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**Filipina Domestic Workers in Hongkong:
A Preliminary Survey**

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by

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FILIPINA DOMESTIC WORKERS IN HONGKONG: A Preliminary Survey

Until recently, women were largely ignored in migration studies, largely because it was assumed that they were passive companions of male migrants. However, in the last three decades, the numbers of single female migrants has increased dramatically in some countries, particularly in Latin America, Western Europe and parts of Asia (Smith, Khoo and Go 1984).

There is still a preponderance of male migrants in Africa, India, and South Asia, but internal female migrants now outnumber males in Thailand, Korea and the Philippines (Fawcett, Khoo and Smith 1984). Eviota and Smith (1981) who have likened the pattern of female migration in the Philippines to that of Latin America, described the situation as 'an emergent phenomenon' and 'historically novel' and one deserving further research attention.

While increasing numbers of women are moving to cities independently, it has been established that whether they are internal or international migrants, they tend to find work in lower status and lower paid jobs than do male migrants. Studies in India, Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America show that while the occupational structure of female migrants is influenced by social and cultural factors, there is a predominance of women in manual and

unskilled sectors (Elisaga 1966, Sudarkasa 1977, Singh 1984, Moroksavic 1983). Several studies in Latin America have particularly commented upon the large numbers of female internal migrants in domestic work (Elisaga 1966, Herrick 1974, Corno 1979 Martine 1975).

A similar occupational pattern is now emerging in South East Asia. Shah and Smith (1981) found that migrant women in Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia were concentrated in domestic services, and there are now significant numbers of Filipino women working in Hongkong and Singapore.

This changing situation, coupled with the changing views of the role of women in society, has created a new interest in female migration. Some of the questions now being asked are: who are the women who migrate, why are they moving, what sort of occupations are they moving to, what are their experiences in their destinations, and what are the consequences of this movement for rural women from less developed countries?

Conventional liberalists argue that the opportunities which industrialisation has produced for women in the waged labour sector enable them to throw off the shackles of traditional rural life (Whiteford 1978). Others, however disagree with this view. Boserup (1970) was one of the first to argue that women were victims of

development because their previous productive roles were being eroded by industrialisation. Marxist feminists argue that the previous subordination of rural women in traditional life has been replaced by their gender subordination within industry (Beneria and Sen 1982, Mackintosh 1981, Young, Wolkowitz, and McCullagh 1981).

The emergence of significant numbers of single female Filipina migrants in Hongkong has resulted from numerous complex factors. Migration theory often divides these into the factors that 'push' the migrants outwards from the country of origin, and those that 'pull' them to the country of destination.

The search by Filipinas for jobs abroad has coincided with the development of a shortage of domestic workers in Hongkong. This has resulted from full employment and considerable changes in the occupational structure in Hong Kong. In the last two decades there has been a decrease in the percentage of unskilled workers in Hongkong and a corresponding increase in the numbers of skilled and professional workers (1981 Census Graphic Guide, Charts 20, 21). These changes have been especially marked for women, and have been related to changes in their educational patterns and fertility rates. Female educational levels have increased significantly in the last twenty years. In 1961, 25% of females in Hongkong had

had no schooling, but by 1981 this had fallen to 14%. The percentage of women receiving secondary and college education rose from 5% and 0.6% respectively in 1961, to 16% and 2% in 1981 (Hongkong Annual Digest of Statistics 1983:185). The average age of marriage increased from 23.6 years in 1971 to 24.4 years in 1981, whilst the fertility rate for females aged between 15 and 49 years fell from 155 per 1000 in 1961 to 65.8 per 1000 in 1981 (1981 Census). During the same period the average household size fell from 4.51 to 3.84, the average number of children per household fell from 1.63 to 0.97, and the percentage of children under the age of 15 fell from 36.2 to 25.2 (1981 Census). As a result of these changes more Hongkong women are now entering the labour force. The female labour participation rate rose from 40% in 1961 to 47.5% in 1983 (Hongkong Annual Digest of Statistics 1983). This increase is proportionally much greater than that for the male population. In 1961 the proportion of females to males in the labour force was 1:5 but by 1983 it was 1:1.5 (Hongkong Annual Digest of Statistics 1983). The demand for female labour is particularly high in the industrial sector.

As a consequence of these changes, the number of women entering semi-skilled sectors has increased while there has been a 20% decrease in the number entering

service occupations. At the same time, the increasing tendency of Hong Kong women to work outside the home has increased the demand for domestic workers or amahs. Temporary female contract workers from the Philippines now fill this gap.

The 'push' factors that have encouraged young single Filipinas to migrate to Hongkong are more complex. The migration of females may reflect changes in educational and occupational opportunities for women, changes in the fertility and marrying ages, and significant changes in the traditional expectations of the female role in the Philippines. However, few empirical studies have been conducted on female migrants in South East Asia.

In the present paper, the Filipina population in Hongkong is defined for the first time, and the ways in which they adjust to life in this foreign city are considered.

Methods

A sample survey of the Filipina population in Hongkong was carried out by the author between January and June 1984. All Filipina domestic workers are required to renew their visas at the Immigration Department every six months. On the same day each week for six months, the first fifty respondents who attended the Immigration Department were asked to complete the survey questionnaire. This sampling method eliminated bias associated with place of work, access or length of stay in Hong Kong, and ensured that the whole population was sampled. The response rate was 85%, and 1209 questionnaires were completed, representing about 5% of the total population. The data were coded and entered into a microcomputer for analysis. A specially-written dBase II programme was used to calculate and tabulate frequencies and percentages, and the Abstat software package (Anderson-Bell) was used for histograms and descriptive statistics. The SAS statistical package was used to obtain further Chi-square and t test results for selected cross tabulations. The details of the questionnaire and the statistical results will be presented more fully elsewhere. In this paper an overview of the Filipina migrant population will be presented.

Results and Discussion

The results are divided into the following categories: (1) sociodemographic characteristics; (2) previous urban exposure; (3) previous work experience; (4) reasons for moving; (5) the process of moving and acquiring a job; (6) the costs involved and assistance received during the move; (7) brief details of the present situation in Hongkong.

(1) Sociodemographic Characteristics

(a) Age

Filipina migrants are predominantly young, with an average age of 30.1 years, ranging from 19 to 60. However, as the histogram shows (Figure 1), the distribution is skewed, with 84% of the population being aged between 25 and 35 years. It is generally assumed that the willingness of the young to take risks, their fewer responsibilities towards their families, and their greater adaptability to new environments, encourages their predominance in migratory flows.

(b) Religion

The overwhelming majority (83%) of this population were Catholic, 8% Protestant Christians, and the remaining 1% included members of the Church of Christ (Iglesia ni Cristo) and Muslims. This is not an

unexpected result, since more than 86% of the population in the Philippines is Roman Catholic, with 4% Protestants, 6% Iglesia ni Cristo, and 4% Moslems (Feitosa 1975).

(c) Marital Status

The majority (76%) of these migrants are single, 22% married, and a small minority (6%) are separated or widowed. That the majority of respondents are single is consistent with other studies of Filipina migrants abroad (Smith 1976). It is not surprising that those who move abroad to work as live-in domestic workers are unmarried, but it is noteworthy that the average age of marriage is 24 years for females in the Philippines (Philippine Yearbook, 1983) which is well below the average age of this group. The finding that 22% of the sample are married is equally interesting, since women in the Philippines are not the traditional breadwinners and nor are they the head of the household (Montiel and Hollsteiner, 1976). Furthermore, the migration of these married women may not be simply the result of economic pressure since the husbands of this group enjoyed higher incomes, higher employment rates and more prestigious jobs than average in the Philippines. This suggests that it is likely that this group of married women are from families who can afford the basic costs of moving and are therefore able to move abroad as the best way of supplementing the

family's income in the shortest possible time. Moreover, because they are comparatively well educated, they may be more ambitious and more ready to contradict the normal behaviour patterns of the average Filipina wife.

(d) Children

A total of 318 (25%) respondents left children behind in the Philippines. The average number of children is 3.38, with a maximum of nine. The histogram (Figure 2) shows the distribution of these children; 59% of married respondents have between two and four children, while approximately one quarter have more than five. 89% of the children are school age or under and 25% are pre-schoolers. Over half the children are being cared for by their fathers and the remainder have been left with relatives, usually the grandparents.

In the Philippines, mothers are the traditional caretakers of their children, even though the extended family may help informally (Montiel and Hollsteiner, 1976; Lapuz, 1981). It is therefore significant that the majority of these mothers have left young children behind. This suggests that a joint decision has been taken for the wife to move away and for the father to take the responsibility for the upbringing of the children. This group is also characterised by the relatively small family size: 3.38 children compared with the national

average of 6.8. This fact further confirms that these families are highly motivated and with unusual aspirations. This same motivation towards economic improvement has perhaps enabled husband and wife to temporarily swap roles and defy traditional values and behaviour.

(e) Education

Few (6%) of these Filipinas received only an elementary school education; the majority attended high school and a surprisingly high 38% received tertiary education. Comparisons between this group and the general female population in the Philippines (Cortes, 1983), show that they are better educated than average. This finding is consistent with studies of internal migrants in the Philippines, which have found that rural to urban migrants in particular, are consistently better educated than average (Feitosa 1975).

(f) Socio-Economic Status

Some authors maintain that the social class origin of migrants may influence their ability to cope with new environments (Goldlust and Richmond, 1974; Kemper, 1975). It is usually assumed that those with high prestige backgrounds will have been encouraged to achieve high levels of education and occupation, and they would

also have the means to achieve their goals. In this study over half (56%) of the respondents' fathers are farmers while the majority of the rest are engaged in unskilled or semi-skilled work. Very few (4%) are professionals. The educational levels of the fathers are consistent with their occupational status: almost half (46%) had elementary school education only, while a third (32%) reached high school, and 10% attended colleges. Nevertheless, this level of education is higher than would have been expected when compared to statistics of the general population (Cortes, 1983).

Three quarters of the migrants' mothers have no formal employment. However housewives in the Philippines are usually involved in informal economic activities such as helping in the fields, peddling or running sari sari stores as well as looking after the children and the house (Montiel and Hollsteiner, 1976). The educational levels of these mothers is similar to that of their husbands. This finding is consistent with other reports from the Philippines, which show that differences in educational attainment by sex are only slight (Smith and Cheung, 1981).

Husbands are generally better educated than their parents-in-law, reflecting improvements in the level of education available to the younger generation.

Nevertheless, 9% of the husbands are unemployed, and 25% are engaged in unskilled work. 20% are farmers or agricultural workers, 16% are engaged in semi-skilled work and 11% are in professional or technical positions. However, the incomes of these husbands average are higher than average for their occupations in the Philippines (Cortes, 1983).

Clearly, then, the migrants in this sample mainly come from lower socio-economic backgrounds and are quite typical of the average Filipino family in the Philippines. Nevertheless, the fact that the level of parental education is higher than would have been expected and the family income is slightly higher than average, suggests that, although they originate from the lower socio-economic classes, Filipinas in Hongkong are by no means from the the poorest or least educated families.

(2) Previous Urban Exposure

Two thirds of the Filipinas in this study were born in the northern rural region of Luzon. Most of the remainder come from Manila (16%) and the Visayas (14%) with a small minority (2%) from Mindanao. The main dialect of the majority (47%) is Ilocano, while a further 23% speak Tagalog. Other dialects spoken are Pangasinan, Ilongo, Cebuano, and Visaya. These women have usually remained in their birthplaces during their childhoods.

38% have only lived in barrios in rural areas; 25% came from small rural towns; 17% lived in large towns in the provinces; and only 11% lived most of their lives in large cities such as Manila. However, by the time they came to move to Hongkong 43% of these migrants had been living in Manila, and had therefore experienced some city life.

These findings are consistent with other studies of Filipino internal and external migration (Feitosa 1975, Smith, 1976). Northern Luzon (the Ilocas region) and parts of the Visayas, have a long history of migration due to economic and land problems.

(3) Previous Work Situation

Three quarters of these women were working before they came to Hongkong, mainly in unskilled jobs. Those in professional or semi-professional occupations (13%) were almost exclusively teachers or nurses. A further 17% were domestic workers, 16% worked in offices and the remainder were engaged in dressmaking (3%), factory work (5%), as sales assistants (4%), or had their own small businesses (4%). The levels of income earned by this group reflect their occupational status. Over two thirds (69%) earned less than 5,000 pesos (HK \$2250) per year, and nearly one half (44%) earned less than 2,000 pesos (HK \$900) annually. Only 7% earned more than 10,000 pesos (HK\$ 4,500) per year.

The finding that three quarters of respondents were working before they came to Hongkong shows that unemployment is not a major reason for migration in this group. However, the majority of these women were engaged in unskilled work with low incomes, and come from families of low socioeconomic status. This supports Feitosa's (1975) view that the migration of females is only accepted in conditions of extreme economic pressures in the Philippines, where tradition still dictates that women should stay at home until they are married. It is perhaps this same economic pressure that has forced many women to accept a lowering of occupational status in coming to Hongkong. Unlike many other migrant groups who can hope to move up the socio-economic scale in the host country, Filipinas in Hongkong are temporary migrants and may only work as domestic workers, so their status will be permanent throughout their stay.

(4) Reasons for Moving

Two thirds of respondents stated that lack of money was the main reason for leaving the Philippines, while 13% left for adventure, 7% because of employment problems in the Philippines, and 8% because of family problems. It should be noted that 15% gave more than one reason for moving. The finding that most respondents moved for economic reasons is consistent with most other

studies of migration in developing countries (De Jong et al 1979). However, it must be stressed that these are not the poorest group in the Philippines and other factors are also involved in the decision to move. In-depth interviews of selected respondents in this study indicated that while economic pressures were important, there were often complex reasons why individuals chose to migrate. Some married women moved to escape unloved husbands (divorce is illegal in the Philippines), some came following some crisis in their lives, some came because their friends were moving; and most agreed that as migrants they gained status amongst their peers in the Philippines.

Despite the present political problems in the Philippines, few moved because of political reasons, though most commented on the general economic and political troubles at home. The great majority became migrants because of many factors combining, but in particular the ability to earn money to provide their families with education and improved accommodation.

(5) The Process of Moving and Acquiring a Job

The process of moving was greatly influenced by the presence of relatives and friends in Hongkong. There is a widespread kinship and friendship network of Filipinas in Hongkong. Just over half (52%) had relatives

living in Hongkong: in 30% of cases there were more than three relatives, and in 12% more than eight relatives. Even more (72%) respondents had friends living in Hongkong. Over half had at least three friends in Hongkong, and almost one third had more than eight. The majority (71%) of Filipinas arranged jobs in Hongkong through employment agencies in the Philippines, while 28% were hired directly by employers in Hongkong. Friends helped respondents to find jobs in 22% of cases, while relatives helped a further 27%.

The average cost of the move was more than 6000 pesos, with a range of 250 - 70000 pesos. This average cost is about a years' salary in the Philippines for this group. Most (70%) of these Filipinas borrowed money to come to Hongkong. Relatives gave assistance in two thirds of cases, friends in 11% of cases, and both friends and relatives in 15%.

These results confirm that relatives and friends play an important part in the migration process of these Filipina domestic helpers. After the move, Filipina friends and relatives continue to play a major role in the lives of these women and indeed this group maintained a Filipino community that is culturally and socially separated from the rest of Hongkong society, as will be discussed later.

(6) Present Situation in Hongkong

(a) Length of Residence

Filipina domestic workers have been in Hongkong for an average of just over two and a half years. The histogram (Figure 3) shows that the length of stay has a skewed distribution. One third have been in the city for less than one year, while a further third have remained for up to two years, which is the length of each employment contract. Only 5.4% have stayed for five years, and a mere 0.1% have remained since recruitment began fifteen years ago.

(b) Job Mobility

There is an obvious lack of job mobility amongst the Filipinas in Hongkong. Two thirds have had only one job and nearly one quarter have had two jobs. Only 6% have had three jobs. Very few have had more jobs than this, with only 0.2% having had between five and eight jobs (Figure 4).

There are several possible reasons why Filipinas stay for only a short time in Hongkong and why their job mobility is limited. Firstly, since Filipinas are restricted to domestic work in Hongkong, there is no opportunity to increase their status by moving to different or better jobs. Furthermore while they may change jobs during a two year contract, the contract terms

and conditions mean that most workers will have only one job during one contract. Secondly, it is likely that these relatively well-educated women become frustrated by the restrictions and low status of domestic work and return home after the completion of one contract. There is some evidence for this, because there is a statistically significant association between levels of general satisfaction and education in this group: those with a higher education having a correspondingly lower level of satisfaction.

(c) Nationality of Employer

Nearly two thirds of this group work for Chinese, and one quarter for British families. Other Europeans and Americans employ a further 10%. This is not a normal distribution, of course, since 98% of the Hongkong population is Chinese (King and Lee, 1981). Most expatriates are middle class professionals earning comparatively high salaries in Hongkong, and it is to be expected that they would be more likely to employ domestic help. Moreover, because Filipinas usually speak better English than most Chinese Amahs, they are particularly favoured by English speaking expatriates.

(d) Salary

The average salary is HK\$ 1492, with a range of \$650 - \$3,000 per month. Two thirds of respondents earn

less than the government minimum wage of \$1650 per month, with the majority (42%) earning between \$1200 and \$1400 per month (Figure 5).

The government minimum wage of \$1650 per month was set in 1984, and applies to all new contracts. The minimum levels for 1983 and 1982 were \$1350 and \$1150 respectively. Since most Filipinas were employed before 1984, it is obvious that in many cases their salaries have not been raised above the terms of their original contracts.

As the histogram (Figure 5) shows, 12% of these domestic workers are earning far less than the previous minimum of \$1350. On the other hand, nearly one third were earning more than the present government minimum.

(e) Accommodation

Only 76% of domestic workers in Hongkong have their own rooms. According to their contracts, live-in amahs must be provided with their own free furnished living accommodation, but nearly one quarter of employers failed to fulfil this requirement. It is obvious from this survey that a significant proportion of Filipina domestic workers are not being provided with the salaries and accommodation required by law, and indicates that employment conditions need to be better regulated by the authorities.

(f) Job Satisfaction

The majority (59%) of respondents replied that they were happy in their present jobs, and indeed 16% were very happy. 27% were non-committal whilst 9% were unhappy and a further 2% very unhappy. Job satisfaction was found to be statistically associated with general satisfaction with life, the number of jobs held, the nationality of the employer, having a room to sleep in, the amount of the salary received, and whether the salary was above or below the minimum wage.

Since the principal reason given for coming to Hongkong is economic, it is not surprising that job satisfaction was associated with salary levels. No less surprising is that the provision of a private room for domestic workers is important, since this group live with their employers and therefore need privacy and a place to retire to at the end of the working day.

Job mobility was also shown to be associated with the level of job satisfaction, and those who moved around were significantly more satisfied than those who remained in one job. Since most Filipinas sign contracts for two years without being able to discriminate between 'good' and 'bad' jobs, it is likely that some Filipinas are able to improve their conditions by moving. However, more surprising is the finding that the nationality of the

employer affects job satisfaction. The results showed that the Chinese employers are less preferred than other nationalities.

There are several possible reasons why this may be so. Firstly, almost all Filipinas speak English, which is still taught in schools in the Philippines. On the other hand few Filipinas can speak Chinese on their arrival in Hongkong. The in-depth study showed that language barriers between Chinese employers and their Filipina maids often caused misunderstandings.

Secondly, live-in servants have always existed in Hongkong but have now almost disappeared from European countries. In the West there are also more widespread liberal attitudes which frown upon the concept of servitude. Most expatriate European employers are therefore unlikely to have had servants in their own countries and are likely to approach the role of 'master' with a certain amount of guilt and with a more liberal attitude than Chinese employers. In contrast, Chinese families are more hierarchical in their structure than are European ones, servants are still assigned the most subordinate place in the family structure. This tradition may particularly affect Filipinas who enter families where members of the older, Chinese generation are still present. The differences between the liberal attitude of

Western employers towards their servants in Hongkong, and the traditional attitudes of Chinese employers is well illustrated in letters about Filipinas to the colony's leading English language paper, the South China Morning Post. In July 1985, the divergence between these different attitudes towards their servants became particularly noticeable. Whilst Chinese correspondents tended to write letters complaining that Filipinas were 'job hoppers', 'spoiled', 'overpaid' and not strictly controlled enough by the Government Authorities, expatriate employers wrote that Filipinas should be treated kindly, and with sympathy, and that this would lead to improved work from their servants. The Editor was finally forced to close the correspondence (South China Morning Post, June 9th - July 11th 1985).

Finally, Chinese employers may live in more crowded conditions, have less space for accommodation and pay lower wages than their European counterparts. A mathematical analysis of these multiple factors and their relative significance will be the subject of another paper.

(g) Social Adjustment

Social adjustment is concerned with how migrants cope with the problems they encounter in moving to a new country, such as locating jobs, finding friends, accommo-

dation and organising their leisure time. At a primary level social adaptation includes the integration of immigrants into their own ethnic community as well as into the network of the host community. At a secondary level it involves participation in formal organisations.

As this study has shown, the location of friends and relatives in Hongkong played an important part in Filipina's initial adjustment to the city. In one quarter of cases the move itself was facilitated by friends and relatives who obtained jobs for respondents. Relatives and friends at home also helped by lending respondents money to pay for the considerable fees to move abroad.

Once in Hongkong, help from relatives and friends is highly practical. Filipinas are guided through the initial procedures required by the authorities such as the Immigration Department. Other information includes that of medical services, shopping procedures, the transport system and general information about the city. These networks therefore provide social continuity practical help and emotional support, all of which influence the adjustment of new arrivals.

(i) Informal Meeting Places

In Hongkong Statue Square in Central is the largest informal meeting place for Filipinas, where several hundred gather on Sundays, the workers' day off.

Several smaller squares are also used. However in the cold winter months, bad weather conditions force these women into the corridors of shopping arcades. If they are moved on from these by security officers they huddle in the arcades outside. At first glance, the Square on Sunday appears to be crowded with a homogeneous Filipina population. However, in fact this crowd is subdivided into at least twenty different groups. Filipinas meet up with friends and relatives from the same region, and often the same town or barrio. Each group uses its own dialect as well as Tagalog, the national language.

Information about home is rapidly exchanged, letters and magazines from the Philippines are read, and tapes and radios are played. Further reinforcement of the Philippine culture is maintained by the choice of food. Many bring home - cooked Filipino food to share with the group. On birthdays special dishes are brought to the group and the occasion is held in public. But whilst a social continuity with home is maintained, integration into the host community is also encouraged. Practical information regarding jobs, leisure time activities and general information is passed on. Assistance is sought for anything from being homeless and jobless to where to buy consumer goods.

For some Filipinas the Square is exploited as a

business location. Some enterprising Filipinas move from one group to another, selling goods they have imported from the Philippines such as jewellery or Philippine magazines, while others sell tapes of popular music. In one corner of the Square, a group of Filipinas have set up a 'beauty shop'. Filipinas sit in the open having their hair permed or nails manicured. The Square is the main focus of Filipina life and culture for these temporary migrants, a link with home, a central part of the kinship and friendship network and meeting place.

(ii) Voluntary Associations

In some countries migrants prefer to become members of voluntary associations rather than to rely upon informal social interaction. A variety of institutions such as labour unions, social clubs, mutual aid societies, churches and newspapers may be formed to help migrants integrate with their new environment. Voluntary associations provide the means to develop particular interests, while simultaneously providing the possibility of upward mobility and reinforcing ethnic values.

There are various associations in Hongkong for Filipinas. The domestic workers union aims to help its members with legal rights and with any work related problems. In addition there are several other associations which aim to provide social and recreational activities.

However, the in-depth study showed that by far the majority of Filipinas do not belong to any voluntary association. Some Filipinas are suspicious that these associations have been formed mainly to extract fees from them. Others believe that they might be regarded as trouble makers if they join unions. However, in general the attitude towards voluntary associations is apathetic and Filipinas rarely discuss their merits.

There are several possible reasons for this apathy. Firstly, these women are temporary contract workers, and do not intend to become permanent migrants. The temporiness of their stay mitigates against their forming permanent associations. Secondly, in the Philippines, joining associations is seen primarily as a male activity. Thirdly, few Filipinas believe that they need to join unions or associations and cannot see the value in wasting their precious hours on Sundays on 'serious' meetings. Sunday is reserved as a time to relax, to talk about their homes, their boyfriends, their favourite movie stars, beauty and fashion. Their identities of themselves are predominantly as sisters, mothers and wives, rather than as waged workers who should know their rights.

(iii) Religious Institutions.

Membership of religious groups also provide a sense of identity for migrants and encourages social interaction. In contrast to their attitudes towards secular organisations, Filipinas in Hongkong usually regard church attendance as a compulsory part of their day off. The vast majority of Filipinas are Catholics and some may attend church more than once a week if their employers permit it. Others remain in the church for the whole of Sunday, as members of fellowship meeting and participating fully in the church's religious, social and recreational programmes.

(iv) Communications in the City

Migrant adjustment to the city may be influenced by their knowledge of their new environment. These women tend not to often deliberately visit places of interest. Rather, on their work days they tend to remain in small geographical areas around where they live, perhaps visiting the market or shops with their employers. On Sundays, Filipinas travel by bus across the city to attend church and to meet with their friends. Obviously, in time they become more acquainted with the city, but this is more by chance than by deliberate action.

Another important means of communication for Filipinas is the telephone. During the week, they

communicate with each other frequently. If, as is often the case, employers do not like them to use the telephone, they wait until the employer is out. It is possible to do this in Hongkong without discovery since local calls are free and go unrecorded. This is a vital instrument in allaying the problems of being physically and socially isolated from each other during the week.

(v) Ties With Home

Filipinas' ties with home are maintained conscientiously. Letters are written regularly to relatives and friends and the telephone or telegram is used if the message is urgent. Returning Filipinas also usually take with them a host of messages, goods and money on behalf of their friends.

Apart from familial contact, Filipinas maintain ties with the Philippines by obtaining publications from home. Newspapers, newsletters and magazines from the Philippines are read avidly. The most popular of these are 'Comics' such as 'Superstar'. This comic often features Nora Aunor, a television star. Nora was a young poor girl who went to the city and became a famous singer and cinema star. Understandably Filipinas identify with her and enjoy stories about her. Other comics feature short 'love' stories, or articles about favourite personalities in the Philippines.

Despite the fact that many Filipinas are worried about the situation in the Philippines, and in particular about the economic problems there, most retain a strong identity with home. Most agree that even if they move to another country such as Canada or the USA, they will eventually settle in the Philippines.

(h) Relationship to Hongkong

As temporary contract workers, Filipinas develop very little identity with Hongkong and with the values of the host population. Thus very few have Chinese friends or would be prepared to date or marry a local man. Rather more would be prepared to date a European or an American. This is not surprising since this generation of Filipinas are still heavily influenced by the 'American Dream' ideology which pervaded the Philippines during the American colonial period. In a similar vein, Filipinas reported that they did not feel very comfortable in all Chinese groups, although the language barrier was an important factor here.

The attitudes of Filipinas to Hongkong remains similarly neutral. Only a minority read local, English language papers or are interested in programmes about local affairs. Very few know very much about local issues such as the current discussions about the colony's future after 1997, or could name the present Governor. Filipinas

remain equally apathetic about local festivals and events, and few have ever attended any festivals or organised events in Hongkong.

Generally these women feel that they are ignored or looked down upon by the local population. They are often not allowed in hotel lavatories or lobbies, which are open to the general public, and are often asked to leave shops or market stalls.

Not surprisingly, only a minority of Filipinas felt that they were involved in the way of life in Hongkong and most did not expect to be. They remain a tightly-knit ethnic minority group whose goals and values differ from the host population.

(i) Host Attitudes.

The social adjustment of migrants depends to a large extent upon the attitudes of the host community. There may be discrimination or prejudice which reflects the community's resistance to absorbing sub-cultures. On the other hand, positive attitudes may facilitate positive adjustment and increase the chances of the eventual integration of the migrant group.

Host attitudes are influenced by many different factors. Firstly, the attitude of the host community towards a migrant labour force may be determined by economic circumstances. In times of economic hardship and

unemployment, feelings of prejudice and hostility may be intensified. Castles and Kosack (1973) suggest that prejudice results from insecurity of indigenous workers rather than from the characteristics of immigrants.

This situation is avoided in Hongkong because Filipinas are restricted to domestic work only, and they fill this gap because indigenous workers have moved into other occupations. Hongkong's full employment results in little competition or feelings of prejudice against Filipinas for this reason. Moreover, the immigration policy is designed so that the entire Filipina labour force could be disposed of if the economic or political situation in Hongkong were to change.

Nevertheless, letters and press reports in local newspapers suggest that the local population do harbour some resentment against this migrant group. In particular their presence in large numbers in the Square, the perception that they are overpaid and the racist stereotypes of the Filipinas as lazy, sulky, 'spoiled' and over-sexed are maintained.

The measurement of the attitudes of the host community towards migrants is extremely difficult, since discrimination and prejudice may be subtle or self perceived. There is therefore a concentration in the literature upon measurable items, such as the rate of

intermarriage between migrants and native members of the community.

The attitude of the host community in Hongkong towards Filipina domestic maids is perhaps best seen in the policies which have been made concerning this group. Firstly Filipinas are not allowed to move out of domestic work into other occupations. Whilst this is an understandable policy, which protects the local population from unnecessary competition it ensures that Filipinas remain in the lowest occupational level. Secondly, Filipinas may enter Hongkong on a temporary contractual basis only. If they lose their job, become ill or homeless, they are easily deported. This policy reflects a lack of interest in the welfare of this group, who have contributed to the occupational structure of Hongkong for the last fifteen years. Thirdly, the Hongkong government has set up a contract system between employers and employees. Five copies of this document have to be signed before a Filipina can be employed. A close look at the contract reveals that it is designed to protect the employer in a number of ways. The number of hours to be worked each week is not specified; the exact nature of what constitutes 'domestic work' is not specified. If an employer wishes to sack his maid he may give her one month's notice. If a maid wishes to leave she has to

obtain a release letter from her employer.

Finally, the attitude towards the enforcement of the contract is a laissez faire one. From the results of the present study, very little appears to be done to enforce the minimum wage or the living accommodation. Filipinas may of course, take the matter to the Labour Tribunal and openly argue with their employers. But in order to do this most Filipinas have to face the prospect of being unemployed, and homeless. The length of time between each of the several required sessions at the Labour Tribunal can run into months. During this time the Filipina is not allowed to work. She stands to lose not only her salary but probably the savings which she invested in the trip to come to Hongkong as well. With their natural tendency not to join labour unions, Filipinas are highly unlikely to complain about their conditions.

Summary and Conclusion

This survey has shown that Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong are a unique migrant group. They are predominantly single, comparatively well-educated and are usually in the age range 25-35 years. The majority originate from the rural Luzon region of the Philippines, but many migrated to Manila before coming to Hong Kong. Most were previously working in the Philippines, usually in poorly-paid unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.

These women are not from the poorest families in the Philippines, and their families tend to be better educated than usual for the social group. They do not adhere closely to the traditional female role in the Philippines. The married women are unusual in that, by joint agreement with their husbands, they have left children behind to become the main breadwinner of the family. The single women have also abandoned the common female behaviour pattern of becoming married in their mid-twenties. It is not clear if these women will remain unmarried or marry later.

Although the majority of Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong are reasonably happy with their work situation, this survey has shown that they are not always properly treated. Many of these workers earn below the Government Minimum wage, which is itself well below the

average wage in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Department of Statistics, 1984). A quarter of them do not have their own room to sleep in, as their contracts require.

Filipinas in Hongkong rely heavily on their own ethnic group for social support. Apart from practical advice, the members of the group give each other moral support, and reinforce the values of the Filipino culture. Ties with home remain strong, whereas the identity with Hongkong is much less.

However, whilst the social support network system is strong, it also serves to ensure that Filipinas remain a separate group within Hongkong society. There are several disadvantages of this lack of integration from the local community. The host group and the migrant group are more likely to form negative stereotypes of each other if they remain separated. Further, this group's lack of awareness of their rights, and disinterest in forming associations for their own benefit, means that they may remain in a vulnerable position. If they encounter difficulties, such as homelessness or legal problems with their employers, their own social network cannot be of much help. Finally, so long as they remain separated from the host community, it is unlikely that adequate social and legal support of these women will be forthcoming.

The normal social development of these women has

been severely disrupted at an age when they would normally be getting married and having children. They have come as an exclusively female group to a new culture where they have many social disadvantages and limitations. Whether they marry or not, or whether they temporarily migrate abroad, the roles of these Filipinas will not be defined as waged workers, but as mothers or domestics. Their migration, temporary as it is, provides them with no new skills or social mobility, and with only a relatively minor and transient financial advantages.

This situation persists because these women define their occupations in terms of the benefits they can obtain for their families, rather than in terms of personal gain. Their status is derived from their families and their peers in the Philippines, not the workplace. Therefore they accept menial, low paid tasks such as domestic work, which is an extension of the female role within the family, quite willingly. Industrialisation has offered a large population of rural women no more than the opportunity to waste their skills on marginal, poorly paid occupations with no political and few legal and social rights. If this situation persists, then it is unlikely that rural female migrants can be considered to have been liberated from the restrictions of traditional life. Indeed they may be doubly disadvantaged, both as migrants and as women.

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FIGURE 1: Age in years last birthday

There were 1178 responses to this question

Mean age = 30.9 years (SD = 7.1)

Median age = 29.0 years

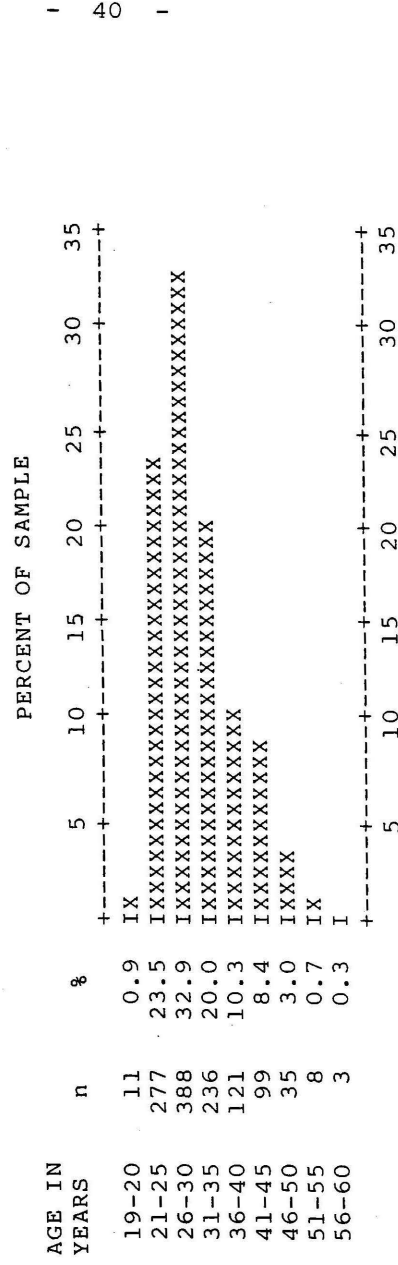


FIGURE 2: Number of children of married Filipinas

There were 318 responses to this question

Mean number of children = 3.4

Median number of children = 3.0

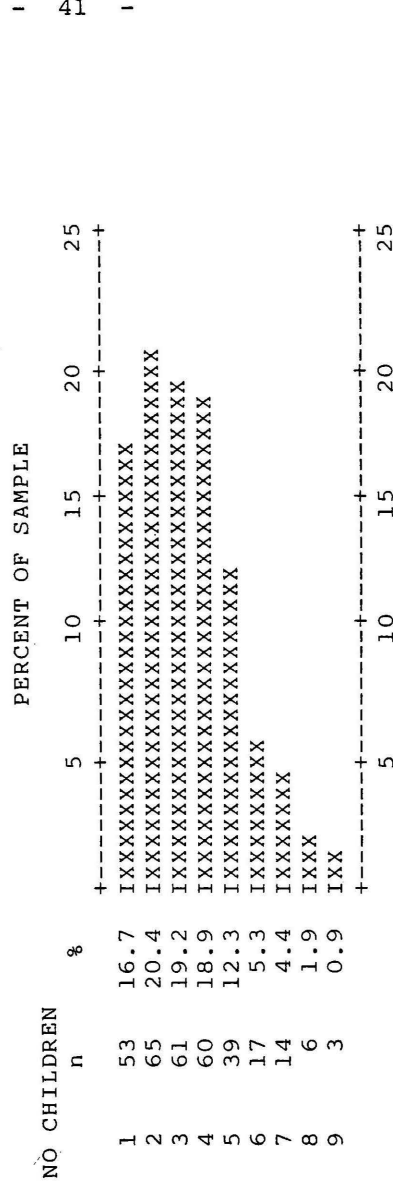


FIGURE 3: Number of years residence in Hong Kong

There were 1135 responses to this question

Mean length of residence = 2.75 years

Median length of residence = 2.0 years

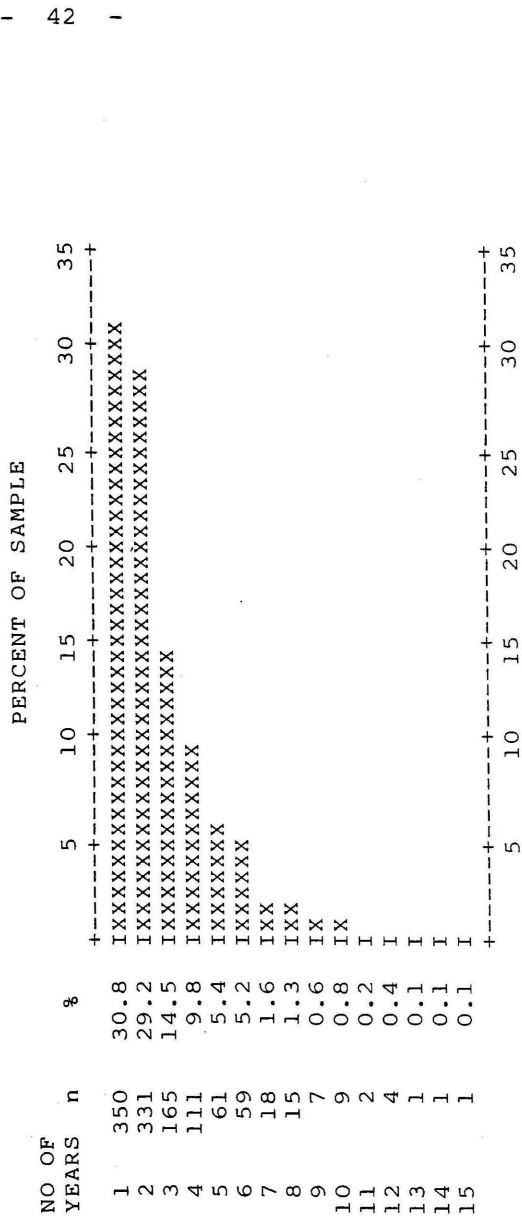


FIGURE 4: Number of jobs in Hong Kong

There were 1118 responses to this question

Mean number of jobs = 1.47

Median number of jobs = 1.0

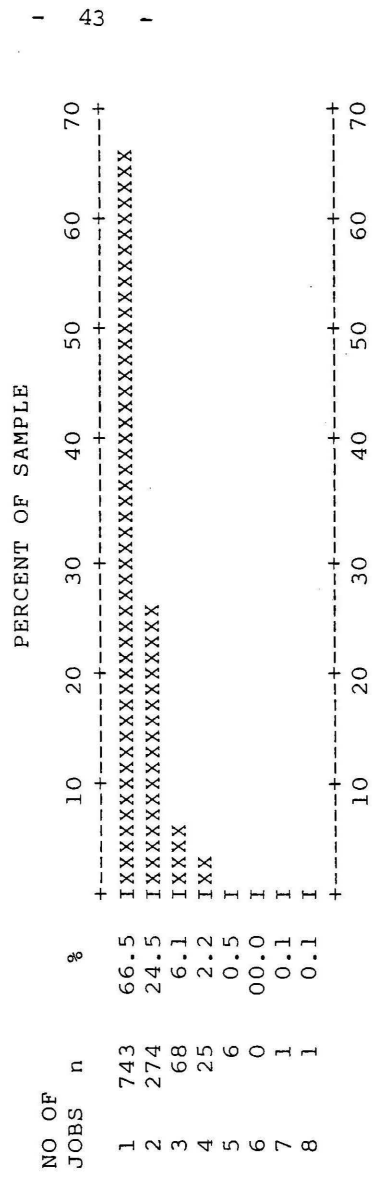
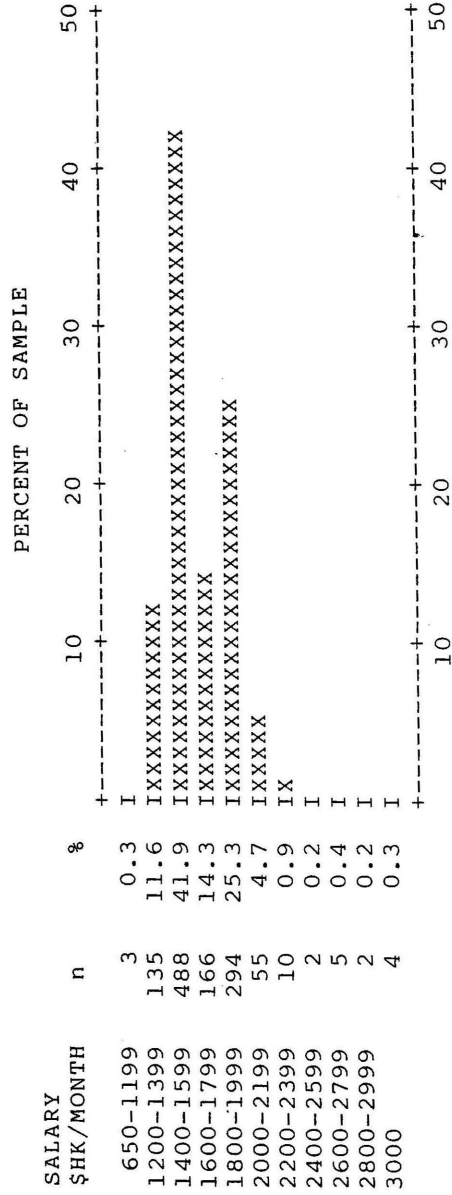


FIGURE 5: Present salary in Hong Kong (\$HK/month)

There were 1164 responses to this question

Mean salary = \$1492.0 (SD = 249.0)

Median salary = \$1350.0



香港菲傭之初步調查

(中文摘要)

隨着近年香港職業結構；婦女之教育水平、就業和角色的改變，家庭傭工之需求亦日益增加，薪金較廉的菲籍傭工（尤其女傭）遂應運而興。事實上，自五十年代以來，女性單獨移民已在拉丁美洲、西歐及東南亞構成一常見之移民新現象，亦因此而開拓了移民研究的新方向。

本研究利用抽樣調查訪問了1,209名菲籍女傭（約佔菲傭在港總人數之5%）。調查結果顯示在港菲傭是一相當獨特的移民羣體。她們的平均年齡是30.1歲，25至35歲佔了84%；76%未婚；83%信奉天主教；75%來港前有工作經驗，其中44%年薪少於2,000披索（港幣900元）；逾60%菲傭出生及成長於具長遠移民歷史的北呂宋農村地區，但近半數在來港前曾於馬尼拉居住，所以亦有城市生活之經驗；她們其中六成多是為了經濟因素來港工作而捨棄了菲律賓的傳統女性角色；但縱使她們大多來自較低的社經階層，其個人和父母的平均教育水平較一般菲律賓人為高。

七成半在港菲傭對目前的工作環境和條件（平均月薪港幣1,492元）感到滿意，其滿意程度與其薪金和職業流動有正面關係，而擁有私人房間和為非華籍僱主工作的菲傭之工作滿意程度亦較高。然而，資料顯示有不少菲傭仍得不到香港政府法例規定的保障：如逾六成工資低於當時（1984年）政府規定的最低月薪（港幣1,650元）、二成多沒有合約訂明的私人房間等。

菲傭的親屬和朋友在其移民過程及在港適應方面均有重要的作用。她們來港前，其中52%有親屬、72%有朋友在香港，這些親友大多能協助她們求職和借貸來港之費用。抵港後，菲傭除仍舊參與宗教聚會外，便極少參加社團、工會和公眾的活動，她們幾乎完全依賴本身的族羣，以尋求精神、情感、物質及生活上的慰藉和幫助。假期時，她們齊集於中環皇后像廣場，進行各式各樣的活動，形成一獨特的菲籍羣體，強化其內部文化，是以她們對家鄉的情感和聯繫遠強於對香港社會之認同。亦由於菲傭缺乏與外界溝通和整合的緣故，她們與一般香港市民遂難於交往和被其接受，彼此產生負面的塑型；她們亦未能形成為自己社羣謀取權益之自覺性和推動力，一旦遇到較嚴重的困難時，個別菲傭單憑自己相熟親朋的幫助，便不足以應付和解決問題。

菲傭來港工作雖然多屬暫時性質，但在客觀的利害權衡下，我們可見她們得到的只是為數菲薄和短暫的經濟利益，並未能改進其工作技能和社會地位；失去的却是要中斷、甚或放棄個人的正常社會發展（如於適齡時結婚和生育）。然而，她們大多能安於接受此勞力、低酬的家傭工作，原因是這些婦女的就業選擇是以其家庭而非個人的利益為主；她們的身份地位亦是衍生於其在菲的家庭和友儕，而不是本身的職業。