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Human trafficking in Mindanao

personal narratives and local perspectives

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Social Anthropology

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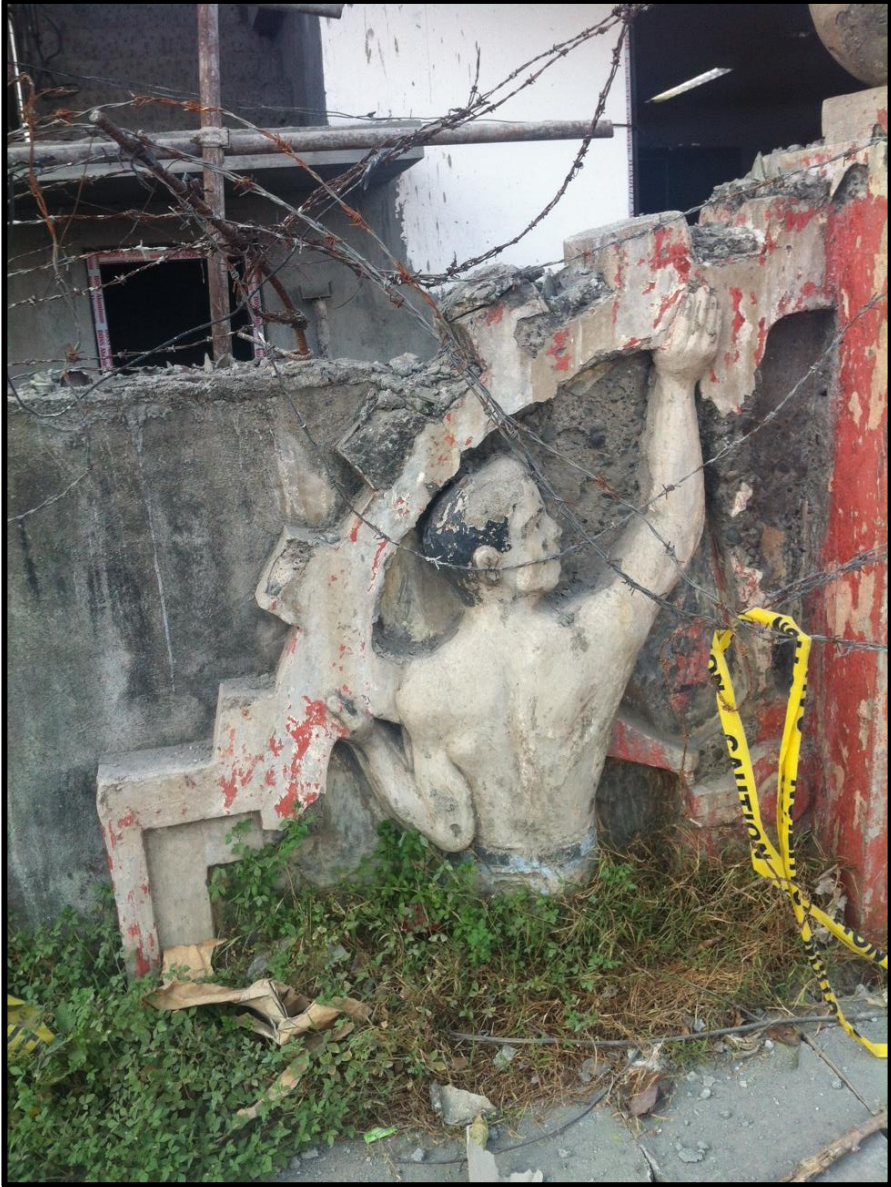


Figure 1: Crumbling sculpture in Davao City

Abstract

Academic as well as popular attention to human trafficking has increased dramatically in recent years, while the demands for immediate action have meant that counter-measures, from political legislation to direct intervention, have often preceded research-based insights. Researchers have demonstrated the value of close research in understanding this phenomenon. However, such in-depth local research is still an emerging area, and little work has been done on the Philippines specifically. In Mindanao, known issues include various forms of labour trafficking, sex trafficking, underage soldiers, and trafficking of migrants. Human trafficking in Mindanao is a complex problem, both in terms of the multiple forms of trafficking that occur and the Philippines' unique social setting. The purpose of this research has been to explore how human trafficking in Mindanao relates to wider social processes. I lived in Eastern Mindanao for five months of fieldwork, from December 2015 to May 2016. During this time, I talked with and interviewed people who had experienced exploitative labour, human trafficking, or trafficking-like practices, whose life stories are at the centre of this research. I also spoke with government and NGO workers from anti-trafficking and related agencies who provided insights into trafficking and local conditions, as well as relevant community members such as former migrants and sexual labourers. In this thesis, my original contribution to knowledge is an exploration and analysis of the social context which influences human trafficking in Mindanao, based on first-person accounts which are contextualised in the wider society and theoretically analysed through a framework of structural, symbolic, and compounding violence. Drawing on anthropological approaches to violence, I have considered human trafficking as a form of violence in the context of multiple violences. Within this framework I also present the idea of compounding violence as a lens to explore and conceptualise the ways that violence often leads to further violence. My findings suggest that human trafficking in Mindanao is an outcome and extension of local social conditions, not separate to normal social processes and realities, and one manifestation of wider compounding structural violence. At the same time, I argue that the narratives from those who have experienced trafficking also reveal deep and complex cultural, social, and personal expressions of meaning, resilience, and hope within constrained, unequal, and even violent circumstances.

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Salamat kaayo, akong mga higala ug mga magtutudlo, ako anaa sa kamong utang.

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Abbreviations and definitions of terms

AMOSUP	Associated Marine Officers and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines
ALS	Alternative Learning System (High School Equivalency)
BLES	Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (Philippines)
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
GO/NGO	Government Organisation/Non-Government Organisation
GRO	Guest relations officer; euphemism for club-based sexual labourers
IACAT	Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ILO	International Labour Office
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MILF	Moro Independence Liberation Front
NPA	New People’s Army
OFW	Overseas Filipino Worker
OWWA	Overseas Workers Welfare Association
₱	Philippine Peso (PHP)
POEA	Philippines Overseas Employment Administration
PSA	Philippines Statistics Authority
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
TIP Report	Trafficking in Persons Report (US State Department)
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
VAW/C	Violence Against Women and Children

Ako, ko	Me or I, short form 'ko'
Amerikano	American
Apo	Grandchild
Ate	Older sister
Bago	New
Bagong bayani	Modern-day hero (Bago - new + bayani - hero)
Balay	House
Barangay	Municipal division
Bayad / walay bayad	Payment / no payment
Bayani	Hero
Bukado	Avocado
Cebuano	Language of the Southern Philippines
CR (Comfort room)	Toilet (Lavatory)
Copra	Dried coconut meat
Daghan	Many
Daog-daog	(To) oppress/Oppressed
Davao	Capital city of Mindanao
Dili	No or not
Dili maayo	Bad (literally, not good; there is no word for "bad" alone)
Diri / diha / didto	Here / there (near) / "over there" (far)
Estudyante	student
Filibustero (from Spanish)	Pirate or subverter; in the Philippines, implies inciting sedition
Filipino/Filipina	Person or man from the Philippines/woman from the Philippines
Gago(ng)	Stupid, silly, idiot
Ikaw, ka	You, short form 'ka'
Ispatay pangpang	Killer (pangpang) cliff (ispatay)
Jeepney	Specific local transport, small bus

Kaayo	Very
Kamote	Kumara/sweet potato
Karenderiya	Small restaurant
"Ka sarili mong bulsa"	"Out of your own pocket"
Katabang	Helper; generally a domestic helper
Katsila	Spanish
Kaya/Dili kaya	Can or able/cannot or unable
Keso	Cheese
Kulata	(To) beat with great violence
Kuya	Older brother
Lang	Only
Lola	Grandmother
Lisod / lisod gyud	Difficult/very difficult
Lumad	Indigenous rural people
Maayo	Good or well
Maayong Buntag	Good morning
Udto	Noon or lunchtime
Hapon	Afternoon
Gabii	Evening
Maestro/a	Teacher (male/female)
Malunggay	Moringa (edible plant "superfood")
Mama-san	Female manager of sexual labourers
Matarong pamatasan	Ethics, correct or moral behaviour
Mindanao	Southern region of the Philippines
Mga	Plural (added before the word)
(Mga) Numero:	Numbers:
usa, duha, tulo, upat, lima...	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
uno, dos, tres, kuwatro, singko...	For some situations the Spanish-derived numbers are used

Pancit	Noodles
Salamat (Daghang salamat/ Salamat kaayo)	Thank you (Many thanks / thank you very much)
“Sa kadtong mga tao nga akong nautang ang kinabuhi nila”	"Those people whose lives are my debt"
Sakripisyo	Sacrifice; Suffering
Sundanon	Prolific
Suroy-suroy	(To) roam or wander
Tindahan	Small shop
Trisikad, sikad	Tricycle, short form; pedicab/rickshaw, motorised or pedal powered
(mga) Tsinelas, slippers	Jandals (inexpensive, plastic thong-style sandals)
Utang	Debt
Visayas	Central region of the Philippines, north of Mindanao
“Wala ka kahibalo unsay mahitabo”	“You don’t know what will happen”
Zamboanga	City in south-west Mindanao, common transit point to Malaysia

Images and tables

Note: all photos were taken by the author during fieldwork unless otherwise indicated. All maps and tables created by author.

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1. Introduction

“I will tell you everything.” (Crystal, formerly trafficked into the sex industry at age 15).

Crystal, like many of the people I met, wanted to tell her story as often as she could in the hope that it would help raise awareness, and be part of exposing and ending the frequency of human trafficking in the Philippines.¹ Now, Crystal is out of the sex industry, working as an advocate for other sexual labourers, and pursuing her education. “I love reaching out to people. For them to be educated. For them not to be victims in human trafficking. As well as the STI-HIV (prevention) because it is not easy for them when they get sick. So, this is why I volunteer (with an NGO supporting sexual labourers).” When I was in Mindanao I was privileged to hear Crystal’s story, and many others, that expressed hope and pain, triumph and loss, and survival through difficulties. These words, experiences, and stories are the centre of this thesis. I will tell you everything.

It was a meandering journey which brought me to Mindanao for research, and even once there I could not have guessed the number and diversity of people who eventually contributed to this study. It was the second time I had been to Davao City when I arrived, on what then seemed to be an unbearably hot day, with my husband and three children in tow. Waiting helplessly with our luggage on a shaded, grassy spot, while the apartment building’s staff struggled to locate our booking, I hoped that I was prepared for whatever lay ahead.

The first time I travelled to Davao had been 18 months prior. I had been taking time out from study to prepare for starting my PhD, which was originally planned to be based on pilgrimage in Japan. A friend in New Zealand was planning to go to the Philippines to visit some mutual friends, and I thought it would be a good opportunity to travel to a new place, visit friends, and learn about the work that their NGO (Non-Government Organisation) was doing. I ended up travelling alone, and spent two weeks in Davao, joining the NGO and

¹ Crystal’s full story is presented in chapter five, in the context of sexual labour and sex trafficking.

learning about the anti-trafficking, school breakfast, child and youth support, and community development programs that they were undertaking.

I initially had no intentions to return to Davao, but toward the end of that time the idea began to grow. I struggled with the heat and felt linguistically incompetent in helping lead children's games when I participated in feeding and human trafficking awareness programs. Nevertheless, I found myself becoming more interested in human trafficking in particular, and what anthropology could contribute to a better understanding of what was happening.

I had learned from local community organisations that in Davao human trafficking was a significant problem, but measures to counter it were still in their infancy. The NGO I was with, for example, was the only group doing any form of human trafficking prevention with young people at the time, and the program they used had been developed overseas rather than locally.² I had wanted to learn more about the Philippines for my own education about the world, but I eventually decided to pursue a PhD study that would meet my own goals as well as support the local organisations I had met by providing locally based research.

The Philippines is widely understood to be a “source” country for international human trafficking, but there are also problems with domestic trafficking (Guth, 2010; Jani & Anstadt, 2013; Saat, 2009; van Schendel, Lyons, & Ford, 2012). At a community summit I attended in Davao City, Mindanao in 2014, local organisations estimated that 150 people per month were disappearing from the local area. Programs to counter human trafficking were in their early stages, and all aspects from prevention strategies to prosecutions were still minimal. Filipinos face a unique set of circumstances which at times result in exploitation, and understanding this connection requires research-based information which is currently underdeveloped. In this thesis, I approach the concept of human trafficking from an anthropological perspective which suggests that the practice and experience of trafficking are not universal, but specific to the geographic, social, cultural, and personal settings from which events and individuals emerge.

² They have since created their own curriculum based on local needs and culture; it is based on a narrative story which warns about dangers and is usually presented in Cebuano.

Despite the robust anti-trafficking laws and migrant support systems, human trafficking in and from the Philippines remains a significant problem. In 2015, 1465 Filipino trafficking victims received government assistance; related research, such as with migrants and sex workers, has indicated that trafficking is significantly underrepresented by official victim counts (Huang & Yeoh, 2007; Urada, Silverman, Tsai, & Morisky, 2014; Visayan Forum, 2016). Research in other contexts, such as Thailand (Feingold, 2014; Pocock, Kiss, Oram, & Zimmerman, 2016), Nepal (Dahal, Joshi, & Swahnberg, 2015; Gurung, 2014), and Mexico (Acharya, 2015; Holmes, 2013; Vogt, 2013), suggests significant connections between human trafficking and social conditions including unemployment, poverty and discrimination. These relationships have not been extensively explored either theoretically, or locally in the Philippines context.

The purpose of this research was to explore the local conditions that contribute to human trafficking, through a focus on narratives from people who have experienced human trafficking and related events. This research was based on ethnographic fieldwork including life-narrative interviews that I conducted in Mindanao, the Philippines, for five months from December 2015 – May 2016. This study contributes to the research on human trafficking by exploring a specific and under-researched local context through unique and diverse individual accounts. Through this research, I found that multiple forms of human trafficking were occurring in Mindanao, and that these diverse forms were maintained by wider conditions in society. From a theoretical framework of structural violence, I argue that human trafficking is one of the multiple forms of violence that people in Mindanao are experiencing. Further, within this framework I present the idea of compounding violence as a lens to explore and conceptualise the way that violence often results in the vulnerability to or experience of further violence. In this study, I also offer a methodological approach designed to respond to the challenges of human trafficking research. My original contribution to knowledge is an exploration and analysis of the social context which influences human trafficking in Mindanao, based on first-person accounts which are contextualised in the wider society and theoretically analysed through a framework of structural, symbolic, and compounding violence.

1.1 Research design and research aim

This research has been designed as a “micro-level” study to extend an understanding of human trafficking in a local setting. From the initial planning stages, it was clear to me that any study of human trafficking had to be centred on those who had actually experienced human trafficking and their own accounts of their lives. However, this emphasis included several ethical and practical limitations. For one, it would have been practically difficult and ethically problematic to conduct research among people who were still under exploitative control (Vijayarasa, 2013a, p. 60). Ethical concerns for both the participants and researcher led me to exclude people who were still going through legal proceedings or initial rehabilitation. Therefore, the target participants were identified as people who had experienced human trafficking in the past and were now moving on with their lives, as guided by the organisations that were supporting me, which I discuss below and further in chapter three.

Like many other human trafficking researchers, I designed this study knowing that the most appropriate way to access participants is usually through other support agencies (Boyd & Bales, 2016; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2010; Warden, 2013; West, 2014). Working through other institutions has its own limitations and challenges, discussed further in chapter three. However, the significant issues of safety, access, and even identification are mitigated through this collaboration, as well as the trust, ongoing relationship, and trained support that agencies offer to participants. The role of support agencies is further explained in chapter three, and in Figure 2 below.

To extend an understanding of people’s life paths overall, I decided that my research would be based on life narrative interviews where the participants would have the opportunity to describe and reflect on the circumstances of their lives. I felt this approach was most appropriate as it would allow me to consider people’s experiences as part of a whole life and part of a social setting, rather than a single unconnected event (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2008, p. 3; Moen, 2006). Warden (2013, p.107) and de Angelis (2012, p.77) have both used elements of life narrative interviews in their research with formerly trafficked persons, emphasising both the context for trafficking and individual agency over a life course. Brennan (2005, p. 36) has pointed out the lack of attention given to formerly

trafficked persons' lives and experiences outside of their dramatic trafficking account. The use of life narrative is an ethical as well as methodological choice to consider exploitation as part of a wider life course that is shaped by personal and social factors. It was important to me that any approach would give primacy to the participants' own accounts, and present a much wider view of participants as whole people rather than "victims."

As an anthropologist, I am also deeply aware that individual narratives are also never only personal, but reflect the society, culture, relationships, and point in geography and history that a person inhabits (Maynes et al., 2008). As such, the perspective of individual lived experience gives a concrete and ground level basis for inquiry into the wider society, culture, and social processes, through a focus on how they play out in day-to-day life (Maynes et al., 2008, p. 32; Staples, 2015, p. 78; Willemsse, 2014, p. 46). Through a personal and subjective point of view, and grounded in the Philippines' context, narratives offer a unique lens on social realities. The focus on day-to-day, lived realities in a specific local context, suggested narrative-based interviews set in an ethnographic methodology. This approach has been successfully used to consider both exploitation and lived experience without ignoring individual people and situations. My research has thus been inspired by a number of diverse studies which have taken this approach in order to consider exploitation and vulnerability from a ground level view, studying groups such as undocumented migrants, sex workers, low paid factory workers, international surrogate mothers, leprosy sufferers, and social welfare beneficiaries (de León-Torres, 2014; Goldade, 2011; Panitch, 2013; Pun, 2005; Staples, 2015; Zheng, 2014). Ethnographies contribute to the literature by exploring people's lives without assuming they are one group with the same experiences, and have the potential to illuminate the complexities of trafficking and migration in society beyond definitions and statistics.

The aim of this study is to explore how human trafficking in Mindanao relates to wider social processes. Based on an anthropological approach to human trafficking which gave primacy to individuals' accounts of their own experiences, the following research objectives emerged:

- ◆ To tell returned trafficked persons' stories which include but are not limited to trafficking experiences

- ◆ To explore the relationships between social factors and human trafficking from a local perspective

The methods used have been based on this ethnographic approach which involved spending five months in Mindanao, the Philippines. During this time, I talked with and interviewed people who had experienced exploitative labour, human trafficking, or trafficking-like practices.³ I also interviewed a wide variety of government and NGO workers from anti-trafficking and related agencies, and attended many organisational meetings and public awareness events. I extended these approaches with additional interviews with community members who had other relevant experiences, particularly former migrants and sexual labourers. Spending five months living in Davao also allowed me to participate in the practice of everyday life such as through navigating the practicalities of food, accommodation and transport for my family and in sharing in my friends' lives. The strategies for accessing these three sources of knowledge – expert and community perspectives, first person accounts, and wider experience of everyday life - are illustrated in Figure 2 below. Note that the first step for locating both community knowledge and participants who had experienced human trafficking was approaching a wide range of local organisations through introductions. From these, I sought further introductions, interviews with their staff on issues facing Mindanao, and support in accessing people who had previously experienced trafficking.

³ The UN definition of human trafficking is the standard analytical base for trafficking research, and I consider the ways that the participants' stories do and do not fit within its parameters. However, I also acknowledge the problems inherent in defining people as "trafficked" when this is not the way they would refer to their own experiences; this tension is discussed with regards to individual cases (see Susan's story (Ch.9) and Jasmine's story (Ch.6), for examples). The only narrative about exploitation which would likely not fit clearly within the definition of human trafficking is DonDon's account of labour exploitation, as will be discussed (see Ch.6). However, the elements of deception, coercion and control, and financial exploitation are all present, and this narrative is included to highlight the fact that continuums of exploitation and control go beyond strict definitions of trafficking, and that labour trafficking is best understood within the wider range of employment practices.

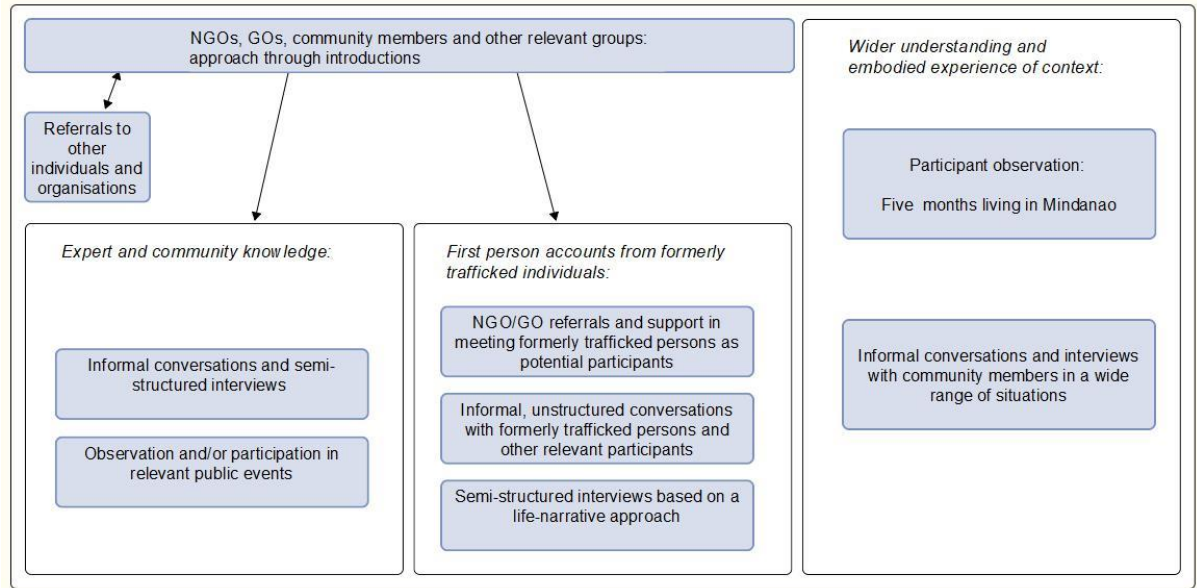


Figure 2: Research design

Fulfilling the aim of this study demanded a deep understanding of both individual accounts of trafficking and the complex cultural setting where human trafficking was occurring. Anthropological methods are particularly suited to in-depth research into a local setting, in part because of the flexibility that they allow in adapting fieldwork to the discoveries and opportunities in the field, and also because of the “holistic” emphasis of ethnographic research which does not limit who or what may be a source of knowledge and understanding. On reaching the field, I found that the category of “trafficking” could apply in multiple situations, and that many people’s experiences were difficult to categorise concretely. In attempting to engage with this complexity, I sought to understand local life in Mindanao from multiple perspectives and through conversations and insight from a wide variety of people, beyond those directly affected by trafficking, over the course of my fieldwork.

The focus of this research is participants’ experiences, narratives and perspectives. Reliable quantitative data regarding the numbers of people trafficked or using support services is not fully available, nor is it within the limits of this project to try to obtain better data. Nevertheless, relevant data that is available publicly and which was shared with me is included in this thesis. I depended heavily on networked introductions (the importance of

which will become clear and is discussed further in later chapters), and as such did not have access to minority groups such as Muslims or Chinese immigrants. The emphasis is also primarily on the experiences of the poor, who are at greatest risk from trafficking, and those who have experienced trafficking, rather than the middle and upper classes. While I interviewed workers from human trafficking related agencies such as the police and women's organisations, fully analysing the measures against human trafficking or effectiveness of the anti-trafficking efforts is outside the scope of this study.

One characteristic of ethnographic research is the flexibility and “messiness” of navigating relationships, multiple sources of knowledge, competing pressures, and the researcher's own position and well-being, particularly in emotionally sensitive topics such as human trafficking (Warden, 2013, p. 84). The variety of experiences, from shopping for groceries to meeting and interviewing such a diverse range of participants and organisations, was indeed messy and I often found myself questioning whether I was pursuing the right directions, or learning anything useful to my research. However, it is the messy and ordinary living of everyday life where the “entrenched processes of ordering the social world” exist, and where social processes are worked out and ultimately felt (Kleinman, 2000, pp. 238–239). The multiple experiences, relationships, and encounters that shaped my research include everything from the “official” events and interviews, to the mundane tasks of life that together built a fuller and more holistic picture of life in Mindanao.

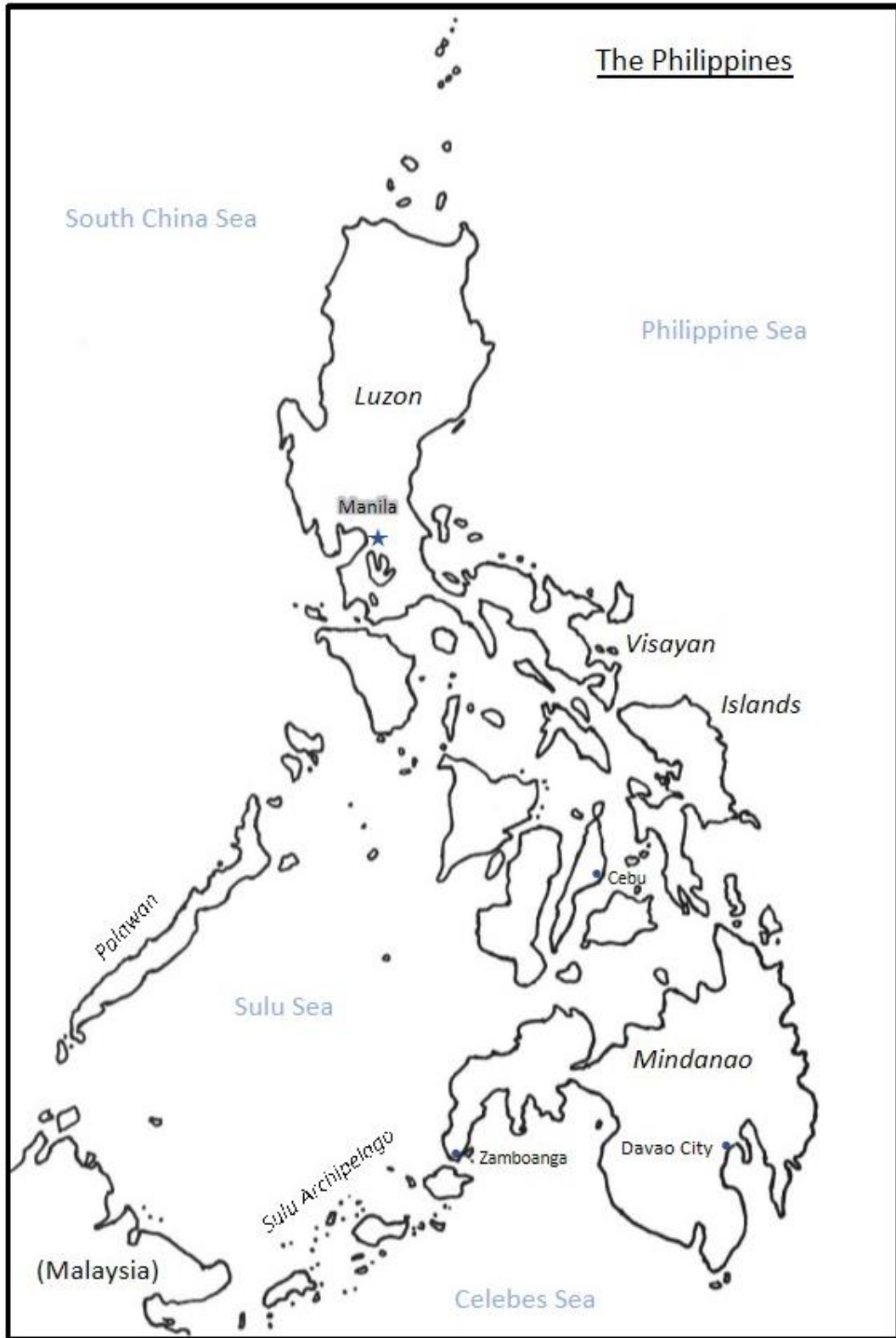


Figure 3: Map of the Philippines

1.2 The Philippines: history

Upon entering the field, it soon became clear that the initial review of Philippine history I had done was insufficient to make sense of the multiple ways that history, even what seems to be very long past, was alive and present in the cultural imagination and day-to-day experience of life for the people that I met. The Philippines has a unique cultural and economic history which has shaped its current situation. Outside forces have had significant effects on the nation's development trajectory, from Middle Eastern traders to Spanish conquerors to American⁴ forces. Filipinos have adapted in numerous ways to live at the intersection of local and global economic systems and forces, and absorbed the consequences of these interactions. Economically, specific historic actions and choices have changed the situation and trajectory of the Philippines in dramatic ways. Culturally, these events are not viewed from an external perspective, but rather have shaped what it means to be Filipino as individuals have responded to and survived through these decisions beyond their control.

The Philippines has had a long history of international trade and relationships. Links to China, India and the rest of Southeast Asia were established from at least 500 BCE, including migration and trading through major ports (Nadeau, 2008, p. xvii). From 1200-1500 CE, the major trading links expanded to the Muslim world of the time. The colonial period, from 1565-1946, dramatically changed Philippine society, and the legacy of both Spanish (1565-1898) and American (1898-1946) rule lives on (Arcilla, 1998, p. 49; Hedman & Sidel, 2000). Notably, the practice of slavery within the Philippines predated Spanish arrival, and continued through and beyond Spanish governance, although officially suppressed (Salman, 2003). The USA still maintains close ties to and influence over the Philippines politically and economically. Historic and current migrations and links to China and Southeast Asia also continue to shape the Philippines social realities and international relationships.

Spanish rule was based on Roman Catholicism underpinning political power. The social landscape began to transition from agrarian regions to townships around a small centre with

⁴ Given the centrality of the USA's role in Filipino history and culture, for the purpose of this thesis, "America/American" refers solely to the USA.

a church, a resident priest, and schools (one for boys and one for girls); the majority of contemporary towns were established in this period (1565-1898) (Arcilla, 1998, p. 48). Spanish control also began the exploitation of natural resources, deforestation, and loss of traditional land use, which would characterise the next centuries of Philippine history. Spanish laws on land ownership meant that some private owners began to acquire and commercially develop what had been traditionally shared land and resources, a legacy of inequality and exploitation which has only been partially addressed today (Adam, 2013b; Hedman & Sidel, 2000). Further, violence, oppression, and forced labour were common elements of the Spanish rule. An account from Filipino oral history illustrates the way that political and religious rule were entwined, as well as the conditions for locals:

The first thing that had to be done was the construction of the town, or pueblo, and the next was the church. This was why a great number of the natives (indios) were captured and forced to destroy the mountains, to cut the trees, and gather adobe from faraway places. This was punishing work for the natives and what was most hateful about it was that they were not paid for their labor.

The natives had no choice but to obey orders; they were forced to obey these cruel masters so as to erect the church, which was the town's foundation.

The natives endured many months of this, but some ran away to faraway places and to mountains just so they could escape the Spaniards' cruelty. The family members who were left behind had to take on the work of those who escaped, and they bore unbearable suffering and poverty.

Shall we tell you about the misery and suffering the natives endured at the hands of the Spaniards? Shall we tell you how many native lives were lost at the hands of the oppressors? (Puedan, as cited and translated in Cruz-Lucero, 2006, p. 42).

Spanish cultural influences continue to be felt and seen in day-to-day Philippine life. Faded and crumbling Spanish architecture abounds in Davao City. The continued dominance of Roman Catholicism is deeply entrenched in belief and custom, as well as legal policy such as the provision of only "annulment" rather than divorce to end a marriage. The Cebuano language that I learned had also transformed to include numerous localised Spanish words and expressions, particularly the use of Spanish numbers in certain situations, such as for money (*uno, dos, tres, kwatro, singko...*). The social geography of the Philippines is still based on the Catholic distinction between lowlanders, and uplanders who had fled and been pushed to the mountains and outside of religious jurisdiction (Paredes, 2017). Lowlands

and cities were converted, and considered civilised, real Filipinos, while the mountainous areas were those of heathen spirituality, backwards and primitive peoples. Even now, the category of *lumad* [indigenous] is based on this arbitrary distinction between “us and them” based on these old Catholic forms of dominance (Paredes, 2015, 2017). The end of Spanish rule, after local uprisings began to challenge colonial dominance, came when Spain sold the Philippines to the USA in 1898.

Reign by the USA (1898-1946), although somewhat decentralised to Philippine control, brought the English language, Protestantism, the contested idea of separation between church and state, and the political structures which exist today (Hedman & Sidel, 2000, p. 7; Nadeau, 2008, p. xiii). Deforestation intensified with the expansion of coconut oil plantations to meet the growing American demand for consumer products such as soap, dynamite, margarine and cosmetics, while small numbers of Filipinos were sent overseas as labourers (Hedman & Sidel, 2000, p. 8; Nadeau, 2008). Hedman and Sidel (2000, p. 8) argued that dependence on the USA has not only hindered potential economic growth, but that the continued military presence and multiple interventions since the Philippines’ independence suggests not a “post-colonial” but a “neo-colonial” relationship between the nations. The relationship between America and the Philippines, and the idealised images of the USA as the land of opportunity for Filipinos, reflect a dominant colonial power which still leaves its mark on local and international affairs (Bulloch, 2013, p. 223).

The land and resource degradation, concentration of wealth and power in certain land-owning families, and impoverished rural areas which characterise the Philippines today are the results of the colonial period and ongoing uneven relationships. The spread of capitalism during and since the USA’s oversight has also been part of the exercise of power. International debt and pressure to repay has led to the Philippines being dependent on the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) approval of its economic strategy and policy, which must be a focus on export and free trade internationally, and be open for investment by foreign companies (Parreñas, 2007, p. 40). The Philippines’ liberal market economy, privatization, and free trade are the result of, as well as the gateway to, international forces and globalisation (Nadeau, 2008, p. xiv).

The IMF's involvement and the implementation of the resource and labour export policies came in the wake of economic collapse under President Marcos (1965-1986). The Marcos family are believed to have embezzled up to \$US 5 billion, and further assets were assigned to their relatives and supporters, while poverty levels increased dramatically (Niu, 1999, p. 90). The dictatorial Marcos regime is known for imposing martial law with consequent human rights abuses, censorship, and seizing corporate assets (Abinales, 2008; Forbes, 2015, p. 199). Marcos' political opponents, public critics, and the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP-NPA) and Moro Independence Liberation Front (MILF)⁵ organisations were particularly targeted, although the NPA in particular grew in numbers as a vessel for Marcos' detractors to unify in opposition (Abinales, 2008, p. 176). Despite this negative legacy, the Marcos family continues to be politically active and maintains some level of public support. However, the violent Martial Law years remain in popular memory.⁶ Analysts have argued that from about 2000, governments have been increasingly authoritarian (Quimpo, 2009). President Duterte (2016-) has extended this tendency of heavy-handed government, raising concerns that history may be repeating itself; one year following my fieldwork, martial law had been declared in Mindanao in response to security concerns (Al Jazeera, 2017b; Asian Pacific Post, 2016, 2017a, 2017b; Rauhala, 2016).

Particularly since the 1974 Labor Code to develop contract labour migration, and under pressure from American and international powers, the Philippines' economic development strategy has become the export of resources. Migration has long been a part of Philippine history, but the contemporary explosion in labour migration numbers was a result of specific actions and economic conditions. Although there had been limited labour migration to the USA from the early 1900s, in the 1970s migration became widespread, legitimised by government policy and structures (Agbola & Acupan, 2010; Ronquillo, Boschma, Wong, & Quiney, 2011, p. 387). Amid the chaotic and repressive Marcos political era and subsequent economic collapse, individuals as well as government policy makers sought

⁵ NPA (New People's Army) is the militant wing of the CPP (Communist Party of the Philippines). The Moro Independence Liberation Front (MILF) is a militant, primarily Muslim, separatist group in Eastern Mindanao which eventually achieved recognition as a limited autonomous region.

⁶ While in the Philippines, I met a woman who had been imprisoned and tortured under the Marcos regime, and a former leader within the NPA at the time, both of whom are now NGO workers and activists.

migration as a temporary strategy to alleviate poverty and bring wealth into the country (Agbola & Acupan, 2010, p. 388). Since then, the common outmigration of workers has been adopted into a so-called “culture of migration,” and remittances have reached a level that now sustains the national economy (Oh, 2016, p. 202). In recent years, about one million labour migrants depart from the Philippines annually, a slight majority being women, and the vast majority are temporary labour migrants (Yu, 2015, p. 47).⁷

With the growth of migration has come increased awareness of human trafficking and issues facing migrant workers. As in other locations globally, including the USA, the UK, Thailand, and Cambodia, it was the sex trafficking of women which first came to prominence, followed by a growing awareness of abuse against domestic workers (Aronowitz, 2003; Guevarra, 2006; Jose & Erpel, 1998; The Asia Foundation, 2007; Tyner, 1994). The development of government laws and programs to facilitate migration and protect migrants’ rights, such as the training of nurses, the Overseas Workers Welfare Association (OWWA), and the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), have accompanied increasing levels of both legal and illegal migration (Asis, 2008, p. 111). As such, Filipino migrants have some levels of protection through their home government’s programs and negotiated rights with receiving countries, particularly compared with other developing countries such as India and Indonesia (Oh, 2016). However, human trafficking of Filipino migrants remains a significant problem.

The Philippines’ dependence on remittances, widespread poverty, and lack of opportunities mean that migration is often considered the main option for finding work. Estimates suggest that up to 50% of the population have been living in poverty in recent years (Ofreneo, 2015, p. 125; PSA, 2016a). Employment is highly shaped by gender, and despite women being better educated than men overall, they are still less able to find work, and paid less than men for comparable work (Yap & Melchor, 2015, p. 276). These conditions have influenced the rise of migration as well as the use of alternate or illegal migration paths such as smuggling or unauthorised migration agents. Greater numbers of people in

⁷A significant majority of land-based migrants are women, while most seafarers are men. Filipinos are “up to 20% of the global labour market for seafarers,” based on a combination of factors including Union advocacy, English speaking skills, and taking lower wages than other international seafarers and their Unions (Ruggunan, 2011, p. 206).

these vulnerable or financially dependent positions has contributed to the incidence of exploitation and trafficking, for both legal and irregular migrants. The government's need for overseas workers to sustain the Philippines' economy also outweighs the pressure to limit workers sent to exploitative conditions.

1.3 Human trafficking and the Philippines

The Philippines is primarily but not exclusively considered a “source” country for international human trafficking (UNODC, 2006). Malaysia, Singapore and the Middle East are common destinations. Females are most often trafficked in domestic service or forced sex work, while trafficking and forced labour on fishing boats or construction sites are most common for males. Men and women (and boys and girls) have also been forced labourers in factories, on plantations or construction sites (Aronowitz, 2009; van Schendel et al., 2012). Filipinos also experience labour or sexual exploitation in the Western world. These locations are often associated with legal and documented migration, whereas other locations in Asia are more likely to also find irregular migrants being exploited. Trafficking also occurs domestically in the Philippines, including sexual exploitation of mainly women and children, exploitative and indentured labour including forms of debt bondage, child soldiers, exploitation of domestic workers including children, and often involves domestic migration from rural to urban areas (Ferolin & Dunaway, 2013; Nonnenmacher, 2014; Williams et al., 2010). All the pathways identified in trafficking situations are also the primary routes for legitimate labour migration and travel (Oishi, 2017, p. 29).

In 2007, the Visayan forum estimated that there were 300,000-500,000 women and children annually trafficked from the Philippines (men were not counted in this estimate), while 224 trafficked persons were brought back to the Philippines (The Asia Foundation, 2007, p. 19). In 2015, 1465 people received assistance through the official government program for trafficked persons (Pajarito, 2016).⁸ Although it is widely recognised that debt bondage and

⁸ The Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons (RRPTP) is administered under the DSWD (Department of Social Welfare and Development) (Pajarito, 2016). There are ten components available: “livelihood assistance; skills training; support for victims/witnesses; Balik-Probinsya (financial and food assistance); temporary shelter; educational assistance; finding assistance (for medical assistance, purchase of assistive devices, etc.); psycho-social counseling; referral; and airport assistance for offloaded and/or intercepted and repatriated (potential) victims of trafficking” (Pajarito, 2016). Several of the formerly trafficked persons I met had been assisted under this program.

labour trafficking of both men and women are occurring in the Philippines and abroad, the literature is heavily weighted towards sex trafficking, women's experiences, and the exploitation of land-based migrants (Cruz, 2012). Labour migration is a common strategy for both men and women, and Filipinos face significant challenges in navigating economic opportunities and constraints at home and in the global labour market.

In the Philippines, migration is commonly seen as a positive strategy to access greater opportunities and diversify family income sources (Agbola & Acupan, 2010; Asis, 2008; Ducanes, 2015; Oh, 2016). However, from the angle of human trafficking any point of mobility also appears as a significant point of vulnerability to deception and abuse. The local labour situation feeds the flow of migrants who do not have access to local jobs, and as the numbers of migrant workers have increased, the domestic labour market growth has declined (Agbola & Acupan, 2010, p. 388). Poverty, unemployment, and low wages are factors beyond people's control. Migration, however, means access to more and better opportunities. Migration, in turn, deprives the nation of many of its workers, particularly skilled workers, who could otherwise contribute to developing the local economy (Portes, 2013). While unemployment remains high, employers have also reported shortages of skilled workers (Barber, 2008, p. 1279). Women in particular experience a lack of jobs domestically, while female care workers are in demand internationally. Migration is a strategic way to access better paid employment and to transfer wealth into the local economy. Migration and migrant labour are also sites where power relationships are acutely felt, and labour migrants have often found that they had few rights in their overseas employment (Briones, 2009a; Parreñas, 2017). Human trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation demonstrate the extreme side of this process that affects many migrants, particularly temporary, unskilled, and irregular labour migrants.

The trafficking of migrants is difficult to measure or define, and it has often been difficult to legally distinguish between contract infringements, migrant abuse, and trafficking. Filipinos are commonly employed in the Middle East, Europe, and other parts of Asia as low-skilled manual labourers (PSA, 2015). Filipinas in particular migrate in response to the "care gap" where the demand for caregivers including skilled workers such as nurses in the developed world with an aging population exceeds the family, government, and private

resources available (Fudge & Parrott, 2014; Lopez, 2012; Parreñas, 2008a). For some, migration is an opportunity to earn foreign currency and send home remittances. However, it can also be a place of abuse, exploitation, and deception, where the accommodation, working conditions, hours, freedom of movement, or payment received do not align to that promised. Migrants, particularly temporary labour migrants, often have different or no access to minimum wage and working condition rights, medical care, and labour laws as compared to citizens (Abella, 2005; Asis & Piper, 2008; Oishi, 2017; Parreñas, 2017, p. 124; Nicole Piper, 2004, 2004; van Schendel et al., 2012). The marginalisation, invisibility, and tenuous legal status of overseas workers on temporary contracts have contributed to the exploitation of migrant workers. The ratio of migrants to trafficked persons is unknown, but evidence from government and NGO reports suggest that the numbers of trafficked or otherwise abused and exploited migrant workers go far beyond those officially documented (Bernardo, Daganzo, & Ocampo, 2016; Guevarra, 2006; Parreñas, 2000; Shin, 2015).

Domestic trafficking is a known problem in the Philippines, a topic explored by a few local scholars but virtually invisible in international bodies of literature which focus on the trafficking of migrants. Overall until 2016, 95% of all official domestic trafficking cases have involved sex trafficking, and 7% labour trafficking (Visayan Forum, 2016).⁹ However, this does not include many cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), employment-related exploitation and abuse, or underage soldiers. These are often categorised differently for a variety of reasons including the likelihood of succeeding with prosecution, which can be more difficult for human trafficking, and the government agency responsible, such as for former underage soldiers who qualify for support offered to all former rebel soldiers. From 1999-2007, for example, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) reported processing 265 “child-combatants” from one rebel group, not included in human trafficking statistics (Cruz, 2010).¹⁰ Researchers, government agencies and NGOs also agree that the official cases only represent a small portion of the actual trafficking events which are unreported, ongoing, or withdrawn from prosecution (West, 2014; Wiss, 2012). Further, researchers have identified corruption in the legal system, such as allowing

⁹Some cases included both forms; also, note that some cases had multiple victims/perpetrators. 54% of all victims were minors (Visayan Forum, 2016).

¹⁰ This included both captured (96) and voluntarily surrendered (169) soldiers, but did not include others who may have left the movement without military processing or were killed in battle (Cruz, 2010, p. 4).

traffickers to continue their operations and avoid conviction through bribes (Bulloch, 2017; Guth, 2010; West, 2014). The local working conditions for Filipino labourers, including cases of exploitation and human trafficking, are under-explored ethnographically and in general research.

The experience and prevalence of human trafficking emerges from local systems whose cultures and societies are increasingly affected and shaped by global pressures. On a global level, the Philippines is frequently a source of natural and human resources used by more affluent nations. Locally, call centres, coconut plantations, and fisheries serve the needs of many overseas locations (Adam, 2013b; Fabinyi, 2012; Ferolin & Dunaway, 2013).

Overseas, Filipino labour migrants are most commonly temporary and unskilled workers, while skilled workers have also found their labour undervalued overseas (Ball, 2004; Choi & Lyons, 2012; Prescott, 2016; PSA, 2016b). Within the Philippines, offshore companies have been known to take advantage of the Philippines' lack of laws/enforcement around labour standards, such as factories that used short contracts to avoid paying benefits (McKay, 2006). Wiss (2012) described the frequency of recruiting underage girls to a known sex tourism site and former American military base, and argued that here domestic sexual labour (and sex trafficking) emerged from colonial systems and particular gendered economic relationships. Since the 1970s, corporations have brought in more and more fish farms which have altered the foreshore aquaculture and pushed out local traditional livelihood practices, so that poor rural people could not find fish to eat or sell as they used to (Ferolin & Dunaway, 2013). Reliance on the global market has increased instability of work duration, wage levels, and working conditions, both at home and in migrant labour, built on the reality that every exchange is made through unequal power relations in which the Philippines and Filipino workers are often unfavourably positioned (Piper, 2010; Prabhakaran, 2013, p. 67). The focus on "destination" countries and migration management, and the lack of attention to "source" locations for human trafficking, suggest that global inequality as it is experienced has been considered less important than border security issues. However, the close links, in the Philippines and globally, between migration and human trafficking demand analysis of the processes by which certain populations are made more at risk within international systems.

The Philippines' unique history, geography, and social context has seldom been considered in human trafficking analyses, either on a macro level where the role of poverty in shaping migration and the risks of human trafficking is taken for granted, or in literature that primarily focuses on Filipino migrants overseas. While the category of human trafficking has been criticised for conflating multiple diverse situations and types of exploitation, the fact that multiple forms of trafficking are emerging from Mindanao and the Philippines raises significant questions about the social context and specific localised risks that people here are facing (Lobasz, 2012, p. 12).

1.4 Overview of the thesis

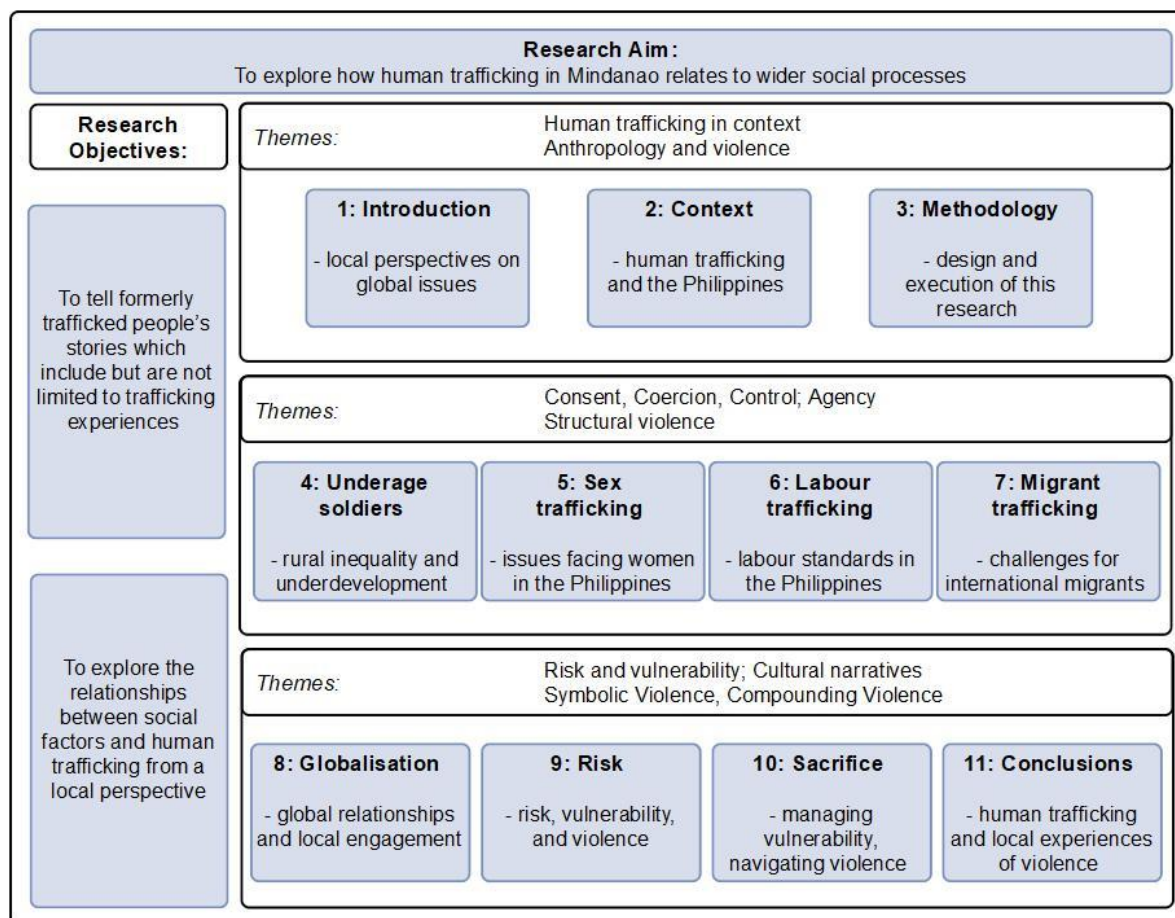


Figure 4: Overview of the thesis

The first part of the thesis (Ch.1-Ch.3; see figure 4) provides a theoretical and methodological background to situate this study in current debates and practice, specifically, work on human trafficking, and anthropological approaches to violence and exploitation. In Chapter two, I explore the central themes in human trafficking research which have contributed to this study. Here I present a theoretical framework based on the concepts of structural violence and multiple violences for analysing the place of human trafficking in a local society. In Chapter three, I describe how this theoretical focus has shaped the methodological strategies required to fulfil the objectives of my research. Here I discuss openly the practice and challenges of designing and carrying out the field research on which this project is based. From this foundation, the structure of this thesis is designed

to build toward a complex and nuanced picture of the culture and society which have shaped my participants' lives, and the conditions which contribute to human trafficking.

Chapters four to seven each present life narrative stories from people who have experienced human trafficking, and here analysis focuses on the themes of coercion, consent, and control, agency, and structural violence (see Figure 4 for the thematic sections of the thesis). These chapters are arranged according to the "type" of trafficking, from former underage ("child") soldiers (Ch.4) to sex trafficking (Ch.5), labour abuse (Ch.6), and trafficking of migrants (Ch.7). In these chapters I consider the nuances of consent, control, and coercion, as conveyed through my participants' stories, in the context of structural violence. In these chapters I also describe the incidence of these events in the Philippines, and consider how each relates to wider social realities and practices. The narratives, context, and analysis are not separated in this thesis, but the next section builds on these chapters to extend the theoretical analysis.

In Chapters eight through ten, I bring together the aspects of the socio-cultural setting which have been explored to analyse the place of human trafficking and exploitation in local lives and society. Here I build on the discussion of structural violence to consider the role of symbolic violence in society as it relates to the risk and experience of human trafficking, by considering the roles of globalisation, risk, and sacrifice in local society. Chapter eight continues from the previous chapter on migration by further analysing the roles of migration and globalisation in Philippine society, through the narratives of other returned migrants who had not experienced human trafficking. The final analyses centre on the ideas of risk (Ch. 9) and sacrifice (Ch. 10) as windows into the social realities and cultural narratives which shape people's life paths. In chapter nine I explore the ideas of risk and vulnerability as they relate to my participants' experiences. Chapter ten describes the roles of local culture and practices which transform risk and suffering into meaningful expressions of sacrifice, love, and hope, and contribute to resilience in the face of difficulty. I argue that multiple, overlapping and entrenched social processes maintain violences – both direct and indirect – which shape the prevalence and experience of human trafficking as part of wider social realities.

2: Trafficking and society: making sense of violence

Human trafficking has been a topic of national and international concern for over 100 years but has only gained wide public and scholarly attention since the late 1990s to 2000s. Since then, the literature has increased exponentially, and the last five years in particular have seen a significant increase in the quality of research and scholarship being produced.

However, there is yet little published work on the Philippines in particular and its significant human trafficking issues, although there have been several high-quality studies conducted with Filipino migrants and trafficked migrants overseas. While research in other contexts including eastern Europe, Asia, and North America indicates significant connections between human trafficking and social conditions such as unemployment, poverty and discrimination (Antal & László, 2015; Brennan, 2014a; Dahal et al., 2015; Dhungel, 2017; Feingold, 2014; Gurung, 2014; Molland, 2012; Nelson-Butler, 2015; Pocock et al., 2016; Poucki & Bryan, 2014), these relationships have not been extensively explored either theoretically or locally in the Philippines context.

The question at the heart of this thesis is how human trafficking relates to wider social processes. Central to this question are the relationships between individuals and society, the role and limits of agency, and the place of vulnerability and violence within society. In this chapter, I identify the relevant debates and themes within the literature on human trafficking which have informed this research. These include the limits of definitions and measurement of trafficking, the role of agency amid victimisation, and the so-called “causes” of human trafficking. My view is that widespread violence within a society, particularly pertaining to human trafficking in the Philippines, implies a connection to wider social processes including normal, everyday life. I argue that anthropological analysis can contribute to an understanding of human trafficking within wider discussions of suffering, vulnerability, and social inequality through a framework based on structural violence.

2.1 Defining and measuring human trafficking

Despite the rapid increase of both academic and popular attention to trafficking over the last two decades, the ongoing problems of how to accurately and appropriately measure and define human trafficking have not yet been fully resolved. Trafficking is a clandestine activity, intentionally hidden from official systems, and as such the people affected are impossible to count directly. The impossibility of measuring the size of the problem or gathering accurate numbers, as well as differing methodologies and criteria for inclusion in global estimates, mean that “statistics on trafficking worldwide are notoriously unreliable” (Brennan, 2014b, p. 117). Human trafficking was initially defined as “forced movement” into exploitative labour, in an attempt to address transnational crime. However, current definitions in practice usually include the subsequent exploitation, and there is a great deal of overlap and confusion between the terms human trafficking, modern slavery, and forced labour (Allain & Bales, 2012; Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2015; Chuang, 2005; Musto, 2009; UNODC, 2016, p. 15; US State Department, 2014, p. 29).¹¹ The term “human trafficking” is important, however, not only because it is used to include other descriptors, but because it has been so widely ratified internationally through the UN Palermo Protocol, with a universal set of legal obligations under a single, shared definition (UNODC, 2000, 2016, p. 16).

The United Nations definition, from the UN Palermo Protocol, has now been generally accepted as the universal standard on which, in theory, most laws, policies and approaches are based. According to this definition, there are three criteria that must be met:

1. The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons,
2. *by means of* the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person,

¹¹ The ILO’s (2017) recent document, for example, used the terms “modern slavery” and “forced labour” almost synonymously; their global overview, however, included only forced labour including sexual labour, and forced marriage. Their exclusion of underage/“child” soldiers, which fall under the definition of human trafficking, is relevant to this study and another reason I have referred to “human trafficking” rather than modern slavery or forced labour.

3. *for the purpose of exploitation*. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (UNODC, 2006, p. 51, numbering and emphasis added).

In this thesis I use the UN's definition as the international legal standard, on which the Philippines' legislation has also been based. However, in doing so, I also explore its limitations and ambiguities in the context of actual experiences which do not necessarily fit neatly into the categories defined above.

Each of this definition's criteria is open to a great deal of interpretation in law and practice. Researchers have explored some of the nuances and continuums of what can be considered "coercion," "exploitation," and "positions of vulnerability," but these are difficult to define concretely under the law (Brennan, 2014b, p. 118; Bressán & Arcos, 2017; Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017; Fedina, Williamson, & Perdue, 2016; French & Neville, 2016; Heil, 2016; Sabon, 2016; Valmond, 2015; Warden, 2013). Although this definition as part of the Palermo Protocol had been ratified by 187 nations by 2016, what is more significant is how human trafficking is understood and addressed (or not addressed) in *local* law and approach (UN News Centre, 2016; Wooditch, 2012, p. 687). The focus of the protocol and of most national governments is on the role of the criminal justice system, which has been criticised for placing the needs of victims second to the rule of law (Brennan, 2014b, p. 118). In practice, human trafficking has often been limited to certain types of trafficking (usually sex trafficking) or treated as a secondary legal concern to the victim's migration status (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012; Brennan, 2014b, pp. 117–118; Feingold, 2014, p. 94; Hameed, Hlatshwayo, Tanner, Türker, & Yang, 2010, p. 40; Plant, 2014).

Defining trafficking according to either universal or local indicators can be problematic in identifying and categorising exploitation as well as justifying intervention. For example, a migrant labourer from an Asian country working in Germany might agree to a wage that was less than that of a similar German worker, but far more than they would earn at home – the line where this situation would be defined as "trafficking" or "labour exploitation" is difficult to determine concretely (Martin, 2005). A child labourer in India might have worked long hours for low pay, but had more food, leisure time, and money than they

would at home with their family (K Das & Mishra, 2005). There have also been types of trafficking identified which do not fall into the recognised UN categories, such as kidnapping for ransom (Brhane, 2015).

A particular aspect of the UN definition is the universal identification of a child as anyone under 18 and whose consent is considered irrelevant in a trafficking case (UNODC, 2016, p. 15). This means that 17 year olds in voluntary sex work are classified as trafficked, which has given states grounds to forcefully remove them from the situation (Horning, 2013; Marcus, Horning, & Curtis, 2014). Solo child migrants have also been assumed to be trafficked as they cannot legally consent to travel alone (Derluyn, Lippens, Verachtert, Bruggeman, & Broekaert, 2009; Galloway, Smit, & Kromhout, 2015; Huijsmans & Baker, 2012). There is no clear line where child labour becomes damaging, exploitative, or qualifies as human trafficking, and the work that children normally do varies greatly across the world. In the Philippines, child soldiers are generally defined as those under sixteen, and children are often expected to work in or out of the home to varying degrees. The experiences of those who have experienced human trafficking complicate “victim” stereotypes as well as the universal viewpoints on trafficking as a singular global phenomenon.

Ethnographic accounts of Filipina migrants in the nightclub industry in Malaysia and Japan have challenged the designation of such workers as “trafficked” where they have been portrayed as a unitary group, forced workers, sex workers, and victims (Hilsdon, 2007, p. 180; Parreñas, 2008a, p. 154). In the USA’s trafficking in persons (TIP) report, other accounts of trafficking, and public opinion, Filipina hostesses, sex workers, and entertainers in this industry have all been frequently labelled as trafficking victims, which did not align to these women’s own perceptions of their situations (Lopez, 2012, p. 255, 2012, US State Department, 2006, 2014, p. 220; Yu, 2015, p. 53). Hilsdon (2007) and Parreñas (2010a, 2011) identified both coercion and agency as they investigated the nuances of Filipina club workers’ lives, highly sexualised emotional labour, and sometimes commercial sexual labour. Both studies explored how these workers adapted and existed in vulnerable positions, and concluded that they could not be described *collectively* as forced sex workers, or as without agency. The nuances of individual experience may not fit neatly into

definitional categories, but highlight the value of close studies in understanding human trafficking and related conditions to understand both experiences of trafficking and the limitations of universal definitions in local situations.

Definitions of human trafficking also determine how it is measured and quantified. Forced labour, forced sex work, exploitative child labour, forced and child soldiers are just some of the diverse situations that qualify. Each of these is further divided by regional variations, domestic or international trafficking, and the details and severity of each situation.

According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), there were 1150 victims of trafficking in the Philippines from 2010-2012 (Kangaspunta, Sarrica, Jesrani, Dijk, & Heijden, 2016, p. 24). Local government and NGO agencies reported that in the same period, social services had responded to over 1000 incidents involving child pornography in the Visayas alone (see Figure 3 for map of the Philippines), which may have been prosecuted only as commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)¹² or child abuse rather than human trafficking,¹³ skewing the statistics overall. In the Philippines, offenses have often been prosecuted under other designations, such as labour standards violations or violence against women and children (VAW/C), where there may be greater chance of a conviction. In the Philippines and globally, statistics reveal that sex trafficking has been vastly overrepresented in official cases, suggesting that this is the primary emphasis for many local legal systems in their understandings of human trafficking (Aronowitz, 2010; Chawla, Me, & le Pichon, 2009; Goździak & Bump, 2008; Visayan Forum, 2016).

Fully engaging with the global and local statistics on human trafficking is beyond the scope of this thesis. Although I return to the issue of definition to point out the limitations of strictly delineating between forms of exploitation which do or do not qualify as human trafficking, defining trafficking or labelling my participants' experiences is not the aim of this project. Instead, this study makes a case for the necessity of moving beyond debates over measurement and definition towards an understanding of the complex and disparate

¹² Under the UN definitions, any commercial sexual activities involving children are also considered human trafficking.

¹³ See Ch.5 for further discussion of the lack of prosecutions compared to the scale of human trafficking in the Philippines.

social contexts for exploitation, through deep and analytical research (Brennan, 2015; Feingold, 2014, p. 95; van der Pijl, Breuil, & Siegel, 2011).

Early criticisms of the human trafficking literature recommended ethnographic insights based on in-depth field work, interviews, and participant observation as central to developing a deeper understanding of human trafficking (Di Nicola, 2007; Laczko, 2005; Zhang, 2009, p. 192). Feingold's (2003) research in Thailand, Long's (2004) analysis drawn from her research with refugees on the Lao-Thai border, and Brennan's (2005) work with formerly trafficked migrants in the USA, were among the first to specifically consider human trafficking from an anthropological perspective, and the rapid growth of this field over the last five to ten years has built on these foundations. Qualitative research with people who have experienced human trafficking contributes to a deeper understanding as well as challenging the prevalent stereotypical dichotomy between "innocent" victims and "guilty" illegal migrants, sex workers, and traffickers (Day, 2010; Fowler, Che, & Fowler, 2010; Wijers, 2015; Zhang, 2009).

Emerging ethnographic research confirms the value of an anthropological approach in dealing with the complexity and ethical challenges of research on human trafficking while valuing the experiences of trafficked persons (Aluko-Daniels, 2014; Aronowitz, 2009; de Angelis, 2012; Mai, 2016; Marcus et al., 2014; Parreñas, 2011; Peters, 2014; Turek, 2013; Valmond, 2015; van Schendel et al., 2012; Zheng, 2014). Researchers have explored the possibilities and limitations of participant observation with people who are at risk for trafficking in constrained or irregular migration (Holmes, 2013; Schmidt & Buechler, 2017; Vogt, 2012, 2013). Some have considered the nuances of agency and control in and beyond situations of trafficking through personal accounts (Briones, 2009a; de Angelis, 2012; Hilsdon, 2007; Warden, 2013). Others have explored the nuances and limitations of trafficking definitions in studies with participants such as sex workers and migrants whose experiences have demonstrated continuums of control, exploitation and abuse (Basnyat, 2017; Bernardo et al., 2016; Brennan, 2014b; Bressán & Arcos, 2017; Constable, 2003; Gutierrez-Garza, 2013; Huang & Yeoh, 2007; Zheng, 2014). In this thesis, I have drawn on these methodological and theoretical approaches to consider the relationships between

individual agency, control, and social processes through people's lives and experiences of human trafficking.

2.2 Coercion, consent, control, and agency

One important outcome of qualitative research has been examining more closely the issues of coercion, consent, and control, which are central to the UN's definition of human trafficking. Coercion, consent, and control can each have continuums within a relationship, but can also be shaped by personal, social, and structural factors (Dewey, 2014). Coercion to engage in unwanted sex, for example, can be influenced not only by individuals but by social norms and pressures about sexuality including the media's portrayals of gender and relationships, as French and Neville (2016) found in their study with young women in the USA. They found that these high school students consented to unwanted sex in part due to the sexualisation of women and the portrayal of frequent sexual activity as "normal" (French & Neville, 2016, p. 391). Researchers have also found that workers in Italy and Argentina remained in exploitative labour because of their migration status which limited their options, challenging the dichotomy of forced or free workers with regards to labour exploitation and control (Bressán & Arcos, 2017). Others have found that Nigerian women "trafficked" into the sex industry in Europe did at times know what kind of job was waiting, although the *conditions* were unknown, blurring the definition and role of consent (Awad, Drasbeck, Vezelyte, Holm, & Jensen, 2015; Mai, 2016). Warden (2013) found that her participants in Central America often saw little difference between trafficking experiences and "normal" financial exploitation and abuse that they faced as sex workers. Ikeora (2016), Nagle and Owasanoye (2016), and Heil (2016) drew on court cases to point out the ways that spiritual means rather than physical force alone have been used to control and coerce people in trafficking. They found that traffickers' tactics included ritual curses to control by fear, and manipulations of religious beliefs about duty and loyalty. These accounts suggest that control, abuse, exploitation and coercion can take many forms, and go beyond questions of individual choice and consent to the social contexts that shape people's lives (Peters, 2014; Yea & Chok, 2018)

Universal models of human trafficking, such as the UN's encompassing definition, have been frequently based on Western assumptions about the freedom of individual choice

(Bernat & Winkeller, 2010, p. 188). For example, there have been legal cases where victims have had to prove not just the coercion required by the UN's definition, but force and a complete inability to leave a situation (Bernat & Winkeller, 2010, p. 190; Brennan, 2014b). Brennan (2014b, p. 118) in particular cites cases from the USA's legal system where obvious coercion and threats were insufficient to prosecute traffickers as theoretically the victims could have escaped. Although the UN definition acknowledges both coercion and abuses of power, its role as a primarily legal device has shaped its applications toward concrete legal definitions which hinge on victim-perpetrator distinctions (Lobasz, 2012, pp. 13–15; UNODC, 2006, p. 51). Emphasising this distinction has led to false dichotomies between freedom or force, and victimisation or agency, which reduce complex situations to questions of individual choice (Burke, 2015, p. 620; French & Neville, 2016, p. 369; Martins, 2016, p. 385; Valmond, 2015; Vijayarasa, 2013a, p. 51). In this thesis, I explore the nuances of choice and agency amid control and coercion, but in the context of wider pressures such as family relationships, gender roles and economics. Coercion and control are central to understanding human trafficking, but cannot be fully understood under a binary dichotomy between freedom and non-freedom.

As a response to the legal and moral emphases on this “free versus forced” dichotomy, the idea of agency has emerged as one of the central theoretical concepts in the human trafficking literature. Research which has focused on the actual people who have experienced trafficking, including their accounts and active roles in choosing courses of strategic action in response to experiences of trafficking, has provided a much-needed critique of the “victim or perpetrator” and “innocent or guilty” dichotomies which have shaped the human trafficking discourse (de Angelis, 2012; Tigno, 2012; Wijers, 2015). A common theme has been identifying both coercion and agency in trafficked persons' accounts, such as de Angelis's (2012) research which revealed the ways that formerly trafficked women from various countries then in the UK adapted and worked to maintain their well-being amid abusive circumstances (Aluko-Daniels, 2014; Gearon, 2016; Long, 2004; Syamsuddin & Azman, 2015; Wijers, 2015). The imagined tension over sex workers as either exploited or freely choosing, for example, is also disrupted by the accounts from sex workers themselves in North America, Africa, and Europe who have often cited both agency and constraint in coming to sex work, such as choosing to seek work but

discovering what type of work was offered only on arrival, but remaining in that work due to a lack of other options (Day, 2010; Kim & Jeffreys, 2013; Schuler, 2016). The question of a person's relative agency, and challenges to that agency amid experiences of control and coercion, is an ongoing theme in this thesis. However, recognising that victims can have a degree of agency and choice does not negate the necessity of exploring the social contexts which shape their choices, the constraints which frame them, and people's diverse experiences.

The majority of ethnographic literature relating to human trafficking in the Philippines has been based on migrants' experiences, which can include abuse, exploitation, and trafficking, as well as success (Briones, 2009b; Domingo-Kirk, 1994; Lindio-McGovern, 2004; Liu, 2015; Lopez, 2012; Parreñas, 2008a, 2017; Strauss & McGrath, 2017; Tacoli, 1996; van der Ham, Ujano-Batangan, Ignacio, & Wolffers, 2014). Accounts of abuse, loss of status, constrained working conditions, social exclusion, and stresses highlighted the multiple and varied personal and structural factors that shaped migrants' lives as Filipinos working abroad (Briones, 2009a; Domingo-Kirk, 1994; Huang & Yeoh, 2007; Parreñas, 2017; van der Ham et al., 2014). These researchers have identified sources of control and coercion which include employers but also various government policies that have limited migrants' options and forced them to stay in peripheral and low-paid employment (Briones, 2009b; Lindio-McGovern, 2003; Lopez, 2012; Parreñas, 2017). Further, in-depth accounts of Philippine migration reveal the unique role of Filipino migration agencies rather than employers in situations of debt bondage in overseas migration, complicating the "trafficker/victim" dichotomy as it is commonly understood (Parreñas, 2008a, pp. 147–150; Renshaw, 2016; Shin, 2015, pp. 765, 798). Filipino workers in many locations were constrained in their access to alternative labour, rather than in the actual conditions of employment, and often by official and exclusionary government policy in the conditions of work visas (Lindio-McGovern, 2004; Paul, 2013, p. 732). Structural factors which constrained migrants' lives, both in domestic conditions and international policies, have been implicated in many accounts of human trafficking, suggesting the need to connect individual experiences with wider conditions.

Questions around the relationships between agency and social structure in shaping people's lives have been noted as particularly relevant to understanding the experiences of risk and choice (Abu-Ali & Al-Bahar, 2011; Brennan, 2014b; Briones, 2009a, 2009b; Poucki & Bryan, 2014; Warden, 2013). The Nigerian women in Mai's (2016) study, for example, found the question of choice irrelevant to their circumstances where they had taken the difficult options available for survival in their paths to sex work in France. It is in this space that ethnographic research has been fruitful in providing grounded insights into personal experiences within constrained and even violent social conditions (Dahal et al., 2015; Ferolin & Dunaway, 2013; Holmes, 2013; Howard, 2014; Parreñas, 2011). One of the characteristics of ethnographic studies of human trafficking is that trafficking has seldom been the sole focus once the complexities of social life, individual choice and constraint, coercion, and continuums of exploitation are analysed through the perspectives of actual people's lives. This is a strength of ethnography which also supports the design of this study in its close focus on the local social context, rather than human trafficking alone.

Ethnographies have fruitfully explored the role of wider social factors within the nuances of personal experiences. Briones (2009b) specifically considered the complex questions of agency amid constraints and abuse in her research with Filipina domestic workers in France and Hong Kong. Her work adds considerable theoretical depth to the human trafficking and migration scholarship by identifying and attempting to overcome common dichotomies between agency and victimhood, and between individual agency and wider structural constraints, by focusing on workers' capabilities within their situations (Briones, 2009b, p. 18). Parreñas (2011) took a similar approach in identifying the complex factors, from family pressures to visa limitations and the role of migration agents, that affected entertainers in Japan. Some of her participants would be considered trafficked, and this is one of the few studies based on participant observation, where Parreñas worked in the bar alongside other Filipinas. Hilsdon (2007) employed similar methods in her anthropological study of entertainers and sex workers in Malaysia and, like Briones and Parreñas, devoted close attention to individual accounts and motivations, which revealed agency and choice even in limiting circumstances including human trafficking. In another study among Filipina domestic workers in Singapore, Arnado (2010, p. 142) highlighted that "much of agency work rests in the mind" such as maintaining a sense of control within their

environments. As such, exploring emotional and mental adaptation and resilience demands this up-close perspective, which I have used in this study to consider both social factors and individual lived experience.

Ethnographic studies have revealed how dichotomies such as exploitation and agency are not necessarily contradictory, and workers can knowingly choose and gain benefit from conditions that can also be considered exploitative (Parreñas, 2011; Pun, 2005). These studies indicate the need to focus on agency even in the context of control and coercion and acknowledge people's perspectives and choices. Pun (2005), for example, described how female Chinese factory workers knowingly accepted harsh, underpaid working conditions for the positive impact that the low wages would still have on their rural family. In-depth accounts, such as Hilsdon (2007) and Parreñas' (2008a) research with "trafficked" Filipina migrant entertainers and sexual labourers in Malaysia and Japan, are beginning to provide analyses which acknowledge individual and collective agency as well as the positions and limitations of vulnerable groups in the global economy. These studies demonstrated that women deceived and coerced into sexualised adult entertainment often remained in that work due to a lack of other options, but also maintained some resistance to certain aspects of sexual labour in attempting to profit from their work. At the same time, individual experience is shaped by the social context and realities. This research has been designed to acknowledge and explore personal experience, but to move past questions of individual choice alone to also analyse how social and economic pressures affect individual lives.

2.3 Human trafficking in global context: causes of trafficking and vulnerability

There is increasing awareness that the factors affecting and "causing" human trafficking are shaped by local histories, cultures, and economic settings, as well as by local experiences of globalisation (Vijayarasa, 2013b; Warria, Nel, & Triegaardt, 2015). "Social determinants" beyond economics are widely seen as contributing, including certain groups being considered "at risk" (Perry & McEwing, 2013, p. 142; Rafferty, 2007). Government and NGO reports as well as scholars increasingly refer to socioeconomic conditions that correlate to trafficking, specifically, poverty, low levels of education, women's status, and a lack of economic opportunities (Aradau, 2004, pp. 269–270; Aronowitz, 2015; Blackburn,

Taylor, & Davis, 2010, p. 114; Kangaspunta, 2003; Perry & McEwing, 2013; Rafferty, 2007; Yadav & Ansari, 2015, p. 228). However, these factors and their complex relationships to human trafficking only become meaningful when viewed up-close and in a specific local social context. In-depth local research is increasingly being used to engage with the complexity and diversity of human trafficking in different locales, and this is the model I have used to consider the situation in Mindanao (Brhane, 2015; Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017; Frangež & Ručman, 2017; Hackney, 2015; Holmes, 2013). Simple “cause and effect” analyses are insufficient to engage with the complexity and integration of social processes which relate to the risks of trafficking, as well as the role of agency in shaping people’s lives.

Despite recognised links between global migration and human trafficking, the incidence, forms, and correlating factors of trafficking can vary dramatically even within the same region, including who is considered “at risk” (Crawford, 2016, p. 119; Frangež & Ručman, 2017, p. 231; Pocock et al., 2016). In the Philippines, for example, the experiences of young women recruited by agents directly from rural areas for sex trafficking to Manila have little in common with those of male Filipino labour migrants in the Middle East (Ayalon, 2009; Wiss, 2012). Rather than suggesting a limitation of general global economic theories, “local cultural practices” has been designated an item in the list of factors affecting human trafficking globally (Aronowitz, 2015; Chung, 2009, p. 86; Heil, 2016; Nagle & Owasanoye, 2016; Newman, 2013; Yadav & Ansari, 2015, p. 229). Child fosterage and apprenticeships, for example, have been considered cultural practices which contribute to trafficking in many parts of the world including Haiti, parts of Africa, and the Philippines, without consideration of the reasons for these practices, or the positive role that they can play in people’s lives (Aronowitz, 2015; Valmond, 2015; Yea, 2010). In this usage, culture is relevant to human trafficking as only something negative which contributes to the incidence of trafficking, indicating a Western pathologizing of other cultures in a “politically loaded, yet simplified causal explanation” of violence (Piedalue, 2017, p. 564); notably, culture is seldom discussed, for example, in relation to domestic trafficking in the USA (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014; Fedina et al., 2016; Perkins & Ruiz, 2017; Reid, 2016). However, there is increasing awareness that social factors based in local systems significantly affect the prevalence and experiences of human trafficking as

well as the post-trafficking experiences (Antal & László, 2015; Brennan, 2014a; Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017; Dhungel, 2017; Feingold, 2014; Frangež & Ručman, 2017; Saat, 2009; Tsai, 2017b; Urada et al., 2014). A focus on certain cultural practices, or global trends, can obscure the fact that local systems have their own patterns and points of vulnerability not reducible to specific “local cultural practices.”

Social structural factors have been implicated in many studies of human trafficking (Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017; Gurung, 2014; Nelson-Butler, 2015; Sabo et al., 2014; Warden, 2013). In Europe, the social marginalisation and exclusion of Serbian Romas maintain conditions of vulnerability which contribute to their disproportionate experience of human trafficking (Poucki & Bryan, 2014). The widespread discrimination against Romas, and perceptions of child labour as a “normal” Roma practice, have meant that this and more extreme forms of trafficking have been ignored (Poucki & Bryan, 2014, p. 154). Richards (2015) analysed historic and present local political and social factors in Estonia which shaped and maintained the risks of human trafficking, highlighting, for example, a geographic area that depended on government factory employment until the collapse of the Soviet Union, which left an entire region underskilled and without local jobs. Subsequently, the population was dependent upon migration, which frequently became the path to labour exploitation or human trafficking. Trafficking from Nepal to India follows a unique pattern and is highly gendered, and Crawford (2016) argued that it is tolerated as part of the widespread and ingrained patterns of violence toward women. Accounts from Central America have highlighted the role of extreme and often violent border politics in shaping the risks and experiences of human trafficking for irregular migrants (Acharya, 2015; Holmes, 2013; Schmidt & Buechler, 2017). In the Philippines as in other parts of Southeast Asia, the massive disparity between rural and urban areas has maintained the increased vulnerability of rural people for multiple negative outcomes which include human trafficking (Bulloch, 2017; Guth, 2010; Mialhe et al., 2014). As in other locations, trafficking in the Philippines is experienced most frequently by those already at risk, suggesting a need to explore the relationship between trafficking and wider social conditions which maintain inequality and vulnerability.

2.4 Human trafficking, violence, and anthropology

Government and NGO reports have increasingly identified certain demographic characteristics as risk factors for trafficking, most commonly poverty, former experiences of abuse, low levels of education, and lack of economic opportunities (Aradau, 2013, p. 193; Bales, 2007; Kelly, 2007; Sakellarios & Lall, 2000; Williams et al., 2010). Some have even listed risk factors including “desperation” and “ignorance” (in terms of both education level and awareness of the potential risks) as causes of trafficking (Martin & Callaway, 2011; Turek, 2013, p. 217). As such, trafficking becomes not a question of crime and criminals, but of potential victims among those “at risk” because of certain characteristics they possess. Aradau (2013, p. 188) pointed out that the convergence of human rights and national security approaches to trafficking have meant that, in practice, trafficked persons have been described as both at risk from trafficking and a risk to the state as undocumented migrants or sex workers, risks seen as justification for control. Filipinas who have been profiled as likely trafficking victims when attempting to travel from the Philippines, and thus were blocked from boarding their flights, demonstrate this process controlling migrants’ legal movement based on official evaluations of risk (Hwang, 2017). This individualised approach identifies not only structural issues but *people* who are considered at risk, and as such places the locus of attention on individuals and their choices rather than the processes which have caused certain groups to bear greater levels of risk.

It is in recognising the structural, “unchosen” determinants of risk that the question emerges of what is considered “violence” – is it in the event of human trafficking alone, or is there violence implicated in the process by which people are made vulnerable and “at-risk”? Galtung (1969) introduced the concept of “structural violence” as a way to consider “indirect violence” and its relationship to “direct violence” (Farmer, 2004; Galtung, 1990, p. 295; Kaufman, 2014; Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2007). Indirect violence refers to how social processes such as inequality, exclusion, poverty, and lack of access to resources, rather than direct physical violence alone, contribute to suffering, thus termed *social suffering* (V. Das & Das, 2007; Farmer, 1997, 2004, Galtung, 1969, 1990; Kleinman, 2000; Scheper-Hughes, 2006). Particularly in medical anthropology, the concept of “structural violence” has continued to be a relevant lens for considering the relationships between

indirect forms of violence and concrete physical events, including health conditions and direct acts of violence such as rape, murder, and human trafficking (Gamlin, 2016; Huffman, Veen, Hennink, & McFarland, 2012; Qureshi, 2013; Schmidt & Buechler, 2017; Vogt, 2013). Structural violence extends an understanding of risk through acknowledging the processes by which some populations or demographic categories are exposed to greater harm through social structures and social inequality, where “violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances” (Galtung, 1969, p. 171; Vogt, 2013; Waterstron, 2005).

Concepts related to violence in social analysis have thus been used to consider inequality at a basic level in terms of the chance of death or physical harm, as well as mental, emotional and other types of harm (Anderson, 2015; V. Das & Das, 2007; Farmer, 1997; Khan, 2014; Khan et al., 2017; Montelius & Nygren, 2014; Sabo et al., 2014). From this perspective, it is clear that certain characteristics and social positions correlate to greater degrees of risk, and that risk is a socially formed connection between people and “outcomes” (Boholm, 2003, p. 175). In the Philippines, for example, people in rural areas are significantly more likely to live in poverty, a situation that I discuss further in chapter four. However, a critique of this approach has been the way that, particularly in official policy, equating demographic information with risk has led to those identified groups being labelled as inherently vulnerable, or as themselves causing the negative outcomes that they are experiencing (Aradau, 2013; Panter-Brick, 2014, p. 433). For example, the Philippine government migration agencies’ rhetoric regarding trafficking suggests that undocumented migrants’ greater risk of experiencing trafficking and exploitation results from their decision to migrate irregularly, rather than the abuse against them (Hwang, 2017). The emphasis on irregular migration as a risk factor for trafficking positions the trafficking victim as a criminal who has willingly entered a risky situation, and met the inevitable result. This explanation obscures the social pressures, including exclusion from social resources such as legal migration options, which have left certain groups bearing greater levels of risk. Statistical correlations which show greater risks for certain populations, such as rural Filipinos, measure outcomes but do not account for the processes which create and maintain these conditions (Holmes, 2013, p. 159; Panter-Brick, 2014; Sakellarios & Lall, 2000; Spencer, 2014, p. 88). Merely identifying correlates of vulnerability does not

question or address the context, particularly the local context, which leads to some people and groups bearing more risks.

Approaches to explaining vulnerability are insufficient unless they encompass not only individuals in marginal, risky situations, but the wider social, political and historical structures which create and maintain conditions of inequality as they relate to risk (Spencer, 2014, p. 89; Tombs & Whyte, 2006, p. 179). The legal system, social norms, business procedures and government support structures are all part of the context where some groups experience higher levels of exploitation, abuse, and hazards, while others are more sheltered from these events (Spencer, 2014, p. 89). In chapter seven, I discuss how the Philippine government sanctions the desire to migrate which works against the restrictive and expensive legal migration practices. This conflict pushes migrants to use dangerous irregular migration routes and unregistered agents, particularly those migrants without the resources to meet legal requirements (West, 2014, p. 43). Holmes (2013, pp. 159–160), similarly, critiqued individual choice rhetoric which ignores the wider social structures, including intentional political strategies of exclusion, which have left Mexicans caught between the mortal risks of remaining or migrating to the USA. Feingold (2014) considered the risk of human trafficking in Thailand in the context of economic and social structures which shape people's lives, also highlighting the conflict between political controls and the economic necessities of rural agriculture. Anthropologists researching human trafficking have emphasised the role of ethnography in understanding and critiquing the structural and social dimensions of risk and of violence (Brennan, 2014b; Feingold, 2014; Weitzer, 2014b).

Concepts relating to structural violence have been developed further by Galtung (1990), Bourdieu (1979, 1997, 2001), Farmer (1997, 2004), Scheper-Hughes (2006), and others to articulate the multiple aspects of social life that contribute to structural violence. These include cultural violence, symbolic violence, and the “violences of everyday life” or “everyday violences” (Bourdieu, 1997; Galtung, 1990; Kleinman, 2000; Scheper-Hughes, 1996). Cultural and symbolic violence have been particularly useful in identifying the invisibility and pervasiveness of social violence. These concepts highlight how social processes can work to make people “complicit” in their own suffering such as by

internalising the normality of dominance, exclusion, poverty, or violence, for example, by valorising women's positions as mothers which maintains women's subservience. They also include the cultural, political and symbolic processes which legitimise direct violence, such as the mobilisation of civilians against opponents of the Marcos regime of the Philippines in the 1970s-80s (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 210, 1999, p. 126, 2001, p. 36; Galtung, 1990, p. 295; Scheper-Hughes, 1996). The "violences of everyday life" further emphasises the idea of multiple, overlapping violence by identifying the micro-level, day-to-day experiences and events, such as the daily hunger and struggle of poverty or individual experiences of racism, by which "power orients practice" in shaping life (Bourdieu, 2001; Kleinman, 2000, p. 238; Scheper-Hughes, 1996).

The study of violence has explicitly grown to include both direct violence and indirect "everyday" forms of violence, continuums of violences, and the relationships between various forms (Katsulis, 2015, p. 76). Continuums of violence, for example, has been used to describe women's experiences from everyday "ordinary" gender discrimination, to common forms of gender-based violence, to "exceptional" experiences of gender-based violence in war (Swaine, 2010, p. 2). The value of this framework is in the way it traces links between the visible and the invisible, the large and the small, the individual and the social, the present and the past. In this way, concepts related to violence have been useful in narrative-based research to consider the relationships between individual experiences and the wider society. Farmer (2004, p. 307) highlighted the pervasiveness and normality of structural violence, which is "exerted systematically—that is, indirectly—by everyone who belongs to a certain social order," meaning that structures of inequality are ubiquitous and often invisible, entwined in normal social relationships. Bourdieu (1990, p. 133), similarly, pointed out how symbolic violence supports oppression by demanding not only active but passive responses, "*laissez-faire* and complicitous silence" in the face of injustices. Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2007, p. 22) developed these concepts considerably, identifying violence in "all forms of 'controlling processes' that assault basic human freedoms and individual or collective survival." Control is central to definitions of trafficking, and thus concepts related to violence offer a way to explore control beyond that of individual traffickers, to the structures and processes that control and limit people's lives

and enable control by others. As such, it is the “social machinery of oppression” that comes into focus as the context for human trafficking (Farmer, 2004, p. 307).

These concepts have been used in relation to migration and various forms of violence and exploitation, including human trafficking. Researchers have highlighted how migrants, particularly migrants from poorer countries, are disproportionately at risk for multiple negative outcomes including ill health, continued poverty, physical violence, exploitation and human trafficking (Gamlin, 2016; Huffman et al., 2012; Qureshi, 2013; Scheper-Hughes, 2000; Schmidt & Buechler, 2017; Vogt, 2013). Barber (2000), for example, identified symbolic violence, “legitimate symbolic violence” by the state, in the Philippines’ deployment of female labour migrants to vulnerable and subservient positions (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 239). The government migration training programs have emphasised the need for Filipina migrants to be obedient and service-oriented, described further in chapter seven. Significantly, many researchers have used the framework of structural violence as a way to situate individual and ethnographic accounts within wider systems, acknowledging both structural constraints and individual or collective agency in navigating the social world (Barber, 2000; Gamlin, 2016, p. 317; Kodoth, 2016, p. 102; Schmidt & Buechler, 2017, p. 153; Vogt, 2013).

A limitation of the structural violence framework is the potential for power relations, social change, and agency to be obscured by the focus on structure (Beckerleg & Hundt, 2005, p. 189). Social structures have at times appeared constant and universal, without change over time or individual contestations. Criticisms of Galtung’s work focussed on these gaps, and in particular the lack of attention to intentional uses of power that contributed to structural violence, and to agency within contentions for power and resistance against power structures (Flynn, Damant, Bernard, & Work, 2016, p. 54). The idea of symbolic violence, as developed by Bourdieu (1997, 1997, 2004) and Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2007), has addressed some of these issues by identifying the changing, contested, and contextual nature of power relations (Bourdieu, 1997, pp. 130–131; Flynn et al., 2016, p. 57; Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2007, pp. 21–22). Understanding the role of symbolic violence has added an understanding of the negotiations and power struggles which both maintain and challenge structural violence through normal day-to-day life. In addressing these

limitations, I have included not only participants' voices and narratives, but their reflections and critiques on their experiences and society. Agency has been a central theme, and by acknowledging participants' choices and struggles, I have highlighted the active role people play in navigating conditions that include violences and constraints. I have also attended to the intimate, day-to-day points where power relations are felt and contested, such as in families, employment relationships, and government agencies.

The concept of structural violence has also been criticised for being a "top-down theory" linking individual experiences to abstract macro-level injustices, without thorough ethnographic or historic exploration of how exclusion and violence are maintained through processes and institutions day-to-day (Flynn et al., 2016, p. 54). Hirschfield (2017, p. 161) argued that the concept of structural violence has the scope to question the combination of factors that contribute to epidemics through ethnographic and historical research, but seldom has been used rigorously to explore the specific social mechanisms contributing to vulnerability. The use of narratives, from a small number of participants, has been also been criticised as not supporting such grand claims, as well as abusing others' narratives of suffering to prove a theory (Beckerleg & Hundt, 2005, p. 189). At the same time, anthropological approaches recognise that participants are not "representatives" of a group or a phenomenon, but that their unique experiences illuminate and expose facets of society. As such, this framework also suggests a methodological stance to overcome these limitations as well as to attend to its central question, which is, how do structural factors contribute to suffering? Despite the potential limitations of this aging theory, this is still a pertinent question. In this thesis, I have addressed the limitations of narrative-based research by drawing from multiple sources of knowledge, through wide-ranging ethnographic fieldwork as well as research-based insights into the Philippines' society and history.

Structural violence is most applicable in anthropology when grounded in time and space, and in the temporal day-to-day experiences of life. Nixon (2011) has introduced the concept of "slow violence" as a way to describe the delayed, invisible and cumulative effects of environmental degradation on people and the environment. Spencer (2014) also considered how violence and marginalisation accumulate and intensify over time. He referred to

“compounding victimisation” to analyse how people as individuals experience structural violence and precarity over their life course (Spencer, 2014). Drawing on these approaches within the anthropology of violence, I consider the risk and experiences of human trafficking as emerging from the compounding violences which characterise the daily lives of people experiencing economic and social insecurity. Marginal populations facing poverty and other disadvantages find that the risks they face build on each other, reinforcing and reiterating their marginal status (Farmer, 1997, p. 275; Tombs & Whyte, 2006, p. 179). In this way, violence is compounding over time, and also in the ways that structural, symbolic, intimate and everyday violences overlap (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2007). Poverty in this sense is seen, not as a general abstract sense of lack or income level, but as the day-to-day violence of hunger, uncertainty, and disappointed hope. From this level, the way that this kind of violence is cumulative and compounding over time can start to become apparent and concrete. Human trafficking can thus be theorised and contextualised as part of this process of *compounding violence*, within a broader framework of structural violence.

Structural violence has been used by multiple disciplines as a way to analyse the links between the past and the present in terms of suffering (Shackel, 2017). Economic deprivation, institutionalised racism, and colonial violence have been demonstrated to have transgenerational impacts on multiple aspects of life including physical health, economic and educational success, and cultural belief systems (Atallah, 2017; Chapman, 2017; E David & Okazaki, 2006; Gamlin, 2013, 2016; Hedman & Sidel, 2000; Rutten, 2007; Shackel, 2017). Colonial legacies have included both structural violence, such as racialised hierarchies or unproductive economic systems which maintain impoverished conditions, and symbolic violence (Bielefeld, 2014; E David & Okazaki, 2006; Hedman & Sidel, 2000). The suppression of native languages and cultures in many former colonies, for example, has been identified as symbolic violence with far-reaching effects (Bourdieu, 1997; Ha, 2003; Khanal, 2017). The Philippines’ history which includes colonisation, which I introduced briefly in the previous chapter, displays multiple violences which continue to impact local society. The legacies of colonial rule and their relationships to current social configurations and cultural systems are themes that particularly emerge in chapter four, in the history of rural underdevelopment, and chapter eight, where I explore

some aspects of past and present global forces on local lives. Dwyer (2017, p. 21) suggested that when the connections between “the cultural, the social, and the political, between representation and social experience” are analysed in terms of violence, violence then can “illuminate the past” – and, I would argue, can the past also illuminate the present.

Economic deprivation, political repression, and political systems that create and maintain suffering and inequality have also been identified as structural violence (Muderedzi, Eide, Braathen, & Stray-Pedersen, 2017; Sparke, 2017; Syed, 2016). Access, lack of access, and unequal access to vital services such as healthcare is one area identified as structural violence emerging from political and economic structures (Basnyat, 2017; Huffman et al., 2012; Parkinson & Behrouzan, 2015; Ponce, Muñoz, & Stival, 2017; Simmons, 2010). Discussion of economic and political forms of structural violence as it relates to human trafficking runs through chapters four to seven where I focus on each of the forms of trafficking that my participants experienced. In chapter nine I bring these topics together in the discussion of risk, where I consider structural violence shaping vulnerability as well as personal life strategies. In the context of risk, I also explore further the idea of compounding violences.

Cultural systems such as gender and social hierarchies have been implicated in the symbolic violence that supports and maintains structural violence. Education, for example, has been an institution often identified as using symbolic violence to suppress certain groups, and to reproduce inequality, whether between class, race, or gender, by measuring students according to the dominant culture (Croizet, Goudeau, Marot, & Millet, 2017; Jones, 2015; Menéndez-Menéndez, 2014). Researchers have also argued that symbolic violence has justified and perpetuated structural as well as physical violences, illustrated by the ways that rape has been tolerated and rationalised in the context of women’s inequality and oppression (Menéndez-Menéndez, 2014; Paredes-Guerrero, Llanes-Salazar, Torres-Salas, & España-Paredes, 2016; Trenholm, Olsson, Blomqvist, & Ahlberg, 2016). I continue this discussion in chapter five in considering women’s unequal position in Philippine society in terms of labour. In chapter ten, I explore some of the ways that cultural systems and symbolic violence support structural violence through considering local conceptualisations of sacrifice and suffering.

In 1986, Philippines President Corazon Aquino gave a speech acknowledging Spanish support in the wake of political violence and economic collapse. She stated, “I accept with deep gratitude these gifts of medicine from the Spanish government and people. They are among the things we need most urgently to bind up the wounds of my people, wounds inflicted by long neglect and conflict” (Aquino, 1986). Aquino here explicitly equated the physical violence of the day to the longer-term structures which had led to conditions of poverty and bloodshed. When I was in the Philippines, I began to understand the degree to which many Filipinos’ lives were shaped daily and systematically by poverty and economic necessity with few safeguards against difficulties. The current conditions facing the Philippines and the prevalence of human trafficking and exploitation demand attention to the specific and experienced forms of violence that people are facing day-to-day and as ongoing realities.

Conclusions

The Philippines is known to have high levels of poverty which are most frequently cited as affecting both migration and human trafficking. However, the social configurations, meanings, and distribution of poverty, the opportunities and constraints that exist, the historic events which have shaped current social configurations, and the unique position of migration within society, are local conditions specific to the Philippines. The position of workers and migrants, social and geographic inequalities, and cultural values all affect the relationships between people and economics, opportunities, and risks. Human trafficking is a risk that emerges from this complex local setting. Ethnographic complexity has allowed for nuanced analyses of human trafficking, other forms of violence, and social inequalities from a local viewpoint, without perpetuating the Orientalist view that non-Western cultures are to blame for exploitation. The Philippines is a unique and under-researched location to explore human trafficking within the social context, and the relationships between society and multiple forms of violence.

Despite the known prevalence of human trafficking in the domestic context, the literature on the Philippines is limited. Ethnographic work on human trafficking is also a new and growing field, but the research that exists has begun to highlight the role of micro-level studies in understanding such a diverse range of experiences. One of the major themes in

the literature is the complex relationship and artificial binary between structure and agency. Research from various disciplines has suggested the need for studies which practically and theoretically explore the social contexts which maintain vulnerability and exploitation, while also acknowledging the agency by which individuals navigate such systems (Brennan, 2017; Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017; Di Nicola, 2007; Laczko, 2005; Pascoal, 2017; Weitzer, 2014a, 2014b; Zhang, 2009, p. 192). This research addresses these topics through fieldwork-based ethnographic descriptions and insights, first-person narratives, and theoretical analysis which considers human trafficking within a social context rather than as an individual, legal, or global issue.

Anthropological theory demands a unique sensitivity to participants' own ways of seeing and experiencing the world, grounded in the actual practice of living life day-to-day. The theoretical framework based on the concept of structural violence is grounded in anthropological tradition and suggests again close attention to the personal experience of social realities where such violence is felt day-to-day. This study is situated within the anthropological tradition of ethnography, as well incorporating life narratives which allow participants' voices to be prominent in recounting and understanding their experiences. The following chapter outlines the methods and methodological choices involved in undertaking this research.

3: “It’s more fun in the Philippines”:¹⁴ fieldwork and wandering

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how this research has been conducted, and the methodological decisions which supported its design. The aim and objectives of this study suggested specific methodological choices in order to research the complex experiences, constraints and motivations involved in shaping life paths that have included human trafficking. Anthropological tradition, as well as trafficking literature which has explored these links in other contexts, suggests that ethnographic approaches are valid and fruitful methods for research that is grounded in integrated local contexts and understandings, and based on participants’ own accounts of their experiences. The basis of ethnographic research has traditionally been participant observation, and while the research topic presented challenges for this approach, the design of the study has been based on the need for close-level accounts and understanding based on immersive experiences. Research on human trafficking demands significant sensitivity toward ethical issues, and I designed and carried out this project based on a primary and ongoing consideration for my participants who had experienced trafficking and exploitation.

3.1 Ethnography and fieldwork in Mindanao

To fulfil the objectives of this research, I started from an ethnographic research design to explore social structures from an in-depth, personal and lived perspective. The ethnographic approach gives the individual experience primacy in understanding and interpreting the wider social realities, through sharing the experiences of day-to-day life. The locus of inquiry is individual lived experience and the participants’ own perspectives, from which insights can be drawn about society, culture, and social processes. While ethnography is thus highly personal and subjective, ethnographic inquiry has been successfully contextualised and situated within historic, geographic and social settings (Farmer, 2004; Feingold, 2014; Staples, 2015). As such, ethnographic research has produced alternative accounts and challenges to quantitative and global-level studies, as are prevalent in the human trafficking literature, which frequently ignore the local and individual realities and perspectives.

¹⁴ This phrase is the Philippines’ tourism slogan (Department of Tourism, 2017).

The combination of ethnographic research and life-narrative interviews was designed to provide anthropologically sound insights into human trafficking in a specific location. The challenge of this approach was that people who have experienced human trafficking share a general social context, but do not necessarily have any personal connection to each other, and I found that this was true in Mindanao as in other locations (Brennan, 2005; Ellard-Gray, Jeffrey, Choubak, & Crann, 2015; Ellard-Gray et al., 2015; Gerassi, Edmond, & Nichols, 2017; Hepburn, 2013). This eliminated traditional participant observation as a potential research methodology. I addressed the problem of accessing participants who are hidden as individuals in society, rather than a socially or geographically distinct group, by working with multiple organisations and slowly increasing my social network through introductions. The life narrative interviews that participants shared with me are understood in part through the understanding of the local society that I gained through five months of living day-to-day in the same local environment.

Although ethnographic research traditionally depends on participant observation which was impossible with the specific participants I was seeking, the five months that I spent participating in life and community in Mindanao gave a grounded and experienced understanding of the wider context to my participants' lives. Gerassi's research team (2017) recommended using a variety of sources and strategies when attempting to access "hidden populations" as a technique to find a wider variety of participants and experiences. This approach demanded modifying the ideal strategy of participant observation to obtain deep data based on immersive experiences, while accepting that participant observation was not feasible with the majority of my key participants to the degree I would have liked. The methodology of ethnographic research was thus adapted to the specific context, limitations, and research objectives. In-depth interviews with key participants gave their own accounts primacy in understanding human trafficking, and during the five months of fieldwork I also sought local community knowledge and insights into the local context so that I could effectively situate these accounts in the wider social setting. While interviews and narrative accounts have been criticised as subjective and therefore of limited analytic relevance, here the methodological triangulation of multiple perspectives on human trafficking, in-depth community participation, and attention to the wider social realities supports the validity of narrative and ethnographic approaches in this context (Warden, 2013, p. 84).

The difficulties of research with “hidden” populations have inspired unconventional strategies for ethnographic fieldwork. Holmes (2013), for example, joined a group of undocumented migrants from Mexico in attempting to cross the American border, eventually finding himself (temporarily) in prison. Scheper-Hughes (2009) pretended to seek a black-market kidney in order to access and interview the sellers and intermediaries involved in the organ trade.¹⁵ Although these methods are controversial, they highlight the challenges of conducting ethnographic research with populations who are invisible and unreachable, but also may not be part of a single community. However, these difficulties also highlight the value of ethnographic study in bringing the seldom-heard voices of trafficked people into discussion and public awareness. The design of this project was first based on the idea that people who had experienced human trafficking would have the opportunity to tell their own stories, from their own perspective, and be understood according to their own sense of the world.

Once I was finally in Davao for research, I would often revisit this commitment while I struggled with exhaustion in the tropical heat and attempted to navigate through the uncertainties and pressures of conducting fieldwork. Believing that my research was important, in some small way, in bringing these first-person accounts to the scholarship on pressing global issues was something that helped me to maintain, if not enthusiasm, at least determination to finish the project. Indeed, my personal interest and convictions about women’s issues, international inequality and development, and the value of first-person narrative in considering social realities all added to the motivation behind this research. Although during the fieldwork I drew on these motivations, in planning my research I also worked through several reservations.

One concern was the central anthropological topic of researching the “other” as a blonde Western woman in the Philippines, a place I knew little about prior to this research. This raised questions such as issues of power relationships, the limits of “outsider” research, and how I would be received. Indeed, I found that the initial assumptions people had on meeting me were that I was 1) American, 2) a missionary, 3) rich. Although I would attempt to amend these perceptions, the general assumption that I was a missionary –

¹⁵ Illegal organ sales are considered a form of human trafficking, but is outside the scope of this research.

religious workers have a high social status in Davao in general, and foreign ones in particular – was something I always struggled with, and I would do my best to gently clarify that I was a student from New Zealand¹⁶ doing research about life in Davao.¹⁷ Although being an “outsider” means that there are undoubtedly many things that I do not understand, I found that in people’s reactions and conversations with me this position did contribute unique insights through experiencing local perceptions of America and the outside world.

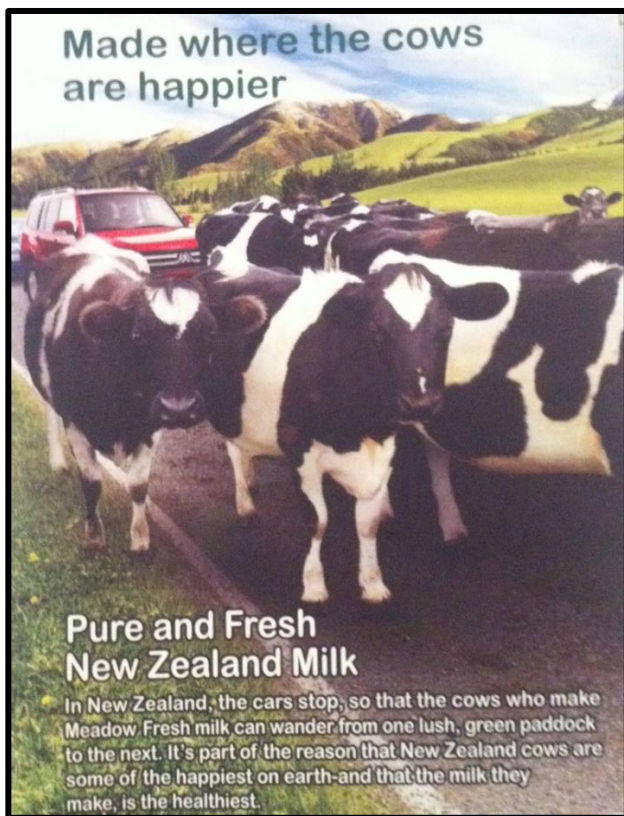


Figure 5: Representations of home?

My family came with me for the first three months of fieldwork, and I often found that having my children along, as well as conducting practical family life such as grocery shopping and exploring, enabled me to interact with a wide variety of people on a more

¹⁶ Although I grew up in Canada, I had lived in New Zealand for fifteen years; although people in NZ still notice my accent, my Filipino friends laughed with disbelief when I mentioned this: “But you sound the same as [another friend from New Zealand]!” In general, therefore, I found it simplest to usually only mention that I was from New Zealand, and the assumption that I was American was based primarily on my skin colour.

¹⁷ Many people I met did not know where or what New Zealand was; those who admitted it would ask me questions such as, ‘Is that an American state?’ or ‘Is that in Europe?’. A New Zealand friend showed me a rare reference, advertising dairy products from “where the cows are happier,” much to our amusement (Figure 5).

personal relational level. Indeed, I found that getting to know some of my neighbours' ordinary life practices often illuminated aspects of the wider culture. In the mornings, for example, there was always an early bustle of activity, and we would greet each other, *Maayong buntag!* [Good morning!], as I passed people in pyjamas out sweeping their drives and curbs or washing their cars. In the library at a local university, I had read about an official edict that households should be responsible for keeping their road frontage tidy. In my neighbourhood, it seemed to be just what was done, go out early to sweep, sweep, sweep, creating the music of the early day. I would guiltily wonder, momentarily, if my curbsides were letting the neighbourhood down, and what it would take to compel me to arise before seven to wield a broom on the public roadway for temporary relocation of dust and leaves. It seemed to me, however, to illustrate how Filipinos often accepted and adapted to conditions that were set from above. Queueing for groceries, asking for directions, eating in restaurants, using public transportation, and living daily life with my family all contributed to a better understanding of the ways that people saw the world and made their lives in Davao.



Figure 6: My children at the market; my son enjoying some pakwan [watermelon] (photo courtesy of Jono Townsend).

Beyond the attention that my children's blond heads attracted (see Figure 6), I began to see glimpses of the position I occupied in the social imagination. Local primary school students, well-groomed and in perfectly laundered brightly coloured uniforms, would walk

past me saying, “money, give me money?” People stared as my family walked past, and the brave approached to ask if they could take a picture with us. Others took pictures anyway. After we had posed with one man prior to an event at the town square, I asked him why he wanted a photo. “For a souvenir” was his somewhat cryptic reply. I was not sure if he just wanted a souvenir of having seen a white family, or of the event that was so exciting even foreigners turned up.

I was constantly aware of my perceived status, and beyond asserting that I was not a religious authority, I made additional efforts to address potential power imbalances that came from my position as a foreigner and a researcher, which will be discussed further. Through the preparation, fieldwork, and writing up stages, I continued to grapple with the question of whether I was the right person to be carrying out this research. Adamson and Donovan (2002, p. 823) reported that this is a common concern and emotional response among researchers who do not share ethnicity with the research participants, particularly when white researchers are aware of the racial and cultural power imbalances in society that also imbue their position and people’s perceptions. I recognise that I will never fully be an insider to Philippine society, and I continue to view research as my education on the Philippines, which will always be incomplete.

I had been assured it would not be a problem to conduct research and interview in English, but I had decided to learn Cebuano to communicate both in and out of interviews and to, ideally, get a better sense of the culture and worldview. Although Tagalog (Filipino) is the official national language, Cebuano (or Visayan) is the vernacular for Mindanao and the Visayas. I took regular lessons via Skype for the year leading up to fieldwork, and my teacher in Manila also began to introduce me to Filipino ways of thinking about the world. It ended up that only a few of my interviews with key participants were in English,¹⁸ and my Cebuano, even as insufficient and limited as it was, was incredibly useful in both “practical” and fieldwork scenarios. I found that it made a difference in interactions, such as in a *jeepney*¹⁹ (see Figure 7) where we had been overcharged and an unrelated query in

¹⁸ Interviews with government/NGO workers were usually in English, although they were given the option of Cebuano as other participants were.

¹⁹ Local transport that could be compared to a small bus, except smaller. The driver sits in the front cab and the passengers sit facing each other on long benches in the back section.

Cebuano resulted in the correct change being given. Our stop was early on the jeepney route, so I was often sitting on the end and tasked with relaying payment to the driver. “*Bayad diri, usa lang*” [Payment here, for one (one only)]. Deciphering jeepney routes, finding taxis, and communicating locations made getting around Davao sometimes rather arduous.



Figure 7: My daughter aboard a crowded jeepney.

Davao city is an odd mix of religions and the secular, although in the city the overall impression is that the various groups seem to coexist peacefully and openly. At the local universities, both Catholic and non-religious, for example, I did not see any segregation between students who were or were not wearing Muslim headscarves. Catholicism, as the dominant religion, is the most officially entrenched in daily public life. I often found myself in the supermarket, (see Figure 8) following the lead of other shoppers, standing solemnly in silence as the garbled recording of a deep male voice led us in a “Hail Mary.” Following this, there would sometimes be the company’s theme song to which the staff would perform a simple dance in their colourful uniforms (often rather unenthusiastically). Once I had finished shopping, I would wait in the queue alongside the “impulse buy” section stacked with chocolate, toothbrushes, and condoms. It was in the practice of daily life that the

intricacies and contradictions of urban social life and practice – such as the normal juxtaposition of agriculture and industry (see Figure 9) - began to come into focus as I attempted to both inhabit and comprehend the world around me.



Figure 8: Shoppers queueing at the packed supermarket after payday.



Figure 9: An urban scene: a goat tied up beside a main road in an industrial area.

3.2 *Suroy-suroy*: to roam around; to wander; to run errands.

The word *suroy-suroy* is used to mean running errands, and is often the answer to the question, what have you been doing today? It also has the connotation of being “out and about,” not anywhere in particular. This was the best way I could describe the fieldwork experience, that of wandering from one place to the next without a fixed route or final destination. Sometimes a meeting would lead to an interview, sometimes to more introductions and further meetings, sometimes it felt like it would lead nowhere.

Sometimes I felt that I was learning more about the hierarchical, bureaucratic nature of Philippine organisations than I was about human trafficking, but this also gave me embodied insight of what it is to be “in the system” and trying to get results (in my case, meetings, interviews, and in one particularly frustrating case, a letter stating that officials had been informed of my intentions to carry out research).

The first thing that I did in the field was to begin approaching organisations that work in anti-trafficking, both government and NGO, to ask for interviews with their workers and for support in accessing formerly trafficked people. Introductions and personal connections were indispensable in this effort, as they are in Mindanao social life. In contrast to this personal approach, I had sent out over 50 emails introducing myself and my research to various organisations prior to and during fieldwork; I did not get a single reply. The process began slowly, as we arrived in December and after a few weeks found that everything was shut for the holidays.

My primary source of introductions and support was Mamu, who took me, my research, and my family under her wing. She worked for the NGO which was my initial point of entry, and I had met her on my prior trip. Mamu was interested in anthropology and my project, and as she had worked in and with a wide variety of GO/NGOs in development and human rights areas, she generously introduced me to many contacts. Mamu assured me that I could write about everything that happened with her, and that I was free to use her real name. I attempted to convince her that I would not be able to do that, and listed some of the reasons why. “What if you change your mind? What if your family don’t like that they could be identified through you? What if people find you because of your past?” She said that it did not matter; I could use her name anyway. She is well known, not only to me, but to almost everyone in her very wide social circle, as Mamu. It is a local word that I would translate as *mama*, which is what my children call me. They adored Mamu, although in hindsight I perhaps should have taught them to call her *Lola* [grandmother] instead. Some of my fondest memories of my time in the Philippines are from the steps of Mamu’s house, watching my children run around and play with some of her many *mga apo*

[grandchildren²⁰], relatives and neighbours' children in the hard-packed dirt yard amid the coconut palms.

My husband and I knew several people who have been involved with a local NGO in Davao including its American founder; at the time of my research she and her husband, and friends who included a Kiwi woman and two Filipina women whom I had known for over ten years were working there. Their connections, insights and friendship were all invaluable to the practical and emotional sides of the time I spent in the Philippines. I would not have been able to even begin this research project without the initial and ongoing introductions that they, and in particular dear Mamu, facilitated for me.

Through these introductions came further introductions, and I was able to spend time with police officers experienced in human trafficking, researchers from local universities who kindly spent time discussing my work and making introductions, social workers from several government departments, GO/NGO migrant support workers, workers and residents at halfway houses for sex workers and former rebel soldiers, and workers from other NGOs with focuses including migration, women, children, sex workers, and legal support. Research with multiple stakeholders in various locations was a central technique to explore the relationships between various facets of social life including the rural-urban flows and disparities. I travelled as much as my contacts could arrange to take me to meetings in other parts of Eastern Mindanao. This was always interesting, and I became acquainted with a wide variety of public transport options from the local pedal powered *trisykad* [tricycle, also known as a pedicab or cycle rickshaw] to the fancy, movie playing, over-airconditioned large buses. The latter was the only experience I had in the Philippines of ever being too cold, and I returned to Davao with the flu.

To visit street-based sex workers, I would go along with women from an NGO at night, but early in the evening before the workers were busy. We would join in the gathering around the *karenderiya*²¹ where the women were laughing and eating, texting and chatting. When I interviewed Susan (see Ch.9), we spoke soon after I had arrived so that she would not be losing potential earnings for the night. I felt a responsibility that, at least, I would not cost

²⁰ *Mga* is a pluraliser

²¹ Small restaurant or food stand; this one was a trestle table with food and drink set up on top.

anything to Susan and the other women, as well as my other participants. There was once, though, a different occasion where Susan did almost lose a customer. The *Mama-San*²² was not there, so Susan was filling the managerial role. One of the ladies was having a dispute with her neighbour, and asked the NGO women to pray with her. Susan and the other women gathered around, and I sat back to wait and observe the coming and goings on the dark street corner. They finished praying, all with glowing smiles and teary eyes, and were sharing hugs and encouragements when a car pulled up behind the circle and stopped. No one seemed to pay any notice, so I finally began to alert Susan, “Customer *diha* [there]!”²³ I found that getting to know these women provided a fruitful perspective on local life and work, and was personally very enjoyable. They found it humorous on one of my first nights when a customer asked the women, “Can we buy the American girls?,” when I and another white woman were visiting.²⁴ The women were a lot of fun, and spending time “hanging out” with them contrasted sharply to the experience of sitting through official meetings.

I attended many Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT)²⁵ meetings and events to better understand the local situation and to make connections for research. These were often conducted in Cebuano, and I struggled at times to catch the details of what was being said. The process was rather painful and mainly involved eight-hour stints of sitting through government bureaucracy that I could often not understand. The worst part, though, was that no one would translate or explain “adult” themed jokes to me because as a student I was assumed to be much younger than I actually was.²⁶ Although I learned a lot from some of these meetings, in this way I continued to feel like an outsider, more so than in one to one conversations. However, attendance did pay off as it led to meetings with many of the organisations that were represented, and introductions to further groups, and towards

²² The title of an older woman who would negotiate with clients for the sex workers in exchange for a cut of the payment. She described herself to me as “the manager”: “I am the manager for the bad girls.” She kept a ledger with detailed records of the transactions for the evenings.

²³ I found that location terms were one way that language corresponded to ways of thinking about the world. There are three: here, there (near) and [over] there (far); once I understood this, it was much easier to understand the directions I was given in how Filipinos generally imagined space in terms of language.

²⁴ I and the street workers found it rather funny, but the other European woman had often been pestered by the *Mama-san* that her curvier figure would fetch a high market return. I did get a once-over look from *Mama-san*, who appraised that I had a “good nose,” but I gathered that she thought I should keep my day job.

²⁵ This was the regional chapter of a nation-wide initiative.

²⁶ I was 34, I had been married for 12 years, and had 3 children, but people guessed my age as 25.

the end of my fieldwork I stopped attending and would contact the people I had met there directly. The biggest benefit for me was meeting people in person and making my presence known over time, and through these connections I eventually arranged to visit many organisations. I interviewed workers from a wide variety of government agencies and NGOs doing work related to human trafficking and migration, as mentioned. These were almost always held in their offices, where I would listen and ask questions while they explained the work that they did, usually in English. Several organisations working in the rehabilitation stages of human trafficking were also able to help me to interview people who had experienced human trafficking themselves.

Most of the formerly trafficked or exploited individuals I spoke to had been through government or NGO assistance of some kind, and this is how I met them. In many interviews, the existing case worker introduced me and translated during the interview, usually in the participant's home or at the organisation's office. In others, the outside social worker or NGO worker who had arranged the meeting would translate. These interviews were recorded, while during most interviews with GO/NGO workers I only took notes. I did not compensate these workers, but I would pay for the transportation costs and snacks to share with the participants, and I was grateful for the generous support I received. Due to the relationships based on the GO/NGO facilitators, I was not able to spend additional time with the majority of the participants beyond the interviews, with a few exceptions.

Much has been written about the role of "gatekeepers" in accessing formerly trafficked persons for research purposes (Bosworth, Hoyle, & Dempsey, 2011; Boyd & Bales, 2016, p. 175; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2010; Easton & Matthews, 2016; Kelly & Coy, 2016; Surtees, 2014; van Dyke, 2013). Indeed, some researchers have encountered challenges or even hostility, to the point that research proved impossible with some or all of the institutions contacted (Bosworth et al., 2011; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2010; Surtees, 2014; van Dyke, 2013). In Davao, I found that there was only one organisation, the government-run women's shelter, which provided me information but would not have allowed me any access to participants, as they were short-term residents who had very recently exited abuse of various kinds. My research, however, would also have excluded these women as I was intentionally seeking people who had already completed legal and rehabilitative processes,

and I found this to be an entirely appropriate policy in the case of the shelter. The significant issues of safety, access, and even identification are mitigated through this collaboration, as well as the trust, ongoing relationship, and trained support that agencies offer to participants. This corresponded well with the other aims of my study in understanding the human trafficking situation and local context, and many organisations beyond those working directly with formerly trafficked persons generously shared information and expertise regarding the social situation in general and problems that their work was addressing. However, I found that the process of building relationships, trust and “goodwill” with relevant organisations did take time as well as personal introductions (van Dyke, 2013).

Locating participants was heavily dependent on networking widely with a variety of groups; I accessed two participants at most through each organisation or individual who served as the gatekeeper, and none through other participants. The organisations were extremely helpful in finding appropriate participants, but the limitations of this method correspond to what has been observed about trafficked persons in general. As a “hidden population,” and “non-associative hard to reach population” – meaning, that whether formerly or currently trafficked, people with these experiences are not frequently a socially or geographically connected group (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2010; Gerassi et al., 2017; Lewis, 2016, p. 101; Tyldum & Brunovskis, 2005). Formerly and currently trafficked persons have also been identified as not only hidden but often marginalised, stigmatised, and vulnerable, contributing to both social and intentional invisibility (Easton & Matthews, 2016; Lewis, 2016). Gatekeepers played a central role in locating and ethically accessing such disconnected participants, but this also depended on my patience and perseverance in building relationships within the government agency and NGO communities, meeting with a wide variety of organisations, and demonstrating my credibility over time.

It was through perseverance, and flexibility in my willingness to *suroy-suroy* that I also came to meet a few participants with trafficking or related experiences who had not been formally identified or assisted by the official organisations.²⁷ This of course raises a

²⁷ Susan is an exception, but an example of how an open approach to fieldwork can result in unexpected connections for seeking “hidden” populations. I met Susan through an NGO working with street sex workers

question about ethical research with people who may have experienced trauma which had not been addressed or resolved (Surtees, 2014). However, I did meet these participants through NGO or community workers who knew them personally, and facilitated introductions as a mutual friend rather than a case worker. In each case, the mutual friend also either remained nearby or acted as a translator, fulfilling the support role for participants which I considered necessary for interviewing people who might have experienced trauma. I make no distinction between “official” (as in categorised and counted by support services) and “unofficial” formerly trafficked persons. Surtees (2014, p. 119) has pointed out that there may be differences between people who have been identified or sought support and those who have not. However, the purpose of this research is to present the narratives from people who have experienced a range of trafficking, trafficking-like, and related experiences such as migration within a generally shared social context, rather than analysing the role of support services.

My approach, then, most closely corresponds to those of trafficking researchers such as Kelly and Coy (2016), Boyd and Bales (2016), Brennan (2005), and the UNIAP’s (2008) recommendations where participants, gatekeepers, and researchers work collaboratively. The aim is not only facilitating interviews and access, but also “positioning each as experts for the purposes of creating a more complete and applicable knowledge,” and extending this with multiple forms and sources of “community knowledge” (Kelly & Coy, 2016, p. 39). Many times, I invited my participants to reflect on their lives as well as general social issues in an effort to engage their contribution to knowledge and analysis within and beyond their own life story. Although the centre of this research is individual narratives rather than, say, their case workers’ commentaries, the methodology of including multiple types of participants as well as a significant period of cultural immersion supports a better understanding of the social setting and factors at play in my key participants’ lives.

who facilitated an interview, as I thought that Susan’s experiences and insights as a long-time sex worker would be relevant and valuable; I did not know that she had worked as a child labourer, in a situation that could be easily classified as human trafficking under the UN and local legal definitions, until partway through the interview (see Ch.9).

3.3 Matarong pamatasan [ethics]²⁸, pain, and writing

“Just wait, I’m crying” - Erica

“It’s very difficult to talk about my experiences of the abuse” - Gabriel

“I would like to have some counselling” - Mariel

There are significant ethical considerations in working with people who have experienced abuse and exploitation. These quotes from some of the interviews that I conducted demonstrate just one of the considerations, that of the research participant’s well-being. Indeed, researchers have established that people who have experienced human trafficking are likely to have experienced trauma, and this was a continual caution in ethically designing the research (Ottisova, Hemmings, Howard, Zimmerman, & Oram, 2016). Ethical considerations have been part of every stage of this research, from planning, to gaining access to participants and the field site, considering my position within the wider community, carrying out interviews and interacting with participants, and in representing and analysing the interviews and field data.

Primary ethical issues included the safety and confidentiality of participants, the safety of myself as researcher, and the potential for my being confused with an employee of anti-trafficking organisations. In addressing these, my main strategies were to arrange interviews through organisations already working with potential participants (see Appendix A for introduction letters), and to go through the information sheet I had prepared (see Appendices B and C) to ensure that participants were aware of their rights and my role as a researcher. The participants who needed legal or rehabilitative support had also already completed those processes, apart from ongoing case management in a few instances, and a trained support worker would be available in each interview.

²⁸ *Matarong pamatasan* also refers to “correct behaviour” or “moral conduct,” both also important as part of the ethics of fieldwork.

Talking with people who have experienced trauma is difficult on a practical level as well as in considering the serious ethical implications. In each interview, there was a trained support person present, generally a social worker, and usually someone the participant knew. I was also careful to make sure that people knew they did not have to participate, answer any question, or could end the interview at any time, and that the support person understood this as well. There were times when people did become emotional in recalling traumatic or difficult events. At these points, I was grateful to have a trained person in that role.

There was only one occasion, in the interview with Erica (see Ch.5) where she was crying while talking about the sexual abuse she had experienced as a child, that I asked if she would prefer to end the interview, or move on to a different topic. She did not, and took a moment to regain her composure before continuing with her account. The presence of a support worker meant that help was at hand if the participants needed it, but it also meant that in that space I felt confident to let Erica make her own decisions about telling her story even when she was obviously finding it difficult. I would have felt uncomfortable in bringing up these emotions with Erica without the NGO worker present; this would have created another ethical problem if I had been uncomfortable continuing the interview, in denying Erica the right to decide about her story, including her emotional response (Easton & Matthews, 2016, p. 12).

The support workers filled several roles, acting as language interpreter as well as cultural medium, for example, asking me to clarify questions that they thought would not be easily understood or interpreted with the same implications. As a trained support person as well as sharing a general cultural background, these people could be depended onto not only manage and support but to help gauge the participant's state and level of comfort in the interview process. One of the "safeguards" for working with people who may have experienced trauma, beyond the presence of a trained worker, was to offer to arrange counselling if appropriate following the interview. Mariel was the only participant who requested counselling, and her case worker offered to arrange this as part of her follow up. Without the support workers taking this key role in the interview process, I would not have considered this research to be ethically sound or practical.

As part of designing the research plan, I completed and submitted a full application to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee which was approved prior to fieldwork (Application MUHECN 15/039; see Appendix D). However, the application of safeguards does not eliminate the fact that all anthropology work is relational, and the ethics of fieldwork with people is further complicated by the fact that most of my participants had experienced some form of trauma, abuse, or exploitation. Despite careful preparations and research designs, most of the ethical dilemmas and decisions can only be “negotiated in real time with real people” (Kelly & Coy, 2016, p. 33). Prior to fieldwork, I had considered, discussed, and received advice at length about potential and multiple ethical concerns. However, ethics mainly matters in the moments of decision in interaction, and I found that this preparation led to something of a researcher paranoia in the field as I tried continuously to consider how my presence and research were affecting those around me, heightened by an awareness of how conspicuous and visible I was.

On leaving the field, as I began to evaluate my experiences I found that the ethical implications of my experiences become more visible and were magnified in the process of writing. In terms of writing the thesis, the primary ethical decision was to present the life narratives as whole accounts. This aligns to my objective of telling the stories from those who had experienced human trafficking, but also consciously places participants’ voices at the centre of this work. It allows a degree of separation between the narratives and my analyses, so that my voice does not diminish the participants’ own perspectives on their lives, but instead interprets the stories alongside the participants’ accounts and interpretations.

Writing the stories has also raised ethical questions on a very personal level that can often never be fully resolved. The interview process is relational, intimate, and emotional; exposing this process and the resulting narratives in writing demanded a second level of sensitivity towards the interview process. Questions over the ethics of this research continued to haunt me. Although I have criticised others for work that turns people who have experienced trafficking into “just” trafficking victims, in selecting participants for this reason, am I doing the same? As a white Westerner coming in, collecting stories, and then leaving, am I re-enacting a form of colonial exploitation? My only justifications have come

from my participants themselves: how eagerly, willingly, and hopefully these stories were shared; how Mamu, key participants, and anti-trafficking workers told me that my work was important; and how I was taught by each person that I met. Most importantly, though I received these stories with gratitude, my participants relayed them with the intention that they would be shared more broadly. The stories have been translated and narrated as directly and respectfully as possible under this ethical sense of both sensitivity and duty.

3.4 Interviews

Ethnographically based individual life accounts “offer unique lenses through which the interplay of social categories might be observed and better understood,” and interviews with key participants were based on this life narrative format (Staples, 2015, p. 78). Individual narratives are also never only personal, but reflect the society, culture, relationships and point in geography and history that a person inhabits (Maynes et al., 2008, p. 3). This approach emphasises how beliefs, values and ideals are often embedded in stories as well as the way that people interpret the world around them and their own lives and experiences. Other researchers have found that formerly trafficked individuals’ narratives reflect not only the shared values in making decisions prior to and within a trafficking event, but also culturally situated understandings of the situations (Awad et al., 2015; Dahal et al., 2015; Gurung, 2014; Jose & Erpelo, 1998). Near the end of the life story interviews, I would specifically ask participants to reflect on their lives and consider what was important, and I found that these analyses added depth to the reflections they had already conveyed throughout their narrative accounts. Through a personal and subjective point of view, and grounded in an understanding of the wider context, individual and groups of narratives offer a unique lens on social realities (Maynes et al., 2008, p. 32; Willemsse, 2014, p. 46). Moreover, narratives are unique in reflecting something of both inner and shared social worlds in that the narrative structure is also a primary way that people understand the world and their place in it, and construct meaning from their experiences (Czarniawska, 2005).

Most of the key participants’ interviews were conducted in Cebuano, either by their choice or by necessity when they did not speak English. I appreciated the value of stories told in participants’ vernacular, given the close relationships between language and views of the

world, in attempting to understand their own perspectives. However, language was a challenge in interviews as well as fieldwork in general. I had just enough language skills that I could make myself understood, and make the people I met laugh at me. I could understand the gist of what was being said which helped the interview process, but I depended on the support workers as much as I could for interpretation. I enjoyed it when participants would laugh at me for my language skills, feign disbelief when they asked my age (“you look so young!”), or laugh with me when I described how many children I had (“*daghan* [many], too many”). Being in the position of *estudyante* [student] in terms of language learning as well as research also set me in a less powerful position, particularly in contrast with the social workers, where I hoped people would feel comfortable to make their own decision as to whether and how they spoke to me.

Interviews were arranged in conjunction with supporting organisations. During interviews, I did not usually ask many questions. Participants had copies of the information sheet in English and Cebuano (see Appendices B and C), and I would first go through it orally to make sure that they knew who I was, what I was doing, and that they were in control of what happened and what they said. I would then explain that I wanted to hear their life story – from where they grew up to where they are now. Sometimes participants would immediately start telling their story, without any questions or prompting, and sometimes I would ask, “what was it like where you grew up?” I usually did not need or have opportunity to ask many more questions until close to the end of the interview. In some interviews, I asked participants if they wanted to choose a pseudonym; sometimes, I forgot, and chose pseudonyms later. Brennan (2005) reported a similar approach to interviews with the formerly trafficked migrants in her research, placing the emphasis on the participant’s narrative and what they want to tell, rather than on the exploitation or trauma they might have experienced.

To maintain a participant-oriented and conversational tone, I did not feel comfortable reading from a page, other than the initial info sheet, or making notes during these interviews. The interviews all followed their own paths as I did not rely on a uniform set of questions or topics beyond the broad life overview theme. In practice, this made the interviews much more open-ended and guided by the participant. This is a positive outcome

in my view, but there were occasionally topics or questions that I later wished I had discussed, particularly when it was unclear in what order some events had occurred in a person's life. As such, the narratives do not all follow the same format, or contain the same level of detail about various parts of people's lives. Overall, I felt that the ability to be fully present and engaged with the participant, and allow questions to emerge from and be guided by the narrative that they presented, enhanced the quality of the interview as a human connection and gave primacy to the participant in shaping the narrative.

Working with interpreters was a mixed experience in some ways, where some interpreters were much more helpful and sympathetic to my research aims than others. It also meant that interviews were shaped by not only me and the participant, but the interpreter/support worker who was in most cases already known. One social worker was obviously trained in more "factual" or quantitative research styles and seemed to want factual, short answers (and questions), and I had to gently try to press what I actually wanted: "can you ask him to describe... what was it like when..." while observing proper respect for this experienced senior worker who had so generously taken me to interview her clients. Another social worker asked if I was going to use triangulation to speak to the victim of trafficking, the case worker, and case and police files to work out what had "really" happened. I tried to explain that I wanted to know what people have to say and think about their own lives. However, a few of the interviews were done with the government case workers present and so I suspect that in some of these I may have heard a slightly more "official" version of events, which can be a limitation of this method of accessing people to interview.

The compensation of participants for their time is always a question in research (Boyd & Bales, 2016, p. 182). A social rather than financial contribution correlated to my position as a guest and student, although the presumption that as a foreigner I was wealthy also created a certain expectation. I would usually bring snacks and drinks to people's homes, as guided by the person introducing me, or pay for the food and drinks if we were at a cafe. I also tried to avoid inconveniencing anyone, and made sure that interviews were set around the participants' schedules, such as meeting employed people in the evenings. There was only one occasion where I was given a gift by a participant, and it was unexpected and revealing. The relatively wealthy "ideal migrant family" (Ch. 8) sent the GO worker and me away

with a bottle of wine, juice, and small snacks in a gift bag. I believed that this expressed how acutely perceived wealth as well as status affects social responsibilities, and I hoped that I had fulfilled the appropriate expectations in other settings.

However, an interview is a reciprocal human connection. It demands emotional labour of both the researcher and the participant in connection, empathy, moderating responses, as well as speaking and telling the story. I became aware of the personal and ethical implications where asking for an interview was also requesting participants' emotional labour in connecting with me, and accepting my attempts to connect and bridge the language and culture gaps between us. Hannah (Ch.8), for example, spoke about her Christian faith which gave her a sense of unity and equality with other people in the world – “God made all of us” - and added that she was a woman and a mother, and, placing her arm against mine, remarked, “We are different because of our past, but we have two hands, one heart, one life, right? *Ako* [I am] Filipina, *ikaw* [you are] from New Zealand, but we are the same.” I was incredibly touched by the gesture, particularly as I was very aware of how visibly foreign I was in Davao. This interaction contrasted sharply with many other experiences, such as when we took our children to the local zoo, and we took pictures of the crocodiles while local visitors took pictures of us, seemingly in the same way.

This experience as well as many of the other friendships and moments of connection that developed in my fieldwork support Narayan (1993) and Seligmann's (2014, p. 12) challenges to the binary dichotomy of “native and non-native” in considering relationships between the self and other. Narayan (1993, p. 680) argued that “given the multiplex nature of identity, there will inevitably be certain facets of self that join us up with the people we study, other facets that emphasize our difference.” Indeed, as a woman, a mother, an English-speaker, a Cebuano learner, having a Christian background,²⁹ inhabiting and doing life in Davao and the neighbouring area, I found that there were many ways that people accepted my identification with them and built relationships that did not erase, but crossed the “self and other” divide. I found Hannah's actions particularly touching as her

²⁹ Being familiar with a wide range of Christian practices, although in various Western settings, I also felt it was a part of Filipino life that I could begin to partially understand. In this case, the differences in attitude that we might have had on doctrinal, political and social issues was never a major discussion, although I did not particularly hide my views which I suspected were often more critical/liberal than many of the people I met.

experiences of poverty, working overseas away from her children, and serious health problems were things that I could empathise with but had no experience of myself; despite this gulf between her story and my (comparatively, very privileged) life, the fact that she saw us as similar and equals was deeply joyful and humanising for me in a very lonely time.

At the same time, the distance and differences between myself and others were sources of frustration and challenges as well as joy and being able to position myself within the field. My language skills were a constant frustration, and the mental effort of communicating added to the physical and emotional exhaustion that accompanied every venture out into the heat, and interviews in particular. However, being a language learner (and often a source of amusement), instructed by each person that I met, helped me to also position myself as a student of their experiences and culture, which was exactly how I thought of myself as an anthropologist in a foreign locale.³⁰ One of the most joyful moments of my fieldwork was with a group of local and foreign friends when we were discussing language barriers and relaying our best (or worst?) faux pas, with much hilarity.³¹ I can only hope that the moments of connection that crossed language and culture were also often a source of joy to my participants as they were to me.

My former language teacher, originally from Mindanao but living in Manila for many years, was a skilled linguist who also taught English and Tagalog. She was also physically removed from the area, and would have had no knowledge of the people I met. As such, she was the ideal translator, and I employed her to translate and transcribe the interviews I had recorded. She read and signed confidentiality agreements, and I communicated to her additionally about the sensitivity and security requirements about the interview materials. I valued her “insider” knowledge in suggesting the implications as well as giving the literal meanings of words and phrases in the translation, and for certain significant or ambiguous terms I have also asked other friends for additional insights.

³⁰ Warden (2013, p. 101) recounted a similar strategy in addressing the implicit power imbalances between herself and her participants.

³¹ My favourite were my friends’ accounts of working with youth who spoke slightly different local dialects than Davao Cebuano, such as accidentally referring to a time when they were so scared that their “pubic hair” stood on end. Once I accidentally, instead of asking to eat some watermelon, said that the watermelon wanted to eat me.

Listening to, reading, and writing up the stories also meant reliving the interviews, which I sometimes found quite emotional. Some of the emotional impact was also delayed by the fact that I did not initially have a full understanding of what had been said in detail, either by my own language limitations or by the summarising interpretation at the time. I found myself again reconciling the memory of the person I had spent time with to the often very difficult story that they recounted of their experiences, at times making the process very draining.³² A theme of this research is that of violence, both personal and structural, immediate and cumulative. For me it also became a metaphor for writing, in the carving of stories and experiences down into words on paper, the impact of painful accounts on the reader, and the bleeding of emotion and pain in the narratives into ink as a writer. At the same time, I have tried to craft the writing to avoid directing violence back toward the participants, through protecting identities, and recounting faithfully, carefully, and respectfully the narratives that my participants shared.

3.5 Analysis and personal narratives

The methods for accessing participants affect not only the outcomes but the analysis. For me, the wide variety of experiences that my participants recounted was not an intentional but incidental outcome of these open-ended methods. When I was designing the study initially, I was expecting to primarily find returned overseas migrants who had experienced exploitation. The prevalence of local experiences of abuse, exploitation and human trafficking in addition to migrant experiences directed my focus toward local systems as well as migration and global relationships, and turned out to be an interesting finding. This approach corresponds to the anthropological tradition of grounded theory where the analyses and foci emerge from fieldwork and participants' perspectives.

In attempting to write and analyse my participants' stories, my starting point is the knowledge that the narrative itself is a person's analysis of their own life and experiences in the world. This analysis is personally and culturally shaped, but is also the most valid one.

³² Warden (2013, p. 119) openly discussed her experiences of PTSD following research with sex workers and trafficked persons; I did not have this level of effect from my research, but can identify similar emotions in the fieldwork and post-fieldwork stages of research. For example, I felt unable to write this chapter and re-explore my own position, emotions and experiences of fieldwork until many months after I had returned home. In this and other chapters I found that I experienced strong emotional responses and I felt that this writing was often a form of emotional labour.

Brennan (2005, p. 35) presented a challenge to researchers working with formerly trafficked persons to consider the possibilities that arise from moving past a “victim status” including commenting on the anti-trafficking movement and contributing to its future. For my research at this stage, this means taking people’s narratives and analyses seriously in attempting to make sense of the social factors which have shaped their lives. As such, the ethical considerations of representation, including the agency of the participant, continued through the writing stages of research.

The main strength of this approach, particularly when working with people who have experienced exploitation, is that narrative accounts of biography and experiences give primacy to a person’s own words, agency in selecting and making accounts, and self-positioning within the events and narratives (Willemse, 2014, pp. 39–40). Further, for people who had generally already shared their experiences of trafficking “officially,” an unstructured interview with focus on their wider life stories including plans for the future, and on their own reflections and analysis, offered a venue for my research participants to reconstruct their narratives beyond that of a “victim.” As such, narratives can also be useful in challenging dominant perspectives, approaches and voices in attending to the intersubjective, partial, and constructed knowledge and narratives by which marginalised populations negotiate and re-narrate their own identities, positions, and experiences (Maynes et al., 2008, p. 34; Ryen, 2011; Willemse, 2014, p. 40). I am aware that each interview was a unique interaction and a story told at a particular moment, in a particular context and relationship; it was, however, how people chose, in that moment, to represent themselves and their experiences.

Ethnographic methods are flexible, but often messy, and a multiplicity of voices can strengthen the validity of observations about a society (Warden, 2013, p. 84). The pressure to find participants, combined with my willingness to pursue any opportunity to meet relevant people, meant that I spoke with everyone I could who had some relevant experience. The result of this was a wide variety of interactions and interviews, from successful and unsuccessful migrants, to sexual labourers, taxi drivers, former underage soldiers, affluent high school leavers planning their futures, as well as GO/NGO/community workers, and people who had experienced a wide range of

exploitative labour situations. Although their lives were mostly unconnected and often vastly different, these stories together helped to build a more complete picture of local society from multiple angles. However, the diversity of the participants may also be considered a limitation of this research method in terms of gaining a deep understanding of the phenomena in question. While I spoke to multitudes of community workers as well as “ordinary” people who contributed to my understanding of local society, the central participants whose life narratives are presented in this thesis are listed in Figure 10 below.

Although interviews are highly subjective, narratives provide glimpses of the fundamental logic which governs people’s actions and choices, and the ways that they understand and represent themselves and their lives (Byrne, 2017). I recognise that an interview and the narrative produced is not a mere account of events, but a creation emerging from the relational interview space and the temporal meaning-making which accompanies the telling (Atkinson, 1998, p. 40; Bräuchler, 2018; Stanley & Temple, 2008, p. 279). The locus of my inquiry is these personal and socially shaped narratives and the *meanings* given to exploitation as part of the wider social context. As such, narratives can be significant representations of the social worlds in which people live their lives. Moreover, a focus on stories which reveal points of exploitation give the social factors concrete expression and basis for analysis, as Arnold and Blackburn (2004, pp. 5–6) have argued:

Life histories enable us to render more intelligible precisely the complex of forces at work in modern societies and to reflect further, and from more solid foundations, on many of the major themes... gender, modernity, colonialism and nationalism, religion, social changes, family and kinship, and interrelationship between self and society.

My analysis, then, is interpretive in nature and has focused on the links between individual stories and wider social processes. The themes and primary points of analysis have emerged from participants’ stories, with a focus on how the participants interpreted and made choices within the circumstances and contexts of their lives. I have first focused on the events my participants described, the choices that they have reported making, and the ways that they articulated and analysed their narrative. Further, I have considered how participants’ stories relate to the wider society, with a focus on opportunities and constraints, and the role of social structures and relationships in shaping their lives. These topics have then been analysed through the concepts of structural violence that have been

described. Through presenting the narratives as whole accounts, I have attempted to retain participants’ voices within my analysis as well as offering transparency for the methods of interpretation.

Participant (pseudonym)	Chapter	Past experience:
Marcus	4	underage soldier
Jun	4	underage soldier
Erica	5	sex trafficking
Crystal	5	sex trafficking
Joramae	5	underage sexual labour
DonDon	6	labour exploitation
Gabriel	6	labour trafficking
Melissa	6	labour exploitation/abuse
Bianca	7	migrant trafficking
Jasmine	7	migrant trafficking
Hannah	8	"unsuccessful" migration
Sharon and Anthony	8	"successful" migration
Susan	9	labour trafficking/voluntary sexual labour
Maribel	9	migrant trafficking
Althea	10	underage/voluntary sexual labour

Figure 10: List of life narratives presented in this thesis

Conclusions

As an outsider researcher, I realise that there are limits to my understanding of society in Mindanao. Indeed, I often tried to ask my participants to reflect on why certain things were happening in society, such as trafficking, separate from their own experience but part of their own cultural setting and understanding. Their answers sometimes surprised me, and often illuminated processes which did not make sense (or, the “correct” sense) when I had thought about them myself. In this thesis, life narratives as part of an ethnographic approach have produced deep as well as diverse data about human trafficking and society in Mindanao, and have illuminated individual accounts and the wider society from local perspectives.

The narratives and analyses that follow are the result of these methodological strategies. I have presented the narratives as wholes, as closely as possible to how they were told to

me.³³ The analyses of the stories and central themes are grounded in the understanding of Mindanao society that I gained from my own fieldwork experiences, as well as the multiple forms of community knowledge that was shared with me. Close attention to individual accounts and the local context through ethnographic methodologies give a grounded basis for analysis of the wider society, and the processes which contribute to the exploitation that my participants experienced as part of their life paths. The next part of the thesis begins by considering the phenomenon of underage soldiers, defined officially as a form of human trafficking, through personal accounts situated in the context of rural Mindanao.

³³ The stories, as mentioned, have been carefully translated (where necessary) from the Cebuano, or local English phrases at times. They have been slightly rearranged, as necessary, to follow a chronological format. I have been particularly attentive to including comments where participants expressed their own opinions and analyses on their lives and experiences.

4: “Until when will we dream?”: underage soldiers in rural Mindanao

My fear when I was in the mountains was that I might die there. If a comrade of yours dies, they will just bury you knee-deep and leave you in the forest. That’s my fear if I died, (no one would know where I was). If you have an encounter here, and a comrade of yours dies, you would carry him and upon getting (to safety), you will bury him. So, I would be afraid that I would die. (Marcus, reflecting on his time as a rebel soldier from age 15-18).

Rebel soldiers like Marcus routinely faced the risk of death for themselves and their comrades. During the time I was in Mindanao for fieldwork, a military skirmish in a rural area had left four rebels dead, the youngest aged only fifteen. Reportedly, New People’s Army (NPA) forces had attacked a military delivery of civilian relief supplies to an impoverished area. In rural Mindanao, NGOs and police told me about their human trafficking concerns which included the issue of underage soldiers. One of the former soldiers I met through police and NGO workers was just sixteen years old, and I watched female police officers hug him and fuss over him maternally.³⁴ The officers had initially facilitated his surrender to the military, and later visited him in their off-hours to teach him to read. He had been told by the rebels that if he was captured, the government forces would torture him and “skin him alive.” This same day, one of my NGO friends had confided that there were NPA soldiers hiding out at her house, wanting to surrender to the military, but wary of a reported corrupt official who had not been facilitating the social support packages offered to former soldiers but pocketing the processing payments.³⁵

As many of my participants originated in rural areas, the issues facing rural Filipino communities seemed an appropriate place to begin considering the context for human trafficking. The prevalence of underage soldiers in Mindanao is closely related to other rural problems including violent conflict, poverty, and unemployment. Globally, underage soldiers are often presumed to represent one of the “worst” forms of human trafficking;

³⁴ He was not one of the former soldiers whose narratives will be presented; I did not have the option to request an interview as the social workers and police officers I was with did not speak his local dialect, and he did not sufficiently speak Cebuano, Tagalog, or English.

³⁵ From what I heard from various organisations, this report turned out to be correct, and was dealt with by higher authorities. Corruption was a known and ongoing issue in the Philippine government.

accounts from other parts of the world, however, are often significantly removed from both the experiences of young soldiers in the Philippines and their social context (Keairns, 2003b). I use the term “underage soldiers” rather than “child soldiers” to include older teenage combatants without infantilising them, and to recognise that my participants, like most Filipino underage soldiers, were teenagers, and in many ways already economically independent from their parents prior to becoming soldiers. The multiple rebel uprisings in Mindanao represent a specifically rural discontentment, and the issues affecting rural populations have been implicated heavily in both individual and group decisions to take up arms. Underage soldiers’ stories reveal their own experiences, choices, and constraints, as well as aspects of the specific rural context in which much of their lives have been lived.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the conditions facing rural populations in Mindanao through the experiences of former underage soldiers, who under international definitions would also be considered victims of human trafficking. Although there are several non-state military groups known to have used underage soldiers, the primary focus will be on the CPP-NPA (Communist Party of the Philippines – New People’s Army) as this is the group where my participants had been enlisted. This chapter contributes to the discussion of human trafficking and structural violence in Mindanao by describing the realities of rural life including the massive disparities between rural and urban communities. The experiences of underage soldiers are points where the relationships between structural and physical violence become clearly manifest. This relationship is also significant in then understanding the ways that rural poverty can be a risk factor for most other types of human trafficking in Mindanao.

4.1 “Trafficking” of underage soldiers in a local context: background

Although “child soldier” is presented by the UN and other international humanitarian organisations as a universal category, and a form of human trafficking, there are significant differences in the experiences of underage soldiers worldwide (Brett, 2002; Brownell & Praetorius, 2017; Keairns, 2003b; Lee, 2009; Stevens, 2014). Underage soldiers, in a local context, have often been found to have more similarities to other local rebel soldiers or local young non-combatants than they would with international underage soldiers; in particular, the experiences and treatment of underage soldiers in Africa and even other parts

of Asia have been vastly different from those in the Philippines (Keairns, 2003b; Spellings, 2008). The primary use of ideological propaganda rather than force for recruitment, for example, as well as the rehabilitation and livelihood support now offered to all surrendering soldiers make the Philippines a unique context and the continued conflict particularly revealing (Keairns, 2003a; Özerdem, Podder, & Quitariano, 2010; Protacio de Castro, 2001). In the Philippines, the multiple ongoing conflicts in rural Mindanao are implicated in human trafficking in the form of underage soldiers as well as the multiple risks, including human trafficking, that those in combat zones experience as a result of the conflict (Bales, 2007; Martin & Callaway, 2011). Researchers have increasingly emphasised the role of local studies that acknowledge (former) underage soldiers' own experiences of the complex and distinct settings that shape their lives (Kerig & Wainryb, 2014, p. 224; Özerdem & Podder, 2011, p. 321; Pedersen & Sommerfelt, 2007).

In the Philippines, underage soldiers are found in many different conflict zones in Mindanao as well as other areas. On 10 March 2017, for example, hundreds of underage soldiers were released by the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) in Western Mindanao, as part of an arrangement with the UN to eventually disengage over 1800 children (Al Jazeera, 2017a). In the NPA, minors have historically had a variety of roles from semi-civilian scouts and messengers to direct support roles and active combat (Makinano, 2001). From 1999-2007, the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) reported processing 265 NPA "child-combatants" (Cruz, 2010).³⁶ The most common characteristics of underage soldiers in the Philippines include being uneducated, teenagers rather than young children, coming from rural, impoverished, large or separated families, and recruited without physical force (Keairns, 2003a; Ordoña de Ocampo, 2006, pp. 60–63). These characteristics have been similar for the majority of armed struggles over the past decades.

Historically, even beyond the Marcos years, military troops have given rural Filipinos legitimate reasons to question their legitimacy as protector (Jose, 2001). The contemporary focus on disarmament and victim-status of underage soldiers stands in stark contrast to the

³⁶ This included both captured (96) and voluntarily surrendered (169) soldiers, but did not include others who may have left the movement without military processing or were killed in battle (Cruz, 2010, p. 4).

treatment of CPP-NPA participants historically. From 1976 until 1995, there were 415³⁷ documented cases of torture by the military and paramilitary groups when interrogating suspected CPP-NPA members or sympathisers (Makinano, 2001). Of these, 326 (79%) were young people between the ages of fifteen to eighteen; almost all were rural agricultural workers, poor and likely uneducated (Makinano, 2001; Protacio de Castro, 2001, p. 129). For this period, “the NPA has a better human rights record than the AFP” (Hilsdon, 1995, p. 108). Even since 2001, the military is assumed to be behind several activist assassinations (Holden, 2009, p. 208). This history of violence is reinforced through the government’s contemporary neglect of rural areas, unequal development that will be discussed below.

The longstanding conflicts in Mindanao are on the surface conflicts of ideologies – Muslims against Christians, communists against the government regime. However, researchers agree that rural underdevelopment, and particularly feudal economic systems and lack of land access, are the underlying catalysts, supporting Paredes’ (2015, p. 170) claim that “land is usually at the root of any serious armed conflict within Mindanao” (Adam, 2013a; Domingo, 2013; Paredes, 1997; Vellema, Borrás, & Lara, 2011). The conflict, however, has perpetuated land access problems, contributing to the 152,380 displaced persons in Mindanao in 2016 – a known correlate to increases in underage combatants (Lasley & Thyne, 2015; UNICEF, 2016). Indeed, even agrarian reform projects which have redistributed commercial land to individual agriculturalists have had limited success in disrupting control by the “landed elites” who have historically wielded significant social, political, and economic power (Adam, 2013b, p. 233; Domingo, 2013; Reid, 2005). Researchers have frequently commented on the dependency-based, feudal style relationships in the Philippines, particularly in agricultural areas (Adam, 2013b; Holden, 2009, p. 208; Horner, 2013, p. 558; Reid, 2005, p. 44; Seki, 2015, p. 1274). Adam (2013b, pp. 233–235) found in an area of Mindanao that resistance from commercial elites - intertwined with political authority - through practices from direct violence to debt bondage meant that few beneficiaries of the land distribution program were able to escape

³⁷ 85% were male; 15% were female. I was privileged to meet a woman who was a former torture victim under the government’s forces during the Marcos era. She was working as an activist at an NGO supporting minors in the justice system. Note that these figures include documented cases alone.

dependency relationships and either keep or benefit from the land packages. The farmers who did access land were barely able to survive from the land's produce, and spiralled into debt which eventually left them landless agricultural labourers once more (Adam, 2013b).

Youth have been central to the development of the NPA since its humble origins in communist-oriented University student groups (Makinano, 2001). Various communist and Muslim separatist groups had existed from the 1930s, but the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) and NPA (CPP-NPA) were both mobilised to violent rebellion under the Marcos dictatorship with accompanying oppressive policies and violent martial law state (Paredes, 2015, p. 170; Stanford University, 2015). Since that time, the MILF and BIFF (Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters) have broken away from the MNLF and continued the violent uprisings in Western Mindanao. Since the establishment of the ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao), conflict has continued as the future of the ARMM has been negotiated; the consequences to indigenous and Christian communities in this area have been particularly devastating and meant significant population displacement (Paredes, 2015, p. 171; Quitariano & Libre, 2001, p. 21). The Abu-Sayyaf is a recent militant Islamic group which, although smaller, has received attention for the terrorist attacks on civilians as well as government forces.³⁸ The NPA exists across the Philippines, with significant activity in eastern Mindanao (Stanford University, 2015). From its height in 1987 with over 25,000 troops who had been mobilised against the Marcos dictatorship, the AFP's 2009 estimates suggested that there were only 4700 active NPA insurgents (Cruz, 2010). In 2016, military activity against the NPA was ongoing, but the government was also offering significant livelihood packages and holistic support for surrendering soldiers.

Questions over the age of consent or majority have often, particularly in the context of human trafficking, been primarily about identifying culpability versus victimhood. Most scholars would agree that in general, minors have greater vulnerability to coercion and less ability to make informed long-term commitments such as enlisting as a rebel soldier

³⁸ While the government (prior to Duterte) has recognised groups such as the MNLF, MILF, and CPP-NPA as political rebels, the Abu-Sayyaf has been considered a criminal terrorist organisation based on its violent attacks on civilians (Makinano, 2001). The Maute and Abu-Kalifar also have recently emerged as small, militant Islamic terrorist groups.

(Derluyn, Vandenhole, Parmentier, & Mels, 2015; Protacio de Castro, 2001, p. 126). Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of agency (Esser, Baader, Betz, & Hungerland, 2016, p. 3). Some have argued that as those under eighteen years are ineligible to enter into contractual arrangements legally, they are always victims when participating in conflict (Sampaio & McEvoy, 2016, pp. 62–63; UNICEF, 2017, p.7). Others have maintained that constraints including the limitations that come with age and maturity do not override the legitimate agency and decision-making processes that even underage soldiers display in navigating the world around them, including the decision to enlist (Kononenko, 2016; Swart & Hassen, 2016). This issue is important, however, as defining child or underage soldiers as distinct from adult soldiers has real-life consequences (Kononenko, 2016, p. 92). Criminal prosecution, support and benefits, and community reintegration are often shaped around the question of whether someone is a victim or a perpetrator; for former soldiers, age can be the single defining factor in answering that question (Derluyn et al., 2015; Kononenko, 2016, p. 92; Sampaio & McEvoy, 2016, p. 63).

The primary difficulty in terms of defining underage soldiers as exploited or trafficked hinges on the definition of a “child” and the degree to which a minor is ascribed the ability to make informed and socially accountable decisions (Derluyn et al., 2015; Kononenko, 2016). The definition and legal age are different in various cultural and legal settings, making universal proclamations or comparisons difficult (Breen, 2007; Keairns, 2003b; Kononenko, 2016; Rosen, 2007; Swart & Hassen, 2016; Tiefenbrun, 2008). Although minor status has meant that perpetrators of crimes, for example, are considered less culpable, it has also meant that those under 18 have been presumed “victims” or lacking agency and prevented from making decisions about their own lives (Kononenko, 2016). This discussion is relevant to all forms of human trafficking, but particularly underage soldiers and sex work where voluntary participants can be labelled trafficked by their age alone. Although some have suggested that the UN’s recommendations have increasingly led to eighteen being considered the universal benchmark, this still varies across locations in policy and practice (Sampaio & McEvoy, 2016; UNICEF, 2017). Others have suggested that the age should be set according to local cultural traditions, or a variable context-based scale which can acknowledge both agency and vulnerabilities (Kononenko, 2016; Swart & Hassen, 2016). “Child soldier” is not a fixed label; military time may end for a variety of

reasons, and children may also grow up to become “adult soldiers” (Brownell & Praetorius, 2017).

At the same time, where such choices are made by (or for) minors amid highly constrained circumstances, there is a legitimate mandate to question whether and what type of intervention is appropriate. Swart and Hassen (2016) suggested that a sensitive understanding of local traditions, maturity, voluntariness, cultural context, and local laws is necessary, particularly for older (15-18 year-old) youths, in evaluating whether a young person can choose either military participation or marriage. Derluyn (2015) recommended integrated approaches which accommodate legal rights, psychological and social needs, through culturally appropriate forms of restorative justice which can transcend binary distinctions between victim and perpetrator. However, these recommendations also highlight the difficulty in reconciling concrete legal policy to actual experience in the case of underage soldiers.

Marcus and Jun’s stories both reveal elements of coercion and exploitation as minors, as well as agency and choice in their experiences of rebel military life. Both men have received education, financial, and well-being support offered to surrendering soldiers. Sacrifice, suffering, death, endurance, and strength are among the central themes of Marcus and Jun’s narratives. These are themes that also link their stories to others of my participants who had experienced various types of human trafficking.

4.2 Marcus’ story

“Those people that I have killed,³⁹ I hope they can forgive me and God will forgive me too.”

Marcus was eighteen years old, but gentle and soft-spoken, he seemed younger when I met with him in a café along with his guardian.⁴⁰ He had come to stay with an NGO worker I knew after recently surrendering to the AFP. The NGO worker was a forthright, petite,

³⁹ “*Sa kadtong mga tao nga akong nautang ang kinabuhi nila*”: literally, those people whose lives are my debt.

⁴⁰ He may indeed have been younger, his guardian surmised, but surrenderees were apparently often taught to say they were eighteen to protect their comrades.

motherly woman, and she had told me how Marcus seemed to be reclaiming his lost childhood, planting in her garden and playing happily with her young grandchildren when they often visited. She obviously cared for Marcus, and during the interview any time Marcus mentioned something in his past that she did not approve of, she would start swatting and threatening him teasingly. I knew her well, though, and would swat her arm playfully in turn and remind her with similar feigned annoyance, “this is *my* interview! You can’t punish him for this!”

Marcus came from a rural area. When he was young, he attended primary school and helped at home. The family was poor but survived. His father was sick and could not work due to ongoing bad health, so Marcus’s mother worked as an agricultural labourer harvesting rice. “When I was little, I went to elementary school there. After that, when I was turning eight, my mother died. There are nine of us siblings, I am the sixth.” At that point, his siblings separated. One sister was “adopted” by a family in another town,⁴¹ while the oldest brother migrated to Manila for work. Another moved to a mining area and found work as a labourer. Two older brothers and one older sister joined the NPA. Marcus was left with his disabled father and two younger siblings. “I was turning ten then, but my father couldn’t get a job because he was sickly. So that’s why I was helping him in looking for food. I had already stopped school at that time.” Marcus took on the responsibility of earning a living to feed the family. He was employed as a casual agricultural labourer, primarily harvesting bananas, before he was yet ten years old.

By the time Marcus was thirteen, he had had enough of the struggle for survival in his home village. He had started getting into trouble, joining his friends in experimenting with marijuana. Finally, he left home, leaving his father and younger siblings. He joined an older sister who was at that point working on a banana plantation. He was thirteen and also found employment as an agricultural labourer on the plantation. However, “my sister and I didn’t understand each other,” he described, “because whenever I made a small error, just a little mistake, she would always hit me, straight away.” Eventually Marcus left his sister to get

⁴¹ This is a common practice, particularly for rural families, to send a child usually to work as a domestic helper in exchange for room, board, and schooling costs; rural communities may not have schools past elementary. However, this can also be a site of abuse or exploitation. Refer to Susan’s story (Ch.9) and Hannah’s story (Ch.8) for examples of this practice.

away from her treatment, and travelled again to another town. He stayed with an uncle, and found a job as a labourer in construction. He worked in this job until he was fifteen.

At this point, Marcus met up with one of his older brothers, Ian, who was visiting. With Marcus leaving home and Ian having been in the mountains with the NPA, they had not seen each other in five years. Marcus was happy to see one of his siblings after spending several years living with other relatives, and realised how much he had missed his family. He decided to accompany Ian back to the mountains. When they arrived, Ian announced Marcus as a new recruit, and Marcus realised he had been enlisted without his knowledge. The next morning, he began training. Training lasted for twenty days, during which time the trainees learned how to shoot, how to avoid crossfire, and what to do in battle. They practiced target shooting with a tarpaulin shaped to look like a person and placed at a distance. Marcus was given a gun, bandolier [bullet holder], bag, and dressed as a soldier. He was very proud of completing the training and wore his new gear with bravado, showing off his new status. “I graduated from the training, I already had a gun and I looked like a typical soldier.” Ian, by this time, had moved on with his separate battalion.

After this, however, “I really went through *sakripisyo* [suffering] that I had never experienced outside. Like when there was no food for a week, none, only water. When there were many (government) soldiers around, we could not get through to get rice. We would just keep on hiding. We knew we couldn’t fight back because we hadn’t been eating. So, we would just have to watch and wait.” There was little Marcus and the other soldiers could do at these times. “My comrades, when the hunger got to be too much, would just eat sugar, grass, rattan, whatever we could find in the jungle.”

Marcus also described enduring long and dangerous treks on top of the hunger that he felt. “We would leave at night, carrying heavy loads. We would walk along *ispatay pangpang* [killer cliffs] in the dark, without any flashlight. In our bags we had bombs, bullets, medicines and emergency supplies for the wounded. For the first two months when I got there, I bore all of this, I just suffered all of the hardships, but I hadn’t encountered a real battle yet.”

Two months after Marcus arrived in the mountains, he experienced his first battle. His camp was raided and attacked by the AFP. “There were only fourteen of us there and thirty of them. We fought back for an hour, exchanging gunshots. They were able to take fifteen of our packs as well as a magazine full of bullets. They stole those from us. After an hour the (government) reinforcements arrived, including a military helicopter, and we had to withdraw. I was only fifteen years old at that time.”

After this, Marcus’ battalion joined another group to form a large squadron, and for a time he was reunited with Ian. Marcus was assigned the duty of setting landmines, while other NPA were placed as snipers. They aimed to take out military forces while they were operating checkpoints along the highway. But before the attack, the AFP soldiers were tipped off and advanced towards the camp.

Marcus and his comrades had to flee, walking out at midnight during Typhoon Yolanda. It was raining hard, cold and tempestuous, and rivers were swollen with rainwater. “The current was very strong. When we crossed the river, one of my comrades was carried away by the current. When he crossed, he got hit by a piece of driftwood. It was dark, and there was no flashlight. We looked for him anyway, even though the current was strong. We swam and dove under the water, but we couldn’t find him. His body was found the next morning.”

After three hours of searching, they had to carry on through the miserable conditions and darkness. “We got tired looking for him, and we continued walking. We were tired and weak because we had empty stomachs and no food. Then it was uphill, really steep. It was very slippery, and our loads were heavy. It took a long time climbing uphill. When we reached (a place we could stop), we made a barracks. We didn’t want to go anymore because emotions were running very high. We were very angry at the soldiers. We were very mad at them, thinking ‘we will stay here, even if we die. We will not withdraw anymore.’ We set up our camp, and planted bombs around it. We dug foxholes, so we could

hide. We waited in silence, only talking to each other very slowly using bird calls⁴² so that we would not be heard. Day and night, we stood guard, and we did not sleep.”

In the typhoon, however, the AFP did not continue pursuing Marcus’ unit. They returned soon after though, and encountered another paramilitary group. These indigenous local “blackfighters” were also active in rural areas. A battle broke out. “The soldiers thought that the blackfighters were NPAs. The blackfighters thought that the soldiers were NPA, because they wear the same uniforms. So, they shot at each other. After a week, the soldiers left, and everything was quiet.” At this point, the battalions split off again and dispersed.

By this point, Marcus was well entrenched into the rebel movement. “I had already internalised the communist way of thinking. We were angry at the government. We were angry at the soldiers. Besides the (combat) encounters, (the NPA) would also educate us, and tell us what the government was like.”

Between skirmishes, Marcus would participate in combat training, communist education, and medical skills. He was trained in emergency medicine, surgery, and basic skills for common ailments. Once trained, Marcus provided basic medical services to the other NPA troops as well as local rural populations. He and the other medics would perform circumcisions, tooth extractions, surgical cyst removal, and make dentures.

In rural civilian towns, as well as providing medical services, Marcus and his comrades would gather the people around an NPA speaker with a blackboard. “We would gather them, just like going to school. Then we would teach them the traits of a soldier, and how the government has exploited us. We would teach them why we are still poor until now. Then after we had organised them, we would choose who would become their leader. Then we would recruit to become members of the New People’s Army. Anyone who wanted to could join, but underage (youths) were not allowed. I was accepted because my brother was responsible there and he recommended me.” Ian, however, was part of a different battalion and seldom saw Marcus.

⁴² “*Pati mag-istorya mag-kanang mura na lang ug pato,*” literally, “we were only talking like ducks.”

“When I turned sixteen, (my comrades) celebrated my birthday. They threw a party for me. They bought me a pig, and chicken. I also got promoted, and I got a higher rank. They changed my gun, my gun was new. I became a medic in the squadron. Then I was the one giving my comrades medical aid when they were sick. So, I stayed *nagkadugay-nagkadugay* [longer and longer]. While I stayed longer and longer in the NPA, I also began to think, ‘will my life be like this always? Feeling like I’m always in the dark?’ I started to think that it was really not good⁴³ for me to continue in this kind of life.”

However, Marcus’ comrades discouraged him from trying to leave, saying that he could not go back to civilian life. “(They) would advise me, that if I left, it would be just the same. If I was a civilian, the government would exploit me, and nothing would change. And that the army was already looking for me, and because the soldiers are fascists, I might be caught and then they would kill me. So, my commitment to serve was revived and I continued on.”

Marcus recounted one of the memorable events for him. “There was a time that we had a medical mission in one community. We held it in the *barangay* hall. When I came in, a man saluted me. He greeted me, ‘*maayong udto* [good noon/midday],’ and saluted, but in the NPA, saluting is not done. It is only done by (government) soldiers. I told our office (what had happened). So, we captured him, and we did not continue our medical mission. We captured him and took him back to our camp.” Initially, the soldier would not admit that he was an intelligence agent, but after a week of being kept in handcuffs, he finally confessed.

“It was decided among the officials that he should be killed. When the officials decided to kill him, I was the one who was ordered to kill. It was night time, and the commander said to me, ‘you’re going to kill him at night. You will take him up to the road, and you will shoot him there. When he dies, remove the handcuffs.’”

“So that was it.” Marcus and another rebel soldier took the prisoner up to the road. Marcus told his comrade to hold onto him in the dark, and Marcus followed, carrying a gun. “When we got to the road, the soldier thought we would set him free. But, unfortunately not. He would be killed instead. So I shot him.”

⁴³ There is no direct word for ‘bad’ in Cebuano: *dili mayo* [not good] could also be translated as bad, but I have retained the literal translation here. However, as elsewhere, this phrase can be read as an understatement of the sentiment implied.

Marcus remained with the movement for about three years. Long treks and hunger became a way of life. He described the ongoing movement, such as an event where “we had to flee. We walked away. We walked for nine days straight.” He also described the constant fear that had accompanied him through his years of service. “My fear when I was in the mountains was that I might die there. If a comrade of yours dies, they will just bury you knee-deep and leave you in the forest. That’s my fear if I died, (no one would know where I was). If you have an encounter here, and a comrade of yours dies, you would carry him and upon getting (to safety), you will bury him. So, I would be afraid that I would die. But if you heard the sound of a gunshot your fears would vanish.” With a gun in his hand and in the fury of battle, Marcus described feeling invincible in those moments. “All the more if you can smell gunpowder. All the more if you can fire your gun. You are immortal.”

Marcus continued his work as a medic. He was also promoted to team leader, and given new responsibilities as an assassin for targeted government troops. Eventually, however, Marcus received word that his father was in hospital. He was given permission go and stay with his father. A female friend and former NPA member had been supporting Marcus, and when he needed medicine for his father, she offered to drive him to the city for it. However, she took him to a mall and introduced him to a female AFP soldier. “I was shocked. I was really surprised at that because I did not expect that I would come face to face with a soldier. Because I had no plans to surrender. So that was it. Two soldiers sat beside me. I thought whether I could flee, but I had no money. I could not go home.” He was angry at his friend, but she continued to text him, reassuring him that he would not be harmed.

Marcus was taken to be interviewed. “We talked. We understood each other. I understood after that, and I thought ‘there are still soldiers who are kind.’ I had thought all soldiers were cruel. So, my fear vanished. Then my anger also vanished. Then (my friend) and I also became close again.”

“When I surrendered, that’s when I realised all the things that I had done.” After Marcus’ guardian had translated, she also commented on Marcus’ experiences since he had come to live with her. “He really realised everything, the wrongdoing he has done, the sacrifices he went through, the hard life; it’s been a big realisation for him.”

Marcus expressed his gratitude for having come to her house and finding people who cared about him, and getting to attend church and participate in religious community life. “I am thankful that I met (his guardian), and here I discovered God. When I got here outside (of the conflict), when I would lie down I would think about the differences between the movement and here outside. I would think that life here is great because here is where you find the real democracy. Here, whatever you want to do, no one will tell you not to do that. There (in the mountains) you cannot just do anything that you want to do if you don’t go through your commander. You even have to ask permission to go to the CR (“comfort room,” the toilet).”

When I spoke to Marcus, he was considering going back to school. He had been working in the garden at his new home, to the delight of his guardian. He enjoyed looking after plants and wanted to go into farming and agriculture; his guardian teased that she was finding him a wife. Marcus reflected on his experiences and how glad he was to be out of NPA life.

“Those people that I have killed, I hope they can forgive me and God will forgive me too. I also don’t want those things that I have experienced to walk at night with no flashlight.” The long, arduous treks were something Marcus had emphasised as a struggle of rebel life. As a medic, Marcus also had to endure seeing the effects of violence very close-up. “Those hardships in life that I encountered, like holding your comrade and his life ending in your hands. During an encounter, he got hit. I held him in my arms, I just let him lie here, like that. I just held him and told him, ‘I will not leave you.’ Then, after a few minutes, his breathing stopped. So that’s why - those kind of sacrifices, I don’t want to bring that back in my life.”

4.3 Jun's story

Being remembered as a martyr –
because you're a martyr during the revolution –
there is that honour.
But the question is, will we end there?
Those that became martyrs during the movement,
didn't they have their own dreams?
Of course they did.
You arrive at that point because you have dreams.
Your dream was to change yourself and change the system.
The question is, until when?
Until when will we dream of that?
Until we are gone?

-Jun (translated and spacing added).

Even with visible scars, Jun was handsome and athletic, the picture of glowing health now that he was out of the jungle. His social worker had done a thorough job asking if he would mind doing an interview with me, stressing that he did not have to by any means. He had shared his story on other occasions, and wanted to make his experiences known. He sat facing away at a 90-degree angle to Adrian and me, his eyes averted to the wall, his face neutral but hard, appearing wary and alert. I was slightly concerned that he was uncomfortable with the interview, but Jun had chosen to be here, and we continued through the informed consent process. I first asked him to describe his life where he had grown up, and my apprehensions began to lift as he spoke at length, thoughtfully but not hesitantly, and gave the impression that he was in control of himself and what he wanted to say.

I met Jun early in my fieldwork and I was not used to working with a translator, and Adrian, the social worker who was accompanying me, was not used to being one, but we managed to communicate. Slowly Jun's body language relaxed and became more open and towards us, and he began to make eye contact with Adrian, although I only received the occasional glance. He had been a soldier from the age of thirteen to 33, when he surrendered a few months prior to my meeting him, making him almost exactly my age. I watched and listened as he spoke, trying to picture him as the thirteen-year-old he once was when he began rebel life.

Jun described how he was never really able to have a childhood. For some time, he had a happy but poor life in the remote rural village with his agricultural family. He would work hard on the farm as well as going to school. He remembered how his parents cared for him and that the children would have enough to eat, even snacks during the day as well as their meals. Things changed drastically, though, when Jun's mother died when he was seven, and his father less than three years later. "In my youth, I did not really experience childhood life because first my mother died, then my father also died." Jun and his siblings were left to support each other, and Jun found himself in the role of breadwinner from an early age. He and his siblings suddenly found themselves in dire poverty with little hope for a better life, and the demands meant that Jun did not continue his schooling past grade one. When he was thirteen, recruiters came through the area, and he joined the NPA.

Jun had had an ambition to finish school, and the offer of free school and training towards any chosen career was too good to pass up – there was no such opportunity in the rural area otherwise, and Jun was not in school at all. They offered "free school and whatever course you want. That propaganda, I was really convinced, because I really wanted to finish school." The lessons, though, were solely based on the NPA's specific communist ideology and would not be any use outside of the forest. Eventually he realised that he would not gain any qualification this way, and in particular, that the anti-government teachings would not help him to get a legitimate job.

The NPA promised him an education that would lead him to a career in the city. He would be able to provide for his siblings, and make something of himself. The reality was far removed from the promises, though. Food was scarce, and during combat there was no chance to prepare what little food there was. "Sometimes breakfast would become dinner, dinner would become lunch. It wasn't regular; really, the situation was *dili mayo* [not good]." Arduous treks without regular meals were part of the way of life. "On our monthly walks, sometimes we wouldn't have enough sleep, not enough food, because we were on the run. If there was any food to be eaten, we couldn't cook it."

Jun described that as a soldier, the trees were like his parents, and his comrades became his siblings as they travelled and lived together. Jun reflected that he was in combat in the forest for "(so) many years that I had forgotten the responsibilities of being me. What my

responsibilities were to myself and to my family. The one thing that I considered to be my parents...was the forest. It's what I recognized as my parents and what raised me.”

“I really was not able to enjoy childhood life because it was so early that I was pushed into (combat). I carried a big responsibility as a guerrilla even then. I really didn't feel (like a child) because at thirteen years old I had already joined and was in the mountains. Thirteen years old until 33.”

There were two things that Jun identified as characterising his long period of service in the NPA. The first was the discipline. He described how, as a soldier, the demands were not only to obey the group's orders but to discipline himself – he described the ongoing self-discipline as central to his experience. “Those experiences - not enough sleep, not enough food, long walks, even if you are asleep, you wake up, and you will walk just to defend, and to avoid (the government troops) – they gave me strength. Those experiences gave me resolve. It gave me strength and I learned to be careful and alert, so that I can also see what is going on around me. So those experiences really gave me fortitude and discipline.”

The second characteristic of life in the rebel militia that Jun identified was the constant danger, being used to seeing death, losing comrades, and fearing for one's own life. “It is normal to experience risking life, risking death in the crossfire of an encounter between the military troops and the revolutionaries. Both sides have to defend something, that's just the standard operating procedure. Whether it would happen now or later, it's expected to happen, you expected eventually there would come a time when you would lose, and death would come.” Jun had watched several of his friends die during encounters. He lamented that even though there was honour in dying for a cause, all of their dreams and hopes for the future would never be realised.

Jun described that most of the other former soldiers had a similar background. Rural, poor, and most had not only never reached high school, but had only been in school to grade one or two. He attributed this as a cause of vulnerability to propaganda as well as age. “In the documents of the former rebels, they really lack education. Nearly all of the surrenderees, their profiles say, Grade One, Grade Two. We rarely see a high school level. If anyone did reach high school, they did not finish.”

It was Jun's ambition for an education and a career that finally made him realise that staying in the rebel movement would not help him in his life. However, he had not been aware of the level of support he would receive, and he was grateful for the opportunities offered. "When I surrendered, we did not expect that this (organisation) existed."

Jun came across as thoughtful and intelligent, and he had proven his abilities by completing high school. Not only had he quickly graduated, but he also won a nation-wide writing competition. The title quote came from some of Jun's reflections on being a rebel soldier. His poetic prose was deeply moving, and conveyed a deep sense of meaning within his experiences and perspective.

Jun reflected on his life as he moved forward. "For me it's *sayon* [easy]. First, before we make decisions or act, we should first consider what the benefits will be. We are not perfect, we have wronged people. But what is important is that the mistakes can really teach us lessons. For me, what happened to me, gave me a big challenge. How will I support myself, and fulfil my dreams. The dream I had to continue my education never faded, never faded even up until the time I surrendered. It was always on my mind that while there is life, there is also hope. Poverty is not a hindrance to my dream. It's not a hindrance that I am an orphan. My having been a rebel is not a hindrance. All of these things, poverty, being an orphan, being an older (student), these became my bridge to become stronger than I am. So, for others, I can only suggest that we should not make poverty, seniority, or other things a basis, because if you could see past them, there are many possibilities to reach your dreams."

Adrian thanked Jun and shook his hand as we got up to go. Adrian later confided how much Jun's words had touched his heart; I was also rather in awe at the depth of Jun's reflection and the strength of character in his narrative. I reached out to shake Jun's hand as well, looking him in the eyes. "*Daghang salamat, Kuya*⁴⁴" [Thank you very much, (older) brother], and he finally returned my gaze, as well as my smile, which warmed my heart although I left feeling somewhat shaken.

⁴⁴ *Kuya* is an honorific title meaning older brother. Its use is not restricted to natal siblings, and denotes respect.

4.4 Soldiers, rural poverty and structural violence

Rural areas of the Philippines have the lowest levels of infrastructure, health services, and commercial activities. They also have the worst rates of poverty, malnutrition, education attainment, and infant mortality (Delgado & Canters, 2011, p. 168; Domingo, 2013; Fukuta, Sudo, & Kato, 2008; Symaco, 2013, p. 365). Crime statistics are often unknown, not because there are not cases of, say, domestic violence or theft, but because remote or indigenous areas often operate under customary law which does not have higher outside or government accountability (Protacio de Castro, 2001, p. 128). The lack of infrastructure has multiple effects, where inadequate roads and transport options limit access to social services as well as commercial opportunities such as markets; the lack of educational opportunities further reinforces cycles of poverty (Delgado & Canters, 2011; Symaco, 2013). Displacement due to conflict and natural disasters, ongoing in Mindanao, is extended and the negative consequences multiplied when there is no resolution, or infrastructure to rebuild and recover. The risks of violence and victimisation are also “amplified...due to poverty and limited access to health care services” (Le, Holton, Romero, & Fisher, 2016). Unequal access to essential services has been identified as a form of structural violence (Farmer, 2004; Simmons, 2010, p. 11). In the Philippines, the effects of rural poverty are compounded through the lack of social services (for example, see Figure 11 below). The combination of suspicious government military forces known to harass rural civilians including apolitical church organisations, and the neglect in providing basic services or economic development, mean that rural Filipinos have frequently experienced the normal operations of the state as violent, unjust, and oppressive (Auyero & Sobering, 2017, p. 5; Holden, 2009).

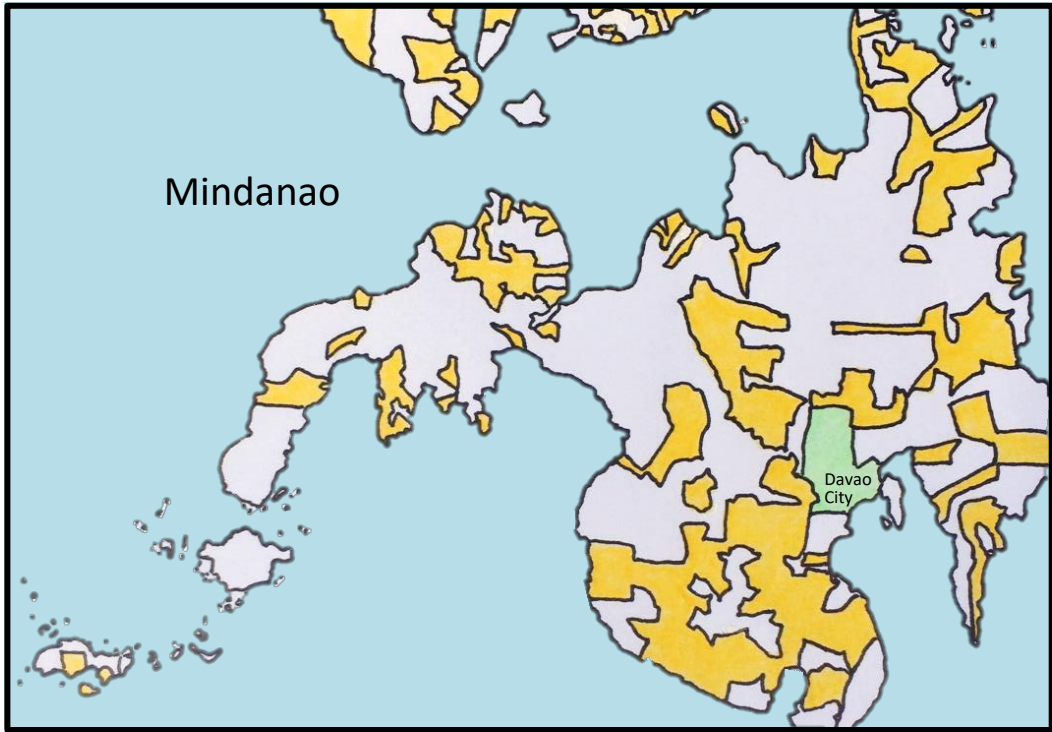


Figure 11: Rural health services in Mindanao's rural municipalities (DOH, 2018). Areas in yellow have some form of birthing facilities and emergency transport; grey areas do not. Map is indicative only.

The forms of structural violence that disproportionately affect the rural areas of the Philippines include poverty and lack of services (see Figure 11, for example), inequality, punitive and neglectful treatment from the government, lack of land access, and an unchallenged economic structure based on feudal-style dependent relationships (Domingo, 2013). Each of these situations demonstrates inequality between urban and rural areas, and structural, pervasive challenges to survival for rural people. Recruiting underage soldiers draws on the lack of services, particularly lack of education, as well as poverty in offering young people a chance to pursue a better life (as is claimed) as well as to oppose the government's role in the inequality and difficult conditions inherent to rural life. Recruiting can be coercive in deceiving young people into service, and often involves false propaganda as well as ideology, and is considered human trafficking because of this coercion and minor status. Coercion in this way is an indirect violence in drawing young people into difficult conditions including direct violence and mortal risk. However, despite deceit and coercion, young people also play an active role that in navigating the options available to them and making choices within and from local realities and systems of

meaning. The complex choices whereby young people enlist in rebel forces are points where structural violence erupts into the potential for physical violence.

In accounts from underage soldiers in the Philippines, researchers have found that combinations of structural and personal factors influenced their participation in conflict. Reasons for enlisting have often included leaving difficult circumstances including poverty and family separation (Keairns, 2003a; Makinano, 2001; Ordoña de Ocampo, 2006, pp. 60–62; Protacio de Castro, 2001). Marcus’s and Jun’s stories confirmed these aspects of other former underage soldiers’ reports. Jun joined the rebel forces for personal rather than ideological reasons which were closely related to the lack of opportunities and severe poverty that he experienced in his rural home. Marcus went from underage labour into underage soldiering; although the work he did was paid and he was free to leave, agricultural labour is physically demanding and among the lowest paid sector of work in the Philippines. When his mother died, the family went from just surviving to absolute desperation. Jun similarly lost his parents and along with his siblings was suddenly in dire poverty. The context of these men’s lives, like others in rural Mindanao, was poverty, lack of opportunity, and exploitative and underpaid work options. These structural conditions were exacerbated by Marcus and Jun’s status as minors amid disrupted family support networks.

Researchers have consistently found that trauma is a common outcome of military service, and particularly so for minors, but there are many variations which have included positive experiences and outcomes (Protacio de Castro, 2001; Song, Tol, & de Jong, 2014). Most accounts of underage soldiers have come from Africa, where children have at times been kidnapped, raped, forced to watch or commit violence, and forced into labour, “marriage,” or armed service among the rebel forces (Brownell & Praetorius, 2017; Haer, 2017; Keairns, 2003b). Accounts from the Philippines have been used to illustrate the incidence of underage soldiers, but most experiences do not align to the severe cases elsewhere. In combat, the most severe war atrocities, such as murder of civilians or rape, are not common

(Keairns, 2003a; Makinano, 2001; Protacio de Castro, 2001).⁴⁵ The NPA has been reported to operate from strong principles which include respect for women and mutual consent, and duty to the group from an egalitarian basis (Keairns, 2003a). They have also been known to offer practical support to rural villages particularly in times of difficulty, besides working to spread their particular communist ideology (Emmons, 2002, p. 51; Keairns, 2003a, p. 9; Stanford University, 2015). Former Filipino underage soldiers, in fact, have reported that although they left the movement because of the violence, they otherwise found the experience empowering and gained valuable life skills (Keairns, 2003a, p. 13). Young women in the Philippines reported that they received greater respect and equality within the rebel military than in wider society, and some reported joining to escape being forced by their family to marry or work as a domestic helper (Emmons, 2002, p. 71; Keairns, 2003a, pp. 7, 14; Ordoña de Ocampo, 2006, p. 69).⁴⁶ Marcus and Jun both sought opportunities and social support that were otherwise not available to them. Researchers working with former underage soldiers in the Philippines have found that the young people often exhibited a great deal of agency, strategy, and ideological commitment, as opposed to the forced service prevalent in other locations (Keairns, 2003a; Özerdem et al., 2010).

Both men's stories demonstrate both coercion and agency. Marcus' brother enlisted him without his consent, but Marcus wanted to be near his brother and remained rather than trying to leave. He embraced the soldier identity, but maintained a critical view of the practices and experiences in his first period in the rebel army. When he later considered leaving, however, his comrades pushed him to stay and distorted the truth to prevent him from going. His young age was undoubtedly a factor; he had to respect and obey his older brother, and he did not have the wider knowledge that might have allowed him to question the reports his comrades gave him. Jun also chose from a limited number of options, and although the recruiters lied to him, the promise of potential education was compared to remaining in the village where he knew with certainty that he would not get an education and was already not in school. Keairns (2003a) reported similar stories from other Filipino

⁴⁵ The recent exception, where civilians were targeted in 2014, was by the recently formed Abu-Sayyaf group, an extremist Islamic breakaway group from the other Muslim separatists. NPA violence has included political targets, particularly in its early days, and there was an attack on civilians in 1989, but virtually all contemporary violence has been directed towards the military (Cruz, 2010).

⁴⁶ The NPA include female and male soldiers, but for this project I was only able to meet male former underage soldiers.

former underage soldiers; although they, like Marcus and Jun, eventually left the rebel group, the coercive pressure including stories about potential violence were significant factors in remaining longer than they would have liked.

It is significant that the false propaganda that was used to control recruits was often based on conditions that may have been true at one time. The Marcos era Martial Law years saw multiple human rights abuses including extrajudicial killings, imprisonment, and torture, the kind of treatment that NPA members expected to receive if they did encounter government troops. At that time, properties and businesses were seized arbitrarily and dispersed among political cronies. There is a clear link between these conditions and the rise of opposition based on alternate political and financial configurations. From the perspective of rural Mindanao, little has changed in terms of the distribution of infrastructure, opportunity, and poverty levels. Indeed, economists have observed that even in periods of economic growth, wealth remained concentrated in a small segment of the population without proportionate increases in jobs; in fact, the number of domestic jobs in relation to the population has often decreased year to year (Agbola & Acupan, 2010, p. 389). In rural areas, particularly those furthest from major centres, economic growth has been virtually non-existent for decades.

The NPA frequently provided basic social services, replacing the government in this role for remote rural villages. The government left a void to be filled. The NPA also dealt with some of the conflict and damage from other warring groups; this validated their role, perpetuated their existence, and built support and sympathy from the public. Studies have shown that non-state militant groups, although often presented as a national security threat, actually pose the biggest threat to local civilian populations (Englehart, 2016; Paredes, 2015). That the NPA took an immediate, active role in ameliorating the effects of conflict reinforced belief in the idea that the government oppressed, exploited, and neglected the rural farmers. However, their proximity as well as active recruitment continued to expose rural populations to violence. The positive role that the NPA often took in society also demonstrates how different rebel groups can operate in quite different ways, and thus the rationales for underage soldiers enlisting or being sent to the front can also vary quite dramatically.

The young men's embracing of the communist ideology and voluntary participation suggests agency in adapting their personal identities in becoming soldiers. It is significant that Jun articulated, not an outright rejection of the teachings and worldview he was taught by the rebels, but a process of making sense, reintegrating, and reinterpreting the world around him. This implies agency not only in reintegrating to civilian life but in the adopting of communist ideology; he took ownership of the beliefs he came to hold, and gave weight to his own experiences and choices from the time he was young. Researchers in the Middle East found that when former underage soldiers' experiences of violence occurred in the context of a genuine belief in the rightness of their liberation struggle, there were fewer ongoing negative impacts from trauma (Wessells, 2006, p. 139). For Marcus and Jun, selectively adapting their mindsets was a way to endure and make sense of the experiences. However, both men maintained a critical stance on some of their experiences, and Jun continually retained his goal of education beyond the NPA. At the same time, Jun identified his age and lack of education as contributing to his vulnerability to propaganda; Marcus, too, mentioned his youth as significant in the effects of the violence he experienced – "I was only fifteen." However, Marcus related his regrets specifically to the violence and hardship he experienced; he did not cast himself as a victim, despite the coercion he had experienced.

Both men emphasised the work of developing new mindsets after years of indoctrination. Jun particularly demonstrated significant agency and autonomy in retaining many of the values that inspired him to fight as a rebel soldier, specifically, believing that change was needed for rural people living in poverty, while undergoing a dramatic shift in adapting to civilian life. The ideas of endurance, sacrifice, and suffering as creating strength for the future were among those that the men described as central to the transition they were undergoing. Both Jun and Marcus had to work through the new knowledge that much of what they had been told about life outside the movement was untrue. Marcus too gained a new perspective on his time in the forest, and in particular noted how much freedom he experienced in a home environment that was not regimented like military camp.

Both men acknowledged having made mistakes, hurt, and wronged people, and Marcus directly articulated his hope for forgiveness. They experienced a contradiction between

believing in the movement and the actual violence and killing. Jun alluded to the impersonal nature of violence between the sides – “standard operating procedure” – and also recognised that in ordinary life, it was not normal to be surrounded by danger and death. Jun came across to me as, not uncaring, but perhaps numb toward the violence he had seen; this is not surprising after twenty years exposed to these conditions. He had also shared his story several times with GO/NGO workers, and was more reflective than focused on details. Research with female underage rebel soldiers in the Philippines has shown that violence was one of the main reasons many had left the movements (Keairns, 2003a; Ordoña de Ocampo, 2006). Marcus, as a medic, viewed physical suffering up close but also had a responsibility for the consequences of violence his comrades endured – his young age, as well as limited medical resources, contributed to this being a significant emotional weight. Another underage soldier had been cited reflecting on the violence, “I think my comrades felt bad when they killed a soldier in an encounter. No matter how you looked at it, they were all Filipinos” (‘Brian,’ 16 year old former NPA soldier, as cited in Protacio de Castro, 2001, p. 132). Violence against others, for this soldier as well as for Marcus and Jun, was also experienced as some level of violence against themselves.

Reintegration includes working through the trauma of violence, and particularly for long-serving soldiers such as Jun, creating new plans for the future. Social workers in this area stressed the importance of effective livelihood support including training and grants as part of the transition out of militia and into a new life, as other researchers have noted (Özerdem & Podder, 2011, p. 8). They expressed feeling discouraged over the cases they had seen where the livelihood grants had been given to surrendered soldiers without other support. At times, the young people had subsequently returned to their rural homes where the money was spent supporting their families, and when it was gone there were still no opportunities, so they had re-joined the rebel forces. Wessells (2006, p. 140) pointed out that the sudden severing of the close relationships which developed through difficult times can itself be a source of trauma. For Marcus, both his relationships with his family and with his comrades have significantly shaped his life path; Jun’s transition out of the NPA meant severing virtually every relationship in his life. The significant work of forging new plans, relationships, identity, and worldview – particularly for soldiers who have grown to adults

through conflict - suggests that holistic support is needed beyond a focus on trauma, victimhood and age (Özerdem & Podder, 2011, p. 3).

The NPA's militant communist worldview offered Marcus and Jun a way to make sense of the conditions that they experienced. It was a framework that allowed acknowledging the violence and injustice of poverty, that did not assign blame to the individual poor rural agriculturalists, but that offered a language to describe the problem and limitations, and even to state concretely that they existed. They had a sense that farmers who toiled away for little reward were oppressed somehow. When the choices available were to stay in this poverty and hard labour, or to join a rebel group fighting against this oppression, the decision to enlist made sense in this context. "The absence of reasonable structural conditions...has resulted in widespread oppression and neglect that continues to fuel the armed struggle of CPP-NPA. The other factors...are all derived from the inability of the GRP⁴⁷ to extend effective governance around the country" (Domingo, 2013). Through this language that brought the violence of poverty and marginalisation into concrete expression, and the available opportunity to contest these conditions and to join in violent rebellion, structural violence was transformed into physical violence.

Conclusions

The Philippines has high rates of poverty in general, but the rural areas are significantly poorer than urban as well as often lacking even basic infrastructure. Both the poverty and the sense of injustice have contributed to the prevalence of underage soldiers who seek an alternative to the poverty in village life. Structural violence is compounding against a person's life directly, but violence is also compounding in how it incites violence in response. In this case, injustice and very real inequality have pushed people out of their villages as well as inspiring a response to take up arms in demanding change. Pushing back against this violence through rebel participation created more violence; it became a point where structural violence was transformed into physical, military violence.

The violence of armed conflict is implicated in human trafficking beyond the use of underage soldiers. The ARMM and other conflict zones are also notorious for

⁴⁷ Government of the Republic of the Philippines

“employment” recruiters who would offer young people a chance to find work in cities such as Iligan or Manila. This presented an opportunity to remit earnings back to their rural families, who would often be under added strain due to displacement or conflict. Local community workers told me how they had seen this happen where young people would never be heard from again. NGO workers visiting from Western Mindanao, as well as those around where I was in Eastern Mindanao, described what they had seen and heard, but lamented that there was no way to know how many people had been trafficked from rural areas, without infrastructure, telephones, legal systems, or often even birth certificates. Conflict as well as rural poverty are thus implicated in sex and labour trafficking.

Both conflict and poverty push people away from their homes. Enlisting as a rebel soldier entails rural to rural movement, while sex and labour trafficking are often associated with rural to urban movement in looking for better work opportunities. In the chapter that follows, I present the stories from women who have experienced sex trafficking as well as some who have worked voluntarily in the sex industry. The women who were trafficked into sex work moved from rural areas with similar circumstances as Jun and Marcus. I also draw on another story from a “voluntary” but underage sex worker, continuing the discussions of age, agency, consent and coercion in relation to human trafficking.

5: Sexual labour and sexual traffic: women in Mindanao seeking work

“They told me that I would be babysitting, but it wasn’t true.” – Crystal, trafficked for sexual labour.

Both domestic and international sex trafficking are significant problems for the Philippines. Although a small amount of high quality research has been conducted with Filipino women overseas who have experienced various forms and degrees of sex trafficking, little research has been done in the domestic context. Within the Philippines, issues related to sex trafficking include the forced, coerced, and voluntary sexual labour of minors, the role of shame and stigma in the experiences of sex trafficking or sexual labour, and the limited economic options for women in general. Many researchers who have worked with sexual labourers and trafficked sexual labourers have argued that both sex trafficking and voluntary commercial sex are shaped by multiple social factors but particularly women’s position in society (Chapman, 2017; Weitzer, 2009, p. 215). This chapter explores the relationship between women’s position and options within Mindanao and the experiences of human trafficking in the form of forced sexual labour.

To explore the conditions specific to the Philippines and Mindanao, I spent time “hanging out” with street-based sexual labourers, all female, in Mindanao as well as speaking to women who had formerly been trafficked for sexual labour. In this chapter I discuss the conditions that women face in Mindanao, and particularly the position of sexual labour, informed by my experiences and insights from local experts as well as wider research. I argue that structural conditions beyond the initial trafficking event created and maintained the conditions for exploitation. For my participants, I also argue that the most successful transitions out of initially trafficked sexual labour were made by the women who were not rescued, but given long-term relational support which enabled them to make their own decisions for the future.

5.1 Sexual labour and sex traffic in Mindanao

The focus on gender in this section is not intended to eclipse the experiences of men and boys who have been sex trafficked, but to set the context for my participants' experiences as young women, and to explore the fact that the majority of those trafficked for sexual labour are female, including in Mindanao and the Philippines. As of 2016, 95% of convicted trafficking cases were for sex trafficking, and of convicted cases of both sex and labour trafficking overall, 93% of all victims were female, strongly implicating the role of gender (Visayan Forum, 2016).⁴⁸ Further, the discussion of human trafficking in the context of the wider sex industry does not mean to conflate forced and voluntary sexual labour, but to highlight the issues that women face generally in Mindanao, and specifically within the sex industry, whether they have initially entered through trafficking or not. The domestic market for sexual labour, for example, draws on a history of military colonialism where American bases were serviced by local women who made their living providing sexual services, which has since carried on similarly in catering for sex tourism (Chapman, 2017, p. 227; Samarasinghe, 2008). The local context that women inhabit and negotiate is shaped by specific cultural and historic conditions which create unique options and limitations.

Much of the Western literature on sexual labour and sex trafficking focuses on the distinctions between voluntary or forced sexual labour, and the role of agency (Turner, 2012, p. 41; Walker, 2017, p. 61; Weitzer, 2009, 2014a). However, scholars working in other contexts have argued that this is a false dichotomy based on Western notions of the individual, which overlooks perspectives from the developing world, and the complex and multiple paths to sexual labour which are not reducible to questions of personal choice alone (Schwarz, Kennedy, & Britton, 2017; Tadiar, 1998; Turner, 2012; Weitzer, 2009). Indeed, in the Philippines, women who entered the sex industry through trafficking are often difficult to distinguish from their "voluntary" co-workers (Bagley, Madrid, & Simkhada, 2017; Samarasinghe, 2008, p. 162; Urada et al., 2016). In many locations worldwide, gendered structural violence including poverty, prescribed and limited social roles, inaccessibility of services, racial or other social marginalisation, and violence, have

⁴⁸ 95% sex trafficking and 7% labour trafficking, indicating that some cases spanned both; also, note that some cases had multiple victims/perpetrators. 54% of all victims were minors (Visayan Forum, 2016).

contributed to situations where commercial sex is among the few feasible options available (Beckerleg & Hundt, 2005, p. 187; Chapman, 2017, pp. 225, 236; Khan et al., 2017). Further to this, sexual labourers have also been identified as bearing additional forms of structural violence in exclusion through stigma, marginalisation, and lack of legal protection (Basnyat, 2017; Khan et al., 2017; Walker, 2017). There are multiple personal and “structural conditions shaping the uneven distribution of agency, subordination, and job satisfaction” as well as employment options for women in the Philippines (Weitzer, 2009, p. 215).

Women’s access to employment in the Philippines in general is unequal to men’s, and although women have statistically higher levels of education, this does not equate to higher wages or more job options (Yap & Melchor, 2015, p. 276). For women in the Philippines without a high school or tertiary education, job options are limited. The jobs that are available tend to be informal, either self-employed or working in a family enterprise, or the lowest paid, lowest status, most unregulated sectors. Agricultural work is one example in rural areas where women are paid significantly less than men for the same work, in a sector which is already notoriously underpaid (PSA, 2016b). Women also comprise the majority of the “pool” of cheap, flexible, and disposable labour, and women have been found to bear the most negative impacts of economic fluctuations (Lim, 2000; Samarasinghe, 2008, p. 162). Even sectors which are dominated by women such as domestic work find women underpaid compared with men (ILO, 2011).

The position of domestic workers in the Philippines is significant to understanding the alternatives young, uneducated women have for employment. Sex, care, and domestic labour are aspects of what Borris and Parreñas (2010) have termed “intimate labour” which emphasises the demands of physical, emotional, relational, and material labour in attending to others. In the Philippines, as in many other locations, this realm is frequently socially invisible, undervalued, underpaid, and configured by gender where women make up the majority of intimate labourers both domestically and as migrants (PSA, 2016b). As of 2011, at least 1.9 million Filipino households employed domestic staff over the age of fifteen, mainly women (BLES, 2011). The invisibility of domestic workers, particularly residential ones, supports the recognised prevalence of exploitative or abusive conditions:

non- or under-payment, lack of recognition as employees, long hours, controlling conditions such as prohibiting time off for social/cultural/religious participation, sexual/physical/emotional abuse, non-payment or termination if pregnant or sick (Pacis, 2009). Statistics from 2011 list only 9.2 % of domestic workers as fifteen to seventeen, but this does not count underage, unreported, unpaid, or “adoption” situations which are common (ILO, 2011); as of 2001, the Visayan Forum’s researchers reported that 60% of domestic workers were under 18 (Pacis, 2009). General minimum wages vary by location and sector, but ranged from ₱250-380 (\$7.20-11.00 NZD) per day in 2016 (PSA, 2017b). Domestic workers, by comparison, had a monthly minimum legal wage of ₱1800-3500 (\$52-101 NZD), or ₱69-134 (\$1.50-3.86 NZD) per day, despite also working longer than usual hours (BLES, 2011; PSA, 2017b).⁴⁹

In the Philippines, commercial sex is illegal but tolerated; government health facilities, for example, require registration of street and club-based workers and provide medical services (Bagley et al., 2017; Urada et al., 2014). In Davao, the police intentionally turn a blind eye to the position of regular (i.e., not underage) street-based sexual labourers, and the women I knew were not afraid of them and in fact suggested that their occasional drive-bys were more likely for their safety than their illegal activity. In other parts of the Philippines, however, corruption among police, governmental and judicial authorities has been cited as allowing commercial sex and sex trafficking to continue with official cooperation. For example, brothel owners have been required to supply bribes to the police in exchange for allowing their continued operation or withdrawing prosecution (West, 2014, pp. 91–92; Yea, 2010). In Davao, there are a number of sympathetic NGOs across the political and religious spectrums whose aims are to support sexual labourers and provide access to services, social support, and alternate economic opportunities where desired. One program, for example, offers sexual labourers’ children an alternate education site which gives them better education support and removes them from the public system where their mothers’

⁴⁹ Lower wages do in part reflect the expectation of included room and board. For domestic employees in 2011, the average weekly working hours were 52 for “private home workers” but 66 for live in domestic workers (BLES, 2011). The average working day was 10.3 hours, and almost 80% (78.1) worked 9 hours or more (9.8% 13-16 hours/day; 68.3% 9-12 hours/day) (BLES, 2011). Almost a third of live in female domestic workers (32%) normally work at least 11 hours/day (ILO, 2011).

work can often leave them stigmatised socially, heavily impacting their attainment at school.

Within the Philippines, sexual labour is socially stigmatised and marginalised (Urada & Simmons, 2014, p. 41). There remains a significant sense of moral judgement, not only around sexual labour, but extramarital sex in general. Thrupkaew (2009) cited a young Filipina street-based sexual labourer who explained beginning this work at age fifteen because “my boyfriend took my virginity, and then left me. So what else was I good for after that?” My friends at one NGO were supporting several formerly trafficked women who had been forced into the sex industry in Malaysia, who refused to go to the government authorities or even tell their families what had happened due to the shame and stigma. The sense of shame that women had internalised contributed to feeling that they were not able to continue in “respectable” society, relationships and employment. Single mothers, similarly, experience both social stigma and time constraints which affect their job prospects. Even women trafficked into the sex industry in some of the worst cases have returned to the Philippines feeling that they were stigmatised for their involvement. Erpelo (1998, p. 127) observed that the women in her research who had experienced international sex trafficking still rationalized and explained their experiences in terms of a strongly conservative, patriarchal view of women’s sexuality and virtue, and after the sex trafficking situation, most of the women interviewed “ended up either alone or in abusive relationships, just glad at the fact that somebody still deemed them fit.” Women in different forms of sexual labour in the Philippines have also expressed disdain for other “worse” forms and the women who performed them (Mathews, 2017). After exiting sexual labour/trafficking, those who had settled in the Philippines have at times experienced difficulties in reintegration (Jose & Erpelo, 1998; Parreñas, 2011; Tsai, 2017a). The lack of opportunities that pushed them to move was exacerbated by the stigma of having done sexual labour, even when forced.

Sexual labour in the Philippines, as in other locations, entails particular risks. However, this varies according to different types and locations of sexual labour. Club positions, for example, mean that women are in a closed environment where it is difficult to leave if necessary, and the arrangement of drinking with customers opens the possibility of drinks

being spiked by clients or managers. Commercial sex while either the client or the worker is intoxicated has also been associated with unsafe sex practices and higher rates of STIs (Chiao, Morisky, Rosenberg, Ksobiech, & Malow, 2006; Urada et al., 2016; Urada, Morisky, Pimentel-Simbulan, Silverman, & Strathdee, 2012). Street-based sexual labour has been often identified as one of the most dangerous jobs (Price, 2012, p. 79; Weitzer, 2009). Clubs may offer some level of protection with other employees around, but if a worker leaves in a client's private vehicle, they are outside of this structure. The street-based women I met recounted that they had had near escapes, and they were alert to signs that the situation might be dangerous. They would text each other to maintain contact when they went with a client, and were conscious of signs that a situation might be dangerous, such as if the client started driving out of town or away from where they had said they were going. I was alarmed, though, when the NGO workers I was with made inquiries about a woman who had not been out recently. "I think she might have gone overseas with her boyfriend?" was the best guess anyone could offer; in a marginalised position, the women were often invisible within wider social networks.

The danger of physical violence compounds the emotional and relational consequences of working in a socially marginal and stigmatised profession. Gill (2017) cited the case of a woman who had been part of a livelihood-based rehabilitation program after sex trafficking in the Philippines but dropped out and returned to sexual labour following a particular incident. After taking an illegal drug to terminate an unplanned pregnancy, she needed medical care but was "retraumatized by reproachful, verbally abusive staff who refused her treatment" (Gill, 2017, p. 2). Particularly for young women in the Philippines who have not completed high school, entry into the sex industry usually also displaces education, which also disrupts their future employment options and continues the cycle of the feminisation of poverty. Participants including NGO workers and present and former sex workers confirmed that in the Philippines, there is a large demand for girls under age fifteen for sexual labour (see Figure 12 for the club whose name emphasises the youth of its performers), and minors often face heightened risks of violence and social consequences.

Several of the current and former sexual labourers I met had entered the work as minors. Similar to coerced or forced sexual labourers, those who began as minors have higher risks

for HIV and unsafe sexual practices – both linked to less power to “negotiate safe sex” (Khan et al., 2017, p. 2; Urada et al., 2012, 2014). Like soldiers, underage sexual labourers are categorised as trafficked for sexual exploitation as they are not considered legally able to consent to voluntary participation, even where they have entered the trade voluntarily. This designation has led to situations where minors were involuntarily taken into care as “trafficking victims” (Horning, 2013; Perkins & Ruiz, 2017), as was Joramae, whose story is below. Ideas about victimhood and agency have been central to discussions of sex trafficking, entwined with notions of gender as well as age.

In the Philippines, sexual abuse, sex trafficking of minors and CSEC (commercial sexual exploitation of children) including online CSEC are all recognised as significant problems. Legally, any commercial sexual activity involving minors can be defined as sex trafficking based on age alone, even in cases of teenagers in voluntary sexual labour. A case in UK international news in 2016 reported how Filipino children heard from their friends how other families were making money via webcams, and suggested this to their family (Holmes, 2016). The parents were not educated, and the thirteen-year-old communicated with English speaking customers. The parents were prosecuted, but the children did not understand how providing a better income for their family had resulted in their parents going to jail. Social workers noted that these children were not traumatised in the same way as other abused children in the shelter (Holmes, 2016). Several social workers I knew described a recent case in Mindanao where a mother and aunt had been sexually exploiting their children in front of a webcam. The social workers described how heart-breaking the scene in court had been when the mothers and children had been crying upon seeing each other, wishing to be together. This, unfortunately perhaps, made it one of the easier cases to prosecute as it did not depend on the parents’ consent to build a legal case.

Legal and social workers described to me how one of the reasons it has been difficult to prosecute human trafficking including CSEC, as well as other forms of child abuse, was that cases are often settled out of court, or dropped entirely, due to social pressure which may include harassment, or financial settlements (Velayo, 2005, pp. 199–200). Court processes do not guarantee a conviction, and demand overcoming any sense of shame and difficulty in confronting individuals in positions of power (Velayo, 2005, p. 197). If the

case was against a more socially or economically powerful person, a financial settlement would often be offered that was an incentive not to prosecute. “Why would we bring charges against them? They are helping us” was what social workers reported were the families’ attitudes in these situations. Going through the courts, in contrast, is expensive in terms of travel and lost income, time consuming and slow, and does not guarantee an outcome, or any material benefit. However, in these cases perpetrators are not being brought to account and are free to continue abusing. I heard about another alleged case of child abuse where the accused had found out the identity of the person bringing charges; subsequently, intimidation and harassment resulted in the case being dropped. Lengthy trials, corruption, and social pressure have meant that all forms of human trafficking have had negligible rates of conviction compared to the numbers of cases (Visayan Forum, 2016; West, 2014).

Ethnographic work has revealed complex relationships between migration, gender, sexual labour, and human trafficking for sexual exploitation. The majority of research on sex trafficking in the Philippines has been conducted with Filipina migrants. Parreñas’ (2009, 2010a, 2011) work with hostesses in Japan and Hilsdon’s (2006, 2007) work with club workers in Malaysia reveal intimate details of daily life and labour, which include a spectrum of sexual, relational, and emotional labour. Parreñas argued that, although the women working in these clubs had often been deceived and financially trapped into sexual labour, they were not primarily controlled by their employers, but by the migration agents and contracts linked to their visas; this arrangement as well as the ways that the women attempted to use the situations to their advantage made it difficult to classify them as “trafficked.” Parreñas (2009, p. 210) also identified the multiple perspectives of Filipina entertainers in Japan who engaged in various forms of sexual labour such as dancing and flirtation, but the practice of actual paid sex varied according to the women and their employment, as Hilsdon (2006, 2007) found with Filipinas in Malaysian clubs. Hilsdon (2007, pp. 180, 188) considered the representation of club women (“single, sexual and available”) as a form of symbolic violence, and noted the frequency of rape and assault in and out of the club, but also highlighted the multiple and intentional ways that women resisted and renegotiated the demands on their bodies, lives and identities. Hilsdon found that women individually decided and enforced the limits of the sexual labour that they were

willing to perform. Although her participants would most likely have been labelled by the Philippine government as “trafficked,” she found that the multiple constraints migrant sexual labours experienced were not primarily from their employers, but often from social factors such as migration status.

Domestic sex trafficking has received little scholarly attention. West (2014, pp. 76–80) gave accounts from several young women who had been trafficked into clubs and brothels. Most had left impoverished rural communities to take a job offer to support their family, but instead were forced into sexual labour, similar to recruiting tactics Wiss (2012) found in rural areas (West, 2014). West (2014) also interviewed young women in the Philippines whose parents had attempted to “sell” the girls directly to a brothel, and various NGO workers I met described a common situation where impoverished parents or relatives sent young women (usually around age thirteen to sixteen) out on the street to sell sex. They found this a particularly difficult situation, as when social workers would offer the underage girls support and lodging so that they could return to school, the parents would come and pick them up and send them back to work. This further complicates the idea of consent; although the UN has pronounced that minors (and, presumably, their parents) cannot consent to being exploited as a basic violation of their human rights, it does raise the question of who ultimately decides about a young person’s life in some circumstances (Brett, 2002; Emmons, 2002).



Figure 12: “Baby Face Night Bar” gentleman’s club in Davao City.

Both trafficking of women and voluntary paid sexual labour are part of what has been termed “sexual economies” (Bernstein, 2014; Piscitelli, 2016), and represent the most overt manifestations of the way that sex is implicated in many economic and reciprocal exchanges such as tourism, politics, and marriage, in the Philippines and globally. In acknowledging the multiplicity of experiences and the changeable temporality of questions of consent, coercion, agency and exploitation, I have used the term “sexual labour” to expand an understanding of such work beyond sex acts alone to include work such as dancing and flirting that occur in Filipino clubs, and to link notions of sexual labour with other forms of gendered economic activity, such as domestic and service work, which often demand gendered or even sexualised labour (Boris, Gilmore, & Parreñas, 2010, p. 132). Chapman (2017, p. 235) and David (2015) both described the gendered, service-oriented economy that emerged around colonial settlements, such as American naval bases as supporting the ongoing sex industry under the same rationale. Chapman argued that “sex tourism and mail order bride industries...carry with them imperialist ways of seeing Filipina womensex tourism to former colonies has not occurred in a vacuum and is reflective of colonial history (Chapman, 2017, pp. 227–228). In this light, recent estimates that 2% or more of Filipina women aged 15-30 were involved in the sex industry can be considered as a neo-colonial legacy as well as commentary on the levels of poverty that drive women into this stigmatised and marginalised industry (Bagley et al., 2017).

However, Ekoluoma (2017, p. 247) points out through ethnographic research in a “Philippine sex tourism town” that locals and tourists build on a colonial past through complex, changing and often contested negotiations. The proportion of women in sexual labour as well as domestic and care work also reflects an essentialised view that equates women with domestic life, service, and “intimate labour,” rationalises, and perpetuates gender-based inequality.

The three women’s stories in this chapter demonstrate some of the local social configurations for women. Particular themes include the role of women in their families and the sense of duty this entails, and the opportunities and limitations for economic success that women face. Erica’s life demonstrates how gender-based abuse can take many forms, and how the moral stigma around female sexuality can affect women’s lives.

5.2 Erica’s Story

“We were really poor. My father was a fisherman. My mama was a church worker. We didn’t have any money - and my father would drink. Then my mother and father would always fight. My mother went to Manila in order to work as a (domestic) helper. When I was six years old.” Erica paused to regain her composure over the tears that were falling. “And then my mama left.”

Erica was so excited for a chance to tell us her story. Before we had realised, she had set up chairs in a lovely shaded spot under the trees outside the NGO office where she worked. But no more than a couple of minutes through, she was in tears as she began her account of growing up in a poor rural area of Mindanao.

Being left with an alcoholic father, without the stability and care that her mother had provided, Erica’s already precarious family situation deteriorated significantly at this point. After her mother had gone to Manila, Erica’s oldest brother began to sexually abuse her. “Then my brother abused me. Sexually abused me. I just tried to ignore it.” At six years old, she didn’t have the ability to do anything but try to endure the situation. A few months later, her aunt married a businessman in a larger centre. Erica had not yet gone to school, and the rural town did not have sufficient opportunities for the children’s education, so

Erica and two of her brothers were sent to live with the aunt and her new husband so that they could go to school.

The situation turned out to be less than ideal from the children's perspective. "When we arrived there, my brothers couldn't bear it, so they fled." The boys were older and ran away to escape the strict and punitive treatment of their uncle, leaving Erica on her own to endure the new home life. Now alone with new caregivers, Erica's material situation had improved, but her relational security had not. Erica was well fed, better than at home in the village, and she was able to attend school. Erica's aunt employed a driver who used to drive Erica to school. This man began to sexually abuse Erica, and did so regularly for several years until he left the job. Although after her previous abuse, Erica did not fully understand that this was not normal behaviour, there was a part of her that wanted to confide in her aunt. She was not able to "gather the strength and courage" though, mainly out of fear that she would be scolded or punished.

Graduating from elementary school and beginning high school marked another turning point in Erica's life. Relationships with friends began to consume her attention to the point that she lost interest in studying and getting her education. "Friends, and then a boyfriend." When she was 15, she had her first boyfriend which quickly turned to a sexual relationship. Erica related her desire for a sexual relationship to the normalisation of sex following the abuse she had experienced. By this point, Erica had little interest in studying. The school finally called her aunt to report that she had been caught drinking and smoking.

Out of fear, Erica refused to return to her aunt and uncle's house to face the consequences of this report. She asked her boyfriend to help her return to where her mother was, now back in the village. "When I got there, I realised that we are really very poor." In the aunt's house, tinned sardines and ground corn were fed to the dogs; at her mother's home, this was the staple diet. She stayed there for a few months but found the material hardship too much. Erica went to stay with a few different relatives, ending up at her oldest brother's house. "The one who had abused me before." He was by then married and in his own household, but once Erica was there he began to abuse her again. Erica wanted to escape, but didn't want to go back to either her mother or aunt's houses again. At this point Erica felt she had no other option but to head out away from her family and look for work. She wanted to get

away from the abuse from her brother, but she also wanted to be able to help her family who were living in such poverty back in the village. She was sixteen years old at this point.

Erica had been working as a waitress in a *karenderya* [small restaurant] in the town where her brother lived, and the cook there knew that she wanted to leave to seek work. This man told her that he had previously worked in a bar in Cagayan as a waiter, and he offered to help her get a job there. “He said, ‘do you want to go to Cagayan? You will make a lot of money.’ That’s where the trafficking started.” He took her to Cagayan and let her stay with his family for a few days before taking her to the bar, where she suddenly realised that it was not a waitressing job.

“And then, when the first time I saw girls dancing, I told myself, ‘No, I could never do this.’ Because they danced naked. Everything is seen. Although I was not a virgin, but I said, ‘No, I won’t, I really could not. This is my first time.’ But later on, I had no choice once I was already there.”

After this, Erica didn’t know what to do. The first week, she could only think about how to get away. She recalled the turmoil she was in, thinking to herself, “‘I have no relatives here. I have nothing to eat and I can’t feed myself.’ It was like survival. It was hardly bearable, (but I believed it would be) only for a few days. I said, ‘I will work here for another few days until I find a different job, while I search for a different job.’ So then, when I couldn’t find any other job, I realised I had been staying there for too long already.” It didn’t take long for Erica to become entrenched in her new lifestyle and the job which soon was not only dancing but commercial sex as well. “I earned so much money. Lots of money, and then I encountered different guys, handsome guys, different nationalities, like foreigners. Yes, because I had a lot of customers, foreigner guys, then I was really able to help my mother with lots of money.”

Before working at the club, Erica had drunk alcohol but had not used drugs. At the club, this changed. “I used drugs, I used alcohol. Every time I would work, every time, I would take drugs, for the reason so I won’t be ashamed. Because it is very shameful to dance (naked). It is very embarrassing to show your body. It is so shameful. So, I would use drugs

so that I could ignore it. Like when I would look at the audience, it is nothing. It's nothing. It would just feel great to dance.”

For some years Erica remained in the club, where she had a top position and a reputation as a star dancer. She began a cycle where she would work, sending money back to her family, until she met a “big time customer.” From time to time Erica would meet a man like this who would become something of a boyfriend, supporting her financially providing a house, asking her to stop her work. However, these relationships often didn't last. “There are times that it will be gone immediately because sometimes, you know, we get fed up especially if our partner is an old person and there is no love.” Erica would return again to working in the club along with the other women.

By the time Erica was 25 she had reached a very low point in her life, and she described how “life became miserable then.” The conflicting rollercoaster of emotions between dancing, sexual labour, using drugs, and making “big money” were compounded by her home situation. At that time, Erica was living with a boyfriend who used to *kulatahon*⁵⁰ [hit and beat] her regularly. The chaos in her life escalated. “I realised that I was not content with just one man. Even though I already had a live-in partner, and even when there was a customer as well, I really wanted to find something - I was really looking for conflict. I would have another boyfriend just to have excitement.” Erica saw this as a kind of addiction. “So then I realised that it is really *dili maayo* [not good]. It was really not good.”

This was a turning point. Erica did not like being in that situation where she was always high and relying on drugs to get through life. However, the money, the excitement of the club and the lifestyle, and the friendships at the club had kept her coming back. There had always been many customers and the money flowed, until she was 25 when things started to change. “Many customers were still coming, until such time that I realised I was already old. If you are (25), customers don't like you anymore.”

“I started thinking and realising, I said, ‘Why can't I stop this when this wasn't part of the aspirations of my life?’ This is not what I dreamed about. I never aspired like this at all when I was still a child. I just wanted to help my family.”

⁵⁰ From the root word *kulata*; see Ch.8 for further discussions of this term.

Erica was at the club when Anna, a woman from an NGO and regular visitor to the women at the club, began to recruit her. Erica was a good communicator and entertainer, popular with the customers as well as the other women at the club. Anna targeted her as a potential peer mentor, as she could see that Erica would be an excellent leader. She finally convinced Erica to try the work that Anna was suggesting. Erica first attended a Department of Health training seminar for six days, to become a peer educator about HIV and STIs and a peer counsellor to women in the sex industry. “So when I started working on that job, I liked it and then, my worries that I would miss the bar were gone. Gone. I enjoyed it... Especially because you are able to help your peers.” The excitement of the club began to lose its appeal as Erica began to identify more with Anna and the other NGO workers and peer educators. She began work as a Department of Health peer educator and counsellor to sexual labourers including the women she used to work with at the club.

“I was able to help and then especially when the ones you’ve helped tell you, ‘Thank you very much *Ate*⁵¹, thank you so much,’ it’s - what an honour. It’s very heavy to take because of their huge gratitude. How great it is if you are able to help others, isn’t it? Even if there isn’t so much money - my (former) colleagues would tell me, ‘You don’t make much money, how much is your salary there? Why did you leave - how are you able to sustain yourself now?’ Like that, but you know, I could not explain. I said it didn’t matter, that it’s not the money that matters. It’s just the fulfilment of being able to help people. That’s what made me like what I was doing then.”

At this point, Erica was also immediately enrolled in ALS (Alternative Learning System; extramural high school equivalency program). Prior to this, she had left high school in the third year when she was fifteen. Erica’s attitude toward life and schooling had changed significantly in that time. “I went to school in ALS, I passed. I passed straight through. Oh, my God. When I passed ALS, I was able to work for (another local NGO). Yes, my success just continued on and on.”

Her new job was working as a community health outreach worker for sexual labourers. Some of the other workers in the NGO were planning to study to become fully qualified

⁵¹ Older sister, a term of respect

social workers, and Erica was offered full tuition through the NGO to study as well. “So, I really prayed for that. ‘Lord, Lord, what should I really choose because it’s important to me.’ Yes, so I really chose to study. When I picked schooling, I worried where I would get money because only the tuition would be paid.” However, the NGO also provided room and board, in exchange for Erica working as a manager. In her second year, she also found work with a medical NGO, and the income covered her transport costs for school, and later the tuition when the NGO could not cover her for a period.

Erica worked hard and is very proud of her success. “By God’s grace, I did not fail any subjects. Oh, Lord. Thank you so much. I really said that. I could cry, that oh, my, in my old age when it is so difficult...that I really achieved. That I never had a failing mark.”

Erica’s tenacity has seen her through a number of obstacles over the past few years. The first was finding the remaining funds to pay for the costs of going to school, which she achieved by finding additional work, but she had also had to struggle with her motivation as difficulties occurred. “I had encountered a little problem because I have a boyfriend. Then we had a small conflict between me and my boyfriend. After that I returned to drinking. Drinking only, then I did not do drugs, I have really stopped with them. But yes, drinking. Then, maybe, the others at the NGO saw that I weakened for a while. My determination was weakened because of the conflict with my boyfriend. My mentor would notice when I seemed to have a problem. She would really call me to counsel me. Sometimes problems would make me think that maybe I should just return to my work in the bar. But then I would say, ‘oh, all my hard work will just be a waste if I do that. It would just be a waste if I return.’”

Erica is excited about graduating and moving on with her work in the community. She is particularly concerned about the number of young teenagers she meets working on the street, many from twelve or thirteen years old and often working against their will. Her position with the NGOs means that she will likely have stable employment for the near future. However, as a social worker, she will also probably never make “big money” and be able to support her family to the degree she did in the past. Despite this, Erica shared another success – she was able to see her nephew, the son of her oldest brother, graduate from a specialised university degree because of her financial support over the years.

5.3 Crystal's Story

I met Crystal at the NGO office where she worked. Like Erica, she had gone on to support other women in the sex industry after she herself left that world. This particular NGO supported sexual labourers in many ways, from support in accessing medical and prenatal care, to a soup kitchen and safe drop-in centre, as well as longer-term residential and rehabilitative care options for those exiting voluntary or trafficked sexual labour.

Crystal described her family as being very poor. Her father had left when she and her siblings were very small, leaving the already poor family in extreme difficulty. "I didn't have a father – my father had a second family. My father was very irresponsible. So I grew up just only with my mother. So we were a very poor family." Crystal's father was a farmer and fisherman. After he left, her mother would make and sell salt to support the family. Her mother had held a piece of land, but once she was on her own with little income, this was the only asset she had access to. The land had to be sold when one of the children was ill and needed medical care. Crystal had attended school up to Grade 4, but eventually had to stop in order to support the family. "In order to survive, I would sell as a sidewalk vendor so that we could buy rice." Crystal also described that in her family, she did not feel that she was considered important because she was a girl. "In the family there was (an attitude) like, 'Oh, you are special, you are my boy child.' That was how I felt then."

Crystal said that this was part of her motivation for leaving home at the age of fifteen. She did not want to stay with her family, but she hoped to be able to contribute more to the family by finding work outside of their area. "A friend of my sister came (to see me), and she promised me a job as a nanny, that I would be babysitting her child in Zamboanga City." Crystal did not tell her mother that she was leaving or where she would be going. "*Ako lang* [just me]. I just left."

"So at the time that I got trafficked, I was transported to the airport. So maybe that's how high tech she was as a trafficker because she had a relationship with someone from the Air Force. So I rode the (Air Force plane), arrived in Davao, had lunch and then we went to Zamboanga City. They told me that I would be babysitting, but it wasn't true. Upon arriving in Zamboanga City it seemed I was staying in a boarding house, but when night

came, I was taken to a club. I ended up there in a big club. So it was there the story started that I began my duty, which was to dance as a go-go dancer. So from there I started working in the bar as a prostituted woman. Sometimes, they would make me entertain a customer. I was *bata* [young; literally, a child] then. I had no idea of – of the ways in a bar. So I immediately began using drugs. Using drugs, and drinking alcohol.”

Crystal remained in the club for several years from her entry at age fifteen. “So many things happened to my life which were *dili maayo* in Zamboanga. I got more and more addicted to drugs. I couldn’t return to my family. It seemed that when a person uses drugs, they are already in a miserable situation. It immediately happened that I got married to a man. There was a man who took me. A few weeks before I turned 18 years old, I got married to my partner, who was Muslim. For Muslims, it is prohibited for the Muslim and Christian to live together if they did not go through matrimony, so we got married.”

Crystal and her husband returned to the area where she had grown up. “We lived together for a long time back there in our place. My husband was a security guard. We did not have kids, maybe (because) I was into drugs in my youth.” They did, however, adopt one of Crystal’s nephews. “When my sibling abandoned him, I took him in.” Crystal had later adopted another nephew as well, as she was concerned about their options if they went to another family, as “if you would be a helper or you are a working student, you will be abused.”

“Then afterwards, it happened that my husband went missing. I had no means to survive living, (and to support) that child we had adopted. So, I returned again to that situation because it seemed that I already had a guide, I knew how to do that. So, for me and that child to survive, I applied as GRO, guest relations officer. There it started again, that situation, in order to live, was my only thought, just in order to survive living. I was reached out to by (a recruiter) and I was trafficked again to (another city) as a dancer. I stayed there for nine months. It was very clear to me that I would work there as a – in the bar. I was turning 24 that time, I was no longer a minor. So, I cannot consider that as still trafficking. But in the context because of hardship, it was still traffic, right? It was in order to meet my needs to survive, to be able to eat, to be able to send (the children) to school.

Because I was still sending (money for) my nephews and nieces at that time. So it was like that, because of hardship on my part, because of hardship is why I worked there.”

“When I returned home, I was able to dance at my place. When I often danced, I would dance, work, table a customer, but I was not really any more into the thing called ‘outing.’ That’s to join a customer because of money, because I had a vision and I was afraid to be impregnated by a different person that I did not love. There were occasions that I went out because of money, but also not just about money. Because I also really liked the customer. It was that sort of a situation. My situation was like prostitution because it was the only way I could work for my livelihood. I was there to be able to provide for my child, for my mother then I was able to send my nephews and nieces to school. At least, they finished high school. But sometimes, my mother would scold me because I myself do not have an education. I only finished Grade 4.”

“So gradually, (an NGO) reached out to us (at the club). Before, it was only the STI-HIV-Aids, only about condoms. But I discovered that in a situation if a woman would equip herself with knowledge, they would have nothing, they cannot abuse (her) any more. It seemed like, I was a fighter. I don’t want that in whichever situation, that our rights as women would seem to be abused. Because it doesn’t mean that because (customers) gave a ladies’ drink worth 210, they can touch our personal – private parts of our body.” Crystal was inspired to become an advocate with this group. “So, we would bring (the training course) - we had a (holistic) education, the one on the street. It was also different, the learning group session, there inside the bar. So, for me it was not difficult to reach out among our peers who were still in that situation until now, because whatever is the situation that they have gone through, it would be the same situation that I would have gone through or experienced. I love reaching out to people. For them to be educated. For them not to be victims in human trafficking. As well as the STI-HIV because it is not easy for them when they get sick. So I volunteer with (these organisations)”

“I dreamed for myself that I would be able to finish high school to have a diploma as high school graduate since I finished studying only Grade 4 elementary level. That’s why I want to help my nieces, my nephews for them to have a good education, not like me, I don’t have education. But now, when they finish their high school, I promised to myself that I need to

also finish my high school. Because my two sons now are already college, first year. So maybe for me, that's my dream, and for them to have a good education and also for my peers. I always look forward for them to reach out and encourage them, 'you, go to school. You have to finish your high school in ALS, like I am. Don't be ashamed. Even your age (doesn't matter).'"

"I had really wanted to become a lawyer. But then (I wasn't able to) because of the difficult circumstances that my parents were very poor. But I don't say that I regretted this. Rather, I am thankful that that happened, what happened to me. I've been trafficked, I've been abused. I was thankful for that. Why? Because I can say to myself that I can be a stronger person."

"I grew up only with my mother. In the context maybe if a family, especially parents if they have clear vision for their children, maybe they grow up with enough education. But in our family, nothing. Never. Me, I can say now, I declare I'll be the one who's graduated high school. That's really my (conviction). That's why I'm very passionate about that, right? I have very strong feelings for that. If there is an opportunity then for me, how will I qualify now for the opportunity if I don't have enough education? So, it's better to have an education. In (the NGO) we see that (women) need to venture for a livelihood, to move on from the past, but then nothing (they would do) succeeds. So, we saw that through education a woman could say that this (life) is not good for herself. So, it is her who can decide to stop from the situation of prostitution."

Crystal, like Erica, had found a great deal of empowerment through her NGO connections and exiting sexual labour. Joramae's story, however, is somewhat different.

5.4 Joramae's Story

Joramae grew up with her parents and siblings. Her father was a fisherman, and her mother did jobs including manicures and domestic cleaning. Joramae did well in school and was supported by an achievement-based scholarship from her *barangay*. When Joramae's mother died, Joramae had finished two years of high school. At that point, she had to drop out of school in order to help support the family. "I stopped when my mother died, I

worked as a dishwasher in a restaurant, and as a (domestic) helper...It's more difficult now. Because when my mom was around, we were ok. I went to school every day because I was sponsored."

Joramae was a young teenager when she became pregnant with her boyfriend. The family was already under strain, and now would have a baby to add to the chores and costs.

A friend, Julia, introduced Joramae to sexual labour as a way to provide for her family and baby. "We were invited by my friends." They were already working on the street when they encountered a foreign woman who offered to arrange jobs for them. When Joramae was 16 and her baby was then two months old, she was given a chance to spend a longer time with a client and travel. Leaving the baby with her partner and her family, she and her friend Julia both went with a foreign man to a bigger city. They stayed in a hotel, entertaining the client, while he provided gadgets, shopping, and trips to the beach. Pia, Joramae's younger sister, had come to visit her and collect some money for the baby's expenses when the hotel was raided. The three young women were taken into protection by social services while the client was arrested.

Although the social workers and police put together a case for human trafficking prosecution, the prosecutors instead chose to proceed as child abuse, hoping for a greater chance of conviction. However, the case was eventually dismissed completely.

Joramae and Julia were taken to the women's shelter for rehabilitation, while Pia returned home. At the shelter, they received counselling, ALS and skills education, and time for exercise. "Our life was great there. We learned many activities there." Handiwork, study, spiritual practices, cooking, cleaning, and learning gardening skills filled the days and gave structure to the women's time.

When I met Joramae, she was seventeen. She did not have immediate plans to finish school. "It depends, because first I have to provide for my child's needs." Joramae's ambitions were centred on her baby, and she hoped that he would get an education and would not be in the position that she is. "Now, my child is first, that's my first priority. I want him to go to school, by God's will, to go to school, to finish it, and not to follow in my footsteps."

Her partner was seeking to go overseas with his family. Joramae was working as a domestic helper, mainly doing relief work when the regular workers were absent. “(I work) so that I have money to buy milk and food for my child.” While she worked her father or siblings would look after the baby. If she could go out in the evenings, she would also work helping her partner with his *trisikad* route.

For the future, Joramae hoped to get a more stable job. “I would like to be able to work at (the mall) as a cashier, even if only like that.” She reflected on how suddenly her life and freedom had changed. “It was so different when I was single than now. Now I have many priorities plus I have to think about many things. Now, I have to order my life so that we can eat three times a day. My obligations now are different.”

Joramae is Badjao in origin, although her family has settled in Davao permanently. Badjao are known to be poor, transient, and are looked down upon socially. The social worker and I had a discussion with Joramae and her father, who owned the small wooden house by the sea, about their community. They had no running water and would fetch it daily, but their electricity was paid for by Korean Christian organisations who have also helped set up livelihood projects for Badjao groups. Joramae’s father noted the improvements in many people’s lives such as fishing from boats they had received, and peddling shoes and bags. “They have improved. They have cleaned up. They are not so dirty that you are squeamish to go near.”

Joramae’s sister Pia was still finishing high school. She hoped travel, to work, and to help her family as well as the government organisation that supported them. Pia had also stayed a short time in the women’s shelter, and enjoyed the experience but also felt bad for some of the women who were in difficult circumstances. She dreamed to work as a flight attendant then return to the Philippines, buy a house, marry and raise a family. She wanted to run a business with her husband, and to have a nice house that would be well maintained. “If I have a house, I want it to be clean.” Pia described her dream job: “I want to travel abroad. I want to work as a flight attendant, and go everywhere. Anywhere.”

5.5 Gender, sex, and social violences

In considering human trafficking, choice, and agency, it is the available options as perceived that shape actions. Erica experienced her life at times as chaos as she navigated the conflicting pressures on her life. She went out to work to earn money for her family, but it was also an escape from abuse and poverty. Erica's life as a young person reveals an increasing trajectory towards insecurity in the financial, social, and relational aspects of her life. When Erica was trafficked into the sex industry, she was personally at a point where there seemed to be few options available to her. Crystal was in a similar position and remaining at home was neither appealing nor financially stable. Both Joramae and Crystal found that as mothers, they had few options that were sufficient or available to provide for their children. Human trafficking has been linked with gendered inequality and the feminisation of poverty, where women have unequal "local access to sustainable livelihoods," and gender-based forms of structural violence that compound the experience of poverty and unemployment (Beckerleg & Hundt, 2005, p. 187; Turner, 2012, p. 38). However, within these constrained circumstances, each young woman made choices to try to find work elsewhere as the known situations were not sufficient. Crystal and Erica left their homes and bore the risk of violence in response to the known violences of poverty, abuse and discrimination.

As is evident in these stories, human trafficking is often closely connected to other events in a person's life history that led to their vulnerability to exploitation – poverty, lack of education, abuse. What is often not discussed is how it can also be related to the subsequent events and choices that a person faces. For Erica, the point of trafficking as an entry into sexual labour turned out to be - financially speaking - a success for her. But it also set a chain of events in motion that she had not intended, and she had to find new ways to deal with life and make choices within this situation. Like Erica, Crystal turned to drugs and alcohol to endure the forced sexual labour, but once she was addicted it became even more difficult to leave or even imagine alternatives. For them, drug use corresponded to Coy's (2012, p. 112) findings with British sexual labourers as a "dissociative mechanism that begins as an emotional survival strategy." Crystal chose marriage as a way out of the sex

industry, but after having spent her teen years there, she had no education or marketable skills which could have sustained her after her husband vanished.

The social workers had taken Joramae from the world of sexual labour, with justifiable rationale according to her young age, but in doing so they have taken away her livelihood without providing a viable alternative. Her partner's work as a *trisikad* driver is minimal and can fluctuate; Joramae and the baby are again primarily dependent upon her husband's and father's abilities to provide for them. Sex workers rights groups have argued that the criminalisation and removal of their livelihood is a form of oppression (Saini, 2016, p. 5). At the same time, sexual labour can be a dangerous and volatile profession, and the older street-based women that I met were finding it more and more difficult to make a living;⁵² without other skills to fall back on, the future did not seem bright. Like domestic labour, sexual labour does not provide career progression or skill development (Pacis, 2009); in fact, the opposite can be true as these intimate labours are highly dependent on youth, and over time workers' labour often becomes less rather than more valuable.

Particularly in this marginalised and moralised industry, for both Erica and Crystal to genuinely leave and pursue new directions required a large amount of effort in constructing new identities, over time and based on relationships. Erica acknowledged that as a non-virgin she was already somehow morally tarnished socially, but she still contrasted this identity with the practice of sexual labour that she was being forced to undertake. The position of sexual labourers in society as "bad" may be intended to deter some from embarking on this path, but also makes it difficult for people to transition out of it. In the context of conscripting underage soldiers, Wessells (2006, p. 94) commented:

Rape is a powerful means of subjugation since it profoundly violates girls' sense of safety and bodily integrity and can lead girls to see themselves as impure and damaged. Rape also casts a large stigma on the survivors, who may be shunned or otherwise treated badly by others, including people from whom they need support.

This is often true in the Philippines where sex and sexual labour is heavily moralised and stigmatised, and particularly so when rape or forced sexual labour is the entry to the sex industry. Indeed, "bad" is part of how the *Mama-san* street worker I knew described her job

⁵² See Susan's story (Chapter 9) for further discussion; Susan is a street-based sexual labourer in her forties who has been working in this industry for many years.

to me – “I am the manager for the bad girls.” Once the women had internalised and accepted on some level that they were outside of legitimate society, it created a chasm between their work, relationships, and position in society and the rest of “good” society and work.

Relationships were significant throughout these women’s stories. Erica liked dancing and enjoyed her relationships with the other women at the club, and she also formed relationships with men over this time. Erica and Crystal found that financially dependent relationships with men they met at the clubs allowed them to exit that lifestyle, at least for a time. However, both expressed a combination of financial reliance and their own choices in forming these relationships. Like other Filipinas who had been trafficked into the sex industry, the women initially left home to pursue work because of their relational responsibilities and hopes for their families (Erpelo, 1998, p. 125). Both experienced various forms of hardship and rejection from their families; however, both ultimately ended up willingly and happily supporting the same family members. Joramae began commercial sexual labour for the sake of her baby; now, she is highly dependent on other family members, and her relationships are positive but financially uncertain. In Erica and Crystal’s lives, long-term and involved relationships were key to being able to leave the sex industry many years after having been trafficked. Relationships enabled identity shifts as the women became part of different communities, began to pursue their educations, and saw themselves as other things than sexual labourers. Crystal found that as she became involved with women’s and sexual labourers’ activist groups, she was presented with ideas about womanhood and women’s rights that profoundly altered her sense of self, and subsequently, the way she acted in the world.

These stories illustrate some of the issues in defining both age and agency in terms of sexual labour and coercion. Joramae, for example, expressed more control in having chosen sexual labour at about age sixteen than Crystal did at 24 in accepting a second bar position because she felt she had no other options. Crystal saw little difference between being forced and tricked into sexual labour as a fifteen year-old and having to return later due to hardship, although this also drew on her earlier experiences. Erica and Crystal both acknowledged that their young age was part of the vulnerability as well as trauma in their

experiences of trafficking. Joramae's story is clearly very different from Erica and Crystal's forced entries to sexual labour; legally, however, there is little distinction. Indeed, the events that led to the designation of Joramae as having been trafficked – having been transported and engaged in underage sexual labour – were described as also having been a lot of fun for Joramae and Julia, and a rare experience of abundant shopping and holidaying. Gardening, although useful, is unlikely to provide these experiences, and there are few if any jobs domestically where Joramae will ever earn what she did in sexual labour.

Erica and Crystal's stories indicate that the factors that maintained conditions of exploitation (caused initially by a person or group exploiting another) are complex combinations of individual choice and agency, and social factors far beyond as well as within the employment relationships. Beyond her initial introduction to erotic dancing and sexual labour, Erica was able to walk out of the club and in theory could have moved away, gone home, found other work, or anything else; her experience, however, also included other factors which severely limited her ability to do this. Joramae, Crystal, and Erica's voluntary experiences were all constrained by necessity and lack of options, but hardship does not eclipse the role of agency in evaluating and choosing among the limited options available for survival. Seeing the complexity, social positionality and meanings, and personal agency does not negate recognising the unequal position of women in society, but emphasises the complex and particular context that women navigate in sexual labours. Sexual labour "like other forms of commodification and consumption can be read in more complex ways than simply as a confirmation of male domination... it can be understood as a place of agency where the sex worker makes active use of the existing social order" (Chapkis, 1997, pp. 29–30). It has been observed that women trafficked into the sex industry frequently choose to either remain or return even when they have the option of leaving, often from a lack of other economic alternatives, as Crystal did (Erpelo, 1998; Urada et al., 2016). In this way, women like Erica and Crystal have turned their experiences into opportunities that would serve them; these choices, however, were also constrained by other social factors including the stigma attached to commercial sex.

The real-life context and experience of voluntary sexual labourers in the Philippines is far more complex than its legal or illegal status, and is significantly shaped by gender-based inequalities and socio-economic conditions (Beckerleg & Hundt, 2005; Khan et al., 2017; Schwarz et al., 2017, p. 20; Swanson, 2016, p. 593). In the Philippines context, there is no way to know whether legalised commercial sex would have benefitted Erica and Crystal either long-term or in escaping initially, or whether it would have enabled those who trafficked them. The context for sexual labour, coercion, power relations and sex trafficking is not limited to the law. A case where human trafficking of minors into sexual labour was successfully prosecuted in the Philippines raises further questions about power structures and accountability: a young woman was charged for recruiting others to a private club for sexual labour, but no charges were brought against the business owners who had directed her and most likely hired her initially as a minor and therefore made her, under legal definitions, a trafficking victim herself (Chapman, 2017). The law did not address the power structures that maintain the marginalisation of sexual labourers, and in this case reinforced and compounded them.

As has been observed in Manila and other locations, women trafficked into the sex industry worked alongside others who had entered voluntarily, suggesting both the prevalence of human trafficking and the invisibility of even voluntary sexual labourers in the Philippines (Urada et al., 2016; Wiss, 2012). The violences and risks associated with sexual labour in the Philippines include the abuses and non-payment of clients, the control or abuse of managers, the continuums of control, force, and coercion that lead to women entering or continuing in sexual labour out of force or necessity, as well as the social marginalisation in the wider community. Sexual labourers in the Philippines who were initially trafficked have demonstrably worse health outcomes than those not trafficked (Urada et al., 2016, 2014); violence is compounding, and they have begun with more violence against their life and person. “Why doesn’t she just leave” is often implicitly asked of women in this industry who say they would prefer not to be there – as did all of the street workers that I met - but this question assumes there are other options, there is somewhere they could go where this type of work would not be necessary for survival (Price, 2012).

A common question in the literature is, what do trafficked persons as well as sexual labourers need – is it rescuing or something else? Perhaps at the very beginning when they were forced into sexual labour Erica and Crystal would have benefitted from rescue; beyond this, what they needed was significantly more complicated. Brennan (2017, pp. 493–494) described how after exiting trafficking, with no social networks or significant skills, formerly trafficked people in the USA often remained in extreme poverty and precarious labour, while anti-trafficking GOs and NGOs would most often discuss the emotional and psychological needs after exiting trafficking. Brennan (2017, p. 490) described decision-making and planning for the future as central to rebuilding a life after trafficking, but this was difficult when basic needs were not being met. There is a clear contrast between Pia’s long-term planning and Joramae’s focus on immediate, day-to-day needs. Joramae had immediately adopted the cultural role of sacrificial mother, and she compared the freedom she had when she was *single* rather than before motherhood. I cannot help but see the deeply ingrained gender norms as a limiting form of structural violence, where at age seventeen Joramae had mostly abandoned her ambitions for her own life – and where her “rescue” had not given her a stable path for the future. Erica and Crystal, in contrast, had renewed hopes and plans despite their significant family responsibilities over the years – supported by long-term relationships, they had chosen and navigated their own paths forward.

Conclusions

Gendered poverty and gendered unemployment are both forms of structural violence that affect women’s entry into sexual labour; they also contribute to the vulnerability to trafficking for sexual labour where women, particularly young women, have limited and risky options by which to fulfil their familial obligations. The illegality of sexual labour and treatment of workers are often experienced as forms of structural violence from the state, and more so in parts of the Philippines where the law is abused by corrupt officials to extort and control sexual labourers. Coerced and forced sexual labour is supported by gender inequality and limitations for women’s labour opportunities, as well as the stigma and marginalisation of women once involved. The violence that these women experienced went

beyond the trafficking events, as structural violences created vulnerability and blocked escape.

The women's stories presented in this chapter challenge the dominant anti-trafficking narrative of "rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration" and similar variations. Joramae was most clearly rescued, but while the experience was positive and supportive, it has not "rescued" her from the financial constraints and lack of options that initially supported her decision to undertake sexual labour. Erica and Crystal, in contrast, were given support from NGOs that did not remove them from their environments, but offered long-term, relationship-based support, and realistic additional choices.

Women's inequality, in terms of physical violence, economics, and social position, is a form of structural violence that is a "universal problem" which has been called a "global epidemic" (Dhal, 2018; Sinha, Gupta, Singh, & Srivastava, 2017). The Philippines context shares the unequal position of women within society but configured according to its unique culture and history. As Anderson (2015, p. 61) found with women who sold sex in Malawi, despite deep inequality, "injustice is not experienced passively." The women I met navigated the constraints and obstacles to achieve their own aims, even in situations of exploitation. However, the majority of voluntary and formerly trafficked sexual labourers I met expressed the same desire – an economically and practically viable alternative that would allow them to provide for their families. As yet, labour opportunities, particularly for women, and even more so for women without tertiary education, are not sufficient to displace sexual labour as a uniquely lucrative option, nor to present rural labour migrants with sufficient opportunities to pass up dubious recruitment offers.

6. Working in Mindanao: labour trafficking and employment

“Financially, it’s *lisod* [difficult]. *Lisod gyud* [very difficult]. *Lisod*. That’s why you need to have extra income as well as your job. Aside from my job, I need to have another way to earn money, because it’s just not enough” (DonDon, a full-time skilled worker).⁵³

One of the defining characteristics of city people-scapes in the Philippines must be the constant commercial efforts, large and small, from beggars to ice cream vendors to suited office workers all going about their business. In Davao, this labour is often informal, but highly visible such as street food merchants and the dense public transport options (see Figure 13). One memorable experience in getting around Davao was when a government social worker offered to take me to one of my interviews with a young woman. Her home was in a poor area of town near the coast. Taxis and jeepneys could not fit down lanes past the main road, so we took the front *trisykad* [tricycle, also known as a pedicab or cycle rickshaw] from the queue of bored looking men. Our driver was a tiny, wizened man who looked to be at least 70. He peddled us slowly along the narrow, paved road, the umbrella wobbling as it spun unsteadily every time it banged into that of a peddled or motorised *trisykad* coming in the opposite direction. As we turned off onto the rough, potholed dirt road, our slow speed reduced considerably as our driver strained his thin legs to deliver us to the next block. I considered whether the right thing to do would be to get off and walk, which would probably not be any slower and reduce the load on our driver. As a young and able-bodied person, it felt wrong to be sitting ferried by a man of his age even in return for the twenty pesos he would earn for our ten-minute journey. I knew, though, that as an older man, most formal jobs would be closed to him, and so he worked how he could in this informal labour. Without family to rely on, many older people struggle to survive. Many of the side streets in Davao would have a large queue of *trisykad* drivers, waiting for a passenger; the fare was up to ₱10 (\$ 0.30 NZD) per rider depending on the length of the journey. I do not know what the average number of trips is per day, but it must be impossible to make a living at this rate.

⁵³ Interview was conducted in Cebuano; this phrasing “*lisod...*” is presented as spoken to retain the repetitive emphasis.



Figure 13: Wandering anthropologist, street-side as a row of jeepneys pass by (photo courtesy of Jono Townsend).

This chapter gives a deeper understanding of the work and employment conditions in the Philippines. The stories I present from exploited workers and formerly trafficked persons reveal complex continuums and relationships between labour exploitation, human trafficking, and the work situation in general. I argue for a theoretical model which can account for the characteristics of both exploitative work and human trafficking, as I contend that both are shaped by social factors beyond the employment/trafficking relationships which must be considered in analysing and addressing these phenomena.

6.1 Employment, economics, and structural violence

Like my *trisikad* driver, significant numbers of people in Davao and Mindanao are struggling to make a living through formal and informal labour. The economic aspects of Philippine society are among the most significant in shaping people's life chances, and the strategic choices that individuals and families deploy to improve their situations. In discussions of human trafficking, there has been controversy over the degree to which

labour trafficking and sex trafficking are related. Some have argued that as sexual labour is another type of work, making a distinction reinforces the “moral outcry” over sexual labour in general (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012; Bettio, Della Giusta, & Di Tommaso, 2017; Peters, 2014). Others have pointed out the distinctions between various types, such as the specific relationship between sexual trafficking and other forms of gender-based exploitation and violence (Acharya, 2015; Aluko-Daniels, 2014; Efrat, 2016; Patterson, 2012; Turner, 2012). However, the constraints and pressures in and around work also create conditions that are linked with human trafficking and other types of exploitation and abuse in work and beyond. The factors which make labour, particularly certain types of labour, a point of vulnerability, emerge from factors beyond the individual workplace to both social and structural conditions.

Human trafficking has often been studied as a distinct phenomenon. However, this approach can easily obscure the incidence of related conditions such as exploitative labour, and position human trafficking as unrelated to other forms of exploitation. The aim of this chapter is to explore the processes which contribute to the experience of work as unequal and vulnerable. Gender, social status, education, and age are factors that are magnified in the experience of work and contribute to vulnerability as well as exclusion from opportunities. Access, or lack of access, to sufficient and legitimate employment opportunities is a significant factor in understanding human trafficking both from the side of the perpetrators and from those exploited.

The concept of structural violence is useful in considering work as it provides insight into the problem of inequality and abuse in work without drawing firm lines between “normal” work, exploitative work, or human trafficking (Farmer, 2004; Kodoth, 2016; Lee, 2016; Smith, 2015). It also emphasises that the inequalities and constraints are experienced, not as inconvenience or risk, but as *violence* against a person and their life. Working conditions in the Philippines, particularly the job insecurity and low wages, have been fruitfully considered through frameworks including neoliberalism, globalisation, and precarity (Bitonio, 2008; Chant & McIlwaine, 1995; Edralin, 2016; McKay, 2006; Ofreneo, 2013; Oh, 2016; Tremlett, 2012). However, exploitation and abuse go beyond the employer/employee exchanges and implicate the wider legal and social structures which

support “*systemic* exploitation” (Kodoth, 2016, p. 86). Here I emphasise the way that the ongoing and day-to-day condition of uncertainty in employment situations contributes to the experience of structural violence which shapes life choices and life chances.

A common wage for full-time, skilled workers such as DonDon and Mariel’s husband (Ch.9) in Davao was ₱500 (\$15 NZD) per day, but participants described how this was not enough to sustain a family of five, particularly given the costs of schooling for children in high school or tertiary programs. Nurses in private hospitals, even with the extensive training and licencing required, have been reported making ₱3,000-8,000 (\$82-219 NZD)/month, or ₱100-266 (\$3-7.50 NZD)/day, while caring for 30 patients in their shift. Legally, all nurses are theoretically entitled to about ₱26,000/month (₱867/day), but this 2002 legislation has never been implemented nor enforced, and efforts have been continually blocked by politicians (Badilla, 2016). The largest employment sector, however, is unskilled labour, and this is true for both men and women, (PSA, 2016b). Note the employment advertisement from Davao (see Figure 16) which advertised ₱250-500 (\$7.50-15 NZD)/day, offering a pay scale that started well below minimum wage.

Poverty, and its uneven distribution both locally and globally, has been repeatedly identified as a form of structural violence (Farmer, 2004; Muderredzi et al., 2017; Smith, 2015; Vogt, 2013). This assessment draws attention to the violence intrinsic to the day-to-day experience of poverty as well as the ever-present risk of catastrophe if unexpected costs arose (Clark, 2014, pp. 27, 33; Simmons, 2010, p. 11). The poverty line set by the Philippine government, at or below an income of ₱60 (\$1.60 NZD) per day, is listed as the minimum for food and additional costs, but in real life is not actually sufficient for basic needs and would barely cover one day’s meals (Ofreneo, 2015, p. 125; PSA, 2016a). Even the shortest jeepney rides, for example, cost ₱8 or more; a return trip to and from work could constitute, at the very least, over 25% of that ₱60. In context, when I was in Davao, we could get a small rotisserie chicken from a street vendor for ₱100 (\$2.60 NZD) for our family’s dinner. The World Bank, however, has set the international poverty indicator at \$1.90 US, or about ₱98, and Ofreneo suggested that by a measure of \$2 US/₱101, as of

2009 half of the population was living in poverty.⁵⁴ This assessment is supported by the vast squatter settlements in Manila that exceed official counts, the fact that 55% of the population was rural as of 2010, and the 2012 USAID analysis of 19.2% of Filipinos living in “extreme” poverty below US\$1.25/₱64 per day (Dy-Liacco, 2014; Ofreneo, 2015; PSA, 2016a). Low wages and the prevalence of poverty have shaped the multiple economic strategies families use to survive.

These economic strategies frequently include work that is highly insecure, variable and low-paid. The number of *trisikad* drivers parked and waiting, for example, as there were behind the elderly driver I described, demonstrates the limitations of unemployment and underemployment statistics. Although in 2017, the official unemployment rate in the Philippines was 5.7-6.6%, Ofreneo (2015, p. 122) has argued that “more than half of the employed do not actually have adequate and decent work” when accounting for part-time workers, unpaid family workers, and those seeking additional work (PSA, 2017a). According to the Philippines Statistics Authority, as of 2016, 33.5% of the labour force was part time, 8.6% were “unpaid family workers,” and an additional 8.1% of full-time workers were actively seeking additional work, making a total of 55.9% of the population unemployed or underemployed in 2016 based on Ofreneo’s method of analysis (PSA, 2017c, 2017c). Additionally, the percentage of “unpaid family workers” is likely underestimated, as, for example, “housewives” are excluded from the labour force statistics. One wage is not sufficient for a family to survive, but as opportunities are limited, many families rely on multiple low-paid income streams such as an informal *tindahan* [small shop] or one member running a *trisikad* [tricycle].

The informal economy also plays an integral role, especially in poorer areas, but as of 2016, estimates indicate that over half of employed workers were also involved in informal economic strategies (Ofreneo, 2015, p. 123; PSA, 2017a).⁵⁵ Small shops and stands sell

⁵⁴ I was unable to find more recent comparable data; most of the PSA’s poverty and income measures are based on family income, which obscures the individual incomes of family members (PSA, 2016a).

⁵⁵ The statistics Ofreneo cites suggest that up to 77% of employed workers are also involved in the informal economy as of 2006; the statistics I located from the PSA are comparable, but list one fewer category which likely accounts for the discrepancy between the figures. I have used Ofreneo’s method of calculation, which includes “unpaid family workers” (8.6%), self-employed (27.6%), and running a family business or farm (3.2%), as well as the underemployed (18%) who are presumably currently relying on relational or informal economic strategies, for a total of 57.4% (Edralin, 2016; PSA, 2017a).

single packets of coffee and biscuits, and necessities such as charcoal, and cough medicine. Trays of small fresh fish appear in the afternoons once the catch has come in and made its way from the docks to the *barangays*. Hawkers walk around carrying bunches of second hand shoes, others weave between traffic stopped at lights and in rush hour to vend bottles of cold water, back scratchers, dash ornaments, and snacks, especially to the taxi drivers who might not have had a break. The informal economy is highly visible and entwined with formal day-to-day economic practices.

In navigating structural violence, Clark (2014, p. 36) pointed out that low-wage workers frequently depend on “fragile survival strategies,” which often rely on social networks through reciprocal and relational exchanges. This practice extends the integrated and social sense of self in Philippines culture to what McKay (2009, pp. 330, 343) referred to as “relational, rather than individuated, models of economic personhood” (Milgram, 2014, pp. 166–167). McKay (2009, p. 341), for instance, described how a community in the Visayas⁵⁶ considered people prosperous, not because of their own resources, but because of their relationships with productive family members. Pastors, nuns, and other community leaders play a key role in the informal social economy in terms of redistribution of resources, particularly in times of hardship or distress. One of my language teachers, for example, was also in this role, and on one occasion while I was at a lesson was asking me and her other students for a few lessons advance payment so that she could help a family with the costs of a funeral. A large part of the Philippines economy is informal and semi-formal, and is critical to the survival of low wage workers and those outside of formal employment.

The Philippines has robust employment laws which address workers’ rights to fair wages, termination and disability benefits, reasonable hours including breaks, overtime, non-discrimination including equal pay, and the right to join unions (DOLE, 2011, 2013). Further, the labour and anti-trafficking laws prohibit unreasonable child labour, bonded labour, threats and assault including both physical and verbal abuse, and also prohibit employers from firing employees to avoid paying benefits such as maternity leave (DOLE,

⁵⁶ See figure 3; the Visayas is the neighbouring region to Mindanao, which shares a common first language. Cebuano and Visayan are among the many terms which refer to the primary language of the southern Philippines.

2011, 2013). Despite these laws that should protect workers' interests, however, workers often cannot access the laws' potential as there is limited and ineffective enforcement to the point that non-compliance is the norm (DOLE, 2011; Hutchison, 2016, p. 184) Hutchinson (2016, p. 185) traced the limited power of workers and workers' associations to the longstanding oligarchic control despite the ostensible democratic political system. Documented legal cases suggest that companies' power is reinforced by legal structures. Departing employees, for example, are not entitled to their retirement or severance payments until they have signed a contract releasing the company from further requirements. Financial pressure due to this delayed payment has resulted in employees agreeing to lesser amounts than what was due, and unable to legally challenge their employers once documents were signed (Bersamin, 2015; Mendoza, 2013). As employment standards are not widely enforced while competition for jobs is intense, there is a high level of tolerance of abuse and control under these conditions. Controlling work situations have thus been normalised as part of wage employment, and situations of human trafficking represent the extreme forms of powerlessness among workers.



Figure 14: "Wanted 10 Girls 18-25 yrs old Apply inside"

Women are more often socially positioned as "domestic" and expected to extend their supposedly inherent qualities and abilities to the workplace in jobs that replicate home

duties and service, embodying and reiterating social inequalities; at the same time, as for men, the largest employment sector was in unskilled work, which is the lowest paid but also least regulated area, the site of many dubious employment practices (see Figure 14 for a “suspicious” job ad) (PSA, 2016b; Yap & Melchor, 2015, p. 277). A common requirement for women workers is that they have a “pleasing personality” and are “willing to be trained” (San Beda, 2017) (see Figure 15). Although statistics list women and men as having roughly comparable employment rates, this does not include the fact that only 50.1% of women are considered part of the labour force but does include the 57% of unpaid family workers who are women (PSA, 2016b). This means that women who are retired or “housewives” are not counted as unemployed, but women working in family businesses or agriculture are counted as employed, despite the fact that neither has any personal income, which suggests that women’s rates of employment are significantly overestimated.



WANTED

- * **Cashier / Waitress**
 - college level pref. HRM
 - restaurant experience
 - knowledgeable with POS system
- * **Waiter**
 - college level, HRM with restaurant exp.
- * **Washer/Janitor**
 - with resto experience.
- * **Kitchen Staff**
 - college level

SUBMIT RESUME INSIDE

Urgent Hiring
Burger Attendant

Qualifications

- Open for High School Grad /Level
- Female
- 18-24 year old.
- Hardworking
- Friendly
- Honest
- W/Pleasing Personality
- W/ or w/o Experience
- Willing to be Trained
- W/ Good work Attitude

Requirements

- Bio data w/ Recent Picture
- NBI
- Brgy. Clearance
- Birth Certificate
- Police Clearance

Interested applicant please text or call:

IMMEDIATE HIRING

LMT SPA THERAPIST

QUALIFICATIONS:

- **FEMALE NOT MORE THAN 30 YEARS OLD**
- **COLLEGE/UNDERGRADUATE OF ANY COURSES**
- **WITH OR WITHOUT EXPERIENCE**
- **NOT OVERWEIGHT AND WITH PLEASING PERSONALITY & GOOD SKIN COMPLEXION**

INTERESTED PARTY APPLY AT

Figure 15: Job advertisements in Davao City. Note requirements that include gender, height, "pleassing" [sic] personality, and tertiary education for cashier/waiter roles.

The Philippines' employment conditions have become increasingly precarious (Bitonio, 2008, p. 26; Frenkel & Kuruvilla, 2002, p. 402; Gonzaga, 2009, p. 49; Kuang-Jung, 2001; Oabel, 2015, p. 214). Irregular and unreliable work hours, underpayment, and underemployment, are a few of the trends that have been reported (Edralin, 2016; Hutchison, 2016, p. 188; Ofreneo, 2013; Sale & Sale, 2014, p. 344). Numerous people told me about how employers would often dismiss and replace their entire staff of service workers every few months; one participant told me about a relative who struggled to survive with jobs lasting for three months only. Workers are often hired on temporary contracts short enough to avoid providing full-time positions and accompanying legal benefits, or hired on contract through an external agency with the same results (Bitonio, 2008, p. 26; Edralin, 2016, p. 2; Hutchison, 2016, p. 188; Ofreneo, 2015, p. 126). Another tactic employers use is the "trainee" provision where new staff can be paid 25% less than the minimum wage for up to two years; Ofreneo and Hernandez (as cited in Ofreneo, 2015, p. 126) found, for example, that at one electronics company in 2010, about 19,000 of the 20,000 workers were classed and paid as trainees. Other complaints from unions include the per-unit pay where workers are only paid per sale (commission) or unit produced such as in garment factories (Ofreneo, 2015, p. 127).

In formal employment, the strict demands and requirements of employers have created a certain "ideal worker" in job application requirements. The shortage of jobs means that the ideal worker has been defined very narrowly – in service sectors, for example, workers are often sought who are female, under about 28 years old, university educated, physically attractive, polite and deferential. As there is a "labour surplus economy," employers easily discriminate against women, older people, youth, and disabled people (Edralin, 2016, p. 2). I would often see and hear job advertisements which included not only details about acceptable gender and maximum age, but also height requirements.⁵⁷ The job advertisement for SM with its cardboard cut-out exemplifies this specificity, with their sought female worker being aged 20-26 while having already completed a four-year tertiary course (see Figure 15). Once employed, workers must comply with a long list of rules and requirements. Common stipulations that I heard about included the following: workers will

⁵⁷ For example, I heard a radio advertisement for male and female security guards requiring that females were at least 5'0 (152 cm) tall and males 5'6 (167 cm).

be financially penalised for each minute they are late to work; mall stores' employees are forbidden to shop in the mall; workers may not bring a bag along to work (in case of theft); (female) workers must wear prescribed makeup as well as the uniform which often includes a short skirt, nylon hose, and high heels. Local business analysts, for example, recommended closer direct monitoring to increase productivity, to the point that any conversations with co-workers had to be written down (Portus & Martinez, 2015, p. 3468).



Figure 16: Job advertisements. Child attendant must be single, age 18-23; the other ad offers a pay range starting below minimum wage.

The power of employers comes from several sources: the scarcity of jobs overall; the lack of the government's will and/or ability to address workplace rights, contract and payment abuses, or health and safety issues; and the tenuous position of low-wage workers where even a short time without work could mean disaster. Hannah's children (Ch.8), for example, were forced to drop out of school when her health meant that she, as the breadwinner, could not work for a period. Court documents suggest that when employees have tried to sue their employers for unpaid wages and benefits, appeals from employers are common, increasing the costs to wronged employees and limiting their ability to see out the process (Bersamin, 2015; Mendoza, 2013). Although court cases for employment infractions are often successful, the limitations of the judicial system mean that this process

can take years, which benefits the employers; settlements awarded are often less than even the entitled pay without other benefits and court costs that the employee has lost (Bitonio, 2008, p. 29; Hutchison, 2016, p. 187). Employment relationships also draw on a history of colonial and patronage relationships where people have simply had to adapt to survive and benefit under those in power (Seki, 2015, p. 1273). The threat of a nebulous, unending supply of precarious, desperate workers willing to accept poor conditions and low pay further informs the relationship between employers and employees.

Structural violence is part of social structures beyond one aspect of life or institutional relationships, but also cumulative and comes from multiple sources simultaneously which maintain oppression (Farmer, 2004). The position of low wage workers is reiterated and internalised through mechanisms such as the “fatalism” that many Filipinos express about their futures, the essentialising of women as domestic and servile, and the lack of high paying jobs in the Philippines as compared to overseas (Aligan, 2016; Parreñas, 2007, 2013; Rutten, 2007). Further, the power of “shame” in this “face”-based culture has been demonstrated as a factor preventing workers from challenging their working conditions, supported by attitudes and practices that reinforce the inferiority and servitude of the poor to the rich and powerful (Rutten, 2007, p. 56; Seki, 2015, p. 1273).⁵⁸ The lack of informal and formal social mechanisms for addressing working conditions has meant that workers “are left to negotiate structural violence in individual ways, perceiving violations of rights as part of everyday struggles to hold on to their employment or resorting to employment as informal/illegal workers” (Kodoth, 2016, p. 86). The normality of low-paid work with substandard working conditions indicates structural violence in employment conditions which maintains the position of the poor in Mindanao.

DonDon’s story below illustrates a few of the ordinary struggles that workers have to deal with in attempting to benefit from their work. His experience of financial exploitation in his work is followed by Gabriel’s story. Gabriel experienced human trafficking in the form of extreme labour exploitation. Although these stories are quite different from one another, they both demonstrate how labour conditions are shaped by employers but also by the

⁵⁸ See chapter eight for further discussion of the role of patronage in local social relations.

wider Mindanao society where both worked. After this, Melissa's story demonstrates how informal labour relationships can also hide and maintain abuse.

6.2 DonDon's story

DonDon was introduced to me by my language teacher, who was also a community worker. She knew about DonDon's workplace experiences and suggested that I meet him. She also suggested that it would be a good chance to test out and improve my language skills by conducting this interview in Cebuano. I was less confident in my abilities than she seemed to be, but I hoped that DonDon would recount his story, as other participants had, without a great deal of prompting, and my teacher would also interpret when needed. DonDon and his family lived in a rough wooden house in a squatter settlement on public land. He and his wife had two children, and his young son sat on the couch to one side and smiled at me shyly during our visit. His wife served us the coffee and cakes that I had brought, and we chatted about our children and laughed, my Cebuano as usual having been a work in progress.

DonDon grew up in an agricultural family, farming and fishing in a rural area not far from Davao. Like many other children, he would help his father with the farming and fishing work. DonDon worked with his family mainly in the school holidays, and he was able to finish high school. After high school, he moved to Davao city to find work. He worked in a number of trades before becoming an assistant to a welder, and had a number of similar positions which gave him apprenticeship experience where he learned the trade himself. "It is difficult to (find a job) if you don't have any skills. But if you have a skill, it is easy."

DonDon had been working as a welder and automotive body builder. He worked at an automobile plant which would import cars from Japan, partially disassembled. DonDon's work was to reassemble the cars to be ready for sale. He worked for a daily rate of ₱500 plus a payment based on the number of cars he assembled in a day or a week. The workers all worked eight-hour days, six days a week. He, like the other men working in the company, was to be paid the daily salary every week, while the commissioned payment built up to be paid less frequently. However, time went on and DonDon waited and kept enquiring, but the commissions owed were never paid. "Their style of giving us money,

whatever was our contract – well, just (bad). They pay us every Saturday, only our salary. But then the full payment for our work, they don't actually give us.” He worked for months and months like this, not knowing what to do but hoping that if he stayed the commissions owed would be eventually paid properly, as per his contract. By the time he had reached ₱100,000 owing to him, DonDon was despairing. He felt trapped by the situation, knowing that if he left he would be forfeiting whatever chance there was that he would be paid what was owed. The day I spoke with him had finally been the breaking point after a long period with *walay bayad* [no payment].

“That’s why I decided that – only earlier today, I have decided to stop from work then I asked for an account (of my final pay). So from this day today, I quit from my job there.”

DonDon had recently been loaned a vehicle to drive. He hoped that whatever he would be paid out from the company would be enough to buy the vehicle outright. Having transportation benefited his family but also supported the small business that they had been running on the side, selling dried fish, which needed to be sourced and transported. He hoped that the income from this would help see them through his period of unemployment. “We had already started a business, so that will be what we will keep doing daily.” After quitting his job, DonDon’s immediate intention was to work as a jeepney driver, taking over from his father who was past 70. Although DonDon was sure that with his skills as a welder he would find another job, for the short term this was the plan to keep the family going.

Financially, things had already been very difficult. DonDon had had to run a side business with his wife just to meet the family’s basic needs, despite his full-time, skilled employment. DonDon was committed to seeing his children through their studies, but recognised the financial pressure that this placed on him and the family’s resources. “I want that they will be able to finish schooling. Whatever profession they want, I will do my best to see them finish their studies, to graduate from college.” Like many Filipino families, DonDon and his wife realised that the best chances for all of their futures depended on their children’s financial abilities and success.

Despite the exploitation that he has experienced, DonDon was relatively optimistic about the family's future. "In my life, my life is fine because even if it's not (perfect) - even if it is quite tough, at least, we are serving the Lord. Because if you are with God, all things that are in this world, he will add to you. That's why you really must prioritize God. Then, your work next. So, our family is fine, even if it's tough like this, but we are happy. No troubles, we understand each other." In the tiny, rough wooden house in the squatter settlement late that *gabii* [evening], I could feel the warmth of DonDon and his wife's generous hospitality.

The other men who worked with DonDon in the automotive company were all in the same situation of being denied their full compensation, and remained so after DonDon left. Like DonDon, they had little recourse or chance of compensation, and would have needed to make the same decision that DonDon did: to choose between staying with the hope that things would change or leaving to try to find a better job. At the time I spoke with DonDon, there was no legal action pending, no official case against the corporation, and no officials had been notified of the contract violations. DonDon's case, I had been told, was unfortunately common, and reflects social configurations of power relations, entwined with economic inequality. As such, normal employment standards are a significant part of the context for labour trafficking such as Gabriel experienced.

6.3 Gabriel's story

Gabriel was the youngest person I interviewed while in Mindanao. At 17, he still seemed to me a little more boy than man. It was difficult to reconcile his sweet, shy manner to the difficult experiences he had endured. It was clear, however, that his current guardian was a very strong woman who cared for Gabriel and was determined to support him in making his way into adulthood.

Gabriel grew up on a farm in the mountains. He worked hard on the farm and went to school, and for a time stayed with his grandmother on the same family farm as his parents. "We had just enough. I would help out (on the farm) and go to school. Sometimes we could eat rice, or we would also just eat *kamote* [sweet potato] and cassava." He and his siblings grew up witnessing domestic violence at home where their father would beat

[“*ginakulata*”]⁵⁹ and intimidate their mother. “Us too, sometimes we avoided, sometimes we didn’t go near him, because he abused us.” When their mother fled from the abuse, the children continued to live with violence and fear at home with their father. Gabriel continued primary school, but he quit to work on the farm before sixth grade. Finally Gabriel could not take the conditions and left home at age fourteen to escape.

After a recruiter came through the rural area looking for able workers for manual labour, an older cousin brought Gabriel to Davao and together they were sent to work at a factory. Soon, though, the cousin decided he could not stand the work and moved on, leaving Gabriel on his own. “That was my first real job.” At age fourteen he had little knowledge about employment or life in the city. The men in the factory worked twelve hours a day from 7:00 am until 7:00 pm, seven days a week. Gabriel was paid ₱100 (\$2.73 NZD) per day. They were given accommodation where they were expected to live in a bunkhouse area of the factory. The workers were also fed, but mainly only rice, which Gabriel described as being rather awful, “it was free, but it was only that bad-smelling kind of rice.” They would also get some dried or fresh fish and occasionally chicken, but it was never enough, and sometimes very little indeed. “It was really lacking, sometimes not enough (for all of us).”

The work was difficult and dangerous. The factory recycled plastic, mostly old plastic sacks, to be used again in manufacturing. Gabriel’s job, like many of the others, was to move the sacks and melt them in the open boiler.

The factory was filthy, decrepit, and incredibly hot. The running water for the manufacturing did not have proper drainage, so there was always dirty, stagnant water adding to the smells and hazards. The chemical fumes from the melting plastic from the old sacks were the most intense smell, adding to the sweat, dirt, dust and mould.

The fumes from the plastic were not only unpleasant, but the workers were often sick from being exposed to the chemicals and dirty conditions. “It’s really dangerous because of the bad smell, and then the others would even get sick.” Gabriel showed me the scars on his legs and feet, deep burns from the melting plastic he worked with all day, every day. He

⁵⁹ See chapter eight for further discussion of this word.

was threatened, physically and verbally abused, humiliated. “I was *ginadaog-daog* [very oppressed].” Gabriel recalled being happy and relieved when the rescuers - including NBI, social services and more - descended, and he thought, “I will be able to leave.”

He reported that older workers, who were on a slightly higher pay scale, initially had mixed emotions about the raid. “They felt kind of sad and worried, but we could no longer bear it.” They were all happy to be free from the horrible working conditions and glad that the employers were being held to account. However, their first thoughts were also about sudden unemployment, and whether they would be paid the wages that were owed. Gabriel told me that older workers had been promised certain wages, but had not been paid properly, and so they were worried that now that the factory was closed there would be no chance of getting the back pay.

The conditions were such that upon freeing the men, the factory was immediately closed down and the buildings condemned.

The men Gabriel worked with were disappointed that when they were rescued, the social services did not help them to find other jobs in the city, and the owed wages were not repaid. “But in the end, nothing. Because (the former employers) have been imprisoned.” At this, most of them took the funds available from the social services to return to their provincial homes, as most of the men like Gabriel and his cousin had been recruited from rural areas.

Gabriel has been assisted under the human trafficking rehabilitation programs which include emergency shelter, psycho-social rehabilitation, education and livelihood programs, and support during legal proceedings. He has had access to a number of support services including counselling and the Alternative Learning System (ALS),⁶⁰ and was placed in a caring home while he worked to complete his studies. Gabriel had also been assisted to resume limited contact with various family members, including his mother whom he had not seen in many years.

⁶⁰ High school equivalency program that could be completed extramurally.

Gabriel reflected that if his mother had not left the family home, his life might have gone differently. “Maybe if my mother didn’t leave us, things would have been better. I could have continued going to school.” Gabriel’s *lola* [grandmother] and his mother had encouraged him to carry on in his schooling. Gabriel and his siblings were very sad and withdrawn once their mother left as they had been very close to her. Their father was more distant as well as being abusive, and Gabriel attributed the emotional impact of his mother leaving as part of the reason he was not able to carry on beyond primary school – “we were all gloomy and had no more desire to go to school because we really missed our mother.” He reasoned that if he had had an education he would not have ended up at the factory.

After this experience had ended, Gabriel had resumed studying with the support of his foster family. He was working towards completing high school through the ALS as well as taking vocational training. He did not have any specific plans about the work he would like to do, but he said that his main ambition was to work to be able to support his family. “Anything as long as there is a job.” Despite his struggles in dealing with an absent mother and abusive father, Gabriel’s primary goal had become contributing financially to their and his siblings’ lives. Like other participants such as Erica (Ch.5), Gabriel’s relationships with his family reveal the complex expectations, entanglements, and social obligations, even toward family members who had abused him. Melissa’s story, similarly, indicates the role of social relationships in perpetuating abuse.

6.4 Melissa’s story

Like DonDon, Melissa’s case is also not registered officially with legal or social services, and no action has ever been taken against her abuser.

Melissa’s family lived in an urban *barangay* [suburb] and was very poor and socially marginalised. “I would say that we come from a very poor family.” Her mother was caring toward Melissa and her many siblings but had not gone past elementary level education. Her father had worked in stable employment, but when he lost his job, he turned to alcohol instead of seeking another position. He became an alcoholic, and her parents were constantly fighting. “He lost his job and instead of trying to, you know, be helpful, he didn’t. He was drinking, he would just drink every day – most of the day, and would

always fight with my Mom.” The family lived together with Melissa’s father’s family, who were often spiteful toward Melissa’s family. As well as her lack of education, Melissa’s mother’s conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism had left her ostracised by her family and neighbours.

When Melissa was very young and her father was working, they had had food, and the children were in school. When he lost his job, however, he sent Melissa’s oldest brother out to work instead of finishing tertiary study, and pressured all of the children to earn money for the family. “It was hard for us to even get rice on our table, and that’s the most basic thing for Filipinos, right? We didn’t have enough rice. Sometimes we would have to borrow money or ask for rice from our aunt and uncle just so we would have something on the table. We didn’t have any meat, so if there was leftover rice from breakfast, we would add sugar and hot water to have as a snack. In the evening, we wouldn’t have any more rice, so we would be hungry while we waited for our *kuya* [older brother] to come home from work and bring us some food or some money to buy noodles for dinner.”

When Melissa was a child, a neighbour offered her a chance to do some work at their home business in exchange for her jeepney fare to get to school every day. Melissa would get up early to work from 4:00 to 5:30 am in exchange for ₱15 (\$0.50 NZD), before going off to school. “It’s our neighbour’s food business. I had to wake up early, for three years I helped out at this business. For that time, the person I was working for, molested me. So finally I stopped.” This situation was already exploitative to some degree, but Melissa was also sexually abused by this employer. Child abuse is a problem in the Philippines and in Melissa’s case was closely connected to her work situation. Further, when Melissa attempted to tell her mother what was happening, she was scolded as the abusing neighbour was also a community leader, and not to be disrespected. “My mom, she didn’t believe me. She said, don’t ever say that about (him).”

As Melissa grew up, she became increasingly angry with the way her mother was treated by the rest of the family. “I remember, I would come home after school and find my mom in the house crying. Really crying, because my auntie just came and said some things, and sometimes they would terrorise her, trying to scare her.” The physical bullying, false accusations, and social rejection made it a very stressful home environment for Melissa’s

mother as well as the children. On one occasion, Melissa took up a bolo knife to ward off her relatives' threatening behaviour, demanding, "So who wants to hurt my mom? Who wants to keep yelling?," and she was proud that she stood up to them and they backed off. As Melissa and her siblings grew up, their ability to support their mother meant that their relatives began to ease off.

Melissa eventually got a position with an NGO, which supported her in going overseas for religious-based leadership training. On her return, Melissa continued to work with the group, using her natural charisma and enhanced leadership skills to contribute to running their programs. They were also able to arrange sponsorship to allow her to enrol in tertiary study, where she obtained a managerial degree in the area of tourism. "I'm the only one who has a degree in my family."

Her oldest brother, as mentioned, was forced to drop out of his tertiary study to become the family breadwinner. He continued to support Melissa's parents and siblings. Melissa's older sister was awarded a scholarship, which she lost due to becoming pregnant while studying. Another brother enrolled in a tertiary course, but even though he had a scholarship for the tuition fees, he had to drop out because he could not afford the materials and transport costs for the required projects. Many of her siblings were working in the informal economy, some supported by other family members.

Melissa was content in her role at the NGO, where she was challenged, made use of her training, and had close friends. Long-term, she had a dream to someday work on a cruise ship. Melissa was one of the most upbeat, high-energy people I have known, and she excelled in sharing her enthusiasm with children and adults alike. I have no doubt that if she got the chance, she would be an ideal cruise director, joining the ranks of the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

The man who had abused Melissa still worked at a church in a position of authority and lived near Melissa's family. She had taken an active role in attempting to break ties with him, and to see that he was not permitted to visit their home or be around her younger siblings. He had not been prosecuted, and nothing had been done to stop his re-offending.

Melissa's story illustrates how the informal economy can also be a site of exploitation and abuse. In each of these stories, the workers had little power to change their situation, because of both the employment situation and the social context.

6.5 Structural violence, labour, and human trafficking

These stories illustrate some of the difficulties inherent to the work and employment experience in the Philippines. Gabriel's story illustrates how the relationship between human trafficking and a person's ability to escape is not always as clear cut as it might appear, as well as the role that family relationships play in shaping a life course. DonDon's story also indicates how getting out of an exploitative situation is not just a matter of being able to leave physically or quit the job; social and financial entanglements can make it extremely difficult to choose to leave. Melissa's experiences also indicate how multiple power imbalances can support abuse and exploitative labour, as do social networks and relationships. Each of these stories indicates that the factors that maintain conditions of exploitation, caused by a person or group exploiting another, include social factors beyond the employment relationship alone.

The economic conditions of widespread poverty, low wages and unemployment normalise and undermine acknowledgement of the severity of exploitation, as degrees of the powerlessness and economic instability that characterise labour exploitation are typical and often expected in employment. Workers are socialised from childhood to be obedient and adapt to the demands placed upon them by parents, teachers, and employers (Cannell, 1999, p. 29; Velayo, 2005). Combined with the overall employment standards and competition for jobs, employment relationships are often characterised by highly unequal power relationships. Not only was Melissa paid a pittance for hours of work early in the morning, but she was sexually abused. The way her employer abused and controlled her during her work time implicates her work as the site of abuse; this was not only a case of child abuse. The position of children within society where they are expected to be respectful, subservient and obedient to elders exacerbates cases of exploitative or abusive child labour and allows few options for escape. Financial and sexual exploitation were made easier by Melissa's age and status, as well as her family's social status, and Melissa's reliance on the fare she earned to get to school.

DonDon's situation is one example of how employees have used money and false promises to control and exploit workers. Leaving his job meant not just finding new employment, but a real possibility of catastrophe when already living close to the bread line. When DonDon left his job, he was also forfeiting any chance of recovering the significant amount of money that the company owed him. This threat helped to keep DonDon compliant and under his employers' control, continuing to work hard in the expectation that he would eventually be paid for his efforts. In the Philippines, debt of this kind has been frequently implicated as the mechanism of control in various types of human trafficking, particularly agent-facilitated labour migration (Parreñas, 2011). Gabriel's coworkers experienced a similar situation, which highlights the way that debt can be a secondary violence in controlling against the possibility of objection to undesirable or violent working conditions.

Social networks are important in getting work but also used in recruiting for legitimate as well as questionable or illegal, and exploitative work situations. Social pressure can maintain employment standards where official processes fail. I witnessed this process in action where a financial dispute between a landlord and real estate agent was settled, neither in person or through the courts, but through mediation by a mutually respected friend who pressed both parties to reach an agreement. My husband was also warned repeatedly not to do business dealings with anyone he had not been personally introduced to, as they would cheat him. However, employment through personal connections is not always an option. Gabriel's position in the factory that he initially entered alongside his cousin is an example of how family members help shape employment activities, although in their case the role of the recruiter was also significant. This pattern of family influence was evident in many of the stories I heard, and younger people in particular often got a job – or were exploited or trafficked – through a friend or extended family member. Erica's story (Ch.5), for example, was shaped by existing social relationships as, like Gabriel, she fled from abuse and poverty, and was subsequently trafficked by a friend into the sex industry. Social networks can both facilitate low-wage work and human trafficking and mitigate against its effects.

The relational model of economic activity means in practice that there is significant pressure to use resources for consumption rather than investment as those who have money

are expected to support those who do not. This is also a social investment and reciprocal safety net, but the relational economic life depends on investment in people and relationships – subsistence, education, health, and reciprocal care. Security that is based on current work and earnings produced by the family overall is ultimately limited in the Philippines' current economy that does not provide enough adequately paid employment for potential workers. The high levels of unemployment and underemployment and inability to access jobs for many people supports the disposability of precarious workers.

These stories suggest that the binary framework of victimhood/agency is not complicated enough to hold the ways that individual agency and choice is made and constrained by social and cultural factors including the perceived options to choose between. When human trafficking has been equated to slavery with its accompanying imagery of chains and physical force, the question is sometimes reduced to a matter of individual control or complicity. There are horrendous cases of chains, violence and control in all types of trafficking that exist around the world, and particularly disturbing cases involving sex trafficking of minors in the Philippines have been reported.⁶¹ A focus on the control between trafficker and trafficked, however, can obscure the wider constraints that facilitate exploitation on one hand, and on the other, prevent a trafficked or exploited worker from being able to leave. Gabriel, in theory, could have run away at the end of a work day. This does not mean that he was not trafficked by his abusive employers, who benefitted from his youth and status which kept him from leaving as well as their threats. However, a wider focus can “go beyond narrow framings of blame to bring social systems into account” (Benson, 2008, p. 621).

Even in extreme cases, structural violence supports physical violence. A reported case in Mindanao, from one of the NGOs I worked with, involved a young girl who was chained up, beaten, and forced to sell sex by a relative. I do not know whether there were eventually convictions, but a case of human trafficking such as this certainly demands some form of direct action. However, the girl was reported to be in her relative's “care” as both of her parents were overseas as labour migrants as they had been unable to provide for her through work in the Philippines. The girl had been left with this relative – undoubtedly an

⁶¹ See chapter one for an overview of the human trafficking situation in the Philippines.

emotionally violent situation for both parents and daughter - because of the violence of poverty. Further to this, the limitations of social services providers and of prosecuting offenders mean that the power of the state is a less influential protection as a disincentive to trafficking and abuse than is intended by the strong anti-trafficking laws.

Structural violence operates on a social level, is systematic and invisible, but exists alongside a “moral economy still geared to pinning praise or blame on individual actors” (Farmer, 2004, p. 307). In the Philippines, the attribution of individual-level responsibility within the formal economic sector contrasts sharply with the collective sense of identity in wider social relations, supporting the use of individual “shame” to ensure compliance (Rutten, 2007; Teng-Calleja, Baquiano, & Montiel, 2015, p. 230). This too is a manifestation of violence, both against a person’s sense of self and in transferring the wider constraints that people experience to an *individual* responsibility to overcome them.

Employees may be desperately poor and not paid a decent wage; they then are often closely monitored by their employers, so they do not steal. Employees may not be able to afford many transport options, and must work informally to support themselves; they are penalised by the employer if they are late. Employees might not afford makeup and decent clothes; their appearance is stipulated and monitored by the employer. The mistrust and control of workers is an example of the systematic, indirect structural violence which arises from the unequal power relationships between employers and employees, as well as the violence of poverty which is given a second blow through employers’ controls. Thus, structural violence is compounding both in general, and in specific areas such as employment.

Although Gabriel’s experience of labour exploitation was “officially” recognised as human trafficking, while Melissa’s and DonDon’s were not, the case that I am presenting is that all of these experiences emerge from the same structural violence by which employers are able to exert a great deal of control over their employees. Exploitative and abusive practices are normalised, hidden and maintained in this context, and the wider structural violence of poverty and uncertainty press on employees to endure the conditions for the sake of keeping the job, often no matter how undesirable it may be. As Scheper-Hughes (2006, p. 14) pointed out, a significant manifestation of structural violence is the “paralysis and

powerlessness among vulnerable populations forced into complicity with the very social forces that are poised, intentionally or not, to destroy them.”

Conclusions

Work in the Philippines is highly precarious, not only in its uncertain duration but also in the exposure of workers to financial and physical risks. Unemployment, underemployment, and high levels of poverty constrain workers to accept and endure the work that is available; the inadequacy of labour standards enforcement allows employers to set their own conditions and stipulations without consequence when they exploit their workers. The significant control exerted by employers is a form of structural violence in itself, and it is also a secondary structural violence in terms of preventing the wider social constraints from affecting employees' labour through further controls. Structural violence is thus compounding in the experience of labour, in that it comes from multiple sources which increase its effects, and that the risks that it creates are directed back to individuals in employment relationships.

Participation in the informal economy is a necessary strategy for survival, but informal labour relationships can also hide abuse, exploitation, and child labour. Domestic labour trafficking emerges from the same context where employers are enabled to wield a great deal of control over their workers with little government intervention. Migration is a strategy to escape the uncertainty and unemployment in the Philippines, but it has become a self-perpetuating necessity as the reliance on migration for economic development has stalled the expansion of the domestic economy and local jobs (Ofreneo, 2015, p. 114). Migration, and the corresponding potential for trafficking and abuse of migrants, is also significantly shaped by the local employment situation. The lack of decent jobs is experienced as violence which pushes people towards risky or undesirable options, both in the Philippines and overseas.

7: International migration: opportunities, risks, and human trafficking



Figure 17: Migration agents' advertisements around Davao City - "Good life awaits you"

"Work overseas the legal way! Take the free Pre-Enrolment Orientation Seminar (PEOS) online!" (POEA, <http://www.poea.gov.ph>).

I was on my way home from fieldwork, relieved and excited to be reunited with my family after the two months that I had remained in the Philippines on my own. I started chatting with the man sitting next to me, Sam, a long-term Filipino migrant worker. He was on the first leg of his journey, flying from Davao to Singapore, on his way back to the UK and away from his family. The stress of migration had led to his marriage breaking up years ago, Sam told me, and he returned to the Philippines as often as he could to visit his nearly-grown children. Returning to the UK was a difficult and emotional moment for him, and after two months of mothering from afar I could only begin to imagine the constant feeling

of distance between migrants and their loved ones. I told Sam about my research, which included understanding the place of migration in Filipino society. “You want to know about migration?,” he replied, “I’ll tell you. It tears families apart.”

Sam’s comments reflected what others had told me about the difficulty of migration, but contradict the image of migration as the epitome of success in the Philippines. Researchers agree that human trafficking is a migration problem, and particularly a problem for low-skilled labour migrants (Andrees & Linden, 2005; Bernat & Winkeller, 2010, p. 189; Cho, 2015; Jani & Anstadt, 2013; Leun & Schijndel, 2016; O’Connell Davidson, 2015; Parreñas, 2011; Urada et al., 2016). In the Philippines as in other areas, there are also established links between irregular migration facilitated by an agent (“human smuggling”) and subsequent trafficking (Aronowitz, 2003; Guevarra, 2010; Martin, 2005; Renshaw, 2016). The processes that drive migration also create the possibility of human trafficking.

Human trafficking of migrants is often conceived as the (exploitative) control of migrants. However, imagining a concrete distinction between free, autonomous migrants and those under some kind of control is a false dichotomy. In this chapter I will describe the ways that human trafficking relates to, mirrors, and extends the controls and restraints that migrants from the Philippines frequently experience. Migrants are willing to run the risks associated with migration, which include human trafficking, because they are pushed to do this by multiple factors beyond their control. From poverty and lack of opportunity for education or jobs, to the pressure to support immediate and wider family, and the government’s policies on migration, there are multiple pressures which shape migration decisions and experiences. Migrants are under employers’ control to varying degrees; human trafficking can represent the worst end of a spectrum of practices rather than a discrete event or occurrence. The fact that the employers’ rights, and the migrant labourer’s lack of rights, are often maintained by law suggests that the control in human trafficking and exploitative labour practices can be an extension of the controls exerted by the state (O’Connell Davidson, 2015).

The “culture of migration” and government policy of migration in the Philippines which codifies migration as the path to success, while legally denying migration to many of those who most desperately need a better financial opportunity, pushes irregular migration as

much as it does regular migration. The demand for smugglers and migration agents, both within and outside of official government regulations, is an outcome of the same official processes. Agents offer credit which places migrants in debt and contractual obligation, and even relationships with legal agents can resemble situations of trafficking and debt bondage.

This chapter is an attempt to engage seriously with the proposition enunciated most clearly by O’Connell-Davidson (2015), that if the objection to human trafficking is on the basis of it being a form of control and exploitation, this demands analysis of the other forms of control and exploitation that shape migrants’ lives, and how these relate to the controls in trafficking. O’Connell-Davidson (2015) suggested that rather than seeing trafficking as slavery, a better metaphor is to compare irregular migrants from developing or conflict-ridden countries with historic escaping slaves who were outside of the law and vulnerable to exploitation. Parreñas (2010b, 2011), similarly, has identified human trafficking of Filipinos as a problem of the lack of migrants’ rights, where the law maintains their vulnerability and social exclusion. In the context of structural violence, the multiple “goats” and “fences” at various levels of society represent macro-level coercion and control in the processes of migration.

7.1 Migration in the Philippines

The Philippine government’s policies on migration, as well as the availability, resources and powers of embassy and consulate services, shape, constrain, and control the experiences and decisions related to migration. Remittances are taxed by the Philippine government, and there are tight controls over who may and may not migrate. “Suspicion of human trafficking” has been used as an excuse to detain travellers, primarily women, who are suspected to be planning to leave the Philippines to work illegally and as such are a danger to themselves in becoming vulnerable to trafficking (Hwang, 2017, p. 132). Legal migrants must go through the Overseas Workers’ Welfare Association (OWWA) programs, paying for transport and membership, before securing a job offer prior to leaving. Female domestic workers under age 23, anyone over 45 in most cases, and anyone without proper medical certification as fit to work, as well as an approved job offer through an officially recognised agent, is not permitted to travel for work (Oishi, 2017, p. 37). The observation

that the majority of documented migrants do not come from the poorest households also indicates the effects of restrictions to legal migration (Ducanes, 2015, p. 104).

At the same time, the government continues its dependence on migration and remittances, supports training programs for overseas work such as nursing and seafaring, and legitimates and codifies the desire for better paid work through migration (Oh, 2016, p. 200). For those outside of the official programs, this is a contradictory pressure both to migrate and to not migrate – or, to not migrate legally. Despite the multiple legal and practical measures to support migration, the Philippines government has been hesitant to admit the degree to which the economy is dependent on this strategy (Agbola & Acupan, 2010, p. 388). Similarly, the government has also denied the link between widespread migration and human trafficking. Success stories are reported and celebrated, overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) lauded as heroes. On the other side, the extreme cases of abuse and human trafficking arouse outrage and sympathy. However, there is little effort to connect the two, or to tell some of the more ordinary stories, of workers who have lost their jobs, been unable to repay their debts, or experienced everyday harassment and discrimination as Filipinos abroad.

Local gender inequalities have been continued and magnified in migration. Migrant mothers in particular have been vilified in the media as abandoning their children and contributing to social problems (Barber, 2008, p. 1271; Lam & Yeoh, 2016; Parreñas, 2013). Remittances are shaped by inequality, where women have been found to remit less earnings despite their greater numbers and higher levels of education overall (Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2006). Available work options have been based on racialized conceptions of gender, such as domestic work and caregiving for Filipinas, and low-level manual labour for Filipino men (Barber, 2008; Bernardo et al., 2016; Lindio-McGovern, 2003; Lopez, 2012). Nursing, for example, is a sector which is overwhelmingly female, and one of the Philippines main skilled migrant sectors (Ball, 2004; Choi & Lyons, 2012; Masselink & Lee, 2013; Prescott, 2016; Ronquillo et al., 2011). Nursing training includes socialisation to a certain feminised persona and aesthetic, which my friend Wanda, a nurse, described including requirements about both demeanour and physical appearance; for example, anyone not meeting height (FEU, 2017) or physical appearance requirements, such as “to

be physically fit (without deformities/abnormalities)” (San Beda, 2017) or to not have any tattoos (PLMAT, 2010), may be excluded from training and access to these job opportunities. The rhetoric and practices relating to the human trafficking of migrants have also been heavily shaped by gendered ideas. Men in situations of forced labour may not be recognised where the working definition of human trafficking is thought to include only women. Migrant women have often been conflated with trafficked persons or labelled “vulnerable” and as such subject to further controls by the state, as has happened to Filipinas stopped before boarding their flights (Hwang, 2017). The social pressures and constraints based on gender have been codified to extend gender-based controls in the labour migration experience.

Agents extend and transform the control by the Philippine government, as well as policies once migrants are overseas, and exert their own controls on migrants. Under Philippine law for safeguarding migrants’ welfare, potential labour migrants must have an agent secure an offer of work before they will be permitted to depart (Oh, 2016, p. 199; Renshaw, 2016); see Figures 17 and 18 for examples of the abundant advertising for migration agents. Agents can complicate the migration process as well as adding costs, but can also offer security within the migration process. Legitimate agents who comply with government requirements, such as registration as a migrant with official support agencies and with the migrant insurance program, and provide ongoing support can fulfil the intentions of the law which requires the use of agents. Legal migration under government or registered independent agents provides many safety nets but can be costly, time consuming, and complicated, and does not guarantee a job offer at the end of the process (Paul, 2017, p. 186). Migration through an unofficial agent (smuggler) is faster and cheaper, and often comes with the promise of a job, or can be the fastest way to access a known job opportunity. However, there are few safeguards against human trafficking, abuse or exploitation including underpayment outside of legal channels.

Even legal agents can leave migrants trapped by their debts and contracts, unable to leave an abusive employer without forfeiting their earnings and unable to repay (Aronowitz, 2003; Parreñas, 2010b, 2011). Migrants in this situation can both resemble and not resemble trafficking cases. Migrants may have been deceived as to the type of work or are

not free to leave their jobs in cases of abuse or exploitation, but it can be the agent through financial debt and/or the state through the limitations of visa requirements rather than the employer who exerts this control. Agents, whether registered or not, can also perpetuate human trafficking, exploitation or abuse if they do not support workers in exiting these situations to prosecute or find new employment. In irregular migration, the difference between smuggling and trafficking can at times be the payment plan – those extending payment plans have ongoing power over the migrant which can result in debt bondage or human trafficking (Saat, 2009). The relationship between the agent and the migrant is endorsed by the state as a legal requirement, but not controlled once overseas, and debt bondage in particular is difficult to measure or regulate.



Figure 18: "Work as a Factory worker in South Korea." Note the requirements of minimum high school graduate and age 18-36 years

Traffickers have controlled victims through the threat of violence posed by the destination state if they were to be found as illegal migrants, for example by taking passports to prevent

escape (Saat, 2009, p. 145). Indeed, the consequences for illegal migrants in common labour migration destinations for Filipinos have ranged from huge fines (e.g. in China, Italy, Japan), to detention or imprisonment (e.g. in Australia, USA) or even caning (e.g. in Malaysia) (Abella, 2005, p. 66; Asis, 2005, p. 30; Saat, 2009). In Sabah, Malaysia, large numbers of irregular Filipino migrants are regularly deported, but the well-documented human trafficking problems are not recognised by local authorities (Saat, 2009, pp. 147–148). Migration is controlled and shaped by the laws and practices in the destination country, control which impacts at every level from decisions about migration to the day-to-day relationships with overseas employers.

Overseas racialized perceptions shape the position and options of migrants, such as where “Filipino women’s racial, national and gender identities are connected to their opportunities for mobility” (Constable, 2006, p. 9). The image of Filipinas as docile and submissive is particularly pernicious and has been implicated in cases where Australian men have sought Filipina brides, and used this idea to justify domestic violence against their wives who did not conform to this image (Cunneen & Stubbs, 2000; Tigno, 2014, p. 20). Migrants have often been paid less for the same work based on migration status or country of origin rather than skills. The limited job options also goes beyond government policy to racialized status, and in Japan and Rome Filipinas have reported being denied access to any opportunities other than domestic and caregiving work (Ball & Piper, 2002; Lindio-McGovern, 2003). Research with Filipino labour migrants overseas has revealed that degrees of control, abuse, and exploitation are ubiquitous, particularly for unskilled workers (Choi & Lyons, 2012; Constable, 2003, 2006; Huang & Yeoh, 2007; S. McKay, 2007; van der Ham et al., 2014). In several countries it has also been noted that “Filipina” has been used synonymously with “domestic helper” (Briones, 2009b, p. 59). Domestic workers, labourers, and others who live at their work site may not have access to social relationships outside of the household or labour site, which further reinforces their status and prevents outside influences or context for the labour conditions. Where migrants have been looked down on and rejected from normal social relations including work, these conditions have significant effects on the experience of migration as well as limiting the possibilities for success (Ball, 2004; Domingo-Kirk, 1994; Hilsdon, 2006; Lopez, 2012; Parreñas, 2017; van der Ham et al., 2014).

The intersection of gender discrimination and Filipino migrant status has resulted in skilled nurses and medical professionals often having been employed in lower status and paid positions than those from other locations. At the same time, even lower status positions overseas are often more lucrative than opportunities at home (Ball, 2004; Barber, 2008; Choi & Lyons, 2012; Ronquillo et al., 2011). Even fully trained medical doctors in the Philippines have sought nursing opportunities primarily in the Western world, and nurses have accepted “unskilled” caregiving positions (Ball, 2004; Barber, 2008, p. 1279). Filipinos in the Middle East and the Western world have generally been relegated to lower-paid, lower-status medical roles with little opportunity to advance (Ball, 2004; Barber, 2008; Choi & Lyons, 2012; Ronquillo et al., 2011). The underpayment of skilled migrants illustrates how international political and migration status has real and monetary consequences in the global economy, and is an extension of the same processes where unskilled migrant workers are subject to exploitation, unsafe conditions, low pay, and abuse because of their status.

Bianca was formerly one such “unskilled” migrant worker that I met in Mindanao. She was a quiet woman but always quick to laugh. Her story contributes to understanding the relationship between migration and human trafficking, and to viewing a more complete picture of a migrant’s life cycle.

7.2 Bianca’s story

I had known Bianca through friends for a few months before I met her in the restaurant where we sat down to have lunch together and conduct the interview. She had done some childcare for us, and I arranged the interview through younger friends who stressed that she did not need to participate, but Bianca was happy to talk about her life. Although I have not included most of our banter, we had a lot of fun and joking during the interview, particularly when I asked Bianca whether she hoped to get married someday. It was also interrupted by my - unsuccessful - attempts to get a watermelon shake without any sugar added to it, Filipino food tending to be much sweeter than what I was used to. Bianca spoke English well as a result of her overseas work, and hers was the only interview I conducted without an outside support worker present in some capacity. However, she also did some work with an NGO I was familiar with, and after knowing her for some time, and the

significant time that had passed since her migrant trafficking experience, I felt confident that we could conduct the interview and that she had significant support systems in place already. I was, however, prepared with the same strategies of being attuned to her emotional state, making sure she knew her rights as a participant, and offering to arrange follow-up support if she wanted it, which she declined. Although these safeguards are important, the fact that Bianca had no concerns about relating her story highlights the fact that a trafficking event does not necessarily or permanently cause a person to adopt an identity of “victim.”

Bianca was raised by her grandmother through her elementary school years. “I really did grow up with my grandmother, and I was with her for a long time. It’s like half of my life, until I was a teenager I was with her, all through elementary school. And I love her so much. She’s my dear grandmother like that. I always say this that I always like my grandmother more than my mother, because I was with her all the time. And growing up with my grandmother was so much fun.” When Bianca was a teenager, she returned to her parents’ home. There was a lot of fighting, arguing, and domestic violence where Bianca’s mother would begin beating her father. Eventually her father moved out to a house nearby. “It was a sad story because they broke up.” Bianca tried to persuade him to come home, saying that the family missed him. “I said, ‘pa, come home. Come home already. We miss you at home. Come on, go home already. We want you to stay with us in the house.’ And then, he wasn’t coming home. ‘No, I won’t because I’m angry with your mother.’ And then he said, ‘no, I can’t. I’m not living there or else, if you force me to stay in the house maybe I will kill your mother.’”

Bianca struggled with this domestic situation while progressing through high school. Her first year, she was paying for her schooling by boarding as a domestic helper in exchange for school fees and room and board. “I was working in the house of my landlady. Fetching water, and doing her washing and cleaning her house, just to have my allowance for school and to get my boarding free because I’m working. She was a nice lady.” Bianca had enjoyed living with the landlady and her two children, helping around the house and studying.

At this point, Bianca's family instructed her to quit school, and not even finish the last four months of her first level. "In the middle, they wanted me to stop – they didn't want me to continue school, because (they said) they can't support me anymore. I said, 'you are not supporting me. I'm supporting myself.'" Bianca was concerned about her parents and siblings, so she finally agreed and returned home to try to help. "But I couldn't do anything about it." There turned out to be no chance of her parents' reconciliation. Bianca's aunt, the sister of her mother, suggested that the family move to Davao, away from her father. So her mother sold the three farms and the big house that they owned. Everything was sold. Bianca recalled, "I didn't see the money, what they did with the money. We didn't even buy *slippers*,⁶² no new clothes. I don't know what happened with that money that they received from the house...I would think to myself, what are these people doing? They don't even care that they have children. There are five of us, I am the second child. My youngest brother, he was only two or three at that time. I was quite shocked at what they did."

A visit back to the rural area turned out to be the last time Bianca would ever see her father. While they were there, Bianca would sneak out to see him as her mother would not allow her to go. Once, however, she was caught. "I went home, she really beat me badly, really, really bad, that I don't know where her hands went on my face that all the blood came out from my nose. She saw it (bleeding a lot). She saw the blood on the floor. She cleaned it, then I went to one corner, sat there and cried. 'I want my Dad.' But I don't know why I didn't have the strength to go and run. I just stayed there and cried under the table. That was more anger building in my heart." Bianca had been close to her father and missed him badly over the years to come.

Back in Davao, Bianca's aunt helped her enrol in school again, and she finished high school while doing most of the housework for her mother and siblings. "I was working, every chore in the house, I was doing it. And at night, I was doing night school. I wasn't doing it in day time, it was from 4 pm to 8 pm until I finished high school. Then after I finished high school, my uncle wanted me to go abroad. He said, 'I'd rather choose you to go abroad and help your mother and your siblings than keep schooling. I said 'okay. I'll go

⁶² "Slippers" is the local English word for jandals (inexpensive plastic thong sandals); I found the term confusing and referred to my jandals as *mga tsinelas* (Cebuano) instead while I was in the Philippines.

abroad instead, maybe after 2 or 3 years, I'll come back and finish my college.' That didn't happen, I stayed abroad for the longest time.”

The agency that Bianca's family used arranged work for her as a domestic helper. It was only after she had gone that Bianca realised the agency was operating illegally, and had sent her overseas without a proper work contract or travel documents. “They didn't have their proper papers and documents, and they wrote on the contract that I will have my salary for \$200 (USD/month), but when I got there, I only got \$100.”

“Only \$100. They don't give a day off. They don't give the salary properly and they were keeping my passport. It is not allowed that your employer keep your passport. And those people, that's what they were doing to their helpers. They were keeping the passports, they were not giving a day off and even the salary, they didn't really give it monthly. Sometimes they give it, very late, after 2 months, after 3 months. And then most of their families were waiting to be sent their money.” The employers took Bianca's passport, and she was forced to work seven days a week. “I missed (home) a lot. I really cried. I said, ‘I want to go home.’” The woman who employed Bianca would also beat her to force her into compliance. “The worst thing, she beat me, that employer. That employer, she really did hit me.”

Nine months passed, and Bianca was working hard without a day off, and she had not yet been paid. First, she began to inquire about her passport. She was informed that the employers had lost it. The employers promised to help her get a new passport, and that she would be paid, but time went on without any change. After another month had passed, Bianca realised that she needed to escape. “It was ten months already; the salary and passport were still not there. I said, ‘okay this is it. I need to get out of this house.’ I had a strong conviction to run away, because she already hit me. So, I ran away from that house. It was very far out in the countryside.” Bianca left and ran away, on foot and without even her passport.

She eventually found her way to the city. First, she sought out the agency that had placed her in the home and was supposed to take care of her. When she got to their office, though, the guard told her that they were not there anymore. The agents had fled to the USA after

having been found as an unscrupulous and illegal operation, and were being sought by the police. Bianca was at a loss, but other Filipina domestic workers she had met told her to go to the Philippine consulate and report her employer for being violent.

The officer at the consulate demanded a medical certificate as proof of the violence Bianca had experienced, which she could not provide. “He said, ‘where’s the bruise?’, because they want to get the medical certificate. I said, ‘how can I show it to you? Because she slapped me. There is no bruise because she slapped me yesterday and today I went to the consulate and there is no mark anymore.’” Previously, Bianca had never had a day off where she could have sought medical verification of her bruises. The agent did, however, accompany her back to the employer’s home to help her collect her things. With his support, Bianca did this and received only \$500 USD, which included the reimbursement for the passport. Even at the reduced wage rate, she should have received \$1000 USD plus the costs of getting a new passport. The Philippine consulate supported Bianca in renewing her documents. Bianca did not have the money to return home, and her family expected her to be sending money. She sent them most of what she had received, and looked again for work.

She found a new employer, and this time they were “very nice people” and she enjoyed working for them. However, she was still not paid the expected minimum salary, and received \$100 USD per month. This time Bianca did not mind, as the conditions were so much improved, and she was also given a day off on Sundays. Her employer would often drive her to attend church on this day, which was a valuable source of connections with other Filipinos and emotional support.

Bianca remained in the Middle East and had five employers over the first ten years. She had to change employers periodically to obtain the correct documents for her to legally work, and she was continually trying to find higher paying positions. After ten years working, Bianca still had nothing for herself. All of her wages were sent back to the Philippines to support her family and her siblings’ educations. “I had been there for a long time already and still didn’t have anything for myself. Everything would go to my family, and my siblings and their schooling. My mother, she didn’t work. And she had a problem. With her sister, they had a gambling problem.”

At this time, Bianca found an ideal position. “After that, I found these very nice people. They were from America and they were working there at a private company. They had an adopted child.” Here, she was well paid, and even got to travel with the family, including returning with them to travel through the USA. “I got the opportunity to travel with them to the US and go lots of places in the US. I was looking after the child, and that was my big adventure to travel.” There, Bianca met other Filipino migrants who urged her to stay and not return to the Middle East with her employing family. Although Bianca had ambitions to work in the USA and hoped to go back again, she returned to the Middle East and continued working for the same family. “I was with them for ten years, and they were giving me a salary of \$300 a month.” She continued to support her family at home, who particularly depended on her when a sister needed an operation, and sent an allowance for her mother who was still without an income. Bianca’s position ended when the girl in her care was eleven years old, and she went home to the Philippines. She was now about 40.

The family from the USA continued to support Bianca financially. They paid for her to attend two years of Bible College, and they continued to send Christmas and birthday presents. They are past retirement age now, and still lived in the Middle East, where Bianca hoped to visit them again one day. “We still keep in touch on Facebook. I’m very thankful and grateful for them. They are a very nice little family. That’s the memories I have of them.”

Since she has been back in the Philippines, Bianca does not support her family financially any more. “Now that I’m here in the Philippines, I don’t have much work. I don’t have much income anymore and I don’t send them anything.” Now the other siblings support each other and their mother, who lives rurally again with one of Bianca’s sisters, and Bianca visits with them and her nieces and nephews. Bianca has been working as a *katabang* [domestic], taking work as she can find it, and volunteering at church and in various religious organisations.

Bianca would love to move overseas and have better work opportunities, and after 20 years abroad, she has few social networks in Davao any more. Her friends have moved on, and her overseas friends are still in the Middle East. “I feel very sad and alone (missing my friends)”. Facebook has allowed Bianca to continue some friendships, but it is not the same

as having people around her. I asked Bianca if she would like to get married someday. “I’m waiting. I’m happy enough, but you know, there is still a need.”

While Bianca was overseas, she missed out on her family and friends growing, living, and even dying without Bianca getting to be part of it. “My father died, because he got sick. I never saw him, I never heard anything from him. He didn’t know how to write, so I couldn’t get a letter from him. I had a dream that we were together in a boat, talking and holding his hand. I really missed my dad. I asked my sister about him...and I heard that he died.” The death of her beloved grandmother who raised Bianca as a child struck her hard when she read of it in a letter from her sister. “I loved my grandmother so much, I love her so much.” Bianca credits God for bringing her dreams where she vividly experienced moments of connection with both her father and grandmother even though she was so far away. She also credits God’s kindness and her time at Bible College with enabling her to forgive and let go of the anger she had held towards her mother and her uncle for many years. “Time goes by, years go by, and I started to realise how it’s not really good to hold anger in your heart for a long time. Because whatever you do, you are not happy.”

The church Bianca attended in the Middle East was predominantly Filipino and provided a sense of community and a chance to develop close friendships with other domestic workers. “Lots of Filipinos go there and people are very close. After church...you have food, fellowship, chatting and sharing, until the night, and it’s fun. They meet other Filipino people and they can speak their own language and do their own thing, have fun. They even have karaoke. For the girls that are new, it’s a comfort for them. When they feel that somebody is taking care of them, talking to them in Tagalog, comforting and praying for them, they like it. They don’t miss their family so much in the Philippines. It helps them recover from their longing for their families.” This was an important source of strength and rejuvenation. She also described how on Sundays she and some friends would sometimes drive for long distances to a river oasis area that reminded them of the Philippines. “There are nice trees, even banana trees there, and vegetables that are here in the Philippines.” These strategies helped Bianca to recover from the stresses that she had experienced and to endure long and lonely years away from her family and home.

Now, Bianca is in her late 40s. She has not had her own children, nor has she yet had a marriage or intimate partnership. She has no savings or assets to show for her years of work overseas, everything having been sent back for her family to live their lives. Bianca has had to rebuild her life in the Philippines, making new friends and reconnecting with family who do not live close at hand, and without skills beyond domestic and caring work. Older people in the Philippines must generally rely on family for support; unless things change, Bianca will need to rely on her siblings' families and her local church networks when she gets older. She still has hope that her former employer or friends might support her to move overseas, and she also hopes to find a husband. At the same time, Bianca is deeply involved in local religious organisations who, along with her family, provide her current support and sense of meaning and community.

7.3 Jasmine's story

“I have encountered so many problems.” – Jasmine

Jasmine was a former migrant, a friend of my friend Nina, the NGO worker who introduced us. For our interview, I met Jasmine in a food court in Davao. I had heard from our mutual friend Nina that Jasmine had been having second thoughts about doing an interview with me as she was feeling rather depressed in the period of grief after losing several family members in the past year. I was concerned about the ethical and practical concerns over interviewing someone who might be depressed or traumatised, but I trusted Nina's judgement and her presence as a support person.

Jasmine was a slight woman, even by Philippine standards, with a tiny voice. But she was clear and direct, speaking straightforwardly and with control in her high-pitched, quiet way. The food court was quiet in the midmorning under the fluorescent light. Nina ate and waited nearby with her children, so we could join her when we were done. Jasmine was struggling with depression and grief but wanted to tell her story. Through her narrative, I forgot my initial impression of her small stature as she gave the sense of being in control and determined as she described what she had endured in her life and even in recent history.

Jasmine grew up in a large town in Mindanao and was the youngest among her brothers and sisters. Jasmine had a stable family life and she was able to complete high school in the Philippines. She married a Filipino man, Ken, who farmed in a rural area. They had a son together, but rural life did not provide much economic opportunity for their future.

Jasmine's ambition was to work to be able to contribute to her family.

Jasmine and a Filipina friend travelled to Lebanon to work. They went over with forged documents via Bangkok to work as domestic labourers. Jasmine found a job, "even though I didn't have papers, I worked for two years in a hotel as a housekeeper." The hotel's beauty spa needed a therapist, and Jasmine's employer assigned her to be trained and work in the spa. Jasmine worked for a year as a therapist, using her new skills, but still did not have a valid work permit. Although government officials would conduct regular checks of the hotel and employees, normally the employers would be aware of when they were expected. One day, though, the immigration officers turned up unexpectedly and "everybody was surprised that time."

In the raid, the officials caught Jasmine in the lobby and asked her to show them her permit. Her employers, though, had prepared Jasmine for this event. "I said, 'I don't have any, sir, I'm a runaway (illegal migrant).' I told him directly, 'I'm a runaway,' because if I didn't it would have been a big problem for my boss. When they asked me, 'Are you working here?' I said, 'No. I only came today.' So, I told a lie for them. I needed to do it because they were the ones who had been paying me. They promised me that if the police caught me, they would buy my ticket to go back to the Philippines. But no. They didn't buy anything, and they didn't have to because they wouldn't admit that I had been working there. So that was my mistake when I told the immigration officials that I wasn't working there. If I would have told them, I could have gone home the same month. But nobody would be responsible for buying my ticket, so I stayed for two years in the jail."

Jasmine ended up imprisoned as an illegal migrant for two years while she waited for the Philippine government to provide her ticket home. "So even though I told the immigration later that I had been working there at the hotel, they didn't believe me because of what I said when they caught me." Jasmine felt she owed her employers and needed to cover for them because they had given her a job for so long as well as her specialist training. "They

didn't help me like they said they would. It's the only thing they did wrong to me, but it's ok because I learned a lot from them.”

Finally, she returned to the Philippines, but after five months she wanted to leave again to get better work overseas. She travelled back and forth to several locations in the Middle East between work and returning home for her mother's funeral. During this period, she would spend time with Ken, her son, and other family while making arrangements to return overseas. Jasmine would send money back for their son as often as she could, and supported Ken as well.

Back in the Middle East, Jasmine found a job as a domestic helper. She was responsible for looking after three pre-school children. The work turned out to be gruelling, and much worse than Jasmine imagined. “I would go to sleep at one o'clock in the morning, and then I would need to wake up at five o'clock in the morning. It felt like 24 hours a day I was working, without a salary.” Besides the constant child care duties, Jasmine was made to toil all hours. Her employers made her do all the cooking, laundry, cleaning the swimming pool, yard work, cutting the grass, and heavy labour. “That is work for a man, but I did all of it.” On top of this, Jasmine was not paid anything for her work even as the days and weeks passed. Finally, after two months of the abuse, Jasmine could take no more. Although she feared the consequences if her employers would pursue her or report her to immigration, she escaped and ran away.

Jasmine was running away from this abusive employer when she met her future second husband, Ali. “I was in the street when a man passed by in his car.” He stopped to ask if she was a runaway and offered help. She was frightened but weighed up her options and went with him, getting in his car. Although still married to Ken in the Philippines, she ended up getting married to Ali, under Islam which was quite foreign to Jasmine. She was with him in Dubai for four years, but in that time, she became increasingly sicker with a chronic health issue. “So I was always in the hospital.” Ali supported her in full, paying for her medical costs as well as her living costs. The doctors in Dubai finally advised her to return to the Philippines to seek help.

Jasmine did return to the Philippines and stayed for three years, spending time with her family. Ali continued to support her financially and pay her medical costs. Jasmine reunited with her husband Ken, although he was living in the mountains and she was in the town, and Jasmine became pregnant with her second child. She started to pursue business opportunities in the Philippines, supporting her son who was nearing the end of high school. However, this stability was short-lived.

Six months before I met Jasmine, her father had died. Left without both parents, she and her siblings were grieving and coming to terms with their loss. Jasmine did have her siblings and son with her for support through this time of grief which coincided with the birth of her baby. Three months later, Jasmine's new baby daughter also died. "So, it's all a problem," Jasmine mused flatly on the events that had contributed to her feelings of depression over the past few months. The relationship with Ken was also over. "I'm alone" she reflected. Everything had been difficult with stress from every side.

Jasmine's health had also worsened in the last few months as she had been dealing with more trouble. She was a guarantor for a loan as a business venture, but her partners did not pay. "I was the one to guarantee everything. So, I need to go out from this country again because the Muslim who is our financier for that money is after me. Even now, they keep on searching for me, because they want to kill me. So that is why I decided to run here to Davao. And then, maybe, later this month or early next month, I am going to travel again to Dubai. But I - I have encountered so many problems, right now I don't know what I should do. I need to run (away) for myself, to save myself. But what about my family?"

Jasmine was responsible for debt of over ₱100,000 (\$2665 NZD) after the others ran out on her. She has been making payments, but the lenders would not accept her payment plans and have been threatening to kill her unless she pays the full amount, straight out and in cash. Jasmine has been through many trials in her life. "But this time, I don't know if I can get through this problem."

Jasmine is about to return to Dubai, all going well. "Just now, I plan to go out from this country to earn money and to pay (Ali) despite everything that's happened. I need to repay him, and then I need to stay there, in the Middle East because this man has helped me so

much. He has helped me financially and for these three years he has given me everything. So, I need to go back, to say thank you for everything.” When Jasmine lived with Ali in Dubai previously, he would not permit her to work because as a Muslim wife she was expected to remain at home. She also had helpers to do the cooking and cleaning, although she would occasionally do a little as well. “He is a good husband” she reflected. Her life in Dubai, and her marriage to Ali, had been quite different from her family arrangement in the Philippines where she was the breadwinner not only for her husband and son but for her extended natal family as well. “They are both good, my husband here, he is good too. But not in every way, because he doesn’t know how to look after his own family, especially financially. He doesn’t know how, I am the one (providing) everything. So, it’s not like in the Middle East, (the men) are the ones who earn money.”

Despite the cultural differences, Jasmine was planning on finding work in Dubai to repay Ali’s generosity to her over the years. She had worked on and off in beauty therapy and spa treatment, drawing on her training she received in Lebanon many years ago. She did not want to return to domestic work but hoped to find work in the spa industry. Jasmine was also planning on bringing her son with her to Dubai shortly, after his high school graduation. She did not see much hope for him staying in the Philippines.

In the Philippines, she described, even when people have jobs, “you work only for your food, right? The salary in the Philippines cannot support any of your other needs. It’s nothing. Maybe if some people have a really good job, maybe then they can. But with people like us, it’s very hard.”

7.4 Coercion, consent, control, and agency: trafficking of migrants in context

Jasmine and Bianca’s stories reflect common themes in terms of non-payment and abuse that Filipino migrants have experienced, and migrant labour as shaped by gender (Bernardo et al., 2016; Briones, 2009b; Choi & Lyons, 2012; Constable, 2003; Huang & Yeoh, 2007; Parreñas, 2017). However, they also demonstrate the uniqueness and personal life contexts of migration and human trafficking. Jasmine considered her current situation, with regards to her stress over the debt contract, to be the most difficult problem that she has faced. Her experience of trafficking exists in the context of a life where she has experienced and

strategically navigated many opportunities and challenges. Bianca was ultimately a very successful migrant; however, her migration success has not provided her personally with a secure future. Human trafficking in the form of migrant abuse was only one aspect of the constraints and pressures that Filipino migrants face in trying to succeed.

Although in general, poverty and lack of education are considered key indicators for vulnerability to human trafficking, both Jasmine and Bianca had stable if not wealthy family circumstances, and both were able to complete high school. Although some of my participants who had experienced trafficking and exploitation did have very little formal education, there are also stories like Mariel's (Ch. 9). She was trafficked while trying to access overseas low-skilled work, as her college degree and past highly skilled work experience did not translate into a job at home. Although education can play a protective role in some ways and circumstances, education that does not correspond to the actual jobs available will not affect either migration or the risks that people must take to access better opportunities.

A key aspect of Bianca's ability to control her experience was in continually looking for better paid employment with acceptable working conditions, and she changed jobs regularly until she found her long-term position. Researchers, and NGO workers I met, have confirmed that this is a common strategy for Filipino migrants, regularly seeking higher paid and more secure work or even a second migration to a more desirable destination (Paul, 2017; Renshaw, 2016). The experience of trafficking denied Bianca this ability, not only in the wages she was not paid but the potential earnings if she had been free to look for other work. Bianca's goal was to send sufficient money back to her family. Researchers have highlighted that formerly trafficked people have often maintained this primary aim even after abuse (Brennan, 2010; Dahal et al., 2015; Sarwar & Karmaker, 2013, 2013; Tsai, 2017a); programs to address trafficking need to as a minimum reduce the financial impact that human trafficking has on migrants. Detention or even rehabilitation programs that do not concurrently support migrants in getting back to paid work, if that is their aim, are extending the impact of human trafficking on the person's holistic well-being, and denying them agency and control of their situation.

The responses that the women had to their trafficking situations reveal much about the agency and active role that each played in determining the course of events in their lives. Both weighed their options until they were sure that the pay and conditions were not going to change, and that they would not lose wages by leaving. Once this decision had been made, both escaped and fled. Bianca then sought help to recoup her owed wages, and then looked for a better job. Although she had been constrained and exploited, in taking these actions she still retained a great deal of agency and made strategic choices within her circumstances. Neither woman saw herself as a victim, and their response to trafficking was to pursue other opportunities rather than return home. Neither was “rescued” as such, but they considered and chose the help that was available. Both, however, expressed anger and a sense of injustice toward the employers who had mistreated them, particularly about the back pay which was lost. Not only the difficult working conditions, but the fact that such intensive labour was unpaid was the primary issue, a reaction that reiterates the women’s agency in seeking control over the outcomes of their work.

Where legal requirements such as visas tie workers to individual employers, the threat of force posed by the state can compound the unequal power relationship and control that employers have over migrants. Jasmine, like other trafficked migrants (Saat, 2009), feared leaving an exploitative situation because of her migrant status. Bianca’s employers, similarly, kept her passport and wages to stop her from leaving. Even in more positive working environments, Bianca continued to be underpaid for her work. Despite promises to the contrary and the support that they had shown her, Jasmine’s first employers did not support her once she was discovered to be working without a permit, and she was jailed. Even in amicable working relationships, there is a power imbalance between employer and employee that is exacerbated by the social rights and status ascribed to migrant workers. Hannah’s (Ch. 9) relationship with her employers highlights how although she was well treated, as a domestic she was still in a relational position of servitude.

The control by the state through the threat of force to irregular migrants is extended by the experiences with government agencies. Bianca’s and Jasmine’s experiences were highly shaped by the actions of the government representatives they encountered. Bianca’s experience of trafficking was followed by support from the consulate which enabled her to

find better work opportunities and remain in the country despite her initially dubious papers. Jasmine's positive work experience was followed by arrest and detention for two years because the embassy did not have the capacity to repatriate her at that time. After this experience, she was unlikely to have sought help from official channels in the wake of her later trafficking experience. As will be discussed, Mariel's experience of human trafficking was also heavily shaped by her interactions with official agencies (Ch.10).

Bianca's account shows the importance of social relationships in the migrant experience. Connections gave Bianca not only support and kin-like relationship ties, but a place to compare experiences and determine what "normal" working conditions were. Researchers with Filipino workers have identified community support as a key source of resilience, while isolation has also been identified as part of maintaining control and exploitation of workers (Bernardo et al., 2016; Briones, 2009b; Choi & Lyons, 2012; Hilsdon, 2006). It is significant in Bianca's trafficking experience not only that she was made to work seven days a week without a physical and mental break for herself, but without a day off she was also unable to form any outside relationships which could have further helped her to challenge her working conditions. Jasmine likewise found that security, in terms of finances as well as migration status, was ultimately found in her second marriage rather than employment. Seafaring migrants, such as Anthony (Ch. 9), have one of the more secure forms of migrant labour as many are represented by a Philippines-based union, demonstrating again the role of social support in employment (Ruggunan, 2011).

Social ties build security and resilience but can also be a source of coercion in relation to migration. The pressure to migrate in the Philippines is not only from the so-called "push" factors such as economics but actual people who are sending family members as migrants, complicating measures of consent and coercion. Children, for example, often do not have control over their future career path (Ronquillo et al., 2011, p. 269). The intersection of traditional familial interdependent relationships, including obedience and obligation to one's parents, with the current "culture of migration" means that young people leaving school or college are often expected to become the family's breadwinner through labour migration. Neither Bianca nor Jasmine went to university because of this family strategy. Bianca was denied her own ambitions because of her family's decision about her migration.

Jasmine, like many others, grew up taking it for granted that once she finished school she would migrate to support her family. For parents, seeing their children finish high school and university can appear the only way to offer a better future for the children and family. The pressure of education fees which require higher wages, combined with the local lack of jobs particularly for people past their 20s, can also make the parents' migration the only viable option for the family's future (Asis, 2006, p. 61). Both Hannah (Ch. 9) and Mariel (Ch.10) explicitly sought migration to pay for increasing education costs for their families. The need for income beyond what the local economy often provides has combined with the government's endorsement of migration and contributed to the so-called "culture of migration."

The "culture of migration" is not only a descriptor but a normative pressure that shapes Filipino migrants' decisions and life ambitions. Ronquillo (2011, p. 263), in an ethnographic study of migrant nurses from the Philippines, described that "the popularity of immigration for Filipino nurses is not driven solely by economic motives but is also fuelled by cultural pressures, the desire for status and an internalised desire to migrate." Migration is central to many cultural narratives about success and the life course in the Philippines, and the plan and desire to travel for work is assumed without needing to be rationalised in Filipino culture, as in Jasmine's story (Nititham, 2011; Ronquillo et al., 2011). Overseas employment and sending remittances is not only about economic capital but cultural capital for the migrant as well as their family at home, an idea that will be discussed further in chapter nine (Nititham, 2011). Successful migration as a form of local cultural status, however, is often contradictory to the position that migrants occupy in their overseas work, a paradox discussed further in the context of sacrifice in chapter ten.

The idea of a "culture of migration" has been used to explain the "risky" behaviour of migrants, particularly poor migrants, creating vulnerabilities to human trafficking as well as other negative outcomes (Alipio, 2013; Bulloch, 2013; Galam, 2015; West, 2014). However, this premise suggests that there is an inherent cultural tendency to want to migrate regardless of the situation, rather than a strategy in response to real economic problems. The idea of a culture of migration is contradictory, although it draws on traditional ideas about family roles and responsibilities, primarily because it separates

families. The Philippines is known for close family and social ties, and a communal sense of identity. Sam, the migrant I met on a plane, characterised his own migration – financially, very successful – as having had a negative impact on his life through disrupting his family relationships. Migration contradicts this more fundamental aspect of culture and of holistic well-being and personhood. Galam (2015, p. 155) explored the imagined aspects of migration from the perspective of family left behind in the Philippines and observed that “the cultural value placed on migration is fundamentally linked to a consideration of the family.” Migration also disrupts the traditional life course, family and gender-based responsibilities, and the transmission of family and cultural knowledge.

Everything I had read and heard about the Philippines prior to entering the field suggested that the so-called “culture of migration” was deeply entrenched at every level of society, and considered the best way to provide for one’s family and succeed financially. What I found in Davao, however, puzzled me as many of the people I spoke to said that they had no desire to leave Davao or to migrate. “It’s very safe here,” is what they told me, “not like Manila.” I found this surprising and contrary to what I had read: first, that so many people had no interest in migrating, and second, that their reason was not financial or related to job opportunities, but to the perceived physical safety of Davao City, as compared to the levels of violence in Manila and other parts of the Philippines. One such man was a taxi driver who had grown up as an irregular migrant in Malaysia, and he cited the constrained access to legal employment and state services his family had experienced overseas. Another service worker, most likely earning less than 500 pesos (\$10 US) per day to support his family of four, told me that he had moved from Manila to Davao because it was safe, and he went so far as to express his belief that in Manila he would have died young. He hoped that his children would stay in Davao, and cited the call centres and retail as opportunities which meant they would not need to leave the country to look for work. If perceived physical safety and the opportunity to find a low-paying job can be enough to negate the drive to migrate, at least for some of the people I spoke to, this suggests that the “culture of migration” can be a response to violence, both direct and structural.

Conclusions

The dependence on migration is just one form of structural violence in the Philippines, contributing to macro-level underdevelopment as well as the vulnerability of individual migrants. Human trafficking of migrants is bringing or trapping people into abusive, exploitative control. However, there are also other types of control, pressure and coercion that shape migration, from economic pressures and family demands to government restrictions and requirements. The push to migrate, whether safely or unsafely, regularly or irregularly, is another form of coercion by the local government, family and culture. Government controls mean that exploitation, control and abuse by employers is enabled and even enforced by these policies, and represents structural violence. Human trafficking is one extreme form of the controls that can shape migrants' lives through unbalanced or exploitative power relationships, and often extends or relies on other controls such as the government's migration policies.

The "culture of migration" where labour migration is often part of the expected and sought life path is a very real part of Filipino understanding, but it exists alongside other cultural narratives that conflict with the individual and social experiences of migration. The narratives about migration are enforced at every level from family decisions to government policy, demonstrating the workings of structural and symbolic violence in producing and deploying migrants. Once overseas, many migrants experience further pressures and constraints that can enable and maintain the trafficking and exploitation of migrant workers. The processes driving migration can be considered forms of coercion to migrate, and constraints on potential migrants. The Philippines is unique in that many migrants do not wish to relocate permanently, but they are still seeking an escape from impoverished conditions for themselves and their families. However, temporary labour migrants often have little power within their employment conditions and migration status, which extends and supports the ability of employers to exploit these workers.

The structural and direct forms of violence that migrants experience come from both local and global pressures. The inequality of migrants in the global system in terms of the frequent exploitation, low pay, and relegation to the lowest status jobs, reflects structural violence on a global level. Migration is not the only, but perhaps most direct, way that

Filipinos interact with the global economy, and local lives are increasingly shaped by global forces. The following chapter discusses globalisation as it relates to the Philippines in and beyond migration. Over the next three chapters I explore how people in the Philippines experience and interpret the conditions that they face including migration, globalisation and poverty.

8. Global pressures and local lives: history, stories, and migration

"In the face of increasing global labour migration, there has been growing recognition that a substantial proportion of individuals will end up in highly exploitative, violent and sometimes fatal circumstances" (Pocock et al., 2016, p. 12).

"Civilisation must, unfortunately, have its victims"

(Baring, 1913, p. 44; Lord Cromer, British Consul-General to Egypt from 1883 to 1907, in a discussion on "progress" in terms of implementing Western economic systems within a colonised "backward Oriental Society").

The extent to which migration is integrated in Philippine society demonstrates how global processes and forces are inseparable from and often hidden in local lives and decisions. At the same time, global ideas are interpreted within deeply held and socially shared local cultural systems. Globalisation is a reality which cannot be escaped, even in the supposedly "less modern" developing world. Indeed, the presence of luxury air-conditioned malls adjacent to makeshift open air *tindahan* [shops]⁶³ and rough corrugated iron houses makes the global influences - and accompanying inequalities and contradictions – highly visible, and creates overt and concrete representations of the outside world. Globalisation and the new images and narratives that accompany it are increasingly part of the Philippines' cultural imagination and experience.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the multiple ways that globalisation is evident in the ever-changing social realities and the processes which relate to human trafficking, particularly through the complex and integral role of migration in Filipino society. In the context of international inequality, as suggested by the quotes above, globalisation finds concrete expression in local lives and actions. It shapes the social and shared cultural narratives which create and answer fundamental questions about identity, norms and values, and the place of people in the world. Images of the Self, as Filipino, and the Other, as the West and the rest of the world, narratives about what constitutes success (and failure), and the relationship between the Philippines and the global make up parts of the

⁶³ small street-side shop, usually just a table

imaginary and embodied landscape which also includes the known risks of human trafficking, exploitation and abuse of Filipinos. In this chapter, I discuss globalisation through the stories of migrants who had not experienced trafficking but other outcomes among the range of migrant experiences. Globalisation contains and creates fundamentally contradictory narratives as it finds expression in local lives and experiences.

8.1 Globalisation and the Philippines

My friends introduced me to *malunggay* [moringa], a plant that grows locally and around South-East Asia. Health experts in the Philippines have been urging people to include more of it in their diet, as it is a nutrient-rich “superfood” and a cheap if not free way to improve their diet as it grows abundantly like a weed even in urban areas. It is commonly used as a filling for rolls with meat. On this occasion, I was given some *malunggay* tea, strong and bitter. I drank it all though as months of the Philippine diet - high in rice, low in vegetables - had left me feeling as though I probably could use some green plant food. After returning to New Zealand, I happened to read the label of a shampoo I had bought on sale at the local shop, which advertised, “Contains moringa oil...Made in Canada.” The invisible process by which moringa had been harvested, processed, exported, and somehow made its way from Southeast Asia to Canada, into a shampoo, before traversing the globe yet again to end up in a New Zealand shop, highlights both how ubiquitous and fundamentally bizarre globalised trade mobility has become; my shampoo had travelled further than most Filipinos will in their lifetimes. Beyond the extractive processes which rely on natural resources as well as mobile, unskilled labour forces, Filipinos and Filipino products – like moringa – have also been fetishized as the “exotic” other, commoditised again for outside consumption.

In a local-level analysis, the central aspects of global inequality are the ways that actual people experience and navigate the challenges that global pressures create. The multiple flows and processes of globalisation defy a local and global dichotomy in actual experience, which disintegrates and combines diverse forces (Mascia-Lees & Himpele, 2006, p. 9). Lindio-McGovern (2010, p. 199) pointed out that macro-level legal and political struggles are often embedded in personal (unequal) relationships; Liu (2015), Lindio-McGovern (2003, 2004) and others have cited Filipino domestic workers, located in

invisible and subservient positions, and often situated along macro-level lines of inequality in terms of gender, colour, and nationality, as particularly embodying the pain of global inequality. The majority of people, particularly those in developing countries, find that there is frequently a gap between globalisation's messages and "promises" and the reality (Piquero-Balleascas, 2009; Sen, 2000).

Participation in the global economy has personal and real consequences, the experience of migration being a point where the structural violence of global processes finds embodied expression. Many researchers have commented on the multiple financial, emotional, social, cultural, physical, and political costs to Filipinos seeking work overseas (Ayalon, 2009; Domingo-Kirk, 1994; Lindio-McGovern, 2004; Parreñas, 2011, 2017). Jørgensen (2016, p. 2) argued that in the global system, migrants and their experiences are pivotal in making sense of "precarity and the process of precaritisation." Precarity is appropriate in considering the ways that the Philippines, and specifically Filipino labour, is positioned in the global economy as temporary, often unprotected by law, and subject to disproportionate risks both physically and financially (Piper, 2010; Tigno, 2014). McKay (2006) and Guevarra (2006, 2010) have both explored the conditions of local Filipino labour engagements with the global marketplace. McKay (2006) has drawn attention to the ways that globalisation and global corporations' practices have resulted in factory work in the Philippines often being characterised by exploitation as a normal working condition, as has been discussed in chapter six. Guevarra (2010, p. 4) analysed the ways that the policy of migration has been used by institutions including government departments and commercial recruitment agencies to "manufacture" Filipinas as "ideal global labor commodities" according to global demands for certain types of labour, particularly low-skilled labour such as caregiving. Continuums of exploitation and precarity within the global economy have shaped the Philippine experiences of human trafficking, as Filipinos' position within the global marketplace is based on certain power relations which inherently include the potential for exploitation (Tigno, 2014).

Local mythology surrounding migration and foreign affluence has a significant impact on migration practices. The effects of remittances are often highly visible, particularly in close communities and family groups where everyone's income levels are known (Yu, 2015, p.

53). Despite the personal and national reliance on overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and their remittances, there are contradictory narratives around OFWs and their place in society, particularly for women. All migrant workers are often called heroes [*bayani*] or *bagong bayani* [modern heroes] and lauded for their sacrifices for their families and nation, as will be discussed in depth in chapter ten. On the other hand, absent migrant mothers in particular have often been blamed for social problems caused by “abandoned” children, or considered morally suspect (Cruz, 2012; Yu, 2015, p. 53). Lindio-McGovern (2004, p. 221) described this internalised script of being both hero and villain where her participants, Filipina domestic OFWs, displayed deep emotions and pain from wanting to be with their families, but bearing this as they would not be able to provide for them financially in the Philippines. Nevertheless, the mythology of prosperous migrant families is powerful and pervasive, and reinforced by informal and official social processes, as will be discussed. This narrative is a significant part of the Philippine perspective on the global.

Images of America and the developed world are entwined with advertising and consumption, to be obtained through Western clothes, as worn by Europeans and light-skinned Asian models, and whitening beauty products, if not plastic surgery.⁶⁴ Shopping malls are a site of consumption not only of this image through consumer goods (and dermatological treatments), but of Western *luxury* and culture, as well as climate. Among globalisation’s stories and messages, the central one has to be “Consume!,” and keep the flows of trade in motion. In the Philippines, advertising is accompanied by images of the West and of affluence, such as the children’s toy in Figure 21, and new desires and options are introduced into the imagination (Davis & Monk, 2007, p. xv). Malls in Davao would brazenly advertise payday indulgences and “buy now, pay next year,” (see Figures 19 and 22) as they invited shoppers to stroll the temple of consumption and its heavily air-conditioned halls – but not to sit down without paying for the privilege (Gonzaga, 2009, p. 52). Outside again, the heat would hit like a wave, followed closely by the noise, the traffic, the scurry to usher shoppers to a taxi in exchange for a few pesos.

⁶⁴ Skin whitening creams and salons are ubiquitous, such as the billboard in Figure 20; I sought but could not find a single deodorant that did not claim to whiten the underarms.



Figure 19: Billboard in Davao City.



Figure 20: Billboard advertising body lotion: "Sexy, Supra White skin in 7 days"



Figure 21: Blonde, blue-eyed “Beautiful Girl” dolls at a department store.



Figure 22: “Pay Day Treats” sign and Christmas decorations in a mall in Davao.

My experiences confirmed what other scholars in various disciplines have noted where Filipinos would readily describe themselves as operating from a “colonial mentality”

(Bulloch, 2013; E David & Okazaki, 2006, p. 1). Researchers have described how this manifests as a sense of inherent personal and cultural inferiority, and a type of “auto-racism” in an ongoing comparison to the powerful colonial Other (Bulloch, 2013; David & Okazaki, 2006; Gonzaga, 2009, p. 53). I discovered numerous religious and advertising displays featuring images of foreigners, including a European family in the Nativity scene, giant Santa Claus at the mall, and a mural of a blonde haired, blue-eyed angel welcoming visitors into a church hall. I found representations of Jesus and Mary as white particularly striking, given their centrality to Filipino Christian traditions.

One male taxi driver, around age 40, who I talked to was very outspoken in saying how white women were the most attractive, and Filipinas were not (nor African, or Indian women).⁶⁵ I pointed out that a Filipina had just been crowned Miss Universe, and I thought that they were very beautiful. “Only for American men,” he scoffed, “not for Filipinos.” This was just one manifestation of what has been called auto-racism when Filipino culture is set against images of America and automatically judged inferior. All white people are assumed to be rich, and American. Of course, by Philippine standards my family was very wealthy, as most New Zealanders would be. But even well-fed private school students would ask for money, as I mentioned in chapter three, as we passed by groups in their tidy uniforms. The Philippines’ position in relation to the rest of the world is keenly felt, and the experiences of poverty and precarity colour Filipinos’ self-perceptions.

Globalisation is often depicted as a relentless homogenising force, but local variations and interpretations of the global have continued to prove the power and agency of local societies in creating life-worlds (Kennedy, 2007). The alternate meanings that I observed in the Philippines given to familiar things and ideas illustrated a micro-level view of this process. Culture specific consumption of global commodities, for example, meant that cheddar cheese was most often considered a dessert (such as in cheese ice cream), as was *bukado* [avocado] which was a staple ingredient in fruit salad (Tsuda, Tapias, & Escandell, 2014, p. 135). Umbrellas emerged on sunny days, and women wore their skinny jeans tight

⁶⁵ By this point in the conversation I had clearly stated that I was married (as was he); I am not sure to what degree his comments were directed to me personally, but they mirrored what others had said. I found that his attitude was not uncommon for both men and women to prefer the idea of foreign partners, as other researchers have confirmed of the Philippines (Bulloch & Fabinyi, 2009).

on the hips to emphasise their curves that Western women would more often would have tried to conceal. Domestically, the Philippine media promotes the idea that Filipinas need to be whiter, and that they were not beautiful, while a Filipina abroad was crowned the most beautiful woman in the world (Miss Universe 2016). Politically, the Philippines has been identified as one of many emerging sites of resistance to globalisation in electing Duterte who espouses strong nationalist views and is critical of even traditional international “allies” (Heydarian, 2017; Russia Today, 2017).

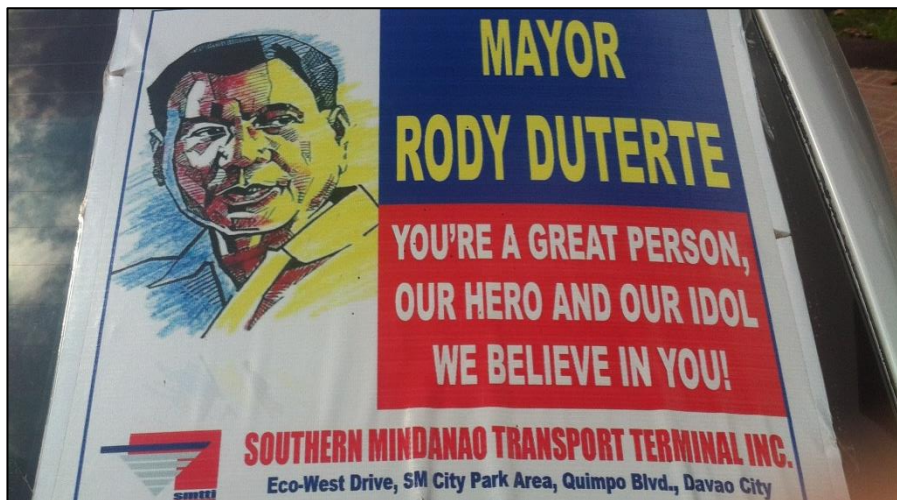


Figure 23: Supporter of Duterte displaying a sign on a car during the 2016 campaign period.

Duterte’s 2016 presidential win has been analysed as a backlash against the globalised economics which have seen the wealthy prosper without corresponding improvements in employment quantity or quality for most Filipinos (Heydarian, 2017, p. 40). One of Duterte’s first acts, in fact, was to refuse a visit from Obama, then the president of the USA which has for many years been the Philippines’ most powerful ally. Duterte commented of the USA:

If there is anything to gripe about, it is me griping: Why did you invade my country 50 years ago? They sat on this land and lived off the fat of the land. And you expect me to be happy?...You treat me as if I am your colony still? You must be kidding. Why would I allow it? Why would I allow you to treat me as if I am your representative here, as your colonial governor? We are an independent country. We will survive, we will endure, we can go hungry. But this time I want my country treated with dignity” (Russia Today, 2017).

Despite significant controversy, my friends from NGOs have reported that within the Philippines initially at least, Duterte appeared to be having a significant effect on crime and

government corruption, and his popularity remained high. I witnessed the election campaign period which was clearly a boon for signmakers, and strong feelings were very evident (see Figure 23). Globalisation has led to not only economic inequality and dependency, but also eroded “traditional forms of authority” and “the sovereignty of nation-states,” resistance to which is also suggested in Duterte’s comments and the popularity of this strong leader claiming national authority outside of global influences (Appadurai, 2000, p. 4; Heydarian, 2017, p. 39).

Globalisation is often imagined as exchanges, and some of the things being exchanged are stories, narratives about how the world is and how it could be. With Appadurai (1995, p. 197, 2000, 2008, p. 5), I locate the pertinent aspect of globalisation as the creation of new and modified social imaginations which shape human life and social narratives. In the Philippines, a central part of the global mythology is the wealth of many overseas countries, and migration as a way to access it; the power of these “imagination” in local society goes far beyond the experiences of people who actually migrate (Bal & Willems, 2014, p. 254). Narratives about Filipinos in the global world, although often hopeful, also suggest a hegemonic power to move people to enact these stories, interpreted through local understandings of relationships based on patronage. People often migrate to trade their labour for that narrative, but sometimes find that the trade is not a fair exchange.

8.2 Hannah’s story

“God will not give trials that you will not be able to endure.” - Hannah, in the middle of one of the trials that she hopes her family can endure.

Hannah sat with me at a coffee shop, overpriced but offering free wifi and excessive air conditioning along with our drinks. A mutual friend who was also an NGO worker had introduced us, knowing that I was interested in migration experiences, and assured me that Hannah spoke excellent English. After explaining my research, I offered that it was fine to answer some questions in Cebuano if that would be easier - and then she began to tell me her story, without further prompting, entirely in Cebuano. I did my best to keep up with Hannah’s narrative while our friend did her own work at a nearby table. Even when I met Hannah, in her late forties and having weathered a difficult life, she was a beautiful woman

with stunning, deep-set brown eyes. Her voice was pleasant but gravelly, and the stress she was currently under showed on her face and in the tears that welled in her eyes several times through our interview.

Hannah had grown up in a poor rural area. “In my place in the province, it was difficult. We were so poor because my father was a farmer, my mother was a farmer. So, nothing, we didn’t have anything.” Her family mainly prepared and sold *copra* [dried coconut meat] to be able to buy rice for the six children. Hannah, as the oldest, particularly felt the hardship as well as the responsibility to her family.

After she had finished primary school, Hannah moved to a larger municipality. “I worked while studying in order to finish.” She boarded with the local Filipino family she worked for, and they paid for her schooling through high school. Hannah had ambitions to become either a nurse or a midwife, “what I really wanted when I was younger. Because I was supporting myself, I could not make my own decision. My employer made the decision because they could not afford it.” They helped her to enrol in a junior secretarial course to prepare for work. Halfway through the year, “my stomach was always painful and the doctor said I had appendicitis. I had an operation there.” After her appendix was removed, she returned to her parents’ farm to recover and was not able to finish her studies. “It’s so sad to say that there have always been trials in life,” she commented on this setback.

Hannah soon left to find work to contribute to the family’s income. “I said that I didn’t want to stay in our place because I pitied my parents. We didn’t have food unless they were working the farm.” Hannah was amazed to be accepted when she applied at a pharmacy, despite not having experience or having completed her college course. “I did not expect I would be able to work there because I didn’t have experience like that, I am not a pharmacist. I took the math exam, and I was able to pass it with (a perfect score).” After proving her maths proficiency in an exam as part of the application. Hannah worked there for three years and gained practical skills and experience. At this point she set out to try to use her on-the-job training to find a better position. It took her three months, but Hannah eventually found another position in a pharmacy. She was pleased to have prestigious, decently paid work which could contribute to her family at home.

One of Hannah's suitors, whom she would eventually marry, turned out to be a relative of her employers. This made Hannah very happy and contributed to her choice and the belief that God had brought him into her life. In her early twenties at that point, Hannah had had many suitors. She had also corresponded with Artur whom she had some ideas of marrying. "I had a German penpal. He was a businessman. (We) would just exchange letters, writing by hand." He had been introduced by a friend's sister who lived in Germany with her German husband. Artur had been divorced for a long time, and grew very fond of Hannah. Finally, he sent her some money, and asked Hannah to meet him in Manila to be married. Hannah, however, was very unsure and concerned. "If (I marry him) and I don't love him, who knows what will happen there because his culture is different from mine. So I was thinking I might not be able to endure it. I could easily get hurt (in my heart) ... Who knows what could happen." She was also seeing her Filipino boyfriend Ramon at that time.

Hannah prayed that God would help her choose. "Lord, whoever you will give, whatever is your will, he will be the one I accept." She felt as if it was a choice between being rich in Germany, or being poor in the Philippines, but happy. She asked God if He could give her a sign and help her decide what to do. "So then, my husband was the one I dreamed of. I dreamed he was giving me flowers and mangoes... So I chose him." She felt confident then to make the decision to marry him, even though she knew that they would have a poorer life in the Philippines.

Hannah described that sometimes their marriage had been difficult as they brought up their three children. She acknowledged that she had been sensitive, easily hurt by people's words, ever since she was a child. She found her husband's temper difficult to live with, "then I would feel hurt, because when somebody yells, even though they're not bad words." Hannah found a great deal of comfort in her faith, and she described how she would feel weak and lifeless if she had to miss going to church.

As the three children grew, Hannah and Ramon began to realise cost to see the children through high school and university. Labour migration began to appear as a possible option. Hannah took up training as a caregiver in a year-long program that included two months' work experience caring for a bed-ridden patient. She and Ramon were both filled with apprehension about Hannah going overseas. They had conflict over finances, the family

activities while she was away, and were often angry with each other when they spoke. “He was angry at me, because I didn’t trust him at the time. Then he would get mad for no reason. So he said, it was not good that we were becoming that way.” Hannah was worried that Ramon would cheat on her; he became angry that she did not trust him. Hannah worried that they might split up, and about what would happen to the children. However, the conflict made it easier for Hannah to finally leave for overseas, thinking that the break might cool some of the anger within the marriage. “That’s why I (finally) went abroad, but I was taking a heartache with me.”

Hannah described the loneliness and pain she felt while overseas. She was unable to attend church to worship with other Filipinos, or any Christians in the Middle Eastern location. “Even when I was working, I would be crying.” She thought that the cost of being overseas and giving her children a better chance and an education might be her husband leaving her and starting another life. “Sometimes, I would have a dream, and I would cry because of the pain in my heart.” However, over time, her anger began to fade, and Hannah began to realise instead how much she missed her husband. They both found the separation very difficult and felt the distance very deeply. By the time Hannah returned home, she felt much warmer toward him and regained her trust.

In her overseas domestic work, Hannah was with the same family for the entire time she was abroad, over two years. She described the family as kind, and they would often ask Hannah about her life and her family back in the Philippines. “I would respect them and they would respect me also,” she affirmed. However, there were some difficult moments, when Hannah’s employers would give her sharp orders or complain when things were not clean enough for them, “She would really exhaust me.” Even though the relationship was mainly amicable, there were moments when Hannah was confused by her employer’s actions and acutely aware of her position in the home. “She would give me a scary look, really glare at me. I didn’t understand why, or what she was thinking. Why is my employer doing that to me? I finally realised, I think she was jealous of me and worried about her husband.”

Hannah returned home to the Philippines after two years in the Middle East when her contract ended. Hannah was happy to be reunited with her family and have a break from

being overseas, and she worked in the Philippines part-time while planning to return to the same employers. While in the Philippines, Hannah did odd jobs, usually caregiving work, as they were available, in stints of two to six months.

A friend in a different Middle Eastern nation suggested that Hannah look for work there and join her, as they could support each other. Hannah applied to an agency, and soon received a call about a job opportunity. Hannah travelled to Manila to complete the documentation and briefing from the agency before going overseas. However, with the costs to travel and spend three months in Manila in processing, and the practical and financial requirements, Hannah was not able to take the opportunity. After three months of waiting, Hannah finally learned that the agency would have charged her ₱310,000 (\$8720 NZD) for the placement, which she did not have. In fact, Hannah was down to her last ₱15 (\$0.50 NZD). Hannah took it as a sign that it was not the right time and returned to Davao.

She found a good job soon after returning, caring for a retired professional who was also an Alzheimer's patient. The family liked Hannah and she was happy to have a stable position which meant she could still be with her family. Hannah did shift work along with a trained nurse. However, after a few months Hannah began to have a problem with her health which worsened to the point that it began to affect her ability to work. "They liked me, they liked my performance and my work. She said that when I am well, I can return to work for her."

Hannah found that she could handle less intensive work and took periodic domestic jobs doing cleaning and child care for the next year. At this point, Hannah's former employers in Kuwait contacted her, asking her to return. "They liked me as their child's carer, and they needed me again because she was busy with her work." Hannah began to go through the process of preparing to go overseas again, renewing her passport and contacting the original employment agency that had found the position. The employers in Kuwait sent Hannah money towards the costs of the passport renewal and the other fees in getting a visa. Hannah was elated to discover that the exchange rate at the time meant that the money covered not only the travel documentation but left some remaining which she put toward her children's school fees.

Part of the documentation for overseas work is a medical exam for certification of health. Hannah went through this process, and her results were deemed acceptable by the Philippine agency, but the corresponding organisation in Kuwait dubbed her as “temporarily unfit.” Hannah was forced to report back to her employer that she had been prohibited from travelling at that time. The employer was understanding, but Hannah mourned the suspension of this relationship. “She was very good and kind. For those two years, we became very close. Maybe someday I can return and work for her again. So for now, I just stay home.”

The limitations of Hannah’s health and the subsequent financial strain meant that by this point the family was struggling to survive. Her husband worked part-time as a taxi-driver, but Hannah had been the primary breadwinner, working part-time as she found work. “Sometimes, I can feel how hard it is with work. My work is not stable, but (at least) I am able to help my husband. Sometimes it’s really difficult, but I can endure it still. I have had many experiences of hardship but some comfort also.” Hannah’s two children in high school were forced to drop out as Hannah had been unable to pay their fees, and the oldest had to delay starting tertiary study.

The friend who introduced me to Hannah had been seeking support to help get the treatment which would restore her health fully; it was a relatively common and simple procedure, but prohibitively expensive for Hannah and her family. Government health insurance is available, but even this requires enrolling and paying certain premiums. Hannah had not had this in place. The children will depend on their education to secure employment in the future; their potential in turn will support their parents’ retirement years. Hannah’s health struggles began a downward spiral that would create a cycle of poverty unless the family could quickly find a way through that would allow Hannah to resume work. Hannah was doing her best to maintain hope, but she was deeply concerned about her children and their futures.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ After I returned to New Zealand, our friend contacted me to let me know that an NGO had managed to arrange Hannah’s medical treatment. My heart was very full as I thought of her. I was incredibly happy for her, but I hoped and worried that she would then be able to find a job that would be sufficient to see her children finish their schooling. I also felt sad that for Hannah, all going well, her best chance for her family would probably be returning overseas, which demanded a high cost from her and from her family.

8.3 Anthony and Sharon's story

Every year, the government agencies that support migrants hold a national contest to choose between regional winners to represent the face of Philippine migration. The contest is widely publicised, and the contestants' stories are told in the media. In this way, many successful migrants' stories are widely shared and held up as the ideal. Anthony, Sharon and their family live in Mindanao, and in recent years they won the coveted title of the "Ideal Migrant Family" for their region. I met Sharon and Anthony with a government social worker whom they knew from the migrant support organisation. Anthony was bustling in and out preparing to leave on another seafaring contract, while Sharon and two of her dogs entertained us in the lounge.

Anthony grew up in a family that was "very poor." One of ten children, he usually would walk to school without any breakfast. He did well in school, though, and wanted to succeed. He would clean *mga trisikad* [tricycles], and wait at the dock to carry heavy suitcases for passengers, in exchange for a few pesos in order to buy his school supplies. His ambition was to finish college, so he could improve his family's situation. Two of Anthony's older sisters married American soldiers who had been stationed in the Philippines, and they and a third sister moved to the USA. Their remittances enabled Anthony and the other children to progress through school, and Anthony eventually obtained a degree in nautical sciences. He found work in a shipping company and continued on there. He worked his way through the ranks, and at age 35 became the youngest captain of a boat in the company's history.

Sharon's father had worked for an American company. The American boss was also a philanthropist, supporting the workers beyond their employment. "My father was supported by an American, the boss was so good to him. He sent us to school, until we graduated." Although the family was poor, this support added to her father's income and allowed the children to get a good education. The American offered to help Sharon migrate to the USA, which she declined as this was not her ambition. This patron also recommended Sharon after she graduated from university to a company he had been involved with where she was employed as an administrator.

At the shipping company where Sharon worked, she met Anthony, who would become her husband. He was working aboard the ship, and Sharon worked in the office in accounts. Anthony and Sharon married and went on to have six boys. Now grown, some are overseas and some live at home. All of the boys have graduated with professional university degrees.

When the children were younger, Sharon found the times when Anthony was at sea very difficult and she managed the large household alone. The whole family would look forward to when Anthony was at home, as during those times he was a supportive father and would play games and sports with the six boys. At the same time, though, “it was quite difficult because with six kids who were all in school, we really had a hard time financially with all of the expenses. So every time he went down for vacation (at home), you would have the problem of wondering when he could go back to the vessel because of the financial burden (without any pay while ashore).” Most recently, Anthony’s seafaring contract meant that he was away for 12-15 days at a time, and home for 24-48 hours in between. Since the children were grown, the separation was not as difficult for Sharon. There was a time when the shipping route went to the Middle East, however, which put the current trips in perspective. “It’s not like before when during the trip to the Middle East, he would be gone for 35 days [at a time]. And during that time, there was no internet, no communication, only letters. So it was very hard.” Anthony and Sharon’s experiences of separation are similar to those of the over 400,000 sea-based Filipino migrants who leave their families for long periods while at sea (PSA, 2015).

As with other migrants, government and private organisations explicitly prepare and market Filipino seafarers to the demands of the international industry. The government markets Filipinos as English-speaking obedient workers, a value that is also integrated into Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) training programs where “obedience is equated with being a patriotic Filipino” (S. McKay, 2007; Ruggunan, 2011, p. 195). Ruggunan (2011) describes the conditions of Filipino seafarers’ employment which are arranged and negotiated by a local “union” (AMOSUP - Associated Marine Officers and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines), which is actually a family profit-making business rather than a member-controlled entity. Wages have been set at higher than non-union members, but lower than international standards to maintain Filipino competitiveness.

Benefits provided for seafarers are generally only valid during active contracts, usually about nine months, and the fee for membership can be \$100 USD (₱5064; \$137 NZD) per month while on contract – which contributes to the profits of AMOSUP (Ruggunan, 2011, pp. 196, 198). Despite the good wages paid in US dollars, fees and contract durations contribute to the fact that seafarers on average return similar remittances as other OFWs (PSA, 2017c, p. 65).⁶⁷

Anthony had recently been shored without work or pay for two weeks after their new puppy had nipped his finger, as he was not given medical approval until he could be cleared of illness. The energetic little pug had been hopping in and out of my lap while we spoke. As a very young indoor dog it was unlikely to have had any diseases, but at the time it had not yet had the requisite immunisations. In Anthony's case, this was a minor setback which only meant the loss of two weeks' wages. The work is contract-based, and the only paid medical leave is for injuries sustained on the job (Lamvik, 2012; S. McKay, 2007). However, this and Hannah's story indicate the ways that physical precariousness – the normal limitations of human life and potential for illness, injury, or death – is given socially shaped consequences which contribute to conditions of precarity.

Sharon did not want her boys to follow her husband to seafaring, although they would have liked to, and all have gone in to medical fields, mainly as registered nurses. Supporting six children through medical school was a significant period of strain on the family's finances, the hardest time they had experienced, according to Sharon, but all managed to finish their degrees. Three of the children were working in the Philippines, two of whom had wives overseas, and the other three were overseas themselves. Sharon described in particular how expensive it was for the children to look for a job overseas; even for highly skilled workers, the costs to access overseas employment were significant, including application fees for agents and government requirements, health certification, and maintaining internationally approved medical licencing.

⁶⁷ In 2014, 21.9% of OFWs were seafarers, and they returned 22.9% of remittances; high levels of union participation, however, mean that seafarers are also more likely to remit funds that are recorded and taxed officially through the POEA (PSA, 2017c, p. 65; Ruggunan, 2011, p. 195)

There are many expectations that come with success, and Sharon complained about how her husband's relatives were always asking for money.

“My husband is still supporting his (rural) family whenever they are having financial problems. He's still helping them. That's one of the problems we have. But it's ok. At least he is the one working, I can't do anything about it. So I have to go with the tide. If not, I will be the one (blamed), I'll be the bad guy from their side. Last year, one of his family members died, and we have supported people there again. I think negatively about it on my side. Why we are always supporting people, but we can't do anything. Because he is working in a vessel and he has a good job and he has a lot of money, that's the reason. They expect support from time to time. They actually ask us for financial help. But we have enough, we just have to tighten a little sometimes.”

Sharon was also a *barangay* leader, so she also would be called upon to help when families in the *barangay* were struggling or having financial problems, as well as administrating local programs, such as medical clinics. The LGU (Local Government Unit for the *barangay*) did not have any budget, so leaders would be expected to support people personally, “*ka sarili mong bulsa*” [out of your own pocket]. Sharon was also called out in the middle of the night along with the *barangay* police to deal with burglars, and on one occasion she ended up caught in between while the robbers brawled with the officers.

Sharon and her family have also encountered trials in their lives. At one point, their newly renovated house burned down and had to be rebuilt from scratch. Sharon and one of her sons have also survived cancer diagnoses; the son's illness was eventually proved not to be cancer, while Sharon had endured several rounds of chemotherapy before recovering. This experience had given her perspective, and she continued to celebrate the anniversaries of her health being cleared. “In my life, I'm already satisfied and contented with what I have now” she affirmed. I asked Sharon what success meant for her. “For me, success is that we have sent the children to school, they have graduated, and they have their own jobs to support them. So, it's easy for us as parents to see them and know that they are successful, and it's a blessing for us parents.” Sharon and Anthony's children were self-sufficient financially, but Sharon acknowledged the difficulty with Anthony's work where he would

only be paid when at sea; the expectations placed on them financially, particularly from his family, did not necessarily correspond to his contract periods.

Sharon gave the government worker and me each a bag of food items that family members had brought from overseas, including bottles of Korean wine and grape juice. Bulloch (2013) noted how the conspicuous display of overseas commodities could be a mark of wealth and status in the Philippines. Normally, I was the one who brought some food with me to interviews or would leave some buns or snacks for the children. Sharon was embodying a different role in society than most of my other participants, where being wealthy was equated to being generous and hospitable. Status was also closely related to wealth, as status was about community leadership responsibility and patronage, and Sharon took this role seriously.

This experience contrasted sharply with how Mamu, my friend from an NGO and primary source of introductions, had shared with me, eagerly showing off local sights, introducing traditional foods, sharing cultural events, and presenting my children with traditionally made wooden necklaces. These relational gifts seemed to represent strongly their very different views of the world outside of the Philippines. Sharon, of course, had prospered as a result of the wealth that came into the Philippines through migration; her gifts were an extension of this. Mamu, on the other hand, had a different perspective. Her father had been an OFW, supervising a crew of Filipino workers. He had warned his children against labour migration, telling them that at home, they would be respected and treated with dignity, but overseas, they would be looked down on, overworked, and treated like servants. Mamu had spent most of her life in the Philippines, much of it as an NGO worker and activist for local Filipino interests, and I believe that her gifts to me also reflected her own sense of wealth. There are multiple, often contradictory, experiences and impacts of globalisation in Mindanao, but they all occur in a context which has been shaped by global inequality and violence.

8.4 Globalisation and *pangkulata* [violence; assault]

Us Filipinos we can adapt, you know, to different cultures. We are flexible to cater to different ones, I guess with our backgrounds as being controlled by the Spanish, by the Japanese, and also by the Americans in our history. Like we are trying to adapt to just survive the different treatments that we have experienced. So I guess - I know that it is still happening right now. Like when we partnered with (an international organisation) you know, they're the ones in control. They have the money so, you just go with it, whether you like it or not (Melissa, NGO worker; see Ch.6 for her story).

Two very different stories, neither of which demonstrates exploitation, abuse, or human trafficking, show another range of migration experiences. Hannah's story illustrates the precarious position that migrants and their families occupy when they are dependent on a migrant's income. The rapid change in her family's circumstances reveals the insecurity that Filipinos can often face in the domestic economy. Sharon's story illustrates the potential for migration to contribute to a family's success and towards the community. However, it also shows how images of migration are used, intentionally as well as inadvertently, to promote and perpetuate the culture of migration through success stories. Both of these stories exist within the narrative and mythology about the Philippines and the world; economic success is most often imagined as to be found "out there" somewhere not in the Philippines. The media and the government present the official images of migration, often successful domestic workers; the much-publicised contest that Sharon and her husband won is just one manifestation. It is also highly visible when families do have remittances coming in and are able to improve their lifestyle. This narrative also contrasts sharply with the anti-trafficking narratives from NGOs about workers who found abuse and exploitation when they ventured out, and migration is presented as the path to risk instead of opportunity.

Hannah's story may seem too ordinary to be told – she was neither successful nor tragic enough, her experiences of subservience hardly among in the extreme stories of abuse domestic workers have reported. Hannah's story is indeed ordinary, and more normal than prospective migrants would like to believe. There are many successful migrants, but numerous factors are stacked against them. The first of course is the debt and costs incurred

in trying to access migration – migrants often start out behind, indentured and constrained (Parreñas, 2017). Hannah and Sharon’s stories also illustrate the role of patronage, in gift or investment, in local economics. The money that Hannah’s employers sent her meant they were treating her like family, but it was also an investment with an expected return.

Hannah demonstrated obvious intelligence and skill in mathematics and working in a pharmacy; her original ambitions for a medical career, though, were crushed because she could not afford to attend university. In the Philippines, nursing is a highly promoted and sought-after career path due to the possibilities for overseas employment. Nursing is positioned as an available career which draws on essential female Filipino skills and attributes towards caring; however, the opportunity for skilled work in the global marketplace has seen increasing numbers of men also pursuing nursing careers, as did Sharon and Anthony’s sons. The narratives about nursing as a valued career path set up a hope that was out of reach for Hannah, undoubtedly like many other hopeful students. This mirrors the position of migration in general in Philippine society, celebrated as the ideal path to success for families but out of reach for significant numbers of the population.

Despite Hannah’s pharmacy experience, she could not find any job locally apart from short term domestic and caregiving positions. For pharmacy or other service work such as retail or hospitality, she would likely not have met the age requirements, besides competing against university qualified applicants. Overseas, she had a stable job in a positive work environment. Sharon has remained at home while her husband went overseas on short term seafaring trips. His long-term position came with stability and success overall. Although Sharon’s story supports the rhetoric of migration as the path to success, Hannah’s is closer to the image of migration being promoted in the media. Had Hannah taken the other opportunity to migrate via Manila, she would have been left heavily in debt; if she subsequently lost her job or had to deal with her health problem, there would have likely been no way out. Locally, however, the significant scarcity of options maintains the idea that success must come from outside the Philippines.

One of my friends in the Philippines, Nicole, had a sister who married a foreign man. People acted, Nicole told me, as if she and her family had won the lottery. Women would

frequently ask Nicole how her sister had met her husband, and if she could direct them to the same agency.⁶⁸ Although this attitude is common, it is important to acknowledge stories like Hannah's where she had rejected her overseas suitor. International marriages involving a partner from the Philippines have often been considered suspect, as known sites of human trafficking and abuse, where men are imagined as seeking a "submissive" homemaker, and Filipinas, a financial provider (Bulloch & Fabinyi, 2009; Constable, 2006; Cunneen & Stubbs, 2000; Erez, Adelman, & Gregory, 2012). Nicole herself was cynical about inquirers' motives, commenting that "white people who come here have more money because they can travel. But it doesn't mean that they are able to save you from whatever poverty you're in."

Poverty and images of the outside world can be significant factors in making these life decisions, including marriage decisions, but as Hannah's account demonstrates, there are also complex personal, cultural and emotional aspects to relationships. Although structural violence and the weight of poverty can be significant determinants of the options available to Filipinos, people are never fully without agency in navigating these obstacles strategically. Researchers have noted how Filipinos have positioned themselves submissively within patronage-style relationships, as Sharon's family did, and Hannah did with her overseas employers, as a strategy to build reciprocal connections (Cannell, 1999; Horner, 2013). Like financially unequal marriages, although these interactions can appear one-sided, relationships are ultimately human and complex, and Filipinas seeking these relationships do so within a personal, cultural and social context.

The overt message of the Ideal Migrant Family media campaign was that the Ideal Migrants are those who should be imitated. However, many factors which enable and constrain migrants in achieving success are beyond personal control. Emulating Sharon and Anthony, for example, would be very expensive, and out of reach for many Filipinos; both had overseas support which enabled them to get their educations and stable jobs. Sharon also stressed how expensive it was, even for a wealthy family, to support the children in

⁶⁸ Nicole's sister had had a long relationship involving distance communication and in-person visits prior to her marriage. However, of the perhaps twenty mixed-nationality couples I met and saw in Davao, she and one other couple were the only I encountered where the European/American husband was not at least twenty years older than the Filipina wife.

accessing work overseas. Once established in skilled work overseas, however, their chances for success would be substantially better than the majority of Filipino OFWs.

Presenting an ideal which is fundamentally out of reach for many Filipinos, even those like Hannah who could undertake labour migration, reiterates the exclusion and inequality of the poor. The opportunity to migrate seems so available and present, but still is so closed, as I discussed in chapter seven. The women I knew who were street-based sexual labourers (see Ch.5), for example, would frequently talk about wanting to migrate, but knew that they could not meet the requirements. One or two would half-jokingly inquire whether my family had a *katabang* [(domestic) helper] already, and did we need a nanny or a cook back in New Zealand? Migration is presented as accessible and lucrative. The reality is that beyond even the actual migration experiences which can include every possibility from success to abuse or human trafficking, migration is not accessible for everyone.

The most successful migrants have proved to be those who, like Anthony, have stayed in a job long-term. This also means, however, that they have got a decent job in the first place, that they have not had to flee from abuse or non-payment, lost their job after becoming pregnant as a result of rape, or gotten sick or injured from difficult or dangerous working conditions.⁶⁹ It also means that they are not being pressured to return more and more money to their impoverished family at home. NGO workers described to me how, like Bianca in the previous chapter, many migrants will continually seek better paid employment; when this process involves a second migration (after a first migration journey within South East Asia, Europe or North America is a typically sought “upgrade” destination), it also incurs a second round of travel and employment agency costs which increase debt and decrease the potential for financial success. Labour migration means that migrants are spending years on end away from their family. Financially successful migrants have also found that the

⁶⁹ An NGO working in the areas of migrants’ rights and migrant support reported that domestic overseas workers returning home after having lost their job because they were pregnant as a result of rape was an increasing trend that they were seeing. The workers told me about some of the cases and also mentioned an OFW who returned to the Philippines pregnant and obviously traumatised, but refused to speak of any of the details about her time overseas. I did hear a more positive ending to one of the stories, though, where an OFW had returned pregnant after rape thinking that her situation would also mean the end of her marriage in the Philippines, but her husband had happily accepted the child as his own. “The child is *really* cute,” the social worker gushed, “even though the [biological] father is from there, it is not very dark, only like me,” as she touched her light brown forearm.

success was not what they had hoped when they only saw their children every few years, or that the stress of separation had led to the end of their marriage. Particularly unskilled labour migration also often implies endurance of the constrained conditions and status that migrant workers frequently experience.

Hannah and Sharon have had quite different experiences in their interactions with the global world through migration. Their backgrounds are similar in terms of growing up in rural, poor areas, but the trajectories of their lives have been very different. Sharon's life reflects the Philippines' history with the USA in the relationship with the man who paid for her schooling; this in many ways personifies the "patronage" style of relationship which has marked colonial times as well as contemporary employment relationships. The stability that Sharon's father's work at an international company brought, as well as his employer's support, likely contributed to Sharon and her family feeling able to decline the opportunity to migrate. This stability was, however, based on this patronage-style relationship as well as the employment, and so on Sharon's father's ability to maintain and benefit from it.

Efforts to improve legal protections and enforced standards for domestic and agricultural workers in the Philippines have been limited based on the idea that these workers are supposedly "part of the family" and protected by relational rather than legal mechanisms through systems of patronage (ILO, 2011; Pacis, 2009; Piper, 2010). Notably, this was the same argument for the legal tolerance of slavery in the Philippines under American rule in 1900, and domestic workers have been identified as a class of worker which frequently falls on continuums of slavery (Salman, 2003). Researchers have shown how Filipino migrant workers carry a logic of patronage into their overseas employment, stressing that even when the work is hard, if they are paid well and have a positive relationship with their employers then they view the experience more positively, as Hannah described overlooking certain aspects of her treatment in work (van der Ham et al., 2014). Employers' expectations of gratitude and deference have been based on overseas perceptions of Filipinas as poor and desperate, although migrants are often not the poorest, and draw on resources to access migration. Briones (2009b) found that employers in Hong Kong and Canada expressed the idea that Filipinas should just be grateful for the work and for being treated like one of the family. Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong have explicitly

identified the idea of being “part of the family” as employers’ justification for strictly monitoring their employees, further than even the law allows (Constable, 2003, p. 135). This language has been a way to coerce compliance, disguise exploitation and conceal uneven power relationships (Constable, 2003; Magat, 2007, p. 624); it has also obscured the sacrifice that migrants have made in separating from their own families to be “part of the family” where they serve.

Patronage-based relationships and the power configurations that they imply are not easily challenged by the less powerful party in the relationship. McKay (2009, p. 333) argued local perceptions on development in the Philippines most commonly depend on patronage through either gift or investment and support from an outside source (Borras, 2007; Cahill, 2008; Horner, 2013; Reid, 2005). However, as Cannell (1999, p. 104) found for her participants in Bicol, the gift economy is not fixed, but marked by tension, uncertainty, and unequal power, where the “rules of reciprocity” are not necessarily clear cut. Patronage-style exchanges are risky, Cannell noted, both with spiritual forces and with people, and can be points of both benefit and manipulation: “patronage and exploitation are two sides of the same coin” (Cannell, 1999, p. 229). As such, the configuring logic of patronage can be considered a symbolic violence by which unequal and exploitative relationships are normalised and maintained both by those who benefit and those who are made vulnerable by this process.

Although the focus of this chapter has been on contemporary manifestations of globalisation as they relate to local, lived realities in Mindanao, memories and legacies of the colonial era are still very much alive. The violence of the past is invisibly etched into day-to-day life; the deeply-held cultural logic of patronage is just one example. Gabriel (chapter 6) used the verb *kulata* [to beat (someone)] to describe the way his father used to beat his mother and the children (“*ginakulata*,” past tense). The word is taken directly from the Spanish, *culata*, which refers to the wooden butt of a soldier’s rifle which could also be used as a weapon, to club with rather than shoot. In Cebuano, *kulata* means to beat or assault and implies a significant degree of violence (as in “to beat someone to a pulp,” my *maestra* [teacher] explained, “until they were black and blue”). The “colonial mentality” was not just something that developed in comparison to the rich *Katsila* [Spanish] and

Amerikano [American] colonisers. Submission was beaten into Filipinos' ancestors' bodies and culture.

Researchers have argued that globalisation and global economic strategies have not had the desired effect of improving the economy, but on the contrary, have harmed local industry, agriculture, and traditional livelihoods, maintained high rates of unemployment, and increased local inequality (Kwiatkowski, 2005, pp. 306–307; Lindio-McGovern, 2007, p. 29; Piquero-Balleascas, 2009, p. 85). As such, the NPA's violent rebellion,⁷⁰ and the support of Duterte's violent response to insurgent groups, can be traced to common points of origin in resisting these manifestations of globalisation. Globalisation, as experienced in the Philippines, has been a violent process since the Spanish colonisers arrived; the post-colonial period has continued to be shaped by powerful global processes and unequal relationships. International powers have reoriented the Philippine economy and society toward export, which has been experienced as violence against the environment, the poor, and the families who are separated by migration. The global trade in low-skilled workers, while it can be strategic for workers, is inherently structurally violent and exploitative, relying on poverty as a lever which forces certain populations into the lowest status jobs. Further to this is the social violence where migrants are recruited but then treated as lower class beings, looked down on, and given the worst working conditions, pay and benefits. Images of the outside world can also be symbolically violent in reiterating the gap and poverty between the outside portrayed world and the Philippines.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have explored the abstract and multifaceted concept of globalization through concrete experiences of migration from the Philippines. Some of the ways that globalisation gains influence in local societies and real people's lives is illuminated through the stories of those deeply entwined in global relationships and processes. Migrant experiences, global commercial engagements, and the media all affect local imaginations, narratives, and choices in navigating global economics. Globalisation only becomes concrete and meaningful in local expressions, but the messages in globalisation are

⁷⁰ Insurgency in the Philippines having been linked to massive inequality and widespread poverty in rural areas, refer to Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion

transformed, accepted, and even consciously rejected as mediated by local people in social conversation. In the Philippines, the power of the “culture of migration” is reinforced by narratives of global economic opportunities which are interpreted through the logic of patronage.

The metaphors of violences illuminate the ways that global processes exert power in local lives and society. One of the Cebuano words for violence, *kulata*, is particularly useful in conceptualising the ways that both historical and current violence, difficulties, and constraints affect not only physical life but culture, beliefs, and narratives. It also reflects the way that violence has often been introduced into the Philippines through global sources; the current economic situation in the Philippines, heavily shaped by colonial and international powers, is also understood through the violence of hunger, lack, and uncertainty that poverty creates day-to-day.

Despite the cultural significance of narratives, decisions about economics and migration are not just a matter of “believing” which of Sharon’s or Hannah’s stories is “normal,” let alone the migrants whose stories were told in the previous chapter who had experienced trafficking. If there are no jobs, and the family is hungry, the question often becomes, among the limited options, which is the most likely to make things better. Staying and doing nothing is often the only choice where the future is easily predicted; if this is not acceptable, then people must consider other options. The global landscape is thus heavily implicated in local understandings of risk. Further, the symbolic violence implicated in patronage shapes the ways that people interpret and deal with risk as heavily dependent on many external forces.

9: Risk and violence: producing and reproducing vulnerability

At that time (after my father died, when I was fourteen), most of my family were expecting me to just get married. It's a dilemma back in our hometown, most of the girls there get married at an early age... Well, I cannot imagine it, you know. Thank God for rescuing me. There was a guy there that people said, 'you could marry him,' but I was like, 'Oh, gosh.' In my mind, I thought, 'what if I get married?' First, (I thought), 'it's okay, I will end up married, and then have kids,' and then I thought – 'I do not have work. If I stay in (the rural village), how am I going to support my kids?'... I mean, it's kind of like a cycle. That's how I see it back in my place. If you're not going to try your best to do something good for your family, like to send your kids to study or to finish their education, it's just like a cycle. They end up marrying and having kids and then the kids would finish grade school but not (even high school). So that was one of my dreams that I wanted to get out. I'm not looking down (on people) but somehow I want to, you know, step out from that.

– Wanda, NGO worker and fully licenced nurse

Risk is culturally and socially constructed, and woven into day-to-day decision making, as in Wanda's analysis of her life when she was considering marriage. Risk is a major theme in the human trafficking literature, as discussed in chapter two, where it is considered in terms of both the general statistical likelihood and of people or groups who are particularly "at-risk." In my participants' experiences risk was also central to making choices in their lives and responding to the events and realities that they were facing. People make sense of risk, factors to consider (or ignore), and what kinds of social support are available in what kinds of situation, through a socially constructed narrative which is specific to a raft of particular social and cultural conditions and contexts. Risk is imagined in the ongoing cultural conversation between individuals and groups, history and shared memory, values and practical realities. In this context, I define risk as primarily an evaluation of uncertainty (Boholm, 2003, p. 167). In the Philippines, widespread poverty, joblessness, lack of education and opportunities, all contribute to the experience of risk.

Risk has multiple connotations, from concrete quantitative measures of likelihood to the social meanings including moral evaluations of why certain events happen at certain times. In human trafficking literature, the concept of "at risk" has been closely linked to conversations about culture, where culture has at times been blamed for giving rise to any

personal attributes or social categories which correspond to greater incidence of trafficking (Aradau, 2013; Bales, 2007; Yea, 2010). Indeed, cultures shape the underlying logic by which decisions relating to risk are made, decisions which are mainly small, daily choices which together shape the experience of life where risk is ingrained in the routine of meeting basic needs (Denney, 2005, p. 43). However, the calculation of risk goes far beyond a personal expression of cultural values to wider questions about society, that is, who is at risk and why (Panter-Brick, 2014).

This chapter seeks to understand how risk is created and managed in the context of human trafficking and my participants' lives in Mindanao. To achieve this, I explore risk as it relates to human trafficking through the framework of structural and compounding violence. The violences that people experience, and the ways that people interpret and navigate this setting, are both significant to an understanding of risk in these terms. In discussing risk, I would first like to query the idea of "at-risk," particularly as it is typically used in the context of human trafficking. The idea of compounding violence suggests that violent events – whether structural or direct – damage a person's life-world in a way that makes them more likely to experience further violence. The idea of "at-risk," then, can be considered a euphemism for compounding violence as it erases, or neglects to take into account, the violence that has occurred - and may still be occurring - in an individual's life and focuses instead on the future. Precarity, risk, and vulnerability generally refer to the likelihood, and unequal likelihood, of negative outcomes; structural, compounding violence instead emphasises that future risk emerges from some form of violence that is *already* present.

9.1 Susan's story

Susan was a smiling, motherly woman. I met her on a street corner one evening, where I had accompanied women from an NGO who would regularly visit her. Susan had been working in the sex industry on and off for over 25 years. The regularly spaced street lights seemed to be missing from this patch; we could easily see each other, but it must have been the darkest spot in the city. I had been struggling to sleep with the city lights, and entertained a brief fantasy of setting up a hammock under one of the trees. Susan shared that her youngest child had recently had a birthday, and the family had been celebrating.

We chatted about our families for a few minutes before Glenda, the local NGO worker and my interpreter for the evening, reintroduced me and checked if Susan was still happy to do an interview. Susan was happy to talk straight away, and I was glad to take the opportunity before business picked up as the evening wore on. She complained of a back ache, so we found a spot under a tree to sit down on the curb beside the wide, quiet road. At this hour, in the dark of the evening, I was only just comfortable with the heat.

Susan grew up in a rural area of Mindanao. Her family were farmers, like many rural villagers. She came from a large family; her parents had twelve children, and providing for them was a constant challenge. When Susan was young, her family sent her to Davao City to work as a house maid. “When I was eight years of age, I was here in Davao already. I was sort of adopted by a man. Someone from here and someone from my place took me to her employer. I was their helper until I got older. I grew up in their household.” Susan wanted to carry on going to school, but her employers did not allow her to continue past elementary. “I really was *nagsakit* [sick]⁷¹ for some time because I begged that I want to go to school, but they didn’t want to send me.”

The family she worked for sent money back to Susan’s family, but Susan was dependent on her employers for her daily needs with no money of her own. She worked long days, seven days a week, doing cleaning, cooking, and washing laundry by hand. “In the morning, sweep outside, then, go back inside. Clean up, wash dishes, just like that. Wiping again and again. Laundry, ironing. It was like that. Hard work.” She worked there for seven years, until she was fifteen. By this point, the neighbours’ maids were telling her that she should not stay, because she was not being treated properly without a day off or being allowed to attend school. “Why do I suffer there. I was becoming an adult already. We will look for a job.” Finally, Susan joined a neighbouring domestic worker in fleeing their employers. Claiming to go for a walk to Rizal Park, they left and did not return.

The young women found work in a *karenderiya* [small restaurant], “I was a server there.” They earned 30 pesos (\$1NZ) each per day, barely enough for their daily needs, but this was the first time Susan had received her own wage. Susan had never had any

⁷¹ *Sakit* means to hurt, to suffer, or to be ill, and many of my participants used it to describe heartache as well as physical pain.

independence before this. She stayed working at the *karenderiya* for three years, but did not manage to fulfil her hope of returning to school. “I worked there a long time. I had a good employer and I liked it, they were kind. But it was like the desire to go to school had left me.” Working seven days a week from the age of eight meant that her relationship with her employers had been more like that of child and parents, where everything she did and had was through them. Even while working at a very low wage at the *karenderiya*, the freedom she had was significantly different.

While working at the *karenderiya*, she met a man and formed a relationship with him. She was about 17; he was in his 30s. “At that time, I had no knowledge about men. I had never had a boyfriend. He was like my first love. When he (asked me), I went with him.” She talked about her relationship mainly in terms of how her work changed, rather than love: “I met that man there, who became the father of my three children. Then he took me from there (working at the *karenderiya*).” They had three children together in quick succession - “I was *sundanon* [prolific]”. But her husband⁷² had been spending less and less time at home, while she was left at home with the children and no money to buy food. It got to the point where he was only home once a week, adding to the pressure on her of having hungry children to care for. She would question him about it, but he told her that his work had assigned him to a different place. She was not satisfied with his answer, but did not yet realise what was happening. Eventually Susan began to hear people talking, telling her that he was actually married to someone else. Even a friend told her that she was “pitiful” and needed to open her eyes to the fact that her man was already married. At this point, Susan left. “That’s why I left, I took my small little children with me. They were still small, but I could no longer stand it because the man was married and then he comes and goes. We were all very hungry sometimes.”

Susan took her children and returned to her rural home where her family was from. However, things did not improve, and the rural location offered even fewer opportunities to earn money to support her children. Her children were hungry, and Susan was growing increasingly desperate. One of Susan’s friends saw her conditions and began to recruit her

⁷² Susan referred to him as her husband even though they were not legally married; this is not uncommon as the costs of legal documentation can be off-putting for poor couples who consider themselves married.

to work. “She said, ‘Money is so easy, money is easy for me. You will only entertain customers, and you will get money immediately.’” Susan finally agreed, and her friend helped Susan dress up and do makeup, and took Susan there. “It was a club. I was shocked. I said, ‘what are we going to do here?’ She said, ‘you know, just to dance. You will earn money instantly.’ I said, ‘I don’t think I can do it. Not like this, oh no.’ But the manager (brought me in). She made me drink something. She said, ‘drink so that you will not be inhibited. I thought you needed money? We don’t want to pressure you.’” The first day, Susan was made to drink alcohol spiked with drugs before she was to dance. Then a customer went to the manager and requested Susan for sex. The manager sent her from the club with the man, but she was afraid. She appealed to him that she was new and not used to the work, and the customer instead gave her money anyway and took her home, advising her to find a better way to raise her children.

The 3000 pesos (about \$90 NZD) she received could not last forever. Susan had never seen this much money and bought a lot of food and infant formula. Susan’s friend was continually pestering her, telling her that what the man said was wrong, and after all she had made money just by going there. “That’s why, of course, the money easily gets spent. So I returned again.” Back in the club, she was again given drinks. “I also drank, so I lost any inhibitions. I do not know what they mixed with my drinks.” She felt faint and out of reality when the club manager asked her if she would dance, and she agreed. From there the work quickly turned into sexual labour. “So that’s it. I got used to it. I got used to it. I got used to the, you know.”

From there, Susan was recruited to Manila to work in a brothel through a friend’s sister. Her children were very small at this time, and Susan paid a local woman in Davao to look after them. “So I had so much money. I was very in demand. I was always hired. The Japanese would give me a tip. I had so much money. Lots of money.” Such was Susan’s favour with her clients that when she finally needed to return home after only a month, one man totally paid for her flights.

When she was working in Manila, Susan would regularly phone the babysitter to check in. One day, though, the lady looking after the children was shaking as she told Susan that her son was ill, and she needed to come home straight away. Susan rushed back to find that the

situation was far worse than she expected. “My suffering that time was so bad. I cried so hard because that child of mine, he got bitten by a dog. He was having chills and salivating.” She took the child to the doctor, and they told her that the child would likely die, but there was medicine that did have a chance of helping. “His mouth could not open, and his eyes were already closed. That medicine is the only one that might save his life.” Susan searched from pharmacy to pharmacy, finally found one which had it in stock, and spent most of the money she had saved buying it. The child lived, and the doctors gathered around and told her that it was a miracle, and the Lord must love her child.

After this, Susan did not return to Manila as she had intended; instead, she tried to get out of the sex industry. “I didn’t want to go back to Manila because I pitied my children. But there was no one to turn to. I applied for a job, but they asked for many things which I don’t have. So I had nowhere to go.” Susan found that she was unable to compete for jobs without the education to even qualify to apply. She was able to obtain the medicine only because the event happened after she had been working in Manila; buying it saved her child’s life but caused further strain as she suddenly had little to show for her time away. Susan went in to great detail describing this event, down to the hour she had to be on the plane to return home from Manila. It seemed to represent a turning point for her in that she acted on her desire to get out of sexual labour by attempting to apply for other jobs, but in doing so also proved to herself concretely that she really did not seem to have other options. This story also seemed to indicate Susan’s awareness of the precarity of life and of the family’s situation.

Instead of returning to Manila or a club, Susan would instead go out on the streets of Davao with a group of young women. Money came easily. Men would drive past and pick one of the group to hire. “So I went back to work. We worked again the same as that (but) I did not go back to the club. My companions and I would stay in corners of the road there in (Davao) - money came easily. At first, there were six of us. We would be walking along here. Then we would be chosen immediately.”

There she met a man as a client who offered her a different path. “He reformed me. He said, ‘Leave that because you have no future there. Do not worry about your children because I will feed you. Those three children, I will feed them.’” Susan saw this as an ideal

opportunity. “So there I met the father of my child, and he changed me too. I was thankful. I said ‘thank you’ because I would finally reform this time, because there was a man who really was interested in me. We really got married. He married me.” It seemed like a dream come true for Susan, and the couple soon had a child. But a few years later, after the birth of their second child (Susan’s 5th), strain began to show. Susan was not working, and the children were getting older. “My eldest, he was already going to college. Then we were always fighting. He would recount all the favours he did for us. ‘Your children, I work, and you all do not have jobs.’ Like that. ‘You can no longer send your children to school, because what (more) can I do?’ ‘You are always asking from me. You all ask from me. You all do not have work.’”

The financial strain showed in the couple’s relationship, and in the power imbalance between Susan as the dependent “rescued” party and her husband as the financial earner. “Then we had the child, and then he changed. His attitude was different. That’s why we were always fighting. (And then) he had another woman ...So that’s why he said, “find a house, because I want to have this house rented out...In order to earn money and so that I have something to give you because you are so wasteful. You all have no jobs.”

The degree to which Susan consented to her induction into sex work is ambiguous. She went along to the club the second time, naively hoping she might be able to repeat the experience of earning money without engaging in sex work, but with an underlying hesitation. She drank to decrease her inhibitions, but she was also drugged without her awareness. She was an adult, but very inexperienced in the world of labour and of men. Structurally, she did not see or have access to any other options within her sphere; it is impossible to say how things might have looked if she had had wider experience in labour and finding work. Her early child labour experiences, which would meet the UN definition of trafficking, undoubtedly contributed to this sense of having little control over her circumstances. Her fragmented social network after this also played a role in shaping the options and support available to her.

It seems clear that Susan’s experience of human trafficking as a child labourer shaped her life course in numerous ways. Her mindsets about work, relationships, money, and every other choice had been influenced by that important period of her childhood. The fact that

she was not able to get an education significantly altered and limited the trajectory of her life. Susan has been resourceful and active in working within the limited probabilities and chances, to get out of a relationship, to relocate her family, to take an opportunity in Manila, to return. At the same time, her life reflects the fact that exploitation creates risk, and often the risk of further exploitation.

“It is making my heart ache. Sometimes I would wonder when I will be able to leave this place...” Susan desperately wanted to get off the streets. She did not see any opportunities for herself that would not require an education. Her children would ask her for things, gadgets and treats, that their friends and schoolmates had, but she has had to explain to them that she did not have much money. Indeed, it was much harder to make a living in her late 40s than when she was young; school fees and living expenses for herself and her 5 children placed significant demands on Susan and her financial capability. When she was younger, on the street the first time, money was easy to come by; now, things are harder. Back then, “we’d get hired instantly. We would charge a high price. It’s difficult nowadays.”

Susan’s marginal social status, as a single mother, a sex worker, and without a secure income, is continually reiterated in her social relationships. Her children in particular want mobile phones and “electronic gadgets,” the growing social desire and norm, and to socialise with their friends at the same level and financial cost, which Susan often cannot afford. Several women on the street would tell us about having been verbally abused and harassed by neighbours and community members for their occupation. They have also reported close calls and violent customers, and they know to be wary if the client starts to drive away from the city or the place they said they were going. It is impossible to compare these types of risks and experiences: the risk of being an older sexual labourer and not making much money, the risks and costs that come from pursuing other jobs which have proved to be out of reach, other risks of death or ill health from violence or STI. Finding legal employment, though, is very risky with high competition for few jobs, and low pay even for the better jobs. Going overseas to work, again, comes with known and unknown costs and risks about the chance of success.

Susan considers her lack of education to be the biggest reason she has ended up in street-

based sexual labour, why she struggles financially and cannot see any way out of her current situation. Educating her children is her top priority and hope for the future. She is well aware that work is becoming less lucrative as she gets older, and will not be viable indefinitely. Her children's education means they might be able to provide for themselves, and possibly Susan as well one day. Now, her ambition for education herself has turned into seeing her children through school. At a number of points during our interview Susan reflected on having been "ill" and heartsick at not being able to attend school, and feeling the regret later on. "Lately, just the past few days, I was *nagsakit* [ill; suffering]. (I wondered), why did that happen, when I really dreamt that I could go to school." Her experience with her husband reflected that he did not understand how limited her options were, or what it was like to be in that situation with all sorts of invisible doors closed around her. Susan had looked into going overseas, but even working as a domestic helper has many qualifying requirements and application costs that seemed far out of reach. To her, however, there was a simple explanation. "I did not finish grade 6. That's why I'm here now."

9.2 Risk and compounding violence

The idea of risk is central to considering human trafficking within local and global contexts. Risk, and the ways that it is conceptualised and managed, have interested anthropologists since Evans-Pritchard (1937) illuminated how an understanding of danger, how and why bad things happen, is shaped in culturally specific ways. Anthropological perspectives have always emphasised the social determinants of risk. Mary Douglas (1966) brought risk to the forefront of analysis in many of her works. Douglas (2013, p. 204) suggested that "the anthropology of risks...is about the social pressures to avoid or take risks." Douglas built an understanding that although human life is physically vulnerable in the natural world, the risks that people face are expanded and complicated by the social meanings, influences and approaches to risk. Risk, then, is not merely a probability of certain outcomes, but a "cultural and symbolic product of community" embedded and expressed in everyday living (Denney, 2005, p. 192). An exposition on risk has led to an understanding that the risks that people face are not spread evenly through the population but that certain segments experience more or less protection, risk, exposure to hazards, and

measures that offset risk and danger.

Susan's story perhaps illustrates most clearly how across a life path, violence can lead to further violence. Her early experience of child labour, which would meet the UN definition of human trafficking (although she had never been formally identified as trafficked), was a result of structural violence in terms of her rural family's poverty. In an already unequal social dispersal of risk, it is clear that risk also creates more risk. Susan's story shows that before she experienced trafficking, she was already experiencing structural and slow violence in several ways. Being one of twelve siblings meant the family was under economic strain. Being in a rural location, fully dependent on agriculture, meant another set of constraints and risk factors such as challenging growing conditions and a lack of alternative income sources or community resources and support. However, the violence of exploitative child labour compounded these effects, not only placing her in an exploitative and dependent situation, but creating a further set of risks in terms of her lack of education and experiences with money, employment, and social relationships. This set a trajectory and limited range of possibilities in Susan's life, which she still experiences.

Poverty is the main reason cited for the risk of trafficking, as it was for Susan being sent to the city, but poverty goes beyond income levels to the day-to-day realities as well as social connotations (Aronowitz, 2015; Bales, 2007; Cameron & Newman, 2008, p. 22). The experience of lack, the present hunger, and the future uncertainty all combine to increase the pain of poverty. Melissa (Ch.6) described in detail how she and her siblings would wait anxiously for their parent or older brother to return home in the evening, hoping that they had brought some *pancit* [noodles] or any food for the younger children to eat after feeling hungry for most of the day. The poverty of Susan's family could be argued as the main cause of trafficking, and the consequences thereof, but this would not tell the whole story. Populations that are suffering or struggling with poverty are at risk for further negative outcomes as a result of the deprivation that they are already experiencing. Being poor is inherently risky and violent due to a lack of resources, insufficient food, and little ability to construct a buffer against health or natural emergencies, but the social meaning of poverty creates further layers of risk.

In the Philippines, the family is supposed to be the ideal and safest place for women and children, but also is the locus of gender based inequality as well as often the site of abuse. Safety is closely linked to remaining within this structure; outside of it, one is “at risk” for multiple reasons which build on each other and contribute to the experience of precarity. At the same time, the incidence of domestic and child abuse means that its risks are compounded by the difficulty and consequences of disrupting existing family and social relationships. Erica’s story (Ch.5) and Gabriel’s story (Ch.6) in particular highlight the fact that domestic violence and abuse were chronic ongoing conditions which eventually contributed to the young people leaving home, only to experience human trafficking. This is a concrete representation of the social structure in that the lives of those outside of the family network are made precarious and more easily exploitable. As such, someone alone in a new area would often be virtually excluded from organised society, as was Erica (Ch.5) when she attempted to look for other work outside the sex industry. Social networks, based on family in the first instance, are experienced as safety and normalcy, but inherent in their production and reproduction is the idea of exclusion of those outside of the network.

The family is one place where the distinction between risk as a real probability and a social creation of what constitutes danger can be seen. Families frequently support each other financially as well as offering care and protection. However, it can be difficult to get out of a situation of domestic abuse, as many of my participants found. Almost all of my participants indicated that they either had already or intended to support their families financially. This also reflects power relations and obligations within a family network. The reluctance to prosecute traffickers, as discussed in previous chapters, demonstrates this tension between safety within and outside of existing social relationships. Social workers mentioned numerous times that where the perpetrator of child abuse or trafficking was a *barangay*⁷³ leader, the family would be very unlikely to pursue a case against them. Melissa (Ch.6), for example, was abused by a church leader; when she told her mother, she was scolded and told never to say such a thing about him. The way that poor families would not be able to pursue a legal case against a richer or more socially powerful person also suggests unequal access to the law’s potential. This relationship reflects structural violence

⁷³Municipal community within the city; a suburb, but also the smallest unit of urban governance.

in terms of current inequality, but also contains fragments of historic colonial relationships that were based on control and patronage by the rich and powerful to the poor and marginalised.

Risks are thus embedded in relationships and highly gendered. Women's position in society is limited, where their prescribed role is often dependent and as such risky based on those around them. Gender-based inequality, oppression and violence shape women's options according to the risks that it creates. Notions of risk are inextricable from notions of safety, and both are woven into the embodied practice of gender. For Susan, marrying a man she had met through sex work was risky in several ways – the financial dependence on him would make it difficult for her to leave the relationship if it did not work or turned out to be violent, the power imbalance resulting from this and his having “rescued” her, the position of her children in the new relationship; outside of this, however, she was left with few options and those were very risky. Erica (Ch.5), who was initially trafficked then remained in the sex industry for some time, found that financial stability also depended on her ability to win favour with men as either a boyfriend-provider or a client; until she found work with the NGO, she had few other options for survival. Joramae (Ch.5) who had been an underage sexual labourer, similarly, found that once she had a baby, she had few options apart from relying on her husband and father. Sexual labour in general usually falls in the same category of gender-based intimate labour that is dependent upon men for provision. Most of my research participants were women, as are the vast majority of identified trafficked persons in the Philippines, and they found that their gender limited their options in life, and that the options available came with inherent risks.

Segments of a population who live with chronic fear experience this as a day-to-day manifestation of structural violence (Vogt, 2013, p. 776). An NGO in a rural area described how a boy living in poverty had climbed a neighbour's tree to steal a piece of fruit; the neighbour fired a warning shot to chase him off, but hit him instead and left him paralysed. In the Philippines, the unofficial but government-sanctioned “death squads” have operated historically and during the time I was in the field, bypassing legal bureaucracy eliminating supposed criminal groups (Asian Pacific Post, 2017a). As discussed in chapter four, government forces have also been known to harass rural civilian populations. Ongoing fear

of physical violence is disproportionately experienced by the poorest groups in the Philippines, both from other citizens and from the state.

Structural violence not only renders certain populations invisible but also implies “the ease with which humans are capable of reducing the socially vulnerable (even those from their own class and community) into expendable non-persons, thus allowing the licence – even the duty – to kill them” (Scheper-Hughes, 2006, p. 13). In the history of the Philippines, there are several times where certain groups of people have been considered expendable in one way or another. The Marcos dictatorship is a prime example, and records show that a majority of those killed and tortured as communist insurgents were not rebel leaders, but poor, uneducated, rural youth (Abinales, 2008). Paramilitary (civilian) groups further extended this violence against perceived rebels. Duterte’s infamous Davao death squads are another, and their victims have often been the lowest level drug runners, rather than drug lords and those profiting, who worked because of desperation rather than criminal intent (Asian Pacific Post, 2017a). These examples illustrate how political and criminal violence are not easily separated; the fashioning of criminals, in these cases, was based on structural violence that legitimated the physical violence against some of the most marginalised and powerless young people (Scheper-Hughes, 2006, p. 14).

In Mindanao, the rural populations are usually considered the most vulnerable and “at risk” due to the lack of resources and dependence on subsistence agriculture. As such, they have little mitigation against the variability of the climate (Levene & Conversi, 2014; Stehr & Storch, 2010). At the end of my field work, rural areas were experiencing a severe drought and the levels of hunger and severe insecurity were increasing from the already problematic situations affecting rural populations. It is not only environmental issues that are threatening traditional livelihoods. Economic development and loss of traditional subsistence resources through commercialisation, pollution, deforestation, urbanisation, market forces rendering livelihoods unsustainable, place rural populations “at risk,” as in coping with ongoing conditions of hardship and suffering.

The tendency for risk to create more risk, and vulnerability to be compounding across a life path has meant that marginalised individuals tend to be equated with the risks they experience within a society. This is related to what Galtung (1990) called cultural violence

in referring to the form of structural violence where inequality and direct violence against certain groups were legitimised and widely accepted. Sexual labourers, for example, are a high-risk group for contracting an STI; they have also often been socially vilified and perceived to be the ones spreading, if not causing, the infections. People living in poverty are often more likely to be targeted by drug pushers as drug mules; they are also perceived to be risks to society and young drug runners have been eliminated by the so-called “death squads.” The reliance on family networks also contributes to marginal individuals and groups being unable to escape their status through work opportunities. Irregular migrants in particular have been considered “at-risk” for human trafficking as a result of their individual choice to migrate irregularly (Aradau, 2013); the structural factors which lead people to these situations have likewise been erased for a focus on the legality of their initial migration (Schmidt & Buechler, 2017, p. 154).

Migration, any migration, domestic or international, legal or irregular, is a point of vulnerability to abuse. The comparatively low Philippine peso, very low wages locally and scarcity of jobs, particularly skilled jobs, make migration appear to be a favourable option, if not the only option, to improve a family’s chances. Mariel’s experience shows some of the processes which contribute to risky migration strategies, and the ways that she worked through the risks inherent to the various options available to her.

9.3 Mariel’s story

Mariel’s social worker took me to meet her at her home. Her neighbours stared at me, conspicuous as ever, as we walked the last part of the journey down the dirt road to her house. She and her husband had four children, and he worked in construction. They owned their home, a simple wooden building along a dirt road. Their situation was relatively stable, and they were not the poorest segment of Davao society. However, with their older children in high school, his salary of was increasingly insufficient for the family’s needs. “(He is a) construction worker. But we have four children. Not enough, his 500 pesos per day (~\$15 NZ). It’s not enough.”

Mariel’s parents had supported her through school, and even after her father’s death her mother’s job washing laundry allowed her to finish college. She married straight out of

university, and was able to use her skills in a specialist field of government statistics. However, the job was contract and project based, and after a few years she found it difficult to find any work. “If the project was finished, then we stop and just wait to be called.” Despite Mariel’s university qualification, skills and work experience, she has been unable to find a job in Davao after years of trying. The market for workers favours the young; a mother with four children is likely to find that the odds are against her. Time has ticked away with the older children getting closer to university and university fees to be paid.

Rita, Mariel’s sister-in-law, and her family were in a different situation. The family was doing well financially, and the children’s schooling was not the constant stress that it was for Mariel. Rita was one of the many overseas workers who sent home remittances to her family, dramatically changing their financial life. Rita was a domestic worker in Lebanon, and had been for a number of years. Like many other Filipinos overseas, Rita was an irregular migrant without official papers or legal working status. It was Rita who suggested that Mariel join her in Lebanon, recommending the agent that she used. Mariel found the agent, a local woman, on Facebook, who was to make all the arrangements. “They have an agreement with immigration. There is an employee in immigration, inside, who they go to.”

Mariel was initially sent to Zamboanga, to go through the “back door” route by boat to Malaysia, before travelling onwards. However, in Zamboanga, Mariel was brought to a hotel where all of her documents were taken, as well as her cell phone, and she was not allowed to leave the room or contact anyone. “So then, I became nervous. I got scared.” Another woman who was there with Mariel managed to escape and alert the authorities. The police and marines returned and freed a total of 18 women who were being held at the hotel.

This was not quite the end of Mariel’s ordeal. She was taken to the local women’s shelter where she spent about ten days before social services were able to organise and fund her journey home. She found the experience “very difficult and sad.” There she saw women who had been held for long periods, some experiencing mental illness or severe trauma, and most if not all suffering being away from their families and homes. The crowded conditions and lack of regular water supply exacerbated the pressure of forced confinement and traumatic experiences. Mariel described waking at 5:00 am to get her turn for the daily

water before the pumps turned off at 8:00. Now, Mariel is happy to be reunited with her family, but worries that she will not be able to find a job before her oldest child reaches University. Although she feels that her family is safe in Davao, their financial situation is very insecure.

The trauma of Mariel's ordeal showed in her body, in her quiet, restrained manner, and her words which still carried pain in them. At the same time, the tenderness in her voice when she spoke about her husband and children hints at what the event must have cost her, and her family. Her youngest child hovered while we spoke, coming in and out of the room, showing me a small toy, disappearing again. Out of all the people I met, Mariel was the one for whom the residual effects of trauma were still most apparent. Departing from her family into uncertainty, being forcibly confined in unknown circumstances, followed by being kept in the women's shelter, have layered traumas into her experience of risk. Her story demonstrates the ways that trauma is not just about an experience of victimisation, but of its relation to other events, particularly the response to trauma. In Mariel's case, the response to a frightening experience of being held captive, was an even longer and more traumatic experience of essentially being held captive in the women's shelter. It extended not only the experience of being out of control, but also being depersonalised as one of many anonymous women held together without knowing each other and far from home.

Mariel's narrative presents a challenge to anti-trafficking service providers and researchers. For her, the worst part of her experience was the "rescue and rehabilitation" that she experienced in the women's shelter. This is not to cast blame on a likely under-funded and overstretched agency which is, for all else, helping women to be safe. It is to point out that victimisation and trauma are not only about the crime or event, but deeply connected with the social context including the legal and rehabilitative responses. The experience of trafficking happened when she was already in a vulnerable and liminal state of change, being in transit, away from her family, home and normal routines. The decision to leave was made in the context of ongoing conditions of uncertainty. The events at the shelter added to the already layered experience of trauma, and loss of control and normality. The closeness of Philippine society is demonstrated in the experience of isolation as trauma. Mariel described a collective sense of trauma that the women were feeling individually but

together, in being separated from their families, exacerbating and reflecting to each other the loneliness, shame, and uncertainty that they were each feeling.

Families would prefer to stay together, and the cost of the migration experience goes far beyond the financial factors. Migration is seen as a strategy to reduce economic risk, while at the same time, is an inherently risky experience for migrants. For Mariel and her family, risk was very much considered in financial terms; the safety of Mariel travelling alone, the risk that she would not find work, or if she did, would not be paid properly or treated well, were reckoned as less important than the financial analysis. In this case, the financial distinction between risk and uncertainty has some credence – Mariel’s family evaluated the known (financial) risk of staying versus the unknown but calculated risk of going in making this decision. The uncertainties – described often in the phrase, ‘if it is God’s will’ – were not considered factors because it was impossible to know what might happen in either situation, whether Mariel remained at home or tried to migrate. This tendency to locate the risks in the future and even the outcomes of concrete plans in the unknown and unknowable – “God’s will” – is one strategy for dealing with high levels of uncertainty. The present realities are highly uncertain, poverty and joblessness are all around, and calculated risks including irregular migration provide some certain action, if not certain outcomes, in response to ongoing uncertainty and experience of risk.

The timing of migration is an important part of strategic mobility. Mariel was planning to go overseas in anticipation of her oldest child attending college, after which, the daughter was intended to also work overseas to support the next children to reach tertiary study. Migration, for her, was done with a clear sense of why, when, and what was at stake. For Mariel, the risk that her children would not finish university would mean that they would be severely limited in their future prospects.

The family member already in the Middle East provided some level of security against the unknowns of finding work overseas, particularly as an undocumented worker. Migrating was a high risk decision, but made with an awareness of what was most likely going to happen if Mariel did not migrate, unless a serious change happened. However, the trafficking situation that Mariel faced was quite traumatic and took resources away from Mariel and her family. It created more risk by diminishing her capacity to work and her

willingness to go overseas, and cost money for travel expenses.

In Mariel's case, the primary mitigating factor against the risk of irregular migration was the social and family network connections which supported her mobility. The same social networks are the risk mitigating factors in daily local lives, where resources are shared particularly in emergencies. In Davao and the Philippines, family and community networks form something of the financial "safety net" against risk that in New Zealand, for example, the government is expected to provide. Migrants do not leave this network, but remain deeply embedded in local relational networks, both emotionally and financially.

The government social work department that handles Mariel's case would like to press charges against the agent who tried to send Mariel overseas. When we met, as Mariel was working through her ordeal and trying to arrange counselling through the social workers, the agent was still working openly on Facebook and recruiting others. This woman had retained Mariel's passport and cell phone, and Mariel was repeatedly attempting to contact her to get them back. If she did not get her valuables by the end of the month in which I met her, she said, she would look at pressing charges. This represented an entirely financial decision, comparing the costs of going through court proceedings to the loss of these expensive items.

Mariel said she would not pursue irregular migration again. "I have already experienced it and known fear, so I would just use legal means. Even though it will take a long time." Legal migration is a long and expensive process, and without a guaranteed outcome of a stable lucrative job. There are costs involved with applying for labour migration – medical certification, transportation to the relevant offices, registration with the Overseas Workers Welfare Association. There is also waiting involved, usually at least a few months to complete the requirements and hopefully secure a job offer. Neither of these is appealing, or often possible, for the unemployed workers who most desperately need to find a better financial option.

Irregular migration bypasses many if not all of these financial and time costs. The risks of the unknown are weighed against the costs of what is known, and prohibitive. One of the factors which influence people to keep trying for irregular migration is the fact that there

are success stories. In Mariel's case, her sister-in-law had been working irregularly for many years and her family was succeeding financially through this strategy. The agent they used may in fact have been well intentioned given that Mariel's sister-in-law had had positive experiences, but the initial agent is only the first step of the process. Viewed from an external perspective, this factor is significant given that Mariel's educational level, age, employment history, and stable if insufficient family income make her a less likely candidate for having experienced human trafficking. Anti-trafficking workers such as those at OWWA who are already frustrated at the numbers of irregular migrants and people being exploited at home and abroad feel that people ought to know better than to take this kind of risk.

However, I wonder how influential Mariel's story will really be to her family, friends and neighbours when compared with the success stories from the families who have managed to flourish from sending a legal or irregular migrant overseas. Stories of migrants being abused or imprisoned exist alongside the stories of migrants working and sending home remittances which improve the family's financial situation and future significantly. When there is no work at home that will meet the family's needs, and the costs and time required to set up legal migration are out of reach, the possibility of success through other channels can be seen as the only real option to make things better. Mariel and her family still face a significant risk to their future in that they are currently struggling, and their situation is only going to get worse unless she finds good employment. "*Wala ka kahibalo unsay mahitabo* [you do not know what will happen]" - was her philosophical and only reply when I asked about the family's future from now.

9.4 Navigating violence: choices and structure

As a point of analysis, most of my participants found themselves in an exploitative situation after deciding to leave home and pursue an opportunity, as did Mariel. The decision was not always made by the person ultimately bearing the risk of setting out, like Susan whose parents sent her to the city. In Melissa's (Ch.6) case, she was exploited when her family sent her to work for a neighbour. Bianca (Ch.7) is another who was explicitly sent out by her family and ended up as a trafficked migrant, and although she was a young adult she also did not have much choice. Erica (Ch.5), Crystal (Ch.5), Jasmine (Ch.7) and Gabriel (Ch.6) were all trafficked after leaving the undesirable conditions at home to pursue a job opportunity; Marcus (Ch.4) and Jun (Ch.4) similarly became underage soldiers after leaving the uncertainties of their homes. This is the point where structural violence is often manifested, in the day-to-day decision making within pressures which are not just precarious but immediately dangerous and violent to the point of shaping experiences, decisions and reactions in real time. In the Philippines agency does not necessarily belong to an individual alone, but to a family whose strategies and decision-making impact on the individual.⁷⁴ When considering risk in daily life, the contexts for these decisions included multiple pressures and risks which led to bearing greater risk by leaving home.

For most of my participants, the factors which led people to make a radical change in their lives and physically leave home to find work were not discrete events. I did not meet anyone who said that they had left home because of a new change or pressure – no one was seeking money for a medical treatment, fleeing a natural disaster, and few had even secured a job offer prior to leaving.⁷⁵ A common theme in decisions to leave was that of a tipping point, where the slow, long term dangers of little money and opportunity gave way to the fast, immediate dangers of venturing out as appearing the less risky option. Mariel, for example, was in a stable situation, but the slowly increasing financial needs of her growing children and their education eventually reached a point where taking the known opportunity – following a relative overseas – became less risky in comparison to not going. When I left

⁷⁴ However, in these discussions I am always aware of cases where families have overruled individuals' needs and rights for the sake of wider choices, particularly in cases of trafficking or abuse where settlements have been arranged out of court and perpetrators have not been charged.

⁷⁵ That is not to say that these things are never catalysts for travel that results in human trafficking.

the Philippines, Mariel was still struggling to find work; now in her 40s, she may indeed find that her only option is to try going abroad again. Erica (Ch.5) took a risk in trusting a relative stranger to find her work, but this was in comparison to the options of returning to her mother to live in extreme poverty, or staying in an abusive situation. This highlights the fact that for many of my participants, taking a risk to leave their home was not just about the risk inherent to a new opportunity and the chance it would not work out. It meant *exiting* a situation that was presently unacceptable and risky. Small, daily iterations of compounding violence, which are experienced as compounding pain, reach the tipping point of becoming unbearable.

Here I particularly see the role of compounding violence in creating risk. It was the day-to-day violence of hunger, abuse, and uncertainty that built over time to create a cumulative sense of the risk of staying, and its inherent vulnerability. In these situations, the only paths my participants (or their families) saw as available to them were limited and risky in one way or another. Jun (Ch. 4), a former underage soldier, for example, had only ever known life in the village, and living there in poverty with his siblings did not give any hope for better opportunities, only risk that they would not be able to survive. The recruiters offered him an opportunity to get an education and a career that would give him security and contribute to his family, reducing the risks they faced due to poverty and agricultural dependency. Jun did not have or know of any other options, due to his geographic location, family and social relationships, and limited education. Like Susan and many others found, there were few options and only uncertainties to choose between. Compounding violence is central to the process by which people are constrained into limited and extreme measures to offset the risk and violence that they are experiencing day by day.

However, all risk does not have the same social meaning. For Susan, choosing between sexual labour and severe hunger for herself and her children meant taking a path which increased her social marginalisation and contributed to long term vulnerability. Negative social meanings can compound the effects in a present and future trajectory. Melissa's (Ch. 6) family, for example, found that their poverty contributed to their social marginalisation. Melissa described how their family was the poorest in the extended family which contributed to their powerlessness in these social relationships when they would be bullied

and harassed by other family members. Being poor is inherently risky and violent due to a lack of resources, insufficient food, and little ability to construct a buffer against health or natural emergencies, but the social meaning of poverty creates further layers of risk. Poverty has both objective and subjective measures and definitions. Poverty is also a trajectory within a social landscape, determining the kind of paths which are open.

Structural violence compounds over time and the effects are not only cumulative but increase as a result of other violences. One of the primary ways this happens is by constraining the options that are available - cutting off certain options, while opening others - and so leaving the most risky options where further violence is likely. Erica (Ch.5) and Crystal (Ch.5) eventually chose sexual labour, although neither considered this the ideal work option, it was available to them – while other options were not – in part because of the earlier violence in the form of sex trafficking that they had experienced. Susan’s parents knew that her chances in life were limited in the village, as was the whole family’s survival without other income sources. The opportunity to send her to the city to work and – hopefully – get a better education, as well as being fed and supporting the family at home, was one of only a few options available to a poor rural family. Susan’s probabilities for life were shaped and limited by her rural home life and certain paths available then, but after the child labour experience, this event changed them significantly and added layers of limitation in her social interactions. Compounding violence suggests that, rather than vulnerable people “attracting” risk personally, vulnerability and multiple experiences of violence often reveal that people are already experiencing violence, and at further risk because of violence. To make sense of this in terms of evaluating risk, the starting point is recognising that marginal groups have fewer and more risky options available. This suggests a need to evaluate not only risk, but what might be considered the “normal” sense of risk “within the materiality of the lives of the poor” (V. Das & Das, 2007, p. 76).

Many of my participants recognised certain events or conditions which had led to their experiences of human trafficking. Gabriel (Ch.6) and Erica (Ch.5) both identified when their mothers left as turning points toward insecurity in their lives. Jun (Ch.4), Susan, Crystal (Ch.5), and Erica (Ch.5) all identified a lack of education as limiting their options. Wanda, as quoted in the opening of this chapter, recognised that the prevalence of certain

rural life paths is maintained by a cycle of poverty and lack of opportunities. However, Das and Das (2007) have suggested that in conditions of poverty and uncertainty, people tend to blame concrete close-at-hand events, as my participants citing education and specific events. The alternative was to face the unfathomable reality that society may have fundamentally failed them, and the world that they lived in might never be the way that they imagined. When my participants, as Mariel, could not bring themselves to speculate as to what would happen in the future, or suggested that their futures were dependent on “God’s will” and as such beyond their control, they reflected the highly uncertain conditions they were facing as well as certain “traces of sociality” (V. Das & Das, 2007, p. 92). Historic powers, for example, have often enforced poor Filipinos’ acceptance of a dependent and contingent place in the social order through violence, ideology, economic and political structures, and religious institutions (Lindio-McGovern, 1997, pp. 26–28). However, one of the meanings of so-called “risky” decisions to pursue employment or migration is in the “active risk-taking rather than passive exposure to chance” (Desmond, 2015, p. 199). In conditions of uncertainty, the risk of human trafficking is only part of the context for the certainty of making a decision. Choosing to face new risks is choosing to acknowledge ongoing risk and compounding violence, and to bear the tension between the chosen and unchosen risks of further violence.

Conclusions

In applying the concept of structural violence to the idea of risk, it becomes clear that there is a distinction between the structural forces that shape people’s lives and the choices that they make to navigate the world. In this chapter, I have separated the idea of risk as the evaluation and possibility of future uncertainty from the idea of “at-risk.” In doing so, I have avoided neutralising past events that have contributed to the risks that my participants have faced. Each of my participants made choices within the particular risk landscape that they inhabited, shaped and constrained by the violences that they had experienced. My participants’ stories demonstrate how violence is compounding to shape and limit the options available, and human trafficking has often been just one of the violences that participants experienced in their lives.

People actively make choices within the circumstances they face, even when violent, limited or constrained. They also interpret and reinterpret their lives in ways that create meaning, and this is also a way to actively navigate risk. Local meanings can also challenge outside hierarchies of action in terms of people's values – “risky” migration strategies, for example, can also be expressions of agency and conscious evaluations of risk. Risk in the Philippines is understood according to local conceptions of the world and their own society, cultural landscapes of meaning that shape even the experiences of human trafficking.

10: Sacrifice: violence and hope

And so it has arrived: the fatal instant,
The dismal injunction of my cruel fate;
And so it has come at last: the moment, the date,
When I must separate myself from you.
Goodbye, Leonor, goodbye! I take my leave,
Leaving behind with you my lover's heart!
Goodbye, Leonor: from her I now depart.
O melancholy absence! Ah, what pain!
(José Rizal, on leaving his lover and the Philippines for Spain in 1882; Rizal, 1969,
p. 17)

The idea of suffering is where the categories of sacrifice, migration, and trafficking overlap. José Rizal, for example, a Philippine hero discussed below, articulated the suffering of separation that migrants have similarly described on leaving their families. Representations of suffering have been central to the deployment of narratives to frame exploitation and bad working conditions as trafficking. NGOs in particular have emphasised not only force or coercion, but the embodied experience of suffering and pain (Aradau, 2013, p. 189; O'Connell Davidson, 2017). In the Philippines, the idea of suffering as purifying has been salient in constructing trafficked women – and at times, voluntary sexual labourers – as victims rather than morally corrupt (Tigno, 2012). The same logic has been noted in identifying illegal migrants or sexual labourers as (innocent) trafficking victims overseas based on their experience of suffering (Brennan, 2008; Fowler et al., 2010; Samarasinghe, 2008; Tigno, 2012).

In understanding sacrifice and its role in Philippine culture, it is first imperative to note that in local usage, there is little semantic difference between the notions of sacrifice and suffering (Borchgrevink, 2003, p. 55). This is true even when suffering is not explicitly linked to a specific act of sacrifice. Marcus (Ch. 4), for example, used the term *sakripisyo* to describe the hardships he endured as a soldier, emphasising the suffering he went through. Ongoing conditions of hardship, as in migration, in sexual labour, in difficult work, in hunger, have all been conceived by my participants and other Filipinos as sacrifice (Briones, 2009b; Lamvik, 2012). Sacrifice is bound up with endurance, and is often about long-term suffering rather than a one-off sacrifice for a particular goal (Bautista, 2015a). At

the same time, many of my participants spoke about sacrifice that gave meaning to their difficult experiences, and of sacrificing as an investment for the sake of their children's future.

This chapter continues from the discussion of risk in analysing how people make sense of the world around them which includes violence in many forms. The risk and experience of suffering are realities that many of my participants and others in Mindanao have had to deal with day-to-day, and the idea of sacrifice is central to this process of navigating risk. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the relationships between human trafficking and wider narratives on suffering, risk, and hope as they are expressed through the idea of sacrifice.

In this chapter, I discuss the idea of sacrifice as a fundamental part of the worldview in much of the Philippines, a driving logic to migration and work, and a way of interpreting and coping with difficulty and suffering. Facing the risk of human trafficking, and often interpreting the experience of trafficking, is shaped by the idea of sacrifice. I argue that places of sacrifice reveal how people's lives are ordered by and around suffering and multiple violences, but that sacrifice is also invoked in transcending and transforming the violence that people are facing.

10.1 Heroes, martyrs, and migrants: imagining sacrifice

Ang bayaning masugatan, nag-iibayo ang tapang

[The hero when wounded, becomes even braver]

(Philippine proverb (Tagalog); Eugenio, 2007, p. 367)

The current understanding of sacrifice in the Philippines has a very specific history. It was introduced through the Catholic religion, but with a specific emphasis which reinforced colonial rule. The focus on the defeated Christ of the *pasyon* [passion] was not merely the day's theology, but an intentional image with the aim of asserting Spanish rule and Filipino submission and compliance (Aligan, 2016; Bautista, 2015a; Cruz-Lucero, 2006). Prior to Spanish times, the idea of heroes was about strong leaders who defended their communities, but the idea of the sacrificial martyr was not explicit nor central (Cruz-

Lucero, 2006). Padel (2000) explored the idea of sacrifice in Indian colonial missions and argued that this sacrifice is always about control, suggestive of the way that Jesuit and Recoleta missionaries sacrificed themselves to build the Catholic church in the Philippines. This was, however, not only self-sacrifice, but relied on forced Filipino labourers to construct the church buildings (Paredes, 2017, p. 233). The Catholic religion and system of thought in the Philippines is deeply ingrained and inseparable from “non-Catholic” or indigenous ways of ordering the world; likewise, even in ardently Christian populations, traditional animistic beliefs have been interwoven into thought and practice (Hislop, 1971; Paredes, 2017; Reyes, 1985). In current times, even traditional and indigenous forms of spirituality have been shaped around the idea of sacrifice (Borchgrevink, 2003).

The *pasyon* is central to the Filipino religious expression of Catholicism, and it presents a hero who is suffering but not ultimately triumphant. During Holy week, prior to Easter, rituals and services describe the suffering, submission, obedience, and humility of Christ up to his death. A Catholic theologian observed that “the Christ of the Filipinos is pre-eminently a suffering Christ, beaten, scourged, humiliated and defeated,” and the victorious risen Christ is largely absent from the mythology (Aligan, 2016, p. 74). This focus on death reinforced the equation between spirituality and suffering, and maintained a separation between ritual and daily life - except when it was suffering and enduring (Bräunlein, 2009; Cannell, 1999; Reyes, 1985, p. 207). “The *pasyon* hero as the paragon of virtue served the Spanish colonialist well,” and the focus on the Holy week rituals which reinforced the ideas of suffering and humility supported Spanish dominance (Cruz-Lucero, 2006, p. 48).

The history of colonial relations is still evident in contemporary beliefs about the *pasyon*, sacrifice, and Black Saturday, the day before Easter. Black Saturday is a quiet “day of sobriety and reflection” (Cruz-Lucero, 2006, p. 39). This day is considered a particular risk in Philippine culture, and I first learned about it because the street-based sexual labourers refuse to go out on this night. For this day, between the crucifixion and the resurrection, Jesus is dead and not able to protect and heal. It was believed that if a person got a sickness or injury, it would not heal until Easter the following year. The sense of loss, and of ritual mourning, and weeping was based on the idea that “it wasn’t only Christ who expired on that mountain; it was God Himself who died” (Valiente, 2015). This theology that says that

there is a day of the year where even God cannot heal people's pain suggests a pervasive sense of suffering, as well as the religious preoccupation with suffering as sacrifice (Magat, 2007, p. 614)

The Philippines has cultural heroes who still have a regular visible place within Filipino life and belief and which draw on these ideas about sacrifice. The archetypal heroes Rizal and San Lorenzo have both been compared to heroic migrants, and both are valorised primarily in their suffering for an ideal rather than their triumph (Magat, 2007, p. 618). San Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila (1600-1637) was heroic in his martyrdom; although he was a Christian, it was not his life but only his death as a martyr after torture that made him the first Filipino saint, recognised by the Catholic Church. He joined a number of Catholic clergy and laypeople onboard a ship to escape an accusation of murder, but the time of their arrival in Japan coincided with intense persecution of Christians, and all were tortured to death (Miller, 2017). San Lorenzo is now the patron saint of overseas workers. Rizal (1861-1896) was a hero for his efforts to liberate the Filipino people from Spanish oppression. Rizal was labelled *filibustero* [subverter] as he pushed for equality for Filipinos, and eventually the idea of Filipino independence from the Spanish (Guerrero, 1962). He was arrested and exiled for four years, eventually blamed for Filipino uprisings and executed. Rizal is a prominent figure in Filipino culture, celebrated yearly on the anniversary of his death, and taught in schools with emphasis on how he suffered away from his family, endured accusations, and ultimately died a martyr without seeing the freedom he had hoped for (see Figure 24) (Guerrero, 1962). Rizal's writings have continued to be invoked to criticise colonial legacies in the Philippines, and his heroic status has been built around his sacrifices for the nation (Juan, 2011, 2014). As the quote above suggests, these figures' heroic strength and value has been proved through suffering – “the hero when wounded” (Eugenio, 2007, p. 367).

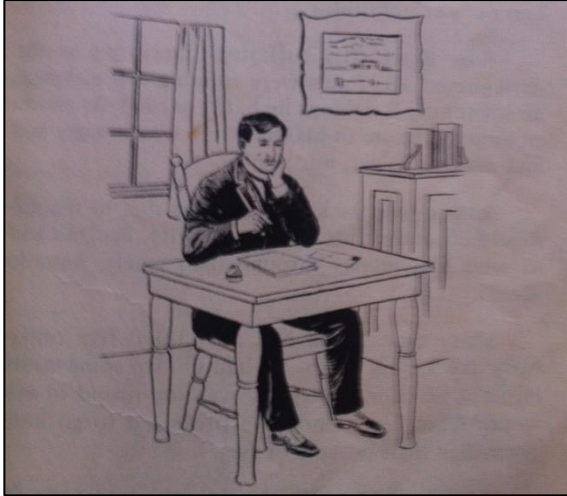


Figure 24: Illustration from a children's textbook on Rizal illustrating Rizal writing poetry while suffering being away from home. "After Rizal arrived in Madrid, he felt very homesick...Poor Rizal! His sufferings increased as the days passed." (Reyes & Dumino, n.d., pp. 53–54).

Like Rizal and the resistance to Spanish imperialism, the idea of sacrifice has been conjured with regard to resisting colonial rule now and in the past, and as a political ideal. Former presidents Corazon and Ninoy Aquino personified and politicised the idea of the sacrificial hero in Corazon's leadership through grief, and in Ninoy's death while opposing the Marcos regime (Calica, 2014). The model of Ninoy's sacrifice as a martyr for the sake of the nation continues to be invoked in religion, media, and politics (Bacani, 2014; Calica, 2014; Torrevillas, 2017). Duterte similarly invoked the idea of sacrifice to legitimate his presidency, and to support the resistance to foreign imperialism:

We are an independent country. We will survive, we will endure, we can go hungry. But this time I want my country treated with dignity... I do not need the presidency at this time of my life. I am 72 years old. As president I have to preserve and defend the Filipino nation. And I will exactly [sic] do it, whatever be the price, whatever be the cost. It's my solemn duty to see to it that my country is really what it should be: a peaceful and comfortable place to live (Russia Today, 2017).

Endurance, suffering, resilience, and sacrifice are all themes in Duterte's words. He emphasised that he did not need to be president but did so on behalf of the nation. Sacrifice is again a trope in defence of the nation and the people.

The Philippines' history around the ideas of sacrifice and heroes has meant that heroism is now seen in the struggle and effort rather than the outcome (Bacani, 2014; Bautista, 2015b; Encinas-Franco, 2015). The hero was not the one who sacrificed their economic potential, for example, to work in the church or an NGO, but the one who suffered to succeed

economically for their family, as in migration. The heroism was displayed in the *struggle* for this end, not necessarily in achieving it. In daily life, outside the realm of ritual, it is everyday labours characterised by their “banality, their monotony, and their incompleteness that require such narrative work to highlight their value as sacrifice” (Mayblin & Course, 2014, p. 316). This is the significance of Aquino’s words valorising migrant workers as heroes. Outside of this imagery, the drudgery of overseas domestic toil was necessary and perhaps gratefully valued by the family receiving remittances, but not significantly spiritual, heroic, or meaningful in and of itself.

Migrants have been called heroes since President Corazon Aquino famously addressed overseas domestic workers as such in 1988. She referred to them as “*bagong bayani*” [modern-day heroes], acknowledging not only their provision but the endurance, suffering, and sacrifice that went into their labour and separation from their families (Encinas-Franco, 2015). The government continues to depict migrant labourers as heroes who sacrificially offer their lives and their labour, including emotional labour of absence and endurance, for the sake of the family and the nation (Bautista, 2015b, 2015a; BBFI, 2017; Bordadora, 2011; Magat, 2007, p. 618). This political framing has been widely adopted into popular and private use. Indeed, migrants are heroes not only to their own families, but to the Philippines as a nation whose economy relies on the remittances for income and for taxes. “When migration is discussed, whether by migrants or in popular culture, it is cast as a duty and a personal sacrifice, a form of deferred gratification for the collective national good” (Barber, 2008). Migration is no longer only a sacrifice, but a duty and marker of Filipino identity and value.

Beyond nationalist sentiments, the idea of sacrifice is heavily laden with emotion. Sacrifice has been implicated in the ways that children and parents cope with the absence of migration and believe that the separation is for a better outcome, even though it is painful (Magat, 2007, p. 604; Parreñas, 2003, 2008b). The sacrifices of migration are not only made by the overseas migrants. Oldest daughters have often assumed the maternal duties if the mother is overseas, including housework as well as the emotional and relational care and support for younger siblings (Parreñas, 2003, p. 48). Parreñas’ (2013) participants, female OFWs, described maintaining mothering and enduring loneliness and guilt from afar

as an ongoing emotional struggle. Migrant parents have also used gift-giving as a way to concretely represent sacrifice and love in maintaining relationships from a distance (Lamvik, 2012). At the same time as being lauded for their sacrifice for the nation, migrant parents, mothers in particular, have been socially blamed for abandoning their children (Lam & Yeoh, 2016; Parreñas, 2013).

Migration is described as self-sacrifice, but can also be considered the sacrifice of people by the state. Bautista (2015a) described the state's role in fashioning "export quality martyrs" as labour migrants based on the idea of self-sacrifice. The government has directly produced several migration categories including nurses; it has created a market for Filipino seafarers based on low wages and "ideal" workers (Bautista, 2015a; Masselink & Lee, 2013; S. McKay, 2007). S. McKay (2007) reported that migrant seafarers were proud of their hero status and of helping their family, but expressed bitterness at the way the government presented them as heroes but then left them vulnerable within the structure of seafaring labour. One seafarer commented that instead of *bagong bayani* [modern heroes], "we should be called '*gagong bayani*' [stupid heroes] because, even if we contribute significantly to the country, the government fails to help unemployed seamen" (S. McKay, 2007). The government's official policy and rhetoric has contributed to fashioning migrants as sacrificial, docile, transnational workers based on corporeal sacrifice, control and deployment of the body as well as the emotions (Bautista, 2015a; Tyner, 2004). In this way, it is not only families and individuals but the state that has sacrificed Filipino workers for global development (Tyner, 2004).

Casting migrants as heroes and as saviours has also been an exercise in power. Government migration training programs have promoted obedience and subservience to qualify for this heroic job, and migrants have been convinced and physically disciplined to deploy themselves as such (Encinas-Franco, 2016; Guevarra, 2006; Polanco, 2017; Prescott, 2016). The central transformation of the idea of sacrificial martyrdom is that the "heroic body" is not in great achievement but in the everyday suffering of toil in the moral duty of migration. The Catholic church has affirmed this emphasis on martyrdom by effort rather than death; however, the Church and media have also condemned the cost of migration to family unity, as well as signs of material prosperity such as smart phones (Bautista, 2015a).

This narrative reflects and supports the government policy of labour export. Local academics I spoke to emphasised how the government says that there is a problem with trafficking, but not any problem with legal migration patterns, refusing to acknowledge the link between the two. Migrants taking on this identity and casting their work as sacrifice, and having it socially recognised as such, have internalised meaning which supported endurance but relocated the agent of sacrifice from the state to the self. The configuration of migration has resulted from government policy, and framing migration as self-sacrifice obscures the reality that migrants are also sacrificed by the state for national aims.

Sacrifice is a central principle that my participants and many Filipinos have used to order their lives within relationships, work at home and abroad, conceptions of gender, and military service including rebel forces. Althea was a particularly industrious woman I met in Davao whose life, and relative economic success, was built on her understanding of sacrifice for the sake of her family. In her sacrifice, she has also taken on a heroic role in and beyond her family relationships, including – perhaps surprisingly – pushing her family to attend church and build stable and moral lives.

10.2 Althea's story

I met Althea on the dark street in Davao where Susan and I had also chatted, and where I had got to know several of the street-based sexual labourers. Althea ran a *tindahan*, along with a few staff she employed including one of her brothers, a table piled with baskets and packets. Hard-boiled eggs, instant noodles, and hot drinks were at hand for the women and any passers-by. Althea grew up in a rural area outside of Davao. Her family are still there, parents, grandparents, and four brothers. Her parents separated, and as a result of the turmoil in the family, she described herself as out of control and negligent. “My mother and father separated. Me, I grew up with no mother, no father. So, I had no self-control. Schooling then working, schooling then working. So, I disappointed myself.” Althea went to high school but did not graduate.

Althea described her home life as violent. Her parents were often violent to each other, and she noted that her brothers were always fighting as well. When her parents separated, she said that this was the point where she became “out of control and negligent” of herself. The

family was very poor, without enough food to eat or even electricity for a long time, making it difficult for the children to study. “Very dark. Extremely dark. That’s our situation there. It’s really tough there in our place. That’s why it seemed I was the one - they depended on me. So, I did not have a choice.” To help the family survive, Althea went out to work in a bar at night as a waitress, at about age fifteen. She struggled like this for a long time, working, studying and trying to finish high school, as well as enjoying the freedom that came from having money. She was often not at home and would stay with friends. She had a live-in partner and when she became pregnant while still a teenager, she finally found that she could not continue as she had. She carried on working hard through her pregnancy but dropped out of school as she was not able to finish her exams. “I worked so hard.” Once she had a baby at seventeen, her life became even more difficult, and her lack of high school education limited her options further.

Although she described her high school job as waitressing, she later mentioned that she had to start work “stripping” (in a club) to support her family who were depending on her. She implied that the bar work was also sexual labour which she later continued in the street-based work she had been doing for many years since – “first was the bar, as a waitress in the bar. Then after the bar, here – on the street and highway.”⁷⁶ Althea had two children, aged eight and ten when I met her. She was also supporting her mother and siblings, as well as others who she had taken in. She described how she was conflicted in wanting to find other work; she thought she would be able to provide for herself, but what about her family? Her brother had recently gone blind and his wife was pregnant with their second child. Another brother worked driving a *trisikad*, but because he had to board in the city to do so, there was little money left to support the rest of the family.

Althea lived most of the time in a two-room house along with her brother and his wife and their two children (one adopted from another sibling). Her children lived with her during school holidays and returned to the rural area for the school year to live with Althea’s mother.

⁷⁶ After mentioning the hardship at home, she added, “*so na no-choice ko. Nag-strip gyud ko*” [So I had no choice. I had to strip]. Although I am not certain, I believe that this is the inference. As an underage sexual labourer, though, Althea would also have met the definition of a trafficked person.

She had been providing micro-loans to some of the other street-based women, and obviously has an aptitude for financial management. She described buying rice in bulk, and school supplies and necessities ahead of time to be prepared. I had met few people in the Philippines who took this attitude toward money, much less anyone who had this number of dependents and demands on resources. She was working hard and trying to save money as the school fees prior to exams would be due in the coming months.

She described that it was a constant worry, however, whether there would be money when it came time for exams, particularly in the future as her children reached high school.

“That’s really what I want. The number one thing that I really want for my child is that - I would ask myself if I can send her to high school? Can I send her to college? That is my question. Especially in high school, they would say that, mom, it’s our exams. Where would I get the money *Ate*? That’s really my question. But for me, God is there *Ate*. He will provide so that I myself can find a way.”

She was also concerned about whether her family had the basics, jandals, underwear, and the like. Althea wanted to make sure that that they looked presentable for church and had decent clothes to wear. “That’s really what I want - I want them to look tidy in church.”

Althea is continually trying to save money and stocking staple foods for her family. Tinned sardines, dried noodles, canned goods, school supplies. “When it’s a lucky day, and I have made over ₱1,000 here in one night, I would be able to save that. I would never waste it. I would really save it. And I would buy wholesale rice (in bulk). I would also not spend more than I had to.” They do not have electricity apart from a single bulb connected to a neighbouring relative’s power supply by an extension cord. It is expensive to travel in to the city, so the family buys as much as possible at one time. Even with public transport for part of the way, it is still a long walk which includes a basic and precarious hanging footbridge.

Althea has been continually attempting to get her family in the mountains to contribute to their economic life. She has arranged so that they had bought pigs, chickens, and ducks, in order to have something to sell at the market. Her past attempts, however, had not been successful, and her capital was wasted in the family’s efforts. She gave her family capital in

order to sell at the market, but they did not manage to get an ongoing income and they had no money left to buy rice. “I really - what I really want is for me to stop working. That’s really my number one desire. But there is an impediment to me, because of (my family’s) hardship. Because for myself, I can eat, but my family *Ate*, I really feel pity for them. So I pity them. I tried to stop giving to them. But they had used up all the capital, and they had no rice, and no other source of income. So that’s why – myself, I would really take pity. Pity will always come out first.”

Althea does question why, as one of the youngest, she is the one supporting her mother in particular as well as the rest of her family. “So, I fed all of them. So I was the only one who was doing my best. Me. My mind was always about my family.” However, she sees no other choice, as there is no one else who is taking the responsibility or has the capacity. Her mother, however, is her main concern, as she is the one who is in the time of life to be supported by her children. “Because if there were just someone who would support my mother there, I really would not. I could just at least focus on only my children. At least then it would not seem that I was shouldering everything alone.”

Part of Althea’s work is trying to find ways for her family to be more self-sufficient. She invested money that was soon spent. Now, she has got some animals for her mother and younger brother at home to care for. They also help her with her *tindahan*, which she hopes will grow and become more of a regular income source. What Althea really wants is to be at home with her children, to guide them, help them with their school work and teach them in their lives. She wants her family, from her parents to her nieces and nephews and children, to all attend church together. She wants them to be a respectable family. She has been pushing them all to attend church and reconcile. Althea seems to have always been the one to sacrifice for her family, since she waitressed at night through high school. Despite this, she has become the one who is giving directions to the others, based on her authority as the breadwinner. She is, like Sharon (Ch.8), embodying the social position of having resources to take pity and offer patronage to those who are less fortunate. She is hard pressed to do this, but works toward her ambitions for herself, to be freer from her family’s demands, to be a provider and carer, to show leadership to other women, to influence her family to attend church.

Althea has a deep sense of Christian spirituality, although she does not attend church frequently. “I am the only one (in my family) who does not go. But in my heart and mind I have a God. I tell them that I will be blessed...I prayed to God that I would not have focus on those kinds of things. So that’s why I also prayed that I will try to engage in some kind of business. But at the time I had a business, I also had to see clients still. Because the income was not enough. If it was a big business, it would be good; right? Because it really feels so good when you have a clear income and also you are serving God. That really sounds good *Ate* [sister], right? (Imagine), doesn’t it? So, it would be great if it’s like that. Then you will serve. You will help your fellow poor. Like that. I really think that way at least like, in this, you know - (in life) we enjoy what God gave us. I also received what is not so difficult. From hardship, we also experience comfort.”

Knowing the Catholic emphasis on caring for people in need, I asked Althea whether her service to her family could perhaps be considered her service to God. “That’s what I thought too,” she replied. “Sometimes I have said, ‘I didn’t go to church to worship, I did not do offerings,’ but by helping, I think that was (my religious duty). I give my family it’s like what I give for offering. But there is still something lacking in myself. I am still missing something.”

“It seems that I don’t mind about myself - in reality this livelihood of mine, I’m a sinner. However, I use the money in the proper way. I use it for my family. I was not thinking for myself only. I did not do drugs, I only think of my family.”

“It’s so pitiful (my life and my work). But ok *lang ko* [I’m ok]. I feel pity for myself, but I feel happy if I can help. So now, we have a neighbour which we took in with us. Like we adopted her because she no longer has a real family. She is sixteen and she has a young child. Still nursing. Then she has no place to live, so I said, you can stay with us. Even if she is not a relative, but we feel sad for her.”

“Just now she texted that they don’t have milk. So I said, ‘don’t worry about milk, we will be able to get that.’ I feel sorry for her, *’te* [sister]. Because firstly, she is a woman. So, I see myself in her that we are in that bad situation. If we really think about it, she is not even

our relative. My thinking is we are siblings. I consider her as a younger sibling. So sad. I feel sorry. She is very *luoy* [pitiful].”

“Sometimes, I feel sad because I only make enough, it’s like this. We all stay in one house with two bedrooms. The *trisikad* driver in one, and I stay in the other. My brother who runs the *trisikad*, has very little income. Especially now when there is no school. He almost has no income. I feel sorry for them. They can’t buy cooking gas. So, I have to provide for that, and diapers for his kids. Sometimes they don’t have rice, so I buy rice. Sometimes food. But it’s fine with me. I did not think about the expenses. All I was after was to help them, so that our family survives. We held tight -- we struggled because my brother has a one-year-old, then the adopted child of our sibling is ten years old. I feel sorry. We feel sorry. In my case, I would spend whatever money I have. I don’t care what they say. I would go out with customers as long as I can help... Sometimes I think it’s strange to tell God, let me earn later (from sexual labour). It feels kind of awkward. But then I think, I just need to try harder. That’s my idea. I will work hard because I have obligations.”

Althea’s obligations have demanded a sacrifice that she feels deeply. For Althea’s children in the future, “I really want them to be professionals. They can repay my hardship. It’s unimaginable, staying up late, and entertaining customers here. There are violent customers. Our souls seem to go ahead of us - sometimes we don’t know where they are.” Like other sexual labourers (Ch.5), Althea recognised the physical risks that added to the stress on her life and soul.

“The biggest danger with a customer is that they will take us far from here, and they will pick on us, you know. And we won’t know what will happen, and then we won’t be able to get back. If it’s just close, it’s fine. As long as it’s in the downtown area only. What we are scared of is when we are brought to their homes because they might do something, they might be violent because they’ll think it’s their home.” In contrast to a motel, houses are a place where the women feel they are not in control. The danger of violence adds to the risk that some nights Althea will make a lot of money, but some nights she will make nothing.

“In my life, it’s really tough. It’s always just a sacrifice.”

10.3 Agency and sacrifice

Dili makalatas sa dagat ang tawong walay tinguha

[He who will not venture can never cross the sea]

(Philippine proverb; Eugenio, 2007, p. 365)

The idea of sacrifice moving people to action has been an exercise in power, as in the deployment of migrants, but has also been an expression of agency – venturing out to “cross the sea” (Eugenio, 2007, p. 365). Sacrifice has also been a way to challenge power relationships - soldiers, for example, have sacrificed their lives to challenge the government over the conditions in rural areas. Although this is outside of “official” narratives on sacrifice and heroism, the former soldiers that I met conceived of their service as sacrifice for a worthy cause. Researchers working with Filipino migrants have also found a relationship between sacrifice and agency in their participants’ lives (Lam & Yeoh, 2016; Lamvik, 2012; D. McKay, 2007; Parreñas, 2013; Tacoli, 1996, 1999; van der Ham et al., 2014). Migration, they found, was a point where individual ambitions could be met while also fulfilling social obligations - self-sacrifice for the sake of the family, particularly for women (Briones, 2009b; Choi & Lyons, 2012; Tacoli, 1999; van der Ham et al., 2014). Migration is a socially approved sacrifice, but Alipio (2014) found that migration has also been a strategy to escape domestic family violence for possible physical and economic freedom to a greater degree. Migration has not only implied financial achievement, but new experiences and escape from conditions at home (Barber, 2000). For Jasmine (Ch.7), for example, migration was no longer a sacrifice but a better life that she had created for herself and her son. Althea’s sacrifice for her family qualified her performance of socially unacceptable sexual labour and gained success and autonomy. In this way, the notion of sacrifice was an expression of agency and transformation, where people drew on certain cultural values to strategically reject others.

Through sacrifice, Althea has found a way to provide for her family and be close to them. Even though sexual labour still reflects certain patriarchal systems, it is financially empowering for Althea and gives her a great deal of power within her family. Yet, she very

keenly feels and reflects a desire for her family to be respectable, suggesting how freedom in one area can be undermined by other forms of patriarchal control, “which tend to remain and/or reconstitute themselves, if not in the workplace, then in other dimensions of women’s lives” (Chant & McIlwaine, 1995, p. 306). This remains similar to what Chant and McIlwaine (1995) found in the Visayas, where women in sexual labour experienced the most freedom and autonomy through earnings and physical distance from other family, but that their gains were limited in other ways:

Empowerment through wage earning is fragmented and incomplete, presents women a contradictory situation where demand for sexual labour is commoditised and legally endorsed, but doing this activity renders them unable to fulfil the requirements for female legitimacy in wider society (Chant & McIlwaine, 1995, p. 298).

The agency that Althea has exhibited in her sacrifice for her family has gained a great deal, but also demonstrates a point of tension within a cultural system which both demands her sacrifice but condemns her resulting labour, resembling the position of migrant mothers.

For Althea, sacrifice was an act of agency as well as cultural values. Saving her neighbour as a teenage mother was also saving herself, and she felt pity both for the neighbour and for herself. However, Althea does not have anyone to rescue her. Even so, she is a hero for many other people, and a vessel of hope for those around her. A shared sense of self, for Althea, meant that she did for others that which she could not do for herself. She imagined, however, one day having a successful business, and a life where she could be home taking care of her children. She had a very different attitude from Susan, who was “rescued” by men. Althea supported everyone she could, including the men in her life. Her financial acumen has served her well; in another context, I could imagine her as a bank manager or CEO rather than a sexual labourer with a tiny *tindahan*, the only difference being the opportunities and education she has had in her life. Althea’s sacrifice has given her the ability to succeed financially, and by fulfilling her social role as provider, it has also given her a great deal of power and autonomy within her family relationships.

Agency is not necessarily synonymous with exercising rights or achieving better outcomes, but is visible in the complex and strategic ways that people navigate and survive in constrained and violent conditions. Briones (2009b) pointed out that there is a false

conflation between agency and rights - exerting agency does not directly lead to rights, and she questioned the dichotomous approach where agency is positive, and structure is negative. Researchers with Filipinos working abroad found that many of their participants overtly recognised slave like or abusive conditions, but chose to stay and did not want to return to the Philippines (Ayalon, 2009; Bernardo et al., 2016; Choi & Lyons, 2012; Hilsdon, 2007; Lopez, 2012; Ruggunan, 2011). Despite multiple structural factors which influence and maintain the abused, indentured, and controlling working conditions, people continue to stay, to migrate, and to navigate this system. Briones (2009b, p. 65) argued that this choice was not about rights but a choice between work and no work in the Philippines. This is what Pun (2005) concluded also through her research with low-paid Chinese factory workers, that people can be both exploited and knowingly choose to make use of what opportunity is available, even when on a macro level the work can be considered exploitative.

When considering social structure, it is easier to see the ways that structure constrains than how structure offers options and a place for agency. In the Philippines, migration, despite the rhetoric of sacrifice and absentee mothers, does offer an approved and celebrated way for women to engage with labour and freedom - or at least the potential for it - although this freedom is contested, uneven, and partial. In the Philippines, the tradition of feminist nuns is another example of women using the existing order to pursue alternate aims (Claussen, 2001; Roces, 2008). Soldiers such as Marcus also referred to sacrifice in conceptualising their armed resistance to current political and economic configurations. Agency and even resistance can exist within structure, in reinterpreting and re-enacting traditional roles, even amid violence.

Agency is also implied in the way that migrants have drawn on the idea of sacrifice in their struggles for identity in an overseas job. In migration, identity and roles are often conflicting: overseas, migrants often navigate low status as a domestic worker or overseas migrant, while at home they are considered a hero on a national and family level with gratitude and honour (Briones, 2009b; Magat, 2007; Parreñas, 2010b). The notion of sacrifice is part of navigating this process as it supports imagining the lower status and enduring difficult work as being for the greater good, reinterpreting and valorising their

treatment overseas. However, identity is always dialectical and informed by social responses, and Filipinos abroad often navigate this tension, for example, where educated Filipinos have accepted lower-level work despite having greater expertise (Choi & Lyons, 2012; Magat, 2007, p. 610; Ronquillo et al., 2011).

The contradiction between internal identity and external responses is heightened in employment where there is little autonomy. One of Barber's (2004, p. 212) participants, a Filipina domestic worker overseas, described finally standing up to her controlling employer: "you just pay for my service but you'll never buy me...my whole individual. You can say anything. You think I am just a slave for you. But I have rights. I have feelings." Bianca and Jasmine (Ch.7) also maintained agency and identity in determining the point where they could no longer stand the conditions and fled from their workplaces. There is agency in this ongoing struggle, at personal cost, for significance and maintaining an identity based on sacrifice for a higher goal, rather than the immediate conditions of the labour.

The agency which has been evident in certain expressions of personal sacrifice has at times been undermined by official discourse. Notions of sacrifice, particularly for women, have been invoked in government migration preparation programs which emphasise vulnerability and women's positions within families. Although women's migration has the potential to challenge certain patriarchal norms and power relations through women's earnings, social practices and narratives have continually undermined women's agency in migration (Parreñas, 2013). Guevarra (2006, 2010) traced the preparation of Filipina overseas workers and noted how the state reinforced patriarchal narratives of blame, which suggest that women are vulnerable and that it is their job to manage their vulnerability. The government training programs emphasised the sacrifice that they are making as women to venture out for the sake of their families while bearing, and being blamed for, the risks of physical danger, and of moral failings such as unfaithfulness. Guevarra (2006, 2010) argued that migration is supposed to be about empowerment, but the seminars instead reinforced submission and lack of power within the migration process. Framing Filipinas as victims has been used to further control and "protect them" in ways that do not empower

(Hwang, 2017; Parreñas, 2010b). This officially-sanctioned discourse reinforces women's lack of agency both at home and in migration.

Women's agency has been challenged through the idea of the sacrificial mother as well as the blame cast upon them for social ills (Alipio, 2014; Briones, 2009b; Parreñas, 2000, 2007). The idea of sacrifice reinforces and reframes migrant motherhood as a point of still enacting this gendered ideal; it does not displace the role of mothers as caring, but demands that migration be undertaken painfully rather than with freedom and empowerment (Alipio, 2014; Bautista, 2015b; Magat, 2007). Tanyag (2017) argued that the image of the sacrificial mother has been part of the social control over women's bodies in the Philippines.

Migration by women has the potential to begin restructuring family relationships with more egalitarian roles. The media's vilifying of migrant mothers, the ongoing trope of sacrifice, and entrenched family relationships undermine this potential. Researchers have found that in general, Filipino men do not take up the caring nor household tasks while mothers are away, which fall to daughters and other female relatives (Briones, 2009b; Lam & Yeoh, 2016; Parreñas, 2013). Further, if children do experience problems, this is generally not attributed to the father and other family members' lack of care, but to the mother who is not present. As a result, women send bigger shares of their OFW wages home, leaving less for their own well-being and survival, and also endure social blame for being away from their families (Lam & Yeoh, 2016; Parreñas, 2007, 2013; PSA, 2016b).

Migrant labour has often also implied the sacrifice of certain types of agency and identity. Researchers have noticed that in domestic and sexualised labour, women in Italy, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Japan have had to conform to certain ideas of the "third-world woman," friendly, submissive, grateful, pliable, and non-threatening (Constable, 1997, 2003; Hilsdon, 2007; Huang & Yeoh, 2007; Magat, 2007; Parreñas, 2009). They found that part of their labour was maintaining this "pretence" of inferiority, particularly for women who were educated or well off in the Philippines (Constable, 2003, p. 141; Magat, 2007, p. 610). Huang and Yeoh (2007) and Constable (2003) listed some of the extremely controlling and even abusive working conditions that domestic workers faced in Singapore and Hong Kong, from monitored daily schedules and permitted hair styles to verbal and physical abuse. The long hours and difficult labour were also implicated in factory and

domestic workers' inability to escape the conditions because of their exhaustion and meeting basic needs which displaced potential reflection (Chant & McIlwaine, 1995, p. 169). The sacrifice of one's own home life for migrant labour has often meant the sacrifice of autonomy.

Sacrifice is the concept which makes labour and suffering valuable, relational, and significant for many migrants and workers. For Althea, deeply held religious and cultural beliefs about sacrifice shaped her responses to hardship and led her to sacrifice even her religious and cultural convictions about sexual morality for the sake of her family. The trope of sacrifice can make the experience of migration meaningful and "worth it" even in times of difficulty in support of one's family (van der Ham et al., 2014). For some of my participants, once they were out of trafficking they were then free to sacrifice for their family. Other scholars have also emphasised the role of sacrifice in Filipino OFWs' experiences which contributed to their well-being and resilience through enacting cultural values (Alipio, 2014; Briones, 2009b; Lamvik, 2012, p. 29; Magat, 2007; van der Ham et al., 2014). The idea of sacrifice works on both a personal and social level, and is a marker of identity among OFW communities abroad as "a way to reaffirm membership in a particular community" (Mayblin & Course, 2014). Both personal and social resources are important for the concept of resilience, and the ability to cope with and deal with stress (Lamvik, 2012; van der Ham et al., 2014, p. 563). Seafarer migrants cope with physically demanding but often boring and repetitive labour, as well as long periods confined to the ship and away from their families. Metaphors of sacrifice and gift are central to enduring this process and making daily life significant (Alipio, 2014; Lamvik, 2012, p. 29; Magat, 2007). Lamvik (2012) and D. McKay (2007) both described how this metaphor is invoked and manifested in the act of sending gifts, putting the labour, love, and sacrifice into physical representation of the self and the relational connection. Framing hardships as sacrifice contributes to endurance, resilience, and hope amid difficulty.

10.4 Sacrifice and Hope

“Ang pag-antus mapait apang ang iya patubas manumit”

[Sacrifice is bitter but its fruits are sweet]

(Philippine proverb; Eugenio, 1975, p. 386)

Despite the experiences of human trafficking and exploitation that many of my participants had experienced, almost all expressed some form of optimism and hope for the future. One of the ways that people have maintained hope through and beyond hardship and suffering is through the idea of sacrifice as making suffering meaningful and a creative force for a better future. Crystal and Marcus, for example, explicitly stated that they were grateful for their experiences of trafficking, which included significant suffering, because of the strength and hope that they had learned through enduring these events. Crystal and Erica also considered their experiences to be sources of hope to both themselves and others, demonstrating what they had overcome and that having been trafficked into the sex industry did not determine the ultimate direction of their lives. Hope was then perhaps one of the fruits that grew from the bitter sacrifice they had experienced in human trafficking. The idea that sacrifice is productive and rewarded in creating a better future is a significant source of hope

Hope born of sacrifice is significant in inspiring and sustaining people’s efforts in labour, labour migration, and in overcoming suffering. However, in many of my participants’ stories, images of endurance and survival were much closer to the surface than expressions of hope. For many, such as Marcus (Ch.4), Susan (Ch.9), and Hannah (Ch.8), their primary hope was to find a job which meant they could support their family. For people who had lived through day-to-day pain of hunger, imagining their family members able to eat and go to school without suffering was a significant goal. Althea’s hopes, too, were modest, and she wanted her family to be able to present themselves as equals, dressed decently in church, with shoes and books to go to school, for rice and basic staples to eat. Part of the

violence of poverty is not only lack, but the extraordinary effort that it takes to meet ordinary basic needs. This violence is reflected in the constrained hope centred on survival.

At the same time, other participants did find renewed and enhanced hope after having experienced trafficking. Some of my participants expressed a greater level of awareness and expectation for working conditions, as Brennan (2010, p. 163) found with her participants in the USA, expressions of hope in the form of agency in working for better treatment. Bianca (Ch.7), for example, after escaping from trafficking, frequently changed jobs until she found one that suited her requirements. Crystal (Ch.5) also had gained a greater sense of her rights and bodily autonomy. Erica (Ch.5) actively worked hard to gain a university qualification. For many of my participants, renewed hope was also connected to their new security, having stable relationships, access to education, and employment prospects, similar to what Brennan (2010, p. 159) found with her participants' hope being linked to migration status security. In contrast, for example, Mariel (Ch. 9) and Joramae (Ch.5) had entered situations later designated as trafficking to seek better financial options for their families; after returning to their families, they did not express any concrete hope that things would improve in the future, as their financial situations had not improved. For Jun (Ch.4), Marcus (Ch.4), Gabriel (Ch.6), Melissa (Ch.6), Erica (Ch.5), and Crystal (Ch.5), they had found various kinds of support through GO and NGO programs which had clearly resulted in new hopes and directions for the future.

The Philippines' Catholic history has contributed to a prevalent cultural sense of "fatalism" which often precluded planning for the future or expressing hope as whatever would happen depended upon the "will of God" (Barber, 2000; Cannell, 1999; Magat, 2007, p. 612). In the Philippines this idea is fundamental beyond Catholicism or even religion in general. An understanding of the fundamental limitation of control within a person's life, and the randomness of events, has been shaped not only by a long history of Catholicism in society and schooling,⁷⁷ but also reinforced by the significant economic uncertainties and lack of predictable economic, health, or other safety nets in cases of severe difficulty. DonDon (Ch.6), Bianca (Ch.7), and Erica (Ch.5) all described this process of dealing with

⁷⁷ To reiterate, the dominant culture and that of my participants is strongly shaped by Catholicism; the predominantly Muslim areas are outside the scope of this study.

uncertainty through seeking “God’s will” and attempting to resign to whatever outcome occurred. Hannah (Ch.8) summed up this idea where God’s will was that which was supposed to happen, and she sought to find it by seeking guidance about who to marry, but it was ultimately described as what *had* happened that proved it was God’s will. Like Mariel’s (Ch.9) ambivalence, however, this is a pragmatic way to deal with the levels of uncertainty. The idea of “God’s will,” which is unpredictable but ultimately benevolent, does not give people security but a discourse for managing insecurity, through a focus on the present for endurance and survival (Ong, 2015, p. 616; Principe, 2015, p. 181). However, the idea of God’s will can also reinforce the idea that people fundamentally deserve or are entitled to the conditions that they inhabit.

Hope frequently comes from outside, whether the will of God or another person. Fate, luck and patronage are again key to this idea, that perhaps God will send someone, or something good might happen (Cannell, 1999, p. 229). Much of the hope is on dependent relationships, where if not family, a foreigner or other benefactor might provide for people’s needs. Susan and Jasmine, for example, both found that their relationships with men offered security and new hope. Hannah and Bianca also maintained this kind of relationships with their overseas employers who supported them personally beyond their work. Even government departments had a sense of fatalism, knowing that the upcoming election might mean significant changes in policy, personnel, and funding, making it impossible to plan long-term. The degree to which people’s lives are shaped by forces beyond their control, particularly in employment, has reinforced the culture of patronage and the location of hope in relationships with those more powerful.

Researchers have suggested that hope is not only an attitude but a skill, one particularly relevant to resilience during difficulty (Bashant, 2016; Hellman & Gwinn, 2017; Infanti, 2008, p. 184). Erica (Ch.5), for example, demonstrated one aspect of hope as a skill in persisting with her studies even through financial difficulty and initially doubting her academic ability, hoping that her efforts would ultimately be rewarded. Erica also readily recognised the ways that others supported her and helped her to keep up hope that she could find a way out of the sex industry. The youngest men in my study, Marcus (Ch.4) and Gabriel (Ch.6), expressed hopeful plans for the future as they began to remake their lives;

central to both accounts was the hope that they would have close connections and financially support their families. Marcus and Jun found that as underage soldiers, the ideas of hope, sacrifice, and suffering were intertwined. Although their daily experience was often of hardship and suffering, they also conceived of their service as sacrifice for the sake of an ideal - the hope for a more just society. Sacrifice, then, enabled them to endure suffering but also enabled them to maintain hope for themselves and others.

Hope is embedded in relationships and fed by the idea of sacrifice. Hope emerging from relationships “insulates” against hard realities in life (Syvertsen, Bazzi, & Mittal, 2017). For Erica (Ch.5) and for Bianca (Ch.7), returning money to their families even through hardship and exploitation was a sacrifice which gave meaning to these experiences, and also built hope through maintaining connections and links beyond their current situations. DonDon (Ch.6) articulated this sense of hope that came from family relationships: “so, our family is fine, even if it’s like tough like this, but we are happy. No troubles, we understand each other.” Many participants’ primary hope was in educating and providing for their children to have a better life, locating hope in relationships that could transcend present hardships. Hope in the children’s future, based on education, was a hope that could often only be realised through significant sacrifice, as Hannah (Ch.8) and Mariel (Ch.9) found in their efforts to work overseas for the sake of their children.

The idea of sacrifice is alive in the Philippines as trope, practice and discourse in everyday life, and becomes the embodied enactment of values and social meaning (Mayblin & Course, 2014, p. 313). Sacrifice is deeply embedded “beyond ritual” into the normal ordering of life and relationships in the Philippines and is also “an end in itself” in that it gives meaning and weight to suffering, and is not only for the alleviation of suffering (Bautista, 2015b; Lamvik, 2012; Mayblin & Course, 2014; D. McKay, 2007). Sacrifice is also a bodily engagement with a moral system and a way to give validity to one’s suffering, by placing it within the cultural system of values, and in pursuing spiritual and relational power accessed through sacrifice (Borchgrevink, 2003, p. 55). In Althea’s case, the moral necessity to sacrifice for her family outweighed the “immorality” of her work, and as such she maintained her position as not only financial but religious and moral influence on her family. In this way, sacrifice is part of social identity and a form of social capital. As Althea

maintains her kin through supporting the family she also gains power within these relationships. “Heroic” migrants are also ascribed this identity based on the concept of sacrifice. Further, sacrificial revolution, not just ritual, is invoked in the idea of the migrant, as part of changing the Philippines economy and the future of the family, in the image of Rizal. The heroic models of sacrifice and martyrdom emphasise the spiritual effect of sacrifice, such as Rizal and Christ whose deaths through sacrifice became transformational to the world around them. Likewise, work as a sacrifice is a gift to one’s family and meaningful in this way. Sacrifice expressed as work, submission, bodily labour and even suffering means that these are transformed into meaningful expressions of love, hope, and even power.

10.5 Sacrifice and violence

Kung minsan ang awa, makasit na iwa.

[Sometimes pity inflicts a deep wound]

(Philippine proverb (Tagalog); Eugenio, 1975, p. 375)

A focus on sacrifice as providing meaning can obscure the history that has brought these conditions that must be endured, that have shaped not only material conditions but interpretations of them. A focus on resilience can also legitimate violence and suffering, present resilient people as “other” to the degree that their suffering and lack becomes normalised. Even in the Philippines, middle class narratives of resilience have been used to hide the ongoing issues of poverty and death, a social denial (Ong, 2015). Talking about resilience can be a way to silence the suffering of the poor, and to de-legitimise their suffering (Bollig, 2014). However, that is not to deprive my participants of the agency in interpreting their world and assigning it value. The meaning, resilience and hope that come from sacrifice are real and concretely so in my participants’ actions. At the same time, the role of sacrifice is intimately connected to the process of structural violence which has forced people to order their lives around suffering. Human trafficking survivors have too often been positioned just as victims, so in discussing it two things do need to be said: people survive human trafficking, escape, and recover from it, finding meaning and

strength within their experiences, as Crystal (Ch.5) and Jun (Ch.4) did; people are less likely, however, to escape from the violences which led them to be trafficked in the first place.

Sacrifice is frequently made in a place of decreasing choices for survival. West (2014) highlighted that migration, domestic or international, is a survival strategy, and this complicates the idea of sacrifice. Cannell (1999) explicitly identified the connection in the Philippines between increasing poverty and sacrifice, patronage, and exploitation in forms of slavery: “the most exposed persons in Filipino society were those with nothing at all - not even a recognised deference - to render within the cycles of reciprocity...deprived of substitutes...was forced to render one’s unprotected self” (Cannell, 1999, p. 228). The process Cannell described is reminiscent of Crystal’s (Ch.5) story, for example. Her family’s decline led to first the loss of their land, then Crystal venturing out for an offer with nothing except her “unprotected self,” ending in human trafficking. We see this process of compounding violence at work in many of the narratives where the loss of stability increased to the point where my participants had to sacrifice and to leave home to pursue a new and risky opportunity, which resulted in trafficking.

Ongoing conditions of suffering demand not only physical actions, but mental and emotional ways of ordering the world in order to endure and make sense of this violence. This is where we can begin to see the relationship between structural violence and sacrifice as symbolic violence. Migration, as an example which has been particularly identified as sacrifice, is not a choice to suffer, but usually a choice made in the middle of suffering, to face a different and chosen type of suffering and risk as a sacrifice. After violence has torn options, opportunities, and resources away from people, what they have left is the ability to sacrifice, to become complicit in their own destruction or exploitation for the sake of survival.

The symbolic violence of sacrifice is demonstrated in its ability to make people participate in creating and maintaining their own suffering (Scheper-Hughes, 2006). José Rizal was executed by firing squad; eight Filipinos fired at him, while behind them, eight Spanish guards stood prepared to shoot the Filipino soldiers if they did not fire on Rizal (Catindig, 2010). This seemed to me a particularly flagrant picture of symbolic violence, whereby

social powers force people to participate in violence against themselves and their own. Erica financially supported the children of her brother who had abused her for years; this suggests symbolic violence in how her duty came before her trauma. Processes that give seafarers and domestic workers endurance, for example, through framing their labours as sacrifice, may not lead them to challenge the racist, low paid and exploitative labour conditions from the government or the employers (Magat, 2007, p. 616; S. McKay, 2007). Migration to unskilled work is supported by symbolic violence where it is legitimated by the state, and sought as self-sacrifice, for a better future. However, Barber (2004, p. 213) questioned the validity of this expectation as for migrants,

what they imagine that future to be and the role they play is linked to institutional and social relations sustained through national colonized subordination...How long will national and personal reliance upon migration endure as a protracted yet still temporary set of arrangements through which migrants tolerate dreadfully exploitative labour and living conditions?

Barber questioned the premise of migration which is built upon fundamentally unequal and exploitative international relationships and has never become a sustainable path to local economic development. In this way, the sacrifice of migration has only a tenuous relationship to the imagined reward, and reflects the cultural alchemy of “God’s will” where present survival and endurance is privileged over concrete plans for the future which is ultimately unknowable and uncontrollable. Suffering and endurance are markers of violence; sacrifice, therefore, is an indicator of violence and a form of symbolic violence whereby people internalise and legitimise suffering. Human trafficking described as *sakripisyo* [sacrifice] indicates violence that maintains and transcends the experiences of trafficking. Sacrifice has both enabled and forced people to reconcile their lives to ongoing violence, loss, fear, and poverty.

Conclusions

Human trafficking in Mindanao is just one form of suffering and risks that people face; the context for trafficking is not only the violences that maintain its practice, but the processes that enable survival, resilience, and recovery. Sacrifice and hope are central to my participants’ accounts of enduring and escaping or overcoming the suffering that they had experienced as trafficked persons. This is not to diminish the forms of violence that they

have experienced, nor to universalise or demand such resilience within violence. Acknowledging personal and social resources that maintain hope does, however, give a more full and human picture of my participants' experiences as well as their own roles, even when constrained, in shaping their lives.

Sacrifice implies both violence and resilience. One of the key questions that Briones (2009b, p. 20) asked is whether Filipina domestic OFWs can possibly live concurrently parallel lives both as servants and as victorious agents. In the Philippines, sacrifice is the transformational belief by which resilience, victory and agency arise out of suffering. Resilience and creativity and metaphor are powerful; Marcus's long treks, Althea's nights waiting in the rain, and Bianca's days spent cleaning overseas are all imagined as meaningful, real expressions of ideals, and in sacrificing demonstrate agency and hope. They also demonstrate structural and symbolic violence. The sacrifice of migration means entering the structural violence of global inequality, for the sake of the people back home. It means using the violence of inequality in international labour relations, bearing the risk and violence of migration, to change the home conditions and reduce suffering. It means entering violent conditions strategically, through sacrifice transforming violence and death into survival. Embodying this transformation in living this contradiction often also means embodying its violence: Jasmine (Ch.7) in an overseas jail, Hannah (Ch.8) being excluded, and Bianca (Ch.7) being exploited and abandoned.

In considering sacrifice and acknowledging the power of cultural narratives in counter-interpreting dominant perspectives, creating meaning, and contributing to resilience, it is not to legitimise or ignore the violences that people face. It is to acknowledge that finding meaning within violence does not render it any less violent, but nor does the frequent failure of "meaning-making" to fundamentally challenge violent conditions eclipse its value, power, and legitimacy as a tool for dealing with violence. Sacrifice as meaningful suffering is a concept that has emerged out of violence; its place in people's understanding and actions reflects and manifests violence. Sacrifice is invoked both within suffering and as a way to move beyond suffering. Althea has settled into the ongoing but expected routine of sacrifice, of managing the financial seasons, of the unknown outcome of a night waiting, even in the rain, hoping that it will pay off; her sacrifice gives her family hope. Perhaps in

this light, Erica's sacrifice for her brother's child demonstrates violence, but also the undoing of violence. The trope of sacrifice brings life, hope, and meaning out of death at the hands of structural violence. It acknowledges violence, but transforms its meaning.

Sacrifice represents an embodied transformation at the point of interaction between people and violence. Violence, even structural violence, is destructive; it might not kill outright, but damages and kills by degrees. Violence kills not only life and health, but relationships, joy, hope, creativity, choice. Sacrifice is about the relationship between death and life; something dies to give life somewhere else. Framing one's hardships as life-giving is a powerful contrast to the structural violence that orders suffering and death. Sacrifice is a marker of violence but also a transformation of violence into hope.

11: Conclusions

Human trafficking in Mindanao is a complex problem, both in terms of the multiple forms of trafficking that occur and in the social processes that relate to trafficking. Formerly trafficked persons' narratives reveal multiple factors working together to shape human trafficking, risk and vulnerability to human trafficking and other forms of exploitation, and the complexities of social life in Mindanao. In this thesis, I have relayed the stories of people who have experienced various types of human trafficking, as well as former migrants, abused workers, and others whose lives and stories illuminate the conditions where trafficking occurs. These people and their lives are interesting and complex, and their voices and perspectives have been central to these accounts. In the literature and discussions of human trafficking, the voices of those most directly affected are seldom heard at all except perhaps as examples of victimhood and trauma. Here they have been presented in a different light, showing trafficking as a part of a life course where people have made choices and dealt with their experiences, as well as illuminating some of the factors which shape human trafficking. These stories show people who have navigated difficulties and constraints and managed to survive.

In approaching this topic, I have first considered individual experiences as the site where multiple and complex pressures converge in embodied experience. As such, this thesis is not a comprehensive or fully representative picture of human trafficking in Mindanao. However, it does present a close view of many facets of a local phenomenon in an attempt to understand the complexity of local experience, particularly from the perspective of the poor. The variety of participants that I encountered meant that the research had to respond to this complexity, and to explore the social context where so many forms of human trafficking and exploitation were affecting people. These stories also illuminate the social world they inhabit, and the widespread difficulties and obstacles that people face. Individual stories and human trafficking have been considered in the light of wider social events and conditions including economics and work, the practice of migration, globalisation, and the local culture. Individual and family lives are the sites where the experience of risk including economic uncertainty, itself culturally shaped, meets social

beliefs and ways of being. It is from this point of convergence that choices are made, risks are faced head on, social roles are inhabited.

The Philippines is uniquely placed to experience both the promises of globalisation to a (potentially and ideally) mobile, educated, English-speaking population, and the realities of a poor country exporting its best products and people into a world where its status is low. The global promise also obscures the so-called “dark sides” of globalisation including the inequalities that exist at every level, and the unequal distribution of rewards, costs and harms. Human trafficking occurs in multiple situations across the Philippine social landscape, with particular risk in domestic and international migration. However, the local economic and labour conditions are also inherently risky, and create unstable and precarious conditions for workers on a continuum of abusive and exploitative situations, exacerbated by gendered/ageist employment practices which emerge from social relationships. In this thesis, my original contribution to knowledge is an exploration of the social context which contributes to human trafficking in Mindanao, based on first-person accounts which are contextualised in the wider society and theoretically analysed through a framework of structural, symbolic, and compounding violence. This approach has not previously been used with research specifically focussed on human trafficking, nor has Mindanao been extensively researched in terms of human trafficking. Further, anthropologists have only recently begun to explore human trafficking and adapt ethnographic approaches to this topic, and in this thesis, I also contribute to the development of methodological strategies to address the inherent challenges to research with formerly trafficked people.

11.1 Summary of the thesis

The aim of this project has been to explore how human trafficking in Mindanao relates to wider social processes. I approached this aim by spending five months living in Eastern Mindanao and learning from a wide variety of local people. Specifically, during this time I talked with and interviewed people who had experienced exploitative labour, human trafficking, or trafficking-like practices; government and NGO workers from anti-trafficking and related agencies; and community members who had other relevant experiences, particularly former migrants and sexual labourers. I found that although

human trafficking can represent a significant form of exploitation and abuse, most of the participants' experiences also reflected "normal" social processes, such as the vulnerability of migrants and the lack of legal protection for workers. The normality of these factors, and the degree to which they were enabled by ineffective or unhelpful social structures such as the legal system, suggest that these often-violent events were closely related to wider forms of violence. People in the Philippines face high levels of uncertainty, and limited opportunities to escape from poverty. Human trafficking is just one of the risks and forms of violence that people navigate in trying to survive and succeed, and it is maintained by structural conditions beyond the trafficker and victims. In approaching this complexity and dealing with the messiness of fieldwork I spoke to this wide range of participants, including those who had experienced diverse forms of human trafficking.

Human trafficking is one of the expected, possible outcomes arising from a number of related and interconnected social practices and processes. The extreme underdevelopment of rural areas and massive disparity between rural and urban areas has contributed to the vulnerability of rural youths to underage rebel recruitment, as well as other forms of trafficking and exploitation, and the ideological underpinnings of the militant backlash against the government. The overall lack of jobs, combined with women's status and position in society, has contributed to the trafficking of (mainly) women in the sex industry. The need to explore every possible job opportunity has unfortunately led to vulnerability, for women in particular, when people have been deceived and trapped into sex work. Labour trafficking emerges from similar processes related to the severe shortage of satisfactory employment. In "ordinary" work, employers often wield a great deal of power over employees, which is supported by the knowledge that workers are easily replaced by others seeking jobs. This control is extended and multiplied in situations of exploitation and human trafficking, and exacerbated by the inability of the legal system to deal with most infractions. Migration is a strategy which sidesteps the limitations of the local economy, but depends on meeting specific requirements including initial financial obligations which are already out of reach for some. For both irregular migrants, avoiding some of the costs and constraints of migration, and legal migrants, their position in international employment is often precarious and subject to external perceptions, constraints and controls.

People navigate these multiple forms of structural violence based on culturally and socially specific narratives. From this focus, there are two aspects in particular which affect people's engagement with the global economy, their approaches to risk, and the ways that families make choices. Narratives first act as "maps" which guide choices and responses; in particular the "culture of migration" is an example of a narrative which contributes to people's long-term planning and decision making, in turn shaped by the local cultural logic of patronage. Narratives also always contain implicit values, which shape decisions but also provide explanations for events. In this way, narratives can also be transformative in creating personally and culturally significant meanings which can contribute to resilience amid or beyond extreme difficulties such as human trafficking. In the Philippines, the deeply held value of sacrifice contributes to both "risky" decision making and resilience; this trope, simply, can turn hardship such as difficult migration or coming through human trafficking into an expression of love.

In chapters four through seven, I have explored the concepts of coercion, consent, and control through my participants' experiences. I found that these were significantly affected by structural factors beyond individual choice or relationships, but within this context, my participants also displayed agency in navigating and interpreting their circumstances. I have explored the idea of structural violence in the Philippines by looking specifically at rural inequality and underdevelopment (Ch.4), issues facing women in the Philippines (Ch.5), labour standards in the Philippines (Ch.6), and challenges for international migrants (Ch.7). These areas of inquiry revealed multiple, compounding forms of indirect violence, which also affected my participants' experiences of direct violence.

In chapters eight to ten, I have discussed these ideas in a wider context through considering the relationships between human trafficking and various forms of violence. I first explored the global context as it is experienced in the Philippines (Ch.8), through the historically pervasive relational logic of patronage which shapes local and international interactions. In considering the idea of risk in the Philippines (Ch.9), I critiqued the idea of vulnerability in terms of "at-risk" populations, arguing that this concept obscures the multiple forms of violence which are already affecting people, as well as increasing future risk. In the final chapter (Ch.10), I have extended the discussion of risk to consider the trope of sacrifice

which is commonly invoked as part of enduring hardship. I argue that sacrifice, as trope and embodied act, can be a site of both symbolic violence and transformation where the constrained options available are strategically navigated and reinterpreted to create meaning, resilience, and hope.

In this thesis, I have fulfilled the research aim by considering the relationships between human trafficking and the wider society in the context of rural-urban inequality, the role of gender, employment conditions, and the place of migration in local society. I have further explored the relationships between human trafficking and certain local beliefs by exploring the impact of current and historic global relationships, the local context for evaluating risk, and the idea of sacrifice as a central cultural metaphor which reveals violence as well as agency and hope.

11.2 Implications of the thesis

Scholars have questioned the value of human trafficking as a useful categorisation in law, activism, and inquiry, due particularly to the diverse regional and categorical variations. However, this study offers a model of how diverse experiences of trafficking and exploitation can be used as a focus of inquiry into a local society. Through a focus on how various types of trafficking emerge within a specific social setting, the relationships between diverse experiences become apparent through the unique local conditions which shape and constrain people's lives.

Human trafficking is often considered a global problem, related to international migration flows. While this is in many ways true, in this thesis I present an alternate perspective and demonstrate how local factors contribute to both domestic and international trafficking. The implications of this finding affect academic as well as practical approaches to human trafficking, and suggest a more integrated view that goes beyond a victim-perpetrator focus. In the Philippines, rural-urban inequality in levels of poverty, access to education, employment opportunities, and effective social infrastructures is a significant factor in the vulnerability to every type of human trafficking in the Philippines. In urban areas, unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and unenforced employment regulations

contribute to exploitation and human trafficking, and to the prevalence of migration for better conditions.

At the same time, this approach suggests a local and regional focus on the conditions that maintain exploitative systems rather than vulnerability alone. Migration laws in many destination countries, for example, enable and enforce employers' power over migrant employees. Filipino migrants are subject to these and other local laws, but their participation in such constrained conditions is also shaped by the local systems.

Human trafficking in Mindanao is an outcome and extension of unequal local situations, not separate to *normal* social processes and realities, and one manifestation of wider compounding structural violence. In this way, focusing on human trafficking has been a way to look below the surface of life in Mindanao, and to observe structural violence through a few of the sites where it spills out into other forms of violence, whether physical, emotional, financial, or other. Human trafficking has thus become a ground-level perspective from which to view local society; this approach contrasts sharply with those that focus on local society to identify possible instances of trafficking and exploitation, and the vulnerability to trafficking.

One of the challenges of ethnography and anthropology is working with people who have shared similar experiences, without being part of a single social group. This study offers one model for conducting such research with individual participants which is at the same time still grounded in a local context. It also offers an application of historical-materialist based ethnographic research to explore the idea of structural violence as it relates to current suffering.

A key question that arose from this research is for further exploration of the rural conditions of the Philippines, and how rural people make sense of the conditions that affect their lives. Another question is about the socioeconomic conditions of the Philippines that maintain structural violence including poverty and inequality, and what directions government and NGOs are taking in attempting to address these. The role of child fosterage, and how families rather than individuals navigate risk day-to-day, are also interesting topics that require further exploration. For future research, there is further need

for in-depth research into the lives and conditions of local workers, sexual labourers, rebel insurgents, and reintegrating former migrants in Mindanao and the Philippines. Fully exploring each of these topics was outside of the scope of this thesis, but this research provides insights on these subjects that can contribute to future research in Mindanao.

This thesis has been an attempt to engage with and comprehend some of the harsh realities of global inequality as experienced in actual lives. In doing so, I join a wide variety of activists, social workers, police officers, religious clergy, communist insurgents, trafficking victims, rural farmers, homesick migrants, and even writer-poets such as José Rizal in dreaming of a better future for the people of the Philippines. For now, however, I can only return to former rebel soldier Jun's (Ch.4) beautiful words, and ask again, "how long will we dream?"

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Appendices



[Date]

Attn: (Contact person; Organisation)

Dear Sir/Ma'am;

My name is Amie Townsend, and I am a student from New Zealand seeking a PhD in Social Anthropology. I am currently in Davao doing research, and I was wondering if it would be possible to meet with you or someone from your organization. I was referred to you by [referring organization] which has reviewed my project and is supporting me in my research.

- I am researching human trafficking, migration, and labor exploitation in Davao City and Mindanao.
- In trying to understand what life and society is like in Mindanao, I would love to hear about your organization, what it does, and what you can tell me about life in this area
- I am also looking for people who have been through human trafficking, abusive working conditions, or a bad experience working overseas, and who would be willing to share their life story.
- I am also looking for contacts and networking opportunities with other organizations related to this area of study.

I am trying to understand what life and society is like in Davao and Mindanao. To that end, I would love to hear about your organization, what it does, and what you can tell me about life in this area. In particular, I am interested in migration and economics, but also the culture and society in general. I would value any insights that you can give me, as well as understanding the work that you do.

I am also working with local organizations to compile some statistics on human trafficking from relevant organizations in Davao. These will be made available once the project is finished, as well as a summary of the findings of this project.

I am also looking for approximately 12 people who have been through human trafficking, abusive working conditions, or a bad experience working overseas, and who would be willing to share their life story. I am trying to find participants through supporting organizations such as yours. I am hoping to work with organizations to locate and talk to people who have been through these kinds of experiences.

Thank you for reading this information. Please feel free to contact me and/or my university supervisor if you have any questions about the project, or would like more information (contact details are included on the attached information sheets).

Sincerely,

Amie Townsend



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TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

November 30, 2015

To Whom It May Concern

Amie Townsend is a PhD student I supervise who is undertaking PhD study in the Social Anthropology Programme at Massey University, New Zealand. She is currently in the Philippines conducting fieldwork related to her PhD project "*Human Trafficking in Mindanao: personal accounts and local perspectives.*" This research will require her to engage in interviews and discussions with many different people and organisations in Davao City who might have knowledge of this issue. I hope it will be possible for you to assist her in advancing her research.

Amie has received ethics approval from Massey University to undertake her research (HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION – MUHECN 15/039).

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about Amie's research project.

Sincerely,

Sita Venkateswar

Email: s.venkateswar@massey.ac.nz

Ph: 64-63569099 X 83663 / Fax: 64-6-3505737

<http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/expertise/profile.cfm?stref=903430>

<https://massey.academia.edu/SitaVenkateswar>

Appendix B: Information sheets (Organisations)



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My name is Amie Townsend, and I am a student from Massey University, New Zealand, carrying out research for a PhD in Social Anthropology. I am living in Davao City studying human trafficking, migration, and labor exploitation, and social conditions such as work and economics.

I am trying to understand life in Davao and Mindanao, and what are the opportunities and challenges that people face here. I would like to invite you to participate in an informal interview about your organization, your role in it, your experiences, and what you could tell me about life in this area.

I am also looking to speak to people who have been through human trafficking, abusive working conditions, or a bad experience working overseas, and who would be willing to share their life story. I would greatly appreciate if there was any way that you would be willing to help or advise me in contacting individuals in these circumstances.

Additionally, I would be grateful for any advice about other contacts and related organizations.

If you are willing to participate in an informal interview of about one hour, we will arrange a time and location which is convenient for you. With your permission, the interview will be recorded so I can refer back to it when I am writing my thesis.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study before the end of 2016;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information, understanding that your name will not be used (we can discuss a title/indicator);
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- (in a taped interview) ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;

The data from this project will be used in my PhD thesis, and may be used for other publications such as journal articles or conference papers. If you would like a summary of findings, please let me know your email address or postal address.

Thank you very much for reading this information. Please feel free to contact me and/or my main university supervisor if you have any questions about the project.

Amie Townsend

[REDACTED] Skype:

[REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]

University Supervisor:

Dr. Sita Venkateswar Email:

S.Venkateswar@massey.ac.nz

Phone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 83663

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, (Application 15/039). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Andrew Chrystall, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x 43317, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.



Human Trafficking sa Mindanao - INFORMATION SHEET

Akong ngalan Amie Townsend ug usa ako ka istudyanti gikan sa Massey University sa New Zealand nga nagresearch para sa PhD sa Social Anthropology. Nagpuyo ko sa Siyudad sa Davao ug nagtuon og human trafficking, migration ug mga pagpahimulos sa trabaho, ug mga kahintang nga sosyal sama sa trabaho ug ekonomiya.

Naningkamot ko nga masabtan ang kinabuhi sa Davao ug sa Mindanao, ug unsa ang mga oportunidad ug mga hagit nga giatubang sa mga tawo diri. Gi-awhag ko ikaw nga moapil sa usa ka interview nga dili pormal bahin sa inyong organisasyon, imong posisyon/pagabuhaton sa sulod sa organisasyon, imong mga kasinatian, ug unsa ang puydi nimong masulti nako bahin sa kinabuhi ining lugara.

Gusto usab ako makigsulti sa mga tao nga nakaagi na sa human trafficking, mga kondisyon sa trabaho nga makaabuso kaayo, o usa ka mangil-ad nga kasinatian sa pagtrabaho sa laing nasod, ug kinsa kadtong andam moistorya sa ilang kinabuhi nako. Magpasalamat ko kaayo kung naa kay matabang nako o matambag nako aron makontak ang mga indibidwal nga anaa ining mga sitwasyona.

Ug dugang pa, magpasalamat ko kaayo para sa bisan unsang impormasyon nga mahatag nimo nako bahin sa ubang kontak ug ubang mga organisasyon.

Kung andam ka moapil sa usa ka impormal nga interbyu nga moabot og usa ka oras, mangita ko og oras ug lugar nga sayon para nimo. Kung motugot ka, ang interbyu akong i-rekord aron maka-refer ko ini sa akong pagsulat sa akong thesis.

Dili ka obligado nga dawaton kining imbitasyon. Kung modisisyon ka nga moapil, naa kay katungod nga:

- mobalibad pagtubag bisan unsa nga pangutana;
- mobiya sa pagtuon usa mahuman ang 2016;
- mangutana bisan unsa nga pangutana bahin sa pagtuon bisan unsang orasa.
- maghatag og impormasyon, ug nahibalang dili gamiton ang imong ngalan (magsabot kita bahin sa usa ka ilhanan.)
- mahatagan og access sa usa ka summary sa mga findings pagkahuman sa pagtuon.
- kung gi-tape ang interbyu, puydi ka mohangyo nga patyon ang rekorder bisan unsang orasa sa panahon sa interbyu.

Ang mga datos gikan ini nga project gamiton nako sa akong PhD thesis ug mahimong gamiton sa laing publikasyon sama sa artikulo sa mga journal o dili mga conference papers. Kung gusto ka og summary sa mga findings, palihog sultihi ko sa imong email address o sa imong puluy-anan.

Salamat kaayo sa pagbasa ining impormasyon. Palihog kontaka ko bisan unsang orasa o ang akong main university supervisor kung naa kay mga pangutana bahin sa project.

Amie Townsend

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
Cell Phone: [Redacted]

Skype:

University Supervisor:

Dr. Sita Venkateswar

S.Venkateswar@massey.ac.nz

Phone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 83663

Kini nga project na-rebyu ug gi-aprubahan sa Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern (Application, 15/039) kung naa kay mga kabalaka bahin sa pagbuhat ining research, palihog kontaka si Dr. Andrew Chrystall, Chari, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telepono 0941 40 800 x 43317, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz



Appendix C: Information sheet (Individual participants)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

Human trafficking in Mindanao - INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Amie Townsend, and I am a student from Massey University, New Zealand, carrying out research for a PhD in Social Anthropology. I am living in Davao City studying human trafficking, migration, and labor exploitation, and social conditions such as work and economics.

I am looking for people who have experienced human trafficking, abusive working conditions, or a bad experience working overseas, and who would be willing to share their experiences with me. You are invited to participate in this project and share your story. I would love to hear about your life: where you started from to where you are now.

If you agree to participate, I will invite you to spend some time talking to me informally one or more times. If you feel comfortable to share your story, I will ask you to participate in an interview that will take one to two hours. If you are able and willing, we will have a second interview later which will take about the same amount of time. With your permission, these interviews will be recorded. This will help me when I write up my study.

This research is not intended to replace or complicate the legal and/or rehabilitation stages of these experiences; therefore I am looking for people who have already completed these steps if they were necessary. Please be aware that participating in this project comes with the risk that recounting painful experiences might be difficult or traumatic. I don't want to cause you any harm through talking with me, and I am not a counsellor. A trained support worker will be available during interviews, and if this research brings up issues you want to discuss further, please let me know and I will arrange a counsellor session for you.

Your rights if you choose to participate:

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study before the end of 2016;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information, understanding that your name will not be used and your identity will be protected (I will discuss using one or more pseudonyms);
- (in a taped interview) ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time;
- have a counsellor or support person present;

The data from this project will be used in my thesis, and may be used for other publications such as journal articles or conference papers. If you would like a summary of findings, please let me know your email address. Thank you very much for reading this information. Please feel free to contact me and/or my main university supervisor if you have any questions about the project.

Amie Townsend



Skype:

Cell Phone:



University Supervisor:

Dr. Sita Venkateswar

S.Venkateswar@massey.ac.nz

Phone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 83663

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, (Application 15/039). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Andrew Chrystall, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x 43317, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.



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Gusto usab ako makigsulti sa mga tao nga nakaagi na sa human trafficking, mga kondisyon sa trabaho nga makaabuso kaayo, o usa ka mangil-ad nga kasinatian sa panarbaho sa laing nasod, og kinsa kadtong andam mopahibalo sa istorya sa ilang kinabuhi. Gi-awhag ko ikaw sa pag-apil ini nga project og ipahibalo ang imong istorya. Manghinaot ko makadungog sa imong istorya asa ka nagsugod hangtod sa imong kahimtang karon.

Kung mosugot ka moapil, imbitaron taka og mga pipila ka oras makigsulti nako ug impormal mga kausa o makadaghan. Kung comportabli ka magpahibalo sa imong istorya, hangyoon ko ikaw nga moapil sa usa ka interbyu nga mokabot usa o duha ka oras. Kung makahimo ka ug andam, aduna kitay ikaduha nga interbyu taod-taod nga mokabot sab og mga susama nga oras. Uban sa imong pagtugot, kini nga mga interbyu i-rekord. Makatabang kini kung mosuwat ako sa akong pagtuon.

Kini nga research dili tuyo moilis o himuong kumplikado ang legal ug/o mga yugto sa rehabilitasyon sa ilang mga kasinatian; busa nangita ako og mga tawo nga nakakumplito na ining mga lakang kung mahinungdanon kini. Palihog pagmatngon nga kini nga project naubanan og mga risiko nga lisod ug traumatic ang pag-asoy sa mga masakit nga kasinatian. Dili ko gustong makaingon sa kasakit nimo pinaagi sa pagpakigsulti nako, ug dili sab ako magtatambag. Usa ka gi-train nga support worker ang available sa mga interbyu, ug kung kini nga research magdala og mga isyu nga gusto nimong hisgutan pa, palihog pahibaloa ko ug mangita ko og usa ka counselor session para nimo.

Imong mga katungod kung moapil ka:

Dili ka obligado nga dawaton kining imbitasyon. Kung modisisyon ka nga moapil, naa kay katungod nga:

- mobalibad pagtubag bisan unsa nga pangutana;
- mobiya sa pagtuon usa mahuman ang 2016;
- mangutana bisan unsa nga pangutana bahin sa pagtuon bisan unsang orasa sa panahon sa pagtuon.
- maghatag og impormasyon, nahibalo ka nga dili gamiton ang imong ngalan (magsabot kita bahin sa usa ka ilhanan.)
- (sa usa ka gi-tape nga interbyu) puydi ka mohangyo nga patyon ang rekorder bisan unsang orasa sa panahon sa interbyu.
- Naay usa ka magtatambag o tawong mosuporta anang tungora.

Ang mga detalye gikan ini nga project gamiton sa akong PhD thesis ug mahimong gamiton sa laing publikasyon sama sa artikulo sa mga journal or mga conference papers. Kung gusto ka og summary sa mga findings, palihog sultih ko sa imong email address o puy-anan.

Salamat kaayo sa pagbasa ining impormasyon. Palihog kontak ko bisan unsang orasa o ang akong main university supervisor kung naa kay mga pangutana bahin sa project.

Amie Townsend

[Redacted]

Skype:

[Redacted]

Cell Phone:

[Redacted]

University Supervisor:

Dr. Sita Venkateswar

S.Venkateswar@massey.ac.nz

Phone: +64 (06) 356 9099 ext. 83663

Kini nga project na-rebyu ug gi-aprubahan sa Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern (Application,15/039) kung naa kay mga kabalaka bahin sa pagbuhat ining research, palihog kontak si Dr. Andrew Chrystall, Chari, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telepono 094140 800 x 43317, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

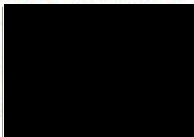


Appendix D: Ethics Committee approval

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
ALBANY

25 November 2015

Amie Townsend



Dear Amie

HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION – MUHECN 15/039

Human trafficking in Mindanao: personal accounts and local perspectives

Thank you for your application. It has been fully considered, and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, a re-approval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Andrew Chrystall
Acting Chair
Human Ethics Committee: Northern

cc Dr Sita Venkatesar, Dr Maria Borovnik and Professor Kathryn Rountree
School of People, Environment and Planning
Palmerston North and Albany

Dr Allanah Ryan

Head of School of People,
Environment and Planning
Palmerston North