred and forty-one Filipino women who migrated to Tasmania. Thirty-nine Filipino women migrated to the greater Hobart region and fifty-nine Filipino women migrated to Northern Tasmania.[3] Compared to other Asian countries, the Philippines as a country of origin had by far the largest proportion of women who migrated to Tasmania. Most of these women have migrated to Tasmania through family reunion migration or as fiancées or spouses of Australian residents.

Given that the majority of Filipino women are married to Australian men in Tasmania, this thesis will engage with the discourse on 'mail-order brides'. It is my hope that it will provide new insights into the experience of Filipino women in Tasmania, and question and challenge the assumptions that are often made about their migration. The ultimate aim is to provide alternative realities to the stereotypes of Filipino women that circulate in the media, on the web and through academic discourse.

To provide historical depth to my arguments, this thesis will look at some of the cultural conditions in the Philippines that influence Filipino migration to Australia. Such conditions include their neo-colonial experience, oppressive gender and family relations, poverty, or a combination of all of the above. It is often assumed that Filipino women migrate to Australia simply because they are poor and in need of a wealthy husband. However, I soon discovered that this version of their personal history is too simplistic. Even though they may be poor, their motivation for leaving the Philippines was rarely based solely on one reason alone. As evidence of this,

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[2] Census statistics from the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs in Tasmania.
[3] ibid.

consider an excerpt of the life story of Lolita, the first Filipino woman I interviewed in Tasmania. Lolita was poor but there is more to her story:

My name is Lolita; I was born on the 21st January, 1960. I arrived in Australia on the 30th November, 1991 after obtaining a three-month visa and was married on the 18th January, 1992. After I got married I lived in a caravan with my husband.

When I was growing up in the Philippines I lived together with all my aunties, uncles and brothers as one big family. We were all very close and we shared the same backyard and the same front yard. There were no fences in between. When I was a child I had a lot of problems with my heart and I nearly died. I was always very quiet and did everything I was told. When I was in grade two, my auntie looked after me. She had only one child, so it was easier for her to look after me than my mother. My auntie taught me how to do this and how to do that. At the age of nine, I could already cook on my own. I could cook rice all on my own. So I grew up like a mum already. I always had to clean the house and look after the piggery. I even had my own pig to look after.

I studied very hard at high school. My teacher was very strict so I did everything she told me to do. We learnt English, Tagalog and other dialects. I did very well until I got to college. In my second year of college my mother died and I had to look after my younger sister. After six months I did finish my course in agriculture but there was no work for graduates in agriculture. So I had to find work overseas to support my younger sister.

My friend was a housemaid in Kuwait. She found me work in Kuwait. I did not know much about Kuwait or the climate. But I went for the work. My employer there was just like a princess. I had to put on her earrings and zip up her clothes. I worked from 6am to 11pm. She was horrible. She made me clean the second floor windows during a dust storm outside. I nearly fell down and died. I still feel very anxious when I remember it. It was terribly frightening. I found my passport in a little suitcase and gathered all my clothes in a garbage bag and ran away. Every night I was sick with nerves. I thought I was going to die. I ran away to the Philippine hostel near the embassy. There were lots of women without passports who could not leave. The staff at the hostel thought that I was very clever because I remembered to find my passport. I worked in a bakery for three months to save for my airfare to go back to the Philippines. I still remember and shake. My princess employer didn't care about me.

When I went back to the Philippines, I was 30 and looking for a job. I worked in an office for agriculture for a little while. My friend stayed in Kuwait for nine years. At home they teased me all the time. "What are you doing?" they would say. I was very good at looking after all my uncles. So I tried again to look for work. I got another friend in Malaysia this time. So I went there through an agency. So work, work, work. My employer gave me nothing. I went to work from 6am to 9pm. I had to look after 4 children, 2 adults, a grandmother and myself. I was given a certain amount of food each day, and after everybody had eaten, I was allowed to eat the leftovers. It was not enough, I felt very weak and hungry. My pay went straight into a joint account so I could not get money out without her signature. She was a teacher and he was a doctor. The grandmother was complaining because she didn't

have enough to eat. But anyway there was a Chinese neighbour, who would feed me his leftovers every afternoon without my employer knowing. I survived through what they gave me. After one year I had to look after a one year old. She slept in a cot next to me every night. I would feed her and change her nappies. I was so sad to leave her; she was like my own baby.

Anyway, I went back to the Philippines and my neighbour there had a penfriend in Australia. My friend's penfriend was David's cousin. So I wrote the letter for her because she had no English. That is how I was introduced to David. I didn't know anything about Australia. So when I got here, David said to me that we were going to live in a caravan. And I said, 'okay'. But I was so cold in the caravan. We stayed there for a week. Then we decided to move in with my in-laws for a little while. They were very good to me. The most important thing was that they treated me very well. After a while I got pregnant and David's parents looked after me. I had a cleaning job but then I left it and had a baby. I preferred to have a baby than work. I was so sick of working. I was so sick of being treated bad.

When my daughter turned two I went to a playgroup in Legana and I met lots of friends. She really enjoyed it and I enjoyed it too because that was when I could meet other mothers. Now our children go to school together. Sometimes I go to town with the other Filipinos. When we get together we forget where we are and who we are, we just have a good time. Sometimes we think we are still in the Philippines and don't worry about Australia for a while. We are so happy to see one another and eat Filipino food. We always meet together for the children's birthdays. My friend is having her 15th anniversary. So that will be half Filipino and half Australian.

Lolita's story reveals an enormous sense of sadness and at times desperation. However, her story improves upon her arrival in Tasmania, together with a caring husband, the arrival of her daughter and a group of friends whom she can trust. Her story also provides insight into the vicissitudes of Filipino migrant workers, trapped in a cycle of servitude to wealthy and uncaring employers. In Australia, Lolita no longer has to serve employers who disregard her sense of humanity. Her husband does not consider her as inferior. In fact, she seems to enjoy designing and decorating her country house in a very scenic area of Tasmania. She has a close group of friends, a supportive church, a beautiful daughter and a husband who respects her. Certainly in the eyes of many she would fit into the category of 'mail-order bride'. But considering the nuances of Lolita's testimony, is 'mail-order bride' a realistic label?

'Mail-order brides'

The term 'mail-order brides' implies that women are simply objects that are ordered in a catalogue. They have little say in the process and are simply sent to the man who makes the order. Furthermore, Filipino women as 'mail-order brides' are often imagined as victims of male violence, poverty and servitude. Naturally, the term 'mail-order bride' itself deeply offends many Filipino women who have migrated to Australia for the purpose of marriage. However, the term 'mail-order bride' is still widely used in newspapers, cinema, magazines and books and is most widely exploited on the Internet, where Filipino women are objectified, either as pornographic representations or as potential wives. This objectification of Filipino women is what I hope to challenge throughout my thesis. I intend to show that

Filipino women who migrate to the West for marriage are not just victims but also *agents*: they often resist and challenge dominant social and gender regimes at various junctures in their lives.

A typical example of the discourse associated with the notion of 'mail-order bride as victim' is an essay by Sean Parlan in *Pacific Rim*.[4] In this essay, which outlines the problems associated with mail-order brides in Canada, Parlan begins with an often-heard statement: 'The global industry of mail-order brides is booming'. Unfortunately, like so many essays of its type, Parlan offers us very little proof that this is actually the case. It appears that he is basing his observation on the large number of Internet websites devoted to the mail-order industry. The main argument of Parlan's article is that women who use these services nearly always encounter abuse and isolation. Dennis Altman in *Global Sex* expresses a similarly negative tone: "unfortunately by 1988 there were almost 50,000 Filipina women in Australia, many of whom had moved there to marry Australians."[5] Furthermore, "many such marriages pair older uneducated white Australians with young women desperate to emigrate."[6]

What is absent in these stories of despair, which are typical of the 'mail-order bride' discourse, is the suggestion that the Filipino women involved may actually be autonomous agents. In the process of marrying Western men, they may be challenging other forms of power that may not seem obvious. For instance, this thesis will reveal that many Filipino women had to face great suffering before being able to migrate to Australia. Their suffering was not always a result of poverty, but rather oppressive ideologies in the Philippines that are discriminatory against women.

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[4] Sean Parlan, "Mail-Order Brides", *Pacific Rim Magazine*, URL:
http://www.langara.bc.ca/prm/2001/mailorderbrides.html/ site accessed 13th May 2003.
[5] Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Australia & New Zealand: Allen & Unwin, 2001), p.115.
[6] ibid.

Through extensive qualitative research, this thesis will show how the majority of Filipino women in isolated areas in Tasmania have at some stage in their lives challenged and resisted different forms of power, both in the Philippines and in Australia. Through their sometimes minor or symbolic resistances, they have been able to construct a life that is somewhat better than what they had before. For example, Francisca grew up with six brothers and six sisters and her mother and father were both farmers. Although Francisca grew up in poverty she made the most of her education and went on to be a successful businesswoman. Francisca graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce at the age of twenty-three and a Bachelor of Science at the age of thirty-one. She then completed a Masters in Business Administration. After graduating, Francisca managed a noodle factory and also owned a jewellery business. Clearly, Francisca worked very hard in the Philippines. Her letter writing to Western men became more of a hobby in her spare time, something she did for fun. For instance, Francisca said:

My cousin was working in the Flying Doctors in Darwin and then he came back to the Philippines for a holiday, bringing back all his grassroots magazines. You know that grassroots magazine for farmers and all that stuff? He gave me a read of one of his magazines. In there, there was a column of pen-pals. So I wrote my name in there. It was just for fun, you know.

The fact that Francisca was a highly educated businesswoman in the Philippines shows how she was very much in control of her destiny when she started to write to a Western man:

I typed my address and sent it off. I had 35 replies. They were from New Zealand, Britain, and Canada etc. I didn't choose anyone. Mike came over right away to meet me, and then went back to Launceston to work. I also had a penfriend in Canada. He was already 57 so I thought he was no good. I was only 26 or whatever. We were writing for a long time. The problem was, my friend in Canada was supposed to come to the Philippines but I made a mistake, I accidentally sent his letter to one of the other penfriends. I was very bad. I never told him that I had a job, I told lots of bullshit. I was testing him to see if he was really interested. Because in the Philippines, if you don't have a job, you are nothing. When I was writing 35 letters, I pretended that I couldn't afford stamps, so they would send me money for the stamps. Mike was a part of this group. But then Mike said, 'I am going to visit you this Saturday' and I said, 'what am I bloody well going to do now'. So I told him that I suddenly got a job. I was very naughty. I just wanted to find out if they were really interested or not you know.

Francisca shows clearly that she is no victim in the pen-friend letter-writing process. In fact, Francisca is the one controlling the whole introduction. She had both choice and agency and willingly went along with the whole process. When I talked about this letter writing process with Fransisca, I learnt that many Filipino women wrote to several men and therefore were able choose who they felt was most suitable. Often they chose their partner on the grounds of who was willing to make that extra effort to fly to the Philippines. Mike flew to the Philippines fairly quickly to meet Fransisca before her attentions were diverted to other men. We can see that Fransisca utilised the letter writing process as a way of testing how serious the men were about her.

One important factor in the introduction process is the pleasure of letter writing. In fact, most women enjoyed being able to write a letter to someone whom they had not met or seen, so that the relationship could be based on a deeper level than appearance alone. This is in contrast to the somewhat sleazy world of the Internet, where highly sexualised imagery is prominent in many of the web sites that advertise Filipino women for marriage. Some sites begin with earnest editorials promoting Filipino women as modest and sincere women devoted to upholding traditional family values. However, several clicks later the same sites are attempting to snare the presumably male viewer with pornographic images of Filipino women. The gambit is that the viewer is only able to see more, and more explicit, pornographic images of so-called 'Filipino babes' if he provides his credit card number. Therefore, it is clear that these sites are not always catering to the needs of a man innocently desiring to marry a Filipino.

A contrasting account of a 'meeting process' between Filipino women and Australian men provided by my informants might resemble the following:

My friend who married an Australian in Melbourne sent me a form to apply for a penfriend, which is the way she found out about her husband. I didn't know if I wanted to marry James because he was old. I was 34 and he was 49. There was nearly 16 years difference. But anyway, we wrote to each other. He rang me every Friday. I also wrote to an American as well as James. I really liked him. I had already been writing to him for a year already. Then James was worried someone else was writing to me so he was in a hurry to come to the Philippines and meet me. He came over after a month of writing and we

got to know each other in the Philippines. After a month, he said, 'I would like

to marry you'.

The above couple met through letter writing and only married after nearly a year of communicating with each other. The above narrative clearly highlights the need for the 'mail-order bride' discourse to include stories of Filipino women as autonomous agents in a world of power relations that are not solely based on gender alone.

A number of Filipino women who are married to Australian men in Tasmania were more than happy to share their story with me. Through listening to their stories, I was able to learn much about the role of Filipino women in the Tasmanian community. I was also able to learn about the ways in which they attempt to express their sense of self and group identity, as women, as Filipinos, as Tasmanians, and as Australians.

Support Networks in Tasmania

As there are a large number of Filipino women in Tasmania compared to Filipino men, the women have been able to support each other in different types of groups. One such group is the Philippine-Australian Friendship Association of Launceston. This support network was formed in 1983 when there was a sudden influx of Filipino women arriving in Northern Tasmania. This group is inter-racial and includes the Filipino women, their Australian husbands and their children. They also have a family focus. Each month they meet at a formal meeting to discuss local and political issues in Tasmania and in the Philippines, and discussion is followed by a meal and a time of sharing together.

Another group is the Filipino Women's Support Group. The Filipino

Women's Support Group has a focus on strengthening the woman and building up her

individual skills. There are women in the group who have an understanding of

Australia's social services, and they in turn provide advice and assistance for

newcomers in the areas of housing and employment. Groups such as these are very

important social networks for women who live in isolated areas in Tasmania and for

single women who need the help of welfare agencies and social services. Women in

the Filipino Women's Support Group also keep close contact with the Migrant

Resource Centre and the Migrant Liaison officers in Launceston.

Both groups, key focus-points of social networks, provide different services to

cater to Filipino women migrants and their specific needs. There is no question that

the social role of these groups is crucial. According to Goss and Lindquist:

it has long been recognised that social networks provide potential migrants

with information about available destinations, contacts with gatekeepers, and

sometimes with funds for transportation and other fees. At destination, they

provide assistance in the form of housing and employment and may be a

means to provide cultural continuity and communication with the community

of origin. Social networks, therefore, reduce the cost of migration and mediate

between the migrant and the destination society.[7]

The Filipino support groups have a highly sophisticated system of networking where

the men and women introduce Australian men to Filipino women back in the

Philippines. Through this process of networking they can check whether the

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[7] Jon Goss & Bruce Lindquist, "Conceptualizing International Labor Migration: A Structuration Perspective," *International Migration Review*, 27, 2 (1995), p. 329.

Australian man has a good record and is respectable for their Filipino relatives and friends back in the Philippines. It is not uncommon for a Filipino woman to try to match up her younger sisters or cousins with Australian men she has met in Australia. Hence, some of the members of these groups fulfil an intermediary or 'match-making' role. In the long-term, these intermediaries can also help facilitate the complex migration and marriage process, where there is a range of visas to organise and fees to pay. According to Nicholas Van Hear these intermediaries hold "migratory cultural capital"[8], which helps establish and consolidate a sense of community identity. In the words of Goss and Lindquist, "Migrant networks develop from social networks as individuals and groups exploit social relationships of kinship, friendship, community, or employment experience in order to support migration".[9]

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a significant proportion of Filipino women in Tasmania come from the Cebu region, in the South of the Philippines. The presence of so many Cebuanos is an illustration of successful personal network alliances. This networking is what Filipino women proudly feel they are very good at. For example, Pertierra argues "Filipinos consider themselves as the centre of a personal network of alliances based on ascribed elements such as family and locality".[10] In this sense, according to Pertierra, Filipinos "personalise their world in order to achieve their ends".[11]

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[8] Nicholas Van Hear, *New Diasporas: The Mass Exodus, Dispersal and Regrouping of Migrant Communities* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), p.62.
[9] Jon Goss & Bruce Lindquist, "Conceptualizing International Labor Migration," p. 329.
[10] Raul Pertierra, *Explorations in Social Theory and Philippine Ethnography* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1997), p. 28.
[11] ibid., p. 29.

Theoretical Approach of this Thesis

This thesis is underpinned by the notion that issues of gender, power and sexuality pervade the experiences and discourse of 'mail-order brides'. Examples include the construction of Filipino women as a feminised, conservative Other vis-à-vis the aggressive women of the West; the complex sexual relations between white Anglo-Saxon males and Filipino women who are often promoted as 'hot', 'naked' and slavishly sexual; and the imagining of the Western-Filipino intermarriage as a site of servitude, abuse, rape and identity-struggle. There is also a view of Filipino and other Asian women as manipulative 'gold diggers' marrying old and unattractive Australians.

This thesis will engage with all of these aspects of this ongoing discourse. Importantly, in the midst of such varied perspectives on gender, race, and power, one perspective is strikingly absent: that of the Filipino woman as a strong, hybrid, autonomous *agent,* as opposed to the stereotypical image of objectified, dominated, Asian, *victim.* Filipino women like many 'migrant' women are predominantly represented as *victims.* This research aims to return *agency* to Filipino women through examining the resistances and negotiations that have been part of their daily lives both before and after settlement in Australia. According to Johnson and Ferraro:

> The victimised self emerges during moments of existential threat, and it dissolves when one takes actions to construct new, safer living conditions. The victimised self emerges when the rationalisations of violence and abuse begin to lose their power; it becomes the all-consuming basis for however long it takes to transcend this period of crisis or threat. It tends to dissolve, over time,

for those who change their lives in new, creative ways, although the sense of victimisation never disappears altogether. For all who experience it, it becomes incorporated into an individual's biography of experience.[12]

This concept of the victimised self is relevant in analysing the position of Filipino women who have migrated to Australia for marriage. These women have taken action to leave situations in the Philippines that contributed to their victimisation. According to Roberta Julian, "The decision to leave and the processes of flight, exile and resettlement are experiences which diminish the sense of victimisation. The more involved the individual is in each of these processes, the more likely it is that the 'victimised' self will be a temporary condition".[13] Most Filipino women who migrate for marriage have taken action to change their lives for the better or simply to create a life that is different. Therefore in the process of migration and settlement there is an ongoing process of victimisation and agency. In other words, 'migrant' Filipino women can feel both disempowered and empowered in the processes leading up to migration and after migration.

Throughout this thesis I will discuss ways in which Filipino women either feel disempowered or empowered in both the Philippines and Australia. To be able to address these different power relations adequately, I will explore Filipino women's experiences of migration and power in two very different locations: Cebu in the Philippines, and Tasmania, Australia.

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[12] John Johnson and Kathleen Ferraro, "The victimised self: the case of battered women," in Joseph Kotarba and Andrea Fontana (eds.), *The Existential Self in Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p.121, cited in Roberta Julian, "Invisible Subjects and the Victimised Self: Settlement Experiences of Refugee Women in Australia," in Ronit Lentin (ed.), *Gender and Catastrophe* (London and New York: Zed Books, 1997), p. 201.

[13] Roberta Julian, "Invisible Subjects and the Victimised Self," p. 202.

Ganguly-Scrase and Julian argue the importance of examining how "gender relations reconfigure in reconstituted relations of class, race and ethnicity"[14] therefore emphasizing the need to recognise "both the dynamics of migrating feminisms and the centrality of gender in structuring power relations in diverse contexts."[15] Gender relations are very different in the Philippines from those in Australia. A woman's sense of empowerment can be influenced by society's values and structures of inequality. This research will cover issues of power and one's self-perception in the different contexts of Cebu and Tasmania. Through focusing on their experiences in both locations I hope to challenge the reductionism involved in universalising women's experiences in 'diaspora'. This thesis therefore will explore how 'migrant' Filipino women conceptualise and define their gender roles and relations in two separate locations. I will also address the way in which Filipino women are perceived by Australian society in terms of gender, race and ethnicity.

As previously mentioned, it is often assumed that Filipino women are victims in one way or another. For instance, it is assumed they are victims of poverty in the Philippines and victims of male dominance in Australia. Filipino women may be wrongly represented as victims. Some Western feminists such as Germaine Greer and Simone de Beauvoir for instance, have often described the wife/mother role as unacceptably restrictive to women.[16] This role is often seen as a role of oppression. However, labelling Filipino women who fulfil the wife/mother role described by Greer as victims is based on Western women's experiences of oppression.

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[14]Ruchira Ganguly-Scrase and Roberta Julian, "Minority Women and The Experiences of Migration," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 21, 6 (1998), p. 633.
[15] ibid.
[16] Some popular examples include Germaine Greer, *The Whole Woman* (London: Doubleday, 1999), Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London: Granada, 1971), Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Penguin, 1972) and Christine Delphy, "Patriarchy, Domestic Mode of Production, Gender, and Class" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds., Nelson, C & Grossberg, L (Urbano and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 259-313.

Women's experiences are not universal. For example, the notion that women are oppressed in the suburban house fails to recognise the importance or hindrance of generational links between women in developing countries. Most of the Filipino women whom I spoke to were raised by their grandparents or aunts and were far from lonely in a suburban house. Looking at women's experiences from a Western point of view may not take into account the nature of support from the extended family and also the types of pressures that could arise for women living with different generations. Living alone in a suburban house may in fact be comfortable for women who have grown up with no privacy or independence. Judith Butler has argued for a need to deconstruct the 'universal woman' so that women from the developing world can be heard:

> The political assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally, often accompanies the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination.[17]

Judith Butler's argues that power and oppression cannot be analysed from the standpoint of a universal feminism that does not take into account cross-cultural differences. In order to show how power or agency and oppression or victimisation are experienced differently for women who cross cultural borders, I will draw on Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical constructs. Both theorists conceptualise power relations very differently. Foucault's description of power tends

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[17] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p.3.

to operate on a level of abstraction whereas Bourdieu describes power operating in a very detailed concrete manner such as in the way one stands, dresses and walks.

Foucault's ideas have been influential in that he "conceptualised people's experiences of domination and subordination as 'effects' of power rather than as proceeding from a specific source of power."[18] According to Foucault, "power is everywhere: not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere."[19]

Given that according to Foucault, power cannot be pinned down to any particular source, Foucault examines the need to critique a type of feminism that suggests power and oppression are located in the masculine/feminine domain alone. Foucault instead defines power as "constituted through discourses."[20] These discourses are what influence what is perceived as normal and abnormal.

One common feature with many Filipino women whom I interviewed was the feeling of being an outsider in the Philippines. This feeling came from not being valued in Philippine society and therefore, resulted in victimisation or feelings of disempowerment. Some reasons for their victimisation included being single, too old, unmarried with a child, poor, orphaned at a young age, unattractive and independent. Having even one of these characteristics meant that they felt like an outcast or abnormal. In other words they did not fulfil their own society's expectations of them to be 'normal'.

In *Discipline and Punish,*[21] Michel Foucault discusses how normalising judgements are made to hierarchise and homogenise people with the overall purpose of excluding and dominating different groups of people. In discussing the role of

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[18] Caroline Ramazanoglu, *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p.5.

[19] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p.93.

[20] Ramazanoglu, *Up Against Foucault,* p. 21.

[21] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1975).

discipline, he argues how discipline can also work to enforce power over people who are regarded as not 'normal'. Although Foucault focuses on the prison system in this particular text, he also refers to the wider implications of normalising patterns that emerge in society as a whole. Foucault therefore, concentrates on how power is diffused throughout society. Foucault argues that, "The relations of power are among the best hidden things in the social body".[22] For example, everybody is constituted as subjects in discourses of normality and abnormality. Discourse in this sense has a disciplining role. Drawing on this theme, in this thesis I explore how normality correlates with power. I therefore discuss what is considered 'normal' and valued in Philippine society and how this contrasts with similar constructs in Australian society.

A significant number of scholars have observed that potential gaps and weaknesses in Foucault's theory of power can be detected.[23] Most importantly, Foucault has been taken to task for his inability to fully conceptualise the possible 'sources' of power. This is an important point as without investigating the nature and source of power it is difficult to fully understand the origins of oppression and victimisation and how to resist such oppression through agency. For example, how can women resist an oppression that is simply passed on through discourse with no original source? I believe that Bourdieu's theories can usefully complement Foucault's theoretical understandings, as Bourdieu emphasises the importance of delineating the potential sites and sources of power.

I have argued that Foucault's and Bourdieu's conceptions of power are very different and possibly mutually exclusive. However, both are very relevant to Filipino women and their migration. Foucault provides important understandings to the

[22] Michel Foucault, "Power and Sex," in L. Kritzman, ed., *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and other writings 1977 – 1984* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 118.
[23] See Caroline Ramazanoglu, Kate Soper, Jean Grimshaw, Maureen Cain, M.E. Bailey, Janet Ransom & Maureen McNeil in Caroline Ramazanoglu (ed.), *Up Against Foucault*.

discourse of normality that affects Filipino women and their sense of self worth in the Philippines and in Australia. Bourdieu on the other hand provides important insights into the everyday lifestyle patterns that are representative of one's class position in society. If these lifestyle patterns cross over into another culture they may not carry with them their accompanying status. This also has important implications for Filipino women's self esteem when they migrate to Australia.

One way for Filipino women to feel 'normal' in the Philippines is to actively seek a form of capital that will further improve their lifestyle. According to Bourdieu, 'capital' can be divided into four different types:

> Firstly *economic* capital, in its various kinds; secondly *cultural* capital or better, informational capital, again in its different kinds; and thirdly two forms of capital that are very strongly correlated, *social* capital, which consists of resources based on connections and group membership, and *symbolic* capital, which is the form the different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognised as legitimate.[24]

Using Bourdieu's theory of capital, I will show how Filipino women have been able to start a different life for themselves and their families through migration. They are taking practical action to escape a feeling of abnormality or discomfort that contributed to their victimisation in the Philippines. In the process of migration, in most instances they acquire one or more of the types of capital mentioned above. Consider, for instance, the acquisition of social capital through marriage. Mina Roces observed how marriage and community work are two types of social capital that are

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[24] Pierre Bourdieu, "What Makes A Social Class?" *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 32 (1987), p.4.

highly valued in the Philippines.[25] Mina Roces in her research with Filipino women in Queensland found that when Filipino women settled in Australia they were actively involved in civic work and in the community as a whole. Roces highlighted how Filipino women often felt compelled to participate in the Australian community through membership in various organisations which "reinforced their identity as Filipina migrants who have 'done well' in Australia".[26] These Filipino women acquired the social capital they lacked in the Philippines through their migration to Australia.

Another concept deployed by Bourdieu, that of the 'habitus', will also help unravel the 'organic' nature of power. According to Bourdieu, the habitus can be understood as:

on the one hand, the historical and cultural production of individual practices - since contexts, laws, rule and ideologies all speak through individuals, who are never entirely aware that this is happening-and on the other hand, the individual production of practices-since the individual always acts from self-interest.[27]

Throughout this thesis, I apply this concept of habitus to help understand issues relating to Filipino women's victimisation and agency and how this affects their migration and settlement. For example, I argue how agency can be influenced by childhood experiences and the habitus, both of which can place different constraints

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[25] Mina Roces, "Filipinas in Central Queensland: Gender, Migration and Support Services," in Denis Cryle, Grahame Griffin & Dani Stehlik, eds., *Futures For Central Queensland* (Brisbane: University of Queensland, 1996), p.148.

[26] ibid.

[27]Jen Webb, Tony Schirato and Geoff Danaher (eds.), *Understanding Bourdieu* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2002), p.15.

on Filipino women. This thesis will attempt to identify some of the constraints embedded in institutions such as schools, families and churches that bind Filipino women to the social circumstances in which they find themselves.

In the later chapters of this thesis I examine what happens when Filipino women engage with the structures and values of Australian society. In Australian society, to be married to a much older man is considered abnormal: not so in the Philippines. In the Philippines, to have your own private house and to not have to work is considered a luxury. In Australia, to be confined to a house and unemployed is considered oppressive. These are just some examples where the Philippine and Australian perspectives of power and oppression are vastly different. A Filipino woman's self-perception and self worth can therefore be very different from 'others' perceptions of her.

The theoretical constructs of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu therefore help to understand how agency and victimhood are blurred in the process of migration. A Filipino woman can be both an agent and empowered after migration if she looks back to the Philippines for her self worth. She may however, once again, feel victimised and disempowered if she looks to Australia for her self-worth where the values of normality and abnormality are different to the Philippines. This victimised self however may slowly dissolve in Australia as she begins to take practical action to avoid situations that contribute to her victimisation.[28] Sometimes this sense of agency can be found in the 'third space'[29] where she is not bound by the structures and values of Philippine or Australian society. This can be a space where resistances are possible. Foucault describes 'resistances' as an:

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[28] An example of this is where Lolita refused to work in a lowly paid position, in an oppressive work environment, that degraded her sense of self and did not recognise her education.
[29] Vijaya Joshi, *Indian Daughters Abroad: Growing up in Australia* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 2000), p.168. Joshi describes the 'third space' in relation to second generation Indian women growing up in Australia.

odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite. Hence they too are distributed in irregular fashion: the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilising groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behaviour.[30]

Resistances can be expressed in many different ways. For example, in Bell Hooks' *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics*, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hahn says:

I think that communities of resistance should be places where people can return to themselves more easily, where the conditions are such that they can heal themselves and recover their wholeness.[31]

This research will attempt to examine where Filipino women can feel at home with themselves and their community and recover a sense of wholeness. This may involve looking back to the Philippines for a sense of belonging or it may involve forgetting about the Philippines experience altogether. Drawing on their experiences in the two separate locations of Cebu and Tasmania, I examine the hybridity as an example of resistance. Ien Ang argues the "importance of hybridity as a basis for cultural politics in a world in which we no longer have the secure capacity to draw the line between us and them, between the different and the same, here and there, and indeed, between

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[30] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 96.
[31] Bell Hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), p. 43.

Asia and the West".[32] The Filipino women themselves discuss the intermingling of values, cultures, identities and connections to homeland. Finally, through their narratives, I show the diversity and complexities of the Filipino 'diaspora' in Tasmania.

I will attempt to deconstruct the concept of 'diaspora' as a framework for thinking about Filipino women in Tasmania. Thomas Holt observes that the term 'diaspora' "carries with it not only the obvious acknowledgement of separation, but the presumption of a kind of unity".[33] This reuniting is supposed to happen after migration. The concept of 'diaspora' that I will deconstruct throughout this thesis leads to an emphasis on the similarities and differences among Filipino women. For example, all Filipino women in Tasmania are viewed as 'migrants' and belonging to the same nationality but this does not mean that they all share similar experiences of migration and racial belonging. The latter chapters of this thesis will attempt to draw out the ambiguities involved in this diasporan concept.

Methodology and Arrangement of this Thesis

This research was based on unstructured interviews with Filipino women who have migrated to Tasmania to marry an Australian man. The main objective of the interviews was to listen to the subjective experiences of the women interviewed. According to Judi Mathison, "Social life is organised and determined by social processes and structures. To deny the importance of the women's accounts of their

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[32] Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, p. 3.
[33] Thomas Holt, "Slavery and Freedom in the Atlantic World: Reflections on the Diasporan Framework" in Darlene Clark Hine & Jacqueline McLeod, (eds.), *Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 35.

experiences within these structures and social processes as useful sociological data would be to deny an important aspect in the production of knowledge".[34] The study target group involved twenty Filipino women who live in Tasmania, aged between twenty and seventy. To select potential interviewees, a 'snowballing technique' was used, starting with a friend. This 'snowballing technique' involved the Filipino women themselves giving information about my project to other Filipino women. After my first round of interviews, I simply gathered as many stories as I could. In many instances, the women themselves would talk about their life history for over two hours. I found that the women enjoyed talking and knowing that somebody was interested in their story and found them worthy of scholarly attention. For this reason, my thesis needed to cover a broad range of topics so that I could include issues that were important to so many different women.

In the opening chapter, I have analysed the literature of 'mail-order brides'. In this section I explore some of the common stereotypes of 'mail-order brides' created through the Australian media as well as the academic responses to the same issue. Most of the academic literature discusses the inaccurate depiction of Filipino women as victims in the Australian media. In this chapter, I refer to Mina Roces who in her study on Filipino women in Australia analyses the possibility of blurring the distinction between victim and agency.[35] Roces discusses the importance of studying gender relations and ideology in the Philippines to fully understand the nature of Filipino migration to Australia. This chapter also discusses how Filipino women are perceived when they arrive in Australia. I discuss the whole phenomenon of intermarriage and its relationship with popular images of 'mail-order brides'. I also analyse some of the underlying structural factors that have influenced the

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[34] Judi Mathison, *'Filipino Wherever I Go': The Processes of Settlement and Identity Construction Among Philippine Women Living in Tasmania* (Honours Thesis: University of Tasmania, 1995), p. 9.
[35] Roces, "Filipinas in Central Queensland", p. 145.

intermarriages of Filipino women and Australian men, suggesting that structural factors need to be analysed in the context of changing gender relations in both countries.

In Chapter 2, I discuss how Filipino women have grown up with American forms of symbolic and cultural domination. In this chapter I examine victimisation in terms of symbolic violence and agency in terms of symbolic capital. For example, I explore how American neo-colonialism in the Philippines has had both a negative and positive influence on Filipino women. For example, some Filipino women discuss the importance of being able to speak English and how the exposure to American education has helped to assist with their migration to Australia. In this chapter, I introduce Bourdieu's sociological theories of symbolic and cultural domination and demonstrate how they can be applied in Philippine society.

It is often argued that Filipino women who migrate for marriage are victims of patriarchy in the Philippines. In response to this, in Chapter 3, I examine Filipino women in the context of patriarchy and changing gender relations in the Philippines. This chapter examines patriarchy in relation to ideology, sexuality and labour. This chapter therefore addresses gender relations and ideology in the Philippines as a way to more fully understand the nature of Filipino migration to Australia.

In Chapter 4, I explore the beginning of the Filipino woman's journey from the Philippines to Australia. This involves examining how they resist dominant and oppressive relations in the Philippines and negotiate a different life through migrating overseas. I utilise Bourdieu's theories of capital and empowerment to analyse why Filipino women feel empowered leaving the Philippines. This chapter reveals how Filipino women are not necessarily migrating to escape poverty but rather because of many other complex reasons.

In Chapter 5, I examine issues of identity within the context of multiculturalism in Australia. In this chapter I explore how Filipino women have been excluded and have also had to endure racism, insults and being ignored by white Australians. I also show how social divisions occur when white Australians do not value Filipino women and their skills. This can be a factor explaining their unemployment. I examine why some 'migrant' women and Filipino women are highly educated yet unemployed or only employed in the service sector. I also argue that social policies on multiculturalism do not adequately account for the hybridity of interracial subjects such as Filipino women who migrate to Australia.

In Chapter 6, I examine issues of identity and homeland connections. This chapter offers a theoretical account of how Filipino women and their families are sites for the development and articulation of a hybrid identity, sometimes referred to as the 'third space'. This chapter examines the ways in which Filipino women represent and position themselves within the larger social constructs of social class, gender, and cultural difference in Australia and Tasmania.

Chapter One

Intermarriage and Popular Images of Mail-Order Brides

Introduction: Filipino-Australian Intermarriages

Intermarriage is increasingly becoming a worldwide phenomenon as a direct result of the international movements of people. According to Cahill,

"Intermarriage as a demographic phenomenon is on the increase, and its incidence is due to a number of factors such as population pressures, imbalanced sex ratios and changes in labour market demands across the world".[36]

The migration of women from the Philippines has been part of this worldwide phenomenon, beginning in the last quarter of last century, which according to Van Hear "demonstrates the volatility of the world migration order".[37] Cahill observes that in the "vanguard of marriages between persons from the First and Third World countries have been women from the Philippines, resulting in the so-called Filipina

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[36] Desmond Cahill, *Intermarriage: the Filipina Bride Phenomenon as a Significant Learning Experience for the International Community* (Melbourne: RMIT, 1994), p.2.
[37] Nicholas Van Hear, *New Diasporas: The mass exodus, dispersal and regrouping of migrant communities*, p. 8.

Bride Phenomenon".[38] In Australia, detailed data from the 1991 census confirms that almost 40% of Asian–born females with Australian-born partners were Filipino women.[39] In Australia, this phenomenon started in the 1970s and was increasingly popular in the 1980s. For example, immigration estimates suggest that there were 700 Filipino women with Australian husbands in 1973.[40] However, from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, there was an increase of 164% in Filipino women migrating for marriage. These intermarriages peaked in 1986, and have stayed high.[41] The most recent census, held in the year 2000 shows that 624 Filipino women who migrated to Australia in that year, ended up marrying Australian men.[42] Indeed, of the Filipinos living in Australia since 1982, females have outnumbered males by about two to one. No other migrant group in Australia has such a female dominated sex ratio.[43]

It is not surprising that because of the high rate of intermarriage between Philippines-born women and Australian residents, there have been a number of studies of Filipinos in cross-cultural marriages originating in the mail-order bride system. These studies examine some of the structural reasons underpinning this mail-order system, including global gender inequity and poverty, and other factors as mentioned by Cahill above, such as population pressures and changing labour conditions. Before examining these studies, however, it is important to consider popular stereotypes of the mail-order phenomenon.

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[38] Cahill, *Intermarriage*, p.1.
[39] James Coughlan & Deborah McNamara (eds.), *Asians in Australia: Patterns of Migration and Settlement* (Melbourne: Macmillan Press, 1997), p.302.
[40] ibid., p.2.
[41] ibid.
[42] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000. Telephone Interview, Canberra, 2002.
[43] Extract from *Philippines Born Community Profile* (Canberra: Research and Statistics Unit-DIMA, 2002), p.2.

Representations of the Mail-Order Bride

Fadzilah Cooke discusses some of the common perceptions of Filipino women and mail-order brides as submissive and undemanding.[44] Cooke observes, "in the popular view, 'Filipinas marry for economic reasons' and that 'Filipinas who marry Australians are perceived by the 'common sense' view as docile, sexually pleasing and poverty stricken'".[45] This perception originates from sites such as the Internet, pornographic magazines and local newspaper matchmaking columns, where Filipino women are marketed as commodities.

Popular perceptions of Filipino women, often contrasting them with Western women, appear regularly on the Internet. For example, Monroy observes, "One venue declares that unlike modern-day American women, Filipinas are completely devoted to their husbands and families".[46] Another American 'pen pal' site, AsianFriendship.com, has these editorial words to say:

Filipino women are renowned for their beauty, femininity and traditional family values. They are sincere, devoted and believe in a lasting marriage [...] Filipinas stand out among Asian women in terms of charm, openness, intelligence, education and loyalty [...] They value their husbands, as their number one priority [...] They thrive on giving their man the attention and affection that is surpassed by none.[47]

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[44] Fadzilah Cooke, *Australian-Filipino Marriages in the 1980s: The Myth and The Reality* (Griffith: Griffith University, 1986), p. 3.
[45] ibid., p.3.
[46] Emily Monroy, "Mail-Order Bride: Uncovering The Evolution and Politics of Marriages Made In The Mail," URL: http://www.urbanmozaik.com/2001.july_htmls/july01_fea_mailorder.html/ Site accessed on 20th November 2002.
[47] URL: http://www.Asianfriendship.com/ Site accessed on 10th July 2003.

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On the Internet, I found many dating agencies selling Filipino women as the 'perfect wife', always looking for romance and love. For example, a site labelled as the 'Elite International Correspondence Club' says that the club itself is:

dedicated to introducing men from all around the world to beautiful single Asian and Oriental women from Southeast Asia. These warm-hearted Asian girls desire friendship, correspondence, love, romance and marriage with English speaking gentlemen.[48]

Another Internet site advertises 'Filipino Brides' as follows:

Philipino Brides are renowned for their simplicity, honesty, femininity and integrity. They are sincere, devoted and they believe in a lasting marriage. These ladies are very feminine and gentle, cultured and passionate. They can be easily captured at the heart of every man because of their inner beauty and charm. Philipina women value their husbands as their number one priority. It's the nature of all Philipinas to be sweet, caring and loving. They are very romantic, tender and thrive on giving their man the attention and affection that is surpassed by none.[49]

The commodification of Filipino women also occurs through sex tours where the promoters are selling women's bodies and sexuality throughout the world. In an examination of the usage of the internet by men, Donna Hughes shows how men who

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[48] URL: http://www.asiansmile.com/ Site accessed on 20th November 2002.
[49] URL: http://www.philipino.fepages.com/philipino-brides.html/ Site accessed on 20th November 2002.

have travelled and bought prostitutes use internet discussion groups, such as 'alt.sex.services', 'alt.sex.prostitution', and 'alt.sex.brothels', to give each other advice and share information on buying, selling and the details of having sex with Filipino women.[50] According to Hughes, as with mail-order brides, the women agree to return home with the tourist.[51] There is a romantic idea that the two will find love and romance after being introduced through these sex tours. Hughes observes that the reality is different. Often women who meet their husbands through sex tours are bound in a relationship of sexual exploitation.[52]

As discussed above, Filipino women are portrayed on the Internet as both loyal and sexual. In films, however, they have been stereotyped in a contrasting manner as manipulative. If they are not submissive wives they are prostitutes and bar girls, or even a combination of all of the above. For example, Kathryn Robinson discusses how in a recent Australian film, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994), the Filipino bride in this film (Cynthia) is portrayed as a "sex-crazed, manipulative ex-bar girl who had tricked a decent, outback Aussie battler into marrying her".[53] Through the character of Cynthia, this movie reinforces the stereotype of the sexual Filipino mail-order bride. This film's main aim was to raise awareness of gay culture in the suburbs of heterosexual Australia and the Australian outback. As for its portrayal of women in general, director Stephan Elliot admitted that he was "very frightened that the film was going to be looked down on by women, because there are not a lot of female roles in the film and the ones that are there are

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[50] Donna Hughes, "Sex Tours on the Internet," URL: www.feminista.com/vln/hughes.html / Site accessed 21st November 2002.
[51] ibid., p.3.
[52] ibid., p.4.
[53] Kathryn Robinson, "Of Mail-Order Brides and 'Boys' Own' Tales: Representations of Asian-Australian Marriages," *Feminist Review*, 52 (1996), p. 53.

not treated all that positively".[54] In the case of 'Cynthia' the Filipino, this is very much an understatement.

Robinson in a study of the representations of mail-order brides observed how in the 1980s the mail-order bride had become a "potent symbol in Australian representations of Asia."[55] In media representations Filipino women were portrayed as "meek, docile slaves, oriental beauties with shady pasts, passive and manipulable, but also grasping and predatory, using marriage to jump immigration queues".[56] These film and media images played with negative stereotypes of Filipino women that were both derogatory and exaggerated.

Another representation that circulates in the media is the Filipino woman's vulnerability to domestic violence due to expectations of her docility and submissiveness. For example, The Filipina-Australian Marriages and Domestic Violence Working Party reported that:

Filipinas married to Australian men may be particularly vulnerable to domestic violence, not because they are Filipinas, but because of the ways in which many of these marriages are contracted and the mythology about submissive, infinitely tolerant women.[57]

It is assumed that because men have bought a wife like any other commodity with an expectation of docility and subservience, they can treat her like a slave and punish any "insubordination". The ABC Drama *Mail Order Bride* directed by Steven Wallace is

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[54] Jan Epstein, "Stephan Elliot: The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert," *Cinema Papers*,1 (October 1994), p.8.
[55] Robinson, "Of Mail-Order Brides and 'Boys' Own' Tales", p.53.
[56] ibid., p. 54.
[57] South Australian Department of Community Welfare, *Report of the Filipina-Australian Marriages and Domestic Violence Working Party* (Adelaide: South Australian Department of Community Welfare, 1988).

a case in point. The drama is about an Australian man 'Kevin' who meets his mail-order bride 'Ampy' at the airport. He then takes her on a long and exhausting drive to a small outback town called Badigeri. During the drive he reveals his ignorance of the Philippines and shows no sensitivity towards Ampy who is feeling overwhelmed by the travel. In Badigeri, Ampy is left to deal with the sexist and ignorant attitudes of the locals. At a party Kevin's best friend rapes her. Kevin then blames Ampy for the rape. He also becomes violent, rapes Ampy and starts to treat her like a slave. Clearly this drama has tapped into all of the stereotypes of mail-order brides and the Australian men whom they marry.

Academic Responses to Media Representations

Academics have attempted to deconstruct such myths about Filipino women who marry Australian men. For example, Desmond Cahill challenges the myth that all Filipino women who inter-marry are mail-order brides. He refers to the Australian situation that has been characterised by personal visits to the Philippines by Australian males through the mail-order and pen-pal system and by personal introduction through the networking system. Scaramella found that 31 per cent of the Filipino women used introduction or pen-pal agencies while 62 per cent had been introduced through friends and relatives.[58]

Many studies also challenge negative stereotypes of Filipino women as docile and uneducated by showing that Filipino women are highly educated and professional. For example, David Watkins observes, "many of the Filipino girls wanting Australian husbands are well educated professionals, accustomed to full time

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[58] Desmond Cahill, *Intermarriages in International Contexts*, p. 134.

employment in responsible positions".[59] Watkins argues how Filipino women are treated as equals to Filipino men but in discussing the equality of the sexes in the Philippines he observes how "prestige for a woman in Filipino society lies mainly in her credible performance as a mother, wife and home manager".[60] Furthermore, Watkins highlights the differences between Filipino women and Australian women in the emphasis he places on Filipino values. These values include family closeness, respect for elders, high regard for women and chastity, male supremacy and social acceptance.[61]

In response to Watkins' paper, Kathryn Robinson critiques Watkins' examination of the 'status' of women in Filipino society. To study the 'status' of women properly, Robinson argues that we must consider women's

role in production and distribution, their involvement in public life, their access to positions of formal power, their exercise of political influence, their degree of autonomy (sexual freedom, legal rights etc.), the prestige afforded women's activities and ideologies about women and their relation to men.[62]

Robinson points out the contradiction between Watkin's glowing portrayal of equality and his description of women obtaining equality from male supremacy. Equality between the sexes in the Philippines is dependant on many factors such as those mentioned by Robinson. Nevertheless, arguments such as these clearly undermine the

[59] David Watkins, "Filipino Brides: Slaves or Marriage Partners?" *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 17, 1(1982), p.82.
[60] ibid., p.76.
[61] ibid.
[62] Kathryn Robinson, "Filipino Brides: Slaves or Marriage Partners?- A Comment," *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 17, 2 (1982), p. 167.

stereotype of a sexualised ex-bar girl, as portrayed in the extremely popular genre of 'Oriental' pornographic magazines and videos, as well as mainstream films.

Other studies have examined the realities of Filipino women migrating to Australia for economic reasons. Catherine Boer compiled a report titled 'Are you looking for a Filipino wife?' where she discusses how economic reasons are usually given priority for women marrying foreign men.[63] In the 1980s, this was certainly the case. In the Philippines, this was a time of extreme poverty and political unrest. Boer observes that many Filipino women would not be able to migrate to Australia under the 'Independent' and/or 'Concessional' category, or under family reunion schemes. Marriage to an Australian, therefore, became an attractive option.[64] Since the 1980s however, there have been many Filipino women migrating to Australia for the purpose of marriage who are from well-off backgrounds. Often when women are not using their professional skills in Australia, it appears as if they are unskilled and from a background of poverty. This creates another illusion that these women have always been financially and emotionally dependent. Their financial and emotional dependence however, is a result of numerous constraints facing them when they arrive in Australia.

When Filipino women arrive in Australia, they are often totally dependent on their husbands: emotionally, socially, and financially. According to Boer, a number of constraints face a Filipino woman on her arrival to Australia. These include factors such as "geographical isolation; a lack of financial independence; a husband who expects his wife to stay at home and is thus denied any autonomy; limited English

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[63] Catherine Boer, *Are you looking for a Filipino wife?: A Study of Filipina-Australian Marriages* (Sydney: General Synod Office, St. Andrew's House, 1988), pp. 1-32.
[64] ibid., p.15.

language skills; the need to care for children and isolation from relatives and friends".[65]

Cooke and Western, in their 1988 study of Filipinas and work, found there were many constraints facing Filipino women in re-entering the workforce. Their study found that Filipino women found it hard to contribute to the workforce because their qualifications are not recognised and their work experience is not usually taken into account. This is due to their qualifications that are not compatible, and local structures that provide little or no scope for adapting their skills to suit local conditions.[66] Another reason could be that they are not represented as part of the dominant culture, making it difficult to apply for work. Filipinos, along with other Asian women, are often represented as the 'other' of the Western woman.

The Filipino Woman as 'Other'

The popular perceptions of Filipino women (in contrast to Western women) are designed to tap into a need in the post-feminist West where women - supposedly - no longer serve men wholeheartedly. Cooke, for instance, has analysed this trend in terms of ideologies about women in Australia. Cooke discusses how the advent of capitalism in the 19th century contributed to the undervaluation of women's work. This occurred when market production became separated from home production. This meant that women's contribution to the domestic economy was considered to be 'non-productive'.[67] Non-productive work was accompanied by an ideology that portrayed

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[65] ibid., p. 22.
[66] Fadzilah Cooke & John Western, *Filipinas and work: the quest for a fair go: an overview of a study* (Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Queensland: 1988), p.10.
[67] Cooke, *Australian-Filipino Marriages in the 1980s: The Myth and The Reality*, p.13.

home and motherhood as ideals to be attained by most women.[68] This ideology is what kept women in Australia inferior in the public world. However, from the 1960s to the 1990s there have been progressively more employment opportunities for women. Australian women were given more choices about their education and career, which often involved putting off marriage to an older age or deciding not to marry at all. Since the 1990s there has also been a decline in the stability of work with the increase in the casualisation of women's work. Women are under more pressure to work longer hours to compete for more stable jobs.

The overall result of these changes has meant that women have become increasingly unsatisfied in the domestic sphere and are becoming more independent in the public sphere. Cooke's study found that some men who marry Filipino women are uncomfortable with social changes in Australia encouraging women to be more independent. To fill in the gap that Australian women have not wanted to fill in the domestic sphere, Cooke suggests that a significant number of Australian men have had to look overseas for a wife.[69] The Filipino bride, according to many stereotypes, would be someone who accepts an ideology of womanhood that relegates women to the private sphere. Filipinos are, on the whole, assumed to be pre-feminist and family orientated, therefore filling the gap that Australian women - who are represented as independent, career-minded and not interested in a conservative marriage - have left.

Elizabeth Holt examines a similar perception, observing that mail-order brides are portrayed as "white Australian woman's other".[70] The sexual exploitation of Filipino women, according to Holt, embodies "titillating myths of the East/sex for

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[68] ibid. p. 13.
[69] ibid.
[70] Elizabeth Holt, "Writing Filipina-Australian Bodies: The Discourse on Filipina Brides," *Philippine Sociological Review,* 44, 1-4 (1996), p.64.

consumption by mainly white Australian men".[71] Holt discusses how as a consequence 'Filipina-Australian' bodies not only become the 'reality' of white male fantasies/desires about the 'sexual East', but are also projected as "passive submissive virginal wives".[72] Discussing a similar notion, Pettman unflatteringly refers to the book *War of the Sexes* (1993), in which an Australian author offers advice on "How to marry a virgin, where to find them, how to meet them and how much it will cost to bring them to Australia" from the Philippines.[73] Those who have 'purchased' such a bride may well expect to have also acquired a highly sexual and submissive partner, according to the author. The reality is, however, often quite different.

The Reality of Sexual Exploitation

The issue of domestic violence and sexual exploitation is frequently discussed in the media in relation to mail-order brides. The media, however, shows little consideration for the social realities of the Australian men involved that are often quite complex. According to Pettman:

Mail-ordering husbands are stereotyped as older white often rural men, presumed to be 'purchasing' a wife because no 'Australian' woman would have them, or because they fear and reject Australian women as 'too feminist'. But a significant part of the trade involves migrant and minority men, including those whose rural or remote working place does not encourage

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[71] ibid., p.62.
[72] ibid., p. 63.
[73] Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), p. 193.

meeting local women, or who lack a community or social network of their own.[74]

Despite the fluidity and plurality of these men's backgrounds and circumstances, unfortunately there is ample evidence that domestic violence is often an outcome when sex tours, serial sponsorship and lack of social networks are involved. In response to this there has been a series of studies investigating the reality of domestic violence and unhappy marriages between Australian men and Filipino women.

For example, Pendlebury has written a study on domestic violence and Filipino women in Darwin.[75] In this study, Pendlebury observed that in 1989 the Darwin Women's Refuge had assisted at least fourteen Filipino women who had experienced domestic violence.[76] Cahill also notes how there have been a series of murders and reports of domestic violence in serial marriages, where the male goes through a series of marriages and divorces with successive Filipinas.[77] Many of these Filipino women can be rightly called victims. Cunneen and Stubbs have also researched the subject of Filipino women in violent situations. They discuss the prevalence of serial sponsorship in Australia. In their book *Gender, 'Race' and International Relations* Cunneen and Stubbs argue that where domestic violence occurs in the context of serial sponsorship, the potential exists for the abuse to be "extreme and prolonged".[78] As evidence of this, The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and the Centre for Philippine Concerns (Australia) provided Cuneen and Stubbs with 19 separate files that covered specific incidents throughout

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[74] ibid., p. 194.

[75] Joanne Pendlebury, "Filipino Brides in Remote Areas," *Occasional Paper* 5 (Darwin: The North Australia Development Unit, 1990), pp. 1-18.

[76] ibid., pp.1-18.

[77] Cahill, *Intermarriage*, p. 6.

[78] Chris Cuneen & Julie Stubbs, *Gender, 'Race' and International Relations* (Sydney: The Institute of Criminology, 1994), p.22.

Australia between 1980 and 1994, and referred to the deaths or disappearances of some 26 Filipino women and/or their children during this fifteen-year period.[79]

According to several informants - who wish to remain anonymous - in Tasmania over the last ten years, there have been roughly two cases each year of sexual abuse of Filipino children by their Australian father, who is often not the biological father.[80] Evidently there is a disturbing pattern of sexual abuse where the children have been exposed to abuse and the Filipino mother has often been forced into physical and emotional isolation, where she has no social or welfare networks on which to draw. These situations are doubly problematic because usually there is little evidence of physical, emotional or sexual violence. In my interviews, I spoke to two women who had to battle with the legal system to have their children removed from their abusive husbands. Both had failed to gain full custody of their children, even though, in one of the cases, the father had admitted to sexually abusing his child. Although very disturbing for those involved, abuse is often minimised by the fact that in the Tasmanian context, Filipino women usually meet their husbands through friends and relatives rather than through more impersonal channels such as the internet.

As discussed in the introduction, the Filipino communities in Australia, and Tasmania in particular, heavily utilise family networks in matchmaking. In fact, Filipino women and their Australian husbands pride themselves on being good matchmakers for their younger siblings and cousins. Some Filipino women, especially if they are the oldest daughters in the family, will spend a considerable amount of time looking for a man who is suitable for their sisters and younger cousins. Often a woman will find a friend who she already knows has a good record and will treat her

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[79] ibid., p. 53.

[80] For reasons of confidentiality and safety, I have chosen not to give any names of individuals or organisations that have helped me with this information.

relative with respect. She will generally look for a man who is mature, warm and gentle. Those who are older are generally assumed to be more gentle and respectful. Many Filipinos would argue that this way of meeting a prospective marriage partner is healthier because they do not get caught up in 'romance' and 'love'.

This chapter has so far examined the issue of exploitation and the negative stereotypes that Filipino women have to endure. In the next section, I will examine a more positive aspect of their migration that includes not stereotypes but rather their own stories of agency. I will examine the nature of agency in relation to Filipino migration to Australia.

Filipino Women as Agents

Much of the literature so far mentioned concentrates on the profile of Filipino women as wives and Australian men as husbands. Other studies concentrate on Filipino women as victims of domestic violence and patriarchal domination.[81] Most of these studies view the Filipino woman as 'victim' but do not allow a Filipino woman to seen as an autonomous 'agent'. According to Roces, such a view is one-dimensional, obscuring the possibility of blurring the distinction between victim and agency.[82] For example, in Roces' study of oral narratives of Filipino mail-order brides in Australia, she found that a Filipino woman's agency often brought her victimisation.[83] However, if the woman is seen only as a victim it may neglect other aspects of the Filipino woman's role. Roces examines how many Filipino women

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[81] Chris Cuneen & Julie Stubbs, *Gender, 'Race' and International Relations* (Sydney: The Institute of Criminology, 1994) and Elizabeth Holt, "Writing Filipina-Australian Bodies: The Discourse on Filipina Brides," pp. 58-78.

[82] Mina Roces, "Kapit sa Patalim: Victim and Agency in the Oral Narratives of Filipino Women Married to Australian Men in Central Queensland," *LILA: Asia-Pacific Women's Studies Journal*, Vol.7, (1998), p.2.

[83] Mina Roces, "Negotiating Modernities: Filipino Women 1970-2000," p. 114.

marry Australian men in order to fulfil the roles of wife and mother denied to them in the Philippines. According to Roces, "the underlying source of these women's self-perception - the one decisive piece of symbolic capital - is still fulfilment of their role as wife and mother".[84]

Roces further discusses how Filipino women have had to negotiate the choices thrust on them by modernity – or 'multiple modernities' - between 1970-2000.[85] Roces argues that:

> In negotiating modernities, Filipino women expressed ambivalence - simultaneously embracing extreme choices between modernity and tradition, empowerment and disempowerment, unofficial power and official power, feminisms and traditional cultural constructions of women. In the experience of negotiating multiple modernities, Filipino women have blurred the distinguishing boundaries between these polar opposites, revealing the complexities that women's changing status has compelled them to face.[86]

Roces reveals the complexities associated with modern society. In terms of being a Filipino mail-order bride, the decision to leave the country as a migrant is considered 'modern'. However, her motivation for participating in the diaspora is to become a wife and mother, which are viewed as 'traditional'.

Roces also emphasises that although the sensationalised literature on the mail-order bride presents them as victims, the realities are quite different. For example, a closer examination of oral histories reveals many Filipino women challenging the

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[84] Mina Roces, "Kapit sa Patalim: Victim and Agency," p.3.
[85] Mina Roces, "Negotiating modernities: Filipino women 1970-2000," p.113.
[86] ibid.

'victim' and 'agent' categories.[87] Roces conducted a study of Filipino women migrants for marriage based in Central Queensland. Her research found that:

> Although Filipino women endure forms of victimisation such as domestic violence, mental cruelty, racism, chauvinism, and a lack of financial independence, most still had a dream of a better future. This better future did not include the success factor of their marriages but instead included other factors such as making use of Australian support services, and being involved in civic and community work in Australia.[88]

Filipino women in Tasmania, however, have not always found the welfare support services to be a 'success factor'. Delia arrived before any support groups were set up in her local area (Launceston), and after a divorce from her Australian husband, had the following to say about her experiences with Centrelink and other welfare agencies:

> *I used to walk into Social Security and scream for a social worker to help me. I was in big trouble. I would scream and yell. I desperately needed a social worker but they would make me wait for days. So no one could help me. The Migrant-Liaison Officer eventually helped me. I didn't have any money or anything. I had no car so I had to walk everywhere. Eventually, City Mission helped me and gave me food. It was very hard; I was on my own with two children. I had a single pension. Then I got married to a refugee and they cut my pension. My refugee husband didn't get money either so we were both left*

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[87] ibid., p.114.
[88] Mina Roces, "Filipinas in Central Queensland," p. 26.

with nothing. I had to go and get help off Red Cross. City Mission always helped when the food ran out. You can only get help of one charity at a time. Now with all my experience, I help other women who have been in similar situations. I have needed all the social services; I am an expert at helping others in this area.

Despite a clear sense of frustration and desperation, Delia shows that the distinction between 'victim' and 'agent' is not always clear. Even in the depths of despair, a strong sense of self-agency is evident. Delia now works as a welfare worker in Launceston and is highly knowledgeable and experienced in the complexities of organising social security and welfare support. The remainder of this thesis will further explore Roces's idea that 'victim' and 'agent' categories can be challenged through oral narratives.

Conclusion

As examined earlier in this chapter, the scholarship on Filipino migration to Australia and marriages to Australian men has mainly concentrated on popular and often sensationalist conceptions of the mail-order bride phenomena and the intermarriages between Filipino women and Australian men. The popular perception of Filipino mail-order brides is of an attractive, slavishly sexual woman or manipulative gold digger married to a relatively unattractive and pre-feminist man looking for a submissive wife and sexual partner. Geographically and socially isolated, the popular belief is that many of these women are locked away, ostracised, and subject to domestic abuse. However, this chapter has also attempted to show that

the site of Filipino marriage to Australian men is also a site where Filipino women resist dominant discourses that suggest they are submissive, abused and over-sexed. Instead, in Tasmania for instance, we find a vibrant and socially active Filipino community, involving both Filipino women and their Australian husbands, who are willing to help new arrivals and help other Filipinos find an appropriate and trustworthy partner.

Basing my analysis on Bourdieu's theoretical sociology, the following chapter will attempt to develop a deeper understanding of some of the reasons for Filipino migration to Australia, a passage usually followed by marriage with an Australian man. I will begin this by discussing the neo-colonial experience of Filipino women in the Philippines, and how these experiences have helped to facilitate women in their decision to migrate to Australia.

Chapter Two

Symbolic and Cultural Domination:

The Neo-colonial Experience

Introduction

This chapter aims to examine some of the cultural conditions in the Philippines that have helped influence Filipino women in their decision to migrate to Australia, including the neo-colonial effects of 'Americanisation' in the Philippines. In support of my argumentation, this chapter will integrate Pierre Bourdieu's theories of symbolic domination and the theory of hybridity with Filipino history and local Tasmanian narratives.

'The Established Order': Americanisation in the Philippines

The Philippines formally came under the rule of the United States when on February 1899. An anti-American war soon followed, with the Filipino forces under the authority of Aguinaldo. This war continued for 16 years (1899-1914) resulting in many deaths of Filipinos and the beginnings of American cultural and symbolic domination.

During this era, it was through education that one could achieve upward mobility. The colonial regime, according to Benedict Anderson, "established the first modern state school-system (classroom enrolments expanded 500 percent in the first generation after 1899), and at the same time made competence in English necessary for access to proliferating bureaucratic jobs and most professional careers".[89] Therefore, learning English helped many Filipinos gain access to the political and economic sphere. The vernacular Tagalog was no longer allowed to be used in schools, and in Filipino universities, the institutional establishment of the social sciences "was nourished and reproduced largely by American academics".[90] The American style of education was scientific rather than theological. This was one of the first steps of American colonisation.

To this day, America has had a significant impact on the economy and society in the Philippines. Although colonial rule ended in 1946, the cultural and political hegemony of the United States still exists. For example, according to Rommel Banlaoi, "Philippine support for the American-led global campaign against terrorism has reinvigorated Philippine-American relations".[91] Since 1999, the Philippine senate ratified the Philippine-American Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA). Banlaoi observes that the Philippines signed the VFA to "primarily deter the perceived creeping assertiveness of China in the South China Sea".[92] Banlaoi argues that this agreement is there mainly to serve America's own economic and security interests in the Asia-Pacific region.[93] Through America's military presence in the Philippines, America is

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[89] Benedict Anderson, "Hard to Imagine: A Puzzle in the History of Philippine Nationalism" in Raul Pertierra, and Ugarte, F. (eds.), *Culture and Texts: Representations of Philippine Society* (Quezon City: University of the Philippine Press, 1994), p.105.

[90] Raul Pertierra, *Explorations in Social Theory and Philippine Ethnography*, p.5.

[91] Rommel Banlaoi, "The Role of Philippine-American Relations in the Global Campaign Against Terrorism: Implications for Regional Security," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 24, 2 (2002) p. 294.

[92] ibid., p. 299.

[93] ibid., p. 299.

able to once again establish power and domination in the Southeast Asian region. America's presence also infiltrates other areas of Philippine society and helps to contribute to the process of Westernisation in the Philippines.

The following discussion will examine the historical effects of power derived from shifting social forces and its impact on the lives of Filipino women. American neo-colonial influence is not always a source of domination that victimises Filipino women. Some Filipino men and women have been able to use American ideological domination to their own advantage. Others have suffered under American domination through its institutionalised power, the effects of which can be internalised. For example, Constantino argues that:

as the decades of American colonial rule rolled on, generation after generation of Filipinos went through systematic brainwashing. History was mythologised to create an altruistic image for the American coloniser; our language was deprecated, our consumption habits were moulded to suit American products and our social and cultural life underwent a fast process of Americanisation. Modernisation was equated to Westernisation, a process which today is taking place throughout the globe.[94]

Filipino women have been exposed to many aspects of an American way of life. At the same time the concept of a unified Filipino identity has been undermined. According to Benedict Anderson, "in a standard history text sponsored by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, the Filipino child is taught that he has 40 per cent Malay blood in his veins, 30 per cent Indonesian, 10 per cent Negrito, 10

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[94] Renato Constantino, "Globalization and the South: The Philippine Experience," in Kuan-Hsing Chen (ed.), *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* (London: Merlin Press, 1978), p.59.

per cent Chinese, 5 per cent Hindu, 2 per cent Arab, and 3 per cent European and American".[95] In other words, all Filipinos are taught that they come from somewhere else. It is no wonder Filipinos are extremely open to settling elsewhere. American dominance can also generate more subtle effects that are internalised in the body. These relations of power become clearer when examined in terms of Bourdieu's concept of habitus.

Colonial Dispositions and the Habitus

Bourdieu's theory of habitus helps to explain the production and reproduction of dependency relations between the Philippines and America. According to San Juan, Jr., "The constellation of action, meaning and *habitus* also explains the production/reproduction of dependency relations now assuming more covert and deceptive disguises".[96] Some habitus (those of dominant social and cultural fractions) can be interpreted as symbolic capital. The habitus, according to Bourdieu, operates at the sub-conscious level. For example, the ways one walks, eats, talks etc. are ways that reveal how a person is classified in the social world. If one dresses and speaks English like a successful businessman or woman then one probably has more chance of success in the capitalist economy.

The habitus also works to reproduce social divisions. These social divisions occur when ideologies become embodied, and thus 'naturalised'. This embodied behaviour is experienced in different fields of thought. In the Philippines context, these fields of thought can be found in the schools, the church, or other institutions

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[95] Benedict Anderson, "Hard to Imagine: A Puzzle in the History of Philippine Nationalism," p.108.
[96] E. San Juan, Jr., "One Hundred Years of Producing and Reproducing the 'Filipino'," *Amerasia Journal*, 24, 2 (1998), p.7.

such as the family. For example, Carmelita, married to an Australian in Launceston, explained how her schooling gave her a sense of familiarity with Americans. She said:

> *I wanted to be nun so I could go abroad. But I didn't think Australia is my country. I wanted to go to America. Our schooling is the same as America so we feel more at home there.*

One of the positive effects of the American presence in the Philippines is that it gives Filipino women a sense of familiarity when marrying American or other men from Western countries, such as Australia. For Carmelita, American ideologies of capitalism and Western lifestyles may have appeared to be more familiar than ideologies in countries not so heavily influenced by the West. When I spoke with Carmelita, I realised she had an American accent and other American mannerisms such as being very direct and open with me in our discussion. She openly talked about sex, her relationship, her boyfriends and her experiences as a teenager. She wanted to be an 'independent' female like American women. Instead of getting married she spoke of wanting to enjoy life and spend more time with her girlfriends at the movies and shopping. In other words, some American influences had become part of her habitus. Dedith who worked in a bakery also spoke of how Filipinos feel comfortable with Americans. She said that:

> *All the Filipinos want to go to America before Australia because they are so comfortable with America. There are over 10 million Filipinos who are registered in the Catholic Church in Los Angeles.*

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In fact, Dedith said that she didn't know anything about Australia before she arrived. She said that every time she saw foreigners she thought they were Americans. This is probably due to the high American military presence and Western business interests. Dedith spoke about how she would have been much more comfortable going to America. Australia, for her was a very frightening and alienating place. She said that she felt nervous because of the language. She could only understand American English or the American accent.

In response to these comments, Bourdieu's notion of 'doxa' is helpful in that it refers to the idea of ideological mechanisms, such as educational and religious institutions, that are accepted and seen as completely natural in everyday society. These ideological mechanisms are accepted, even though they have the potential to reproduce structural inequalities. According to Bourdieu, "by using doxa we accept many things without knowing them, and that is what is called ideology."[97] Bourdieu says that he has "tried to substitute concepts like 'symbolic domination' or 'symbolic power' or 'symbolic violence' for the concept of ideology in order to try to control some of the uses, or abuses, to which it is the subject".[98]

In the Philippine context, the discriminatory effects of colonial power such as the undermining of the Filipino dialects and identities have often become so internalised that they appear natural. Such discriminatory effects can be produced through what is disavowed. Native traditions and cultures in the Philippines have been replaced by ideologies of capitalism. Domination and power therefore, takes place in the form of capitalism as an economic system and through American culture such as

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[97] Pierre Bourdieu "Doxa and Common Life: An interview" in Slavoj Zizek (ed.), *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994), p.268.
[98] ibid., p. 266.

language and behaviour. San Juan Jr. argues how "American culturalism denotes the intent to rule the world by the imposition of her values".[99]

To show how ideologies and values are naturally accepted, Bourdieu refers to the paradox of doxa. 'I have always been surprised', Bourdieu writes in the opening lines of *Masculine Domination,*

> by what might be called the paradox of doxa – the fact that the order of the world as we find it, with its one-way streets and its no entry signs, whether literal or figurative, its obligations and its penalties, is broadly respected; that there are not more transgressions and subversions; or, still more surprisingly, that the established order, with its relations of domination [...] ultimately perpetuates itself so easily [...] and that the most intolerable conditions of existence can so often be perceived as acceptable and even natural.[100]

In the Philippines, American ideology and symbolic domination has for some Filipinos become quite acceptable. For example, capitalist ideology contributes to world poverty and creates a greater discrepancy between the worlds rich and poor. It also continually perpetuates itself through market forces. The conditions of capitalism that allow the wealthy to have more access to resources that allow them to become even wealthier are broadly accepted in some societies. Therefore, by using doxa and ideologies of domination and subordination, America has been able to exert a gentle and sometimes invisible form of violence on developing nations such as the Philippines. This power is generated through symbolic domination.

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[99] E. San Juan, Jr. "One Hundred Years of Producing and Reproducing the 'Filipino'," p. 14.
[100] Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2001), p. 1.

Bourdieu defines the 'symbolic' as "that which is material but is not recognised as such (dress sense, a good accent, 'style') and which derives its efficacy not simply from its materiality but from this very misrecognition".[101] Symbolic systems hold a great deal of power in society. According to Bourdieu, "symbolic forms such as language, dress codes and body postures are important in understanding not only the cognitive function of symbols but the social functions of symbols".[102] Therefore, somebody who has a certain amount of symbolic capital such as American mannerisms also has a certain amount of symbolic power and domination. According to Bourdieu, agents are involved in "the symbolic conflicts of everyday life in the use of symbolic violence of the dominant over the dominated".[103]

In *Masculine Domination*, Bourdieu also asserts that the structures of domination are the product of

an incessant (and therefore historical) labour of reproduction, to which singular agents (including men, with weapons such as physical violence and symbolic violence) and institutions – families, the church, the educational system, the state – contribute.[104]

Bourdieu sees this violence as a gentle violence, which is even invisible at times. For example, symbolic violence can take place through the act of knowledge and practical recognition that takes place at an unconscious level. Indeed, dominated agents do not necessarily perceive symbolic forms of violence, and through what Bourdieu terms as

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[101] Cheleen Mahar, Richard Harker, Chris Wilkes (eds.), "The Basic Theoretical Position" in *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: The Practice of Theory* (London: Macmillan Press, 1990), p. 5.
[102] ibid.
[103] ibid.
[104] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, p. 34.

'misrecognition', the situation of these agents seems to them to be 'the natural order of things'. Symbolic violence may take the form of people being denied resources, denied a voice, or treated as inferior. Bourdieu substitutes the concept of invisible violence or symbolic violence for ideology. This concept of symbolic violence, therefore, highlights unperceived forms of everyday violence.

Filipino women who migrate to Australia have early experiences in the Philippines where they engage in social worlds of inequality. Throughout this thesis I will discuss how some Filipino women have had to cope in positions of inferiority and inequality. Most of the Filipino women whom I interviewed were highly educated but still did not have access to prestigious positions in the Philippines because of their class background. Their habitus would give away their class background and would in turn lead to fewer opportunities to work in powerful positions. The habitus can reproduce social divisions in the Philippines and in most capitalist societies, which is clearly an effect of symbolic violence. According to Bourdieu:

> Symbolic violence is instituted through the adherence that the dominated cannot fail to grant to the dominant (and therefore to the domination) when, to shape her thought of him, and herself, or, rather, her thought of her relation with him, she has only cognitive instruments that she shares with him and which, being no more than the embodied form of the relation of domination, cause that relation to appear as natural.[105]

It is also relevant to note that there is an ongoing dynamic between the embodied experiences developed in spaces of early childhood and those of adulthood.

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[105] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, p. 35.

Filipino women, for instance, have developed a habitus of culturally embodied difference to the Americans. Mandy Thomas argues how "the body remembers these relations as it moves about in the world. All sentient engagement in the world is thus informed by social and historical conditions".[106] In the context of this study, the institutional social spaces of the church, the schools, the universities, the family, the economy and the politics have all interacted with Filipino women and their habitus in an ongoing dynamic.

For Bourdieu, "agency is always confined to the constraints of the habitus which embodies the history of the group or class to which the agent belongs".[107] Filipino women have learnt through their habitus to orient their actions to converge with the strictures of these institutions. San Juan, Jr. argues that:

The major obstacle to any rigorous exploration of U.S. imperialist hegemony in the Philippines inheres in the controlling paradigm of philosophical idealism (instanced in methodological individualism and empiricist functionalism) that ushered in academic disciplines addressing U.S. "exceptionalism" and legitimised their regimes of truth.[108]

American imperialist hegemony is now such a part of their life, as it exists in the schools, in the media, in the churches and other institutions where ideology has a strong influence. History schoolbooks for example, portray Judge William H. Taft, the first civil governor as someone who did his best to look after the welfare of the

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[106] Mandy Thomas, *Dreams in the Shadows: Vietnamese-Australian Lives in Transition* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), p. 39.
[107] The Friday Morning Group, "Conclusion, Critique," in Richard Harker, Cheleen Mahar & Chris Wilkes (eds.), *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu* (London: Macmillan Press, 1990), p. 204.
[108] E. San Juan Jr., "One Hundred Years of Producing and Reproducing the 'Filipino'," p. 6.

Filipinos. According to Bautista however, Taft "adopted a 'Philippines for the Filipinos' policy which was in fact set up to improve the standard of living of the Filipinos so as to create a taste for American products, resulting in a lucrative market for the Americans."[109] The Philippines also owe debts to America, which are paid at the expense of the environment. The pressure to repay debts has led to "forest denudation, destructive open-pit mining, overfishing etc".[110] These are just some examples of symbolic violence where American capitalism as an ideology produces discriminatory effects, that can lead to poverty, destruction and unemployment.

For some Filipino women, however, an American influence assisted with their future career prospects and choice of marriage partner. Marcelina, a homemaker in Launceston, explained how she enjoyed working for the American employers. She said:

I used to work for a military base for the Americans. It was really nice working for them. We are much more used to the Americans and their accent.

Ella, who was an accountant and married to a Filipino lawyer in the Philippines, had the following to say about Americans:

Whenever a Foreigner comes to the Philippines, Filipinos think they are American. Even if you are Australian. Americans control the Philippines, Filipinos like Americans. Some Filipinos think that if you marry a foreigner, you are a prostitute. But the Americans used to always go to the nightclubs and bars to meet girls, so that is where it came from.

[109] Veltisezar Bautista, *"The Philippine-American War (1899-1902),"* URL: http//filipino-americans.com/ p.13. Site accessed on the 13th October 2003.
[110] Renato Constantano, "Globalization and the South: The Philippine Experience," p. 59.

These quotations reveal the paradox of doxa. In one sense, the Filipinos may 'like' Americans, yet they are also aware of the control that America has in the Philippines. 'Rich' American men procuring 'cheap' Filipino prostitutes, for instance, are a clear example of sexual exploitation. Another Filipino spoke of how all she ever wanted to do was *'marry an American'*.

In some instances, to value American domination in the Philippines is an effect of what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence. That is, "imperceptible and invisible even to its victims exerted through the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition or even feeling".[111] Bourdieu writes:

> As man or woman, in the object that we are trying to comprehend, we have embodied the historical structures of the masculine order in the form of unconscious schemes of perception and appreciation.[112]

The Filipino women in the above examples have shown how at a conscious level they appreciate Americans. They have accepted some of their forms of domination such as the use of American ideology in the Philippines and the use of American bases. This acceptance, however, in some instances, can contribute indirectly to relations of domination and subordination.

I have so far discussed the impact of American symbolic domination in the Philippines on Filipino women. There are however, many positives in being raised

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[111] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, p.2.
[112] ibid.,p. 5.

with an American education if one wants to eventually travel to America or other English speaking countries. Some of the Filipino women I spoke to suggested how important it was to be educated in English. For one elderly woman I spoke to, English was her only medium to communicate with other Filipinos, as they did not speak her dialect. She said that English was her first language and Tagalog her second. The next section will further discuss some of the positive influences of American colonisation in the Philippines.

Colonial Hybrid Identity and Intermarriage

One positive aspect of American colonisation and its affect on Filipino women involves the acquisition of Western symbolic capital. The exposure to Western culture can quicken the process of accumulating national capital in countries similar to America. Filipino women have shown that they are highly adaptable in countries other than the Philippines. This may be due to the American colonial influence that has brought much of American culture to the Philippines. This exposure to an American cultural ideology has helped to equip women to deal with the forces of capitalist postmodernity. Hybridity has often been associated with postmodernity. According to Homi Bhabha,

> Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the

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'pure' and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory effects.[113]

Bhaba's definition of hybridity shows how colonial domination and identity can be challenged. Whilst I do not argue that the Filipino's position of hybridity is always positive, there are a few benefits that can help someone in a subjugated position.

According to Lo, Bakhtin distinguishes between two types of hybridity: 'organic hybridity' and 'intentional hybridity'.[114] Organic hybridity tends to be associated with globalisation and the breaking down of national barriers. Lo conflates organic hybridity with 'Happy Hybridity', a type of hybridity, which, does not challenge the dominant political discourse directly, and involves little tension or conflict. For Werbner, as quoted by Lo in her discussion, "organic hybridity does not disrupt the sense of order and continuity; rather the movement of culture and the bleeding of boundaries mutates organically".[115] After talking to my informants, I found that in the Philippines, my informants most identified with a sense of organic hybridity that did not challenge American symbolic domination directly. I found that their experiences were similar to second-generation Indian women living in Australia.

Vijaya Joshi explores the ways in which second-generation Indian women experience what can be referred to as a sense of organic hybridity: the "third space". According to Joshi, this third space is a place where second generation Indian women feel free from the residues of cultural traits that are dominant in either Indian or

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[113] Homi Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders" in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.), *The Post Colonial Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 34.
[114] Jacqueline Lo, "Beyond Happy Hybridity: Performing Asian-Australian Identities" in Ien Ang, Sharon Chalmers, Lisa Law and Mandy Thomas (eds.), *Alter/Asians: Asian-Australian Identities in Art, Media and Popular Culture* (Sydney: Pluto Press Australia Limited, 2001), p.154.
[115] ibid.

Australian cultures.[116] The boundaries of this space are fluid and allow for the creation of cultural identity at an individual level. Joshi argues that the third space speaks of autonomy, agency, and more specifically gives the woman herself the ability to negotiate her identities in the context of two cultures. It is in this third space where second generation Indian women can challenge certain assumptions about behaviour and gender roles.[117] Filipino women likewise, can challenge certain assumptions about behaviour and gender roles in the Philippines, in America and in Australia.

According to Ien Ang, "hybridity is a necessary concept to hold onto in this condition, because it foregrounds complicated entanglement rather than identity, togetherness-in-difference rather than virtual apartheid".[118] Contreas, a Filipino woman, is especially well placed to analyse this complicated entanglement because it is embodied in her own life trajectory. Contreras defines herself as a colonised intellectual, and is concerned about how the Philippines will forge a new identity. She argues that "the historical experiences of the Philippines effectively prevents a recovery project from prospering, not only because of our multiple past identities, but also because of a totalising colonisation which made us forget our past, and then forget that we forgot".[119] Sometimes projects of decolonisation can build nations, but in the Philippines it could mean the end of the Filipino nation and the "birth of a Igorot nation, a Lumad nation, a Mangyan nation and an Aeta nation".[120] Contreras has a father with Chinese ancestry and a mother with Spanish blood. A decolonisation

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[116] Joshi, *Indian Daughters Abroad,* p.168.
[117] ibid.
[118]Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West,* p.3.
[119]Antonio Contreras "Political Ideologies of Western Feminism in the Context of the Women's Movement in the Philippines," *Review of Women's Studies,* 2, 2 (1991-92), p. 94-95.
[120] ibid., p. 95.

project could therefore give her no place to go back to. In this sense, colonisation in its present state has created a sense of hybridisation amongst Filipino women.

Lily, an ethnic Chinese/Filipino woman, felt more comfortable with marrying an American than a Filipino. Her exposure to American culture gave her another avenue to forge relationships that were not specifically Filipino or Chinese. She spoke of the problems of marrying a Filipino. She said:

I would rather be an old maid than marry a Filipino who could not financially support me. Also my family will not help me because I married a Filipino. There if you are a Chinese lady who marries a Filipino, they look down on you. So I decided to write to an American.

Her family's sense of racial and financial superiority influenced her in not wanting to marry a local. Thus it is in this 'third space' where Filipino women can challenge certain assumptions about behaviour and gender roles. Given that they have an experience of an American/Filipino upbringing, they are also exposed to different types of feminisms that give them the freedom to choose a more independent or interdependent lifestyle. The exposure of two cultures also gives them the freedom to create a third space that is not Filipino or American.

As I have attempted to argue, on the one hand, American colonial influence has had devastating effects through symbolic, cultural and economic domination. On the other hand, American colonial influence has helped facilitate Filipino women for a life overseas where their hybrid 'entanglements' make it easier for them to adapt to life abroad.

Conclusion

Through this exploration of the effects of American colonisation in the Philippines, I have tried to find a sociohistorical explanation for the 'internationalism' of Filipinos, as a way of explaining why so many Filipino women look abroad for marriage. I have shown how American ideologies have become embodied in Filipino women through the workings of the habitus and symbolic domination. Although American colonisation has undermined the Filipino identity and culture, I have shown how for some women hybrid entanglements can have a positive influence in their lives. In the next chapter I will continue to discuss factors that influence the migration of Filipino women to Australia for marriage. One significant influence is that of gendered ideologies - or 'doxa' - that have constrained Filipino women in the Philippines in one way or another.

Chapter Three

Patriarchy and Changing Gender Relations

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the 'internationalism' of Filipinos, and strong historical links with America, help explain why so many Filipinos find migration an attractive prospect. Migration from the Philippines can also be traced to certain gender relations and ideologies in the Philippines; causal factors that are treated as entirely normal by Filipino society as a whole. As such, gender, 'a socially constructed category'[121], is vital in assessing the reasons behind the migration decisions of Filipino women who end up marrying Australian men. According to Beneria and Roldan, "the social construction of gender is a historical process that involves traits, activities, beliefs and behaviours, and almost universally accords greater value to those associated with the roles men occupy".[122]

Given that Filipino migration to Australia is gendered, this chapter will explore some of the issues facing Filipino women before they migrate to Australia and after they migrate. I will pay particular attention to Filipino women who are married to Australian men. For the most part I will be using the theoretical sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's sociological theories are particularly useful in analysing Filipino gendered migration decisions because his theories examine

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[121] Betsy Wearing, *Gender: The Pain and Pleasure of Difference* (Sydney: Longman Australia, 1996), p. 34.

[122] Beneria. L. and Roldan, M., *The Crossroads of Class and Gender* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p.12.

relations of domination and subordination. In this sense, I will show how some Filipino women often make their migration and marriage decisions and are therefore not acting in a subordinate manner, but rather as autonomous 'agents'. However, in the process, they are also succumbing to oppressive ideologies in the Philippines, and can therefore be classified as victims. Through an examination of this dilemma, I hope to problematise the distinction between 'agent' and 'victim', a distinction that is not always clear-cut.

Filipino Women in the Context of Changing Gender Relations

The mail-order bride phenomenon must be placed in the context of changing gender relations where women in wealthier countries are resisting marriage and domesticity. Capitalist patriarchy operates to value so-called 'men's work' more than so-called 'women's work'. It also divides paid work and unpaid work. Women who are at home raising children are involved in "reproductive work". That is:

> the work essential to maintain and produce human resources that also entails the reproduction of the whole social structure per se, including the reproduction of political ideologies.[123]

This unpaid work usually takes place within the institution of marriage and is usually categorised as domestic work. The mail-order bride system, according to Kojima, is "considered an instrument for finding substitute labour for reproduction and wage

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[123] Maureen Mackintosh, "The sexual division of labour and the subordination of women" in Kate Young, Carol Wolkowitz, & Roslyn McCullagh (eds.), *Of Marriage and the Market: Women's Subordination in International Perspectives* (London: CSE Books, 1981), p.9.

work".[124] Jan Jindy Pettman discusses the assumption that women's work in the care and servicing of men and children is a 'labour of love'. Pettman contends that "marriage's dubious sexual politics and the usual choice of wives as younger, smaller and generally having less power and status does not make for equality".[125] This is especially so when men seek 'other' women as better wives from other countries. In the opening chapter of this thesis, I briefly mentioned how Fadzillah Cooke argues that Australian men are uncomfortable with social changes that encourage women to work and be more independent. Cooke further argues how men who look for Filipino wives have a desire "to look for wives who would fit the traditional supportive role."[126] Among the brides interviewed by Cooke, "59 per cent reported their partners would want them to stay at home upon arrival in Australia".[127] Similarly, "nearly 57 per cent of the men interviewed admitted to wanting 'undemanding wives'."[128] Cooke's study suggests that in view of trends in male conservatism in Australia "men who marry Filipinas are merely those who share this conservatism but who react more forcefully to social changes in the country".[129]

However, with the rise of capitalism and the feminist movement, women in the Philippines have been - like Australian women - reacting against patriarchy. Rodriguez argues that in "contemporary society, patriarchy is a deeply entrenched and integrated system of male dominance".[130] In the following section, I will examine the

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[124] Yu Kojima, "In the Business of cultural reproduction," p. 204.
[125] Pettman, *Worlding Women*, p.193.
[126] Cooke, "Australian-Filipino Marriages in the 1980s", p. 12.
[127] ibid.
[128] ibid.
[129] ibid.
[130] Rodriguez, "Patriarchy and Women's Subordination in the Philippines," p.16.

ways in which in the Philippines, patriarchy is manifested as ideology, as control over women's sexuality and as control of women's labour.[131]

Patriarchy as Ideology

Carolyn Israel-Sobritchea argues how the ideology of female domesticity is a salient feature in Philippine society.[132] According to Israel-Sobritchea, "the legitimisation of male dominance in the household, in work, in politics and other areas of life is rooted in the cultural values, norms, religious beliefs, attitudes and life aspirations of Filipinos".[133] Others would argue that patriarchy in the Philippines has stemmed from capitalist ideological reproduction, where the household is the main site for the reproduction of patriarchy. According to Rodriguez, "the socialist feminists' view is especially useful in viewing the oppression of Filipino women as a result of the integration of patriarchal and capitalist power systems".[134] It is often argued that after the Spanish conquest, women moved from being equal to men to being objects of subjugation. Rodriguez, for instance, observes how as a result of Spanish interventions, the traditional self-sufficiency of the Filipino rural households changed to become nuclear families dependant on the man to earn a wage as a peasant or as a factory or office worker.[135] Patriarchy has continued to manifest itself through religious strictures, schools, the mass media and, perhaps most importantly, through gender ideology.

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[131] Luz Lopez Rodriguez used these categories of Patriarchy in her article, "Patriarchy and Women's subordination in the Philippines". I believe that Tasmanian Filipino women's experiences of patriarchy coincide with Rodriguez's framework.

[132] Carolyn Israel-Sobritchea, "The Ideology of Female Domesticity: its Impact on the Status of Filipino Women," *Review of Women's Studies*, 1,1 (1990), p. 26.

[133] ibid., p.30.

[134] Rodriguez, "Patriarchy and Women's Subordination in the Philippines", p.17.

[135] ibid., p. 19.

The ideology of female domesticity is one of the more dominant gender ideologies in the Philippines. This ideology legitimises gender stratification in many areas of Philippine society. According to Israel-Sobritchea, "the Catholic Church fostered the ideology of female domesticity through pulpit preachings and by limiting women's education to rudimentary reading and arithmetic, home crafts and Christian doctrine".[136] After the Americans colonised the Philippines, they did little to reverse the position of women in society. Many women were in fact encouraged to leave their education to work in factories producing cheap products for America and other Western countries. For example, even though many women had a tertiary education this did not mean they had better employment opportunities. Many female graduates do not enter the workforce because of their domestic responsibilities. If they lived in rural areas, they were often encouraged to stay in the home and work in domestic responsibilities.

As previously mentioned, in Philippine society, marriage holds great prestige. Many Filipino women have often spent their whole lives preparing to be mothers and raise children. For women who don't marry, this has dire consequences. Many women whom I interviewed in Tasmania, for instance, were middle-aged professional women who were not married in the Philippines. Although these women sometimes held professional positions in the Philippines, their single status often brought victimisation. For example, some women I spoke to held very prestigious managerial positions in the public world, but still felt that they were 'lacking', in the sense that they lacked independence in the household.

Migrating to Australia brought new challenges, which were sometimes negative and sometimes positive. For Lolita, this meant that she no longer had to do

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[136] Israel-Sobritchea, "The ideology of female domesticity," p. 28.

the housework for her father and all her brothers and uncles who used to tease her about not having any 'real' work to do. Lily who was a professional accountant, and was promoted to a supervisor of a large company, spoke of her authoritarian Chinese father:

I grew up very old fashioned, very conservative. I was not very outgoing. Because of the way I grew up, it was very strict. You always had to behave, very authoritarian. I grew up being teased too. I thought I was ugly. I was teased within my family. I am the ugly duckling in the family. I grew up like that. They said I was ugly because I had a flat nose. When I reached 30, my father got worried because I wasn't married yet. So I had to find a husband. I liked some Filipinos but I just hold my feelings because it was forbidden. I was very obedient.

For Lily, living in the Philippines involved a life of obedience to her father. She was not allowed to marry men whom she may have had feelings for, reflecting her family's sense of racial superiority. Her story is an example of how intra-household stratification by gender and generation can often be oppressive to daughters. According to Wolf, "the kinship system affects families' ability to organise and control their members' labour - particularly that of young females - in different ways".[137] This has left many women in the Philippines disempowered and subject to the authority of older generations.

In the introduction Lolita who grew up in a rural household talked about the impingements of her family. When she wasn't working she talked about being teased

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[137] Diane Wolf, "Daughters, Decisions and Domination: An Empirical and Conceptual Critique of Household Strategies," *Development and Change*, 21, (1990), p. 44.

all the time. She was encouraged to work even if it meant going overseas to work as a maid. According to Wolf, "household strategies necessarily embody relationships of power, domination and subordination if a strategy is formulated by the decision-maker(s) and successfully executed by those for whom decisions are made".[138] In Lolita's story we saw how the uncles were putting pressure on her to find employment; hence she felt the need to look for work outside her home and, ultimately, her country.

Patriarchy as Control over Marriage and Sexuality

If a woman falls pregnant in the Philippines and is not married, her family and friends often disown her and treat her as an outcast. This in turn, often creates a life of hardship, poverty and discrimination. In the Philippines motherhood is only accepted within marriage. Unwed mothers are considered a social disgrace and as a consequence suffer from social ostracism. The Catholic Church, as is well known, does not allow the use of contraceptives, hence young women often fall pregnant and become disowned. Delia spoke to me about how she had to endure such suffering:

After one year of teaching, I couldn't teach any more because I was pregnant. I couldn't teach because I had a baby out of wedlock. When I got pregnant I was disowned, nobody wanted to know me, then my dad died when I was pregnant. I couldn't come home for the funeral because my brother said he would kill me. He thought that my father was heart broken through my pregnancy and so he died from the stress. They didn't want to know me. They

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[138] ibid., pp. 60-61.

said that they no longer have a daughter or sister. They wouldn't help me get

a job and I was stuck because in the Philippines you really need your family in

order to get a job. So I had to go South to Cebu and have the baby on my own.

I went to see my rich uncle but then my auntie said, 'what will the neighbours

say, your niece is here with a baby on her own so we can't have her here'. So

they gave me money to go to the monastery and the nuns looked after me. No

one was allowed to see them. But they gave me an ultimatum, I was only 21.

They said I could keep the baby but I could only stay there for one month

because they didn't have the facilities to look after the baby. But they said if I

give up the baby they will give me a job in one of the schools. So I asked my

mother if she could look after the baby. My mother also didn't want to look

after the baby because she said that she would lose her poise and dignity. She

never looked after me as a daughter. She always worked to pay for all the

housemaids.

Anyway, it was really terrible. I wrote to my mother for six months and

she ignored my letters. I had no one to help me, so I went to a church at the

top of the hill, which had a big, lighted cross. I prayed there for one day and

the next day my mum rang and said she had booked my plane ticket to come

home. She said that night she had a vision of my dad. She was very scared. My

dad was lying on the couch and he said, 'let Delia come home'.

In Delia's story, being treated like an outcast by both her family and society was what eventually forced her overseas. Delia could no longer work as all avenues for employment were cut off due to her status as a single mother. Her life would simply

have become one of spiralling poverty had she not left the country. Although personal faith plays an important role in overcoming adversities, as suggested in Delia's account, Catholicism as a patriarchal institution can be viewed as controlling in other aspects, such as the church's disapproval of divorce. Legal separation is allowed - but not divorce - which means that women are unable to remarry if they are unhappy in their first marriage. Ella, for example, wanted to leave her husband in the Philippines and remarry in Australia. This is a small part of her story:

> *I married a Filipino man before I came to Australia. I worked in the Philippines as an accountant and my husband was a lawyer. We were always fighting. I also had a daughter. When I came to Australia, I could not marry because I wasn't divorced properly in the Philippines. I had a daughter in the Philippines but I couldn't bring her to Australia. I had to fight so hard to have her here. I cried nearly everyday, her father being a lawyer knew how to keep her from me.*

'Loose ends' from the Philippines – such as divorce – cannot always be tied up before arrival in Australia. Indeed, the social and personal impact of the church in the Philippines, and the patriarchal world-view it strengthens and promotes, is far-reaching. The following section will examine other results of patriarchal domination.

According to Rodriguez, patriarchal control over women's sexuality inevitably leads to control over women's labour. She observes that, "Most of the jobs that are open to women are usually extensions of the mothering, caring and educational roles that they do at home".[139] These jobs are likely to be paid less as well making work

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[139] Rodriguez, "Patriarchy and Women's Subordination in The Philippines," p. 23.

conditions overseas appear more favourable. For many women such financial constraints were a contributing factor when they decided to look overseas for a husband.

Patriarchy and women's labour

Filipino women from poor backgrounds can be considered as doubly oppressed in the context of globalisation. For instance, Rosalinda Pineda-Ofreno discusses how exploitation occurs within the framework of the New International Division of Labour (NIDL). The NIDL is a global trend that is based on the differences in wages of first and third world workers, and between male and female workers.[140] The Philippines is a typical source of cheap labour. Women can therefore feel disempowered in more ways than one. Ella described what it was like if you didn't have an education in the Philippines. She said:

> *Mostly the people in the Philippines are working on the farm in the provinces. Even if the families are farmers, they will try to make enough money for their children to go to the city and go to school. Study is the most important thing. Even if it is far and you have nothing to eat, you still go to school. Because people there will look down on you if you are not educated. You just end up being a maid. Even if you are a professional there, you still earn much more money here.*

Ella compared this to Tasmania. She said:

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[140] Rosalinda Pineda-Ofreneo, "Women and Work: Focus on Homework in the Philippines," *Review of Women's Studies*, 1, 1 (1990), p. 43.

Here people don't seem to care if you are educated or not, as long as you are

a good person, as long as you are a good wife, or as long as you look after

your children well. You don't care not having a career here. But in the

Philippines, if you don't have an education, they just ignore you.

As Ella has pointed out, in the Philippines, study is the most important thing. I heard

many stories from women whose families sacrificed everything so that they could go

to school and university. A farmer would save all his or her life to enable his or her

daughter to go to university. The oldest daughter once employed would have to

financially support her younger siblings through their education. If the oldest daughter

cannot find work she is forced overseas so that she can support her younger siblings.

Another significant influence of Filipino mobility includes the growth in

unemployment for university graduates. For example, in 1995, up to 50% of

university graduates could not find work.[141] Filipino women who do find work are

paid one-third of men's earnings and suffer from higher levels of unemployment and

poverty. Often, because women are hired on a contact basis, they are the first to be

laid off.[142] Joseph Lim argues that this is also "because of their lesser degree of

unionisation and the firm's attempt to cut costs, particularly those related to maternal

leaves and benefits. Others will see more rotation and lower wages for the same

reasons".[143] For many, their only alternative is to go abroad.

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[141] "The Philippines at a Glance" URL:
http://www.ccic.ca/archives/devpol/1999/ap7-philippines-at-a-glance.htm. Site accessed on 2nd August 2003.
[142] ibid.,p.3.
[143]Joseph Lim, "The Social Impact and Responses to the Current East Asian Economic and Financial Crisis: The Philippine Case," *Asian Migrant*, 11, 2 (1998), p. 51.

It can also be argued that the human costs of globalisation in the Philippines are gendered. Women play a critical role in the processes of globalisation. Mary Rose Fernandez says that gender significantly influences who migrates from the Philippines.[144] Daughters are sent overseas in order to remit their earnings to their families. Fernandez observes how women's earnings - that are less than men's - are remitted in higher proportions than men's. Therefore, sending young women overseas has important economic benefits for families.[145] Women tend to send more money home because they feel a greater social responsibility to look after their younger siblings when they go overseas. Edita Tan observes that "their remittance has contributed greatly to the country's foreign exchange earnings which averaged 20.4 percent of GNP in 1990-1998".[146] The Filipino nationalist discourse represents overseas workers who send home remittances as 'national heroes'. These remittances, according to the nationalist discourse, will "transform an 'underdeveloped' national economy into a vibrant nation of capitalist entrepreneurs".[147] It goes without saying that due to exchange rates and the strength of foreign currencies, Filipino women who work overseas are often in a financially better position than many of those who remain in the Philippines.

Women's work in the Philippines is often lowly paid and insecure. Lack of funding to education and health care in the Philippines has serious effects on women who are dependent on government services to maintain their household survival. When asked about the education and health care system in the Philippines, Margo, one of the first Filipinos to arrive in Launceston, shared the following information:

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[144] Rose Mary Fernandez, "Commodified Women," *Peace Review*, 9, 3 (1997), p. 412.
[145] ibid., p. 412.
[146] Edita A. Tan "Labor Market Adjustments to Large Scale Emigration: The Philippine Case," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal,* 10, 3-4 (2001), p. 380.
[147] Katherine Gibson, Lisa Law and Deirdre McKay, "Beyond Heroes and Victims: Filipina Contract Migrants, Economic Activism and Class Transformations," *International Feminist Journal of Politics,* 3, 3 (2001), p. 366.

When I was teaching, lots of my friends were not married. I was worried about the future. What will happen to me? I will grow old, my brothers and sisters would grow old also. I am not sure whether my relations would be able to look after me when I grow old so I decided to get married to an Australian.

Margo lost both her mother and father to illness at a very young age. After her parents died, she felt that her future was no longer secure in the Philippines. She now says that she is really thankful that she decided to come to Australia because she no longer has to worry about finding food and paying for health. Even though she was employed as a teacher in the Philippines, she spoke of how she would often receive blank cheques at the end of the fortnight. She said:

It is lonely here, but you do get support. Here the government will always help. The government will pay your medical, in the Philippines you have to pay all the time. So people here are very lucky. Teachers are always striking here. In the Philippines there are 100 people in each class. We are paid at the end of the month and most times it is late. Some of my friends there get zero cheques. It is very hard there.

Lydia also had to survive on a small income. At the end of grade six, she had to stop her schooling when her father became very ill. She had to help her mother work on the farm so that they would have enough to eat. She eventually found work in Mindanao as a secretary in a Catholic convent. Despite having a secure job, Lydia spoke of how hard it was if you were poor. For example, she said:

The people in the province have to use herbs as a remedy instead of going to the doctor. A lot of them had TB and could not pay for medicine. There are many poor people in the Philippines, not like in Australia. Even getting the dole in Australia, you are wealthy. If you have many people in the house, you have to feed all of them.

The life here in Australia is relaxed compared to the life in the Philippines, because people there are all struggling for life because if they cannot work they cannot eat. There is no medical attention for elderly people in the Philippines. The life there is only good for government employers or business people, they are just one third of the population.

Margo and Lydia both discussed how their health is better attended to in Australia. However, this often came at another cost. Margo described her experiences when she first arrived in Tasmania. She said:

I was not happy when I first came. It was very hard, very hard. A different culture and lots of things to consider. It was very cold. I knew not much about Australia before I came. At school, whenever we would learn about other countries, I would fall asleep. I could not imagine it extremely cold for me here. I did not have any jumper, or socks or anything to keep me warm. At night I could not sleep. In Australia you don't worry about food or clothing but you worry because you are lonely, emptiness in your heart. But in the Philippines, not much people can get what they want but they are happy because they are looked after by their families. We love the old people and

look after them. My main worry is getting old here. If I was not married, I

would go back to the Philippines, because it is very very lonely here. I

sometimes feel very anxious. If I dance and sing, go out, call friends, I feel

better. I had an operation because I have breast cancer, I wanted to talk to

somebody but I had nobody. I am always caring for my husband. But I want

caring for myself. I have rheumatism. I cannot even brush my hair. I just lay

down on the lounge. I cannot get any help. Everybody will help you in the

Philippines. Here, everybody is too busy to help.

Reflecting both the positive and negative points of Margo and Lydia's accounts, Mina Roces observes that "while in the Philippines the extended family provided all support services, once in Australia, the migrant is deprived of the kinship support and marginalised in a basically conservative small town, the Australian government support essentially replaces the kinship system".[148]

Margo and Lydia's accounts do stress how poverty in the Philippines was an influential factor when they decided to migrate to Australia. For some Filipino women, migrating to Australia and marrying an Australian man has relieved the tension of poverty, which for many was a constant source of stress. Lydia had the following to say:

When I was at the agency, I was already in my 30's and I was still single. I

wanted to look for a man. There were plenty of men in the Philippines, but I

was thinking, 'if I got married, it would still be the same, I would have

nothing'. If the husband is working there, you are still poor. I did not want to

[148]Mina Roces, "Filipinas in Central Queensland: gender, migration and support services" in Denis Cryle, Grahame Griffin & Dani Stehlik (eds.), *Futures For Central Queensland* (Queensland: Central Queensland University: 1996), p. 145.

have to look after my husband as well. So I went to work in a hotel. I left the
agency to apply for a foreigner husband so I can go abroad. It doesn't matter
what he is like, but I have to survive.

Lydia felt she had no other choice but to find a husband overseas. It was her only way
to survive. In the 1980s, when Lydia migrated to Tasmania, survival was a key factor
for migrating overseas. Many other Filipino women were in the same position as
Lydia where seeking a foreign husband was a way out from poverty.

Conclusion

This chapter shows how a combination of gendered ideologies and poverty in
the Philippines are an important influence in the migration decisions of Filipino
women. I have shown how Filipino women have had to endure all kinds of sexual and
class discrimination. Some felt they had no other choice but to find work or a husband
overseas.

In the next chapter I will explore further what Filipino women are looking for
when they migrate overseas. I have so far shown how an escape from poverty and
sexual discrimination are influential factors. However, after many interviews, I found
that I was just scratching the surface. Using Bourdieu's concepts of capital, I will
further examine the role of the family and other institutions when Filipino women
decide to migrate to Australia. I will also look at what the benefits are in leaving the
Philippines.

Chapter Four

Resistance: Negotiating a Better Life?

Introduction

I have so far shown how women from the Philippines have been exposed to both symbolic and economic domination. To describe these relations of domination of the established order, Bourdieu uses the concept of the 'field', that is, a social arena where people develop strategies, and struggle over different resources or capital. Bourdieu shows how "fields encompass struggles over their very boundaries"[149] and that they are "systems of relations that are independent of the populations which these relations define".[150] A 'field', in other words, "is a system of social positions, structured internally in terms of power relations".[151] Within the field, people acquire different types of capital, such as economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. I will argue how the acquisition of capital is a form of self-empowerment. In this chapter, I will show how Filipino women in Tasmania have been able to utilise different types of power both before and after migration to Tasmania to negotiate a different life.

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[149] Pierre Bourdieu, "For a Socio-Analysis of Intellectuals: On Homo Academicus: An interview with Pierre Bourdieu by Loic Wacquant," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology: A Critical Review*, 34 (1989), p.6.
[150] ibid.
[151] Ruth Wallace & Alison Wolf, *Contemporary Sociological Theory: Expanding the Classical Tradition* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), p.111.

Capital as resistance: Filipino women on the move

This section examines how power and resistance can be achieved through acquiring different types of capital. Bourdieu shows how agents are "distributed in an overall social space, according to the global volume of capital they possess, the composition of their capital, especially economic and cultural and according to their trajectory in social space".[152] This means that the social rank and specific power, which agents have in a certain field, depend on the specific capital they can mobilise.[153] This is in addition to other wealth accumulated in other types of capital such as economic and educational capital. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu describes how classes are distinguished from one another by the overall volume of capital they possess and by the composition of this capital.[154]

According to Bourdieu, "agents develop strategies to construct their social world and act to reproduce their positions and to gain position in the social world".[155] There are two types of strategies. The first type includes 'reproduction strategies', which are sets of strategies designed to maintain and improve social position. The second type, 'reconversion strategies', refers to movements within social space. That is, converting educational capital into economic capital. These strategies and struggles create differences by a process of distinction.[156]

Through the oral narratives of Tasmanian women, I will show how Filipino 'migrant' women, although at times victims of symbolic domination and a globalised economy have transformed these setbacks into positives. Even though some of the women I spoke to have suffered the most repressive situations, one way to fight back

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[152] Bourdieu, "What Makes a Social Class?", p.4.
[153] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 113.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Chris Wilkes, "The Basic Theoretical Position," p.18.
[156] ibid.

is to leave. That is, abandon the abuses of employers, the scorn of families, the corruption and mismanagement of the Filipino government and its authorities, and settle in Tasmania. Through doing so they have drawn on their sense of agency in their struggle for different types of capital that may further improve their lives and well-being.

According to Goretti Horgan, "globalisation has contradictory effects on women".[157] This is especially so for women who have migrated from the Philippines to Tasmania. Globalisation and its effects in the Philippines have helped Filipino women to travel abroad and mobilise different types of capital. For example, in chapter two, I argued how an American education could be beneficial for somebody wanting to travel abroad to further their education and employment prospects. In this sense, globalisation has empowered these women with more self-confidence. As social actors therefore, they are able to adopt strategies that enable them to improve their situation. In the next section, I will show how Filipino women have both resisted dominant discourses and acquired capital as a form of resistance.

Ella's story below is an example of a Filipino woman who was subjected to varying forms of domination in the Philippines and how she used her self-confidence to free her from that oppression. Before she left the Philippines, Ella was a wealthy accountant and married to a lawyer. Her identity was tied up with Filipino cultural norms of femininity. Even though she was very wealthy she was unhappy in her marriage. To escape, she flew to Australia to meet a man she had never met. In this sense she easily fitted the stereotype of a mail-order bride. But she was no meek pushover: her resistance started at the airport when she met the man that her aunts had found for her:

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[157] Goretti Horgan, "How does globalisation affect women?" *International Socialism: A quarterly Journal of Socialist Theory*, (Autumn 2001), p. 77.

I knew he was rich, but when I saw his face at the airport, I thought, 'Oh my God!' He was very short and looked like a killer. I thought, 'I can't stand being with this man'. I said, 'I am not going to get married to that man'. But my auntie said, 'it is all right, if you don't suit each other, you can just separate'. But I didn't want to go through all that again. So I stayed here longer and worked as a nanny. I have since met my partner. He is really good to my kids. He is a furniture removalist and is a very responsible man. He has a sense of humour and is fun to be with.

We can see that in the first instance, Ella resisted marrying the rich man at the airport. Now, she is still unmarried, but is living with a man that loves her, although he is not wealthy. Her individual subjectivity deconstructs the pejorative term 'mail-order bride' that stereotypes Filipino women as submissive and marrying only for money. She is also not currently married which also deconstructs the concept of all Filipino women in Australia as 'brides'. Ella's account severely disrupts the discourses that exist to contain her. Her trajectory clearly does not resonate with 'mail-order bride' discourses that circulate in the media from time to time. In this sense, she has maintained an individual level of power. Where there has been power, she has produced resistance.

Ramazanoglu, in discussing Foucault's concept of 'resistance', shows how resistance "takes the form of counter discourses which produce new knowledge, speak new truths, and so constitute new powers".[158] According to Foucault, power is a 'capillary'. He says of power:

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[158] Ramazanoglu, *Up against Foucault*, p. 23.

Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.[159]

Filipino women in dominated positions gain power through strategies in acquiring different types of capital that contribute to normalised discourses on Filipino femininity. Therefore power may come from a variety of sources and can also be articulated as resistance. Susan Bordo, for example, says "the fact that resistance is produced from within a hegemonic order does not preclude it from transforming that order".[160] So although many Filipino women remain subject to what Bourdieu refers to as symbolic violence, both in their home and through conventions of Philippine femininity, they are still able to make changes in their lives for the better and in the process help others.

Filipino women and agency

The following discussion will concentrate on how Filipino women act as agents in their migration to Australia and also, in the very same process, fulfil the dictates of Philippine femininity. In particular, I will explore how Filipino women have juggled certain types of capital both before and after migration and how they use the site of inter-marriage to resist and struggle against prevailing gendered ideologies that have constrained them. Bourdieu observes that "the social rank and specific power which agents are assigned in a particular field depend firstly on the specific

[159] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), p. 93.
[160] Susan Bordo, *Twighlight Zones* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1997), p. 190.

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capital they can mobilise, whatever their additional wealth in other types of capital".[161] Likewise, the amount of power a Filipino woman has within a field depends on her position within the field, and the amount of capital she has.

The most obvious type of capital that may seem attractive to Filipino women is economic capital. As already discussed, the 1980s in the Philippines were a time of economic and social hardship. During this time, women who migrated to Tasmania from the Philippines often had economic motivations for leaving the Philippines. The conditions that initiated Filipino migration to Tasmania are very different from those that have perpetuated Filipino migration across time. Therefore, although initially financial considerations were a prime motivation for wanting to migrate to Tasmania in the 1980s, these considerations are different now for Filipino women, who are on the whole migrating through family networks.

Economic capital and migration

I found that some Filipino women in Tasmania were financially struggling in the Philippines and were worried about being a burden on their families in the future. When they migrated to Tasmania, the financial burden was one less worry. Earlier in the thesis I showed how Margo was most worried about being a burden on her family when she grew old. It is not uncommon for Filipino women to worry about their retirement and who is going to support them. This may explain why there are a number of Filipino women who migrate to Australia in their mid forties or just before retirement.

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[161] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.113.

Economic factors are indeed a driving force behind gendered migration from the Philippines. However these economic factors are often intermixed with other social pressures or to maintain a certain standard of living. For example, Tacoli observes:

> The majority of respondents would not be classed among the poorest groups in Philippine society, and in several cases migration is undertaken in order to maintain a middle-class standard of living, which is increasingly threatened by the country's persistent economic crisis. Indeed, a commonly mentioned reason for moving is to increase household's social mobility.[162]

Sometimes on an ideological level women may be migrating for other reasons that are not purely economic. According to Tacoli, while the low household income in rural areas of the Philippines is often an important reason for moving, the significant number of women coming from relatively wealthy backgrounds suggests that in many cases economic survival is not the sole issue. For example, in my interviews in Tasmania, I found that there was a pattern, where women felt overwhelmingly responsible for the welfare of their whole family back in the Philippines. They felt it was their duty to either help send money home or to not be a burden themselves.

It is perceived by many media sources that Filipino women are simply marrying Australian men for financial security. However, many Filipino women whom I interviewed in Tasmania held stable jobs in the Philippines and were from middle to upper class backgrounds. They were well paid and often in prestigious managerial positions. Ninia, for instance, was in the teaching service in the

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[162] Cecelia Tacoli, "Labor Emigration and the Accumulation and Transfer of Human Capital," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 2, 3 (1993), p. 669.

Philippines for 21 years where she taught Home Economics and Science. She later became a principal in a district high school. She said:

When I was a head teacher, the directors said that I was at the highest civil service eligibility in the Philippines. So they said at that time I was fit to be a principal, so they got me a position as head of the school.

Ninia also worked as an adult education co-ordinator in which she was able to help 1000 illiterate adults to read and write. She stressed the importance of this, because it meant they were later able to vote. She was very active in running seminars in adult literacy. Aside from this, Ninia organised short courses such as typing, handwriting, dressmaking, secretarial work and other vocational activities for young mothers. After a very successful career, Ninia finally decided to get married, one year before her retirement. She was 60 when she married. She decided to use all her retirement money to have an adventure in Australia.

Rosita was also not facing any great financial hardship. Rosita simply fell in love with Tony. She even discussed how she had to provide evidence to immigration that she was 'in love'. They required her to send letters, photos and telephone bills to prove her 'love' for Tony. She said:

I was working as a nurse in a hospital in Singapore. I had problems when I first met Tony because I could not understand his English. We had close communication for two years and then we got married.

Dedith, who was raised with her Aunt thinking all along that she was her mother also made her own way through a range of different part-time jobs and educational courses. She was not close to her own parents and felt sad at how they had given her away as a baby. She did however, have a boyfriend and was contented not to get married to someone from overseas. She spoke of simply being bored in the Philippines and wanting to travel. She said:

Before I got married I was working in the bakery part-time. I was very bored, just working and watching television I would start at 7.00am and finish at 4.00pm.

The above examples are some of many where economic reasons for migration do not appear to be the main reasons for wanting to marry a foreigner.

Other reasons such as maintaining a certain standard of living, one that is acceptable to their class 'habitus' could also be an influence. Bourdieu discusses the system of matching people in the following way:

'one speaks of a well matched couple', and friends like to say they have the same tastes – is organised by taste, a system of classificatory schemes which may only very partially become conscious although, as one rises in the social hierarchy, life-style is increasingly a matter of what Weber calls the 'stylisation of life'.[163]

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[163] Bourdieu, *Distinction.*, p. 174.

Therefore, according to Bourdieu's theory some women may be choosing wealthier husbands to maintain a certain 'style' of living that is acceptable in their class 'habitus'. For example, Lily, who was from an upper class background in the Philippines, had the following to say about marrying somebody in a lower class.

I have seven uncles and only two married half Chinese, the rest married Filipinos. They find marrying a Chinese lady very expensive. The wedding of the Chinese, the dowry, you have to have a big feast...poor Chinese cannot afford. So there is a shortage of Chinese man. I could have married a Filipino but I wanted to marry a professional. You don't just get anybody for the sake of marrying, no. I would rather be an old maid.

Lily describes how it was important to marry a professional as opposed to a Filipino man. Her family would simply not have allowed Lily to marry a Filipino man because of their reputation and class. We can see that she was also not able to marry a poor Chinese man, as it would be an embarrassment if he could not afford the wedding. Not being able to find a rich husband that would meet her family's expectations, Lily had to look overseas for a 'gentleman' with a higher income and status.

Mobilising Social and Cultural capital

So far, I have shown that many of the Filipino women in Tasmania had some economic capital in the Philippines and were influenced by other factors when they decided to migrate overseas. After a few interviews, I noticed a pattern of women feeling pressured by aunts and cousins who had already migrated to Australia. Some

of these women needed to mobilise certain types of social and cultural capital to ensure their social mobility and to be accepted within their family. For example, they had to make greater use of the marriage institution as a form of social capital.

Marriage holds great prestige in Philippine society. In some Filipino households, the pressure to get married is quite strong. For example, the following women told me how they had been pressured to marry even though they were not ready or were not 'in love'. Dedith, for instance, said that her cousin Teresita who was already married to an Australian kept pressuring her to write to her husband's friend. Dedith said that she felt a bit awkward and frightened when she first met her husband who is 21 years her senior. Although her husband is very supportive, she talks of being lonely and after a year still has not met any Australians her own age.

Carmelita also spoke of feeling pressured by relatives already living in Australia. Carmelita's mother died when she was only ten years old. She said:

I really wished that I had a mum that I could talk to. I always felt sad. I would always feel, 'where is my mum?' When my mum died, my dad was hardly there everyday.

When Carmelita went to college she met her Australian friend Cameron, who later became her husband. At college she was very uncertain as to whether she was doing the right subjects. She said:

I was studying all different courses, which I didn't finish. If I didn't like it, I would do another one. For example, I studied nursing, but then I found out I

couldn't stand all the blood and kept fainting. I think I studied four courses. In the end, I actually wanted to be a nun so I could go abroad.

Whilst Carmelita was studying, her aunts were all migrating to Sydney. She said that she was left back in the Philippines on her own and life became very hard without the family support. Eventually she felt the pressure to marry even though she was 'not in love'. She said:

When he asked me to marry him, I was in shock. I said, 'I will have to think about that.' My auntie said, 'Why not, this is your chance to come to Australia. ' I was thinking and thinking. I was crying because I wasn't sure. I was in Manilla at the time and then my auntie said, ' Why not, this is your opportunity, just go. He is a good man, he is a Christian and he is interested in you.' I said, 'Oh, I don't know, I can't just leave everyone here.' I had to really think about it. He was just a friend. It wasn't romantic or anything.

Eventually Carmelita agreed to the marriage. She said:

When I was growing up, I always wanted to fall in love. But it was not really my desire to get married because it is just too much work. I actually wanted to become a nun. When I was in college, I just wanted to have fun. It all came on very quickly, I wasn't wanting to get married. And I said, 'yeah, probably this is my chance, because I always wanted to go abroad. And I wanted to see my grandma, but she died before I came to Australia.

Here, Carmelita reveals how her decision to get married was largely made for her by relatives already living in Australia. Carmelita's main reason was to see her grandma who raised her as a child after her mother died. Although Carmelita just wanted to have fun, her family was more important to her. She talked about how important family was to her especially after her mother had died. She rarely saw her father who had to work extra hard on the farm and eventually resorted to drinking to alleviate the grief. The attraction of Australia was the stability of her extended family.

Francisca also had a marriage arranged for her but she was much-older and was able to challenge and resist the pressures from her aunts. She said:

My auntie arranged for this Chinese man to meet me. She wanted me to marry that man who was rich and was from Mindanao. He was the owner of a logging company. He was very rich. They arranged an engagement party. But I said, 'I don't want it'. I said 'no'. I was not in love, but she said that I would develop love as the last thing. The love will develop you know. I agree with that, but this man was big and I didn't like him.

Francisca was also brought up by her aunt. Her own parents could not look after her because she was the oldest of twelve brothers and sisters. Her parents were farmers and lived in a rural village. Francisca's aunt probably just wanted the best for Francisca so that she would not have to live in poverty. Francisca, however as previously discussed ended up studying a few degrees and became a successful businesswoman. Ella also had a marriage arranged for her by aunts already living in Sydney:

I worked in an office for eight years and then I got sick of working. In Sydney I have two aunties, a cousin and my grandma. They said they want to introduce a husband for me. This man was very old and very rich and I said 'I don't think we will last'. I don't think he will like me because I already had a daughter.

Ella, however did not marry the wealthy man, she later chose somebody whom she fell in love with. Age is a crucial factor in whether the decision to migrate was made by the women themselves or by other members in the extended family. Women in there twenties were more likely to move for the sake of their family rather than for their own benefit, reflecting normative expectations of gender. A parent, aunt or uncle would often exert considerable pressure to migrate to Australia. Younger women seem to be more subject to parental authority than older Filipino women.

For some Filipino women, pleasing the family holds greater influence than fulfilling their own careers. In this sense, their migration involves great self-sacrifice. Even though Filipino women are often under employed and lose the benefits of their skills and education, they are looking after their parents and siblings by getting married, which, according to Barber, "fulfils one of the dictates of Philippine femininity".[164]

Younger women also felt more obliged to look after their families financially. In the case of young single migrants, moving away may be a way of affirming their

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[164] Pauline Barber, "Agency in Philipine Women's Labour migration and Provisional Diaspora," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 23, 4 (2000), p.402.

independence, both financial and emotional, with respect to their parental families.[165] Fransisca, now married to an Australian in Tasmania, discusses this notion in the following way:

Filipino women are brought up to be independent; we have so much fight in us, so much determination because the way we were brought up. I think some Filipino women like to become more independent from their families. Especially if they come from a well off family. It gives them a bit of a break.

Some of this independence is based on being able to raise money for their families. This gives them a sense of responsibility that they did not have in the Philippines. There are stereotypes of women who marry just so that they can send remittances home. The remittances that are sent home however, are sent in an altruistic manner. I asked Evanor who works with Filipino women in Tasmania about some of the issues that concern Filipino women when they first arrive. She said that:

We help them to get in touch with their families. Filipino women are under a lot of stress when families back home expect them to send money back. Especially if the member of the family is the head of the family, then she would like to continue being the head of the family by helping the family with their daily expenses. They would like to send money back so that their brothers and sisters can go to university. They try hard to budget to send money back. If you are the head of the family, it is at the back of your mind to help your family, it is your duty to help them. If another member of the family finishes university,

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[165] Cecelia Tacoli, "International Migration and the Restructuring of Gender Asymmetries: Continuity and Change Among Filipino Labor Migrants in Rome," *International Migration Review*, 33, 3 (1999), p. 670.

then they can take the responsibility and the Filipina here doesn't have to keep

sending money back.

By sending remittances home, women continue to remain within the boundaries of their normative roles. For example, in the Philippines, women are expected to be altruistic and to sacrifice their own well-being for their younger brothers and sisters. Filipino women may be migrating for their own personal goals but they also wish to be able to fulfil their normative roles. For example, according to Tacoli, "disaggregation by gender shows that daughters are almost twice as likely as sons to migrate because of relatives' decisions. Moreover, the strong sense of duty towards relatives, and in particular parents, which permeates Philippine familial ideology acts as a powerful constraint which can only be overcome through extreme conflict."[166]

For women who are already thirty and are not married in the Philippines, they often seek husbands so they can become wives and mothers, therefore fulfilling Philippine cultural constructions of womanhood. According to Mina Roces, "definitions of Filipino femininity have altered little despite the major breakthroughs made by women throughout the entire twentieth century. Marriage is still viewed as the destiny of women regardless of educational attainments".[167] In the Philippines, unmarried Filipino women in there 30s are marginalised as *"solteras* [bachelor women], women past marriageable age".[168] Cooke observes that, "Indications of a sense of desperation could be glimpsed from the behaviour of Filipino women aged 35 and above, wherein a larger proportion of women in this group resorted to more formal and more secure channels of meeting marriage partners than those in age

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[166] ibid., p.671.
[167] Roces, *Negotiating Modernities*, p.132.
[168] ibid.

groups below 35".[169] Therefore the pressure to get married, a value that is linked to cultural constructions of femininity is felt very strongly by older women in order to fulfil cultural constructions of Filipino womanhood.

Lily had this to say about not being married in the Philippines at the age of 34:

I met my husband when I was 34. Before I met my husband, my friend who married an Australian sent me a form to apply for a penfriend, which is the way she found out about her husband. I didn't know if I wanted to marry him because he was old. There was nearly 16 years difference and I thought, 'uh, uh'. But anyway, we wrote to each other. I would not say I was in love, no. For me, I am 34 and in the Philippines that is already old.

Age and the worry of being single was a concern for Lily. As previously discussed, not being married can lead to social ostracism, as one grows older. Lily preferred to be married and not in love than to be old and a social outcast in the Philippines. For some women however, getting married at an older age was just a chance to discover the world and to do something different in their lives.

Filipino women aged over 35 sometimes felt that they already had a successful career in the Philippines. They also had a very good education and were looking for something else that would give their lives more meaning and fulfilment. These women often looked at coming to Australia for the purposes of an adventure. For many Filipino women, the only way they are going to see the world and to live in a different experience is to get married to a foreigner. Ninia, for instance, speaks of

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[169] Cooke, *Australian-Filipino Marriages in the 1980s*, p. 31.

wanting to leave the Philippines before she spends her pension, and in order to have an adventure overseas, to see Australia:

> *I got married at 60 and I ended up being married for seventeen years. In the Philippines I had lots of admirers who had the mental ability and they were professional. I don't know, some I accepted but just for sweethearts. But I never thought of getting married until I retired. Because my main purpose for getting married to a man in Australia was just to see the place. I never had travelled out of the Philippines. And if I have to use my retirement pay, I fear that, if I return back to the Philippines, I would have no money. That is not easy, so I said, 'I think I will use this opportunity to get out of the country'.*

Women such as Ninia are undoubtedly mobilising their cultural capital. Through experiencing another culture they can have a richer life experience, which distinguishes them from Filipinos who have never travelled overseas.

According to Cooke, options for professional women are limited in the Philippines. The lives of many professional women, especially those living in provincial cities or towns, can be pretty boring. It is very hard for these women to meet men who are from similar backgrounds as most professional men are working in Manila.[170] Tacoli argues that this is often linked to a general dissatisfaction with life in the Philippines ranging from career dissatisfaction to problems within family relationships, and finding suitable men.[171] Ninia describes the problem in the following manner:

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[170] ibid., p.32.
[171] Cecelia Tacoli, "International Migration and the Restructuring of Gender Asymmetries: Continuity and Change Among Filipino Labor Migrants in Rome," p. 670.

I even complained to my head offices, I said, 'why do you assign me to very far remote places, when there are all these men around and I am single.' I even told them that I was still hunting; the men are not suited for me in these remote places. But they said, 'we need your service, we cannot get other persons to be assigned there.'

Ninia was very highly educated but was working in a predominantly female profession such as teaching. Ninia was incredibly independent. She even engineered and constructed special gates and classrooms for her school in Davao. The government could not afford to fund a new classroom so Ninia set about making one instead. Ninia showed me photos of all the buildings that she built. Some of these buildings included shade huts for the children so that they would not have to sit in the sun and for outdoor class lessons. In the community, she built a community hall and a large shade hut for the purposes of family planning. Ninia was very active in the community but in retirement she wanted to see the world and have an adventure so she set about organising it through marriage.

Conclusion

I have argued that gender and ideology play a major role in the migration decisions of Filipino women in Tasmania. But other factors are also relevant, such as age, class 'habitus', and the need for certain types of capital as a way of maintaining or improving one's social position in a certain social class or field. Given the gendered ideological constraints of the Philippines, it is understandable that some women resort to acquiring different forms of capital to improve their lives. Even when their

motivations appear to be financial, there are hidden gendered ideological factors, such as maternal altruism, which influence their decisions.

The next chapter of this thesis will examine how Filipino women are represented in the context of dominant discourse in Australia such as multiculturalism. I have so far examined how Filipino women have had to negotiate patriarchal ideologies in the Philippines. The next chapter will look at how Filipino women negotiate discriminatory ideologies in Australia. This chapter will also re-examine multiculturalism within a feminist framework and will once again draw on Tasmanian local narratives to show the existence of varying levels of discrimination based on gender, race and class.

Chapter Five

Multiculturalism and Identity in Australia

Introduction

This thesis has so far analysed why Filipino women choose to migrate to Tasmania and some of the problems that they have had to endure in the Philippines. In this chapter, I will be discussing how Filipino women cope with other structural inequities and oppressive ideologies in Australia. This chapter will explore how race and class as categories intersect in the different forms of oppression experienced by Filipino women.

'Mis-recognition', multiculturalism and migrant women

Multiculturalism as a policy was introduced to replace the previous ideas of assimilation. Its central premises are that all groups should be able to express their own culture. Multiculturalism as a policy aims to promote a tolerant and harmonious society. In practice however, multiculturalism fixes identities and embeds racial distinction. This can have a negative impact on migrant women in terms of racism and exclusion from resources and work opportunities. The combination of a lack of

resources and educational opportunities for migrant women can lead to significant structural inequalities.

In this section, I will be concentrating on the recognition and mis-recognition of identity constructed in the categories of ethnicity and "race". Beverly Skeggs defines mis-recognition as "a continual dialogic process in which we all participate to place others, and hence, understand how to place ourselves".[172] This placing of others is most obvious when groups in society are allocated a homogenous identity. According to Avtar Brah et al., "the term 'identity' offers conceptual and political space to rethink issues of racialised social relations and ethnicity".[173] For example, one outcome of the mis-recognition of identity is an unequal distribution of resources resulting in social divisions. This inevitably leads to class discrimination. According to Floya Anthias, social divisions may be considered in two separate but related ways:

> The first is in terms of constructing categories of difference and identity involving other and self-attributions or labelling and self-identity. This involves the formation of social categories of the population and boundaries of *differentiation.* The other is in terms of constructing social relations in terms of differential positioning, and the allocation of power and other resources. This is the issue that relates to social relations of *stratification* or inequality.[174]

'Migrant' women suffer most from mis-recognition and the unequal distribution of resources. To make recognition, according to Beverly Skeggs, is to "participate in a

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[172] Beverly Skeggs, "The Toilet Paper: Femininity, Class and Mis-Recognition," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 24, 3/4 (2001), p.296.

[173] Avtar Brah, Mary Hickman and Mairtin MacanGhaill, *Thinking Identities: Ethnicity, Racism and Culture* (Great Britain: Macmillan Press, 1999), p.1.

[174] Floya Anthias, "Rethinking Social Divisions: some notes towards a theoretical framework," *The Sociological Review*, 46, 3 (1998), p. 515.

system of judgement and classification".[175] This type of judgment and evaluation can involve classifying others with a certain identity. This classification of a subject into a specific identity organises the subject into a specific world. For example, the subject is separated from others who have been marked with a different identity. The subject is also connected with others who are similarly subject to strategies of domination. Therefore, Skeggs argues that mis-recognition "fixes the subject in exclusion, pathology, harm, and pain".[176]

There are many problems involving recognition and mis-recognition by others. According to Craig Calhoun:

> We face problems of recognition because socially sustained discourses about whom it is possible or appropriate or valuable to be, inevitably shape the way we look at and constitute ourselves, with varying degrees of agonism and tension.[177]

This section will show how multiculturalism encourages identities that are fixed in relations of subordination and domination defined by boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. According to Ghassan Hage, multiculturalism is "a form of symbolic violence in which a mode of domination is presented as form of egalitarianism".[178] In his book, *White Nation*, Hage describes the national home as a 'fantasy space' where the national subject (those with accumulated national capital) can dominate the 'other' (those with little national capital). Multiculturalism gives the dominant group the

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[175] Beverly Skeggs, "The Toilet Paper: Femininity, Class and Mis-Recognition," p. 296.
[176] ibid., p.296.
[177] Craig Calhoun, *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), p. 20.
[178] Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1998), p.87.

power to both tolerate and not tolerate the 'other' depending on the level of threat to Australia's national identity.[179] Therefore, "those who tolerate imagine themselves in a position of spatial power"[180] where they can manage national space.

This process of 'othering' is an effect of nationalism and the attempt to create a unitary identity in an increasingly globalised context. According to Jan Jindy Pettman, in terms of who belongs, "Australian nationalism is almost daily on the political agenda, and requires much ideological work in its reproduction and re-invention".[181] In this agenda, women are nearly always invisible. Pettman argues that they "tend to be subsumed within the boundaries of racialised or ethnic difference, as community member (or possessions?) first and women only later".[182] In multiculturalism, ethnic women are active members in as far as they can reproduce their culture and contribute as community members in the dominant culture. Their professional contributions such as those of teachers, doctors and social workers are rarely recognised in the context of multiculturalism. Instead, they are encouraged to display their traditions through their dancing, costumes and abilities to cook well. Therefore multiculturalism simply involves the cosmetic acceptance of those from different racial backgrounds.

The project of multiculturalism involving festivals and education aims to promote ethnic and cultural diversity. This in turn will help Australia to become a more tolerant and peaceful country. This nationalist discourse however, needs to have the support of the majority of ordinary Australians. Ien Ang reminds us "the Hanson/Howard ascendancy was a clear indication that more than two decades of

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[179] ibid., pp. 72-77.
[180] ibid., p.89.
[181] Jan Jindy Pettman, "Second-Class Citizens? Nationalism, Identity and Difference in Australia" in Barbara Sullivan & Gillian Whitehouse (eds.), *Gender, Politics and Citizenship in the 1990s* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1996), p. 14.
[182] ibid., p. 16.

official government policy has not led to the generation of a deep and pervasive nation-wide commitment to multiculturalism".[183] Many Australians do not feel that multiculturalism has much significance in their everyday lives because 'Anglo-Celtic' Australians are positioned outside of 'multicultural Australia'. As a consequence, 'Anglo Celtic' Australians are not forced to re-imagine themselves as part of the 'new' multicultural Australia. In fact, Australia's national identity is constructed using images of people that are part of the dominant culture alone.

The fact that there are many Australians who still imagine the Australian identity as one that is similar to 'White Australia' suggests that there are many Anglo-Australians who do not identify with multiculturalism. Ang in her studies on multiculturalism argues that:

the ideological work necessary to actively *disarticulate* racism and nationalism (where the two were previously so firmly connected and popularly supported) and to win consent from the population at large for this disarticulation has remained undone.[184]

It seems that too many Asians in Australia creates a sense of anxiety amongst many Australians who feel insecure about their own employment situation or threats to their 'Australian identity' being re-constructed with new identities. In reality, the support of multiculturalism occurs only if ethnic minority cultures do not pervade the dominant 'Australian' culture and 'take their jobs'. To reassure White Australia on this issue, the project of multiculturalism must concentrate on the proliferation of ethnic traditional cultures so that they do not become a threat to the dominant

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[183] Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese,* p. 100.
[184] Ien Ang, "Asians in Australia: a contradiction in terms?" in *Race, Colour & Identity in Australia and New Zealand.*, p.125.

'Australian' culture. By focusing on the traditional side of culture rather than the professionalism of its people, it locates them outside of Australian culture. Multiculturalism therefore, can create difference that excludes certain groups from Australia's imagined identity.

Australia's Imagined Identity

Australia's national identity is produced from a complex interrelationship of the "national, local, communal and individual processes of identity acquisition and formation".[185] In Australia, the effects of globalisation have weakened nationalism as a discourse. Instead, Australia has a national identity that is in a constant process of negotiation. For example, Australia's national identity is often defined in terms of sporting heroes, folk songs, barbecues, swimming, life-savers, cricket, Aussie Rules football and so on. Outside these popular images however, are Asian women, who sometimes do not relate to any of the above identities. Asian women do not have the physical characteristics and dispositions of the dominant national 'type'. The more involved they are in the dominant cultural practices the more they are seen as Australian. In other words if Asian women assimilate they can accumulate nationality.[186] Hage argues that, "the extent to which they can actually accumulate national capital is linked to the cultural possessions and dispossessions (what Bourdieu calls 'habitus' – one's historically acquired structure of the personality) they bring with them".[187] Women who do not have enough national capital or who do not choose to be apart of Australia's imagined identity may be more vulnerable to racism.

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[185] ibid., p.125.
[186] Ghassan Hage, *White Nation*, p.54.
[187] ibid.

Mulitculturalism does not succeed in eliminating social exclusion and racism. According to Stephen Castles, "racism is an ideology which gives causal social and historical significance to appearances of biological difference. It is a cultural construction, rather than a biologically based phenomenon".[188] I spoke to some Filipino women about their experiences of racism and how they had been made to feel inferior. Margo explained to me some of her experiences of exclusion. She spoke of how she was well liked at the Australian schools in which she taught at, she said:

> *I have done some relief teaching. It was good, the children really liked me. I had no problems. I could not drive the distance however. So I went to apply for a local school.*

But when Margo went to apply for a school closer to her home, her skin colour and accent were a basis of discrimination. She continued:

> *the principal told me to go to another school where there were more people like me. It is a mining town where there are many Asians.*

Margo also spoke of how she feels when Australians ignore her, she said:

> *When I was doing a course with Australians, I feel awkward because the Australians would not talk to you. I feel ignored when I am with Australians. We Filipinos feel welcome if someone will talk to us. I feel unhappy if Australians do not talk to me. I feel like they do not like me. If they want to talk*

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[188] Stephen Castles, Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis, Michael Morrissey (eds.), *Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1988), p.107.

to me, then I will talk. They are the host. If they show interest in us, we will

respond. I did a course and no one talked to me, it was very hurtful. When I

went to visit my daughter in law, she did not want to talk to me either. I talk to

her but she just ignores me.

Margo has experienced the worst of being treated like an outcast. She even talks about

young children who have insulted her:

I used to have children who would throw stones at me. I was very upset. I

came home and asked my husband, 'Why are the children hurting me, I did not

do anything to them?' It was just horrible.

Margo has been made to feel invisible and worthless. She has been separated from

others who have been marked with the Australian identity through their skin colour

and mannerisms (otherwise revealed in what Bourdieu refers to as the habitus).

Through mis-recognition, a process in which we participate to place others, and

hence, understand ourselves, Margo has been fixed in exclusion and pain.[189]

According to Julie Matthews, "insults and abuse serve to create a community

of 'us', where the demarcation of them distinguishes who does not belong".[190] The

children's violent behaviour that was plain racist was similar in hurtfulness to the

experience of 'being ignored' by 'nationalists' who belong to the dominant culture.

Therefore so-called 'tolerant' nationalists can practise racism simply through the

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[189] Beverly Skeggs, "The Toilet Paper: Femininity, Class and Mis-Recognition," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 24, 3/4 (2001), p.296.
[190] Julie Matthews, "An Ambiguous Juncture and the Formation of Asian Femininity," *Australian Feminist Studies*, 17, 38 (2002), p. 211.

process of exclusion. These nationalists are in the same imaginary position of power as the children in a nation imagined as theirs.[191] The following excerpt is an example of how Fransisca was made to feel like she didn't belong:

I have experienced racism from the customers. One time there were women sitting in the lounge. They tore up all the keno papers and scattered them everywhere in front of me. We are trained to treat the customer as always right. This woman was really big and nasty. She told me to go back to my own country. I told her she was a real pig. I did not care! The aboriginal men with me told her to shut up as well.

Multiculturalism focuses on cultural differences rather than structural differences. According to Anthias, "multiculturalists have tended to treat ethnicity in terms of static cultural attributes rather than as dynamic and contextual processes".[192] As a consequence, the political dynamics of ethnic difference and consequent inequality, disadvantage and exclusion, are ignored.

Social divisions

The discourse of multiculturalism represents Australia as a country where all ethnic groups live in harmony with the dominant culture. In reality, there are many structural differences involving social relations of domination and subordination. Ethnic groups have become stratified in terms of the unequal allocation of different kinds of capital. According to Bourdieu, people struggle for resources using symbolic

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[191] Ghassan Hage, *White Nation*, p.79.
[192] Floya Anthias, "Beyond Unities of Identity in High Modernity," p. 128.

forms of power. Through the concept of symbolic power, Bourdieu says that he tries to "make visible an unperceived form of everyday violence".[193] For example, to be recognised depends on symbolic systems that have an effect on who moves about in different social spaces. The structure of this space is dependent on the distribution of the various forms of capital. As previously discussed, Bourdieu categorises four different types of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic.

Bourdieu's metaphors show how different groups have access to different amounts of capital and embody certain dispositions. These dispositions are revealed in the 'habitus'. According to Bourdieu, the "dispositions (habitus) are inseparable from the structures that produce and reproduce them".[194] Migrant Filipino women in Tasmania may be seen to inhabit similar social spaces in a range of contexts and to display similar dispositions or a similar habitus.[195] This habitus is subject to the judgment of the dominant culture. Having a 'strange' accent and other subordinate dispositions may lower a Filipino woman's bargaining power in the labour market and define her as suitable for particular modes of employment.

Although a Filipino woman may hold a university degree, in the Australian context she is often working in the retail, domestic or hospitality industries. In relation to migrant women, Barbara Misztal observes that, "the difference between their position and the position of Australian-born white women is one of the biggest social and economic gaps in Australia".[196] Women from non-English speaking countries occupy the lowest segment of the labour market. Given the nature of their employment, they also earn less than other groups. These problems arise from the

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[193] Pierre Bourdieu and Terry Eagleton, "Doxa and Common Life: An Interview," in Slavoj Zizek (ed.), *Mapping Ideology*, p.266.
[194] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, p. 42.
[195] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.170.
[196] Barbara Misztal, "Migrant women in Australia," *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 12, 2 (1991), p. 19.

mis-recognition of their qualifications. One possible solution, retraining, has its own problems. To retrain is often expensive and extremely time consuming, especially difficult for mothers of young children.

According to Misztal, "migration to Australia generally involves downward social mobility and under utilisation of skills, for at least some period of time".[197] Filipino women in regional areas of Australia are over represented in the service sector of the economy even though they hold very high qualifications and have numerous business skills and experience. The service sector is labour intensive and requires little skill or education. Filipino women in regional areas are under-represented in the higher social classes despite their high qualifications. Migrant women in isolated areas may be particularly disadvantaged in this respect. Teresita, for instance is 24 and worked as a real estate agent in the Philippines. She is now living in Tasmania where she is married to a salesman who is aged 55. When I spoke to her she said that she was 'too short' to have a good job here. Teresita is now working as a casual waitress at a Chinese restaurant.

When Filipino women arrive in Tasmania they arrive in a "socially ranked geographical space".[198] Not being able to use their skills and qualifications is often made worse by their spatial dispersion. Nearly all the Filipino women I spoke to were no longer able to use their skills and education that they had acquired in the Philippines. Most spoke about how difficult and expensive it was to retrain in their profession. Others simply spoke of how they were not valued anymore. Ninia, whom I discussed earlier as having a successful career in the Philippines, now lives in a tiny garage with no heating and bare essentials. Her toilet is out the back with a kitchen

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[197] ibid., p. 26.
[198] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 124.

sink. Her room in the garage just has enough room for one bed and a bedside table. She describes her life now as much poorer than when she was in the Philippines.

Lily, who can no longer find employment, is left at home to look after her elderly husband who due to illness is emotionally and physically dependent. She said:

My husband does not want me to go out all the time. I have to look after my own health so that I can look after my husband. But now, I say when I want to go out. I make his food and put it on the table and then I go out. We fight a lot about the cleaning. I do not want to clean all the time. I always let my feelings out. When I first came here, I felt like a slave or a maid here. At home, I would never clean the toilet, but here I do everything you know.

Here, we can see the frustration that Lily has with both trying to cope with her health and not being able to go out and be a part of the community in a working capacity. She clearly does not enjoy being at home all the time yet each time she has tried to apply for work she has been refused. She expressed how difficult it was to find work as an accountant in Tasmania if you are Filipino.

According to Jane Flax, "the experience of gender relations for any person and the structure of gender as a social category are shaped by the interactions of gender relations and other social relations such as class and race".[199] With regard to Filipino women, where the community has not valued their education and skills, has not included them in local friendships, has not given them the finances to re-train, what choice do they have? They are left at home with their husbands, or alone if he is at work. They are also often geographically isolated and therefore become more

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[199]Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," in Linda J. Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/postmodernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), p.40.

dependent on their husbands. This suggests that racial discrimination and gender discrimination are interwoven.

Filipino women who are married to Australian men in regional areas are often located in the private domain, which is not seen as politically relevant. According to Yuval Davis, "since nationalism and nations have usually been discussed as part of the public political sphere, the exclusion of women from that arena has effected their exclusion from that discourse as well".[200] Therefore, women such as Lily, living a life in poverty are left out of public discourse.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how Filipino women are assigned an identity in multiculturalism. This identity is often mis-recognised by the general community. I have given examples of racism and insults to show how Filipino women are affected when they are seen as 'different' in the wider community. Not only have Filipino women living in isolated regions had to endure racism but also exclusion from resources that could further help their employment prospects. In the next chapter, I will discuss the hybridisation and heterogeneity of the Filipino diaspora in Tasmania. This hybridisation is a resistance to being labelled with one identity alone. This will reveal the diversity and complexities of the Filipino community.

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[200] Nira Yuval-Davis, "Gender and Nation," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16, 4 (October 1993), p. 622.

Chapter Six

Hybridity and the Filipino Diaspora

Introduction

In this chapter, I will first discuss the broader academic discourse of hybridity and identity within the Asian diaspora. Following this, I will show how at a local level, Filipino women in Tasmania like other Asian-Australians, are involved in the deconstruction of the homogeneous identities and the term 'diaspora'.

Asian-Australian Hybridities

In the previous chapter I described restrictive effects of multicultural policy on the sense of identity of non-dominant ethnic groups. Ien Ang for example, writes of her experience of marginalisation:

> To define myself as Asian, however, unavoidably and logically means writing myself out of the bounds of that identity and into the margins of a pre-given firmly established Australian imagined community, the boundaries of which

'are still eurocentric, cemented together around a core of white traditions' (Schech and Haggis 2000: 236).[201]

The way out of this restriction is through the discourse of hybridity, challenging stereotypes of diasporic populations. The discourse of hybridity is often seen as a form of resistance that dismantles and diminishes identities authenticated in multiculturalism. Within the Asian-Australian 'diaspora', Asian-Australian women have negotiated different identities that take a mix of elements from their Australian and Asian upbringing. These identities are hybrid and fluid. According to Bakhtin, as quoted by Lo,

[Intentional hybridity] is an artistically organised system for bringing different languages in contact with one another, a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another.[202]

This type of hybridity is most frequently discussed in postcolonial theory. It is the third space or place of hybridity where the construction of new identities can be formed. Postcolonial theory offers an alternative way at looking at hybridity and minority groups such as Filipino women. Through a postcolonial notion of intentional hybridity, Asian-Australians can express a form of counter-hegemony. As already mentioned, the conception of ethnicity as hybrid and heterogenous provides a position for Asian-Australians to express themselves as a group with histories of exclusion.

According to Ien Ang, "a critical cultural politics of diaspora should privilege neither host country (real or imaginary) or homeland, but precisely keep a creative

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[201] Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, p.191.
[202] Jacqueline Lo, "Beyond Happy Hybridity: Performing Asian-Australian Identities," p.154.

tension between 'where you're from' and 'where you're at'".[203] If this position of 'in-betweenness' is not productive or creative it can be an empty space that can produce a feeling of loss. Intentional hybridity, expressed through hybrid cultural forms, can fill this in-between space with new forms of culture. For Chinese-Australians a productive hybridity can break down notions of belonging to a mythic homeland such as China. Ien Ang observes that:

> it is by recognising the irreducible productivity of the syncretic practices of particular overseas Chinese cultures that 'China', a mythic homeland' will then stop being the absolute norm for 'Chineseness', against which all other Chinese cultures of the diaspora are measured".[204]

So intentional hybridity can "deconstruct and dissolve the pure and essential Chinese subject, the absolute norm of authentic Chineseness which overseas Chinese – people of Chinese descent living outside of China - can never match up to".[205] Ethnic Chinese through intentional hybridity can construct new hybrid identities and communities in both their homes, work places and also in relation with each other.

Intentional hybridity is articulated in the 'third space', a space without borders. In this space, Ang is free to construct an identity that is neither Australian nor Asian. This identity would embrace a notion of complicated entanglement where Ang can hold onto a hybrid 'in-betweenness'.[206] This hybrid in-betweenness that Ang discusses is one that is also characterised by power imbalances. For example, there

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[203] Ien Ang, "Migrations of Chineseness: Ethnicity in the Postmodern World," in David Bennett (ed.), *Cultural Studies: Pluralism and Theory* (Parkville: Department of English, University of Melbourne, 1993), pp. 32-44.
[204] ibid., p. 42.
[205] Ien Ang, "The differential politics of Chineseness," Ghassan Hage and Leslie Johnson (eds.), *Identity/ community/ change* (Sydney: Pirie Printers, 1993), p.19.
[206] Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, p. 194.

are some parts of Asianness that are considered by mainstream Australians as too difficult to absorb or assimilate. If Asianness became more dominant in this third space, the dominant culture would start to feel uncomfortable. Ang suggests, "the concept of hybridity should be mobilised to address and analyse the fundamental *uneasiness* inherent in our global condition of togetherness-in-difference."[207] The discourse of hybridity therefore, should attempt to challenge hegemonic multiculturalism to include Asians as heterogeneous Australians located within Australian culture.

Much of the literature discussed so far in this chapter has been concerned with issues of identity surrounding the Asian diaspora in Australia. I have discussed how for many Asians, the concept of hybridity gives them a space where they can choose to explore their identity without pre defined boundaries. Central to identity formation is the narration of the self, that is, people's stories of their histories, families, child rearing and so on. The next section will attempt to delineate the Filipino diaspora in Tasmania through exploring issues of identity, connections to homeland and the maintenance of networks.

The Filipino Diaspora in Tasmania

Multiculturalism in Australia assumes that all Filipinos have a similar identity. In this section, I will illustrate how Filipino women have negotiated different identities that do necessarily fit with the public stereotype. According to Yuval-Davis:

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[207] ibid., p.201.

A basic problem of multiculturalism is the assumption that all members are equally committed to their culture. It tends to construct the members of minority collectivities as basically homogeneous, speaking with a unified cultural voice. These cultural voices have to be as distinguishable as possible from the majority culture in order for them to be perceived as being 'different; thus, the more traditional and distanced form the majority culture the voice of the 'community representatives' is, the more 'authentic' it will be seen to be within such a construction (Sahgal and Yuval-Davis 1992).[208]

Filipino women are not all committed to Filipino culture as multiculturalism might suggest. In fact, some Filipino women are in Australia precisely because they were marginalised through cultural ideology in the Philippines and wanted to make a new home in Australia.

Members of the Filipino diaspora in Tasmania are involved in the reshaping of the politics of identity through their reshaping of the relations of power, cultural practices and inter-generational continuities. For example, where some women have embraced cultural practices and inter-generational continuities from the Philippines, others have disrupted these continuities to absorb cultural practices in Australia. Through these choices, Filipino women through their micro resistances have deconstructed the concept of 'diaspora'.

According to William Safran, the term diaspora should be limited to populations that satisfy the following criteria. He suggests these should include:

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[208] Yuval-Davis, "Gender and Nation", p. 628.

dispersal from an original centre to two or more peripheral regions; retention of collective memory of the homeland; partial alienation from the host society; aspiration to return to an ancestral homeland; commitment to the maintenance or restoration of the homeland; and derivation of collective consciousness and solidarity from a relationship with the homeland. [209]

In relation to Filipino women, this definition is too restrictive. In fact, several implications of this definition can be challenged. Safron's suggestion that all diaspora have a partial alienation from the host society could be argued using the concept of hybridity. After talking to some of the Filipino women in Tasmania, I found that some wanted to distance themselves from the dominant Australian identity whilst others wanted to distance themselves from the dominant Filipino identity. This was most evident in their ideas about raising children.

The following women have contrasting ideas of identity and raising children in Australia. One has chosen to forget her Filipino identity partly due to the encouragement from her husband and the other has embraced her sense of Filipino identity also with the encouragement from her husband. Lily described how she felt about her Filipino-Australian identity.

I said to my husband, 'Do you know, sometimes I don't feel Filipino.' Because I have been talking to Australians. I forget that I am Filipino or Asian. I am one of them. I don't feel more Filipino. I reckon I am more Australian because I adopt the Australian way. Other Filipinos who have been here for so long. I told them 'Look you have been here for so long, you should be more

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[209] William Safran, "Diasporas in modern societies: myths of homeland and return," *Diaspora: a journal of transnational studies* , 1, 1 (1991), pp. 83-99.

Australian than Filipino.' A friend of me, she is more Filipino. Filipinos are

more shy, They don't say yes or no, they waste your time. Some Filipinos have

their own way. It depends on your husband. Other Australian men don't tell

their wives if they have made a mistake whereas my husband tells me. My

husband wants me to be Australian. You cannot see any Filipino wall

hangings here. Some Filipinos hang onto their culture.

For Carmelita, maintaining a Filipino identity was important for her daughter:

I am still a Filipino. Even my daughter, when somebody would ask her where

she is from she would say, 'I am Filipino, like my mum.' I raise her Filipino

style. My husband is always busy. I am always the one who disciplines her. I

am the one who does everything. My husband just leaves it to me. I want my

daughter to have respect for older people. Not all Filipinos want their

children to be Filipino. I have met Filipinos who don't raise their children

Filipino. I think they are more Australian then I am. Some Filipinos come here

because they had a bad life in the Philippines. They just want to forget it. But I

don't. I've always wanted to go back to the Philippines. My husband really

wants to go back.

In the Filipino diaspora in Tasmania, some wish to return to the Philippines and miss
their family but for others, there is no desire to return home. This was largely
determined by their age and how long they had already lived in Tasmania. For young
women who had recently arrived in Tasmania, they expressed an almost desperate
longing to return home. Dedith for instance, said:

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The biggest problem here is being homesick. Sometimes I cry in the night because I miss the Philippines. You miss your parents and the lifestyle in the Philippines, the noisiness. In the morning there are always people to talk to but here you wake up and it's very quiet.

Teresita likewise felt unsettled living so far away from home:

I am looking forward to going home. I always call my mum and write letters. Sometimes I call her four times a day. Today I call them four times. Usually I just call them once a week.

Some middle-aged women who had spent ten or more years in Tasmania, expressed a desire to return home for a short period but this was only after other practical local concerns had been taken care of. These concerns included paying off the mortgage, extending the house, saving up for the children's airfares and so on. Marcelina who was a businesswoman in the Philippines said:

When I went back to the Philippines in 1999, I just wanted to come back to Tasmania. The heat was too much. ˙

Marcelina continued:

I feel much safer here in Australia. I am very happy here. I am happy all the time. While I go and do the groceries, I sing at the same time. I really like it here because of the climate.

Lolita who was a teacher in the Philippines and now lives on a farm said:

I haven't been back to the Philippines yet, we have to save first. It is very hard to travel with a baby.

For older women who had already established careers and had little family left in the Philippines, there was often no desire to return to the Philippines. They had made their home and established their identity in Australia. Fransisca, who has no children and works in hotel reception said:

My husband is retired already and he wants to move back to the Philippines, because we have a house there. But I feel it is too hot. If we have a holiday in the Philippines, he is more excited than me.

We can see that for some women, the Philippines and its culture still felt like home and for others Tasmania was now home. Most Filipino women embrace the concept of a hybrid identity. Some have had to hold onto their Filipino identity but also willingly participate in the Australian culture. Due to Tasmania's isolation, many Filipino women have had to hang onto their sense of place and identity as a means of support. Others who have travelled more widely around Australia and the world have not felt such a strong need to hang onto a sense of place.

In the next section, I will show how the degree of alienation is linked with the strength of ties to homeland and strength of networks with other Filipinos. The strong notion that diaspora have strong links to the homeland is not the case for many. Hence, while some authenticate their identity through multicultural festivals and spending a considerable amount of time with their homeland origins, for others, they prefer to turn their back on Filipino identity as their sole identity.

In defining diaspora, there has been a significant emphasis placed on the importance of networks. For many Filipino women however, these networks are not always seen as wholly beneficial. Indeed, some women do not want anything to do with the Filipino support groups in Tasmania. Often this is because they are from a different region in the Philippines and do not feel like they have much in common with the other Filipinos.

In the Filipino diaspora, there exists a degree of intra-ethnic nationalism. By this I mean there is a divide between those from Manila who speak Tagalog and those from Cebu who speak Visayan. In the Philippines, Manila is dominant, both culturally and economically. For those from the South, it is very hard to be recognised unless they travel to the North. In Tasmania however, women from Manila are marginalised because they are the minority and do not speak Visayan. According to my informants, most Filipino women in Tasmania are from Cebu and Mindanao. This creates a lot of underlying tension in Filipino networks. In fact, sometimes these groups have a lot of 'backstabbing' and gossiping, which many women prefer to keep at a distance. Such divisions may reproduce problems that women are actually trying to escape from in the Philippines. Divisions may also arise between women who have different motivations for wanting to come to Australia. These divisions indicate that diasporas are far from homogenous.

Some women discussed with me their involvement with Filipino support groups and other Filipino women. It appears that while some were very involved in the maintenance of their culture and keeping up homeland networks, others preferred to keep their distance. Some women go so far as to help their families in the Philippines migrate so that they can feel more at home. Lydia, for instance, is from Cebu and is now living in Tasmania and is looking after her elderly husband. Due to her loneliness she was able to organise for some of her family to migrate to Tasmania. She organised it in the following way:

I asked my sister to come here as a tourist. The immigration in Manilla did not let her come because she did not have a job. She was alone in the Philippines. I was working hard for her and working out her visa for six months. The only way she could come was to get married. Through the charity, I met some politicians. We were talking to each other. They helped me to get a visa for her. She came here with my reference. Then she went back to the Philippines. After a year she came back and my intention was to look for a husband for her. We found a husband that was divorced. I said she had to go home because his divorce was not finalised. She had to wait eight months for the divorce to be finalised. She came back here and got married. Her husband was a farmer who looks after cows. He is a little big but he is okay. They have no problems. That is what I did while I was here in Australia. My parents passed away so I had to look after my family.

After that I organised my niece to come here. She came on a fiancée visa as well. If you are alone in this country you are so lonely you know. Even

though you have friends, it is different to having your brothers or sisters. You

need them because they are the only people who can help you if you need help.

After consolidating support from her family she became a much stronger person and did not feel so lonely. She was then able to utilise her strengths and help her Filipino friends. She said:

I have organised Filipinos for Independence parties and Christmas parties

every year. I organise all the money and the food. I enjoy being with the other

Filipinos. I have also organised Filipino dancing and making of the costumes.

I get on with everybody. I feel Australian now. My home is Australia.

We can see that the Filipino dancing and making of costumes is what helps Lydia to feel at home in her Australian community. Being able to contribute to the community was very important to her. Unfortunately, she is now struggling to look after her husband and needs a lot of support for her husband. She can no longer help out in the community because of the demands at home. When I asked her about her role as carer at home she said:

Now I cannot leave the house because I have to look after my husband. The

multicultural Department sent me $1000 to spend on costumes for the parade

on November, 10th but I rejected it because of my husband. I am woken all

through the night. It is not easy. I have to get up all night to get his medicine.

He needs me all the time. Before, I looked after everybody in the Filipino

community. If they were sick, they would contact me. I would give them comfort because they had no family.

We can see from Lydia's story that she has given a lot of herself to her family, the Filipino community and her husband. Wherever she could, she would establish support networks for both herself and the Filipino community.

Other Filipino women express a sense of distance from other members in the Filipino community. This is exemplified by the response from a respondent who chooses to remain anonymous.

There is a lot of fighting here amongst the Filipinos, not really fighting. But they think they are good because they are so rich here in Australia. Especially when they don't have nothing in the Philippines, and then they come out here, they show off how rich they are. For me, I am happy with my life like this as long as I can do whatever I want, and I can go out whenever I want. I have a good relationship with my husband. Some of the women married Australians when they are young and their husbands are 60... I know 3 or 4 Filipinos who cannot go out at night; they have to wear lipstick all the time around the house. I think, 'Oh bloody hell, I can't even comb my hair!' I have to look after the kids, my husband doesn't care.

There are some Filipinos who don't want to mingle because of the fighting and gossiping. But we just go for the music and have fun. My friend doesn't join the club but she has lots of friends there. I have to go out and socialise.

Lydia expressed how annoyed she was that Filipino women no longer helped with the multicultural activities:

There are many Filipinos here but they are not responsible to do work. If you commit to a responsibility you have to do it. I used to always organise all the dancing. Every ethnic group participates in dancing. Sometimes we would go to the nursing home to entertain people. The Filipinos are not interested anymore because they are busy with work or children. They have no time for participation.

Lydia also told me about how hard it is to keep the Filipino community unified with a political voice:

When a friend died, I had to contact all her relatives in the Philippines and organise her funeral. It was very hard because she has no family. You can get money from the government but you have to write where it all goes. So I don't worry about funding anymore. If we are all together, we have a voice, but working as a group is hard. We have so many different opinions. There is a lot of fighting amongst the Filipinos. There is a lot of gossip. We all come from the same country, why do you have to be jealous? I feel you have to be contented with what you have.

Carmelita who already has most of her family in Sydney, talked about the Filipino groups in the following way:

For me, my family is more important than the Filipino community. My family
sticks together because that is the way we are. My family was involved with a
Filipino organisation but it was so bad because there was so much gossip.
They don't go anymore. We are too busy with our life and kids. They have a
group here but they gossip and break each other. Instead of being together
and seeing each other once a month, they are always hurting each other. If
you get together with them and you have problems, they gossip behind your
back.

On the whole, the women that were involved in a support group had more positive
experiences of being involved with other Filipino women. Lily, for instance,
described her club in the following way:

Our club is family oriented; our club is kids and husbands etc. There were a
couple of other clubs but they fell apart a couple of years ago because they
were all women. In our club the men are more active than the women. We pay
for all our own things in the club. It is very hard to get money from the
government. We go on family camping trips every year. We take about six
boats and go fishing. Sometimes the husbands are more active than the
Filipinos. We didn't want a Filipina as a president because if it is a Filipina
who runs the club, it will be no good, because some Filipinas fight.

Francisca spoke about the club as being like a family:

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All of us in the club have different interests but we are like cousins. There are some in the club who you get on better with than others. I find they are like relations because I don't have relations here.

The above narratives show how with the absence of family there is sometimes a need for a replacement family that can fill in that supportive role. The family unit however, normally has a similar class position and therefore a similar habitus. In the Filipino community of Tasmania, women are arriving from a diverse range of class and ethnic backgrounds. As a consequence, there is sometimes fighting, gossiping or jealousy. For some women, this can be overcome with an understanding of one another's differences. For others, it is simply too much. Most women, however, found that all the work involved to maintain these networks was worth it, because in the end they enjoy each other's friendship and possibly need each other for support.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have addressed issues of 'identity' and 'diaspora'. I have argued that Asian-Australians and Filipino women do not always identify with their ethnic origins. For some women, leaving behind their ethnic identities helped them to cope with day to day living in Australia and Tasmania. For other women, holding onto their sense of place was helpful especially if they had particular values that were not as obvious in Australian society. I also showed how the Filipino women themselves have different feelings about connections with their homeland and support networks, which deconstructs Safron's definition of diaspora.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have examined how Filipino women have coped with the challenge of migrating from the Philippines to Tasmania, a journey generally followed by marriage with it's accompanying stresses. I have tried to follow this journey from the very beginning when Filipino women first made that decision to marry a Westerner. When I first started interviewing, I found that listening to these women's life histories and their feelings about certain events was crucial in understanding the reasons for their migration and subsequent marriage. For me, this also involved a journey of learning and discovery.

After a few interviews, it became clear that Filipino women in Tasmania came from a variety of class and ethnic backgrounds. Nevertheless their experiences can be analysed in terms of an overall trajectory of self-empowerment. By this, I mean the way each woman has gone about defining and achieving her personal goals. I found Bourdieu's theories of capital and habitus particularly helpful in delineating how each woman was able to achieve a sense of personal fulfilment through her journey from the Philippines to Tasmania. While reflecting on the personal lives of these women, I also tried to show how sociological factors played a large role in their decision making process. In Chapters 2 and 3, I examined the ways in which the experience of neo-colonialism and patriarchy in the Philippines often were key influential factors in their migration to Australia. I showed how gendered ideologies in the Philippines had a significant influence on the migration decisions of Filipino women. These gendered ideologies were often a basis for sexual discrimination leading to lives of poverty or boredom. Moving along this journey, I discovered that Filipino women were no "push

over". They resisted domination at many junctions in their lives. Their courage and determination continually astounded me.

In Chapter 4, I further examined Bourdieu's concept of capital. In the process I was able to see how for each woman, agency was expressed in many different forms. The Filipino women discussed how they were able to make changes in their lives for the better. Often this meant leaving the abuses of the family, employers or other institutions. Leaving was often accompanied by a sense of loss and grief. However, the women all showed how they came through this hardship to build a life that would be better in the long run. In this chapter, I discussed the benefits of inter-marriage with an Australian. I showed that despite the stereotype of Filipino women marrying for financial security, Filipino women were able to discuss other reasons for wanting to migrate to Australia such as the alleviation of boredom and the need for an adventure. Unfortunately, what many women didn't realise they would encounter in this adventure was racism and social exclusion in Australia.

In Chapter 5, I examined multiculturalism, social exclusion and racism and how this has affected the opinions of Australians. This chapter explored the concepts of identity and race and how different identities are formed under the umbrella of multiculturalism. Through local narratives this chapter revealed the nature of social exclusion and how this has personally affected Filipino women living in Tasmania. Often this has damaged their employment prospects and reduced their sense of self worth. Where it is often thought that the Filipino diaspora have a united front against such oppression, I found that not all Filipino women are committed to the support groups set up in Tasmania. In fact, some Filipino women felt lonely and isolated and did not receive any support from other Filipinos.

In Chapter 6, I revealed the diversities and complexities of the Filipino community in Tasmania. I also discussed the nature of hybridity and how Filipino women in Tasmania have had to negotiate an Australian-Filipino lifestyle that at times had involved great sacrifice. Ien Ang, for instance reminds us that:

In short, hybridity is not about fusion and synthesis, but also about friction and tension, about ambivalence and incommensurability, about the contestations and interrogations that go hand in hand with the heterogeneity, diversity and multiplicity we have to deal with as we live together-in-difference.[210]

For some Filipino women, living an Australian-Filipino lifestyle is one of fusion and synthesis. However for others it is one of tension and anxiety. This thesis has tried to draw on some of the positives and negatives of leaving the Philippines and settling in Tasmania. Each Filipino woman shared with me a story of some setbacks and some advances. In their journey they have had to renegotiate many aspects of identity that white Anglo Australians take for granted. Sometimes this renegotiation of aspects of their culture and identity involved a sense of anxiety and other times a sense of relief. Therefore, in Chapter 5 I attempted to show how the Filipino women themselves carry out the deconstruction of diaspora.

Whilst most of this thesis has concentrated on the deconstruction of negative representations and the Filipino identity, in the final section I will draw on some of the similarities of the Tasmanian Filipino "community". This will lead to the suggestion that the men who are married to Filipino women in Tasmania are an equally interesting group to study. I had many informal conversations with the men

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[210] Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, p. 200.

who were very open and talkative. They too expressed a desire to be interviewed and included in the scholarship. I will therefore include them in some further comments for research in the future.

Sadness, loss and relationships – moving on

Filipino women in Tasmania have nearly all experienced a childhood trauma such as the loss of a parent or the absence of a parent to care for them. I found that nearly everybody whom I interviewed had a sad story that had a significant impact. The desire for a family or a lifelong relationship was very important and outweighed any other concerns such as the loss of a career or even a comfortable lifestyle in the Philippines. They all spoke of how they desired a husband who was gentle or sensitive. Some women gave examples of how gentle and understanding their husbands were.

In the Introduction to this thesis, I wrote about Lolita who had lost her mother at a young age. She had also suffered from a serious heart condition in childhood. Due to her heart condition and the declining health of her mother, her aunt raised her. Later when her mother died she spoke of how hard it was to finish her education. Her father worked long hours and was not able to be very involved in her upbringing. Stability and family were very important for Lolita. Lolita describes her husband as the 'shy type' who now understands what she has been through.

Delia also spoke of how she had been abandoned by her family. When Delia became pregnant her family and friends treated her like an outcast. This was accompanied by a sense of loss and despair. Wherever she tried to find help, she was rejected because of her pregnancy. Delia is now married to a Chinese-Australian who

is likewise very gentle and supportive. He too has suffered as a refugee and understands Delia's sense of loss.

Carmelita lost her mother when she was growing up. Her mother died at the age of 36. She said:

> *My mum died when I was ten years old. She had cancer. I was just my daughter's age. I remember it a little bit. When my mother died, my dad was hardly there everyday. Because he had to run the farm on his own. When he came home he was always sad. He would just drink which is really sad.*

Carmelita experienced loss at a very young age. Carmelita is now very determined and independent. Although she initially did not want much to do with marriage or having children she has since worked very hard as a nurse in a retirement home, raising her daughter and supporting her husband. Her husband has a disability that keeps him in an endless cycle of unemployment and short-term work contracts. Carmelita also lost her first baby due to stillbirth:

> *We were in Port Macquarie when I lost my first baby due to stillbirth. They didn't give the baby to me for that long, they just took it away. At the funeral I was crying when it was cremated. We still care about it. We still have the ashes. When we settle down somewhere, we will sprinkle them somewhere in the sea.*

Through all the sadness and loss, Carmelita talks about her husband in the following way:

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Andrew is a really good man. He doesn't shout at me or get angry. He is very

sympathetic with me. He has always been very sensitive since he was young. I

am very lucky that he is so sensitive.

Carmelita's story is not uncommon. Dedith was given away as a baby because her mother could not raise her. She talked about not being very close to her real parents because she hardly knew them. She is now married to a man who is much older than her however she says that he is very kind and caring.

Teresita is likewise married to a much older man. Teresita was 24 when she married her husband who was 55. Teresita only ever saw her father once a year. She spoke of wanting to marry somebody like a father who was older and more responsible. Her husband has three children and the youngest one is 29. She once told her husband, *'I am your youngest daughter.'* Even though she has married a much older man she discusses the need she had to find an older man who was less threatening, possibly a replacement father. For instance, she said:

I wanted to marry a man that is much more mature than me. Because if you

marry a younger one, then maybe he will bash you or something like that.

Teresita like many Filipino women in Tasmania has had to cope with loss or abandonment as a child. The characteristics of the men involved with these women nearly always included sensitivity, gentleness, maturity and shyness. Sometimes this was partly due to their disabilities or traumas. Many of the men had endured multiple failed marriages. This was no doubt accompanied by a sense of failure and loss.

In this thesis I have tried to illuminate differences and similarities among Filipino women who have migrated to Tasmania, Australia for marriage. What became clear with all of the women whom I interviewed was the mixing of the categories of agency and victim. At times they were victims and other times they were able to resist social forms of oppression through the acquisition of capital. In this sense they felt self-empowered. This empowerment gave them the strength to find a third space where they could be free to be who they wanted to be. In this space they could also find a husband in an unconventional manner that did not fit with the norms of Australian society. What mattered more was how they were perceived in Philippine Society. I found that when living in Australia they were all able to look back to the Philippines and feel like they had achieved some of their goals. Their personal goals were very different to mine but that is why I found them so interesting.

Suggestions for Further Research

This thesis has used qualitative research in analysing the lives of Filipino women in Tasmania. To those who are interested in exploring the subject matter in greater depth, it will be useful to interview the men who are married to Filipino women. The study of Tasmanian men who are married to Filipino women and the issues associated with masculinity would be an important area of study that would further enhance this research.

Another approach to this study could involve a comparison of lifestyles between those Filipino women who migrated to Australia to further their career goals and those who came for marriage and family reasons unrelated to career. The

comparison would necessarily involve contrasts between women's experiences in the major cosmopolitan cities and in rural and isolated areas.

A more in-depth study could involve researching the sociological character of Filipinos alongside other Asian communities and in comparison with the sociological features of Australian society as a whole. A further macro-level approach to the study of Filipino communities in Australia with the use of quantitative statistics would also be of great benefit to those involved in the immigration process.

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