Making meaning about reproductive work: A narrative inquiry into the experiences of migrant caregivers in Canada

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how migrant caregivers ascribe meaning to the (re)productive labour that they provide within Canada’s Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP). Introduced in 1992, the LCP was a temporary foreign worker program that recruited women, primarily from the Philippines, to care for children, elderly people, and people with disabilities in the homes of their employers. Numerous studies have shown how the stipulations of the LCP produce precarious working conditions that render caregivers vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and that result in their deskilling and de-professionalization. The conditions engendered by the LCP reflect and reinforce the devalued status of care and domestic work; however, little attention has been paid to how people employed in the program make meaning about this work. Informed by feminist standpoint theory, this study centers the voices of live-in caregivers to examine the discursive strategies they utilize to make sense of, (re)frame, negotiate and/or challenge the problematic tropes attributed to care and domestic work. The findings of this study contribute to a growing body of scholarship that examines the experiences of those employed in “dirty” occupations that have the potential to “taint” or stigmatize workers. Utilizing narrative inquiry, a total of three focus group interviews were conducted with eleven women employed in the LCP in the last fifteen years. The interviews took place between December 2016 and January 2017 at a community organization in Toronto that provides services to migrant caregivers. Drawing on excerpts from these interviews, I explore four major themes that emerged from the research. The first theme focuses on participants’ common experiences of stigma and exploitation that stem in part from the devalued status of reproductive labour. The second theme highlights one of the central ways that participants brought dignity and meaning to their job by refocusing attention on the relational dimensions of care. The third theme centers on participants experiences of transnational motherhood, including the painful experience of family separation. Lastly, the fourth theme explores discourses of sacrifice and spiritual faith, which were central to how participants made sense of their experiences of family separation, exploitation, and stigma. For several of the women in this study, their identities as workers were inextricably tied to their maternal identities, and sacrifice, as well as spiritual faith, informed how they assigned meaning to care and domestic work.
Keywords

Care work, domestic workers, reproductive labour, migration, dirty work, standpoint theory, narrative inquiry; Live-in Caregiver Program.
Summary for Lay Audience

Care and domestic work, which includes caring for people, cooking and cleaning, is undervalued. Some aspects of this work, especially those tasks that involve close contact with dirt, the body, and its fluids, are often low paid. Given the way care and domestic work are devalued, this study explored how people employed in Canada’s Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) make meaning about this work. The LCP was a temporary migration policy that allowed people, mostly women from the Philippines, to come to Canada on a temporary basis to provide care for children, older people and people with disabilities while living in the homes of their employers. A total of three focus group interviews were conducted with eleven women who were employed in the LCP in the last fifteen years. The focus groups took place between December 2016 and January 2017 at a community organization in Toronto that provides services to migrant caregivers. This thesis examines four major findings that came out of these interviews. The first finding focuses on participants’ experiences with their employers who often did not respect their basic rights as workers. I argue that these experiences are tied to the way that care and domestic work are generally devalued in society. The second finding highlights one of the ways that participants brought a sense of meaning to their job by drawing attention to the relationships they developed with the people they cared for and the important role they played in their lives. The third finding focuses on participants painful experiences of parenting while being physically separated from their children, who remained in the Philippines. Lastly, the fourth finding focuses on sacrifice and spiritual faith which helped participants to make sense of their experiences of caregiving and family separation. For many of the women in this study, their relationships with their children and their religious faith shaped how they made meaning about their experiences as live-in caregivers.
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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

1.1 Description of Study and Research Questions

The work that people do to make a living is intricately linked to their social worth (Facey, 2016). In particular, people who perform “dirty work” are often stigmatized, although this type of work is varyingly compensated depending on who is doing it. By and large, feminized work, though increasingly viewed as “essential,” is not well-renumerated or valued. In some cases, feminized work is considered “dirty,” and those who do it are subject to stigmatization. This includes social reproductive work (e.g. child and elder care, or bodily care for sick and disabled people) primarily done by women whose low-waged labour is, increasingly, in demand due to changes in women’s workforce participation rates in industrialized countries and in response to global austerity measures. Indeed, feminist scholars, particularly those whose scholarship take up social reproduction, have noted a decline in state involvement in and responsibility for the caring needs of its citizens, as well as a significant restructuring of welfare states in the neoliberal era (Bakker, 2007; Luxton, 2006; Misra et al., 2006; Yeates, 2005). As wealthier countries download responsibilities for the care needs of young and ageing citizens in particular, temporary labour migration programs have been implemented in several countries, particularly in the Global North, to meet these needs. In Canada, the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP), which relied on gendered and racialized labour, was one such initiative. Women who perform this type of work in the LCP must negotiate stigmatization to maintain their dignity and to support their families in a global context that increasingly requires women to cross borders in search of work. Quite often, live-in care work does not reflect the skills, professionalization, and levels of education of the women employed in the LCP or in subsequent iterations of the program.

Introduced in 1992, the LCP recruited women, primarily from the Philippines, to provide care for children, older adults, as well as persons with disabilities, in the homes of Canadian families on a temporary basis. As with most policies regulating the movement of migrant care workers globally, the LCP positioned caregivers as unfree labour by tying
them to a specific employer. While employed in the program, women were prohibited from seeking work in any other sector of the labour market, nor could they switch employers without first securing official authorization. Furthermore, until very recently, live-in caregivers in Canada, many of whom are mothers, were not entitled to bring their families or partners with them during their period of employment.

Efforts to confine migrant women in domestic labour are reflective of the poor working conditions that have historically characterized this work. Due to long hours, isolation, lack of privacy, and low wages, most women who have entered Canada as domestic/care workers have attempted to leave as soon as other job opportunities became available (Arat-Koc, 2006; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997; Calliste, 1991; Henry, 1968). As feminist approaches to political economy indicate, poor working conditions are symptomatic of a much larger problem rooted in the way that social reproduction is organized under the capitalist mode of production (Arat-Koc, 2006a; Bakan & Stasiulis, 2012; Bakker, 2007; Luxton, 2006). Despite being integral to the functioning of societies and economies, the activities involved in social reproduction, including care and domestic work, are widely regarded as banal and inconsequential. Viewed as an extension of women’s “natural” roles as wives and mothers, domestic and care work tend to be poorly remunerated when done for pay. Furthermore, when such work is commodified for a wage in the labour market, it is typically carried out by women, specifically racialized, (im)migrant women (Duffy, 2005).

While much has been written about the lived experiences of women who labour under the LCP, as well as the policies that preceded it (Arat-koc, 1989; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997; Henry, 1968; Pratt, 2012; Silvera, 1989; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005), less attention has been paid to how they engage in meaning making to understand, (re)frame, challenge, and/or resist the problematic tropes attributed to care and domestic work and how they negotiate or develop new identities and modes of thinking under the conditions of a policy that positions this work as peripheral to the larger economy. Thus, located in a feminist sociological framework, this dissertation aims to document and analyze how migrant
domestic workers identify and discuss the embodied dimensions of the (re)productive labour that they provide within the LCP.

Using the method of narrative inquiry to analyze three focus group interviews conducted with eleven women employed in the LCP within the last fifteen years, this study aims to identify the ways in which they negotiate, (re)frame, and/or challenge the cultural and social meaning(s) attached to care work and the implications this has for how they view themselves and their work. Informed by key insights from feminist standpoint theory, this dissertation is framed by four central questions:

1) How do the many women employed in the LCP find value in and/or create meaning from the work that they do?

2) How does domestic/care work, as an aspect of social reproduction, shape or re-frame women’s identity or sense of self-worth?

3) What new knowledges or points of view do women develop in order to resist and challenge the LCP (including the way it devalues domestic and care work) or find ways to use the opportunities that it may provide for them?

4) What implications (emotional and psychological) do the social meanings attached to domestic work have for the women who do this work?

The objective of the study is to conduct a feminist-focused inquiry into daily practices, or what Dorothy Smith (1987) describes as the “problematics of the everyday world,” at the site of care work to discern how women’s insights and knowledges lend a critical analysis and/or new perspectives of political economy with respect to employment, (im)migration, and the provision of care. Towards these goals, this study draws on feminist standpoint theory which posits that women who face subordination develop a dual epistemology: that of their own based on their experiences, as well as a critique of the subordinating practices and processes (Collins, 1990) that influence their everyday world (Smith, 1987). By examining care work from the standpoint of female migrant workers, the purpose of the study is to produce knowledge that contributes to scholarship about the changing nature of domestic and care work, including its gendered and racialized underpinnings, in a neoliberal economy.
Sociologists have examined the central role that work plays in shaping how individuals construct a sense of identity and create meaning from their lives (Simpson et al., 2014). As Simpson et al. (2014) explain:

Work offers meanings that are less readily available from any other activity or institution – it gives time structures to the day, prompts contact with others and provides opportunity to participate in a collective activity or purpose, thereby offering potential status and feelings of self-worth. (p. 755)

The relationship between work, identity, and meaning making, has been well researched, particularly for those employed in more privileged occupations likely to be perceived as “fulfilling” as well as in occupations categorized as “dirty” (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Drew et al., 2007; Kreiner et al., 2006; Van Vuuren et al., 2012). “Dirty work” refers to types of work that are widely regarded as disgusting, demeaning and/or that are seen as morally questionable. The stigma attached to dirty work has the potential to “taint” those who carry it out and can have implications for their sense of self-worth. Although care and domestic work are commonly referred to as the “dirty work” of social reproduction within feminist scholarship, less has been written about how women create and assign meaning to this work (Showers, 2015; Stacey, 2005).

In *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self Recovery*, bell hooks (2005) discusses the potential that work, actively chosen and that is fulfilling, has to “make life sweet.” Conversely, she also discusses the serious emotional and psychological implications that can result when a person is engaged in work that is unrewarding: “It is practically impossible to maintain a spirit of emotional well-being if one is daily doing work that is unsatisfying, that causes intense stress, and that gives little satisfaction” (p. 31). And yet, poor women, working class women, racialized women, and Black women in particular, have historically engaged in work out of necessity (or through force), often in the most devalued occupations in the labour market, including care and domestic work (hooks, 2005).

Many women who enter Canada under the LCP often have university education and professional training in other fields (Bhuyan et al., 2018; Torres et al., 2012). For most
migrant live-in caregivers, including the women in this study, the decision to migrate to Canada stems, not from a desire for the work itself, but from the potential to improve their own as well as their family’s quality of life through access to higher wages and citizenship (Bakan & Stasiulis, 2012; Torres et. al., 2012). The structural constraints that frame women’s employment opportunities and choices, in addition to the devalued status of domestic and care work, particularly when it is performed by racialized migrant women in private households, raises important questions about the process through which they construct meaning and identity in relation to the work they do on a daily basis.

1.2 Overview of Study Findings

The study generated four distinct, but deeply interconnected themes, including: exploitation and stigma, care as relational, transnational motherhood and sacrifice and spiritual faith. Exploitation, which is inextricably linked to the devaluation and stigmatization of care/domestic work, is the first major theme that emerged from participant accounts of their experiences while employed in the LCP. In negotiating the stigma attached to caregiving, participants emphasized the relational aspects of their job, which is the second major theme that emerged from the data. The third theme focuses on participants experiences of transnational motherhood and the difficulties associated with family separation. The fourth theme focuses on how participants made sense of their experiences as migrant caregivers, including the painful experience of family separation as well as stigma and exploitation, through the language of sacrifice and spiritual faith. As participant narratives show, they were willing to sacrifice their relationships with their children to engage in work that was devalued and stigmatized, to secure better opportunities for themselves and their families. Relatedly, faith in God was an important source of strength in helping them to make sense of and endure these sacrifices. Collectively, these four themes closely reflect how participants in this study talked about managing the stigma attached to “dirty work."
1.3 Chapter Outlines

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter two examines the global political and economic processes that have given rise to the migration of women as domestic/care workers from the Philippines to Canada. Chapter three provides a review of the literature on transnational care migration, dirty work, identity and meaning. Chapter four includes a discussion of the theory and methodology that informed the research study, which respectively included standpoint theory and narrative inquiry. Chapters five and six examine the four major themes that emerged from focus group interviews including: exploitation and stigma, care as relational, transnational motherhood and sacrifice and spiritual faith. More specifically, chapter five will include an integrated discussion of the first two themes, because foregrounding the relational aspects of caregiving was one of the central ways in which participants negotiated their experiences of exploitation and stigma in the LCP. Chapter six will explore the themes of transnational motherhood and sacrifice and spiritual faith, again because participants’ identities and roles as mothers as well as their spiritual faith were central to how they made sense of their experiences as members of transnational families and as caregivers. Lastly, chapter seven includes a final summary of the study’s findings and a discussion of its contributions to the existing scholarship on transnational care migration and dirty work as well as implications for future research.
Chapter 2

2 Background and Context

This chapter provides important context for the emergence of transnational care migration from the Philippines to Canada. I situate the rise of temporary labour migration in the Philippines and Canada within a larger global political and economic context to make sense of the processes that have spurred both the demand for and supply of temporary care/domestic workers. Close attention is paid to policy changes, in both the Philippines and Canada, aimed at organizing and regulating the transnational migration of domestic/care workers.

2.1 Labour Sending Country: The Philippines

One of the world’s largest source countries of labour migrants generally, and migrant care/domestic workers specifically, is the Philippines (Guevarra, 2010; Rodriguez, 2010). According to the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (2016), there were roughly 2.1 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) employed in various countries across the globe in 2016. OFWs move to fill labour shortages in a range of mainly “low” and “semi” skilled occupations in the global economy in the health care, service, entertainment, production, construction, and transportation sectors (OECD & Scalabrini Migration Center, 2017). The Philippine’s emergence as a major labour exporter is the result of several complex and interrelated factors operating at the macro, meso and micro-levels (Battistella, 1999). Importantly, contemporary labour migration from the Philippines has its roots in the U.S. colonial labour (and education) system under which primarily Filipino men migrated to Hawaii and California to fill shortages of agricultural labour in the late 19th and early 20th century (Choy, 2003; Rodriguez, 2010). However, it was not until the early 1970s that the Philippine state undertook a central role in facilitating the overseas migration of its citizens to meet the growing demand for temporary workers in the Gulf region following the oil boom, which spurred massive infrastructure development projects and labour shortages, particularly in the construction and oil sectors.
At the same time, the Philippines was experiencing significant rates of poverty and unemployment as well as political instability. To address these problems, the government began taking loans from the IMF in the 1960s. From then on external debt continued to increase and in 1970 the pesos was devalued. It was in this context that President Ferdinand Marcos enacted the Labor Code of 1974, just two years after declaring martial law to suppress a rising communist movement and as a means of enforcing its IMF and World Bank backed export-oriented industrialization strategy. The Labor Code established three main government agencies including the Overseas Employment Development Board (OEBD), the National Seaman’s Board (NSB) and the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) to promote, recruit and place workers overseas (Battistella, 1999). As a key component of Marcos’ national development agenda, organized labour migration was initially intended as a temporary solution to address high levels of poverty, unemployment, and foreign debt. However, an economic recession in 1980, which led again to the devaluation of the pesos, followed by the assassination of opposition leader Senator Benigno Aquino Jr. in 1983, only deepened the need for continued migration. Furthermore, the living conditions exacerbated by structural adjustment policies imposed by the IMF and World Bank in the 1980s and 1990s, including declining wages, a rising cost of living, increasing unemployment, and cuts to public services such as health care and education, compelled many Filipinos to continue to seek work abroad. Over the last forty years, the Philippine state’s labour migration strategy continued to expand under successive governments due to ongoing political and economic instability. In 2001, the administration of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo explicitly set a target to send one million workers abroad each year. More recently, the government of Benigno Simeon Aquino III vowed to improve local employment opportunities to ensure migration was a choice (OECD & Scalabrini Migration Center, 2017). Nevertheless, migration has continued unabated.

Since labour migration was first adopted as an official strategy by the Marcos regime in the 1970s, a comprehensive institutional infrastructure, consisting of various state agencies, laws, policies and regulations, has developed to govern overseas migration. In
1982, the OEBD, NSB and the BES were consolidated into the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), which became the central government agency responsible for regulating overseas migration (Battistella, 1999). The primary function of the POEA now focused on regulating and marketing migrant workers, thus leaving “the actual recruitment and deployment of overseas workers” to private agencies (Tyner, 2000, p. 138). Although the Philippine state continues to play a direct role in facilitating the overseas employment of its citizens through the negotiation of bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding with various countries, including Indonesia, Jordan, Spain, and the United Arab Emirates, it was unable to meet the significant demand for labour on its own. As a result, in 1978 the government began granting licenses to private agencies to recruit, train and place overseas workers (Asis, 2006; Tyner, 2000). As a lucrative enterprise, both licensed and illegal private recruiters, which charge significant fees for their services, have come to play a dominant role in matching workers to employers abroad (Tigno, 2014).

In addition to the POEA, several other state agencies were created to govern different aspects of the migration process from pre-deployment through to return and reintegration. For instance, in 1987, the Welfare and Training Fund, initially established in 1980 to provide insurance, loans and other benefits to overseas workers, was replaced by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). Funded through membership fees paid by migrant workers, the OWWA provides social security benefits and educational programs for OFWs and their dependents, including scholarships, death, and disability benefits, and supports for the reintegration of return migrants. Additionally, in 1980, the Commission of Filipinos Overseas (CFO) was created to foster cultural ties to the Philippines among those who settled permanently outside the country. Considerable efforts have also been made by both the government, as well as private sector agencies, to encourage entrepreneurship in pre-departure and reintegration programs for returning migrants (Spitzer, 2016).

Given the vulnerability of migrant workers to exploitation both from private recruiters and employers, efforts have also been made to better protect OFWs. In 1995, the Migrant
Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act (MWOFA) was passed, following the execution of Flor Contemplacion, a Filipina migrant domestic worker in Singapore who was accused of murdering two people. Responding to the outrage sparked by this and other widely publicized instances of abuse, the MWOFA included a commitment that OFWs would only be sent to countries that guarantee their rights are protected. In addition, the Philippine government requires all OFWs to complete pre-departure orientation seminars, mainly administered by non-governmental organizations, to educate them about the laws and customs of host countries and to inform them of resources they can access if they experience problems while abroad. More recently in 2013, the Philippines negotiated a labour agreement with Saudi Arabia, a major destination country for OFWs, and in 2011 it ratified the International Labour Organization Domestic Worker’s Convention 189. As a result of these efforts, the Philippine state’s labor export system has emerged as a model of migration governance, imitated by other countries including Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and India (Walton-Roberts, 2012).

A “culture of migration” (Asis, 2006; Choy, 2003; Parreñas, 2015) has emerged alongside the institutionalization of migration. With an estimated one million people migrating abroad for work each year (ILO, 2015), transnational migration has become a normal aspect of social life in the Philippines (Asis, 2006; Parreñas, 2015; Rodriguez, 2010). Indeed, successful stories of migration shared among relatives and friends and depicted in the media and advertisements are pervasive and fuel the aspirations of many Filipino citizens to seek better opportunities overseas (Choy, 2003; Parreñas, 2015). Persistently high rates of unemployment and underemployment, particularly among youth, in addition to the desire to study and travel, remain significant factors in motivating people to migrate (Battistella & Asis, 2013). As of July 2016, the underemployment rate in the Philippines was 17.3%, while youth unemployment (among those aged 15 to 24 years old) comprised “48.2% of the total unemployed” (OECD & Scalabrini Migration Center, 2017, p. 49). Not unsurprisingly then, many young people continue to view migration as a pathway to a better life. Findings from the Pinoy Youth Barometer Survey in 2012, showed that 40.36 percent of students surveyed planned to
work abroad after graduation, with the US, Canada and Australia cited as the most desired destinations (OECD & Scalabrini Migration Center, 2017, pp. 49-50).

As a major impetus of organized labour migration, the remittances provided by OFWs were and remain central to generating the foreign currency needed to service the nation’s debts and support the economy. The Philippine state’s vested interest in securing foreign currency via migrant remittances is reflected in its various attempts to manage and direct their flow. In 1982, President Marcos issued an executive order requiring the mandatory remittance of a portion of migrant worker’s earnings to their families through Philippine banks. Under the order, seafarers, contractors, doctors, engineers, and other professional workers were required to remit seventy per cent of their salary, while domestic workers and other service workers were required to remit fifty percent; a move that was met with fierce opposition (Rodriguez, 2010). More recently in 2014, a proposed law attempted to reinstate mandatory migrant remittances, which again drew heavy resistance. Such efforts persist even though, as Rodriguez (2010) points out, the “very structure of the migrant labor system functions in such a way that individuals working overseas necessarily remit their earnings to their dependents left behind in the Philippines” (p. xiv). Currently, the Philippines is the third largest recipient of remittances in the world, behind China and India (IMF, 2012). According to the IMF (2012), “The ratio of remittances to GDP has increased from 8 percent in 2000 to about 11 percent in recent years” (p. 6). Records from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (Central Bank of the Philippines) indicate that in 2016 OFWs remitted a total of $26,899,840 U.S. dollars through official bank channels.

In addition to servicing the nation’s debts, remittances enable migrants to meet their family’s basic needs, build or renovate homes, pay for their children’s (and other relatives) education and health care, purchase durable goods, save money, and start businesses. Nevertheless, considerable debate exists on the extent to which migration and remittances facilitate development (Kelly, 2017; Yeoh et al., 2015). While proponents, which include global financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, point to increased income, consumption, and educational expenditure as positive outcomes, critics argue that heavy reliance on migrant remittances merely serves to reinforce rather than
alleviate the problems of unemployment and poverty since funds are largely used to pay
down the nation’s debts and not to make investments that lead to local job creation
(McGovern, 2003; Rodriguez, 2010).

2.2 Gendered Patterns of Philippine Migration

In the mid-1970s, overseas labour migration from the Philippines was dominated by men
working in the oil and construction sectors in the Gulf Countries. By the 1980s, however,
demand for care/domestic workers and other service workers in industrializing countries
in South and Southeast Asia, prompted a steep rise in the number of Filipino women
migrating abroad for work. Additionally, the growing need for care and domestic labour
in Western Europe and North America also fuelled increasing demand for women
workers. Changes in gendered patterns of migration in this period largely reflect broader
shifts in the global economy which gave rise to the demand for certain types of work,
particularly in the service and manufacturing sectors, to which women were seen as
ideally suited (Tigno, 2014; Tyner, 1996). Notions of women as more compliant and
docile workers, which were reinforced by the Philippine government and private
recruitment agencies in the marketing of OFWs, fuelled this demand (Tyner, 1996). As a
result, in 1975 just 12% of Filipino migrants were women, but by 1992 women
outnumbered men among newly deployed migrant workers, a pattern which persists to
this day (Asis et al., 2004, p. 203). As more recent findings from the Survey on Overseas
Filipinos show, women comprised 53.6% of all OFWs who left the country for
employment in the years between 2011 and 2016 (Bersales & Recied, 2016, p. ix). The
Philippines is one of three countries, along with Sri Lanka, and Indonesia, where female
labour migration outnumbers male labour migration (Piper, 2008).

Domestic and care workers, the vast majority of whom are women, continue to comprise
a significant portion of OFWs. Although exact numbers are not known, Parreñas (2015)
estimates that roughly “50 percent, or 1.4 million, of the estimated 2.8 million female
temporary migrant workers from the Philippines are domestic workers” (p. 3). Filipina
domestic workers migrate to various countries typically in East Asia, West Asia, North
America, and Western Europe (Parreñas, 2015, p. 3). Presently, Hong Kong and the Gulf
Countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates are the largest receiving countries of migrant domestic workers from the Philippines. However, Canada, in addition to the U.S., Italy and Spain, are among the most desirable destinations for Filipina migrant domestic workers due to opportunities for permanent settlement and comparatively better working conditions. Many Filipina caregivers work in other countries such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Saudi Arabia, to gain the experience needed to qualify for entry to Canada as well as other more desirable destination countries (Parreñas, 2015; Paul, 2011, 2017).

2.3 Labour Receiving Country: Canada

As a receiving country, Canada has a long history of relying on (im)migration to fulfill the chronic demand for domestic labour, dating back to the 19th century. Importantly, the history of domestic worker immigration to Canada is intimately connected to the country’s position as a white settler colony and its attendant racialized nation building project (Arat-Koc, 1999). Prior to the implementation of the point system in 1967, who was considered acceptable for immigration to Canada was informed by a racial taxonomy that “ranked national and ethnic groups according to a combination of geographical, physiological, and moral criteria” (Valverde, 2008, p. 178). Countries were divided into preferred and non-preferred sources of immigration to Canada, and a quota system set limits on the number of entrants from each country. Preferred groups\(^1\) included Great Britain, the U.S., as well as Scandinavian countries. In comparison, the list of non-preferred groups was much longer. For instance, Jews, Italians, Greeks, Turks and Armenians were among the many groups considered unsuitable for immigration to Canada. However, the most “undesirable” of the non-preferred groups in Canada, were Asian and Black people who were constructed as morally and biologically inferior (Valverde, 2008, p. 179). As a result, up until the 1950s, domestic workers who

\(^1\) What were considered preferred source countries was not static, but rather changed depending on the historical context and the economic exigencies of the state at the time. Due to exclusionary immigration policies, up until WWII most immigrants to Canada came from Britain, Western Europe and Scandinavia.
immigrated to Canada were almost exclusively\textsuperscript{2} white-European, initially from England and Scotland, and later Eastern Europe, and they entered the country as permanent residents (Arat-Koc, 2006a; Macklin, 1992). Regarded as “mothers of the nation” (Arat-Koc, 2006a) whose presence was viewed as integral to the cultural and physical reproduction of the nation, it was understood that their term in domestic service would be short, and it was expected that they would eventually marry and form families.

Following WWII, as the number of women entering the workforce began to increase, so too did the demand for domestic labour. At the same time, as Western Europe nations recovered from the destruction of the war, immigration from the region declined. In response, the Canadian government turned to several previously “non-preferred” sources of domestic labor including refugees from Eastern Europe and later Germany, Italy, Greece, and Spain before turning to the British West Indies as a “last resort” (Arat-Koc, 2006a, p. 205).

In 1955, the West Indian Domestic Scheme (WIDS) was implemented to facilitate the entry of a specified number of women, initially from Jamaica and Barbados, to work as domestic workers in the homes of Canadian families. The stipulations of the policy reflected both the urgent need to fulfill the demand for domestic labour as well as government officials’ concerns about the immigration of Black women to the country. In their recommendations to Cabinet in 1955, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Minister of Labor suggested that “Selection should be made from suitably qualified single girls in the age group of 21-35 years, having regard to health, character, and training” (Pickersgill & Gregg, 1955, p. 658). The requirement that women be single

\textsuperscript{2} One of the few exceptions were specific instances when Black people were needed as a cheap pool of labour to carry out the most undesirable and lowest paying jobs that Canadians did not want to do. For example, in 1910, Canada’s first Caribbean Domestic Worker Scheme was implemented to arrange for the transportation of 100 women from Guadeloupe to be employed as domestic workers in the homes of families in Quebec. Although it was initially determined that this group of women was of “a good class,” by July of 1911, as increasing numbers of women arrived, government officials, along with the Canadian public, began to express concern that the women were “immoral” and “unfit mothers” (Calliste, 1993, p. 143). The Superintendent of Immigration at the time suggested that it was in the country’s best interest if the scheme was discontinued because “the women were not all of good moral character” (Quoted in Calliste, 1993, p. 142).
and between the ages of 21 and 35, women’s primary child-bearing years, suggests that
government officials viewed Black women first and foremost as workers and not as
future mothers, wives, or citizens. Furthermore, the inclusion of character as a condition
for admission, reflected fears about the supposed sexual immorality of Black women.
Prevalent racist and sexist stereotypes, which constructed Black women as promiscuous,
informed immigration officials concern that if they were admitted to Canada, they would
become a “public charge”\(^3\) or a drain on the economy. As a result, women who entered
Canada under the WIDS were required to undergo a gynecological exam and if they
became pregnant or left domestic work within the first year of their contract, they could
be deported at the expense of the sending country’s government (Macklin, 1992). The
WIDS remained in place until 1968, following the implementation of the point system.
Thereafter, domestic workers would no longer enter the country as permanent residents
but as temporary migrants with no possibility of immigrating permanently to Canada,
until the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) was implemented in 1981.

2.4 Implementation of the Point System and the Rise
of Temporary Migrant Domestic Worker Policy in
Canada

In the 1960s, “new labour needs were emerging in Canada; [as] rapid industrialization
and expanding new technologies required workers with high levels of skill and
education” (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 81). As the government shifted its efforts toward
developing the country’s manufacturing sector, the demand for skilled labour reached a
level that far exceeded supply (Green & Green, 2004). At this time, the Canadian
government was also under pressure from equality seeking groups who demanded
changes to the explicitly racist quota system. In response to these demands, race and

\(^3\) In July of 1911, ten female domestic workers from Guadeloupe were denied entry to Canada, because it
was assumed that they would likely become a “public charge” since eight of the ten women were single
mothers. Immigration officials reasoned that these women would “likely become pregnant again and
become a public burden” (Quoted in Calliste, 1993, p. 134).
nationality were first removed as criteria for entry to the country in 1962. Subsequently, in 1967 the point system was implemented, which allowed immigration officials to closely manage the skill level and occupational distribution of entrants to Canada, thereby eliminating explicit discrimination in the selection process.

Under the point system, applicants would no longer be assessed based on their country of origin or race but on their qualifications under nine supposedly objective criteria, including “education and training, personal assessment, occupational demand, occupational skill, age, arranged employment, knowledge of English and/or French, a relative in Canada willing to assist in their establishment and employment opportunities in the area of destination” (Department of Manpower and Immigration, 1967, p. 21). Each criterion was assigned a numerical value and applicants would be awarded points based on their qualifications in the aforementioned categories. Labour demand, occupational skill, and special points for arranged employment comprised a large proportion of the potential points that could be awarded to any given applicant (Green & Green, 1995). As Alan G. Green and David Green (2004) point out, in 1967, “40% of the possible points [awarded to potential immigrants] were based on the assessment of predicted short term success in the applicant’s intended occupation and destination” (p. 119). The high priority placed on occupational skill and demand reflects the intent behind the point system, which was mainly to control immigration in keeping with the needs of the economy. Although (im)migration policy in Canada has always been intimately connected to the country’s economic objectives, up until this point, the demographic and population requirements of nation building remained paramount.

According to the Department of Manpower and Immigration, the purpose of the point system was to “remove the last vestiges of discrimination in Canadian immigration procedures” (Department of Manpower and Immigration, 1967, p. 21). However, the precise intent was to bring immigration policy in line with the needs of labour and business in Canada. As Linda Carty (1999) argues, changes to immigration policy in Canada during this period were not intended to diversify the Canadian population, but to “bring cheap labour to capital” (p. 44). Carty, as well as others (Arat-Koç, 1999), contend
that the so-called “liberalization” of Canada’s immigration policy in 1962 and 1967 actually signaled the increasing commodification of immigrant labour (Arat-Koç, 1999; Carty, 1999). From this perspective, under the point system, potential entrants to Canada were reduced to commodities, valued solely for their ability to fulfill gaps in the labour market.

Given the chronic shortage of domestic labour in Canada, it is reasonable to expect that it would have been assigned a high rating in terms of Occupational Demand. As Daenzer (1993) points out, however, the Occupational Demand value for domestic work was decreased without explanation from 15 to 12 in the 1960s and to 10 by the 1970s (p. 96). Domestic labour was also rated very low in terms of “occupational skill, training and experience” (Arat-Koç, 1999, p. 217). As a result, Daenzer describes the transitional period following the implementation of the point system as “a decade of administrative tinkering with domestic work policy” (p. 89) during which government officials purposely eroded the status of migrant domestic workers for the benefit of Canadian families and the economy.

Changes implemented during this period also worked to re-assert racial inequality in access to citizenship for migrant domestic workers through the discriminatory application of the point system. Although the “points for all other categories of domestic work were lowered,” (Arat-Koç, 1999, p. 217) nursemaids and nannies, who were typically from Europe, were classified as skilled workers and were awarded higher points. The effect of this change was discriminatory because Caribbean countries, the main source of domestic labour to Canada at the time, did not have training programs for nursemaids or nannies. As a result, women from the region could not qualify as skilled workers under this category (Arat-Koç, 1999). Furthermore, any previous experience women did have in domestic service did not gain them any points under the new system. Consequently, European women continued to enter Canada as skilled nannies and nursemaids with landed status, while women from the Caribbean increasingly entered as “unskilled” domestic workers on temporary permits or as undocumented migrants (Arat-Koç, 1999; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). The manipulation of the point system to ensure the exclusion
of domestic workers as permanent residents demonstrates how racism and sexism continued to function in more subtle ways through the supposedly “non-discriminatory” point system (Arat-Koç, 1999). Categorizing domestic labour as unskilled served to legitimate Caribbean, and later Filipino, women’s status as non-citizens.

The proliferation of temporary employment programs in Canada occurred against the backdrop of a larger transition to a global economic system based on neo-liberal “free market” ideology and a growing desire on the part of governments in the Global North for a more flexible and disposable workforce. By the early 1970s, economic prosperity experienced by many Western nations in the post-war period began to give way to an economic recession (Gabriel, 1999). Spikes in oil prices from 1973 to 1974 and again in 1979 resulted in sharp increases in commodity prices. Consequently, economic growth declined, while inflation and unemployment skyrocketed (Green & Green, 1995). Social welfare provisions that were extended in most Western nations as part of Keynesian economic growth strategies in the wake of the Great Depression were now targeted as the cause of the recession (Gabriel, 1999). In response, states in the Global North, began to adopt policies premised on the neo-liberal economic values of privatization, trade liberalization, and deregulation. In line with these principles, governments began to implement policies and practices that facilitated “labour market flexibility,” for instance “by scaling back on employment standards, lowering wages, weakening collective bargaining provisions, and strengthening employer control” (Gabriel, 1999, p. 129). As Christina Gabriel (1999) explains, “flexibility is associated with an employer’s bid to reduce costs – based on a low wage strategy – to meet the ‘imperatives’ of the global economy” (p. 129). The drive for labour market flexibility has resulted in significant increases in precarious employment, including part-time and “non-standard” work such as temporary and seasonal work, in which women are disproportionately overrepresented (Vosko, 2000). These types of work are especially appealing because they enable employers to “respond quickly and rapidly to changes in the global economy” (Gabriel, 1999, p. 129).
It is within this context that the Temporary Employment Authorization Program was enacted in 1973, thereby revoking the right of potential immigrants to apply for landed status from within Canada. Rather, “unskilled” workers, including domestic workers, would now have to secure temporary employment visas prior to entering Canada (Daenzer, 1993). Temporary visas are intended to fulfill labour shortages, typically in occupations characterized by poor working conditions and low wages, mainly domestic and agricultural labor, by granting only short-term entry to individuals on the condition that they remain employed in a particular occupation for a specified period of time. Not only did temporary visas contract domestic workers to a specific occupation but also to a specific employer. Upon completion of the agreed upon work term, domestic workers had the option of renewing their visa or they could be forced to leave the country (Macklin, 1992).

Without landed status, migrant domestic workers became visitors with no legal right to settle permanently in Canada. Consequently, the implementation of the temporary visa system created conditions that enabled a steady supply of cheap and flexible domestic labour to Canada. According to Bakan and Stasiulis (1997), “The Canadian government’s objective of bringing in domestic workers under temporary work permits was transparent: to create an indentured or captive labour force, at low cost to the Canadian government, who were unlikely to quit regardless of how exploited their work and living situations” (p. 34). An internal memo sent within Department of Manpower and Immigration in 1976 affirms Bakan and Stasiulis’ claim:

At this time, I do not see how we can believe that permanent admission offers any solution to the problem of supply [of domestic labour]. Permanent admission means job mobility…The recruitment of non immigrants [temporary migrants] strongly impedes the turnover of domestics (Quoted in Daenzer, 1993, p. 87).

Thus, revoking landed status and issuing temporary visas would secure for Canadian families a more continuous supply of cheap domestic labour by confining women to this occupation. Furthermore, by tying domestic workers to specific
employers and requiring them to live-in, this policy institutionalized the subordination of domestic workers to their employers.

In addition to granting significant power to employers, the temporary visa system also strengthened the Canadian government’s ability to control immigration in conjunction with the needs of the economy. Without landed immigrant status, domestic workers could be called upon when needed and discarded in times of economic recession. Furthermore, as temporary migrants, the Canadian state assumed no responsibility for the costs of their education or training prior to arrival or for maintaining workers in times of economic downturn. In keeping with the goal to reduce state expenditure, this arrangement also absolved the Canadian government of its responsibility to meet the care needs of Canadian citizens through universal programs and entitlements by transferring the burden to women from the Global South.

Given these advantages, temporary status and the live-in requirement were further institutionalized under two subsequent migrant domestic worker programs, including the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) and the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) implemented in 1981 and 1992 respectively. To qualify for entry to Canada under the FDM, applicants were required to have “a minimum of one year's full-time experience as a domestic worker or a certificate from a recognized school showing successful completion of a domestic worker training program” (Macklin, 1992, p. 704). Those accepted into the FDM were compelled to live in their employer’s home for a period of two years, during which time they could not switch employers without authorization. However, largely due to migrant women’s activism and organizing, a pathway to citizenship was also included in the FDM (Macklin, 1992). Domestic workers became eligible to apply for permanent residence after two years of live-in employment in addition to meeting requirements for educational upgrading to demonstrate their ability to become “self-sufficient.” The requirement of educational upgrading was criticized by domestic workers and their advocates as discriminatory and it was eventually removed following a legal challenge in 1990 (Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005, p. 49).
In 1992, the FDM was replaced by the LCP which granted care workers the opportunity to apply for permanent residence after completing twenty-four months of full-time live-in employment or 3,900 hours of work within a four-year period. Although the educational requirements for permanent residence established under the FDM were eliminated, the minimum education and language standards for initial entry under the LCP were increased (Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). To qualify for entry into the LCP, applicants were now required to have education equivalent to that of a Canadian secondary school diploma as well as six months training or one year of work experience as a caregiver. Despite enduring calls for the elimination of the live-in requirement, the federal government has insisted, until recently, that the “live-in requirement is an important element of the LCP, as there is no shortage of Canadians or permanent residents willing to work as caregivers on a live-out basis” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011, p. 9).

Numerous scholars agree that as the Canadian government increasingly came to rely on “non-preferred” groups of women as the main source of domestic labour, there was a simultaneous deterioration in the rights and resources extended to migrant domestic workers and an increase in the regulations placed on their freedom and mobility (Arat-Koç, 2006; Daenzer, 1993; Macklin, 1992; Miranda, 2007; Silvera 1989; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). Indeed, as Stasiulis and Bakan (2005) note, “from July 1975 to June 1976, 44.8 per cent of all entrants to Canada on temporary visas assigned to in-home domestic work were from the Caribbean, and only 0.3 per cent were from all countries in Asia” (p. 55). However, beginning in the mid-1970s the number of Filipina caregivers in Canada steadily increased and by the mid-1980s the Philippines surpassed the Caribbean as the primary source of migrant domestic labour to Canada (Stasiluls & Bakan, 2005).

Between 1993 and 2010, approximately 80% of those entering Canada under the LCP were from the Philippines, the vast majority of whom (about 90%) were women (CIC, 2012). This demographic transition coincided with growing domestic worker organizing and resistance, and a concomitant discursive shift in the presumed “suitability” of
Caribbean women to caregiving (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1995; Tungohan, 2013). Characterizations of Caribbean women as “aggressive” and Filipinas as “compliant” increasingly informed employer preference for Filipina domestic workers in Canada (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1995; Macklin, 1992; Tungohan, 2013).

Canada’s reliance on temporary migration as one mechanism for addressing its own care crisis is indicative of several economic, political, demographic, and cultural shifts in the country over the past forty years including: increasing female labour market participation, declining fertility, a growing aging population and shrinking, inadequate or non-existent public services and supports for families due to neoliberal reforms and austerity policies. In the absence of publicly funded elder and childcare options, families that can afford it have the option of hiring a caregiver through the LCP. For some families, this option is preferable due to the high costs of care as well as the flexibility it provides working family members. The program is particularly attractive to parents with multiple children, because caregivers are paid the same rate regardless of the number of children in their care. This is just one of the ways that the LCP devalues and invisibilizes reproductive labour, by transferring this responsibility to migrant care/domestic workers, who lack citizenship rights. Furthermore, it is precisely the separation of migrant caregivers from their own families that allows them to meet their employers’ need for flexible care arrangements.

2.5 Recent Changes to Migrant Domestic/Care Worker Policy in Canada

The LCP remained in place from 1992 to 2014, when it was superseded by the Caregiver Program (CP), a five-year pilot project, which made living-in optional. Two streams were created for those who wished to apply for the CP: one for those caring for children and another for those caring for persons with high medical needs. A cap was also placed on the number of caregivers who would be granted permanent residence under each stream every year and stricter language and education requirements were also introduced. Thus, under the new policy, migrant caregivers no longer had the right to apply for landed
status after two years of employment in Canada. Rather, they were now required to attain one year of post-secondary education that was accredited by or completed in Canada in order to apply. This requirement was viewed by critics as particularly troubling given that migrant caregivers were prohibited from furthering their education while working under the program. In addition, the new changes required that caregivers complete a test to demonstrate English language competency to qualify for permanent residence. Studies that explore the impact of these policy changes on migrant caregivers in Canada are emerging (Bannerjee et al., 2017; Bhuyan et al., 2018). For instance, findings from the Migrant Mothers Project show that despite removing the live-in requirement, many caregivers continue to live in their employer’s homes due to high cost of living, low wages, and employer preference (Bhuyan et al., 2018). Significantly, the number of caregivers granted permanent residence also declined precipitously following the changes introduced in 2014.

Although these policy changes were implemented just prior to when the interviews for this dissertation took place, all participants in this study came to Canada through the LCP. Following the completion of the interviews, however, further changes were made to the Caregiver Program. In June of 2019, the federal government launched the Home Child Care Provider and Home Support Worker Pilots. This program grants “occupation specific” work permits, which allow care workers to switch employers so long as they remain employed within that particular occupation, an important improvement from previous versions of the policy. However, the program again placed annual limits on the number of applicants who could be granted permanent residence under both streams, which were capped at 2,750 each. Another important change introduced in the new pilot is the provision allowing care workers to bring their spouses and children with them for the duration of their employment contract. Due to the recent timing of these changes, however, little information is currently available on the experiences of care workers under the new program (See Appendix for a comparison of migrant domestic worker policy in Canada from 1955-2019).
2.6 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the various factors that gave rise to women’s out-migration from the Philippines to Canada. As discussed, several complex and interrelated processes, including shifts in the global political economy, have engendered multiple crises in care, thus precipitating greater demand for care/domestic workers in many wealthier countries. In response to the global demand for cheap and flexible workers, the Philippine state has facilitated migration as a means of addressing the country’s persistent problems of poverty, unemployment, and underemployment and as a means of containing social unrest and political instability. Furthermore, the ongoing impacts of neoliberal restructuring, including declining wages, increased cost of living, and a lack of employment opportunities, has prompted many Filipinos to seek better prospects abroad.

Facing its own care crisis due to demographic changes, women’s increased workforce participation and a scaling back of the welfare state, successive Canadian governments have relied on temporary labour migration programs to meet the needs of (some) Canadian families for flexible child and elder care options. Like other temporary migration programs, the LCP relies on unfree labour to secure a reliable supply of care/domestic workers. In addition to institutionalizing unequal relations of power between employers and caregivers, the LCP also contributes to the structural devaluation of the work involved in social reproduction. By categorizing domestic and care work as temporary, “unskilled,” and low-waged, the LCP not only negates women’s prior training and education, but also masks the fact that caregiving is a competence and skill that is acquired. As a result, the LCP positions care/domestic work as transitional, and not as a desirable career path. Such policies reflect and reinforce social and cultural attitudes, as these are informed by historically specific gendered and racialized ideologies, towards domestic/care work. It is precisely the way in which care/domestic work is positioned within a gendered and racialized global political economy that informs this study’s exploration of the individual and collective meanings caregivers ascribe to this work.
Chapter 3

3 Literature Review

Much scholarly attention has been paid to the importance of paid work in constructing meaning and identity in the lives of workers. In a neoliberal global economy, where one’s morality and self-worth are closely tied to paid employment and where success is viewed as a measure of individual effort, hard work, and ambition, those employed in “dirty” occupations arguably face significant barriers to understanding their work as meaningful. This raises important questions about work-based meanings and meaningfulness, particularly in feminized, racialized, and “dirty” occupations such as care and domestic work.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of existing scholarly literature on transnational care migration, highlighting key conceptual frameworks through which the globalization of care/domestic work has been theorized, including the global care chain and the international division of reproductive labour. Particular attention is paid to how notions of dirt have been theorized in literature on care and domestic work as well as to racial and gender hierarchies that characterize this work. Drawing on this scholarship, I conceptualize care work as a highly feminized and racialized type of dirty work to which Filipina women have been constructed as “ideally suited.” The social and cultural meanings (including the attitudes, feelings, and emotions) attached to care work and the potential for such work to taint or stigmatize those who carry it out, raises important questions about the ways in which people negotiate these problematic tropes. The findings of this study seek to contribute to literature on gender, migration and care and dirty work by examining how Filipina women ascribe meaning to care and domestic work, in light of the way it is socially and economically devalued.

3.1 Gender, Migration and Care

Nearly half of the world’s international migrants (215 million) are women, many of whom migrate abroad as nurses, caregivers, and domestic workers. In 2015, the ILO
estimates that there were roughly 11.5 million migrant domestic workers world-wide, approximately 73% of whom were women. Feminist scholars have attributed the recent growth in female migration (also referred to as the feminization of migration) to several complex and interrelated processes including, changes in women’s work force participation, declining fertility rates, stagnant wages, a growth of aging populations in wealthier countries as well as neoliberal economic restructuring in both sending and receiving countries (Hochschild, 2000; Liu, 2015; Misra et al., 2006; Parreñas, 2000a; Williams, 2018). The multiple crises of care exacerbated by neoliberal restructuring fuels both the demand for and supply of migrant care and domestic workers. Much of this movement (80%) flows from low and middle-income countries to high income countries (ILO, 2015) primarily in Southeastern Asia, North America, the Gulf States and northern, southern and Western Europe.

One of the major conceptual lenses through which the global movement of domestic/care workers has been theorized is the care chain. Initially used by Arlie Hochschild in 2000, global care chain (GCC) refers to the process wherein the previously unpaid care work of middle and upper-class women, typically in the Global North, gets transferred to less-privileged, migrant women from the Global South. In their absence, most migrant domestic workers pass on their unpaid childcare responsibilities to female relatives, their partners, or paid domestic workers, who in turn pass on their caregiving responsibilities. Each transfer of labour constitutes a link in a chain that connects people across the “globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring” (Hochschild, 2000, p. 131). Hochschild (2002) describes this process as a “global heart transplant” (p. 22) in which migrant domestic workers not only transfer their time and energy, but also love from their own children to the children they care for in the Global North. She likens love to a resource, such as gold, ivory, or rubber, which is extracted from poorer countries and transferred to wealthier countries, resulting in a “care drain” in sending nations.

Rachel Parreñas (2000) identifies a devaluation process that accompanies this transnational transfer of care and domestic services. She argues that as care work is transferred on, it becomes increasingly devalued so that the same labour performed by a
migrant domestic worker in Toronto or Montreal, for example, costs significantly less when performed by a woman in the Philippines. Gendered and racialized notions of care, which have their roots in histories of colonialism and slavery, underlie this process of labour devaluation by constructing women from the Global South as “ideal” caregivers and domestic workers. In the case of the Philippines, Vernadette V. Gonzalez (2007) draws connections between U.S. colonial rule and contemporary transnational Filipina care migration. Orientalist stereotypes about Asian women generally, and Filipina women in particular act as a “powerful resource for capital” naturalizing and cheapening the (re)productive labour of Filipina migrants. As Gonzalez (2007) explains, “The body of the Filipina – as a trope of manageable, cheap and available ‘service’ in state and private development discourses and as a material laboring presence in the modern Filipino diaspora – operates as a crucial bridge between the colonial period and the present day in the Philippines” (p. 29). Both the Philippine state and employment agencies deploy these tropes to market Filipinas abroad as “ideal” caregivers and domestic workers. Such stereotypes are also reflected in employer preference for Filipina women as care workers in receiving countries. For instance, in the Canadian context, Bakan and Stasiulis (1995) found that employment agencies and employers expressed preference for Filipina caregivers in racialized terms and against the construction of Caribbean women as “aggressive.”

Over the last 20 years, a rich body of literature has emerged that documents and analyzes the lived experiences of migrant domestic workers under different migration regimes (Anderson, 2000; Constable, 1997; Hochschild, 2002; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Lan, 2006; Lutz, 2011; Parreñas, 2000a; Romero, 1992; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). Early global care chain research drew attention to migrant caregivers’ lack of citizenship rights, exploitative working conditions, and abuse at the hands of employers in receiving countries, typically in the Global North (Hochschild, 2002; Parreñas, 2000a). This scholarship highlighted the role played by receiving states in facilitating the exploitation of migrant domestic workers through migration policies that rendered them vulnerable to mistreatment and abuse.
Particular attention has also been paid to the formation of transnational families and the resulting phenomenon of transnational motherhood. Much of this early research emphasized the negative impacts of family separation, including the emotional and physiological effects of familial separation on mothers (Arat-Koç, 1999; Horton, 2009; Liu, 2015) and their children (Parreñas, 2005; Pratt, 2012). Despite long periods of physical separation, however, numerous studies have also documented the various ways in which migrant mothers continued to love and parent across borders by sending money and communicating regularly with their children via phone calls, text messages and other communication technologies (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Parreñas, 2014; Tungohan, 2013). This research has provided important insight into the ways in which mothers negotiated shifting gender norms in the migration process (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1997; Parreñas, 2001a). For example, Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila (1997) found that undocumented Latina migrant domestic workers in the U.S. redefined traditional notions of motherhood to include the role of economic provider. Similarly, in the Canadian context, the Filipina live-in caregivers Tungohan (2013) interviewed argued that working abroad enabled them to be better mothers by providing financially for their children. To compensate for their physical absence and resist accusations of maternal neglect, the women Tungohan interviewed used communication technology to closely monitor their children, exhibiting what she termed “transnational hypermaternalism.”

3.2 Revisiting the Global Care Chain Concept

Without discounting the foundational contributions of early GCC literature to the study of transnational care migration, several scholars have revisited the concept in recent years, drawing attention to its limitations and suggesting avenues for its expansion (Brown, 2016; Kofman & Raghuram, 2012; Manalansan, 2006; Nadasan, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2017; Yeates, 2004, 2012). Eleonore Kofman & Parvati Raghuram (2012) identified a geographical bias in GCC research, much of which focuses on South to North migration. Their research seeks to address this gap by examining patterns of care migration between countries within the Global South, including migration flows to low- and middle-income countries. As their research indicates, much of this movement is intraregional and “some countries such as Mexico and Turkey” have “become both origin and destination
countries, while others have become ‘migration poles,’ i.e. places that attract migrants” (Kofman & Raghuram, 2012, p. 5). Among the middle-income countries that have become important poles of migration are Argentina, Venezuela, Jordan, Malaysia, Thailand, the Russian Federation and Poland (Kofman & Raghuram, 2012, p. 5). Given the diversity that characterizes different sending/receiving countries in terms of their wealth, histories and patterns of migration, welfare systems, and care infrastructure, Kofman & Raghuram (2009, 2012) have called for more empirical research to examine how care regimes and welfare regimes intersect to shape the provision of care as well as the experiences of migrant care/domestic workers.

Drawing on the work of Shahra Razavi (2007), Kofman and Raghuram (2009) argue that the concept of the care diamond can better account for complexity and variation in how care is organized across four institutional sectors, namely the state, the market, the family/household, and the community/not-for-profit sector, in sending/receiving countries. As Razavi (2007) explains the care diamond refers to “the architecture through which care is provided, especially for those with intense care needs such as young children, the frail elderly, the chronically ill and people with physical and mental disabilities” (p. 21). The concept aims to make visible the institutional and spatial arrangements of care by examining who provides care, who pays for care as well as where care is provided in different welfare regimes across time and space (Razavi, 2007). Central to such an analysis is not only a focus on the complex interrelationships between each of the points in the care diamond, but also on the social relations, meanings and values that shape the provision of care in each context (Kofman & Raguhram, 2009). In this vein, Raguhram (2012) emphasizes the need for a contextual and intersectional analysis of GCCs that is attentive to local dimensions that inform the meaning and organization of care within and across countries. In the Indian context for example, Raguhram (2012) notes that in addition to gender, race and class, caste and religion are also significant factors that influence the provision and spatial arrangements of care. Informed by these observations, Raguhram (2012) argues further that attentiveness to local dimensions of care has important implications for social policy approaches that are
increasingly being articulated at the global level by institutions such as the ILO and OECD (p. 151).

In addition to exploring contextual variations in the meaning and organization of care, efforts have also been devoted to expanding GCC research to examine the experiences of a wider range of migrants who provide care in various “unskilled,” semi-skilled and skilled occupations, including nurses, social workers, and teachers, employed in different institutional contexts such as hospitals, nursing homes, and schools (George, 2005; Walton-Roberts, 2012; Yeates, 2004, 2009). In particular, the work of Yeates (2009) and Walton-Roberts (2012) expanded the concept of the GCC to account for transnational nurse migration, highlighting the distinct experiences of migrant nurses who often have different training and credentials than domestic workers and who also “tend to be employed in institutional rather than private settings” (p. 176). Recognized as skilled workers, nurses also typically (im)migrate under different conditions, receive higher pay, and in many instances are allowed to bring their family with them. And yet, as this research also indicates, there are connections and similarities between the experiences of migrant nurses and domestic workers in terms of the racialization and feminization of their labour as well as their experiences of workplace discrimination (Choy, 2003; Walton-Roberts, 2012). Furthermore, as Walton-Roberts (2012) notes citing the example of Canada’s Live-in Caregiver Program, under which trained nurses often enter the country as live-in caregivers, the two types of GCCs are interlocked (p. 176).

Research on global nursing care chains has also provided important insight into the impact of skilled care migration on the health care systems of sending countries (Lorenzo et al., 2007; Yeates, 2004). In the case of the Philippines, shortages of skilled nurses and the documented pattern of doctors retraining as nurses for the purposes of migration have had detrimental impacts on health care delivery (Lorenzo et al., 2007). Negative impacts on the quality of education have also been observed in some countries due to the internal and international migration of teachers (Voigt-Graf, 2003).
GCC literature has also been critiqued for focusing primarily on women’s roles as mothers and neglecting the broader kinship networks in which transnational migrants are embedded. For example, in many host countries, immigration policy limits the sponsorship of family members to young children, thus preventing the immigration of other relatives, including parents, grandparents, and siblings (Kofman & Raghuram, 2009; Yeates, 2004). And yet, less attention has been paid in the literature on GCCs to how migrants negotiate care arrangements for and maintain relationships with aging family members and other relatives over time. Recent research has sought to address this gap by examining relations and practices of care that exist between transnational migrants and a wider range of family members and chosen kin beyond the mother-child dyad (de Leon, 2019). Drawing attention to the ways in which “transnational care and emotional labour intensifies and attenuates over the life course” (p. 7), Conely de Leon (2018) has specifically argued for a “reconceptualization of transnational care labour that is (1) multiphased, (2) multidirectional, (3) multilocal and (3) multirelational in scope” (p. 12). Relatedly, with respect to the impact of women’s out migration on “left-behind” family members, some have also questioned the extent to which women’s migration constitutes a “care drain” at the level of the household (Raghuram, 2012; Tyldum, 2015). Given the important role that extended kin play in providing care for children in some contexts as well as parents own efforts to maintain emotional ties with and provide financially for their children, women’s migration does not necessarily result in a “care deficit.” Recognizing these efforts, however, does not negate the existence of inequalities in social reproduction to which the concept of the global care chain draws attention. Rather, as Helma Lutz and Ewa Palenga-Möllenback (2012) point out “families and countries at one end of the care chain continue to have better opportunities to reconcile their work and family life than migrant care workers and their families at the other end of the care chain” (p.32).

Another implication of focusing primarily on the experiences of migrant mothers is that global care chain research tends to conflate women’s interests with those of their families, thus obscuring other motivations underlying the decision to migrate abroad for work (Tyldum, 2015). Martin F. Manalansan IV (2006) and Rachel Brown (2016) argue
further that the concept of the GCC essentializes the experiences of migrant caregivers by naturalizing the caring biological mother and neglecting the experiences of single women, as well as male, transgender, and queer migrant caregivers who may also have different motivations for migrating that do not center around reproduction. More specifically, Manalansan (2006) points to a lack of focus on sexuality, pleasure, and sexual identity in the lives of migrant care/domestic workers, which can be important factors in migration. As a result, several scholars have begun to examine the experiences of male, queer, and transgender migrant caregivers (Brown, 2016; Kilkey, 2010; Lai, 2018; Locke, 2017; Manalansan, 2008; Scrinzi, 2010).

Men comprise a small but growing number of transnational migrant domestic workers employed in both the stereotypically feminine aspects of social reproduction such as caregiving and cleaning as well as in the traditionally masculine aspects of household labour such as gardening, household repairs and maintenance. Majella Kilkey (2010) contends that migrant men employed in both types of domestic work constitute an important, yet under-researched, dimension of the global care chain. Focusing on the U.K. context, Kilkey (2010) argues that the rise of what she terms the “migrant handyman phenomenon” (p. 139) is indicative of shifting norms and expectations around fatherhood. Greater expectations of father’s involvement in child rearing, alongside the continued expectation of paid full-time employment, has resulted in the transfer of some traditionally male household tasks from middle- and upper-class fathers to migrant men. This as well as other studies (Gallo & Scrinzi, 2016), make visible the role that men play, as both providers and recipients of care and domestic work, in the globalization and commodification of social reproduction. Relatedly, other studies explore the various ways in which migrant men employed as household cleaners and carers negotiate a loss of status associated with doing work that is not only “dirty” and “demeaning” but that is also feminized (McGregor, 2007, p. 802). Findings from these studies suggest that some migrant men emphasize the physical aspects of their jobs, such as lifting elderly clients or cleaning outdoor windows and patios (Parreñas, 2015; Scrinzi, 2010), as well as their roles as providers and breadwinners (Näre, 2010) as a means of reclaiming their masculinity.
Interestingly, research on male migrant domestic workers suggests that their employment in a feminized occupation does not necessarily upend the gendered hierarchies that structure the work (Scrinzi, 2010). Rather, migrant men who do domestic work are often discursively constructed through racialized ideologies as “effeminate,” “submissive,” and “childlike” (Näre, 2010; Parreñas, 2015). Thus, as Lena Näre (2010) concludes based on research conducted with Sri Lankan men employed as domestic workers in Italy, “the fact that for men to have access to domestic work, they need to be ‘feminized’ by employers challenges the idea that men’s employment in the sector would somehow automatically subvert the social constructions of domestic service as a ‘women’s job’” (p. 80).

Furthermore, male employment in domestic work does not appear to improve its status as precarious, low waged work (Parreñas, 2015).

Other scholars have identified the need for further research into the experiences of gay men and transgender migrant care workers not only to consider the queer practices, identities, and subjectivities that migration may enable, but to gain a “comprehensive idea of the gendered dimension of domestic work” (Manalansan, 2008, p. 2). This is not to suggest that migration necessarily enables sexual freedom/liberation, but to bring into focus how identities and subjectivities may inform and be impacted by migration.

Referencing the film Paper Dolls, which documents the lives of several gay and transgender Filipino migrant domestic workers in Israel, Manalansan (2008) suggests their experience “provides an alternative framework to situate migrant care work and gender” (p. 2). The people profiled in the film, who are employed as health aides for older Orthodox Jewish men, are also members of a drag performance group called Paper Dolls. In addition to the work they do in caring for elderly Israeli men, Manalansan argues that their drag performances constitute a “care of the self” (p. 3), thus expanding the scope of what constitutes care work and challenging the notion that “care is only something needed by the ‘needy’” (Nguyen et al., 2017, p. 200). Furthermore, Manalansan (2006, 2008) as well as others (Brown, 2016), suggest that pleasure, intimacy, desire, and self-fulfillment constitute important dimensions of migrant domestic/care worker’s lives that are equally deserving of inquiry. Manalansan (2006)
has specifically called for “new works” that “focus on gender fluidity and the role of women as sexual and gendered agentive subjects” (p. 239).

In this vein, Lai (2018) explores meanings of home in the lives of Indonesian migrant domestic workers in same-sex relationships in Hong Kong. As temporary migrants, who will one day return to Indonesia, Lai found that participants did not necessarily view home as “something to escape from” (p. 900). Even though in most instances, women had to hide their same-sex relationships from their parents and children with whom they wanted to maintain ties, some expressed an intent to live with their female partners upon returning to Indonesia, while others said they would eventually end their relationships because they wanted to get married and have children. Several of the women in Lai’s study were married and had children prior to migrating. For some of these women, migration provided a legitimate opportunity to leave their husbands, while for others migration enabled them to save money, purchase a home and provide a better standard of living for their husbands and children. However, most of the married women Lai interviewed were dissatisfied with their husbands, many of whom had extramarital affairs and, in some cases, started a new family with another woman. In several of these cases, husbands did not want to maintain contact with their wives and would also not allow their children to maintain a relationship with their mother. Still for others, migration enabled them to avoid or at least post-pone marriage for a period. Although Lai’s findings offer important insight into how sexuality and gender are (re)negotiated in the context of migration, this remains an under-explored topic in the literature on transnational care migration.

3.3 “Dirty Work” and the International Division of Reproductive Labour

Another perceived limitation of global care chain analysis is its tendency to center the emotional dimensions of the work involved in ensuring the well-being of others, while obscuring the non-relational, non-nurturant aspects of reproductive labour in which women and men of colour are often concentrated (Duffy, 2005; Parreñas, 2000, 2012,
Within the scholarship on reproductive work, the non-relational, non-nurturant tasks of care, such as cleaning and food preparation and service, are commonly referred to as “dirty work” (Anderson, 2000; Duffy, 2005; Stacey, 2011) or “the back room work of social reproduction” (Glenn, 1992; Razavi & Stabb, 2012) to reflect the widespread perception of these tasks as banal, low status and menial. By contrast, occupations that involve “intensive relational work” (Duffy, 2011, p. 9), which includes teachers, doctors, social workers, child-care workers, and nurses, are relatively more respected. Indeed, numerous studies show that racial hierarchies exist in the relational and non-relational or dirty tasks of highly feminized occupations such as nursing (Duffy, 2007; Glenn, 1992).

For this reason, Parreñas (2001a, 2012) argues that the concept of the international division of reproductive labour can better account for both the nurturant and non-nurturant or relational and non-relational aspects of reproductive labour that are increasingly performed by racialized migrant women and men in transnational contexts. Drawing on insights from feminist political economy, Parreñas (2012) distinguishes care work from reproductive labour which “entails a wider array of activities” including “purchasing household goods, preparing food, laundering clothes, dusting furniture, sweeping floors, maintaining community ties, caring for adults and children, socializing children, and providing emotional support” (p. 270). In conceptualizing the transnational re-organization of care and domestic work, Parreñas (2000) linked Evelyn Nakano Glenn’s (1992) foundational analysis of the racial division of reproductive labour in the U.S. to Saskia Sassen’s (1984, 1986) notion of “the international division of labour.” Glenn (1992) examined historical and geographical variations in the racial division of reproductive labour across the U.S. at the household and institutional level. She found that in the first half of the twentieth century, Mexican women were overrepresented in the “dirty work” of social reproduction in the Southwest, African American women in the South, and Japanese women and men in northern California and Hawaii. In each of these contexts, discriminatory laws worked to confine women from these racial-ethnic groups in domestic work, while racially and historically specific gendered ideologies constructed them naturally as suited to carry out this labour (Glenn, 1992).
More recent scholarship confirms similar patterns of occupational segregation by gender and race in the relational and non-relational (or dirty) aspects of reproductive work in both the U.S. and Canada. Mignon Duffy (2005) observed that while a racialized hierarchy continued to shape the “dirty work” of social reproduction in the U.S., the demographic composition of the workforce had shifted: Hispanic women now comprised a majority of those employed in the non-relational aspects of reproductive labour performed in both private and institutional settings, and the number of Black and Hispanic men employed in such occupations in institutional settings also grew dramatically. Importantly, Duffy’s (2005) findings confirm what Glenn noted much earlier: “that as reproductive tasks have been increasingly removed from the household and performed within publicly organized institutions, racial-ethnic women have continued to perform the “back room” work (hospital cafeteria workers, for example), while white women maintain more public and supervisory roles (nurses, for example)” (p. 317). Furthermore, race and gender hierarchies also exist within nursing among those who perform technical (“cleaner”) tasks and those who perform the “basic” or “dirtier” tasks involved in direct patient care in the U.S. context (Glenn, 1992; Wolkowitz, 2006). More specifically, work that involves intimate interaction with the body and its fluids, or what is referred to as “body work” (Van Dongen & Elema, 2001), tends to be carried out by nursing assistants and health care aids who are disproportionately women and men of colour, while nurses perform more of the technical, clerical, and institutional tasks (Glenn, 1996; Jervis, 2001; Wolkowitz, 2006). Such patterns have also been observed in Canada where racialized (im)migrant women are overrepresented as nurses’ aides and personal support workers (Das Gupta, 1996; Damasco, 2012; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005) and hotel housekeepers (Liladrie, 2010). Indeed, many former live-in caregivers in Canada, including those who were previously trained as nurses, become employed as Personal Support Workers after leaving the program (Banerjee, et al., 2017, 2018; Damasco, 2012; Tungohan et al. 2015).

While occupational segregation in the relational and non-relational aspects of reproductive labour clearly highlight its gendered and racialized organization, the
distinction between the two are not always so clear cut. For example, those employed in the LCP are typically responsible for both the relational and non-relational aspects of caring for children, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities. This may include household cleaning and preparing meals as well as attending to the physical and emotional needs of persons in their care. Furthermore, domestic/care workers themselves, including the women who participated in this study, often emphasize the care required in attending to the physical needs of their clients, arguing that labels such as “domestic helper” or “domestic worker” mask the relational and emotional dimensions of their work, which they find most rewarding.

3.4 Dirty Work and Stigma

Sociologists have applied the concept of “dirty work” to make sense of the experiences of those employed in a range of occupations that are widely regarded as disgusting, degrading, and distasteful and that result in the stigmatization of those who do the work, a process commonly referred to as taint (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Drew et al., 2007; Hughes, 1968; Kreiner et al., 2006). In addition to domestic work, other types of work typically viewed as “dirty” include construction, garbage collection, sex work, nursing, mining, and butchery. Everett C. Hughes (1958) outlines three types of taint, physical, moral, and social, that characterize “dirty work”:

Now every occupation is not one but several activities; some of them are the ‘dirty work’ of that trade. It may be dirty in one of the several ways. It may be work that is simply disgusting. It may be a symbol of degradation, something that wounds one’s dignity. Finally, it may be dirty work in that it in some way goes counter to the more heroic of our moral conceptions. (pp. 49-50)

This definition can help us to understand domestic and care work performed in private households in at least three ways. First, the tasks involved in this type of work that require contact with dirt and bodily fluids, are seen as disgusting. Second, having to perform these activities for a living in someone else’s home is often viewed as degrading, as an affront to one’s dignity, and as low-status work. This is because of the “particularly servile relationship” (Tyler, 2011, p. 1486) live-in domestic workers occupy in relation to their employers, a dynamic that is further reinforced through migration policy. Third,
some contexts, domestic workers and nurses may be subject to accusations of sexual immorality and impropriety, simply by virtue of their occupation (Chang & Groves, 2000; George, 2005; Showers, 2015; Walton-Roberts, 2012).

The theoretical concept of taint refers to the process by which the physical, social, and/or moral stigma associated with dirty work gets projected onto (Hughes, 1958) or sticks to (Tyler, 2013) the bodies of those who perform this work in such a way that they are reduced “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (Goffman, 1986, p. 11). Feminist scholars have noted how the inferior status attached to domestic work, as well as other forms of dirty work, often become synonymous with the social status of those who carry out this work (Cox, 2006). In The servant problem: Domestic employment in a global economy, Rosie Cox (2006) elaborates further on the relationship between social status, domestic work, and dirt:

- Despite the importance of the work to our health and general environment, work with sewage, collecting rubbish or cleaning is avoided and the people who do this work are looked down upon, assumed to be dirty themselves. The status of the worker becomes inseparable from the status of the work, and it is impossible to improve dramatically the standing of either without challenging deep-seated feelings about dirt. (p. 7)

Societal perceptions of dirt and the reactions of disgust to which they give rise are socially constructed and carry symbolic meaning. As Tyler (2013) notes, the meaning ascribed to objects or persons deemed dirty can tell us much more about the values of a given society or culture than it does about the inherent qualities of said individuals or objects. And yet, the (in)ability to distance oneself from dirt is often read as an indication of a person’s moral character, social worth, and status.

In Doing the Dirty Work: The Global Politics of Domestic Labour, Bridget Anderson (2000) argues that physical activities involving contact with dirt also play an important role in reproducing the social relations that shape reproductive work and that (re)produce social status. As she explains, domestic work is “bound up in the reproduction of a lifestyle and, crucially of status. Nobody has to have stripped pine floorboards, hand-
wash only silk shirts, ornaments that gather dust” (p. 14). Thus, while domestic work does include tasks necessary to meet the basic survival needs of people and workers, it also plays a role in reproducing “class subjects” (Arat-Koç, 2006b, p. 90).

One’s proximity to dirt then is deeply connected to the construction not only of class, but also gender and race. Maintaining distance from objects deemed dirty is about maintaining the boundaries of the self, including our identities or understandings of ourselves as classed, raced, and gendered subjects, by expelling that which threatens to stigmatize us or to harm our sense of self, dignity, and status (Tyler, 2013). Not having to perform domestic work (or other forms of dirty work), is often a marker of gender, race and/or class privilege. Indeed, as anti-racist feminist scholars have long pointed out, the historical ability of middle- and upper-class white women to employ (or enslave) domestic servants to carry out the most physically onerous aspects of domestic work, enabled them to reconcile the contradictions inherent in the feminine ideals of “virtue” and “domesticity” (Glenn, 1992; Palmer, 1989). Similarly, more recent scholarship further highlights how the employment of migrant men as domestic workers in Europe “also reproduce[s] the privilege of white middle-class men, whose detachment from the ‘dirty work’ is thus confirmed” (Scrinzi, 2010, p. 59).

Equally important to note, however, is that notions of dirt can also work to exclude women from certain (more privileged) “dirty” occupations. Indeed, certain types of dirty work are valued much differently depending on whether they are masculinized or feminized jobs. In the energy sector, for example, notions of physical dirt, danger, as well as images of the cowboy have historically kept women out. It is precisely the danger, risk, unpredictability, and harsh natural environment involved in oil sector work and energy production, that constitutes it as men’s work to the exclusion of women (Miller 2002, 2004). Comparatively, in the case of care work, notions of bodily (Van Dongen & Elema, 2001) and emotional dirt (Thomas, 2014) keep (some) men out. As Isaksen (2002) explains, elder care “appears to be an area that is so heavily burdened with low status combinations and feminine connotations that it presents itself as a risk area where masculine norms of dignity are challenged on the individual as well as the social and
cultural level” (p. 144). Thus, intimate care (particularly when it is performed in the home) involving contact with the body and its waste, challenges traditional notions of masculinity. In contrast, work that involves contact with physical dirt and that is carried out in public space does not challenge, and in fact may coincide with or reinforce hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, some male dominated types of dirty work such as construction, mining, and oil sector work are highly paid, in part, because they are dirty and dangerous.

Building on the work of Anderson and Cox, Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2014) invokes the concept of affect to analyze “the cultural predication of feelings associated with and infused in domestic work” (p. 1). Based on interviews conducted with undocumented Latin American migrant domestic workers in Austria, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom, she examines how energies, feelings, and emotions towards domestic work/ers are transmitted within private households, focusing specifically on how they impact upon those who carry out this work. To illustrate this point, Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2014) quoted one woman’s experience at length. With respect to her work Carmen said:

The worst for me, we could say, are the toilets! So, you, you see people who are really spick and span, but you can forget it. Really! So I wear gloves everywhere. You know rubber gloves?! […] Because I don’t know?! It could be they are people who may be super clean to the outside world! But you, you know the people in the kitchen and the toilets! So, Really! Brushes are available everywhere! Thank God we drink only tea now! [Carmen smiles] Brushes, these toilet brushes are available everywhere! At least, what can you do? What you can do is make it a little bit cleaner. But it is sprayed all over! Pee all over! The men cannot pee properly at all. (p. 4)

Gutiérrez-Rodríguez argues that such carelessness conveys a message of contempt, whether intended or not, which can result in feelings of worthlessness and invisibility.

Other qualitative inquiries into the interpersonal relations between domestic workers and their employers confirm similar experiences of invisibility, disrespect, and dehumanization (Anderson, 2000; Rollins, 1985; Silvera, 1989; Stiell & England, 1997).
For instance, Felicity, a Jamaican woman who was employed as a live-in domestic worker in Canada in the 1980s, explained how gender, race and class intersected to shape her employer’s treatment of her:

Sometimes when they treat you badly, it’s because you’re black, and they really just don’t have any respect for you as a human being, no matter how educated, well-spoken and no matter how good you are with kids. But it’s also because they pay you to be in their house that makes it even worse, you become nothing in their eyes. I can’t tell you why, there are so many reasons, but they happen together, we come as one package … They just abuse, abuse, abuse you. It doesn’t matter how intelligent you may appear to be they look at you as a black helper … Colour doesn’t have any respect for class. They will still see you as a helper no matter what. (Stiell & England, 1997, p. 352)

Felicity’s account of her experience illustrates how the devalued status of domestic work and the servile relationship between domestic workers and their employers gets read onto the bodies of the people who carry out this work in such a way that they become invisible, or rather “become nothing” in the eyes of their employers.

Women employed as live-in caregivers in Canada commonly report experiencing stigmatization from community members and prospective employers because of their occupational status (Bannerji et al., 2017; Eric, 2012; Henry, 1968; Stiell & England, 1997). Less well known, however, is what implication this has for how they make meaning and bring value to the work that they do, in the face of such deep disregard. The social and cultural meanings (attitudes, feelings, and emotions) attached to domestic work and the potential for such work to taint or stigmatize those who carry it out, raises important questions about the ways in which migrant live-in caregivers make sense of their work and come to understand themselves in relation to the work that they do.
3.5 Care Work, Identity and Meaning

In recent years, a growing body of scholarship has emerged that examines the lived experiences of those who perform work that is physically, morally, and/or socially tainted, paying particular attention to how they view their work, as well as the coping strategies workers develop to manage taint in “dirty” occupations such as mining (Van Vuuren et al., 2012), butchery (Simpson et al., 2014), firefighting (Tracy & Scott, 2006), sex work (Tyler, 2011), and nursing (Jervis, 2001; Mills & Schejbal, 2007; Stacey, 2005; Thomas, 2014). For instance, Simpson et al. (2014) examined how workers employed in the male-dominated butcher trade made sense of and brought value to the dirty, physical work they performed through traditional notions of masculinity. The working-class men they interviewed emphasized the physical strength involved in their job and their status as the breadwinner, to frame their work in a positive light (Simpson et al., 2014).

Within this body of research on the relationship between dirty work, identity and meaning, some attention has been paid to how people engaged in reproductive labour ascribe meaning to their work. For example, Clare L. Stacey (2005) examined meaning making among home health care workers employed in the U.S. Of the interviews she conducted, Stacey noted that home health care aides had “a conflicted often, contradictory relationship to their work” (p. 832). While participants identified several obstacles that “compromised their ability to do a good job or to experience their work as meaningful,” (p. 832) including over work, the personal satisfaction that came from caring for another person brought a sense of dignity to the job. Stacey’s findings provide insight into the kinds of negotiations care workers engage in to create meaning from and find dignity in their work.

Other research sheds light on the coping strategies (im)migrant nurses and medical workers use to manage the stigma associated with care work through “professional distancing” (Showers, 2015). For instance, Showers (2015) found that West African women employed as nurses in the U.S. coped with racial hierarchies in the profession as well as the stigma associated with care work by avoiding certain specialties where other West Africans were concentrated in large numbers and by distancing themselves from the
less valued aspects of the work, particularly that performed by nurses’ aides in nursing homes. Similar strategies have been observed in other contexts including Bangladesh, where Hadley et al. (2007) found that nurses employed in government hospitals attempted to minimize the stigma associated with their job by avoiding tasks widely regarded as “dirty.” Dirty work included “cleaning soiled beds, feces and urine, shaving and cleaning patients and giving mouth care” as well as “catheterization, performing stomach washouts, administering nasal suction or aspiration, cleaning drainage waste, and dressing infected or gangrenous wounds” (p. 1171). In addition, “Touching ‘dirty’ patients also came under the nurses’ classification of ‘dirty work’. Dirty was associated with being from a lower class rather than in an unhygienic state” (p. 1171). Rather than performing these tasks themselves or interacting with people deemed “dirty,” nurses offloaded these responsibilities to hospital support workers and patients’ relatives.

Likewise, in her research with Filipino medical workers employed in Singapore, Amrith (2010) found that participants negotiated the stigma associated with care work by positioning themselves as professionals and distancing themselves from other Filipina migrants employed as domestic workers. The medical workers Amrith interviewed expressed contradictory notions of care as both a source of national pride and shame. Although participants attempted to distance themselves from particular types of feminized labour that have become closely associated with the Philippine nation in recent years, they also expressed an ethic of care as a point of national pride.

Research that has focused on questions of identity and meaning making with respect to migrant caregivers in Canada has centered around three central issues: first, how motherhood as identity and practice is renegotiated in transnational contexts (Tungohan, 2013); second, downward social mobility, deskilling, and de-professionalization experienced by women who enter Canada through the LCP as well as previous versions of the policy (Henry, 1968; Bannerji et al., 2017); and third, more recent research has begun to focus on racial and cultural identity in the context of social and economic integration (Bonifacio, 2013). While the significance of these studies cannot be understated, they provide limited insight into how women who labour under this programme assign meaning and value to care/domestic work.
This dissertation seeks to contribute to this literature by examining how migrant women employed as live-in caregivers in Canada make sense of their work in light of the unique set of constraints that stem from their status as temporary migrants and from the particular way in which their work is regulated and organized through the LCP.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of the existing literature on transnational care migration, dirty work, meaning making, and identity. Within this scholarship, recent revisions of the concept of the global care chain (GCC) have drawn attention to its utility as well as its limitations for understanding the globalization of care and domestic work. Utilizing the concept of “dirty work” as it has been theorized in feminist scholarship on the international division of reproductive labour, I argue that care and domestic work constitute a racialized and gendered form of “dirty work,” which has come to be closely associated with Filipina women and the Philippine nation. The potential for dirty work to stigmatize those who perform it as well as the lack of attention paid to contextual meanings of care in existing GCC literature, raises important questions about how care/domestic workers derive meaning from this work. It is precisely these questions of meaning making in the context of dirty work that this dissertation aims to explore.
Chapter 4

4 Theory and Methodology

In this chapter, I outline the theoretical and methodological approaches that informed this study. First, I provide an overview of feminist standpoint epistemology. Drawing on key insights from this theoretical approach, I contend that migrant care workers constitute a “knowing community,” linked by their experiences as workers within an international division of reproductive labour structured by gender, race, and class hierarchies. Their social location as well as their connection to a transnational network of solidarity and support among migrant care workers, has implications for how they make sense of and ascribe meaning to their experiences. Next, I outline the methodological approach that informed this study, which employs narrative analysis to examine the stories live-in caregivers tell about their lives, including the discursive practices they engage to assign meaning to their experiences and their work. A total of three focus group interviews were conducted with eleven live-in caregivers in Toronto. Using NVivo software to code and analyze the data, four major themes were identified from the group discussions including: stigma and exploitation, care as relational, transnational motherhood, and sacrifice and spiritual faith.

4.1 Theoretical Framework: Feminist Standpoint Theory

On 1 December 2015, the Toronto Star published a story titled “Trudeau draws flak after his two nannies being put on public payroll” (Coyle, 2015). The article refers to a public debate that erupted on Twitter and Facebook about whether taxpayers should be responsible for covering the Prime Minister’s childcare expenses. Referred to by some as a “scandal,” Trudeau was accused of being a hypocrite for criticizing former Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s childcare benefit for advantaging wealthy families, while using taxpayer dollars to pay for the care of his own children.4 Others were quick to

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4 It was also later reported that Trudeau hired a caregiver through the LCP prior to becoming Prime Minister.
defend the Prime Minister arguing that taxpayers should be responsible for his family’s childcare expenses and that universal childcare should be available to all Canadians. Still others questioned why taxpayers should foot the bill when Trudeau’s wife, Sophie, could/should be taking care of their children.

That this issue triggered such fervent debate is very revealing of societal perceptions of care and domestic work, including deeply entrenched gender norms that frame childcare as women’s “natural” responsibility and as work that should be done for free. Comparing the salaries of different employees at 24 Sussex Drive provides further insight into the lack of value assigned to domestic and care work. As the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives pointed out at the time, Harper employed a personal chef with a salary of $60,000, a fact which drew no public attention or scrutiny (Ballantyne Carr, 2015). By comparison, the two women employed to care for the PM’s children, Marian Puego and Marilou Trayvilla, were reportedly being paid “between $15-$20 an hour during the day and $11-$13 during night shifts” (Levinson King, 2016). Largely absent from the public debate was any discussion of the conditions and low pay that characterize care/domestic work in Canada, particularly for migrant women employed under the Live-in/Caregiver Program.

I begin with this story because it provides insight into prevailing societal perceptions of care and domestic work and raises several important questions that go to the heart of the theoretical perspective that informs this study, which is feminist standpoint theory. Firstly, why is care and domestic work devalued? How has this work come to be seen as work that should be done for free or for low pay? Secondly, who does care and domestic work and what might they have to tell us about how we need to think about social reproduction? If we start, as standpoint feminism insists that we do, from the experiences of migrant care workers, what insights might they provide into this issue? A standpoint approach would suggest that examining this issue from the perspective of migrant care/domestic workers themselves, located as they are at the intersections of production and reproduction in a gendered and racialized global political economy, might provide
different insights than those articulated in the public debate over Trudeau’s childcare expenses.

Standpoint feminism is informed by key insights from Marxist theory which posits that one’s social location within a capitalist society is epistemically significant. According to Marx, people gain knowledge through their active engagement in the world to meet their own needs (through labour) under particular modes of production. In this way, knowledge-seeking is always influenced by the interests and values of particular social groups in specific historical contexts. As Pohlhaus (2002) explains, “Knowledge on this account is always interested; I come to know the world for a reason (e.g. to grow better crops, to cure myself of illness etc.)” (p. 284). Marx highlighted the different ways in which people were situated in society in terms of class under the capitalist mode of production, suggesting that class divisions provided capitalists and members of the working class with different standpoints from which to view the world. For example, while ruling elites and those who owned the means of production might have a more positive view of capitalism as a source of freedom and material wealth, the working class might be more inclined to view capitalism as a coercive and violent economic system (Jaggar, 2004). Thus, for Marx, members of the working class have a more objective view of the world compared to the ruling class who have a vested interest in advancing a view of human nature and social reality that obscures the exploitation and inequality inherent in capitalism (and reinforces the status quo).

In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist standpoint theorists, including Hartsock (1983) and Smith (1974, 1987) among others (Collins, 1986; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1986), drew on these insights to suggest that women occupied a particular social location that could provide important knowledge about the social world, including the social relations in which their lives were embedded. Starting from the premise that what people do can enable and limit what they know, Harding (1995) argued that a person’s social position within hierarchically organized societies, in terms of gender, including the roles, responsibilities, and expectations this confers on people, has implications for what one knows (p. 341). From this perspective, women’s experiences, including what women do,
or the types of activities in which they were typically engaged in their everyday lives, provided a starting point for analyzing the social relations of production and reproduction (Smith, 1987).

Central to these accounts was an analysis of a sexual division of labour that structured women’s and men’s lives differently, making women primarily responsible for care and domestic work as well as subsistence production. In her foundational book, the *Everyday World as Problematic*, Dorothy Smith (1987) distinguished care and domestic work from other forms of labour by pointing to the bodily and relational nature of the work as well as its immersion in the concrete day to day necessities of human life. She argued further that it was largely women’s unpaid reproductive labour that enabled (some) men to transcend these aspects of daily life and engage in more “abstracted” forms of labour. Significantly, as was discussed in the previous chapter, women of colour in the U.S. and Canada have long mediated some of the most physically onerous or “dirty” aspects of this work for race and class privileged women. Over the past thirty years, the changes wrought by neoliberal globalization have meant that migrant women of colour increasingly perform this work transnationally in wealthy and middle-income countries. Feminist standpoint theory asks what implications these different experiences might have for what people know and how they perceive the world. More specifically, feminist standpoint theory is concerned with the critical insights that might emerge from the conflicts or contradictions between women’s lived experiences and dominant ways of interpreting and understanding the world. For example, women’s experiences of engaging in care and domestic work, of knowing the amount of time and energy involved in as well as the skills necessary to do this work, may conflict with dominant conceptions of these activities as trivial, banal, and inessential.

Building on the work of Smith and others, Collins (1986) argued that the marginal position Black women occupied within academia, and in society more broadly, provided a resource for developing “distinctive analyses of race, class and gender” (p. S15). To illustrate the implication one’s social location as an “outsider within” can have for
knowledge production Collins (1986) drew attention to the experiences of Black female
domestic workers in the U.S. context:

The memoirs of affluent whites often mention their love for their black ‘mothers,’
while accounts of Black domestic workers stress the sense of self-affirmation they
experienced at seeing white power demystified – of knowing that it was not the
intellect, talent, or humanity of their employers that supported their superior status,
but largely just the advantages of racism. But on another level, these same Black
women knew they could never belong to their white ‘families.’ In spite of their
involvement, they remained ‘outsiders.’ (p. S14)

Thus, the contradictory social location Black women employed as domestic workers
occupy, as both insiders and outsiders to the (white) world(s) inhabited by their
employers, offer particular insights that may not be apparent to those who occupy more
privileged social locations. For Collins, Black women’s location as outsiders within
enables them to identify contradictions in the ideologies that legitimate their oppression
and craft self-definitions that affirm their humanity.

The assertion that members of oppressed groups, by virtue of their social location, have a
more impartial view of nature and social reality or what is commonly referred to as
“epistemic advantage” has been the subject of intense criticism and debate. In her
engagement with standpoint theory, Bannerji (1995) acknowledges that the social
location of marginalized groups and individuals does not necessarily confer authority on
or critical consciousness of oppression. Rather, as she asserts, “Victims and subjects of
capital do not automatically become socialists. Misery does not automatically produce
communism and desire for change born of suffering does not spontaneously know ‘what
is to be done?’ to end oppression” (p. 35). This is because people’s experiences and the
meaning(s) derived from them are mediated by historically available discourses or ways
of making sense of and understanding experience (Comack, 1999). Indeed, as Jaggar
(2004) acknowledges, precisely because dominant ways of knowing are so prevalent it is
likely that “women’s perceptions of reality are distorted both by male-dominant ideology
and by the male-dominated structure of everyday life” (p. 57).
In response to these critiques, a number of theorists have attempted to clarify what is meant by a standpoint. For instance, Jaggar (2008) maintains that “Standpoint theory does not claim that individual members of subordinated groups have automatic knowledge of the structure of social reality; it simply claims that occupying a certain social location may facilitate or block the achievement of certain insights” (p. 306). Thus, as Jaggar and others (Harding, 1995; Narayan, 2004) have rightly noted, there is a difference between recognizing that one’s social location or experience of oppression can enable critical insights and assuming that such insights are automatic. Others, including Hartsock (1983) and Harding (1995) distinguish standpoint from social location, arguing that a feminist standpoint is an achievement born out of a struggle to develop critical consciousness of an oppressive social order.

Pohlhaus (2002) extends this idea further, accentuating that a standpoint results not simply from an individual struggle against an oppressive social order. Rather, as she reminds us, knowledge is “always formed within the relations of a particular community” (p. 292). Thus, individuals always struggle to know and understand the world from within communities. With this in mind, I argue that migrant Filipina domestic/care workers constitute a knowing or “intersubjective community” (Pohlhaus, 2002) connected by their experiences of “partial citizenship” (Parreñas, 2001b) in the countries to which they migrate. In response to their experiences of dislocation and exploitation, migrant care workers create networks of support and solidarity linked together by information and communication technologies as well as non-profit and community organizations that provide spaces for them to share their stories, offer each other support, advocate for their rights, organize resistance, and express themselves creatively. As Parreñas (2001b) points out, “Filipina domestic workers are only able to conceive of a global community because of the similar impacts of global processes on their lives. These similar experiences function as the premise of their community from which they carve a symbolic transnational ethnic identity as Filipino diasporic subjects” (p. 1143). Migrant care workers’ connection to what Parreñas (2001b) refers to as an “imagined global community,” constitutes a site of struggle from which they seek to understand and make sense of their experiences. Ethel Tungohan (2017) documents the important role these
networks and organizations play not only in providing spaces for migrant women to socialize and share their experiences but also to engage in consciousness raising, activism, and public education aimed at challenging stereotypes about migrant domestic work/ers. I argue that the transnational communities of support migrant care workers create for themselves enable them to develop self-definitions that affirm their humanity as well as understandings of care and domestic work that assign value to this work.

4.2 Methodology: Narrative Inquiry

Informed by feminist standpoint epistemology, my methodological approach employs narrative inquiry to examine the stories migrant domestic workers tell about their lives, including the discursive practices they engage to assign meaning to their experiences. Narrative inquiry is the study of human experience as told through stories (Clandinin, 2006). Narrative methodology is concerned with the stories people tell, to themselves and to others, in making sense of their experiences and in formulating their own self-understanding. Such stories are valued within narrative research as rich sources of knowledge about the social world, including “the multiple intersections between gender, history, identity and social location” (Pitre, et al., 2013, p. 130). As Clandinin (2006) explains “human beings both live and tell stories about their living. These lived and told stories and talk about those stories are ways we create meaning in our lives as well as ways we enlist each other’s help in building our lives and communities” (p. 44). Thus, the stories people tell and retell about their experiences are crucial to how meaning is made from experience.

Roof defines narrative as “a set of ordering presumptions by which we make sense of perceptions, events, cause/effect relations (and even the idea that sense can be produced by a notion of cause/effect), and life, narrative permeates and orders any representation we make to ourselves or to others” (Quoted in Oikkonen, 2013, p. 298). Thus, narrative inquiry is not only concerned with the stories people tell about their experiences, but also the social and cultural context(s) that shape experience, including the underlying logic(s) that frame how they make sense of their lived experiences and the world (Dielmann, 2009).
Research that employs narrative methods to examine reproductive work has most commonly focused on the nursing profession particularly as a means of emphasizing the importance of narrative knowing in nursing practice (Green, 2013; Pitre et al., 2013; Sandelowsji, 1994). While important, this research largely focuses on patient narratives as a source of knowledge about health and wellness rather than on the experiences of nurses engaged in a type of reproductive work. For instance, Sandelowsji (2004) found that nurses emphasized patient narratives in aiding them to diagnose and treat diseases/illnesses holistically. Privileging this knowledge was important in challenging dominant discourses that inform approaches to health care, and which dehumanize patients and depersonalize the delivery of care. While much can be gained from the practical application of narrative inquiry in the context of these studies, they provide little insight into how meaning is made about reproductive work.

Building on the insights provided by narrative research in the disciplines of sociology (Green, 2013; Pitre et al. 2013; Riessman, 1987, 2000; Sandelowsji, 1994; Sosulski et al., 2010), education (Clandinin & Connely, 2000), and psychology (Andrews et al., 2015), the present study extends this methodological approach to examine meaning making about reproductive work in the lives of migrant care workers. The study of meaning making through narrative, as it relates to workers in particular, includes an examination of “the categories through which workers understand, experience, and negotiate the world around them, as well as how they solve work-related and other challenges” (Daniel et al., 2011, p. 297). With respect to this study, this includes an exploration of the concepts and discursive strategies migrant domestic workers engage to negotiate stigma and ascribe meaning to their work.

Cultural sociologists investigate sense making at multiple levels, including the institutional, individual, and cultural. One analytical tool they use in seeking to understand “the experiences and symbolic goods […] workers draw on to make sense of their productive activities” (Daniel et al., 2011, p. 302) is the concept of cultural repertoire. As Daniel, Arzoglou, & Lamont (2011) explain:
cultural sociologists examine the cultural repertoires that may sustain their [worker’s] sense of self-worth and ability to respond to new challenges. Such repertories - for example, religious that valorize morality over socioeconomic success or facilitate mobilization and involvement in politics – may buttress workers’ empowerment and sense of social and cultural membership. (p. 306)

For instance, in *Sisters of the Yam*, bell hooks (2005) discusses the collective wisdom that she remembers brought, meaning, dignity, and respect to the work of many African-Americans in the U.S. context where anti-Black racism severely limited their employment opportunities. In the face of structural barriers, she recalls being taught that the integrity with which a job was done was more important than the type of work one was doing. Such affirmation was critical in bringing value and meaning to work that was otherwise regarded as “low status.”

The work of Black Feminist scholar, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) offers similar insight into the kinds of self-valuation strategies Black women have historically employed to reframe dominant understandings of their work. In *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, Collins quotes May Madison, “a participant in John Gwaltney’s study of inner city African-Americans” (p. 47) to demonstrate how experiences of racism can shape a person’s perspective on the relationship between work and identity:

One very important difference between white people and black people is that white people think you *are* your work…. Now, a black person has more sense than that because he knows that what I am doing doesn’t have anything to do with what I want to do or what I do when I am doing for myself. Now, black people think that my work is just what I have to do to get what I want. (Gwaltney quoted in Collins, 1990, pp. 47-48)

Madison’s understanding that work does not determine self-worth demonstrates the implications that one’s standpoint can have for the way work is defined and understood. Furthermore, the division she draws between work and the self is indicative of the kinds of identity strategies marginalized and oppressed people engage to preserve a positive sense of self, despite/in spite of the ways in which their work is denigrated. It is precisely
the various strategies that migrant care workers draw on to make meaning about reproductive work that is the focus of this study.

Through an analysis of focus group interviews, this dissertation examines the narratives live-in caregivers construct to make sense of their experiences as well as the discursive strategies they employ to assign dignity to the work they perform under the LCP. More specifically, as outlined in chapter one, this study sought to explore the following research questions:

1) How do the many women employed in the LCP find value in and/or create meaning from the work that they do?
2) How does domestic/care work, as an aspect of social reproduction, shape or re-frame women’s identity or sense of self-worth?
3) What new knowledges or points of view do women develop in order to resist and challenge the LCP (including the way it devalues domestic and care work) or find ways to use the opportunities that it may provide for them?
4) What implications (emotional and psychological) do the social meanings attached to domestic/care work have for the women who do this work?

4.3 Method: Focus Group Interviews

Data for this study was collected using focus group interviews. Focus group interviews were chosen as the best method for addressing questions of meaning and identity among migrant domestic workers because they privilege the vocabularies, concepts, and concerns of research participants (Wilkinson, 1998) and enable a more dynamic conversation between participants and the interviewer than is possible in the traditional one-to-one interview. As Patricia Leavy (2007) explains, “Focus group interviews produce what is known as a happening. A happening is a conversation that, while prearranged and ‘focused’ by the researcher, remains a dynamic narrative process. Within this context, group members communicate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences on their own terms” (p. 173). Importantly, the interaction produced by the group dynamic allows participants “to exchange, verify, and confirm their experiences” (Madriz, 1998, p. 116) with others. In this way, focus groups can enable participants to identify connections
between their own and others’ everyday experiences. Conversely, differences in opinion or experience can allow for rich discussions and elaborations that further complicate understandings of the lived experiences of migrant care workers.

From a feminist epistemological standpoint, which regards all knowledge as socially situated and informed by the values and interests of particular groups, focus groups can offer a window into how meaning is created and negotiated in a social context. As Wilkinson (1998) notes, focus groups have “the potential to inform us about the co-construction of realities between people, the dynamic negotiation of meaning in context” (p. 112). In a group interview, participants can discuss and negotiate their own interpretations of their experiences with others, thus offering the possibility for shared meanings to emerge. This interaction itself becomes an important part of the data that provides insight into the process through which meaning is created from experience through the sharing of stories with others.

The interactive nature of focus groups also gives participants more opportunity to shape the direction of the discussion, as was evidenced numerous times during the interviews conducted for this study. Participants would frequently interject to ask each other follow up questions, qualify other’s responses, confirm similar experiences, and highlight exceptional cases. They also offered advice and support to those dealing with difficult situations, particularly involving the challenges associated with family separation and reunification. The potential for focus groups to offer a more comfortable environment for participants to share their experiences is one reason why this method is often used in studies involving marginalized populations who may have concerns about participating in research for various reasons including safety and distrust (Leavy, 2007; Wilkinson, 1998). This was certainly the case for the women who participated in this study, some of whom had not yet received permanent residence status in Canada. This reality was reflected in study participants’ concerns about confidentiality and their request to conduct the remaining interviews in a focus group format.
My original plan of study was to couple focus group discussions with follow up one-on-one interviews. However, following the first focus group, participants expressed a preference for conducting the follow up interviews as a group as well. It was clear that they felt more comfortable responding to the questions in what they found to be a supportive group context, with people whom they already had friendships and connections. In keeping with the principles of feminist research, including a commitment to reflexivity, which involves opening up the researcher’s decisions to questioning and sharing authority with research participants, I felt that changing the design of the study to fit their preference was appropriate. Ultimately, this decision led to a more detailed and rich account of participants’ experiences than would have been possible in a one-on-one interview.

As indicated in the previous section, the central questions of this study focused on how migrant care/domestic workers make meaning about this work, considering how it is socially and economically devalued. Without making assumptions about the kinds of meaning people might ascribe to this work, discussion questions for the initial focus group interview were broad and open ended. They were designed to get a sense of the various ways in which participants viewed care/domestic work. For example, participants were asked how they would describe their job as well as what they felt were the most rewarding and difficult aspects of the work. As the findings in chapter five indicate, participants tended to emphasize the relational aspects of caregiving as the most rewarding and the physical aspects of the work as the most difficult. Additionally, in their discussion of the difficult aspects of caregiving, participants described their negative experiences with employers. In subsequent group interviews, questions were designed to further probe ideas and concepts raised by study participants in the initial interview. For example, when discussing how they viewed care/domestic work, many participants described it as a sacrifice. As a result, in one of the follow up interviews, I asked participants how they thought about sacrifice. Importantly, when discussing sacrifice, participants emphasized their relationships with their children more so than those with their partners or extended family. Consequently, the findings of this study are closely informed by participant’s experiences of transnational motherhood.
4.4 Participant Recruitment and Data Collection

Participants were recruited using a snowball sampling method. I contacted several organizations in Toronto that provide services to migrant caregivers to ask if they would circulate a letter of information about the study in their networks. The director of one such organization, who I was introduced to by a colleague, allowed me to make a presentation in their facility and hand out a letter of information about the study. Eleven women expressed interest and agreed to participate in the study. In deciding where and when to schedule the focus group interviews, everyone agreed that the most convenient place to meet was at the local organization where they attended English language and computer classes. With permission from the director of the organization, each focus group interview took place in their facility.

A total of three focus group interviews were conducted between December 2016 and January 2017 in Toronto and they ranged in length between 60 and 90 minutes. The first focus group took place on 17 December 2016 and was attended by eleven women. The second, follow-up group interview was held on 31 December 2016 and was attended by seven of the original eleven participants. The third and final follow up group interview took place on 18 November 2017 and was attended by four of the original eleven participants.

All participants identified their country of origin as the Philippines, and they ranged in age from 26 to 65. All but three respondents (8 out of 11) had children, and most were employed in the LCP between 2011 and 2016. A total of four participants were employed in the LCP when the interviews were conducted, two had open work permits (and were awaiting the processing of their applications for permanent residence), two had obtained permanent residence and three were Canadian citizens. Most participants had some post-secondary education and were previously employed in other occupations in the Philippines, as midwives, nurses, teachers, and social workers. Three participants did not disclose their education level and four did not disclose their employment status prior to
migration. However, every participant except for one worked in other countries doing care and domestic work prior to entering the LCP (See Table 1 below).

**Table 1: Participant Demographic Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Employment status prior to migration</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Status at Time of Interview</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Previous Destination Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1 Zel</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Open permit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2 Leo</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Canadian citizen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3 Elsa</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Open permit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4 Mae</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Midwife</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Employed in the LCP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dubai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5 May</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Employed in the LCP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6 Raina</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Domestic worker</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Canadian citizen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7 Lydia</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Canadian citizen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8 Mary</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Not disclosed</td>
<td>Not disclosed</td>
<td>Employed in the LCP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9 Melissa</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Not disclosed</td>
<td>Not disclosed</td>
<td>Permanent resident</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10 Simone</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Not disclosed</td>
<td>Not disclosed</td>
<td>Employed in the LCP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Hong Kong Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11 Zean</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Not disclosed</td>
<td>Permanent resident</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first group interview was an activity-based focus group. Each interview question was written on a board for everyone to see and participants were provided with large post-it notes and markers with which to write their responses. Once everyone had time to write their responses, the post-it notes were pasted on the board and each person was given an opportunity to identify and elaborate on their answers. The initial focus group discussion was guided by broad questions (e.g. How would you describe the work that you do? What are the most rewarding aspects of your job? What are the most unpleasant aspects of the job?) (See Appendix for full interview guide). Both subsequent focus groups were
guided by follow-up questions touching on topic areas identified by the researcher as requiring further discussion (See follow-up interview guide in Appendix).

### 4.5 Consent, Confidentiality and Compensation

Informed, written consent was obtained from every participant prior to each focus group interview (See Appendix for Consent Form). The consent form included an explanation of the study and a statement informing participants that the interview was voluntary, confidential, and could be stopped at any time. The written consent form also informed participants of their right to refuse to respond to any questions they were not comfortable answering. Before starting each interview, I reviewed each aspect of the consent form with participants.

Again, with written consent from all study participants, each focus group interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to capture the exact wording, phrasing, language, and tone used by participants. In order to ensure confidentiality, study participants selected or were assigned a pseudonym and any significant identifying markers in their narratives (e.g. children’s names) were changed or omitted. Participants were provided with a copy of their transcribed interviews via email to ensure that the details were correct, clarify their responses, and identify any information they would like obscured or excluded. As a sign of gratitude and respect, participants were given an honorarium of $25 as well as bus tokens to cover the cost of transportation to and from each of the interviews.

### 4.6 Positionality and Reflexivity

In keeping with the shared principles of feminist standpoint theory and narrative inquiry, my approach to social research is informed by a critique of power relations inherent in the research process, and in particular between the researcher and the subjects of research. Feminist approaches to social research are critical of research paradigms that regard scientific knowledge as objective and impartial. Rather, as standpoint feminism indicates, research is always interested and is shaped by the goals, perspectives, and
social locations of those doing research. Being attentive to the power dynamics embedded in the research process requires that the researcher engage in a reflexive self-examination of how their/her/his own social location informs every step of the research process from formulating the research question and study design to the analysis and interpretation of the data. As Hesse-Biber (2007) explains “reflexivity is the process through which a researcher recognizes, examines, and understands how his or her own social background and assumptions can intervene in the research process” (p. 129).

As a reflexive method, narrative inquiry shares many of the principles of feminist standpoint theory and methodology. As Clandinin (2013) explains, “Because narrative inquiry is an ongoing reflexive and reflective methodology, narrative inquirers need to inquire continually into their experiences before, during, and after each inquiry” (pp. 82-83). This includes an opening up of the choices a researcher makes, in formulating research questions, collecting and interpreting data, to critical examination and questioning. One way that I practiced reflexivity was by journaling before, during, and after each interview. I took note of my general impression of the interviews as well as other important details not captured by audio recording. I also noted tensions that arose in the context of conducting this work. Clandinin and Connolly (2000) argue that these reflexive notes are integral to the research process and that the information contained in them constitutes an important source of data.

In my own reflexive inquiry process, I grappled with several important questions such as: What motivations did I have for undertaking this research? How will this research benefit study participants? How might my own social location and personal experiences shape the kinds of information I view as significant to include (or leave out) in the recording of field notes or in interpreting the data? When I initially gave a presentation at the community organization on the call for participants, these were also questions people asked of me. I was asked about how I came to this research topic. In response, I explained that my interest in the experiences of migrant domestic workers in Canada stemmed, in part, from my own experience growing up as the daughter of a single mother who worked as a housekeeper in a hotel, a machine operator in a factory, and later as a live-out
domestic worker in Toronto. Watching my mother engage in this backbreaking work for wages insufficient to support her family, illuminated for me the unjust and contradictory ways in which certain types of work, particularly those gendered as feminine, are (de)valued within society. Growing up, I also witnessed the ways in which my mother was mistreated by some of her employers while working as a “nanny.” Later, when I was completing undergraduate studies, I learned about the West Indian Domestic Scheme and the Live-in Caregiver Program and was struck by some of the similar experiences I remember my mother telling me. For example, my mother’s employers used to give her used clothing and household items for herself and me. I read similar accounts in research conducted with migrant care workers, some of whom took offense to such gestures. Although my mother’s experiences shaped my interest in better understanding how care and domestic work are organized and valued, as a white Canadian citizen pursuing a PhD, I am very much an outsider to the experiences of migrant live-in caregivers in Canada. Thus, I draw on my personal experience while at the same time remaining cognizant of what Helen Longino concludes based her own experience as a social researcher: “However much I [researcher] and they [research subjects] inform ourselves about one another’s life situations we can neither share nor escape our social locations unless we materially dismantle them, and even then we cannot escape our histories” (Quoted in Comack, 1999, p. 297). Rather, my goal as a feminist researcher “is to use my position of privilege as an academic to make that knowledge [gained through people’s stories] visible, to put the women’s words on paper” (Comack, 1999, p. 299).

Critical to this goal is a commitment to conduct research with and for, not about research participants (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Harding, 1987; Pitre et al., 2013) This involves “sharing authority” with study participants (Comack, 1999, p. 299). Thus, the design of the present study, including the choice of focus group interviews was informed, in part, by this concern. Focus groups are said to offer participants greater control over the direction of the interview than is typically possible in a one-to-one interview. This was evidenced numerous times throughout this study when participants would interject not only to ask each other follow up questions, but to ask me questions directly. At various points during the interviews, participants asked me questions about my own personal life,
including whether I was married or had children. I view these instances as examples of what it means to share authority with and be accountable to study participants. Honestly sharing information about my personal life was also critical to building trust and engaging in a reciprocal dialogue with participants. I emphasize these moments to highlight the way in which the focus group enabled a different dynamic than a traditional one-to-one interview. However, I also recognize that despite these efforts, relationships between researchers and participants “are still based in large part on an interview process whereby the flow of information is one-sided” (Kirsch, 2005, p. 2165).

Another way that I intended to share authority was by providing participants with a copy of their transcribed interviews to ensure that the details were correct, to clarify or elaborate on any responses, and/or to identify any information they would like obscured or excluded. While I thought this might also provide an opportunity for study participants to elaborate on their responses or provide additional insights, after each focus group, when I sent out the transcribed interviews, I never received responses from participants. In hindsight, I realize that participating in the study itself was a huge time commitment for everyone, as was evidenced by the difficulty of scheduling interviews at a time that worked for everyone. While this does not invalidate efforts to share authority, it did illuminate for me that the goals and principles of research may not always align with the interests and desires of research participants. Furthermore, it must also be noted that efforts to practice reflexivity and share authority do not upend the power differential between the researcher and study participants. Indeed, there are risks and limitations to sharing authority or fostering friendly relationships between researchers and research subjects, particularly if such efforts serve to obscure this power dynamic (Kirsch, 2005). Thus, while the findings of this study are closely informed by the voices and stories of study participants, I recognize that the interpretation and analysis of the themes that emerged from their narratives is ultimately my own.

4.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis in narrative research involves multiple readings of interviews as well as different stages of analysis (Pitre, et al., 2013). First, each focus group interview was
transcribed verbatim and uploaded to NVivo for coding. Following transcription, the next step in analyzing the data was to review each interview in its entirety to get an overall sense of their content. Next, interviews were reviewed again, this time assigning a code to passages that were rich in description or that communicated important information. For example, participant descriptions of what they enjoyed about their job were initially coded as “Rewarding aspects of the job.” Similarly, participant descriptions of their reasons for migrating were initially coded as “Motivations for migration.” Further distinctions were then made to group different types of “motivations” or “rewarding” aspects of the job. For example, “Motivations for migration” that were economic in nature were coded as “Economic motivations,” while the rewards of caregiving were further categorized depending on the different aspects of the job that were emphasized. Codes were also assigned using each participant’s pseudonym to group their responses from all three interviews. This enabled a review of participant narratives as a whole, while also allowing for the contextualization of participant responses to each question within their own broader personal life story (Pitre, et al., 2013).

The next stage of analysis involved reviewing the codes and their content, paying specific attention to patterns of meaning making, including similarities, differences, contradictions, and conflicts (Daiute, 2014), in the ways participants perceived care and domestic work as well as the self-valuation strategies they drew on to bring dignity to their job. At this stage, focus was also directed to the kinds of cultural repertoires and common metaphors (Sandelowsji, 1994) live-in caregivers drew on to organize their stories, and to describe and bring personal meaning to their work. For example, sacrifice was a common metaphor that several participants used to describe caregiving and to make sense of their experiences of family separation. In addition to themes that connected participants’ responses, I also paid attention to “negative cases” or experiences that contradicted or complicated the general patterns that emerged from their responses (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 145). For example, although most participants described strained relationships with their employers, three participants described their employers as “good” and “nice.” One of these participants, who felt that her employer treated her as “one of
the family,” did not feel as though she had to make the same kinds of sacrifices others in
the group described.

In interpreting the data, I considered the significance of the meaning participants ascribed
to care/domestic work in relation to the broader political, economic, and cultural context
in which their lives were situated. For example, notions of sacrifice in participant
narratives are intimately connected to the important role Catholicism plays in Filipino
society and culture, which, in turn, has its roots in Spanish colonization of the
Philippines. Furthermore, in facilitating the overseas migration of its citizens, the
Philippine state draws heavily on notions of sacrifice to construct OFWs as national
heroes. Thus, cultural and religious notions of sacrifice informed how they made sense of
their decisions and their work. Furthermore, reflecting key insights from standpoint
theory, the ways in which participants made meaning from their work was shaped not
only by the political, economic, and cultural context in which their lives were embedded,
but by their social relationships and identities as well as the transnational social networks
to which they were connected. Indeed, their roles and identities as mothers featured
prominently in how they made sense of their experiences.

Four major themes emerged from the data including: exploitation and stigma, care as
relational, transnational motherhood, and sacrifice and spiritual faith. The first theme
focused on participants’ common experiences of stigma and exploitation that stem in part
from the devalued status of care and domestic work. In response, participants utilized
various discursive strategies to assign value to their work, including refocusing attention
on the relational dimensions of care, which was the second major theme that emerged
from the data. The third theme highlights the difficulties associated with maintaining
transnational households, particularly for participants who had children. One of the ways
participants made sense of their experiences of family separation and exploitation was by
reframing caregiving as a sacrifice, which was the fourth major theme. For several of the
women in this study, their identities as workers were inextricably tied to their maternal
identities, and sacrifice, as well as spiritual faith, were central to how they made sense of
and assigned meaning to their experiences as live-in caregivers. These themes will be
explored in more detail in chapters 5 and 6, respectively. In both chapters, the themes that emerged from focus group interviews are analyzed in relation to literature on transnational care migration and dirty work, to identify instances where the study findings were validated by and/or diverged from the existing literature.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches that informed the study design as well as the analysis and interpretation of interview data. Informed by insights from feminist standpoint theory, migrant care workers in this study were regarded as a “knowing community” linked by their experiences as workers within an international division of reproductive labour structured by gender, race, and class hierarchies and by their social relationships and networks. Building on this assertion, this study explored the individual and collective meanings participants ascribed to care and domestic work and to their experiences in the LCP. Using narrative analysis to analyze three focus group interviews conducted with eleven current and former live-in caregivers in Toronto, this study provides insight into the discursive strategies participants engaged to assign meaning to their experiences and their work. Four major themes emerged from the data, including: stigma and exploitation, care as relational, transnational motherhood and sacrifice and spiritual faith. The next chapter explores the first two themes.
Chapter 5

5 Stigma, Exploitation, and the Devaluation of Care and Domestic Work in the LCP

This chapter explores participants’ common experiences of stigma and exploitation in the LCP, as well as in other countries where they worked as live-in caregivers and domestic workers. Drawing on excerpts from focus group interviews, this chapter makes connections between the stigma attached to care/domestic work, as a form of “dirty work,” and migrant caregivers experiences of exploitation, disrespect, and degradation, a dynamic that is reinforced by the terms of the LCP. Next, I explore some of the discursive practices deployed by participants to negotiate the stigma associated with care and domestic work, including refocusing attention to the emotional and relational dimensions of the work. Lastly, attention is paid to participants’ experiences living and working as caregivers in different countries. Their perspectives offer important insights into how meanings of care shift in different contexts.

5.1 Dirty Work, Stigma and Exploitation

As discussed in chapter two, care/domestic work is commonly described as “dirty work” within scholarly literature on gender, migration, and social reproduction. The sociological concept of dirty work refers to work that is generally regarded as disgusting, demeaning, dangerous and/or distasteful and that if given the option, most people would choose not to do. Initially coined by Hughes (1951), and more recently developed by Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), the concept of dirty work allows us to think about care and domestic work as physically and socially tainted because it involves direct contact with dirt, bodies, and bodily fluids and because of the servile relationship between care/domestic workers and employers (Bosmans et al., 2016; Tyler, 2011). The concept of dirty work also highlights the way in which care and domestic work is viewed more generally in society. Despite its importance to the functioning of societies and economies, cultural assumptions about caring and household labour as unskilled, as tasks that anyone can do.
and as stereotypically feminine, result in low occupational status (Bosmans et al., 2016; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2014).

In addition to feminization, the inferior status assigned to domestic work cannot be separated from histories of colonization and slavery, including processes of racialization (de Casanova & Salazar, 2019; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2014). In the Canadian context, scholars have documented the way in which different racial and ethnic groups throughout history have been constructed as naturally suited to domestic work. Furthermore, research shows how the rights and privileges extended to migrant domestic workers deteriorated as women of colour from the Global South replaced white European immigrant women as the primary source of domestic labour to Canada (Arat-Koç, 2006a; Daezner, 1993). As Stiell & England (1997) contend “domestic work is racialized, and [...] in a context where (im)migrant women are an important source of domestic workers, national identities are employed to signify a group’s proclivity for domestic work as well as the quality of care they provide” (p. 195). Most recently, Filipina women in particular have emerged as “prototypical” care/domestic workers owing to their supposedly compliant, subservient, docile, and hardworking character (Gonzalez, 2007; Parreñas, 2015; Stiell & England, 1997). Importantly, the powerlessness imposed on care/domestic workers through temporary migration programs like the LCP, can in turn be read as confirmation of these gendered and racialized stereotypes (Stiell & England, 1997).

Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) assert that people employed in “dirty” occupations come “to personify the dirty work such that they become, literally, dirty workers” (p. 413). Thus, conceiving of care/domestic work as unskilled, dirty, and inferior lends itself to thinking about people who do this work in similar ways, which has implications for how care/domestic workers are viewed and treated by their employers. As Bosmans et al. (2016) explain “Taint can lead to the stigmatization of domestic workers. It paves the way for treating domestic workers with disrespect, which can range from ignoring them to openly deceptive behaviour” (pp. 54-55). Numerous studies show that live-in care/domestic workers report being treated with contempt and disrespect, including being regarded as inferior or as “non-persons” by their employers (Anderson, 2000; Gutiérrez-
Rodríguez, 2014; Kordasiewicz, 2014; Rollins, 1985; Silvera, 1989). Non-person treatment includes being treated as “socially transparent,” insignificant or invisible, such as when employers argue or have intimate conversations in front of domestic/care workers, fail to reprimand children for insulting domestic/care workers or otherwise behave as though they are not there (Kordasiewicz, 2014; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2014). In this chapter, I argue that the devalued status of care and domestic work, which is reinforced through temporary labour migration policies, also contributes to the disrespect, degradation, and exploitation of migrant care/domestic workers. The interactions between caregivers and their employers detailed in this chapter, clearly illustrate the link between the stigma attached to dirty work and migrant caregivers’ experiences of exploitation, degradation, and disrespect. The stipulations of the LCP exacerbate these conditions, by limiting the power and ability of migrant care workers to assert their rights.

5.1 Exploitation

Categorized as unskilled labour under the point system, caregivers are denied entry to Canada as independent immigrants with permanent residence. Instead, under the LCP, caregivers are granted entry to the country as temporary migrants whose status is tied to a specific employer. A central theme in the literature on live-in caregivers in Canada highlights the way in which the terms of the LCP structure the relationship between employers and workers. Studies have consistently shown that the LCP facilitates the exploitation of migrant care workers through the live-in requirement, temporary status, and the promise of citizenship (Faraday, 2012; Silvera, 1989; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005; Stiell & England, 1997).

More specifically, the live-in requirement blurs the line between work and private life and between the workplace and the home making it easier for employers to extend the workday. As a result, migrant caregivers in Canada frequently report that living-in means being on call twenty-four hours a day (Faraday, 2012; Silvera, 1989; Stiell & England, 1997). In this study, almost everyone reported working more than eight hours a day, as was specified in their contracts, without overtime pay. Several respondents cared for persons with high medical needs as well as children with disabilities who required around
the clock care. Zel, who was hired to care for an elderly man with Alzheimer’s in
Toronto, described her workload,
And doing a live-in caregiver for an Alzheimer’s client is not only eight hours.
So, I am paid for eight hours, that is what is written on the job description, but my
work is extended up to midnight when my client is awake until midnight and I
had to stay with him. I had to do all the tasks day and night. Though they always
say ‘you relax when he is sleeping, you relax’ but he doesn’t sleep, so what will I
do?
Mae, who cared for two children in Toronto, described a similar experience,
And you know I always start, like every day I always wake up before 6am, like 10
to 6am, just to get myself ready and from 6:20am until 8am that is my [time].
Though in my contract I only have to work eight hours but its way beyond eight
hours. It’s fourteen, fifteen hours, even more, like, yeah, and there is no overtime
fee for that. I am not given any statutory holidays like no double pay, nothing.
Christmas, I have to work without pay, boxing day or Victoria Day, whatever day
it is, I don’t have it. Like I have to work with no overtime pay. I am so jealous of
them [her employer] they can go anywhere, any places. If there is a long weekend
they can go to Montreal, U.S. whatever, but I am stuck at home because I don’t
have those days, like I am not given those you know and no, not paid.
Non-payment of wages for overtime was a very common experience among those who
participated in this study. In fact, only one participant reported that her employer paid her
for the extra hours she worked caring for their children on weekends. In addition, several
participants were not paid for holidays as is required by law.

Many participants also routinely performed tasks outside of what was specified in their
contracts, including gardening, walking the dog, shoveling snow, and caring for
additional family members, without being compensated. In addition to caring for a man
with Alzheimer’s, Zel also became the primary caregiver of his wife when she underwent
two knee replacements. She expressed frustration that her primary responsibility to
provide companionship to her client became secondary to the tasks his wife instructed her
to carry out: “So, what happened was my client became my second priority, because the
wife is giving me instructions what to do during the day. You have to do this first, do that first, and if you have time take my husband to walk.” Zel, as well as others, also described situations where they were asked by their employers to do “favours,” such as picking up groceries on their days off or watching children in the middle of the night, without being compensated. When I asked why they thought their employers felt it was okay not to pay them for this work, one interviewee, Elsa, said that since the children were sleeping the parents did not think she was really doing any work. This employer’s response is indicative of prevailing notions of caregiving, as an innate female capacity, that prevent recognizing caring and household labour as “real work” deserving of remuneration. Furthermore, framing employer requests as “favours” not only obscures that these tasks constitute work, but also implies a level of familiarity between live-in caregivers and employers that masks the contractual nature of their relationship as well as the asymmetrical power dynamic that exists between them. This finding is consistent with those of other qualitative studies in which employers frequently describe live-in caregivers as “one of the family” or engage in other familiarizing practices as a way of extracting more work without remuneration (Kordasiewicz, 2014; Romero, 1992; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). As Solari (2006) explains, “When worker-client relationships become familial, personal obligations replace contractual obligations in defining the expectations of that relationship” (p. 314). Indeed, some participants described feeling as though they could not refuse requests for “favours” because their clients were older or because of close attachments to the children in their care.

Notably, studies have also shown that care workers often acknowledge the contradictions inherent in notions of “fictive kinship” or familiarizing gestures on the part of employers, by pointing to other instances of degradation and exploitation (Kordasiewicz, 2014; Parreñas, 2015; Romero, 1992). Zel, mentioned above, who was regularly asked by the wife of her male client to do “favours” on her days off, also recounted how the same woman repeatedly accused her of stealing. Whenever the woman misplaced her belongings, she would accuse Zel of throwing them in the garbage or stealing them. In the following excerpt, Zel attributes these accusations to the way her employer viewed her: “the woman, I can say she is a bad person, because she looks at me like dirt on her
feet, like she looks at me like a thief. If she cannot find her telephone number, she will say I threw it out. If she cannot find anything like her rocks, she will say I put it in the garbage.” The emotion with which Zel spoke as she described these interactions with her female employer made apparent the humiliation she felt because of the way she was treated. Zel’s experience of degradation alongside the familiarizing practice of being asked to do favours for her employer is not an uncommon one among live-in care workers (Kordasiewicz, 2014; Romero, 1992; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). In her research with Polish live-in care workers in Italy, Kordasiewicz (2014) found that practices of what she terms “overt degradation” and “fictive kinship” can occur simultaneously. This was evidenced by instances of “sweetening,” which she describes as “a general degradation by means of familiarizing gestures” (p. 101) such as offering “gifts” of used clothing and household items.

The pathway to citizenship offered through the LCP acts as a strong deterrent to reporting instances of exploitation, including wage theft, as well as other violations of live-in caregivers’ basic rights as workers. To apply for permanent residence, live-in caregivers must either work in the program for a total of twenty-four months or accumulate 3,900 hours within a four-year period. Switching employers, while permitted, can prolong, and potentially threaten to jeopardize this already lengthy process, leading many live-in caregivers to accept living and working conditions that they would otherwise not tolerate. One participant’s experience was particularly illustrative of the way in which this dynamic, institutionalized through the LCP, structures the relationship between live-in caregivers and their employers. Elsa, who worked as a teacher in the Philippines before migrating abroad as a care worker, was hired by a family in Toronto to care for their young child. Five months after her contract began, Elsa’s male employer asked if she would be interested in earning extra income by taking care of his niece. Motivated by the need to support her daughter, Elsa agreed to the arrangement under the impression that she would be paid hourly for this work. For about a year, her employer’s niece was dropped off every day at six in the morning and was picked up at around six in the evening. During this time, Elsa cared for two infants even though her contract specified that she was only responsible for caring for one child. When she was only paid $130.00
extra each month for about a year, Elsa finally decided to confront her employer’s sister. Perplexed by Elsa’s inquiry, the woman responded, “why are you complaining? You are a shared nanny. You are lucky because I am not asking you to come to our house and do the household chores.” The woman went on to explain that she paid her brother (Elsa’s employer) $1000.00 each month for Elsa to care for her child. Shocked by what she was told, Elsa later confronted her male employer who responded by reminding her “you know I lost my job; I need all the means to get some income so we could pay you.”

As Elsa described her experience of being used as a “shared caregiver,” another participant, Mae, interjected and asked Elsa if she would have agreed to this arrangement had she been told about it up front. Others in the group immediately answered for her firmly saying “no.” But Elsa replied emphatically “I would, because I want my papers.” Then Mae turned to me and said, “See, that’s how we sacrifice everything just for the sake of the paper.”

Elsa never filed a complaint against her employer because she worried that it might affect her application for permanent residence. She explained her decision not to take legal action against her employer as follows: “Yeah because everybody says I could report them, because it is very illegal. But on my mind is that if I do that it’s a long process that might jeopardize my papers, so I just let it go. Luckily, I got my open paper. But I was waiting four years for my PR [permanent residence] because of the backlog. I have family, two dependents.” Similar experiences reported by other study participants illustrate the way in which the promise of citizenship acts as a mechanism to discipline workers and discourage the reporting of abuse and wage theft, thus enabling employers to exploit and abuse live-in caregivers with impunity.

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5 This was a term used by participants to describe what they said was not an uncommon practice among employers of live-in caregivers in Canada. One participant described instances of other live-in caregivers she knew being required to clean the homes of the friends of their employers when they were away on vacation. Similar experiences have also been documented in literature on live-in caregivers in Canada (See Silvera, 1989, p. 83)
Even though care workers in this study clearly understood their rights under the LCP, fear of comprising their application for permanent residence deterred them from reporting. As Zel explained:

For me it is hard. They give you more information about your rights. Everywhere they find your rights, they tell you what is abuse, they give you everything, define everything but you cannot do anything. I don’t like to make it big. If you are abused, you go to do this thing. But just like she said, to finish twenty-four months and you might be free after you have your open permit. Maybe twenty-four months will be very short, I said to myself. And this one, day by day it will pass. You will have a hard time today and tomorrow is another day, it’s always like that. So, it was hard but at the end of the day I could say we can pass anything that is happening day by day just for that goal.

Similarly, Mae explained that she was willing to accept long hours without overtime pay, provided her employers did not physically abuse her, if it meant that she could get permanent residence in Canada:

I always have that positive mind as long as they don’t hurt me, I can endure, do whatever physical activities even if it’s hard as long as it doesn’t get physical. Yes, that’s it. Though I know I have been abused, not, verbally maybe, but for the hours. But as you know like most of the caregivers, well I’ll speak for myself. I am willing to endure that because of the paper, you know the residency, the open permit. I don’t want to take a risk and I don’t want to keep changing employers.

The above accounts encapsulate so clearly the metaphor of the “carrot and the stick,” which has been used to describe the coercive dynamic instituted by the LCP (Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005, p. 52).

When live-in caregivers do insist on having their basic rights as workers respected, they risk facing retribution or retaliation from employers. After Elsa requested that her employer pay her for overtime work, she noted that his treatment of her changed:

But since then, I noticed a change with my male employer. There are those changes that every time I demand for something, because I know my rights, so sometimes if I insist on my right, he will increase the duties. Because I said two
years is enough of working overtime without pay. So, after two years I ask if they could pay my extra hours. So, he did give me extra payment. Sometimes he gave me ten dollars, twenty dollars, but it’s supposed to be that overtime payment is per hour. But what he is doing is that every pay cheque he would just add ten, twenty dollars. Since I asked for overtime pay, he is like he wants more, he even asked me not to use my phone at all during working hours because it’s not allowed. He said that even at work they are not allowed to use their phone when they are working, so they expect me not to use the phone.

Because of the threat of retaliation, including losing one’s job, care workers in this study reported feeling more comfortable confronting, negotiating with, or filing complaints against their employers after they met the requirements to apply for permanent residence. Leo, for instance, was hired, along with another live-in caregiver to care for a child with autism who required care twenty-four hours a day. She recorded her hours, but waited until she applied for permanent residence and received an open work permit before filing a complaint against her employer:

Yes, there are times when you know your rights, but you cannot do it. For instance, with us, it was twenty-four hours duty of an autistic kid. We are two [live-in caregivers]. Really twenty-four hours, the whole day and night. But you don’t do anything when you are under the program. I jotted down the violation of my employer. When I was not yet open, I cannot do anything, I have to obey. But when I get my open permit, I filed the case.

Once Leo filed the complaint against her employer, who was a lawyer, he yelled at her demanding that she retract the grievance. When she refused, he then offered to compensate her if she withdrew her claim:

He said, ‘if you withdraw your resignation, I will give you $500.’ The second time he raised it to $1000. And he even told me the first time I went there told me ‘I am a lawyer I am safe.’ But when there is maltreatment after I gave my resignation and I have my open permit I have the courage to say ‘you know you said you are a lawyer and I feel confident that you are, but now I say you are a liar.’ He kicked the table and said, ‘get out in front of me.’ I said, ‘are you sure you want me to get out in front of you?’ ‘Get out now.’ And then after two
minutes ‘Leo come to my office’ and then ‘okay withdraw your case I’ll give you $1000,’ but I did not and so I leave.
Leo declined this employer’s attempt at bribery and the case was eventually resolved in the courts. For most others, however, pursuing such official avenues as a means of recouping unpaid wages was not possible.

The interactions between employers and live-in caregivers detailed here demonstrate that the treatment of care workers is intimately bound up with how care/domestic work itself is perceived and valued within a given culture and society. Non-payment of wages or framing employment duties as “favours” reflects the invisibility of care and household labour as work deserving of remuneration. An unwillingness or inability to see care and household work as “real work” is, in turn, linked to the structural organization of reproductive labour under capitalism as well as to gendered and racialized notions of care that naturalize and deskill caring and household labour. As other studies have shown, these problems are only exacerbated when care and domestic work is performed in the home by migrant women where strong associations of the home with family and private life lend itself more easily to reframing contractual relations in familial terms. In such instances, notions of personal obligation rather than contractual obligations govern the relationship between live-in caregivers and employers. The lack of power afforded to live-in caregivers through the LCP exacerbates this situation by making it difficult for them to assert their rights as workers.

5.2 Negotiating Stigma: Reframing Care and Domestic Work as Meaningful and Dignified Work

In the absence of extrinsic rewards, in the form of high pay and social recognition for example, research shows that people employed in “dirty” occupations engage a range of discursive practices to recast their work as meaningful, rewarding, and legitimate (Ashforth & Kriener, 1999; Simpson et al., 2014; Tracy & Scott, 2006). In their research, Ashforth and Kriener (1999) identified three types of “occupational ideologies” that emerge in “dirty” occupations with strong subcultures, including reframing, recalibrating,
and refocusing. As they explain, occupational ideologies “provide a means for interpreting and understanding what the occupation does and why it matters” (p. 421). Reframing refers to attempts to infuse dirty occupations with positive meaning by pointing to the larger purpose served by the job, thus transforming it into a “badge of honor.” Recalibrating involves adjusting the standards by which the occupation is evaluated by, for example, exaggerating the significance of minor but more positive aspects of the job. For example, in their research with domestic workers in Belgium, Bosman et al. (2016) found that participants, who were primarily responsible for cleaning their employer’s homes, emphasized the significant role they played in providing physical and emotional care for their employers by helping them get dressed or listening to their problems. Refocusing refers to discursive practices that redirect attention away from the stigmatized features of the job to non-stigmatizing aspects by emphasizing intrinsic or extrinsic rewards. As Ashforth and Kriener (1999) explain, refocusing “actively overlooks the stigmatized properties,” (p. 423) such as when garbage collectors point to their pay and schedule flexibility as sources of satisfaction. Together, these shared meanings “provide the social resources needed to counteract the influence of the wider culture in which the occupation or workgroup is embedded” (Ashforth & Kriener, 1999, p. 421).

Although migrant care/domestic workers experience barriers to developing a strong occupational subculture, including isolation and long work hours, the meanings participants in this study assigned to care and domestic work were informed, in part, by their connection to local and transnational networks of solidarity and support among migrant care/domestic workers as well as their social roles and identities as mothers. The remainder of this chapter explores three main discursive practices participants utilized to bring meaning, dignity, and respect to their job. First, they emphasized the important role the work they perform plays in the lives of the people for whom they care as well as their employers. Second, they reframed care/domestic work as a vocation that involves showing love and care to others in attending to their physical and emotional needs. Finally, they foreground the emotional and relational aspects of their job, which they find most rewarding, by naming themselves caregivers. By insisting on being referred to as
caregivers they assert their own humanity and disavow the stigma attached to other occupational designations such as “domestic helper” or “domestic worker.” Importantly, in making meaning about their job, participants articulate contradictory notions of care and domestic work that simultaneously challenge and reinforce broader cultural assumptions about reproductive labour.

Despite or in spite of their experiences of stigma, exploitation, and degradation, participants engaged multiple discursive strategies to frame caregiving as dignified and valuable work. Some respondents assigned value to care and domestic work by pointing to the important role it plays in social reproduction. In so doing, they echo an understanding espoused by (trans)national domestic worker organizations and movements which assert that care and domestic work “is the work that makes all other work possible.” For instance, Leo explained that the work she carried out as a “domestic helper” in Hong Kong enabled her employers to “get through their day.” Similarly, Elsa described her role as a “personal support staff” to parents who had to work and did not have time to mind their own children. Elsa, as well as other study participants, saw themselves as a “second parent” to the children for whom they cared. Collectively, their narratives highlight the integral function the work they perform plays in the lives of their employers; indeed, their labour enables Canadian families to sustain a dual-income household while at the same time ensuring their loved ones receive quality care.

Although caregiving was not necessarily the first choice of work for many participants, most of whom had education and experience in other fields, some described it as a personal passion and a vocation, which they defined as “giving love or care to a person.” Leo, for instance, described caregiving in this way:

Caregiving for me is like taking care of your own family … it depends on the different ages, it might be childcare, elderly care, a person with a disability. So, you need to have that passion to do it. Even though you are not related you are committed to do something good. Aside from your being paid for that, it is your very chance to let these people feel that you care for them.

Raina described caregiving similarly:
Caregiving based on my personal experience, I work as a domestic helper in Hong Kong for 8 years, and caregiving is like also a personal passion. You are considered to devote yourself when you are taking care of kids, especially when they are very young. And when the parents give you the opportunity and the chance and the personal, like you are the parents to them right, and they are giving you the time and trust and commitment to take care of their kids. So, for me, caregiving is really a hard task, but you need to be very patient, and you have to deal with the difficulties.

In their view, ensuring that the person(s) under their care felt loved was a central aspect of caregiving that distinguished it from other occupations in which they had previously worked as social workers, nurses, midwives, and teachers. Participants placed value on the virtues and skills that they felt were required to provide high quality care, including patience, kindness, empathy, and compassion. They also took pride in the skills they acquired while learning how to attend to people’s diverse care needs, such as a child with autism or an older adult with Alzheimer’s.

In this way, they articulate an understanding of caregiving as a kind of affective or emotional labour similar to how Hochschild (2012) uses the term. For Hochschild, emotional labour refers to work that involves managing one’s own emotions to elicit a desired emotional response or “state of mind” in customers or clients. Comparing the contemporary job of a flight attendant to that of a child labourer in a wallpaper factory in the 19th century, Hochschild (2012) illustrates an important distinction between physical and emotional labour when she writes:

> In the case of the flight attendant, the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself, in a way that loving or hating wallpaper is not part of producing wallpaper. Seeming to ‘love the job’ becomes part of the job; and actually trying to love it, and to enjoy customers, helps the worker in this effort. (pp. 5-6)

Further, Hochschild writes that “Seeming to love the job” (p. 6) may involve “surface acting,” that is, outwardly displaying emotions that do not reflect one’s inner feelings, or “deep acting,” which involves actually attempting to change one’s emotions to conform
to the “feeling rules” governing a given occupation. In the case of caring and household labour, the “script of deference” (Parreñas, 2015, p. 120) domestic workers are often expected to follow requires them to engage in emotional labour, including suppressing feelings of anger, frustration, sadness, and/or exhaustion to appear happy. Indeed, live-in caregivers and domestic workers commonly report that smiling and appearing happy are requirements of the job (Parreñas, 2015). Furthermore, caregivers are expected not only to “care for” but also “about” their clients; an important distinction often noted in carework literature between the tasks involved in caring for others and the feelings or emotions with which these tasks are supposed to be carried out (Stacey, 2011). High quality care, then, involves not simply performing certain tasks, but doing so in a loving or caring manner. Importantly, the amount of emotional labour involved in caregiving is often greater when it is performed in the home as opposed to institutional contexts such as nursing homes or hospitals (Stacey, 2011).

Hochschild noted the potential for alienation or estrangement from one’s own feelings that can arise from performing emotion work in the service sector where emotion rules are dictated by organizational or company norms, or as is often the case in care and domestic work, by familial and cultural norms. As Hochschild (2012) explains:

This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality [...] the worker can become estranged or alienated from an aspect of self – either the body or the margins of the soul – that is used to do the work.” (p. 7)

While emotional labour can have negative impacts on a worker’s self-esteem and well-being, studies also suggest that care workers, like those employed in other types of “dirty” occupations, find some aspects of their job meaningful and rewarding (Stacey, 2011). One key finding in the literature is that care workers regularly identify the connections developed with their clients as the most rewarding aspect of the job.

As a consequence of the personal and intimate nature of caregiving, strong bonds of attachment can develop between caregivers and care recipients overtime, particularly in the case of childcare. Given the length of time it takes live-in caregivers to gain
permanent residence and sponsor their families in the LCP, many remain in the homes of their employers for several years. As such, they play an integral role in raising their employer’s children, in some cases from the time they are born or very young until they are school-aged. In one of the families Elsa worked for, her employer’s second child was born while Elsa was living in their home. Since the mother returned to work very soon after giving birth, Elsa cared for the child from the time she was born. Elsa pointed to the fact that both of her employer’s children began to call her “mommy,” as evidence of the amount of time she spent with the children and the close bond that developed between them. Elsa, like many other migrant live-in caregivers (Parreñas, 2001a), also saw the children for whom she cared as a temporary stand-in for her own child. Showing love to her employer’s children was one of the ways she coped with the pain of being separated from her daughter:

So as the second parent or mom of those kids it’s also a way for me to, because I leave my one child there, so it’s a way for me to show the care that I couldn’t give to her that I am showing to those kids that I am taking care of. And it’s also for me it’s a prize, because I have a daughter, so I had the chance to take care of two kids, my first employer has two kids, two boys, so that’s the first time that I experienced how to mind small kids and now I take care of two girls. The eldest one is of the same age when I left my daughter. So, it’s her that has been somewhat replacing the place of my daughter. […] The things that I have been missing to do with my daughter I am doing with her […] that’s why sometimes they call me mama, but I said you can call me mommy or mama without your mother, because I don’t want the mother to get angry, because I had that issue before with my first wards.

Not surprisingly then, several women in this study identified the close relationships developed with their clients as the most rewarding and self-affirming aspects of their job.

Leo, who worked for a family for seven years in Hong Kong before coming to Canada, expressed a feeling of deep satisfaction at seeing the kids she cared for grow up and complete their education. She described their acknowledgement of the important role she played in their upbringing as her reward for caregiving:
It’s like your certificate or diploma when after long years that you have been away from them and they know where you are, and they keep in touch with you. That’s how it was with my first employer. Now they grow up and it’s so fulfilling on your part when you hear them say ‘wow Aunty, you’ve taken care of us before, now it is our turn to care for you.’ It fills up your heart. They just want to give back the love that you shared with them. […]

So that’s caregiving for us. It’s a vocation, at the same time it’s also like your dream come true to see the way we have raised these children, which we missed to our own children. […] Especially for when the wards that you take care of will never forget you and they will see you as part of their life. I heard one of my wards, he said bluntly to the classmates and in front of the parents ‘this is my aunty I am not here if not for her, she took care of us when we are kids when mom is not available.’

Leo still keeps in touch with the children of her first employer and even visits them occasionally in the United States where they now reside. For Leo, these enduring relationships served as a source of social validation of the important role she played in their lives.

Participants described a number of other rewarding and difficult aspects of their work depending on whether they cared for children or older adults. Interestingly, those who cared for elderly people expressed greater satisfaction with their job. Two participants, both of whom cared for older clients, said that they enjoyed caregiving and described the work as “easy and fun.” Lydia, who worked as a domestic helper for seventeen years in Hong Kong before coming to Canada at the age of fifty-three, explained that her years of experience, in addition to the “luck” she had in finding a good employer made her work easy and enjoyable:

Because of my experience for a long-time taking care of old people in Hong Kong. Because I worked there for almost seventeen years, yeah with old people. So, I already adapt their attitudes, their manners. So sometimes I am also like that. Until now when I came here to Canada in 2008, almost eight years working with a Chinese family. And they have their father and mother, which the mother has
advanced Alzheimer. So almost as if nothing, because you know, no talking. And we were the only two in the house because the children have their own family. So, I enjoy much because we are already only two in the house. After I feed the lady, I can sleep, because it’s a very big house and we’re only two. So, for me it’s easy because you know if you have experience, everything is very easy. It depends on the employer you are employed with. And I am very thankful because I found a lucky one.

Lydia’s sentiment echoes that of other Filipina domestic workers who express a preference for elder care over caring for children because it is perceived as more skilled and offers greater freedom. Even though many of the tasks involved in caring for older adults are the same as those required in other forms of domestic/care work, there is a perception that providing companionship is paramount (Parreñas, 2015). Furthermore, because older adults requiring care often have conditions, such as Alzheimer’s or dementia, that limit their mobility and ability to communicate, care/domestic workers may find that they have more freedom from their employers, especially when the client’s family does not live in the same home, as in the example provided by Lydia.

The association of elder care with the medical field, particularly nursing, also contributes to the perception of this work as more skilled and respectable. As Parreñas (2015) explains in the U.S. context, “The formation of an immigrant niche in nursing among Filipino Americans has led to the conception of elder care as a skilled job in Los Angeles, one requiring special ‘medical’ skills like monitoring blood pressure. In the community, any job in the medical field, including those in the lower ranks, is considered respectable” (p. 123). Thus, nurses and other medical workers may choose to care for older adults because it is seen as more in line with their professional training and experience. Finally, some migrant care workers also choose elder care over childcare out of concern for their own children. In this study, two women, Zean and Zel, explained that an important factor in their decision to care exclusively for older people was that they did not want their children to see them caring for other kids.
In contrast to those who described elder care as easy and fun, for most other participants it was the need to care for more than one child at once, in addition to the never-ending nature of household work that made their job tiring and difficult. Leo, for example, cared for four children, including a set of triplets as well as an eight-year-old child. Not surprisingly, the level of difficulty associated with the job also depended on the age of the children in their care. Mary, who was caring for school-aged children at the time of the interview, felt that her workload was manageable:

I can just say my employer is also nice to me. I take care of four kids. Now they are all in school. I just do some household chores in the day. When they come home at 6 pm that’s my time to take care of them. I just give them a bath, I feed them. That’s it, I just started when school is open this year. And after I put them to bed at night and that’s my time off. They are also nice to me. I am not complaining.

By comparison, those caring for infants, who require a higher level of direct physical care, expressed more difficulty. For instance, Elsa described her job as tiring and difficult after she developed back pain from carrying and picking up a young child who constantly insisted on being held.

Notably, when discussing the most difficult and challenging aspects of care/domestic work, participants tended to emphasize the non-relational or “dirty” aspects of the job, including the most tedious, “boring,” and physically demanding tasks such as scrubbing the floors by hand, preparing meals, pushing the stroller through the snow, and shoveling snow. May, a teacher in the Philippines who was encouraged by her husband to come to Canada, described her experience working as a live-in caregiver:

It’s very hard for me. […] my work was hard because every day I always pushing the stroller. I am taking care of three kids and the eldest is a special child. So, every morning my work is 7am to 7pm sometimes until 8pm because I am still within the program. And then, it’s hard for me because I am doing all household chores. I always cut the vegetable salad, always wash the vegetables, I think every day. So, and then especially pushing the stroller, because we walk twenty-five
minutes and then go back again home. Especially in the winter it’s hard to push because my employer wants me to go out with the baby.

Similarly, Mae, who worked for a Canadian family in Dubai and eventually moved with them to Canada, described the difficult aspects of her job:

I said it’s tiring but rewarding. Of course, household chores are never-ending. There are always dishes to wash. You’ll always find something to do. But it is rewarding during the end of the month, yeah of course – the money. […] But people do it differently; sometimes some people [employers] would make your job easy sometimes not. But this one [job] is different because the kids are bigger, yeah so, I don’t have to take care of them. I don’t have to push strollers. And so, like I know most of them [caregivers] they clean the floor with mop or whatever, but for me they [employers] wanted me to do it by hand with a cloth. I have to kneel down like Cinderella and do the, you know [cleaning]. They maybe thought that I don’t have kids to take care of, so they are maybe giving me you know harder jobs. And there in Dubai I used a mop, but I wonder why here like they are making it difficult for me?

That participants emphasized the relational dimensions of care as the most rewarding and the non-relational tasks as the most difficult aspects of their job is not surprising. Indeed, numerous studies show that one of the ways care and domestic workers attempt to counter the stigma attached to their work is by distancing themselves from the “dirty” tasks associated with cleaning and bodily care (Amrith, 2010; Showers, 2015) or by downplaying the significance of these tasks to their job (Bosmans et al., 2015).

Emphasizing the relational dimensions of their job, then was one of the central ways in which study participants derived a sense of dignity and satisfaction from the work. Despite the challenges associated with the job, many participants agreed that they would remain in caregiving because the demand for care is high, making it easy to find work. As Zel explained, “Doing caregiving is in demand. Once you go out and apply you are accepted. It’s very easy to apply than any other kind of work.” Several participants cited their age as well as the costs of upgrading their education as reasons they would likely not return to their former professions. Zel, once a nurse in the Philippines, was working
as a personal support worker at the time of the interview. She explained the difficulty of returning to nursing after spending so many years working as a live-in caregiver:

I am working as a support worker. I would have to upgrade. It’s hard for me because I stayed long in caregiving that’s the problem. It’s supposed to be two years and then you are out, but it doesn’t work that way. I stayed for three years and my three years’ experience as a nurse already pass. I didn’t get my student visa and I cannot study. I don’t know if I will still go back to nursing. It is really hard because of all the expenses; it is very expensive.

Elsa also felt that returning to her previous occupation as a teacher would be impractical:

Maybe on my part I will just go on with caregiving. Because going back to my profession as a teacher, I am sure it will be so hard, especially because I will need to upgrade and the money for upgrading. So, working and studying is not practical on my part right now.

Similarly, Lydia, who said that she enjoyed caregiving, explained that her age in addition to advances in technology made it unlikely that she could return to teaching:

For me, because I am already old, I am not thinking of going to anywhere profession because caregiving for other people I think is my line. Taking care of old people, I am enjoying it. I was a teacher; in 1972 I graduated. And the new technology today for me and getting old, the memory deteriorates, so how I wish to go further but cannot already.

In contrast, Mae, was more optimistic about the possibilities of upgrading her education, expressing her desire to explore other options once she is out of the LCP:

For me I want to get certification in ECE [Early Childhood Education]. Well, it’s a bit still kind of related because it is with kids. But I want to try something else. But of course, I think I am in line with caregiving too, I won’t mind. But for now, I really wanted to try something and get certified.

Leo, who had been out of the caregiver program for several years at the time of the interview, was the only participant who was able to continue her career as a social worker in Canada. The inability of most participants to upgrade their education and return to their former professions is indicative of broader patterns of deskilling and de-
professionalization identified in research on the LCP (Bannerjee et al., 2017; Pratt, 1999; Spitzer & Torres, 2008; Tungohan et al., 2015).

5.3 Shifting Meanings of Care and Domestic Work

Recent reviews of existing literature on transnational care migration have identified a lack of attention paid to the meanings ascribed to care in different contexts (Nguyen, et al., 2017; Raghuram, 2012). For example, Nguyen, Zavoretti & Tronto (2017) emphasize the need to “scrutinize the meanings that people derive from care relations in specific empirical settings” as well as “how everyday practices both defy and incorporate competing moral ideas” (p. 202). Similarly, with respect to contextual differences in how care is understood and arranged, Raghuram (2012) writes:

These have particular resonance when carers are themselves living transnational lives, simultaneously engaging in caring activities both in the North and in the South. The meaning of care does not stand still over these two geographical areas; and understandings of care should not be distributed and shared across different providers of care. (p. 156)

All but one participant in this study worked in other countries, including Hong Kong, Dubai, Taiwan, and Saudi Arabia before coming to Canada. Accounts of their experiences shed light on the living and working conditions of migrant care and domestic workers in each of these countries, affirming much of what has been documented in the literature on gender, care, and migration (Constable, 2010; Lan, 2006; Parreñas, 2015; Parreñas & Silvey, 2016). Furthermore, their understanding of how care/domestic work was valued and how they were treated and viewed in the various countries where they worked provides further insight into contextual meanings of care. Their discussions of relations between employers and workers in each of these contexts also reveals one of the central ways in which they attempt to assign value and respect to the work they perform. By insisting on calling themselves caregivers as opposed to “domestic helpers” or “housemaids” they center the relational and emotional aspects of their job, which they find most rewarding and respectable.
Prior to coming to Canada through the LCP, several participants, including Raina, Elsa, Leo, Lydia, and Zean were employed as domestic workers in Hong Kong. As their accounts confirm, migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, who are referred to as “domestic helpers,” are required to live-in their employer’s home for a period of two years with no ability to switch employers or to engage in any other type of work for wages. There is no pathway to citizenship for “domestic helpers,” and if they lose their job, they are required to leave the country within two weeks. Legally, domestic helpers are guaranteed certain rights under their employment contracts, including a minimum wage and one day off every week. However, underpayment of wages is commonplace and migrant domestic workers face significant barriers to enforcing the terms of their contracts (Constable, 2010). Thus, as is the case with most temporary migration programs, “Hong Kong laws and policies primarily serve the interests of employers and the larger state apparatus. They deter workers from pursuing their rights, ensure the continued availability of an affordable pool of foreign workers, and aim at maintaining domestic workers as temporary and docile migrants” (Constable, 2010, p. 120).

Nevertheless, a small but very visible network of activist migrant domestic workers has emerged in Hong Kong to organize resistance to these policies and to provide support to other migrant domestic workers. For Leo, it was the sense of community derived from her involvement in these activist networks as well as the relationships she formed with other migrant domestic workers that she cherished most about working in Hong Kong. Even though she only had one day off a week, Leo explained that the community that existed among migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong enabled her to recharge and replenish her energy.

Comparatively, in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, where Zel and Mae both worked, migrant domestic workers are governed by the kafala system, which also grants significant powers to sponsors or employers. Under the kafala system, migrant domestic workers are sponsored by an employer (or kafeel) whose consent is required for them to enter or leave the country and to switch jobs. Employers are also responsible for ensuring that workers they sponsor leave the country at the end of their contract, which includes paying for their flight home. Migrant domestic workers who leave their job without the permission of
their employer (or abscond) can face criminal charges and those who become pregnant can be deported (Parreñas & Silvey, 2016). Although confiscating passports is illegal in some countries governed by the kafala system, evidence suggests that the practice is commonplace making migrant domestic workers completely dependent on their employers and extremely vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Nevertheless, research suggests that migrant domestic workers still attempt to negotiate with their employers and in some cases they runaway or switch employers to escape undesirable living and working conditions (Parreñas & Silvey, 2016).

Participants who worked in Hong Kong and Dubai suggested that the practice of confining domestic workers to the employer’s home, confiscating passports, and physical abuse were not uncommon. Several participants reported knowing of another domestic worker who was locked inside their employer’s home. They reasoned that employers did this because they knew how badly they treated their household employees, and that if given the opportunity to run away, they would.

Based on their experiences, several respondents in this study felt that in Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, and Dubai, live-in domestic workers, who were referred to as “domestic helpers” or “housemaids” respectively, were not respected. In fact, many used the analogy of slavery to describe their living and working conditions as well as how they were perceived and treated by their employers. By contrast, most participants felt that in Canada, where they were referred to as caregivers, the work was relatively more esteemed. Many agreed that referring to the work as caregiving elevated its status and uplifted their spirits, even if they were performing the exact same tasks:

Mae: In Dubai they call you a housemaid. And when it’s a housemaid it means literally you are worthless in terms of your class in the society and so your personality is worth nothing. But when I got a Canadian employer in Dubai, she didn’t even call me housemaid she called me help so I was elevated, so it was a new experience to me. Because she didn’t want to call me something else. She said it’s discriminatory to call me housemaid, so she only wants to call me help or
helper or something but not the word they use to call their housemaid, they say it’s the lowest class of person – it means you are – like…

Leo: A slave?
Mae: Yes, yes, that’s the right word.

Leo described a similar negative connotation attached to the category “domestic helper” in Hong Kong, where it has also been noted that “the term banmui (‘Philippine girl’)” is often “used interchangeably with ‘maid’ or ‘servant’” (Constable quoted in Amirth, 2010, p. 415):

When you go to Hong Kong, they don’t call you a caregiver or nanny. They call you a domestic helper. And it’s to their mind and others minds too, DH is an even lower version of caregiving. But here in Canada you feel there is a little elevation of the name because there is more love, and they value that. Although in Hong Kong they also – some employers they value too – they cannot go to work without your help. But here caregiving is giving out your love, giving care to the elderly and kids. It’s another thing, which is even higher than say nanny because caregiving is not just at home per se, but in the hospitals and nursing homes. So, it is a bit different, and you gain more value in the name here than in other countries.

Most study participants preferred the emphasis on the relational dimensions of care associated with the term caregiver as opposed to terms like domestic helper or housemaid, which seem more closely associated with the “dirty” or non-relational aspects of reproductive work and are regarded as forms of slave or servant labor. They explained that caregiving was a broader term used to refer not only to care provided in the home, but also in institutions by nurses and other professionals. Leo, who was previously employed as a social worker in the Philippines, explained the more expansive notion of the term caregiver in the U.S. and Canada:

And when you are in America when they say caregiver, it’s a valued position because caregiver they generalize it, like even if you are nurse in the hospital – those are caregivers. And like some when you say you are caregiver it is a low position, but here in the U.S. or North America caregiving is like other professions.
In Leo’s view, the association of caregiving with these relatively more esteemed occupations raised the status of the work. Given the constraints imposed on care workers through the LCP, naming themselves “caregivers” was one small way participants in this study exercised agency to negotiate the stigma attached to care/domestic work and assert their own self-definition. Redirecting attention away from the physically dirty aspects of their job by defining their work as caregiving served to affirm their self-worth and bring a sense of dignity to their job.

Participants also made some distinctions between the kinds of tasks they were responsible for in Canada as well as the way they were treated by their employers. Those who worked as “domestic helpers” in Hong Kong explained that they were required “to do everything” for their employer including cleaning, shopping, and caring for family members. In contrast, in Canada once they completed the two-year period required to qualify for permanent residence, there was more room to negotiate the tasks for which they were responsible in their employers’ homes. Elsa, who worked for one year in Hong Kong to meet the requirements of the LCP, described the difference between working as a domestic helper and a live-in caregiver:

Yeah, especially with the time. Working in Hong Kong, they own you 24/7 but here in Canada mostly you have a specific time to work. After a specific time [you are] allowed to take your rest, do your own stuff. And work here is much lighter compared to in Hong Kong. Because there you will be all around, you are going to do everything from shopping, going to the market, doing the household chores. Here you have the opportunity to choose, especially when you are getting to that job, you can tell the employer which job [you] need to do and not to do. But in Hong Kong you don’t have that choice, you have to do everything. That’s what I like here in Canada. Others also noted differences in the level of deference they had to show to their employers. As Lydia explained:

But comparing here in Canada, you are not a slave because in Hong Kong, they call you a name, it means slave. But here in Canada they call you by your name and you are not saying ma’am and sir to them. In Hong Kong you say ma’am and sir always, but here in Canada you call your employer by their name. So, it’s different.
According to Lydia and others, employer expectations regarding the demeanor of care/domestic workers in Hong Kong, Dubai, and Saudi Arabia seemed to more closely resemble that characteristic of older forms of servitude. In comparison, many participants felt that in Canada, live-in caregivers were treated more like a member of the employer’s family.

One exception was Zean, who worked in Hong Kong for a wealthy older woman who was also a Canadian citizen. According to Zean, the woman treated her like a daughter:

Yeah, for me it’s like enjoying and fun because my employer they treat me as I am a member of the family. My employer here is my employer also in Hong Kong. So, I didn’t know when I apply to go to Hong Kong that she is a Canadian citizen. After two weeks I came here. For almost six years come in and out of Canada. And in 2008, she decided to stay here, she bring me here. And then I process my paper here in Canada, so it’s easy for me.

In Zean’s experience, this familial-like treatment contrasted with the negative experiences described by other focus group participants with their employers in Hong Kong:

For me, I did not experience that same thing because when I applied in Hong Kong I didn’t know that she was a Canadian citizen. So, she treated me like a daughter. So, we go to like Shangai, Beijing, Australia, Canada for six months. And then after that we go back to Hong Kong to process a visa for another country. I just carry her bag, go all over the place. So, I didn’t experience that. So yeah, I must be lucky. […] That’s why if I hear someone complaining about their employer… I am sorry I didn’t experience that like most of the caregivers. Until now and after that because she has breast cancer so that’s why we came here every six months to do a checkup at [the hospital]. After her breast cancer was cured, she went back to Shanghai. Because she is a millionaire, she didn’t go to Shanghai until I got a new employer. So, I am lucky, because my new employer, they are Italian, and they also treat me like family.
Everyone agreed that Zean’s experience was exceptional and that she was lucky to have ended up with such good employers. As a result, others in the group jokingly referring to Zean as “the millionaire’s daughter.”

As discussed earlier, employers commonly use familial terms to refer to care/domestic workers employed in their homes, which has largely been interpreted in the literature as an exploitative strategy intended to extract labour without compensation. Interestingly, studies have also shown that some live-in care/domestic workers also adopt this familial ideology to describe their relationships with employers and clients. However, the way in which care/domestic workers use the idiom of the family seems to differ in important ways from how employers use these terms. For instance, Kindler (2008) found that live-in care workers drew on “fictive kinship” ties as a means of accessing employers’ social networks. In another study in the U.S. context, Solari (2006) found that some of the homecare workers she interviewed from the former Soviet Union invoked notions of fictive kinship as an identity strategy to distance themselves from the stigma associated with being labeled a servant. For participants in this study, describing being treated as “one of the family” as a way of distinguishing their experience working in Canada seemed to imply not being viewed as a servant or slave, even if they experienced some of the same exploitative practices in both contexts. Like the Filipina domestic workers Parreñas (2015) interviewed in Rome and Los Angeles, the women in this study seemed to equate being treated “like one of the family” with being regarded as a human being. However, as was evidenced by participant’s accounts, in many instances, their Canadian employers did not always view them as workers deserving of basic rights and protections, including the right to pay for overtime work. Furthermore, even though many participants felt that live-in care work in Canada was less comparable to slavery in other contexts, there have been reported cases of extreme abuse in Canada as well as instances of employers confiscating live-in caregivers’ passports.
5.4 Meanings of Care in the Philippines

Compared to the other countries where participants worked as care/domestic workers, they felt that “caregiving” was viewed differently in the Philippines. Leo explained the different terms used to refer to paid domestic workers who care for children:

We call them Yaya, nanny, maids. But now when they say caregiver because this happening, going out of the country, when you say caregiver there is one term, they call – sitter – and even the employer call them that way – it’s no longer helper.

For Leo, the term “sitter” or “nanny” implied more than simply being a “helper.” Although some parents hire caregivers in the Philippines, several participants felt that it was more common for family to care for children. As Zean explained, “Like me, I have five children, I am the one who takes care of them. My mother you know sometimes she comes, but I am the hands on for the five children. Yeah, mostly in the Philippines it’s like that.” Zel concurred, explaining that she did not hire a “nanny” to care for her children while she was abroad: “For me too, I have two children. While I am here my aunty is taking good care of them, so I don’t have to pay someone to take care of my children.” Zel also noted that in contrast to Canada, it was less common for people to hire someone to care for aging or sick family members in the Philippines: “There are not many caregivers in Philippines because old people are taken good care of by their families. For the kids yeah, we have babysitters but adults they live-in the home.”

Their explanations speak to the important role that family plays in the care of children and older people and to the comparative lack of market and state involvement in care provision in the Philippines. According to the ILO (2013) in 2009 “only 5.8 per cent of all households across the country employed domestic workers, either in live-in or live-out arrangements” (p. 4). Nevertheless, domestic work remains an important source of employment for women in the country. Of the estimated 1.9 million people employed as domestic workers in the Philippines in 2010, about 84% were women (ILO, 2013). Class differences have also been identified between those employed as domestic workers in the Philippines and those who migrate as care/domestic workers. Demographic data indicates that migrant care/domestic workers typically have higher levels of education, while “In
general, local domestic workers are younger, come from poorer areas, have lower levels of education and have less work experience than domestic workers who take placements overseas (ILO, 2013, p. 29).

The belief, held by most participants, that family should care for elderly people, informed their lack of understanding and criticism of the way Canadian families appeared to treat aging relatives. Referencing the common practice in Canada of placing elderly parents in long-term care facilities, participants explained that this would not be an acceptable way to care for older relatives in their families. Rather, deeply entrenched notions of filial obligation, which require children to care for their parents, shape the provision of elder care in the Philippines (Battistella & Conaco, 1998; Parrenas, 2015).

Given the more limited role the state and market play in the provision of child and elder care in the Philippines, Mae explained that the term caregiver tends to be associated with work performed outside of the home: “When you say caregiver in the Philippines it is viewed as you are working like not at home. It means you are working as a nurse, or medic or something, taking care of you know [people], but not at home.” Because of the association of caregiving with professional occupations, such as nursing, located in institutions, participants felt that this work was more respected in the Philippines than in other places where they worked. In addition to the greater respectability afforded to nurses due to their education and training, Amirth (2010) explains that “in a majority Catholic country like the Philippines, the nurse is almost seen as saint like in her/his dedication to help others” (p. 416). Nevertheless, it is also worth noting that nurses are among the lowest paid professionals in the country (Amirth, 2010). Furthermore, contradictory notions of care permeate Philippine society (Aguilar, 1996; Amrith, 2010). On the one hand, migrant care workers are celebrated for their contributions to their families and the nation. On the other hand, the stigma attached to care and domestic work and the association of the Philippines with “flexible” and “unskilled” care labour, is also a source of personal and national shame. Thus, care/domestic work/ers in the Philippines are simultaneously celebrated and denigrated, and care/domestic work has become a source of both national pride and shame. As a result, Filipino/a migrants employed as nurses and medics abroad often attempt to distance themselves from domestic/care
work/ers by emphasizing the professional and skilled care they provide (Amirth, 2010, p. 416). As one of the nurses in Amirth’s (2010) study explained, it is precisely the requirement that they do “dirty work” that is a source of their humiliation while employed as medics in Singapore:

We bathe [the patients], we clean them, we do the dirty job. In the Philippines, the relatives are there 24/7, they help us take care of their loved one, we just deal with the medical side. Here they depend on us for everything, it is sometimes degrading. I have a degree, I worked for so many years, paid so much for my education and I end up doing this? (p. 417)

Thus, nursing in the Philippines is, in part, respectable because it is distinguished from certain aspects of caregiving or “dirty work.” Conversely, for the women in this study, describing their work as caregiving constitutes an attempt to “professionalize” their job through its association with nursing. Nevertheless, much like the Filipino/a medical workers Amirth (2010) interviewed in Singapore, the women in this study also express “contradictory visions of care.” In making meaning about care work, they also attempt to distance themselves from the “dirty” or non-relational aspects of the job.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored participants’ common experiences of stigma and exploitation in the LCP, as well as in other countries where they have worked as live-in care/domestic workers. Their narratives provide insight into the links between the stigma attached to care and domestic work and the treatment of migrant care workers, a dynamic which is reinforced by temporary labour migration policies like the LCP. Participants employed various discursive strategies in attempting to frame their work as meaningful and dignified. While some of these strategies challenge prevailing conceptions of care and domestic work, such as emphasizing the significance of this labour to their employers’ lives, other strategies, such as insisting on naming their work caregiving, inadvertently serve to reinforce existing hierarchies between the relational and non-relational aspects of reproductive labour. The next chapter explores the third and fourth themes that emerged
from participant narratives, which include transnational motherhood and sacrifice and spiritual faith.
Chapter 6

6 Sacrifice and Spiritual Faith: “The Price of Caregiving is Losing Your Kids”

This chapter explores the closely related themes of transnational motherhood and sacrifice and spiritual faith, which emerged from an analysis of the data. First, I examine participant’s motivations for migration as well as their experiences as members of transnational families, including the difficulties and challenges they faced while parenting across borders. Second, I examine discourses of sacrifice and spiritual faith which were central to how participants made sense of their experiences of family separation and their experiences as live-in caregivers. Drawing on Wendy Brown’s (2016) notion of sacrificial citizenship as well as Robyn Rodriguez’s (2010) concept of migrant citizenship, I situate participant narratives of sacrifice within a broader context of neoliberal restructuring to make sense of the ways in which relations between the state and citizens have been reimagined and reconstituted. I argue that participant narratives of sacrifice are indicative of the kinds of trade-offs made necessary by new forms of citizenship that have accompanied the rise of neoliberalism.

6.1 Motivations for and Trajectories of Migration

As discussed in chapter two, the multiple crises of social reproduction exacerbated by neoliberal globalization in both sending and receiving nations necessitates the transnational migration of women as a livelihood strategy. In response to high levels of unemployment and underemployment, as well as limited social services following years of neoliberal structural adjustment policies in the Philippines, many families adopt migration as a means of improving their material well-being and as a pathway to upward social mobility. These factors were clearly evident in participant’s explanations of their reasons for deciding to migrate abroad for work. Zel, for instance, explained that her children had ongoing health issues and that she could not afford the health care they required:
But the reason why we are going out is it’s very expensive in the Philippines to pay for the hospital. That’s why I went to Saudi Arabia, because my two children are sickly, they are asthmatic and every month they have to be hospitalized. It’s really not my decision to go out, my family said, ‘you have to do something because you cannot live like this, your husband cannot support all of these expenses.’ They said, ‘don’t worry about your children we will take care of them.’ Like all my sisters said that to me ‘so you have to go out to work to support them.’ We talked about it, me and my husband, and we said okay we will just do this. It was the hardest thing to do. My family helped, they took good care of my children, and we talked every day on Skype.

For Zel, the higher wages she could earn abroad as well as the better quality of life she associated with living in a “developed” country were major motivating factors in her decision to come to Canada as a live-in caregiver.

Others cited a lack of employment opportunities in the Philippines and the need to support their children as the primary reason they, in consultation with their families, made the decision to migrate abroad. Most everyone also agreed that the possibility of settling permanently was a significant factor in choosing to come to Canada. As one focus group participant explained:

Melissa: No, everyone, everyone who comes here in Canada their motivation is to bring their family, and second there are a lot of opportunities here and they said Canada is the safest country. But it’s hard to come here, a lot of things to do before you can come to Canada. For me I worked in Hong Kong for three years and six months before I came here. I am still working for my employer for six years, I just pass my application for PR, permanent residence status.

Even for those who did not have children, the potential of obtaining permanent residence and later sponsoring other family members was a significant motivating factor:

Simone: I have been working here for twenty months. I am hoping for next year to really start to process my open permit. And I came from Hong Kong also for almost three years before I come here in Canada, and I work in Saudi Arabia also for two years. My motivation in life is the same situation for some of the people
here – I want to bring some of my family here – my parents, my sisters, my brothers.

Participant explanations speak to the kinds of negotiations many individuals in the Philippines have been compelled to make in response to the impacts of globalization and neoliberal restructuring over the past forty years and are directly tied to their familial responsibilities. For many, migration represents the promise of social mobility enabled by higher wages abroad, through remittances and/or permanent immigration to a wealthier country.

Equally important to recognize, however, are the non-economic motivations for migration that have been documented in other research studies, including the desire to leave a failing or abusive marriage in a country where divorce is illegal, as well as the desire to travel and experience other cultures (Manalansan, 2006; Parrenas, 2001; Tacoli, 1999). Other scholars have cautioned against framing the motivations for female migration in purely familial terms, pointing to non-economic factors and acknowledging that family goals and personal goals can sometimes overlap (Asis et al., 2004; Manalansan, 2006; Tacoli, 1999). As Asis et al. (2004) explain “the idea of initiating migration simply ‘for the sake of the family’ is likely to constitute a partial picture; instead, while pursuing family goals, women migrants also manage to pursue personal goals and interweave these in the migration project” (p. 204). Lydia, for instance, came to Canada much later in life after spending many years working as a “domestic helper” in Hong Kong and when her children were already adults. She explained that following the death of her husband, she applied to come to Canada through the LCP because there was no possibility of acquiring citizenship in Hong Kong:

As for me, I also came from Hong Kong and worked there for seventeen years, and I am planning really to apply here but at that time it was very hard you know because I am the breadwinner. So of course, coming here you have to spend money, a lot of money. So, when my husband died that is what I decided. In 2008, I applied. I asked first the agency if I can pass because of my age at that time, I am fifty-three. So, she said to me “fifty-three, but your face is so young.” So, I filled out the form, and then successfully, they look for an employer for me here
and it’s a Chinese family. […] And my motivation really is if you are in Hong Kong because there is no chance of permanent residence there, once you are old - go home. So here is you know the good opportunity and so now I am already a citizen. [Clapping]

In Lydia’s case, immigration to Canada offered greater security, which for some older migrant domestic/care workers remains “elusive” (Parreñas, 2015, p. 183).

Though most participants had intentions of settling permanently in Canada when they entered the LCP, this was not necessarily their original plan at the outset of their migration journey. Rather, as discussed in the previous chapter, all except one participant in this study worked in at least one other country before coming to Canada. For some, this was an intentional and necessary step to gain the experience required to qualify for entry to Canada, while for others their eventual decision to come to Canada was shaped by their experiences living and working in other host countries and by the connections they developed along the way. As such, they were engaged in what Mary Angu Paul (2017) terms a “step-wise international labor migration” pattern. Paul defines stepwise migration as:

the process by which capital- and information- constrained labor migrants accumulate migration-related capital of various kinds while working overseas, enabling them to eventually gain access to destinations that had been out of their reach and/or outside their awareness set when they originally left their home country. (p. 10)

As participant narratives affirm, it is not easy or common for care/domestic workers to migrate directly from the Philippines to Canada due to the higher costs associated with doing so and due to the education and work experience requirements of the LCP. In fact, only one participant in this study, May, who was encouraged by her husband to migrate abroad for the sake of their children, came to Canada directly from the Philippines. May was only able to do this because her sister-in-law, who previously came to Canada as a live-in caregiver, secured a job for May with her former employer.
In contrast, other participants, including Elsa, had to first seek employment in other countries to gain the necessary qualifications for entry to Canada:

So, I’ve been in the live-in caregiver program for five years and four months. And my motivation here is that, just like her, it’s like the easiest way to come into Canada. But prior to coming to Canada, I need to have at least one year experience in Hong Kong because from the Philippines it is quite hard to come to Canada, so one way is that I went to work in Hong Kong as a DH [domestic helper]. So as soon as I get the minimum requirements of one year I applied to Canada.

For Elsa, and others, working in Hong Kong was a steppingstone which enabled her to accumulate the resources needed to reach a more desired destination country. Although stepwise patterns of migration are varied and complex, according to Paul (2017):

What is shared across all stepwise journeys is their hierarchical, incremental, and fundamentally agentic nature. They are all attempts to climb a migrant’s ‘destination hierarchy,’ the personal, subjective ranking of different destinations in terms of each location’s attractiveness as a place in which to live and/or work.

(p. 10)

As Paul’s findings show, migration trajectories for Filipina domestic/care workers typically follow a path from the Middle East and/or Hong Kong and then Canada (p. 132). In contrast, established migration trajectories for Indonesian care/domestic workers rarely included Canada or other Western nations as the most preferrable destination.

Importantly, stepwise migration may not always begin intentionally, but rather may unfold more gradually in the process of migration (Paul, 2017). In Zel’s case, her negative experience working as a nurse in Saudi Arabia informed her decision to move to Canada, where she could eventually sponsor her husband and children for immigration:

So, my motivation for entering the live-in caregiver is to get me out from Saudi Arabia because I was working there as a nurse. And you know if you are working in Saudi Arabia, you don’t have the capability or opportunity to become a resident, you cannot even bring your family there. So, I really wanted to go to Canada. And for me, I think doing the live-in caregiver is the easiest way to come
here. Because if I will come as immigrant from express, I think there is an express entry visa, I cannot do the processing, its hard there in Saudi Arabia to do, it’s hard especially because I am a woman, and I don’t have family there. So doing this program was the easiest way for me to get here.

Even though Zel saw live-in caregiving as a step down professionally, she felt that the benefits of living and working in Canada were preferrable.

For other participants in this study, coming to Canada was not initially part of their plan, but upon working in other countries and developing friendships with fellow care/domestic workers, the possibility presented itself. This was certainly the case for Leo:

I did not plan to really come here, but I had my friend. I came from Hong Kong. We have friends there who came here earlier than me and they keep bugging us. We are three best friends; we are writing in a magazine, and they start bugging me. They are sending me papers, just sign up, you have an employer here. Something happened in Hong Kong that I really want to leave, personally I need to leave and when my friend said ‘do you really want to come here? I am moving out from my employer, and I am recommending you.’ I said yes, yes.

Like Leo, Mae also did not initially have a desire to come to Canada until her employers in Dubai, who were Canadian citizens, proposed that Mae accompany them there so that she could continue to care for their young children:

And my motivation is like, at first, I wasn’t really thinking of coming to Canada. I was working for seven years in Dubai prior to my employment to Canada, but it wasn’t on my mind, but then my employer processed my papers. I guess they liked me, and then they sponsored me. And so, I said okay, whatever comes if it goes through then yeah, why not, but if not, I won’t be that disappointed because it wasn’t really my dream. And by chance yeah it did go through. That was one of the reasons but now that like, yeah, the only way for me to get out of Dubai was that I had to be under the live-in caregiver, right, so that’s why I am under this program and yeah that’s it.
In Mae’s case, moving to Canada gave her an opportunity to leave Dubai, where she noted that working conditions were particularly poor for domestic workers. Moving to Canada also meant the possibility of sponsoring her husband and daughter for immigration. Although Mae, as well as the rest of the participants in this study, intended to apply for permanent residence in Canada, the end goal of stepwise migration does not always include settling permanently in another country. Rather, some migrant domestic/care workers aspire to work in a particular destination country for a few years with the intention of eventually returning home (Paul, 2017, p. 9). In either case, those engaged in a process of stepwise migration seek comparatively better working conditions and higher pay in different host countries as part of an individual or family strategy of survival and upward class mobility. Although participants in this study were able to reach their desired destination, it must be noted that due to exclusionary immigration policies in most host countries, “For the majority of serial migrants […] ‘stepwise’ migration is aspirational rather than practicable” (Parreñas et al., 2019, p. 1234).

Research on Filipina migrant care/domestic workers has documented the contradictory ways in which their class status shifts in the process of migration (Parreñas, 2015). Given that migrant Filipina care/domestic workers often have high levels of education and training, they commonly experience downward social mobility in the countries to which they migrate whilst their higher wages enable their families to maintain or achieve a middle-class lifestyle in the Philippines. Further to this, migrant workers enjoy improved social status in the Philippines precisely because of the material benefits migration enables and because of the way in which they are venerated in public and state discourses (Parreñas, 2015, p. 136).

6.2 Transnational Motherhood and the Impact of Family Separation

As is the case with many (though not all) migrant domestic workers, most participants in this study were married and had children (8 out of 11) or other relatives they supported in the Philippines. As such, they were members of transnational families; defined as
households where one (or more) members live in at least two different countries (Asis et al., 2002; Parreñas, 2015). As Parreñas (2015) explains “Although not occupying the same residence, family members in transnational households share resources, maintain a sense of collective responsibility for each other’s well-being, and uphold the duties expected of them as kin” (p. 53). Transnational households form among low-wage migrant workers in response to a number of structural factors including uneven development between sending and receiving nations and restrictive immigration policies in receiving countries (Parreñas, 2015). Numerous studies have documented the negative impact of family separation on migrant mothers, who commonly report a sense of loss of intimacy as well as feelings of grief, guilt, sadness, dislocation, and estrangement from their children (Arat-Koç, 1999; Asis et al., 2002; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Horton, 2008; Parreñas, 2001, 2015; Pratt, 2012). Likewise, research on transnational families has also documented feelings of abandonment, betrayal, resentment, insecurity, anxiety, fear, and a lack of understanding among the children of migrant domestic workers (Asis et al., 2002; Parreñas, 2015; Pratt, 2012). The experiences of the women I spoke with affirmed many of these findings.

The pain and duress endured as a result of family separation was palpable when participants recounted their experiences, especially when they discussed the impact their physical absence had on their children. Several participants described the hurt, anger, and resentment their children felt when they left to go abroad to work. For instance, Elsa recounted how her daughter, who was almost five years old when she first went to Hong Kong, would not sleep for the first three nights after she left:

On my part there is even a big sacrifice for me, because I left my daughter when she was almost five years old. It’s the first time that I am leaving her, so it’s really, so hard for me, but it’s more, harder on her part. Because she is really a momma’s girl, she doesn’t want her dad, and then suddenly I just leave her. Elsa explained further that her initial departure was made even more traumatic because she and her husband decided not to tell their daughter that Elsa was going to be far away for a long period of time:
And the worst part is that we lied to her. I didn’t tell her that I was going to Hong Kong. And then but all the while I was in Hong Kong. And I was told that the first two nights that I didn’t go home she would just stay there awake looking for mommy. After a week we told her that mommy is already in Hong Kong so that’s the first thing that she said that ‘I don’t like mommy she is a liar.’ So, it’s been two months when I was in Hong Kong, even though how hard I tried to talk to her, she wouldn’t talk to me. So, it’s really, painful for me on that part, because she hated me for lying to her.

When Elsa’s contract was abruptly terminated two months after she left, she returned home and was able to reconcile with her daughter:

I don’t know if it’s a blessing in disguise, I was terminated so I had to go back home so that’s the time that I used to explain to her even though she is already five years old. But I am so lucky my girl is so smart. So that’s why in the two months that I stayed in the Philippines I am waiting for my new job I was able to patch up. So, when I get back in Hong Kong, though it still really hurts, she already knows that it’s okay mom you can go but still she would really cry.

Before coming to Canada from Hong Kong, Elsa made sure she was able to go home to spend time with her daughter so she could explain why she was going to be far away again:

So before coming to Canada I made it a point, even though everyone advises me not to go back home, I said Canada is really, really far and I don’t know what will happen. So even though my grandfather is already buried, I lied to my employer, I told her that I need to go back home, my grandfather is dead. I want to say goodbye to him, so they let me go. So, I just stayed there for a week. So, when I came back, I told her that I would be going to Canada, ‘I’ll be doing this for you and your Daddy but don’t worry because I’ll be talking to you.’

Like several others, Elsa struggled to help her daughter understand why she was leaving. Indeed, children in transnational families commonly express a preference for their mothers’ presence, love, and affection over that of their fathers or extended family (Save the Children, 2006).
Respondents found separation particularly difficult when their children were ill or on special occasions when parents were expected to be present. For instance, Zel found it really painful being so far away when her children were in the hospital: “It’s really hard especially when they get sick. Yeah, they will call you ‘mommy I am in the hospital’ and you cannot go home. You just cry on the phone talking to them. It’s really a hard thing.” Similarly, Leo found separation especially hard when her children met certain milestones: “No, they just feel sad because especially in the elementary days, they write you ‘where are you? It’s my graduation’ and it’s the most hurting part.” Leo then recounted what her children said to her when she left to work in Hong Kong: “Wow, good for the kids of the Chinese people you are taking care of, but you left us when I was six years old.” Leo noted that this was a common refrain from the children of migrant caregivers who often express resentment towards their mothers.

The emotional reactions Leo and other respondents describe from their children are reflected in other studies of transnational households, particularly when it is the mother who migrates. Significantly, some studies suggest that children in transnational families find it more difficult to adjust when mothers migrate abroad as compared to fathers (Asis et al., 2002; Parreñas, 2015). Parreñas (2015) attributes these differential responses to the socially constructed expectations of mothers and fathers, which assign primary responsibility for child rearing to mothers. Recognizing that emotions are shaped by ideological forces, including gendered understandings of motherhood as requiring intensive care and nurturing, Parreñas (2015) argues “that socialized gender norms aggravate the emotional strains of transnational family life” (p. 86). As a result, migrant mothers face greater expectations than male migrants, who are regarded primarily as breadwinners, to continue to meet their children’s emotional care needs while earning an income abroad (Tungohan, 2013). At the same time, migrant mothers also experience contradictory expectations that, on the one hand, celebrate their economic contributions, and on the other hand problematize and pathologize their physical absence (Parreñas, 2015; Tungohan, 2013). Even though extended kin have long played an important role in child rearing in the Philippines and there is little evidence to suggest that women’s out-migration is linked to widespread social problems (Asis & Ruiz-Marave, 2013; Basitella
& Conaco, 1998), the association between the two remains pervasive in public and media discourse.

One prominent theme in the literature on transnational mothering and motherhood centers on the ways in which migrant mothers manage or negotiate their parenting responsibilities across borders in the light of these contradictory expectations (Asis et al., 2002; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Parreñas, 2015; Tungohan, 2013). These studies consistently show that despite the disruption caused by migration to traditional parental roles and responsibilities, many migrant mothers continue to maintain affective ties and parent across vast distances – and the women who participated in this study were no exception.

Participants utilized various practices to maintain relationships with their children, including regular communication via phone calls, text, or Skype in addition to sending remittances and returning home for visits. For instance, Elsa explained how she attempted to make up for her physical absence by calling her daughter regularly when she was working in Hong Kong:

> Because even though in Hong Kong, most of my salary is being used paying for cards, because I used to call her every day to check on her because I know that’s the only means to cover up for my absence in her life. So, I need to catch up to whatever is happening.

However, when Elsa initially came to Canada, she could not afford to call her daughter as often:

> So, when I came here to Canada, the problem here is that I couldn’t afford to get a new phone, so I just called her once a week, using my employer’s home phone. So, I was lucky they would allow me to do that, they would pay for that. I came here in September so in January the next year I was able to purchase a new phone so that’s when I had the chance to, it’s just texting … so it’s just through internet. So, until now that’s what I used to do, I called her twice a day one in the morning before she goes to school and then in the evening to check for her homework and to check whatever is happening to her.
In attempting to substitute for her physical absence by calling her daughter twice a day and continuing to monitor her progress in school, Elsa, as well as others in the group, enact what Ethel Tungohan (2013) terms “hyper maternalism.” Tungohan defines transnational hypermaternalism as “the way migrant women exhibit maternal care through financial support and thorough surveillance techniques enabling close communication across borders” (p. 41). Tungohan and others (Parreñas, 2015), have noted the greater possibilities for sharing information and monitoring children afforded to transnational parents by recent advances in communication technology. Although these technologies can never fully alleviate the pain of physical separation, they enable family members to maintain more regular contact in their daily lives than was previously possible.

In addition to communicating daily with their children, participants also tried to return home to visit as often as possible. While she was working in Hong Kong, Leo made it a point to try and go back to the Philippines at the end of each school year:

So, with that realization even if we have a hard time going home every year, even when I had the chance to go home twice a year, we tried our best to be there when they are in the closing sessions of school because they are very proud of what they did.

For others though, such frequent visits back home, especially after moving to Canada, were not practical financially. In Zel’s case, the significant cost of a flight back home from Toronto, prohibited her from maintaining such regular visits: “Since I am here in Canada I don’t go home really anymore. Before I used to go home every ten months and here, two years of not going home.” Rather than spend thousands of dollars on a flight to the Philippines, Zel reasoned, as many other migrant workers do, that it made more sense to stay in Toronto and send money to her family.

The toll of years of physical separation on the lives of live-in caregivers I spoke with was evident in their descriptions of how their relationships with their children changed over time. Many participants described feeling estranged from their children who no longer recognized them or became accustomed to their physical absence. After two years of
separation, May recalled that her daughters became very shy around her and on one occasion her eldest daughter said that May did not look like her mother anymore. Others described the confusion their children experienced when they returned home to visit. On one trip home, Zel remembered that her son continued to look for her in the screen even after two days went by:

Even when my son is two years old, I was there, I just came about two days ago. And then he said ‘where is Momma? Momma is on the phone. Where is mama? I don’t know is Mama on the phone or in the screen?’ He was looking for me in the screen.

Leo agreed and shared a similar experience upon returning to the Philippines to visit her daughter whom she left in the care of a “nanny” or “yaya”:

And when I came down from the [train] station and she came out, I heard it. It’s just across the street but I heard it she called the Yaya ‘Mama.’ She came out and I heard it she called the yaya, nanny, sitter ‘Mama, mama, aunty is here.’ And she was pointing at me. It was so painful.

Leo noted the irony of the situation that while working to provide for her daughter by caring for other people’s kids she was losing her relationship with her own children.

Despite their efforts to maintain emotional relationships with their children, everyone expressed a sense of disconnection. Wiping away tears as she began to speak, Raina described what it was like to be separated from her children for a total of thirteen years:

I am going to be very emotional, since I left my kids when they are very little. I left my youngest when she is only five months old and I am still lucky because every two years I go home, but the big difference is that they know that I am the mother, but the feeling of being distant with them. They only know my face and my voice, but they know that I am the mom.

Leo: Because your sister always tells [them] you are the mom.

Even though Raina’s mother and sister, who cared for her children while she was away, ensured that they knew she was their mother, Raina still felt estranged from them:

In my case it’s been thirteen years since I left my kids. I go back home for two weeks, the longest is three weeks. Very challenging because if you go home like
in the span of two weeks and yeah there is going be like, you will be like a stranger to them. Yeah, they may know you in voice or in pictures, but in reality, it’s like you have been forever away, a stranger to them.

Raina found it particularly painful when she came back home for a visit and her daughter was physically distant:

Right, I left her when she was five months old. Then when I come back, she was already two years and six months. And then she is like, she don’t want me to hold her, she is just staring at me. She don’t want me to stay with my husband closer. She was like ‘stay away from my dad.’ Yeah, like you know, and it hurts. I keep on, I cried and then my mother would say ‘don’t mind them they are only kids, they are gonna be okay.’

Eventually Raina’s daughter would warm up to her, but when it was time for her to leave again, they would have to relive the painful experience of separation: “Like if will stay three weeks, then the relationship will be very good again, but the parting time is very hurting again. When you come and then you go its very bad.”

Overtime, other participants described how their children, who were initially angry and resentful, eventually became accustomed or indifferent to their absence. Lydia, who worked abroad in Hong Kong for seventeen years before coming to Canada, recalled that when she would return home to visit, it seemed like her children did not want her around:

My daughter at the time when I left, she was only five months, now she is almost thirty. So, the gap is very long. Because my husband, who was still alive at the time, took care of her. And when I go home, because every two years, because the contract finished, we go to have vacation. So, of course you can feel they are far away from you. When I am with my husband they will say ‘stay away.’ And they will say ‘go home to your home.’ Because they are always not seeing me in the household. So, it’s painful to us that they will say to you, ‘you are not here living, go away.’

Zel similarly explained that when she returned to the Philippines for vacation from Saudi Arabia, she could sense that her children really wanted her to go back:
Sometimes when I was in Saudi Arabia my vacations are long. I got long vacations, two months – and that is paid. When I go there after a month my children are asking me ‘Mom when are you going back?’ I will say, ‘why do you want me to go?’ They will say no, they gave me good reasons. But actually, they want me to go.

Their children’s protectiveness of their fathers and apparent indifference towards their mothers’ presence, is indicative of the disruption migration often causes to traditional gender roles within the family, which has also been the subject of considerable research.

Early studies on transnational families suggested that despite the role reversal that occurs when mothers migrate and become the breadwinner, “left-behind” fathers largely did not take on the nurturing and household work previously carried out by their wives (Battistella & Conaco, 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Parreñas, 2005). Instead, Parreñas (2005) found that eldest daughters, female extended kin or domestic workers carried out the bulk of this work, while migrant mothers continued to nurture their children from afar. Similarly, in their research, Battistella and Conaco (1998) found that it was much more common for extended kin to live in the household with left behind fathers (69%) than in the households of left behind mothers (39%) (p. 231).

More recent research, however, suggests that after decades of women’s out-migration, this may be shifting and left behind fathers may be taking on more of the caring and household labor in the absence of their partners (Asis et al, 2002; Garabiles et al., 2017; Hoang & Yeoh, 2011; Lam & Yeoh, 2014, 2018; Pingol, 2001; Taho, 2014); a pattern which is certainly reflected in the experiences of some of the participants in this study. In her research, Pingol (2001) found that in many instances where mothers migrated, “househusbands” in the Philippines assumed an important role in caring for their children and in performing household labour. Similarly, in their study of Filipino transnational families, Asis et al. (2002), observed that of the seven men they interviewed, all except one took on some or most of the reproductive labour, including cooking, cleaning, and childcare, when their wives migrated overseas for work. Importantly though, only one became a full-time carer and the rest continued to work for wages in addition to caring
for their children and doing household work. In a more recent study with thirteen Filipino and twenty-two Indonesian “left behind father-carers”, Lam and Yeoh (2018) found that while care arrangements for children often included extended kin, in most instances the father was reported as the primary caregiver.

Some have interpreted men’s greater participation in care and domestic work in transnational families as evidence of gradual social change (Gamburd, 2000), while others have questioned the pervasiveness of this pattern (Parreñas, 2015). Parreñas (2015), for instance, argues that Pingol’s findings were based on a small sample and do not reflect the patterns found in larger studies (p. 49). Furthermore, in interpreting their findings of greater involvement of left behind fathers in childcare and housework, Lam and Yeoh (2018) cautiously concluded:

there is no clear evidence at this point to indicate revolutionary transformation in gender ideologies around parenthood and childcare. Left-behind father-carers in the study still prefer migration/work to taking over the mothers’ roles, showing that they are still generally uncomfortable in radically changing existing gender ideologies and household division of labour. (p. 114)

The various ways in which left behind husbands/fathers negotiate these shifting roles in relation to their masculine identities seems to support this conclusion (Lam & Yeoh, 2014, 2018). For instance, the men in Lam and Yeoh’s (2018) study managed feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment by framing caregiving as their responsibility or duty to contribute to the family to compensate for their inability to maintain their status as the breadwinner. Interestingly, Pingol (2001) noted that some left-behind husbands she interviewed reasserted their masculine identity by pointing to their ability to efficiently manage remittances and emphasizing the skills required to do housework including “organization, precision and physical strength” (p. 229). What these findings suggest is that although gender roles may shift in families where mothers migrate, both migrant mothers and “left-behind” fathers seem to interpret these changes in ways that conform to rather than challenge traditional gender ideologies (Lam & Yeoh, 2018; Pingol, 2001; Tungohan, 2013). What also remains less clear is whether a more traditional gender division of labour is reinstated once families are reunited either in the Philippines or in the
Studies in the Indonesian context suggest that these changes may not be permanent and that most female return migrants resumed their responsibility for caring and household labour (Hugo, 2005; Silvey, 2006). Similarly, Parreñas (2015) found that the greater employment opportunities that exist for Filipina women in Italy, due to employer preference for hiring women as domestic workers, has not translated into a more equal division of household and caring labour within their families. However, further research is needed to better understand the long-term impacts of shifting gender roles in transnational families.

Despite participant’s efforts to maintain relationships with their children, several women explained that as their children got older, they seemed less interested in talking on the phone. Elsa recalled how her daughter became less communicative over time:

- But since she entered third grade, seven and eight because she is with a group of peers, even though she doesn’t tell me, I can sense there is this feeling that we are getting apart. Before she tells me everything. Now, if I ask her what’s going on she says it’s just the same, as if the feelings she is already having secrets and it’s because of her peer group and sometimes if I call, I can tell from the tone of her voice she doesn’t want to talk to me. No interest, and sometimes if I call, she will give the phone to her dad.

This was an experience to which others in the group could relate. May described how when she initially left for Canada her children would call her regularly, but they eventually lost interest in talking on the phone:

- Yeah, I have two kids, both girls. I left them when they were eleven and nine years old. And then we are always chatting but it’s not enough even every day because before they are very sweet but now, my eldest […] suddenly she turned off the phone. So, I am so sad. They used to say something like ‘Mom how are you?’ Right, now they didn’t ask me ‘how are you?’ Before they always asked how are you? Like my husband if he doesn’t tell them to call me, they do not call me. So yeah.

Their experiences echo those of other migrant care workers who commonly express a sense of grief over the loss of an emotional connection with their children (Parreñas,
2015). Notably, feelings of grief, loss, and estrangement do not immediately disappear once families are reunited.

At the time of the interviews, Raina and Leo were the only two study participants who had been reunited with their children in Canada. As with many migrant care workers who are mothers, they both described the difficulties associated with reunification. Raina explained that her relationship with her daughter, now a teenager, was strained due to so many years of separation:

Thirteen years [apart] and when they come over two years ago it was very stressful. My daughter she gave me a very hard time. My son he is okay, but my daughter she gave me a very hard time, especially she is already in the stage of youth so it’s like [hard].

Raina further described how a feeling of separation or emotional distance persisted between her and her children even after they joined her in Canada:

Like when they came over last year, it was very stressful, and it made me sick. Like, it is a really, very tough situation, like, you are living together, but in a sense that they are still far from you. I come, like they are there, but it’s in the sense that you are not there, you know? Like, but I am hurt, you are hurt. […] Because even now you are chatting every day you are calling them every day, but it’s very hard, even with my daughter it’s different, it’s very, very hard. Even with my daughter I talk to my daughter I know she wants to communicate with me but the feeling of stranger or sudden stranger, the feeling [is still there].

While recounting her experience, Raina urged others in the group who had yet to be reunited with their children and husbands to be prepared for the challenges that they would likely encounter:

It’s going to be a more stressful day, you are going to be working the whole day, and when you come home when you see them, it seems like nobody [is there]. They will not ask you ‘hi Mom did you eat are you okay?’ No. It’s like just like I am gonna tell them ‘hi guys.’ Like, no response. And then I say ‘is anybody home, hello, hello?’ It’s like, oh my, and when they are teenagers right and they are going to adopt the culture here it’s, oh my. […] you have to be prepared and
each of us if you have kids back home you have to be very, very tough and you have to be very, very prepared when they come over especially with your husband too because it’s very, very hard. Even when you are apart from them for two, three, five years, thirteen years, it’s very, very hard it’s like you are starting again from the very first step, like giving birth to them with your kids.

Again, talking to others in the group, Raina went on to describe the stress associated with working to support her children in Canada while continuing to support other family members back home:

Because when your family come over there will be more challenges. Because you have responsibilities with your employers and you will have your own responsibilities with your husbands and your kids and it adds up [and] it’s very hard to deal, yeah especially when your family will come over and your family will give you hard time. Even your husband will give you hard time. Because even if your husband will work, there will be more complicated stuff that, because he is going to deal with his work and us too and family back home, especially when the family back home they think that you are like the financial breadwinner, they keep on asking ‘brother send me [money]’. Because they think that our life here is so comfortable, that they did not know that my husband is working very hard just to deal with us, everyday stresses here and they are going to keep asking him to send money back home. What about us, right? He has a family to deal here and then how come they keep asking? I understand, but they should understand too, but Filipino people when it comes to deal with family coming over here, they think we are rich.

The challenges Raina describes here reiterate the difficulties associated with family reunification documented in other studies (Parreñas, 2015; Pratt, 2012). In the Canadian context, Pratt (2012) found that the intergenerational impacts of transnational migration on Filipino youth were particularly negative. She noted that the children of live-in caregivers, whose mothers often worked long hours, struggled in school, and oftentimes found themselves employed in low-wage service and caring jobs similar to those performed by their mothers. Likewise, in the second edition of Servants of Globalization, Parreñas (2015) observed a similar pattern among some of the children of Filipina
migrant domestic workers in Italy whom she interviewed. However, she also noted an
important distinction in outcomes based on when children migrated to join their mothers:

Those who came as adolescents were more likely to attend university or technical
school and hold semiprofessional or professional jobs in Italy; those migrating as
teenagers became proficient in Italian, gaining access to retail or restaurant jobs;
and those who arrived in Italy as adults were likely to face language difficulties
and follow their mothers into domestic work. (p. 79)

Parreñas also noted, however, that it was less common for the children of migrant
domestic workers to migrate to Italy in adolescence due to a variety of factors, including
restrictive immigration policies and a higher cost of living.

Notwithstanding the difficulties she was experiencing with her daughter, Raina expressed
her determination to continue working to repair their relationship:

Yeah, that’s why I keep on saying, I will not give up on her, because I am her
mother, even though my sister and my mother took care of her, I am still the
mother, I will not give up on her. It’s [been] like two years. It’s very hard but
well, yeah and I thank God and the circle of friends they give me support even
with emotional prayers. It really helps a lot.

While it is difficult to generalize about the long-term impacts of family separation on
parent-child relationships, there is evidence to suggest that in some instances, children
and parents in transnational families can rebuild their relationships over time. For
example, in her study with two former live-in caregivers and their daughters in Canada,
de Leon (2009) observed that in adulthood, both women grew to understand the reason
their mothers went abroad to work and were able to restore their relationships.
Importantly, de Leon noted that in these cases, the involvement of both daughters in
Filipino activist and advocacy groups enabled them to develop a critical perspective on
their own experiences, which helped them to reconcile their relationships with their
mothers. Similarly, Parreñas (2015) observed that over time, the children of migrant
domestic workers she interviewed in Italy:

learn[ed] to see the formation of the transnational family not as their parents’ fault
but as a reality imposed by structural forces, including barriers to higher
education, racism in the classroom, the absence of public childcare support, and their parents’ low wages. They come to understand the maintenance of transnational families, and the challenges of reunification, as a struggle they share with their migrant parents. (p. 83)

The women who I spoke to certainly expressed hope that in the long-term their children would eventually grow to appreciate why they made the decision to move abroad. Participants worried about whether they made the right decision but maintained faith that bargain they made would pay off in the long run.

6.3 Maternal Sacrifice and Spiritual Faith

Respondents made sense of their decision to migrate and their experiences as caregivers through the language of sacrifice. They framed the difficulties they encountered, including the degrading aspects of the work and the painful experience of familial separation, as a sacrifice, the benefits of which would be experienced by their children. Many described giving up their own happiness as well as their relationships with their children in the hopes that they and their families would fare better in the long run. Leo, as well as others in the group, interpreted the loss of an emotional connection with their children as the price of caregiving:

Yeah, and in addition to what she says the price of caregiving is losing your kids. It’s I don’t know but it’s a fact that when they are still there, when you go home, they just see you on a material basis because you have all the money, you have the clothes, you have the toys. But not the love that you are expecting from them. I felt that when I was still in Hong Kong.

Similarly, as Zel, who went abroad to work so that she could afford the medical care her children required, explained – “you are the sacrifice, but they are the beneficiary” – referring to her children. Participants saw the impact that family separation had on their relationships with their children as the cost of the bargain or trade-off they made to provide them with a better quality of life. Framing their experiences as a sacrifice brought meaning and purpose to the work they carried out and allowed them to cope with the negative consequences of family separation.
For several of the women in this study, faith in God also served as an important source of strength that helped them to endure sacrifices that it was hoped, would enable them to leverage a better standard of living for themselves and their families. For instance, Raina explained that if she maintained her faith and relationship with the creator, everything would work out in the long term. Similarly, others expressed a firm belief that so long as they continued to pray and keep faith in God they could persevere and surpass anything to achieve their long-term goals, which for most included the desire to immigrate permanently to Canada with their families. As Leo explained, “if you have developed your faith, whatever happens you can surpass it. There are trials, yeah, but if your faith is really deep no matter what, they may destroy you, tell stories, this and that, but if your faith is strong, you will sail on against that.”

Importantly, despite the hardships and difficulties they faced while employed in the LCP, most agreed that the sacrifices they made were worth it in the long run. In contemplating this question, Zel came to the following somewhat tenuous conclusion:

I said that sometimes I thought is it worth it to go away from your family and earn dollars and give them everything that they want and, on your way, you are losing your relationship with them? That’s the impact of staying here as a caregiver. […] I think it maybe is still worth it, but it is difficult. At the beginning it will be very, very difficult but in the long term I think it is worth it, because my aim is to take them to be with me. And I think I can achieve that, so the goal will be just to get them, and I think it will be good.

Recognizing that their relationships with their children were forever altered, Leo explained that she still thought it was worth it because of the benefits it afforded to the family as a whole:

Yeah, I think it is worth it, but it is really a sacrifice on the part of the one who went ahead. Because it will be another challenge when they come, and it will not be the same as before. So just to give you some tips not to get frustrated, don’t hope you will bring back to what you used to be. That will never happen. It will be another level. You can prepare but you have to consider there are lots of trials to get to that. And maybe yes maybe no, that you will succeed but at least you
have done the best that you can. And don’t think of the sacrifice and hardship that you had. It may not be worth it for you because some we have sacrificed ourselves even our own happiness but that’s for the sake of the family. But it’s worth it for the whole family.

Notably, their responses are strikingly similar to those of the live-in caregivers Tungohan (2013) interviewed in Canada. In her research, Tungohan observed that most of the women she spoke to “felt that despite the hardships they endured under the LCP and the difficulties of family separation, they did not want to be anywhere else. They pragmatically weighed their alternatives, ultimately concluding that dire economic conditions in the Philippines made migration necessary” (p. 48).

6.4 Neoliberalism and Sacrificial Citizenship

The kinds of sacrifices the women who participated in this study feel compelled to make are a direct result of political and economic conditions stemming from liberalization policies implemented in the Philippines since the 1970s. We can see in their narratives how the conditions engendered by these broader processes inform their decisions to migrate abroad in search of higher wages to meet their reproductive needs. The negotiation they make to sacrifice their relationships with their children in hopes of providing them with a better life, are indicative of the particular ways in which citizenship has been reconfigured or reimagined in a neoliberal context.

Neoliberalism posits that the market is the most efficient mechanism for meeting people’s needs and addressing social problems. According to this logic, the role of the state should be limited to maintaining the necessary conditions for economic growth and capital accumulation by facilitating free trade and protecting private property and individual freedoms. The key principles of neoliberalism, namely liberalization, deregulation, and privatization, legitimize limited state intervention in markets based on the assumption that markets are best suited to ensuring the most efficient use and allocation of resources (Harvey, 2005). In the name of economic growth, neoliberalism promotes the privatization of government owned assets as well as reduced government spending on social programs and services. Thus, neoliberalism devolves responsibility for services
like health care and education to individuals, who are “free” to purchase them in the market (Brown, 2016).

In addition to refashioning state-market relations, neoliberalism also rationalizes a particular way of conceiving of the roles and responsibilities of citizens. It values a particular type of citizen-subject, namely the self-sufficient, self-reliant, hard-working individual who is motivated by self-interest and acts to maximize self-gain. Such a person assumes personal responsibility for managing social risks and economic insecurities and makes no claims on the state. Instead, they seek self-advancement and self-improvement as a solution to what are framed as “personal” problems. The culture of individualism that has accompanied the rise of neoliberalism encourages people to prioritize their own interests without concern for the well-being of others or the community as a whole. It discourages people from working cooperatively or collaboratively with others to bring about broader social and institutional change. Daniel (2014) articulates this point clearly when she states: “political and cultural discourses in the age of neo-liberalism have instantiated ideals and norms of citizenship that foreground personal, intimate, and market-oriented modes of belonging over public and overtly political ones” (p. 129).

Wendy Brown (2016) uses the term “sacrificial citizenship” to describe the ways in which citizenship has been reconfigured and reimagined in a neoliberal context. Brown notes that when governments implement austerity policies, including cuts to services or layoffs, citizens are often called on by politicians to accept these consequences and to make sacrifices in the name of economic growth. In such a context, Brown explains that citizen virtue is also “reworked as the ‘shared sacrifice’ potentially required for a healthy or troubled but above all flexible economy” (p. 8). As Brown explains further “Citizenship entails reconciling our expectations, behaviours, and livelihoods to those ends. Virtuous citizenship undertakes this reconciliation; bad citizenship (greedy public employees, lazy consumers of benefits, or insufficiently flexibilized workers) spurns it” (p. 11). Virtuous citizens then, are those who take on responsibility for their own well-being by pursuing “savvy self-investment and entrepreneurial strategies of self-care” (Brown, 2016, p. 9).
In the case of the Philippines, the state has pursued international migration since the 1970s as a means of alleviating the insecurities and disruptions to everyday life engendered by liberalization (Rodriguez, 2010). As a labour broker, a key function of the Philippine state is to meet capital’s demand for cheap and flexible labour by encouraging and preparing its citizens for overseas migration, which includes ensuring that they behave responsibly and return home at the end of their contracts. In *Migrants for Export*, Robyn Rodriguez (2010) discusses how the pursuit of this strategy for economic growth and development has resulted in a reconfiguration of the relationship between the Philippine state and its citizens, resulting in the emergence of what she terms “migrant citizenship” (p. 79). Migrant citizenship refers to a set of “rights” the state extends to migrant workers as well as the responsibilities and obligations it confers on them in return. For its part, the state offers migrant workers protection from exploitation and abuse and provides benefits that are exclusive to migrant workers, such as skills training and upgrading before, during, and after migration, as well as educational supports for the children of migrant workers (Rodriguez, 2010). In return for (minimal) state protection and benefits, migrants are expected to be model employees and “cultural ambassadors” for the Philippines, whose behaviour has the potential to uphold or tarnish the country’s esteemed reputation as a source of high-quality workers. Within this normative framework, the good migrant citizen (or flexible-worker citizen) is one who is willing to work hard, follow the rules, and return home at the end of their contract.

Despite its various efforts to guarantee the safety and security of its citizens abroad, a tension persists between the need to protect the rights of migrant workers and the market-driven nature of labour migration (Tigno, 2014). Indeed, as Tigno (2014) aptly explains “The capacity of the Philippine state to protect the rights of migrant workers is constrained in the context of a state-facilitated, private recruitment-dominated, and market-driven migration system” (p.33). While the state attempts to manage this contradiction, Tigno argues that what ultimately results is “the subordination of a rights-based approach to a market-based approach” (p. 34). This is evidenced by the stipulations of the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act, which emphasizes skills training and
education as the best way migrant workers can protect themselves from exploitation and abuse.

In reconstituting the terms of citizenship, the Philippine state also rewrites nationalist discourses to encourage and legitimatize the overseas employment of its citizens, in service of its neoliberal agenda. One way the state has sought to achieve this goal is by framing overseas workers as national heroes, who make sacrifices for the sake of their families and the health of the national economy. In this context, moving abroad for work becomes a “nationalistic act,” that “requires some degree of suffering but ultimately advances the greater national good” (Rodriguez, 2010, p. 85). As Guevarra (2010) explains, the notion of social heroism “is deeply rooted in Catholic ideals of suffering, sacrifice and martyrdom, the predominant cultural norms that structure the ways Filipinos interpret their everyday lives in times of social despair and that imbue individuals who possess these ideals with a status of social respectability” (p. 56). Thus, framing migrant workers as self-sacrificing heroes constitutes a legitimation strategy in the face of criticism of the state’s labour export program, including its inability to live up to its obligations to citizens by securing adequate living conditions within its national borders.

The promise of migrant citizenship is also a means through which the Philippine state attempts to govern the conduct of its citizens. In preparing citizens for overseas migration, the state engages several “disciplinary techniques,” including mandatory pre-departure orientation seminars and skills training programs for overseas workers. Ostensibly aimed at protecting migrant workers by equipping them with information, critics argue that these programs ultimately serve to educate migrant workers about their responsibilities and obligations in what Guevarra (2010) describes as a process of empowering them to self-govern (p. 51). In these seminars, migrant workers are implored to work hard, earn money, send remittances, and manage their finances in a responsible way to ensure their family’s security in the short and long-term. Social reproduction is thus reframed as an individual responsibility, entirely dependent upon the migrant worker’s ability to govern themselves responsibly while abroad. As Guevarra (2010) argues, in preparing citizens for overseas migration, “the state is relieved of any
responsibility for their overall well-being, since these well-informed workers are already equipped with the knowledge needed for their protection” (p. 65).

In her analysis of predeparture orientation and training programs, Rodriguez (2010) demonstrates how the state draws on gendered notions of family and sacrifice as a means of regulating and disciplining overseas workers. Female migrants are instructed to behave in ways that are consistent with their religious and moral values, which includes continuing to fulfil their roles as wives and mothers. Rodriguez contends that what these programs really teach labour migrants is how to withstand the difficulties they will face rather than resist them. She writes:

Confidence building exercises are neoliberal techniques of self-government and regulation – confidence becomes a means by which one strengthens one’s will to accept adverse conditions rather than challenging them. To do so is to be a good overseas worker; indeed, it is to be a good overseas Filipino worker and therefore to take up the mantle of Philippine migrant citizenship. (p. 108)

From this perspective, practicing sacrifice through faith and prayer, can be read as “techniques of self-government,” through which migrant workers attempt to regulate their own behaviour to conform to the ideals of neoliberal (migrant) citizenship. However, while the goals of citizens and the state overlap to some extent, migrant women are not simply passive followers of state directives and policies. The women in this study did not express their desires to migrate abroad in nationalistic terms. Rather, as their narratives indicate, they are responding to the impact of broader economic and political changes on their lives through a limited set of opportunities available to them. In so doing, they simultaneously conform to and resist the imperatives of migrant citizenship. Not only did many of the women I spoke to challenge exploitation in both subtle and overt ways, but the goal of their migration projects, mainly to settle permanently in Canada, was also at odds with those of sending and receiving states. As their narratives show, for most, the “short-term” sacrifices they endure are part of a long-term strategy to access some of the rights and benefits associated with citizenship (unavailable in the Philippines) in the countries to which they (im)migrate.
6.5 Sacrifice as Embedded Agency

Sacrifice and spiritual faith are common themes in qualitative research conducted with Filipina migrant caregivers that raise important questions about agency (Liebelt, 2011; Parreñas, 2015; Pratt, 2012; Tungohan, 2013). On the one hand, narratives of sacrifice can be read as a re-inscription of traditional gender norms that construct “good mothers” as those who are willing to put their child’s needs before their own. Framing migration as a sacrifice then, may be one way that migrant mothers, and indeed the state, reconcile notions of “good motherhood” with their physical absence. As a result, some scholars have interpreted notions of sacrifice in the narratives of migrant caregivers as a mechanism for coping with the stigma associated with female migration (Tyldum, 2015). Several studies highlight the contradictory ways in which female migrants are represented in public discourse in their countries of origin (Parreñas, 2001a, 2015; Rodriguez, 2010; Tungohan, 2013; Tyldum, 2015). Hailed as heroes for their economic contributions by the state, migrant mothers are also vilified for social problems and familial breakdown supposedly caused by their absence. For the Ukrainian migrant domestic workers Tyldum (2015) interviewed, framing their actions as a sacrifice was one way they rebuffed such ideas and made sense of their experiences of degradation while working as carers and cleaners in Italy. As Tyldum explains, “stigma shapes the way people talk about migration, making some narratives more easily available and some decisions and experiences taboo” (p. 57). Tyldum argues further that narratives of sacrifice serve to frame female migration as a forced choice that erases migrant caregiver’s agency by conflating women’s interests with those of their families and obscuring other reasons that women may choose to migrate abroad for work.

I argue that such a reading of sacrifice in terms of a lack of agency is only possible if agency is conceptualized solely in terms of resistance to tradition. As scholars such as Mahmood (2001) and Korteweg (2008) have pointed out, in Western feminist scholarship agency tends to be defined in terms of opposition or resistance to traditional gender norms that restrict and constrain women’s opportunities and possibilities. Framing agency in this way, however, offers limited understanding of the actions of women that might appear to reinforce traditional gender norms or that may be grounded in patriarchal
religious traditions. Instead, Saba Mahmood (2001) invites us to “think of agency not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create” (p. 203).

Building on Mahmood’s foundational work, Anna C. Korteweg (2008) makes a distinction between agency, which as she notes, refers to a person’s capacity to act and assess the potential impacts of actions on future outcomes, and autonomy which refers to a person’s capacity to act in a self-interested way. According to Korteweg, conflating agency and autonomy forecloses a notion of agency as relational, including the possibility that one’s capacity for action may be embedded in socially and culturally defined relationships to others or informed by religious principles. In contrast, she argues that “A conceptualization of agency as embedded takes seriously that women’s subjectivity is informed by their religious practices in ways that directly shape their agentic behavior” (p. 444).

Drawing on Korteweg’s notion of embedded agency, I frame sacrifice as a form of agency rooted in traditional gender norms and spiritual beliefs as well as a kind of neoliberal subjectivity. Embedded agency offers a more nuanced understanding of the various ways in which the women in this study made sense of their decision to migrate to Canada and of the pain and difficulties experienced as a result of restrictive migration policies that devalue reproductive work. For many of the women in this study, conceptions of themselves as mothers who were willing to make sacrifices for their children and families undergird their decision to migrate abroad for work and to endure the degradation and stigma that characterizes care and domestic work in a gendered and racialized global economy. While the sacrifices (some) women are compelled to make for others can be seen (and experienced) as a source of disempowerment, it leaves no room for the possibility that some women may also derive meaning, purpose, and identity from their relationships to others – including their children, partners, and extended family. As several of the women in this study explained, notions of sacrifice motivate and inform their capacity to act and to make strategic life choices that aim to improve their own well-being as well as that of their families. My point here is not to minimize the structural
constraints that limit their choices and opportunities, but to acknowledge the ways in which their actions, and the meanings ascribed to them, are rooted in and informed by the social and cultural contexts in which they are embedded. I argue further that recognizing agency in the context of limited opportunities does not negate advancing a critique of an unjust economic system that requires some groups to sacrifice a lot more than others. What I am saying is that we can critique this unjust system while remaining attentive to the ways in which people maneuver within it in attempting to better their own as well as their family’s life chances. What is lost in the process, or the messiness of these trade-offs, is evident in the narratives of the women who participated in this study.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the interrelated themes of transnational motherhood and sacrifice and spiritual faith. Participants’ experience of transnational motherhood, including the pain of family separation, was a prominent theme that emerged from focus group interviews. In making sense of these experiences and of their jobs as caregivers, participants framed their decisions as a sacrifice. They were willing to risk the negative impact that migration might have on their relationships with their children and endure the degradation they experienced while employed as live-in caregivers, if it meant they could access the benefits of citizenship in Canada. Their migration trajectories thus constitute a pattern of “step-wise” migration and are indicative of the shifting norms of citizenship in the neo-liberal era. The sacrifices they feel compelled to make stem from an erosion of state responsibility for social reproduction in the Philippines. In response, they attempt to secure a better life for themselves and their families by pursuing the promise of citizenship offered through the LCP. Faith in God that in the long run their decision will pay off helps them to endure these sacrifices.
Chapter 7

7 Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this study was to explore how migrant care and domestic workers make meaning about the reproductive labour that they provide in the LCP, in light of the way that it is socially and economically devalued. This chapter reviews the central themes that emerged from focus group interviews as they relate to existing literature on transnational care migration, dirty work, identity and meaning making. In addition to outlining key contributions of the study findings to the existing literature, this chapter also includes a discussion of study limitations as well as implications for future research.

7.1 Discussion of Study Findings and Key Contributions

Using the concept of “dirty work” to understand the stigma attached to care and domestic work, this study set out to explore how migrant care workers assign meaning to the work they performed while employed in the LCP. Drawing on insights from feminist standpoint theory, I asserted that migrant care/domestic workers constitute an “epistemic community,” whose experiences within an international division of reproductive labour that is structured by race, gender, and class hierarchies, may have implications for how they make meaning about reproductive labour. To explore these questions, three focus group interviews were conducted with eleven current and former live-in caregivers in Toronto in 2016 and 2017. Four distinct but interconnected themes emerged from the interview data including: stigma and exploitation, care as relational, transnational motherhood, and sacrifice and spiritual faith.

The first theme that emerged from focus group interviews was stigma and exploitation. As this study showed, the terms of the LCP enable the exploitation and abuse of migrant care workers with impunity. Participant accounts of their experiences indicated that they routinely performed duties outside of those specified in their contracts and worked more than eight hours a day. Although employers are legally required to pay wages to live-in
caregivers on statutory holidays and for overtime hours, almost everyone reported that their employers did not. This was the case even for some of those who described their employers as “nice” or “good.” What this indicates is that the two are not mutually exclusive and even seemingly “nice” employers still may not see it as their legal obligation or duty to pay people caring for their family members for overtime or on holidays. Although some participants felt their employers treated them “like one of the family,” they used the analogy of flipping a coin to describe the chances of ending up with a “good” or “bad” employer. Furthermore, their goals of applying for permanent residence, and eventually sponsoring their families, deterred them from resisting or reporting instances of wage theft. Thus, the findings affirm what numerous studies have previously shown: that the live-in requirement and temporary status in particular render caregivers vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (Faraday, 2012; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005; Stiell & England, 1997). I argued further that these experiences stem in part from the way in which care/domestic work is devalued and stigmatized. Both employer’s treatment of live-in caregivers as well as the terms of the LCP reflect and reinforce the invisible and devalued status of care and domestic work. Collectively, participant narratives indicate that in addition to policy changes, a broader cultural shift is needed to reframe public understandings of the value and importance of care and domestic work.

Despite or in spite of their experiences of exploitation, the second theme demonstrated the various discursive strategies study participants utilized to assign meaning to their work. One of the central ways participants countered constructions of their work as dirty was by emphasizing the relational dimensions of their job and downplaying the non-relational aspects, a strategy that has been documented in other studies on dirty work (Bosmans et al., 2016). For many participants in this study, framing their work broadly as “caregiving” brought meaning to the job by foregrounding what they found to be the most rewarding aspects. Thus, they preferred to refer to themselves as caregivers, a name that they felt brought a greater sense of dignity and respect to their job. In emphasizing the relational aspects of the job, they disavow the negative connotation attached to labels such as “housemaid” or “helper.” Their efforts also speak to the difficulty of negotiating the stigma attached to the non-relational or “dirty” aspects of care and domestic work.
The third major theme that emerged from participant narratives highlighted the difficulties associated with family separation and reunification. Like many migrant domestic workers who are mothers, the women in this study experienced a sense of loss and disconnection from their children after years of physical separation. Although some scholars question the extent to which women’s out-migration negatively impacts children, particularly in light of the important role extended family plays in child rearing in many contexts (Raghuram, 2012; Tyldum, 2015), for the women in this study, being physically separated from their children strained their relationships, at least for a time. Many described the pain they experienced as their children became accustomed or indifferent to their physical absence. While only two participants had been reunited with their children at the time of the interviews, they experienced additional challenges when their children and husbands joined them in Canada. Despite these challenges, however, they expressed hope and maintained faith that they would be able to repair those relationships in time.

In making sense of their experiences of family separation and exploitation in the LCP, participants framed their decision as a sacrifice, which was the fourth major theme that emerged from the study. Importantly, when asked how they viewed caregiving, several participants stated that it was a sacrifice, intended to achieve broader individual and family goals. In attempting to secure a better life for their families, they described sacrificing their relationships with their children. Furthermore, participants explained that they were willing to accept the living and working conditions engendered by the LCP, in the hopes of achieving their long-term goals. Ultimately, most felt that it was still worth it to come to Canada, despite their negative experiences of exploitation and family separation. For many participants, faith in God was an important source of strength in helping them to make sense of and cope with these sacrifices. As discussed in chapter six, the notion of migration as a sacrifice is pervasive in state discourses and is deeply connected to Catholicism and the Philippine’s history of Spanish colonialism. Thus, I interpret narratives of sacrifice and spiritual faith as a kind of “embedded agency,” to acknowledge the socially and culturally situated meanings that informed how
participant’s made sense of their actions and decisions. Furthermore, I argue that the
sacrifices participants felt compelled to make are indicative of the kinds of trade-offs
made necessary by shifting norms of citizenship in the neoliberal era. Their experiences
reveal how notions of sacrifice converge in religious and neoliberal discourses to
normalize overseas migration and legitimize limited state responsibility for social
reproduction.

While the meaning(s) ascribed to caring and household labour by care/domestic workers
have the potential to inform new ways of understanding the value of this work, it is
equally important to acknowledge the limits of individual and collective meaning making
in the context of structural inequality and devaluation of the work. That people can find
meaning and value in feminized and racialized types of labour routinely constructed as
dirty is a testament to their resilience. It does not, however, negate the need for structural
and systemic change, including wider social and economic recognition of the importance
of reproductive labour. As the findings of this study show, im/migration policy can either
reinforce or challenge prevailing perspectives of care and domestic work. Thus, policy
development would benefit from the insights provided by migrant care/domestic workers
and by feminist analysis of paid and unpaid care. Such insights raise important questions
about how (im)migration policy could be reformed to recognize and reward the value of
reproductive labour. For instance, what would it mean to reward care/domestic workers
in ways that are commensurate with their social and economic contributions? In the
Canadian context, what would an immigration policy that values and rewards
reproductive labour entail? Perhaps if the points system reflected the true value of the
labour provided by migrant care/domestic workers, those who do this work would qualify
for entry to Canada as permanent residents, something advocacy groups have long
demanded. Such insights could also lead to recognition on the part of receiving countries
that the demand for household and caring labor is not temporary, nor is it unskilled.
Rather sending countries, and in particular families (specifically women), provide much
of the necessary labour in reproducing workers for the global economy. Furthermore,
those who enter Canada through the LCP have training and experience, as is required to
qualify for entry, in addition to having post-secondary education in care-related and other
fields. Indeed, numerous studies show that the LCP leads to the deskilling and professionalization of former live-in caregivers, many of whom become employed as personal support workers (Banerjee et al., 2018; Pratt, 1999; Tungohan, et al., 2015). Given the high concentration of women (and men) of colour, and (im)migrant women in particular, in low-waged caring jobs globally, implementing policies that re-value and reward care and domestic work through a redistribution of resources, including higher pay, and that promote a greater respect for the work itself – are thus essential race and gender justice issues.

7.2 Study Limitations

Although the findings of this study provide important insights into how migrant care and domestic workers derive meaning from their work, it is not without limitations. Indeed, most of the participants in this study were mothers (8 out of 11). Those who did not have children, who also happened to be among the youngest and most recent entrants into the LCP, attended the initial focus group but were unable to make it to the other two interviews. As a result, the study findings largely reflect the experiences of married migrants who had children. Although many migrant domestic/care workers are mothers, many others are not, and a gap has been identified in the existing literature with respect to the experiences of single women as well as queer and transgender migrants (Manalansan, 2006). Unfortunately, the findings of this study do not shed light into these under researched areas. It is therefore important to note that the meanings ascribed to care and domestic work may differ in important ways depending on several factors including one’s social location, and cultural and religious background among others.

Another limitation of the study is its lack of focus on the relationships between women and their partners. Although this was not a direct focus of this study, in responding to questions about the meaning and value of care/domestic work, participants emphasized their relationships with their children and did not talk in a lot of detail about their relationships with their partners. As a result, the study provides only limited insight into how those relationships factored into participants’ decision to migrate as well as how they were impacted by years of physical separation.
Recent policy changes implemented as this work was underway also constitute another limitation of this study. Just prior to and following the completion of the interviews for this study, the LCP was replaced by two subsequent pilot programs in 2014 and 2019. Although I had intended to interview people who came to Canada under the 2014 Caregiver Program, all participants who agreed to take part in this study entered Canada through the LCP. Thus, the findings do not provide insight into migrant caregivers’ experiences under these other programs, both of which made living-in optional. It is also not clear what, if any, implication these policy changes might have for how people make meaning about care and domestic work.

Lastly, due to the small size of the sample, the findings of this study are not generalizable and therefore may not be representative of the experiences of all migrant domestic workers. Nevertheless, the findings do dialogue with existing literature on transnational care migration and dirty work, confirming and providing further insight into many of the themes identified in other research studies.

7.3 Implications for Future Research

As the work for this dissertation was wrapping up, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, making the questions in this thesis even more salient because of the distinct challenges faced by migrant care/domestic workers in the context of the crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fault lines in the care infrastructure of many countries, including Canada and the Philippines. Underfunded health care systems were quickly overwhelmed by increased hospitalizations, and long-term care facilities became major sites for spread of the virus. Canada’s long-term care institutions, in particular, had disproportionately high rates of mortality from COVID-19, many of which were preventable. In the Philippines, President Duterte temporarily halted the out-migration of nurses, doctors, and health workers as already under-resourced and under-staffed hospitals had to meet increasing demand (Neustaeter, 2020). Furthermore, nationwide shutdowns, resulting in school and daycare closures brought into sharp focus precisely what was and was not essential.
Globally, lockdown orders resulted in increased loads of unpaid care and domestic work, particularly for women, exacerbating inequalities that existed pre-COVID (Bolis et al., 2020). Findings from research conducted by Oxfam in five countries, including the USA, Great Britain, Canada, the Philippines, and Kenya showed that “around half of women (44%–55%) surveyed report that they are spending more time on unpaid care and domestic work as a result of COVID-19” (Bolis et al., 2020, p.7). As a result, more women than men left the workforce altogether to care for their children (UN Women, 2020). As was the case prior to the pandemic, unpaid care and household work became even more intense for people living in poverty. In the Philippines, “parents – particularly those who are single and young as well as families living in poverty who are recipients of the government 4Ps [social protection] programme – are among those who spent more time each day on unpaid care and domestic work both before and during the pandemic” (Bolis et al., 2020, p. 5). Comparatively, in Canada, those born outside the country and minority ethnic respondents as well as nurses, day care providers, teachers, and health care workers were more likely to report increases in unpaid care and domestic work (Bolis et al., 2020, p. 14).

In the early stages of the pandemic in Canada, front-line and essential workers, particularly health and childcare workers were celebrated by the public, in the media, and state discourses as heroes. However, celebratory rhetoric has not been matched by long-term improvements in the working conditions or pay for most of these workers, who continue to face even greater challenges and stress in carrying out their jobs. These challenges were particularly acute for migrant live-in caregivers, who, as temporary migrants, were already vulnerable to exploitation and abuse in the workplace. News media coverage as well as reports from advocacy groups have cited several instances of live-in caregivers in Canada losing their jobs due to the financial impact of the pandemic on their employers, while others were reportedly fired after contracting COVID-19 (Keung, 2021). Reports also suggest that rules around social distancing and isolation as well as fears of contracting COVID-19, have prompted some employers to require caregivers to live-in their homes (Inclan, 2020; Keung, 2021). Such arrangements have resulted in increased workloads for live-in caregivers who are often responsible for
cleaning their employers’ home and caring for sick family members, in addition to other tasks beyond those specified in their contracts. Currently, research is underway into how COVID-19 impacted Filipina migrants, including live-in caregivers, in Canada (Tungohan, et al. 2021).

The rhetorical way in which “front line workers” were celebrated in the midst of the pandemic, raises important questions about the implications this might have for how care/domestic workers make meaning about their work. More specifically, the spotlight the pandemic brought to the essential role of care and domestic work raises questions about how this might change what it means to do live-in caregiving and what if any policy implications this might have. Has the COVID-19 pandemic shifted social and cultural meanings of or produced deeper appreciation for care/domestic work/ers? Does this work become dirtier in the context of a pandemic as (live-in) care work becomes more dangerous? Or will workers’ experiences point to more complicated responses in light of the global impacts of COVID-19, known and unknown, on all aspects of life?

These questions constitute a fruitful directive for future research not only for the insight they can provide into the experiences of migrant care/domestic workers during the pandemic but also for understanding the implications these discourses might have for how migrant care/domestic workers make meaning about reproductive labour. It also remains to be seen what impact the global health crisis might have on the development of care infrastructure, as scholars, advocates, and health and childcare workers in various contexts push for policy reforms, as part of economic recovery plans, to better recognize, reward, and redistribute paid and unpaid care/domestic work.
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## Appendix A: Migrant Domestic Worker Policy in Canada from 1955-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>West Indian Domestic Scheme (WIDS)</th>
<th>Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program (NIEAP)</th>
<th>Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM)</th>
<th>Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP)</th>
<th>Caregiver Program (CP)</th>
<th>Home Child Care Provider and Home Support Worker Pilots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Contract</strong></td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Short-term work permit</td>
<td>2 years, subject to renewal by employer</td>
<td>2 years, subject to renewal by employer</td>
<td>2 years, subject to renewal by employer</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Status Upon Arrival</strong></td>
<td>Automatic landed immigrant status</td>
<td>Temporary residence</td>
<td>Temporary residence</td>
<td>Temporary residence</td>
<td>Temporary residence</td>
<td>Temporary residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Sending Countries/Regions</strong></td>
<td>Informal agreement established under the quota system with Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Haiti</td>
<td>Europe Caribbean</td>
<td>Caribbean Philippines</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Philippines China</td>
<td>Philippines China India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eligibility Requirements</strong></td>
<td>Female, single, between the ages of 21 and 35 without children, at least an 8th grade education, pass a medical</td>
<td>Educational requirements unclear. Could be sent home if the demand for domestic workers decreased</td>
<td>Minimum one-year full-time experience as a domestic worker or a certificate of completion of a domestic</td>
<td>Equivalent of Canadian secondary school education (Grade 12), plus 6 months’ training or one year paid, full-time</td>
<td>Equivalent of Canadian secondary school education (Grade 12), 6 months’ training or one year paid, full-time experience</td>
<td>Must meet the education and language qualifications for permanent residence prior to applying for entry under the program (See below). Those who meet all the requirements are issued an occupation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
examination (as determined by Canadian immigration officials)

From 1961 onward - some high school education was required.

Could be deported if the contract was breached or if entrants became pregnant within the first year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live-in Requirement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No - Option to live out</th>
<th>No - Option to live out</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Route to Citizenship</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, but must qualify in order to apply</td>
<td>Yes, but must qualify in order to apply</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Work experience:</strong> Obtain two years fulltime work experience in Canada as a home childcare or health care provider within a four year period</td>
<td><strong>Work experience:</strong> Obtain 24 months of authorized full-time work experience in Canada within 48 months before their completed application is received</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Education requirement:</strong> Canadian one-year post-secondary</td>
<td><strong>Education requirement:</strong> Canadian one-year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to switch employers</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>Not without approval</td>
<td>Not without approval</td>
<td>Not without approval</td>
<td>Not without approval</td>
<td>Occupation specific work permit – allowed to switch employers but must remain employed in that specific occupation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to bring spouse/children upon arrival</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Letter of Information and Consent

Western

Letter of Information and Consent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making Meaning About Reproductive Work: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Migrant Caregivers in Canada</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Document Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Information and Consent – Participant</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Investigator</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Erica Lawson</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Research Support Staff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Gaudet, PhD Candidate, Western</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in a focus group interview with 8-10 current/former live-in caregivers or an individual interview to discuss care and domestic work. You are eligible to participate if you are currently or were previously employed under Canada’s Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) within the last 20 years.

2. Why is this study being done?

This study explores how migrant caregivers identify and discuss the physical and emotional aspects of the work that they provide within the LCP. The objective of this study is to examine the personal meaning(s) live-in caregivers attach to their work, including the strategies they engage to re-frame and transform the negative stigma associated with domestic and care work. The insights and knowledges provided by live-in caregivers have the potential to inform critical analyses of and/or new perspectives on immigration policy and the provision of care.

3. How long will you be in this study?

If you chose to take part in the study, you will be asked to participate in either an individual interview or focus group discussion with 8-10 current or former live-in caregivers for about one to two hours. If you participate in the focus group you will also be invited to participate in a follow up interview, which should take an additional 30-60 minutes of your time. Participation will include 1-2 study visits and each visit will take approximately 1-2 hours.

4. What are the study procedures?
If you agree to participate you will be asked to:

4.1. Discuss your experiences as a live-in caregiver, including your thoughts on care and domestic work, in the context of a focus group or individual interview. Focus group discussions and individual interviews are expected to range in length from 1-2 hours. If you wish to participate in a follow-up interview following the focus group discussion, an additional 30-60 minutes of your time will be required.

4.2. Focus group interviews will be audio recorded. You can still participate in a one-to-one interview if you do not agree to be recorded.

4.3. We anticipate that the focus groups and individual interviews will both be conducted in the City of Toronto and/or London, Ontario. We further anticipate that focus group discussions will take place in a community organization frequented by, or familiar to, caregivers. One-to-one interviews (including individual and follow-up interviews) will be conducted at a place that is convenient for each participant.

5. What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?
The possible risks and harms to you include feelings of stress and discomfort that may result from discussing issues related to domestic and care work in the context of the LCP, such as familial separation and exploitation. Should you experience feelings of stress and/or discomfort and require further support, there are a number of available local resources for live-in caregivers, which are listed below:

- Live-in Caregivers’ Action Centre (CAC), Toronto
- Philippine Women Centre (PWC-ON), Toronto
- Migrant Workers Alliance for Change (MWAC), Toronto
- Migrante Canada

6. What are the benefits?
The possible benefits to you may include a sense of connectedness and/or solidarity based on shared or similar experiences with other study participants. The possible benefits to society may include greater respect for care and domestic workers, including the physical and emotional skills involved in this work as well as increasing public awareness about the important contributions migrant live-in caregivers make to Canadian society and the economy.

7. Can participants choose to leave the study?
Participation in this study is voluntary. You can leave the study and/or stop an interview at any time.
If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request withdrawal of information collected about you. If you wish to have your information removed please let the researcher know.

8. **How will participants information be kept confidential?**
   Personal information, including email addresses for follow-up will be collected at the time of the interview and stored separately from the rest of the data. Data will be anonymised to ensure participant’s privacy. Each participant will be assigned (or they can choose) a pseudonym at the time of the interview. Transcription of the interview and all further discussion of the participant will refer to the pseudonym. Electronic data will be stored in an encrypted file, using Microsoft Word password protection to which only the Research Support Staff will have access. Paper data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the office of the Research Support Staff at Western University. At the end of the five years, paper data will be shredded and electronic data will be deleted.

9. **Are participants compensated to be in this study?**
   A small honorarium in the amount of $25.00 will be provided to you for your participation in either the focus group or individual interview. If you participate in the focus group and agree to participate in a follow-up interview you will receive an additional $25.00 for your time.

10. **What are the Rights of Participants?**
   Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on your employment or immigration status. We will give you new information that is learned during the study that might affect your decision to stay in the study. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

11. **Whom do participants contact for questions?**
   If you have questions about this research study please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Erica Lawson or the Research Support Staff, Crystal Gaudet. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics.

   **This letter is yours to keep for future reference.**

---

**Written Consent**

1. **Project Title**
   Making Meaning About Reproductive Work: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Migrant Caregivers in Canada
I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to be audio-recorded in this research

☐ YES ☐ NO

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

☐ YES ☐ NO

I agree to be contacted for a follow up interview

☐ YES ☐ NO

I would like to receive a copy of the transcript from my interview

☐ YES ☐ NO

If you answered yes to the above question, please provide your preferred method of contact:

Telephone Number:

__________________________

OR

Email address:

__________________________

Print Name of Participant

Signature

Date (DD-MMM-YYYY)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Print Name of Researcher</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date (DD-MM-YYYY)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

CALL FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Are you currently or have you previously been employed in Canada’s Live-in Caregiver/Caregiver Program within the last 20 years?

If so, you are invited to participate in a focus group interview with 8-10 current/former caregivers and/or a one-to-one interview to discuss care and domestic work.

Project Title: Making Meaning About Care and Domestic Work: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Migrant Caregivers in Canada

YOU ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IF YOU:

Are currently or were previously employed as a caregiver under the Live-in/Caregiver Program within the last 20 years

Participation involves: One focus group interview at a central location that is convenient for each participant. Focus group interviews should not take longer than 1-2 hours. If you wish to participate in a follow-up, one-on-one interview, an additional 30-60 minutes of your time will be required. During the interview you will be asked to discuss your experiences as a caregiver, including your thoughts on care and domestic work.

In appreciation of your time, you will receive a small honorarium in the amount of $25.00 for your participation in the focus group and/or individual interview.

If you have any questions or you are interested in participating, please contact:

Crystal Gaudet, Western University
OR
Dr. Erica Lawson, Western University

Thank you!
Appendix D: Interview Guide

Experience as Domestic/Care Worker

- What does a typical day at work look like for you?
- What kinds of tasks are you responsible for in a typical day at work?
- How would you describe your job?
- What is a typical day off like for you?
- How do you feel about the work that you do?
- Do you enjoy what you do?
- What is the most rewarding aspect of this work?
- What do you value most about the work that you do?
- What are the unpleasant aspects of the job and how do you cope with these?
- How do you make sense of the decision to come to Canada under the LCP?
- Can you tell me what it means to do this work? How does it impact how you see yourself, your confidence and sense of self-worth?
- What kinds of decisions do you have to make (or are you not able to make) because of the work you do?

Experience of the LCP

- How would you describe your relationship with your employer(s)?
- What has been your experience of ‘living-in’ with your employer(s)?
- What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of living in your employer’s home?
  Prompt: Do you have privacy?
- What is it about living-out that might appeal to you?
- Can you comment on the value of the LCP program?
- How have the recent changes to the LCP affected you?
- What would a better policy allow you to do?
Appendix E: Follow Up Interview guide

- What kind of work did you do prior to caregiving?
- What type of work/job did you have in the Philippines?
- Do you have training and or education in another field?
- Do you have children?
- Many of you mentioned working more than the 8 hours specified in your contracts. When your workday is extended what kinds of tasks are you typically doing?
- How many years did you spend working in other countries as a caregiver before coming to Canada?
- For those of you who worked abroad in other countries, how would you describe that experience? Is it similar or different compared to your experience as a caregiver in Canada?
- How is caregiving viewed in the Philippines? How does that compare to how it is viewed in Canada or other places where you have worked?
- Do you feel that the work you do is respected and valued?
- Is this work that you would choose to do if you had the ability to find other employment?
- For those of you who are out of the program now, what kinds of work are you doing?
- How long was the period of separation between you and your family?
- Last time someone mentioned that they often wondered whether it was worth it to come to Canada. What do others think about this?
- Many people mentioned that caregiving is a sacrifice, I am wondering if you could talk a little more about how you think of sacrifice?
- How does your spiritual faith inform how you think about sacrifice?
## Curriculum Vitae

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Crystal Gaudet</th>
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| **Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** | York University  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2004-2009 B.A. (Honours), History and Women’s Studies |
|               | The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2010-2011 M.A., Women’s Studies and Feminist Research |
| **Honours and Awards:** | Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)  
Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship  
2010-2011 |
|               | Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship (Declined)  
2010-2011 |
|               | Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship  
2012-2013 |
|               | Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship (Declined)  
2013-2014 |
|               | Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)  
Doctoral Fellowship  
2013-2015 |
| **Related Work Experience:** | Teaching Assistant  
Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
2010-2013 |
|               | Research Assistant  
PI: Dr. Paul Nesbitt Larking  
Huron University College  
2013-2015 |
|               | Undergraduate Course Instructor  
Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies |
The University of Western Ontario
Winter 2014; Winter 2018

Research Assistant
PI: Dr. Bipasha Baruah
The University of Western Ontario
2015-2016

Research Assistant
PI: Dr. Erica Lawson
The University of Western Ontario
2016

Undergraduate Course Instructor
Political Science and the Centre for Global Studies
Huron University College
2016-Present

Publications:


Lawson, Erica & Gaudet, Crystal. (2013). Sex work, street vending and implications for mothers and daughters in the global economy: A feminist analysis of political
https://jarm.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/jarm/article/view/37826