Hunger in households of plenty: Indonesian domestic workers navigating towards food security in Singapore

by

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B.A., McMaster University, 2014

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Abstract

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In Southeast Asia, many impoverished Indonesian women migrate to Singapore to work as domestic workers in households. Though employers are required to provide domestic workers with food and housing, there have been numerous reports of employers withholding food. This thesis explores the ways in which Indonesian domestic workers navigate towards food security in the context of social relations in their employers' homes in Singapore. I draw on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2016, where I interviewed Indonesian domestic workers and employers. Not only were the majority of domestic workers experiencing food insecurity, food was additionally symbolically used to denigrate them. Drawing on a concept I term *markings*, which denotes the process of demarcating social roles through symbols and boundaries, I argue that employers control food in order to produce *markings* that construct and reinforce relations of inequality in households. These relations around food emotionally and physically shape domestic workers in ways that allow them to know their positions in the household. Despite their subordination, domestic workers use strategies to contest and endure their unequal conditions in Singapore in ways that demonstrate their resilience. This research demonstrates the importance of protecting the food security of migrant women, and advocates for the fair treatment of domestic workers.

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Acknowledgments

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Dedication

For all of the domestic workers in Singapore who have graciously shared their worlds with me.

For my family of indentured servants, cane cutters, domestic workers, and labourers who showed me from a young age the ways in which inequalities impact the lives of the oppressed. Your sacrifices and hardships continuously encourage me to advocate for the needs of the most marginalized in society, and remind me every single day why my commitment to this topic is both necessary and important.

For my father, whose struggles, endurance and hard work taught me never to take the privilege of education for granted.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the worlds of domestic workers in Singapore

> I was very thin and sick because not enough food and so much jobs. [I am] not allowed to eat when I am hungry. When my employer says time to eat, I must eat, and when they say time for work I must work. In the morning, I have no time for breakfast. I must clean the house first. And if I go anywhere or do anything the employer follows behind me. If I sleep she follows me. If I cook, she watches me, so I can't cook for myself. And she doesn't let me eat her food. She give me my food separate. I cannot touch her food.
>
> — Sasi,[1] Indonesian domestic worker

Sasi is one of 243,000 foreign domestic workers (FDW[2]) currently working in Singapore (MOM 2017e), and one of at least 125,000 domestic workers in Singapore who are from Indonesia (Arshad and Seow 2016). Domestic workers like Sasi come to Singapore on a temporary work permit to earn remittances to send home. They live and work in employers'[3] homes in exchange for salary. Currently, about one in five families in Singapore employs a domestic worker (Leow 2017). Sasi's quote shows how domestic workers' ability to obtain food is embedded within the multilayered obstacles that they must navigate in their employers' homes in Singapore. As with many domestic workers, Sasi had previously worked in other households as a domestic worker for many years. Despite this experience, Sasi's employer managed every aspect of her life, including her ability to obtain sufficient food. Sasi experienced the paradox of her employer expecting her to complete a large number of tasks, while denying her the food necessary to provide enough energy for her to complete those tasks. Sasi's ability to negotiate food security, and her well-being, were contingent on her relations with her employer.

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[1] Participants' names have been changed to pseudonyms.

[2] "FDW" refers to a foreign domestic worker who works in Singapore. This thesis will mostly use the term "domestic workers," to refer to FDWs.

[3] This thesis refers to one who employs a foreign domestic worker as "employer."

While not all domestic workers experience the same kind of treatment as Sasi, her experience of being monitored by her employer and having to navigate around that monitoring is common among workers (Wessels 2015). When domestic workers come to Singapore, control over their livelihood is placed in the hands of their employers. This control is a consequence of policies created by Singapore's Ministry of Manpower (MOM), which require employers to provide domestic workers with basic needs, including food and housing, along with a salary which rarely is high enough to allow domestic workers to purchase their own food (MOM 2017i). Thus, domestic workers' food security depends on their relations with their employers and on their employers' ideas, values and practices around food.

While Sasi may have struggled to obtain food security, most people in Singapore can easily access food. Singapore is a prosperous nation with a high standard of food security. In addition to having the seventh highest GDP per capita (CIA 2017),[4] Singapore was ranked as the third most food secure country in the world in 2016, and is praised for its food safety net programs and low poverty rate (EIU 2016). The nation even prides itself on its food security, with headlines such as "Food Security: Singapore's Success Stories" disseminated in public messages (AVA 2015). When domestic workers migrate to Singapore, they are migrating to work in a nation where food is widely seen as abundant and accessible.

Domestic workers in Singapore are also hired by employers who can easily afford food. MOM requires that employers earn a minimum income[5] so that they can provide food, and cover

[4] Ranking is from The World Factbook 2017.

[5] MOM does not publicly disclose the minimum income needed to hire a domestic worker; however, on their website, MOM states, "[The] salary requirement is set based on the realistic overall cost of hiring a foreign domestic worker (FDW), including worker's salary, levy, insurance, food and other expenses" (MOM 2017k).

expenses and a salary for domestic workers, which is on average S$597/month[6] (MOM 2017k; HelperChoice 2017). MOM has issued a regulation stating that employers must provide FDWs with "adequate" food (MOM 2017i, sec. 4). MOM has also recently published meal provision guidelines as an example for employers to follow. While these guidelines are available on the MOM website, employers are required to review them only if they have never hired a domestic worker before, or if they have changed more than three domestic workers in a 12-month period (Employment Agent, pers. comm., August 2016; MOM 2017c). Despite these requirements, there have been numerous reports of employers withholding food from domestic workers (Alkhatib 2017; Han 2017; HOME 2017). This issue is problematic for migrant women because food becomes important not only as sustenance and energy to perform their work duties but is also critical for maintaining their emotional, cultural and psychological well-being (Counihan 1999). When control over food is limited, migrant women may experience a loss of power and control in many aspects of their lives.

This thesis addresses the issue of food security for Indonesian domestic workers. Because Indonesian domestic workers are newer to a transnational labour market in Asia that has been dominated by Filipina domestic workers until the early 2000s (Peng 2017), there are few studies exploring overall experiences of Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore. Some scholars have addressed domestic workers' food security in Singaporean households as part of a larger critique of household dynamics, and have shown that domestic workers often struggle to obtain enough food to feel full (Ueno 2009; Dutta et al. 2017). However, there have been no published studies focussing exclusively on domestic workers' food security, nor on how domestic workers are emotionally and physically shaped by their food security experiences in households in

[6] This amount varies depending on where the domestic worker is from and her work experience. In Singapore, most domestic workers are from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Myanmar. Filipinas typically earn a higher salary than Indonesians; and Indonesians typically earn a higher salary than Myanmarese domestic workers (TWC2 2016).

Singapore.[7] Drawing on three months of ethnographic fieldwork in Singapore in 2016, where I interviewed both domestic workers and employers, this study explores the ways Indonesian domestic workers navigate towards obtaining some measure of food security in households in Singapore. This study further explores how the process of navigating towards food security is bound up in the production and management of relations of inequality. Using a feminist ethnographic approach, I focus on how domestic workers emotionally embody issues of food security, and how they respond with resilience as they navigate towards food security in employers' homes.

This thesis unravels the complex sets of relations that domestic workers must negotiate in order to obtain some form of food security. It shows why domestic workers struggle to obtain food amid plenty. I look at how relations with employers and social distinctions affect food security. Domestic workers' navigations towards food security provide a lens for exploring the ways in which unequal relations are constructed and perpetuated in households, and how those relations are enacted on and through domestic workers' bodies. I show that domestic workers must strategize to cope, manage and endure in households where relations of inequality pervade their daily lives and shape their bodily experience and practice. To explore the challenges of domestic workers' navigations towards food security in the context of household relations, I address the following questions.

1.1 Research questions

1. *How do Indonesian domestic workers address the issue of food security in households in Singapore?*

[7] See Casanova (2013) for this issue in Ecuador, and Sollund (2012) for this issue in Norway.

2. *How are Indonesian domestic workers' experiences around food security related to relations of inequality in households?*
3. *How are Indonesian domestic workers emotionally and physically shaped by their experiences of food insecurity?*
4. *How do Indonesian domestic workers cope with and respond to their experiences of food insecurity?*

In this thesis, I argue that domestic workers must be strategic in order to obtain some form of food security in employers' homes. I show that obtaining food security is a multidimensional issue, requiring consideration of social relations, emotions, bodily practice, structural barriers, and pragmatic responses. I show that domestic workers' ability to obtain food security within the household is not about the employer's financial ability to provide food for domestic workers, or even their willingness to do so, but is rather about responding to boundaries created between worker and employer that attempt to reinforce relations of inequality. Domestic workers must thus navigate around numerous boundaries and social relations within the household in order to obtain some measure of food security. Domestic worker participants describe how interactions around food have the capacity to shape their emotional and physical well-being. This shaping is part of how employers manage domestic workers' bodies. Domestic workers respond to this management by learning to withstand food insecurity, to develop resilience to adversities, and to carefully navigate towards food security over time.

In order to emphasize the complexity of food security for domestic workers, the following sections outline key definitions of inequality, food security, emotions, and resilience. These concepts have been discussed in scholarship about transnational migration, but I focus in particular in this thesis on food security and resilience more than earlier scholars, who have

tended to look at non food-related challenges and the concept of resistance (Constable 2014; Ueno 2009). After defining these terms, I then describe the underlying conditions leading to a feminized labour migration pattern from Indonesia to Singapore. After summarizing the policies in place for domestic workers in Singapore, I show how these policies further denigrate domestic workers and inadequately protect them. I describe the policies in place for ensuring domestic workers have access to food, and show that they do not address the complex relations involved in food security. Exploring domestic workers' food security in Singapore requires an approach that observes social relations within the household, individual embodiment, external barriers, and pragmatic responses.

1.2 Inequality as a conceptual framework

Relations of inequality shape experiences of food security for domestic workers in Singapore. Nguyen and Peschard's (2003) conceptualization of inequality provides an important starting point for understanding food security, as they draw on Fassin (1996) and Foucault (1977) to frame inequality within the notion of power, and historical and social processes. Inequality emerges from an uneven distribution of power, defined here as the ability to control the practices and ideas of others (Ribot and Pelusa 2003, 155). Power becomes hierarchical through historical and social forces, such as entitlement relations, modes of governance, distribution of rights and citizenship, past events, and social discourses and institutions that legitimize the suffering of the marginalized (Nguyen and Peschard 2003, 467; Elkana et al. 2002). This uneven distribution of power is mobilized through "mechanisms, processes, and social relations," and can "affect people's ability to benefit from resources," such as food (Ribot and Pelusa 2003, 154).

The ways in which power is distributed depends on positionality, that is, an individual or group's location in a hierarchical social order (Quesada et al. 2011). Bronfman et al. (2002) argue that vulnerability is one positionality that indicates the existence of social inequality. Vulnerability considers one's location in networks of power relations, and the degree to which one is subject to the effects of inequality (Quesada et al. 2011). Individuals and groups in dominant positions hold the power to gain, control, benefit from and maintain access to resources that allow for upward mobility and survival—such as materials, persons, institutions and symbols, including food (Ribot and Pelusa 2003). These actor(s) have the power to produce and maintain gradients in access (Nguyen and Peschard 2003). In contrast, those in subordinate positions are vulnerable to being deprived of access to those resources. One's position within an uneven relation of power involving food can thus influence one's ability to obtain food.

Nguyen and Peschard (2003) are particularly useful for theorizing how inequality can act on and through the human body. Drawing on Turner (1980), Pandolfi (1990) and Farquhar (1994), they show how social relations of inequality can be expressed on the body through inscription, experience, or practice. Nguyen and Peschard (2003) argue that the effects of inequality can leave visible marks on the body, which can be used to construct difference, order bodies, and produce and maintain social hierarchies. Those lower on the social ladder are more vulnerable to the effects of inequality than those in higher positions. For example, social disadvantages, such as exposure to harsh working conditions and lack of access to adequate dental care, can materialize on bodies as poor dental health and imbue those bodies with stigma (Horton and Barker 2010). Yates-Doerr (2015) similarly shows how obesity often coexists with food insecurity in Guatemala, and how obesity is used to pathologize and categorize bodies

through notions of backwardness and ignorance. Bodies can thus become biologically and symbolically imprinted with inequalities (Brotherton and Nguyen 2013; Butt 2013).

As poor men and women migrate to work within households "in the lowest wage sectors of the world's wealthiest economies" in order to survive, their bodies can become particularly vulnerable to the effects of inequality (Mills 2003, 45). For transnational care work, wealthier individuals enact inequality when they hire domestic workers for a low local wage. This inequality is exacerbated by policies that allow domestic workers to work for lower than minimum wage, and require them to live and work in employers' privately enclosed homes, where resources may not be available or reliable and laws may not be obeyed (Clarke 2013; Iyer et al. 2004). Thus, there is potentially a power relationship between domestic workers and employers (Anderson 2001; Lan 2006; Constable 1997b). Race and class inequalities are also produced when domestic workers consistently come from poorer and different ethnic, racialized, or religious backgrounds than employers. Bridget Anderson (2001) argues that this pattern "enables households to perpetuate and promote the idea of other races and social groups as servers and doers of dirty work that they themselves are too important to do" (28). Due to their need to earn money to get out of poverty, domestic workers often withstand inequitable work conditions that can have an effect on their bodies and on their relations and practices around food (Constable 2014; Andrevski and Lyneham 2014; Yeoh and Huang 2010).

Literature on transnational migration has shown that domestic workers experience inequality in diverse ways. One consistent finding is that employers use various tactics to dehumanize domestic workers (Chin 1997; Asis et al. 2004; Lyons and Chong 2009; Constable 1997a). To legitimize prejudice against domestic workers, employers often construct narratives of domestic workers as "dirty" and "stupid," and use techniques to depersonalize them, such as

forbidding them from socializing with people outside the household (Ladegaard 2013, 476; Ueno 2010, 92; Saldaña-Tejeda 2012). Power relations of inequality become mobilized through symbolic meanings placed on daily activities (Mills 2003). For example, differential access to resources in the household, verbal and physical abuse, and paternalistic control by employers can symbolically structure social relations and be used to create and normalize relations of inequality. Constable (1997a) argues that employers try to reduce domestic workers to docile bodies, and symbolize this diminution by controlling their bodies through clothing, haircuts and work routines. Through restricting domestic workers' ability to live a full life, employers can cast workers as dirty and denigrated, and validate their own self-perception as clean and middle-class (Anderson 2000; Lan 2006).

Food, food security and eating are part of the symbolic systems that produce inequalities in households, although they have received far less scrutiny than employers' verbal and physical abuse and control over domestic workers' work routines and bodies. In the next section, I define the terms food security and food insecurity, and contextualize these definitions within the inequality present in the households in which domestic workers work.

1.3 Framing food security and insecurity

Counihan (1998) argues that the "ability to produce, provide, distribute and consume food is a key measure of power" (2). Food security addresses the place of power relations of inequality within food. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (1996, sec. 2) defines food security as a situation "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." Koc and Welsh (2002) widen the scope of food security to define it as "access by all people, at all times, to food that is safe, nutritionally

adequate and personally acceptable and which is obtained in a manner that respects human dignity" (4). Emphasizing that the availability of food does not guarantee access to it, Koc and Welsh embed food security within the politics of equality and notions of entitlements and rights. Food insecurity can thus indicate inequality in access and lead to a questioning of one's broader rights and entitlements (Mares 2014). This definition of food security allows for the scope of domestic workers' experiences of food to provide insights into the inequalities embedded within households, practices and lifeways.

Girard and Sercia (2013) draw on Koc and Welsh and the FAO to define food *in*security as "a situation where the availability of safe and nutritionally, personally and culturally appropriate food, as well as the capacity to procure for oneself the required food which meets one's food preferences in a socially acceptable manner for an active and healthy [life], is limited or uncertain" (33). This definition emphasizes that food security is not only about having access to adequate quantities of food, but also about having access to personally and culturally satisfying foods. The denial of these foods can disrupt daily life.

Because food is a basic need for all people (Hedican 2016), denying access to food renders a person less entitled to standards of life that are available to others (cf. Agamben 1998). Through denying domestic workers the ability to make decisions over their own food and to access food, employers extract labour from workers at the expense of their "human dignity, rights and desires for autonomy" (Carney 2014b, 3).

Though these definitions of food security are useful, scholars have mostly applied them to the context of acquiring food through economic means. However, past studies in Singapore show that domestic worker food security requires a closer look at relations within households. Ueno (2009) found that inconsistent rules were barriers to obtaining food in Singaporean households,

as domestic workers were reprimanded for using food up too quickly, or letting it go to waste. In their recent study on health meanings among domestic workers in Singapore, Dutta et al. (2017) found that food insecurity was one of domestic workers' material struggles for achieving an optimal sense of health. Domestic workers in that study struggled to obtain food security not only because they lacked access to sufficient, culturally appropriate foods, but also because they sustained heavy workloads and were excluded from the decision-making process in buying foods. The definitions of food security described thus far do not allow for the scope of experiences of domestic workers working in households. In order to incorporate the context of the household into definitions of food security, I have developed the concept of *markings* to show how household social relations and distinctions impact domestic workers' ability to obtain food security.

1.3.1 Food security through the lens of markings

Anthropologists have shown how social hierarchies are maintained through "differential control and access to food" (Counihan 1998, 2), and how different patterns of consumption are used to distinguish the rich from the poor (Mintz 1985; Weismantel 1988). In the context of research on domestic workers, Saldaña-Tejeda (2012) draws on Bourdieu (1984) and Foucault (1990) to argue that "food distinctions are powerful markers of gender, class and race that are often deployed for the justification of workers' exploitation and the self-affirmation of female employers" (126). Pei-Chia Lan (2006) explores such theoretical distinctions in her research of domestic workers in Taiwan with the concept of boundary making. Drawing on Lamont (1992), Nippert-Eng (1996), Ong (1999) and Bourdieu (1977), Lan uses boundary making as a lens for exploring daily practices that employers and domestic workers engage in to cultivate and crystallize social distinctions in households. Boundaries include using separate refrigerators to

store domestic workers' food and limiting the amount of space in the household that domestic workers are allowed to occupy (11). Building on this research, I further capture the social and relational aspects of food security by developing the concept of *markings*.

In this thesis, markings is a term used to demarcate and identify social hierarchies within households, and used to reinforce categories and create food insecurity. Markings are acts, values, expressions, feelings, boundaries, symbols and materials that create social divides while conveying messages. Drawing from prior research, some examples of social divides around food that encapsulate my definition of markings include domestic workers being required to eat poorer quality food than employers, such as discarded leftovers and expired food (Cox & Narula 2010; Lan 2003). Another example is being given food in different serving dishes and locations than employers (Sollund 2012; Saldaña-Tejeda 2012; Kobayashi 2015). Markings, I argue, are modes for communicating social roles of inequality in households, and mediate between the social world and the physical world of food to create social difference. The term acknowledges the social, symbolic and material aspects of food, and allows food security to be understood as a production of social relations and hierarchical positions. In Chapter Three, the term markings will be used to show how practices around food distribution and eating create social boundaries and maintain power relations of inequality. Emotional and bodily experiences are part of the production of markings. In the following section, I define terms used to describe how domestic workers are affected by experiences with food security and inequality.

1.4 Bodily and emotional expressions of food security

The bodily sensations involved in our interactions with food, such as chewing, smelling and feeling hungry, can be bound up in social meaning (Bourdieu 1984), and thus are important for research on food security and inequality. The tastes, textures and smells of food can interact

with the body's internal processes by evoking the senses (Sutton 2010). When senses are evoked, one can become conscious of their position in relation to others (Longhurst et al. 2009). For example, domestic workers in Norway described having an insatiable craving for food that they saw in the household, but were not allowed to eat (Sollund 2012). This craving allowed them to understand their subordinate social positions in relation to their affluent employers.

Since food becomes part of the body, it can be intimately related to concepts of self and be linked to one's emotions (Lupton 1996). Because food is also necessary to survive and thrive, when there is not enough, people often struggle emotionally and physically (Page-Reeves et al. 2014). Markings achieve the effect of enhancing inequality because of the role of food in shaping the body and emotions. The physical and emotional effects of limits in access to food can play a role in reinforcing markings. To understand the intersections between emotions and food, we must first understand affect. Deleuze and Spinoza argue that affect is "an embodied, physiological state that emerges through a relational encounter" (quoted in Conradson and McKay 2007, 170). In other words, affect is embodied cognition that is generated from social interactions. Emotions are "the conscious perception of particular affects," mediated through cultural systems (Conradson and McKay 2007, 170). Emotions apply meaning to embodied sensations, and consequently bridge the physiological body to the social world (Svašek and Skrbiš 2007). Tapias (2006) argues that emotions are products of sociality and social relations, which prepare us "for social action and enable an expression of agency, even if that agency initially entails not outwardly expressing emotions or taking action at all" (104). In the context of social inequality, while emotions may be present, only certain individuals hold power to overtly express their emotions, and only certain emotions can be overtly expressed in certain circumstances by certain people (Tapias 2006).

Experiences of food security and insecurity can impact emotions. Emotions are thus key for understanding how domestic workers are shaped by experiences of social inequality. The emotional consequences of food insecurity have been well documented by scholars. Page-Reeves et al. (2014) argue that food insecurity can cause emotional upheaval and disruption to daily life. Because food is often associated with positive emotions such as comfort, pleasure, security, and a sense of home and family, negative emotions such as anger, stress, anxiety and fear can be evoked when people do not have enough food to feel satisfied (Williams et al. 2012; Weaver and Hadley 2009).

The feeling of emotional distress during times of food insecurity is exacerbated for migrant women. Studies have shown that limits on food access can negatively impact the emotional and physical states of migrant women, often causing weakness and distress (Sollund 2012; Carney 2014a). For example, Nùñez & Holper (2005) found that Peruvian domestic workers in Chile felt demoralized when they experienced hunger (quoted in Saldaña-Tejeda 2012, 128). Emotional distress can be heightened when migrants have limited access to foods from their home countries (Sutton 2001; Law 2001). Experiencing emotional distress, however, does not connote powerlessness. The final definition I address is resilience and its importance as a counter-action and counter-reaction to food insecurity.

1.5 Resilience as a mechanism for coping

To avoid casting domestic workers as passive recipients of inequality, I explore the ways in which domestic workers exhibit resilience while living with employers. I use Nahar and Van der Geest's (2014) definition of resilience: "The ability to withstand adversity and not be crushed by it" (382). Resilience is a person's ability to cope with, manage, endure or transcend an adverse situation. Drawing on James Scott's (1985) notion of resistance, Nahar and Van der Geest (2014)

argue that resilience is cultivated by surviving unpleasant circumstances through "moral strength and group solidarity" (394). The concept of resilience is useful for observing the unequal conditions in which domestic workers live, and acknowledges how domestic workers strategically and actively work within their restrictive contexts to endure their conditions, and sometimes move beyond them.

The concept of resilience has been widely used in domestic worker research. Scholars have shown how the underlying conditions of transnational migration rely upon the resilience of separated families (Mills 2003; Hoang et al. 2015). Studies on transnational parenting have shown how domestic workers withstand adverse work conditions in order to provide their children with a better life (Parreñas 2001; Horton 2009; Yeoh and Huang 2000). Even when work conditions are good, migrant mothers still enact resilience as part of their efforts to cope with being separated from their children (Williams 2007). Thus, resilience is a consistent part of domestic workers' lives in both bad and good work conditions. Building on these studies, I use the concept of resilience to describe how domestic workers endure or transcend their work conditions in order to financially support themselves and their families. Because most studies on domestic worker household practices focus on acts of resistance (Ueno 2009; Yeoh and Huang 2010), my focus on resilience offers a nuanced approach to understanding household practices, and recognizes the wide range of strategies domestic workers use to cope with and move beyond food insecurity in Singaporean households.

In order to adequately account for the resilience I documented among domestic workers in Singapore, the next section outlines the underlying conditions promoting the feminized migration of Indonesian women to Singapore. It summarizes the structural conditions in the transnational

labour industry that encourages poor women to leave their homes to take up domestic work in foreign countries.

1.6 Feminized labour migration from Indonesia to Singapore

Since the 1960s, increasing numbers of women from across the globe have migrated transnationally for work (Bakker and Gill 2003). This feminized migration pattern is characterized by women from low-income countries migrating to advanced capitalist nations to take up work that more affluent women are no longer able or willing to do (Ehrenreich and Hoshchild 2002, 531). The majority of women migrants are employed in low-end, low-skill and traditionally female-dominated jobs (Brooks and Devasahayam 2011). In particular, women migrants overwhelmingly work in domestic services, with 8.45 million working as domestic workers (Gallotti 2015). To financially support their families, many migrant women leave families behind to care for the children and family members of others in more affluent households (Parreñas 2001).

This feminized migration pattern has been prominent in Asia since the 1980s, when migrant women began taking up domestic work in newly industrialized nations, such as Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan (Lan 2006, 5). In Singapore, this pattern emerged in the 1990s when Singaporean women began choosing to return to work after having children (Yeoh 2016). Since public childcare is limited, and temporary foreign worker wage standards allow domestic workers to be paid less than minimum wage, households in Asia have increasingly hired migrant women from neighbouring countries to carry out domestic work (Brooks and Devasahayam 2011; Piper 2004). While migrant women who take up domestic work in Asia are mostly from Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka (Luebker et al. 2013), Indonesians and Filipinas make up the majority of domestic workers in three of the Asian

Tigers—Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan (Lan, 2006, 10). Filipina women have had a longer history of labour migration than Indonesian women. However, since the early 2000s, Indonesian domestic workers have outnumbered Filipina domestic workers in Singapore and Taiwan, and are almost equal to the number of Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong (Peng 2017).

Economic and political changes in Indonesia have stimulated an increase in the number of Indonesian women engaging in transnational labour migration. In the 1980s, the Government of Indonesia began promoting transnational labour migration to rural women as a solution to poverty (Chan 2014). As female transnational migration increased, Indonesia saw the benefits of financial remittances from these migrant women. The government began presenting migrant women as heroes, while continuing to promote the merits of migration to citizens (Ball et al. 2017; Killias 2014). Currently, there are 6.5 million documented Indonesians who have migrated for work; 80% of these migrants are women, mostly from uneducated, rural backgrounds, and 90% of those women are employed in domestic services—mostly in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Singapore (Andrevski and Lyneham 2014; Chan 2014). While migrants' remittances have contributed to Indonesia's rapid economic development, high levels of unemployment and underemployment persist, with 27.7 million individuals living in poverty (IOM and Laursen 2010; DKP et al. 2015). Thus, Indonesian women continue to migrate for work, and most do so to get their families out of poverty (Bastide 2015).

Prior to going abroad, Indonesian women stay at training centres for about one to two months, where they learn the skills necessary for employment in domestic services (Platt et al. 2013). These training centres encourage women to become obedient, subservient domestic workers, and subtly discourage them from speaking up if mistreated (Loveband 2009; Rudnyckyj 2004). Training centres are known to be sites for domestic workers to receive abuse, including

receiving inadequate food and extended confinement (Jones 2000). That abuse is in part due to the fact that domestic workers usually cannot afford to pay upfront for the costs incurred while staying at the training centres. Instead, they form contractual relationships with brokers who bring them to the training centres and arrange their training, travel, documentation, and employment placement (Platt et al. 2013). The fees for these services are debt-financed and come from domestic workers' salaries after they begin working overseas (KHOO et al. 2015). To pay these fees, domestic workers work for the first five to twelve months without any salary,[8] especially for their first contract. These loans place Indonesian domestic workers in a vulnerable position in their new work placements. They often tolerate abuse from employers in order to repay their loans and be able to send money home (Amnesty International 2013).

In receiving countries, employment agents often advertise Indonesian domestic workers as particularly obedient (Lan 2006),[9] which can encourage employers to abuse Indonesian domestic workers (Ladegaard quoted in Liu 2014, par. 17). This advertisement can make Indonesian domestic workers more likely to be placed with restrictive and abusive employers than workers from other countries. However, as the next section shows, all domestic workers have restricted rights in Singapore and are vulnerable to abuse in the household, despite new policies designed to increase safety and food security of domestic workers.

1.7 Policies and protections for domestic workers in Singapore

In Singapore, domestic workers have few rights. There are several types of work visas available for labour migrants in Singapore; each offering legal protections based on the skill

[8] For Indonesian domestic workers, fees were an average of S$2,476 in 2016, and can be as high as S$5,800 (Seow 2016). Fees cover a range of costs, "including medical check-ups, document processing, and training, as well as commissions earned by different recruitment intermediaries at both sending and receiving ends" (Platt et al. 2013, 16).

[9] This is in contrast with Filipina domestic workers, who are usually paid more, better educated, fluent in English, and more likely to complain about maltreatment than Indonesian domestic workers (Constable 2014; TWC2 2016).

requirements of the pass. Individuals who migrate with "skilled" or "professional" passes, such as highly qualified executives, have more protections than those who migrate with "semi-skilled" passes, such as domestic workers (MOM 2017f). Domestic workers migrate with a visa called a "work permit for FDWs," which is issued for two years or less. Unlike most other "skilled" and "semi-skilled" migrant workers in Singapore, which includes those employed in construction, manufacturing and service sectors, domestic workers are not covered under the Employment Act (Kaur 2010; MOM 2017d).[10] This means they have little bargaining power with employers and no entitlements to medical and maternity leave, minimum wage, statutory holiday and overtime pay, maximum hours of work, and work injury compensation. Domestic workers are also not allowed to bring family members to Singapore or change their citizenship status (Yeoh 2006; Kobayashi 2015). They are immediately deported if they become pregnant or test positive for HIV and venereal diseases, which they are tested for every six months (MOM 2017j). They are not allowed to marry a Singaporean or permanent resident without approval from MOM, even if their work permit has expired, or is revoked (MOM 2017l). In contrast, "skilled" visa holders are allowed to bring their families, can eventually apply for residency or citizenship, and have no restrictions on health status, marriage, or pregnancy (MOM 2017f; Yeoh 2006). Kobayashi (2015) argues that through these visa categories, Singapore formally demarcates between classes of migrants, welcoming those who are "skilled" into Singaporean society while treating domestic workers as sources of labour to be extracted, and then sent back home.

The restrictive and unequal conditions that domestic workers live within in Singapore are exacerbated through employer requirements. Unlike employers of "skilled" migrants, employers

[10] The Employment Act also does not cover individuals who work as executives earning more than S$4,500 a month, seafarers, or government employees (MOM 2017d).

of domestic workers must pay high levies[11] to the government, and a security bond of S$5000 (MOM 2017h, 2016b). This security bond is forfeited if the employer breaches the contract, including if they fail to have the domestic worker medically examined every six months, or if the domestic worker disappears. These fees and requirements can lead to the exploitation of domestic workers. Devasahayam (2010, 45) argues, "employers feel justified to use [FDWs] however they wish, because of the cost incurred to secure the FDWs' employment."

Domestic workers' dependency on employers increases their vulnerability to mistreatment. They can only stay in Singapore as long as they are working in the occupation and with the employer specified in their work permit (Yeoh 2006; MOM 2016a). Employers have the unilateral right to terminate the employment contract at any time and can cancel the domestic worker's work permit for any reason and without notice (Yu 2016). Once the work permit is cancelled, the domestic worker must immediately be repatriated (MOM 2017b).[12] Alternatively, employers can let them transfer to work for other employers. However, many employers choose not to, especially if they abused the worker, as they fear that she will report the abuse (non-governmental organization [NGO] representative, pers. comm., August 2016).[13] Domestic workers may fear being sent home, and thus may not report adverse work conditions.

While many countries have been criticized for their discriminatory treatment of domestic workers, Singapore remains one of the worst migrant-receiving countries for its restrictive policies and lack of rights for domestic workers. Globally, Singapore is located in one of the two worst regions in the world for worker's rights: Asia and the Middle East (ILO 2013). In 2010,

[11] Levy rate is S$265/month for a domestic worker. Individuals with disabilities, and Singaporean citizens who live in households with at least one child under 16 years old or one adult aged 65 years old or over can apply to pay a concessionary rate of $60/month (MOM 2017g).

[12] Domestic workers must repay the brokerage fees if they want to work in Singapore again. Some agencies will reduce fees when domestic workers reapply to work in Singapore (Employment Agent, pers. comm., August 2016).

[13] Domestic workers are not allowed to transfer to another employer without their current employer's consent (MOM 2017m).

Human Rights Watch produced a report comparing domestic worker conditions in eight countries in these two regions. While Singapore stood out for "vigorously and successfully" prosecuting employers and recruiters who physically abused domestic workers, Singapore was also the only country among the group that had not made any efforts to cover domestic workers under the Employment Act (Varia 2010, 4). Singapore was also one of only nine countries that did not support the adoption of the International Labour Organization's 2011 Domestic Workers Convention (C189), which would give domestic workers the same labour rights as other workers (HRW 2012).

Following the numerous reports of abuse of domestic workers in the 1990s, the Singaporean government implemented harsher penalties in 1998 for abusive employers (Yeoh 2006). In 2005, employers were required to begin paying domestic workers their salary on a monthly basis. In the same year, Human Rights Watch published a report on the abusive conditions in Singapore, which spurred Indonesia and the Philippines to establish support systems for domestic workers in their embassies (Varia 2005; Dodgson and Auyong 2016). In 2006, a standardized employment contract template was introduced, which required employers to provide domestic workers with three meals per day, and "recommends" at least eight hours of continuous rest (ASEA and CareTrust 2006, 3). In 2012, the government modified the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act to include employers' responsibilities to provide "acceptable" accommodation for domestic workers (Singapore Government 2012, 18). In 2013, MOM implemented a weekly rest day. MOM also tightened up employers' requirements, stipulating that they must provide domestic workers with "a mattress, pillow, blanket and bathroom amenities," such as shampoo and sanitary napkins (MOM 2017i, sec. 3). Despite these efforts, many gaps remain in the policies and they are not strictly enforced (TWC2 2012). Food

has received less attention than the above employment issues. The next section discusses the ways policies for domestic workers' food access are written, published and enforced.

1.7.1 Policies regarding domestic workers' food access

In Singapore, the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA) is the only place where regulations for employers of domestic workers are legally binding. All other areas where rules are mentioned are suggestions and have minimal or no penalties for employers who break them. The only mention of food access in the EFMA is a brief sentence stipulating that employers must provide domestic workers with "adequate food," which was added in 2012 (Singapore Government 2012, 18; 2017). While the employment contract of 2006 added that employers must provide "three adequate meals a day to the FDW, over and above the salary paid" (ASEA and CareTrust 2006, 3), this information is not in the EFMA. What constitutes "adequate food" in both the EFMA and employment contract remains vague and undefined. Many NGOs in Singapore have published reports urging MOM to amend the EFMA to include a clear definition of "adequate food" and standardized guidelines for enforcing it (HOME and UPR 2015; TWC2 2012). In 2015, for example, a prominent NGO in Singapore published results from a study showing that many domestic workers do not receive enough food, and emphasized that this is in part due to MOM's lack of clear regulations regarding food (Wessels 2015). Others have also criticized Singapore's vague policies regarding food (Choon 2014; Clarke 2013; Varia 2005; Cohen-Mansfield et al. 2013). Recently, MOM published suggested meal guidelines for employers, which are available on their website, and in a newsletter for employers (e.g. MOM 2017a). The meal guidelines on MOM's website state:

> **Adequate Food**
> You must provide your FDW with 3 meals a day. Your FDW requires sufficient food to perform household chores.

> An example of a day's food intake for a female engaged in moderate activity is as follows:
> - Breakfast: 4 slices of bread with spread.
> - Lunch: 1 bowl of rice + three-quarter cup of cooked vegetables + palm-sized amount of meat (fish/poultry/beef/lamb) + fruit
> - Dinner: 1 bowl of rice + three-quarter cup of cooked vegetables + palm-sized amount of meat (fish/poultry/beef/lamb) + fruit
>
> Be sensitive to your FDW's needs when it comes to food. Do not force your FDW to eat food that she is not supposed to or is not comfortable with. For example, your FDW may not be able to eat certain food due to her religious beliefs, or she may not be accustomed to your family's dietary requirements (e.g. vegetarian food or porridge).
>
> (MOM 2017i, sec. 4)

While these guidelines remove some ambiguity from the regulations, they are still not mandatory. The EFMA has yet to be amended to include these guidelines as well as a definition of "adequate food." There are still no efforts made to monitor domestic workers' food security conditions in households.

While food, food security and the needs of domestic workers are clearly on the agenda in contemporary Singaporean society, the policies, including meal provision guidelines, do not consider the complex relations within households that can act as barriers to domestic worker food security. Page-Reeves (2014, 7) argues that food security is a conceptually flexible issue which cannot be clearly measured or addressed with simple policies, such as those highlighted above. Previous studies on domestic worker living conditions in Singapore have provided valuable insight into the ways in which domestic workers navigate relations around food in employers' homes, but they have not focussed on food security directly (Ueno 2009; Kobayashi 2015), or they have assessed food security in quantitative terms only (Malhotra et al. 2013). While Dutta et al. (2017) directly addressed food security in a recent qualitative study, they looked at food security as a sub-category of many larger negotiations that domestic workers make with employers in Singapore. A study that focuses on food security as a core conceptual

issue is necessary in order to capture the multiple dimensions and relations that impact domestic workers' ability to obtain food security.

By taking a qualitative and ethnographic approach to food security for Indonesian domestic workers, and by looking at symbolic and material relations in households in relation to food, inequality, emotions, the body and resilience, my research significantly departs from previous studies. I focus on the many social, relational and emotional processes involved in Indonesian domestic workers' navigation towards food security, including the ways in which they struggle with food insecurity, how they are affected by these experiences, and how they learn to cope with household conditions. In the next section, I outline how I explore domestic workers' navigation towards food security in each chapter of this thesis.

1.8 Outline of the thesis

The next four chapters of this thesis explore the ways in which domestic workers navigate complex sets of obstacles in order to obtain food security in their employers' homes. Chapter Two focuses on the methods I used to conduct this research. Although I conducted interviews with domestic workers, employers, and community members, I argue that the most important part of my methodological approach was a consideration for the vulnerable position of domestic workers. I describe the five research methods I used with domestic workers, and I show that my own position of marginality was an essential part of the fieldwork process.

Through the conceptual lens of markings, Chapter Three focuses on the ways in which domestic workers navigate towards food security in their employers' homes. After summarizing participants' experiences of food security using a food security measurement scale and interview data, I focus on how food access and eating are practiced within households and policed by employers' behaviours and disciplinary tactics. I argue that these practices prevent domestic

workers from accessing food, and are part of the range of practices used to produce markings that demarcate social boundaries in households.

Chapter Four explores the ways in which domestic workers are emotionally and physically shaped by their experiences of food insecurity. I show how, through these emotional and physical expressions, many domestic workers in this study come to know their positions in the household. I argue that employers use food to manage domestic workers' bodies. I conclude that the ways in which food insecurity is felt, understood, and expressed is a reflection of the ways in which inequality is written on the body.

Chapter Five looks at how domestic workers respond to their employers' management. Using the concept of resilience, I show that domestic workers used various strategies to endure or transcend their unequal, food insecure conditions in Singapore. I deconstruct the concept of silence and show that silence is a strategic tool for coping with unequal conditions. I conclude that domestic workers strategically work within the framework of inequality in which they exist, using a range of different responses to try to ensure continuity and well-being for themselves and their families.

Chapter Six summarizes the key findings from this thesis and suggests further research with domestic worker populations. I show the significance of this study, and emphasize the importance of attending to the issue of domestic worker food insecurity. I conclude with recommendations for improving food security for domestic workers. Improving domestic worker food security will be a vital step towards addressing the unacceptable conditions of inequality still prevalent in one of the most affluent and food-focused societies in the world.

Chapter 2: Researching sensitive topics with a vulnerable population

Investigating food security, emotions and social relations in households among Indonesian domestic workers involves sensitive research with a vulnerable population. "Sensitive research" is concerned with "socially-charged and contentious areas of human behaviour" (Barnard 2005, 2), and can potentially impact and pose a threat to all individuals involved (Lee 1993, 4). Vulnerable individuals are those who experience "diminished autonomy due to physiological/psychological factors or status inequalities" (Silva 1995, 15), and are "likely to be susceptible to coercive or undue influence" (Stone 2003, 3). These groups include those who are "subject to discrimination, intolerance, subordination, and stigma" and are rendered silent, hidden, tabooed or marginalized (Nyamathi 1998, 65). Because domestic workers are vulnerable to the impacts of inequality and this research explores those impacts, this research is inevitably concerned with sensitive research issues.

Scholars have documented the unique responsibilities of conducting research with vulnerable populations. Citing Sin (2005), Liamputtong (2007) articulates that "we as sensitive researchers have our responsibility to ensure the physical, emotional, and social well-being of our research participants" (37). Scholars have also argued that research with vulnerable communities must not only document the worlds in which participants live, but must also advocate for their needs (Ladegaard 2013; Shuman 2005; Fine 1994). In this chapter, I draw on these insights to describe the methodological framework I used for this study. I argue that special consideration for the vulnerable position of domestic workers was the most important part of my methodological approach.

In order to uphold the responsibilities of conducting research among vulnerable populations, many sensitive researchers adopt a feminist ethnographic approach (Liamputtong

2007; O'Neil 1996). Feminist ethnographers document the impact of various social forces on lived experience, including race, gender and class, with the commitment of using findings to improve the lives of participants and give voice to the marginalized (Craven and Davis 2013; Acker et al. 1983). With a focus on power relations enacted in participants' lives, feminist research also often carries out research that the people who they are working with want or need (Mascia-Lees et al. 1989).

A feminist approach was foundational for conducting my ethnographic research in Singapore from June to September 2016 with domestic workers, employers, and community advocates and members. A feminist approach allowed me to attend to the power imbalances among participant groups, in order to inform decisions about whose voices this research should be grounded in (Craven and Davis 2013). I also gained insight from Nagar (2002) who argues that research with vulnerable communities should produce knowledge "in ways that do not reflect or reinforce the interests, agendas and priorities of the more privileged groups" (182). In order to provide data that could improve domestic workers' lives and not reinforce interests of the more privileged groups who participated in my study, in particular employers, I place domestic workers' voices at the forefront of my research results. My methodologies are thus focused on the lived experiences of domestic workers.

This research is also grounded in qualitative methods. Scholars have argued that qualitative methods are best for hearing the voices of vulnerable participants because they allow researchers to build relationships with participants, and for participants to share their experiences from their own perspectives (Liamputtong 2007, 7; Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011, 28; Campbell 2002). Craven and Davis (2013) argue that the stories that feminist ethnographers collect, in particular, can illuminate information and fill in silences in ways that quantitative data typically cannot.

In the following sections, I first discuss the methodologies I used during Singapore field research. I then highlight the importance of my own marginalized position in conducting research with a vulnerable population. Last, this chapter looks at how I managed ethical issues while conducting the research, as well as how I analyzed the data after conducting the research. I conclude with the ways in which I plan to use this research to advocate for the needs and wants of participants. I begin this discussion with a description of each participant group and my process of recruiting them.

2.1 Participants and recruitment

Three groups participated in this research. These groups included women who were born in Indonesia and were working in Singapore as domestic workers in 2016, employers in Singapore who had ever employed a domestic worker from Indonesia, and community members who work with Indonesian domestic workers in various capacities. In total, 27 domestic workers, 18 employers, and 38 community members participated in the research. As part of my vigorous efforts to protect the domestic workers' anonymity, the employer participants had no relationship at all with domestic worker participants. Employer participants were not talking about domestic worker participants, and vice versa. This confidentiality allowed domestic workers to feel comfortable opening up about their experiences with assurance that their personal information would not be disclosed to their employers (Liamputtong 2007, 29).

The 27 **domestic workers** who participated in this study were aged 21 to 44 years old, with most participants between 24 and 37 years old (see Appendix A for participant details). Most domestic workers had been in Singapore for at least four years, with 15 having been in Singapore between four and nine years, and eight having been in Singapore for ten years or more. As well, most domestic workers had worked for at least two different employers in

Singapore. Six participants had worked for one employer, 17 had worked for two or three employers, and four had worked for four or five employers.

The 18 **employers** who participated were from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Twelve were Singaporean citizens and of Chinese, Malay and/or Indian descent. Six were permanent residents and originally from India or Indonesia. The employers had employed domestic workers from 1 to 29 years, with six employers having employed domestic workers within each of the following ranges: 20-29 years, 9-18 years, and seven or less years. Within those ranges, the number of domestic workers employed ranged from one to ten, with the majority having employed three to six domestic workers, typically on two-year contracts. Seven employers had only ever employed Indonesian domestic workers, while the other employers had hired domestic workers of different nationalities as well.

Community members were individuals who could offer expertise on issues around domestic work and food. These individuals included directors and staff members from NGOs, government-run organizations, educational programmes for domestic workers, domestic worker employment agencies, remittance bureaus, travel agencies, shipping centres, salons, and various stores in malls which domestic workers frequented. I interviewed 38 community members in total. I met with most community members once and some representatives several times during my time in Singapore.

Domestic workers were recruited through purposive sampling. That is, I deliberately recruited participants with specific characteristics to fulfil my research objective (Palinkas et al. 2015). In Singapore, I reached out to many different domestic worker communities through various avenues. I made efforts to recruit domestic workers who frequent mosques, attend classes to upgrade their education, or hang out at malls on their days off. I ‘hung out’ in well-

known areas where Indonesian domestic workers gather, including malls, food courts, employment agencies, mosques, parks and other outdoor spaces (see Figures 1 and 2), celebratory and social events, operation sites for domestic worker education programmes, NGO sites, and shelters that provide housing for domestic workers who have been mistreated by employers. Because domestic workers in Singapore usually have one day off a week, which is usually on Sundays, I recruited most domestic workers on Sundays. I recruited all domestic workers who were staying at shelters[14] on the other days of the week.

Figure 1: Indonesian domestic workers 'hanging out' at a public park on Sunday, the day off for many

[14] Seven domestic workers were recruited from shelters; however, two were not included in this study because I was unable to complete their initial interviews. Five of the domestic worker participants included in the study were living at shelters when I conducted the interviews.

Figure 2: Indonesian domestic workers crowded underneath a bridge, as they avoid the hot sun and meet with fellow domestic workers on their day off

In order to be invited to spend time at some of the spaces in which domestic workers gather I had to establish relationships with key informants and gatekeepers. Because gatekeepers can be protective of vulnerable participants (Liamputtong 2007, 51), I spent a lot of time building relationships with directors of shelters, where the most vulnerable domestic workers were staying. Recruitment of these domestic workers was important for maintaining my commitment to advocate for the needs of the most marginalized and provide a channel for them to vocalize their concerns. Thus, I met with directors of advocacy NGOs immediately after I arrived in Singapore and offered to volunteer at their organizations. Eventually, directors and I built close relationships, which helped me gain access to the shelters' secret locations.

After gaining access to the shelters, I had to establish rapport with the domestic workers staying there. Rapport is established when participants trust and are comfortable with the

researcher, and is essential to develop with vulnerable participants so they can feel safe opening up about sensitive issues (Madison 2005, 31). In addition to establishing rapport through relationships with trusted members of the community, I also dressed and carried myself in a similar manner as the domestic workers. These efforts were successful, as many domestic workers in the shelters approached me to welcome me in because they thought I was a newly arrived domestic worker. One participant told me that I was also accepted within the community because I chose to eat with the domestic workers in the shelter, an act that distinguished me from the volunteers who usually eat outside the shelter and separately from the domestic workers.

To recruit the employers who hired domestic workers, I relied on connections established throughout fieldwork and snowball sampling, which occurs when existing participants use their social networks to assist with recruiting future participants (Bernard 2002, 185). To establish connections, I initiated conversations with possible employers at various sites, such as at stores, and I volunteered at a local sporting event. Through these initial conversations, I eventually built friendships with individuals who were employers, some of whom I later recruited for interviews. Some of these individuals were not employers of domestic workers; however, they later gave me access to their social networks of friends who were employers. For example, Cynthia and I became friends after meeting at a hawker centre. Though Cynthia was not an employer of a domestic worker herself, she later invited me to a party with her friends who were employers. My friendship with Cynthia allowed me to quickly be accepted by potential participants in her inner circle.

I recruited most community members through approaching the operation sites where they work, and others through emails. While I was in Singapore, I regularly visited these operation sites to observe activities occurring with domestic workers and to build connections with

community members. While some individuals did an impromptu interview with me when I approached their sites, others set up an appointment at a later date.

One limitation on the recruitment process was time. Though employers experienced limits with time due to their busy lifestyles, domestic workers had even more limited time. As of 2013, domestic workers are entitled to one day off a week (MOM 2017i). However, one NGO estimates that 59% of all domestic workers do not have a day off every week, with 10% never having any days off at all (Nurlina et al. 2015). This limited free time meant that I had a maximum of four days a month to recruit most domestic workers, and I could not gain access to domestic workers who did not have any days off unless they ran away to a shelter. Because I would be taking up some of the limited free time of domestic worker participants, I devoted energy to forming reciprocal, confidential relationships with them (Corbin and Morse 2003). The confidentiality provided in my research allowed domestic workers to open up in ways that they normally were not able to in their daily lives (cf. Liamputtong 2007, 29), which many domestic workers noted. I provided a relaxed and safe setting for domestic workers to voice their experiences and concerns and gave them emotional support, offering in return to use my results to advocate for their needs and make a positive change in their lives (Maiter et al. 2008). I mobilized the goal for reciprocity into designing methodologies, discussed in the next section.

2.2 Methodologies for vulnerable participants

I designed a methodological framework with careful attention to the vulnerable and silenced status of domestic workers in Singapore. This section discusses the methodologies I used and describes why they were best for research with a vulnerable population.

I drew on a feminist approach to design my methodologies. Feminist research aims to identify the various levels of oppression that impact the lives of the marginalized (Campbell and

Wasco 2000, 787), and thus "necessitates the use of multiple methodologies which are more flexible and collaborative" (Liamputtong 2007, 13). In order to explore the multiple levels of oppression enacting in domestic workers' lives, while grounding this research in their voices, multiple methods were conducted with domestic workers. I used in-depth interviews, food security questionnaires, participatory mapping, participant observation, and reflexive photography. While allowing me to accommodate the varying needs and experiences of participants, the use of these different methods also allowed vulnerable participants to open up slowly and facilitated communication through different channels (Greenhill and Dix 2008).

Table 1 outlines the different methodologies used and the number of participants who participated in each method. A description of how each method was applied follows the table.

Table 1: Types of methodologies used

Participant Groups	Interview 1 /Total Participants	Food Security Questionnaire	Participatory Mapping	Interview 2+	Participant Observation	Reflexive Photography
Domestic Workers	27 (1-2 hours)	15	8	12 (0.5-2 hours)	11	8
Employers	18 (1-2 hours)	6				
Community Members	38 (0.5-2 hours)					

2.2.1 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews are conducted with participants who have important knowledge about a specific phenomenon and are able to deliver verbal information about the social world of that phenomenon (Holmes and Castañeda 2014). Through mutual self-disclosure between the researcher and participants, in-depth interviews can allow vulnerable participants to feel comfortable delivering responses about their emotions, opinions and experiences (Liamputtong 2007, 96). This method is also flexible, and allowed me to adapt interviews to participants' needs

and take breaks or change settings when necessary. In-depth interviews provide the level of intimacy necessary for researchers to gain a sympathetic understanding of the lives of participants; thus, participants from all three groups participated in this methodology.

While interviews with community members were conducted in a public setting, such as at their workplace or a café, interviews with employers were conducted either in their homes or at a café. In an effort to protect their anonymity and to provide a confidential setting, domestic workers' interviews occurred in public settings that could provide some privacy, such as at parks or cafés, and I did not enter their employers' homes. I recorded and transcribed all interviews with domestic workers and employers.

The major themes of the interviews with domestic workers and employers were: food security conditions; dynamics in households; body issues; emotions; relations with employers; activities on days off; friends and family; and perceptions of the Singaporean government (see Appendix B). After answering questions about these themes, domestic workers and employers completed a food security questionnaire at the end of the interview.

2.2.2 Food security questionnaires

In order to enhance my understanding of domestic workers' experiences of food security in households, some domestic workers and employers completed the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) at the end of their first interview (see Appendix C). The HFIAS is a well-used scale with standardized validity that has been designed by the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project to measure household food access in a cross-cultural context, in both developed and developing countries (Coates et al. 2007). The HFIAS aims to capture information about three universal features experienced among those who have inadequate access to food: 1) anxiety about food supply; 2) insufficient food quality; and 3) insufficient quantity of

food supply and the physical consequences of insufficiency. Employers and domestic workers each completed two versions of the HFIAS: the first version based their own food security, and the second version based on their employers' food security (for domestic workers) or domestic workers' food security (for employers). In order to build participants' trust, so they could feel comfortable sharing their responses, I administered the HFIAS at the end of the interviews. However, administering the HFIAS at the end of interviews also meant that there was not always time left to complete the questionnaire, hence only half of the domestic workers and employers completed it. Some domestic workers also completed a participatory mapping activity at the end of their interviews.

2.2.3 Participatory mapping

I used participatory mapping to collect information about domestic workers' social relations within the households in which they work. This method consists of participants using their knowledge to produce a spatial representation of an area (Chambers 2006). Because I chose not to go into the households where domestic workers work to protect domestic worker participants' anonymity, I used this method to acquire a sense of dynamics inside households. Eight domestic workers drew a spatial depiction of their employer's household, and demarcated the spaces which they occupy and the spaces which their employers occupy. These domestic workers also highlighted the spaces where they store, prepare and consume food. I then asked the domestic workers how they feel in those spaces. This method was useful for facilitating non-verbal channels of communication.

2.2.4 Unstructured interviews

I met with 12 domestic workers for second and third interviews, which were unstructured in nature. Unstructured interviews occur when the researcher has an outline for the types of

questions they would like to ask, but has little control over the direction of conversations (Bernard 2002, 206). Because rapport was established during the initial interviews, the following interviews provided a setting for domestic workers to comfortably open up at their own pace. The lack of structure also allowed these interviews to be relaxed and participant-directed. This method is ideal for a vulnerable group. These interviews were also useful for asking domestic workers to elaborate on key points from their first interviews, and, more importantly, for allowing them to express what is meaningful to them. Most of these unstructured interviews occurred simultaneously with participant observation activities, which allowed domestic workers to discuss sensitive issues in a setting that was familiar and comfortable to them.

2.2.5 Participant observation

I engaged in participant observation (PO) with many of the domestic workers. That is, I immersed myself into the social worlds of participants in order to observe and experience their worlds as they do (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011, 224). Liamputtong (2007) argues that PO "is a means for the researcher to fully comprehend the standpoint of the participants" (120). Musante (2014, 252) adds that PO is "the only way to capture tacit aspects of culture as praxis […] as well as explicit culture." I joined domestic workers in various activities involving food, including cooking, eating and food shopping. I also participated in social events with their friends such as sporting events, weekend outings to the park, and religious events. However, I was not able to spend time in the homes where domestic workers work and spend most of their time, and thus could not directly observe their household dynamics with employers. In an effort to partially fill this gap, I lived in households for four weeks where there were domestic workers employed, and observed their daily dynamics. These observations were useful for obtaining contextual information about household dynamics.

To maintain a focus on food, I joined domestic workers while they shopped for foods for their employers' households. This method allowed me to identify foods that were accessible and inaccessible to domestic workers. Food shopping also allowed me to observe the ways in which domestic workers navigate their food security through obtaining food for their employers. It also illustrated the body language they displayed, clothing worn, and attitudes taken when participating in tasks for their employers during work hours. I also joined in eating activities at public outings and events with friends, and during interviews. I ate the same meals as the domestic workers, and observed their behaviours around eating and sharing foods with others wherever possible.

2.2.6 Reflexive photography

Because I chose not to access employers' homes, I used reflexive photography to obtain information about domestic workers' food activities with their employers. Reflexive photography is when the researcher asks participants to take photographs of their worlds, and is useful for discovering how participants see and understand their worlds (Douglas 1998). Harrison (2002) argues that participant-generated photography can "symbolise and make visible aspects of the self in social and physical environments" (865). Liamputtong (2007) adds that this method "gives voices to the researched" (145).

Using their cell phones, domestic workers were asked to photograph anything in their environments that is important to their food experiences, emotions, and relationships. Because they could photograph items that are most meaningful to them without me being there, this protocol allowed vulnerable participants to control findings and decentred my authority as the researcher (Liamputtong 2007, 145). Photography also provided an opportunity for participants

to feel good about their food-related skills, as they were proud to share images of meals they had prepared.

These methods were, overall, effective for exploring domestic workers' worlds. However, there was one prominent weakness throughout: all methods were conducted in English, rather than in Indonesian languages. This weakness was problematic for two reasons. Equal meaning is not always conveyed across languages (Hennink 2008, 26), and domestic workers who do not speak English did not participate in this study. Thus, the methods I chose had limits around how domestic workers could articulate their experiences, and which domestic workers could participate. Overall, however, this collection of methods provided multiple angles for capturing the rich and complex experiences of participants' lives. These methods also partially overcame obstacles around difficult access to participants while protecting the needs and anonymity of the vulnerable. In the next section, I discuss how my own marginalized position shaped how research was carried out.

2.3 Sameness as a starting point

Many feminist ethnographers and critically reflexive anthropologists have argued for the importance of deconstructing and acknowledging the position of the researcher in relation to their participants (Gailey 2014; Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 50; Zinn, 2001). In this section I focus on how my personal experiences of marginality provided me with a bridge to the experiences of domestic workers (Simmons 2001). Building on Abu-Lughod's (1991) work on positionality, Mascia-Lees and Johnson-Black (2000, 99) argue that researchers who have personal experiences of otherness are in a better position to be sensitive to the experiences of participants. While remaining cognisant of the dangers of flattening the vast array of experiences among domestic workers (Hesse-Biber and Yaiser 2004, 17), I argue that consciousness of my own

oppression provided me with an insightful starting point for conducting this research with domestic workers.

Though I do not live under the same levels of oppression as domestic workers in this study, my shared experiences of marginality as a woman of colour from an immigrant, working-class background in Canada provided me with an insightful lens for understanding the experiences of domestic workers in Singapore. I bring awareness of the experience of being undereducated, impoverished and from a developing country through my parents. My parents are from poor families in Trinidad and Tobago, and were only able to attend elementary school as children after overcoming many barriers, including having to work to earn money to help support their families. Similarly, poverty inhibited domestic workers in my study from pursuing the education that they desired in Indonesia. They had to migrate to Singapore to earn money to get their families out of impoverished conditions.

In addition to my parents coming from similar living conditions as many domestic workers in my study, I bring some awareness of the burdens of being part of a marginalized community post-migration. Most of my family members migrated to the USA and Canada as undocumented immigrants and almost all of my female relatives, including my mother, were employed as domestic workers in wealthy homes when they arrived in North America. Due to their undocumented status, my family members were underpaid when they worked as domestic workers, and some experienced abuse in similar ways to the domestic workers interviewed in my study.

As a master's student at a reputed Canadian university, I bring the privilege of being part of an academic community to my research goals and practices. However, as a person of colour from an undereducated, low-income family background, I am also an outsider within an

academic discipline that privileges white, middle- or upper-middle class students and faculty (Navarro et al. 2013; Brodkin et al. 2011; Harris 2016; Harrison 2008). This outsider status has allowed me to understand domestic workers' experiences in ways that may not be accessible to more privileged researchers. Similarly, Iris Lopéz (2013) was aware of her outsider position in anthropology as a woman of colour from a working-class community in the USA while conducting her research with impoverished Puerto Rican women. Lopéz argued that her working-class background allowed her to have conversations with participants that other academics would not have been able to have. Unlike Lopéz, I was not conducting research with my own community; however, my family background provided me with similar advantages in my research. I have extensive experience speaking with people who are domestic workers, which allowed me to create a more relaxed environment for domestic worker participants, and ask questions that a researcher without these experiences may not have been able to ask. Thus, my marginalized family background both separated me from other academics, and gave me a lens for understanding my participants.

Similar to Simmons (2001), my shared phenotypic characteristics with participants helped me develop rapport with domestic workers. Being a woman of colour with brown skin was helpful for initiating informal conversations and recruiting domestic workers. When I spent time in well-known places where domestic workers gather, many domestic workers approached me because they thought I was a domestic worker. After speaking with me through this initial point of contact, domestic workers quickly opened up about their experiences.

My experiences of oppression and privilege motivated my interest for engaging in research that could give voice to silenced individuals, and increased my passion for this topic. I saw my privileges in having access to basic needs, citizenship status, funding, and tertiary and post-

graduate education in a developed nation. Domestic workers said that they saw my privileges in my ability to travel freely, to not have to financially support my family, to come from Canada, and to have a university education. Because of my own experiences of being from a marginalized community, I choose to use these privileges to conduct research that could potentially benefit people who experience oppression. Erksine (2016) argues, "The vantage point from which one sees the world determines one's angle of vision" (76). Through my vantage point, I bring heightened sensitivity and commitment to this research with vulnerable participants.

2.4 Ethical considerations and beyond

Part of my commitments to this research with vulnerable participants included making extensive efforts to protect participants in a manner that went above and beyond my approved ethics protocol. Fairhead et al. (2006) argue that ethics is an ongoing process that extends beyond protocols, and needs to be contemplated throughout the entire research project. In particular, obtaining informed consent from vulnerable individuals is part of this ongoing process and requires extra sensitivity for ensuring that participants understand all aspects of the research (Sin 2005). Thus, even after participants gave their informed consent, I consistently evaluated the risks of their participation throughout the research. For example, while conducting my methodologies with domestic workers, I was hyper-attentive of our surroundings. Because I met the domestic workers in a public setting, I consistently scanned the surrounding environment to observe the behaviours of individuals nearby. I used various methods to prevent these individuals from listening to our conversations, including notifying participants of potential eavesdroppers, and suggesting that we change settings. Similar to Geros (2008) in his research in Syria, while I was with participants, I would never truthfully disclose my occupation or what I was doing in Singapore to anyone who asked. This practice ensured that participants' affiliation with my study

remained confidential. I continued to make ethical considerations when I managed and analyzed the data after completing my fieldwork, as I discuss in the next section.

2.5 Data analysis

After I completed my fieldwork, I transcribed all interviews. I used thematic coding with MAXQDA software to allow for qualitative analysis. By focusing on identifiable themes, a thematic analysis allows findings to be systematically structured while maintaining the exploratory nature of qualitative research (Guest et al. 2011). This coding system allows patterns in the data to emerge and be linked to the theoretical models. While MAXQDA allowed me to organize, compare and analyze large sets of data and improve validity, use of this type of software has been criticized for encouraging deterministic and rigid analysis (St John and Johnson 2000). To attend to these drawbacks, I triangulated coded data with non-coded data from PO, reflexive photography, participatory mapping and non-coded interviews. In the final section, I discuss how I plan to use the analyzed data to advocate for participants' needs and wants.

2.6 Conducting research that participants need or want

As mentioned in the introduction, part of feminist research is leading projects that participants need or want (Mascia-Lees et al. 1989). While I was in Singapore, domestic workers voiced that they would like the policies in Singapore to improve and be more considerate of their needs. They also want employers to be more understanding of these needs, especially when it comes to food access. Last, domestic workers said that they would like assistance with showing the positive ways in which they live and work in Singapore in order to counter negative stereotypes about them. To fulfil these requests, I am using my research to complete a report

with findings and recommendations for improvements that will be publicly accessible and disseminated to policy makers and community members. I will also present my work to NGOs and have my presentation available to them to use in their advocacy for domestic worker rights. These materials will present domestic workers in a positive light, advocate for their needs, and illustrate challenges they may face while working in Singapore.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the different approaches I used to document Indonesian domestic workers' experiences surrounding food security, emotions and social relations in their employers' homes in Singapore. I also demonstrated why this methodological framework was best for investigating sensitive issues with vulnerable participants. I showed that both my use of a feminist ethnographic approach and consciousness of my own marginality shaped the ways I conducted research and allowed domestic workers' voices to come to the forefront. Chapter Three begins by describing food security in households and focuses on the voices of domestic workers to show how they navigate their way towards food security in their employers' homes.

Chapter 3: Navigating towards food security in employers' homes

> I am always hungry because my work is very hard. […] Sometimes I [secretly] bring my crackers to the toilet because crackers are crunchy if eat, so I go [secretly eat in the] toilet. Because last time ma'am told me, "I don't want you buy food like the last maid!" Because last maid, my ma'am gave her expired and spoiled food. So the maid feel like, "Why ma'am do that to me? I am people also. I don't want food like that. This food spoil already." So if the maid go on off-day, she buy food. So ma'am think that she is no good. So I don't want ma'am to think that way about me.
>
> —Ati, Indonesian domestic worker

Ati shared the experiences of the previous domestic worker who worked with her employer to illustrate the ways she obtained food in her employer's home. Ati's employer did not provide Ati with enough food and the food that Ati got was usually expired or spoiled. Despite not providing adequate food, Ati's employer did not want domestic workers to purchase their own food to eat. Ati was faced with the dilemma of needing to obtain enough food to have energy to work, while also wanting to please her employer. She strategized by secretly purchasing crackers, which she then consumed in the bathroom to conceal them from her employer. Ati risked being considered "disobedient" in this example for eating food against the employers' wishes. She might have had her contract terminated if her employer were to find out about her secret eating. Ati was faced with the challenge that many domestic workers in this study faced: needing to please her employer around food in order to keep her job, and needing to eat enough food to do her work.

Ati's narrative shows some of the quotidian obstacles that many domestic workers in this study had to navigate in order to obtain some form of food security in their employers' homes. In this chapter, I deconstruct the various obstacles domestic workers face to show how they struggle to achieve some measure of food security on a daily basis. Domestic worker responses require an understanding of various features of food and social life in the household.

This chapter looks at how social relations and household dynamics become sites of negotiation which can either facilitate or compromise domestic workers' food security. I argue that the ways in which domestic workers experience food security and insecurity in households are bound up in the production of *markings,* which are used to demarcate social boundaries between employer and worker that reinforce household relations of inequality. Markings around food, I argue, are a critical space for employers to use to reinforce domestic workers' unequal positions. Building from Lan (2006) and Saldaña-Tejeda's (2012) work, I define markings as acts, feelings, values, boundaries, symbols and materials around food, which can be unpacked to show how employers use food to delineate social roles and hierarchical relations within the household. The concept of markings is useful because it assesses domestic workers' food security not only from the perspective of foods they have access to or their financial ability to obtain those foods, but also in terms of the various social relations they must navigate in order to obtain those foods.

This chapter begins by summarizing the diverse ways in which domestic workers experienced food security and insecurity in their employers' homes using the food security scale (HFIAS) and in-depth results from domestic worker and employer interviews. Combining findings from the HFIAS with interview data will allow domestic workers' navigations toward the goal of food security to emerge in ways beyond the isolated categories of the food security scale. I then compare domestic workers' experiences with employers' perceptions of how domestic workers experience food security in their homes. This comparison allows food security to be viewed from different vantage points—from the perspectives of the receiver of food and of the provider of food. The two differing perspectives will demonstrate that a more thorough

investigation of household dynamics is necessary to better understand domestic workers' experiences of food security and insecurity.

This chapter then uses the concept of markings to describe how food security is shaped by social practices in households. I first show how markings are produced through food distribution practices in the household. This discussion is followed by a focus on how markings are produced through eating arrangements in the household. I then show how markings are implemented through employers' personalities and family members' actions. Last, this chapter discusses the disciplinary tactics employers use to manage markings. Employers and their family members make markings meaningful through words and actions, in ways that require domestic workers to compromise their own food security, and as a result, reinforce markings themselves. The extent of the struggles domestic workers face to obtain food security in households where food is abundant suggests that domestic workers' lives are imbued with relations of inequality in ways that impact their well-being. Markings are thus part of the everyday practices in the household, used to construct and reinforce inequalities.

3.1 "The food is not enough to make me energy": Summary of food security experiences

Koc and Welsh's (2002) definition of food security considers whether one is able to obtain culturally and nutritionally satisfying foods in socially acceptable ways. This section draws on Koc and Welsh's understanding of food security to thematically describe the ways in which domestic workers in this study experienced food security and insecurity. This section is divided into two parts. The first part looks at domestic workers' perspectives of their own food security and insecurity experiences and the second looks at employers' perspectives of domestic workers' food security and insecurity experiences. These perspectives will be based on findings from the

HFIAS and the interviews. The contrasting perspectives of employers and domestic workers will show that an understanding of household dynamics and social practices is necessary for exploring how domestic workers experience food security and insecurity.

3.1.1 Domestic worker food security results from the HFIAS and interviews

All domestic workers interviewed shared that their food security and insecurity revolved around their relationships with employers. Domestic workers also expressed that they understood food security as having both nutritionally and culturally satisfying food, and enough food to give them energy to work. They drew on these understandings of food security when discussing their experiences with food in employers' homes.

The HFIAS was used to assess domestic workers' abilities to access foods in employers' households. The following table shows domestic worker responses to the HFIAS.[15]

Table 2: Domestic worker HFIAS responses (*n*=15)

Questions based on domestic workers' personal experiences of food access	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1. In the past four weeks, did you worry that you would not have enough food?	8	0	0	7
2. In the past four weeks, were you not able to eat the kinds of foods you preferred because of a lack of availability?	4	1	2	8
3. In the past four weeks, did you have to eat a limited variety of foods due to a lack of availability?	4	0	1	10
4. In the past four weeks, did you have to eat some foods that you really did not want to eat because of a lack of ability to obtain other types of food?	5	1	4	5
5. In the past four weeks, did you have to eat a smaller meal than you felt you needed because there was not enough food?	6	0	2	7
6. In the past four weeks, did you have to eat fewer meals in a day because there was not enough food?	9	0	2	4
7. In the past four weeks, was there ever no food to eat of any kind available to you in your employer's household?	11	1	1	2
8. In the past four weeks, did you go to sleep at night hungry because there was not enough food?	6	1	4	4

[15] As noted in Chapter Two, not all domestic workers and employers were able to complete the HFIAS due to time constraints.

9. In the past four weeks, did you go a whole day and night without eating anything because there was not enough food?	14	0	1	0

The responses to the HFIAS questions reflect some trends for how domestic workers in this study navigated food security. About half of the domestic workers who completed the HFIAS indicated that they were in food insecure conditions on the questionnaire. In particular, responses to Questions 1, 5 and 8 show that about half of the domestic workers were worried about not having enough food, did not have access to enough food, and went to bed hungry. Four of those domestic workers experienced conditions in which they sometimes or often had no food to eat in their employers' households. Though most domestic workers had access to some food in the home every day (Questions 7 and 9), the HFIAS shows that the majority of domestic workers are unable to access preferable foods, and ate a limited variety of foods (Questions 2, 3, and 4). When asked about the food security of their employers, all domestic workers said that their employers did not experience any food insecurity and had abundant access to a variety of preferable foods. These results demonstrate that despite living in households in which food is abundant, many domestic workers in this study struggled to obtain preferable foods.

Results from interviews corroborated that many domestic workers experienced food insecurity. The interviews revealed that obtaining food security was much more complex than simply having some food to eat every day and at every meal. All but three domestic workers, who said that they "never" had issues with food access in the HFIAS, said that they did not have food security in their interviews, but used various strategies to suppress their hunger, such as drinking water or eating biscuits when they did not have access to enough food. During their interviews, 14 out of the 27 (52%) domestic workers revealed that they were hungry on a regular basis, described physical signs of food insecurity such as weight loss, and said they did not get enough food to engage in physical labour in their current employment conditions. These

domestic workers also emphasized that they were overworked, had minimal rest, and did not have enough time to eat the food that was available to them. Many of the remaining 13 domestic workers who had better access to food still found that the foods they could access in the home were nutritionally and culturally inappropriate.

Lulu provided an example of a common trend among domestic workers of not having enough food, the available food being culturally inappropriate, and having too much work to do:

> Lulu: About the food, cannot. About the job, it is fully, fully job; very hard. The food is not enough to [give] me energy. Because one vegetable all day and the job [makes me] so tired.
> CM: Even when you eat it is not enough?
> Lulu: No because chapatti. Maybe two or three chapatti and one vegetable. It is very difficult to do job with this food. Because everybody body need energy, right, from the food.
> CM: How would you like to be eating? What do you need to be eating to have energy?
> Lulu: Maybe rice, egg and vegetables. […] But really I cannot eat just one day, one vegetable because my job is really very hard. […] [Right now] meat one time a month, only [employer's types of] vegetables. Eggs, maybe one time a week.

Lulu demonstrated how domestic workers' ability to obtain food security depends on multiple dimensions. In particular, food security is not only about the amount of food domestic workers have access to, but also about the kinds of foods that are available to them. Similar to Lulu, domestic workers said that they were generally expected to eat the same kinds of foods as employers for meals. For all but two domestic workers, eating employers' foods meant eating foods that were familiar to their employers' culture[16] and not their own.

Despite eating the same foods, 21 of the 27 (74%) domestic workers had restricted access to foods in the household. These domestic workers had to ask employers for permission to eat certain foods in the household. Snacks and fruits were the most restricted items. Domestic workers found their restricted access to fruit particularly problematic, as Eka discussed:

[16] Domestic workers described employers' cultural foods as Chinese, Indian, Malaysian, Indonesian, and 'Western,' which refers to Western European and American cuisine.

> Eka: If I ask about fruit, later he [employer] counts. Later he counts and says: "I put fruit here, don't eat!" If I want to eat fruit, I must buy myself. He is very stingy. […]
> CM: Anything need to change [about your food]?
> Eka: Fruit; I want to eat fruit! If don't eat fruit, I am not the same.

Domestic workers also voiced their need to have better access to meat, vegetables, rice, fish, and eggs in order to have more energy. They often stated they were tired of having to eat the same foods all the time. Melati described her frustration:

> Some people cannot eat bread in the morning. Can you just let the helper[17] eat what they want?! Because I don't have enough energy, like do you want to eat bread for two years?! Of course not! Can you at least give another choice? You can cook instant noodles, right, just another choice. Or maybe go to market and buy fried Bee Hoon [Chinese noodles] or whatever, or you can eat last night food. […] But bread, I stay here 11 years and I am sick and tired of bread!

Domestic workers indicated that they often felt hungry and weak, and lost weight when they could not access culturally satisfying foods (see also Dutta et al. 2017). Rice, as a staple in Indonesia, was listed as the most important food for providing domestic workers with food security. Rice was also most problematic when inaccessible. Alya, for example, described the importance of rice for domestic workers: "Rice is the main thing in my village. We cannot live without rice. We can live without meat, but we cannot live without rice." Lati also reiterated that rice was a cultural staple that provided strength and sustenance:

> Lati: I eat whatever they [employer] eating, but I need to eat rice every day. Indonesian we eat rice every day, right. But sometimes we [employer and me] didn't eat rice every day.
> CM: So were you hungry?
> Lati: Just two slice, two pieces of chapatti! [I weighed] just 39 kg because I need rice. I have no power without rice. People say if you eat chapatti you have power. Who say power?! I eat chapatti every day for six years and I don't have power!

In addition to not having rice, four Muslim domestic workers ate pork. Two of those four women said that they ate pork because they did not have alternative food choices. One of those women unknowingly ate pork because her employer did not tell her when pork was in her meals. The

[17] "Helper" is another common term used to refer to domestic workers in Singapore.

fourth domestic worker decided to eat pork voluntarily to not create more problems with her employer, who consistently mistreated her.

Participants revealed that there is a general understanding that domestic workers are expected not to ask for food and to eat only what is given to them. As a result, most domestic workers purchased their own food in order to have culturally appropriate options and/or to feel full. However, since MOM requires employers to provide them with adequate food, domestic workers did not earn enough money in their monthly salary to purchase their own food. They often complained when they had to buy their own food because they would be unable to save money, as Vita revealed: "I buy myself rice and vegetables, but the thing is I cannot save my money because I come for work." In interviews, only 8 of the 27 (33%) domestic workers stated that they did not have to purchase food with their own money. Six out of the nineteen domestic workers who did purchase their own food were not allowed to go outside or talk to neighbours, and had to secretly ask neighbouring domestic workers to purchase food for them. When domestic workers were unable to purchase their own food, they adopted other strategies. Three domestic workers secretly received food from another family member in the household. Nine domestic workers drank water to feel full. Three domestic workers, who desperately needed energy to work, stole food. In sum, many domestic workers struggled to obtain food security.

In the next section, I show how these perspectives compared with employers' perspectives about food security of domestic workers in their homes. This comparison provides another vantage point for exploring domestic workers' navigations towards food security, and relations involved in those navigations. This comparison will show that while most domestic workers said that they struggled to access personally appropriate food in their employers' homes, most employers said that domestic workers who worked in their homes did not struggle to access food.

3.1.2 Employer food security results from the HFIAS and interviews

The ways in which employers discussed food security in interviews differed from how domestic workers discussed the issue. Though only 6 of the 18 (33%) employers interviewed also completed the HFIAS, their responses reflected general trends among employer participants. All employers felt that domestic workers had no problems with food access. While some employers indicated on the HFIAS that domestic workers did not have access to a variety of preferred foods in their homes, during their interviews, all employers said they provided domestic workers with more than enough food to eat, and most said that they did not impose food restrictions. All but two employers said that domestic workers ate very little food in their homes, and 12 employers noted that domestic workers purchased their own foods.

Though half of the employers allowed domestic workers to cook separately in their homes, domestic workers usually ate the same meals as employers. Three employers were Indonesian, and said domestic workers could access their cultural foods without cooking separately. Two non-Indonesian employers were opposed to workers cooking separately, including Adrian:

> CM: Is she [domestic worker] allowed to [cook separately]?
> Adrian: I would have an issue because if you have already cooked our basic meal, you should just eat what we are having. There is no reason why you should be cooking something else.

These findings suggest that household dynamics play a role in domestic workers' ability to access personally appropriate foods in employers' households.

Rules about food access varied in households. Seven of the eighteen (39%) employers said that domestic workers could eat what they wanted in their homes without having to ask for permission, but most never actually saw domestic workers taking and eating food from their pantries or refrigerators. Domestic workers may not have eaten those foods because employers generally excluded them from choosing which foods were purchased for the household. As a

result, the household foods may have been undesirable to domestic workers. For example, Valerie told her domestic worker: "I provide you with everything; so if you want to buy your own type of snacks, you use your own money." Of the eleven remaining employers who did not allow domestic workers to eat whatever food they wanted, four said they purchased separate biscuits, bread and instant noodles on a monthly basis for domestic workers' consumption.

The status item of fruit illustrates the different viewpoints of employers and workers around food access. All but one of the employers who allowed domestic workers to eat fruit said that domestic workers do not eat fruit. Two employers said this is because Indonesians do not like fruit. These findings are contrary to responses given by domestic workers, who almost always said they enjoy eating fruit and complained when fruit was inaccessible. Thus, there may be other reasons why domestic workers were not eating available fruits in employers' homes. In particular, some fruits may not be culturally appropriate. Two employers said that domestic workers do not like the "non-local" fruits such as grapes or apples that were available in their homes. Domestic workers may also not feel comfortable eating fruit because of household dynamics. One employer overtly linked the consumption and purchasing of fruits to household status.

> CM: If the domestic worker asked, would you get her fruit?
> Xavier: If none of us are eating fruit, then she can [have] it. […]
> CM: If she asked, would you go out to buy fruit though, if you didn't have any fruit?
> Xavier: Not fruit, because you don't need this to survive. Biscuits I can understand, but fruit is not necessary. To me it's a luxury.

These findings begin to unpack the challenges of obtaining food security in employers' homes. While all employers perceived that domestic workers had food security, most domestic workers expressed that they experienced food insecurity in multiple ways, including having a lack of access to culturally appropriate food or to enough food to sustain their work. Cultural

values and preferences can shape how domestic workers experience food security in households (Koc and Welsh 2002). Status and social relations also shape these experiences. While the above materials describe some of the issues domestic workers face as they navigate towards food security, it is also important to incorporate household dynamics into discussions of food security. The rest of this chapter uses the concept of markings to explore the complex social relations around food, including domestic workers' ongoing negotiations with their employers and employers' family members that affect the ways in which food is distributed and eaten in households. The next section begins with a discussion on how markings are produced through food distribution in households.

3.2 "They just give me the bone of the fish": Marking difference through food distribution

The ways in which domestic workers described their navigations towards food security demonstrated that employers' control over food in households was about something more than a need to conserve resources. Domestic workers had to grapple with the ways food was used to communicate social boundaries in households, and how food created and maintained inequalities. The spatial, bodily, and social expressions and relations involved in practices around food, as well as the material significance of food, are what I call markings (cf. Saldaña-Teheda 2012). I identify four key areas of producing markings: food distribution, eating arrangements, employers and their family members' behaviours, and disciplinary tactics. These four ways of implementing markings were sites of struggle. The results show that some employers were more concerned with creating social boundaries than providing domestic workers with food security. The discussion of markings begins with describing three significant ways markings were produced through food distribution: differences in the quantity and quality

of food; differences in the freshness of food; and restrictions on expired or spoiled status food. These markings were used to interrupt domestic workers' efforts to obtain food security.

3.2.1 Marking difference through the quality and quantity of food

The first significant way in which food distribution was used as a marking was through the quality and quantity of foods available to members of the household. Almost all domestic workers in this study were expected not to eat foods that were considered "expensive" at some point during their employment, such as *Milo*,[18] eggs for breakfast, or meat for dinner. Generally, domestic workers said they could only access cheaper coffee, rice, biscuits, and bread in the household. While most domestic workers did not accompany employers when they ate in restaurants, the few who did all said they ate cheaper food, the leftovers from employer's plates, or they did not eat at all in the restaurant.

Both Dwi and Nini shared their experiences of getting cheaper, less flavourful items to eat than their employers*:*

> Dwi: If employer likes the food, they don't allow me to eat. Most of the expensive food the maid cannot touch. Don't think of [eating] expensive food! Like some vegetables, I cannot touch. I cannot eat […]
> CM: Because you are in the kitchen, can you go and take something to eat?
> Dwi: No no no, cannot! They no allow. For the maid, keep in a separate fridge - cannot mix with employer food. My food cannot mix with theirs. […] Because the maid's rice is different from the employer's rice. For the maid, it's the cheaper rice.
>
> If ma'am order pizza I can take because she order so many. [But if] she order burger, she says there is no need to order for me because expensive. If pizza, okay, because buy two boxes and if [they] finish eating, I can eat. But burger, no. [Nini]

Even when domestic workers were eating the same foods as employers, they were often restricted as to the food items they could eat. For example, Utari said, "We [employer and me] eat the same food, steamed fish, but they just give me the bone of the fish. They asked me to

[18] *Milo* is a chocolate malt powder that is mixed with hot or cold milk or water to produce a beverage (Nestlé 2017).

clean the bone like a cat." Like Utari, Lulu also ate the same foods as her employers for meals, but she had access to fewer options to eat than them, and consequently felt hungry:

> They [employers] eat one vegetable and have other ingredients, chutney and something like that they can eat. So yes, the vegetables is same with me, but me only get one, but they have three other things. So they have enough for themselves. I cannot take that. I can only take the vegetables.

In contrast to the domestic worker participants, most employer participants did not overtly say that they imposed restrictions on domestic workers' food access. Adrian stood out among employers as he expressed his need to distinguish the quality and cost of foods he offered domestic workers from those he ate himself:

> I wouldn't want her [domestic worker] to take my food because usually I don't buy the cheaper stuff for my family. For the domestic workers I would always get the cheaper stuff. I don't see why they need such expensive biscuits or things. If they want, I would go out and get maybe a one-month supply, "This is yours. Take as much as you want." Even coffee, I would never let her take my coffee, even my instant coffee. I would get those house brand coffees because in Indonesia I am sure they would do likewise.

Through markings, Adrian naturalized the distinction between cheap foods that domestic workers from Indonesia *should* consume from expensive foods that his family consumed. While many of the other employers did not necessarily say which foods domestic workers were or were not allowed to eat, they often said that they required domestic workers to ask permission to eat foods, especially status items, and validated them when they did not eat much of their foods. Avanti, for example, validated domestic workers for internalizing and practicing these markings:

> These helpers will never take anything in the fridge without asking. They know what is meant for the kids. […] Eating is not a problem for me. I would obviously like that they [domestic workers] ask, but with these two helpers I never had a problem because they never took anything.

Employers like Avanti asserted markings through controlling the distribution of food, problematizing domestic workers who eat a lot, and setting out rules that required certain individuals to ask for food, while others could eat without asking.

Employers also used markings to naturalize a distinction around quantities of food distributed. Evelyn, for example, gave less food to domestic workers than to her own family:

> CM: So how do you divide the food? Do you give a little bit less to her or is it the same amount?
> Evelyn: The sweets, of course not! Let's say like this [*hand gestures a portion size*], maybe just a quarter, a quarter.

Evelyn unquestioningly articulates the way she distributes food and naturalizes the notion that domestic workers *should* receive less food. By imposing differences in quality and quantity between what employers' families eat and what domestic workers eat, some employer participants distanced themselves from domestic workers. This distancing created unequal access to food and interrupted domestic workers' ability to obtain food. Differences in the quantity and quality of foods were thus used as markings to create social distance, food insecurity, and unequal relations in households.

3.2.2 Marking difference through freshness of food

The second most prominent way food was used as a marking was through the freshness of foods available to members of the household. Of the 27 domestic worker participants, 23 (81%) described that even if freshly cooked foods were available, they were expected to eat leftover items before fresh items, while employers only ate fresh foods. Mia described her experiences of this issue:

> Mia: They have new food already, but ma'am take the leftover, leftover food, put on the table and says, "You finish this one first."
> CM: You eat leftover food, every day?
> Mia: If every day leftovers still have, then every day leftovers I eat. […]

> CM: And the employers don't eat leftover food? They eat fresh food?
> Mia: Yes, especially sir. Sir don't want leftover food.
> CM: So do you like the leftover food?
> Mia: Sometimes the leftover food is not good. Two days old, three days old. Ma'am just give me to eat. Sometimes if ma'am don't know, I throw out. I don't want! No good also. Taste no good also, smelly. If ma'am talking, talking, she doesn't know, right, and then I throw in dustbin. Yeah, I cannot eat it.

Similar to Mia, all participants who were expected to eat leftovers also expressed disgust for these foods and many secretly discarded these items as well. Sasi's situation was more restrictive because she could *only* eat leftovers. She was one of three domestic workers who were only allowed to eat leftovers or stale foods for all meals. Because Sasi's employer installed cameras in the household, Sasi was unable to throw away stale and unsavoury leftovers:

> If I cook more, ma'am say, "Why you cook more?" and they make me put the food in the fridge. Tomorrow lunch ma'am give me leftovers to eat. Sometimes I want to cook more because I am hungry and she doesn't want to give me more. She says I have to put the fresh food in the fridge so I have to eat it the next day. I am not allowed to eat fresh food, only leftovers. […] Ma'am says, "This [food] expensive. You don't eat, only for me." So strict. Only leftover food she don't want, then she give me. If food expired I must eat. Last time I threw away expired bread after three days and she told me I can still eat it. Had a white colour, got mould. She asked me to eat, so I eat with butter and then I got lots of pain.

Many domestic worker participants, who could still access fresh food items for meals, expressed that employers only gave them status foods, such as fruit, sweets and takeout, when those foods were expired or stale. Risa, for example, said, "My employer give me fruits leftover after two or three weeks. She will give me [fruits] after going bad." Kade also voiced that she received status items such as takeout food only if it was leftover or if the food did not taste good:

> Kade: My employer's family eats better food. […] If food not nice or going to expire already, sir give me. If buy food from outside and not nice, he give me. […] If buy food from outside and he not finish, he will say that he buy food for me. But I know he buy food that is not [tasting] nice and then give me.
> CM: So he wouldn't give it to you if it is good?
> Kade: If good, no. Like pancake, he buys. Later after it is leftover for one week, he gives me if still have one or two pieces. […] But I throw in dustbin, I don't want to eat, later my stomach pain or what, I don't want. Better I hungry than I eat.

Kade described how receiving leftover takeout food that was unsafe to eat led her to choose hunger over eating unsafe foods. Cox and Narula (2010) argue that when employers give domestic workers leftovers or food that might not be safe to eat, employers do not view workers as equally human. Thus, markings assigned through the freshness of food not only reinforce unequal relations in the household that negatively affect domestic workers' ability to obtain food security, but also deny domestic workers of equal entitlements based on an idea of a shared humanity.

3.2.3 Marking difference through restrictions on spoiled or expired food

The third most prominent way in which markings were used to demarcate household status was through prohibiting domestic workers from eating any status food at all, even if expired or spoiled. While no employer participants said that they did this, about one third of domestic worker participants experienced this issue. In these cases, the employers implemented markings when they reserved foods for the exclusive consumption of members of the household who are viewed as higher status, including family members and, in one case, the driver of the household. Even when household members did not eat their reserved food items, these foods would still remain off-limits for domestic workers, and would eventually be discarded. Yayi, for example, described how her employer consistently purchased foods that would expire and would be donated to charities or given to friends:

> A lot of food expired in the house. I always check the cupboards because ma'am always buy buy buy, like *Milo*, all kinds of things! If biscuits expire, ma'am gives to other people. […] Ma'am very caring with the donations, like Salvation Army, but she don't treat me like that. Instead, ma'am says, "This food for me, this food for you. You never touch my food—even if food spoil, you cannot eat it!"

Aulia also noted how she was restricted from eating foods that were later discarded:

> Aulia: Sometimes he [employer] angry with me, "This one [food] not for you. This one for my family." He tell me like that.
> CM: Even if he is going to throw it [the food] away?
> Aulia: The food always wastes! Would have been better if he give it to me to eat!

In these examples, markings were established through the domestic workers' awareness of restricted foods' physical presence, staleness, and subsequent removal from the home or discarding into the garbage. Markings were also established through domestic workers remaining hungry and food deprived in homes where food was wasted or donated elsewhere. Thus, these markings affirmed domestic worker positions as subordinate to other members of the household, and, in some cases, to individuals and groups outside the household who receive donated food that domestic workers are forbidden to touch.

Through the three markings discussed in this section, most employers of domestic worker participants and some employer participants were able to use food distribution practices to govern and maintain social boundaries within their intimate household spaces, in physical, social and symbolic ways. These markings produced material distinctions that anchored social hierarchies in place and created social distance between worker and employer. Because employers have the power to control the distribution of food to members of the household, one's access to food, or lack thereof, symbolizes the ways in which power is distributed in the household (see also Saldaña-Tejeda 2012; Lan 2003). Power relations of inequality become visible when domestic workers are denied access to food of equal quality, quantity, freshness and safety as employers. Thus, by implementing markings through food distribution practices, many employers of domestic worker participants and some employer participants compromised domestic workers' ability to obtain food security while reinforcing relations of inequality.

In the next three sections, I build on this exploration of markings. I first look at how markings are further established through eating practices in the household, including through the

spatial and temporal order of eating. I then focus on how employers implement markings through their attitudes and behaviours, and I highlight the role of extended family members in managing markings. Last, this discussion concludes with a focus on how employers use disciplinary tactics to police markings. Through exploring markings more fully, the next three sections will allow the unequal access to food that domestic workers endure to become readily apparent.

3.3 "My helper knows where she stands; she would not eat with us": Eating practices in the household

The sharing of meals is an intimate process that can shape family membership (DeVault 1991). McIntosh (1996) argues that mealtimes can provide a setting for communicating and reinforcing social norms. This section explores how the spatial and temporal order in which meals are eaten in employers' homes become sites for communicating social exclusivity, negotiating relations of inequality and managing domestic workers' food security and insecurity.

3.3.1 Spatial order of eating in households

Participants from both groups said domestic workers usually ate separately from employers. Only three employers said they ate at the same table as domestic workers, and only one domestic worker said she ate at the same table as her employer. Another domestic worker said she ate with her employer's children before her employer arrived home from work. All other participants ate separately. The predominance of demarcated spaces for eating suggests that markings were implemented through mealtimes and seating arrangements, and were important for establishing hierarchical roles and social boundaries in households.

Some domestic workers enjoyed eating alone because they were able to assert their autonomy in this way. These domestic workers tended to live in conditions in which they had less restrictions on food access and comfortable spaces where they could eat, such as in their

bedroom with a TV or computer. For example, Sara and Icha both expressed joy at being able to eat alone:

> I just eat in the kitchen or sit in my own room and watch TV. I don't want to sit with the employer to eat. I just want to enjoy when I sit down and eat. […] I am comfortable eating alone because I can relax. Sometimes my friends come over in the evening and we eat. [Icha]

> My employer said, "Wherever you want to eat, it's up to you, but I just want to be alone with my husband for dinner." I thought that was a good idea. I have laptop, so I watch shows and enjoy. […] I choose to be free in my room and enjoy the TV. [Sara]

In contrast with workers who felt autonomous, just over half of the domestic workers said they felt denigrated from eating separately. These workers had restricted access to food and uncomfortable, controlled eating conditions. These conditions included eating in the kitchen while standing or while sitting on a chair or on the floor, and using different dishes and utensils than employers, or even using dirty dishes. Utari, for example, frustratingly said: "I eat in the kitchen, standing up. I cannot sit in the chair!" Similarly, Kade said: "Sir say, 'All maid eat on the floor, not on table! Every maid!' I eat in the kitchen on the floor. My heart feels like, 'oh my gosh!'" In addition to having to eat separately from employers, Sasi said she was expected to eat from the unwashed dishes that her employer had eaten from, which consequently impacted her ability to obtain food security:

> I make big bowl of food, employer eats and then she tells me to eat the leftover food from the same bowl and I cannot! I say better I eat biscuit or instant noodles. She touched her mouth with the bowl. I feel it is disgusting.

In addition to many domestic workers' experiences suggesting that mealtimes were sites to assert the subordinated role of "maid," half of the employers overtly stated that they ate separately from domestic workers in order to assert boundaries between family members and staff. Employer Avanti, for example, said, "Children still have to know she [domestic worker] is in the family, but still you have your own lines. This is what you can do and can't do. I am not

comfortable to eat together." And Leela rationalized eating separately in the context of maintaining family unity: "This is our private family time together. It is our family space. It is an intimate time together. Mealtimes are very, very important for us because it is the time we meet together." Adrian was most explicit in voicing his efforts to maintain social boundaries through mealtimes:

> I really keep that separation, including food. She [domestic worker] is not part of the family; she come here to help. […] She will eat whatever we have and if not, she can have instant noodles or something. […] So even if I go out to eat in a restaurant, I would just give her $5, she can go and eat somewhere and come back later. Or she would come and when we return home she would have her dinner. If possible, we don't let her participate in our meals, even in restaurants.

These examples align with Lan's (2003) work, which shows how eating arrangements become sites of exclusion from the intimate sphere of employers' families. Using markings, employers demarcate the spaces in which food is consumed in order to socially distance their families from domestic workers. This distancing results from and reinforces relations of inequality; those who decide who eats where and with whom assert power over those who do not get to decide. This unequal power relation allows employers to manage space and food in their homes.

3.3.2 Temporal order of eating in households

The temporal order in which food was eaten was also used as a marking to reinforce power relations of inequality in the household. Most domestic workers and employers said that domestic workers were expected to eat after employers. Most domestic worker participants revealed that eating after employers not only affirmed social roles within households, but also negatively impacted their food security. In all cases, domestic workers were expected to finish allotted tasks before they could eat. For many domestic workers, putting food after work meant that they would often get hungry from engaging in physical labour, going long hours without

food, and then having to wait for employers to finish eating. This issue was exacerbated for domestic workers who were physically overworked and forced to complete tasks that were not outlined in their contracts. For example, in addition to completing tasks stated in her contract, Mara also worked in three different households and cared for three children. Because she had to finish these tasks *and* wait for her employers to finish eating before she could eat, Mara was often hungry and worried about when she would receive her meals:

> When all employer eating, I am taking care of these three [children]. She [employer] tells me to help. But she is not aware that I need to finish my other jobs. I finish my jobs and then she tells me to take care of children. And then my employer eats and after I eat. Employer is talking, talking for so long [at meals]! What time I must eat?! […] I worry about what time I can have lunch or dinner. I always have dinner at 10:00 p.m. or 10:30 p.m.

One third of domestic workers revealed that after waiting for employers, they would be too tired to eat. This issue was exacerbated when their employers finished all of the food and did not leave any leftovers for them. When no leftovers remained, domestic workers would be expected to prepare another meal for themselves, after they cleaned their employers' dinner mess. Because employers finished eating late in the evening, these domestic workers would often be too exhausted to cook again. Thus, domestic workers in these situations would often forgo eating dinner altogether if there were no leftovers, sacrificing food for sleep, as Mia described:

> CM: For dinner, she [employer] serves the food for you?
> Mia: No, because [they] all finish [first]; I clean table and then I can take [food]
> CM: Is there always food for you left?
> Mia: Sometimes if she finish food she asks me to make something, maybe fry egg. If employer like the food, maybe chicken, very like, and children also like, so food finish, "Mia, sorry the food finish, maybe you can fry egg or something."
> CM: So you fry egg?
> Mia: No, night already, how to do? I am tired already.

Mara and Mia's experiences both show how markings established through eating arrangements are not only about boundary making, but are also a part of the complex sets of

relations involved in the ways domestic workers experience and negotiate their food security. The relations of inequality become visible through mealtimes, as employers extract labour from domestic workers while depriving them of the food necessary to perform that labour. Thus, markings set out through mealtimes became sites for many employers to not only fortify difference and make that difference visible, but also to wield power over domestic workers by restricting their ability to consume food when they were hungry. The next section explores the ways in which these markings were reinforced through employers' behaviours.

3.4 "When I eat, ma'am gets angry; but when I don't, she also angry": Marking difference through attitudes and behaviours

The uneven relations of power within the household allowed employers to implement markings through their attitudes and behaviours in ways that impacted domestic workers' ability to obtain food security. Domestic worker participants revealed that their employers' inconsistent expectations around food were the most common behaviours that asserted markings. Almost all domestic workers said that when employers told them that they could eat certain foods, employers or their family members would often reprimand them right afterwards for taking those same foods. Employers' inconsistent behaviours often worsened other barriers to food security that many of these domestic workers already faced. For example, Lati said she was so hungry from not receiving enough food that she stole butter to eat with her bread in the morning in order to have enough energy to work. These barriers were exacerbated by her employers' contradictory expectations about her food access. Lati described these inconsistencies:

> Ma'am says, "Whatever in the fridge you eat." But I am thinking again sometimes, like if there is chicken in the fridge, I don't take the chicken because maybe it is for her son or daughter. So I just take vegetables. I can't understand this one, I mean which food for me, which food not for me? […] Because after I take food, sometimes ma'am searching for that food. One time I mistake because ma'am said, "You take from the fridge whatever you want." I take a little chicken from the fridge, but then

> she said the chicken is missing. I said I take it, and then she said, "This is not for you!" Then after that I not taking.

Kiki had similar experiences with her employer. She described how her employer initially said she could eat whatever food she wanted, but later complained when she ate certain foods:

> CM: Is there food that you are not allowed to eat in the employer's house?
> Kiki: No it's okay I can eat everything, but usually employer's expensive fruits I don't eat...If I want to eat, then I buy by my own self.
> CM: What would happen if you ate it?
> Kiki: It is okay, but sometimes they ask. Like, for example, employer buy four peach, and then I cut two. Then if I eat one or half or leftover, they say, "The leftover peach from yesterday, still have?" Then when I say I eat it. They say, "Oh" and their face is like [angry], so I don't feel that it is good. So whatever expensive food there, I don't eat. Like fruits, I don't eat. […] Because the employers sometimes says, "[The food] so fast finish!" Then I feel very uncomfortable.

To avoid upsetting their employers, Lati and Kiki abstained from eating their employers' food, and purchased their own food instead. Employers' inconsistent behaviours required domestic workers to respond by limiting their food intake and compromising their food security, and thus became part of the markings that reinforced power relations of inequality in households.

Some domestic workers revealed that their employers used more overt attitudes to execute markings. These domestic workers described how their employers were consistently angry with them about how much and which food they ate. Risa described her employer's overt attitudes around food and how she had to navigate around those attitudes to try to obtain food security:

> My sir is very fast to get angry. He don't like I cook too much and he don't like that I take too much food also. He is very troublesome. I don't really like him. He always says I eat too much, that the food always very fast finish. He says, "This food is very expensive. You cannot eat it!" […] Yesterday his face was unhappy and after he screamed, "Risa, where is the chicken?!" Now I will go take my food in front of him so he will see how much I take because he worried that I will take too much. Then I will finish my cleaning and eat in the kitchen, where it is quiet and I can enjoy.

Risa demonstrated that part of navigating employers' attitudes to obtain food security was employing emotional labour, which extended beyond the physical labour of the job. Hochschild

(1983, 7) defines emotional labour as the requirement of having "to induce or suppress feeling" in order "to produce a proper state of mind in others." To prevent her employer from being angry, Risa had to change her behaviour around her food intake, while controlling and taking care of her own emotions. Risa's experience was common among domestic workers in this study. Most domestic workers demonstrated that they had to shift their own ways of being in order to accommodate employers' behaviours (cf. Anderson 2000). The unequal relationship and leverage that employers have required domestic workers to tolerate behaviours that compromised their own food security, because doing so reduced the threat of being sent home and losing money. Both the behaviours of employers and the responses that those behaviours required from domestic workers became part of the markings that reinforced the unequal relations in the household. Thus, being a domestic worker in Singapore means potentially compromising one's own food security in order to accommodate employers' behavioural issues, and consequently reinforce markings. The next section shows how domestic workers often have to accommodate behaviours of employers' extended families as well.

3.4.1 Extended family policing markings

Domestic workers discussed the role of their employers' family members in policing markings. In particular, domestic workers often spoke about role of the parents of employers. Because employers often hired domestic workers to work with their parents, part of enduring employers' behaviours often meant enduring the behaviours of their employers' parents. This section explores the ways employers' parents enforced markings that acted as barriers to many domestic workers' food security. Half of the domestic workers complained that employers' parents, who they referred to as "grandma" or "grandpa," would scrutinize their actions. For example, when discussing her experiences in her employer's house, Aulia jokingly said, "We

don't have CCTV or camera [in the house], but I think my grandma is [like a] camera! Grandma look at me, what I do." These behaviours were seen to be ways that grandparents police domestic workers' access to food, as Vita indicated:

> When we eat outside, my ma'am told me, "Don't order anything expensive when grandma is around. When the grandma not around, you can order whatever you want." […] The thing is grandma will be like, "You know you are maid and you can't order this kind of thing. You think it's cheap!? You know how much your salary is!?" […] When we go out [with grandma] they will tell me to eat at home first. […] But at home, then grandma will cut my food. Sometimes she will just give me less food after I eat outside. Even though my ma'am is the one who pays, grandma will say, "Do you know that food is very expensive?! Actually what you buy just now, you can buy for two persons, or can share or eat it together. You don't need to order." They say, "How much you eat? How much is your salary? How much are you earning per day? This food is expensive, you know."

In Vita's case, grandma played a key role in implementing markings. Vita's experience echoed those of the other 13 domestic workers who complained about grandparents' policing. For these workers, part of navigating food security was learning to cope with grandparents' markings. Many of these domestic workers coped by rationalizing grandparents' behaviour and why they tolerated it, which included voicing how employers treated them well and compensated for grandparents' obstinacies. Because they were often asked to work closely with the parents when employers were not present, many of these domestic workers worked in conditions in which they regularly struggled to obtain food security due to grandparents' consistent enforcement of markings. Melati articulated her struggles to obtain food security in a grandparent's home:

> Melati: Employers like to put helper to work in the parents' house and I don't like that because they don't pay me. That is not my job and the parents are very stingy and don't give proper food. […] I was very skinny because most of the time I stay at grandma's. […] The grandma was very stingy.
> CM: Were you hungry?
> Melati: Of course, because I work in their house from morning to afternoon! I was very tired and sick with the food that they gave me and that was really not proper food for me. They just boil the rice, put salt inside and chopped up the fish ball. That

> is all what they give me. They say, "This is porridge for you." How would you feel about the food?! This is so horrible! She just cook rice for me and I don't know how long the rice there already and they just put salt, soya sauce and with the egg only. This is what they give me most of the time, every day during lunchtime and I was tired and sick because of that.
> CM: Did she eat that food?
> Melati: No, of course not! That is just for me. They cook differently, not for them, just for me. […] That is why it make me suffer. Even though my employer is good, I discuss with them before, "I like you and the kids and want to stay with you longer, but please don't make me stay with your mother."

Melati described grandma's prominent role in enforcing markings. These markings are embedded within unequal conditions that require domestic workers to compromise their own food security and well-being to go against MOM's rules and work with grandparents. In such conditions, domestic workers have few resources available to them, other than complaining to MOM. Generally, domestic workers do not report employers who violate their contract because of fears of unemployment (Constable 2014). Thus, grandparents are one of the various actors in the household who can effectively implement markings and complicate domestic workers' desire for food security. The last data section discusses what participants described as the most effective enforcer of markings: disciplinary tactics. Domestic workers often responded to disciplinary tactics with fear and would, consequently, reinforce markings.

3.5 Enforcing markings through disciplinary tactics

Many domestic workers said their employers used various forms of discipline to manage their eating. Domestic workers described receiving four forms of discipline: physical abuse; punishment through food; salary deductions; or verbal abuse. These disciplinary tactics created and reinforced markings around food and affected most domestic workers' ability to obtain food security at some point in time while they were working in Singapore.

Physical abuse was the harshest form of discipline. Among the five domestic workers who said that they had been physically abused, two domestic workers, who were both staying in shelters, described how their physical abuse became part of the markings that reduced their food security. Nini was one of these workers. She described how, in addition to hitting her, her employer would spit on her head when she sat down to eat her meals, because her employer thought that she should be working instead of eating: "If I sit down to eat, sir angry and says that I must take care of grandma and he spit on my face four times. Every time he angry, he spit." In response to her employer's abuse, Nini refrained from eating on a regular basis.

Nini was also one of five domestic workers whose employers used food for punishments and rewards. She described how her employer would not give her proper meals if he felt that she did not work enough: "Employer no give me dinner to eat. He only give me one slice of bread. He said, 'Bread is enough because you not working much.'" Similarly, Kade said that her employer gave her food based on his perception of Kade's behaviour:

> Sometimes I say: "I haven't eat." Then employer says: "You do this [task] first, then you eat." But if he is good to me, he says: "You eat first." Sometimes no, I say "I also haven't drink tea in the morning, you ask me to do this thing." Then he say, "You just keep quiet."

Two other domestic workers who were punished through food also had monies deducted from their salaries if they ate food they were not supposed to eat or if they let food go to waste. Dwi described how her employer deducted money from her salary if she did not accept the markings that created social boundaries. For example, in addition to having to eat with separate dishes and utensils, Dwi could only eat her employer's leftover foods if those foods were placed on a separate tray. When describing the purpose of the tray, Dwi said: "Employer put food on the other tray for me because employer say maid is dirty." Dwi had to put the tray on the table before her employer ate each meal. Her employer would then portion out the food and place it on the

tray for Dwi to eat the next day. Dwi said that if she forgot to put the tray on the table before a meal, her employer punished her by not giving her food, or by deducting $10 from her salary:

> Employer have special tray for the maid, so when they finish dinner, they put food on my tray for me to eat later for dinner or lunch. Then one time I never put the tray out. Of course, no food. Because I forgot to bring out, then lunch no food. […] Employer say, "What you choose, $10 or no food?" I say, "Ok, I won't eat, but don't cut $10." Because if they cut $10, that is half day of work. My salary for one day is $23. If employer take $10, my salary is $13 only. So I say better I don't eat.

Of all the forms of punishment, verbal abuse was the most common. Most domestic workers said that they had been yelled at for issues in the household as some point during their employment. Some issues that caused them to be yelled at included how quickly they worked, how they cared for employers' children, and how often they called their own families at home in Indonesia. In terms of food use, domestic workers were usually verbally abused for eating and cooking. They were rebuked most in contexts in which they had to ask employers for permission to eat food, or when employers conducted food inventories to ensure that they followed the rules. Eka described her experience of being yelled at when she did not follow the rules around food, and how that experience compromised her ability to obtain food security:

> If I eat, I must ask permission from them and then I can touch the food. I cannot just eat, eat. Last time I take the tail of the fish. After that sir shout shout shout with me, "Why you not ask permission from me if you can eat or not!?" I said, "Sorry sir I didn't tell you." He yell, "Next time if you want to eat, you must tell me or ma'am and then you can take!" "OK sir, I will tell you I want to eat."

Because domestic workers were fearful of upsetting employers and did not want to disrupt their image of deference, they quickly adopted strategies to prevent verbal abuse from happening. Ati described how she strategized around her employer's yelling:

> Some food I want, but ma'am say, "Don't touch my food if I never tell you that you can eat." Food in fridge, until spoil I never touch, because ma'am tell me, "If I don't ask you to eat, don't eat!" A lot of food in the fridge spoil! […] I never ate anything because employer like that. One time, I very hungry in the afternoon and I take one biscuit, only one biscuit, and my employer yell, "Why the biscuit low?! You eat my

> biscuit!" I say, "Yes ma'am, I want." "Why you never ask me?! Why you never ask sir?!" Then I say, "I am sorry ma'am. Next time I don't want to take." […] I never ask [for food]. The time ma'am scold me until now, I never ask.

Ati's experience shows that part of the complex obstacles through which she had to navigate to obtain food security was to avoid being yelled at. Ati had to learn which food she was allowed to consume, and the unspoken expectations and socially acceptable ways for her to obtain and consume that food. As with many other participants, she strategized by limiting her intake of her employer's food and remaining silent about her food needs. While these strategies allow domestic workers to prevent conflict and maintain an image of deference, they also produce markings that reinforce relations of inequality in the household.

Employers in this study did not overtly say that they reprimanded domestic workers for eating food unless domestic workers ate restricted items. However, the ways in which they described domestic workers' behaviours around food suggest that they were managing food, and possibly enacting disciplinary tactics in the household. For example, almost all employers said that domestic workers ate very little, purchased their own foods, and rarely ate accessible snacks, even when they could eat them without asking. Dynamics within households, such as repeated verbal reprimands, extended family members' behaviours, and obsessive focus on food markings, may have prevented domestic workers from feeling comfortable asking for and eating foods. Evelyn, for example, described how, in addition to requiring domestic workers to ask for permission to eat any food, she policed markings through measuring food amounts and through subtle verbal reprimands:

> I find cake in the helper's room. Then I give a test and I see the cake become less. I measure how big it is, whether she take it or not. […] She is cutting a bit by bit. Become less one centimetre, because it is a big cake and then she cut the cake. I said, "You know if you are not honest enough, how [can] I trust you? You not good people." I tried to help her realize that I know she stealing. After that she didn't dare.

A couple other employers revealed using similar tactics as Evelyn. These findings suggest that employers' disciplinary tactics managed domestic workers' behaviours around food in ways that reinforced markings and unequal relations, and resulted in conditions of food insecurity.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has defined food security within the context of social relations that domestic workers must navigate in order to obtain both culturally and nutritionally satisfying food, and enough food to do their work. This chapter also embedded food security within the concept of markings to make visible the complex social relations that domestic workers have to navigate in order to obtain food. Through food distribution, eating practices, employers' and their extended family members' behaviours, disciplinary tactics, and domestic workers' fear of punishment, markings were enacted in households in ways that interrupted many domestic worker participants' ability to obtain food security. Because 93% of domestic workers who participated in this study did not experience food security when markings were present in their lives, results from this chapter suggest that food security may be difficult to achieve in work conditions where markings are present. Domestic workers' struggles became part of the production of symbolic meanings and daily activities that reinforced and communicated social boundaries and power relations of inequality in households. Through markings, employers communicated the subordinate role of domestic workers, and rendered them less entitled to necessities that other members of the household have access to. These findings illustrate how food security is strongly shaped by the social context within which food is acquired and consumed.

In addition to navigating around markings, domestic workers have shown that they must seek strategies to cope with employers' control over food in ways that also manage employers' emotions. The conditions which require poor domestic workers to struggle to obtain food and

physically survive in wealthy employers' homes, where food is abundant, reproduces the unequal relationship between employers and domestic workers. In the next chapter, I explore how domestic workers are emotionally and physically shaped by unequal conditions that prevent them from obtaining food security. I show that through inflicting emotional and physical pain upon domestic workers, many employers of domestic workers in this study used food insecurity to manage domestic workers' bodies, as a key site for the production and maintenance of inequality in the household.

Chapter 4: "I was sometimes crying I am so hungry": Emotional and bodily experiences of food insecurity

Because we physically incorporate food into our bodies, food is intimately connected to our physical well-being. However, while a physical lack of food can cause physical sensations of hunger and bodily ailments, lack of food can also be imbued with emotional responses (Lupton 1996). Page-Reeves et al. (2014, 198) argue that "the very nature of food as something that people need in order to be satisfied means that when there is not enough food, people feel shame, stress, anxiety, and even fear." Emotional and bodily responses are interrelated and important aspects of food, and they are also features of food insecurity.

This chapter explores the ways in which domestic workers are physically and emotionally shaped by their experiences of food insecurity in their employers' homes. Constable (2014) argues that employers manage domestic workers' bodies through clothing, haircuts and work routines. I expand on these insights to argue that by inflicting emotional and physical distress on domestic workers through their control of food, employers are also managing domestic workers' bodies. Through embodied emotional and physical experiences, domestic workers come to know their subordinate positions in the household. The ways in which food insecurity is emotionally and physically felt, I argue, reflect the ways in which unequal relations of power are written on domestic workers' bodies, and is an outcome of employers' management.

Emotions and the body are crucial to an understanding of food insecurity and the management of well-being, and can be effectively approached through a focus on embodiment. The process of embodiment considers how social and material worlds impact the physical body (Lock & Farquhar 2007). Emotions are not only embodied, but can also mediate between the body and social world, and thus can help individuals interpret and understand their relations to

others in their environment (Tapias 2006; Lyon and Barbalet 1994). Conradson and McKay (2007) define emotions as the conscious perception, interpretation and expression of particular affects. Affect can be understood as the embodied, physiological sensations that emerge when one has a relational encounter (Conradson and McKay 2007). While emotions may be physically felt and understood during a relational encounter, the ability to overtly express emotions is influenced by relations of power (Tapias 2006; Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990; Ahmed 2014). In unequal relations of power, only certain individuals can overtly express emotions, while others are constrained. These insights about the limits to overtly expressing emotions can be used to enhance understanding of food insecurity as an enactment of power. Those who have little power may experience food insecurity in an affective way that shapes their emotional responses, but may not be able to overtly express their emotions, such as through verbal communication about inequality. This chapter explores domestic workers' emotional responses to markings around food and eating, including employers' behaviours used to enforce those markings. Through the emotional expressions of sadness, dehumanization, anger, frustration and fear, this exploration shows how employers position domestic workers in subordinated roles, how domestic workers come to understand these roles, and how domestic workers actively reflect upon their subordination through their emotions.

The latter part of this chapter explores how domestic workers physically experience their subordinated positions in and through their bodies. It elucidates the ways in which domestic workers' bodies become symbolic markers of social inequalities (Horton and Barker 2010). Nguyen and Peschard (2003, 461) have argued that the effects of inequality can leave visible traces on bodies which can be used to mark them as different. Anthropologists focusing on embodiment call for an examination of the lived-in body, including how bodies carry out daily

activities and relate to other bodies, in order to understand how an embodied person experiences their social world (Tapias 2006; Csordas 1990; Lock 1993). I look specifically at the ways in which domestic workers' bodies express the physical impacts of food insecurity and overwork in the forms of hunger, weight loss, weakness, hair loss, and illness, and how these physical experiences are connected to emotions. I argue throughout that these bodily expressions are an outcome of employers' management, used to discipline domestic workers' bodies into subordination.

This chapter begins by describing domestic workers' emotional responses to employers' restrictions on their food and eating. I then highlight domestic workers' emotional responses to receiving unwarranted blame for eating foods that they never consumed. Last, this chapter focuses on how employers' control over food physically impacted domestic workers' bodies. I highlight the physical impact of weight loss and conclude with the suggestion that employers intentionally keep domestic workers at a low weight in order to reinforce the unequal power relations in the household.

Showing how domestic workers are emotionally and physically shaped by food insecurity elucidates how domestic workers embody their unequal relations with employers. This focus on embodiment demonstrates how food insecurity is a multidimensional struggle that impacts domestic workers' daily lives in complex ways. The chapter begins with a focus on domestic workers' emotional responses to restrictions on food, and the management of domestic worker bodies that results from employers' emotional manipulations.

4.1 "If my employer complains about my eating, it hurts": Emotional responses to restrictions on food and eating

Domestic workers in this study most commonly attached their struggles with obtaining food in employers' households to feelings of sadness and dehumanization. About two thirds of the domestic workers shared in interviews that they felt sad and dehumanized from their employers' restrictions on food and eating. For participants, these emotional responses were embedded in the larger picture of who they are as people. Participants went beyond their employment positions to draw on what they were sacrificing to work in Singapore.

Eka, for example, demonstrated how her emotional responses to food insecurity were rooted in her larger sacrifice of being away from her family. Eka had recently returned to work in Singapore for the third time. In desperate need of money for her family, she left her three young children, including her breastfeeding one-month-old, back home in East Java to work for her current employer. Eka described how her emotional pains from her sacrifices were worsened by the abuse she received from her employer, in particular around her employer's control over food:

> Eka: I feel like the employer and the maid different. But eating [treatment] also different. My employer got everything, but how about me, [I get nothing]? Sometimes I say like that to myself. I don't want to tell him [employer] how I feel. […] He tells me, "If you didn't eat, I don't care. I don't care about you." […] I feel so sad [*cries during interview*]. […]
> CM: How did you feel when the employer didn't give you food?
> Eka: Sometimes I so sad. I feel like, "How come my employer like this?" Sometimes I talking to myself in my heart, "How come my employer like this?" But I also know I working to get money. I working hard because I need money, but why he still do me like that? I feel. I ask myself. […] Sometimes night time I very tired, sometimes I cry only. I thinking. Because far from my family. I can feel [sad]. […] Employer eat first, then after I eat. We don't eat together. If there is leftover food, then I eat. If no food left, I just make instant noodles for myself. Sometimes I feel maybe this is just the way my life is.

Eka offered strong emotional language to describe how the impact of her food insecure workplace made her question her larger decisions. She responded to her employer's markings around food and eating with feelings of sadness. She further illustrated her sadness in her body language, as she burst into tears while discussing her food insecurity, and her subordination. Her

understanding of her food insecurity was not separate from her unequal domestic position; together they created an overwhelming emotional response. However, Eka chose to feel rather than speak: "sometimes I talking to myself in my heart," and "but why he still do me like that. I feel," suggest she kept her emotions to herself. Eka's statements about needing to work even while experiencing food insecurity and emotional distress—"How come my employer like this? But I also know I working to get money"—gives glimpses of how subordination through hunger made her question her dreams, "sometimes I feel maybe this is just the way my life is."

Domestic workers often clearly linked their emotional distress regarding food insecure conditions to their subordinated positions in the household and the nature of their contractual relationships with employers. They described how employers felt as though they could wield power over and demean them. Risa, for example, said that her employer felt entitled to restricting her food intake in ways that made her right to food seem problematic and unreasonable. Risa described how her employer's control over her food intake, and his verbal abuse, left her feeling heartbroken and subordinated:

> My employer thinks I am just a helper. They think, "I pay your fee and need to pay so many things and still need to prepare your meal." But food is my right to have, but they always think I am just below them! […] I cried because sir screamed at me, "Where is the chicken?!" I feel like, it is just chicken and I just take a little bit. Why you scream? I feel very heartbroken. I work for nine years already, and it is just a little bit of food. And he has other food; I just take a little bit only. That time I cry.

Risa showed how her employer's control over food reinforced a subordinate status that would not change even after nine years of employment. Her employer's policing of food not only maintained her subordinate position in the home, but also left her feeling heartbroken and sad.

Like Risa, Dwi also discussed feeling hurt in response to how her employer treated her around food. Unlike Risa, Dwi had worked for numerous employers over the past nine years. Despite having some positive experiences with previous employers, Dwi described how the

transactional contract relationship made her current employer feel entitled to treat her like a "low person." When describing dynamics around food and eating, Dwi shared her emotional struggles in navigating around her employer's treatment:

> If they don't allow me to eat, then I don't eat. But for me it is OK. Little problem, you know.
>
> But if my employer complain about my eating, it hurts. If I eat already and then they start yelling, it hurts. Because if they are not happy, they always yell at me. They are not thinking that I also have a heart. Because they are thinking, "Our maid is only down here." So they can treat me like low people.
>
> Some employers are like that. They never thinking the maid can say no. They think because you are maid, you must do everything. They think, "I pay your salary. I pay your levy, then you must follow our rules!"

While Dwi felt "OK" with the markings around food and eating in the household, she felt hurt and denigrated with how her employer mobilized these markings when she had already consumed some food. She linked her employer's expectations and vociferous mobilization of markings, to their inability to empathetically recognize her as a person with a heart and emotions. She also astutely connected this lack of empathy to the transactional financial relationship that potentially subordinated her. Dwi suggested that the transaction allows employers to feel entitled to treat domestic workers however they please, including denying the embodied emotional impact—"it hurts"—of verbal abuse around eating food.

Dwi's insights that her employer tied food to subordination were frequently noted among the domestic workers who experienced food insecurity. In particular, these domestic workers commonly described how their food insecure conditions made them feel as though their employers could not recognize their equal humanity. For example, similar to Dwi, Sasi described how her employer's requirement for her to eat separate food in a demarcated area made her feel "low" and "sad":

> CM: How do you feel when your employer makes you eat separate food?
> Sasi: I feel sad because we are human being. Some employers eat together in the table—my last employer, we sit together and she ask me to eat a lot. That is why I feel very sad. I feel very, very low. I know I am maid, so I must look down, cannot look up, but people must treat me like a human being right. "You are maid, you are maid," some employer just think like that. "You sit there. You eat there."

Through the demarcated food and eating practices in the household, Sasi was made to feel sad because her employer could not acknowledge her equivalent humanity. At the same time, Sasi was expected to internalize a body language of subservience. By associating the right to eat with keeping her eyes down, Sasi tied her emotions to body language, and to food insecurity. This triangle of associations illustrates how unequal power relations not only manifest into embodied emotions, but also influence how and if these emotions can be overtly expressed. Through control of food and expression of emotions, Sasi's employer was able to manage Sasi's body.

Like Sasi, Yayi also described how she felt dehumanized from her employer's markings around food. While taking for granted the status differences between her employer and herself, Yayi simultaneously felt dehumanized:

> Yayi: Whatever food ma'am don't like, she gives me. Then ma'am puts the food on separate dishes for me because she says maid is dirty. I feel a lot of pain from this; I feel different than them because ma'am said the door is dirty, but maid is more dirty. […] I don't want my employer to make me eat different food.
> CM: So you want it to be you can eat the same food?
> Yayi: Not the same food, because I know I am maid and them employer. But no need to be like that with me because I am also human. We are also human! If they have a lot of food, they just give me little bit. […] Here in Singapore, employers ask us to work and work, but they never think about our stomach! We are also human! […] My employer like that. The dog flu, they bring to the doctor and they check up until $400. But the maid sick, don't want to take to doctor. Sometimes they can't think properly—which one human, which one animal.

Yayi responded to her employer's markings around food and eating with emotional pain. Again referencing how body language is tied to feelings around food insecurity, Yayi expressed

feelings of frustration, anger and dehumanization. She supported her claim by rhetorically noting that her employer could not distinguish whether she was an animal or a human.

Eka, Risa, Dwi, Sasi, and Yayi all vocalized their emotional frustrations with how their employers treated them with food. They described their feelings of sadness, heart pain, anger, and dehumanization to illustrate how their employers' unfair treatments were linked to subordination. They were acutely aware that their personal and physical subordination, food deprivation, and emotions were connected. Domestic workers' linking of food markings and subordination to feelings of dehumanization resonates with Sollund's (2012, 85) argument that food and eating practices are sites to indicate "whether [domestic workers] are recognized as human beings with basic human needs." Ladegaard (2013) builds on this argument by noting that through denying domestic workers of their humanity, employers can exclude domestic workers from the domains of moral values and fair treatment which apply to others in the household. Through this exclusion, employers not only enforce boundaries and assert power over domestic workers, but also position domestic workers as subordinate to the employer's level of humanity. This assertion allows employers to reaffirm their own dominant position in the household, and to ultimately manage domestic workers' bodies (cf. Nussbaum 2006). This notion of the positioning of hierarchical roles aligns with domestic workers' experiences, as they all shared how they came to know their subordinate positions in the household through experiences of food insecurity and the interconnected intensity of their emotional responses.

In the following section, I build on this discussion of how domestic workers are emotionally shaped by food insecurity to address the specific issue of being wrongfully blamed for taking food. Many domestic workers raised this issue and showed strong emotions in

response. This focused case shows that, through the emotions evoked from unwarranted blame, employers were able to manage domestic workers' eating, and ultimately their bodies.

4.2 "Make my heart very pain because I never eat it and they say that I did": Emotional responses to unwarranted blame

Domestic workers commonly voiced that employers would blame them for anything in the household that seemed out of order. In particular, half of all domestic worker participants described being blamed for eating foods in the household that they had not consumed. Because these domestic workers were not eating restricted food, nor were they receiving enough food to eat from employers, they often found this blame emotionally frustrating. This section focuses on the emotions that emerged from being wrongfully blamed for eating food in the household.

Domestic workers commonly discussed how being falsely accused of eating food caused them to feel frustrated, afraid, or sad. These feelings were connected to feeling demeaned and underappreciated for the amount of work that they did. Lati, for example, worked for her employer for almost a year. She articulated how her employer withheld food, gave her spoiled food and blamed her for eating restricted food items that she never actually consumed. These experiences heightened her feelings of being underappreciated:

> Employer never give food, even if they have a little bit, they say don't eat, keep in the fridge. They are very rich. I very upset because I work so hard already and they give me spoiled spinach. […] I feel sad with how they treat me. If I didn't buy the egg, I can't eat. In the morning, sir always have eggs with the bread and sausage. Sir like [eggs], so I always prep for sir, but my ma'am say, "Why the egg very fast finish? You are eating the egg! You are stealing the egg!" That one hurt me. Make my heart very pain because I never eat it and they say that I did. It's only egg, how expensive? They are all very rich. Why are they very worried if I am stealing the eggs?

In her expression, "make my heart very pain," Lati shows the strong emotional impacts of being accused of stealing food in her rich employer's house where she worked "so hard" and suffered

with food insecurity.

Similar to Lati, Kade described feeling angry over being consistently blamed for eating food that she had not eaten, and for having food restrictions tied to not being allowed to go outside or have a day off:

> If employer buy chips or anything, he counts. If buy biscuits, he counts how many in the pack. If I take one biscuit, then he will know I take. If there is half a pack because somebody else eat—I don't know who eat, I never see—then he says to me, "You eat, you lie to me. I know you eat!" If food missing, or any biscuit missing, he always say, "You eat!" But I never eat. Then he still say, "You eat." Then I very, very angry and I say, "OK I will buy. Give me one day off, I go grocery and I will buy this biscuit for you!" Then he says, "Go!" But he won't give me a day off because I know he scared to let me go outside alone.

Kade's employer used unwarranted blame as part of his various tactics to maintain control over the household as well as Kade. In response, Kade felt "very, very angry," and vocalized that anger to her employer, "give me one day off, I go grocery and I will buy this biscuit for you!"

Employers' false accusations can be viewed as a part of their "backstage control" efforts. Yeoh and Huang (2010, 230) argue that this control stems from employers' fear that domestic workers' deference is actually a mask hiding their "true" nature in the presence of others, and that deference is dropped when they are alone, or "backstage." Because domestic workers work in the private spaces of employers' homes, employers use various tactics to maintain control over their homes when they are not there. Blaming domestic workers for missing food or other issues in the household can be a part of this control. Domestic workers feel emotionally distressed from this blame. This distress can drive them to monitor their own actions to avoid further controls by employers (cf. Sollund 2012), which allows employers to maintain "backstage control."

Unwarranted blame was most effective at maintaining "backstage control" when this blame evoked the emotion of fear among domestic workers. Domestic workers were often so fearful of receiving further blame that they did not eat foods in the household even if those foods were

accessible and they were hungry. For example, while Kade described that she felt angry from wrongful blame in the excerpt above, in her interview she also said that wrongful blame caused her to be too scared to eat any food in the household:

> I never take food because I am scared sir say, "Why you take this one?" So many questions he asks, so I don't want. I never take food, even if I hungry. If I hungry I just drink a lot of water, then do my work, and I forget about the hungry.

Kade's fear mobilized her to strategize around potential blame by forgoing eating, "I never take food, even if I hungry," and instead drinking water and occupying herself with work. As a result, the employer's blame evoked emotions that effectively controlled food in the household, as well as Kade's body.

Similarly, Mara felt fear from her employer's blame. She repeatedly used the word "scared" to describe how emotions shaped her food choices:

> If I want to eat the egg, I am very scared because any food inside the house finish, grandma says, "Why so fast finish?" If I want to eat what they have in the home, I am very scared. If grandma or ma'am don't tell me what to eat I never eat because I feel scared. […] The grandma tells me, "You want to eat fruit, you take." But because I am scared, I never eat [their fruit]; I buy fruit with my money instead. Anything in the house I can eat, but I am scared because the employer always say, "Why this one faster finish?" So I have feeling that I am maid and they suspect me. […] Only if employer give me food in my hand I can eat, but if they just tell me, "This food you can eat," I don't want to eat because I scared. […] For me to be happy again, I don't want if any food finish in the home, the employer blame me.

Mara was so emotionally engulfed in fear from past reprimands that she was unable to eat food unless her employer physically handed it to her. Her repeated use of the words connecting her emotions to unwarranted blame—"scared," "suspect," and "happy"—demonstrates how emotionally overwhelming employers' control over food is for some domestic workers. Through wrongful blame, Mara's employer was able to maintain control over food in the household and manage Mara's emotions, and through emotions, her body.

The cases of Kade and Mara show that through eliciting the emotional response of fear,

employers' unwarranted blame was an effective strategy for managing domestic workers' bodies. Drawing on Ahmed (2001), Huang and Yeoh (2007) argue that through inflicting emotional pain upon domestic workers, employers attempt to remake domestic workers into docile and obedient bodies. While grappling with their emotional reactions to accusations around food, domestic workers can adhere to these docile roles. Huang and Yeoh (2007) add that when they are abused in the confines of their employers' homes, domestic workers may feel emotionally and physically trapped and can become too fearful to negotiate their circumstances, as the case of Mara above clearly illustrates. While domestic workers may desire to change their circumstances, unequal power relations can prevent them from doing so. Instead, they may manage themselves in order to mitigate the impacts of employers' control. In the cases above, this management took the shape of reducing their food intake and not eating status foods, such as eggs, in order to avoid further reprimands from employers. Thus, through unwarranted blame, employers maintained control over domestic workers, and managed their emotions and their bodies.

In the next section I explore the impact of employers' control over food and household tasks on domestic workers' bodies, and show how, through this control, employers kept domestic workers underweight. This section demonstrates how unequal power relations materialized on and in domestic workers' bodies in ways that reinforced their employers' power and control.

4.3 "I'm very thin and very sick because not enough food and too much jobs": Weight loss, weakness and work

Because food must enter the physical body to keep a person alive, the body is the pivotal site for understanding how domestic workers are shaped by managed starvation. This section

focuses on how domestic workers' bodies were physically shaped by their work conditions of food insecurity, and the emotional responses that emerged from those physical experiences.

Domestic workers described weight loss as the most prominent bodily response to their work conditions. Overall, 19 out of 27 domestic workers said that they lost weight because their current or previous employer did not provide them with enough personally appropriate food, and/or they were overworked and stressed. For example, Aulia described losing 5 kg in one month: "I very fat when I come. Then very tired and not enough food or sleep and then I lose 5 kg after one month." Nini also experienced a dramatic weight loss: "I was 52 kg and then only work 2.5 months and then 42 kg. Not enough food. […] Then I drink water only. That is why my body very small. I don't have body. Body so small."

In addition to linking weight loss to not having enough food and being overworked, domestic workers often described their weight loss as connected to feelings of physical weakness. Lulu, for example, described in her current job her lack of access to personally appropriate food, the large number of tasks she was expected to complete, and her employer's erratic shouting. Lulu then elaborated on how these conditions caused her to lose weight:

> Lulu: Now friends say I am more slimmer. I look different. I look like too much thinking, like a stressed person and I very thin now. All friends tell me that. I feeling sad. I feel this is not what I want. Now my life is going different, now very sad. […] I am 42 kg. When I come to Singapore, I was 45 kg. That is why many friends say I very thin now. I very small, very thin. My clothes too big.
> CM: How do you feel about your body? Do you want to gain weight?
> Lulu: Yes, I want to get better than now because now I feel very tired. Sometimes my body not feel good because too much job. I always sad because of the job and the food employer giving me. If employer treat me good and well, like how they should treat me, I can stay and can do the job. But the way they are, I cannot stay. […]
> CM: What weight do you want to be?
> Lulu: I want to come back to normal, like 45-46 kg. Now I scared I will be 40 kg.

Lulu described the weight loss and feelings of tiredness, sadness and stress that she had in response to working with an employer who did not treat her "good and well," provided her with

too little food, and required her to do too much work. Though Lulu was only one year into her two-year employment contract, the physical costs of her current work position made her unsure if she could continue.

Among all domestic worker participants, Mara was the most vocal about her bodily and emotional responses to her work and food conditions. As noted above, Mara's emotional response to her employers' reprimands impacted her ability to eat food in the household. Mara here describes significant weight loss and bodily deterioration as a result of conditions in the household:

> When I come here I was 56 kg and now I am 44 kg. […] My body does not have enough fruits and I always eat late! Sometimes my stomach pain, very pain. I am scared I get gastric problem. If never take care of gastric problem, you can get cancer. It's not good for me. Here [*points to stomach*] very hurts. The pain feels like gastric problem now. Then my hair also have problem. If hair always fall out, it's a problem because not enough fruits. I must eat fruits and I cannot eat late. Eat late in the night, can get diabetes and cancer. Now, a lot of my hair—I comb every morning and a lot fall out! I wash also, and a lot of hair fall out! Really! Last time my hair was not like this. […] You cannot eat instant noodle every day, but I have no choice. If I never eat instant noodles, I am hungry. Now, my clothes are very loose, loose.

Mara connected her hair loss, gastric problems, and 12 kg weight loss to the quality of her food intake. Mara was additionally concerned for the impacts of her limited food intake on her physical appearance. She illustrated this concern by showing me photographs of her body when it was heavier and healthier, and vocalized her desire to look that way again: "I want to look like last time when I very fat. Now my pants are all loose. I lost a lot of weight." Casanova (2013, 580) argues that through giving domestic workers inadequate food, not permitting them to attend to their health problems, and preventing them from having an "acceptable or attractive middle-class feminine appearance," employers materially and symbolically devalue domestic workers' bodies. In Mara's case, she not only manifested physically her employer's devaluation, she also

emotionally embodied this devaluation in ways that impacted how she inhabits, uses, and feels in her body.

Asih also shared her struggles with weight loss. Because Asih had aspirations to save enough money to open her own business in Indonesia, she said it was important for her to have employers who understood her aspirations and her humanity. While her current employer at the time of the interview provided her with these needs, her previous employer, who she worked for when she first arrived in Singapore five years earlier, did not. Asih described how the restrictive conditions she endured with her previous employer resulted in weight loss:

> When I worked with the old employer, I just come [to Singapore] and my weight was 59 kg. Then when my contract finished I became 47 kg because my employer never make me happy. I never had freedom. They only think I come here to be domestic worker, so what I dream or want, they never cared. They say, "You come here to do work, not to me tell what you want." They never allow me to eat or sleep. That is why I lost 12 kg. Very trouble to get food there, very difficult for me.

Asih described how her food insecure conditions and her 12 kg weight loss were embedded within her employer's choice to not recognize her full personhood, and her employer's assertion that she should not have aspirations beyond domestic work. Ladegaard (2013) argues that denying domestic workers their personhood is a means to silence them, and legitimize their exploitation. Through her weight loss and dehumanizing experiences, Asih embodied this exploitation and her subordinated position.

Lulu, Mara and Asih's cases illuminate how unequal power relations can be inscribed on the bodies of domestic workers. These unequal power relations allowed employers to impose food insecurity and stressful work conditions on domestic workers, and prevent them from being able to take care of their own well-being. Domestic workers embodied these relations through emotional distress, weakness, pain and weight loss. Through these embodied effects, employers

were able to devalue domestic workers' bodies, communicate their inferiority in the household, and manage their bodies (cf. Casanova 2013).

Management over domestic workers' food intake and bodies may have been embedded in employers' desires for slender domestic workers who represent an image of discipline and self-restraint that reflects well on the employer. Three employer participants expressed a desire for slim domestic workers who are able to contain their desires to eat. Leela, for example, described that the reason why she did not allow domestic workers to eat and drink certain foods is because she did not want them to become "plump" and "lazy." She described a specific incident in which she used her expectations of a slim domestic worker as a means to effectively stop a domestic worker from "stealing" *Milo* drink powder:

> Sometimes she [domestic worker] steal *Milo* from the children. I caught her one time. Then she told me, "Usually I take one spoonful, ma'am." After that she stopped. Because if they take *Milo,* they will become very plump and lazy. Sometimes I talk to them, "If you become plump, your motion becomes slow, affecting your work. That means I don't want you to eat. I want you to be healthy."

Employer Diya also demonstrated her desire for domestic workers to control their eating. Diya illustrated this desire in her complaints about her domestic worker's eating and weight gain. In addition to referring to how the weight gain impeded the domestic worker's ability to work productively, Diya attached the domestic worker's weight gain to who she was as a person:

> The domestic worker takes about 4-5 slices of bread for her breakfast. And lately she also eats packs of instant noodles. I tell her, "Don't eat that. It is very bad for health." […] I say it is very bad. So much carbs and all this MSG [monosodium glutamate]. […] She buys a lot of snacks. She eats a lot of snacks. […] 30 eggs, she is eating all of it! Oh my god. I say, "Don't eat so much eggs, it's very bad for health." She always frying eggs and eating. […] You should see her pictures. When she came she was small. Now she is big. She is bloated. […] When she came she was 40 something kg. Now she is about 62 kg. She put on a lot of weight. When she came she was a small sized girl, very sweet. Now she is a monster. I wish she was back to that [small size]. Very sweet, cute. She cannot bend down now! […] She is very lazy.

Describing her "big" domestic worker as a "monster," Diya emphasized her desire for her domestic worker to be "small" and "very sweet" again.

Domestic worker Vita supported Leela and Diya's remarks about their desires for domestic workers to control their eating and weight. Vita described that while she was able to maintain control over her own food intake, her employer tried to control the eating of the other domestic worker who worked alongside Vita:

> The other maid in the house is doing more work, but my employer don't want to let the maid eat more. The maid will eat more rice. But my employer will complain that the rice very fast finish. […] Because every time she sees me, I eat less food than the other maid. I eat less than half a bowl of rice and she sees the other maid is eating more than one big bowl of rice. My employer will get scared and tell her, "My other maid doesn't eat so much. Why you eat a big bowl of rice? Next time you eat less. No good for you!" They will say if you eat too much, it is not good for you, like your health will not be good or you will get fat. They will use [weight] as an excuse to say you are not good and that they are right.

Leela, Diya and Vita's employer criticized domestic workers for their eating and weight gain. Employers in these cases rationalized their control over domestic workers' bodies by explaining it in terms of maintaining optimal health and productivity. Employers' desires to control domestic workers' bodies so they remained slim and productive resonate with Bordo's (2004) framing of the construction of femininity. Bordo argues that "the rules for the construction of femininity require that women learn to feed others, not the self, and to construe any desires for self-nurturance and self-feeding as greedy and excessive" (171). The employers in the cases above positioned domestic workers' eating as overindulgent, greedy or morally wrong, and as impeding their work. Bordo argues that through instilling values that women should feel ashamed of their appetites and needs, and suppress their hunger, the ideal female body becomes associated with self-restraint and containment of impulse (176). In the cases above, eating was

associated with damaged productivity and laziness. Domestic workers who were able to control their appetites were thus rendered desirable and productive in the eyes of their employers.

Producing the industrious, slender worker is part of employers' efforts to reinforce power relations in the household and maintain control over domestic workers' bodies. For domestic workers, this discipline may occur when employers deny them access to enough personally appropriate food to have energy, feel full, and be healthy. Through weight loss, preoccupation with hunger, fear of employers, and deteriorating health, the domestic workers profiled above had little energy to subvert their employer's domination. The hungry, weak worker becomes a disciplined worker, and is easy to control. By managing domestic workers' food intake and bodies, employers strive to maintain domestic workers in their suppressed and subordinated position in the household.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how domestic workers are emotionally and physically shaped by employers' control over food. I have argued that employers manage domestic workers' bodies through eliciting food insecure conditions that emotionally and physically distress domestic workers. Through their emotional responses of sadness, anger, frustration, and dehumanization, domestic workers described how they come to understand their subordinate positions in the household. These positions are reinforced through employers' unwarranted blame. Through unwarranted blame and its elicited emotional responses, employers manage domestic workers' bodies and emotions. Domestic workers described how they embody their experiences of food insecurity and unequal relations with employers as hunger, weight loss, weakness, pain, sickness, hair loss, and emotional distress. I suggested that these responses were related to employers' efforts to produce desirable, slender domestic worker bodies. This discussion further illuminated

how domestic workers embody inequality and how employers manage domestic workers' bodies. Together, these findings have shown that domestic workers experience food insecurity emotionally and in their bodies in ways that negatively impact their daily lives, including their ability to work. Through these embodied experiences of food insecurity, unequal power relations with employers became detrimental to domestic workers' health and well-being.

To further explore the relationship between domestic workers' physical and emotional experiences of food insecurity and unequal power relations with employers, I have argued, using Ahmed (2001), Huang and Yeoh (2007) and Bordo (2004), that employers control domestic workers' food and eating as a means to make them into disciplined, docile bodies rather than full and human persons. Domestic workers' uncomfortable emotions and physical weakness from food insecure conditions were part of employers' disciplining efforts to remake domestic workers' bodies into a body that was desirable for domestic labour. While domestic workers expressed awareness of the relationships and connections between employers' actions and their own bodies and emotional states, they also demonstrated that they managed their behaviours, actions and attitudes around food in ways that made them appear docile to employers. Similar to Bordo's framing of the dieting woman who self-monitors eating because of fear that she will not conform to the desirable body, domestic workers monitored their eating out of fear that they would upset employers and suffer the associated consequences.

Results also show that some employers may impose hunger and weakness on domestic workers as a means to keep domestic workers in their subordinated positions. Providing domestic workers with less food than what is necessary to meet energy requirements to complete their required tasks meant that domestic workers' time and energies were dedicated to strategizing how to divide their finite amount of energy among tasks, maintain some notion of physical

health, and not upset employers. The busy, hungry worker has little energy to dedicate to plotting how to resist their employer's domination; they are more concerned with obtaining their basic needs than disrupting household power relations. By emotionally and physically weakening domestic workers through food insecurity, employers were able to manage domestic workers' bodies and maintain social order in their households.

In the next chapter, I explore how domestic workers responded to their employers' efforts to manage their food intake and bodies. Using the concept of resilience, I focus on the strategies workers use to cope with, manage, endure, and transcend unequal conditions where food insecurity is a feature of their lives. I explore more fully why domestic workers choose to deploy particular responses to their food insecure conditions, and show how these responses are part of their efforts to provide a better life for themselves and their families.

Chapter 5: Resilience in oppressive conditions

The previous chapter described the embodied experience of food insecurity, illustrating connections between emotions, bodily well-being, and employer strategies of management and repression. Using the concept of resilience, this chapter focuses in detail on the strategies domestic workers use to counter and work within food insecure living conditions, and the impact on their sense of self. This chapter emphasizes that while domestic workers in this study may have had to participate in unequal relations, overall, they did not internalize those relations. Most domestic workers in this study stated that they were aware of power relations around food and inequality in their lives, and described how they strategically worked around them whenever they could. I argue that domestic workers are not passive recipients of food-related oppression who "unknowingly consent to their own domination" (Holmes 2013, 157). Rather, domestic workers are aware of the hierarchical relations in their lives, and actively negotiate these relations in ways that allow them to be resilient when dealing with food insecurity and other food-related adversities in the workplace. Because domestic workers' ability to obtain food security is embedded within markings in the household, and embodied through access to food and other bodily regulatory practices, this chapter interweaves domestic workers' resilience within other forms of mistreatment around food and food insecurity. This chapter shows that domestic workers consciously strategize to produce the most favourable outcomes for themselves and their families in the actions they take around food insecurity. It highlights some of the multiple and changeable responses that domestic workers deploy to transform their unequal conditions.

This chapter frames domestic workers' responses within the concept of resilience. Resilience can be understood as the ability to manage, endure or transcend adverse circumstances, and not be diminished by them (Nahar and Van der Geest 2014). Niehof (2008,

217) adds that resilience is "a multi-layered phenomenon that manifests itself as a process." Resilience includes the responses adopted to recover from the impacts of adversity (Van der Geest 2008), to avoid worsening the impacts of adversity on one's livelihood (Loevinsohn and Gillespie 2003), and to mobilize resources to adapt to new circumstances (Wiegers 2008). In their definition of social resilience, Kessy and Obrist (2008, 227) include the ability "to search for and create options and thus develop increased competence" in dealing with adverse conditions.

In the literature, the concept of resilience is often closely linked with the concept of resistance. Resistance is often thought to be a more active response than resilience, used to overtly change circumstances and counter sources of oppression (Van der Geest 2008). In contrast, resilience is sometimes seen as one's ability to cope, survive or adapt, and not actually change one's circumstances (Reid 2012). Ryan (2015) refutes the idea that resilience does not actually change one's circumstances. Drawing on Scott (1985), Ryan argues that "adaptation and coping can in fact be a form of resistance" that can contest the power of the dominant class (309). Instead of framing domestic workers' resilience within the concept of resistance, I show how acts of resistance can be part of domestic workers' resilience. Ryan adds that for resilience to be resistance, it must challenge the conditions that are experienced. When domestic workers in this study challenged their employment conditions, their intention was to ultimately find a new employer and continue working in Singapore. While many of the actions that are highlighted in this chapter might be categorized as an act of resistance, aiming to contest employment conditions, I argue instead that domestic workers' goal of contesting their conditions was embedded within their resiliency to continue working in Singapore as a domestic worker, as opposed to trying to challenge the structures of oppression acting in their lives.

I include the strategies domestic workers use to cope with, tolerate, mediate, endure, adapt to, transcend, and thrive in their food and living conditions, as well as their ability to prevent their personal conditions from worsening, including managing possible negative impacts on their families and their future goals. Echoing Nahar and Van der Geest (2014), I include some of Scott's (1985) strategies of resistance within domestic workers' strategies of resilience. Scott argued that the poor used small hidden forms of resistance to survive in their work conditions and maintain their dignity. I also draw on Niehof (2008) and Wiegers (2008) who both highlight emotions, personal experiences and personality characteristics as key sources of resilience. The strategies used by domestic workers discussed below include silence, positive thinking, remembering past experiences, cajoling, desertion, relying on social relations, a grudging compliance, voicing concerns, and using personality traits. I also include domestic workers' abilities to utilize their resources, both material and immaterial, to create new options for themselves and to develop competence in navigating food insecurity and the unequal conditions they face.

To illustrate domestic workers' resiliency in their unequal conditions, this chapter is broken down into three in-depth case studies. In the first two case studies of Elin and Yayi, I show how silence is a key strategy that domestic workers use to cope with food insecurity. Scholars have argued that silence can be a strategic response to conditions of inequality, especially for those who are in subordinate positions (Tagore 2009; Glenn 2004; Maclure et al. 2010; Scott 1985). Conquergood (2002, 312) asserts, "Subordinate individuals do not have the privilege of explicitness, the luxury of transparency, the presumptive norm of clear and direct communication." Solorzano and Bernal (2001) showed how Chicana and Chicano students used silence as a form of internal resistance to critique structures of oppression. Scott (1985, 301)

described how the resistances of the poor depended on their silence and anonymity to ensure their survival and protect their livelihoods. Nahar and Van der Geest (2014) showed how childless women remained silent and tolerated familial abuse in order to provide themselves with marital security. Drawing on these observations, I show how domestic workers use silence as a response of resilience to endure or transform conditions of food insecurity. Silence can be used as a strategy to "protect one's identity from damaging and dangerous discourses" (San Pedro 2015, 148). I show how Elin and Yayi used silence strategically to protect their bodies, their integrity, and their families from further struggles, and to strive to meet their ultimate goals.

Second, this chapter describes resilience as a multi-pronged process of knowingly enduring food insecurity or transcending it, in order to secure a better future. The first case study of Elin shows the multiple covert recourses used to tolerate food insecurity, including the use of positive thinking, past memories, and cajoling. The second case study of Yayi highlights the strategies of resilience necessary for changing food insecure conditions instead of tolerating them, including a dance between silence and overt acts of contestation. Last, the chapter focuses on more overt strategies with Alya's case and highlights the role of personality in shaping resiliency. Alya's case shows how overtly voicing concerns and reshaping personality can be used as strategies to transcend food insecurity and discriminatory treatment in ways that can enhance personal well-being. Overall, this chapter shows the subtle ways in which domestic workers can refuse to internalize the discourses of their oppressors. These cases all show that domestic workers do not take their circumstances for granted, but rather, actively react against them and choose to not be diminished by them.

The first case begins with the story of Elin. Elin used silence, positive thinking, past memories, and cajoling as key strategies for coping with food insecurity. Elin's case

contextualizes why domestic workers may choose to tolerate food insecurity, and how this tolerance can be used as a strategy for meeting larger goals in their lives.

5.1 "I keep quiet and drink water": Silence as a strategy for improving Elin's life

Elin is a single mother of three who is in her late thirties. Divorced for over 10 years, Elin is the sole-provider for her children, who live in boarding schools in West Java where she hires people to look after them. Over the course of my three months of fieldwork, I met with Elin on four separate occasions, and we regularly communicated by text and telephone. Throughout our conversations, Elin said again and again that migrating to Singapore for work was a means to earn money to support her teenage children, attend school, and eventually start a business back home in Indonesia. To financially support her children and achieve her personal goals, Elin endured many struggles in Singapore. She had been working in Singapore for five years and was currently seven months into her first contract with her second employer. While Elin's current employer offered food secure living conditions, her former employer imposed many restrictions on her that prevented her from obtaining food security. Elin used several strategies of resilience to tolerate her food insecurity and endure the 4.5 years she worked in her former employer's home. These strategies included a strong reliance on silence. They also included positive thinking, memories of past experiences, and cajoling.

To cope with her previous work and living conditions, Elin relied on her past experiences and positive thinking. Elin said that her personal experiences of food insecurity in her own family's home in Indonesia allowed her to feel gratitude for food conditions in Singapore. She described how gratitude and positive thinking were essential for coping with eating bread and instant noodles every day:

> Elin: Ma'am never gave me food. Morning is bread and afternoon is instant noodle. I only eat instant noodles. My ma'am would buy food for herself.
> CM: She didn't buy you food?
> Elin: She is stingy with money. I am happy, instant noodle is fine with me because in Indonesia only if I have money I can buy noodles. But here in Singapore, every day I eat instant noodles. I just try to think positive things. I thought I am already lucky even though I never got any food. I never think my employer bad. […] In Singapore I never have problem with food. From young I don't focus on food in Indonesia because we don't have money.

Elin's past experiences of poverty became a source of resilience while facing food insecurity in Singapore. While she acknowledged that her past employer was stingy with money and food, Elin intentionally chose not to think badly of the employer and instead, "just [tried] to think positive things" to cope with the employer's restrictive behaviour. Through positive thinking, Elin demonstrated her capacity to tolerate and endure her food insecurity.

Elin also emphasized the importance of family in helping her manage her previous employer's domestic conditions. She described her memory of her own family's poverty and how the lack of opportunities she had because of that poverty helped her rationalize her choice to endure her employment conditions:

> My family was very poor. My mother only had food for me and my sister. When we have food I know that my mother also want to eat, but because there is not enough she always drink water and give the food to us. That is why I learn when I have difficult life I always remember my mother. I have difficult life, but my mother have more difficult life. That is why I come Singapore. I want to earn money. I want to make her happy. I want to have a house. But I was just three months in Singapore and my mother passed away. She had high blood pressure. […] At that time I have no salary so I cannot do anything. I always have a sad memory that if I have money maybe my mother still be alive now because I could send her to the hospital to check up. […] I know money is important to support my family. That is why no matter how difficult my life is in Singapore, like take care of a five-story house, I am happy because I remember what I get can make everybody happy back home.

Elin showed how her past experiences of poverty, her mother dying from an illness that was exacerbated by poverty, and her family became mechanisms for enduring her work conditions in

Singapore. She used what she previously endured as a baseline for how to handle her current conditions. Sad memories of her past mediated her perception of her current experiences.

Despite using resources of optimism and fortitude, Elin's most important strategy for enduring her challenging employment conditions was silence. Elin's previous employer was very stern, and asserted markings in the household that caused Elin to lose 15 kg when she first arrived in Singapore. Elin described her physical and emotional responses to her lack of access to culturally appropriate foods and to her employer's behaviour, and how she kept quiet, drank water, and continued working:

> When I first came to Singapore I so hungry because in Indonesia I eat rice, and here I only get two pieces of bread, jam and coffee. I get pain because I am so hungry. I was sometimes crying I am so hungry because I have bad story. Nine months I have no salary because agency deduction. I could not do anything for nine months if I am hungry or whatever. I am still scared with my employer. I couldn't say I want to eat this because I am hungry. I also couldn't speak English. I keep quiet and drink water. […] I lost so much weight. I was only 40 kg. I was 55 kg before. Because stressful, new job, new food, new language, I always scared. […] My ma'am always look angry. She never talk nice.

Elin's silence about her hunger allowed her to maintain deference at a time when she feared her employer most. She also described remaining silent about her need for medical care when she got sick from her lack of access to nutritious food:

> I get anemia and low blood pressure. I always need medicine for this. I need vitamins to support my body. I had this problem with my first employer, but I cannot say anything. I was also sick but I can't do anything. My ma'am cut my salary [to pay for me] to go to doctor.[19] So I never complain.

Elin articulated the importance of silence for saving money, even when that silence involved compromising her own health.

To ensure that she could meet her personal and family goals, Elin described how she not only tolerated her employer's behaviour, but also tried her best to earn that family's love:

[19] Employers are required to "bear the full cost of any medical care" for domestic workers (MOM 2017i, sec. 5).

> No maid has ever finished their contract before because of my ma'am's character. So many maids [who worked for her before] think about what [want to get]. But I don't try to push my employer to give me what I want. Instead I try to make the family love me and then they will give me what I want.

Elin's silence and cajoling allowed her to form good relations with her female employer's husband and mother-in-law. In particular, the mother-in-law would secretly give Elin food when her daughter-in-law was not home. Eventually, Elin's multi-pronged efforts enabled her to access more and better quality food after a couple of years of emotional labour.

While Elin was able to eventually have better access to food, she was unsuccessful in obtaining other freedoms that she wanted. One of Elin's most important goals was to attend school while she was in Singapore. In order to go to school, Elin required one day off a week. Despite her requests, Elin could not get her legally-entitled day off. As a result, Elin manoeuvred carefully and strategically around her employer's restrictions to meet her goals:

> Elin: My heart sad. Everyone in the house is happy with my work—cooking is nice, I am good at shopping and budgeting for food. Our house five stories and I can work alone. Another maid couldn't do that. But my employer don't want me to go to school. So I finish contract and I told them I don't want to work in Singapore. Then I secretly interview with a new employer who will give me every Sunday off to study.
> CM: Did you ever tell your previous employer that you left because they did not give you a day off?
> Elin: I never tell them. I lied, I don't want them to think I want to change employer because my sir is very good. I told them I want to go back to Indonesia to be with my family. I tell them money is not everything, but family is everything for me.

Elin shows that her compliant persona and her enactment of a subordinated role was a strategy for ultimately gaining economic and social mobility. That mobility included aiming to get out of poverty and get an education.[20] Having one day off a week to attend school was necessary. When her employer prevented her from achieving her goals, Elin created a new opportunity for herself in a way that allowed her to maintain her appearance of deference and keep good relations with

[20] Scholars have shown that transnational domestic work is a key source for many Indonesian women to improve their family's financial situation and create future forms of livelihood for themselves and their children (Platt et al. 2013; KHOO et al. 2015).

her employer. By secretly finding a new employer who provided her with food security and a day off a week, Elin used silence as a strategy of resilience.

Elin's case shows how domestic workers can be strategizing agents in their own subordinated positions, even when they do not outwardly seem to resist their employer's domination and their food insecurity. Similar to the peasants in Scott's (1985) work, Elin strategically manoeuvred around her unequal conditions to benefit from them and not disrupt her outward deference to her employer. While Elin continued to work within a system that positioned her in a subordinate role, she navigated the system to work it to her advantage.

Elin's case also demonstrates the multi-dimensional nature of resilience. Similar to Niehof's (2008) argument that resilience is not bounded or encapsulated within singular acts, but is rather a multilayered phenomenon, Elin's resilience for tolerating and moving beyond food insecurity and other forms of mistreatment was a continuous process. Elin used strategies—positive thinking, remembering past experiences, silence, and cajoling—to adapt to her conditions and prevent them from worsening. Over time, she developed more competence for dealing with adversities, and found ways to create new options for herself (cf. Loevinsohn and Gillespie 2003; Kessy and Obrist 2008). In the next section, I extend this understanding of resilience as a multi-layered phenomenon to Yayi's case. While Elin used strategies of resilience to tolerate food insecurity, Yayi used strategies of resilience to get out of food insecurity. I show how Yayi used overt strategies, including voicing her concerns and desertion, embedded within a discourse of silence in order to carefully navigate barriers to contesting her employer's domination.

5.2 "I run away in the middle of the night": Yayi's strategies for navigating out of food insecurity

Yayi is a married, 25-year-old domestic worker from Central Java. When we met, Yayi had been working for seven months in Singapore, for one employer. She came to Singapore to earn money to support her sick toddler and to earn a degree. She had a thirst for learning, like almost all domestic workers in this study, but also struggled with being far from her son. Both her husband, who worked in Central Java in the farming industry, and her mother were caring for her son while she was in Singapore. Because her husband wanted her to be home caring for their son instead of working in Singapore, Yayi's migration caused much family tension. However, migrating to Singapore was Yayi's only option to provide her son with health care. During one of the four times we met, Yayi described why she decided to migrate to Singapore for work:

> My son is sick, so I come here to work to take care of him. I don't know why he sick. Every month he is sick, always vomits; he cannot eat anything. I want to take him to the doctor, but the hospital is very far. I need a lot of money to go. […] In Indonesia, I worked very far from home, but the money is not enough, and I never see my son. Better I go to Singapore and work two years, and then come back home.

Unfortunately, working in Singapore worsened the tensions in Yayi's life. In her employer's home, Yayi lived in highly restrictive conditions; she did not receive enough food or sleep, and was overworked. Yayi described the impacts of these conditions on her well-being:

> I not enough rest. I can feel my body. If I work for two years like that, I don't know if I still healthy. I always run up and down. Every day my stomach very pain and my leg always cramp. When I finish my work, then I bathe at 2:00 a.m. If I am very fast, 1:00 a.m. Also no dinner. I need to hurry, so I only eat little bit. I am always hungry.

Yayi also had to navigate around markings in the household. She was given leftover food, could not access the nutrient-rich foods, such as meat and eggs, which her employer's family ate, and had to wait for her employer's family to finish eating before she could eat her meals. Yayi lost a significant amount of weight and felt pain in her body. In response to this maltreatment, Yayi tried to change her employment conditions. She strategically asked her employer if she could transfer to work for another employer. However, Yayi's employer refused to let her transfer, and

instead, threatened to send her back to Indonesia. Yayi described her fear of this threat, and how that fear was elevated by her agency loan debt:

> I am always hungry because I always eat late. I must wait for my employer to eat. Sometimes I cannot eat breakfast because my employer always needs me. […] I tell my ma'am that I want to go back to agency and then my ma'am say if I want to go to agent to transfer to another employer, she will send me back to Indonesia, so I can't even tell her that I want to go to agent. They don't want me to work with another employer because they worry that I will tell someone about [the abuse]. I cannot go back home because I still don't have money! I haven't even sent money home because I pay the agent seven months. I need to work first. […] I worried because if I stay there, whatever I don't like, if I complain, they can send me back.

To mitigate the threat of being sent home, Yayi secretly voiced her concerns to her agent, but her agent encouraged her to continue working for her employer: "I ask for help, but my agent don't want to help me; they asked me to stay, stay and stay with the employer. I don't know how to work with that employer though, very hard." Yayi eventually asserted her limits to her employer's domination through the strategies of desertion and silence. In the middle of the night, she secretly ran away from her employer's home and sought refuge in a shelter.[21]

After running away, Yayi faced challenges which required heightened forms of resiliency. She had to report her employer's behaviour to MOM, and choose between pursuing a case against her employer, so she could eventually work for someone else, or return to Indonesia and go through the entire recruitment process again to be able to return to Singapore to work. By choosing to pursue a case, Yayi was required to stay at the shelter and in Singapore until her case was completed, which could be anywhere from a few months to a few years, meaning that she could not work, repay her loan, financially support her child, or return home to see her family. Yayi described some of the adversities she endured while pursuing her case, including her family's lack of support for her decision, and how she coped with these adversities:

[21] I met Yayi while she was staying in the shelter.

> When I run away, I want to die. I feel like how to still go on because my agent ask me to pay my loan. […] And to find a new employer also very hard and my son back home is sick. One whole day I cry because my son sick while I stay in the shelter. […] My mother say I have to go back if I don't have employer. But I don't want to go because I want money. […] My husband is angry with me because I stay here long time and haven't got any money. He asked me to go back to take care of my son. It is very hard. […] I must think positive; I cannot think, think. I can take care of my son if I have job. I can make my son a better life. […] I think positive because everybody is like that in the shelter.

Yayi described the adverse effects of reporting her abuse—emotional distress, inability to pay off her agency loan, struggles to find a new employer, family's lack of support, hearing about her sick child, and inability to earn money to support her child—and how she used positive thinking and social relations with other domestic workers in the shelter to cope with these adversities. To further mitigate these adversities, Yayi also strategically minimized the size of her case, so she could quickly get back to work. To decrease the scope of the investigation, Yayi chose not to disclose the extent of her employer's abuse with MOM. She highlighted that food insecurity was the key aspect of the abuse that she left out of her report, and described how common this decision is for domestic workers who navigate the reporting system in Singapore:

> The maid never complains about the food, only if too much to handle, then she complain. Almost all the women in the shelter didn't get enough food. They have more problems than food but when they talk about food, [food] is never enough. But if MOM ask about the food, they say they have enough, but actually they don't have enough. But they don't want to make a lot of complaints. I am also like that. I tell MOM I have enough food. I don't want to complain, I just want to transfer employer, so my case very fast finish. If I tell the truth, the case will be very hard to finish.

A few participants in this study shared Yayi's sentiments about domestic workers commonly remaining silent about their food insecurity to protect themselves from further adversities. One domestic worker in the shelter added, "I don't want to tell MOM [about food] because how if I say anything, how long I stay here?" This silence is partly guided by their inability to prove that they were in fact not receiving enough food, as one domestic worker said: "We cannot report

because we don't have witness. We must prove everything. Maybe if they beat me with marks, I can report." Food can be the last form of mistreatment to report to MOM. This finding illustrates how, even after overtly contesting employers' domination, domestic workers strategically negotiate the amount of contestation they choose to deploy. Choosing to stay silent about food insecurity becomes a strategy of resilience, used to minimize their time without work, to cope with prolonged bureaucratic procedures, and to maximize their earnings.

Yayi's case shows how resilience can be a key feature in navigating the barriers to getting out of food insecure work conditions. Unlike Elin, who relied mostly on silence and taking a positive view to tolerate her food insecurity, Yayi felt a range of painful emotions arising from her work conditions and cautiously tried to change them. By showing the nuanced ways in which silence can be used as a strategy in the process of overt contestation, Yayi's case enhances our understandings of silence. While Elin used silence to maintain deference and protect relations with employers, Yayi used silence to buffer the consequences of being sent home. Like indigenous students in San Pedro's (2015) study who used silence to shield themselves, their families and their communities from the negative effects of dominant paradigms in public schools, Yayi used silence as a strategy to shield herself and her child from further struggles. In her silence, she critically reflected upon her food insecure conditions and negotiated her options. Moving between covert and overt strategies, Yayi demonstrated resilience in her ability to escape abusive conditions, endure the adverse impacts of reporting those conditions, and continue to pursue her case while facing those ongoing impacts. In the final section, I describe Alya's case to highlight how domestic workers can use their personalities and public acts of rejection as sources of resilience for coping with and transforming their food insecurity and subordination.

5.3 "People always look down and treat us like a doormat, so then I decided to change myself": Alya's overt rejection of discriminatory treatment

Alya is a 27-year-old domestic worker from South Sumatra. When I met Alya, she had been working in Singapore for five years, and was currently with her third employer. As the breadwinner of her family, Alya supports her mother and brothers in Indonesia with the money she earns in Singapore. When describing why she came to Singapore, Alya said, "I wanted to go to university, but my family is very poor and cannot afford to send me. So I come to Singapore to try to get my university degree." To achieve her goals, Alya relied on more overt strategies of resilience to transcend the effects of discriminatory employment conditions that left her food insecure. Alya relied mostly on the strategy of reshaping her personality, but also used a grudging compliance and an explicit voicing of her concerns.

Alya developed resilience strategies when working for a previous employer. While this employer verbally abused her and wrongfully deducted money from her salary, Alya's most pressing complaint was about the types and amount of food they expected her to eat. Navigating around markings and the social relations that produced those markings, Alya was expected to eat leftovers, standing up, and in the kitchen. She described her rejection of the food:

> My employer is very rich. They give me the leftover food, which is disgusting. They just give me rice and century egg.[22] They give me that! Century egg can damage your brain when you eat every day! It's like if you eat just MSG [monosodium glutamate]. It is like even twice as bad as MSG. […] And you know veggies, the broccoli, they gave me the branches!

In response to her food insecurity, Alya complained to her agent, but her concerns were dismissed: "The agent did not care because it's a common thing. There are a lot of employers doing that with food. There are a lot of domestic workers this happened to." Alya grudgingly

[22] Century egg is a preserved egg that is soaked in a saline solution for weeks or months before consumption (Springer 2015).

continued to work, and she lost 10 kg. When her limits to denigration were reached, she described vociferously expressing her concerns to her employer:

> Alya: So I take it, take it, take it, but then in the long term I could not take it anymore. […] I asked my employer to send me to the agent three times and they didn't listen to me. So I shout at my ma'am. I act like I was crazy. I shout at them. I pretend I am crazy so they would let me go. Then they finally let me go. […]
> CM: When you shouted what you say to her?
> Alya: "I know you want to kill me." "Why you treating me like this? Do you think I am very stupid, like I don't have brain and I don't know which is right or wrong?" "I never met a person like you." […] I was screaming. It was very loud. […] I act like I want to kill them. They called the agent and said I am crazy. Then my employer send me back home to Indonesia without my knowledge. The next morning my employer packed my bag and took me to the airport.

Alya was the only domestic worker in this study who vocally expressed her defiance in a manner that caused her to be sent home. In Indonesia, she had to find a new employment agency, go through the entire recruitment and training process again, and repay agency fees. Eventually, Alya returned to Singapore, demonstrating resilience through her ability to 'bounce back' from adversity and not be diminished by that adversity (Niehof 2008, 217).

When Alya returned to Singapore, she used strategies of resilience to prevent herself from experiencing previous adversities. Alya connected the treatment she received from her previous employers to discriminatory beliefs that domestic workers from Indonesia are docile and stupid. This stereotype has been widely noted by scholars researching domestic work in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (Ueno 2009; Constable 2014; Lan 2006). Many participants said they had been told that Indonesian domestic workers are not intelligent. Rather than internalizing this stereotype, many domestic workers took steps to reject the label of docile and stupid. Alya intentionally changed aspects of her personality and demeanour to reject the docile identity expected of her, both inside her employer's home and in public. She described how reshaping herself allowed her to cope with the discriminatory treatment she received:

> I realize people always look down and treat us [domestic workers] like a doormat. People thought we could not use hand phone or computer because we from village, we don't have electricity. But this is not true. We can be more than that. So then I decided to change myself, so people won't look down on me. And now, I'm a maid, but people don't look down on me because I have knowledge. I am much different now than five years ago. I don't want people to look at me like I am stupid. […] I change a lot. I try to take care of myself also. Then people don't look at me like maid anymore.

To reject aspects of a "maid" role that was ascribed to her, Alya intentionally dressed similar to young Singaporean women, and adopted Singaporean understandings of health and body image. She wore more makeup, asserted confidence through her body posture, and dieted to maintain her ideal weight and her optimal sense of health. Alya's efforts to dress similar to Singaporean women and assert confidence in her posture can be observed in Figures 3 and 4, and can be contrasted to Figure 5, which shows the ways Indonesian domestic workers typically dress in Singapore.

Figure 3 left: Alya poses with her stylish outfit on her day off. Figure 4 right: Alya walks using a confident, upright posture as she shops for clothes.

Figure 5: Indonesian domestic workers wearing their typical clothing on their day off

Alya's efforts to transform her "maid" status allowed her to gain better treatment so that she could cope with her position as a domestic worker.

Alya's most successful strategy of resilience was adopting an assertive persona. This persona allowed her to socialize and form friendships with Singaporeans. During our participant observation encounters and interviews, Alya was always confident and assertive when socializing in public, and in ways that distinguished her from other domestic workers who I spent time with. For example, when I went shopping with Elin in the market where she frequently shopped for food, Elin was not very chatty with people in the market and we never ran into anyone who she knew in public. Alya, however, was very chatty in public, and was consistently greeted by patrons and shop owners who knew her in the market where she frequently shopped for food. Alya further demonstrated her confidence during one of her interviews. While explaining to me that Singaporeans can easily recognize Indonesian domestic workers in public, Alya fearlessly approached a Singaporean woman who was sitting nearby to support her point:

> Alya: People look at us and treat us differently, because they are aware. I know there are 220 000 domestic workers from Indonesia over here. People just easily recognize us. I mean I will just ask someone.
> [*Alya approaches a young woman who she refers to as "Girl."*]
> Alya: Girl, girl. Can I ask you something? Can you look at someone and be aware of if they are a maid or not? Can you tell if the person is a Singaporean or foreigner?
> Girl: Not necessarily, but sometimes yes. Depending on the nationality.
> Alya: But the way they talk, you can tell very well, right?
> Girl: Yeah if they are talking.
> Alya: And their actions, you can tell if they are a maid, right?
> Girl: It depends on the person, not necessarily.

While the woman who Alya approached did not necessarily confirm her point, Alya's quick decision to approach a Singaporean showed some of the ways she enacted her assertiveness and differentiated herself from the stereotype of the docile "maid." Alya was aware of the conditions she lived in and what was expected of her, but refused to conform to those expectations.

Alya mobilized her assertiveness in finding an employer who would give her the freedoms she desired. She described that after her past adverse experiences with her previous employer, she asserted her need to find an employer who would allow her to go out on week nights, have enough time off to take university classes, and provide her with access to the foods she desired to maintain an optimal sense of health. Alya's food security stood out among domestic workers in this study. She was able to drink freshly squeezed juices every morning, eat organic fruits and vegetables, and her employer paid for all her meals when she ate out. In sum, Alya's ability to assert her desires led to food security.

Similar to Elin and Yayi, Alya's resilience was a multilayered process that changed over time. Unlike Elin and Yayi, however, Alya relied on more overt strategies of resilience, and showed the consequences, both good and bad, of enacting those overt strategies. To cope with food insecurity in her previous employer's home, she shifted from using a grudging compliance to verbal outbursts. Though Alya was sent home, she was able to re-establish a sense of well-

being for herself by reshaping her persona and finding an employer who supported her food security needs. Wiegers (2008, 274) argues that personality plays a strong role in shaping resilience, adding that "strong characters might be able to access more resources or be more inventive in their way of responding to stress and shocks." Similarly, Alya's deployment of her outgoing personality allowed her to adapt to her environment and use her resources to transcend discriminatory treatment, obtain food security, and thrive in Singapore.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how domestic workers rely upon resilience to cope with their food insecurity, and continue working in Singapore. The three case studies demonstrate that resilience is the ability to manage, endure and/or transcend adverse circumstances, to prevent adverse conditions from worsening and to adapt to new circumstances, including creating new options for oneself (Nahar and Van der Geest 2014; Wiegers 2008). All three domestic workers were aware of the hierarchical conditions in which they lived and worked, and actively negotiated their conditions to endure and transcend them when they could. Elin's case highlights the powerful place of silence in domestic worker stories, and how, along with emotional decisions and memories of past experiences, silence is a strategy for enduring food insecurity. Yayi's case demonstrates how silence can also be embedded within active forms of contestation, and used for navigating the process of escaping food insecurity. Alya shows how one's personality can be essential for enacting resilience, both inside the household and in public, in ways that confront discriminatory beliefs, assist in breaking free from expected roles, and enhance food security and personal well-being. These findings show that domestic workers critically reflect upon, and enact a variety of responses to food insecurity and other forms of subordination and suppression, to produce the best outcome for themselves.

This chapter has also shown the importance of attending to covert forms of resilience. When looking at how people respond to oppressive contexts, Madhok (2013) argues that "we must shift our theoretical gaze away from these overt actions to an analysis of critical reflections, motivations, desires, and aspects of our ethical activity" (106). Similarly, attending to Elin, Yayi, and Alya's reflections, motivations, and desires demonstrated that they were consistently negotiating the pros and cons of whether to endure food insecurity or subvert it, even when they chose to take no obvious overt action. In their silence and non-action, these domestic workers were nonetheless still active and responsive to their situations. Tagore (2009) argues that through their silence, marginalized women "live through, remember and resist violence" (150). Similarly, through their silence, domestic workers in this study coped with unequal conditions of food insecurity in order to focus on securing a better future for themselves and their families. They demonstrated their abilities to cope with hierarchical power relations and still retain their dignity and strive to fulfil their larger goals.

These findings illustrate the need to look at food security beyond the level of access and availability of food. The inequalities in domestic workers' lives and the markings produced by those inequalities emphasize how food security can be a struggle to obtain even when food is accessible and available. Embedded within domestic workers' struggles for food security is a struggle to physically and emotionally inhabit and use their bodies in the ways that they desire. Domestic workers navigate and respond to these struggles with reference to who they are as people, and why they were working in Singapore in the first place. As indicated with the case studies in this chapter, domestic workers' choices in how they respond to food insecurity can be just as much about their family histories, emotions, and personalities as it can be about accessing eggs, vegetables and rice, and eating at the same time as their employers.

In the concluding chapter, I summarize the findings from this thesis. I describe the importance of taking a holistic approach to understanding food insecurity in households, and to exploring how domestic workers navigate towards food security in Singapore. I also make suggestions for further research and provide recommendations for improving domestic workers' food security in Singapore.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has explored the ways in which Indonesian domestic workers navigate towards food security in employers' homes in Singapore. I show how domestic workers' ability to access food can be bound up in the production of inequalities. I demonstrate how, through food insecurity, power relations of inequality are acted on and through domestic workers' bodies. In Chapter Three, I draw on Lan's (2003) notion of "boundary work" and Saldaña-Tejeda (2012) to emphasize the spatial, bodily, and social relations involved in food distinction practices in the concept I term *markings*. I define markings as acts, values, expressions, feelings, boundaries, symbols, and materials that are used to demarcate hierarchical relations in the household. Using the concept of markings, I argue that most employers of domestic workers in this study use food to demarcate social relations and hierarchies in the household. Domestic workers have to navigate through a complex field of markings in order to obtain some form of food security in employers' homes. Some of the markings include food distribution practices, eating practices, behaviours of employers and extended kin, disciplinary tactics, and domestic workers' fear of punishment. Domestic workers' struggle to obtain food in households where food is abundant demonstrates how the allocation of food in the household can be key to constructing and perpetuating social inequalities in households in Singapore.

In Chapter Four, I show how domestic workers emotionally embody their experiences of food insecurity. I argue that employers manage domestic workers' bodies through food insecurity, and domestic workers come to know their social positions through this management. I draw on Ahmed (2001), Huang and Yeoh (2007) and Bordo (2004) to suggest that employers' management of domestic workers' food intake and bodies, and domestic workers' corresponding emotional and physical distress, are part of employers' efforts to remake domestic workers'

bodies into docile, disciplined bodies. Through their emotional articulations and their physical experiences and expressions, domestic workers demonstrate their awareness of employers' efforts to perpetuate inequalities through their bodies and emotions.

Chapter Five illustrates how domestic workers cope with food insecurity. Through detailed case studies, I argue that domestic workers are aware of the unequal conditions that produce their food insecurity, and actively respond to these conditions using strategies of resilience. I emphasize Nahar and Van der Geest's (2014) notion of resilience to show how domestic workers endure or transcend adverse work conditions where food insecurity is a key feature of their lives. Drawing on Tagore (2009), Scott (1985) and San Pedro (2015), I explore domestic workers' silences. I illustrate how their silence can be a strategic response allowing them to navigate a host of inequitable practices, and ideally strive for, if not achieve, the best outcomes for themselves and their families. These findings show how domestic workers' experiences of food insecurity can be embedded within their experiences with other forms of mistreatment, structural barriers, and power relations, including being overworked, limits in the reporting system in Singapore, and relations with employment agents. Food insecurity can impact domestic workers' personal lives and relations. At a fundamental level, addressing domestic workers' food insecurity is key to understanding, and improving, their overall lives while working in households in Singapore. While the findings suggest a complex interplay of factors, not all facets of domestic worker experiences can be set out. There are a few limitations in this study, which I discuss next.

6.1 Limitations

Guided by a feminist ethnographic framework, I made a conceptual choice to ground the methodologies and presentation of findings in the voices of the silenced and marginalized. As a

result, I focused this thesis predominantly on the voices of domestic workers as opposed to the employers and community members. While this choice made room for the multiple and dynamics ways in which domestic workers navigate and experience their worlds in Singapore to emerge, employers and community members' voices are also very important. Employers, in particular, directly impact domestic workers' ability to access food, and have rich and complex life stories that can provide insights into why the Indonesian domestic workers I studied navigate towards food security in the ways that they do. Thus, further research could focus more fully on employers' perspectives.

This thesis also had sampling biases. Because all interviews were conducted in English, I was not able to recruit domestic workers who do not speak English. As well, unless domestic workers sought refuge in NGO-run shelters that provide food, shelter, legal aid and counselling, only domestic workers who had a weekly day off could participate in this study. Thus, other than the participants who were staying in shelters at the point of the interviews, the voices of domestic workers who were currently working without a weekly day off were not represented in this thesis. Domestic workers who have a day off tend to be more privileged and have better relations with employers. A more randomized sample of all Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore in future research would be useful for confirming validity of findings from this research.

Last, I was not able to go inside the homes where domestic workers are employed and spend most of their time. Though I chose to live in homes where domestic workers worked while I conducted this fieldwork and was able to observe dynamics in the household, I was unable to witness participants' descriptions of their dynamics with employers. Using multiple methods of inquiry, including photography and participatory mapping, and meeting with participants over multiple sessions and maintaining ongoing communication allowed me to gain more insight into

dynamics within the households where participants worked. The findings that emerged from these methods also provided insights about possible future research building from this thesis, which I discuss next.

6.2 Future research

Because of the exploratory and understudied nature of Indonesian domestic workers' food security experiences in Singapore, I recruited domestic workers with a range of different experiences, including both domestic workers who are newer to Singapore and those who have been working in Singapore for many years. This methodological decision allowed for rich and multifaceted data to emerge. The emergent data showed that domestic workers in my study generally experienced more issues with food insecurity when they first arrived in Singapore. The frequency at which this finding occurred suggests that further research is necessary to unpack how domestic workers who are new to Singapore experience food (in)security. This research could be useful for addressing food insecurity in the early stages of domestic workers' migration, and for preventing lasting effects that can come from enduring food insecurity over time.

Throughout this thesis, I show how Indonesian domestic workers in my study often endure food insecurity. One reason for this endurance appears to be because of the lack of protections they have in Singapore and the numerous barriers they face to changing their conditions. Future research could compare Indonesian domestic workers' food security experiences in Singapore to those of Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong, another highly-industrialized Asian city, where foreign domestic workers are said to be more protected by more effective labour laws, and to be more active in fighting for their rights (HRW 2012: Huang and Yeoh 2003; Law 2002). While previous studies have shown that domestic workers in Hong Kong do struggle with abuse from employers (Ladegaard 2012; Constable 2014), an in-depth, comparative study on food

security could provide insights into whether introducing more protections for domestic workers in Singapore could improve their food security conditions. This proposed study would benefit from applying significant insights from this thesis. I discuss these insights next.

6.3 Significance

This research has provided significant insights that can enhance future research on domestic worker food security. In particular, this research demonstrates the importance of focussing on symbolic and social relations and on the body in domestic worker food security research. Through this lens, relations around food can become an entrance for unravelling deeply embedded systems of inequality and oppression that materialize on and through the body. A focus on the body then demonstrates how unequal relations that impede the ability to obtain basic needs not only impact domestic workers' health and well-being, but also their lives beyond their employment positions. Because oppressive conditions are apparent in many countries where foreign domestic workers work, the study of social relations and symbolic meanings in the household and on the body around food can help address domestic worker food security in countries where domestic workers rely on employers for food and housing.

The findings from this research also have pragmatic implications in Singapore. The food insecurity prevalent in the lives of many domestic workers in this study suggests that food insecurity could be widespread in Singapore in ways that may be hidden and masked through employers' management tactics and Indonesian domestic workers' coping mechanisms. Because most domestic workers in this study had a weekly day off, they may have had better working conditions than Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore who do not have a weekly day off. While this research may not be representational of all Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore, these findings do illustrate that some Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore are experiencing

food insecurity in ways that prevent them from living full lives. This research thus stresses the importance of addressing Indonesian domestic workers' need for food security in Singapore.

In order to try to improve the food security conditions for Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore, and in alignment with a feminist approach of advocating for the needs and wants of participants, this thesis is revised as a report that is publicly accessible and disseminated to MOM and community members through email, and through NGO channels of dissemination. The report is also available on the webpage of the Centre of Asia-Pacific Initiatives at the University of Victoria. The report includes findings from this research, and a set of recommendations for improving the food security conditions for Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore. Many of these recommendations are based on requests from participants in this study, which were mainly top-down solutions to problems with food security. A more comprehensive set of recommendations is available in the report. The final section shows some of the recommendations included in the report.

6.4 Recommendations

1. In training centres in Indonesia, provide Indonesian domestic workers with more information about options for reporting abuse, and about NGOs and advocacy groups in Singapore that provide channels of support.
2. Organize a food share network among Indonesian domestic workers. NGOs could assist Indonesian domestic workers to organize a network that will provide free culturally appropriate food to domestic workers on a weekly basis. This food could be delivered to the households in which domestic workers work or be picked up at convenient locations.
3. Revise the meal provision guidelines to increase the recommended number of meals per day, and to include information about culturally appropriate options and frequency and time

at which domestic workers need to eat. Include these guidelines in the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA) so they are mandatory and binding.

4. Implement a mandatory workshop to teach employers how to provide domestic workers with food security. Employers will learn about the kinds and amount of foods and the frequency at which domestic workers need to eat, and how to create an environment where domestic workers feel comfortable voicing their need for food.
5. Include a health check-up in the mandatory 6-month medical screening for venereal diseases and pregnancy. With the domestic worker's approval, the doctor will conduct a physical exam to check and monitor the domestic worker for malnutrition.
6. Remove barriers to reporting food insecurity. This could begin with increasing restrictions on employers' ability to send domestic workers home. Implement a requirement that domestic workers must agree with being sent home. If the domestic worker does not agree, then the employer will be obligated to allow her to transfer to work for another employer.

Many domestic workers in this study illustrated that their lives have been filled with hunger, malnourishment, feelings of dehumanization, and emotional pain from food insecurity. Domestic workers cook, clean, and care for the children and elderly of many families in Singapore. They deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. This respect and dignity can begin with recognizing domestic workers' clear capacity to identify the sources of their problems in households, and with respecting and supporting their efforts to resolve their embodied emotional experiences of food insecurity through patience, ingenuity and resilience. Taking domestic workers' food insecurity seriously is an important step towards improving conditions for domestic workers in households and beyond, for transcending power inequalities, and for restoring domestic workers of the rights and entitlements they deserve.

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Appendix A: Domestic worker participant characteristics

Name	Age	Number of Children	Marital Status	Home province in Indonesia	Years in Singapore	Number of Employers in Singapore
Alya	27	0	Single	South Sumatra	5 years	3
Asih	24	1	Married	East Java	5 years	2
Ati	29	2	Divorced	West Java	1 year	1
Aulia	21	0	Single	Jambi	10 months	1
Devi	44	1	Separated	East Java	11 years	1
Dwi	35	0	Single	West Java	9 years	4
Eka	30	3	Married	East Java	6 years	3
Elin	37	3	Divorced	West Java	4.5 years	2
Icha	44	2	Divorced	Central Java	16 years	5
Iliana	23	0	Single	East Java	4 years	2
Kade	34	1	Divorced	West Java	8 years	2
Kiki	34	0	Single	Central Java	15 years	3
Lati	24	0	Single	Central Java	4 years	2
Lulu	28	1	Divorced	East Java	5 years	2
Mara	35	0	Married	North Sulawesi	5 years	3
Melati	33	1	Divorced	West Nusa Tenggara	11 years	5
Mia	29	0	Single	West Nusa Tenggara	1.5 years	1
Nini	29	0	Single	Central Java	6 years	2
Putri	40	1	Widowed	South Sumatra	14 years	2
Risa	27	1	Married	West Nusa Tenggara	9 years	1
Sasi	29	2	Divorced	West Java	7 years	4
Sara	40	1	Separated	East Java	13 years	3
Sakti	35	0	Married	West Java	15 years	2
Utari	34	0	Single	Central Java	4 years	4
Vita	40	2	Married	East Java	6 years	2
Wati	29	0	Married	North Sumatra	12 years	1
Yayi	25	1	Married	Central Java	7 months	1

Appendix B: Selected questions from interview protocol

Interview questions for Indonesian domestic workers

1. What kinds of foods did you eat at home in Indonesia and how did you make decisions about the food you ate?

2. What kinds of foods do you eat in Singapore? How do you make decisions about the food you eat when you go out?

3. What kinds of foods do you eat in your employer's home and how are decisions made about which foods you eat in the household?

4. Do you cook in Singapore? Please share how cooking for yourself makes you feel. What types of foods would you cook and why? Are these foods different from what your employers eat?

5. How does your employer accommodate your food needs and desires? Do they accommodate your cultural and nutrition needs? How so? Are there foods that they do not provide you with that you would like them to?

6. Please tell me a bit about the food that your employer's family eats. What kinds of foods does your employer's family eat? Who cooks for the family?

7. Can you tell me more about your employer's attitude about food?

8. How do the foods you eat differ from those your employer's family eats? Are there any differences in nutritional quality? Types of foods? Taste? Quantity? Cultural differences?

9. Please describe how you eat your meals in your employer's household. Who do you normally eat with and where do you normally eat?

10. Please describe your relationship with food in Singapore. Do you enjoy the food you have access to? Do you wish anything were different about your relationship with food?

11. Are there any restrictions on the kinds of foods you are able to eat within the household? If so, what are they? Why are they restricted?

12. Please describe how your health has changed since you moved to Singapore.

13. Have your feelings about your body changed since you moved to Singapore? If so, how?

14. How does your employer feel about your food access and health?

15. Have you heard any of your domestic worker friends being mistreated in the home? Any stories about food specifically? What happened? What did they do about it?

16. To what extent do you think you are being fairly treated with food? How so?

17. What resources do you have available to you to use if there is a problem around food in the home?

18. How does the government treat domestic workers? Are they concerned about the well-being of domestic workers? How so?

19. Please tell me about your living situation beyond food. What is it like? What are the rules in your employer's household?

20. Please tell me about the people you live with in your employer's household. What is your relationship like with them?

21. What are your duties for your employer?

22. Do you have days off? How many? Is your contract with your employer always respected?

23. Please tell me a bit about how you spend your days off.

24. How do you feel when you go out in Singapore? How do people treat you?

25. Where do you eat in public? Why?

26. How is Singapore different from Indonesia in terms of food? Please compare people's relationship with food in the two countries.

27. Do you know about the meal provision guidelines on the MOM website? [*Show them the guidelines*] Does your employer provide you with the amount of food suggested in these guidelines? How so? What could they improve on?

28. I am writing a report on the current conditions of foreign domestic workers in Singapore and I would like to use your opinion as input. What do you think the Singaporean Government could do to improve domestic workers' access to satisfying food? Why?

Interview questions for employers

1. How many domestic workers have you hired? How were your past experiences with other domestic workers?

2. Please tell me a bit about you current domestic worker. Where in Indonesia is she from? Does she have children? How long has she been in Singapore for? How long has she worked for you?

3. Please describe your domestic worker's job contract. How do you decide on the payment?

4. Please tell me about the people you live with. Who lives in the house with you?

5. Please tell me a bit about your experiences with your current domestic worker. Have dynamics in your household changed since you hired her? How so? How do you manage your privacy in the household?

6. I'm interested in learning more about the relations and decisions made around food in your home with the domestic worker. Can we start with you telling me about the kinds of foods that your family eats? Do you eat meals in the household? How often do you dine out? How do you make decisions about which foods to buy and eat?

7. Who cooks for your family?

8. What kinds of foods does the domestic worker eat in the household? How do you make decisions about the food she eats?

9. How does the domestic worker's food differ from yours?

10. Please describe the kind of relationship that the domestic worker has with food.

11. Do you think that the domestic worker eats food that she is not allowed to eat in the household? How do you know?

12. What food needs and desires of the domestic worker are important for you to meet? How do you accommodate her food needs and desires?

13. Where does the domestic worker eat? Who does the domestic worker eat with for each meal?

14. How important is your domestic worker's health and nutrition to you? Why?

15. What kinds of chores does the domestic worker do in the household? What are her duties with your children?

16. Please describe the rules you have for the domestic worker. Which spaces of the house is she allowed to occupy? Where does she sleep, eat, spend her time off, etc.?

17. Please describe the relationship you have with the domestic worker.

18. Is there anything that you would like to change about the domestic worker? What things and why?

19. Does the domestic worker have days off? If so, how many? Does she always get the number of days off specified in her contract? How do you manage her contract?

20. What does the domestic worker do when she is off-duty in your house?

21. What does the domestic worker do when she goes out? How do you know?

22. What values are important to you for the domestic worker to have?

23. Are Filipina domestic workers different from Indonesian domestic workers? Please tell me why and share any stories that you may have to describe why you think this way.

24. How do Singaporeans treat Indonesian domestic workers in general?

25. How does the government treat Indonesian domestic workers? Do you think Indonesian domestic workers are treated fairly?

26. Do you think the government is concerned about the food security of domestic workers? Why or why not?

27. Have you ever seen the meal provision guidelines on the MOM website? If yes, what do you know about them? [*Show them the guidelines*] Do you follow these guidelines? Do you think other employers follow these guidelines? Why or why not?

28. Given some of the media stories, do you think that it is true that some Singaporeans mistreat their domestic workers? How do you know?

29. I am writing a report on the current conditions of foreign domestic workers in Singapore and I would like to use your opinion as input. What do you think the Singaporean Government could do to improve domestic workers' access to satisfying food? Why?

Interview questions for community members

1. Please tell me a bit about your organization and its role in the lives of foreign domestic workers in general, and Indonesian foreign domestic workers specifically.

2. How are Indonesian domestic workers treated when they are in public in Singapore?

3. In general, how are Indonesian domestic workers' work conditions in their employers' households?

4. How do employers treat Indonesian domestic workers? How is this different from domestic workers from other countries? Has this changed over time?

5. What kind of relationship do most foreign domestic workers have with their employers? How about Indonesian domestic workers specifically?

6. Do Indonesian domestic workers ever report incidences of mistreatment from their employers? How frequently do these reports occur? What kinds of issues do they usually report?

7. In general, do Indonesian domestic workers have access to culturally satisfying and nutritious food in Singapore? Why or why not?

8. Are the meal provision guidelines on the Ministry of Manpower website useful and effective for improving the food security of foreign domestic workers? Why or why not?

9. How has the food security of foreign domestic workers changed over time in Singapore? How about for Indonesian domestic workers specifically?

10. What could the Singaporean Government do to ensure that foreign domestic workers have more secure food and living conditions?

Appendix C: Modified Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS)

Part 1: Questions based on personal experiences of food access

1. In the past four weeks, did you worry that you would not have enough food?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

2. In the past four weeks, were you not able to eat the kinds of foods you preferred because of a lack of availability?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

3. In the past four weeks, did you have to eat a limited variety of foods due to a lack of availability?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

4. In the past four weeks, did you have to eat some foods that you really did not want to eat because of a lack of ability to obtain other types of food?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

5. In the past four weeks, did you have to eat a smaller meal than you felt you needed because there was not enough food?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

6. In the past four weeks, did you have to eat fewer meals in a day because there was not enough food?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

7. In the past four weeks, was there ever no food to eat of any kind available to you in your/your employer's household?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

8. In the past four weeks, did you go to sleep at night hungry because there was not enough food?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

9. In the past four weeks, did you go a whole day and night without eating anything because there was not enough food?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

Part 2: Questions on behalf of employer or domestic worker's experiences of food access

1. In the past four weeks, did your employer/domestic worker worry that they would not have enough food?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

2. In the past four weeks, was your employer/domestic worker not able to eat the kinds of foods they preferred because of a lack of availability?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

3. In the past four weeks, did your employer/domestic worker have to eat a limited variety of foods due to a lack of availability?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

4. In the past four weeks, did your employer/domestic worker have to eat some foods that they really did not want to eat because of a lack of ability to obtain other types of food?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

5. In the past four weeks, did your employer/domestic worker have to eat a smaller meal than you felt they needed because there was not enough food?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

6. In the past four weeks, did your employer/domestic worker have to eat fewer meals in a day because there was not enough food?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

7. In the past four weeks, was there ever no food to eat of any kind available to your employer/domestic worker in your/your employer's household?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

8. In the past four weeks, did your employer/domestic worker go to sleep at night hungry because there was not enough food?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___

9. In the past four weeks, did your employer/domestic worker go a whole day and night without eating anything because there was not enough food?
Never ___ Rarely___ Sometimes ___ Often___