

**THE STATE OF SEXUALITY AND INTIMACY: SRI
LANKAN WOMEN MIGRANTS IN THE
MIDDLE EAST**

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A THESIS SUBMITTED

**FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY**

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

2010

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the ongoing support of several faculty without whom this project would not have been possible. I wish to thank Brenda Yeoh for her feedback and mentorship of this project, and for acting as my advisor for this work. I am also grateful to Natalie Oswin for her feedback and support on my committee, and to Patrick Daly and Lily Kong. In addition, I would like to thank Pamela Shurmer-Smith, and Sallie Yea for their inspiring teaching and mentorship. I am grateful to Tracey Skelton, Sarah Starkweather, Mark Johnson, Pnina Werbner, Jeanne Marecek, Rachel Silvey, Noor Abdul Rahman, Shirlena Huang, Linda Peake, Helga Leitner, and Geraldine Pratt for their insightful feedback on chapters, drafts, paper presentations and articles for publication.

I am thankful for fellow graduate students and staff who helped me to examine further my ideas and writings and to stay on track. In particular, I would like to thank Kamalini Ramdas, Elizabeth Frantz, Yaffa Truelove, Lu Weiqiang, Sharon Wok En-En, Menusha De Silva, and Masao Imamura. I am especially grateful to Lee Poi Leng and Amelia Tay for their endless and patient administrative assistance.

I also am grateful and wish to express my thanks for the funding that supported and helped make this research possible, in particular, the Lee Foundation's Lee Kong Chian Scholarship; the Department of Geography, and Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Migration Cluster, NUS; the Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography; and the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences, NUS for the funding of two reading groups: 'The deconstruction of

reconstruction of the intimate within the context of mobilities and migrations’ and ‘Current debates in migration studies for graduate students’.

Although only my name appears on the cover of this dissertation, many people contributed to its creation. Besides all mentioned above, I want to thank my many research participants, friends and associates in both Sri Lanka and Lebanon; this project would have never come to fruition without them. In Sri Lanka, I would like to thank my key informants: Geethika, Kumari, Sunitha, Angela, Sumika and Asha; and key institutions: UNDP RCC and the Migrant Services Centre. I would also like to sincerely thank dini, Revs, Moo, N and J for their support over the course of many years and for providing me with my own intimacy and sexuality experiences during migration. I am also forever indebted to Ashan Munasinghe for his ongoing support and assistance. In Lebanon, I would like to dearly thank May Farah and Rita Hakim for their friendship and generous research support. I want to thank my key informants: Sheila, Shameela, Renuka, Sureyka and Nirmila; and my key institutions: Caritas and ILO, Arab States.

In Singapore, I would like to give gratitude from the bottom of my heart to Seeta Nair and Michelle Bunnell-Miller, two amazing friends who kept me almost sane throughout the process. I thank them for their strength and compassion, and for never-ever missing a beat when I needed them.

In the grand scheme of things, this project is necessarily dedicated to the nearly 80,000 Sri Lankan domestic migrant women who live Lebanon, migrating for work, adventure and the hope of a better life. May they continue to seek and find moments of solace and pleasure.

More personally, it is also dedicated to Sovan Patra. I would like to offer my gratitude and heartfelt thanks to him for his ongoing kindness and support through everything, and for both the *joie de vivre* and sobering perspective he brings to my life.

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Summary:¹

Drawing upon research in Lebanon and Sri Lanka in 2006-2009, this dissertation presents a critical analysis of state and non-state interventions into the intimate and sexual lives of Sri Lankan migrant women in Beirut. Focusing firstly on state and non-state interventions, it interrogates the ways that normative ideals of heterosexual marriage and family are variously regulated and enforced transnationally and how that both purposefully ignores and acts to constrain women's sexual agency in situations of migration. It highlights how non-state actors, deliberately or otherwise, fall in line with moralistic state discourses to reinforce the hegemonic paradigms of migrant women's sexuality. Secondly, assessing state and non-state projects vis-à-vis Sri Lankan female migrants who transgress normative expectations it highlights how institutions operate to promote and repress certain sexualities, images, desires and stereotypes, and how this leads to the marginalization, for example through lack of state acknowledgement and protection, of those who deviate from the norm. Finally, in assessing the actions of subjects within state and non-state bodies, and of migrant women, I highlight the manner in which individuals, demonstrate resilience, reworking and resistance to normative ways of being. In their actions one can see fissures in the normative discourse of the state and thus potential spaces for transformation.

¹ I would like to thank Mark and Pnina Weber as well as anonymous reviewers for their comments on a paper, "Erasure of sexuality and desire: state morality and Sri Lankan migrants in Beirut, Lebanon", which will be published in *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* in 2010. Their comments helped to shape this summary and particularly my work in Chapter 6 on extra-state interventions.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

“I like Beirut. I have freedom to do what I want here. I have a room that’s mine and I can invite whomever I want in. I don’t have to worry who is watching – the village, my family...Many women [Sri Lankan migrant women] are having the time of their life here...They have a hard life back at home and here they are free” (Shamalee, Sri Lankan migrant worker in Beirut, 2009).

1. Motivation – Introduction:

For nearly four decades, Sri Lankan women have been migrating to work in the Middle East as domestic migrant workers to support children, husbands and members of the extended family who remain behind (Gamburd 2000; Jureidini 2004). The money female migrants send home is the second largest source of foreign exchange for Sri Lanka (De Silva 2007; SLBFE 2008). To date, there are over one million female Sri Lankan migrants working in the Middle East and their earnings help support five million, or a quarter of Sri Lanka’s population (De Silva 2007; Jayaweera et al 2002; 1; Weerakoon 1998; 109). Women are encouraged by national policies to go abroad to earn wages that they might not otherwise be able to earn in an economically and politically unstable Sri Lanka (Gamburd 2005; Human Rights Watch 2007; Sriskandarajah 2002; Smith 2006). In the Middle East, Asian domestic migrant workers are seen by states to supply an affordable and compliant source of household labor (Moukarbel 2009; Sabban 2004; Young 1999)

National policies that encourage this migration can be seen as imposing a conceptualization of the female migrant as a repository of productive capacity. Thus, the female migrant is identified primarily, if not exclusively, in the public discourses of the state as an economic resource. The notion of the body as an economic resource is well entrenched in academic literature (Adams and

Dickey 2000; Bujra 2000; Gill 1994; Hansen 1992; Ozyegin 2000; for specifically migrants in the Middle East Humphrey 1993).

What complements, nourishes and underpins the state policies encouraging migration is a social discourse that locates the identity of the Asian and, indeed, Sri Lankan woman within a network of familial obligations; she is presented, variously, as the dutiful daughter, wife or mother (Yeoh and Huang 2000; Parrenas 2001). Academic, policy and media discussions often conveniently slot the Sri Lankan female migrant within these overarching conceptual frameworks of 'body as an economic resource' and 'person as a sum total of her duties to others, albeit familial others' (SLBFE 2000; as discussed in de Alwis 1998; Gamburd 2000).

The narrative that is marginalized in this privileging of identity markers is that of the female migrant worker herself. From a theoretical standpoint, this disregard translates into an eschewing of the idea of female migrant workers as an agent who is capable of having desires, and acting on them for personal benefit or pleasure in favor of the notion of the female migrant worker as an object of value. Equally, the relations that are considered significant in the construction of an identity for the female migrant workers become her highly idealized normative relations with others. What is conspicuously absent is an acknowledgement that the enterprise of creating identity could profit from a consideration of the daily practices, coping mechanisms and contestations (As will be discussed in more detail in the coming chapters, I engage with the work of Katz (2004) and define women's actions and those actions of other subjects within the state as acts of resilience,

reworking or resistance.² The acts of reworking and resistance are further discussed as forms of dissonance and acts with transformative potential) of female migrant workers.

The need to broaden identity markers, in the light of the discussion thus far is nowhere more apparent than in the domain of the female migrant worker's sexuality. This should not come as a surprise once it is acknowledged that both desire and hegemonic discourses suppressing desires are in competition to monopolize the emotional space at migrant women's disposal. A disproportionate amount of discourse in academic, policy and media circles dealing with the sexual context of the worker's life abroad tends to foster an archetype of the workers as a 'victim', as one who, on account of the physical-psychological space women inhabit, is vulnerable to sexual abuse (Human Rights Watch 2007; Jureidini and Moukarbel 2004; Moukrabel 2009; UNDP 2009; and as discussed in Gamburd 2000; Manalansan 2006).

Migration studies often emphasize the migrant's role, both real and perceived as martyr mothers, dutiful daughters or sacrificial sisters (Gamburd 2005; Parrenas 2001; Yeoh and Huang 2000). The Asian family represented as strong and based on gendered notions of motherly femininity and fatherly masculinity, and where individual desires are given up for the obligations to family (Stivens 1998: 17). Sexuality and migration studies literature often assumes a married, heterosexual female migrant subject (Manalansan 2006). This is largely because heterosexuality has been so naturalised as a normative category that it is present only as the invisible norm against which "deviant" sexualities are positioned (Valentine 1993; Jacobs and Fincher 1998). When

² I would like to thank Tracey Skelton for suggesting that I revisit Katz's work on resilience, reworking and resistance following a presentation of a chapter of this thesis in the Department of Geography, NUS, March, 2010.

sexuality within migration studies is addressed it has tended to be relegated to reproductive sex, forced abstinence and sexual abuse or rape (Manalansan 2006). There have been very limited discussions of sexuality and agency, sexuality and pleasure, and sexuality and transgression of heteronormativity in the lives of migrant women (for an exception to this see Walsh, Shen and Willis 2008 which looks at the way in which a focus upon heterosexuality and migration illuminates how spatial dislocation provides opportunities for both men and women to play out different heterosexual identities.).

2. Aims:

I argue that typecasting the Sri Lankan female migrant workers as an economic resource or as a cog in a network of family relations compromises the probity of her identity. Thus there is a need to augment existing literature by populating its silences with articulations of an identity that is not wholly contingent either on economic dynamics or on responsibilities towards a family. This thesis attempts to do just that. Using female Sri Lankan migrant workers in Lebanon as reference, it attempts to bring to the fore the agency of the Sri Lankan female migrant workers as encapsulated by their capacity for sexual desire, and by their ability to act to realize those desires through participation in intimate relationships outside the ambit of stringently codified social normativity. In so doing, women challenge, defy even, the enterprise of strait jacketing them as dutiful, moral and chaste.

While making clear the manner in which state and extra-state discourses operate to encourage a chaste and dutiful migrant and make invisible those female migrants who transgress such identities, my research aims to challenge the assumed notions of both a Sri Lankan female migrant

worker who as victim and sacrificing family member and the Lebanese state and employer as victimizer. It takes up the call within queer studies to unpack normative heterosexuality, and the naturalness of motherhood and the family (Hubbard 2000; Luibheid 2005; Manalansan 2006; Oswin 2007). I aim to demonstrate that the discourse on, and assumptions of, an almost 'natural' dutiful female migrant leave invisible those who migrate and remain abroad for relationships which transgress the normative nuclear family; and the manner in which the state reinforces their invisibility (Luibheid 2000; Manalansan 2006; Povinelli 2006). In assessing the actions of subjects within state and non-state bodies I also highlight the manner in which individuals, similar to the female migrant workers discussed, demonstrate resilience, reworking and resistance. In their actions one can see fissures in the normative discourse of the state and thus potential spaces for transformation.

The study of intimacy, desire and sexuality might seem a public irrelevance – an interesting, but essentially private concern (Giddens 1992). However, their formations and practices are critical factors, not least of all because they are necessary for the continued life of the human species (ibid). Foucault makes clear how the deployment of desire, intimacy and sexuality has been essential to state power over life (Foucault 1978). States shape which relations are recognized as legitimate or proper within the state and which can legitimately cross the borders of the state (Butler 2002; Nash 2005). By doing so, the state and various operations of its power operate to fragment identities as a way of denying humanity to the person as a whole (Berlant 1997, 1998; Grayson 1998; Povinelli 2002; Wiegman 2002). While recent work within migration and queer theory has begun to theorize how sexuality structures all

aspects of international migration (Luibheid 2000), more work can be done to interrogate normative discourses and assumed categories.

3. Questions:

The aims of the thesis, expressed in the previous section leads to an agenda for research which is constituted by consideration of the questions listed below.

1. How do the Lebanese and Sri Lankan states aim to shape and control the intimate and, especially, sexual lives of Sri Lankan female migrant workers? How do notions of sexuality and intimacy permeate state discourses even when not made manifest as the explicit content of laws, documents or curricula?
2. How do extra-state discourses and practices, which are assumed to contest inequalities experienced by domestic migrant workers, reinforce the state logic? Where and how do fissures in the normative discourse manifest?
3. How do Sri Lankan female migrant workers respond to these state and extra-state discourses and practices? How do women contest the superimposition of the highly idealized, state sanctioned identity?

In answering these questions my investigation focuses upon spaces outside employers' private homes, as inside has been shown to be spaces where domestic migrant workers' intimate and sexual lives are controlled and curtailed (Moukarbel 2009; 2009a). I focus upon spaces within the largest migrant neighborhood in Beirut. My research participants are primarily freelance workers, those domestic migrant workers who live outside of the

employer's private home. Specifically within Lebanon literature has shown that the home is seen as off limits to the monitoring of the state (Smith 2006) and that employers can and often do control the work and lives of domestic migrant workers (Moukarbel 2009a). This control extends to domestic migrant workers' intimate and sexual lives. While working and living inside the home domestic migrant workers cannot have friends or lovers (Moukarbel 2009a). "They are not allowed to love freely and are supposed to put their private lives on hold for the entire duration of their contract - while caring for their employers" (Moukarbel 2009a:10). The private home becomes a space which domestic migrant workers are likely to want to move out of so that they can have more freedom to engage in an intimate and sexual life (ibid).

Although I do contextualize my project with a discussion of Lebanese society and the dynamics within the private home (context chapter 2), I focus upon the discourse and practices of the state as the potential force for disciplining domestic migrant workers intimate and sexual lives outside of the employer's private home. Furthermore, I critique the discourse and practices of non-state actors as the assumed voice of contestation and support for domestic migrant workers. Specifically, I look at non-state players as organizations, which are understood to address the inequalities experienced by domestic migrant workers (Huang et al 2005: 15). I-NGOs and NGOs are seen as the force for the creation of political spaces from which domestic migrant workers and their advocates can act (ibid).³ I analyze in particular a

³ For example, NGOs in the Philippines are seen as having the best success in creating transformative politics. Advocacy work of migrant NGOs in the Philippines contribute to high levels of protection for workers overseas, absentee voting and the possibility of dual citizenship (Asis et al 2004). Indonesian domestic migrant workers have more freedom to lobby for governmental protection and support because of the actions of NGOs (Hugo 2005). Through the advocacy of NGOs, Hong Kong has

2009 two-year study by UNDP on the vulnerabilities faced by Asian migrant women to HIV in the Middle East. The report is the most recent and largest inclusive study, which provides an overview of UN and NGO interventions in regards to female migration and sexuality.

4. Thesis Structure:

In Chapter 2, I provide the contextual background for this study. I give an overview of the history of migration from Sri Lanka to Lebanon, a summary of the Sri Lankan state's economic reasons to encourage female migration, a sketch of the demographic profile of Sri Lankan migrants in Lebanon, and an impression of the status of female migrant workers in Lebanon in relationship to the state and in the context of women's status within the country. Chapter 3 explains my methodology. I employ global ethnography with a focus upon sexuality to make evident causes and effects within the migration process, which have not been previously explored. According to Gille and O Riain (2002), global ethnography emphasizes the sociopolitical context of any research; and as research into migration and sexuality cannot be separated, for example, from state and familial power, and agency of the subject, such an approach fits well. Global ethnography looks at the connections between the particular situations and patterns of action studied and their wider social context. Within this chapter I provide a general profile of female migrant participants within the study.

In Chapter 4, I assess relevant literature within queer theory, state theory, geographies of affect and emotion, and transnational migration

become a space where domestic migrant workers can assert rights through trade unions (Wee and Sim 2005).

literature. I engage with queer theory, and specifically the work of Luibheid (2000) and Manalansan (2006) to deconstruct notions of state sexuality, intimacy and desire and analyze subjects' contestations of state imposed identities. I utilize state theory, and specifically the work of Agamben (1998) to demonstrate how the state operates not only to exclude certain subjects from state acknowledgement and protection, but to subjectify in a manner that allows only the partial beings of subjects to be recognized.⁴ I also engage with the work of de Certeau (1984) to demonstrate the need to explore and critique the state by conducting research in spaces which are not under the surveillance of the state. Spaces not under direct recognition of the state include emotional and affective responses to state discourses.⁵

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are my analytical sections. In Chapter 5 I assess the role of both the Sri Lankan and Lebanese state in creating a highly idealized identity of Sri Lankan female migrant workers. The Sri Lankan state promotes a Sri Lankan female migrant citizen who is docile; celibate or at least able to lead a sexual life hidden from public view; and focused upon duties to the family (de Alwis 1998; Hewamanne 2007; Lynch 1999; SLBFE 2000; SLBFE 2008). It might well be that the state considers the female virtues it espouses as an adequate (and indeed, necessary) navigational aid. The Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment as well as the Sri Lankan Embassy in Lebanon actively promotes these roles in their everyday discourse,

⁴ I would like to thank Sallie Yea and Sarah Starkweather for their comments on a paper I presented, *Homo Sacer to Homo Cupido: Sri Lankan female migrant workers in Lebanon and State exclusion of desire, sex and intimacy*, at the Sexual intimacies and marginal migrations workshop, September 14, 2009, NUS.

⁵ I would like to thank Yaffa Truelove for introducing me to the work of de Certeau through discussions and through her master's thesis *On the Verge of a Water Crisis? State Discourses and the Production of Water Inequality in Delhi, India* (2007).

migrant training sessions and media campaigns.

Similarly, the Lebanese state wants compliant, temporary and cheap bodies to work as maids and nannies within private homes (Esim and Smith 2004; Jureidini 2004; Moukarbel 2009; Young 1999). However, in entering Lebanon, ostensibly as an economic resource, the Sri Lankan female migrant also enters an unregulated social space where, as the ‘dark, foreign, unattached woman’, she is perceived to be the sexually available female subject (see Chin 2005; Rahmen et al 2005 as discussed pertaining to other Asian receiving countries). The lack of laws, in some instances, and the lack of enforcement in others, delimit incursions into the lives and labor of the women and, consequently condone, or even perpetuate, this perception.

The unifying theme in both states’ treatment of the migrant women is the notion of partial inclusion. The female migrant is fragmented; the sexual and sexualized fragments fall outside of the socio-legal space demarcated by hegemonic social discourse and formal legislation. Thus, claims for acknowledgment and protection of these fragments of the self are, by default, delegitimated. Ironically, the invisibility, which makes space for these transgressive relationships, also excludes the relationship from recognition, reward and protection. And when the potential for such relationships to exist is recognized, either hypothetically or by reference to an actual experience, the participating female migrant is liable to the ostracism by a highly stratified Sri Lankan society divided on class lines (for a discussion of the stratified class system in regards to migration see Gamburd 2000: 15-18; for a discussion on sexuality and class within Sri Lanka see Basnayake 1990). The lack of Lebanese labor laws to protect the life and labor of female domestic migrant

workers, and the lack of enforcement of criminal laws by the Lebanese General Security, condones this particular perception of Sri Lankan migrant women. While the Sri Lankan state acknowledges the particularly sexualized space in which the women work and live, they place the burden negotiate the complexities on the female migrant workers (see for example: SLBFE 2000: 7, 11-12, 15). Each state operates to protect and recognize only the partial lives of these female workers. They exclude the Sri Lankan female migrant worker as a sexual or sexualized subject from protection by the state.

Chapter 6 presents a critical analysis of extra-state interventions. Specifically, it focuses upon UNDP published papers on Sri Lankan migrant women to interrogate the ways in which normative ideals of heterosexual marriage and family are variously regulated and enforced transnationally and how that, both, purposefully ignores and acts to constrain women's sexual agency in diasporic situations. It highlights how non-state actors, deliberately or otherwise, fall in the line with state discourses to reinforce the hegemonic paradigms of migrant women's sexuality. I further point out that while, both, state and extra-state actors, since 2006, have been active in bringing the labor of female migrant workers within the perimeters of state protection, this is partial acknowledgement of the women's humanity. The denial of the women's capacity as sexual beings still remains blatant; this is a consequence of their selective subjectification in a manner which denies their potential to desire intimacy. Yet, in both Chapter 5 and 6 I highlight fissures in the normative state discourses, and spaces of potential transformation.

In Chapter 7 I investigate women's responses to and contestations of state and non-state discourses and practices. In particular, I engage

geographies of affect and emotion to understand how state discourses can (and do) mediate women's emotional responses to the migration process. Social constructions of loneliness, despair and happiness affect, both, women's desires for sexual and intimate relations and their actions to realize the same. The state's denial of the sexual dimension of the female migrant's being makes the migrant as a sexual subject invisible to or ignored by state agency. Under the cloak of this invisibility (or neglect) these women access spaces that are sub-social (social and, yet, not formally so) to engage in transgressive relationships that constitute acts of sexual pleasure seeking. Migrant women enter a variety of short and long term heterosexual relationships, monogamous and otherwise, with Lebanese nationals and other migrants. These relationships place women in complex and often contradictory circumstances. The relationships are a form of transgression and contestation. Yet, they are also coping mechanisms. Nonetheless, once engaged in a transgressive relationship, women are further outside the ambit of the state and its protection. I assess women's actions employing Katz's notion of resilience, reworking and resistance to assess which actions might lead to more transformative lives and spaces. In the final chapter I provide a summary of the topics discussed and future directions for further research.

Chapter 2 - Contextualizing Migration, Gender and Sexuality Research in Sri Lanka and Lebanon⁶

"...always ask why the causes of domination are so often mistaken for the conditions of salvation" (Abensour 2008: 406).

1. Introduction:

As stated in the introductory chapter, the most common discourse around Sri Lankan women's migration abroad, and specifically to the Middle East resides around the idea of the migrant subject as economic contributor to the family and who encounters and endures abuse while abroad (Humphrey 1993; Jureidini 2004; Moukarbel 2009; UNDP 2009; Young 1999; and as discussed in Gamburd 2005:101).

However, in the tradition of a wide array of scholarly work informed by Foucault that reveals the ways in which state discourses are politically-motivated calculations, and in part "constitute the domains they appear to represent" (Goldman 2005; Rose 1999: 198; Scott 1998; Truelove 2007), I maintain that while state and academic discourses regarding female migration might aim to capture and assess the dynamics involved in migration, they are actually constitutive of it. A focus upon remittances and the vulnerabilities faced by domestic migrant workers reconstitute and co-produce particular ideas regarding migration, namely that the female domestic migrant worker goes abroad to sacrifice for her family and in the process is a victim of abuse.

⁶ This chapter, as an abstract, has been accepted to *Gender Place and Culture* as part of a special journal issue, which comprises papers from Pacific Worlds in Motion II, graduate conference, 2009. I would like to thank Kamalini Ramdas for her collaboration and feedback in shaping the abstract, paper and proposal.

As both state institutions, and international institutions such as UNDP, categorize and thus de-limit, they simplify specific aspects of a far more complex reality (Scott 1998; Sivaramakrishnan 1999; Goldman 2005).

Accordingly the chapter comprises two main sections; the first provides an overview of the migration of Sri Lankans to the Middle East. The logic underlying the discussions in the various subsections in this section is simply this: I want to urge (in latter chapters) that when the focus remains squarely on the migrant as a source of remittances for sending countries, a source of cheap labour for receiving countries, and as a potential victim of abuse in both countries, an understanding of how discourses on sexuality and the women's sexual identities shape their reasons to migrate, their experiences during migration and their reasons to remain abroad continues to occupy the blind spots of, both, academics and policy makers. This section makes evident the manner in which the Sri Lankan and Lebanese states work together to construct an economic subject, which is economically beneficial to both states.

The second section of this chapter attempts to challenge another pervasive motif in the literature. Often the dominant normative discourses on migrant female domestic workers transfers blame for their physical-psychological traumas to the destination states. The discussion in this section is designed to acknowledge that state bodies rarely acts in isolation but in concert with social mores and cultural norms. Thus, the latter act to abet or constrain state power and confer legitimacy on the states' various acts of commission or omission. We see how the social mores and cultural norms, despite varying across the states in which transnational migrants live and work, ultimately operate to construct identity and inform and influence the

experiences of the domestic migrant worker in particular ways. In Sri Lanka the ideal female person migrant is socially and morally constructed as sacrificer for the family and nation. However, when we try to find space for the migrant worker within this template of 'the sacrificer' an incongruity in such a characterization becomes conspicuous. Lynch (1999) highlights this tension in the concept of 'an ideal female migrant worker' by identifying her handicap; she transgresses the assumed immobility of a virtuous woman. In Lebanon, the female domestic migrant is viewed as morally suspect 'other', a female subject with no ties to family, male relatives or forms of power within the Lebanese state (Moukarbel 2009). The views of the female domestic migrant worker as sacrificer for the family and nation, a loose woman and transgressor of norms operates to maintain the low status of the subject as a deviant body to be utilized by both states for economic ends (Wright 2001).

2. The normative discourse on migration:

In the follow sections, after presenting a concise recent history of the Middle East that highlights the transition of the region from being a source of migrants to being a destination, I present an overview of the figures that the state of Sri Lanka provides on migration and domestic labor migration. This is followed by a review of the academic and state discourse on the economic benefits and reasons for Sri Lankan labor migration. In 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 subsections, I analyze the economic push and pull factors, which are constantly re-emphasized by the state as catalysts for the migration of Sri Lankan females to the Middle East. This is followed by a demographic profile of the Sri Lankan female migrant worker, constructed piecemeal from migration statistics, that is reinforced in academic and policy discourse. It

should not escape notice that such demographic profiling is an act of analysis; the female migrant identity is fragmented and the economic fragment is privileged.

In presenting this statistical economic portrait of the female migrant worker my intention is to critique it. Its hegemonic status in discourses in migration is often legitimized by appealing to it as *the* reality of migration. I assert on the contrary that such statistical narratives are only *representations* of reality; at best they are partial and at worst lopsided. They hide as much (if not more) as they reveal and confound as much as they clarify. In particular, I want to challenge the state's scale of inquiry. The state conceptualizes scales, and emphasizes those of the nation and the family, as empirically identifiable categories through which to understand push and pull factors (Brown and Lawson 1985). While this provides a wealth of information about the linkages between economic change and migration flows, there are other areas that remained ignored and silenced. It leaves unexplored the manner in which the politics of, for example, gender, sexuality and difference, shape both the knowledge that is produced about scale and the dynamics and meanings of scale in practice (Silvey 2004). What remains unacknowledged in the process is that an analysis at a different scale, for example, that of the body, will result in a different picture of the benefits and pitfalls of the migration process (ibid). Further this dereliction of other scales has the intellectual insidious affect of perpetrating the myth of the female migrant worker exclusively as an economic subject who responds to social, political and economic circumstances in single-minded pursuit of pecuniary gain.

2.1 History of migration into the Middle East:

A discussion of migration into the Middle East always emphasizes the discourse around the economic pull factors within the region (Gamburd 2000; Jureidini 2004; McMurray 1986). Till the oil boom, recent history has cast the Middle East an area of emigration (Gerner 2000; Harris 1997). In the beginning of the 20th century, Arabs migrated to North and South America, Africa and Europe (McMurray 1986). However, the oil boom of the 1970s reversed the trend; inter-Arab and Asian-Gulf migration expanded dramatically. The oil boom economies discovered a locally insatiable appetite for labour, which in conjunction with large disparities in wealth between sending and receiving countries, particularly those in South Asia, fuelled the process. Arab men, including Lebanese, migrated to oil-producing countries, and Asian males competed for low-skilled jobs in the Gulf (Al Moosa and McLachlan 1985). However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s falling oil prices and the Gulf War precipitated a gender twist to the migration story: in what has been noted as the beginning of the feminization of migration to the Middle East region (McMurray 1986), an increase in participation of Asian women in migration was witnessed. Households in the Gulf, and in Lebanon, now see migrant domestic workers as necessities (Brochman 1993; Moukarbel 2009). These workers come from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Korea and Sri Lanka (Castels and Miller 2003). That 81 of every hundred Asian females in the Middle East work as domestic migrant workers is a testimony to the changed socio-economic expectations in the Gulf region in response to increased affluence (Chammartin 2005). In Lebanon, prior to the civil war (1975-1991), families in need of domestic help employed young females,

mainly from poor families in rural areas in Lebanon, but also from Syria, Palestine and Egypt (Jureidini 2004; Khalaf 1987; Sweetman 1998). These girls often entered the household at the age of 10 and commonly stayed until they were married (Jureidini 2004). However, of late, the demographic profile of the domestic worker has altered mediated by a number of social, economic and political issues towards a preference for non-Arab female workers. The politics between Syria and Lebanon, the economics of the region as well as changes in social perceptions of foreign workers and domestic work have all played a role in the increased numbers of non-Arab females being employed as domestic workers in Lebanon (McMurray 1986). With the start of the civil war and a mounting mistrust among different groups of Arabs in Lebanon, Lebanese households stopped employing Syrian, Egyptian and Palestinian women as domestic migrant workers in the home (Habib 1998; McMurray 1986). In addition, economic concerns based primarily on the substantial negative wage differential between foreign workers, the foreign female workers tend to work for lower wages than Lebanese nationals, mandated the switch to migrant domestic workers. The economic interests of the Lebanese state augments arguments in favor of migrant workers as domestic help; while, since the domestic migrant worker is not registered for social security, they impose no burden on state finances, they also help to keep a lid on the booming inflation (Jureidini 2004).

It should not escape notice how a focus on understanding migration as a response to changing economic contingencies on the scale of regions and nations decimates, by silencing, the personality of the individual migrant. As the grand opera of changing comparative and competitive advantages of

nations unfolds, the migrant finds her role diminished to that of an extra contributing minimally if at all to either tempo or plot. In the next two sections I examine the push factors that provide impetus to Sri Lankan migration to the Middle East. While the details change, the thrust of the discourse does not. The migrant still remains the cog in the wheel of an economic juggernaut.

2.2 Discourse on Migration's Economic Benefits:

Migrant remittances contribute significantly to the economic well being of, both, households and the Sri Lanka state. This is an important basis on which the economic discourse of the state and extra state organizations reinforcing the need for migration and female migration rests (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1990).

What is re-emphasized in the migration story of Sri Lanka is that on average the workers who go abroad support five family members at home. Statistically, this implies that the 693,000 women who work abroad support approximately 3,465,000 people, which is 18 percent of Sri Lanka's estimated 19 million people (Gamburd 2005). According to government sources, in 2008, migrant remittances totaled USD 2.9 billion—approximately 7 percent of the country's gross domestic product (SLBFE 2008). Sixty percent of the total remittances, or approximately USD 1.7 billion, come from the Middle East (ibid). Remittances are now a greater source of foreign exchange revenue than tea exports (ibid) (see Table 1 below).⁷ In addition, migration relieves unemployment pressures on the domestic economy (Central Bank of SL 2006; Hyndman and Walton-Roberts 2000). Thus, remittances are strategically vital

⁷ The garment sector remains the largest source of export revenue (Sri Lankan Central Bank 2008).

for poverty reduction, lower trade deficit, and alleviate unemployment-imposed pressures on the government to guarantee growth; as such, the government actively pursues a policy of promoting foreign employment (Human Rights Watch 2007).

Table 1. Private Remittances and Foreign Earnings during the year 2007 and 2008
Rupees Millions

Year	Remittances	Tea	Rubber	Coconut	Garment	Total Export	Remittances as a % of country's total export
2007	276,728	113,565	12,089	15,636	347,670	845,683	32.72
2008	316,118	137,600	13,538	18,532	355,995	881,321	35.87

Source: Central Bank Annual Report 2008

In recent years, Sri Lanka migration has been rediscovered as a key intervening apparatus in facilitating economic development, offering a route to mitigating deepening inequalities. The state and extra-state organizations have all mobilised migrants to fund development initiatives in the sending countries. This has led to a range of calculative processes whereby some forms of migration and the affects of migration come to be hypervisibilised while others become invisibilised (Raghuram 2009). The scale of focus becomes the nation while sacrifices made by migrants who remit money back to Sri Lanka are not adequately recognized. In the next section, I present what can be read as an attempt by the state to synchronize the arguments for migration on these two scales.

2.3 Employment opportunities for potential female migrants:

One of the stated reasons for the Sri Lankan state's encouragement of migration is the lack of employment opportunities for women within Sri Lanka. Often presented as a problem that can only be fixed through out-migration, it leads to migrations becoming the valve for release of economic pressure within the country (Gamburd 2000). Interestingly state emphasis on comparing the employment opportunities available to women domestically to those available abroad and on the wage differentials between destination countries and home, can be construed as an attempt to harmonize the national and the individual. The basis of this attempted unification, however, still remains economic.

According to the Sri Lankan Central Bank, in 2006, Sri Lankan women's labor force participation was 36 percent, about half the male participation rate of 68 percent. Further, the female unemployment rate has been more than double that of men's for over three decades (Central Bank of SL 2006). Sri Lankan women earn at the lower end of the wage spectrum; their estimated earned income for 2003 was half that of men. The gender based wage differential is, in part, endorsed and, in part, caused by the government; the Sri Lankan Wages Board established different wage rates for women and men workers for work of equal value in the tobacco and cinnamon trades. A 2007 study by the University of Paradeniya, Sri Lanka, found that the wage gap between similarly-situated males and females at the bottom end of the wage spectrum can be as large as 33 percent in the private sector and 27 percent in the public sector (Gunewardena, et al 2007).

Most jobs available to the migrating women within Sri Lanka are low-skilled and low-paying jobs. Female employment is concentrated in unpaid

family agricultural labor; in plantation labor, such as in tea estates; and in informal or non-unionized sectors such as in factory work in garment and other labor-intensive industries within and outside export processing zones; in home-based economic activities usually as subcontracted piece-rate workers; and in small-scale self employment (ADB 2006). As of 2006, women could earn USD\$36-71 a month in garment factories, USD\$13-27 in tea estates, USD\$44-53 as a cook in a private home, USD\$44 in agricultural labor and USD\$22 making cigarettes (Human Rights Watch 2007). This juxtaposition with the potential to earn USD\$100-140, by working abroad highlights the lure of migration.

In this section and the last I have related the discourse on migration with an eye towards uncovering the inherent bias towards an economic understanding of the process. While economic facts are undoubtedly crucial premises in prompting or preventing migration, I assert that an exclusive focus on the same marginalizes scalar analyses of the process that have the migrant body at its core and promotes a conceptually problematic understanding of female migration. I also presented the constant re-emphasis on migration benefits for the female migrant worker as an attempt to conjoin the scales of the nation and the family. However, this is fundamentally flawed; not only does it fail to redress the body as a unit of analysis, the attempted unification persists with economics as the central analytical tool. In the next two sections I present, in order to critique, a statistical construction of migration flows and the female domestic migrant worker.

2.4 Sri Lankan Migration

Since Sri Lanka's independence in 1948, its migration policies have been relatively liberal (INSTRAW 2000:110 as quoted in Gamburd 2005: 93). Migration into the Middle East began in 1976; the migrants were overwhelmingly male and worked primarily in the construction sector. In the mid-1980s while the number of men going abroad decreased, women continued to go for employment in the domestic sector. By 1988, over half of Sri Lankan migrants were women. Women as a proportion of all migrants reached a high of 79 percent in 1994 (SLBFE 1997, as quoted in Gamburd 2005:93). Since then, both the numbers of male and female migrants have increased with the rate of increase greater in the former category. Despite this, in 2008, out of a total of 252,021 workers who migrated, 49 percent or 123,200 of the workers were women (see table 2 below).

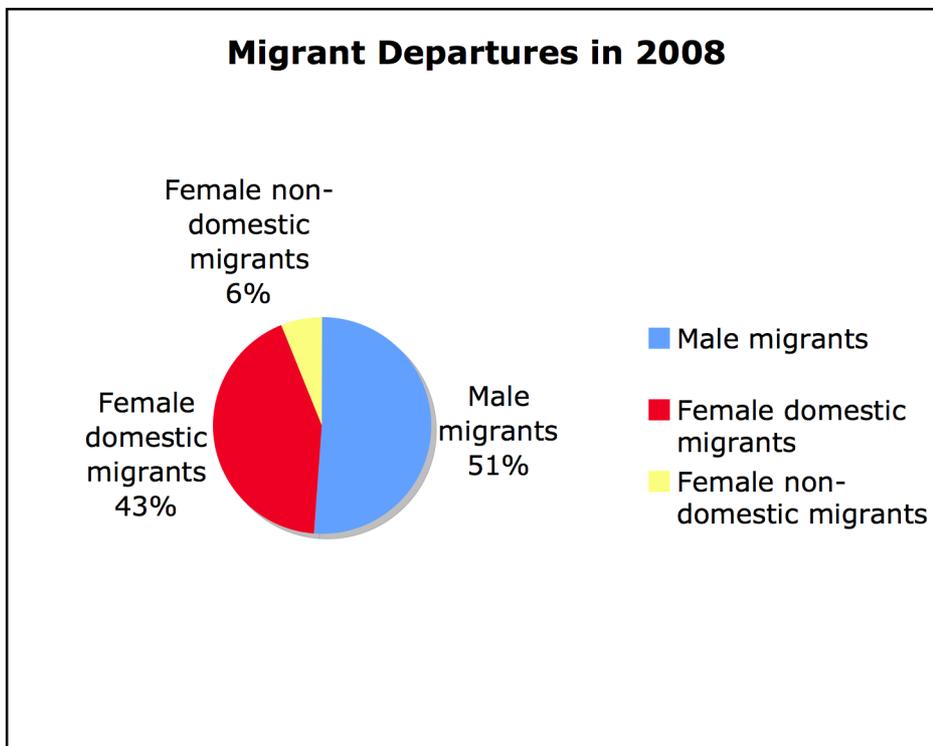


Table 2. Migrant Departures in 2008

Source SLBFE 2008

Over 88 percent, or approximately 108,000 of these women work as domestic workers on temporary contracts in five primary destination countries: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar and Jordan (See table 3 below). Till 2007, Lebanon was one of the primary destinations. But the economic austerity in the wake of the 2006 war and the erosion of the lost advantage of Sri Lankan workers vis-à-vis those from Nepal and Bangladesh has contributed to a decline in the number of Sri Lanka women migrating to Lebanon (IOM 2008). Nevertheless, current estimates of the number of Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers in Lebanon vary from 80,000-120,000 (Caritas 2006; SLBFE 2005; UNDP 2009).

Table 3. Female departures as domestic migrant workers by country in 2008

Country	Year 2008	Percentage
Saudi Arabia	35,460	33
Kuwait	35,677	32
UAE	13,261	12
Jordan	6, 175	5
Lebanon	4,626	4.26
Qatar	4,624	4.25
Bahrain	2,713	3
Cyprus	2,267	2.5
Oman	2,189	2
Singapore	564	.5

Malaysia	273	.3
Maldives	238	.2
Israel	115	.1
South Korea	45	.04
Pakistan	17	.02
Syria	15	.01
Other	62	.02
Totals	108,709	100

Source SLBFE 2008

2.5 The Sri Lankan Domestic Migrant Worker:

Approximately 15 percent of the Sri Lankan labor force works outside of the country (Gamburd 2005). However, within the migrants there are significant gender and socio-economic discrepancies. Nearly 70 percent of the Sri Lankan migrant labour force in 2004 was female (IOM 2005). Over 90 percent of the women traveling to the Middle East from Sri Lanka are employed as domestic workers (ibid). Further, despite Sri Lanka's reports of high literacy rate at 90.1 percent (Central Bank of SL 2003), women who migrate abroad often are not educated beyond high school. Those going to the Middle East usually have six to nine years of schooling and have never worked outside of the home before. Despite low employment rates among all women, educated women are often unwilling to work in Sri Lanka or abroad in what is perceived to be the low-status job of housemaid (Gunatillake & Perera 1995:43).

According to statistics compiled by the SLFBE in 2004, most of the women who go abroad are between the ages of 20-45. Further, a majority of the migrating females come from the rural areas. Muslims are disproportionately over represented in migrating group; while they constitute 7 percent of the population, they account for 22 percent of all migrants. This has been explained by alluding to the lower socio economic status accorded to Muslims within Sri Lanka (Gamburd 2005; SLBFE 2004). Seventy-five percent of the women are married and 90 percent of those women leave children behind (Gamburd 2005). Even when decisions to migrate leads to marital problems (or when the impetus to migrate stems from marital problems), few ever divorce. In addition, female migrant workers postpone marriage to go abroad. Those migrants with children most often leave them in the care of grandparents, siblings and husbands (Save the Children 2006).

The reduction of the female migrant worker to a statistic through the reliance on the quantification of migration flows and the migrants themselves – as demonstrated in the last two sections – reinforces the notion of the migrant as one abstracted of all personality. Again, analysis on the scale of the individual is eschewed in favor of statistical generalization. While it is uncontroversial that statistical data often provide a convenient shorthand for the objects of their reference, it needs to be acknowledged that in the translation of a person to a set of numerical attributes, a wealth of information is compromised.

As Nikolas Rose notes, state quantifications serve to “redraw the boundaries between politics and objectivity by purporting to act as automatic technical mechanisms for making judgments, prioritizing problems and

allocating scarce resources” (Rose 1999: 198). While appearing to quantify a disinterested view of its subject statistics actually emerge out of a series of subjective choices that are highly political, rather than simply technical (Truelove 2007). Rose argues that political choices shape a whole host of decisions associated with quantification, including:

Statistical enquiry, for example, in the form of explicit or implicit theories shaping what is counted and how it is to be counted...systems of classification adopted, for example ethnicity rather than race, nationality, ancestry, caste or religion...questions as to how often to measure and how to deal with change; for example, data on the money supply are published monthly, but estimates of poverty are annual, and the census is taken every ten years (1999: 205).

In the next two sections I present some structural aspects of migration in order to explicate how the statistical-economic characterization of the female migrant workers and the migration process translates both into attempts to promote their ‘welfare’ and into constraints on such attempts.

2.6 Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE):

In this section I look at institutions and the formal mechanisms of the recruitment of migrants. The intention, here, is to turn the spotlight on who are defined in the literature as key players. Specifically, I look at the mandate and role of the SLBFE with regard to the promotion of migration and the protection of the migrant’s interests and the constraints faced by the Bureau in the discharge of its mandate. The recruitment process is also presented,

highlighting the role of hiring agencies (both in Sri Lanka and Lebanon), who are acknowledged to be another category of ‘key players.’

The Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE), the government body responsible for the promotion of migration and the protection of migrants, was established in 1985 under the Act No. 21 and amended by Act No. 4 of 1994, the primary legislation that deals with foreign employment (CEDAW 2009). The SLBFE operated under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour till 2007, when it was transferred to the newly created Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion & Welfare (MFEPW). Currently, the Bureau’s mandate includes the formulation and implementation of foreign employment policies & promotion programs designed by the MFEPW (ibid). Accordingly, the Bureau is responsible for setting standards and approving or rejecting the contracts provided by foreign employers to Sri Lankan migrants, licensing recruiting agents, and operating programs to protect Sri Lankan migrants and their families.

However, the mandate to protect often conflicts with the mandate to promote labor migration, this is a dilemma not only in Sri Lanka, but in other migrant sending Asian countries as well (Huang et al 2005:8). Often migrant sending countries believe if they place stipulations on foreign employers for improved migration and work conditions, inclusive of higher salaries, their workers will be at a competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis workers from other countries (ILO 2004). Competition, rather than collaboration, between the supplying countries for a limited number of foreign jobs often results in the countries being lax in promoting migrants’ welfare and malleable in their interpretation of ‘welfare.’

Thus we also begin to see here the manner in which the Sri Lankan state and Lebanese state work together to construct a migrant subject who is economically beneficial to both the sending and receiving country. The female domestic migrant worker should remain cheap for receiving countries, and require few interventions on her behalf on the part of sending countries. As stated, although one of the mandates of the SLBFE is to protect the welfare of Sri Lankan migrants, the Bureau never intervenes in such a way that would affect the flow of migration. For example, in 2007, the SLBFE demanded a higher wage for domestic workers in Lebanon (from USD100 to 140) through a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of the Interior's General Security Department (the ministry in charge of controlling the entry, presence and departure of foreigners in Lebanon) (Caritas 2009). Attempts to convert the understanding into statutes have remained insipid at best in the face of anxieties about a loss of competitive advantage (UNDP 2009). Again we see how state discourses identify and value the female migrant worker based on an economic instrumentalities.

2. 7 Recruitment process:

Similarly, an examination of the recruitment process makes evident the manner in which the Sri Lankan and Lebanese state work together to produce a subject who continues to be economically beneficial to the state by giving her little access to any power over her economic or social position.

To migrate as a domestic migrant worker to Lebanon, one has to be “sponsored” under sponsorship or *kafala* program. Under the *kafala* (literally, ‘guaranteeing and taking care of’ in Arabic) an employer is required to sponsor a migrant worker’s visa and assume full economic and legal

responsibility for him/her during the contracted period. Being formally tied to a sponsor/employer is a standard condition of temporary foreign labour, whether skilled or unskilled, in most countries in the Middle East (Al-Moosa and McLachlan 1985; Jureidini 2004; ILO 2006). The *kafala* system is designed to give the control and management of the daily work experiences and status of migrant workers within the Middle East region and Lebanon to the employer (Nga Longva 1999).

In order to enter the country on a working visa, migrant workers have to be invited from Lebanon, either through a hiring agency or by an individual employer. Workers arrive into Lebanon with a 3 months working visa, pre-arranged by the Lebanese agency or the sponsor. The Lebanese agency's fees, approximately US\$1,000 for the hiring of a domestic worker, are borne by the Lebanese employer. These fees cover airfare, government charges for visa processing and agency commissions. In addition to these costs, the employer must pay separately for the residency and work permits, notary fees annually renewable insurance, which amount to approximately US\$700 (Jureidini 2004).

The majority of Sri Lankan women who migrate pays agency and sub-agency fees in Sri Lanka (Jureidini 2004; UNDP 2009). Sri Lankan law permits labor recruiters to charge migrant domestic workers only the SLBFE's official registration fee, which ranges from about US\$50 to US\$100. However, the actual fees women pay are as much as US\$315 (Human Rights Watch 2007; UNDP 2009). Labor agents and subagents routinely flout the Foreign Employment Act and overcharge prospective migrant domestic workers by inflating costs, such as visa and government registration fees, or

levying large fees in exchange for their placement services (ibid). As a result, women and their families are compelled to finance this initial cost of migration by selling assets, particularly jewelry, or by taking a loan from friend or relatives or loan sharks (Jureidini 2004).

While economic exploitation of female migrant workers during the recruitment process underscores her identity as a powerless economic implement, the state's lethargy in enforcing laws against exploitation is far more telling. As higher personal costs of migration (borne during recruitment) reduce the risk of transgressive behavior on the part of the female migrant when abroad and keep her economic viability intact, state disinterest in lowering these costs can also be read to reinforce understanding of the migrant worker as an economic agent responding to a private cost benefit calculus imposed on her by an external market place. In this light the sporadic attempts at enforcement of anti-exploitation laws can be seen more as state overtures to reduce impediments to an economically beneficial steady flow of migrant workers than as being motivated by a concern for the migrant persons well being.

2.8 Categories of women migrant workers in Lebanon:

These final three subsections (2.8, 2.9, 2.10) focus on the literature on the migrant workers' experiences in the destination. To that end, a taxonomy of the migrant female domestic worker is identified, which is followed by discussion, at some length, of, both, the conditions that leave her susceptible to exploitation and abuse and the specific forms of that abuse. My intention in

this last subsection is to identify, present and highlight discourse of victimhood that implicitly represent the migrant female domestic worker as the ‘sacrificing’, ‘enduring’ subject. Interestingly what emerges from the discussion is the notion that transgression is constituted by the degree to which the female migrant worker resists fitting this template.

Foreign female domestic workers in Lebanon are formally classified by the state into three categories with different living and working conditions (Jureidini 2004; Moukarbel 2009; UNDP 2009). The categories operate to maintain the low and deviant status of the domestic migrant worker within the country. I provide an overview of the working and living conditions for live-in workers as a contrast to the freelance workers, the primary focus in my research.

Live-in workers reside within the sponsors/employers' household, usually for two or three years. The sponsor is responsible for all the financial costs such as working papers, health insurance, clothing and food, as well as the airfare for the worker to return to her home country upon completion of employment. The employer also has the legal obligation to annually renew work and residency permits and the medical insurance of the worker. The employer can and usually does control and limit the employee's freedom of movement by retaining the worker's passport and other papers. Live-in workers earn approximately USD100 per month. The workers who fall within this category are perceived by both the Lebanese and Sri Lankan states to be the less transgressive subject. They sacrifice for their families, send all earnings home and are under the control of the Lebanese sponsor.

Freelancers live on their own either renting or staying in a room in exchange for services rendered; they work on an hour ratio pay for various employers. Their living and working conditions are less controlled. To remain within the law, the freelancer must have a sponsor. Although it is technically legal for a domestic migrant worker to live as a freelancer in Lebanon, she is required to still have a sponsor with whom she works and is in close contact with. The sponsor is to know her whereabouts at any time. If a domestic migrant worker is questioned at any time by the police or General Security, she must have the telephone number of her sponsor on hand, and the sponsor when called must attest to being her legal sponsoring and to knowing her whereabouts. If this does not occur, the domestic migrant worker risks being detained or deported.

Frequently some Lebanese charge a sum to act as sponsor for an individual migrant worker. Often problems arise with over charging or promising sponsorships, which do not come to fruition (Human Rights Watch 2007; UNDP 2009). According to 45 freelancers interviewed for a 2009 UNDP report, they can earn from USD300-800 per month. However, their expenses – rent, clothing and food, entertainment – come to approximately USD300 per month. They are also required to cover their own annual USD700 visa expense each year. The workers within this category are perceived by both the Sri Lankan and Lebanese state to be transgressive. They transgress the norm of the immobile woman and the idea that a female subject should not be separated from family and a male guardian. The utilization for their wages for their own personal pleasure and gain becomes morally suspect. Living as freelancers, the female domestic workers receive less protection

from the Sri Lankan and Lebanese states. Few laws extend to protect her, and she is generally outside of the surveillance of the state.

Runaways are workers who formerly worked and lived as live-in workers and who have decided for various reasons (mainly abuse and withholding of payment) to leave the house of their employer. They take refuge in embassies, NGOs or with other migrants who are living independently (and thus become freelancers as well). At any given time the Sri Lankan embassy houses approximately 200 Sri Lankan migrant workers who are waiting to have their legal status within the country changed or to be granted safe passage home. Caritas Lebanon also offers two houses for up to approximately 50 female domestic migrant workers, who are in a similar precarious legal status as to those women within the Sri Lankan Embassy. As soon as the migrant worker leaves her sponsor, she is considered to be residing illegally. The employers usually notify the Ministry of the Interior's General Security Department (also known as General Security) immediately because they are responsible for the migrant worker as long as her yearly residency and work permits are valid. However sometimes employers also file complaints of robbery against migrant workers to withdraw any responsibility. Their earnings and expenses each month are equivalent to freelancers. However, their 'illegality' makes them exempt from the annual work visa fees. 'Runaways' are viewed by both the Sri Lankan and Lebanese state to be the most deviant subjects. They have transgressed the expectations of immobility, connections to the family and the need to act within the laws of the state. Workers who fall into this category are the most susceptible to abuse and exploitation as they have no access to

sources of protection. There are reports of these women being physically abused in migrant neighborhoods, detained for long periods of time within detention centers with no access to judicial rights, and abused within the Sri Lankan embassy in Beirut (Huda 2006). Ironically, however, women who operate within this category could have the greatest access to mobility and economic gains.

The preceding discussion highlights how the typology of the female migrant worker coincides with a moral scale. By benchmarking moral worth to the degree to which the migrant subject produces benefits for the state without imposing costs, states reinforce an economic understanding of the female migrant. Further by morally devaluing aspirations to and acts of personal gratification the states condone and contribute to a neglect of the study of migration on the scale of the body. This refusal to acknowledge the personality of the female domestic migrant worker fosters a social climate, which is conducive to according her a low status. This is the subject of discussion in the next section.

2.9 Low Status of Workers:

The increase in demand for foreign domestic labor has corresponded to an increase in the stigmatization of domestic work as labor, if at all appropriate for Lebanese women, then only for women of lower status within the society. Both during and since the war, but particularly post-war, maid and nanny positions have come to be seen by many Lebanese as degrading and unacceptable (Al-Moosa and McLachlan 1985; Jureidini 2004; Sweetman 1998). With the migration of foreign women to the Middle East in the 1970s from Africa and Asia, the domestic worker is, perceptually, identified with the

foreign female migrant. The conditions of work, relative low wages, and the racialized stigma associated with domestic employment have made it unappealing to Arab women.

At the same time that domestic work has been stigmatized, the hiring of a domestic helper has become a complex status symbol for employers. Not only the ability to hire a maid, but also the specific ethnicity of a domestic migrant worker is used as a benchmark of status of families in Lebanese society. (The use of various ethnicities of domestic workers to connote status has been noted to occur across the Middle East, see Al-Moosa and McLaclan 1985; Eelens et al 1992; Jureidini 2004; Young 1999). For instance, most Lebanese families within the higher-socio-economic bracket would insist on hiring a domestic migrant worker from the Philippines rather than from Sri Lanka or Africa because Filipinas are believed to be better educated and able to speak English.⁸ Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers are on the second tier with Africans relegated to the lowest. Accordingly, the wages paid to Filipina, Sri Lankan and African domestic workers tend to be scaled to match their perceived status. The Filipinas are usually paid USD150 per month; the Sri Lankans, USD100; and the Africans, USD80 or less (Jureidini 2004; for a similar ordering and status making within Yemen see De Regt 2006).⁹

⁸ The perceptions of particular ethnicities of domestic migrant workers seem to vary by country (Huang et al 2005). For example, Filipinas in Canada are deemed to be docile and hardworking, while in Malaysia Filipinas are perceived to be demanding and strong willed (Pratt 2004; interview with Fernando, deputy general manager of the SLBFE July 25, 2005).

⁹ More research needs to be conducted to see if religion is a contributing factor in the rate of pay. In Yemen, De Regt (2006) reported that, although Yemenis are almost entirely Muslim, there does not seem to be a strong preference for domestic workers of a particular religious background. Filipinas, who are most highly valued as domestic workers, are in general Catholic. However, she did find that conservative upper class Yemeni families prefer to employ Indonesian women because of a religious preference.

While the state endorsed impersonality of the female domestic migrant worker can be seen as patronizing, the public perception of their low status, the denial of their humanity has another more pernicious consequence. Their perceived sub-humanity presents them as morally legitimate targets of abuse. But as I document this abuse in the next section I want to also emphasize that theme of victimhood that pervades discourse. As will become apparent, the abuses endured by live-in female migrant workers is implied to be providing the impetus for the suffering women to ‘transgress’ further by becoming freelancers or runaways, which exposes them to further abuse. However, this analysis obfuscates, again by ignoring the scale of the body, a more fundamental tension in the concept of the ‘virtuous’ female domestic migrant worker. As virtue is constituted by immobility and economic functionality in such narratives, they run the peril of ignoring the possibility of these women ‘transgressing’ not only on account of abuse but also in pursuit of perfectly ‘natural’ inclinations for mobility, companionship and bodily gratification amongst others.

2.10 Working and living conditions of domestic migrant workers living inside and outside of their employers home:

Globally, domestic migrant workers in receiving countries are perceived to be in precarious economic, social and legal situations (Constable 1997; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999; Khalaf and Alkobaisi 1999; Parrenas 2001; Pratt 2004; Romero 1992; UN 2005). The UN (2005) has deemed domestic work the most exploitative forms of employment worldwide. The vulnerability of the female migrant have been, commonly,

attributed to the performing of work that has been historically undervalued as non-work and female work (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Huang et al 2005; Lawson 1999; Silvey 2004); their working in homes, in spaces that are often viewed to be private and apolitical, and thus not with the ambit of labour laws or within the protective jurisdiction of state agency (Marston and Staeheli 1994; Pratt 2004; Truong 1996; UN 1996); and to a general passivity shown by governments worldwide to address issues pertaining to domestic migrant workers (Gamburd 2000; Pratt 2004; Truong 1996).

Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the UN, in his 2005 end-of-the-year press conference outlined the global challenges of migration as a top priority for 2006 (ILO 2006). Similarly, a 2000 report by the UNDP placed international migration close to the top of the global development agenda (UN 2002a). The increase in attention has corresponded with the increase in the overall numbers of migrants, the increase in women's migration, the increase in remittances as well as the increase in awareness of the problems that migrants face (Constable 1997; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999; Khalaf and Alkobaisi 1999; Parrenas 2001; Pratt 2004; Romero 1992).

Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers in the Middle East generally work long and hard hours (Jureidini 2004; Moukarbel 2009; Young 1999). The work responsibilities for maids and nannies often include working without a break from early morning until late in the evening. The variety of tasks that women are expected to do include: general upkeep of the house; cooking and assisting in the preparation of meals and snacks; washing and ironing; caring

for children, infants, elderly and disabled family members; feeding pets and washing family cars (Jureidini 2004).

Approximately 30 percent of these women report abuses (Pererra 1997; Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment, SLBFE 2004; author interview with David Soysa of Migrant Services Center July 26, 2005, Sri Lanka). Lebanon is no exception; female domestic migrant workers are reported to experience varying forms of exploitation and abuse (ILO 2006). The UN reports that maids and nannies in Lebanon experience physical, verbal and mental as well as sexual abuse (ILO 2006; Gamburd 2005). Non-payment of wages is reported by the SLBFE (2006) to be the most common form of exploitation. In addition, every year there are multiple reports of beatings, forced detention, and, in some cases, murder; however, to date, there have been no convictions in Lebanon for the ill treatment of household assistants (Huda 2006).

Exploitation is endemic to the extent that it has become acceptable for employers to withhold the passports of workers, use verbal abuse, lock workers inside the home, monitor food intake, insist on long working hours and, in some instances, abuse them physically (Jureidini 2004). A recent survey of domestic migrant workers by Jureidini (2005) showed that 35 percent of domestic migrant workers are not permitted to leave their employer's home. Eighty-seven percent have their passports taken away. Similarly, in a survey of 70 Sri Lankan domestic workers, Jureidini and Moukarbel (2004) found that on average such women work 16-17 hours work per day. In addition, it was noted that many are considered to be on-call 24 hours per day. For example, some women have to cook and clean late at night

when visitors are over, or nurse children and assist elderly people throughout the night. Eighty-eight percent reported having no days off (ibid). Some workers are granted an hour or two on Sundays to attend church services; however, their employers often accompany them to both control and protect them. Few of the live-in workers can leave the employers' premises to visit friends or stroll unaccompanied. Those who report having time off, often say that they would use the time to rest and sleep to recover from exhaustion.

Women also report that the employers' discretion controls the length of their hair, the clothes they wear, how frequently they bathe and their accessibility of medical treatment (Jureidini 2004). Further, there have been reports that workers have been forced into sex surrogacy for young Arab males in the home (Mansour 2005). In extreme instances there have been reports of workers being forced to have abortions (Smith 2004) or murdered (Jureidini 2004).

The harshest abuse that occurs within the home seems to occur during the initial months of employment. During this period, the employer usually adopts the attitude that she has to "train" her employee harshly so that there will be no misunderstanding later. It is not unusual for a domestic worker to suffer from emotional or psychological abuse within the home. This harsh treatment is a strict and punitive form of socialization into the job. A 2005 phone survey by Caritas of 400 employers found that 31 percent of those surveyed believed it was okay to beat a maid or nanny if she did not follow instructions (Huda 2006). Given the degree of regimentation the migrant domestic worker is subjected to, Moukarbel (2009), unsurprisingly, found with her research in Lebanon that while working and living inside the home

domestic migrant workers cannot have friends or lovers. In her words, “they are not allowed to love freely and are supposed to put their private lives on hold for the entire duration of their contract - while caring for their employers” (Moukarbel 2009:17).

The living and working conditions for domestic migrant workers residing outside of their employer’s home under the Lebanese classification of the ‘freelancer’ or ‘runaway’ can be quite different from those who live-in. Migrant women under these categories report higher wages, fewer working hours, more freedom of movement, and greater control over working conditions (UNDP 2009). My research for this project found migrant women find this status comparatively desirable. They obtain the status of freelancer or runaway through negotiations with their employer, making arrangements with other migrants to assist them in leaving their place of employment before the end of their two-year contract, or setting out on their own before the end of their contract.

According to a 2009 UNDP report, women residing outside of their employer’s private home work approximately 10-12 hours per day, can manage resting breaks throughout the day, and take at least one day off per week. Their hourly wages of USD5-7 enable them to share the monthly rent (USD150-300) on an apartment in lower income neighborhoods on the outskirts of Beirut. The majority of women who live outside of their employer’s home reside in Waffa, the largest migrant neighborhood in Beirut. Women living outside of their employers’ report more freedom and less social control.

Although more in-depth and studies with larger sample sizes need to be conducted to capture an accurate picture of migrant wages for those residing outside of their employers' homes, UNDP in 2009 found that 'freelancers' and 'runaways' can earn between USD300-1200 per month. Women reported that their ability to earn higher wages was dependent upon the ability to locate employers for steady employment. While they had more freedom to choose an employer and quit when conditions were not to their liking, the employer also had no commitment to employ a worker on a long term basis. Nonetheless, research conducted to date points to domestic migrant women residing outside of their employers' homes earning higher wages and having greater spending power. Minus monthly expenses for rent (USD75-150), food (USD120), clothing (USD50) and visa (USD50), women still retain some discretionary income. Domestic migrant workers report that they continue to remit USD100 home each month but retain the additional wages earned for their independent enjoyment in Beirut.

Migrant women living outside of their employers' homes report greater access to entertainment, free time, and a social life with friends and male partners. They report having time to engage in leisure activities, including: attending concerts and parties, shopping, dining and going to cafes, and visiting friends.

As women engage in leisure activities outside of the employer's home, they enter spaces that are not highly monitored by the Lebanese state. Most commonly, the Lebanese police and General Security do not directly surveil migrant neighborhoods (Caritas 2009). Occasionally, General Security conducts searches in migrant neighborhoods to check for 'legal' working

papers and visas. However, such searches usually only occur after some other disturbance has called security into the neighborhood (Huda 2006). Those women who fall under the category of freelancers and ‘runaways’ believe that they have little recourse to state protection should problems arise. The former group perceives that the state would always take the word of a national against theirs and the latter fears that their irregular status within the country would make them unable to access protection (ibid).

Migrant neighborhoods are also perceived by Lebanese nationals and other migrants to be spaces, which are not tightly monitored by the police and General Security. Interviews with a limited number of male migrants and Lebanese nationals conducted for this study found that migrant neighborhoods are viewed as spaces occupied by loose women who are available for short term affairs and prostitution. Thus, the migrant neighborhood although perceived by migrant women to be a space which affords more freedom and less social constraint than the space of the employer’s private home; it is accordingly also a space which is characterized by a lack of state protection and by a perception of the women occupying this space as morally inferior to those who live in with their employers.

3. The Lebanese socio-cultural dynamic:

The following overview of the Lebanese state and society is essential to situate domestic migrant workers within the socio-political dynamic of the country. In an attempt to clarify the agency and power of the Lebanese state, this section will explicate the position of the state with regards to kinship ties; the role of *wasta* (the ability to garner special favors from the state); the status of women, and constructions of female sexuality within Lebanon. Clearly, all states

compartmentalize subjects' lives into strictly regulated spaces; how the boundaries are drawn and the degree of regulation is, however, a function of a broader socio-cultural dynamic. Thus, here, we survey the socio-cultural terrain in Lebanon to situate, in that landscape, the social position, lives and work of the migrant female domestic worker.

I start by presenting the weakness of state authority in relationship to the power of kinship ties. This is followed by a discussion of the sharing of legal jurisdiction between state sanctioned and religious courts. The following subsection, 3.3, gives a brief insight into the cultural guidelines that constitute demarcations between legitimate and proscribed sexual behavior with respect to women. These insights are then brought together in two final subsections, 3.4 and 3.5, to analyze the migrant female domestic worker's precariousness in terms of their visibility to the state. Arguing that visibility is contingent on recognition by the state, the issues of susceptibility to and protection from abuse or exploitation reduce to questions about whether they are included or excluded from the body politic, whether they have access to state power or not. Acknowledging that inclusionary overtures have been made by the Lebanese state since 2006, I however, assert that such invitations to be included are partial and conditional. Who is invited to the table is not the migrant person; it is the asexual migrant worker.

3.1 The Lebanese state and operation of kinship ties and *wasta*:

The power of the Middle Eastern state, inclusive of Lebanon, is perceived in some instances to be subordinate to strong patriarchal kinship ties (Ayubi 1995; Gerner 2000; Harris 1997; Khalaf 1987; Mann 1986 Salem 2003). The family in its many variations is the basic social unit in Arab societies (El-Solh

& Mabro 1994; Joseph 1983; Joseph 1991; Joseph 1993; Joseph 1994; Sabbagh 1996 and Tucker 1993). Access to and control over many forms of power in Lebanon (whether state or society based) often come through extended kinship ties (King-Irani 2000). However, the intertwining of kinship with patriarchy results in the family's being the sole source of economic, emotional and social support for women. On a practical level, this primary social norm translates into unemployment benefits, health insurance, and protection against all forms of disaster being offered to women through the extended family (Sabbagh 1996: xv)

On the one hand, kinship ties can be presented as enabling insufficient state access to remote spaces with family networks. But often, these ties have been criticized for their contribution to a pervasive disenfranchisement of women that is endorsed, and perhaps even mandated by the state and religious sects (Joseph 2000). As a result of the surrogacy that is thus engendered, for a Lebanese female, access to power often comes through a male relative (Joseph 1994). In addition, the Lebanese legal system often views women as subordinate to men and as persons to not be viewed as separate from their families or more specifically from their male relatives. While the content of legislation does not necessarily articulate the subordinate social status of women, the bias is highly apparent. This can be viewed as a result of antiquated laws and reluctance for legal reform born of the patriarchal social order (Shehadeh 2004). For example, the state relies on extended kinship and religious affiliation to determine citizenship. Joseph argues that such reliance has been the most significant deterrent to citizenship equality for women in Lebanon (Joseph 2000). Women are granted Lebanese citizenship only

through their fathers. Lebanese women cannot pass on citizenship to their foreign husbands or their children.

Related to subordination of the power of the state to kinship ties (acquiescent or otherwise), is the power of *wasta*, or special connection to those working within government services. *Wasta* helps to navigate through the labyrinthine bureaucracy of the Lebanese government. According to King-Irani (2000:268),

Individuals' interactions with state bodies and governmental bureaucracies takes place often primarily through patron-client relationships mediated by ties of kinship (actual or fictive), political party membership, or ethnic and sectarian affiliation...In most Middle Eastern societies, governmental services are available only to those who have connections (*wasta* in Arabic...)...

The precarious standing of the female domestic migrant worker on account of a lack of state recognition is exacerbated by the Lebanese socio-cultural dynamic. Given the discussion above on kinship ties and *wasta* it becomes evident that female domestic migrant workers have little access to power through regular social channels. They have no family networks to fall back on and no male guardian to intervene on their behalf, and consequently no *wasta*. Unions or professional organizations, some of the viable options through which domestic migrant workers might seek power, are seen by the Lebanese as weak in comparison to extended kinship ties and *wasta* (Young 1999).

3.2 Religious courts:

The primacy accorded to the family is further manifest in the state's delegation of responsibility for family law or personal status law to a system of religious courts. Fifteen family codes have been authorized by the state, for the eighteen legally recognized religious sects. Fifteen different legal cultures stipulate and enforce guidelines for appropriate behaviors of Lebanese citizens around kinship issues (Khalaf 1987). The religious courts are the arena of family law; they are responsible for marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance. The state has marginalized itself this aspect, making itself legally unavailable to its citizens in these critical matters (Joseph 2000). Which legal code applies to any particular citizen has been determined by descent, designated by birth group by kin affiliation, by religious descent designed through the patrilineal line. That such pivotal matters of jurisdiction are determined by birth is one of the most profound testimonies to the feudal underpinnings of the state.

Domestic migrant workers are not easily recognized or protected by the religious courts. The only manner in which domestic migrant workers would have access to the family law courts would be by marriage to a Lebanese national and conversion to one of the identified religions.¹⁰ Buddhism and Hinduism are not recognized religions within the court. The existence of religious courts, which divides individuals by sectarian affiliation, ostensibly operates to further separate foreign domestic migrant workers from Lebanese nationals. In a region governed by patriarchal kinship ties, and in some cases religious affiliations, Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers are unenviably, alienated by both.

¹⁰ As of 2004, there have been no recorded marriages between Lebanese nationals and foreign domestic migrant workers (CRTD 2004).

3.3 Women's sexuality:

Arab feminist authors such as Abu-Odeh (1996), El-Solh and Mabro (1994), and Mernissi (1996) have all pointed to the importance placed on women's virginity and chastity in Arab societies. Women's acceptable sexual activity is restricted to the bounds of marriage. For example, within Lebanon and other Arab countries, extra-marital sex (*zina*) is punishable by civil and religious laws, carries a prison sentence, and is considered haram, an impermissible act against God. In contrast, sex within marriage is revered (El-Solh & Mabro, 1994) and a wife's disobedience and refusal to "surrender herself" to her husband's rights under marriage is grounds for divorce (Birr & Fitnat 1996). In contrast, pre-marital sex has dire consequences, ranging from non-marriageability to becoming the victim of a "crime of honour" (Abu-Odeh 1996 and Mernissi 1996).

The demarcation line between consensual sex and rape is not so much dependent on a woman's consent but more so on the possible consequences of the sexual activity. For example, if a woman is unmarried and is raped the consequences of the woman potentially marked as unmarriageable can be seen as dire for the family, and thus is viewed as a serious offense against the entire family. Thus, understanding rape within the Arab contexts is an enterprise that needs to be undertaken within a theoretical framework that acknowledges the importance of the family (*vis-à-vis* the individual); of socio-familial institutions (like marriage); of the concept of virginity as virtue; and of the sacred/profane distinction between pre marital and marital sex.

The normative discourses around Lebanese female sexuality shape the female domestic migrant worker as a sexual subject. Domestic migrant

workers are viewed as lone women who do not have family ties, or a male to represent them. Thus, there are fewer constraints on their being constructed as sexually available. The act of sex does not affect the status of a female domestic migrant worker within Lebanese society. In this case, one's actions only affect the individual, as they are not seen to be connected to a family. The repercussions do not involve the need to marry or the need to maintain honor through killing.

3.4 Female domestic migrant workers in Lebanon and the state:

Till 2006, Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers were viewed as outcasts, as citizens outside of the sovereign state and juridical system (Smith 2006). With the lack of enforceable laws, the position of migrant domestic workers was equivalent to Agamben's *homo sacer* (ibid). For example, the lack of laws which attended to domestic laborers, and/or the lack of acknowledgement and enforcement of such laws contributed to the production and reproduction of an "exclusionary zone" – a zone characterized by the permissibility of verbal, physical and sexual abuse. The private home, in particular instances, could be defined as such an "exclusionary zone" or "state of exception". In addition, it was not only state actors who had the power to exclude domestic migrant workers from State protection but the wider sovereign as defined by subjects with state recognition (Agamben 1998:84; Long 2006: 113). Thus, it was not just the state as represented by government bodies but wider society, which operated as sovereign to exclude particular subjects. (As will be discussed, the ability of the wider sovereign to exclude domestic migrant workers from state protection continues to play a key role in female migrants' partial exclusion from the state).

However, since 2006, there have been steps to include domestic migrant workers – as a worker within the country - into the purview of the Lebanese law, a pre-requisite for state protection. For example, there is now a unified contract among employment agencies, employers and employees, which states rate of pay limits the number of hours of work. Human Rights Watch opened in offices in Beirut in 2006 and their portfolio covers the rights of migrant workers within the country. Caritas, the largest NGO in Lebanon and the primary one to focus on migrant issues, has hired four lawyers to represent domestic migrant workers in legal disputes with employers (the majority of the over 30 cases that Caritas handles annually deal with non-payment of wages and physical abuse). Two ILO documentary films with the aim to inform the general public of the rights of domestic migrant workers were made and viewed widely in Lebanon. Finally, there has been awareness through an online Facebook group, which plans multicultural events and shares news stories related to migrants.

These all seem like important steps. However, what I want to highlight/explore in chapters 5 and 6 is the concern that such inclusionary overtures are directed not at the migrant ‘person’ but the migrant ‘worker’. Thus, what are considered due for inclusion are those attributes of the person, which constitute the domestic migrant worker. Other attributes not necessary to this construction especially the migrant workers’ sexuality – both as identity and as capacity – still remain unrecognized and excluded.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

“The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations, no matter how panoptic they may be: it is neither foreign to them (it can take place only within them) nor in conformity with them (it does not receive its identity from them). It creates shadows and ambiguities within them. It inserts its multitudinous references and citations into them (social models, cultural mores, personal factors)” (de Certeau 1984: 101).

1. Introduction:

I employ global ethnography with a focus upon sexuality and intimacy to make evident causes and effects within the migration process, which have not been previously explored. According to Gille and O Riain (2002), global ethnography emphasizes the sociopolitical context of any research; and as research into migration and sexuality and intimacy cannot be separated, for example, from state and familial power, and agency of the subject, such an approach fits well. Three strategies, which global ethnography relies upon are particularly useful for this project. These are: 1) the extension of the observer into the participant’s world; 2) observation across places; and 3) analysis of micro and macro processes. The overall approach of this study is ethnographic, complimented by structured qualitative data collection and analysis techniques.

My approaches for data collection and analysis were influenced by both the research questions and the contexts in which the research was conducted, as discussed below. The concepts of sexuality and intimacy were used throughout the research to guide interviews, and to help organize the extensive and complex ways that state discourse aims to shape and influence identity and actions. At the onset of the research, I envisioned understanding the

appearance and influences of constructs of sexuality and intimacy through three overlapping and related questions: 1) How do state bodies address sexuality and intimacy of the female migrant subject? 2) How does state power shape and influence female migrant sexuality and intimacy? 3) How do female migrants respond to state actions?

I organized the data collection in three interrelated 'layers' in an attempt to capture the various scales of sources of information as suggested by Levine (2002). I utilized interviews, observations and discourse analysis as I conducted research at the level of the state, non-state actors and individual subject. The principal methods of data collection for this study consisted of interviews in Sri Lanka and Lebanon with migrants on their day-to-day experiences and practices during non-work hours; interviews with government, NGO and I-NGO officials and observations of I-NGO's day-to-day practices; and analyses of state and non-state documents pertaining to sexuality, sexual practices and intimacy.

2. Broad geographic and ethnographic focus of research:

I originally became interested in conducting research in the area of female migration from Sri Lanka to Lebanon when I lived and worked in Beirut as a journalist from 2000 to 2004. I covered human rights stories and migration was one of the arenas I focused upon. After living in Lebanon for four years I decided to return to graduate school in order to study the topic of female labor migration more rigorously. For my Masters thesis I attended to how the abuse of Sri Lankan migrant women is made possible in Lebanon. Drawing upon this work I asked new questions for my PhD dissertation about women's agency, sexuality and state interventions.

I have focused my research on the lives of Sri Lankan migrant workers in Lebanon, constructs of sexuality and intimacy, and state interventions because this research context provides the best opportunity to answer the questions presented for my dissertation. There are namely four primary reasons. First, when I began my study, Lebanon was one of the top four receiving countries for Sri Lankan domestic labor migrants (SLBFE 2006), and Sri Lankan nationals were the largest group of domestic labor migrants within Lebanon, totaling between 90,000-120,000 (Caritas 2005; SLBFE 2006). Second, the comparison of sexual and intimate freedoms and constraints Sri Lankan migrant women experience in Sri Lanka and Lebanon presented a potentially great contrast. In Sri Lanka, migrant women are subject to a stringent discipline imposed by moral mechanisms, reinforced through the state and the family, in regards to sexuality and intimacy. In Lebanon, the mechanisms, within the state, extra-state and wider communities that monitor and regulate sexual and intimate behavior are markedly different and, at times, more permissive. Sri Lankan women are far from the watchful eye of family and community in Lebanon and the Lebanese state and wider community are not invested in the sexual moral purity of female domestic migrant workers to the same degree or in the same manner as the Sri Lankan state and wider communities. I hypothesized that the apparent contrast would provide a good case study for how sexuality and intimacy are socially constructed and how migration might act as a catalyst for change. Third, Sri Lanka is the only country in South Asia, which has not banned the female migration and has maintained active policies of encouraging migration and developing and teaching pre-migration curriculum, which addresses women's

sexuality and intimacy. State policies, data and curricula presented potentially rich material for analyses. In contrast, although countries such as Bangladesh and India have banned female migration at various times (UNDP 2009), migrant women continue to go abroad but through irregular channels and thus it is difficult to acquire data on these groups of women. Fourth, the I-NGOs and NGOs, which have migration on their agendas and intercede to fill in where the state has left off, have a significant presence in both Sri Lanka and Lebanon (less so, or not at all in other Middle East countries¹¹). Caritas, an NGO assessed within this project, is the largest NGO operating in Lebanon and the largest NGO focusing upon female migrant issues, which operates both in Sri Lanka and Lebanon. United Nations Development Project, Regional Center Colombo (UNDP RCC), another I-NGO assessed within this project, is the first and only I-NGO to directly address Asian migrant women's sexuality in the Middle East and Sri Lanka. UNDP RCC began a regional study in 2006, which was completed in 2009, on Asian migrant women's vulnerability to HIV.

2.1 'Freelancers' from Sri Lanka:

Although there are women from different national backgrounds working as domestic migrant workers within Lebanon, including Filipinas, Ethiopians and Bangladeshis and Nepalese, I have strategically chosen to focus upon Sri Lankan women. As previously noted, Sri Lankan migrant women make up the largest group of female foreign workers, between 90,000 to 120,000 (figures in 2008 vary depending upon the source: SLBFE, Caritas, Lebanon's

¹¹ It is difficult or illegal for I-NGOs and NGOs to operate in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia the UAE (UNDP 2009).

General Security), and they are the only national group of those listed above who have not experienced a state ban of female migration to Lebanon. Previously, little work has addressed Sri Lankan freelancers' experiences abroad and concepts of sexuality and intimacy (see for example: Jureidini 2006:147 for mention of Sri Lankan women and sexual liaisons with Lebanese nationals and migrant males; and Hewamanne 2007 writes about Sri Lankan female internal migrants within Sri Lanka and intimacy and sexuality. In addition, I limit my research to domestic migrant workers who are working as 'freelancers' and live in self arranged accommodations. (After the completion of my fieldwork Moukarbel published an article in 2009 on Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers and love and intimacy, but with a focus upon the dynamics within employer's private home). I chose to focus on freelancers in contrast to migrant women who are living and working within their employers' private homes (and, thus, have little or no access to intimate and sexual relationships); this is appropriate since, only in this group, the interplay of key aspects of my research – sexual agency, responses to delimited intimate spaces, etc. – is explicitly recognizable. Specifically, Sri Lankan domestic migrant women who work and live in the private home have been portrayed as having little access to intimacy and sexual agency (Moukarbel 2009).

I also largely focus upon married, Buddhist and Christian, Sinhalese, Sri Lankan women between the ages of 18-45. This represents the majority of Sri Lankans who migrate from Sri Lanka to Lebanon (SLBFE 2006).¹²

¹² Muslim and Hindu Tamil female migrant returnees from the Middle East were interviewed for this research within the Ampari and Batticaloa districts, respectively, in collaboration with research for UNDP RCC, which is discussed in more detail below. However, the small research team and I were unable to conduct long-term one to one interviews with the Muslim Tamil and Hindu Tamil women research participants which would have allowed for cross-sectional comparisons with the migration stories and experiences of Sinhalese Buddhists.

Approximately 75 percent of Sri Lankan migrant domestic workers are married, and approximately 90 percent leave children behind (Eelens et al 1992:6; Gamburd 2005; Gunatillake and Perera 1995:160; Jayaweera et al 2002:11). It should be noted that many Sri Lankan women who migrate to and remain in Lebanon for many years state themselves to be Christian (rather than Buddhists) as they perceive this to be a religious identity that Lebanese employers are more comfortable with (Caritas 2005). The same study corroborates this perception.

2.2 Geographic focus, Beirut and Sri Lanka:

Focus upon the geographical locations of Beirut; the district of Colombo; and 5 districts with significant out migration in Sri Lanka was a strategic decision to best answer my research questions. Beirut was chosen, as it is a space in Lebanon that does not delegitimize the possibility for women to live outside of an employer's home along with affording them possibilities for entering relatively unencumbered various social and love relations. In contrast, in cities in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE it is both illegal for female migrant domestic workers to live apart from their employer and to live with a male they are not legally married to (UNDP 2009). In addition, the civil war in Lebanon (1975-1991) as well as the current unsettled political situation keeps the Lebanese state preoccupied, which contributes to the vacuum of concern over the lives and work of migrants within the country (Khalaf 1987, UNDP 2008). Finally, Beirut has one of the largest migrant neighborhoods in the region (UNDP 2009); this is the site where I focus my research.

In Sri Lanka I began with a wide sampling of interviews in areas with significant out migration and eventually tactically decided to focus upon the

district of Colombo. At the beginning of my project in 2007, a small team of researchers and I conducted focus group interviews with domestic migrant workers who had returned from the Middle East in six districts in order to attempt to cover the diversity of out-migration in the country (explained in detail in 3.1). These districts not only represented high out migration areas, but also constituted distinct geographic and economic zones, and were areas affected directly by the 25 years of civil war. My research took place in the district of Colombo, which includes Colombo and is the area of the highest out migration; Kurunegala, the district with the second highest out migration and the highest out migration for domestic migrant workers; Kandy, a district in the tea and hill country that has the fourth highest out migration; Polonnaruwa,¹³ a district in the central dry zone; and Ampari and Batticaloa. The last two districts mentioned have the largest out migration in eastern Sri Lanka two and substantial Tamil populations and populations that were directly affected by civil war. Regions with significant out migration which I did not collect primary data for are the South and the North of Sri Lanka. I did not conduct interviews in the South as Michele Gamburd conducted excellent research on migration in this area in work published in 2000. I rely upon her data for this province. I was not able to access the North due to the civil war ongoing at the same time as I was conducting research.

After conducting focus group interviews throughout the country I chose the district of Colombo as a location to focus on for deepening my data. Besides Colombo being the district with the highest out migration, it is also

¹³ Polonnaruwa has lower out migration than surrounding districts in the central dry zone. However, it was originally chosen by UNDP RCC as a district to conduct research in regards to migrant returnees risk to HIV because of the presence of a military base and a preponderance of single men.

where five key informants, who had returned specifically from working and living in Lebanon, lived. Colombo was also the most feasible location to conduct multiple, long-term interviews given dissertation time constraints and restrictions on travel on account of the civil war. I returned to Colombo multiple times to conduct interviews with key informants from 2007 through 2009. While this focus is mirrored in my analysis of interviews within Sri Lanka, I do attempt to augment my discussion with analysis of interviews conducted in the five additional districts outlined above.

It is important to note that there is often an assumption that rural women's experiences in regards to freedoms and constraints and sexuality are profoundly different from those of urban women (for example Ferdinand Tönnies' work on the different communication networks created in rural versus urban settings, or community versus civil societies (Adair-Toteff 1995). Yet, my research as well as work conducted by Lynch (1999) found that urban migrant women's movements, identification and communication networks were still stringently and similarly controlled, particularly in the communities in Colombo where migrant women reside. Often the women within migrant sending communities have very limited mobility within Colombo and Sri Lanka. Lynch (1999) has emphasized that Colombo was actually the place in the country where the Victorian moral standard of immobility originated, articulating in her own work on female Sri Lankan factory workers within Sri Lanka, the minimal difference between urban Colombo and rural spaces.

3. Interviews - focus group and one to one interviews:

I began my research with focus groups based on the notion that we develop knowledge in context and in relation to others (Gross 1996). The dialogic

characteristic of the focus group provided me with “access to the multiple and transpersonal understandings that characterize social behavior” (Gross 1996: 118). For my research the focus group was used to elicit common experiences and normative understandings of the migration process and its intersections with sexuality and intimacy. While the broad merits of focus groups have been noted by geographers (Burgess 1996; Holbrook and Jackson 1996; Bennett 2003), Kong (1998) argues that when conducting focus group interviews in an Asian context, “people remain reticent if issues are sensitive or deeply personal” (Kong 1998: 81). Aware of these disadvantages of using focus group interviews, I decided to extend my primary research to include one-on-one interviews. The multiple one-on-one interviews, which were conducted over a span of two years, allowed me to develop a rapport with participants, and address each participant’s experiences and perceptions.

3.1 Focus group interviews:

I conducted two phases of focus group interviews. The first phase was conducted in Sri Lanka; the second phase in Lebanon. Both sets of interviews took place in 2007 and were funded by UNDP RCC. UNDP RCC began research in 2007 on Sri Lankan migrant women with a particular focus on their vulnerability to HIV. When UNDP RCC approached me to assist with the research within Sri Lanka and in the Middle East, I agreed under the stipulation that I could conduct my dissertation research simultaneously as well. Conducting research for UNDP RCC afforded me the opportunity to work with two additional research assistants, a translator, and to conduct focus group interviews in Sri Lanka and Lebanon. My dissertation research and UNDP RCC’s research on vulnerability overlapped in the areas of women’s

sexual and intimate experiences and perceptions, state and NGO interventions, and family and community perceptions and controls regarding sexuality. Nonetheless, our research foci diverged since UNDP RCC's primary interest lay in understanding women's health, safer sex practices and women's knowledge of HIV and STDs. In addition, their focus group interviews included migrant returnees from the Middle East at large (including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, Jordan and Lebanon). While UNDP RCC did not have a specific Lebanon focus, I was able to identify specific women who had returned from Lebanon (42 in total¹⁴).

My research assistants and translator were Sri Lankan, Sinhala Buddhist females. One research assistant and translator were employed regularly by NGOs who worked with migrant returnees. The second researcher was a medical doctor employed by an international NGO. In analyzing the data collected from our focus group interviews we found little difference in the type of information each of us were able to elicit. The data analysis did show that the research assistant who was also a medical doctor (and who introduced herself as so in the groups) was able to elicit more detailed medical information regarding HIV and STDS. We surmised this was in part because women felt more comfortable talking to a medical doctor and in part because they also took to opportunity to seek medical advice.

In Sri Lanka we interviewed a total of 145 migrant women in six different parts of the island in 18 focus groups with approximately eight

¹⁴ We interviewed a larger number of Sri Lankan migrant returnees from Bahrain, Lebanon and the UAE as this was the specific focus of the UNDP RCC research. In setting up the focus group interviews we asked Migrant Services Center, the NGO who selected participants for the groups, to look specifically for participants who had worked in these three countries. However, participants were not limited to these three Middle East countries. However, given the time frame for the study and the numbers of interviews that UNDP RCC wanted to conduct it was not possible to limit returnee participants from Bahrain, Lebanon and UAE.

women per focus group (see Table 4 below). The research participants had all worked in the Middle East as domestic migrant workers for two to 10 years (with a mean occupation period equal to seven years) between the years 1998-2008. Female participants in Colombo, Kurunegala, Kandy and Polonnaruwa were majority Sinhala and Buddhist.¹⁵ In Batticaloa and Amparai participants were Tamil, Hindus and Muslims. Participants had education levels, which varied from second grade to A-levels; 5th grade was the mean highest education level attained. Forty-two of the women interviewed in Sri Lanka were recent returnees from Lebanon (returned between 2004-2006) and had two to 15 years of experience within the country.

The three focus group interviews in Beirut involved eight women each. The participants were Sinhalese Buddhists and Christians with education levels ranging from 4th grade to A levels. Participants had been in Lebanon from two to 20 years; the mean length of stay over the sample was eight years. My translator for these interviews was a female staff member from Caritas Migrant Center (My working relationship with Caritas Migrant Center and their standing within the migrant community is explained in more detail below).

Table 4. Focus group interviews – location and number of participants:

Location	Number of focus groups	Total participants
Colombo	3	25
Kandy	3	24
Amparai	3	24

¹⁵ In Colombo, 3 participants were Muslim Tamils. In Polonnaruwa 8 participants were Hindu Tamils.

Batticaloa	3	23
Kurunegala	3	25
Polonnaruwa	3	24
Beirut	3	24
Total	21	169

3.2 Interview format:

We followed a “guided” interviewing format (Rubin and Rubin 1995) when designing the focus group interview questionnaire in order to provide opportunities for participants to expand on their responses while providing sufficient structure to facilitate comparison across responses. Most interviews lasted 1.5 hours and were recorded to insure accuracy in transcriptions except in cases where it was refused (two times in the east as women were concerned about security issues during the ongoing civil war), in which case we attempted to write as much as possible during the interviews and immediately thereafter. There were 30 questions which focused upon women’s experiences before, during migration, and with an additional section on return migration for those women interviewed in Sri Lanka. The interview questions addressed possible vulnerabilities to HIV and included questions on women’s sexual lives and intimate relationships.

The focus group interviews allowed me to obtain a general overview of Sri Lankan migrant women’s experiences abroad, understandings of sexuality and intimacy, and women’s identities. The focus group interviews reached a theoretical saturation point in which interviews revealed informational redundancy (Flick 1998; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Morse 1995; Strauss & Corbin 1990). Women discussed the types of relationships women desired,

were able to engage in, and restrictions faced within such relationships. They provided me with an understanding of the stereotypes they themselves held and perceived others to hold about Sri Lankan female domestic migrant workers. Women spoke of the reputation they believed other migrants and Arab nationals held of Sri Lanka women, namely Sri Lankan migrant women are “willing to sleep with anyone for the price of a roti.” They described the “black mark” Sri Lankan women experienced upon return within their families and communities as it was generally assumed that returning female migrants had transgressed expectations of chastity and monogamy while living and working abroad. They spoke of the types of male migrants Sri Lankan women preferred (Indian, Bangladeshi, Egyptian, Syrian and Lebanese) and desired to be in relationships with.¹⁶ They relayed stories of Sri Lankan migrant women having consensual affairs with male employers, and forced into situations involving sexual harassment and rape. They spoke of Sri Lankan migrant women going abroad and “forgetting their families because they would meet a man and be carried away.” My informants stated that Sri Lanka migrant women are “not able to control their hormones.” They told stories of abortions, trips to doctors for birth control, STDs, and fears of HIV and AIDS. It is important to note that none of the women in the focus group discussions discussed their own personal stories.

Upon completion and analysis of phase one and two of the focus group interviews, I readjusted my approach. In accordance with what Kong (1998) suspected, there were gaps in the data with regard to women’s personal stories. I surmised that participants would be more comfortable to speak about their

¹⁶ Women who had returned from Bahrain, Kuwait and Lebanon told stories of women engaging in affairs outside of the employer’s home. In Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar female participants did not know of anyone who was able to live outside of their employer’s home.

own experiences and more in-depth if I met with them in a one to one situation and over a period of time. This is discussed in 3.4.

3.3 Selecting participants for focus group interviews:

The selection for the first phase of focus group interview participants in Sri Lanka was conducted by Migrant Services Center, a migrant NGO based in Colombo, with representatives working in 10 of the districts with the highest out migration. UNDP RCC hired the Center to coordinate the research in Sri Lanka from May 2007 through October 2007. The Center was able to contact their offices in the districts where we planned to conduct interviews and to ask for migrant returnee participants to volunteer to participate in a study regarding, “migration, women’s safety during migration, and with a focus on vulnerability to HIV.” All participants were made aware that UNDP RCC led the research.

The degree to which UNDP RCC’s affiliation with the research affected migrant participants’ responses could not be fully ascertained. However, as described below, I returned to migrant neighborhoods to continue my research as an independent researcher in order to lessen the biases that might have occurred due to UNDP RCC’s affiliation with the previous interviews.

In Lebanon, Caritas Migrant Center arranged for 24 migrant worker volunteer participants to be interviewed at their offices on a Sunday afternoon in November 2007. Caritas, as mentioned earlier, runs a safe house and community center in Wafaa where I conducted my interviews. They can house up to 30 women at a time at the Center. On Sundays, the Center becomes a central social meeting place for workers on their day off. Workers can also attend Catholic Church services at the Center in the morning. Eight

of the women who attended the focus group interviews had done so. Five of the women were, at the time of the interviews, staying at the Caritas Safe House after experiencing problems with their employers. The translator during the interviews was a Sri Lankan Catholic lay woman who had worked at the Center for the past seven years and who had previously worked as a domestic migrant worker. She was viewed by Sri Lankan Embassy officials and by my five key Sri Lankan migrant informants to be a community leader who was well respected by migrant women. However, the degree to which participants might have censored their responses out of, for example, a perceived awkwardness to discuss sexual practices with a lay Catholic worker was not possible to ascertain. However, to work around the potential omissions, as discussed, I returned to Beirut for three additional research trips to interview participants one to one and in my capacity as an independent researcher.

3.4 One to one interviews:

Drawing upon the data from our 21 focus groups, I began meeting with and interviewing five research participants from a slum neighborhood in Colombo with high out migration in 2007; this continued through 2009. I also maintained contact with one research participant who lived in Kandy, but who made regular trips for her work to Colombo (see table 5 below).

I developed a working rapport with participants over tea or more visits and sessions. The discourse of sexuality is hidden within Sri Lankan culture (Hewamanne 2007) and can, in general, be a very sensitive and difficult topic to address. But I found that after one visit of general discussions around the migration experience, women were willing to and wanted to talk. No one

refused to speak to or to be included in the study.

In Beirut, I maintained long-term contact with five Sri Lankan migrants who lived in Wafaa, the largest migrant neighborhood in the capital city. I met with the five participants during two research trips in 2008 and one in 2009 (see table 2 below) between five to seven times. Each research trip varied between one and two months. These five women became my primary informants in Lebanon.

This design allowed me to prioritize several goals, including collecting more reliable data by being able to compare and complement the data already collected (under the auspices of UNDP RCC) with the now long-term lengthy interviews, based on individual rapport with research participants, and thereby reducing the coercion that invariably enters into research in some form, but particularly when a potentially intimidating institution like the United Nations is involved.

In order to obtain permission from key informants to become participants in my study and also to build rapport before beginning the multiple interview sessions I would first meet with potential participants and explain my research, obtain signed permission and ask participants to begin telling me their migration stories. I found that allowing women to speak about experiences deemed important to them and/or experiences they wanted to share fostered trust and allowed women to feel more comfortable during follow-up visits. Usually on my second visit, I followed a select list of twelve questions. Specifically, the interviews attended to the women's sexual relationships; extramarital sexual relationships; partner choice; forms of relationships (for example whether monogamous, long term or short term);

interactions within couples; and when abroad their attitudes toward sexuality and sexual desire. When discussing return migration interviews focused upon community perceptions of return migrants; women's interactions with family, community and husbands; and their management of interactions.

In some cases, particularly with participants who appeared to be more nervous or shy, the questions were not administered in the same order as with other participants. In three cases, the information was gleaned from free-flowing conversations when it became clear that the interview format would be difficult to sustain. In one case, the participant had recently experienced an argument with an employer and thus was too upset to go through the interview process. I listened to her story first before guiding her through any questions. In the second instance, the participant had a recent quarrel with her boyfriend and wanted to talk about that before continuing with the interview. And in another situation, the participant had experienced a partial amnesia regarding details of her life after a fall five years prior. Some of the questions she was unable to answer; some others, she answered in relation to what she had been told by friends and family her life had been like. In all follow-up sessions (after the second visit), with participants the interviews were free-flowing and conversational. I allowed participants to tell stories from their lives, and speak of their perceptions and experiences.

My reliance on unstructured follow up interviews implied that I needed to listen carefully, and, yet critically, to the stories that my participants told me. I did not want assume that I could easily understand their motivations or predict their actions and perceptions. I often needed to ask further questions, schedule additional interviews and accept invitations to social functions to

garner a more complete picture of migrant women's ideas and practices in regards to sexuality and intimacy. For example, during my summer 2008 research trip to Beirut when I told male Lebanese friends and acquaintances about my research focus they often replied that Sri Lankan women had the reputation of being willing to pay for sex. I thought this very curious as I could not imagine, given the low salaries of domestic migrant workers and the apparent availability of free sex, that women would be willing to pay for sexual encounters. I began to question my informants about this and learned about the belief that many Sri Lankan women hold: to show one's love in an intimate relationship one cares for the person through paying for food, housing and clothing. It was their willingness to bear these expenditures, which were translated into the statement, "Sri Lankan women are willing to pay for sex in Lebanon." However, in the mind of my informants, they were not 'paying' for sex but caring for someone whom they loved.

3.5 Selecting one to one interview participants:

All participants for the long-term one to one interviews were voluntary and were enlisted in an effort to reflect the majority profile of Sri Lankan migrant workers in Lebanon. I enlisted participants from the two neighborhoods within Colombo and Beirut by first meeting with leaders within the two neighborhoods and asking for their assistance in locating individuals who fit my research participant profile. Participants were female, between the ages of 18-45, Sinhalese Buddhists, returned from Lebanon within the past five years with at least two years of experience within the country, educated between 5th grade and A levels, and able to communicate in English. Locating women who fit this profile was not difficult as it was reflective of the majority of

migrant women who had returned from Lebanon.

I decided to enter the communities through the leaders I had met within the two neighborhoods during the research with UNDP RCC. After my initial visits to the field sites, I felt that the social and political context of the two cities (ongoing war in Sri Lanka and political unrest in Lebanon) made it necessary to be introduced to community members and the general public through a continued, clear and reasonable affiliation. Being able to establish trust in both locations, which included an understanding within the neighborhoods of why I was there and with whom I was affiliated with, was necessary in order to conduct the longer-term data collection.

In the neighborhood in Colombo I first met with Kumari, who was the neighborhood's liaison with the government. Interviews with participants in the focus groups perceived Kumari to be well respected in her neighborhood as someone who would speak to government officials and represent the best interests of neighborhood residents.¹⁷ In Lebanon, I first met with officials from the Caritas Migrant Center in the migrant neighborhood in Beirut where I conducted my research. According to past interviews with participants and my past years of experience working and living in Beirut, the Center is well respected and trusted within migrant communities as an organization that will assist migrant women in need.

The interviews were conducted in a variety of settings depending on the needs of the participants. In Colombo, I interviewed participants in their homes and in mine, in cafes, bakeries and parks. In Beirut, I interviewed

¹⁷ As the slum neighborhood is both heavily populated and located on land which is not legally owned by the residents it is an area which is contested. State officials interested in taking over the land for gentrification and politicians vying for votes from residents visit the area regularly.

migrant women within their private apartments and in mine, in cafes, in parks, at the Caritas – Lebanon office, at musical concerts, at birthday parties, and on church grounds. I requested a time and day that participants would like to be interviewed.¹⁸ The majority of interviews were conducted between 3pm and 10pm, and on weekends between 9am-5pm when migrant women did not have work. Most interviews lasted 1.5 hours and were recorded to insure accuracy in transcriptions.

The limiting factor to my approach was that all of the women with the exception of one with whom I maintained long-term contact with were able to communicate with me in English. I chose participants who could communicate in English, as I did not want to rely upon interpreters. I was concerned that my research participants would be apprehensive to discuss their personal lives if someone from Sri Lanka was present. Research participants had all made it clear that they spoke to few Sri Lankan nationals about their experiences abroad as they did not want their life stories to be known within their families and communities.

¹⁸ As I was conducting research during my trips to Beirut, I became aware of a potential social class separation between Sri Lankan migrant women who live in and frequent Wafaa and those who do not. I surmised from the way that my five key informants in Wafaa spoke about their experiences and from informal talks with a Sri Lankan female domestic migrant worker community leader and other Sri Lankan female migrants who lived outside of Wafaa of the rift.

To explore this issue I interviewed five Sri Lankan women who live outside of Wafaa in a more affluent neighborhood in Beirut with other residents who are migrants and Lebanese nationals. I met with each research participant twice and discussed their perceptions pertaining to intimacy and sexuality and Sri Lankan migrant women both within Wafaa and outside of the migrant neighborhood. The women expressed that they do not like to be affiliated with Wafaa or the women who frequent the neighborhood. Rather, they chastise the women of Wafaa for “going with migrant men”, “not having control of their sexual desires” and “forgetting about their families at home”. The participants who did not like to be associated with Wafaa went into the neighborhood only on shopping trips to purchase Sri Lankan food, clothing, DVDs and music CDs. As will be discussed in a later chapter, these participants from higher-class locations internalized and espoused ideas and practices more in-line with that of the Sri Lankan State.

The reliance on English speaking participants implied that I was largely unable to access a long-term perspective from participants who only spoke Sinhalese. The one research participant from Kandy who made regular trips to Colombo was the exception. She communicated with me in Sinhalese and I relied on a Sri Lankan translator from Colombo each of the five times we met. Although my sample size is not large enough to draw conclusions, the conversations I had with her pertaining sexuality and intimacy and the data I collected were not markedly different from the interviews I conducted with those in English. Sunita, my informant from Kandy, expressed that she was comfortable to speak with my translator and me, and that she did not fear stories reaching back home. Despite this, in a redressive measure, I ensured that the long-term interviews I conducted with the English-speaking participants also covered their perceptions of how other Sri Lankan migrant women, inclusive of Sinhalese-only speakers, addressed concerns of sexuality and intimacy.

Table 5. One to one interviews with female research participants in Colombo and Beirut:

Name	Age	Marital status	Residence at time of interview	Years abroad	Background on migration trajectory and living and working arrangement while abroad.	Years in study
Kumari	28	Married	Colombo	8	Kumari migrated to Lebanon when she was 20 years old. She lived and worked in a private home before meeting a friend who assisted her to move to Wafaa and work as a freelancer. She lived with her Indian boyfriend while abroad.	2006-2009
Geethika	27	Separated	Colombo	2	Geethika migrated to Lebanon when she was 25. She left, in part, because she was unhappy in her marriage in Sri Lanka. She worked and lived in a private home in Lebanon for six months before she left on her own accord and met a Lebanese man who eventually became her 'husband' and assisted her to move to Wafaa. She returned to Sri Lanka during the July 2006 Lebanese War.	2006-2009
Asha	37	Married	Colombo	10	Asha migrated to Lebanon when she was 27. She lived and worked with her employer for one year before she met a friend while she was out running errands whom assisted her to escape and live and work as a freelancer in Wafaa. She lived with an Indian man for four years, and currently has been living with her 'husband' from Bangladesh for the past six years.	2006-2009
Sumika	35	Married	Colombo	7	Sumika migrated to Lebanon when she was 28. She lived and worked within a private home for five years. She then made arrangements with her employer to live outside in Wafaa. She currently lives with her Egyptian 'husband'.	2006-2009
Angela	43	Married	Colombo	20	Angela migrated to Lebanon when she was 23. She lived and worked within a private home for the first 10 years. She then made arrangements with her employer to live in Wafaa. She currently shares a flat with her sister and their two Syrian 'husbands'.	2006-2009
Sunitha	44	Married	Kandy	12	Sunitha migrated to Lebanon when she was 32. She lived and worked within a private home for two years. She then made arrangements with her employer to live in Wafaa. She currently lives with her Indian 'husband'.	2006-2009

Nirmila	40	Married	Beirut	22	Nirmila migrated to Lebanon when she was 18 years old. After working and living with her employer for two years she was physically abused and hospitalized. Caritas assisted her to leave her employer and work as a freelancer. She has shared an apartment with four different boyfriends during her time abroad. She currently lives with an Egyptian 'husband'.	2006-2009
Sheila	43	Married	Beirut	18	Sheila migrated to Lebanon when she was 25. She lived and worked within a private home for 10 years. She met her Indian 'husband' when she was out running errands. Her employer granted her permission to move out of the home and live with him in Wafaa.	2007-2009
Renuka	38	Married	Beirut	10	Renuka migrated to Lebanon when she was 28. She lived and worked within a private home for 18 months. She 'ran' from the home. She spent many days on the street before meeting another Sri Lankan woman who assisted her to move to Wafaa. She currently lives with her Indian 'husband'.	2007-2009
Sureyka	39	Married	Beirut	2	Sureyka migrated to Lebanon when she was 37. She lived and worked within a private home for six months before meeting an Indian man who assisted her to leave and live with him as 'husband and wife' in Wafaa.	2007-2009
Shamalee	28	Married	Beirut	5	Shamalee migrated to Lebanon when she was 23. She lived and worked within a private home for two years before making arrangements with her employer to live in Wafaa. She has lived with three boyfriends and currently lives with a man from India.	2009

4. Research within UNDP RCC and interviews with state, I-NGO and NGO official:

To ascertain how state and non-state perceptions are formed and acted upon, I conducted interviews and participant observations for the second layer of my data collection. I worked as a research consultant for seven months within UNDP RCC offices and conducted participant observations. I continued to

attend UNDP RCC team meetings and meetings with government and other I-NGO officials till March of 2009. I also conducted 16 interviews with state and non-state officials.

4.1 UNDP RCC:

I worked within the UNDP RCC HIV and AIDS Team office for a period of seven months from May 2007-November 2007. As mentioned before my work in this office was based on UNDP RCC's agreement that I be allowed to conduct research for my PhD along with the research for the migration and HIV study. I met with the team leader to inform her that I would not only be gathering research from migrant participants but also observing the work of UNDP RCC. She agreed to the research as long as I maintained the anonymity of research participants, and disclosed my role as a researcher to colleagues.

From 2007-2009, I attended seven one to two-day long meetings with government officials and non-government officials from Sri Lanka and Lebanon in connection with the UNDP RCC study on Asian female migrants and vulnerability to HIV. During these meetings not only did I participate as a researcher representing the Sri Lankan and Middle East portions of the study, but also as an independent researcher interested in the discourse around migrant women's sexuality.

4.2 Participant Observation:

My goal in using participant observation within UNDP RCC was to uncover what the organization takes for granted—strategies, alliances, representatives' responsibilities—and to reveal the structures of social action in place (Herbert

2000). In contrast to interviews, participant observation examines what people do as well as what they say. Due to these characteristics, the data collected through this method complemented the interview data in order to: (1) clarifying how strategies are formulated during meetings and informal discussions; (2) discovering which groups lead the discussion at different levels; (3) understanding how some groups maintain their access to HIV issues and issues of sexuality; and (4) finding out what types of alliances develop, for example, who supports UNDP RCC's research projects and agenda.

4.3 Government, I-NGO and NGO officials and other key players:

I interviewed 17 government, NGO and I-NGO officials. I investigated how discourses on migrant women's sexuality and intimacy are (re)formulated at both the national and international scales. I interviewed participants about their current work.

Interviews covered the following areas: policies and laws in place which addressed sexuality and intimacy; the implementation of policies and laws; critiques of present policies and laws; participants' perceptions of what future acts state or non-state actors should take to address sexuality and intimacy; and perceptions of migrant women's intimate and sexual lives in Lebanon and Sri Lanka (A detailed summary of the participants is provided in Table 6).

Table 6. One to one interviews with NGO, government and I-NGO officials

Type of organization	Office name	Location	Number of participants interviewed	Year(s)
NGO	Caritas	Sri Lanka	1	2007
NGO	Caritas	Lebanon	4 staff; and 2 human rights	2007,2008, 2009

			lawyers	
NGO	Afro-Asian Migrant Center	Lebanon	1	2008
NGO	Migrant Services Center	Sri Lanka	3	2007, 2008, 2009
Government	SLBFE	Sri Lanka	2	2007, 2008, 2009
Government	General Security	Lebanon	1 staff; 1 lawyer	2009
I-NGO	UNDP0-RCC	Sri Lanka	2	2007, 2008, 2009

These interviews were complimented with more informal interviews with researchers and academics within the Marga Institute of Sri Lanka, the American Institute of Sri Lankan Studies in Sri Lanka, and Center for Women’s Research (CENWAR). I also benefited greatly from conversations with affiliated researchers during a migration conference in Colombo in August 2008, and one in Beirut in July of 2009.

5. State and I-NGO and NGO Document analyses:

In analyzing state and non-state documents which address female migrant sexuality and intimacy I interrogate the ways in which state and non-state actors frame Sri Lankan female sexuality and intimacy by bringing “into sharp focus certain limited aspects of an otherwise far more complex and unwieldy reality” (Scott 1998:11). Specifically, I look at discourses of the Sri Lankan migrant women as willing to sacrifice for the economic good of the family and nation, dutiful mother and daughter, chaste and monogamous and victim. By drawing on particular statistics, or “simplifications” (Scott 1998) of migrant women’s experiences and state and non-state expectations, the state and non state actors are able to discursively make invisible and illegible alternative

experiences. The discursive focus on the female subject as economic sacrificer who remains focused on the family leaves invisible the scale of the body, and women's lived intimate and sexual experiences.

The critical approach to discourse aims to challenge social orders and practices that we accept as 'natural', when a way of seeing and interpreting the world becomes so common and so frequently constructed in discourses. In casting light on this process, critical discourse analysis seeks to make visible the 'common-sense' social and cultural assumptions or ideologies which, below the level of conscious awareness, are embedded in all forms of language that people use (Fairclough 2001).

I reviewed three Sri Lankan state reports on migration and one pre-departure training manual for domestic migrant workers (SLBFE 2000; SLBFE 2006; SLBFE 2008; UNDP and SLBFE 2000); two Lebanese state documents, which outline laws and policies regarding domestic migrant workers (Lebanon General Security 2008; Lebanon General Security 2007); eleven international agency documents which address domestic migrant workers' working and living conditions, sexuality and sexual health and HIV related concerns (IOM 2005; IOM 2008; ILO 2004; Jureidini 2004; UN 2005; UNDP 2009; UNDP 2008); and three Sri Lankan and Lebanese NGO documents, which address sexuality and HIV (Caritas 2005; Caritas 2009; Young 1999).

6. My Role as "Sudu Nona" and "Americaneer":

My own positionality during the research and fieldwork is an important aspect of this dissertation. My identity as a white person, a woman, a researcher, an American, a person of greater wealth, a migrant and a stranger played an

important part in the types of information I was able to access, the conversations I had, and the overall perspective of this analysis. My research was both helped and hindered by my own multiple subjectivities. I had to be aware of my subjectivity in order to develop an understanding of the potential influence of own position (Wolf 1996: 114).

While conducting research in Sri Lanka and Lebanon, I was assigned a myriad of names – *Sudu nona* (white lady), *Ajnabeeah* (foreigner), *Americanee* (American). My name as *Sudu Nona* and *Americanee* communicates attitudes toward race and difference in Sri Lanka and Lebanon and the subsequent challenge I faced when beginning the fieldwork portion of this research. Off the “beaten path” of tourism, there are very few foreigners who visit the neighborhoods and areas I visited to gather data. Despite my insistence to the contrary, research participants often maintained hope that I would be able to assist them in finding well-paying jobs with foreigners in Lebanon or Sri Lanka or positions in the United States. My connection with a wealthy country like America, the UN and NGOs instilled hope in women that I could help them. This hope might have affected women’s responses in that they would provide me with information, whether real or not, that they perceived would please me. On the other hand, participants were more apt to talk to me because they perceived that I was not connected to community and family in Sri Lanka and thus stories of their lives would not reach ‘home’.

I found that my identity as a relatively wealthy foreigner was often equally as influential in the scripting of responses. I believe migrant participants perceived a need to tell me the worst case scenarios of migration abroad in hopes that I would assist them, or merely because they believe that

this was what I was looking for. In most cases, I would listen to participants' stories and then guide them to other areas of discussion.

On the other hand, I believe that my identity as a female put participants' at ease to discuss their thoughts and feelings regarding sexuality and intimacy. Women expressed that they were comfortable in sharing their stories because they believed that I would understand. Additionally, as a white educated foreign woman they perceived me to be someone who they could direct questions to and ask advice from in the realm of sexuality, women's health (as conversations often involved discussion of safer sex practices, STDs/HIV and abortions) and intimacy. As a way of avoiding giving medical or psycho-social advice to women, I provided participants with names and numbers of doctors and social workers who were more qualified and at liberty to assist.

I also had the added benefit of having been a migrant who in both Sri Lanka and Lebanon was familiar with the landscape, culture and languages in both locations. I found that speaking to women in Colombo about specific places and events from Beirut, which we mutually recalled, put them at ease to talk. For example, three of the women I interviewed regularly in Colombo were also in Lebanon during the July 2006 War. Talking about our experiences during the War was a way to share life experiences and build rapport. Speaking Arabic together was also a way to build relationships.

Similarly, in Lebanon, when speaking with participants I found it very helpful to be knowledgeable of Colombo, Sri Lanka and Sinhalese when building rapport. In Lebanon I also had the added benefit of sharing the experience of being a foreign woman within the country. Participants believed that I would understand what it was like to be viewed as an outsider by

Lebanese society.

7. Language and translation:

An important caveat to the interviews I have conducted is that when participants could not communicate in English I relied on translators. I have a working knowledge of Arabic and Sinhalese, but I wanted to have fluent speakers available when discussing in-depth detailed information on women's lives, sexuality and intimacy. All of the interviews with participants from state and non-state offices were conducted in English, a language in which all of these participants were competent.

Working with a translator presented limitations for my work. I could never fully test, for example, how different the data collected would have been if my long-term key informants were Sinhalese-only speakers communicating without a translator. Among social science researchers who focus upon Sri Lanka there are different views as to whether or one can access more information as 'a foreigner' or 'a Sri Lankan national' as these views tie into the notion that 'Sri Lankans are fearful to discuss many personal and private issues with insiders as they fear their stories reaching their home and community'. As my fluency in Sinhalese grows, this could be an area for further research. As with any research, my project has produced a situated and partial knowledge (Haraway 1988). According to Pratt, "Partial knowledges leave opportunities to learn from other perspectives and ways of knowing, to engage in translation exercises across non-reducible knowledges" (Pratt 2004: 179).

As mentioned before, the limited one to one interviews I did conduct with a translator versus those that I did not, did not indicate a significant

difference in the data collected. However, as noted above, the sample size was small and thus, the preceding inference, inconclusive. Usually, interviews that were simultaneously translated from Sinhalese to English were significantly longer as not only did they require time for translation but the explanation of words and references. These exercises presented opportune times to discuss the difficulty of translating pertinent words in my research from English to Sinhalese.

For example, the English word and concept of romantic love is often unfamiliar to Sinhala speakers. Specifically, to have a man romance a woman is unfamiliar. As Kumari, a 42-year old Sinhala woman who had worked in the Middle East, told me, “Romance does not happen here. Love is more spontaneous. Things just happen. If a man were to romance a woman it would be viewed in a predatory way. A woman would never fall for any of those things. He would have more luck if he asked directly or said, ‘I like you; I love you’. The seduction process is unfamiliar, so scary.”

It was also instructive to see how the word ‘intimacy’ translates into Sinhalese. First, there is no direct translation for intimacy. The nearest translation would be *kittu*, which means close or a close relationship. There are also Sinhalese words for a *lingika* (sexual) relationship, an *anuragi* (erotic) relationship, and a *kamuka* (lustful) relationship. However, none of these words would be used or widely understood by persons speaking colloquial Sinhalese. In fact, verbalizing words associated with sexuality are considered taboo.

So while, the translation affords opportunities for interesting analyses of language and concepts, it is also makes evident the need to always be

reflective in my own work and be vigilant of the biases that such a reliance on a language not native to the participants engender.

8. Data Analysis:

My favored approach toward analysis has been to use the thick description of ethnographic inquiry in order to answer the principal questions of the research. With the exception of simple cross tabulations for tracing basic data patterns, I have not subjected the interview data to further statistical analysis. I have analyzed interviews, state and non-state documents, and observations focusing upon the language and social dynamics involved in the constructions of sexuality and intimacy.

Interviews were transcribed and subject to organizational and analytical treatment. I personally transcribed all key interviews in English. My research assistants and I transcribed and translated all interviews which were conducted in Arabic, Sinhalese, and Tamil. I entered these data into a basic word processing system, since the semi-structured format of the interviews already provided much of the structure that another text analysis program would facilitate.

Analyzing my data, I compared responses across questions, taking into account additional variables such as age, years of migration abroad, and number of children. Many of the less normative questions, such as those regarding forms of income, are appropriate for this kind of treatment.

In assessing state and non-state documents I looked for incidences of discussion on sexuality and intimacy and for similarities and discordances in the manner in which they were discussed when present. I assessed sameness and differences within documents coming from the same state and non-state

institutions as well as across the different institutions where I conducted my research. A particular focus of this comparative assessment was to investigate if state bodies framed or addressed the issues differently than non-state bodies did, and if the Sri Lankan state varied from that of the Lebanese state.

In the sections of my dissertation that follow, I have selected individual case studies that shed light on important social processes, that represent common and deviant perspectives among migrant communities, or that provide particularly insightful responses to research questions posed in earlier chapters.

As a final and important note, all of the names of informants in Colombo and Beirut have been changed to protect the identities of informants.

Chapter 4 - Theoretical Frame

“...I am positing a political and theoretical perspective that suggests that sexuality is disciplined by social institutions and practices that normalize and naturalize heterosexuality and heterosexual practices including marriage, family, and biological reproduction by marginalizing persons, institutions, or practices that deviate from these norms. Queer scholars argue that all social discourses...more often privilege...heteronormative ideas, practices, and institutions” (Manalansan 2006: 225).

1. Introduction:

I engage primarily with queer and state theories, to guide my inquiry and points of entry into sexuality, state power and agency. The complexity of my project- in terms of its intersections with many areas of enquiry - does not allow for one grand overarching theory but rather I engage with an amalgamation of theories to explain the various operations of state power and individual agency at play. Despite the richness of literature within queer and state theory, there remains room for the two to be brought together to produce a theoretical framework which can ground investigations into, and analyses of how negotiations on the balance of power between individual agency and state power constitute and are constituted by the enterprise of constructing sexuality, desire and intimacy (for examples of where this is occurring see Luibheid 2004; Oswin 2010). In the absence of one 'grand unified theory', my analysis relies on noting, discussing and inferring from the intersections between these two conceptual paradigms. Queer theory brings attention to the social constructedness of sexuality, desire and intimacy by making evident the queerness of not just homosexual identities but heterosexual and heteronormative ones as well (Oswin 2010). Its interrogation of relatively

unexplored links between sexuality, and pleasure in the lives of migrants (Manalansan 2006: 241, see for exceptions Walsh et al 2008) provides it with almost perfect credentials to support my attempt of breaking down the notion that heterosexuality is always licit and normative (whereby homosexuality is always illicit and queer) (Huang and Yeoh 2008; Oswin 2008 and 2010). State theory, on the other hand, possesses the resources to highlight the role of the state in the production of sexuality, intimacy and desire and demonstrate how sites of potential transformation, resistance or revolution can emerge within state controlled socio-cultural space. Further, in conjunction with queer theory, state theory assists in analyzing how structures and relations of power at the level of the state aim to shape and explain, in hegemonic terms, what occurs within given spaces at various scales, for example the body, household and nation (Pratt 2004; Wright 1999). In this context, the work within transnational migration literature that assumes a normative female migrant subject who is dutiful, chaste and sacrificing, is identifiable as perpetrating the hegemonic narratives of the state by often leaving invisible notions of transgressive desires and pleasures (Manalansan 2006; for examples, see Constable 1997; Parreñas 2005).

Within state theory, a focus on the 'embodiedness' of the state can account for how 'transgressive' and 'transformative' sexualities cohabit with state sanctioned normative sexualities. The embodied state is not an abstract entity operating outside of or above everyday life, but is, rather, enmeshed and conflicted over its authority and purpose (Marston 2004:8). Focusing upon the embodiment of the state –not 'the state' but rather comprised of individual parts and people - serves as a strategy to locate more clearly how knowledge

and power are produced (see Gupta 1995; Haraway 1988; Rose 1995). The embodied state is constituted within and through social relations and its internal logic forms, unevenly through difference. These differences point to potential transformative spaces where resilience, reworking and resistance against the agenda and narratives of the state are constantly reproduced (Katz 2004).

Combining queer theory with state theory provides the tools that can probe the ways in which sexuality has particularly been disciplined through state actions. Theories of the state advanced by de Certeau (1994) and Agamben (1998) emphasize the importance of researching non-traditional spaces of the state to unravel its operational ethic. While de Certeau exhorts researchers to look outside of the surveillance of the state, Agamben argues that the state of exception is employed in innovative and unexpected ways. Queer theory complements this line of analysis by identifying both, non-traditional spaces and the nuances in the state's inclusion-exclusion project. The final piece in the jigsaw of transformative spaces that provide asylum (within and from the state) to 'queerness' (understood as the potential for and act of transgressing normative ideals) is provided by recent work within geographies of emotion and affect. This body of literature highlights how transformative spaces are being opened up through state action (Anderson and Smith 2001; Thrift 2003).

It is obvious that there are noticeable areas of overlap between the bodies of literature mentioned thus far. Harnessing these crossovers is crucial to the enterprise of critically unpacking sexuality, desire and intimacy at the scales of the body, family and state. Thus, by straddling these theoretical

platforms, my work complements recent attempts to plug gaps in our understanding of how migration experiences, constituted by state narratives on the ideal sexuality, desire management and transgressive intimacies, operate to rework, revise and reconstitute those articulations to make them manageable at the personal scale. Accordingly, I address the call to investigate how sexuality, and in particular heteronormativity, structure migration (Domosh 1999; Jacobs and Fincher 1998; Silvey 2004; Valentine 1993). The study of sexuality and migration remains marginalized, trivialized, depoliticized, or treated with hostility (Luibheid 2004; for exceptions see Altman, 1997, 2001; Adam, Duyvendak, and Krouwel, 1999; Bell and Binnie, 2000). Sexuality continues to be viewed by many migration researchers as “natural” and “private.” However, queer theory has convincingly established that sexuality is neither an unmediated “natural” drive nor a private matter; on the contrary, the state and powerful social groups intervene to found ideas about sexuality and deploy sexual function in normative ways.

Second, I address the lack of geographical literature on heterosexualities despite a pervasive acknowledgement of a new for the same (as a notable exception, see: Besio and Moss (2006) contribution to a special issue of *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* on ‘Sexuality and gender’). Alison Blunt and Jane Wills state, “Although it remains politically and analytically imperative to make dissident sexualities visible and to resist their marginalization, it is also important to examine the basis and effectiveness of heterosexual dominance and to study the sexed nature of heterosexuality” (2000: 161). According to Huang and Yeoh (2008), “Much more work is needed to interrogate not only how certain “moral

heterosexual performances are naturalized in a variety of ‘everyday’ social settings’’ (Hubbard, 2000, p. 206)...but to challenge the often unproblematic assumptions made about heterosexualities, and the connections between space and sexualities, not just in the Anglo-American context but also in Asia.”

Thirdly, my work researches sexuality and migration within non-Western spaces. To date, there have been few analyses of heterosexualities in the context of migration, and, even fewer outside of the West and within Asia (for exceptions see: Huang and Yeoh 2008; and Walsh et al 2008). Fourthly, there has been very limited research on sexuality and pleasure (either heterosexual or homosexual) in the lives of migrants (Manalansan 2006: 241). Previously studies of sexuality within transnational migration studies have been primarily restricted to the domain of heterosexual reproduction and family life (D’Emilio 1993; Luibheid 2004; Manalansan 2006). The focus on biological parenthood means that analyses of sexuality, in this body of migration research, operate in the severely limited context of either reproductive sex, forced abstinence brought by migration, and sexual abuse or rape. This narrowing of context has served to foster a paradigm of migrant as a subject with little agency.

2. Primary terms:

Before I go any further, I would like to define the primary terms that I will be employing: sexuality, and intimacy.

2.1 Sexuality and queer theory:

For this project, I define sexuality as an overarching concept that delimits the content, scope and exercise of an individual’s sexual faculty. Sexual faculty, in

turn, is the individual's capacity to behave sexually, either by volition or by instinct, and, in the former instance, to seek pleasure or as performance of a social ritual. In this deliberative sense then, sexuality is inalienable from sexual agency (the individual's ability to translate intention into action, e.g., to actualise sexual capacity in accordance with personal desires). Nonetheless, agency can conceivably (and, as invariably witnessed in practice) be disrupted and, indeed, subverted by the ideologies, narratives and practices of the state and society. This distorted articulation (or, in some instances, an almost total suppression) of sexual agency gives rise to a sexuality that is constructed in line with the hegemonies that underlie social organisation in a given time and space. The narrative on sexuality that correspondingly emerges can be disturbingly exclusive, marginalising alternative expressions of sexual agency. States and societies that are reluctant to abandon this narrative, for fear of compromising the integrity and coherence of the ideological foundations on which the state/society rests, adopt either of two strategies to respond to the challenge posed by dissonant sexualities: the first is an obstinate to acknowledge the ontological claims of deviations from the sexual norm; secondly, where acknowledged to exist, the expressions of difference are identified as anomalies, as tokens of deviant, abnormal sexualities that stand in urgent need for correction. For the purpose of this project, when I write of sexuality it includes: gender perceptions and capacities for erotic experiences and responses (El 2004; Rubin 1993). It also includes: "physiological mechanisms of sexual arousal and response; information on sexually transmitted infections like HIV/AIDS; perceptions, teachings, thoughts, motivations, emotions on sexual behaviour and attitudes....sexual behaviour

pertaining to the relationships between sexual behaviour and religion, race and social class” (El 2004: 1).

Similarly, queer theorists insist that all sexual behaviors, concepts linking sexual behaviors to sexual identities, and categories of normative and deviant sexualities, are social constructs (Barry 2002; Butler 1990; Halperin 2003; Halberstam 2005; Sedgwick 1990). They reject the idea that sexuality is an essentialist category, something determined by biology or judged by eternal standards of morality and truth. Rather, sexuality is an array of social codes and forces, forms of individual activity and institutional power, which interact to shape the ideas of what is normative and what is deviant at any particular moment, and which then operate under the rubric of what is "natural," "essential," or "biological".

Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* argues that when states or other social organizations concern themselves with population control, sexuality is defined by politics and economics. The politics and economics define sexuality in the form of moral statements about what types of sexuality are right, or good, or moral, and which are wrong, bad, and immoral. According to Foucault, sexuality is, “...a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of power (Foucault 1976: 145-146). Specifically, by focusing on transnational sexualities one can see how power operates within globalization, capitalism, diasporic movements, and political economies of the state to affect sexuality (Blackwood 2005).

2.2 Intimacy:

I focus upon intimacy as a power relationship between human subjects. In Latin, *intimus* means either what is innermost or a close friend, while the verb *intimire* means to make known. Conjoining these parts of speech suggests that, at root, an intimate relation results from making known (*intimdre*) to a close friend (*intimo*) what is innermost (*intima*). Many things are in relation, but only some are intimately related. We know many things, but have intimate knowledge of only a few. We express many things, but only those in our inner circle understand what we intimate (Kasulis 1990: 436).

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1976) writes of a relatively fluid model of intimacy, which made few distinctions between public and private before the eighteenth century. Paul Veyne, et al (1992) further delved into intimate matters in their five-volume series, *A History of Private Life*, building their collection around the basic assertion that, as societies changed and modern nation-States solidified, private thought, action, and emotion emerged as the foundation of social interaction and personal identity. In a recent work Zelizer (2005) makes clear the role of the US state in defining which subjects can share intimacy and how the intimacy can be expressed through action and medium. Zelizer defines relations as intimate, “to the extent that interactions within them depend on particularized knowledge received, and attention provided by, at least one person-knowledge and attention that are not both widely available to third parties” (Zelizer 2005: 3). The sharing of 'particularized knowledge' inflects the notion of intimacy with those of 'privacy' and 'secrecy'; the divulging of shared particularised knowledge could be damaging to any one, both or all of the parties involved.

The choice of scope in a study of intimacy is contingent on the broader purpose of the study. My work looks at how state power shapes both, subjects' desire for and expression of sexual intimacy, which does not fit easily into the mainstream templates of intimacy grounded in kinship or family ties. To that end, a good starting point is to provide an account of what sexual intimacy might be. Based on the preceding discussion, I suggest the following definition: Sexual intimacy is a relation between two persons based on the sharing of particularized (or, person specific) knowledge at the scale of the body acquired through sexual engagement of each other. This proposal has several advantages: firstly, it makes sexually intimate relationships non-exclusive; secondly, the focus on 'persons' as relaters and the emphasis on 'engagement' as the fundamental pathway to bodily knowledge implicates agency as a necessary condition for sexual intimacy. Further, this characterisation leaves room for sexual intimacy to be socially constructed by intervention to shape the notions of 'bodily knowledge' and 'sexual engagement'. Finally, both the social construction of intimacy and the capacity of 'particularized knowledge' to cause harm, when divulged, contribute to make intimacy amenable to analysis in terms of power structures.

State action in endorsing particular forms of intimacy, while prescribing others, is pervasive. The Sri Lankan state, as will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, is, accordingly, active in constructing 'legitimate' forms of sexual intimacy. Attending to the state's operations in constructing, maintaining, legitimising and proscribing (forms of) intimacy, highlights Foucault's belief that, the state and individual desire come together to produce a binary power relationship defined in terms of dichotomies like, 'illicit/licit'

and 'permitted/forbidden'; the formation and exercise of intimacy is constrained to operate within these structures of power (Foucault 1978).

3. Queer theory and heterosexualities:

My work discusses social constructions of intimate heterosexual relationships. While early work within queer theory attended to the construction of homosexual identities, it neglected the construction of heterosexual identities (Huang and Yeoh 2008). According to Hubbard, "...there was an almost deafening silence surrounding the sexualized nature of 'family life', despite the burgeoning feminist literature on mothering, domestic reproduction..." (Hubbard 2007:153). Recent work has been, in that sense, redressive, attending to the normalization of the heterosexual performance and practice or the ways in which heteronormativity relied on the silencing of heterosexual others (Hubbard 2007). Within the past decade, work within geography has reflected this awakening of interest in heterosexual identities (see for example Nast 2002; Thomas 2004). This is a much welcomed departure from tradition; Cathy Cohen (1997) makes clear that it is not just non-heterosexuals to which queer theorists should address their work but to all kinds of non-normative sexualities. She advocates a "broadened understanding of queerness...based on an intersectional analysis that recognizes how numerous systems of oppression interact to regulate...the lives of most people" (Cohen 1997: 441 as quoted in Manalansan 2006: 224). Thus, as Oswin suggests, "The task of queer theorists, then, is to embrace the critique of identity to its fullest extent by abandoning the search for an inherently radical queer subject and turning attention to the advancement of a critical approach to the workings of sexual

normativities and non-normativities” (2008: 96). Yet, within migration studies, the attention given to migration and sexuality has been relatively limited (Walsh et al 2008). An emerging body of research takes a queer theoretical perspective to analyze flows of gay and lesbian migrants (e.g. Binnie 2004; Gorman-Murray 2009; Knopp 2004; Puar 2006), but otherwise sexuality tends to be mapped onto the bodies of migrant sex workers, rather than being understood as something that all migrants enact. The implication is that sexuality within migration has tended to be considered only in terms of deviance from the heteronormativity. Normative heterosexuality has featured implicitly, as a taken-for-granted framework for the organization and experience of familial, marital or romantic relations in migration (see for an exception the special issue of *Gender Place and Culture* 2008 on “Heterosexuality and migration in Asia”).

Engaging with queer theory, and state theory allows us to open up assumptions about sexuality, desire and intimacy. Queer theory can be used to destabilize the ground upon which normative identities and binaries are socially constructed to make, for example, what is read as “a non-queer sexuality” queer (Oswin 2010). Combining the three literatures allows us to expose privileging and normalizing tendencies in institutions and texts. It allows us to see that sexuality is disciplined through social institutions and practices that normalize and naturalize certain heterosexualities and heterosexual practices, including marriage, family and biological reproduction by marginalizing persons, institutions or practices that deviate from the norms (Manalansan 2006:225). Finally, as Luibheid (2004) suggests, there is the

potential for showing, and accounting for how sexuality and heteronormativity structure aspects of transnational migration.

4. State theory:

An account of migration remains equally incomplete without a consideration of the role of the state in constructing migrants' identities. State theory allows us to analyze how state power operates in nuanced and complicated ways to control and affect sexuality, desire and intimacy, especially of Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers. As suggested earlier, I move away from a disembodied characterisation of the state to an embodied theory of the state where the embodiment of the state power can be witnessed in the daily practices of state actors and subjects (Mountz 2003). Embodiment serves to locate knowledge and power in a time and a place (see Gupta 1995; Haraway 1988; Rose 1995; Truelove 2007) and to fashion the state as constituted within and through social relations, not only constitutive of but constituted internally and unevenly through difference.

According to Gupta, like other institutions, the state is highly variegated, complex, and entwined in many relationships that are difficult to pry apart. "...[S]eizing on the fissures and ruptures, the contradictions in policies, programs, institutions, and discourses of 'the state' allow people to create possibilities for political action and activism" (Gupta 1995:394). The failure to acknowledge this corresponds to a failure in recognizing the full political potential of alternative epistemologies of the state. In so far as political resistance is comprised of exploring the inconsistencies in state narratives and seeking within them ways to disrupt the most audible material political projects of the state. Mitchell (1991:93) argued: "[J]ust as we must

abandon the image of the state as a free-standing agent issuing orders, we need to question the traditional figure of resistance as a subject who stands outside the state and refuses its demands. Political subjects and their modes of resistance are formed as much within the organizational terrain we call the state, rather than in some wholly exterior social space.”

The state does not exist outside of the people who comprise it, their everyday work, and their social embeddedness in local relationships. Mountz's ethnographic work on migrants and the Canadian state suggests that bureaucracy is only as powerful as decision-making processes and participation within the collective. Thus individual agents of the state have the potential to be subversive in their day-to-day work, particularly when a critical mass begins to question and challenge policy (Mountz 2003). In subsequent chapters, this insight will prove crucial in illustrating that, despite the hegemonic narratives propounded by state discourse, care should be taken not to misconceive the state as permanently and absolutely monolithic. Within the apparatus of the state there is capacity for, and articulation of, dissent. Whether these dissident attitudes, embodied in the agents (or, agencies), of the state translates into narrative substitution is, ultimately, a question of critical mass.

Furthermore, quotidian geographies of the state challenge what Mitchell calls “the structural effect” of the artificial division between state and civil society. This divide is politically disempowering, because when people believe that the state is all-powerful and mysterious—existing somewhere “out there”—they do not participate in protest (Mitchell 1991:94). In this setting, while resistance to existing narratives need not come exclusively from “the

outside” (see Gupta 1995:394) reworking of narratives is almost always domiciled in the state. The daily practices and beliefs that inform those who comprise the state can generate alternative narratives. As I will show later, 'reworking' depends on the ceding of jurisdictional space from the state to the subject. This withdrawal serves two purposes. On the one hand, provided these spaces are small pockets, it eliminates the need for the state to produce a coherent account of the dissonance between dominant and alternate narratives. On the other, reworking provides the vent that prevents dissidence from articulating itself as active resistance.

4.1 de Certeau – spaces outside of the state:

Carrying on from the previous paragraph, assessing subjects' resistance, and in the context of my empirical focus on the less monitored migrant neighborhood in Lebanon, I appeal to the work of Michel de Certeau (1984) which highlights the importance of an analysis of the state that attends to spaces outside of the surveillance of the state. He argues that to better understand the effects of the state, especially on vulnerable populations, we need to investigate the effects of the state in spaces that are not under its radar. I then engage with recent work within geography on affect and emotion (Anderson and Smith 2001; Thrift 2003) which also encourages analyses outside of traditional, rational and expected spaces of investigation. The work on affect and emotion complements de Certeau's work as it argues for the importance of uncovering the affects of the state in unexpected and under researched areas. De Certeau suggests that “contradictory movements that counter-balance...outside the reach of panoptic power” (1984: 95), demonstrate the need to examine power and inequality in the spaces that remain unaccounted for within state

representations. The emphasis is on the subjects who occupy them, trying to satisfy their own needs by foiling the rules of the game imposed by others. Thus, the state's image of a good Sri Lankan woman in the employer's private home is countered by highlighting spaces – migrant neighborhoods - where Sri Lankan women reside on their own and act unencumbered by state sanctioned moral codes. Often, in these spaces, women's lives and practices deviate substantially from how the state might expect them to live.

The discussion of de Certeau's position on the importance of investigating spaces unregulated by the state brings to the fore the relevance of a discussion of the micropolitics of sexual practices for more nuanced analyses and understandings of the operations of the state and other macropolitical forces (Mohanty 2003; Nagar et al. 2002). By looking at experiences of the everyday as a source of counter narratives to the state's representation of migrant women, we can better understand how state policies are actually experienced and navigated though in sometimes unexpected, and often contradictory, ways. It also provides us access to comprehending women's responses including reworkings, to the operation of the state. Das and Poole (2004) reinforce this point. In *Anthropology in the Margins of the State* they state:

“To study the State, we need to shift our gaze from the obvious places where power is expected to reside to the margins and recesses of everyday life... There is, of course, a paradox here, for it is in the realm of illegibility, infelicity, and excuses that one sees how the state is reincarnated in new forms” (2004: 227).

Thus, the everyday becomes a potential site to understand how the state is actually experienced, understood and “lived,” as Das suggests, as well as a site for examining how power in everyday practice is experienced in sometimes “unrecognizable” ways, as suggested by de Certeau (1984).

4.2 Affect and Emotion:

By encouraging analyses outside of the traditional and expected domains, the literature on affect and emotion shows itself as complementary to de Certeau’s exhortation to focus on the spaces occupying the gaps of state regulation. Affect and emotion are, further, intertwined with the concept of reworking that I present and discussed in Section 5.4. There, I present reworking as a strategy to manage invisibility and identity. Nevertheless, the need to manage either is preempted by a more basic need, the need to manage the affect of the emotions constructed by the state’s blindness towards migrant women and its enterprise of erecting and imposing partial identity structures. In this context, I distinguish between emotion, affect and the affective performance while migrant women have negligible control over the emotions they experience (on account of emotions being social constructs), the way they are experienced (e.g. the affect) is essentially subjective. It is precisely this subjectivity that reworking allows migrant women to alter to their advantage; in this sense, then, reworking acquires the status of affective performance.

I argue further that attending to and assessing subject’s affective responses is instructive in laying bare the machinations of the state. To this end, Chapter 7 uses the literature on affect and emotion to critically analyse

the interactions that Sri Lankan female migrants, working as freelancers, have in the migrants' neighborhood. While the interactions reinforce previous associations (in a display of the underlying strength of state discourses), they also ground the potential for change. As Thrift suggests, it is through social geographies of encounters - of bodies and forces - that emotional states – love, anger, joy, trust, hope, despair, sadness, betrayal, resentment, fear, shame, disgust, embarrassment - are materialised, resulting in an arrangement, “in the relations between bodies which results in an increase or decrease in the potential to act” (Thrift 2003: 104). It is this potentiality to act/ to not act, to do/ to not do, that ‘greases the wheels’ of subject positions’ ability to alter habitual regimes of practice. In assessing human intimate relationships and their links to affect and emotion, attention to geometries of power and trajectories of history make evident the differing capacities that individuals have for ‘affect and to be affective’ and thus resist, or merely cope and survive (Tolia –Kelly 2006: 213). In the instance of Sri Lankan female migrants in Beirut, the focus on the emotional and affective dimensions of their sexual transgressions reemphasize the idea that actions are not always forms of resistance but coping mechanisms or ways of ‘reworking’ their situations in spaces which offer few other possibilities of response.

Further, the literature on affect and emotion justifies an exploration of the sexual experiences of Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers in Beirut as a way of getting better purchase in our understanding of migration. In so far as analyses of responses to state power often skirt around affect and emotion and sexuality, attention to the neglected spaces can allow us to better understand

the effects of the state by looking at how the migrants experience the sexual life, how they struggle, and how they rework their situations.

4.3 Agamben:

Within state theory, a key preoccupation is with the construction of subjecthood and the hierarchy of subjects. In this context, Agamben's work (1998) on state exclusion of particular subjects provides one such criterion. Constructions of subjecthood play an important role in creating unsurveilled spaces that foster reworking or resistance and, accordingly, are important to understanding migrant behaviour. However, even though Agamben provides a good starting point, I depart from his thesis in arguing that in the case of Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers in Lebanon there is not a complete state exclusion of the migrant subject (as Agamben (1998) might argue) but rather a partial one. States might, and in several instances do, protect female migrants as laboring mothering, and wifing bodies, but not as sexual subjects desirous of intimacy and pleasure for their own sake. The state's recognition of asexual subjects serves to blur the line that Agamben wants to draw by using whole subjects as the objects of the inclusion/exclusion enterprise and emphasizes the need for a concept of partial exclusion. The sophistication and complexity of exclusionary criteria and processes mandate that we view as objects of exclusion, not persons, but specific aspects of personhood.

Agamben's work on bare life (*homo sacer*) or the subject which resides in the state of exception or state abandonment is concerned with the contradiction in the conception of the biopolitical state – namely how a state committed to managing life produces a category of people who are deemed killable. While Foucault focuses on the maintenance of the normal, Agamben

focuses on the states' maintenance of the state of exception where persons reside in a zone of exception – a space where laws have been suspended. Agamben argues that the “highest political task” within modern democratic societies is to define who is inside and who is out, whose life is politically relevant and whose is not (Agamben 1998:10; Pratt 2005: 154). His work has now been used widely, for example, to understand the subject position of post 9/11 prisoners of Guantanamo Bay (Zizek 2003), detainees of Abu Ghraib in America occupied Iraq (Gregory 2004), and migrant sex workers in Canada (Pratt 2004). While my research shares Agamben's focus on the inclusion/exclusion enterprise, we differ over what is excluded; Agamben's excluded subjects experience a complete ban, while I suggest that exclusion is partial and selective.

Previously, in the exclusion/inclusion context, the dominant paradigm of the female domestic migrant worker, working and living within the Middle East, was that of a subject excluded from state protection as, for example, no labor laws operate to protect them, they are denied citizenship and treated unequally by the law (DeRegt 2006; Saban 2004; Smith 2006). But as laws, policies and awareness have shifted in the last few years to bring domestic migrant workers under the purview of the law (for example, steps are being taken in Lebanon to bring domestic migrant workers under the protection of local labor laws (UNDP 2009)), I want to assess how a different kind of exclusion is taking place – a partial exclusion of being. Migrant women's sexuality, narrowly conceived in terms of performing the duties of the laboring, mothering, and wifing bodies, is recognised in Sri Lanka, while the exercise of sexual agency for personal pleasure is omitted from the

construction of subjecthood. Similarly, once abroad, a subject's desires (or, even, the capacity for the same) are not acknowledged or protected by either Sri Lanka or Lebanon; moreover, acting on sexual desire removes the subject further into legal abandonment.

4.4 Agency and resistance:

Engaging with Katz's work on agency, I employ the terms resilience, reworking and resistance (Katz 2004) as a way of discriminating between subjects' responses to state projects of 'narrativisation'. I utilize them to analyze transformation and sites of potential transformation. I assess how both subjects who are agents of the state and migrant subjects demonstrate agency and the potential to open up transformative spaces. Katz makes a careful distinction between resistance, reworking and resilience in her work on young people in Harlem and Howa, Sudan who organize to rework – and, in some instances, resist outright - a number of the conditions confronting them. She shows how contextualized accounts of agency in different sites attend to its variations, including its limits, its structuring context, and its uneven impact, rather than simply its autonomous character (Katz 2004; Sparke 2008). She contrasts *resistance* that involves oppositional consciousness and achieves emancipatory change, with forms of *reworking* that alter the organization but not the polarization of power relations, with forms of *resilience* that enable people to survive without really changing the circumstances that make survival so hard. I utilize Katz's taxonomy of responses to not only assess the actions of migrants but those of persons working within state and non-state institutions as well.

For example, adhering to this taxonomy of responses, I argue that Sri Lankan women working as freelancers in Wafaa rework their situations in that they are able to alter some of the adverse affects of migration, but are not able to alter the polarization of power, or achieve emancipatory change. Although women are able to move outside of the employer's home, and into a space which affords more freedom, particularly in regard to their intimate lives, women are still precariously positioned on the hierarchy of power relations. In Lebanon, their lives, actions and intimate relationships are not recognized or protected either by law or by the society outside the migrant neighborhood. Given this lack of formal endorsement as persons with capacities for engaging in the intimate acts or relationships for personal gratification, the anonymity of the migrant neighborhood is vital to their enterprise of reworking. Equally, it is vital to the opening up of spaces in state surveillance where reworking can flourish. Interestingly, what is reworked is invisibility too; a disadvantaging, alienating, marginalizing invisibility is maneuvered into one which sustains and nourishes these women. Despite all this (and, this is precisely why it constitutes reworking), the invisible continue to remain invisible!

A second aspect of the reworking process involves managing the identity of the chaste, dutiful citizen fostered on the female migrant by the Sri Lanka state. It is a rigid identity, which generates expectations of these women that are robust with respect to the women's circumstances. This is a twin predicament; while the severance of intimate ties spawns despair and loneliness the expectations engendered by their assigned identity proscribes attempts at ameliorating the experience of these emotions. Reworking allows

room within the overarching narratives of the chaste and dutiful female migrant for the women to manage affect of these emotions.

5. Conclusion:

Queer theory makes evident the social constructions of intimacy, sexuality and desire. Yet solely a queer theoretical approach does not do justice to the messy and complicated operation of state and state based power involved in my project which assesses the migrant subject, the state and agency. Only an engagement with a variety of literature and theories can bring us closer to a meaningful analysis of how power operates to affect the sexual lives and practices of migrant Sri Lankan women from Sri Lanka to Beirut, Lebanon. Queer theory's intersection with state theory is thus important in answering questions about the role of sexuality in shaping migration and notions of family. State theory allows us to uncover the complicated operations of the state. In particular, an analysis of a non-monolithic state, which is comprised of people and their everyday work and their social embeddedness in local relationships (in other words, an embodied state) allows us to attend to cracks and fissures in the notion of 'the state' and to see spaces for with transformative potential. An analysis of these transformations mediated by considerations of the agency of the subject draws attention to the concepts of resilience, reworking and resistance that operate as migrants' affective responses to socially constructed emotions engendered by migration.

Chapter 5 - Sri Lankan and Lebanese States, Normative Discourses and Spaces for Reworking¹⁹

“Gramsci understood the state as a political accomplishment that was always partial and always tending toward unravelling. Gramsci argued for penetrating the hegemonic strategies and practices –conscious and unconscious- that conditioned subaltern groups to accept their subordination” (Marston 2004: 13).

1. Introduction:

This chapter assesses how particular notions of Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers’ sexuality and need for intimacy are viewed and reproduced within the Sri Lankan and Lebanese states. The various governmental bodies collude, perhaps unwittingly, to create and reinforce the position of such workers – and specifically in this case their sexual beings - as *homo sacer*, or as subjects who, in particular spaces are not recognized and protected by the state (ibid; Pratt 2005). Within the Sri Lankan state, Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers are cast as the sacrificing and chaste mother, wife and daughter. Within the Lebanese state, although laws of a different letter might be in place, Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers are cast as second-class subjects and as the other, who are viewed as possessing a tainted sexuality and as off-limits as intimate partners (Moukarbel 2009). Yet, my work suggests, these characterisations are not seamless; it is in the cracks and fissures of the state, which is fertile in transformative potential, which engenders the possibility of emancipatory change. I highlight these spaces as sites where an

¹⁹ This chapter, in abstract form, has been accepted to *Gender Place and Culture* as part of a special issue following the Sexual intimacies and marginal migrations workshop, 2009, NUS. I would like to thank Sallie Yea for useful feedback and questions.

acknowledgement of migrants' humanity or the migrants' need for sexual intimacy asserts itself through efforts to rework and resist the overarching state conceived and circulated paradigms of femininity and 'migrantness'. Interestingly, these spaces can arise within the bureaucratic apparatus of the state (where state agents, in the spirit of Mountz's (2003) study, harbour and articulate dissonant sentiments) or within its geographies of surveillance (where unsurveilled spaces are the breeding ground for reworking/resistance). My research, similar to the work of Mountz (2003), demonstrates that assessing the actions of individuals within the state can operate to expose cracks and fissures in the monolithic notion of 'the state'. Assessing spaces and actions not under the direct surveillance of the state or outside the normative discourse of the state exposes spaces and actions of transformation (female migrants' actions which could lead to potential transformation are discussed in Chapter 7). I begin the remainder of the chapter by outlining the modes in which the state narrative, both in Lebanon and Sri Lanka, makes itself palpable.

2. Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE)

Throughout the forty-year history of Sri Lankan female migration to Lebanon, a Sri Lankan state discourse has developed to idealise the Sri Lankan female nationals working as domestic migrant workers in the Middle East and to infer, from the ideal identity, a model code of conduct. In part, the form and content of this discourse is revealed and reinforced through the training packs handed out in the pre-departure training sessions. The training session on

sexuality and sexual health, introduced in 2005, occurs on the last day of the thirteen-day pre-departure training. It is entitled, ‘Workshop for women migrating for foreign jobs and for their husbands/guardians: Overcoming challenges of life through good sexual health and a happy life.’ In the Workshop, for example, the Sri Lankan state acknowledges the sexualized space in which women work and live in Lebanon, but insists that it is the Sri Lankan female migrant’s responsibility to manage this space to protect her sexual being; the SLBFE institutionalises this attitude in its training sessions (as I will go on to show later in this chapter).

The five sessions within the last day of the training are entitled, ‘Let’s achieve the challenges of sexual health during migrant work,’ ‘Let’s promote the sexual wellbeing of the family,’ ‘Let’s be responsible in our sexual behavior,’ ‘Let’s protect our children,’ and ‘Let’s save money and enjoy the happiness of life.’ Women are required to attend these sessions with their husbands, or guardians if they are unmarried. The training manual is accompanied by ten five-minute video clips, which present scenarios on sexual health, sexual advancements, and sexual harassment. Where the curriculum does acknowledge and condone the sexuality of Sri Lankan migrant women, it stresses sexual agency exercised by the women only in their capacity as wives. The training manual focuses upon responsible sexual behaviour within the marriage. It discusses monogamy within marriage, but also addresses ways to maintain sexual pleasure within a marriage through good hygiene and variety of sexual acts. The training manual states, “Make them aware of things that affect the wellbeing of a family, such as variety, interest in your partner, body odours, voice and patience. Give an example for

variety. If our meals are always the same, we should change the ingredients or the ways of cooking, and not change the cooker pots and pans to enjoy the taste of various foods. Like this, it is possible to live in one house with one partner comfortably with variations....be aware of your partner's sexual satisfactions (SLBFE 2005:22). Interestingly, the training emphasizes masturbation as a vent for sexual stress. Thus, on the one hand, the state acknowledges the female migrant as the subject of sexual desire, while, on the other, it circumscribes her capacity for desire fulfillment by limiting her agency to choosing acts that do not compromise the state's agenda in keeping the institution of heteronormativity propped up by the twin pillars of marriage and family.

In addition to providing information on HIV, the manual emphasizes that women should be in control of their sexual desires and any sexual acts including harassment, which might take place. They are not only responsible for their own actions but that of others who might try to proposition or sexually abuse them. In controlling themselves and the situation, they should remain calm and in control of their emotions as their demeanor and reactions work to control the actions of others. Women should manage their loneliness and sexual desire through, for example, distracting themselves by work. As specific example of appropriate behavior, the training manual provides the following: "Because of loneliness, some people engage in risky sexual activities. But Madara avoids this by planning how to spend her time fruitfully, by earning extra income through sewing clothes, and thinking of her children" (SLBFE 2005: 15). Additional direct quotes from the training manual include:

You must work hard, be patient, remember why you have come (p. 3)...Remember that there are no social security or retirement structures in place for ...You must work and save now (p. 5)...Prepare your family for your departure (p. 7)...Make sure your husband and children are taken care of in your absence (p. 8)...Once you are away your loneliness will be your burden. However, you must not stray. You must concentrate on your work...(p. 10) ...know that your employer is required to pay at least USD150 per month. Complain to your hiring agent and embassy if he/she does not (p. 21).

The references in the curriculum to loneliness and its potential for provoking sexual behaviour as affective response demonstrates the acknowledgement, by the Sri Lankan state, of migration's capacity for fracturing traditional family networks and the 'moral' constitution of the migrants. Nevertheless, any action on the part of the migrant to respond to this reconfiguration of emotional and social space that is reflective of her sexual agency is heavily discouraged. On alternative affective response suggested by the state – work as a distraction, for example – reinforces an understanding of the women as merely economic subjects. The exhortation to supplant sexual urge with thoughts of work is testimony to the exclusion of the sexual dimension from the identity of the female domestic migrant worker.

Finally, the training manual also reads, “If your baba [the male employer] makes sexual advances toward you, you must avert your eyes, and if he persists above all do not let him penetrate you...” (p. 15). The importance placed on penetration reemphasizes the notion of family – and a pure Sri Lankan family, untainted by Arab men. It reiterates the purity and

chastity of the body of the Sri Lankan female. It supports the narrative of the importance of family and perpetrates the hegemonic discourse of sexual normativity. Thus, not only is the onus for the management of loneliness shifted to the migrant, her options for so doing are heavily circumscribed. Despite this, since the ideal female migrant is cast as dutiful and sacrificing, the state discourse remains unapologetic about the burden it places on her shoulders.

Similarly, interviews with government officials, inclusive of curriculum developers, and the style of writing in the training manual reveal their concern with giving women the knowledge to stay healthy to work, and to remain chaste. In so far as both health and celibacy, while abroad, are factors that promote economic productivity (and hence, the potential for higher remittances), the economic agency of the migrant is demonstrated as being privileged over other aspects of her being. For example, as quoted in the introduction of the training manual on sexuality and sexual health, “To continue being involved in the foreign labour market in a superior manner... [we need to have] quality of citizens [who go abroad]... Job seekers must be turned in to persons with excellent behavior who have attitudinal changes with knowledge and understanding. This one-day workshop was created to give a helping hand for this national task of equipping female migrant workers...complete knowledge, high level of skills, positive attitudes and a personality that can face challenges successfully” (SLBFE 2005:1). Migrant worker training also focuses on making migrants aware of the economic calculus of their decision to migrate. A central role in this calculus is played by the concept of deferment of pleasure. By portraying migration as not an end

in itself but, rather, the means to an economically fulfilling future, the hardship that women have to endure during their tenure abroad is normalised. It becomes the opportunity cost of a brighter future. The SLBFE developed a poster (see illustration 1 below), in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, Sri Lanka, in 2000, which was placed in each of the Sri Lankan domestic migrant worker training centres. The captions under migrant women working abroad and ignoring distractions from Lebanese men and male migrants read, for instance, “All of this hard work in a foreign country is for my family to have a better future...Don’t misuse the freedom you get in abroad. Don’t forget the reason you have migrated for.” In sum, the discussion in this section is illustrative of how the SLBFE faithfully reproduces, in its training programmes, the normative discourse on the female migrant worker, particularly with regard to her sexuality.

The shifting of responsibility from the (powerful) state to the (vulnerable) female migrant lends itself to a disturbing interpretation. Implicitly, the state is identifying the twin markers of female virtue, “*lajjabaya*” as the women's most potent form of defense against sexual abuse. As a corollary, the state is implying that any trespassing of the perimeters of decorous behaviour – in the pursuit of personal pleasure, for example – takes the women into territories where exploitation and abuse are just desserts.

In addition to reemphasizing the importance of the moral straitjacket, the Sri Lankan government aims to directly reinforce women’s connections to their nuclear families in, for example, mandatory pre-departure training sessions. Although these sessions have, largely, a pragmatic aspect - typically consisting of instruction on the use of household cleaning and cooking

equipment, child and elderly care, banking and financial matters, multicultural communication, basic Arabic and health - the last day of training focuses on

Illustration 1: SLBFE, HIV Prevention Poster:



sexual health, sexuality and HIV: SLBFE literature indicates an intertwining of the emphasis on sexual well being with an emphasis on the maintenance of women's connection to family and the importance of sending remittances home (SLBFE 2006), which can be construed as an attempt to promote the normative behaviour as defense against sexual ill-being.

2.1 Fissures within the state narrative:

The continuity in a normative state discourse and its expression in published and publicly available state literature conceals, however, the fissures that appear within the day-to-day operations of the state. In reviewing the literature in an earlier chapter, I referred to Mountz (2003) for the idea that the embodied state allows for its bureaucratic ethic to be contested by members of that bureaucracy. In discussing human smuggling issues in the context of the Canadian state, she found that many officials espoused beliefs and acted in ways that diverged from the normative state discourse and laws. While most bureaucrats would not admit to this in a formal, tape-recorded interview, they would speak of it openly in their day-to-day work. Thus, Mountz was able to reveal the state as “the effect of practices” (Mitchell 2000). That is, she assessed practices as authoritative on one level, but at another, open to being mediated by emotion, desire, interpretation and conflict. The capacity for (and exercise of) discretion runs contrary to statutory requirements and makes enforcement of particular laws contingent on the subjectivity and biography of bureaucrats and migrant claimants (Marston 2004; Mountz 2003). Agent

discretion coaxes an apparently rigid state structure to yield spaces of transformation and undermines state authority. Mountz writes, “The state is powerful, but not all-powerful and knowing...[and] it is through the feminist strategy of embodiment that the actual power of the state materializes in daily practice” (Mountz 2002; see also Hansen and Stepputat 2001).

Mountz’s thesis finds resonance in my ethnographic work on the state. While the majority of interviews with government employees revealed support for the normative state discourse on female migration and its presentation of the female migrant as a sacrificing wife and mother who is solely focused on the family, some interviewees articulated a contrarian view. A similar division was observed among employees of the SLBFE.

Interviews with SLBFE employees who facilitate the pre-departure trainings for female domestic migrant workers revealed that most trainers reinforce the state’s narratives by emphasising the importance of monogamy and a focus upon the family. Many of these trainers in the SLBFE were once domestic migrant workers, who, upon return, found work within the Bureau on account of their relatively superior skills in the English language, cooking, and etiquette. Some trainers stated that they felt it was their duty to teach women, and particularly migrant women coming from villages, how to behave when they are abroad. Not only do they encourage women to be focused upon their duties and not to stray into transgressive sexual relationships while abroad, but they also teach women what they deem to be proper hygiene and, instill in them a sense of fashion. They instruct them with a particular focus on husbands and employers as the audience, how to bathe and groom properly. Grooming rituals include facials, manicures, pedicures, eyebrow shaping,

applying make-up and dressing fashionably. According to Nimma, who has been working as a trainer for three years at a center in Colombo, “Their husbands do not recognize them after they spend two weeks with us. We teach them how to look and behave like ladies.” According to Neluka, who has been teaching for four years at a SLBFE center outside of Colombo, “These women are representing Sri Lankan when they are abroad. I tell them that they need to change the perception that ‘Sri Lankan women are willing to sleep with anyone for the price of a roti’...These women don’t understand. You cannot imagine the way they act when they first come to the center. One young woman last week showed up and she was rubbing up against the sub-agent who had brought her in...They are not in control of their hormones.” She continued to explain that she teaches the women to have self-respect and to think before they act – particularly with regard to intimate relationships with men.

Yet, not all of the trainers supported this orientation or form of training. One trainer who was interviewed at a separate training center outside of Colombo stated that she had empathy for women’s social situations when they go abroad. She stated that she understood that these women feel lonely and would be desirous of companionship when they go abroad. Although the written curriculum did not allow for alternative discussions about managing sexuality and sexual desires while abroad, during her classes, according to her, “she talked discreetly” to migrant women about engaging in safe and responsible sex while abroad. She spoke with them about the right to have control over their bodies and to see themselves as separate from their families and husbands. She told them that it was acceptable to have affairs as long as

they made an informed decision about such matters, and practiced safer sex.

She stated,

I talk to the women about what to *really* expect when they go abroad. We talk about the reality that if they want to have an affair it will most likely be possible. There are a lot of men who are abroad and single too. But I talk to them about not trusting everyone. We talk about really taking time to get to know someone before starting an affair, and especially sharing expenses...

She uses these two stories to illustrate the situations that women might face.

...There was a young 20-year-old woman, Komali, who went abroad to Bahrain. After working for two-years for a Bahraini family she moved outside of her employer's home because she met an Indian man from Tamil Nadu, Pramod, who claimed that he wanted to live with her and marry. For six-months she continued to work very hard and lived with Pramod. In the evenings she took very good care of him: she cooked and cleaned and they made love. She paid all of the bills and more than half of the rent. Despite an inability to save money, she wanted to show her love for him through caring and providing; she was preparing to marry him and stay together forever. However, one day Pramod came home to tell her that his Indian wife was coming to live in Bahrain and that they could no longer be together. Heartbroken and with very little savings, Komali made preparations to return to Sri Lanka. However, upon her return to Colombo she was too ashamed to tell her family and friends what had happened. Her sadness was something she had to hide and keep inside....

She then goes on to tell a story with a different ending. She does so to let the women know that they will have options and need to make decisions about their intimate lives abroad. Her actions illustrate a fissure in the monolithic and normative discourse of the state. She grants women permission to transgressive normative notions of motherhood and wifhood and their explicit duties to the family.

But then I also talk to them about good romantic stories. For example, Radhika, a 30-year-old married woman with two children went abroad to Lebanon. She worked for some time in her employer's home but then managed to negotiate living on her own with Raj, a young migrant male from Bangladesh with whom she fell in love. They worked very hard during the days and spent evenings together. Radhika guessed that Raj had a wife and family back at home but they never spoke of this. Raj and Radhika lived nicely together, shared expenses and enjoyed companionship. Finally, nearly five years later, the two decided that it was time for them both to return to their respective home countries. Despite being sad to leave, they both returned with savings and with good memories of their time together in Lebanon.

Similarly, the sociologist at SLBFE, who was responsible for developing the HIV and sexuality curriculum, stated, during interviews, that he had compassion for the plight of domestic migrant workers. He understood that it was difficult for them to go abroad and to remain on their own for long periods of time. He did not believe that the curriculum could be modified to accommodate a public acknowledgement of the need for women to manage loneliness through sexually intimate relationships. However, he stated that in

private conversations with migrant women, he let them know that he understood their situations and supported their need to satisfy their “sexual desires, and to take care of their bodies”. He stated, “I tell them not to be shy to realize that they will have needs that they will want to take care of while abroad. But I tell them to be cautious and not to get involved with every man who passes by...I always tell them to be cautious about rogues just waiting to take their money... and we discuss options for safer sex.”

The sociologist’s sentiments were also echoed by a consular official in the Sri Lankan Embassy in Lebanon. He stated that he understood that Sri Lankan migrant women who lived with their boyfriends while working as freelancers in Lebanon were viewed as loose women. Nonetheless, he was ready in their defense: “They are human like all of us. They have needs and desires. Are they doing anything different than anyone else? Why is it when they have affairs they are looked down upon, and when a Lebanese has his or her liaisons it is seen as okay?” He continued by stating that when women approach him for support although he was often unable to directly assist them due to problems with the Lebanese law or people’s attitudes in Sri Lankan or Lebanon he wanted them to know that he sympathized with their situations.

But the consular’s sentiments were not echoed among all employees within the Sri Lankan Embassy. The Sri Lankan Ambassador to Lebanon stated that he did not like the behavior of Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers in Lebanon. Upon meeting a domestic migrant worker who is new to Lebanon he always talks to them about appropriate behaviour in the country, which includes not getting involved with men. He believes a “Sri Lankan women’s duty is to be a respectable lady, wife and mother.” He talks to

women about the importance of family and remembering them while one is working abroad. To curb women's transgressive behaviours he started monthly Buddhist teaching sessions about "appropriate moral behaviour, which includes teachings regarding chastity and a focus upon the family" at the embassy.

The data presented here supports the thesis that cognitive dissonance with the state's overarching paradigms in its officers, can lead to the exercise of discretion on their part, which covertly opens up transformative spaces. In this disjuncture between narrative and action, female migrant workers develop the capacity for resilience by learning to employ reworking to manage the affect of migration. Even though, owing to a lack of "critical mass", emancipatory change based on a comprehensive revision of the state discourse is not realised, the articulation of dissent, despite the cloak of anonymity it wears, highlights the potential for resisting the state's agenda.

3. Lebanon's Ministry of Labour:

While the Sri Lankan government addresses sexuality and intimacy directly within state documents, the Lebanon government, to date, addresses migrant women's sexuality by excluding it from discussion within official documents, except when condemning sexual abuse (as stated in the 2009 unified contract created by the Lebanese Ministry of Labour, sexual abuse qualifies as grounds for migrant women terminating their contract of employment).

The Lebanese Ministry of Labour is responsible for enacting and enforcing labour laws and regulations. Until 2005, the Ministry of Labour

had, generally, not attended to the working and living conditions of domestic migrant workers in the country (Jureidini 2004; Young 2001), paying more attention to the Syrian and Palestinian workers in the country (than to the Asian workers), and more attention to male workers than female (Young 2001). The lack of attention to female domestic migrant workers can be attributed to the perception of domestic work as non-work, perhaps premised on the notion that the private home is not a work place to be monitored by the state. In recent developments however, the Ministry of Labour in Lebanon has begun to focus on ensuring the safety and fair treatment of domestic migrant workers particularly within the home.²⁰

The Ministry of Labor has taken steps to bring domestic migrant workers - as laboring subjects – under the purview of the Lebanese state protection. For example, there is now a unified contract among employment agencies, employers and employees, which states rate of pay, and limits the number of hours of work (OHCHR 2009). Even before this recent concern with the welfare of domestic workers, in 2000, the government had established a formal complaint procedure for migrant workers, allowing them to register their complaint directly with the Ministry of Labour. Most notably, as a consequence of this procedure some hiring agencies have had their licenses

²⁰The current interest in domestic migrant labour might in part have to do with a visit in September 2005 from a UN special rapporteur who came to investigate the needs of such workers in the country as well as publish a report, which listed many areas needing improvement within the government and civil society. Such a report has the potential to bring international attention to Lebanon as a country that violates human rights. The Lebanese government takes such reporting seriously as it has the potential to rupture Lebanon's reputation as a hospitable and progressive country (Khalaf 1987). The country prides itself on being welcoming to foreigners (at least to higher-status visitors) and on being one of the more progressive countries in the Middle East in regards to human rights issues (ILO 2006; author interview with Simel Esim, Gender Specialist in the ILO's Regional Office for the Arab States in Beirut, September 4, 2006; author interview with Jawad Adra, Managing Partner of Information International Research Consultants in Beirut, September 5, 2006).

suspended for improper conduct. While these pragmatic steps are welcome in view of their potential contribution to the well being of the migrant worker, I argue that they mask a deeper apathy. In this context, what I want to highlight is the persistent exclusion of migrant women's sexuality from the jurisdiction of state protection. I argue that such exclusion is embedded in state and societal structures. As discussed in Chapter 2, the normative discourse around Lebanese female sexuality shapes the female domestic migrant worker as a sexual object. Domestic migrant workers are viewed as lone women who do not have family ties, or a male to represent them. Thus, there are fewer constraints on their being constructed as sexually available. Since sexual objectification is identified as causally connected to episodes of harassment and abuse, state sanctions against the same are understandable. Nonetheless, the concept of the female migrant worker as sexual *subject* is obliterated by the refusal to make any references to her sexual agency in state documents. This aspect of her being, accordingly, remains unrecognised and invisible.

In November 2005, a three-day workshop entitled, "The Awareness Raising Workshop on the Situation of Women Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon" was held in Beirut, Lebanon. The Workshop exemplifies the way in which sexuality is pushed to the margins of state sponsored discussions. The goal of the Workshop was to bring together over 60 government and civil society officials to discuss ways to increase the understanding of, and responsiveness to, the needs of female migrant domestic workers at the levels of government and society. It was the first time in Lebanon that a national forum for discussion had been organised to assess the conditions of domestic work and the situation of female migrant domestic workers. The information

provided by the ILO on fair practice and recommendations, for example with regard to labour laws, and bilateral agreements, was disseminated to governmental bodies, NGOs, human rights lawyers, the media and the public.

The Workshop participants created a list of what they deemed pressing issues related to domestic migrant workers in Lebanon.²¹ Their primary focus was the creation of enforceable laws and procedures, based on workers' rights, which would ensure better working and living conditions for domestic migrant workers. The laws and procedures – aimed to improve the treatment of domestic migrant workers across transnational, national, public and private spaces – were envisaged to be implemented through bilateral agreements, national laws and government interventions.

However, mirroring the discussions, the subsequent report and the unified contract are silent on the issue of sexual and intimate desires of domestic migrant workers. The significance of this omission becomes clearer when juxtaposed against the fact that the migrant workers' rights to communications with her family are acknowledged and legitimised. Where the unified contract mentions intimacy, it does so only in relation to the family. It

²¹ The 12 areas they consider to be the most important in regards to further development or analysis are: 1) enforceable protective labour laws; 2) accessible information to workers concerning their rights, responsibilities and available services; 3) media coverage that is oriented towards a rights-based perspective; 4) the role of employment and recruitment agencies in assisting or abusing domestic migrant workers and the need for better trainings for employment agency staff; 5) the monitoring of the working and living conditions of domestic workers, for example, by employment agencies, and the Ministry of Labour; 6) the empowerment of domestic migrant workers and the degree to which their voices are heard; 7) the treatment of migrant domestic workers by security forces and the decriminalization of undocumented workers, who may be undocumented because employers withhold workers' passports and other identification papers; 8) gender issues in the detention centers; 9) fees paid by migrants to migrate; 10) the terminology used to refer to women who leave their place of employment due to excessive work, abuse or non-payment of salaries, for example, the use of the term "run away"; 11) the lack of investigation by authorities into physical threats, alleged murders and suicides of domestic workers; and 12) the need to create enforceable bilateral agreements (This is a summary of the pressing points that were outlined in the ILO report on "The Awareness Raising Workshop on the Situation of Women Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon.").

states that, “the employer shall allow the worker to receive telephone calls and correspondence in addition to permitting her to communicate with the condition that the costs are charged to the worker after an official proof of the expenses is presented. The employer is responsible to pay for one phone call per month for the worker to contact her family.” While the official endorsement of the migrant workers’ needs to maintain ties with their families acknowledges the underlying desires for intimate connections and elevates them to the status of rights, the dereliction of other forms of intimacy (sexual intimacy, in particular) serves to discount the sexual dimension of migrant workers’ lives. In the context of the literature surveyed in Chapter 4, this is illustrative of how the promotion of the family, as a unit of social life (and, hence, the focus of state regulation/intervention), embeds domestic migrant workers’ identities in a network of familial relations and disregards desires that arise at the scale of the individual body. In so far as these desires perform no role in maintaining family based identities (and may, indeed, jeopardise such identities), they are justifiably excluded.

Wright (1999, 2001), on her work on Mexican female migrant workers, finds that women’s identities as “ignorant, docile, dirty, immoral” and the silencing of their voices are linked to the state demand for flexible, easily-replaceable and cheap labor. She highlights how ideologies about the proper role of an individual at work become unquestioned understandings of ways of being as they are entrenched in narratives of various kinds of practices and ways of thinking. Similarly, as discussed in Chapter 2, Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers are viewed as temporary workers within the home, with limited connections to family or a culture. They are seen as sexually

tainted or sexually promiscuous and available to Arab nationals (Jureidini 2006; Moukarbel 2009). Ideologies of the state and society operate in tandem to construct a particular identity of Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers. The identity is then carried forward to create silences in state discourses about these women's sexuality and intimate needs and desires.

In addition, while the new unified contract attempts to ensure that domestic migrant workers have leisure by stipulating their entitlement to one day off per week, and an additional six-days off per year, women's usage of leisure is regulated by emphasizing that pregnancy will result in deportation. Again, one can notice how the domestic migrant worker's inclusion as a subject due for state consideration is based on her ability to remain economically functional. Justification of workers' access to leisure is grounded on the notion that rest makes the women more productive and enhances their capacity to function as domestic help. The implied disregard for sexual agency or the freedom to enter and maintain intimate relationships becomes explicit when we note that, "The Lebanese labour law prohibits discriminating against a woman worker on the basis of her being pregnant. The law states that women workers should be entitled to seven weeks of maternity leave that can be taken in the pre-delivery or post-delivery periods and it provides for the full payment of wages during maternity leave. However, the law does not apply to foreign domestic workers. The health insurance that covers foreign domestic workers does not include delivery fees neither does her contract include maternity leave" (Caritas 2009: 2).

The manner in which female migrant workers, their entitlements and obligations are constructed by the attitudes and actions of public authorities,

often duplicitously, becomes apparent when we consider the following episode. In 2008, a brochure circulated by the Ministry of Labour stated, incorrectly, that the workers, under Lebanon laws, do not have the right to marry (Caritas 2009). However, the right of a domestic migrant worker to marriage is actually upheld in the Lebanese constitution (ILO 2006; Huda 2006). The inaccuracy in the Ministry of Labour brochure was discovered by a Caritas official during the November 2005 Awareness Raising Workshop at the ILO in Beirut (ILO 2006). Nonetheless, as further research uncovered, the constitutional provision is only a symbol of the state's claims to being liberal; exercising the right requires one to navigate around the almost insurmountable bureaucratic obstacles²² put in place by the Lebanese government and the Sri Lankan Embassy.

The preceding discussion highlights how the actions and inactions by the Ministry of Labour cast the domestic worker as a subject whose includability is, at best, partial, contingent on her economic worth. Aspects of her being, including sexuality, that do not augment her productivity are considered peripheral and pushed to the margins of state attention. Further, state retribution – in the form of absolute exclusion via deportation – is threatened when sexual agency acts to the detriment of economic functionality (in the case of pregnancy, for instance). This inference is validated when we consider how state recognition of female migrant workers as sexual *objects* coincides with their neglect as sexual *subjects*.

²² As discussed in Chapter 2, it is difficult to complete bureaucratic tasks within the Lebanese government unless someone has *wasta* (or has access to power or knows persons who do). Interviews with Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers demonstrate that they are reluctant to start bureaucratic tasks either with the Lebanese government or the Sri Lankan Embassy due to the bribes that are needed, time commitments and lack of trust that officials will actually assist them in a fair and timely manner.

Interestingly, Sri Lanka and Lebanon constitute contrasting case studies of the negotiations that take place between state narratives and the functioning of the state apparatus in (mostly) reifying and (sometimes) contesting paradigms about the domestic migrant worker. In Sri Lanka, while the state discourse gives the appearance of being monolithic allows no official room for manoeuvre in the identity of the female domestic migrant as ‘rightless’ but ‘dutiful’, state functionaries (covertly) articulate dissent by exercising discretion in their interactions with the workers. In contrast, in Lebanon, the state, as represented by its legal structure, allows for a greater acknowledgement of the migrants’ entitlements; nonetheless, individual operatives of the state demonstrate commensurately lesser zeal (compared to their Sri Lankan counterparts) in enforcing the law. In Mountz’s (2003) terms, the transformative potential within the organisation and operation of the Lebanese state is lesser. Research into the position of Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers in Lebanon shows that existing protective and rights-based laws are often not enforced because of perceptions and attitudes on the part of those doing the enforcing. The following section details the manner in which the enforcement (and, reinforcement) of laws are based on the perception of individual enforcement officials. While laws might exist to recognize and protect the humanity of domestic migrant workers, they are rarely enforced (ILO 2004). While organizations, such as ILO and Caritas, work closely with the Ministry of Labour to ensure a human rights discourse and laws and policies which follow, and while the Ministry in meetings might concede (as demonstrated in the ILO 2005 meeting), the enforcement and follow-through is lacking (Huda 2006). Ultimately, a picture emerges where the humanity of

workers, through a denial of their sexuality and a disregard for their needs for intimacy, is rarely recognized in day-to-day operations of the state.

3.1. Extensive Laws, poor enforcement:

An overview of the laws pertaining to domestic migrant workers and the modes of their enforcement reveals that individual attitudes and perceptions play a role in shaping the everyday circumstances of the domestic migrant workers. For example, even though sexual abuse is listed as an offence within the unified contract, interviews conducted with Lebanon's General Security confirm that they are often unwilling or unable to follow up on complaints from domestic migrant workers. To date, what the Ministry of Labour claims to do, through legislation, with regard to domestic workers' rights remain incongruous with the manner and content of routine interactions between Ministry employees and domestic migrant workers. Fawzi Al-Hajj Hassan, Head of the Labour Force Unit in the Ministry of Labour, in his report during the "Awareness Raising Workshop on the Situation of Women Domestic Migrant Workers in Lebanon", asserts that the Ministry protects workers by stipulating terms of fair employment, monitoring employers' adherence to those terms and attending to workers' grievances arising from their breach (ILO 2006:20). Nonetheless, the government has been unable to prosecute, let alone convict, any employers on charges such as, "deprivation of liberty or fraudulently withholding wages...or sexual exploitation" (Huda 2006:12).

In a further example, a 1964 General Security decree states, "physical and emotional abuse and sexual advances against the woman's will are

prohibited and that the victim can complain in person or by telephone” (quoted by Huda 2006:14). However, on account of a lack of awareness and enforcement, the law has been relegated to the status of nothing more than an endearing but defunct custom. According to Huda, “senior government officials outside the Ministry of Interior, including parliamentarians, were often unaware of the existence of these directives” (Huda 2006).

Few cases ever make it to court; even fewer result in a decision in favor of the domestic migrant worker. Caritas, the largest NGO in Lebanon and one of the few organizations, which addresses migrant grievances, has, since 2006, hired four lawyers to take on migrant complaints. However, complaints that are heard and lead to prosecution, more often than not, have to do with non-payment of wages. During 2008, only one employer was prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced for the rape of a domestic worker within the (private) home. Tellingly, there was not a single instance of courts being required to arbitrate on a case involving a domestic migrant worker living outside of her employer’s/sponsor’s home. Most disputes that arise in the context of this category of migrant workers are settled out of court, to the detriment of the worker. The courts’ ability to provide redress is further hampered by institutional bottlenecks: lack of resources; court backlogs; corruption; cultural biases, particularly against foreign women; bureaucratic indifference and inefficiency; difficulty in establishing abuse; and victims' lack of knowledge of their rights (U.S. State Dept Trafficking in Persons Report: 2009). Given the significant hurdles to pursuing criminal complaints in the Lebanese court system, and in the absence of alternate legal recourse, many foreign victims opt for quick administrative settlements followed by mandatory repatriation

(ibid).

Adib Zakhour, a senior attorney with Caritas, affirmed that there are existing civil codes and institutional laws that Lebanon has ratified, which govern all rights related to one's personal life and human dignity. Accordingly, what impetus an updating of labour laws include domestic work would provide for enforcement is unclear. According to Mr. Zakhour, a primary cause for poor enforcement is the discrepancy between the laws and their interpretation and implementation. For instance, in theory, foreign workers have the right to carry their passports and the right to legal guidance and direct communication with lawyers if they are arrested. Further, the law identifies the responsibility for the removal of a worker's permits and passes to lie with the employer. In practice, however, these and other rights of the workers are not upheld. To ensure that women migrant domestic workers are benefiting from the laws that are designed to protect them, Mr. Zakhour stressed the important role lawyers do and can play with regard to disseminating knowledge and understanding of the law and defending the rights of domestic workers in court (this would include the right to marry, to become pregnant and give birth). However, whether or not a lawyer is actually able to win an individual case often depends on the governmental officials and judges he/she dealing with – whether the arbitrating official is sympathetic to the plight of domestic migrant workers or has a favourable relationship with the given attorney.

An interview with the head of General Security revealed that he understood that there was unfair treatment of domestic migrant workers. He stated that he understood that they were provided with very little police or

legal protection because they were viewed as “second-class citizens in Lebanon”. He stated, “I know this is a tremendous area that needs to be addressed, but we are so far from being able to do so. We have so many other pressing political and security issues within the country.”

The erasure of migrant workers’ interests from the agenda of the state highlights their devaluation as the ‘other’ that is allowed to enter and remain for only as long and only on those terms as are mandated by the cost benefit calculus. It is the attitude and actions of the state’s operatives that, as argued earlier, constructs and maintains an inferior identity for the workers and justifies the rejection of their humanity. Defacto marginalisation of the female domestic migration occurs despite the statutory infrastructure of the state emblematising a contrary, more inclusive ethic; clearly, this is a phenomenon that can only be captured by the construal of the state as embodied and embedded in the everyday actions of its representation.

I want to end this section with a vignette, which exemplifies how perceptions regarding the sexuality of domestic migrant workers can interfere with workers’ access to forming and maintaining intimate relationships. Geethika’s story illustrates the manner in which normative views of the identity of Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers and their relationship to Arab male nationals affects the enforcement of laws and policies. Even when laws and policies do exist to protect and recognize the sexuality and intimate lives of domestic migrant workers, they are not enforced due to prevailing notions of the sexuality of female foreign workers as ‘tainted’ and as a threat to the identity of the Lebanese family (Jureidini 2006; Moukarbel 2009).

As stated above, the constitution of Lebanon gives domestic migrant

workers the right to marry. Accordingly, in the following case, Geethika and Ibrahim were able to legally marry. However, as will be seen, they were unable to continue the intimate relationship as perceptions held by individuals within Lebanon's General Security made it untenable for them to continue staying together in the same country.

One Sunday, in 2005, Ibrahim, a Lebanese laundry-man in a local hospital in Beirut, met Geethika, a Sri Lankan domestic migrant worker in Wafaa. The two met and instantly fell in love and wanted to marry. Geethika, who had ran away from her employer's private home because she was unhappy with the living and working conditions, was recently divorced from her husband in Sri Lanka and acquiesced to a marriage with Ibrahim. The two went to a Shiite sheikh who performed the ceremony and registered their marriage within the Shiite registry.²³ The two moved into an apartment together in Wafaa.

Six months into the marriage, Geethika ran into her previous employer on the street. The employer detained Geethika and called the police; Geethika was arrested for living outside of her employer's home without permission. In the six months that Geethika spent at the detention centre, Ibrahim visited her every other day. He pleaded with officials to release Geethika, but they were unwilling to do so unless he paid the USD1500 in fines and money owed to Geethika's previous employer. Based upon Ibrahim's USD500 per month salary it would be some time before he would be able to save enough money to release her.

²³ It is interesting to note that the actions of the Shiite sheikh could be viewed as a step toward reworking and resistance. The religious official permits the marriage, yet officials within the government do not recognize the marriage. Further research could be done to assess the religious official's perceptions and willingness to support Ibrahim and Geethika's marriage in response to General Security's refusal.

Before this time could come, the 2006 Lebanese War began, Geethika, along with the other 260 detained domestic migrant workers, was released and received amnesty to return home to Sri Lanka. The Lebanese government feared that the Israeli bombings could destroy the detention center, and so a decision was made to release the detainees. Geethika returned to Sri Lanka.

At the end of the war, in August 2006, Ibrahim began the process, with General Security, to bring Geethika back into the country. According to Abdel Sater, a human rights lawyer, Ibrahim was required to pay the USD1500 fines; apply for a spousal residency for Geethika, which would require Geethika to live outside of Lebanon for six months; and for Ibrahim to show that he was employed and able to support her. However, four years later, after having paid the USD1500 and taken the necessary legal steps, Ibrahim is still trying to bring Geethika back to Lebanon.

Interviews with Ibrahim, General Security and a human rights lawyer reveal that officials within General Security simply do not believe that Ibrahim wants to bring Geethika into Lebanon as his wife. They dismiss Ibrahim's claims and believe that he wants to bring Geethika in as his "personal prostitute". Research on the sexuality and intimacy of domestic migrant workers in Lebanon reiterate these findings (Jureidini 2006; Moukarbel 2010). According to an official within the General Security office, "His case is very difficult. No one would believe that a Lebanese man wants to legitimately marry a Sri Lankan woman. In our culture, a Sri Lankan woman is seen as a prostitute not as a wife." Research conducted by Mourkarbel (2010) suggests that the Sri Lankan female domestic worker body is perceived by Lebanese nationals to be "tainted" (Moukarbel 2010:342). She states that intimate

relationships with female workers are also viewed as “shameful and degrading” (2010: 341). Jureidini (2006) suggests that Lebanese employer’s perceive Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers as ‘highly erotic’ and a ‘threat to the Lebanese family’ (Jureidini 2006:131).

Thus, she is a sexual consumable and, hence, not a sexual equal. She is the object and not the subject of sexual desire. This asymmetry in the sexual status (*vis-à-vis* autonomy) of the Lebanese man and the Sri Lankan maid is what makes marriage between them untenable to individuals tasked with manning the bureaucratic apparatus of the state. Thus Geethika and Ibrahim’s plight reveals how perceptions harboured by officers of the state can directly affect domestic migrant workers access to intimacy and certain forms of sexuality.

4. Conclusion:

This chapter identifies how the state operates to construct and maintain a heavily circumscribed identity of the female domestic migrant worker. It investigates the role played by state discourse on the ideal femininity and the narratives of (hetero)normativity by identifying its articulation through its laws and literature. It also identifies spaces of resistance within the state machinery created by the dissonance between the narratives and the belief systems of individual operatives of the state. This dissonance, the chapter argues, can express itself through discretionary acts that run contrary to the state depictions, characterisations and exhortations. The space thus demarcated is rich in what Mountz (2003) calls ‘transformative potential’ spaces, which facilitate the migrant’s reworking of the moral and practical constraints on

their ability to manage the emotional byproducts (and, even causes, of) migration,

According to the discussions in the chapter, Sri Lanka and Lebanon present relatively contrasting case studies. While the Sri Lankan state relies on what is often presented as a seamless and unified discourse on femininity and migrant worker, individuals representing the state (covertly) question the narrative and contest it by modifying it or even subverting it with other 'migrant sympathetic' discourses. Lebanon, on the other hand, has rich legislative content that identifies migrant domestic workers, not exclusively in terms of duties but as possessors of rights to humane and dignified treatment. However, functionaries of the state reveal an attitude that treats the migrant worker as 'the other' whose inclusion is contingent on her economic worth. In doing so, they perpetuate a cultural bias which constructs the worker as a sexual object, denies her sexual subjecthood and truncates the transformative spaces available within the state.

Finally, despite the existence of reworking within the Sri Lankan state, in the end, the two states operate together, perhaps unwittingly, to maintain the sexual identity of domestic migrant workers and designate her needs for intimacy as something to be recognized only within the confines of an identity as sacrificing mother, wife and daughter.

Chapter 6 - Extra State Actors, Normative Discourses and Spaces for Reworking²⁴

“I simply do not see why the nation has to have an official sexuality, especially one that authorizes the norm of violent gentility; that narrows the field of legitimate political action; that supports the amputation of personal complexity into categories of simple identity; that uses cruel and mundane strategies to promote shame for non-normative populations and to deny them state, federal, and juridical supports because they are deemed morally incompetent to their own citizenship” (Berlant 1997: 19).

1. Introduction:

Supplementing the critique of the state, this chapter presents a critique of non-state interventions in the intimate and sexual lives of Sri Lankan domestic migrant women. Employing discourse analysis, it tries to demonstrate how non-state literature seconds state articulations of morality to maintain abstract paradigms of the ideal female migrant as a subject with no capacity for sexual desire. This chapter further argues that benchmarks of feminine virtue that are identified and promoted by the apparatus of the state are reinforced through the research and activism of non-state actors. Focusing primarily on a paper on Sri Lanka migrant women published by the HIV Practice Team of the United Nations Development Programme Regional Center in Colombo (UNDP RCC), as an example of a non-state intervention that is premised on state endorsed conceptions of female virtue, it interrogates the ways that normative ideals of heterosexual marriage and family are variously regulated and enforced

²⁴ A version of this chapter is to be published as: Smith, M. (forthcoming). Erasure of sexuality and desire: state morality and Sri Lankan migrants in Beirut, Lebanon. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*.

transnationally and how that both purposefully ignores and acts to constrain migrant women's sexual agency. Through interviews and ethnographic research this chapter highlights how non-state actors, deliberately or otherwise, fall in line with moralistic state discourses to reinforce the hegemonic paradigms of migrant women's sexuality. Secondly, assessing non-state projects vis-à-vis Sri Lankan female migrants who transgress mononormative expectations it highlights how institutions operate to promote and repress certain sexualities, images, desires and stereotypes, and how adherence to (or, deviations from) norms can constitute criteria for the marginalization (for example through the lack of state acknowledgement and protection) of whole persons or of specific aspects of personhood. However, my research also offers glimpses - through an analysis of day-to-day workings within NGOs - of possible sites of reworking in relationship to the state (Katz 2004). Individuals within the NGO, who, on moral, analytical or idiosyncratic bases, might disagree with both the normative state discourse, open up these spaces and the state sanctioned NGO interventions.

I begin my analysis of non-state actors with an examination of the actions of a UN organization, which as an NGO is overtly committed to address the inequalities experienced by domestic migrant workers (Huang et al 2005: 15). It has often been argued that neo-liberal states are minimally concerned with disciplining variations of sexuality within the private sphere, particularly of migrant populations, and more concerned with reinforcing marriage or couplehood as a foundation of an economically functional and productive unit (Luibheid 2009). Such arguments are often complemented by the rhetoric that NGOs are architects of political spaces in which the advocacy

for domestic migrant workers take place (ibid). While the hypothesised role of the state, in such arguments, in focusing on social organisation, cohesion and functionality can be read as support for my thesis that migrant female bodies are recognised only in their economically instrumental aspects, the analysis in the chapter runs counter to the putative role of non state actors as providing safe spaces for the voicing and redressal of migrants' grievances. Rather, I argue, organisations like the UN maintain and sustain the very inequalities they are supposed to critique. In line with normative morals of sexuality UNDP RCC aims to encourage marriage, monogamy and motherhood while discouraging transgressive sexual practices; accordingly, it nourishes the state sanctioned archetype of ideal sexual citizenry. Interesting, as I will detail presently, while the UNDP RCC is generous in its allocation of typescript to building a discourse of victim hood that casts the Sri Lankan female migrant as the victim of sexual abuse, it severely truncates the space for the narrative of the migrant woman as sexual agent (rather than sexualised object) by various acts of omission and deletion. I specifically address the UNDP RCC report on Asian migrant women's vulnerabilities to HIV because it is the most recent, largest and most inclusive study addressing female migration and sexuality. No other state or non-state report has addressed migration and sexuality within the Asian context previously.

Although I focus upon the case of the UNDP RCC – to demonstrate how research, analysis writing and editing techniques are employed to make invisible, and thus exclude from state protection, certain sexual desires and practices – as an example of collusion (perhaps unwitting) between state and

non state actors in shaping the lives of Sri Lankan female migrant workers, I also refer to examples from the civil society at large to support my argument.

It is worth clarifying a methodological point here. While analyses of non state literature are crucial in identifying intersections between state actions and non state ‘activism’ in order to maintain the ideological status quo, they would be equally helpless in flagging the sites of resistance within an organisation to its own overarching schemes. Thus, in so far as resistance is constituted by individuals within the organisation contesting these schemes (or, narratives), on a daily basis, through their work, it is important to identify the organisation’s transformative potential. This can only be achieved through ethnographic observation. My observations at UNDP RCC and Caritas – which are discussed subsequently – support Mountz’s (2003) findings that actions and attitudes of individuals within the organisation define how organisational power is deployed to maintain or substitute organisational aims. She argues: “Ethnographic observation and participation, in its documentation of these frustrations and subversions, can contribute to political breaking points within the state theorised as an institutional arrangement of social practices” (Mountz 2003: 640). Engaging with Katz’s taxonomy, I specifically highlight space of reworking and potential sites of resistance (Katz 2004).

2. Interventions by UNDP RCC:

The multi-country UNDP study and report is entitled, *HIV vulnerabilities faced by women migrants: from Asia to the Arab States: from silence, stigma*

and shame to safe mobility with dignity, equity and justice. The research, undertaken in 2007-2009, was released in March 2009 and concludes that Asian women working in the Arab states are highly vulnerable to HIV infection because they often travel and work under unsafe conditions and are targets of sexual exploitation and violence (UNDP 2009). The \$120,000 research project included Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Bahrain, Lebanon and the UAE. Over 500 migrants and state and non-state officials were interviewed for the study. The work was jointly undertaken with three UN agencies and four NGOs. The project received national and international attention and wide media coverage.

I will focus primarily on the portion of the report which addresses Sri Lankan migrant women in Beirut (although the information does apply to all groups of female migrants within the study). The omissions and deletions that occurred during the preparation of the report amplified the state's silence over the intimate and sexual lives of Sri Lankan female migrants. The magnitude of the silencing act will become even more apparent after the discussion, in the following chapter, of the experiences of those Sri Lankan women who work in Beirut as freelancers. The work of UNDP RCC is analyzed and evaluated vis-à-vis a specific cohort of Sri Lankan migrant women, 'freelancers', who live outside their employers' home and ^{whose} lives and sexualities deviate from expected norms. In Beirut, and specifically within Wafaa, a suburb where many freelancing migrants live, many Sri Lankan women choose to cohabit with male migrants and Lebanese nationals partly in order to share expenses and secure a sense of safety and protection from unwanted male attention, but, most importantly, to satisfy their desire for emotional and sexual intimacy.

To demonstrate the manner in which the UNDP has silenced and made invisible women's desires for intimacy, while at the same time emphasizing women's roles as dutiful and chaste mothers, daughters and wives, I want to review the first executive summary of the report on Asian Migrant Women's HIV risks. The summary, which was launched in October 2008, was first inadvertently released without having been edited and reviewed by officials within UNDP RCC (see illustration 2, below).

Illustration 2

Executive Summary:

Final Complete Report:



This unedited version stated, explicitly that many migrant women (and migrant men) were indeed engaging in consensual sex while living abroad, and that the prospect of such intimate relationships weighed favourably, for some women, in making the decision to migrate. However, migrants' and researchers' accounts, which depicted migrants as sexual subjects desiring and engaging in sexual relations, were erased from the final report (see illustration

3 below). As mentioned in Chapter 3, I had access to this information during the time that I worked as a research consultant at UNDP RCC. I worked with a team of senior and junior UNDP officials. Although I received permission from UNDP RCC to conduct my PhD research during the time of my consultancy through observation and interviews, I have chosen to not use individual names as a way to maintain a degree of confidentiality.

Illustration 3: Sample page, and additional examples of phrases from the UNDP Executive Summary (2008), which were omitted from the final UNDP Report (2009)

Sample Page:

The high cost of migration is not matched by sufficient wages and often the migrants find it hard to save enough to pay off the debt and send money home. Such situations, make them highly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Several respondents of the study mentioned that they have been coerced into sexual relationship by economic necessity. **In some cases, this is also driven by emotional and physical needs.** Several respondents have also reported that they have been forced into sex by employees, male members of the employee-households, other

- defines acts constituting illegal recruitment and penalties thereof;
- sets mandatory periods for the resolution of illegal recruitment cases;
- provides for free legal assistance and preferential treatment of victims of illegal recruitment under the witness protection program;
- requires gender-sensitive labor migration policies, programs, and services.

Key migration management institutions:
The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration in the Department of Labor and Employment, licenses private recruitment agencies;

Additional Omitted Text:

“...sexual activity is easier for women migrant workers who do not live within the home of their employer, and who therefore enjoy full freedom once they are off-duty. They also have days off and are able to own and use mobile phones, which facilitate easy contact” (UNDP Executive Summary, October 2008: 20).

“Inevitably, sexual relationships between domestic workers and their male co-workers take place. As human beings they have sexual desires and have the right to fulfill them” (ibid: 19).

“Savings realized from sharing rent enabled workers to spend money on sexual activities with other nationalities... The overwhelming majority of Pakistani males interviewed in the study claimed to have sexual relationships with female sex workers, [which included] Sri Lanka women migrant workers who are away from their wives for long periods of time need to fulfill their sexual urges” (ibid: 24).

There are several reasons why the individuals involved in the editing of the final UNDP RCC report did not want to recognize the sexuality and

desires of Sri Lankan migrant women. Firstly, there was a desire by senior UNDP RCC officials to make migrant women appear to be as vulnerable to HIV as possible to ensure that AIDS remained on the UNDP agenda. Secondly, there was a fear, instigated by senior UNDP RCC officials, that if governments (particularly in the Middle East) were informed through the report that migrant women were engaging willingly in sex abroad, there would be negative state repercussions for the women. In addition to these pragmatic considerations, individuals with editorial responsibility for the document articulated – during formal meetings and discussions (which I attended during my consultancy) – a zeal to ‘instil proper values in migrant workers’. Thus, the final report was shaped by this moralistic stance, as well as by a disbelief that women might experience sexual desire. Officials also held a belief that (on the part of officials representing Asia) Arab males or migrant males, as subjects who are expected to have and do have ‘transgressive’ or excessive sexual desires, were inevitably sexually harassing or abusing migrant women, or were responsible for migrant women’s indiscretions.

How the final version of the report would present women’s desires for sex and intimacy was left to the discretion of the UNDP RCC HIV Practice Team officials. As demonstrated within meetings, decisions were based upon perceptions of what senior officials believed would be accepted by state officials in Sri Lanka and Lebanon, and not cause negative repercussions in the form of restrictions on migration. In addition, senior officials stressed the importance of encouraging ‘good moral standards for domestic migrant workers’, or instilling ‘proper’ notions of ‘monogamy’, and presenting the migrant worker as ‘a female dedicated to her role as mother, wife and

daughter'.²⁵ Turning the spotlight on the individual decision maker in this instance invites comparison with Mountz's (2003) remarks on Canadian immigration officers. Of them, she writes: "A profound change in an individual decision-maker is a profound change within the state. In this way, immigration officers have the potential to be subversive in their day-to-day work, particularly when a critical mass begins to question and challenge policy." Similarly, the UNDP RCC team senior officials are in possession – through their capacity to exercise discretion – of the potential to disrupt the moralising narratives of the state that seek to discipline migrant workers' sexuality. In failing to exercise that discretion to subvert the hegemonic narrative, they neutralise the transformative potential of the Report.

Under the direction of senior employees, the team went line by line through first draft of the 170-page report and deleted all references to women's sexual agency, women desiring sex, and women having boyfriends, unless such a reference was qualified as an aberration by reemphasizing the norm to be the sexual victimization of the worker. In addition, it is interesting to note that subsequent interviews with UNDP RCC representatives and another NGO official who participated in the altering of the report showed that participants did not necessarily agree with the deletions which the HIV Practice Team senior officials insisted on; however, they were afraid to articulate their dissent as they feared negative repercussions for their jobs. They feared not having their contracts renewed, or not receiving a promotion, as based upon discussions with other team members. Further, unlike employees at the SLBFE (see the previous chapter) who used their interaction

²⁵ During meetings to review the progress and to edit the report in 2008 and 2009, the HIV Practice Team senior officials shared their opinions and executive decisions for how the report would present information on women's sexuality and intimacy.

with potential migrant workers to contest the state ethic, these individuals had no recourse to alternative forms of expressing their reworkings. The concentration of discretionary power in the senior officials attenuated the potential of these individuals to be agents of transformation.

The report was engineered to result in its final form through substantive deletions, insertions and substitutions. Any mention of women seeking sexual relationships on their own accord and out of emotional and physical need was removed. The passage, ‘Domestic workers engage in sexual relations for a variety of reasons, including physical needs and economic and material benefits. All domestic workers interviewed in...[the Arab States] shared [the view] that sexual activity is easier for women migrant workers who do not live within the home of their employer, and who therefore enjoy full freedom once they are off-duty. They also have days off and are able to own and use mobile phones, which facilitates easy contact’ (UNDP Executive Summary, October 2008: 20) was deleted. Similarly, this statement by one researcher was deleted: ‘Inevitably, sexual relationships between domestic workers and their male co-workers take place. As human beings they have sexual desires and have the right to fulfill them’ (ibid: 19). Another researcher wrote, ‘Savings realized from sharing rent enabled workers to spend money on sexual activities with other nationalities...The overwhelming majority of Pakistani males interviewed in the study claimed to have sexual relationships with female sex workers, [which included some] Sri Lankan women [working as sex workers as well]...Migrant workers who are away from their wives for long periods of time need to fulfil their sexual urges’ (ibid: 24).

Whole passages documenting consensual sexual behaviour of migrant women were replaced by brief mentions of ‘consensual relationships’, which were always followed by emphasizing exploitative ones such as rape, and group rape. For example, the final report contained this passage: ‘While many relationships are consensual, there are instances where partners, both nationals and other migrant workers, take advantage of the women. Reports indicated that some domestic workers become victims of sexual exploitation by abusive partners and/or by employers and their relatives. Incidents of rape and group rape, either by local nationals or male migrant workers from other nationalities, were reported in the host countries. Usually, the domestic workers do not disclose incidents of sexual exploitation for fear of losing their jobs and to avoid stigma and discrimination’ (UNDP 2009: 71).

UNDP RCC neglected to tell a significant part of the story of migrant women’s personal experiences. The notion that women migrate, not only for an economic future for the family, but also because they are curious about and aware of the potential for intimate relationships abroad was not included in the study. The study left out that once abroad, some women seek pleasure by creating free time and innovative relationships with men. Similarly, the report avoided mentioning that women’s desire for intimacy, in many instances, propels them to move outside the employer’s home to unsurveilled spaces within the state. As stated earlier, these deletions, modifications and moderations of women’s stories was motivated by a fear of ‘exposing’ female migrant subjects as unchaste and impure by the standards of normativity set by the state and adopted, uncritically, by the report. The report itself and the manoeuvrings leading up to its final release provides us with an instructive

case study of how the international agencies and civil society organisations employ a similar biopolitical discourse which works to discipline the female migrant subject by containing her sexual agency.

Finally, the report is replete with photographs of Sri Lankan migrant women who are supposedly representatives of exploited women but in actuality, the images are of women enjoying themselves at a Sinhala concert in Beirut in July of 2008 (which I attended as well). The women were with their boyfriends and friends; they spoke loudly, drank, smoked and wore jeans and tank tops (see illustrations 4 and 5). If these women had been in Sri Lanka, this type of attire and behaviour would elicit comments of *lajj-baya nathi* (loose and immoral, literally without *lajja-baya* – fear and shame). But in Lebanon, most women support each other's new attire, mannerisms and relationships.

Illustration 4: Sri Lankan Women Enjoying Themselves at Rock Concert



They encourage each other, laugh and pass the time. In this context, read as an oversight, the choice of these images for the report is merely comical. The other reading, however, which predicates the choice of images on the premise that personal gratification, as a proxy for moral degeneration, is to be understood not in terms of the women's agency but in terms of exploitation, is intellectually discomfoting.

Illustration 5: Sri Lankan Women Enjoying Herself at Rock Concert



3. Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center (CLMC):

The central purpose of this chapter is to identify ways in which non-state actors operate to sustain, rather than contest, the state's formulation of a female migrant identity. Read in conjunction with the previous chapter on

state interventions, the discussion of UNDP RCC shows how non state actors follow the state's lead in abstaining from acknowledging the female migrant's sexuality while recognizing them as sexualized. In this section, through a discussion of Caritas, I wish to demonstrate how the UNDP RCC's position finds resonance in the conceptual stances of other non state actors, which have the capacity to influence migrant affairs.

Caritas, the largest NGO in Lebanon, opened their Migrant Centre in 1994 in Beirut with the goal to protect asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers, and to support and assist such persons in maintaining their rights and dignity on a social, medical, humanistic, cultural and legal level (Caritas 2009). With regard to domestic migrant workers, Caritas operates a safe house where medical and social assistance is provided to women who have had to leave their employers' homes. Four Caritas lawyers also provide legal consultation to domestic migrant workers. In addition, Caritas has worked, with permission from General Security, within migrant detention centers providing medical, psychological, nutritional and legal assistance to domestic migrant workers.

Caritas articulates its future goals to: 1) coordinate with the Ministry of Labour to raise awareness of the plight of domestic migrant workers and the rights of such workers and responsibilities of involved parties; 2) support the creation of a complaint unit at the Ministry of Labour staffed by Caritas staff; 3) collaborate with the Ministry of Labour to modify laws on migrant workers; and, 4) create a committee to promote the awareness of the Lebanese cultural image of migrant workers and existing cultural attitudes and behaviour of Lebanese society towards such workers (ILO 2006:14).

However, within their projects, Caritas has been neither able to address the issue of domestic migrant workers' sexuality nor able to advocate for their rights to intimate relationships. Rather, through its media projects, it aims to instil in women a desire to maintain their economic responsibilities to family at home and to continue to use their bodies for work and mothering rather than for sexual pleasure. It also aims to inform the wider public that Sri Lankan migrant women are moral and chaste females with natural ties to home. In March 2006, the CLMC released a film entitled, 'Maid in Lebanon'. The thirty-minute documentary depicts the situation of women migrant workers in Lebanon, and describes their different experiences while living abroad. The film received national and international attention.²⁶ The image of Sri Lankan migrant workers presented in the film, however, is singularly one of the dutiful mother, wife and daughter who sacrifices her life for family back at home, or of women who have been the victims of sexual violence. Six Sri Lankan women, aged 18-45, are interviewed in the film. Leela, a mother of five, cries for her children back at home; Nirosha writes love letters to her husband as she sends remittances home to build a family house; Surayaka goes abroad as the dutiful daughter to support sending her sisters to school; Kumari supports two children while her husband is unable to get work back in Sri Lanka; woman X and woman Y respectively tell of being sexually and physically

²⁶ The \$25,000 project was funded in partnership with the UN's Office of High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Labor Organization (ILO) the Netherlands Embassy and Caritas. The movie has been shown internationally at film festivals and universities as well as national workshops intended to raise awareness among Lebanese nationals of the plight of migrant workers within the country. In addition, clips of the film are available on YouTube and the national and international press continues to cover the film to date (conversation with C. Mansour, film director, 2009).

abused. The graphic potential of the film is further augmented by images of dead or abused anonymous Sri Lankan female bodies.

Clearly, Caritas operates to manage the identity of the domestic migrant worker to fit the paradigms authored by the state (and, hence easily recognisable by the larger society). This identification of the migrant domestic worker, simultaneously, as a repository of virtue and as a victim of an unsympathetic society is crucial to the success of its project to alter their designation as ‘the other’. Nevertheless, Caritas’ awareness campaign as well as its broadly defined operational ethic glaringly omits making any appeal to empower the migrant domestic worker – through legislation and attitudinal change – to function more effectively as a sexual subject by being able to exercise her agency to enter (and exit) intimate relationships of her choosing to manage the loneliness and despair that migration might give rise to. The migrant worker is deserving of a humane treatment but her claims to humanity hinges critically on her ability to fit the normative template. Thus, Caritas attempts to generate sympathy for the migrant worker – which constitutes only a partial erasure of her otherness – where her need, really, is for empathy.

Nonetheless, closer observations of day-to-day workings within Caritas and interviews with Caritas employees reveal that there are, both, employees who endorse and reject the organisation’s stereotype of the ideal female worker as moral, chaste and family minded.

Sister Mary, a Catholic nun from Sri Lanka, has been working with Caritas for two years. She has daily and direct interactions with Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers. Interviews with Sister Mary show her to identify with the normative discourse of Caritas and that of the state regarding

domestic migrant workers' sexuality and desires and needs for intimacy. Sister Mary provides daily counseling to women and always encourages them to avoid intimate relationships or, if they are in one, to end them. She encourages women, "to stay connected to their families, and to remember the reasons that they have come abroad." When she is outside of the Caritas offices and walking within Wafaa and sees Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers with men she tries to shame women by conspicuously watching them and making it evident that she disapproves. She states, "I want them to know that I am watching what they are doing. They try to avoid my eye, but I know that they see me...They know what they are doing is wrong and that's why they avoid me...I want them to be proud to be Sri Lankan and not behave in a manner that brings shame to our country."

On the other hand, Nirmila, a Sri Lankan woman who has been working with Caritas for over 10 years, is sympathetic to the plight of domestic migrant workers. She states that she understands the difficult situation that they are in. She sees Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers in Lebanon as "very lonely" and in need of "affection and pleasure" within their lives. She states, "I understand why they are doing what they do. We cannot judge them. I let them know that I understand and that they need to be careful to make good decisions for themselves. They have difficult situations at home and here. You cannot fault them for wanting to just have a good time." In this way, Nirmila demonstrates a reworking of the policies and actions of Caritas. I argue Nirmila reworks her situation and that of migrant women in that she is able to alter some of the adverse affects of migration, but she is not able to alter the polarization of power, or achieve emancipatory change.

4. Conclusion:

This chapter is concerned with the multiple operations of gendered and sexualized power, which is not practised within hermetically, sealed or epistemically circumscribed borders of the state. Deploying Foucault's notion of biopolitics, 'an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations' (Foucault 1976), and Agamben's state of exception (as discussed within Chapter 5), I analyze how institutions like UNDP RCC employ research, analysis and writing techniques to make visible and invisible, and thus to bestow with state protection only certain sexual desires and practices.

This chapter has highlighted the manner in which sexuality is disciplined by extra-state (and state institutions) in a manner that normalises and naturalises a monogamous heterosexuality, marriage, family and biological reproduction. Not only are persons who deviate from the norm most often marginalised and silenced, but deviant ways of being are suppressed in the discourse of the state. Assessing the UNDP RCC's project vis-à-vis Sri Lankan female migrants who transgress mono-normative expectations highlights how institutions operate to promote and repress certain sexualities, images, desires and stereotypes (see Minter 1993). Implicit normative moral assumptions erase, conceptually, the possibility agency of women's desiring sex and forms of sexual interaction outside of monogamous marriage. Further, a consideration of Caritas' campaigns to increase awareness in Lebanon about the domestic migrant worker only serves to proliferate stereotypes of migrant women as either the dutiful female family members or victims – (in the latter case, with the Middle Eastern employer or state inevitably the victimiser).

Thus, further research might explore the ways that oppressive and exploitative practices of migrant women are not only tied to gender, class and racial stereotypes and practices (Pratt 2005; Silvey 2004; Yeoh 2004), but to assumptions regarding sexual identity as well, such as monogamy and the related concepts of the sacrificing and chaste mother, daughter and wife.

However, this chapter has also highlighted how individuals working for the organisation can create transformative spaces within the organisation, by expressing dissidence against organisational goals and policies through acts of discretion in their day-to-day work, to impair organisational abilities and power. But while the disjunctures between the organisation's narratives and individual belief systems is necessary for the subversion of the narratives to even be possible, these are not sufficient for the transformative potential to be realised. What is needed, over and on top of this reworking, is the capacity of the dissenting individuals to translate their dissent (in overt or covert ways) into acts of resistance. In the context of the examples discussed in this chapter and the last, we can identify a taxonomy of transformative potential in the various (state and non state) institutions studied (see Table 7 below).

Table 7. Taxonomy of transformative potential

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Reworking</u>	<u>Mode of articulation of reworking</u>	<u>Capacity for discretionary acts</u>	<u>Transformative potential</u>
SLBFE (Sri Lankan state)	Exists	Covert	Exists	High
Ministry of Labour (Lebanese state)	Rationalised	NA	Exists	Low

UNDP RCC (Sri Lankan, non state)	Exists	No articulation	Does not exist	Low
Caritas (Lebanese, non state)	Exists	Covert	Exists	High

As has been well documented in the media and international organisations' reports (Human Rights Watch 2007; Jureidini 2004; UNDP 2009), Sri Lankan migrant women do experience sexual harassment and rape while working abroad. And, within this chapter, I do not wish to diminish the problem of sexual exploitation; rather, I suggest that the theme of sexuality can not be explored by a selective and exclusive focus on victimisation, but only by understanding the women as sexual agents who make choices to satisfy their desires for intimate relationships and contextualising this agency to the socio economic background which generates a climate conducive to their exploitation. As research and reports focus solely on exploitation, they render invisible the manner in which women are also active sexual subjects who desire intimate and sexual relationships (which explains, at least in part, why they re-migrate and want to remain abroad). This invisibility contributes to their sexual lives continuing to remain outside the ambit and protection of the law. For example, in most instances, living away from one's employer is still considered illegal, social acceptance of their polyamorous relationships is difficult, and legal marriages for female migrant workers outside their home countries are difficult to obtain.

Despite the fact that Sri Lankan women are well aware that they are in a precarious position in relation to the state and that there is a legal vacuum with regard to their intimate relationships, they continue to enjoy intimate and

sexual lives while abroad. And while these images of pleasure might pale against visions of women's bodies that have been abused, raped and killed, erasure of the former is an obliteration of women's desires, capacities and agency. According to Manalansan (2006: 235), we need to go beyond a labouring gendered agent and highlight a desiring and pleasure-seeking migrant subject. Female sexuality, in the context of migration, functions not as a mere symbol of homeland traditions but rather as the site of ideological and material struggles that shape the impetus to migrate and influence the manner of settlement and assimilation. It poses new ways of thinking about female sexual agency and the redefinition of gender roles in a transnational context.

Chapter 7 - Sri Lankan Migrant Women, Spaces of Reworking

“...[D]esires for intimacy that bypass the couple or the life narrative it generates have no alternative plots, let alone few laws and stable spaces of culture in which to clarify and to cultivate them. What happens to the energy of attachment when it has no designated place? To the glances, gestures, encounters, collaborations, or fantasies that have no canon” (Berlant 1997:7)?

1. Introduction:

In the last two chapters, I presented and discussed the ways in which the motif of the chaste and dutiful Sri Lankan woman emerges from the discourses of various state and non-state actors. I also argued how such discourse performs a cartographic function, earmarking moral, social and cultural spaces for these women to inhabit and move around in. This chapter turns the spotlights on the women to interrogate the ways in which they navigate the complex terrain of their everyday lives with the moral compass that the state equips them with.

This chapter considers how Sri Lankan migrant women living and working as freelancers in Beirut, Lebanon rework (Katz 2004) state imposed identity constructed via a conflation of the notion of moral worth being chaste, demure and sacrificing (de Alwis 1999; Lynch 1999). I argue that their move into the migrant neighborhood and participation within the migrant community there, inclusive of engaging in intimate relationships, constitutes a reworking of their status and circumstances as migrants to make the state imposed identity of, and the attendant expectations from, the “good Sri Lankan woman” more manageable. This reworking involves multiple actions, for example: leaving an employer’s home, greater consumption of

leisure (as compared both to when women reside in Sri Lanka and in their employer's home), and utilization of remittances for personal pleasure. Since my focus is on the sexual domain of migrants' lives it is important to not misread the increased consumption of leisure as having an economic inflection. Greater leisure is important in its facilitative aspect, in the ways it can expand sexual possibilities available to the female migrant worker and boost her capacity of sexual agency.

The majority of women who live outside of their employers' homes in Beirut cohabit with male partners and are in what would be defined by the Sri Lankan and Lebanese state and wider societies as adulterous relationships (Caritas 2009). By moving outside of their employer's private home into a neighborhood which is not closely monitored by the state, family and employers, freelancers trespass into a territory where moral regime is significantly different from the social spaces they previously used to inhabit. While this transgression is motivated by economic incentives in the form of prospects for higher wages and greater freedom of movement and association, a considerable impetus for the move comes also from a desire to rework the socially constructed and state mediated emotions of loneliness, anger and shame. Reworking, working and living conditions in this manner is also an attempt at renegotiating the terms of migration by challenging the state's articulation of 'loneliness' and 'shame' as inevitable by-products of migration and tribulations that are testimonies of the women's virtue.

2. Wafaa, migrant neighborhood in Beirut:

The neighborhood of Wafaa is approximately five by five city blocks in size. It is a low rent suburb of Beirut, populated with apartments and shops, and is situated a few kilometers north of the affluent central downtown area of Beirut. To the south of Wafaa is an Armenian neighborhood, to the east is a low-income Christian neighborhood, and to the west is the Mediterranean Sea. Migrants began moving to the neighborhood in the 1990s, according to interviews with the City Manager of Waffa, the shopping area is three-square blocks, which is surrounded by seven blocks of five and six storey apartment buildings. The shopping area consists of restaurants, cafes, clothing stores, dry good stores, produce shops, a pharmacy, telephone call centers, and DVD and CD stalls. Shops are stocked with goods which come into Beirut from India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Ethiopia. On any given day the neighborhood is busy with shoppers, and restaurant and café goers. Sunday, the time when most migrants do not have to work, is the busiest day. Approximately 1000 Sri Lankan migrant women live in the neighborhood. Ninety-percent of these women live with male Lebanese nationals or male migrants (Caritas 2009).

Before migrating to Lebanon or shortly after their arrival in the country, the women learn, from other migrants, of the possibility of working as a freelancer living in a neighborhood such as Wafaa. Being able to not work within the employer's private home as a 'contract girl' and moving out to live and work as a freelancer becomes a highly desirable goal. The hours of work are more manageable, the rate of pay is higher and there is the freedom to engage in intimate relationships. My key informants in Wafaa worked an average of 40 hours per week, and earned USD800 per month. They usually split the USD300 per month rent with a male partner.

Given the nature of the *Kafala* or sponsorship system, the initial migration into Lebanon often requires a reworking of the migration process. Sri Lankan women who leave to Lebanon usually go under one of the following plans. Migrant women depart to Lebanon either with a two-year contract (with a plan to live and work as a freelancer at the end of the contract); or on a pre-planned 'free' visa. Of the women who go on a two-year contract there are several who migrate with the intention to escape from their employers' homes before the contract period ends. In the first instance (two-year contract), women arrange to migrate legally through a hiring agent. The last two options ('free visa' and plan 'to jump') are not recognized as legal options by the Lebanese government. Acquiring what migrants now refer to as a 'free visa' entails contacting someone in Lebanon (a Lebanese national or person with legal residency) who is willing to be paid to act as a sponsor only in name. The fees for a 'free visa' can be up to USD3,000. The last option ('jumping' from a two-year contract) involves migrating through legal channels but with a plan to run 'jump'/escape from the employer's house.

Once in Lebanon working outside the employer's home, Sri Lankan women most commonly move into a neighborhood such as Wafaa and share an apartment with a Lebanese male national or male migrant worker. Sri Lankan migrant women living in Wafaa, who cohabit with men, consider their relationships to be 'fake marriages' (discussed in more detail below). While these relationships are endorsed neither by laws nor by the larger society outside Wafaa, they tend to be monogamous relationships which, when

the partners are both migrants, last the length of the migration period of at least one of the partners.

If a couple desires to have their relationship status changed to a legal marriage it would be difficult to do so. The Sri Lankan Embassy requires extensive documentation for a woman to prove that she is single and not married back in Sri Lanka, and to show that her parents grant permission for her to marry. The Lebanese state does not permit civil marriages; only religious marriages are allowed (Bilani, et al 1985). A Sri Lankan Buddhist woman wanting to marry in Lebanon in most instances would have to convert to the faith of her spouse. While instances of Sri Lankan female migrants legally marrying within Lebanon do occur, according to the Sri Lankan Embassy in Lebanon, such instances are rare.

Sri Lankan migrant women partner with Egyptian, Syrian, Bangladeshi and Indian male migrants who are working in low-income jobs in Beirut and, more uncommonly, with Lebanese males - most commonly Shiite men from lower socio-economic backgrounds or widowers with dependent children. Typically male migrants from Egypt, Syria, Bangladesh and India work as janitors, cleaners and porters in buildings and commercial establishments; Syrian and Egyptian men also work in construction, farming, car-servicing, cleaning and garbage collection, repair and maintenance workshops, and as peddlers and porters.

The Arab migrant males and Lebanese males, who partner with Sri Lankan female migrants, are viewed within Lebanese society to not be in a social or economic position to marry a Lebanese female. According to data I collected from Caritas Migrant Center through interviews with the Catholic

nuns and social workers, male migrants, who are residing in Lebanon for a finite time, partner with Sri Lankan female migrant workers for short-term relationships and to share expenses while they are in the country. Some Indian and Bangladeshi male migrants invite their Sri Lankan partners to return home with them at the end of their migration period to marry. For Syrian migrants who are living in Lebanon on a more permanent basis, and for Lebanese nationals, partnering with a Sri Lankan female migrant can be viewed as life long partnership, and with the possibility of legal marriage.

3. The narratives of everyday

3.1 Reworking the moral identity

3.1.1 Shifting morality

Women have created a space in Wafaa where they are able to rework the moral rules of the chaste and pure Sri Lankan mother, wife and daughter. In Wafaa, away from the watchful eye of family and community, Sri Lankan women are free to engage in intimate relationships, to dress in a manner that would be deemed disrespectful in Sri Lanka, and to spend free time engaging in forms of entertainment not socially accepted in Sri Lanka. In Wafaa, they encourage each other to bend the rules of the ‘good Sri Lankan woman,’ and foster a malleability in the moral codes, which accommodates formerly promiscuous and disrespectful behaviour. Women engage in ‘fake marriages,’ limit the amount of remittances they send home, spend money on new forms of entertainment, and wear jeans and dresses deemed disrespectful in Sri Lanka.

My field notes from the summer of 2008 illustrate a common Sunday afternoon in Wafaa:

In 2008, on a Sunday summer afternoon in a migrant neighborhood outside of Beirut, hundreds of female Sri Lankan domestic workers, along with other male and female South Asian and Arab migrants, enjoy their day-off and walk, shop, meander, and chat along the streets. Restaurants, cafes, grocery markets, and fruit and vegetable, video and clothing stores proliferate and are filled with window shoppers and buyers. Sri Lankan women are dressed in the latest fashions: in jeans, short skirts and tank tops. No one is wearing a sari. They wear bright lipstick and accentuating eye make-up; and their hair is down, cut short or permmed into a mop of curls. Sri Lankan women don knock-off Gucci sunglasses and handbags. They talk loudly on their new mobile phones and shout at each across the street.

A bus pulls up and a man gets out advertising tickets to a Sinhalese concert that evening at USD10 per entry. Twenty, 30 and 40-something year-old Sri Lankan women rush in their heels to buy tickets and get on the bus. Once on board women speak of their male partners and their plans that night for dancing and parties. If these women were in Sri Lanka, this is the type of attire and behavior that might elicit comments of lajj-baya nathi (loose and immoral, literally without lajja-baya). But here, in Lebanon, most women support each other's new attire, mannerisms and relationships. They encourage each other, laugh and pass the time.

(Fieldwork notes Smith 2008)

To highlight the degree to which women rework social and moral rules within Wafaa I want to contrast women's lives in Wafaa with their lives in Sri Lanka. With large numbers of village women migrating to Colombo and

abroad for employment since the late 1970s, the morality of female migrant laborers has emerged as a primary target of nationalist discourse about the moral integrity of the nation (de Alwis 1998: 197-98; Gamburd 2000 as quoted in Lynch 2007: 101). Sri Lankan President Rajapaksa running up to the elections in 2010 claimed that, “women are the main contributors to the economy of the country – in the plantations, the garment industry and as migrant labour...Therefore women must be accorded not equal status but primary status *pramukasthanaya*, under the heading *gedera budun amma* (mother is the Buddha in the home)” (Cats Eye 2010).

While women, and in particular mothers, “are seen to be the role models for their children and the rest of society” (Lynch 2007: 79), in Sri Lanka, their moral primacy is contingent on their sexual propriety. Women’s sexual purity is central to Sinhala Buddhist identity (Lynch 2007: 144). The ideal, the role model is designated as a *sanwara* woman who does not call attention to herself” (Lynch 2007: 153). The term *sanwara* means decent and implies being disciplined and having self-control; it can also be translated a “respectable.” “It is a virtue advocated by the Buddha, and so is sometimes translated as “virtuous practice”: by controlling one’s body and mind one is being a good, virtuous persons...”(Lynch 2007: 153).

In Sri Lanka, families and communities closely monitor women’s practices. There is an important behavioural-concept, applicable primarily to women, in Sinhala, *lajja-bayya*. It has been translated as “fear of ridicule or social disapproval” (Obeyesekere 1984: 504) and as “restraint, a holding back from the gaze of others, keeping intense encounters at arm’s length” (Spencer 1990: 171). A respectable woman is one whose public movement is

circumscribed, who is demure and dressed with decorum. A woman with a sloppily tied sari exposing too much midriff can elicit comments of being *lajja-baya nathi* (loose and immoral, literally without *lajja-baya*), as can a woman who moves in public too much and who speaks too loudly. If a woman wore trousers, it would show that they had no self-respect or self-control: they were not behaving respectably.

3.1.2 Fake marriages:

Sri Lankan women state that they choose to cohabit with male migrants and Lebanese nationals to share expenses, and for the fulfillment of romantic and sexual desire. Away from the social and physical constraints of family and community, and living away from their employers, they share apartments with men and enter relationships, which they deem as ‘fake marriages’. These relationships are tailored to suit their economic and social situation, personal needs and migration timeframe. According to Renuka, who ‘jumped’ from her first employer’s home, and with now 20-years of experience in Beirut, “When I jumped from that home, I spent two night on the street before I found an Indian man to help me...He told me I could move in with him...We lived like husband wife – a fake marriage you know. We enjoyed a lot. He took care of me and we shared some expenses. But then his wife from India came to Beirut, and I had to leave...Oh, that was very hard. But, after living with friends for some time, I met my husband [an Indian man] who I’ve lived with for many years...I cannot imagine ever going back to Sri Lanka – you know

how life is there [meaning that she would be judged for staying away for so long and for being with Indian men].”

Women encourage each other to find boyfriends, and ostracize those who cannot find one. The matchmaking and encouraging of others to participate helps to create a culture, which condones sexual promiscuity.

According to Nirmila, a Sri Lankan social worker in Caritas with 20-years of experience within Lebanon, “I know very few women who work as freelancers and don’t have a boyfriend. They are really looked down upon if they don’t have a boyfriend. And they help each other to find new partners. If one man moves away they find another man to replace him.”

Women’s justifications living within ‘fake marriages’ also revolve around narratives of bad conditions at home in Sri Lanka, particularly regarding the lack of trust and respect they have for their legal husbands. Migrant women’s stories within Lebanon often reveal the frustrations they experience from the burdens placed upon them to migrate and work for the family. For example, repeatedly in interviews, participants would state, “What do I need a husband for,” which would be followed by a litany of accounts of poor management of remittances, drinking, and gambling. Or, “If I return back home my life would be so different and controlled.” And, “You know how I would be viewed back home,” which is to say that of the unfaithful, loose woman. Kumari states, “They’ve had such difficult lives before coming here - social and financial problems, alcoholic husbands, debt, abusive relationships. They arrive and just want to escape and have a good time. They want to make up for lost time.”

In addition, women know that whether or not migrant women act on their desire to quell loneliness through intimate relationships, family and community ostracize them for it. By going abroad women transgress the assumed immobility of women and thus are already perceived to be loose and immoral. Consequently, their standing as proper daughters, wives and mothers – *honde lamay* or ‘good girls’ – is jeopardized (Lynch 1999).

In what can be constructed as an attempt to salvage a reputation made fragile by migration Sri Lankan migrant women working as freelancers also decide to only send USD100 back in remittances each month. Even if they were earning more money, to be able to remit more money they refrain from doing so as they believe that the sending of more remittances would mark them further as a promiscuous woman back in Sri Lanka. They believed that if they sent more their family members and community would speculate that they had found a boyfriend or had begun working as a prostitute for the extra money. Thus, women believed that it was better to continue to remit the expected USD100, so as not to instigate suspicion.

Ostracism by the very societies which encourage the transgressive act of migration, migrant women turn the standards to their advantage. Being in a no-win situation reduces the stakes on the maintenance of a virtuous reputation. Consequently, shedding it becomes easier. According to Asha, “I know that people are talking about me back at home. But I do not care what they say...I can live a free life here. I know if I move back to Sri Lanka that my life will change, but for now I’m enjoying.” The identification of moral worth with sexual restraint is not challenged as much as it is put aside while in Lebanon like a well worn garment, perhaps that is unsuitable for the season.

According to Sunitha, “We all just send USD100 home to our families because we know if we send anything more that we will be talked about. They will just assume we are up to no good here...One time when I was home visiting Sri Lanka a neighbor of mine sent milk powder home from Dubai...The people talked about her and said that they knew what she had done to get the extra money [meaning that the migrant woman was either prostituting herself or receiving money from a boyfriend].

3.1.3 Embracing the reworked new morality:

While not all women embrace the reworked moral identity, the majority of my research participants expressed a contentment with the sexually permissive life in Wafaa. Nonetheless, a few women did remain conflicted about their engagement in transgressive intimate relationships and expressed that they were not fully comfortable with the situations. And some women condemned the ‘transgressive’ actions of other women. A common refrain among my informants was, “Sri Lankan women do not know how to control their hormones.” Or that they are able to “sleep with anyone for the price of a roti.” According to Sheila, who had legally married her Indian husband in Sri Lanka, “These women will sleep with anyone. They come here and go mad...They’ve never been away from their families and they think that it’s okay to go with any man. But I don’t like this. These women are no good...They do not know how to control themselves.”

As Hewamanne (2007) found in her work with Sri Lankan migrant women working in factories in the FTZ’s in Sri Lanka, some women wanted

to be perceived as ‘good girls’, but would work around the strict rules of what it meant to be good. She found that women in Sri Lanka were at pains to give the impression that they adhered to what are considered traditional Sinhala Buddhist values, especially the prime one of sexual morality (2007: 199). Women spoke of being proud of self-control. They would rarely talk about human desire – *manussa asa van* – or of sexual desire as reason for relationships. Hewamanne (2007) found that migrant women in the FTZs “constructed their narratives both through and against the dominant cultural narrative. Balancing cultural expectations, female desires, peer pressure and allure of the new consumer culture in the FTZ resulted in creative ways of reconciling their desires with dominant cultural discourses to arrive at a strategic stance that would be most beneficial in that specific context” (2007:163)

Similarly, Sri Lankan migrant women in Lebanon rework narratives of the good Sri Lankan girl to arrive at a way of living and interacting in a manner which is most beneficial to them. Their new surroundings, distance from family, and reinforcement of new moral code by other migrant women assist to encourage women to rework their understanding of a ‘good Sri Lankan woman’. Although some women are conflicted, similarly to what Hewamanne found, many women are accepting of the new behaviours in Wafaa. According to Shamalee, who had relationships with several migrant men, “I was raised in a very strict family. At home, I am not allowed to go out on my own. I can’t dress in jeans or tight shirts, like I am wearing now [points to her skin-tight jeans and sleeveless tee-shirt]. But here I can go and come as I want...It’s fun to flirt with these men. Everyone knows me here. I’ll have to

be the ‘good girl’ when I go back, but for now I’ll enjoy.” Shamalee’s experiences abroad, like that of other women, allowed her to translate her ideas and actions into acceptable behavior. Women laughed and joked about their affairs with men and the affairs that other women were having. They repeatedly stated that women were finally having ‘the time of their lives’. They spoke of women’s desire for sex, to be loved and for romance. They spoke of their inability to control themselves in regards to sexual desires, and were not shy to talk about sex and romance. According to Kumari, who has been living in Beirut for over a decade, “After working in the day, I spend my free time with my boyfriend or in the homes of other Sri Lankans. We drink whiskey, listen to music and dance. I’ll be honest everyone has a lot of sex too. They are finally enjoying themselves...”

4. Constructing emotions and managing affect:

Mediated affect and emotions shape experiences and actions (Anderson and Smith 2001; Thrift 2003); thus a focus upon affect and emotion brings to light previously hidden catalysts for why subjects act and do not.

In the following subsections I will address how the socially constructed emotions of pride, shame, anger, happiness and hope are experienced by the women and shape their attempts to rework their migration experiences. I begin this section with a vignette, which outlines the typical stage in the Sri Lanka female migrant’s migration process leading up to the decision to live outside of an employer’s home and engage in intimate and sexual relationships. What I highlight in the story is how the construction of

particular state and familial mediated emotions operate to increase migrant women's desires to act.

In the vignette, Sureyaka, a 39-year-old Sri Lankan migrant women with two and half years of experience in Lebanon, desires to move away from the shame and anger associated with her family and work, respectively. She hopes for a better economic and social situation. She seeks pleasure through creating free time and relationships with men. Sureyaka's family, working and social experiences mediate her emotions. The effect of these emotions propel her to move outside of the surveillance of the Sri Lankan state and Lebanese state and seek a better life outside of her employer's home. Yet, her options are always limited by the economic and social possibilities surrounding her.

4.1 Vignette:

One month before departure abroad, May 2007:

It is nearly 11:30pm and thirty-nine year old, Sureyaka from her home outside of Colombo, Sri Lanka, thinks about her decision to go abroad for the first time to Beirut, Lebanon to work as a maid and nanny. She hopes she will be going for a better economic future for her family. Her mother will take care of her two daughters, aged 15 and 17. For the past 12 years she has worked as a seamstress and her husband a day laborer. But the work is irregular and their combined salaries of USD6 a day is sometimes barely enough to cover the children's school fees, food, and tea and milk expenses for the month, as well as her husband's allowance for arrack and occasional gambling. He is sleeping now after a night of drinking and yet another

argument between them over money. She thinks what a struggle life has been for so many years. She knows she must bear these hardships in life and quietly. Life abroad might be difficult too. She will miss her daughters. But she holds out hope for good luck and to receive a benevolent employer. She has heard stories of married women in her situation going abroad and meeting men too; they move to Lebanon and have the 'time of their lives'. But just the thought makes her shy, but maybe a little curious too. She sleeps.

Two-days before her departure, June 2007:

During the Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) pre-training Sureyaka is instructed to stay focused upon her work and her family. "You must work hard, be patient, remember why you have come...Remember that there are no social security or retirement structures in place for you...You must work and save now...Prepare your family for your departure...Make sure your husband and children are taken care of in your absence...Once you are away your loneliness will be your burden. However, you must not stray. You must concentrate on your work. If you feel sexual desire you must distract yourself, sew, think of your family, etcetera...If your baba [the male employer] makes sexual advances toward you, you must avert your eyes, and if he persists above all do not let him penetrate you...Finally, know that your employer is required to pay USD100 per month. Complain to your hiring agent and embassy if he/she does not."

Eighteen months later, December 2008:

Sureyaka is working in a house in Beirut, Lebanon. She is not pleased

with the situation. Usually she works from 5 in the morning till 11 at night sweeping, cleaning, scrubbing, polishing, cooking, preparing meals, cleaning up after meals...Her hands ache and her back hurts. She has had no days off and the pay does not always come in, or on time. Upon her arrival, her Madame confiscated all of her clothes, including the new emerald green dress she had purchased especially for her trip abroad; in exchange, her Madame gave her an oversized, previously used navy blue maids uniform to wear every day. The other morning when Sureyaka was fixing her hair and putting on lipstick her Madame told her that there was no need to do so as there was no one who she needed to get dressed up for. She is so ashamed. Although she would never tell her Madame, the Baba, her Madame's husband, did sexually proposition her, but he left her alone after she refused his advances. In actuality, she is alone most of the time and misses Sri Lanka dearly. She cries at night, but quietly so that no one hears. She thinks, 'Is this what my life will be? Is this how I will die – working like an animal in someone else's house, or will I return to my life in Sri Lanka with little hope of ever improving my situation and that of my daughters?'

A week later, she learns from Rajesh, an Indian male gardener who comes to the house, who speaks to her in hushed tones so that their employers do not hear, that she can earn higher wages outside, and have more free time to meet others. She decides she will make a plan to escape from the house so that she can earn USD300-800 per month as compared to the present USD100. She is also curious about these others and about Rajesh too.

Six months later, June 2009:

Sureyaka has 'jumped'/run from her employer's home. Rajesh helped her to escape, offered to share his apartment, found work as a domestic worker for her and is helping her with expenses. He wants her to be his 'wife' and she accepts. After working in the day, she spends her free time with her 'husband' or in the homes of other migrants in a similar situation to her own. They drink whisky and beer, and listen to music and dance. She has more money and freedom than she has ever had in her life. She is enjoying the pleasures of a sexual life, and being so far from Sri Lanka, she has little fear of family back home finding out. She still remits the required sum back to her mother of USD100 per month so the children are taken care of. Gradually, the longing for her family begins to fade. Nonetheless, she knows she is in a precarious position. Running from her employer's home and now residing illegally within the country, she knows she is taking great risks. Everyone knows of women being questioned by the police, detained and deported. She also has to be cautious about who she allows in her life. Last week, a woman from Colombo near her apartment was shaken up and robbed by a new boyfriend. Two weeks ago, a woman had all of her savings and passport stolen. There are no officials/police to call for help when this happens. Anything can happen where they live.

But despite the difficulties she states, "women are finally having the time of their lives."

Sureyaka's story makes evident the manner in which state and familial mediated emotions operate to propel women to move outside of the surveillance of the state and contest the imposed emblem of the 'good/chaste' women. Ironically, the state's simultaneous encouragement of migration and a

woman's connection to family operate to create socially constructed feelings of loneliness, frustration and unhappiness. The affect of such emotions result in a reworking of state and familial expectations which do not so much constitute diminution of their value as neglecting them. The state expects women to go abroad to work, remain in the employer's home and take on the burden of loneliness and isolation. However, It is a heavy burden. As Sureyaka's story shows, one way women cope with the loneliness and frustrations and rework the situation to be more manageable is through transgressive intimate relations. Once women adjust to living away, they prefer to stay away rather than return as the difficulties, economic hardships and constraints experienced in Lebanon often pale in their perception, to those experienced in Sri Lanka.

4.2. Loneliness:

The Sri Lankan and Lebanese states help to create a socially constructed loneliness as they encourage women to be inseparable from their families, but at the same time encourages them to separate by its promotion of migration (Chow 2007 argues a similar point with female Chinese internal migrants).

The experience of loneliness, particularly at the beginning of migration, can be extremely uncomfortable for women. My informants spoke of the first two or three months of separation from family as being the most difficult. This affect is so pervasive that those who are in contact with migrant women in Lebanon (employers, embassy officials and NGO officials) have now come to expect. A Sri Lankan consular officer at the Sri Lankan

Embassy in Lebanon stated, “We receive many calls from women during their first few months here. They are distraught and lonely and want to go home. We tell them to wait awhile and things will get better.”

What is instructive to note is how the affect of loneliness translates into action and how the chosen action constitutes a reworking of the state imposed codes of being and behaving. How the reworking – designed to make affect of loneliness, a temporary emotion, more manageable – becomes desired permanently is also interesting. Often the way women quell their loneliness, and recommend other women to do, is by meeting male partners. According to Renuka, a 35-year-old with over 10-years of experience living and working in Beirut, whose words were similarly repeated by many of my female informants, “Sri Lankan women have a difficult time for about the first two or three months when they arrive. They miss their families and think that they cannot go on without them. They cry and talk a lot about going home. But then things get better. They meet men, and then they never really want to go back. They come to realize how difficult their lives have been. You know, in Sri Lanka each woman has some intense family burden that she has to bear. Here they have some peace of mind.”

4.3 Shame and anger:

Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers’ narratives on their life and work experiences in Lebanon (and Sri Lanka) reveal the experience of shame and anger that they are subject to in every day life. Women’s narratives come in a rush of stories about the shame and anger that they experience as related to

their work, low social status in Lebanon, skin color, nationality and economic standing. In women's voices they are ashamed of the "dirty work that they are required to do". They come to be ashamed of and angered by the "darkness of their skin" as they know it marks them as "an outsider and as person is as ignorant as an animal. They come to be ashamed of the way they are perceived by some Lebanese nationals as to be the "loose, sexually available woman". And they fear the shame they would feel if their stories of their status in Lebanon reached Sri Lanka.

Shame is not easily separated from anger as the two emotions were usually spoken of or expressed together. My informants would relay a story which seamlessly blended shame with subsequent anger. They were ashamed of the way they were treated in Lebanon (and Sri Lanka) and were angered by the unfairness of their situations. It is easy to see how these emotions are social constructs. According to Kumari, Lebanese nationals perceive Sri Lankan female workers to be the, "*Sri Lankeeya*, the stupid, and dirty one; the *sharmoota*, the whore and the slut."

According to Sheila, "When I arrived to Beirut, Madame took me into the bathroom and told me to take off all of my clothes and she proceeded to scrub and wash me as if I were a dirty animal. I was so ashamed, but I didn't want her to see it...I cried for days in my room quietly and alone...I worked for two-years but I hated her and the work...cleaning is the only option."

According to Renuka, "They think I am an animal. That I can work all of the time. They think I have no hopes or dreams. That I am not a woman who wants some of the same things that they do. I want to have fun, to dress nicely, to have pleasure. Look what I have to wear [she points to an oversized

worn maids uniform]. I feel bad that this is the only job I can do here, and that I am treated so badly.”

Kumari adds, “they see my black skin and they think I am stupid, dirty and poor...That I am born to clean house...I’m ashamed to walk down the street.”

4.3.1 Shame and anger from enforced low status:

Sri Lankan women related that they are shamed and ostracized if they try to step outside of their position as housemaid. For example, if Sri Lankan women appear to be well-heeled and not donning their maids uniform on the streets in Beirut, drivers, from their car windows, yell, “*Shu hayda*” (literally ‘What is this?’ but signifies, ‘Who do you think you are; you look ridiculous.’). As Kumari related, “I tried to take English classes in Beirut and the instructor told me that the classes were not for me.” Renuka recounted that when she tried to learn how to drive she was constantly mocked at as she drove down the street. She said, “They think I am too stupid to drive, that I cannot do anything but clean for them.” Leila related that she did not like to go shopping for clothes in Beirut as when she walked into a store, attendants always watched her as if she would steal something. “They think that I couldn’t have enough money to purchase new or nice clothes.”

Outside of their homes of employment and living spaces, there are few options of spaces where Sri Lankan migrant women can without associations of shame and inferiority, step out of their economic designation. Migrant women, for example, are barred from movie theaters, beaches and nightclubs.

These public spaces have complete bans, are spaces where female migrant workers would not feel welcomed, or are spaces where the price of entry is prohibitive. According to Renuka, “In Lebanon, I cannot go to a movie theater, a nightclub or a beach. Do you know what that feels like? They treat me like I’m an animal. I’m supposed to just work and have no pleasure [she pauses as tears well up in her eyes.] I’m not a donkey; I cannot work like that. I’m a woman too I want to have evenings out like them [Lebanese female employers and nationals]...”

4.3.2 Shame and sexuality:

In Lebanon, Sri Lankan migrant women are seen as ‘loose and immoral women’, as they are separated from family and community (Jureidini 2004; Saban 2004; UNDP 2009). They are sexualized to the extent of becoming the object of sexual advances and propositions within the private home and in public spaces. The narratives of my key informants revealed the sexual objectification they experienced and the feelings of shame which followed. As will be additionally addressed in section 4.3.2 below and as was addressed in chapters 5 and 6, the women experience a shame that is (re)enforced from their past experiences in Sri Lanka, their present experiences in Lebanon, and potential future experiences upon return. Multiple discourses of a migrant women’s sexuality, both in Sri Lanka and Lebanon (for example, state, extra-state, community and that of migrant women themselves), operate to manifest a shame for speaking of and expressing sexuality. According to Renuka, when speaking of her experiences in Beirut, Lebanese men are “hungry for black

women...everywhere I go I have whistles and cat calls. The taxi drivers never leave me alone...you know they see you like just a body.”

What is often narrated to be the greater shame (i.e., the shame that has the stronger affect) is the treatment they receive from Lebanese female employers in the private home. They speak of their female employers as often condoning the sexual propositions they might experience within the home. According to Kumari, who had worked in a home where a teenaged boy in the home propositioned her to have sex, “When I went to complain to my madame that her son wanted to have sex with me she told me that I should just do it. She said after all I already had children and husband so what did it matter. You see how they are...”

It is not just the perceptions of Lebanese nationals which operate to reinforce a sense of shame, but other migrants, including Sri Lankan migrants, often chastise the promiscuous behavior of Sri Lankan female migrants. A common refrain is that, “Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers will sleep with a man for the price of a roti.” Migrant women express feeling ashamed of such a label. Some women go to such lengths as to deny that they are Sri Lankan. According to Kumari, “When I first moved to and saw the reputation of Sri Lankan women I would tell people I was Indian and not Sri Lanka. I didn’t want people to think that I was cheap.”

4.3.3 Shame in Sri Lanka:

Migrant women also experience shame in Sri Lanka on account of being perceived as loose and immoral simply because of their mobility. “It doesn’t matter what you have done or what you do to try and change. You will always

be seen as having a black mark,” said Kumari. She went on to lament that it translates into social ostracism within the family and community. The shame women believed they would experience in Sri Lanka if they were to return was a constant factor in deciding not to return to Sri Lanka. A constant refrain was, “You know how it is in Sri Lanka,” or, “You know how they are,” alluding to the fact that a female migrant returnee would not be treated with respect within their families and communities. These narratives reveal how the effective responses to emotion (in this case to shame) tend to be regularized or naturalized through reinforcement.

The various forms of experience of shame and anger propels women to respond in ways that contest the directives of the state and family. Sri Lankan women respond by moving outside of the private home, remaining away from Sri Lanka and seeking sources of pleasure to counteract negative affects. Though this contestation is not overt and though women are powerless, individually, to substitute shame away they comradeship of women in Wafaa and the climate of reworked normality is conducive to construct counter emotions to shame. I discuss this next.

4.4 Pride, pleasure, happiness and hope:

The move to Wafaa places Sri Lankan domestic migrant women in a narrower society which produces positive emotions of pride, pleasure, happiness and hope. These emotions are effective tools in helping the women manage the affect of shame encountered in their interactions in spaces beyond Wafaa. In

this light it is scarcely surprising that many migrant women express the desire to conduct their lives within their neighborhood.

Most of my key informants who speak of feeling ashamed often interweave that narrative with proclamations of being proud for what they have learned, the skills they have attained, and the manner in which they are different and better than the Lebanese. Where their low status within the country is a source of shame, working hard and learning new skills associated with cooking and cleaning become a source of pride. In addition, they are proud of Sri Lankan warmth, kindness and generosity in relation to what they see as Lebanese cruelty and financial stinginess. They speak of being proud that they receive attention from men and that they are objects of sexual attention. They engage in intimate relations with Lebanese nationals and migrant males; they take pride in their abilities to care and provide financially for their partners.

As their options for interaction and entertainment are limited by their restrictions to move around and access to public spaces outside of Wafaa, they move to construct entertainment, pleasure and pride out of limited options. This illustrates the appeal of ownership of private space migrant women entertain male partners and friends within their homes. According to Nirmila, “Women have few options for enjoyment and pleasure after work. They have difficult lives here and feel a lot of shame for the housework they have to do. As a way to cope, they turn to pleasures of the body. They drink whiskey; they smoke and have sexual encounters. No one should judge them for what they do.” Both the freedom of the private space and the sense of community within the public spaces within Wafaa are critical to developing emotions who

affects counterbalance the experience of shame, loneliness and powerlessness. In a certain sense the control over space, affect and being that Wafaa provides juxtaposed against what is perceived to be a constricting way of life in Sri Lanka serves to keep the women desiring to remain in Lebanon.

There is a constant hope that one's luck will change. Geethika, commenting on the lives of other Sri Lankan migrant workers in Lebanon says, "It's the hope for a better life that keeps them going...they think and they hope that a man will take them out of their difficult situations. It's the fairy tale, the fantasy that keeps them getting up to go to work and staying here." Kumari states, "My life is very hard here. I hate Lebanon. You know how it is here. Look how we are treated. But things are not easy in Sri Lanka either. I have tried to make the best of my life here. But yes, I hope for a change. I hope that I can find a man – a European one – who will take me out of this place."

However, the women's reworking, as affective response, does not alter the power structures of the society which produces the need for reworking. Their personalities, which find relatively complete expression in Wafaa, are compressed into economically functioning bodies outside Wafaa. As mentioned earlier even in Wafaa, the hole in the network of state surveillance, the women remain invisible. Their persons are denied recognition and protection as are their relationships. According to Shamalee, who has been living in Beirut for over a decade, "We are getting by [in Wafaa], and many of us really enjoy our time here but...life isn't easy here either...Yesterday, a Filipina lady was beaten up by her Syrian boyfriend...I think it was about some money thing...We get nervous when we hear stories like that because

everyone knows it could be you next time. Anything can happen where we live.” But even in the somberness of her tone that universal refrain of Sri Lanka migrant women living in Wafaa is resonant: “Women are finally having the times of their lives.”

5. Conclusion:

The Sri Lankan state, in tandem with familial and social dynamics, operates to create rigidly regulated spaces where there are clear markers for how Sri Lankan domestic migrant workers should behave, live and work. The state discourse emphasizes that women should go abroad as domestic workers, live in the private home of the employer be focused upon work and family. However, the physical and moral spaces thus created give rise to emotions that produce effective dissonance. To manage affect migrant women rework their situation by moving into gaps in the network of state monitoring and use the license afforded by their anonymity to transgress (and yet not overtly challenge) the markers of a state imposed morality. In these recesses of formal state authority the migrant women engage in intimate relationships and pursue personal gratification without the affect of shame. What remains unaffected is this process of reworking the structures of state and social power. Despite the reworking the women continue to remain invisible bereft of state endorsement of and protection for their persons or their relationships.

In this chapter I have examined the above in the context of Wafaa, and relatively under monitored suburb of Beirut, Lebanon. In focusing on Wafaa I take note of a large body of literature originating in de Certeau, that exhorts

paying attention to the ‘margins’ of the state and to ‘the narratives of everyday’ as a way of uncovering the complex ways in which state power is exercised. I have complemented my engagement with de Certeau by using emotion and affect (concepts that are often at the margins of the analysis of the state) to understand how women act to rework their situations (Katz 2004). Understood thus, reworking becomes affective response. I argue that Sri Lankan women working as freelancers in Wafaa rework their situations in that they are able to alter some of the adverse affects of migration, but are not able to alter the polarization of power, or achieve emancipatory change. Although women are able to move outside of the employer’s home, and into a space, which affords more freedom, particularly in regard to their intimate lives, women are still precariously positioned on the hierarchy of power relations. In Lebanon, their lives, actions and intimate relationships are not recognized or protected either by law or by the society outside the migrant neighborhood. Given this lack of formal endorsement as persons with capacities for engaging in the intimate acts or relationships for personal gratification, the anonymity of the migrant neighborhood is vital to their enterprise of reworking. Equally, it is vital to the opening up of spaces in state surveillance where reworking can flourish. Interestingly, what is reworked is invisibility too; a disadvantaging, alienating, marginalizing invisibility is maneuvered into one which sustains and nourishes these women. Despite all this (and, this is precisely why it constitutes reworking), the invisible continue to remain invisible.

Finally, within this overarching theoretical framework, I have tried to demonstrate how Sri Lankan female migrants in Lebanon negotiate the imposed identity of being chaste and sacrificed and manage the affects of

socially constructed shame and loneliness by becoming freelancers.
Ultimately, however, they remain unrecognized, unprotected and powerless.

Chapter 8 – Conclusions and Topics for Further Research

“Queering our analysis thus helps us to position sexuality within multifaceted constellations of power. As critical geographers seek to understand these constellations, the advancement of a queer approach alongside postcolonial, feminist, critical race and materialist approaches will most certainly help to ask new questions and illuminate a broader range of critical possibilities” (Oswin 2008: 100).

1. Conclusions and topics for further research:

This thesis sought to question and complicate state narratives, as well as scholarly conceptualizations, of sexuality, intimacy and migration in order to reveal the many patterns of inequality that arise, at multiple scales, from migration.

The research questions addressed in this thesis are:

1. How do the Lebanese and Sri Lankan states aim to shape and control the intimate and, especially, sexual lives of Sri Lankan female migrant workers? How do notions of sexuality and intimacy permeate state discourses even when not made manifest as the explicit content of laws, documents or curricula?
2. How do extra-state discourses and practices, which are assumed to contest inequalities experienced by domestic migrant workers, reinforce the state logic? Where and how do fissures in the normative discourse manifest?
3. How do Sri Lankan female migrant workers respond to these state and extra-state discourses and practices? How do women contest the superimposition of the highly idealized, state sanctioned identity?

I answered these questions, specifically, by analyzing everyday practices of Sri Lankan migrant women against the backdrop of how they are represented

by state and extra-state entities. I argued for an understanding of how reworkings of sexuality and intimacy have the potential to open up spaces within which state power can be transformed and subverted. In this sense, the thesis constitutes an attempt to articulate connections between state power and the spaces of reworking and potential resistance, which is undervalued in most mainstream analyses that portray state power (as being exercised through hegemonic discourses) and extra state actors (as contesting or colluding with the state).

By tracing state representations of Sri Lankan migrant workers, I have asserted that state discourses serve to reproduce women as docile, chaste, and compliant workers. These narratives also serve to either produce a subject object dichotomy or constitute a basis for according preferential treatment to only certain aspects of female migrant subjecthood that render, often, their actual lived experiences invisible. The focus on the migrant as an economic/sexual object, as a source of remittances for sending countries, as a source of cheap labour for receiving countries, and as a potential victim of abuse in both countries, marginalizes and obscures alternative discourses on how sexuality and the women's sexual identities shape their reasons to migrate, their experiences during migration and their reasons to remain abroad. Further, I have demonstrated how the choice of analytical and presentational tools – statistics, for instance – sustain the objectification of Sri Lankan female migrants and contribute to their chronicles of desires and practices going unnoticed. As a result, I train the spotlights back on the women to interrogate the ways in which they navigate the complex terrain of their everyday lives with the moral compass that the state equips them with.

This concluding chapter provides a summary of my research and outlines critical themes that future research can address. In particular, further analyses of masculinities, diverse sexualities and class are recommended to help illuminate how sexuality, in concert with these other constructs, shapes transnational migration. Future research should critically examine: 1) how the construction of masculinity, or men as gendered subjects (in conjunction with queer theory's problematization of these concepts) affects migration; 2) how gay, lesbian, and queer identities and communities shape and are shaped by migration; and, 3) how normative perceptions of intimacy and sexuality and 'compulsory heterosexuality' operate differently across socioeconomic classes (Binnie 2010). An exploration of each of these topics can deepen our understanding of state operations of power and of the chasm between the narratives of the state and the everyday experiences of migrant workers.

2. Summary:

2.1 Background Theory:

I engage with queer and state theories, to guide my inquiry and mark points of entry into this analysis of sexuality, state power and agency. Queer theory draws attention to the social constructedness of sexuality, desire and intimacy by making evident the queerness of (not just homosexual identities but) heterosexual and heteronormative ones as well (Oswin 2010). Its history of interrogating relatively unexplored links between sexuality, and pleasure in the lives of migrants (Manalansan 2006: 241) provides it with almost perfect credentials to support my attempt of breaking down the notion that heterosexuality is always licit and normative (whereby homosexuality is always illicit and queer) (Huang and Yeoh 2008; Oswin 2008 2010). State

theory, on the other hand, possesses the resources to highlight the role of the state in the production of sexuality, intimacy and desire and demonstrate how sites of potential transformation, resistance or revolution can emerge within state controlled socio-cultural space. Further, in conjunction with queer theory, state theory assists in analyzing how structures and relations of power at the level of the state aim to shape and explain, in hegemonic terms, what occurs within given spaces at various scales, for example the body, household and nation (Pratt 2004; Wright 1999). In this context, the work within transnational migration literature that assumes a normative female migrant subject who is dutiful, chaste and sacrificing, is identifiable as perpetrating the hegemonic narratives of the state by often leaving invisible notions of transgressive desires and pleasures (Manalansan 2006; for examples, see Constable 1997; Parreñas 2005).

Transgressive desires and proscribed pleasures can operate to contextualise the state's disciplining of sexuality. This is acknowledged in the theories of the state advanced by de Certeau (1994) and Agamben (1998) which emphasize the importance of researching non-traditional spaces of the state to unravel its operational ethic. While de Certeau exhorts researchers to look outside of the surveillance of the state, Agamben argues that the state of exception is employed in innovative and unexpected ways. Queer theory complements this line of analysis by identifying both, non-traditional spaces and the nuances in the state's inclusion-exclusion project. The final piece in the jigsaw of transformative spaces that provide asylum (within and from the state) to 'queerness' (understood as the potential for and act of transgressing normative ideals) is provided by recent work within geographies of emotion

and affect, a body of literature that highlights how transformative spaces are being opened up through state action (Anderson and Smith 2001; Thrift 2003).

2.2 The State:

Li (1999: 298) asserts that “bureaucratic schemes for ordering and classifying populations may be secure on paper, but they are fragile in practice.” My analysis of everyday practices of Sri Lankan state officials and female migrants has sought to reveal the many ways in which the daily activities of individuals fail to correspond to plans, schemes, or laws. In so far as the operations of the state can be discerned through the acts of omission and commission of its officials, my research, involving global ethnography, identifies the Sri Lankan state space to comprise multiple sites where the potential, to varying degrees, for transformation exists. Sri Lankan bureaucratic practice, allows migrant women to conduct their private lives independently of but in the shadow of the monolithic discourse. Similarly, in the case of Lebanon, the day-to-day bureaucratic most commonly ignores the migrant women’s private lives and condones the discourse of the sexually tainted and loose female. Clearly, then, juxtaposing normative discourses on sexuality and intimacy against everyday practice illustrates how the compromises and negotiations with state narrative can lead to transformation, as Mountz (2003) suggests, within the bureaucratic apparatus of the state (where state agents, in the spirit of Mountz’s (2003) study, harbour and articulate dissonant sentiments) or within its geographies of surveillance (where unsurveilled spaces are the breeding ground for reworking/resistance).

2.3 Extra State Actors:

In the context of female migration, the capacity of extra state institutions to validate (and, hence, reinforce) or context state discourses forces an acknowledgment that the operations of gendered and sexualized power are not practised within hermetically sealed or epistemically circumscribed borders of the state. My chapter on extra state actors highlighted how sexuality is disciplined by extra-state institutions in a manner that normalises and naturalises a monogamous heterosexuality, marriage, family and biological reproduction. Voices that deviate from the state sanctioned norm, that articulate deviant ways of being are suppressed in the narrative that emerge from extra state research. Employing participant observation, the chapter uses UNDP RCC's project on Sri Lankan female migrants as a case study to highlight how institutions operate to promote and repress certain sexualities, images, desires and stereotypes (see Minter 1993). My research also shows that this selective treatment can be attributed to normative moral assumptions, embedded either in the institutional psyche or in the personal mindset of decision makers, that erase, conceptually, the possibility agency of women's desiring sex and forms of sexual interaction outside of monogamous marriage. Further, the confluence between state discourse and extra state narrative is borne out by a consideration of Caritas' campaigns to increase awareness in Lebanon about the domestic migrant worker, which only serve to proliferate stereotypes of migrant women as either the dutiful female family members or victims.

However, this chapter also highlighted how individuals working for the organisation can create transformative spaces within the organisation, by

expressing dissidence against organisational goals and policies through acts of discretion in their day-to-day work, to impair organisational abilities and power. But while the disjunctures between the organisation's narratives and individual belief systems is necessary for the subversion of the narratives to even be possible, these are not sufficient for the transformative potential to be realised. What is needed, over and on top of this reworking, is the capacity of the dissenting individuals to translate their dissent (in overt or covert ways) into acts of resistance.

2.4 Migrant women:

My chapter on how Sri Lankan migrant women working as freelancers in Beirut, Lebanon conduct their everyday lives disrupt and challenge the state and extra state narratives. By focusing on the non traditional unsurveilled spaces within the state, I am able to highlight how women rework the state imposed identity (de Alwis 1999; Lynch 1999). Their stories of realizations of desire through the pursuit of proscribed intimate relations constitutes an attempt to reclaim, through complex negotiations with state apparatus and discourse, parcels of personhood officially denied to them. I have argued that their move into the migrant neighborhood and participation within the migrant community there, inclusive of engaging in intimate relationships, is necessary to make the physical and psychological demands of their status, circumstances and expectations more manageable.

The majority of women who live outside of their employers' homes in Beirut cohabit with male partners and are in what would be defined by the Sri Lankan and Lebanese state and wider societies as adulterous and immoral

relationships (Caritas 2009). By moving outside of their employer's private home into a neighborhood which is not closely monitored by the state, family and employers, freelancers trespass into a territory where moral regime is significantly different from the social spaces they previously used to inhabit. While this transgression is motivated, in part, by economic incentives in the form of prospects for higher wages and greater freedom of movement and association, a considerable impetus for the move comes also from a desire to rework the socially constructed and state mediated emotions of loneliness, anger and shame. Reworking, working and living conditions in this manner is also an attempt at renegotiating the terms of migration by challenging the state's articulation of 'loneliness' and 'shame' as inevitable by-products of migration and as tribulations that define a migrant woman's virtue.

3. Final thoughts and further research:

My work has contributed to geographies of sexualities and feminist migration studies, and specifically, heteronormativity's regulation of heterosexualities within geography (Walsh et al 2008; Huang and Yeoh 2008).

I assessed the role of both the Sri Lankan and Lebanese state in creating a highly idealized identity of Sri Lankan female migrant workers. The Sri Lankan state promotes a Sri Lankan female migrant citizen who is docile; celibate or at least able to lead a sexual life hidden from public view; and focused upon duties to the family (de Alwis 1998; Hewamanne 2007; Lynch 1999; SLBFE 2000; SLBFE 2008). Similarly, the Lebanese state wants compliant, temporary and cheap bodies to work as maids and nannies within private homes (Esim and Smith 2004; Jureidini 2004; Moukarbel 2009; Young

1999). The unifying theme in both states' treatment of the migrant women is the notion of partial inclusion. The female migrant is fragmented; the sexual and sexualized fragments fall outside of the socio-legal space demarcated by hegemonic social discourse and formal legislation. Each state operates to protect and recognize only the partial lives of these female workers. They exclude the Sri Lankan female migrant worker as a sexual or sexualized subject from protection by the state. However, individuals who make up the "they" within both states demonstrate resilience and reworking to the hegemonic discourse. Hence, there is a potential for resistance.

I presented a critical analysis of extra-state interventions. I highlighted how non-state actors, deliberately or otherwise, fall in the line with state discourses to reinforce the hegemonic paradigms of migrant women's sexuality. I further point out that while, both, state and extra-state actors, since 2006, have been active in bringing the labor of female migrant workers within the perimeters of state protection, this is partial acknowledgement of the women's humanity.

I then investigated women's responses to and contestations of state and non-state discourses and practices. In particular, I engage geographies of affect and emotion to understand how state discourses can (and do) mediate women's emotional responses to the migration process. Social constructions of loneliness, despair and happiness affect, both, women's desires for sexual and intimate relations and their actions to realize the same. The state's denial of the sexual dimension of the female migrant's being makes the migrant as a sexual subject invisible to or ignored by state agency. I assessed women's

actions as demonstrating resilience, and reworking. I highlighted the potential for actions, which might lead to more transformative lives and spaces.

From here, I am left with specific additional questions for my particular project and areas of interest for further, broader, research.

I discuss UNDP ‘fears’ of the consequences of a frank discussion of women’s sexuality: such discussion could justify worries that migrants will find boyfriends and get pregnant, resulting in further curtailment of migrant women’s mobility and sociability by both employers and the Sri Lankan government. In such a situation, where are a feminist and a migrant advocate to stand? Does one stand firmly behind the idea that sexuality deserves frank discussion and women deserve the right to engage openly in consensual relationships, or does one support the prevalent fictions that many of the actors seem to accept? Thinking through these issues could move the theory beyond a Foucauldian analysis of discourse, and enhance the discussion of agency and projects among migrant women and among state and civil society administrators.

Would the migrant women actually want the state to get involved in their private lives? Most Foucauldian analysis implies that greater supervision means greater disciplinary power over the governable subject. If the current discourse completely discounts women’s consensual sexual activity, is this necessarily a bad thing? Could leaving this zone uncharted and unregulated actually work to the migrant women’s advantage? What might the alternative look like? (Perhaps, a condom in the farewell package and an STD test for all returning women migrants? How and for whom would this be a better alternative?)

The research for my thesis as well as recent studies within sexuality and queer theory, identify several promising lines for further inquiry.

Firstly, while researchers, within the last few years, have begun to analyze masculinities (see Longhurst, 2000, for a review; and Berg and Longhurst 2003; Charsley 2005; Walsh 2011) there has been little research that critically inspects the construction of masculinity, or men as gendered subjects, in combination with queer theory's problematization of these concepts (see Kitiarsa 2008 for an exception to this). Within Sri Lanka and with Sri Lankan male migrants, masculinity and masculine identities have received little attention, except in work on militarization (Tambiah 2005). Geographers, in particular, can advance the analysis of these complexities of gender construction by exploring its intersection with migration. This would allow the uncovering of the role played by sexuality in shaping and influencing the socio-spatial processes.

Secondly, research should also attend to how migration both affects and is affected by notions of diverse sexualities, such as queer, gay and lesbian (Luibheid 2004, see Manalansan 2004 for recent work in this area). In Sri Lanka and Lebanon, whereas work on heterosexual femininity and masculinity has not been comprehensive, literature on non-heterosexual and non-heteronormative practices and identities are even more intractable (for exceptions in the Sri Lankan context see Utumpala 2009; and Wijewardene 2005 & 2007; in the Lebanon context see Merebet 2009). In part, this can be traced to the social, cultural, and legal conventions that proscribe the expression of such sexuality, making them secret and, therefore, hard to study. However, it may also be that 'western-trained' researchers have approached

questions about nonheterosexual and non-heteronormative identities and practices with the conceptual apparatus that has framed GLBT studies in the west, a framework that might miss the point in Sri Lanka and Lebanon. Most information about nonheterosexual practices and identities has been driven by a narrow public health interest, focusing, for example, on stamping out gay sex tourism, “rehabilitating” beach boys, and preventing HIV education (UNICEF 2006). Colombo and the tourist beach areas have been the focus of attention. (The exception is a survey conducted to determine to what degree there is correspondence between behavior that leads to decreased risk for HIV/STD transmission and behavior that is perceived to diminish culturally-defined risk (e.g., loss of virginity) completed at the University of Peradeniya, medical faculty, Silva 1996.)²⁷

Thirdly, work on the class politics of sexuality (for example Trask 2003) has challenged the marginalisation of class within queer theory and sexuality studies more generally. However, while class has received renewed critical attention from human geographers (see for example Lee 2000), questions of the intimate and sexual dimensions of class politics tend to remain under-explored within contemporary human geography. There is room to further explore the relationships between sexuality, intimacy, class and space in order to explicate underlying theoretical linkages. For example, research could explore how “compulsory heterosexuality” (Binnie 2010) operates differently across socioeconomic classes. While Hewamanne (2007) has explored class and gender, and to a lesser extent class and sexuality, in Sri

²⁷ I would like to thank Jeanne Marecek for her insightful comments, which contributed to the shaping of my ideas for further research. In the course of jointly planning a conference on sexuality and Sri Lanka for 2011, she continues to share with me her rich insights and analysis.

Lanka and Massad (2007) has attended to the interplay of class and sexuality within the Arab world, more work needs to be done to explore, within the context of migration, how class operates to affect intimacies and sexualities.

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