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Experiencing exclusion and reacting to stereotypes? Navigating borders of the migrant body

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In her seminal work on the body, Robyn Longhurst (1994) outlines that the body can be seen as the 'geography closest in'. However, in contemporary society, when restrictions are placed upon the body and the body is subjected to boundary making and territorialisation, how does the geography of the body begin to change? The paper investigates the way in which emotional experiences of situated bodies alter over time and how public perceptions of particular (migrant) bodies changes the spaces through which they are materialised. It critically discusses the specific ways in which female migrants' bodies may be bordered in place and how particular stereotypes surrounding the migrant body lead to a very particular sense of territoriality. Territory has been defined as 'a portion of geographic space which is claimed or occupied by a person or group of persons or by an institution' (Storey D 2001). This paper looks at how territory is inscribed on, in and through the body, utilising the migrant body as an example that enacts and performs particular aspects of territory as a response to the classificatory stereotypes that challenge it. Drawing on feminist embodied research in Singapore, the paper demonstrates the different ways in which female migrants' bodies operate on the margins of society, creating specific territorial borders around their bodies. Discussions of the experiences of foreign domestic workers and expatriates in Singapore highlight how these bodies are stigmatised and categorised, demonstrating how social and cultural separations lead to a re-territorialising and renegotiation of bodies.

Key words: *migrants, territory, bodies, practice, identity*

Introduction

This paper discusses the different ways in which two seemingly unconnected groups of migrant women create and maintain territory around their body when they are subjected to stigmatisation. Focusing on the case of Singapore as a site, this paper explores the complex relationships and negotiations that expatriate women and foreign domestic workers (FDWs) have with the host society. Through their emotional experiences of territorialisation, I take these two distinct groups of women to discuss how stereotypes and stigmas affect the migrant body in different ways, which can lead to similar responses, thereby presenting a unique insight into the process of emotional territorialisation. Through a discussion of the territory of the body as 'the geography closest in' (Longhurst 1994), this paper examines personal and emotional concepts of territory and territoriality. Analysing the appearance of the body as 'other', I highlight the way in which stereotypes are placed on the migrant body, reflecting on the norms and assumptions of bodily practices and performances and how these effectively produce and reproduce particular territorial identities. Further, the paper looks at how the migrant body demonstrates an example of enactment and performance of particular aspects of territory around their bodies.

Policies around immigrant settlement and citizenship remain critical to international migrants (Turner 1994, cited in Dunn 2010). Policies operating at the national scale regulate and control bodies, which impact on the daily lives and experiences of migrants from a multitude of backgrounds. This particular example discusses the

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experiences of expatriate women and FDWs who are subjected to rules and regulations placed on their bodies, their identities and their practices during their residence within Singapore. As Dunn asserts,

> transnationalism is about encounters between different bodies which leads to all kinds of intimacies and emotions, some that generate sharing and exchange and others which lead to tension, friction and even hostility and anger. (2010, 6)

This paper focuses on the frictions and tensions that are manifest in and through embodied, everyday practices of different 'categories' of migrants residing in the same state, looking at how their bodies are viewed and their subsequent territorial reactions to such policies.

This paper is concerned with the human behaviour that constitutes, maintains and reproduces territories around the individual body, suggesting that it is the emotive and personal territories created that are important to our understanding of the very practice and performance of this concept. While the implications of territory are hotly debated, the concept itself, its genealogy, conceptual preconditions and even its precise meaning have been given less attention (Elden 2005; Painter 2010, 1097). Subsequently, the paper addresses these concerns by focusing on the practice and performance of territory for the individual (Cox 2002). Such a focus responds to Painter's (2010, 1097) suggestion that there is room for further reflection on territory, as embodiment, as practice, as existing at multiple scales (Elden 2010; Sack 1986), and as lived experience, through which this research is rooted.

Discussing the border, this paper considers Storey's (2001) argument that humans have an innate need to control territory, inferring that territorial behaviour is 'natural' and that territories and boundaries are produced under particular conditions to serve specific ends. Here, territorial boundaries are created as a response (or reaction) to a particular set of practices that migrants face in different ways through the practice of their daily lives. Additionally, territories are spaces that people defend by excluding some activities and by including those that will enhance more precisely what it is in the territory that they want to defend (Cox 2002). The paper will therefore address the practices of defence around bodily territoriality and the demarcation of visible or symbolic boundaries that are created in and through the actions and interactions of individuals.

The notion of social and cultural belonging may be translated into an understanding of the formation of personal and emotive territories for individuals that are at once reactionary and performative. This draws on insights from feminist geography, which understands territory as personal and relational, starting from the body, through which we experience, perform and interpret territoriality (Wastl-Walter and Staeheli 2004). Territories rest on spatial imaginaries, the mental maps that people use to make sense of the world (Keating 2014). Subsequently, *imagined* borders and boundaries must be taken note of when discussing territory and territorialisation, developing further the suggestion for a feminist analytic lens. The paper responds to claims that we are facing (multiplying) borders in a variety of settings in the everyday (Madsen 2014, 57), investigating how migrant women negotiate a myriad of different borders and territories in their everyday lives. The paper develops suggestions that territory, and the practice of territoriality, is not nation-state bound but is immersed in the local and the everyday (Crow and Allen 1994), refining the scalar nature of territory by drawing on Longhurst's (1996) idea that the body, as both leaky and fluid, is a boundary that may be transgressed by particular practices. Therefore the very intimate scales at which particular practices operate may indeed be territorially rooted in nature.

Borders are experienced differently (Madsen 2014) and so I subsequently take two seemingly distinct groups within one national context to explore the concepts highlighted. Studying expatriate women and FDWs in Singapore, this paper unpacks negotiations between individual and state in the creation and regulation of corporeal territorial entities. Both groups are excluded through practices of 'the border', albeit through subtly distinct ways. Noting Keating's suggestion that 'territory can be seen as a causal character, moulding institutions and human behaviour' (2013, 1), imagined territory(ies) impact on the formation of material territory(ies) and vice versa, suggesting that territory is an *ongoing* practice, always in a state of becoming (Painter 2010, 1094). Territory is, therefore, both practice and performance, suggesting a real need to look at how this plays out in everyday settings.

Bordering the migrant body

The empirical material for this paper draws directly on the scale of the body as a site of territory, of territorial practice and the practice of self-identity (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Bodies can be read as outcomes of social process and can be seen as sites of action and resistance (Dunn 2010). Subsequently, geographical research has begun to take seriously the politics of embodiment, demonstrating the importance of focusing on this particular scale within not only contemporary migration research, but also in the politics of emotion more broadly.

The very demarcation of self and other marks migrants as different (Cresswell 1996); they are externalised and separated as 'different from us'. This stigmatisation impacts the sense of belonging that migrants face. In Singapore there are particular stigmas that surround the migrant body, based on class, race, ethnicity and colonial

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histories. These lead to the creation of a protective boundary around 'othered groups', which in turn leads to practices of territoriality in a myriad of subtle and everyday ways. It is in expatriate women's and FDWs' response to this stigmatisation that we see the very formation of bodily boundaries and territory.

Expatriate women and FDWs form communities that are distinct from those of the host nation, which leads to a particular understanding of parallel but separate lives, where they operate in and through everyday spaces in Singapore while maintaining relative 'distance' from native Singaporeans as a reaction to the stigmas that are faced. Creating territories, they create boundaries that both unite and divide space (Penrose 2002). Expatriate women and FDWs in Singapore face different forms of stigma attached to their bodies; however, there are some common experiences and therefore their reaction to the different stigmas they face can be discussed in conjunction, to highlight the *performative* nature of territorial constructions. If transnationalism is experienced in different ways (Dunn 2010), we can also suggest that two different cultural/national groups might have indeed similar or different experiences within the same national territory or city space. Researching these two groups within one nation allows us to explore their similar and different experiences and their subsequent response to, and performance of, different territorial practices. State power and policies are evocatively revealed through analysis of how bodies are disciplined and regulated, and importantly, their everyday or daily responses to migration policies (Bailey *et al.* 2002, cited in Dunn 2010). Therefore, the state's imposition on the migrant body and the regulations that this imposes 'binds together' different types of migrant experience.

Within migration studies, it is normally the globetrotting of corporate elites on which research is situated, though these may not necessarily be the groups that need public assistance or protection Dunn (2010, 4). However, even empowered groups can occupy very vulnerable sections of the labour market (2010, 4). Therefore, I suggest that both FDWs and expatriate women are forms of 'economic' migrant, though differently positioned through concepts of agency, as well as the capacity to hurt and be hurt (Waite *et al.* 2014). While FDWs migrate directly for paid employment, expatriate women in this research were primarily on spouse passes; therefore I class this group as 'economic migrant' because of their reason for being in Singapore, which was attached to their partner's employment status as skilled worker. Additionally, there might be a 'category jumping' between temporary and permanent visas (see research done in the Australian context by O'Conner 2005), which leads to varying experiences of mobility by different categories of 'guest workers' and/or migrant, highlighting that *all* might be unevenly empowered and disempowered. It is by focusing on the embodied experiences of these distinct, but connected, groups that we might begin to see not only the structure of the state in/through everyday life, but also the way in which daily territories and territorial negotiations are manifest in different ways by these two groups. Their 'coming together' is also apparent through a shared experience of temporariness (Bailey *et al.* 2002), as temporarily permanent inhabitants of a particular national (as well as local and everyday) space. Subsequently, while these groups' experiences might be compared through their mutual categorisation of 'otherness', there is no denying that the agency and autonomy of each group and their practices of territoriality are also distinct.

This paper draws on empirical evidence gathered for a doctoral research project, with data collected during a three-month research visit to Singapore. A young white-British academic, I worked as a volunteer in a number of migrant rights organisations, as well as expatriate social groups and found that my own positionality helped me to negotiate the experiences and stories of these two particular groups. Forty semi-structured interviews were conducted along with oral histories across the organisations – 25 with expatriates, 15 with FDWs. In addition, four focus groups were conducted with expatriate women and six with FDWs. Finally, over 150 hours of participant observation were conducted.[1] Research was collected with the American Women's Association[2] (AWA), the Australian and New Zealand Association[3] (ANZA) and the Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics[4] (HOME) with individual participants who had spent anything from three months to 20 years in Singapore. These organisations allowed me to spend considerable amounts of time with members and the methods enabled a great deal of interaction with participants over time, though challenges of reflexivity and research ethics were rife (Jackson 2011). For example, many of the women that participated in focus groups and interviews at the HOME shelter had had their experiences of Singapore altered through some form of dispute with their employers. Further, expatriate women were not 'volunteers', nor activists, having joined organisations primarily for social reasons. However, the territorial practices that I draw on originate from their broader experiences of residing in Singapore as an 'othered' identity.

Stigmatising migrant bodies: the case of Singapore

The proportion of non-Singaporeans in Singapore rose from 14 per cent in 1990 to 36 per cent in 2010. Many Singaporeans, it has been reported, are alarmed by the rapid increase of low-paid migrant workers, which has widened social divides and strained the small country's

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transportation and housing capacities. The government hopes to increase the overall population from 5.4 million to 6.9 million by 2030. Because the birth rate of Singaporeans is below replacement levels and permanent residency is tightly controlled, the bulk of the increase will have to come from temporary migration, further skewing the ratio of transient workers to citizens (*New York Times* 2013). Currently foreign workers make up 38 per cent of the total working population in the city state, which has caused tension among local residents (Harper 2013). This is set to rise to 45 per cent by 2030, further putting indigenous Singaporeans into a reduced majority. As such, migrants in Singapore are likely to face greater stigmatisation for a number of reasons.

The fundamental principles for *why* expatriate women[5] and FDWs[6] create separate territories is similar and yet distinct, reflecting Yeoh's point that negative representations of minority social groups are often tied to the fear of the 'other' (1999, 124). These women, as 'foreigners', 'aliens' and 'outsiders', face discrimination in the way they are viewed by the Singaporean state and by broader social processes;[7] they face stigmatisation and stereotypes due to their bodies and the physical and social differences between them and the host society. For example, in their research with FDWs in Singapore, Yeoh and Huang (2000) highlighted the way in which the FDW's body is subject to policing by employers such that these bodies are relegated to a divisive class boundary, between Singaporean and FDW (Huang and Yeoh 1996; Yeoh and Huang 2010; Piper 2013). FDWs are a transient workforce with no foothold in the country, their bodies regulated by strict legal policies that prevent them from gaining any sense of permanency or belonging in society and that limit their individual autonomy, such as reproductive rights (Oswin 2013). The lower status assigned to FDW bodies creates both physical and metaphorical boundaries between the migrant body and Singaporean society (Yeoh and Huang 1999).

In comparison, expatriate women experience much more liberal policies. However

> rather than experiencing the pleasures of a 'borderless world', expatriate women's experiences highlight the persistent relevance of boundaries in their everyday life. (Fechter 2007, 38)

'Boundaries' here are understood as territorial distinctions or indeed social, cultural or imagined 'divisions' that may 'separate' the migrant from the host society in a myriad of ways, extending Fechter's (2007) discussion by involving the emotional bonds and boundaries of research participants. While migration may provide opportunities for agency for expatriate women, it can also reaffirm particular patriarchal structures in the host society, limiting the autonomy of the individual in different ways (Yeoh and Khoo 1998; Lundström 2012). These women, who are used to different patriarchal and societal structures, can be marked out as visibly different and therefore as not belonging in much the same process as detailed above. Though their position in the host society was much more comfortable, it was a different routine to that which they were used to and reflects different patriarchal relationships, perspectives on the family and traditional gender roles. Further, a sense of temporariness was also experienced as their residence in Singapore was only guaranteed while their spouse was in employment. Discussing their experiences, the women at the AWA were shocked to find that they were unable to open their own bank account, or take out a mobile phone contract, without their husband's approval or explicit permission (Leonard 2008).[8]

The processes by which these women were 'othered', though somewhat different, demonstrates the way in which resident 'aliens' are seen as outside the host society. The creation of separate and distinct territory(ies) can subsequently be seen as a survival mechanism. Though not always experiencing a threat to their individual person, these women maintained a sense of distance from the host society through the creation and maintenance of distinctly separate territories, grounded in their own formation of self-identity. *How* these women respond to the stereotypes and stigmas attached to their bodies is important for a wider understanding of the continued and complex negotiations of migrants more broadly.

Creating and maintaining territory

There were distinctive arenas in everyday life through which territory was seen as a reaction to boundaries and regulatory practices enforced by the host population. Participants outlined that social boundaries pushed them outside of the social territory of Singapore. Both expatriate and FDW participants discussed being stared at when out in public. Expatriate participants spoke of being called 'Ang-Mo', which *participants* understood as a derogatory term for white people,[9] making them feel 'out of place', while FDWs were also limited in their mobility, often being confined to the home space of the employer or to a few enclaves on their days off as they were regarded as 'maids', a much lower social status (Yeoh and Huang 2010, 1998). This was discussed by Magdalena, a Filipino FDW who had been in Singapore for six years, and Deborah, a British expatriate, who had been in Singapore for 2 years,

> Always I am at [her employer's] home. When I go outside sometimes it is hard. In some places people look at us [her and her friends, also FDWs], they see us differently, I can see them thinking we should not be there. (Magdalena)

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> I think it is one of the safest cities in the world . . . But sometimes you do feel a bit uncomfortable, especially with what you wear . . . It's hard not to look like a tourist. Some of my friends have been called things like Ang-Mo. It doesn't happen often, but it does make you think. (Deborah)

While the experiences of these two groups are not equivalent, the sense of exclusion each group faced is linked to their identification as particular migrant 'other', which connects with broader concerns about specific categories of migrant in Singapore. The stigmatisation that surrounded participant's bodies limited their mobility and also shaped their experiences and perceptions of themselves within the host society. This experience led to the creation of new boundaries that were manifest in two ways: geographically and emotionally.

Creating geographically distinct territory: home and support spaces

Geographical territories attest to the way in which these groups of migrant women were physically separated from the host population and involved the construction of physical borders, marked concretely through distinct separation. This is seen in residential segregation and the location of support groups and organisations, creating territory through physical acts for specific ends (Storey 2001) and boundaries that may be either visible or symbolic (Wastl-Walter and Staeheli 2004).

Discussing the issue with participants, the location of the home space was very important. However, the processes of residential segregation and reasoning behind this were different. Expatriates created their 'own space' through the rental of high-end properties in relatively exclusive areas of Singapore. This was usually part of a relocation package, which enabled expatriate women to live a separate and different life than that of local Singaporean women. FDWs were subject to boundaries imposed by employers and thereby occupied a very different kind of residential territory. Most FDWs lived-in with the families they were placed with, often in a small, windowless room, close to the kitchen or laundry facilities of the main accommodation. The living quarters assigned to FDWs were distinctly different from the main area of accommodation, thus physically separating them from their employer.[10] While expatriates occupied separate spaces through choice, operating a degree of self-segregation and opting for high-end expat condos that they considered 'safe', FDWs were separated in a very different way, often lacking agency in their choice of living arrangements. These examples show that the personal space of the home separated the two groups of women from wider Singaporean society more generally. However, this issue is complex. While some expatriate participants wanted to live in Housing Development Board apartments in order to mix with Singaporeans, there were strict conditions on the allocation of such accommodation for Singaporean citizens, restricting them to more expatriate-orientated condos.

In addition, migrant women's organisations operated as a territory, both physically and emotionally. Those who joined organisations were able to practise their identity and their sense of self within the safe confines of an organisational territory; the physical walls created a boundary through which outsiders were not welcome. For example, expatriate women's organisations operated within a space that was exclusively for members only, such as the American Club on Orchard Road, which housed the AWA. Entry to the club was permitted only with membership identification and visitors were not able to purchase food or drinks in the restaurant or the coffee shop as payment was charged to the membership card. Participants at the AWA highlighted their difference to the local population, explaining that their different values and opinions were the motivation for becoming part of this group. For example, Alex, an American who had been in Singapore for a year, highlighted:

> I feel like they [Singaporeans] have a wall up like they don't want to be involved with us . . . or befriend an expat or . . . I don't know . . . because I was trying to talk to Singaporeans in my building and they just have this wall up . . . they treat us differently. (Alex)

Such comments are interesting as the purpose of these organisations is to create 'divisions', thereby remaining exclusive. The lives of expatriate women were closely linked to, and shaped by, the expatriate community in general, which was distinctly separate from the host society's daily practices in terms of social activity, friendships and daily routines (Fechter 2007).

For FDWs, HOME was a distinctly separate space, where members were treated as equals, having full rights within the space of the organisation. However, it was the metaphorical territory that was created that gave them a sense of agency, away from the negative stereotypes placed on their bodies in wider society. The women claimed this space as theirs; outsiders were treated as such and on entering the space of the shelter where FDWs lived, volunteers (who were usually white, middle class or expatriates) were referred to as M'aams, demonstrating that, while allowed inside this physical boundary, there was an 'us/them' dichotomy, operating through emotional and representative difference; this was *their* space, *their* territory, created as a safe place for them. In contrast, FDWs referred to each other as sister, demarcating a distinct border of who 'belonged' in this space. The organisation was thus made into a territory through the demarcation of a physical border (the walls of the shelter)

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but more importantly emotionally through constructions of 'inside' and 'outside', based on identity and difference to the host population.

The practice of territory in everyday life

Expatriates and FDWs were also involved in the active construction of boundaries around their bodies through the practice of everyday life, forming emotional or symbolic territories that were practised and maintained through habits, behaviours and everyday instances. Expatriate participants affectionately termed this 'the expat bubble' in which they practised their daily lives through routinised actions that were different from routines of local women. For example, expatriates saw the food of the host society as a source of pollution (Fechter 2007). As Lupton discusses 'the physiological dimension of food is inextricably intertwined with the symbolic' (1996, 8). Eating food from their homeland and discounting local 'routines', expatriates could retain a sense of self (Longhurst *et al*. 2009, cited in Dunn 2010, 6). This resonates with Fischler's understanding that 'through the principle of incorporation . . . we become what we eat' (1988, 279) and shows that these participants did not want to 'become' Singaporean. Although some participants did consume food from the host nation, most were likely to stick to food and recipes from home, creating a boundary between what was and was not allowed to enter their body, demarcating a boundary around their body not penetrated by 'Singapore'.

While this might also be seen as habitual practice, individuals discussed food in a group setting, referring to recipes and places they would go to purchase specific items shaping their daily lives into specific routines. In the HOME shelter, FDWs created recipes from their home nation using local ingredients (primarily the Philippines, Myanmar and Indonesia). This was consumed in large groups at scheduled meal-times and represented the way in which food continued to be a practice of their identity, mirroring familial connections and 'getting together', which they explained as being an important tradition in the homeland. Food as identity was therefore important. More than habitual routine, eating foods from the homeland, participants suggested, meant they were able to actively maintain the cultural boundary between home and host nation.

Finally, participants expressed particular aspects of territorialisation through dress and appearance, which they used to create imagined boundaries between themselves from the host culture, demonstrating the practice of territory and territoriality (Wastl-Walter and Staeheli 2004). Participants spoke about dress as an important component of creating and maintaining a separate emotional space from the host society. For Elizabeth, a Brazilian expatriate living in Singapore for six months, expressing her identity this way was important to preserve her sense of self:

> It is a shock when you arrive somewhere new and the culture is different and you have to get used to that. . . . For my husband if I wear this shirt and showing my chest it is fine, for me here it is not, but that is because we are different cultures. . . . But I will wear these clothes because it is my culture; it is where I come from . . . It is me and I want to show that. (Elizabeth)

These arguments relate to the way in which migrants were perceived and the stereotypes that were assigned to their bodies and bodily identities. Many participants refused to change their dress, seeing it as a form of self-expression. For example, FDWs practised their own identity at Lucky Plaza, a meeting point for FDWs on their days off. The women wore clothes that would not necessarily be 'accepted' by employers; such clothes were not merely outside of the prescribed 'uniform', but also shaped their bodies in different, sometimes unacceptable and overtly sexualised ways. By clothing the body according to their own cultural norms, expatriates and FDWs chose to practise a symbolic boundary around their body, demonstrating a particular bodily territory. This boundary was not penetrated by the culture of the host society, but was instead a defiant way of performing a distinctly separate emotional space, using their bodily subjectivity to do so.

Conclusions

In this paper I have highlighted how stereotypes placed on the migrant body lead to the creation and maintenance of geographical territories and the practice of territory in everyday life both imaginatively and geographically. Participants created emotionally and geographically separate territories in which they practised a sense of self and yet these 'real' and 'metaphorical' territories both informed and were shaped by each other through specific territorial practices. The choice to create, maintain and subsequently occupy separate territories reflected the individual experience, yet this was continually negotiated (Penrose 2002), thus demonstrating the importance of active maintenance of the border as protecting micro-territories of the migrant body. This cements the notion of the performative aspect of the border as a site of continual struggle and negotiation (Berndt 2001) and develops insights into 'thinking territorially', reiterating their individual and active negotiation (Paasi 2003). The border of the body is porous and migrant women actively practise and perform aspects of 'border maintenance' as a reaction to being excluded emotionally and physically from the social and cultural territory of the host society. This

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demonstrates the multiplicity of bodily territory (Christiansen and Joenniemi 1999) and highlights the need to understand the complexity of connection of different scalar practices. Paying more attention to intimate, as well as national, territorial configurations therefore allows us to conform to as well as challenge traditional assumptions of territory, suggesting instead that territory, and the practices of territoriality, are not simply political, but are also personal and emotional, operating within the everyday choices that migrants make.

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Notes

1 It should be noted that the expatriate women involved were primarily white, middle class, some with children in Singapore, others with grown-up families. These women ranged in age from their early 30s to their mid-50s, but all were on spouse visas and were therefore not permitted to take up paid employment in Singapore. In comparison, FDWs were primarily young women from South East Asia who had travelled to Singapore alone, often leaving families in their home country. These women were in Singapore specifically for economic reasons, though their visa status did not afford them a number of employment rights.

2 The research was conducted in 2009, during which time the AWA, founded in 1935, had a member base of over 1200 people, all contributing S$125 per annum to the association, which operated within the American Club, an American Expatriate exclusive club which cost over S$10 000 per annum for family membership in the same year. The AWA is a social organisation, organising trips, events, and a social and sporting programme for members.

3 ANZA was founded in 1947, and at the time of the research had over 7000 active members, contributing S$135 per annum in membership fees. ANZA operates independently of any other national association, unlike the AWA. The ANZA website states ‘over our sixty year history we have provided people and families with a home away from home, a place where people can come together with fellow countrymen, relax, build important friendships and give back to the community’ (ANZA membership website 2010).

4 HOME, founded in 2004, is a registered charity that looks into the welfare and rights of migrant workers in Singapore. Their objectives focus on advocacy, welfare and empowerment for migrant workers. There were no official statistics on the number of members as membership is free, with HOME relying on charitable funds and donations.

5 The paper draws primarily on the experiences of American, New Zealander, Australian and British expatriate women.

6 Foreign Domestic Workers involved in HOME primarily originate from The Philippines, Myanmar and Indonesia.

7 As December 2011, Singapore had 3.27 million Citizens (SCs), and 0.54 million Permanent Residents (PRs). Together, they made up the resident population of 3.81 million. We also had a non-resident population of 1.46 million who are working, studying or living in Singapore on a non-permanent basis. Singapore’s total population was 5.26 million. The remaining 12% of the non-resident population are higher-skilled foreigners such as professionals, managers, executives and specialists who hold Employment Passes (EP). These higher-skilled foreigners enhance the competitiveness of Singapore-based companies by complementing our limited Singaporean workforce or by providing skills and expertise that we do not yet possess, and by helping our companies expand into regional and international markets. 21% of Singapore’s non-resident population were family members of our residents or employment pass holders, and international students. Family members hold either dependants or long-term visit passes and 14% of the non-resident population are foreign domestic workers (Population.SG n.d).

8 This was due to restrictions placed upon expatriate women who were on spouse passes. With this type of visa they lacked certain forms of agency, with participants bemoaning a ‘backward’ culture that treated women as inferior. For comparisons, see Coutin (2010) for discussions of how asylum seekers experience exclusionary tactics such as being denied access to employment, housing, higher education, social services, healthcare and public benefits which ambiguously situate migrants as outside of a national territory, even when, physically, they are within it.

9 While often not intended as a derogatory term, Ang-Mo (meaning red hair) was perceived by participants to be a term that marked out their otherness much in the way that migrant groups in other countries might be referred to through the use of particular local (slang) phrases.

10 While some FDWs lived in with children or older family members that they were caring for, it is important to note that their location, residing within employers’ homes, having little or no personal space, and with limited opportunities to go outside and interact with other Singaporeans, reinforces their geographical ‘separateness’.

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