

**Everyday Work, Everyday Gender:
Women Employees' Experiences in Taiwan**

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Abstract

This feminist study explores professional women's everyday experiences of gender in the workplace in Taiwan. As previous research indicates, compared to women in other East Asian economies, such as those of Japan and Korea, women in Taiwan have a more consistent career trajectory. In addition, the local women's movement and activism has brought Taiwan a long way in improving women's employment rights in the workplace. However, a substantial body of literature also shows that it is too soon to claim that gender inequality has been banished from the workplace. Applying ethnomethodological and symbolic interactionist perspectives, this project aims to investigate gender inequality at work by focusing on women employees' everyday experiences. The qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interview is adopted as the main method to generate research data, while feminist theories on gender and heterosexuality serve as a foundation for the analysis. Through an exploration of the participants' accounts, gendered and heteronormative practices at work are examined in two contexts: organisational management and everyday social encounters. Within management practices, women employees tend to be regarded as homogeneously marriage-oriented and family-oriented and are therefore assigned certain jobs and positions accordingly. As for social practices, the heteronormative and gendered social order is sustained through common everyday interactions, such as appellations and general communication. As the structural and institutional factors affecting gendered arrangements are discussed, personal experiences in negotiating gender are also revealed in the participants' narratives. A deviant misfit self is constructed by some participants as a means of mobilising agency in situations that disqualify or discriminate against women employees.

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Author's Declaration

In accordance with University regulations, I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Why this PhD?

This PhD is very much an unexpected but reasonable result of several personal, political and emotional experiences. These 'historical moments' in my life have had a significant influence on my academic interests and have thus contributed to my motivation to undertake this research project. Therefore, I introduce this thesis by providing an introduction to those moments in order to explain why I turned my hand to investigating the everyday doing of gender in the workplace.

If I have to mark a start date for this academic journey, it would be 26 August 2002. I was standing in front of the UK immigration section at Birmingham Airport. An immigration officer was checking my passport and asking about my purpose for visiting. I explained that I was an international student and would soon start my postgraduate study in the UK. He then followed up with questions regarding my discipline. 'Women's and gender studies', I replied. He asked 'Why this subject?' with a smile on his face which I am still not sure how to interpret even now. My response was my concerns about gender inequality and women's suffering. 'What about men?' he said. What about them? To be honest, I did not care much about men when I applied for the taught MA programme. Also, I was not very fond of enquires that questioned my research interests, particularly those suggesting that I was neglecting the needs of men. I had never heard someone studying, let's say ethology, being asked to justify her interest in birds but not crocodiles, or a postgraduate history student focusing on the Victorian era having to explain why he did not research the Edo period. I almost rolled my eyes but managed to suppress it, considering my delicate status as a foreign migrant. The best reply I could come up with was something like: 'After women's lives improve, then I will think about that.' I admit that it was not very politically correct, but I was fed up with enquiries about the discipline I had chosen. It was a little rebellious gesture of mine. This short conversation very much summarises my later intellectual quest. The more enquiries I receive, the

more I feel the need to insist on devoting myself to knowledge production which positions 'women' at the centre.

After receiving my degree, I went back to Taiwan and spent a few years working for charitable and human rights organisations. Because of my job, I had opportunities to sit at the same table with representatives of other organisations and government to discuss issues that concerned civil society. I noticed that there seemed to be a pattern to our discussions. Firstly, representatives from civil society would address their concerns. Then, the government officials would express their sympathy but emphasise that their hands were tied because of legal regulations. Then, we would have to have more meetings to discuss the related legal issues. This was the stage at which the involvement of the departments of law enforcement or the Ministry of Justice would be introduced. They would bombard us with jargon and legal principles. The bottom line was that the legal system is complicated and delicate; if we change one little thing, it could cause serious damage to the whole system. I had no problem with engaging in heated debates. I understood that different organisations and government sectors would have different perspectives and opinions. That was the whole purpose of having so many meetings: to negotiate and find a possible solution. However, most of the time, I just sat there and thought the whole negotiation was perfunctory. We spent so much time and energy on having meetings but achieved so little. I felt that I had been lured into the arena of law, which was not my home field. Then the moment that triggered the perfect storm of my anger came. A government legal advisor dismissed the opinion of civil society by attacking the staff of organisations who had not received any academic training in legal studies. Attending the meeting as a representative of my organisation, I was furious. Rather than focusing on the issues on the table, the advisor was dismissing our suggestions because we had not acquired the 'proper' academic background. Indeed, what he said was true. None of the staff members in my organisation were professionally trained legal specialists. My colleagues were experienced social workers and activists with academic backgrounds mostly in sociology and social work. I could not tolerate the fact that our academic background was being used as an excuse to neglect our concerns. It was not the first time our opinions had been dismissed by

disqualifying our professions, but his sarcastic and contemptuous tone just struck a raw nerve. I made up my mind to do a second MA in legal studies. People do impulse shopping; I do that too, and also impulse studying. As a result, my battlefield shifted from meeting room to seminar room.

The year was probably 2008. The location was still Taipei, Taiwan. I was debating with a postgraduate student over the 2007 Civil Law Amendment. I was a 'mature student' studying law. It was a taught programme specifically designed for individuals who had no relevant academic background but were interested in the discipline. Most of my colleagues were successful professionals in other areas, such as medical science or construction. They had chosen to expand their knowledge and abilities into law for a practical reason: to deal with the legal issues they had encountered and would possibly face in the future in their career. As for me, as I have explained, my motivation was pure anger. From the day I stepped into the legal world, my anger was not extinguished but rather kept blazing. I was attending a seminar session. Most attendees were 'ordinary' law students with a BA in legal studies. I was arguing with one of them about the latest legal regulation of surnames. One important change implemented by the 2007 Civil Law Amendment was to abolish the legal regulation that children should have their fathers' surnames.¹ The new law states that children can have either the paternal or the maternal name as their surname. A postgraduate argued that this amendment caused damage to the existing social and moral order. He claimed that there would be consanguineous marriages and intermarriages without people knowing that they are actually marrying their relatives since the surname system would be 'chaotic' after the amendment. I found his argument absurd and very difficult to follow. I said to

¹ Civil Law Article 1059 is a legal regulation regarding the surname of children. Prior to the 2007 Amendment, the regulation stated that a child should adopt the father's surname. Only under a few exceptional conditions could the mother's surname be adopted, such as that the mother has no male siblings, or the father has married into the mother's family [入贅; *ru jhuei* or *ruzhui*]. In other words, the practice of passing on patronymics was the norm and was maintained through the institution of law. The 2007 Amendment changed the regulations so that a couple can decide whether their child will adopt either the mother's or the father's surname. This amendment is regarded as a challenge to the conventional patriarchal ideology in law and, moreover, a significant landmark for the women's movement in Taiwan (see Peng and Hung, 2011; Chen, 2014.)

him that if he really believed that the purpose of having a surname is to prevent intermarriages or consanguineous marriages, the previous legal regulation would fail in that purpose too. The old system only kept records of fathers' surnames. The record of mothers' surnames had been neglected ever since the day we accepted Civil Law. After a few exchanges, he accused me of delivering 'a surprise judgment'; I had no idea what he meant, and he emphasised that what he had said was also the legal opinion of a prestigious professor specialising in Civil Law.

A deep sense of frustration welled up from the bottom of my heart. It was not because of his accusation but rather because I could not believe that I still had to argue against this kind of statement, which was obviously full of patriarchal bias. I thought we were already past this. I thought we should have entered an era in which gender equality was regarded as an essential legal principle. Since the late 1990s, after decades of struggle, the women's movement in Taiwan has reached tremendous landmarks in legal reform. By the 2000s, we already had the Prevention of Sexual Assault Act (1997), the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (1998), the Gender Equality in Employment Act (2002), the Gender Equality in Education Act (2004), the Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act (2004), and several major Amendments in Civil Law (1998, 2002, 2007) to secure women's rights. Yet, there I was, debating against the taken-for-granted patriarchal ideology that passing on the paternal name would bring prosperity to society.

Then comes the year 2009. An industrial action inspired me to ponder on the situation of employed women in Taiwan. I was browsing news articles online and a public statement caught my eye. On 8 June 2009, an open letter entitled 'We Would Rather Be Nice and Sweet' [如果可以，我們寧願永遠甜美] was posted on the website of Coolloud [苦勞網], an independent online news agency.² It was written by the members of the Association of Outsourced Employees in the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts. In the statement, the outsourcing company was accused of gender discrimination for demanding that

² The open letter is written in Chinese. It is accessible on the following webpage: <http://www.coolloud.org.tw/node/43079>.

women employees provide a pregnancy test report. Although it was not listed as a condition of employment, it was obvious that the outsourcing company was discriminating against pregnant employees. It was a case that involved a violation of the Gender Equality in Employment Act. However, what caught my eye was not only the accusation, but also the personal struggles revealed in this statement. It was expressed in the following words:

This is a really tough decision. We have struggled not only with the oppression of the outsourcing company but also with ourselves. Can we fight? Can we roar with anger? Can we show to our husbands, children, and parents that we are not as obedient and tender as they have known?

As women, it is difficult to fight, even in imagination. But we decided to stand up and fight [...]

For these women employees, the decision to 'stand up and fight' was not an easy one, even though there was a law to legitimate their claim. They were fighting against both the discriminatory management practice and society's expectations of women. Their concerns about gendered perceptions clearly challenged the conventional idea of the legal subject, which is the autonomous, linear-thinking and rational male (see Levit and Verchick, 2006). Their story is more than the legal case of damage compensation that a legal professional would probably perceive. This incident drew my attention to the experiences of women who have confronted gender discrimination at work and the gendered social conditions that might prevent them from filing a formal complaint.

2011 was a tough year for me, and also for some of my feminist friends. I had completed most of the required modules and was working on my dissertation about analysing courts' verdicts of sexual assault. While my study of law was coming to an end, I realised that, with my interest in feminism, I had probably been an outcast in the academia of jurisprudence all along. Yes, we did have modules about feminist legal theories. Yes, we did have (a few) professors and lecturers trying to bring gender into every seminar discussion. However, apart from those specific sessions, women's experiences and gender were seldom the

focus. The institution of law always occupied the central seat. My feeling of discontent was growing. I was sick and tired of studying everything through the lens of law.

While I was struggling with academic law, my feminist friends were fighting their own battles at work. I was accumulating my written words, and they were accumulating their experiences in coming across the dark side of the workplace. Through our regular gatherings, I learnt that even the organisations which claimed a reputation for being women-friendly might have serious management problems in relation to gender equality. Then, a friend was unfairly and wrongfully dismissed by her employer. She was brave enough to file a formal complaint and go through the official dispute mediation and arbitration process. In the end, she received severance pay but nothing more. All the blackmail and character assassination carried out by her employer, as well as the real cause of her dismissal, were neglected during the mediation and arbitration. Moreover, according to the settlement, the details of this case had to remain confidential. She was gagged. After this incident, whenever I read the documents of a legal case, I could not help wondering how much information had already been filtered out. Was there something the plaintiff wanted to say that could not be included because it was considered 'irrelevant' to the law? And how about those who did not have the social resources, capital or support to go through the legal process? Driven by my dissatisfaction with the legal knowledge approach I was taking, and also my deepening concern about women employees' situation in the workplace, I felt the urge to undertake another intellectual adventure. I wrote a PhD research proposal on investigating gender discrimination at work with a focus on the experiences of women employees who did not file a formal complaint. I believed their voices should not be silenced merely because they chose not to go through the adjudication process. Instead, their stories might provide more detailed information about the social and cultural context of gender inequality at work.

On 28 September 2012, my flight landed at Manchester Airport. It was my second visit to the UK, with the same purpose as the previous one. I was about to start my PhD in Women's Studies. This time, the immigration officer was

interested in my marital status and my future plans more than my research interests. 'Are you planning to marry in the near future?' 'Will you stay in the UK after your studies?' 'No' was my answer to both questions. The first one was expressed with certitude; the second was more like 'No, maybe, I'm not sure.' After all, who could know where my study impulse might lead me? For instance, I failed to foresee that I would soon overturn and rewrite my research plan.

In autumn 2013, with the fieldwork data in my hands, it became clear that I had to adjust my research objectives. It was the beginning of the second year of my PhD and I had just spent a summer in Taiwan to conduct the fieldwork. The first year of training had been challenging and inspiring. I had received intellectual stimulation and encouragement to critically examine the assumptions in my original research questions. My attention was gradually drawn into the theoretical framework of doing gender. This seemed to provide an approach which would enable me to liberate my viewpoint from the limitations of the law. Before I entered the research field, I decided to revise my research proposal and came up with a fieldwork design which was flexible enough to include my participants' everyday experiences of gender at work. When I came back to my student accommodation in York and started to sort out the initial data analysis, I realised that the focus of my PhD research had shifted to the everyday doing of gender in the workplace. Doing research is an organic process and this PhD is no exception. Of course, the actual twists and turns that happened during my PhD study were more complicated than the description I have offered in this paragraph. I will fill in the details in the following chapters.

Outline of the thesis

There are six chapters following this introduction. I begin with Chapter Two, a literature review for this study. The review focuses on existing literature that helped me to set up the research context for my own exploration of gender, work and Taiwanese society. It is organised as a three-part discussion. I first draw attention to research that depicts the economic and social background in relation to women's employment in Taiwan. I then move on to scholarship that offers a critical perspective on re-contextualising East Asia and Taiwanese

society. In the third part, the focus shifts to the theories that have influenced my conceptualisation of women's labour and gender. After the literature review, I present a chapter concerning the methodology and research process of this project. Chapter Three provides a reflexive examination of my research design, as well as the research process employed during this study. I explain how the envisaged relationship between a researcher and the participants from a feminist perspective served as the starting point for my ethical concerns and therefore influenced the research structure and findings. I also present the unexpected aspects of this study and how I managed to adapt.

I then use three chapters to discuss the research findings. In Chapter Four, by presenting and analysing my participants' accounts, I draw attention to the practices of organisational management. With the help of feminist theories on gender and heterosexuality, I argue that organisational managements are gendered and heteronormative by categorising women employees as naturally marriage- and family-oriented. Women are expected to work in certain industries and are confined to these, holding certain positions and doing certain jobs because of their gender. These practices therefore result in gender segregation in employment. In Chapter Five, I move on to the general interactions in my participants' day-to-day working lives. The analysis primarily focuses on my participants' accounts of everyday social practices, such as appellations, casual talk, and body language. I argue that, while everyday practices at work are happening in a gendered and heteronormative cultural context, they are also intertwined with the hierarchical social order. Extending the discussion about negotiating gender at work, in Chapter Six, I examine my participants' accounts with an enquiry into the mobilisation of agency and the construction of the social self. The examination is presented in two parts. I start with a discussion about my approach to theorising the social self. Through a reflexive reading of the work of G. H. Mead (1934), my own understanding of 'the self' as a conceptual tool in the context of Taiwan is proposed. In the second half of this chapter, the focus is on the construction of the social self in the process of negotiating gender. I examine the emerging social self in some of my participants' accounts and argue that, while their adopted strategies may vary, there is one common element in their narratives: a constructed misfit self. I

point out that the realisation and the construction of this misfit self may play an important part in the mobilisation of agency and may, therefore, make negotiation possible.

In the last chapter, I provide a summary of my research findings as well as a discussion of the limitations of this study. I acknowledge that my feminist stance and personal social network had a significant influence on the recruitment and sampling; therefore, I am aware that this study cannot offer a full picture of employed women's experiences in Taiwan. When it comes to the issue of representativeness, this thesis can probably only manage to contribute a small fraction to the whole picture. However, I argue that this limitation is also a virtue of my exploration. I also propose enquiries that may lead to future research based on my observations of the most recent changes in Taiwanese society and thoughts inspired by communications with my participants after my fieldwork. Moreover, I explain my intention to use this study as my first academic attempt to participate in the production of the sociology of everyday life and propose a contextualised approach to exploring women's experiences in Taiwan.

Chapter 2 Setting up Coordinates on the Intellectual Map of Gender, Work and Taiwan

Introduction

In Taiwan, the metaphor that knowledge is like an ocean was fairly common when I was a schoolgirl. Tutors would advise their students that studying hard is the only way to survive it and reach the destination. While school education back then (maybe it is still the case) was organised around compulsory memorising and exam-taking activities, this well-intended guidance sounded intimidating rather than encouraging. It implies that studying is a matter of life or death, as though struggling alone and helplessly in the open water. My peers joked that, since the ocean is so difficult to cross, the smartest way to survive is to turn back rather than to reach out.

This metaphor revisited me when I began to write this chapter. Not because I felt intimidated, alone or helpless during the process (although I did have a few difficult moments), but because knowledge has presented itself like a boundless ocean in front of me. And then the imagery of travelling from one location to another came to my aid. In a way, the thought that I was undertaking a journey was useful to help me to make sense of my writing. If knowledge is the sea, then the purpose of a literature review is not to investigate every drop of it but to discover where I am and, therefore, which direction I should be heading. As long as I have made proper preparations, I can travel in this ocean of knowledge. It will carry me rather than devour me.

This chapter is about the preparations I made in order to take on this journey of knowledge. I will introduce previous studies that set up the academic context of my own exploration. I identify gender, work and Taiwan as the main coordinates on my knowledge map for this quest. I depend on them to confirm and reflect my own location during this intellectual exploration. I deliberately give empirical studies on Taiwanese society the central position in this

literature review. I am certainly aware of the existence of 'western' findings. They are simply not the intellectual route I have chosen to take and are of limited relevance to Taiwan. I will start by reviewing research that depicts the economic and social background in relation to women's employment in Taiwan. Secondly, I will introduce studies that help me to re-contextualise East Asia and therefore Taiwanese society. Then my focus will shift to the theories that have influenced my conceptualisation of women's labour and gender.

Picturing Employed Women in Taiwan

The rapid and 'successful' transformation of the Taiwanese economy and the distinct gender patterns in employment have brought the country some sociological attention in the global knowledge market. The former has drawn researchers to investigate women's roles in this transformation and how their social status has been influenced by the economic shifts. The latter poses puzzles for sociological explanations of the relationship between women's labour-market participation and social conditions of gender inequality.

Like other East Asian countries, such as Japan and South Korea, Taiwan is one of those latecomers to industrialisation that have presented impressive achievements. During the 1960s, with aid from the United States, the Kuomintang (KMT) regime drove Taiwan onto the path of labour-intensive and export-led economic development. While male officials and politicians often took the credit and enjoyed the spotlight for the 'economic miracle', it was actually a fruitful result primarily at the expense of women's sweat and even blood, such as the case of RCA (see Arrigo, 1985; Chen, 2011). For example, the primary providers of the labour force that supported production in the Free Trade Zones (FTZ) were women. The working life of female factory workers in Taiwan during that era has been well documented in previous studies (e.g. Kung, 1978; Diamond, 1979; Hsiung, 1996). This research has shown that the booming economic development in Taiwan is actually an accomplishment that relies heavily on gendered social institutions and arrangements.

With the continuing transformation of the economy within the context of international markets, new social changes have emerged in Taiwan and,

therefore, the focus of academic investigations into women's employment has shifted. Since the mid-1990s, Taiwan's economy has become 'much more diversified, and industries have been upgraded and become more capital intensive' (Lee, 2004: 75). The industrial structure has been reassembled from low-skilled to high-skilled manufacturing and the economy has become service-oriented. Meanwhile, accompanying the relocation of its position in the system of global capitalism, Taiwan has become a site for examining local and migrant women's employment and how these have intersected with each other's lives (see Lan, 2003b; Lan, 2006). It has been shown that, during the second half of the twentieth century, Taiwan experienced rapid economic transformation, which was accompanied by massive social changes. Within just a few decades, the economic structure has shifted from agricultural-oriented to industrialised and then post-industrialised. This very much fits the character of what Chang Kyung-Sup (1999; 2010) conceptualises as 'compressed modernity'.

Within the constant transformation of the economy, there is one distinct and sustained characteristic of women's employment that has attracted researchers' attention. Compared to other rapidly developing economies in East Asia, statistics have shown that Taiwan has a consistently high and steady rate of women's labour-force participation. This persistent pattern not only manifests in women's labour as a whole over the years but also in terms of individual women's life trajectory. Women in Taiwan tend to stay in their jobs even after marrying and having children. Brinton et al. (1995) used the statistics on married women's employment in Korea and Taiwan in the 1980s to examine explanatory models of women labour-force participation. They identified three major differences in these two societies. In the age group of 25–34, the so-called proper childbearing age, while many Korean women tended to stay out of the labour market, women's labour participation in Taiwan remained steady. Also, to a great extent, married women in Taiwan acquired formal jobs at any age while their Korean counterparts were mostly in informal ones. The last salient difference is the relationship between education and women's employment. In Taiwan, the level of education has a positive influence on the probability of women's employment. In the case of Korea, it is the opposite. A similar pattern also emerges in the comparison between Taiwan and Japan. It has been

suggested in later studies that the comparatively steady employment trajectory of women in Taiwan seems to have survived the societal changes driven by economic transformation (see Chang, 2010; Yu, 2009).

However, this steady employment pattern cannot be regarded as an absolute answer to the enquiry about gender equality in the workplace. The fact that women tend to stay in the workplace does not mean that they have been treated equally with their male counterparts. One obvious gender inequality at work is the gender pay gap. Examining the gender patterns of quantitative data about employment in Taiwan, Zveglich et al. (2004) aimed to provide an explanation for the persistent and even increasing gender pay gaps. They found that, while there is an ascendancy of equal opportunities for women to access education and experience, they are nevertheless paid considerably less than men. The authors suggest that 'substantial within-occupations pay gaps between men and women are the main source of Taiwan's overall gender wage gap' (ibid.: 867). Moreover, they point out that within-occupation pay gaps actually 'grew over time and contributed to a substantial decline in women's relative wages after controlling for their gains in education and experience' (ibid.: 867). In other words, women in Taiwan do not receive equal pay for equal work. These findings suggest that there is a persistent inequality in payment across the spectrum of occupations. Later studies suggest that there might be a more invisible gender segregation in employment in Taiwan. In their quantitative data-based study, Chang and England (2011) used data from 2006 to look at the pay gaps in Korea, Japan and Taiwan. Their study found that Taiwan has a smaller gender gap in earnings but the variables they built up could not fully explain the reasons for the gap. They suspect that the pay gap in Taiwan might be partially due to discriminatory practices in hiring or 'supply-side preferences' which could not be examined through employment statistics (ibid.: 13). Moreover, 'the remaining unexplained portion of the gap may reflect discriminatory wage differences between men and women in the same occupation' (ibid.: 13).

Research also reveals that the high labour-force participation of women does not necessarily mean that they are free from gendered labour in the domestic

sphere. In her work on married women's lives in Taiwan and Japan, Yu (2001) aimed to provide an explanation for the gap between married women's attitudes towards conventional ideas about gender and their consistent employment in Taiwan. She proposes that the answers to this inconsistency could be revealed by investigating 'structural conditions'. Through examining the different 'cultural and socio-economic context' in Taiwan and Japan, she identifies several factors relating to the demands on financial resources and requirements for childcare and homemaking. She concludes that 'the fact that many married women in Taiwan play a role in supporting the household economy does not seem to actually shake their belief that a wife should be the primary caregiver in the household' (ibid.: 94). Furthermore, providing financial support for the family is commonly viewed as a way to take care of family members, especially children. Yu's research demonstrates the different social norms relating to motherhood in Taiwanese and Japanese societies. In Taiwan, being a mother does not mean that a woman can escape the responsibility of contributing financially to the family. On the other hand, having a full-time job does not excuse her from caring labour in the household. Yu's interview data shows that women are still the main caregivers in their families, just as much as their Japanese counterparts. Married women in Taiwan are usually carrying a double burden caused by their dual roles in the workplace and at home. This, then, raises questions about women's everyday practices and the management of this dual burden of labour.

In later research, Yu (2009) provides explanations for the socioeconomic conditions that enable married Taiwanese women to manage their family responsibilities without withdrawing from their participation in the labour market. Unlike Japan, which has an economic structure based on large enterprises and capital-oriented industries, Taiwan's economy is more labour-intensive with small and medium-sized businesses serving as its backbone. Different state policies have shaped different labour-market conditions and employers' attitudes and management practices. Taiwan has experienced 'frequent labour shortage[s]' and therefore 'incorporating married women into the workplace' becomes a reasonable strategy for employers to manage labour demands (ibid.: 179). Moreover, the loose structure and management of small

and medium-sized business that build up 'informal work climates' and 'workplace practices' enable married women employees to manage the balance between work and family (ibid.: 179).

Putting forward the hypothesis that there is a correlation between changes in childcare practices and changes in gender roles, Ochiai et al. (2008) conducted comparative research on East and Southeast Asian societies. They focused on patterns of women's life courses in employment and the contextual factors behind the pattern in each society. While there are societies that share similar patterns, they found that the socioeconomic conditions which enable these patterns to emerge are quite different. Societies such as Korea and Japan show an M-pattern in women's employment, because women tend to leave the labour market upon marriage, first pregnancy or childbirth. On the other hand, according to the data, which covers the time period from the 1980s to 2004, Taiwan shows a reverse U-pattern. Moreover, they point out that there is a divergence within this pattern that is related to women's educational levels. In Taiwan, 'the employment rates of married women vary significantly by educational background' (ibid.: 45). While it is not uncommon for less educated women to withdraw from the labour force in order to provide childcare, highly educated women show a preference for remaining in work after marriage and childbirth. This divergence may show different patterns according to educational level, but the difference in education does not by itself provide a sufficient answer to it. Highly educated women receive informal childcare support from relatives, particularly parents and siblings, and also babysitters and maids who are mostly migrant women workers from South East Asia (see also Wang et al., 2013; Loveband, 2004; Lindio-McGovem, 2004; Lan, 2003a; Lan, 2003b).

While there are studies providing insightful analysis that help us to understand women's employment in Taiwan, there are still questions pending. More academic effort is required to provide further inclusive and thorough investigation into women's working lives. Firstly, alternative and diverse perspectives are essential to obtain a better understanding of women's experiences. The distinct pattern of married women's employment seems to

direct most of the academic attention towards married women's experiences and leaves unmarried women's working lives largely under-studied.

Moreover, along with the new social changes in the twenty-first century, I argue that continuing enquiry into women's experiences of work in Taiwan is required. The conditions that previously assisted women to have stable career trajectories are now being contested. For example, Yu (2009) suggests that the dramatic change in education policy and the continuing transformation of the economy might have a negative impact on women's employment. Beginning in the late 1990s, the government initiated a project of educational expansion and therefore expanded university enrolment. The number of highly educated men is increasing. In addition, the development of Taiwan's economy is being channelled in the direction of capital- and skill-intensive work. The thriving high-technology industry demonstrates this economic change. The market demands more professional and skilled employees in the technology industries. Yu suggests that the increasing availability of labour offered by highly educated men might decrease career opportunities for women. This concern should be understood in the context of national educational policy. Since the education system in Taiwan helps to produce a division of labour, this demand for labour is hardly a gender-neutral one. The expansion of education has indeed increased the accessibility of higher education; however, gender segregation among disciplines persists. There is still an obvious gender gap between the so-called 'female disciplines' and the 'male disciplines'. According to the latest statistics provided by the Ministry of Education, university departments are categorised into 23 faculties. During the academic year 2015, women formed the majority in the Humanities while men obviously dominated Engineering. In the Humanities, there were 77,755 female students and 32,945 male students. In Engineering, there were only 35,111 female students compared to 227,333 male students (see Figure 1 and Table 1). The gender gap among disciplines is not only a consequence of cultural factors, such as gendered presumptions about aptitudes, but also government policies in the areas of economics and education. For example, Hsieh and Yang's (2014) study indicates that groupings within the high-school curriculum and the College Entrance Examination play an influential part in constructing and sustaining this gender gap. In the 1950s, the

Taiwanese government established the grouping system of the College Entrance Examination. Disciplines were generally categorised into groups and there was an individual scheme of marking and exam subjects for each group.³ This policy then resulted in the grouping of the high-school curriculum. Since education is an important factor in forging professional skills and human capital, the gender gap in education then contributes to the gender gap in employment. In other words, gender segregation has shadowed women’s career development from school education to occupational choices. Along with the economic transformation, there are more opportunities for both college admission and jobs for men since the technology industries are developed under the guardianship of government policy.

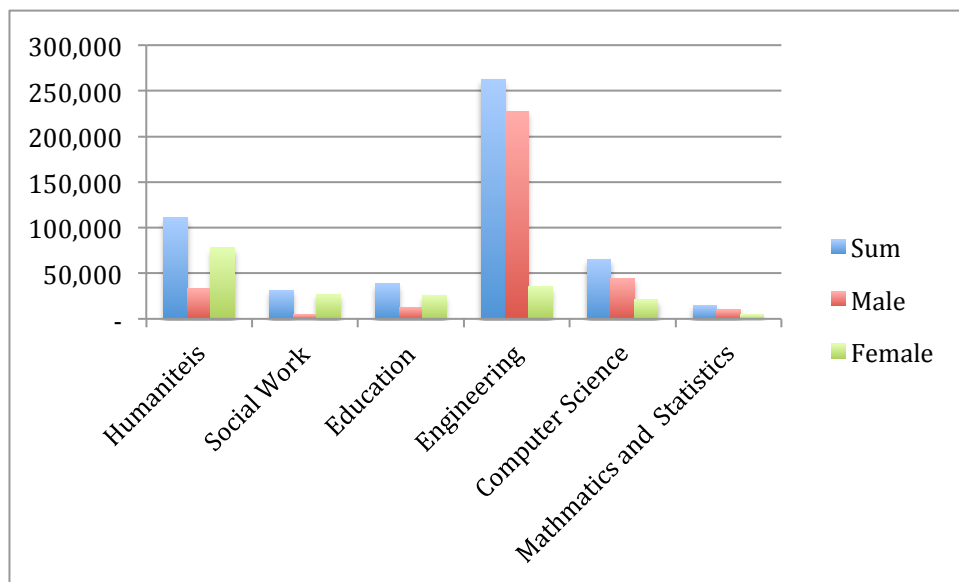


Figure 1 Five disciplines with obvious gender disparities

	Humanities	Social Work	Education	Engineering	Computer Science	Mathematics & Statistics
Female	77,755	26,687	25,654	35,111	21,004	4,819
Male	32,948	4,925	12,946	227,333	44,018	10,070
Total	110,703	31,612	38,600	262,444	65,022	14,889

Table 1 Numbers of female and male students in disciplines with obvious gender disparities

On the other hand, the enactment of the new law on gender equality has also brought potential changes in labour conditions for women. Since the 1990s,

³ The four groups were: science and engineering, literature and arts, medicine and agriculture, and law and commerce (Hsieh and Yang, 2014).

there has been a legal reform movement in Taiwan to promote women's rights and gender equality. For instance, the Domestic Violence Prevention Act was passed and enacted in 1998, the Gender Equality Act in Employment in 2002, and the Gender Equity in Education Act in 2004. The reform has introduced new regulations and reasoning in legal doctrines, law enforcement and government administrative practices. The provisions of these new laws have also contributed to social changes that influence women's lives. Therefore, I would argue that all these newly arrived factors mean that enquiries into women's employment remain timely.

(Re) Contextualising 'East Asia'

It is interesting that the quantitative data on women's employment has prompted diverse and sometimes even contradictory interpretations of the cultural context of gender in Taiwan. On the one hand, Taiwan is identified as a society that shares similarities with others in East Asia. On the other hand, there are also studies indicating that Taiwan is totally different from these other societies in terms of patriarchal values.

There seems to be an academic common sense to assuming similarities in culture between Taiwan, Japan, Korea and China. In the realm of East Asia, Taiwan shares its historical and cultural heritage with other countries in the area, such as Japan and Korea. In their examination of the value-based explanation model, Brinton et al. (1995) ruled out the possibility of patriarchal values being a meaningful factor that contributes to distinct differences in women's employment in Korea and Taiwan. Although aware that there 'may be some distinctions between Taiwan and South Korea in sex-role values', they found these to be insufficient in terms of providing 'detailed evidence on systematic, subtle differences' (ibid.: 1107). Therefore, they generally assume that both societies share 'similarities in patriarchal values' (ibid.: 1106). However, there are also researchers who try to disentangle the differences from the similarities. Sechiyama's (2013) comparative study on patriarchy in East Asia is one example. Drawing upon quantitative data, he identifies the characteristics of Taiwanese patriarchy and its cultural and social bases. By

reviewing related statistics and surveys, he proposed two characteristics of Taiwanese patriarchy. Primarily, women's participation in the labour force seems comparatively more stable across all ages and marital status than in Japan or South Korea. The results of surveys on women's attitudes towards working also indicate that it is acceptable for married women in Taiwan to stay in the workplace. In other words, married women who have children in Taiwan tend to continue working. Sechiyama then proposed two interpretations of Taiwanese patriarchy. One is that 'Taiwanese patriarchy does not have any strong taboo against women being in the labour force', and the second is 'the lack of any great strain associated with the role of the mother' (ibid.: 197). I generally agree with his findings that, compared to other societies under the influence of Confucian thinking, Taiwan exhibits a distinctiveness on the issue of gender and employment. However, I hesitate to fully agree with his interpretations of this distinctiveness. It seems too quick to jump to the conclusion that 'a form of patriarchy has emerged in Taiwan that does not place particular emphasis on the role of the mother' (ibid.: 200). Other studies have shown that, while women in Taiwan have the liberty to work, this does not mean that their 'responsibility' for the domestic field is lessened. Instead of claiming that there is no 'particular emphasis on the role of the mother', I would argue that there are different kinds of social norms about the role of mother in Taiwan. It is constructed within a specific social and cultural context. As I will elaborate later, other studies have indicated that the domestic labour accompanying women's family roles, such as mother, wife and daughter, probably requires more sophisticated analysis than Sechiyama proposed (see e.g. Yu, 2009; Liu and Osawa, 2013; Wang et al. 2013). I would argue that both interpretations might have overlooked the complexity of the context of East Asia and the heterogeneity among the societies in the area.

Confucianism is often pinpointed as the foundation of cultural similarity in East Asia. It is a widely acknowledged historical fact that Confucian thinking has spread throughout East Asia and China has been identified as its source. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that the Confucian values of these societies are identical. Moreover, in some countries, this cultural heritage is not 'purely cultural' but is very much a political one. Revealing the differences in the

endorsement of traditional Confucian values among college students in China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan, Zhang et al. (2005) aim to challenge the assumption of cultural similarities in the region. They propose that researchers 'should resist the temptation of generalization and be sensitive to the "localized" Confucianism and its spheres of influence' (ibid.: 114). Zhang et al.'s proposition of a localised viewpoint offers an alternative standpoint to approaching Confucianism in any individual society. While being sympathetic to their argument, I would like to further elaborate upon the idea of localisation. I argue that to acknowledge localisation means to see that there could be more than one version of Confucianism in the East Asian context. Instead of viewing the Confucianism in each society as a copy of the 'original' and 'true' prototype, I suggest regarding each version as a specific fabrication that has emerged within a particular historical situation. Moreover, this fabrication should be examined in the light of various dimensions of practices. Other than the level of endorsement and implementation, the aspects of negotiation and resistance should also be acknowledged. Especially in countries such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, where Confucianism is deliberately promoted and maintained through social institutions and government policies, the political background and context is indispensable for understanding this cultural component of society (see e.g. Leung 2014). In other words, the culture of a society is not merely cultural. In the case of Taiwan, the specific historical and political background has offered a critical social context within which to ponder the oppressive and suppressive influence of Confucianism. While it is an ideology that is promoted and institutionalised by the KMT government to justify and sustain its governance, it has been pinpointed as one of the ideologies that contribute to autocratic and hierarchical social control. For instance, Chen Fangming (2000), a Taiwanese literature scholar, identifies the martial law period (1949–1987) under the KMT regime as the recolonial phase. In his view, during this period, Taiwanese society was forged by ideologies of Han-centralism, male supremacy and Confucianism. These three went hand in hand to suppress and oppress any attempts to express alternative political and cultural ideas.⁴

⁴ It should be noted that Chen's argument has sparked discussions and debates on historical interpretations of Taiwanese literature (see also Liou, 2006 and Chow et al., 2007).

Studies have shown that, although East Asia is a useful socio-geographical division, it should not be used as a concept to narrow the sociological view or to generalise all the societies within the region. It is important to indicate that I consider Taiwan to be a society that is influenced by Confucian thinking but where the practices and interpretations have their own specificity. Just as Japan and Korea have their own versions of Confucian adaptation, so does Taiwan. Comparative studies on countries in the geographical region of East Asia have shown that the similarities in historical and cultural heritage do not justify a homogeneous view of these societies.

China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are commonly identified as natural members of the Confucian patriarchy club. They are described as societies sharing similarities which 'can be traced back to the common origin of the Confucian model of the family' (Raymo et al., 2015). It is indeed a recognised historical fact that Confucian thinking originated in China and has had an impact in various societies in Asia for complex historical and political reasons. While acknowledging the significance of its influence, I would also argue that a universal view of Confucianism is an obstacle to a comprehensive understanding of each society in East Asia. In his intriguing work on deconstructing Chineseness, Chun (1996) challenges the ideology that Chineseness as an absolute and homogeneous cultural entity, especially when it is to be understood in specific social, political and cultural contexts. I am not denying that Taiwanese society has Chinese elements in it. The perspective that I would like to suggest is to be critical about the naturalisation of Chineseness in Taiwan.

The Chineseness of Taiwanese society is the post-war outcome of the political project of the KMT regime. In his work on deconstructing a certain and homogeneous 'Chineseness', Chun (1996) first started with the ambiguity of language itself. While, in English, Chinese is almost the common term to refer to 'Chineseness', within Chinese-speaking societies there are different terms that could be used to refer to 'Chineseness' by different Chinese communities and societies, each with a slightly different meaning, and each with its specific cultural and historical connotations, such as *tang* [唐], *hwa* [華], and *han* [漢].

He argues that the viewpoint that 'China as an unambiguous political entity and Chineseness as a feature shared by ethnic Chinese on the basis of discrete traits and traditions' is underpinned by 'a homogeneous notion of culture that is essentially modern, if not national, in origin' (ibid.: 113). For example, in Taiwan, Confucian values were deliberately institutionalised and promoted by the KMT to secure its own rule and its legitimate role as 'the' Chinese ruling party. In order to secure itself as the legitimate 'Chinese regime' against the China ruled by the Chinese Communist Party, the KMT has 'depicted itself as the guardian of traditional Chinese culture' (ibid.: 116). So, while it is an undeniable fact that Taiwanese society is deeply influenced by Confucian thinking, it is not a cultural heritage that can be naturalised by its prevalence. Rather, it is a cultural reality very much generated by political conditions, and it has been critically debated.

The historical context has made the idea that Taiwan has a shared cultural legacy with China a sensitive issue. Considering the political tension between these two states, it is always a potential political concern that Taiwan is the land of preservation of the 'true traditional Chinese culture'. The first point of contention emerges with the conceptualisation of 'tradition'. The conceptualisation of China as an individual and specific political and cultural entity is actually a modern one. The second concern regards authenticity: thinking that there is a true, authentic version of Chinese culture. I would argue that to see Taiwan as the land that preserves true Chineseness is actually a China-centred perspective. Ironically, the sense of true and original Chinese culture is a political ideology promoted by both the KMT regime and the People's Republic of China, which are supposed to be political rivals. The political discourse claiming that Taiwan is the representative of Chineseness neglects the organic process of cultural practices.

One crucial factor which has enabled Confucian thinking to survive the dramatic changes in various East Asian societies is that it has been constantly reshaped and reinvented. As Jackson, Ho and Na indicate, 'even when cultural precepts and practices have a very long documented history, they may be reinvented and their current form may be the product of successive revivals and revisions, as is the case with Confucianism in East Asia' (Jackson, Ho and Na,

2013: 669). Departing from the critical conceptualisation of tradition and modernity, Jackson, Ho and Na (2013) seek an alternative framework to examine social change and social life. Instead of viewing tradition and modernity as oppositional concepts which cannot coexist, they advocate a framework that deconstructs the dichotomy between the two. By doing so, they seek to avoid an assumed cultural essentialism and argue that 'the persistence of traditional values and practices is mediated through socio-economic context' (2013: 689). That is, in their words, 'difference and shifts in the ordering of personal and family lives are not only the result of cultural diversity and change; much depends on the socio-economic and political context' (ibid.: 683). One common analytical approach for comparative study, whether it is a study of societies with similar or different cultural values, is to give culture the key role of making sense of social practices. Jackson, Ho and Na's study indicates that cultural elements are not the only sources of variation. Socio-economic and political context is equally important.

While comparative studies are meaningful and indeed useful for answering sociological enquiries, there is also a temptation to regard one society as the norm against which to evaluate the rest, both in the context of West-East comparison and in assessing East Asian societies, as well as generalising the similarities between different societies that share a certain cultural heritage. Culture should not be used as a convenient answer to all sociological enquiries. If we treat the western pattern as the norm, we might miss alternative and crucial explanations for understanding the lives of people in different 'non-western' societies. For instance, on the issue of adulthood, the distinctly late age for young people to leave their homes in most Asian societies could easily be interpreted as an outcome of filiation, for it 'has been one of the cornerstones of East Asian societies for thousands of years, and it is still highly valued' (Yi et al., 1994: 77). However, it should equally be noted that other socioeconomic aspects should not be entirely dismissed by focusing on existing cultural norms. Studies of women's employment in East Asian societies have shown that there might be a gap between what people believe in terms of cultural values and what they can actually do considering the situated conditions, such as the costs

of living, housing and education as well as the assessable social welfare (Raymo et al., 2015).

Reflecting on the critical aspect of knowledge production, being a researcher from an Asian society and doing research in a European society has led me to reflect upon my own research perspective. Writing about Taiwan becomes a critical position to claim. My role as an Asian international student in a 'western' country becomes one of the many conditions of my reflexivity. It influences not only my everyday social life but also my role in knowledge production. In everyday conversation, I worry that I might be perceived as THE representative of Taiwanese society, or even of Asian society. As a researcher, I am alarmed by the risk of universalising Eurocentric knowledge to other social contexts. Jackson critically reflects upon the politics of knowledge production from the position of a 'western' researcher. She writes that 'some caution is necessary in approaching any analysis of societies other than our own, in particular comparison between "The East" and "The West"' (2015: 3). This critical reminder is also meaningful for researchers with an 'Eastern' background or standpoint and researchers studying societies of which they acquire membership. In the case of this study, my identity as a member of Taiwanese society does not guarantee the innocence of my position in knowledge production.

So far, the focus of my writing has been on previous findings about women's employment in Taiwan. In doing so, I have discussed the distinct patterns and the specific historical, political, cultural and socio-economic conditions in which these patterns are embedded. It has been clearly demonstrated that women's career trajectories are influenced by social factors and not purely by labour-market demands. Also, I have revealed my approach to contextualising women's working lives in Taiwan. However, the scholarship on women's employment can only partially locate my position on the map of knowledge production. Since the enquiry proposed here is primarily about women's experiences of gender at work, I feel it is essential to pinpoint the conceptualisations of 'work' and 'gender' in this project. Therefore, in the second half of this chapter, I will move

on to deliberate upon the sociological and feminist studies that have shaped my approach to 'work' and 'gender'.

Reshaping the Knowledge Boundary of 'Work'

Chen May, the very first married woman I knew in my life, used to say that a holiday was an extra working day for her. When the whole family is having a break and staying at home, that is the time when she has to do more household work. She describes the trickiness of the labour contribution of a housewife in the following words: 'if I do everything, nobody notices. But if I miss one thing, everyone notices.' May is my mother. Since the day she married, she took on the role of a housewife, no matter whether she had a 'proper' job or not. There was even one point in her life when she was working full time as a housewife, as a college student and also as an insurance salesperson. Having been nurtured by a woman like May, it seems sensible for me to ponder the work that falls upon women's shoulders. (It is probably fair to say that home is the very first research field that I experienced.)

I think May's words on housework perfectly capture the dark secret of women's work: it is often 'invisible' when it is performed well. At first glance, this might seem contradictory. How can something so essential and important be neglected so easily? Unfortunately, when it comes to women's contribution, this is often the case. Women are usually the ones taking care of essential tasks to manage the household and keep the institution of family going. Their work is naturalised and therefore taken for granted. It is tricky indeed for women's work to be recognised. Moreover, this dark secret has a hidden place not only in the household but also in the so-called 'public domain'. When women 'step out' of the family domain and engage in activities on the labour market, their contributions still largely remain unseen, discredited and under-appreciated.

Contemporary sociological and feminist studies have revealed this dark secret of women's work and have contested the social institutions of gendered labour. Within this substantial academic endeavour, one fundamental achievement is to push back the knowledge boundary by reshaping the conceptualisation of work. There are substantial numbers of academic studies

which contest conventional views of work and labour. Alternative conceptual tools, along with new theorisations, are proposed in order to frame alternative approaches, such as 'emotion work' (e.g. Hochschild, 1979; Hochschild, 1983), 'sexual labour' (e.g. Adkins, 1995), 'aesthetic labour' (e.g. Warhurst et al., 2000; Witz et al., 2003), 'body labour' (Kang, 2003), and 'body work' (Wolkowitz, 2002, 2006). In this section, I would like to bring in a discussion about previous research which throws light on examining work activities and their entangled gender implications. It would be an overambitious attempt to cover everything intensively and this may therefore be a partial and general discussion. I will focus primarily on research that has helped to shape and expand my view of women's work and women's labour.

Care work and the multiple labour burden placed on women

As I have briefly discussed in the previous section, a comparatively steady employment status does not necessarily ease the weight of labour in the private domain from women's shoulders. Employed women in Taiwan still have to perform the 'work' of certain gendered roles. And this 'work' does not only occur after they call it a day and leave the workplace. It is a duty (if not a burden) that they carry all along. It would be oversimplified to see the workplace as a space that is purely 'public' and the individuals in it as free from 'private' matters. The concept of public/private domains can offer a critical perspective on how social life is constructed, arranged and interpreted. However, it would be a distortion to view an individual's quotidian experience as divided into segments, some of which are completely 'private' while the rest are entirely 'public'. While my project is to investigate women's experiences of gender in the workplace, this does not mean that my investigation should be or could be confined to an exploration of 'employment work' only. Care work is one form of gendered labour that transcends the boundary between public and private domains and which projects an indispensable dimension for studying women's experiences in gendered society.

To simply use the term 'care work' might have critical implications in Taiwanese society because the labour of caregivers is often overshadowed by social norms of gendered relationships, especially those among family members.

Care work is very much personalised and primarily shared among family members. It is not only a social practice sustained by cultural norms but also a legal responsibility defined by Civil Codes (Yeandle et al., 2013). For example, it is written that the husband and wife share a mutual obligation to 'maintain' each other's life. 'Maintain' is the official translation of the Chinese wording, *fu-yang* [扶養], that is used in law. The translation only captures a partial meaning of the original term. *Fu-yang* also implies to bring up, to raise and to support. This mutual obligation between family members is about more than just providing basic material necessities for each other. It also involves other forms of support. To fulfil this legal obligation requires the complex practice of providing care for a spouse in need. Moreover, although the legal wording seems gender neutral, providing care tends to be the responsibility or obligation imposed on a certain gender. And it is usually women who perform those gendered tasks.

Studies have shown that women are the main caregivers in Taiwan and that the available support is mostly informal. In their comparative study of the system of care for older people in Japan and Taiwan, Wang et al. (2013) focus the discussion on examining the situation of working carers. Women are the providers of unpaid labour to take care of older family members even when they are in full-time employment. Wang et al. point out that 'in practice, policies and societal norms that emphasize familial responsibility for the old often mean that women provide unpaid care' (ibid.: 90). Compared to Japan, Taiwan is far behind on the track of the welfare state. State policy reinforces women's role as unpaid caregivers and there is limited formal support for them to fall back upon. When state policy and societal norms go hand in hand, the outcome is to reinforce the naturalisation of this unpaid labour performed by women. Their care work for elderly family members goes unrecognised and their role as carer seems difficult to identify. While care work is regarded as normalised socialised behaviour for maintaining functional familial relationships, a woman's role as carer is silenced. 'Because care responsibility is naturalized through family relations, carers tends to see themselves as mothers, daughters and/or daughters-in-law, and few think of themselves as "carers"'; therefore, 'to do so is a political move' (ibid.: 90). The absence of formal support for carers stems not

only from the state but is also seen at an organisational level. 'Caring for an elderly family member tends to be seen as a "family matter" at work, rather than something an employer has the responsibility to share' (ibid.: 99–100). One previous study (see Yu, 2009) shows that the 'informal working climate' is one of the factors that enables employed married women in Taiwan to balance their work and family life. However, it should be clarified that this 'informal working climate' does not necessarily endorse systematic or organisational support for women working as carers. For example, the employer might be tolerant towards the few minutes leaving of an employee for a single breastfeed but reluctant to set up a policy or provide appropriate facilities. In their study on non-family support for career women who practise breastfeeding in Taiwan, Chang et al. report that, although support from colleagues is available and negotiation with employers is possible, 'the workplaces were not family or breastfeeding friendly' (2014: 297). According to the accounts of their participants, most organisations did not accommodate them with a secure and private space to express breastmilk before they requested one and initiated a negotiation with their employers. Moreover, while Chang et al.'s study identifies a common encouraging and supportive attitude from colleagues, I would argue that this 'friendly' attitude requires further analysis. This informal support in the workplace may have its roots in the gendered social norms about what a 'good mother' should be, as one of their participants reported that 'if I stop breastfeeding, I will be teased by them [the colleagues]...and they will blame me continuously' (ibid.: 297). Liu and Osawa's (2013) work on partner-care in East Asia provides similar findings on gendered patterns in providing care in Taiwan. Firstly, while the law states that a couple has a mutual obligation to maintain and support each other, in reality the practice presents a gendered result. Similarly to other East Asian countries, women are mainly the ones providing care for their partners in Taiwan. Secondly, because the formal care service is limited and too strict to extend to everyone who needs it, 'only the neediest are covered' (ibid., 206). This results in a high dependence on informal support, especially that of family members. Also, this study points out that workplaces are seldom care-friendly. For example, the practice of 'long working hours and leave provisions mean that workers have few ways of reconciling

work and care' (ibid., 213). All these findings illustrate a harsh situation for employed women who try to manage the 'dual burden' of providing care while remaining at work.

Through an examination of care work, the multiple labour burden of employed women is manifested. In conjunction with labour-market transformation, the social landscape of the gendered division of labour is far more complicated than simply women doing housework and men undertaking workplace activities. When employed women's life trajectories transcend the boundary between household/workplace and private/public, we see how involvement in formal employment does not necessarily spare them from labour responsibilities at home when men are largely spared. Probably this has been best described by the phrase, 'the second shift', proposed by a female participant in Hochschild's (1989) research on working parents. After calling it a day at the workplace, employed women encounter other labour demands in the household domain waiting for them to fulfil. This gendered arrangement of labour not only occurs in the household but also in the workplace. There are particular forms of gendered labour in both social domains that are naturalised as 'women's work', which I will now describe.

Embodying gender and sexuality at work

While studies on care labour reveal women's work that is generated beyond the scope of employment, the 'private' domain is not the only social sphere that should be placed under scrutiny when investigating women's free labour. In the workplace, there also exist aspects of women's work that are naturalised by gender norms and therefore under-recognised. Such work remains unpaid even though it is commercialised to generate profit and bring benefits to the organisation. The scholarship on emotion work has provided a theoretical framework that reveals the commercialisation of gendered labour. Under the influence of gender norms, being caring is regarded as intrinsically female. Women in the workplace are expected to perform this caring activity for commercial value. The concept and theorisation of emotion work therefore offers a critical framework for investigating the 'invisible' labour that takes place as a part of employed work.

Reviewing the conventional theoretical frameworks of dramaturgy and psychoanalysis, Hochschild suggests an alternative research focus for social interactions. She proposes an 'emotion-management perspective' which brings social psychological enquiry to the relationships among 'the self, interaction, and structure' (1979: 51). As social beings, individuals adopt 'conventions of feeling' in their interactions. Instead of being something that happens naturally or instinctively, to have and express proper feeling on the appropriate occasion or situation is the result of socialisation. Moreover, this socialisation is related to the social order in terms of class. Workers who have different class backgrounds acquire different socialisation and therefore emotion work has a role in sustaining the social structure. Hochschild therefore reveals that emotions and feelings are part of socialisation. She further indicates the commercial aspect of emotion work because it not only happens during private, personal social exchanges but also in the commercial world. Hochschild promotes a further exploration of the emotion work that occurs in different occupations.

In her argument on the commercialisation of feeling, Hochschild compares middle-class work and working-class jobs and concludes that the former involves more emotion work. In the comparison, she seems to focus primarily on the emotional display and exchange between the worker and the consumer. I would like to propose another perspective on viewing emotion work in the marketplace. The exchange of emotion and feelings in the marketplace could be happening within other relationships in the workplace; for instance, the exchange of emotion and feelings between colleagues or working partners. This exchange may also bring commercial value in a less direct way.

The perspective on emotion management is particularly critical when examining women's labour. Adopting Illich's (1981) concept of 'shadow work', Hochschild (1983) argues that emotional labour is often overlooked, labour such as housework, which is expected to be performed by women and is usually under-recognised and under-appreciated. 'Women are expected to do more of it' (ibid., 168). There is this social and cultural expectation for women to be nice. Women are not expected to do emotional labour but rather to naturalise it.

When it comes to women's emotional labour, being becomes the way of doing. Therefore, there is this tricky side of it: the better women are at it, the less chance there is for them to earn credit for it. In Hochschild's words, 'the more her labour does not show as labour, the more successfully it is disguised as the absence of other, more prized qualities' (ibid.: 169). Hochschild's analysis reveals that there are gendered aspects to emotional labour. Women are expected to be nice, which means that being nice is their natural status, and so the management work that they perform on their emotions and feelings in order to present this desirable impression is neglected. Therefore, when women engage in the workplace, there is this double standard around expressing feelings, particularly 'negative' ones, such as anger. While men are assumed to be rational and their feelings are therefore justified, women are regarded as irrational and emotional. Hochschild proposes the idea of a 'doctrine of feelings' as the framework for analysing women's disadvantaged status in expressing feelings in the workplace. The biased rules governing women's expression of feelings and emotions are actually related to the power relationship in a given situation. She states that 'the lower our status the more our manner of seeing and feeling is subject to being discredited, and the less believable it becomes' (173). This double standard for expressing feelings also puts women in double jeopardy.

Hochschild's research on emotion work has served as a significant academic inspiration for later sociological scholarship. Some of her original ideas have been challenged, particularly the conceptualisation of emotional labour and emotion work, but her work remains influential (see e.g. Taylor, 1998; Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Witz et al., 2003, Bolton, 2005; Wolkowitz, 2006; Brook 2009). Her empirical investigation into the work experience of flight attendants also became the pioneering sociological and feminist enquiry into service work. In subsequent studies in related empirical fields, gender became an important aspect when examining service labour. Taylor and Tyler's (2000) ethnographic research on the airline industry is one of the academic endeavours that accord gender a key role in the analysis of employees' labour in service industries. They argue that 'emotional labour cannot be regarded as a "gender-neutral" phenomenon', that emotional labour is utilised by commercial organisations as

a way to deliver 'quality service' and that it is expected that this labour will be delivered by women employees. This demand for quality service, which is often 'beyond managerial prescription', therefore mobilises gendered emotional labour and 'the production of sexual difference' through servicing activities (ibid.: 77, 91). Taylor and Tyler's study also explores 'surface acting' and 'deep acting' in the context of employee management. The research findings suggest that 'a surface commitment or act can conceal "deep" or "genuine" resentment and cynicism of quality improvement programmes in the service sector' (ibid.: 93). Quality management, which is accomplished by demanding emotional labour, therefore damages female employees' 'work autonomy'.

Following the investigation of the naturalisation and commercialisation of women's gendered shadow labour in the service industry, theories surrounding the concept of sexual labour were developed to answer concerns about gendered sexualisation in the service sector. Focusing on the experience of employees in tourist organisations, Adkins' (1995) empirical work shows that, compared to male colleagues, female employees' work and bodies are routinely sexualised and they are constantly located in a sexualised position within interactions in the tourist industry. Pondering the 'physical appropriation of women to men' in both sex-work and other waged work, Adkins argues for a feminist perspective that foregrounds the gendered aspects of sexual labour in the workplace. She argues that 'the sexual servicing of men may not be specific to the "sex industry", but rather is a common feature of women's waged-work' (ibid.: 158). By highlighting that women's work is sexualised in both the sex industry and other 'common' employment, Adkins shows that sexuality provides a crucial perspective for comprehending gendered labour in employment. However, it should be highlighted that saying that women's labour is generally sexualised does not equate to promoting a homogeneous understanding of sexual labour in different industry sectors. Liu's research on the 'white-collar beauties' in provincial China has revealed a complex landscape of sexuality at work. By analysing professional women's employment experiences, Liu (2008) reveals that, while women's physical appearance is considered to be a commercial resource and business culture is very much sexualised, women also carry the moral burden of being 'too sexy'. Ironic and

contradictory as it may seem, professional women are expected to be sexy in a desexualised way. The nuanced and arbitrary nature of sexuality management has located women in a vulnerable position from which to negotiate their way through sexual politics at work.

The research focus on women's shadow and naturalised labour in the service industry is challenged by studies that promote 'aesthetic labour' as an alternative theoretical foundation. The concept of aesthetic labour was coined by Warhurst et al. (2000) to investigate the emerging characteristics of the labour market in 'the new Glasgow'. Since the 1990s, Glasgow has striven to reinvent its local economy and to rid itself of the image of an industrial city. With its turn away from the path of manufacturing towards a service-oriented industrial structure, the labour demand has reflected a different embodiment of labour. Warhurst et al. argue that aesthetic labour is one of the distinct but often overlooked skills that are required to contribute to this 'post-industrial rejuvenation' (ibid, 1). Aesthetic labour is identified as 'a supply of "embodied capacities and attributes" possessed by workers at the point of entry into employment' (ibid.: 4). These capacities and attributes are further systematically reformed and managed through the processes of 'recruitment, selection and training' provided by the employers (ibid.: 4). They are mobilised, developed and commodified to produce a specific style of service representing and exemplifying the image that is favoured by the organisation. According to Warhurst et al., this service embodiment should be examined beyond the scope of 'physical appearance' (ibid.: 7). The aim of aesthetic labour is to provide the customer with a 'sensory experience' that fulfils the reception of all the senses (ibid.: 7). While the theorisation of aesthetic labour indeed brings forward analytic dimensions which broaden the discussions on service labour, such as the context of the organisation and the emphasis on embodiment proposed by Witz et al. (2003), gender seems to be rather blurred. Warhurst et al. (2000) argue that aesthetic labour is performed not only by women but also by men. As Wolkowitz points out, 'to say the work is not confined to either men or women is not to say it is not gendered, though, especially if sexual attractiveness is one of the attributes employers look for' (2006: 88). Although sympathetic to the proposed emphasis on embodied labour and how it is managed and

transformed within organisational practices, I concur with Wolkowitz' critique that the theories on aesthetic labour might have a weakness in their gendered implications. I do regard gender as an indispensable lens when it comes to examining women's experience of work. This standpoint thus poses questions regarding my approach to gender, and I will discuss these next.

Conceptualising Gender in Everyday Interaction

It was a sunny afternoon. One of my colleagues and I were standing on a pavement in Taipei City having a short conversation. She was about to cross the road while I was explaining that I would go in another direction because I had to meet a friend of mine who lived nearby. 'Is your friend male or female?' my colleague asked me. Then, there was a short pause because I did not know how to answer that question. Many things were being processed in my head. The first thing that came up was that I had never asked my friend the 'gender question'. I did not know which gender my friend identified with. However, that does not mean that I treat this friend as a gender-neutral person. I always assume that we have a similar gender identity. But still, how do I really know? Besides all these things, why does the answer to this question even matter? Why did my colleague need the gender information about my friend to have this conversation with me? So I replied with some hesitation: 'I'm not sure. Why?' My colleague looked surprised and then laughed. 'Nothing. Just asking.'

It was one of those very 'sociological' moments in everyday life that have inspired me to ponder gender as a social construction. Gender is one of the most important social categories in our daily lives. It is an essential indicator that people use to differentiate, distinguish and understand each other. From the moment of birth, or even before, a human being's gender causes questions and concerns. It also affects how we act and interact with other people. Which toilet should a person go into? How should a person dress? What is the 'proper' degree subject, job, even lifestyle? To some extent, the answers to these questions all relate to gender. However, the definition of gender is not a straightforward one.

I am interested in women's experiences of gender inequality and discrimination at work. In order to turn this research interest into academic work, I first need to clarify my own understanding of gender. In other words, it is crucial to explain what gender means in the context of this study, why I define it in a certain way and how previous theoretical studies conducted by feminist scholars shed light on my conceptualisation of gender.

There are three parts to this section. Firstly, I am going to briefly introduce the ethnomethodological approach that serves as the foundation of this research. Secondly, I will discuss the idea of 'doing gender' by reviewing some of the most important feminist works in this area. In the third part, adopting an interactionist perspective, I will explain the concept of reflexivity as a crucial part of my understanding of gender in this research.

The Ethnomethodological perspective

Regarding the contemporary research trend in gender inequality in Taiwan, I would like to encourage the study of gender from the perspective of everyday practices. In the first chapter, I introduced my concerns regarding the institution of law. Although it is important to discuss gender inequality from a legal perspective, the law should not be used as a filter to narrow our understanding of women's experiences. Furthermore, I believe that over-emphasising the discourse of the legal subject might lead to a view of women who experience gender inequality as either active or passive legal actors. This dichotomous conceptualisation concerns me because it oversimplifies women's social situation and even reinforces the discourse of blaming the victim. I was looking for a theoretical framework that would allow me to analyse gender inequality in a situational context and prevent me from holding dichotomous assumptions about women's rationality. The ethnomethodological perspective was able to serve as a proper foundation for my research to start with.

In his original words, Harold Garfinkel used the term 'ethnomethodology' to refer to 'the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life' (1967: 11). Criticising the limited research focus of traditional sociology on 'extraordinary events', Garfinkel proposes a

sociology that studies 'everyday affairs' (1967: 1, 9). This is a sociological approach that is interested in not only what people do in daily life but also how they do it. By exploring the 'how', Garfinkel suggests that there are 'methods' in everyday doing (1967: 30). That is, as a social being, a person's behaviour is always rational. It involves rational evaluation and discretion about certain rules, even though those rules may be taken for granted as 'common understanding' (1967: 30). For an ethnomethodological researcher, one of the primary tasks is revealing this 'common understanding' and examining the 'operation' of it or, in Garfinkel's words, 'to making commonplace sense visible' (1967: 36).

Inspired by the ethnomethodological framework, I am interested in studying women's experiences of gender inequality at work with a focus on the context of everyday social life. I am going to examine women's daily working experience regardless of how 'mundane, ordinary, trivial' it might seem. In order to do so, I must first have a detailed discussion about the concept of gender. What is 'gender' according to an ethnomethodological perspective? What theoretical tools are available to help us reveal and challenge the common sense of gender in a given cultural context?

The idea of 'doing gender'

The ethnomethodological perspective has contributed to the development of gender theories. It provides the foundation for considering gender as a social construction in everyday life. Kessler and McKenna's work (1985) is amongst those that adopt ethnomethodology and reveal the social nature of gender. They disclose the construction of gender in social practices conducted by individuals in everyday settings and conduct an in-depth analysis of 'gender attribution'. Going through some of the most important theoretical concepts relating to gender, Kessler and McKenna conclude that 'it becomes clear that no one piece of information about a component of gender is sufficient for making a gender attribution' (1985: 16). However, once a gender attribution is made, all other gender-based categories are settled. Kessler and McKenna use the term 'primacy of gender attribution' to identify this social phenomenon. They propose that gender attribution is neither guesswork nor probability. Rather, it

is a 'complex, interactive process involving the person making the attribution and the person she/he is making the attribution about' (1985: 6). For Kessler and McKenna, gender is a social construction that happens in everyday interaction. We, as social actors, all contribute to it as well as being shaped by it.

While Kessler and McKenna direct their academic focus towards how the gender of an individual is socially decided and determined, Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman's theorisation further expands the sociality of gender to the everyday interactional level. Reviewing the conventional sociological theories of gender, West and Zimmerman (1987) set out to provide an alternative approach to understanding gender as something that a social being does rather than possesses or inherits. They propose conceptualising 'gender as a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction' (ibid.: 125). Nevertheless, they point out that not only sex and gender but also sex category should be considered in order to have a concise theoretical view about the interactional work a gendered being is constantly doing in society. As they explain and differentiate the definitions of sex, sex category and gender, West and Zimmerman demonstrate that regarding sex/gender as a binary opposition of biological/social is problematic. For them, the relationship between the biological and the social is complicated and the boundary between the two is rather blurred. They define sex as 'a determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males' and point out that these biological criteria may vary (1987: 127). Sex does not equate to sex category because the latter is constantly being accomplished in everyday life. In West and Zimmerman's words, 'a sex category is achieved through application of the sex criteria' (1987: 127). In everyday social contexts, an individual's sex is assured by her/his sex category. However, an absolute connection or relevancy between a person's sex and her/his sex category can be absent. Since the common biological features that are accepted as sex criteria in society are often hidden, people are usually looking for other visible characteristics which match 'our cultural perspective on the properties of natural, normally sexed persons' to categorise someone's sex during a social interaction (1987: 133). Also, West and Zimmerman suggest that gender should be viewed as 'the activity of managing situated conduct' according to the

'normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category' (1987: 127). Furthermore, they emphasise the interactional and institutional aspects of the concept of doing gender. They argue that 'it is a situated doing, carried out in the virtual or real presence of others who are presumed to be oriented to its production' (1987: 126). They oppose the idea that gender is something a person possesses. For them, doing gender is not only a behaviour undertaken by a social being but also a complicated interactive process of 'situated conduct' (1987: 126). In other words, the 'doing' is an interactive one.

Through West and Zimmerman's study, it is clear that doing gender is a social activity that cannot be performed without sex criteria and sex categorisation. There is an interdependent relationship between what is defined as biological/natural and what is seen as social/cultural. Moreover, it is not a process that can be fully accomplished by the individual but is rather a repeated, recurring accomplishment that requires the interaction of all the participants in a given social context. When we interact with people in our daily lives, we are regarding them as gendered beings; therefore, we are all participants in the process of doing her or his gender. However, conceptualising gender as doing, that is, as a social practice in progress, does not mean that a person can do whatever she/he wants. As Rahman and Jackson clearly put it, 'doing gender is thus a continual process of action and interpretation' and 'we "do" gender as much by the interpretative processes by which we attribute gender to others as by our own actions' (2010: 162).

If gender is an ongoing interactive doing in everyday social life, then the process of this 'doing' requires further theoretical explanation. For instance, how should we regard the self in this process? How do we understand it in relation to social structures and social relationships? What kind of selfhood is emerging in this process? I will answer these questions by further discussing interactionist theory in the following part of this draft. In particular, I will focus on the concept of reflexivity.

Reflexivity, self and gender

Reflexivity has served as a crucial inspiration for feminists in their challenge to the conventional theorisation of gender. Critically reviewing the traditional theory of socialisation and gender roles, Liz Stanley and Sue Wise reveal the theoretical disadvantages caused by overlooking the reflexivity of selfhood. Comparing different studies on socialisation, Stanley and Wise (1993) indicate the weak spot shared by the different models. They argue that the conventional socialisation model is 'psychologistic' and 'deterministic' because it assumes a 'pre-formed and almost autonomously unfolding ego which develops independently of the social' (1993: 101). Moreover, socialisation theory gives early childhood experience in the 'normal' heterosexual family a crucial and essential role in the process of constructing an individual's gender. They then outline a contradiction within the socialisation theory. While holding psychologistic and deterministic assumptions on the pre-social 'innate process', it also favours an 'over-socialized' explanation of a child's malleability (1993: 102). Stanley and Wise contest this socialised/non-socialised dichotomy, and point out that the socialisation model on gender construction is 'non-reflexive' (1993: 103). Stanley and Wise develop their argument further by examining the gender-role theory from a feminist perspective. In their words, the 'role-making' approach takes account of 'situation, personality and context in influencing events and behaviours', while the 'role-taking' approach 'describes a determinate reality in which absolute order exists and prediction is possible' (1993: 106–7). That is, if we see the gendered process as making roles, we must recognise the possibility and ability for an individual to make, to construct, to have a certain influence over the given situation. The role can only be fulfilled after one is in the situation. On the other hand, regarding gender construction as the process of taking a role is to assume a reality that determines the role that an individual is able to take; therefore, the role exists prior to the given situation. Most feminists working on gender-role theory, according to Stanley and Wise, seem to adopt the role-taking model (1993: 107). Proposing a more 'situational variable' approach that 'emphasize[s] the making and retrospective approach to "role"', they work on a theoretical foundation that does not over-

generalise women's life experiences or neglect various situated differences (1993: 110).

By clarifying the theoretical differences between role-making and role-taking, Stanley and Wise emphasise that gender is an ongoing social process that continuously happens in specific situations rather than something that is moulded during a pre-social life stage or during a certain limited period. Their theoretical reflection emphasises the situational aspect of doing gender. Moreover, their argument implies that a sufficient theory of doing gender should allow a researcher to see a gendered person's situated being rather than generalising it and neglecting the social details. They demonstrate that, in order to develop a practical social constructionist approach to gender, further conceptualising of selfhood with the concept of reflexivity is required to reconcile the contradictory dichotomy. A framework that enables a 'self' with agency to emerge without dismissing the significance of situational and relational conditions is needed.

Introducing George Herbert Mead's thoughts on reflexivity to conceptualise the selfhood of a gendered being, Jackson proposes an alternative framework that moves beyond the social/non-social and social determinism/free choice dichotomy. According to Jackson (2011), Mead's conceptualisation of reflexivity considers social and relational parts of 'the self'. For Mead, reflexivity is 'the capacity to see ourselves as subject (I) and object (Me), which rests on the relationship between self and other' (Jackson, 2011: 17). Jackson argues that reflexivity can only be understood within a social context. Because of reflexivity, the self is constantly being constructed through the process of reviewing its own being with an awareness of context. In Jackson's words, 'reflexive self-hood, then implies a degree of agency and active meaning-making, but it is always both produced within and bounded by its social context' (2011: 17). Jackson further argues that the concept of reflexive self-hood can shed light on gender theory, especially in understanding women's gendered daily lives. She suggests that 'reflexivity is not a quality opposed to sociality, but very much part of it' (2011: 18). Being fully aware of the social conditions of exercising reflexivity, Jackson points out that a reflexive being has the ability to 'imagine

oneself from the other's perspective and anticipate the other's responses to oneself' (2011: 18). She also stresses that, all too often, this is a social capacity that the subordinate develops in order to survive the power relationship. Following Jackson's argument, due to gender inequality, women are highly reflexive social beings rather than the passive oppressed or the assimilated ignorant with false consciousness.

Gender is not something that a social being innately possesses. Rather, it is a doing that involves complicated processes. From an interactionist perspective, reflexivity is a crucial concept enabling us to gain an adequate understanding and explanation of an individual's being in a given social context. It provides an alternative framework that recognises a gendered being's agency without assuming total free will in doing. In other words, it can allow a researcher to see an individual's ability to negotiate without overlooking the structural limitations in different social contexts. That is, doing gender is neither compulsory nor entirely free, but a social construction involving reflexivity, interactions and relational practices.

Because I am conducting research aimed at studying gender inequality through women's experiences at work, I believe that the interactionist conceptualisation of gender, self and reflexivity can equip me with a rather flexible framework for investigating potential research data. But how exactly can the interactionist perspective potentially benefit this study? This is an important methodological question that requires an answer in this research project. I will develop answers to this question in later chapters.

Chapter 3 Lost and Found in the Field: Methodology and the Research Process

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced the metaphor of going on a journey. I used the imagery contained in this metaphor to help me build the meaning and purpose of a literature review: to explain where I am and where I intend to go intellectually. If I may continue to utilise such imagery, I would like to say that this methodology chapter contains the travel plans and the travel log of this research quest. It records what and how I planned in advance, the actual execution of this trip, and what happened on the road. This chapter is composed of stories about this journey that I think are worth sharing from the perspective of a qualitative researcher. If there are readers expecting a methodology chapter which reveals 'the magic trick' behind the scenes, I am afraid that this chapter might be rather disappointing. Conventionally, in most academic writing, this section is tailored in a smooth and well-organised way so that the reader will probably assume that the researcher had a perfect plan before she or he went into the field. However, I will not and cannot do that, simply because it just was not the case; that is not the way that I experienced this research.

The truth is, there is no perfectly designed pre-action magic trick but rather a process of constantly adapting, improvising and redesigning. Just as with any journey, unexpected things happen no matter how carefully it is planned. At least, that was the case in this research. As a researcher who adopted qualitative research methods, I was fully aware that, no matter how detailed and precise my research design might be, something unpredictable could always happen in the field. And I believe, as a researcher, that it is the unpredictability of qualitative research which is actually the part that should be valued. Rather than trying to control and minimise the unpredictable, I aimed to manage it in a reflexive way. This challenged me to rethink my methodology and even helped

me to reveal and reconstruct it. Doing research is an 'organic' process rather than a mechanical one. I am not the one and only master of this research who has the total authority to determine its direction and results.

Therefore, I would like to use this chapter as an opportunity not only to explain my research design but also to represent the process as it evolved during the progress of my research. I will start with how I envisaged the relationship between researcher and participants from a feminist perspective. This chapter is about the planned, the expected and also the surprising, unanticipated parts of my journey through the research field.

Designing It in a Feminist Way

Qualitative interviews will be used to gather information about women's experiences of sex/gender discrimination at work. Face-to-face interviews will be the main model to gather information. If an informant has doubts about a face-to-face interview, an interview via social networking platforms or telephone will be arranged.⁵

It is a somewhat painful experience to revisit and reread my original proposal for this research. It is vague, clearly not theoretically sophisticated enough and the wording implies that the writer's understanding of the researcher-participant relationship is over-simplified. I could go on for another thousand words delivering my criticism of it. Be that as it may, when the painful embarrassment subsides, the differences between the ideas implied in this premature proposal and those I am holding now emerge as evidence of improvement.

There are some components which have remained as they were in the original proposal. Most of these were general ideas about the designated research method. From the very beginning, I wanted it to be qualitative research about women and work. I wanted to meet employed women in person and learn about their work experiences, particularly those relating to gender.

⁵ This passage is quoted from the original research proposal that I submitted as part of my PhD application.

Most of all, I wanted it to be a participant-friendly study. While these principal ideas have lingered, the actual plan of implementation has been modified considerably. This did not happen overnight but gradually during the first year of my PhD, during which I dived into substantial feminist literature. The changes were adopted in order to readjust the general objective of this research, my realisations about the researcher–participant relationship and my conceptualisation of research ethics.

Revising the objectives

I have shifted my research focus from gender/sex discrimination to the experience of gender. This shift occurred for both theoretical and pragmatic reasons. Partly, it is due to my acquired conceptualisation of gender with the help of the established literature on gender theories, which I have presented in the theoretical discussion in Chapter Two. Along with the shift in my approach to gender, I also adopted a critical lens to examine the assumptions hidden in the original research subject. I found that the focus on gender discrimination reveals my own assumed projections of women’s experiences in the workplace. Indeed, it was the news and stories about unequal and discriminatory treatment imposed on women at work that motivated me to conduct this research. However, I realised that I should not let my motivation narrow my vision when I went into the field. Clearly, my target participants were probably not the women in those news reports and stories. The recruitment would be more exclusive if I used ‘having experienced gender discrimination’ as a required condition for participation. While gender discrimination is a theme that I wanted to discuss in this study, I thought that the actual generated data might go beyond it. Also, I worried that the various possible interpretations of gender discrimination might be discouraging or confusing to potential participants. A more flexible and clear research question was needed to keep me open-minded about my participants’ accounts as well as to prevent any misunderstanding. After filtering out the presumptuous hypothesis, to shift the research focus to women’s experiences of gender at work seemed to be much more appropriate and pragmatic.

Once the main research question was settled, I began to revise the objectives for the fieldwork accordingly. I set up the sampling conditions as the following: a woman who has or has had experience of full-time employment for at least one year. A white-collar job is preferred but it is not a necessary requirement. My decision to confine the research scope to office jobs is not purely a result of my research interest. It was also due to practical considerations around the accessibility of participants. The designed recruitment method was non-probability sampling. The beginning of the recruitment process would primarily depend on my social connections. Therefore, the limitations that my personal social and economic background might impose needed to be considered. In other words, based on the evaluation of my personal social networks, women who have office jobs seemed to be the most accessible group. This accessibility also implied that I may share similar social capital with the potential participants. Initial participants would be approached through my personal connections, including friends, relatives and acquaintances. Following this initial outreach, I would try to invite more participants through a snowball sampling technique. The prospective number of participants was 25 and I planned to interview each person at least once.

The face-to-face semi-structured interview was preferred as the main method. If a participant felt uncomfortable about an interview in person, alternative meeting methods would be arranged, such as an interview via social networking platforms or telephone. Interviews would begin with a general enquiry about daily life and then gradually turn to specific questions about her experiences of gender in the workplace. The interview questions were developed on the basis of seven themes, consisting of: work history, daily life routine, relationships with colleagues, work environment and atmosphere, troubles and disputes at work, gender inequality in the workplace, and personal experiences of gender discrimination. Although I had drafted an interview outline containing a list of specific questions, this was intended to serve as a memorandum for myself as an interviewer rather than a strict script that aimed to confine my participants' responses. The questions were generally open-ended in order to structure the interview in a flexible way and to encourage the participant to share any information that she found relevant.

Picturing the researcher–participant relationship

Chih-Lu⁶: She/he asked me, ‘are you a feminist who puts feminism into practice?’ And I said, ‘eh? Of course, is there any other kind?’ (laughs)⁷

Despite the fact that feminism is a diverse body of knowledge, it is still very difficult for me to imagine how there could be a feminist who does not transform her knowledge into action. As Letherby argues, ‘feminism is both “theory” and “practice”’ (2003: 4). Therefore, when one participant, Chih-Lu, who identifies herself as a feminist, told me that she was once asked in a job interview whether she is ‘a feminist who practises feminism’, I could not help but share a good laugh with her. I totally understood her feelings and probably would have had the same reaction if I were her. As a feminist myself, I am inclined to regard knowing and doing as equally important and, most of the time, it feels difficult to separate the two. Conducting feminist research means more than to ‘produce useful knowledge that will make a difference to women’s lives’ (Letherby, 2003: 4). It is also about implementing that knowledge during the process in a reflective way. Doing research is itself a form of feminist action. As a feminist researcher, I had expected myself to do this research ‘right’ prior to doing it well. Once this principle was secured, questions concerning the detailed arrangements of the research design then came to the surface. For instance, what should I do in order to acquire informed consent from a participant? How should I conduct the interview so that it showed respect for my participant’s feelings and emotions? What if an interviewed participant decided to withdraw later? Should I keep in touch with her after the interview? If yes, how would I achieve it? The answers to all these questions led to the core issue of research design: the researcher–participant relationship. How I perceived and constructed the relationship would directly influence almost every aspect of the interactions between my participants and me and, therefore, the research process.

⁶ All the names of the participants are pseudonyms transliterated using the Wade-Giles system. The process of deciding which transliteration system to use will be explained in detail later in this chapter.

⁷ This is a quote from the interview with the participant Chih-Lu.

The participant–researcher relationship is a crucial issue which has attracted the interest of many feminist researchers. Despite theoretical diversity, challenging the traditional methodology that treats participants ‘as objects to be worked on’ is a common standpoint among feminists (Tyler et al., 2002). Feminists are highly critical of the power relationship between a researcher and her participants; therefore, they always treat the issue of research ethics extra-carefully and delicately. Feminists have persistently raised a warning sign to remind researchers never to become those who ‘take, hit and run’. A researcher should not ‘intrude into their subjects’ privacy, disrupt their perceptions, utilize false pretenses, manipulate the relationships, and give little or nothing in return’; once she is satisfied, she should not then ‘break off contact with the subjects’ (Reinharz, 1979: 95).

Since the moment that I decided to undertake this project in a feminist way, Reinharz’s words have been echoing in my ears. Doing it ethically and meeting a feminist standard have been my primary concerns. This is the core of my project through and through. The first step to easing the anxiety that derived from the thought that I might exploit my participants was to ponder what kind of researcher I would like to be and how I would perceive my participants in relation to knowledge production. I did not do this by simply projecting the ideal in my mind but rather I recruited the help of the intellectual achievements of experienced feminist researchers. Among them, Dorothy Smith’s (1987) wise words concerning a sociology ‘from the standpoint of women’ have had a particular influence on my understanding of the academic duty of a researcher. Smith argues for a sociology that ‘does not transpose knowing into the objective forms in which the situated subject and her actual experience and location are discarded’ (ibid.: 153). Smith clearly challenges the conventional idea of pursuing a transcendent level of knowledge as the main purpose of sociological research. Her approach to knowledge production emphasises that the actual social world that the subject is experiencing should be a major concern for a feminist sociologist. A methodology regarding the individuals in the researched field as situated subjects, therefore, conceptualises the subject and her social world as inseparable. For me, Smith’s perspective sheds light on how I, as a researcher, should perceive individuals in the researched field. I wanted to

make sure I would treat my participants 'as subjects, as knowers', as women 'located in their actual everyday worlds' (Smith, 1987: 153).

In order to perceive myself and my participants as situated beings in this research, I began with something 'trivial'. I regarded using the term 'participant' as actually the first methodological move towards a feminist conceptualisation of researcher-participant relationships. I am fond of the idea that naming is a powerful thing. As I have demonstrated in my writing, I prefer to use the term 'participant' to describe an individual who is taking part in this study. I chose not to use other common terms, such as 'interviewee' or 'informant'. Indeed, I did interview my participants, but they are not just interviewees. During the interview, it seems natural to see a participant as an interviewee and I, as the researcher, as the interviewer. However, the actual interactions between us were often more than that. It was not unusual for our interactions to begin long before the actual interview and to continue afterwards. While I was conducting the fieldwork, this became more and more clear. Therefore, I am hesitant about using the interviewer-interviewee model to explain our relationship. Also, I am not convinced that identifying the participant as an informant would suit the methodological framework of this study. This relates to my view of and approach to the research data. I regard research data as a creation that is cooperatively produced by both the participants and the researcher. It is not a set of packaged, well-kept records that are simply preserved and brought to the interview by my participants but material which is generated in a situated and interactive context. Therefore, perceiving the women who took part as 'participants' has helped me to acknowledge not only their contribution to this research but also their subjectivity within it. Participants are individuals with agency with whom I interact in the field, and through our interaction the research data is generated.

Having said that a participant is regarded as a contributor with agency, I am nevertheless very aware of the power relationship between a researcher and a participant. I do realise that a researcher has a certain influence over the fieldwork in a way that a participant cannot have. After all, the researcher is the one who initiates the interaction with a specific purpose and an agenda;

moreover, the researcher is the one who holds the power to analyse and interpret the data. Before the fieldwork, my understanding of this power relationship was comparatively simple and straightforward. My focus was on the negative sides of the power gap between a researcher and participant. I assumed that, as a researcher, my power position would consist of holding a clear high ground that would cause the participant to feel too intimidated or uncomfortable to share their thoughts with me. This view was seriously challenged once I actually stepped into the research field, as I will discuss later in this chapter. Precisely because of my concern about the power that a researcher might exercise during research, my primary ethical concern was the possible exploitation that might be caused by my field practices. Being terrified by that possibility, I tried to come up with a fieldwork plan that could help me and my participants to interact in a less hierarchical way during the whole process.

Ethics matter

A list of well-developed interview questions might initiate a meaningful conversation but will not necessarily make a participant feel comfortable about sharing her story. I am convinced that informed consent is the foundation of the basic practices of research ethics. There was no doubt about including the practice of informed consent in my fieldwork design. The issue was how. In order to prevent leaving informed consent as a vague promise, the transformation of this abstract concept into feasible practices was needed. I found that visualising the interview step by step was a useful method to start with. During this visualisation process, I realised that its purpose was not to picture the interview out of pure imagination, but to engage in an envisaging activity that was based on my knowledge and experience of social interaction. Along with the ethical concerns, I also took into account my personal expectations of both my own behaviour and that of my participants.

At the very beginning of each meeting, I would be the one with the information about the research. I wanted to remove any possible barriers caused by an information gap between a participant and me. Having stated that, however, I could not neglect the reality that 'there are limits to how adequately'

a researcher can perform information disclosure to all participants (Mason, 2002: 81). My solution to this problem was to deliver the basic information and then encourage my participants to raise any questions in their minds. When formulating the interview procedure, I tried to make sure that my participants would have the best possible opportunity to understand the purpose of this research, the standard structure of the interview and any other things that they would like to know about my project before they agreed to take part.

I intended to use an information sheet and a consent form to help me achieve this.⁸ The information sheet provided general information about my research and an explanation of the basic procedure of the interview. Most importantly, it emphasised that the nature of the interview was voluntary rather than compulsory. A participant could decline the invitation or withdraw her participation even after the interview. I sent out the invitation together with the information sheet. At the beginning of each interview, I asked the participant if she had already read it or not. No matter what the answer was, I would still go through the content of the information sheet to give the potential participant a verbal explanation. Then I would ask her if she had any questions. I tried my best to provide information as fully as possible. I would not interview anyone who had not read the information sheet or had not understood the information on it. After all these steps, if the potential participant was still willing to join the project, then I would bring out the consent form and obtain her signature.

Before I could go into the field and execute my research, there was an official procedure that I was required to complete. This was to obtain approval from the ethics committee of my university. There was a ten-page ethics form waiting for me to fill in. I admit that, at first glance, it all looked very 'bureaucratic' to me. However, during the process of completing it, this 'annoyingly bureaucratic document' surprisingly inspired me to think about research ethics in a deeper way. It led me through a virtual research tour from research questions to data storage, and pinpointed practical issues. Previously, all my attention had been on how to acquire informed consent from the participants. I had hardly thought about other ethical issues, especially those regarding the safety of the

⁸ The information sheet and consent form are included as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, respectively.

researcher. Previously, I had only thought about research ethics in terms of protecting my participants from abuse and exploitation by unethical conduct. I failed to comprehend that a researcher could be vulnerable in the field, too. The questions listed on the form reminded me to locate ethics within a two-way interactive relationship. Research ethics protect not only the rights of the participants but also those of the researcher. Of course, I am aware of the limitations of the 'regulatory model of research ethics' (Halse and Honey, 2005: 2142). Obtaining approval from an ethics committee does not guarantee that research will be completely ethical. Research ethics is after all a matter of practices. The point that I am trying to express here is that, if ethical practice indeed 'evolves from reflexivity', then the regulatory ethics form was useful material that served to trigger my reflexivity on the potential ethical issues raised by this study (ibid.: 2160).

Pilot study

As well as making plans, I did one more thing to prepare myself for the fieldwork. I decided to conduct a pilot study. The main purpose of this was to help me design and improve the interview questions. I undertook three pilot interviews in two stages. Two were conducted at quite an early stage when I only had fairly general ideas about this project. I conducted these two non-structured interviews without any specific questions in mind. Both pilot participants were my friends and were native Chinese speakers. These interviews were more like casual chats about work with a recording device by my side. Despite the fact that they seemed 'casual', 'non-academic' and not necessarily 'successful', these two interviews actually provided me with useful information from which to develop interview questions. For example, I experienced an awkward pause during one pilot interview when I struggled to catch my slippery thoughts to raise a specific and clear question. When I reviewed that interview, I realised that the difficult situation was caused by the insufficient design of the questions. I only had a number of bullet-point interview themes with me and had not developed concrete questions on each issue. For that reason, I failed to come up with immediate suitable questions to encourage my participant to talk more in the interview. That 'failure' helped me

to understand the importance of good interview questions. Having a list of gender-related issues was not good enough. I should have transformed them into concrete questions. Therefore, I started to design a draft of interview questions that echoed my research questions. I used this draft in my third pilot interview to practise and test it.

In addition to being more structured, the third interview was quite different from the previous two in terms of the linguistic aspect. My intention was to rehearse a formal interview in order to prepare myself for the main fieldwork. It turned out to be a much more rewarding experience than I had anticipated. Originally, I developed all the interview questions in my target participants' mother tongue; that is, Chinese. Due to the fact that the participant in the third pilot interview was an English speaker, I had to translate all the interview questions into English. The process of translation, surprisingly, became a useful strategy for me to examine the phrasing and logic of the questions. It triggered a reflexive mental activity that was more than just translating words. Picking up foreign words to substitute for the concepts I had expressed through my native language was like having a conversation with myself in which I criticised the vague and obscure aspects of my work. Translation became a crucial part of the research method and this became even clearer during the later stages of the research process, as I will explain in the latter part of this chapter.

Although none of these interviews could be used as research data, the feedback from my pilot participants really inspired me to tailor my interview questions in a more detailed way. Most of the questions that I designed focused on everyday work routines and office culture. I would ask things like: What is your typical working day like? Do you usually have lunch with colleagues? Or do you prefer to eat alone? And why? What troubles you the most in the workplace? I organised the questions under different themes, such as overall work experience, daily routine, general management of the organisation, the official complaints procedure in the workplace...etc. I produced an interview outline detailing specific questions.⁹ When I conducted an interview, I would take it with me as a reminder for myself. It would not be a questionnaire for the

⁹ The original interview outline is attached as Appendix 3.

participant. A participant could always refuse to answer any question that I proposed and she could say anything that she wanted to share. I intended to keep the interview structure flexible.

The Inconvenient Truth about My Fieldwork

So, in the summer of 2013, I flew from an island country in the Atlantic Ocean to another one situated in the Pacific Ocean. I spent two months in a Taiwan bathed in a perfect marine tropical climate. I was excited in general. I considered it to be my very first complete fieldwork experience. I had conducted interviews for research purposes before, but they had not been for my own project and my engagement was limited. Therefore, this research brought me to my very first fieldwork journey as the main researcher, who had to manage the project as a whole. There were both expected and unexpected occurrences. They came together to instigate a critical inspection of the original design and my perception of fieldwork. Writing about what happened in the field is therefore a dialogue with myself to examine my own ideas and practices of feminist methodology.

Recruitment is bittersweet

Met with three potential participants. They showed interest in both interviews and focus group. I will do follow-up. (*Fieldwork journal, 25 July 2013*)

This is the first entry I wrote in my fieldwork journal. It recorded my earliest move in the field. It probably looks quite academic because of the wording. One thing I did not explain in this entry was that the three potential participants were actually my friends. I knew that my personal social network would be a valuable resource to recruit participants, but I did not realise that the recruitment would intertwine so closely with my personal life. The sense of maintaining a clear boundary between the research fieldwork and a researcher's personal life seemed to dissolve secretly without me noticing. The stage curtain of my fieldwork was pulled up quietly in a gathering with my friends. This was one of the personal routines I practised during this PhD

journey. Whenever I went back to Taiwan, meeting up with friends for nice meals was a must-do. My social routine then became a reaching-out action as part of the recruitment process. Since my friends cared about how I was doing in the UK, the progress of my research seemed like a natural topic to bring up. Our conversation then turned to a discussion about whether they could take part in this study. As previous research in East Asian societies has revealed, personal connections often play a significant role in qualitative interviews (Liu, 2006; Park & Lunt, 2015). My personal networking was a tremendous help during the recruitment process. In addition, the feminist bond that I shared with my friends was a particularly strong force that had a substantial effect.

I soon realised that the quality of my personal connections was serving as an influential positive factor on the recruitment. I first reached out to friends whom I knew well. Our mutual understanding and shared living experience contributed to a certain sense of trust that is difficult to build only through proper research conduct. This does not mean that I skipped the step of informed consent, but I did feel that the invitation process could be initiated in a more nuanced way than simply by a formal offer by the researcher. For example, some participants already knew that I was about to undertake fieldwork, and expressed their willingness to participate even prior to my formal invitation. While good friendship offered a solid platform for the invitation, I did worry about the pressure and tension which could be caused by interpersonal relationships. I did not want to be perceived as an unscrupulous salesperson who exploits personal connections to gain every possible profit for her own interests. The 'real' and already existing social relationships in the field had raised my awareness of the implications of research ethics.

In my fieldwork, the recruitment and the interview were two different but overlapping stages. The latter accelerated the former. I did not start interviewing after I had finished all the recruitment work but managed to do both simultaneously. This is the pattern of my snowball sampling. Before I had enough participants, I ended every interview by asking the participant to recommend another potential participant if she were willing to do so. Therefore, conducting an interview was not only about collecting data but also about

building extended connections. While I was interviewing a participant, she was probably gathering information about the research and evaluating the feasibility of inviting her friends to join. I would like to use an email as an example to explain the snowballing process. One participant, who is a friend of mine, wrote a wonderful invitation inviting her friends to join my research. The original mail is in Mandarin and I translated it as follows:

Dear you [the female you]¹⁰,

No matter how long you have known me, I believe you know me as a grumpy person who cares about gender equality. Thank you for your tolerance of my 'nagging and complaining' [...] my friend, Chin Ting-Fang, is doing her PhD research in order to tackle gender inequality from an academic approach [...] If you are willing to share your work experience, please contact her. The interview is about 1hr long and as for the venue, any place in Taiwan will do, as long as you feel fine about it. Chin will climb the mountain and swim the ocean to get there for you.

The attachments are the information sheet for the research and a list of interview questions I got from Chin. **If you are a little bit hesitant, I am willing to share my interview experience to help you evaluate the pros and cons of participation** [emphasis added].

Thank you for supporting women, no matter what approach and what perspective you are taking, even if it's just something small such as listening to my complaints.

Chih-Lu

This email was sent after I had conducted an interview with Chih-Lu. She also sent me a copy. It is a well-written invitation. To be honest, it is even better than the one that I wrote. I was touched. Moreover, it was rewarding to realise that

¹⁰ Standard Chinese in Taiwan has a female pronoun for the second person singular. In Chih-Lu's original wording, she used this female pronoun to address the recipients.

she was willing to describe her own experience of the interview to help her friends understand more about the nature of participation.

Chih-Lu's email prompted me to think more deeply about the process of snowballing recruitment. It is not only about a participant introducing other potential participants through her personal network. Since then, I have had personal feelings about the term, participant. I am now calling the women I interviewed 'participants' not merely because the classic feminist texts on methodology say that I should, but because I am truly convinced that this project is a collaboration between myself and my participants.

Once the first few interviews had been completed, the recruitment process began to accelerate. I felt that my social life had never been so complicated. Small things like handling my diary became crucial in order to manage the fieldwork. There was one occasion when I did three interviews in one day and it was exhausting. Reviewing my personal diary of that period, I can see that it was probably the peak of my social life. With a busy schedule like that, management work became crucial. The first aspect was time management. At first, I thought I could manage to do transcribing while the fieldwork was progressing, then I reluctantly discovered that I had been overly ambitious. My time was segmented due to interview appointments. Furthermore, making all the contacts and following them up was more time-consuming and energy-intensive than I had anticipated. In order to prevent myself from falling into social anxiety, I then used a worksheet to manage the progress and development of my fieldwork; it is basically a list of my potential participants and a record of the transition through different contact stages. For instance, I would keep records on invitations, follow-up, interview date setting, and after-interview contact. It was a record as much as a to-do-list to keep my fieldwork on track. It also documented the recruitment and interaction process with my participants. The general process is presented in Figure 2. The snowballing process and the connections between the researcher and the participants are illustrated in Figure 3.

Alongside the diary and worksheet, a research journal was also included in my fieldwork toolkit. The idea of keeping a research journal was first suggested

by my supervisor. Its original purpose was to keep her updated about the progress of my work while I was far away from the academic institute to which I am attached. It turned out to be a strategic approach to both fieldwork management and data analysis. My record covers all the things that I found interesting in my fieldwork. I wrote down not only the recruitment process and the interview arrangements but also my thoughts about fieldwork. After each interview, I would summarise the highlights of the interview and quickly write down my initial thoughts about it. This journal then became a memo for developing potential themes. The notes on my transcribing also helped. I would mark the parts of an interview that were interesting and might relate to other interviews in one way or another, and provide short explanations. I chose five interviews that had more notes than the others as introductory cases to develop a draft of potential themes. After examining other transcripts, I then revised the draft.

As well as the interviews, I also conducted two focus-group sessions with some of my participants. I intended to use these sessions as an alternative way to generate data that probably could not be produced through interviews. I had never conducted a focus group and wanted to give it a try. The participants were acquainted with each other and held regular social gatherings. I took advantage of that and proposed to hold the focus group sessions at their regular social meetings. They agreed to this idea and we organised two sessions. All the participants in the focus-group sessions had already been interviewed individually. The two group sessions were basically conducted with the same participants, apart from one who was unable to join the first session, so she only took part in the second.

Altogether, I successfully recruited 30 participants. The age range was approximately 24 to 48 years. The industries in which my participants work are quite diverse and some have experienced significant career changes. Most of my participants occupy basic positions in their organisations, while some have made it to the mid-managerial level. Overall, I conducted 32 interviews and two focus-group sessions. The total length of the recorded data is approximately 68 hours. The average length of each interview/focus group session is more than

two hours. However, due to my evolving concerns regarding the ethics of data preparation, I decided not to use the data generated through focus group sessions in the analysis. I still regard these as useful but decided not to present them in my writing, particularly not to quote them directly.¹¹

The general background information about my participants is shown in Table 2. It is obvious that most of them are single. This sampling result might reflect both the characteristics of my personal social networking and the demography in Taiwan. According to the demographic statistics collected by the Ministry of the Interior, the total population of single women who have reached the legal marriage age is around thirty per cent. I did not include sexual orientation as basic information about the participants. This is not because I did not see it as important information or because I did not know anything about it. It is deliberately excluded for ethical reasons. This research recruited participants with various sexual identities. There are participants whom I have known well for some time who did not bring up their sexual identities in the interviews. There are at least two possible reasons. One is that they did not think that it was relevant to the interview. The other is that they did not feel comfortable allowing that piece of information to be included in this research. It would not be ethical for me to force them into coming out in this study even under the protection of a pseudonym. Therefore, I would like to remind the reader to avoid making assumptions about the sexual identity of any participant simply because she did not disclose that information.

¹¹ Please see further discussion on page 91.

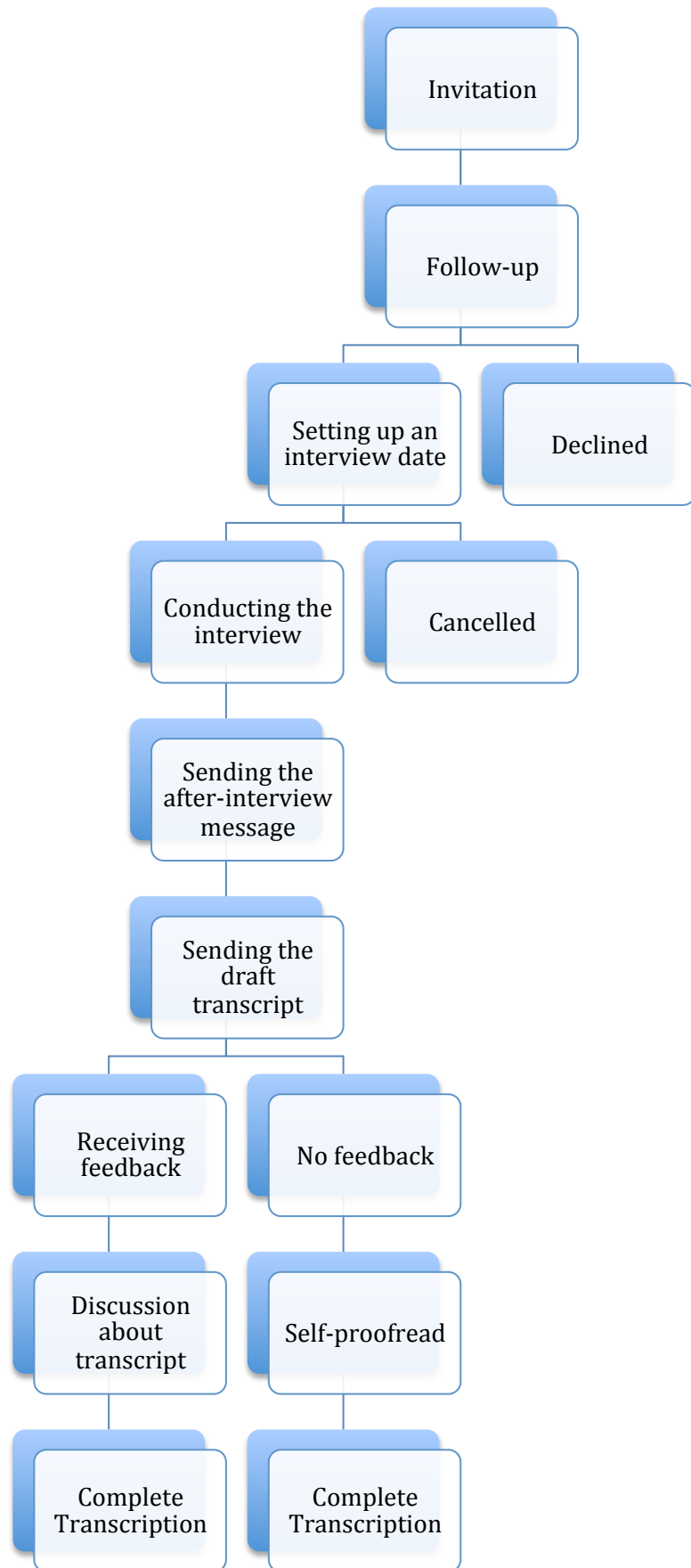


Figure 2 Recruitment Procedure



Figure 3 Snowballing process

Name (Wade-Giles)	Age	Industry	Years of experience	Relationship status ¹²	Education
Chi Chih-Lu	34	Banking	10	Single	MA
Lei Yu-Nung	50	Social Work	30	Single	BA
Lin Hsi-Shu (Katja)	34	Telecommunications	10	Married	MA
Chao Hsiang-Yun	34	Banking	10	Single	BA
Yang Chieh-Ming	33	Social Work	13	Single	BA
Tsao I-Chieh (Nora)	23	IT	1	Single	BA
Yu Liang-Wei (Zoe)	36	Insurance	16	Single	BA
Cheng Ya-Hsin	34	Government	10	Single, Divorced	MA
Chou Ying-Hua	34	Education	11	Single	BA
Sung Yu-Tai	32	Publishing	7	Single	MA
Chiang Shih-Ching	49	Media	25	Single	Diploma
Han Lu-Fan (Shirley)	32	IT	10	Single	BA
Tang Yu-An	39	Social Work	15	Single	BA
Lu Chia-Chun (Kristin)	32	Insurance	8	Single	MA
Hsu Kai-I (Sabrina)	35	Publishing	3	Single	PhD
Feng Hsiao-Yin	34	Education	4	Single	MA
Fang Chih-Jui	34	Government	9	Married	BA
Chang Pei-Ching	33	Social Work	10	Married	BA
Liao Yu-Hsuan	30	Banking	6	Married	MA
Wei Han-Ting (Jess)	28	Education	4	Single	MA
Hsiang Yu-Chen	30	IT	8	Single	BA
Tu Ying-Hsuan	22	Service	5	Single	Diploma
Liang Yueh-Chao	55	GOV	34	Married	Diploma
Huang Hui-Li (Trixie)	35	IT	13	Married	BA
Wang Pin-Yen	36	Publishing	11	Single, Divorced	MA
Kao Chi-Lun	29	Social work	5	Single	BA
Hsieh Che-Yuan	26	Government	4	Single	MA
Tsai Tzu-Ling	55	Law	34	Married	BA
Ho Pei-Ju	39	Transport	16	Single	BA
Su Ko-Chi (Iona)	29	Education	6	Single	MA

Table 2 Basic information about participants

¹² The relationship status shown here is more about marital status. In the interviews, I only asked about my participants' marital status as one of the standard questions. I did not ask whether they had a current partner or were in a romantic relationship, although some of them did reveal this information during the interviews.

Every interview is unique

It might seem that there is no point in emphasising the uniqueness of every interview since I adopted the semi-structured interview as my research method. This is a method that encourages a flexible agenda and is deemed to allow each interview to produce a fieldwork result that could be different from all the others. Although I would not have been surprised to hear similar and common experiences from different participants, I did not expect them to deliver homogeneous accounts. However, this initial assumption did not prevent me from being amazed by the richness of the data generated by the interviews and the characteristic accounts given by each participant. As well as emphasising that the interview data is more heterogeneous than I had expected, I would also like to point out that I developed different interview approaches, including the strategy of personalised preparation.

Influenced by ethnomethodological and symbolic interactionist thinking, most of my interview questions focused on everyday work routines and office culture. These questions might have sounded 'gender neutral' to my participants and sometimes even made them wonder why I, as a researcher, was asking about such 'irrelevant stuff'. However, this 'irrelevancy' functioned as a potential breakthrough point for my participants to share things that were not covered by specific questions but were relevant to this research project. The method of the semi-structured interview also allowed me to collect data that I had not anticipated.

Therefore, many of my participants provided accounts that went beyond my initial research scope, and those accounts brought inspiration to cultivate unexpected but fascinating themes. For example, towards the end of each interview, I usually asked my participant whether she had any personal working rule or motto. One of them replied: 'always be myself'. She said that if the work environment or organisational culture makes her feel unable to be herself, then she will quit. Her answer sparked me to initiate a sociological enquiry into the meaning of being oneself in the workplace. So after that interview, I added questions regarding the true self to my interview outline.

Moreover, while preparing for the very first interview, I realised the need to personalise the outline for each participant and also for myself. Before the fieldwork, the interview outline was designed for a faceless participant. She was a general figure and not anyone specific. Once the recruitment began, this general figure was replaced by real women with vivid personas and characteristics. It felt wrong to use the 'prototype' interview design when a specific individual appeared in front of me. This was especially so in the case of participants whom I already knew. Strictly speaking, the truth is that, due to my recruitment method, I never interviewed a 'complete stranger'. As the graph of the recruitment shows, the snowballing process demonstrates an expansion of my social network. However, it should be noted that the recruitment process does not represent the actual social connections among my participants and me. Having a participant introduced to this project by another participant does not necessarily mean that she was a stranger to me. Instead, she might be a common friend or someone I knew. Moreover, even if she was a stranger at first, after our interactions during the recruitment process, by the time we actually met for the interview, we would already have a certain amount of knowledge about each other. Experiencing the actual interactions during the recruitment process, I then realised that my original interview outline was too general and 'stiff' because my assumption had been that I would be interviewing complete strangers. If I had adopted this proto-outline to conduct all the interviews, it would probably have been perceived as socially awkward. Therefore, before each interview, I would revise the outline in order to personalise it for the specific participant.

Interview interactions are complicated

Hsi-Shu: You know, how you let people think you're unmarried? It's actually quite easy. When the topics you're interested in are not about family, people will assume you're unmarried. Because a married woman, she would constantly mention 'my husband' and 'my children'. Or say 'my family' is blah blah blah. On the other hand, single people only talk about 'I'. 'I' went to see a movie yesterday; instead of 'we' went to see a movie. 'I went to see a movie.' 'My

friends and I are going to', 'My friends and I have tried that restaurant before.' **My colleagues and I are going to a music event in August, ah, would you like to join us? [emphasis added]**¹³

Hsi-Shu is not just a participant but also a friend whom I know well. For that reason, it is quite understandable that our interview is composed of conversations that cannot be identified as purely research-oriented. For example, in this quote, Hsi-Shu was at first sharing the experience of being misidentified as a single woman by her colleagues because of the way she speaks. Then it suddenly occurred to her that there was an event which she thought I might be interested in and therefore she turned the sharing into an invitation. I think this is a perfect example to demonstrate the complexity of researcher-participant interaction in my fieldwork. It shows how the conversation during an interview could shift seamlessly from a research-related topic to a private matter. It also clearly reveals that I was not the only one asking questions in the interview. Hsi-Shu is not the only participant who did that during the interview. Exchanges like this were not rare according to my fieldwork experience. These 'not so formally research related' conversations have shed light on the complexity of researcher-participant interactions in the field.

The occurrence of interviewing an acquaintance is not uncommon in my fieldwork. This has resulted in complex social interactions that led me to question the boundaries of researcher-participant relationships. It is fairly clear that the interview interactions between my participants and me cannot be fully explained by the conventional researcher-participant model. Before the interviews, we had developed certain patterns of interaction based on our pre-existing personal and social connections. It would have been utterly awkward for me to just ignore these established connections and abandon the communications style with which we had become comfortable and familiar. I could not just put on the mask of 'a strange researcher' and pretend that I knew nothing about them and they knew nothing about me. For me, fieldwork is not a game or a scripted role-play. It is a situated social event rather than an

¹³ This is a quote from my interview with the participant, Hsi-Shu.

ahistorical and asocial performance. My participants and I are situated social actors. Our social beings and relationships should not be overshadowed by oversimplified ideas about researcher and participant. However, this does not mean that I treated my participants exactly the same as in our ordinary and private interactions. The major difference was the involvement of research ethics in our social exchanges. The pre-existing relationships not only diversified the fieldwork interactions but also sensitised me to the subtleness and nuances of ethical practice, which I shall discuss later.

The questions that my participants raised were not just invitations to social events or general enquiries to clarify our discussions. They also proposed questions about this research, about me (as a researcher or acquaintance/friend or both), about institutions and the social world as a whole. These were not necessarily easy questions and I did not always know the answers. There were even moments when I felt as though I was having a mock viva, such as when Hsi-Shu asked:

Hsi-Shu: What does doing a PhD mean for you?

According to Oakley, the traditional model of interviewing is a one-way mechanical process of communication in which the interviewee is passive and managed and the interviewer is self-reservedly objective (1981: 36–7). Reviewing methodology guidelines in textbooks, Oakley argues that preventing an interviewee from asking questions back is seen as preferable. It is regarded as something that ‘properly socialized respondents’ would not do (ibid.: 35). Moreover, a correctly socialised interviewer should never share her own ‘beliefs and values’. In discussing the issue of asking questions back, Oakley challenges this traditional model and the methodology embedded within it. She argues that the textbook model is problematic and suggests alternative strategies. Although I have no idea whether it is proper to identify my participants as ‘properly socialized’, one thing I do know is that I do not perceive taking questions from the participant as a negative thing. While some research benefits from providing participants with very limited information (see Ali, 2010), this study does not share that agenda.

In response to my participants' questions regarding my opinions, I expected myself to be honest. This was a general principle which I reminded myself to apply throughout the process of fieldwork. The consideration underlying this approach is related not only to ethics but also to productivity. The research questions that I had prepared did not require a research method that involved hiding the researcher's intentions. I was convinced that, the better my participants understood this project, the more useful and meaningful would be the data that I could collect. The fact that my participants did ask questions to acquire more information about this research means that there were inevitably different levels of information disclosure. For example, one participant asked me about my research motive the first time we met. By answering that question, I provided more information to this participant than the others.

Above all, I was particularly conscious of my identity as a feminist. In fact, the participants probably discovered this during the early stages of recruitment. For example, I included this message in the information sheet.

This part of the research is intended to learn about women's experiences of employment in Taiwan, especially experiences relating to gender inequality at work. I hope the research will contribute to understanding how to better promote gender equality in Taiwanese workplaces.

This passage disclosed my general stance on gender and work to my participants. In terms of methodology, I see revealing my research intentions, my purpose and also my standpoint as a way to be objective. This does not mean that I intended to judge my participant and persuade her to agree with me. I would leave space in the conversation to encourage the participant to express her opinions first. If that failed, I would ask her for her opinion after I had shared my thoughts. By revealing my ideas, my intention was to motivate my participants to engage in a conversation with me. Thus, the interview sometimes turned into a discussion on certain issues. On the occasions when my participants said things that I disagreed with, I would restrain myself from turning the interview into a debate. After all, my purpose was to have an active

conversation with the participant rather than to reach an agreement on any particular issue.

On the other hand, I am aware of the possible influence that revealing my own stance might have on sampling and data generation. Presenting myself as a female researcher who considers gender equality in the workplace to be a serious issue could already stir up all kinds of images even without me waving the banner of 'feminism'. My gender politics were very likely to attract participants who, if they did not agree with me, at least had an interest in my perspective. Since the participants were my partners in generating research data, the characteristics of the sampling would definitely influence the fieldwork results. Furthermore, it appeared that my disclosure of the purpose and subject of this study had influenced how my participants prepared themselves for the interviews. The following conversation occurred when I asked one participant, Che-Yuan, about her thoughts on the gendered glass ceiling.

Ting-Fang: Do you think men are more likely to be promoted to managerial positions?

Che-Yuan: Actually, before attending today's interview, I did think about this question.

Che-Yuan's reply implies that she had thought about what questions I would raise during the interview. Her ideas might thus have been shaped by the information about this study that I had provided during the recruitment process.

There is another type of question that commonly appeared in the interviews. It seems that these questions were proposed due to a sense of care. My participants cared about whether their accounts were helpful to my study. Ying-Hua, a high-school teacher was one of these.

Ying-Hua: I feel that most of the children are more afraid of their fathers than of their mothers. Is this information helpful?

Ting-Fang: Surely, yes. It's interesting. I'd never thought about that.

My response to Ying-Hua's question was an immediate 'yes'. Being a feminist, especially one who is attracted by the theorisation of everyday life, I am always fascinated by my participants' thoughts and experiences about gender and women's lives. I sincerely felt that all my participants' accounts could inspire me in one way or another. There were also some participants who expressed doubts about their opinions. In such cases, I would emphasise that there was no correct answer to any question that I posed. Also, I would explain that, from my previous research experience, I had learnt that sometimes the information that a researcher considered less relevant might turn out to be the most important piece of research data.

Through this discussion of my participants' enquiries and my responses, I have shown that, while I did adopt the method of interviewing, the actual exchanges were more complicated than just 'the researcher asked a question and then the participant answered it'. The semi-structured interviews that I conducted are composed of complex verbal interactions. It is within this interactive process that the research data was generated.

No universal model of ethics practice

Ting-Fang: This red dot here shows that it's recording. Let me check if the time meter is running properly. Okay.¹⁴

Reviewing the recorded data, I found that most of the interviews begin with me saying something similar to this passage. It seems that I never failed to mention my recorder at the beginning of each interview. I considered this to be a necessary action with ethical implications. Once the participant informed me that she was ready, I would bring out my recording device, which was a digital voice recorder. I would turn it on and place it somewhere visible. Then, I would draw my participant's attention to the red dot on the device before I asked any questions. By doing so, I intended to let the participant notice the existence and function of the recorder. I wanted to make sure that she was aware of the recording during the interview as well as letting her understand that I would never record anything secretly. I deliberately explained how to tell whether the

¹⁴ This is a quote from my interview with the participant, Han Lu-Fan.

machine was running or not. This practice also functioned as a demarcation between informal casual chatting and the interview. No matter whether the participant was someone whom I already knew or a stranger, our meeting always began with casual social talk. The interview was just part of our interactions during the meeting. Exactly because of this, I felt the need to indicate 'when' the shift from casual chat to recorded interview occurred. This is one of the many actions that I considered to be ethical conduct but did not think of before I went into the field. It is also a good example to demonstrate how the actual practices of ethical conduct could vary. Although I introduced the recording device in all the interviews, it did not always happen in the same way. My wording was slightly different in each interview. Thus, of course, my participant's reaction also varied. This is one of many trails in the recorded data demonstrating that I developed different communication styles to practise research ethics. The interactive differences emerged to suit the situational conditions of each interview and the relationship I had with the participant. In other words, my practice of research ethics was different case by case.

As I have indicated, by describing the interviewees as participants, my intention is to address their agency in this research; however, I have no intention of pretending that power relationships are not an issue in my fieldwork. As Letherby stresses, 'it is the researcher who has the ultimate control over the data collection and presentation' (2003: 125). I was aware of the power relationship in the field, and would not naively claim that I could just erase it by undertaking my research ethically and in a feminist way. The power relationship not only influences the practice of informed consent, but also plays an important role in the process of data collection. After all, 'how we identify ourselves and how we are identified by respondents affects not only relationships during the research process but also the data collected' (Letherby, 2003: 123). The fact that the relationships between my participants and me differed from one another reminded me to approach each interview differently rather than to conduct them mechanically.

An obvious example would be my interview approach to a participant with whom I was acquainted. When I interviewed an acquaintance, I did not pretend

that I knew nothing about her. That would have made the interview interaction odd and unnatural. However, I did carefully deal with the information that I had due to prior knowledge. I intended to draw a clear line around the limitations of data collection. I explained to my participants that only the material generated during the fieldwork would be used in later production. If an acquainted participant did not bring up certain information in the interview, I would not use it as research data even if I thought it was relevant. However, I did not avoid asking my participants questions based on prior knowledge, as long as they felt fine to talk about it. I would remind each one that if the following question was too personal or if she was reluctant to answer for any other reason, then she could refuse. Also, I would stress my principle of anonymity. I would not disclose any information that I gathered in the interviews to anyone, including our common acquaintances.

As well as remaining vigilant regarding the privileged power a researcher has, I also acknowledge the possible disadvantages that I could have in relation to my participants. Cotterill (1992: 593) points out that the power relationship between a researcher and her participants is not an unchangeable condition, but may shift according to 'different interview situations'. In other words, a researcher may not always be in an advantaged position in terms of power. In the previous chapter, I discussed the hierarchical social order in Taiwan by using the daily practices of appellations. That was the social reality that I could not avoid when I conducted the interviews. Although I would not use the word 'vulnerable' to describe my situation, it is undeniable that there were moments when I felt compelled to follow certain social norms in order to demonstrate my awareness of my own social status. This was most obvious in interviews with a participant who was senior both in work experience and *bei fen* [輩分], the social order of generation. I will provide a further discussion of this in later chapters.

Another example to explain my different approaches to certain ethical conduct would be the timing of acquiring the participant's signature on the consent form. According to my original ideas, I regarded it as an indispensable step to acquire the signature before conducting the interview. I believed that

only 'unethical and evil' researchers would make the 'mistake' of not doing so. Then it turned out that I probably have to bear that bad name myself. There was one interview that was processed without my participant giving her signature first. She did not refuse to do so but said that she would prefer to sign it later. There was an immediate cry of 'oh no' echoing in my head. Within that few seconds before I expressed my reply, there were hundreds of thoughts crossing my mind. My first instinct was to convince her to sign it before we began the interview, but then the situational information came forward. We were in a restaurant and she was having dinner. It was indeed probably not the best timing to sign a document. I knew this participant well; if she said she would do it later, then she would do it later. In our prior interactions, I had provided basic information about this study and she had indeed given me her verbal consent to join it as a participant. What should I do if she ended up refusing to sign the form? Maybe I should just accept it because it is definitely a participant's right to do so. It would be unethical to coerce her into being part of this research. Above all, informed consent is not just about having the signature on a document. The actual practice should be more than this simple formality. After processing all this information as fast as I could, I decided to put the consent form back into my folder and say 'okay'. In the end, this participant did sign the consent form after the interview was over. I am not sure if it was the perfect way to deal with the situation. This little episode has stayed vividly as part of my fieldwork memories. It became a reminder for me to keep in mind that sticking to rigid formality does not necessarily qualify me as an ethical researcher.

Holding the viewpoint that informed consent is more than just obtaining signed consent forms, I did not regard my participants' signatures as a free pass for me to use all the information they shared. During the interview, if I sensed any hint that the participant was hesitant about answering a question, I would emphasise that she could skip any disturbing questions. At the end of each interview, I would ask if any information required extra coding or exclusion. After I finished the transcript of each interview, I would send it to the participant for verification. I respected and welcomed any suggestions or recommendations, especially those concerning privacy and personal

information. In any case, before including details shared in any other form than interviews, I would always ask for individual confirmation.

Although there was no absolute solution to every unexpected thing that happened in the field, research ethics always served as a compass that helped me to figure out my direction and survive the fieldwork. This was particularly the case during the recruitment process. At a late stage of my fieldwork, I realised that ethics had actually played a crucial role in the recruitment process. If I conducted an interview properly and ethically, the participant would be more comfortable about introducing new participants. Every interviewed participant had the potential to be the core of my recruitment snowball. Doing research ethically is the best strategy to recruit participants. I will use recruiting acquainted participants as an example. Several friends of mine basically came up with an immediate 'yes' when I mentioned my fieldwork, even before I explained to them how the interview would be conducted. However, I did not take that immediate 'yes' as a valid consent. I insisted that they should read the information sheet first and then contact me later if they would still like to participate. At first, I thought that I had probably complicated things for myself, but it turned out that my participants were clearer about how I would process my research work and how much I cared about their privacy and valued their consent. Practising ethics properly was therefore a way to show them how serious and sincere I was as a researcher. When I received the carbon copy of the lovely invitation by Chih-Lu, I then understood that my participants' interview experiences could have a crucial impact on snowballing recruitment.

Shit happens

My apologies for the vulgar language, but shitty things do happen in field research. My fieldwork was no exception and I have no intention of covering that up. It could be something small, such as a confusing meeting point which prevented my participant and me from finding each other. For example, I was supposed to meet a participant by a casual-wear chain store. I arrived earlier than scheduled as I normally did. I forget who made the phone call, me or my participant. Anyway we were on the phone talking to each other half an hour past the meeting time. She said she had arrived and I said I was at the meeting

point too. But we just could not see each other. We then realised that there were at least two stores of the same brand in that area. So we were waiting for each other in totally different places. My participant managed to find me and we ended up apologising to each other.

Certainly, the shitty thing could also be something serious. There was one time when my recording device broke all of a sudden. The interview had been going on for more than an hour and I had no idea how much data was missing due to the incident. I seldom took notes during an interview because it would distract me from listening to the participant with full attention. This means that I was entirely dependent on the recorder to capture the interview data. The participant apparently sensed my anxiety when I indicated that the device had malfunctioned. She was very understanding and sympathetic. We discussed possible measures to rectify the situation. She then agreed to arrange another meeting. On another occasion, I forgot that I had an appointment with a participant. It was already three hours late when I realised. It felt like all the blood in my veins had frozen. I grabbed my phone and rang the participant to confess my mistake. It was during her working hours. When she answered the call, her tone was very 'businesslike'. After I explained everything and apologised, there was an abrupt pause in our conversation. The participant did not say anything for a few seconds. The silent moment was killing me. It turned out to be a pause caused by astonishment because she did not know what I was talking about. She replied nervously and apologetically that she had completely forgotten about it too. It was an overwhelming workday for her and her mind was completely occupied with details of a long meeting. Thanks to the unexpected and yet 'lucky' coincidence, both of us could relieve our sense of guilt.

About one month after I came back to York from my fieldwork, I had an opportunity to share my experiences at a workshop. One theme of my presentation was the aspect of the unexpected. Naturally, I was discussing the inconvenient truths about my fieldwork. After the session, one colleague approached me and expressed her appreciation of my honesty. She said that not many researchers would admit to the shitty part of their fieldwork even though

everyone knows that it does happen. I felt as though I had just shouted out a big 'you-know-what' kind of secret in public. Frankly, my intention had been to use those failure episodes as comic relief in my presentation. I did not anticipate that it would earn me any high opinion. Although I am certainly not proud of those awkward and even disastrous incidents, my colleague's comments planted the thought that it might actually be worth a discussion. If 'feminist research has a tradition of demanding that the unseen and the unacknowledged be made visible and heard', then revealing these shitty parts of my fieldwork is perhaps a reasonably feminist thing to do (Ryan-Flood & Gill, 2010: 1).

Undertaking a study is indeed like going on a journey; the unexpected tends to stay in the memory. Those first undesirable moments have functioned as memorable clues to keep my days in the field vivid and colourful. They have been helpful while I was writing this chapter and reviewing the research process. Each of them also marked an evolving point for me to learn from my own mistakes. The research field is after all not a universe unfolding according to a researcher's will. No matter how thoroughly a researcher plans ahead, there will always be something unexpected. Nevertheless, I am not promoting the abolition of fieldwork preparation. Rather, I argue that researchers should not avoid discussing the unexpected occurrences in fieldwork. Exactly because no one can anticipate every possible situation or walk into the research field with perfect contingency plans, sharing experiences of failure becomes meaningful. While we may have to work solely on our own in the field, this does not necessarily mean that we have to struggle alone.

In addition, I argue that revealing 'the shitty part' of fieldwork is a practice that can help to approach reflexivity. Feminist methodology has valued reflexivity as a method of critical knowledge production. I am convinced that admitting and reflecting upon a piece of research's limits, advantages and shortcomings during fieldwork is part of exercising that reflexivity.

Surviving Data Preparation

Ting-Fang: Mm...I will finish the transcript within three months.¹⁵

In the end, I could not keep this promise to the participant, Siang-Yun. I was over-ambitious and thought that transcribing would be a simple and easy task. How naïve I was! I knew it would take time but did not realise that it was such a delicate job, composed of manifold methodological decisions. In addition, I thought that transcribing would be the last step before I started to conduct data analysis. Preparation work was required in order to transform the audio data generated in the field into usable research data and it turned out that transcribing was only part of that process. The actual preparation also included translation, Romanisation and negotiation with my participants. The multi-lingual nature of the audio material and the international aspect of this study also posed difficult questions about data translation. Moreover, the practice of asking my participants for feedback on the transcripts increased the amount of labour required for data preparation. It was far more time-consuming, labour-intensive and challenging than I had anticipated.

Doing transcription is not just listening and typing

During the research design stage, I had decided to do the data transcribing myself. I made that decision for several reasons. Firstly, it would increase the sense of security and privacy that I could offer to my participants. I promised my participants that any sensitive or private information that they disclosed would only be accessed by me and would be ruled out of the research data. I wanted to make sure that no third party could access the raw data in order to keep my participants anonymous. Therefore, I felt that it was my responsibility to finish the transcribing myself rather than hiring transcribers to do it for me. Secondly, it would enable me to become more familiar with the data. Transcribing is a long process and, quite often, it requires the transcriber to listen to recorded clips several times in order to get it right. This back-and-forth process provides the opportunity to review the details of every interview. Thirdly, since I was the one conducting the fieldwork, I knew the background

¹⁵ This is a quote from the interview with participant Hsiang-Yun.

information about each interview, which could be essential for understanding the participant's account and transforming it into text. Moreover, I could add non-verbal information to the transcript. The data that is generated by an interview is not only about words but also includes emotions, facial expressions or other elements of communication. As the person who actually conducted the interview, I could provide details that a transcriber would not know.

When I started to draft this methodology chapter, I realised that doing the transcription myself has had a significant influence on how I reviewed the research methods. To put it more specifically, it has enabled me to be critical and reflexive about my practice of data preparation. Probably the most obvious example would be the realisation of how complicated the process of transcription is. By reviewing how I did the transcription, I began to be aware of the nuanced decisions I made during the whole process. Although interviewing is a widely-adopted research method, transcription has not received proportionate attention. As Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) point out, in most academic publications, the transcription process is usually simplified into a few words and is not considered to require further explanation or exploration. They argue that, by doing this, researchers assume and present transcription as a 'transparent' research process that does not require further theoretical or methodological examination (ibid.: 65). Having experienced it myself, I agree that transcription is not a 'transparent' practice at all. At least, for me, it was not and is not. It is a fairly complicated decision-making process which requires theoretical and methodological engagement.

Being both surprised and not so surprised, I found that the very first transcription I did was the most painful one. The easily identified obstacle is the labour. It took me quite some time to discipline myself to the demanding work of transcribing. So far, I have never heard any researcher say that she enjoys transcribing. I cannot say that either. I will not lie. It is indeed a dreadful process. The excitement and satisfaction that I felt when reviewing the total length of the interview recording all vaporised in the moment that I started transcribing. And all the awkward pauses in the interviews, surprisingly, became precious little breaks that I cherished. The second point is that it was not until I started

transcribing that I realised there are millions of things to think about and to decide in the case of data presentation. The first step is to decide what should be included in the transcript. At first, I had this idea that I should keep all the details of the recorded data and transform them into text; for instance, the sounds of the environment in which the interview was undertaken. Soon I realised that this would be an impossible task. No matter what kind of strategies I adopted in the end, I would inevitably lose some piece of fieldwork in the process of transcribing. First of all, recording itself is actually 'incomplete'. It only captured the audio record of an interview and this is always partial. One obvious fact is that the sensitivity of my recording device determined the limitations of the recorded data. Duranti (2006) suggests that a transcript should be viewed as an artefact and transcription as a cultural practice. He points out that, because the production of a transcript happens after the actual interview event, a researcher has to acknowledge the temporality of the transcript as well as of the interpretation and analysis based on it. I became convinced by Duranti's argument during the process of transcribing.

Elinor Ochs was one of the early pioneers in theorising transcription. Although they were developed from the perspective of linguistic studies, her theoretical ideas on transcription are also inspiring for non-linguistic research involving transcription. She argues that 'transcription is a selective process reflecting theoretical goals and definitions' (1979: 44). That is, transcription is not a mechanical step that transforms the recorded interview data into text. When we do transcribing, it is inevitable that we draw a line between what we want to include and that which we exclude from the data. For example, do we keep the noise of the surrounding area in the transcript? Ochs also argues that 'a more useful transcript is a more selective one'. However, in my study, this was not necessarily the case. This is because of the theoretical standpoint that I have adopted. My research approach is influenced by the ethnomethodological perspective that mundane daily life is worth examining. From the planning stage onwards, I deliberately designed the interview to be as flexible as possible. That is, I was willing to include potential data that I had not anticipated. This is the reason why I chose to undertake semi-structured interviews. In other words, when I transcribed I had not yet decided which parts of my participants'

accounts should be included in the analysis. Therefore, I felt hesitant about producing a very selective transcript.

In their inspiring discussion on how transcription matters in qualitative research, Oliver et al. (2005) point out that failing to choose a suitable transcription style will prevent a researcher from accomplishing their research objectives and may even cause concerns about research ethics. They therefore 'advocate an intermediate step: a period of reflection that allows researchers to contemplate transcription choices and assess how these choices affect both participants and the goals of research' (Oliver et al., 2005: 1274). Unfortunately, I did not take this intermediate step at the time that Oliver et al. propose: before the stage of actually doing the transcribing. As a rookie in academic work, I have learnt most of my research skills during the process of actually doing my PhD research. Yes, I did have a research proposal and plan before I undertook the project. However, one of the most important things I have learnt in my PhD studies is that research is never a linear process. Or, even if it is, it never goes according to plan.

Oliver et al. propose that various transcription practices can be understood 'in terms of a continuum with two dominant modes': naturalism and denaturalism (2005, 1273). While a naturalised transcript keeps all the details of every utterance in the audio data, a denaturalised transcript removes personal features from the conversation. There are different theoretical considerations behind these methodological differences. A study that adopts a naturalist style of transcription tends to examine the actual spoken language. Therefore, all the features of real conversations matter. On the other hand, a denaturalised style is usually adopted for research that focuses on the information and meaning in the reported accounts. The primary task of data preparation for research of this kind is to make it easier to read and make the meaning of the data more comprehensible. Therefore, behind the continuum of these two modes of transcription actually lies a continuum of methodological approaches to research data. Accompanying different research objectives, there are various transcription styles that fit into this methodological continuum.

My research is looking at women's experiences of gender at work in Taiwan. That is, the research questions that my study tries to answer are about what women's experiences are and how they make sense of these experiences. It would be fair to say that my research leans towards the mode of examining the information expressed in the speech. Although the questions that my research aims to answer are not about, for example, patterns in actual speech, I still find it useful to note the 'verbal and non-verbal signals that can change the tenor of conversations and meaning' (Oliver et al., 2005: 1276). For example, I did transcribe laughter, physical actions, stuttering and pauses.

Some features of the data are dismissed in the denaturalised process of translation, but they are meaningful information that could provide the reader with a more complete picture of the context of this research. Davidson (2009: 38) argues that 'all transcripts are selective in one way or another' for 'it is impossible to record all features of talk and interaction from recordings.' Rather than treating it as something trivial and not worth mentioning, it is critical and meaningful to acknowledge and explain this selectivity 'in relation to the goals of a study' (ibid.). Duranti also points out that 'the recognition of the inherently selective nature of recording first and transcribing later should alert us to the fact that the real must be approached, approximated, simulated, and even induced and seduced by means of multiple selective processes' (2006: 306). As a researcher, I acknowledge and value the 'imperfect' parts of the research process because that is the material that keeps me critical and reflexive about my academic doing. Therefore, I am convinced by Duranti's argument and aware of the selectivity and manipulation in the data preparation.

I have included emotional signals and environmental information in the transcription. Emotional signals, such as laughter, are important clues for me to interpret my participants' feelings about specific events. I also believe that it will be helpful to my participants too. In the data preparation process, I deliberately involved my participants. After I had finished each transcript, I sent it to the participant and asked for her approval. Although I did try my best to finish the transcripts as soon as possible, transcription takes time. My participants might receive the transcript more than half a year after the

interview. Therefore, environmental information is important in terms of helping each participant to re-situate herself in the interview and bring back her memories of that day. On the other hand, I did not include non-response tokens in the transcription, primarily because they did not influence the information being delivered, and also it may prevent a good understanding of the presented data.

Although my research subject does not include cross-cultural issues, the production and presentation of this project certainly do. Most of all, certain cross-cultural issues emerged during the data preparation process that are not necessarily revealed within the data analysis. Rather than sweeping them under the carpet, I feel that it would be meaningful to discuss them. The issue of language differences is an obvious one. Since I am doing this PhD research at a British academic institution, there is no doubt that the thesis should be written in British English. However, English is not an official language in Taiwan. It would have been unreasonable to conduct the fieldwork in English. This, then, means that translation is inevitably necessary when it comes to data reporting. The final presentation of my data is assuredly 'not authentic' in terms of displaying it in the original words. My role as a researcher is actually a three-fold one. I am the interviewer, the transcriber and also the translator.

Deciding on pseudonyms and Romanisation

I think the way you designed the pseudonym is very interesting. Instead of using alphabetical or numerical coding, you created names that are very different from the real names. It makes the reader feel that it is a real person but at the same time they can't identify who the participant is directly. Is that the reason why you chose to use names rather than codes as pseudonyms in your study? [...] I'm now conducting interviews for my own research. And I'm thinking about how blurry I should go for anonymity.¹⁶

¹⁶ This quote is from the feedback from a participant, Ya-Hsin. Her feedback was sent via e-mail. I have acquired her permission to include the quote as research data.

Ya-Hsin expressed these comments as part of her feedback on an early draft of the transcript. We then exchanged our ideas about pseudonyms and anonymity via email. As she pointed out, I indeed had my own strong ideas about what kind of pseudonyms should be created for my participants. However, it was after having the discussion with Ya-Hsin that I began to regard it as a significant methodological arrangement worthy of deliberation.

Trivial as it may seem, it actually took me some time to figure out the pseudonyms for this study. There were two essential issues. One was the design and the other was the format, particularly which Romanisation system to use. In terms of the design, my primary concern was to keep my participants anonymous without sacrificing the sense of humanity. I am convinced that naming has an influence on image projection. If I wanted to present my participants as individuals with characteristics of their own, I doubted that addressing them as numerical or alphabetic codes would be an effectual method. Therefore, I decided to create pseudonyms which read and sound like 'real names'. The design was based on my impressions of the participant and her personal preferences. Choosing a proper pseudonym was one of the basic items in my discussion with participants regarding transcription revision. As Figure 3 and Table 2 show, there are some participants with second pseudonyms, names which look more English-like. This is because some participants use English names in the workplace. It is part of the working culture in Taiwan, particularly in companies dealing with international business. I therefore created pseudonyms for those participants accordingly.

The original pseudonyms for my participants were in Traditional Chinese (or Taiwanese Hancha). Since this study is targeting Anglophone readers, I then had to decide on a Romanisation system to transliterate the fictitious names. To be honest, it was a tricky problem that I left unresolved until the last stage of my research. The main reason was the tangled socio-political background of Romanisation in Taiwan.¹⁷ In response to the 'chaotic situation' of

¹⁷ Taiwan is a multiethnic and multilingual society with a complicated history of colonisation and immigration. With this specific background, Mandarin Romanisation is scarcely the only linguistic issue that has significant political implications in Taiwan. There are currently other heated debates over various linguistic issues; for instance,

transliteration in Mandarin Romanisation, the Taiwanese government has been trying to designate a unified system since the 1990s.¹⁸ However, the official policy of promoting a unified system of Mandarin Romanisation has triggered heated debates. The controversy has been mainly regarding two Romanisation systems, Tongyong Pinyin and Hanyu Pinyin. Hanyu Pinyin is the only legal and official Romanisation system recognised by China and has been widely accepted as the phonetic scheme for teaching and learning Chinese internationally.¹⁹ It is often referred to as Pinyin. Tongyong Pinyin is a system designed by Taiwanese researchers at Academia Sinica. The main purpose of the project was to ‘find the maximum transferability between the Hanyu Pinyin scheme and Taiwanese vernacular scheme’ in considering the multilingual reality of Taiwan (Chiung, 2001: 30).²⁰ These two systems attracted different supporters with different political ideologies in the policy debate. While the Taiwanese pro-independence party, the Democratic Progress Party (DPP), supports the local system, Tongyong Pinyin, the pro-unification Nationalist Party or Kuomintang (KMT) campaigns for Hanyu Pinyin to ‘avoid contribution to pro-Taiwanese Independence activities’ (ibid.: 29). As a consequence, different governments have adopted different systems as the standard scheme. After winning the Presidential Election, the DPP government decided on Tongyong Pinyin as the official Romanisation system in 2002. The policy then attracted serious protests and a boycott by KMT local officials; therefore, it was not fully effectuated. Then, in 2009, after the KMT came to lead the government, it abolished Tongyong Pinyin and designated Hanyu Pinyin as the standard scheme. This policy turn could not be reflected in immediate implementation due to the lack of budget

the national policy on language education, the standardisation of writing of other vernaculars such as Taiyu and Hakka, preserving the endangered aboriginal languages and restoring Austronesian names for Indigenous Taiwanese (see Hsiao, 1990; Hsiao, 1997; Klöter, 2004).

¹⁸ Generally speaking, most Taiwanese people are not familiar with Mandarin Romanisation. Romanised schemes have not been included in the national education curriculum. Mandarin Romanisation is not a commonly written script. Prior to the unified policy discussion, as well as several available roman schemes, such as the Wade-Giles system, the Mandarin Phonetic Symbols II, Postal schemes, the English K.K. phonetic symbols were also adopted as a Romanisation system. These multiple schemes therefore resulted in a ‘chaotic situation’ (Chiung, 2001: 27.).

¹⁹ Han [漢] means ‘the Han ethnicity’. Yu [語] means ‘language’. Hanyu literally means the language of the Han ethnic group. Pinyin [拼音] means ‘phonetic transcription’.

²⁰ The literal meaning of Tongyong [通用] is ‘in common use’.

and the on-going political debates. Until today, the policy on Mandarin Romanisation is still a controversial issue in Taiwan and there is still not a unified system in reality.

Although Tongyong and Hanyu roman scripts are at the centre of the debate about Mandarin Romanisation, when it comes to the transliteration of names, that is another matter. The conventional Romanisation system for names in Taiwan has been the Wade-Giles system. This convention has survived the policy changes implemented by both the DPP and KMT cabinets. Generally speaking, a Taiwanese citizen acquires the official transliteration of her name when she applies for a passport issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Before the unified policy, the Wade-Giles system was generally used in the transliteration of official documents. Therefore, most citizens have their names transliterated based on the Wade-Giles system. According to the application guidelines issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Romanisation of the name of a passport holder should be consistent with the one on their previous passport. In addition, the transliteration of the surname should be identical to the one shared by other family members. The usage of the Wade-Giles system is therefore sustained by administrative regulations and practices.

All of these factors turned the decision on Romanisation for this study into a tricky issue. Considering the linguistic, cultural and political implications, I chose to employ two systems for different purposes in my writing. In the case of pseudonyms, I have used the Wade-Giles system in order to recognise the convention and to keep my participants' pseudonyms consistent with other Taiwanese names, such as those of the referenced authors and my own. For other Mandarin words, I will use Tongyong Pinyin as the transliteration scheme if no other transliteration is available. Chinese is not a single, homogeneous language. There are many varieties being used in different Chinese societies and communities. The Standard Chinese in Taiwan (Guoyu [國語]) has its own features, which need to be distinguished from the Standard Chinese in China (Putonghua [普通話]). It is usually easy to distinguish the dissimilarity in written Chinese because the orthography in Taiwan is Traditional Chinese rather than Simplified Chinese. However, in the case of Romanisation, the

distinct linguistic features would be dismissed if I just used Hanyu Pinyin. While acknowledging the fact that Hanyu Pinyin has claimed international acceptance and popularity, I intend to adopt a ‘minority’ Pinyin system that depicts local linguistic characteristics to indicate the heterogeneity of the Chinese language. Therefore, as well as the implied political connotations, I argue that it is a reasonable solution to adopt Tongyong Pinyin for this study. I know that this arrangement may cause problems for readers who have studied Chinese and are comfortable with Hanyu Pinyin. However, it may serve as a way to treat the reader to a taste of the actual linguistic situation around Romanisation in Taiwan: it is confusing and chaotic, and there are on-going debates about it.

Troubling translation

Han-Ting: *Tai niao le* [太鳥了].²¹ Ah, how to translate ‘*tai niao le*’?

Ting-Fang: No worries. I will figure that out later.²²

When it comes to academic writing, the issue of translation always haunts me. Before this study, most of the translation difficulties that I experienced were about finding proper Chinese words to substitute for a certain English concept. Sexuality is a typical one. When I was writing my MA dissertation in Taiwan, I employed the concept to analyse legal discourse in cases of sexual assault. The translation I used was *singyu tejhih* [性慾特質]. *Sing-yu* [性慾] means ‘sexual desire’ and *te-jhih* means ‘characteristic’. Therefore the literal meaning of the translation is actually ‘characteristics of sexual desires’. I was not satisfied with it but I could not find a better translation. The translation failed to depict the concept with the implication of social structure. It made sexuality a personal thing that someone possesses. As Jackson, Liu and Woo (2008) argue, the fact that the idea of sexuality is difficult to translate into any Asian language reveals its specific historical and cultural connotations. Therefore, the emerging ‘problems’ caused by translation may have a productive effect on research because there might be valuable nuances hidden in them.

²¹ This is an informal colloquial expression. It could be understood as ‘it sucks’ in English.

²² This conversation is a quote from the interview data.

The bilingual (or even multilingual) nature of this study has brought me new challenges in translation. This time, rather than finding Chinese words to translate theoretical concepts from English, the primary task is to decide whether to translate or transliterate the research data from Chinese and Taiwanese vernaculars into English. There are original accounts which cannot be translated without sacrificing significant cultural implications. In other words, to translate or not to translate is itself a methodological issue. Translating became a method of reflection on cultural and social differences. The distinct term, *tongzhi* [同志], is a good example. It is a term widely adopted in Taiwan to refer to LGBT communities. Its literal meaning is ‘comrade’. The first part or character of the word comrade in Chinese means ‘sameness’, which is also the first character of the Chinese term for homosexuality. LGBTQ communities in Taiwan often quote a famous saying of Sun Yat-Sen [孫逸仙], the so-called founding father of the Republic of China. That is, ‘the revolution is not yet successful, the comrades still need to strive for the future.’ It is as though even the founding father of the nation is on the side of LGBTQ communities. The term has ‘an ironic twist on communist and nationalist discourse’ (Rahman and Jackson, 2010: 195). If it is translated into English as gay or lesbian or queer, then the twist will be gone.

In order to retain the nuances of the data, I chose to transcribe the interview data in its original spoken languages, which are Chinese and Taiwanese vernaculars. I read and analysed the data in its original languages first and then translated the quoted passages into English. If I found a word or a concept that is difficult to translate then I chose to transliterate it to keep the pronunciation of the original word in the translated transcription and explain it later in my analysis. It was actually a good thing to find something difficult to translate because it means that this concept or word is probably culturally specific and deserves to be examined closely.

Cooperating and negotiating with participants

Yu-Tai: Hey, I’m reading the transcript. It’s so interesting and funny. I just realised that I have such a good sense of humour. [...] I haven’t

finished reading it yet, but I can tell you already that it has brought me mixed feelings, particularly when I read the parts about my expectations and interpretations about work back then.²³

The interview style that I adopted is formal but not serious. I wanted my participants to feel comfortable about sharing information with me. However, this does not mean that I intended to lure them into saying things that they would later regret. I was aware of the possibility that a participant might be willing to share her experience with me but feel uncomfortable about having it published in any form of academic work. Therefore, as well as the standard procedure of informed consent, I have intentionally involved my participants in the process of data preparation. I offered to send each transcript to the participant and invite her to make suggestions for revision. This was not compulsory work that I assigned my participants to do. A participant could refuse or ignore this offer. Therefore, not everyone wrote back to me. There was one participant who lost contact after the interview. I tried to contact her more than once to ascertain whether she would like to change anything in the transcript but there was no response. However, I did receive feedback from the rest of the participants.

In my original design, I categorised the potential corrections into four types and set up a different strategy to deal with each of them. The first is the case of adding things. If a participant wanted to provide more information after the interview, I would add it to the transcript with a comment that it was added afterwards. The second is altering. If a participant told me one thing during the interview and then wanted to change it to something else, I would discuss it with her and discover the reason for this change. If it were due to privacy or other ethical reasons, I would respect my participant's decision. If that was not the case, I would tell her that my preference is to present both versions in the transcript. The third is correcting mistakes. I would check the recording and discuss it with the participant. If there was a mistake, then I would correct it. The last kind of correction is typography, and this I would just correct. Later in

²³ This is a quote from the feedback from my participant. It was sent as a private message via a social networking platform. I have acquired permission from this participant to include it as research data.

the process of negotiating with my participants, I realised that my original design did not necessarily fit in with my participants' needs. My planned strategies became general guidelines but the actual negotiation was more case by case.

Throughout the negotiation process, I remained aware of how crucial it was to practise research ethics in the field, especially concerning the power relationship between researcher and participant. By performing the transcription myself, I generated opportunities to ponder more deeply on the power of a researcher. My triple roles as transcriber, translator and researcher in this study have made me extremely aware of the power relationship between the participants and me.

It was at this stage of my research that I made the decision not to include the focus group data. My primary concern was the practice of gaining the consent of my participants for the transcripts. The interactions during a focus-group session are more complicated than those of an interview. They involve multiple participants during one fieldwork encounter. The transcript of one focus-group session would therefore require the approval of every single participant. While I was more than willing to respect my participants' suggestions and feedback, there could be potential conflicts between different participants' opinions on the same text. For instance, one participant might want to revise or elaborate more on what she has shared. That revised update could make the subsequent exchanges seem out of context. Therefore, other participants would have to change their accounts or object to the revision. On the other hand, I did not feel comfortable about breaking the transcript into segments and discussing each part separately with the participants who had given specific accounts. This would involve the same flaw of hampering the contextualisation of the data. This is not to say that the focus-group sessions are not useful or meaningful for this research. They provided further information about my participants' experience and thoughts on gender and work; in addition, they deepened my reflections on research methods. It is just that I have not resolved my own thoughts and concerns about data preparation. Those unfinished thoughts about focus groups

have thus stayed with me and may contribute to other intellectual projects in the future.

Through the process of data preparation, reflexive dialogues developed between my participants and me as well as me and myself. Rather than a research phase consisting of trivial chores, I consider data preparation to be a challenging process for a researcher and an opportunity to critically review her research assumptions and her epistemological stance on the status of the data. While pondering the practice of transcription brought me to revisit the purpose of this study, the cooperation and negotiation work with my participants advanced my recognition of the interactive aspects of data generation. The data for this project is the result of the situated and interactive doing of my participants and me. I did not see research data as the objective possession of the participants. In my opinion, conducting fieldwork is nothing like mining. I do not view research data as deep-buried material that is waiting to be discovered by researchers, nor the participants as keepers of objective information. Research data in this study is regarded as an intellectual product generated during the research process, which involves the doing of and interactions between the participants and the researcher. With this idea in mind, I perceive my data as a historical and contextual product that can only offer subjective findings. I cannot, and also do not intend to, present my participants' accounts as universal truth about women's experiences. However, I do consider their narratives to be true in the sense of meaning making. I am convinced that my participants shared what they believed to be true in the given situation and, in addition, that they wanted me to perceive it as such.

Analysing the Unexpected

The fieldwork design, which encouraged participants to share accounts that diverged from my assumed hypothesis, did indeed bring me data that was full of surprises. Through listening to and interacting with my participants, I found that the assumptions hidden in my fieldwork plan were revealed and gradually stripped away. It seems that the only research question left standing was the most general one: What is women's experience of gender and work in Taiwan?

As a result, I could not just screen and select data based on the original outline of the interview questions. A more flexible method was needed.

The idea to allow the data to lead the way served as the first step in preparing myself to analyse the unexpected. Instead of sorting out the data according to the original research questions and interview schedule, I decided to read the transcripts with fresh eyes. It was as though I changed from a traveller who only looks for specific things during the journey to one who becomes spontaneous and then examines what has actually been seen, experienced and discovered on the road. I tried to free myself from the limitations of the designed plan. In other words, the development of the themes for analysis in this study was very much a result of my fieldwork and experience.

In terms of actual practice, conducting the analysis was a research phase that cannot be viewed as a separate process from my fieldwork. As I discussed earlier, the fieldwork was basically an interactive and reflexive proceeding. The structure and outline of each interview was different from all the others. New interview questions were constantly emerging as the fieldwork progressed. Consequently, my ideas for the analysis were inevitably evolving all the way through. My thoughts and reflections on the fieldwork were the original material that I used to ponder the themes of the analysis. My fieldwork journal then served as a starting point for sorting out the considerable number of transcripts on my desk. The journal was organised by date. At the end of each day, I would take some time to record and reflect on my progress. The journal not only recorded the tasks I had accomplished in the research field but also held my immediate impressions of every interview. Although the notes were not necessarily analytical enough, being sometimes just a quick entry that pointed out a particularly interesting experience shared by the participant, they were handy reminders enabling me to identify the accounts that had fascinated me the most in the research field. The journal then became a memo for developing initial ideas about potential themes.

As well as reviewing the fieldwork journal, the transcription notes were another useful source. When I transcribed, I kept notes to mark the parts of an interview that were obviously related to gender. In addition, I would also

include short comments to record my initial ideas about the marked passage. Through assessing and reorganising these notes, I started to identify potential themes for the analysis. Then I selected the five interviews that had the most notes as introductory cases. I developed a draft of emerging themes based on an analysis of these cases. After that, I read the rest of the transcripts closely in order to revise the themes I had drafted. This reading was not conducted in an orderly way. Sometimes I focused on just one and sometimes I did comparative reading. There were also occasions when I decided to re-read a particular transcript. Reading and re-reading transcripts was essential work in analysing the data. Not only are fieldwork and data analysis inseparable from each other, but conducting data analysis is also mingled with the process of writing.

Although, from the description above, the practice of conducting analysis in this study may look linear and fairly direct, the actual process was rather tangled. The final version of the themes was completely different from the initial one. I was constantly revising the content and structure during the process of reading the data. In other words, almost all my assumptions about research findings were seriously challenged.

The final version of the themes can be categorised into three groups. The first category includes themes relating to organisational management. Compared to the others, these themes were identified at an early stage of the data analysis. This was primarily because the situational information relating to organisational practices was easier to recognise in the data, such as the scenario of a job interview or meeting. The second category covers themes regarding general communications or social interactions in everyday practices. The analysis for this category developed gradually while I was reading the data. Although I did conceptualise gender as an essential and crucial part of everyday doing, it was not clear at first what specific social practices I should be investigating. Compared to the material fitting the first category, data that belongs to the second group was at first glance more nuanced and subtle. The third category mainly included themes that I felt to be uncategorisable but too interesting to let go. This is material that I did not anticipate my research would include. It only occurred to me at a later stage that the 'uncategorisability' of

those themes was actually a potential similarity that I could use to develop my analysis. I then organised the data analysis into three parts accordingly. In the next chapter, I will start by presenting the research findings and analysis of the themes fitting the first category.

Chapter 4 Being Employed as a ‘Nyu Sheng’: Gendered and Heteronormative Management in the Workplace

Introduction

In 2006, the Vice-President of the National Taiwan University of Science and Technology, Chen Chin-Lien, applied for the position of President of National Ilan University. She was the only woman on the shortlist. In the end, the position went to a male candidate. Chen later argued that the selection committee had shown gender bias against women candidates during the selection process. Chen brought the case to court. She won in the Taipei District Court but lost in the High Court. According to the plaintiff's arguments on the verdict, one of the selection panel members asked Chen 'Where is your husband?' She replied that her husband works at the National Taiwan University and they live in Taipei. And then the committee asked 'If you get the job and come to Ilan, what will you do about your family then?' and even made a general comment about female applicants by saying 'female candidates are disadvantaged in fundraising.' In this case, the fact that Professor Chen is married was brought up in the interview as something of relevance to the selection. The underlying assumption is that a married woman naturally bears the responsibility for taking care of her family and that she should place it before her career. Then, Professor Chen's ability to fundraise was directly questioned. The committee cast doubt on her suitability as a candidate, based not on her past work experience or qualifications but entirely on her gender.

Later that year, Koo Kwang-Ming, a senior DPP member and politician, expressed his opinions regarding the four possible Democratic Progressive Party candidates running for President. When speaking of the only female candidate, Annette Lu, who was Vice President at that time, Koo dismissed her by saying 'one can judge her capacity according to his own light but there is no

place for a skirt-wearing person to be the Commander in Chief (Yen and Wu, 2006). Although he did not use any term referring directly to women or females, the expression 'a skirt-wearing person' unambiguously implies a gendered connotation in Taiwan. Koo made it crystal clear that, in his opinion, Lu would not be a suitable leader of the army solely because she is a woman. While Professor Chen's ability to perform a certain task was questioned, Vice President Lu was disqualified from the position with highest political power.

Then we come to 2014. Ko Wen-Je, a surgeon who previously worked for the National Taiwan Hospital, declared that he would run for Taipei City Mayor as an independent candidate. During a campaign event, Ko told the audience that he had not chosen the major of Obstetrics and Gynaecology because he did not want to make a living between women's legs (Tu and Kuo, 2014). And during another event, he criticised a female candidate running for the Chiayi City Mayor by saying that as a young and pretty woman, she would be suitable to work at a counter or to be a tourist ambassador but she will not fill the shoes of a mayor (Yu, 2014). Ko first described obstetrics as a dishonourable medical discipline for a man to choose due to its connotations of sexual services for women, and then judged a female politician's career by her appearance. And then, in 2015, when Tsai Ing-Wen was running her presidential campaign, her single status was targeted by her male political opponents as a way of questioning and undermining her personality and professional ability. Some claimed that Tsai would not understand the needs of people who have families. Others accused her of being a 'closet lesbian', and therefore not an honest politician (Hioe, 2016a).

These extremely inappropriate and sexist comments about women with highly professional careers all occurred after 2002, the year when the Gender Equality at Work Act came into effect. They serve as vivid evidence to suggest that there is a huge gap between the legal regulations and reality. Despite being steady and active participants in the labour force, women are still enduring discriminatory and hostile encounters which dismiss all of their skills, abilities and accomplishments because of their gender.

In this chapter, I will present an analysis of my participants' accounts which shows that sexism towards women with careers does not only manifest in high-profile cases. Rather, it is part of everyday reality for ordinary women employees in everyday workplaces. The focus of the discussion will be on the practices of organisational management. While there has been substantial western literature on gendered management practices, I will mainly draw on empirical studies which focus on Taiwanese society to develop my argument. In addition, with the help of feminist theories on gender and heterosexuality, I will argue that management practices at work are both gendered and heteronormative. Women employees tend to be categorised as a homogeneous group. They are generalised as naturally marriage and family-oriented. Women are expected to be confined within certain industries, having certain positions and doing certain jobs because of their gender. Such practices result in gender segregation in employment.

Gender Segregation Between and Within Industries

Taiwan has indeed come a long way on the issue of gender equality in the workplace. Things have changed and are still changing. We have been making tremendous progress. For example, according to the official report issued by the Ministry of Labour in 2014, over the past ten years, more women have been taking on the so-called 'men's professions', such as the IT and engineering industries. Also, the number of female managers is increasing. These trends are all evidence that the division of labour and the glass ceiling in the workplace have been challenged. However, it is too soon to say that every barrier of gender segregation at work has been completely torn down.

Compared to other East Asian economies, such as Japan and Korea, women in Taiwan have more consistent career trajectories. Most women retain their careers even after marrying or having children (see Yu, 2009; Sechiyama, 2013). Despite significant characteristics in women's employment, previous studies also indicate that, along with neighbouring countries, Taiwan still has a long way to go in terms of gender equality at work (Brook, 2006). One obvious fact is that the high labour participation of women does not guarantee that all

industries and occupations in Taiwan have been generally friendly or supportive towards women employees. There are still industries and organisations largely dominated by men. In such workplaces, male employees have enjoyed a privileged status, not just because they are the majority. As Faulkner suggests, 'the largest cultural group will tend to shape the workplace culture' (2009: 16). Male-dominated workplaces tend to create a work culture which treats male employees as the norm. In this section, I will present my participants' experiences regarding gender segregation between and within industries. I will also discuss how they make sense of those experiences and how their career orientation and work strategies have been influenced by them.

Choosing a 'better' industry

Yu-Hsuan is one of the participants who used her own experience to illustrate how being a woman has constrained her career opportunities. Yu-Hsuan is a PR specialist with an academic background in radio and television production. Originally, she had career prospects in both production and public relations. After being advised by a male acquaintance with experience in a similar occupation, she became convinced that, compared to production, public relations management would probably be a more women-friendly profession.

Yu-Hsuan: He told me that, in his opinion, it would be better for a *nyu sheng* [女生]²⁴ in Taiwan to choose a career path in PR. In other words, it would not be easy to go for production. And I think so, too. There were only few of the *nyu sheng* in my class who went for a career relating to our academic background. And they are all ... I think it's quite difficult for them.

In our interview, Yu-Hsuan did not provide further details about whether the male acquaintance had explained why he thought it would be better for a woman to choose public relations over media production as her occupation. His assertive advice, however, clearly had an influence on Yu-Hsuan's career choice. For Yu-Hsuan, the advice actually reflects the reality revealed by her peers' employment experiences. Therefore, it would be difficult for her to challenge it

²⁴ *Nyu sheng* [女生] means a young woman or a girl. It can also be a plural noun.

as a stereotypical assertion. When observing the career development of her colleagues, she noticed that only very few of her female peers have successfully pursued a career path in media production. There is a salient gender disparity in the industry. The career obstacles for women are not just caused by the fact that female staff are outnumbered by male colleagues. Rather, it is more about the unfriendly work conventions that resist accepting female staff to join the team. Yu-Hsuan later realised through the experiences of others that the radio and TV industry is indeed very unfriendly towards women employees. She told me a story about a friend, who had shown her talent and professional skills while they were still university students. According to Yu-Hsuan, this friend won a national documentary prize with her graduate production. With such an outstanding résumé, it was really a surprise to Yu-Hsuan that this friend found it fairly difficult to pursue a career in TV and film production.

Yu-Hsuan: She is the kind of person who will fight [for her rights]. She would actually ask, 'Why don't you hire me? In what respect am I not good enough?' And they said, 'Uh, because you are a *nyu sheng*.' Then she said, 'But I can carry heavy things and I can handle outdoor filming or anything. I can drive and I have a driver's licence. Is there anything that men can do and I can't?' But they would tell her that, 'Because all the members of our team are men. We don't know how to teach a *nyu sheng* to do things.' When people say things like this, it's very difficult to argue. I know that when she finished the postgraduate programme and started job hunting she came across a lot of things like this. I thought it would be easy for her to get a job and a lot of people should have shown interest in working with her. But that was not the case.

In Yu-Hsuan's description, this female friend was a talented individual with an active and persevering personality. From Yu-Hsuan's point of view, this friend had tried her best to negotiate in job interviews that were full of sexist comments and assumptions. As a job applicant, she attempted to convince the male interviewers that she was a competent candidate with her professional skills and abilities. However, all they cared about was her gender.

The way in which Yu-Hsuan perceived her friend's struggle was that gender bias was the main factor preventing a talented and qualified woman applicant from pursuing a career in TV and film production. Moreover, she suggested that this bias was justified and excused by the gendered work culture. The male interviewers stated that, because it is already a male-dominated industry, it would be difficult for a male-only team to hire a woman. It was as though they did not know how to interact with women professionally in the workplace. The existing and conventional male working style was used as a sufficient excuse to reject a woman applicant. In other words, gender segregation is legitimised by this discourse of a gendered work culture. Moreover, women are categorised as distinctly different from men in the workplace. Gender prevails over all the other individual characteristics and qualities of an applicant. While a woman applicant could argue articulately with evidence of her ability and professional skills, as Yu-Hsuan's friend did, all her efforts seemed to be easily dismissed by the categorisation of gender. She is a woman, so naturally she would not fit into a workplace already occupied by men. It is nothing to do with professional abilities and skills. It is all determined by gender. This overt gender discrimination was identified by Yu-Hsuan as something that it is difficult to fight against.

For Yu-Hsuan, the unfortunate interview experience of this female friend served as proof to demonstrate that women are not welcome in the industry of TV and film production. What intimidated Yu-Hsuan was not that she would have to work with a male team but the frankly discriminatory attitude and practices revealed at the very beginning of the recruitment process. The assumed and assured male-dominated work culture ensures that women will be disadvantaged prospects. Also, it seems that, to the recruitment interviewers, there is nothing wrong with this work culture. It is as though sustaining a workplace that is exclusively for male employees is unproblematic even when a competent woman applicant shows interest in joining the team. While I do acknowledge that the majority group tends to hold the power to shape the culture in any workplace, I also think that we should be critical about the assumed justification for this cultural institution. The existing gendered culture at work should not be accepted as a valid excuse for excluding female

employees. Having men as the majority in the workplace is one thing, deliberately creating a working environment that is hostile to women is quite another. What makes the nature of a male-dominated industry hostile to women is not necessarily that there are more men there, but the fact that it has been shaped as a professional field for men only. Men are the norm and they have exercised the power to maintain that norm. The sexist ideology and practices that secure men as the privileged and preferred employees are more problematic. By adopting such practices, the industry is sustained as a domain that is hostile for women to step into.

Yu-Hsuan's narrative demonstrates how the workplace experiences of other social actors with whom a person is acquainted can influence an individual's reflexivity on gender at work, and therefore her career decisions. From the advice of the male acquaintance, the observation of her colleagues' career development, to the rocky start of a female friend's career, everything played a part in Yu-Hsuan's consideration of which industry would be 'better'. For Yu-Hsuan, the key difference between the two industries was obviously the level of friendliness towards women employees. In tailoring her own understanding of women's situation and experiences of gender in the male-dominated workplace, Yu-Hsuan was doing gender while developing her own strategy for choosing a more promising career.

Working in a male-dominated workplace

Other reports from my participants suggest that biased and sexist recruitment is not the only gendered management practice preventing women from fulfilling their career ambitions in male-dominated industries. Some of my participants had survived the recruitment process and were working in those industries. As women doing a 'man's job', they have experienced other 'long-lived structured practices that disadvantage women' (Cockburn, 1991: 220).

IT is conventionally a male-dominated industry in Taiwan. It is an industry that perfectly represents both horizontal and vertical occupational segregation. Men are not only the majority but also occupy most of the top positions (Cheng, 2010). Working in this typical industry as a computer programmer for more

than eight years, Yu-Chen has observed that working arrangements are often gendered.

Yu-Chen: The thing is that a *nyu sheng* is usually assigned paperwork. [...] They would not say that it is because you are a *nyu sheng* [so you should do it]. For instance, when I worked in my first company, I was the only *nyu sheng* in that department and I was the one answering all the calls.

Previous research has indicated that, in the computing industry, administrative jobs are often assigned to women (Panteli et al., 2001). Administrative work is constructed as gendered labour. Women are assumed to be 'naturally' good at it. It seems that Yu-Chen's company has adopted this gendered work pattern in a nuanced way. Despite the fact that she was hired as a computer programmer, Yu-Chen was expected to deal with administrative tasks, such as answering all the incoming calls, while her male colleagues could focus on the tasks that related to their 'professional skills'. Those jobs were not assigned to her but all her male colleagues just assumed that she, as a woman employee, should or would do it. In the case of incoming calls, they simply ignored them and continued their 'real and serious' work. By answering the office phone, Yu-Chen was actually doing work for all of her male colleagues. However, because of her gender, her labour is very unlikely to be recognised as a contribution to the team. As a female computer programmer, Yu-Chen is expected to cover extra work which is not identified as related to her professional skills. I argue that, compared to the male computer programmers in the organisation, her employment status is degraded and so is her labour contribution. From Yu-Chen's experience, we can see that female employees face gendered work arrangements even when they acquire the same job appointment as their male colleagues.

When it is anticipated that women will manage both their professional tasks and the 'women's work', it is actually not surprising to hear that women have to work harder to prove themselves professionally in the male-dominated workplace.

Yu-Chen: So a *nyu sheng* has to spend more time and make more effort to prove that you can do this job and be in this position.

Because of her phone-answering experience, Yu-Chen has had many opportunities to explore people's gendered assumptions about female employees in the IT industry. Although they know that she works in that industry, people appear to assume that, as a woman employee, Yu-Chen's job has nothing to do with specific IT skills. She told me that she constantly feels that the individuals she encounters in the workplace have general doubts about her programming skills or simply assume that she has none at all. She learnt this from the experience of answering calls for her department. There was more than one occasion when a caller insisted on talking to someone else in the department even though Yu-Chen had stated clearly that she was a member of the computer engineering team.

Yu-Chen: I've answered some calls like, 'Hello? I want to speak to anyone in the engineering department.' I said, 'Yes. This is the engineering department.' 'May I speak to...?' Then I said, 'He's not in at the moment.' Didn't I just say that this is the engineering department?

Episodes such as this are not pleasant verbal encounters at all. Yu-Chen felt that her membership of the computer engineering team was denied in that telephone conversation. By asking to talk to someone else in the department, the individual who made the phone call projected the implication that the woman who answered the phone could not respond to his or her professional enquiry. Yu-Chen was regarded as a receptionist whose role in the team had nothing to do with computer engineering. Examining the classification of the level of job skills in the UK, Phillips and Taylor argue that 'skill has become saturated with sex' (1980: 85). In other words, the worker's gender determines whether the job itself is skilled or not. It has nothing to do with the actual content of the work. In Yu-Chen's case, this 'men/skilled, women/unskilled' equation is utilised in another way (*ibid.*). For the caller, since Yu-Chen is a woman, she must be doing 'woman's work', an unskilled job, in this male-dominated workplace. The

misidentification of Yu-Chen as a receptionist was not caused by her action of answering the phone, but because the caller recognised her as a woman.

Yu-Chen's accounts show that gender segregation at work is not only practised among industries but also within industries. Moreover, it is institutionalised by gendered working arrangements. Women are expected to choose certain professions and to do certain work within an organisation. According to Yu-Chen's experience, if a woman breaks the barrier by being in a 'men's' industry and doing a 'man's' job, then it is very likely that her professional ability and qualifications will be constantly suspected or neglected. The fact that there are women working in the IT industry does not seem to be a sufficient condition to dissolve the gender segregation.

Research on women's employment in the IT industry in Britain has revealed that gender segregation is 'being reinvented' rather than 'loosening' (Guerrier et al., 2009: 506). Guerrier et al. (2009) point out that women are mostly employed in positions with fewer technical requirements. By looking at gendered hybrid roles, Glover and Guerrier (2010: 91) find that 'men with "soft" skills may be located in the client-facing external hybrid roles, and women in the internal teamwork roles' in the IT industry. These studies reveal that the gendered construction of jobs is one of the cultural factors that result in limiting women's opportunities in this male-dominated industry. While Taiwan has a very different social context, this reinventing of gender segregation also seems to emerge in my participants' stories. They have revealed that gender segregation in the workplace is patrolled by gendered interpretations of jobs and daily interactions.

From another participant's work experience, it emerges that the constant denial of their professional abilities through gendered working arrangements is not the only problematic practice hampering the careers of women in a male-dominated workplace. Pei-Ju is a mechanical engineer with 16 years of work experience. When I met her for the interview, she was in the transportation industry. Pei-Ju told me that, from her early days

as a university student, she had been aware that mechanical engineering is a 'men's profession' and, as a woman, she is the one who has to adapt to the situation. At her university, the main building of the department where she was studying did not have any women's rest rooms. It was an environment where men were the norm. Years have passed; the scenario has changed from university to workplace. One thing that does not change is that men are still the norm. When Pei-Ju started to work as a professional mechanical engineer, she had to face it all over again. She shared her thoughts regarding the recruitment of a woman to a male-dominated workplace. According to her observations, there is a generally negative attitude towards hiring female mechanical engineers. One of the reasons given is that to have a woman joining a male team is considered troublesome. I then asked Pei-Ju about what the trouble is exactly.

Pei-Ju: They have to adjust a lot of things. Originally it's a purely men's ... for example, the way they dress. They all feel comfortable about it. And suddenly you come as an unwelcome guest, then everyone has to adjust for you. [...] Including, they might keep porn on the computers in the office. They want to watch it after work. You [a woman] got hired and they have to delete it out of respect for you. But we [women who work as mechanical engineers] always act like we're looking but not seeing. You've had to learn to act like this ever since the educational process.

Pei-Ju described herself as 'an unwelcome guest' stepping into an all-male field. The implied relationship between the guest and the host clearly indicates who is in the advantaged position to set the rules of the domain and furthermore to form the culture of the workplace. In Pei-Ju's narrative, the already existing heterosexual masculine culture was a major challenge for her to overcome. The example provided by Pei-Ju portrays a workspace which is only friendly towards individuals who fit into the culture of heterosexual masculinity; therefore, it is easier for men to stay in that environment. It is a space in which men can do whatever they like because they are the majority and it has been like that for many years. The example of watching porn in the office shows that

working culture actually covers more than matters relating to work. While Yu-Chen said that a woman has to make more effort to prove herself in a male-dominated workplace, Pei-Ju's experience reveals that this also includes making an effort to adapt, which might be invisible to her male colleagues. She has to act as though it is nothing, and not being offended by the masculine work culture is a way to prove that she can handle it and work in the team. Researching the work experiences of Taiwan's women seafarers, Guo and Liang (2012) argue that women who enter this masculine workplace might be able to 'reshape' it. I have no doubt that women who choose a so-called 'men's career' can contribute to breaking down gender segregation in the workplace. Nevertheless, I think it is important to acknowledge the personal struggles of women in the context of gendered power relationships and how women might also be 'reshaped', socialised or disciplined by the masculine work environment. When the organisation as a whole is not friendly to female employees, women are disadvantaged in the workplace. For those who have been breaking through the glass ceiling and the segregation barrier, it is not an easy thing just to be there, just working. To expect a reshaping of masculine practices in the workplace by simply enrolling women seems to burden an already marginalised and underprivileged minority. Gender equality at work is not merely about having diversity in the gender of staff. Diversity in culture also matters. Recruiting women will not automatically transform the workplace into an inclusive one.

When women are the majority

Gender segregation exists not only in male-dominated industries but also in those industries which have women as the majority employees. Ying-Hsuan, a marketing specialist working in a tourist agency, told me about her observations of gender disparity in different departments within her company.

Ying-Hsuan: In the case of the travel industry, women employees usually outnumber men but there are differences among different departments. [...] In the sales department, there are always more men than women. But in the ticketing department, I mean those relating to airline tickets, there are seldom any men.

In Taiwan, the business activity of sales is conventionally considered an 'outdoor' job because it involves business activities such as visiting clients or negotiating deals on social occasions. Influenced by the gendered dichotomy of outdoor/indoor labour, sales activity is thus interpreted as a job for men and a sales department is often male-dominated compared to other indoor desk jobs. This example illustrates that gender segregation at work is sustained through management practices which are underpinned by the ideology of gendered labour. When the assumed work culture supports this ideology, whether women are outnumbered by male colleagues or not, gender segregation will be sustained.

Social work is another profession in which women form the majority but still encounter gender segregation in work assignments. According to the official statistics from the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 2014, more than 80% of social-work professionals are women.²⁵ Social work, along with professions such as nursing, is regularly perceived as a woman's occupation and indeed draws more women than men to take part in it (see e.g. Evans, 1997). It is a profession that welcomes women because they are considered to have the appropriate feminine qualities to accomplish the tasks. However, the gendered work arrangements are still there. From my interview data, it appears that female and male social workers tend to be assigned different tasks even when they work in the same unit. Chi-Lun is a senior social worker. Social work has been her profession for five years. She told me about her work experience in an organisation providing labour welfare support and described how tasks are assigned to employees differently because of their gender.

Chi-Lun: *Nan sheng* [男生]²⁶ were usually assigned tasks that require more labour or involve complicated clients. In my previous unit, men were responsible for foreign workers. [...] Their jobs were more complicated. We [women employees] were taking care of standard services for the general public.

²⁵ The official report indicates that in 2014 there were in total 11,537 personnel in social welfare, 9,516 women and 2,021 men.

²⁶ '*Nan sheng*' [男生] means a young man or boy. It can also be plural.

According to Chi-Lun, female social workers are assigned cases that are less challenging in terms of physical strength and professional skills. They are expected to deal with cases that can be managed through providing 'standard services' that can be applied to 'the general public'. On the other hand, her male colleagues were given opportunities to work on complicated cases which may require more time, energy and professional skills. There are at least two issues in this work arrangement. In the matter of physical strength, women employees are considered to be at a disadvantage compared to men by nature. This is no doubt a gender stereotype that reflects essentialism. Women and men are generalised as two distinct biological groups with undeniable differences in physical strength without any evaluation of the specific requirements of the task or the abilities of each individual employee. The other issue is the gendered expectations of professional skills. It seems that female social workers are expected to provide routine services while their male colleagues are considered more capable of managing cases that may require advanced skills and the ability to deal with all possible contingencies. In addition, female social workers are advised to adopt different strategies from their male colleagues. This is manifested in Chi-Lun's account of the practice of home-visiting service.

Chi-Lun: I think, when a female social worker goes visiting, if, for example, the client is a violent offender, or from the reporting info sheet, it is known that he has problems such as substance abuse, if you as a woman wanted to do it alone, people would ask, 'do you need somebody to go with you? Do you need somebody, such as a volunteer, to keep you company?' or 'we can ask two social workers to do it together. Considering the safety issue.' Yep, this part, it looks as though, because I'm a woman and if my client is a specific case. It [my gender] would make a difference.

Ting-Fang: How about a male social worker? It's all right for him to visit on his own?

Chi-Lun: Yes.

Chi-Lun has noticed that only when the social worker is a woman is the issue of personal safety raised in her organisation. It is assumed that a woman employee will need extra protection in a situation of possible exposure to violence. Therefore, female social workers are identified as employees who have special needs in undertaking their work routine. On the other hand, male social workers are just regular employees who are capable of managing their jobs on their own. Thus, the male is perceived as the norm. In addition, in Chi-Lun's organisation, this extra protection would be provided in an informal way. It is not a safety issue being managed through institutional protocol. Considering the occupational hazards of social work, a more reasonable solution to this issue would be to set up a system that allows every social worker to draw upon the personnel or related professional support they need. I have no doubt that there is a gender aspect when it comes to the issue of violent crimes, but it would be over-simplified to assume that female social workers need extra protection while their male counterparts do not require it at all. By failing to recognise personal safety as an occupational issue which needs to be addressed and managed through institutional practices, Chi-Lun's organisation is actually constructing a gendered work pattern through the dereliction of its duty in work management.

Through an examination of the accounts of my participants, I have discussed gender segregation at work in Taiwan. Gender segregation has manifested both horizontally and vertically in terms of industry structure. Gendered management has prevented women from developing careers in certain industries as well as certain occupations within a specific industry. Moreover, there are differential gendered treatments being implemented, even among those who work in the same department or have acquired the same level of seniority. These management practices sustain gender segregation at work and situate women in a disadvantaged position compared to male applicants and employees. I want to emphasise that gendered management is not only stipulated in male-dominated workplaces but also in those where women employees form the majority. My participants' accounts also reveal that gender segregation at work is legitimised by the ideology of gender. It has structured

the dichotomy of gendered social and organisational roles. I will investigate this issue further in the next section.

Housewife and Breadwinner at Work

'Nan jhu wai, nyu jhu nei [男主外、女主内] is an old-fashioned Mandarin saying in Taiwan. It means that men should take care of the outdoor business while women should take care of the indoor. The boundary that distinguishes the indoor from the outdoor is usually identified as the household. While the indoor space seems to be defined within precise limits, the outdoor could cover various social fields. This saying is conventionally interpreted to mean that women should be housewives and stay at home while men should be breadwinners who pursue their careers in various professions. What underpins this interpretation is the norm of a gendered division of labour that builds on the base of the heterosexual family. It presupposes a social order sustained by gendered labour arrangements and segregated social domains. Of course, this is just one explanation of the saying. It could be argued that an alternative interpretation of the literal meaning of the saying is possible. That is, women are regarded as the authority figures in the domestic area and once men step into the household, they are in territory that is managed by women. While this is a possible interpretation, it is also one that neglects social, cultural and material reality. In a capitalist society like Taiwan, those who have the opportunity to explore career opportunities will be more likely to have an advantaged social and economic status than those who do not. The status gap would therefore very likely create an unequal power relationship and result in the housewife being in a disadvantaged situation. In addition, it would be naïve to examine the meaning of the saying without putting it in a gendered context. 'Housewife' is a gendered identity. The constructed social meaning of this identity cannot be fully examined without acknowledging its gendered counterpart, the 'breadwinning' husband. Therefore, I suppose that it would be fair to say that in a capitalist society that embraces heterosexual relationships as the norm, this saying actually promotes the idea of a gendered division of labour that is sustained by

'the continuing interaction of two interlocking systems, capitalism and patriarchy' (Hartmann, 1976: 139).

It should be highlighted that, despite often being labelled a 'traditional' gendered identity, 'housewife' is actually a modern creation. Mies (1997) developed the concept of 'housewifization' to describe the gendered division of labour that arose in response to the demand for labour of the capitalist economy. A housewife is therefore a specific gendered labour provider in the modern economy. Ochiai further identifies 'housewifization' as a significant factor in the process of modernisation in the west and in Japan (2008: 3). Ochiai argues that 'modernization led to the gender division of labour between the "breadwinning" husband who labored in the public sphere and the housewife who specialized in housekeeping and childrearing in the domestic sphere' (ibid.: 4). When a society transforms its economy to the post-modern and post-industrial stage, the shift in the demand for labour results in 'de-housewifization'. As Ochiai proposes, 'economy development first "housewives" women, then "de-housewives" them' (ibid.: 5). As I have discussed in Chapter 2, there are different patterns of modernisation and economic development in other societies does not necessary follow the 'western' model. Research also indicates that, in Taiwan, as in many other contemporary Asian societies, there is no obvious evidence to show that housewifization has emerged (Ochiai et al.: 2008).

Although, in reality, being a full-time housewife is not a popular choice for women, there are social practices which normalise the ideology of a gendered division of labour. The saying, *nan jhu wai, nyu jhu nei*, is just one example. According to my participants, there are management practices connoting and reinforcing this ideology in the workplace, too. In this section, I will present interview data to discuss how women employees are perceived as housewives or housewives-to-be by their employers and colleagues.

The invisible female breadwinner

Gender segregation at work takes several different forms. It could be barriers between industries. Or it could be differential job arrangements within a certain industry. It could also be a gendered hierarchy within an organisation. From

data gathered in 2005, only 16.58% of managers were women in Taiwan and they earned almost 16% less than male managers (Chou et al., 2009). A decade has passed since then, and we can see improvements but the power in the workplace is generally still held by men. According to an official report from the Ministry of Labour (2015), in 2014, 25.38% of managers were women. As for the average hourly payment, women earned 15% less than men. I would argue that this unequal distribution of promotion opportunities is related to the ideology of gender. Although women are active in the workplace, men are still identified as the breadwinners for their families. Tzu-Ling, a senior legal specialist who has a managerial position in the company where she works, shared her observations with me.

Tzu-Ling: In my department, all the staff are women. If we compare the manager with one who works in a department that has both men and women, and take a look at the salary, it would be like this, very obvious [using body language to indicate that the manager who supervises men has higher pay] [...] But the reason is that men have to feed their family. This is what has been considered by those in higher positions. Men have to be the breadwinners. [...] So whenever we have a salary adjustment, they will take that into consideration.

Tzu-Ling's account indicates gender bias in the salary structure. In her firm, although women are promoted to higher positions just as men are, this does not bring them an equal opportunity to earn as much as men. On the ladder of promotion, women may seem to have shattered the glass ceiling and stepped up to acquire higher positions in the organisation. However, when it comes to salaries, these are allocated on a different track from their male counterparts. They are paid less. This shows that their professional skills and managerial abilities are devalued and not properly appreciated. Tzu-Ling's observation also indicates that the gender bias in payment is justified by the ideology of gendered roles in a heterosexual relationship. Male employees are identified as breadwinners while women are not. Considering that women's labour market participation is not uncommon in Taiwan, the assumption that men are the breadwinners who create the financial stability for their families is obviously a

myth. Take Tzu-Ling, for example; she is married with children and has proved her ability in the workplace. There is no obvious reason to deny her role as a financial supporter of her family. However, she is not regarded as a breadwinner by her employer. In the case of Tzu-Ling, we can see that the ideology of gendered social roles has effects that are revealed in the workplace. Married women employees are assumed to be dependent on their husbands, who are seen as the breadwinners for their families. Therefore, women's incomes are considered to be 'a secondary income' (Cockburn, 1991: 23). In this way, the ideology of the gendered division of labour has shadowed individual female employees from the domestic domain into the public sphere. While the stereotype of gender roles has its roots in cultural norms, it does indeed have a material effect, manifesting in women employees' unequal status in the workplace.

Marital status as an issue

The assumption that women should take certain social roles not only determines the salary they can earn at work but also the jobs for which they can apply. Hsi-Shu shared an unpleasant job interview experience with me. Hsi-Shu is in her mid-thirties and already has nine years of work experience in marketing. She started sharing her observations on gender inequality at work by talking about the personal information check during the recruitment process.

Hsi-Shu: First, the unfairness for women in the workplace. I think, in other countries, you can choose not to disclose your marital status and even your age on the CV. But in Taiwan, these are required information. Examining the marital status and age of the applicant is an essential part of the recruitment evaluation. I think, at some level, they [interviewers] start the selection process in the recruitment interview. They will identify what kind of person suits the specific job. For example, if a married woman applies for a job which requires the applicant to go on business trips in the future, she will not be considered suitable.

The practice of a job applicant informing a potential employer of her or his marital status is regarded as common sense. Since it is assessed as essential information, it is supposed to have a certain value in candidate selection. Hsi-Shu notices that, in the case of a married woman, she would not be viewed as a competent candidate for a position which includes going on business trips in the job description. That is to say, the marital status of a female applicant would determine what kind of job she could obtain. Hsi-Shu is not the only participant who feels that her personal information, such as marital status, is a target of scrutiny in the recruitment interview. Han-Ting, who works as an administrator at a university, told me about one of her most unforgettable interview experiences. She was stunned by the interviewer's questions regarding her personal relationships.

Han-Ting: She/he then asked 'do you ... do you have boyfriend?' I said 'no.' She/he then continued by asking 'what if you have a boyfriend and he has a job in Taipei, will you follow him and return to Taipei? And what if after you get married, he works in Taipei. Will you follow him? Will you still stay here?' But I think, how should I answer that? Because I had no boyfriend and no husband at that moment, how would I know that? If I do have, so what? How can I anticipate what will happen in the future?

As a job applicant, these interview questions confused Han-Ting. She did not know how to answer them. First of all, they are questions about her personal life. She could not understand why the interviewer would assume there to be a connection between her personal life and her competence for the job. Secondly, they are hypothetical questions. Although reluctant, Han-Ting did inform the interviewer that she was single. That did not stop the interviewer from prying into her personal choices regarding her role in a relationship. For Han-Ting, it seemed nonsense to have those questions asked. She was single at that moment and she may or may not be in the future. Her decisions in the future should not be used to judge her work ability at the recruitment stage. Thirdly, they are questions with stereotypical gender implications. It is probably not surprising at all to find that the questions refer to heterosexual relationships only. The

interviewer even implied a concern that a female employee would leave her job in order to 'follow' her male partner. This personal information about relationships and marital status seems to be used to categorise what kind of employee this applicant would be, or, to put it more specifically, what kind of women employee she would be. Women are not only categorised by their gender but they are also sub-categorised as suitable or unsuitable women and the underlying presumption is made based on the status of their heterosexual relationships.

In Han-Ting's case, we can see how a single woman employee's personal life choices are a concern for an interview panel; Hsi-Shu's experience on the other hand provides particulars of a married woman applicant. Hsi-Shu used her interview experience to illustrate how a woman's marital status will influence her employment opportunities.

Hsi-Shu: If you're married then they'll ask 'in three years, will you...' 'Do you have kids? Do you plan to have children in three years?' Do you know what this means? This means that [they are thinking] how much it would cost to hire you. A married person, an unmarried person ... if you're unmarried, they'll ask 'do you have a boyfriend?' It's the same. You might apply for [marital, parental] leave and you might have children.

Hsi-Shu's account suggests that, when a woman applicant comes in front of the recruitment interviewers, she is examined and evaluated as a negative asset. The possibilities that a woman may marry and have children are viewed as potential personnel costs to the company. Moreover, there is an assumed pattern or script about the career development of a woman employee. This script follows the norms of heterosexuality: she will eventually be in a relationship with a man and then marry him to create a family with children. The interview panel might appear to be concerned about her career plans but actually it is all about her family plans. And somehow all of this is regarded as relevant information when making recruitment evaluations. Hsi-Shu interprets this investigation of personal lives at the recruitment stage as unequal treatment for female employees. This is an interpretation that was reinforced by

her personal experience of job applications. She was once rejected exactly because she was a married woman.

Hsi-Shu: Then, about the job that requires going on business trips, they would ask ... they wouldn't ask if you're willing or not. They would say 'but this job may not be suitable for you. It's because we would probably move the office to...' blah blah blah. 'Your ability is good but...' I was once rejected that way because the interviewer thought the job required going on business trips or being allocated to an office abroad. 'You have a family so how could you go?' What do you mean by how? Just go by myself. By walking, by taking a flight, by whatever it takes.

As these generalised ideas about women's family role prevails, an individual woman's inclinations and career ambitions are dismissed. Through the feedback from the members of the interview panel, Hsi-Shu sensed that she was not being considered as the right candidate for the job. While giving praise for her ability, they unveiled their doubts about her suitability because she was a married woman and hence had to 'stay' to take care of her family. I could feel Hsi-Shu's annoyance from her description of the exchange. She was not particularly impressed about the assumptions behind the question expressing concerns about her being away from her 'family'. As a married woman, she was expected to stay with 'her family' and therefore would not fit the job. It is assumed that married women employees are highly family-oriented. Moreover, the concept of family is here linked with marriage. That is, marrying is regarded as the only way to establish one's family. In other words, unmarried women are not considered to be people with families.

I could not help but compare Han-Ting's and Hsi-Shu's accounts with an old-fashioned Taiwanese proverb on marriage advice for women. The literal translation may sound a bit bizarre. It says that if you marry a dog, then just follow the dog's way. My interpretation of the meaning of this proverb is two-fold. The first one is that a woman should be content with the man she has married and hence must endure all the difficulties caused by him in the marriage. Secondly, it conveys the supposed power hierarchy between a

husband and his wife. A husband's family role is to lead and the wife's is to follow. This proverb is seldom used nowadays and the referenced advice would be considered out of date if not discriminatory, especially by younger generations. Nevertheless, I could still perceive the residue of the cultural foundations that support the proposed ideology of this proverb in both Han-Ting's and Hsi-Shu's unpleasant interview experiences. Women are supposed to follow their male partners even if it means sacrificing their careers. When a recruitment panel asks a woman applicant questions such as 'will you follow your boyfriend?' or 'how could a married woman go on a business trip?' the panellists are adopting cultural assumptions about gendered social roles and making biased and gendered management decisions accordingly.

Besides the cultural implications, these inappropriate interview questions also demonstrate the failure of the implementation of legal regulations on equal access to employment in Taiwan. In other countries, such as the UK, which have established specific guidelines to enforce the Equality Act in the workplace, the uncomfortable and unnerving questions reported by my participants would be considered illegal and would never be asked in a job interview. However, it is clear that in Taiwan, legal regulations concerning gender equality at work have not yet been transformed into specific guidelines for actual organisational practices. Article Seven of the Gender Equality in Employment Act 2002 clearly states that 'employers shall not discriminate against applicants or employees because of their gender or sexual orientation in the course of recruitment, screening test, hiring, placement, assignment, evaluation and promotion'.²⁷ When my participants were asked about their marital status, personal relationships, and future 'family' plans, the interviewers were projecting their gendered assumptions about women. In other words, they saw gender in female candidates and would deliver recruitment decisions based on those biased assumptions.

²⁷ This quote is the official English translation of the article. The complete English translation is available at the official website of the Ministry of Labour: <http://laws.mol.gov.tw/eng/flaw/FLAWDAT0201.asp>.

The abnormal single and the stable married

By examining my participants' personal experiences of job interviews, I have shown that, when a woman presents herself as a job applicant, her suitability for a specific job is judged according to cultural norms about gendered family roles. There are also accounts further suggesting that those cultural norms will be adopted as criteria to evaluate a woman applicant's characteristics. Hsi-Shu once overheard an interview panel's discussion about a job applicant. She noticed their unfriendly attitude and negative comments about the applicant because she was single.

Hsi-Shu: The interviewee probably knows nothing about it, because we won't discuss it in front of her. I might be the one who is much closer to the supervisor, so I can hear his/her true opinions. For example, my supervisor would say, 'but I think she's a bit weird'. [...] She/he would say, 'she's already 37 or 38 years old and still single. It seems no good' ... blah blah blah ... all sorts of things. [...] How many employers think that way? I say almost 80%. When they see a woman at the proper age for marriage, 30-something, they will judge her normality by her marital status and relationship status. Thinking about where she should be in terms of job position and not thinking about her ability.

In Hsi-Shu's opinion, her supervisor was using the fact that the applicant was single to deduce a negative opinion about her personality. This deduction implies that the idea that women are 'naturally' family-oriented is the baseline for assessing a woman's normality. Because it is her nature, a woman will marry a man at the so-called 'proper' age. Any woman who strays from that life design is a reasonable target for stigmatising labels.

It seems that women in the workplace face a dilemma. If they are married or family-oriented, they are regarded as a negative asset. If they are not, they are labelled as abnormal, not 'normal' women. Either way, such perceptions could have a negative impact on a woman's career opportunities. This binary interpretation is like a trap that constrains a woman from pursuing a career in

the public domain. A woman's marital and relationship status is treated as something essentially negative in terms of an organisation's management. In this way, the institution of gendered social roles is sustained, or even reinforced, by management practices.

On the other hand, married men are regarded as reliable employees who can offer stable labour for the organisation. This is shown in Hsi-Shu's account of the gendered perceptions of married women and men in the workplace. Hsi-Shu feels that, in her organisation, the married status of a female employee is evaluated differently from that of a male employee in terms of human resource management.

Hsi-Shu: I think a married man at work will be evaluated as a stable employee, a trustworthy employee who has specific goals. He will be regarded as emotionally stable and someone who will not quit his job easily. A married woman only gets the last bit.

Hsi-Shu identifies three positive comments a married man might receive in relation to his job performance. The first concerns his career ambitions. The second is about emotion stability. The last is employment retention.

Although these days in Taiwan, a woman will not be denied the right to have a job, published equal rights in legal documents do not necessarily bring equal support or equal treatment within organisations. According to Hsi-Shu's observation, this seems particularly obvious when it comes to the issue of employees' marital status. At the organisational management level, female employees are perceived as less valuable than male ones. This presumption is deeply entangled with the ideology of gendered labour arrangements in Taiwanese society. It influences a woman's career from the very beginning of the recruitment process. However, men are treated differently. If a man gets married, he will be appreciated by his organisation as a useful asset. He will be thought of as a stable employee who will be likely to stay in his job longer. This unfair assessment of married female and male employees reveals assumptions about gendered responsibility for the family. A married man is assumed to be the main financial supporter of the family and therefore should be ambitious at work. On the other hand, a married woman is expected to place her husband's

career ahead of her own. Even though she may also have a full-time job, her primary responsibility is supposed to be taking care of everything in the household in order to enable her husband to give his full attention to his career. Therefore, married men are identified as stable employees for two reasons. Firstly, they are be regarded as being devoted to their jobs in order to earn a steady income for the family. Secondly, they have their wives to take care of household matters. These gendered assumptions are derived from the ideology of the division of labour.

By examining Hsi-Shu's accounts, I have shown that organisational management is dependent on the institutional establishment of marriage. Married employees are perceived, not as individuals, but as half of a couple. As Jackson and Scott write, the feminist critique of monogamy 'was never concerned only with sexual exclusivity, but with the institutionalization of coupledness and the presumed "ownership" of another individual' (2004b: 152). Marriage is therefore an institutionalisation of gendered relationships which excludes alternative options. The ideology of coupledness therefore serves as a foundation for the construction of marriage. A married couple is assumed to be exclusively available to each other in various ways, such as sexuality, emotions and feelings, and sociality. Hsi-Shu's account reveals how this 'coupledom and the presumed "ownership" of another individual' are manifested in economic activities. Married employees are assumed to work as a couple in their daily life. Even when a married woman is present as an individual employee in the workplace, she still cannot rid herself of her membership of a heterosexual married couple.

However, it is not only women who are negatively judged in terms of this binary gender categorisation in the workplace. While women are perceived as 'naturally' family-oriented and marriage-oriented, men are expected to be career-oriented. Those men who have chosen so-called 'women's jobs' are also marginalised and identified as not sufficiently career-oriented; therefore, they are labelled as not masculine enough or are disqualified as breadwinners.

Han-Ting: [...] It's just paperwork. And men who worked in universities would be regarded as a little bit sissy. [...] an

administrative job, for example, requires carefulness and being scrupulous about every detail. It's kind of a girl's job. A man doing it, it would be regarded as a bit weird.

In Han-Ting's narration, indoor administrative tasks are considered jobs for women and girls and convey a negative meaning. A man doing a job that is usually for women is one thing. A man doing a job that is degrading and supposed to be done by women is another. Jobs are not only gendered but also sorted into a hierarchical order. Women's jobs are less valued than men's. Yu-An provides another example about men who choose to work in a 'women's' industry.

Yu-An: If a man chooses social work as his career ... generally speaking, here's the thing. The earnings of a social worker aren't enough to support a whole family.

In Taiwan, social work is mostly dominated by women. As in other occupations labelled as women's professions, a social worker's salary is comparatively low. Therefore, if a man is a social worker, he will generally be judged as a disqualified breadwinner.

By examining the gender categorisation during recruitment processes, I have shown that the division of labour is not only arranged along the binary setting of private/public domains but also by the gendered arrangements of the workplace. In the eyes of recruitment personnel, women applicants are often categorised as distinct from men and are assigned jobs differently. Women are perceived as naturally marriage- and family-oriented; therefore, it is seen as better to assign them jobs that will not prevent them from 'enjoying family life'. This categorisation is not only gendered but also implies a heteronormative ideology. That is, the concept of 'family' that is utilised in management practices is usually a heterosexual one.

The Heteronormative Work–Life Balance

In this section, I will continue the discussion on the heteronormative management of work by focusing on the organisational practices that are used

to help employees achieve a work–life balance. I will first introduce the long-hours culture in Taiwan in order to illustrate the ‘imbalanced’ context within which women employees are situated. Then, I will present an analysis of organisational practices. I will argue that the organisational support is generally designed for married women employees only, if there is any. In other words, the conceptualisation of the ‘life’ in work–life balance is primarily about family life. Furthermore, it is specifically limited to the model of a married heterosexual family. Rather than being woman-friendly, these practices are actually both constructing and reinforcing this heteronormative institution.

The long-hours culture

In 2013, the Ministry of Labour revealed the result of a labour report on working hours. According to this report, the average annual hours worked per person in employment in Taiwan is 2140.8. Compared to most OECD countries, an employee in Taiwan works much longer hours. In the United Kingdom, for example, the average annual working time per person is 1654 hours, around three-quarters of the hours in Taiwan. More surprisingly, Taiwan’s working hours also exceed those of most advanced developed economies in Asia, such as Japan. More information is shown in Table 3.

Year	Taiwan	S. Korea	Japan	Singapore	Hong Kong	UK	USA
2002	2,176.8	2,464.0	1,798.0	2,392.0	2,438.8	1,684.0	1,810.0
2003	2,175.6	2,424.0	1,799.0	2,392.0	2,423.2	1,674.0	1,800.0
2004	2,202.0	2,392.0	1,787.0	2,407.6	2,449.2	1,674.0	1,802.0
2005	2,182.8	2,351.0	1,775.0	2,418.0	2,438.8	1,673.0	1,799.0
2006	2,170.8	2,346.0	1,784.0	2,402.4	2,407.6	1,669.0	1,800.0
2007	2,166.0	2,306.0	1,785.0	2,407.6	2,423.2	1,677.0	1,798.0
2008	2,156.4	2,246.0	1,771.0	2,407.6	2,371.2	1,659.0	1,792.0
2009	2,121.6	2,232.0	1,714.0	2,392.0	2,340.0	1,651.0	1,767.0
2010	2,174.4	2,187.0	1,733.0	2,402.4	2,392.0	1,652.0	1,778.0
2011	2,144.4	2,090.0	1,728.0	2,402.4	...	1,625.0	1,787.0
2012	2,140.8	...	1,745.2	2,402.4	...	1,654.0	1,789.9

Table 3 The average annual working hours per person in 6 countries

The statistics certainly show that it is not an uncommon thing to spend long hours in the workplace in Taiwan, but the reason for this is not made explicit.

There has been research on the issue of working hours, but mostly with a focus on legal issues (e.g. Hou, 2013; Wang, 2012; Cheng et al., 2011). The issue of work–life balance has drawn attention in western academia (e.g. Smithson & Stokoe, 2005; Crompton & Lyonette, 2006; Watts, 2009; Bacik & Drew, 2006); however, in Taiwan it is a comparatively new and under-researched issue (Lu et al., 2006).

Due to this long-hours culture, it is not surprising to learn that working overtime is one of the common experiences shared among my participants in different industries. Take Ying-Hsuan for example, she works in the travel industry and talked about working overtime as something that routinely happens in her annual work schedule.

Ying-Hsuan: If it's busy season then I have to work overtime. For example, we have three travel fairs annually. And the one in October every year is the biggest. Then from two months prior to the fair, we get busier. During that period, I work overtime almost every day. When it gets closer to the fair, the hours are longer. Because there are just so many things to be done and we couldn't finish them [in normal hours].

Yu-Chen, an IT engineer, provides another example. She told me that it was common practice to work overtime in her previous unit, too. She also explained to me that the exhaustion caused by working overtime drove her to leave her previous job.

Yu-Chen: The reason why I decided to quit is not because I felt that there was no chance for me to be promoted but because I felt so tired. I was exhausted and my health got worse because I had to work overtime a lot.

Ting-Fang: How many hours did you work a day back then?

Yu-Chen: From 9 a.m. to 4 a.m.. [...] I had worked like that for at least two years. So I spent a lot of time sleeping at weekends and during holidays. If I didn't work overtime on those days, I must have slept a

lot. My boyfriend back then quarrelled with me for that. I needed sleep and he needed breakfast. He wanted us to breakfast together.

From Yu-Chen's experience, it is obvious that the overwhelming demands of work were occupying most of her time and damaging her health. In other words, her life back then did not come anywhere near to a work-life balance. Also, from observing her colleagues' career trajectories, she thinks that women's attempts to have a job and maintain a relationship have been hampered by routinely working extra hours.

Yu-Chen: I think a lot of women quit their jobs for their boyfriends. [...] Because ... um ... like my first job, my company required employees to work overtime quite often. They got into fights with their boyfriends because of that. And then one came in tears and told me that her boyfriend had told her that he was going to break up with her, so she must quit.

Like Ying-Hsuan and Yu-Chen, Yu-Hsuan, a PR specialist, has observed that working late on weekdays and working extra hours at weekends is quite common among PR professionals. She also points out that it is preventing the women in this industry from having steady relationships.

Yu-Hsuan: [...] Most of the employees in my work field are women and most of them stay unmarried. And even get ... um also stay single, no boyfriends. Those who have boyfriends end up breaking up. It's difficult to keep a relationship [with a job like that].

Ting-Fang: Um, do you think it's because of the work?

Yu-Hsuan: I think work ... I think it's very difficult to keep a romantic relationship if you've got a busy job. [...] Because you ... we have to work extra hours at weekends for PR events. On a normal working day, to get off work before 8 pm would be considered early. In most cases, the usual time to leave work is between 8 pm and 9 or 10 pm.

There is no doubt that working overtime is one of the major challenges for career women attempting to achieve a work-life balance, but the reasons are

not obvious. A quick and reasonable answer would be the excessive workload that they are taking on. However, my participants provided more information beyond that quick answer. According to their experience, there might be significant cultural factors contributing to this phenomenon of long working hours. For example, Yu-Chen reveals that the attitude of those in managerial roles plays a significant role in the amount of overtime their subordinates work.

Yu-Chen: Then the attitude of the boss is that, I pay you, therefore, I am your BOSS. You have to do exactly what I've told you. I told you to work overtime so you have to do overtime. [...] And also, his standard [of evaluating performance] is kind of weird. It's not about whether your performance is good or not. It's about whether you work overtime a lot. [...] It's a myth. I don't do overtime. Why not say that I'm much more efficient?

Working long hours seems to be a useful indicator for her boss to evaluate an employee's performance. It is more about the time an employee spends in the office than the results or outcomes. In these circumstances, an employee who tries to show that she or he is valuable and indispensable to the organisation has to get used to the practice of working overtime. If this is considered together with the hierarchical culture in the workplace, probably it is more about showing obedience to one's superior than loyalty to the organisation.²⁸

When I talked with Ko-Chi, an administrator at a university, about her experience of unspoken rules in her workplace, she brought up the practice of being a team player by not leaving the office before her colleagues.

Ko-Chi: I am a more *ren fen*²⁹ kind of person. So I will observe. I like watching people, paying attention to trivial things. When I was a rookie, I didn't think about it [as an unspoken rule]. I just feel, um, most of my colleagues are still working, so if I leave work first, even though I've finished my work, it still seems wrong to leave first. So I

²⁸ I will discuss the hierarchical culture in the workplace further in Chapter 5.

²⁹ *Ren fen* [認分] in Chinese means being aware of and accepting one's own social status and situation.

will actively ask [if my colleagues need a hand or not] and do my best to help [them do their job].

Yu-Chen's story reveals that working overtime is regarded by her boss as evidence of dedication and devotion to work. In her boss's mind, he is the one hiring people and paying their salaries; therefore, the staff must do what he wants. As for Ko-Chi, her rationale for working extra hours to help her colleagues illustrates that it is a way to demonstrate your caring and team spirit to your team. She puts herself in the role of a good team player. Both sense the organisational hierarchy and the power relationship within it.

I am not suggesting that this is the universal fact within every work organisation in Taiwan, but rather, I would like to use these as examples to illustrate that certain factors relating to Taiwanese work culture play an important role and contribute to the result of long working hours. By addressing the issue of working overtime, I intend to use it as an example to show how work influences women's lives and how a work-life balance has become an almost unreachable goal for any employee in Taiwan.

The gendered and heteronormative organisational support

Because the ideology that women are naturally family-oriented and marriage-oriented still lingers in the workplace, the work-life balance support offered by organisations is largely underpinned by ideas about wifeness and motherhood rather than about an actual individual's needs. I-Chieh, who worked in an international company, described a lecture event organised by her company to support women employees.

I-Chieh: Ah, I remember there was this lecture event for women employees. One theme was work-life balance. [...] It's kind of like having coffee together and female colleagues would share their experiences of family life and work. [...] Then, I think most of them were talking about children. At that moment, I felt, um, it was kind of difficult to participate. [smile] People were talking about how to raise children and then ... I forget the details. It was about things related to raising children.

According to I-Chieh, the event was about work–life balance, but most of the active participants were married women with children. As an unmarried non-mother, she felt distant from the topics of conversation and found it difficult to participate.

Yu-Nung, an experienced marketing and fundraising specialist, shared the uneasiness she had felt at a book club session organised at her workplace. She was told that the topic would be gender and she went with the expectation of having a discussion about issues of gender and work. Then it turned into a session that triggered intense sharing of family problems among the married women. It was quite a shock to her as a woman with no personal experience of having a husband or raising children.

Ting-Fang: So did you feel shocked that they were talking about personal stuff at a work meeting? Do you think –

Yu-Nung: For me, it's not that you can't talk about it [any personal problem] but you do have to have a certain foundation and instructions. It should not be like you go into a [meeting] ... and then pop! [using body language to express the feeling of being exposed] It really feels like, you organise a ... come, now we have a meeting and then suddenly everybody ...

Ting-Fang: Being nude?

Yu-Nung: A nudist-camp style meeting. But you don't do that kind of thing on a daily base.

I have no doubt that married career women with children are marginalised and face tremendous challenges and pressure when it comes to the issue of work–life balance. My intention in presenting I-Chieh's and Yu-Nung's thoughts on these events is to indicate that the life part of the work–life balance equation is usually limited to heterosexual married life. Furthermore, the support provided to married women employees is often not provided by institutional management but through other female colleagues' sacrifice. Ko-Chi's story

about unequal workload arrangements and unfair performance evaluation by her supervisor is a suitable example to demonstrate this.

Ting-Fang: Couldn't you bring this issue up at a meeting?

Ko-Chi: Nobody dares.

Ting-Fang: Why not?

Ko-Chi: It would be like we ... we're fussing about trivial things. Because the chief is more ... biased? I don't know how to put this. I don't know how to describe it. She's [the supervisor] more tolerant towards her [a married colleague]. She thinks that because she has a family and children to take care of, so ... um, not so much work should be assigned to her. And when she sometimes does overtime, my supervisor would think, um, even the one who has a family to take care of is staying. It really shows her dedication. So sometimes we feel that it's kind of unfair. We feel like, so do we, unmarried or single people, have no family? It shouldn't be seen like that. And then, we've got a male colleague in our office. He thinks that we're fussing about trivial things and being childish. Why are we fussing about this kind of thing?

Ting-Fang: Is that so?

Ko-Chi: Yep, [he thinks that] she has family, or what you —

Ting-Fang: Is it taken for granted?

Ko-Chi: Yes. He keeps wondering why are you [unmarried women] picking on her? He said, 'when you get pregnant and get married then you'll know.'

It seems an extremely tricky task for feminists to raise issues about non-mothers without the potential risk of revealing tensions between mothers and non-mothers. Just like feminists dealing with this tricky tension, Ko-Chi found it very difficult to raise a potential management problem involving the way in

which her supervisor treats married women employees differently from the others. Ko-Chi, as an unmarried woman, was accused by her male colleague of picking on a married woman. However, what she was trying to do was to point out the unequal workload arrangements among her colleagues.

Ko-Chi: He would say, 'why are you fussing so much about it?' But there are some among us who have already married and had children. None of us like her [the married colleague]. We've got the same work attitude. What needs to be done needs to be done. We wouldn't become someone like her.

Ting-Fang: So she's not the only one who is married and has children, there are also —

Ko-Chi: Yes, gradually —

Ting-Fang: But their workload?

Ko-Chi: Never less.

Munn Giddings (1998) argues that, while all women are marginalised, mothers are marginalised even further. Reflecting on Munn Giddings' argument, Ramsay and Letherby (2006) suggest a new framework for studying non-mothers at work in their research on non-mothers' work experience in higher education. They argue that the model of adopting the 'division between mothers and others' is insufficient. Rather than dividing women and comparing them with one another, they argue that 'both mothers and non-mothers were affected by the dominant discourse and the ideology of motherhood that pervades our society' (2006: 28).

I think that my participants' experiences have shown another approach to conceptualising women's marginalisation in the workplace. The marginalised status of a woman is contextual. I argue that the acknowledgement of plural forms of marginalisation is crucial for understanding women's situations. A woman's marginalised status is not universally the same in different situations. In addition, it is difficult to quantify. That is, one woman's specific

marginalisation in a given situation is difficult to compare with another's. A mother is not always more marginalised than a non-mother in the workplace or vice versa.

Previous studies have suggested that the informal working climates and flexible management style that emerged with the economic structure based on small and medium-sized businesses in Taiwan is one of the factors enabling married women to manage their double burden of home and workplace (Yu, 2009). However, what remains unclear is how these informal practices are actually stipulated in the workplace. From Ko-Chi's experience, the informal support given to married women employees might actually be at the expense of single female employees, who are expected to provide free labour and work too much overtime.

While gender equality in the workplace is improving, it is important to be aware of women's different experiences and backgrounds. As in the case of work-life balance, a career woman's life is not only about family and family life is not only about marriage. There is more to it than that. The concept of family should be broadened, along with the concept of work-life balance. Chih-Lu, a participant who works in the banking industry, shared her thoughts and experiences as an unmarried woman in a team with a leader who emphasises 'work-life' balance.

Chih-Lu: Then she said, 'and she has been married for five years.'
And then I said, 'um, yes, I remember that. I was at her wedding banquet.' I don't know why she brought that up. But my supervisor, she really, really cared that she could offer a so-called 'work-life balance' environment. But her definition of life seems to be only about family, nuclear family, relating to family only.

Ting-Fang: And it's a heterosexual nuclear family.

Chih-Lu: Yep, yep, yep. Then, therefore, she keeps telling everybody that if you get married, don't worry, all of us will back you up. Don't worry about having a baby, because all of us will back you up. I think, probably for some women, this is a very friendly environment. But

the problem is, for me, what if I don't want to marry and I don't want children, how would she back me up?

Ting-Fang: Does it also come to your mind, what if I'm single, will you back me up?

Chih-Lu: Or if I'm single, will you particularly not back me up?
Because I have to back up others.

Chih-Lu is aware that, for her supervisor, there is probably only one version of life that a women employee is supposed to have: a heterosexual family life with a husband and children. In such circumstances, women who choose to live a life other than building a family with a husband is disadvantaged in the workplace by the unequal distribution of supportive resources. By emphasising the support system the company could offer, the supervisor was actually reinforcing a heteronormative structure with managerial measures.

These management practices may be claimed to be woman-friendly or indeed performed with the intention of reducing the stress for those who bear the double burden of both paid work and domestic work. However, the underlying heteronormative assumptions deliver alarming messages about reinforcing the heterosexual ideology of motherhood and differentiating women by their marital status. In her study investigating men's responses to the equal opportunities strategies of organisations, Cockburn argues that the policies which support the so-called 'mothers' privileges' are actually confirming women 'as the domestic sex' (1991: 217).

Women Who Go Beyond the Glass Ceiling

In previous sections of this chapter, my intention has been to reveal that gendered and heteronormative management practices have resulted in the limitation of women's career development. Women are often expected to work in certain industries, professions and positions, and are indeed confined there. Women are not welcome in industries that are generally male-dominated. They are identified as naturally family-oriented and are often assigned jobs that allow

them to have more time to take care of their family business. These jobs often attract lower earnings than those occupied by their male peers. When it comes to promotion, women are less well supported than men. However, there are still career women who have broken through the glass ceiling and who try to make a difference.

In this section, I will discuss the experiences of women who go beyond the glass ceiling. The discussion presented here is developed from examining two types of interview statements provided by my participants. The first includes accounts from participants who have acquired managerial or senior managerial positions. In other words, it is first-hand information from women who have broken through the glass ceiling. The second are interview statements by participants who have worked with female supervisors. While the former provide the direct experiences of women managers, the latter are useful to help us understand how women employees make sense of their female supervisors' experiences of gender in relation to management. I consider both to be valuable data in helping me to understand the gender implications of management.

It has been suggested that, for women employees who are positioned at the basic and lower levels of an organisation, women managers could be insiders on the management team. Chih-Lu's female supervisor, for example, has brought her details about the male managers' attitudes towards gender which are not revealed when they are doing their management jobs. At that time, Chih-Lu was working for an international IT company. It is an enterprise which claims a reputation for gender equality in management policies. From her personal experiences as an employee, Chih-Lu did feel that it was an organisation valuing equal opportunities and respecting women's rights and interests. She felt that, when it came to gender issues at work, most male managers had been generally sensible. However, after being informed about interactions among the managers by her female supervisor, Chih-Lu saw the need to reevaluate her first impression.

Chih-Lu: She said that, in front of other staff or colleagues, they may seem very [serious and professional] ... However they would tell dirty jokes too. For example, at the kind of social events to which

only senior managers are invited, they [male senior managers] would say things like: 'Should we have some "fun" tonight then? Maybe we can find some exotic dancers.' Then my supervisor would interrupt them by saying things like 'If that's the case, hunks for me then.' [...] She would use alternative strategies to [interrupt their conversations] ... And then they would say, 'We were just joking.' Something like that.

It seems that, for those male managers, such exclusive occasions for the senior management team were an opportunity for them to behave without regard for the gender equality policies of the organisation. They would not tell 'dirty jokes' when they were working with other staff. However, they certainly felt it was okay to do so on occasions when only senior managers were present.

During the interview with Pei-Ju, a mechanical engineer, I mentioned a newspaper article about the various problems caused by so-called 'feminine competition in the workplace' (Chiu, 2011). The title of the article could be translated into English as 'Why women persecute women'. According to this article, one of the problems is that women supervisors are too ambitious and usually target other women employees as potential rivals; therefore, they treat them cruelly. Pei-Ju then shared her experience of working with a female supervisor.

Pei-Ju: We have women supervisors in our organisation. I would say they treat us well. The things mentioned in that article have not happened. [...] Most of the time, she was willing to give you the opportunity but she would be strict. [...] It would actually be a risky decision for her to support you. She could promote a *nan sheng* instead. [...] Today she recruits a *nan sheng*. If his performance is good, then fine. If not, she has already recruited a *nan sheng*. He has no inconveniences and he is physically strong enough. But if she recruited a *nyu sheng*, she would challenge people's assumptions. So we have to understand that she's under pressure. If the *nyu sheng* doesn't perform well, then people will think that she [the female supervisor] shouldn't have hired her.

According to Pei-Ju's observation, when it comes to recruitment decisions, women supervisors' professional judgement will be under strict scrutiny. In other words, recruiting a woman would make a woman supervisor vulnerable. Her professional reputation would be bundled together with this employee's performance. She has to be responsible for this woman colleague's failure. But if she hires a man, then his failure is his own. It would be nothing to do with her. I would argue that this women's burden could be interpreted as part of the effect of gender categorisation. Women are not only generalised as a homogeneous group with a shared nature, they have to carry the label of women all together. It is very difficult for a woman employee to distance herself from the generalised perceptions about other women in the workplace. Moreover, this perception is usually negative.

From my data, it is can be seen that mechanical engineering is not the only profession in which a woman supervisor has to be responsible for her women colleagues. As an active member of the LGBTQ community in Taiwan, Jiang Shih-Ching has long been aware of gender discrimination in the workplace and has tried her best to fight against it. With her position as a senior media specialist, she now has more power to negotiate and challenge the system to enable her sisters to have equal opportunities. However, her higher position cannot protect her from the burden of risk to her own career. Her identity as a lesbian could be used as an excuse to question her leadership when she insists on giving a lesbian applicant a fair chance. She told me that, only recently, she has changed her mind.

Shih-Ching: Actually I ... it's only now, I'm willing to carry this burden. Shih-Ching used the word, 'burden', to describe her personally-felt responsibility for her women supervisees. Then, she continued to explain this feeling by giving the example of the recruitment and hiring experience of a particular female member of staff.

Shih-Ching: Let me tell you something funny and ridiculous. At my current company, my supervisor is a man. And he always recruits the good-looking ones.

Ting-Fang: You know this by observing or did he just tell you directly

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Shih-Ching: I've observed it. And once he told me bluntly [about his opinion of an applicant], 'So ugly.' [...] And we usually do the interview together, then he asks me, 'Who would you pick?' He shows his list to me. Because I know him well, I know he will choose the pretty ones. So I will choose two or three candidates who I prefer. And I'll tell him, I say 'those three for you to look at, and these three for me to work with.' So, the last three are my people. [...] It's very clear that he only hires those who look pretty. And because he's responsible for the day shift, so those three [picked by him] also work on the day shift. And those picked by me, those 'ugly ones', work with me on the night shift. One of them, the last one we hired, the last place ... um, he wanted to hire someone else but I want to hire this one. [...] He asked me, 'why do you want to hire this one?' I just replied with 'I just want to hire her.' It's actually because I knew that she's a T³⁰ and I wanted to give her a try. I've never done this before [hiring someone because of knowing she is a lesbian]. 'I want to hire this one.' Then he said 'All right, all right.' And that's it. He said, 'She's your responsibility. I won't care.' I told him, 'you won't even look at her anyway. Also, she will be working with me.' [...] But you know what? He can be really obvious. Even that employee knows that she must have been selected by me. He never talks to her. [...] What I meant is, most of the time, he would say, 'go find your Shih-Ching *jie* [姊].'³¹ [...] For me, she's the very first one that I interviewed and I hired her because she's a T.

³⁰ *T* is a lesbian identity. The term is derived from the English word "tomboy". It refers to a more masculine sexual role, while its counterpart *Po* [婆] refers to a more feminine one (Chao, 2008). *T* and *Po* are two common terms with lesbian connotations in Taiwan.

³¹ *Jie* [姊] means an older sister. In Taiwan, it is used to refer not only to those with family relationships but also to women who have superior social status. It is usually used in a casual context.

It is because of her managerial position that Shih-Ching has had the chance to observe and participate in the under-table negotiation of recruitment decisions. There is plenty of information regarding gender and employment in Shih-Ching's accounts. The first thing I would like to address is the issue of women's appearance. In her inspiring work on the British tourist industry, Adkins (1995) describes how women's appearance would determine their employment. Examining her participants' experiences of work in an amusement park, Adkins argues that 'women workers needed the "right" appearance to be employed' (ibid.: 105). 'Facial display and appropriate clothing' would directly influence what kind of job a woman could be assigned or even whether she would be hired in the first place (ibid.: 105). Shih-Ching's account echoes Adkins' argument by demonstrating how a female candidate's appearance was judged by a male recruitment officer and how he made recruitment decisions based on his own personal and biased appearance criteria.

The negotiation between Shih-Ching and her male supervisor indicates that this organisation did not have an established standard practice of equal opportunities in the recruitment selection process. Therefore, the male supervisor could express his sexist comments about female applicants in the meeting. On the other hand, Shih-Ching used this inappropriate recruitment practice as an opportunity to negotiate in favour of the disadvantaged applicant without a discussion of the sexuality issue. Shih-Ching justified her choice with persistent insistence. Moreover, she used her position as a potential supervisor for the applicant as leverage. She stressed her intention to recruit this applicant onto her own team.

At the end of the discussion, Shih-Ching successfully secured a place for this female applicant. At the same time, her male colleague also explained clearly that this female employee would be Shih-Ching's responsibility. He even made sure of this in daily interactions at work by always referring her to Shih-Ching.

Lei Yu-Nung, an activist who used to work in the advertising industry, also shared similar experiences. She is also aware of the extra burden of being a female supervisor who is willing to hire women in the industry she previously worked in.

Yu-Nung: It's not always about recruitment and interviewing. Because I've experienced gender inequality in the workplace, I decided that once I got the power, I would hire *nyu sheng*. [laughing] I would do my best to hire as many *nyu sheng* as I could. But in this process, I've encountered so many difficulties. [...] I will use my experience in the production company as an example. I even hired female directors. But female directors would *tuusse*³². But it's not because they didn't have the ability. It's because ... I've worked with some [male] directors who are big names now. When I worked with them, they would also *tuusse* back then and no one would care. Almost everyone would tolerate him as a beginner. [...] If the same thing happened to a *nan sheng* and a *nyu sheng*, people would judge them differently. [...] You would find that people have high tolerance towards *nan sheng*. [...] He could use ten or twenty films to sharpen his skills, but no one would give the same chance to a *nyu sheng* [director]. Of course, she would perform less well, because she could not learn from experience, by actually doing it. So I've paid the price for this. If I hire a woman director, I have to take the risk that she will probably *tuusse*.

It should be noticed that, generally speaking, there are very few women film directors in Taiwan. Yu-Nung's decision to hire women is not only rare but also 'risky'. Like Shih-Ching, Yu-Nung is actually putting her own career at risk by doing so. In addition, Yu-Nung also observes people's different judgements about women compared to how they judge male directors.

That male-dominated industries are not friendly to women is not because there are more men there. It is because men are regarded as the norm. Women are deprived of equal treatment from recruitment, right through employment and into management. For those women who have broken through the glass ceiling, the fight is still not over. It is more than just doing their own job right. They are carrying the burden to make sure that all the women are doing things right. Gender categorisation is not only about judging someone by categorising

³² *Tuusse* is a Taiwanese term. It means making trivial non-intentional mistakes.

her or him into a distinct gender group with distinct characteristics but also about using a group member's behaviour to deduce things about the behaviour of the rest.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed my participants' accounts regarding management practices. These accounts reveal how women employees make sense of their own experiences of these practices and also those of other female employees in relation to their gender. Through this discussion, I have uncovered the gendered and heteronormative assumptions made by organisational management. Thus, gendered and heteronormative management both constructs and reinforces gender segregation and maternal ideologies in the workplace. Moreover, I have suggested that, as social constructions, gender and sexuality are intertwined with each other. One cannot be examined without reference to the other. From the perspective of materialist feminism, Ingraham (1994) proposes a critical reflection on previous gender theories. Ingraham (1994) devised the concept of the 'heterosexual imaginary' and argues that it has prevented some feminists from seeing heterosexuality as a crucial part of the construction of gender. Ingraham further argues that 'the material conditions of capitalist patriarchal societies are more centrally linked to institutionalized heterosexuality than to gender'; in addition, 'gender is inextricably bound up with heterosexuality' (ibid.: 204). Although I still have unsettled thoughts about evaluating heterosexuality over gender, I am convinced that heterosexuality is a key concept that can help me to understand the gendered arrangements in the material world. I also agree with Jackson and Scott's (2010) argument that heterosexuality is privileged in aspects of social life that are not necessarily sexual. It is so normalised that it seems to be 'natural or inevitable' (Jackson, 2006: 112). Jackson and Scott (2010: 85) also point out that 'heterosexuality should not be thought of as simply a form of sexual expression', because it is a social institution that has influence extending far beyond people's sexual lives. Heterosexuality is not only produced and reproduced in heterosexual relationships but it is actually 'mobilized and

reproduced in everyday life' (Jackson, 2006: 114). Heteronormativity is deeply embedded in both our sexual and our nonsexual routine activities. As Jackson proposes, it requires 'our continual reaffirmation for its continuance' in the everyday practices that enable the gendered heterosexual order to be sustained (2001: 291). From the above discussions of my research findings, it is clear that the ideology of normalised heterosexuality manifests itself in gendered management in the workplace. Therefore, I am taking a standpoint that the examination of gender in employment cannot be achieved without including the institutional construction of heteronormativity in the picture.

In order to further investigate the gendered heterosexual order in everyday nonsexual and social practices, I will move from organisational management to everyday interactions in the workplace. The analysis will be continued in a discussion of quotidian social practices at work in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 'Don't' I Have a Brain and Hands?': Negotiating Gender in Mundane Interactions at work

Introduction

It was a very hot and humid day. I was walking around the university with my new haircut. It was fairly short and easy to take care of. It was exactly what I needed to survive a typical summer in Taiwan. Then, a colleague saw me in the corridor. She said, in a tone that was full of surprise and even concern, 'Why did you cut your hair so short? What happened to you?' I was quite confused by her questions but still managed to reply honestly: 'Just because hot weather has happened.' It was not until later that day that I realised 'the given off' of my colleague's expression (Goffman, 1959: 14). In Taiwan, long hair is generally considered the norm for a young woman, as a way of performing her femininity. If she decides to cut her hair short, it must be because she wants to be not so feminine for some reason. The most clichéd interpretation would be because of an unpleasant break-up. My colleague was worried about me. She thought something not so pleasant had happened to me and that I had had a haircut in order to change my mood. Trivial as it may seem, this incident is an example to illustrate that everyday interactions are actually full of traces of gender construction. For my colleague, my short haircut was expressing some kind of symbolic message, and this message was only comprehensible when she read it with the attribution of my gender. It was a gendered and gendering interaction. There is no university regulation that enables this to happen. It is a construction that goes beyond organisational management or arrangements. This kind of 'trivial' and subtle everyday practice is exactly the subject that I would like to discuss in this chapter.

Although I did not adopt an ethnomethodological approach to conduct the fieldwork, this methodology has provided me with useful concepts and approaches to examine the data. Often regarded as something 'natural', gender

is identified by ethnomethodologists as part of the common sense that requires further investigation. Although the concept of gender had not been proposed or theorised at the time, Garfinkel's work indicated that 'sex status' as the 'ascribed object' can only be achieved and sustained by consistent work in everyday life (1967: 133). By studying the case of Agnes, Garfinkel illustrates that an individual's 'sex status' is a management project involving conscious calculation. Therefore, Agnes's 'passing' has brought us a sociological inquiry: do we all at some level work on our 'sex status' in everyday practices? Reviewing the conventional sociological theories of gender, West and Zimmerman (1987) provide an alternative approach to understanding gender as something a social being does rather than something a social being inherits or 'is'. They propose conceptualising 'gender as a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction' (1987: 125).

While being aware that gender as a 'doing' is perpetuated through institutional management and organisational arrangements, I am convinced that it is critical not to neglect individual practices in everyday life. In terms of the power relationships in knowledge production, focusing on everyday practices is a critical position to take on. Proposing a sociology from a women's perspective, Smith has eloquently argued for a method that enquires into the 'everyday/everynight world' and experience (Smith, 1987). The 'tacit knowledge' situated in women's experiences, which we might not be equipped with 'appropriate language' to speak of, could thereby be revealed, exposed and examined (Smith, 1997: 394). Moreover, any attempt to challenge persistent gender inequality cannot be successful without critically assessing those taken-for-granted routines. Kitzinger has argued that, compared to the 'macro level of oppression', such as gender discriminatory laws, the 'micro level of oppression' that happens in everyday interactions is 'the most resistant to analysis and political challenge' (2009: 97).

Having discussed gendered and heteronormative organisational management in the previous chapter, I will now move on to the general interactions in my participants' day-to-day working lives. The analysis in this chapter primarily focuses on my participants' accounts of everyday social practices, such as

appellations, casual talk, and body language. I will demonstrate that, while everyday practices at work are happening in a gendered and heteronormative cultural context, they are also intertwined with the hierarchical social order.

Being Identified as a *Jie* [姊]

Since 2013, the movement to reconceptualise the legal idea of the family in Taiwan has drawn much public attention. The draft of the *duo yuan cheng jia* [多元成家]³³ legislation has been proposed and promoted by the Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights. Despite disputes about strategic issues, most of the pro-LGBTQ activists and NGOs are taking part in this movement and have launched campaigns to back up the legal reform. The draft is organised into three sections: marriage equality, the civil partnership system and the multi-person family system. By arguing in favour of expanding and reshaping the legal definition of family, this legal movement has directly challenged the conventional view of familial relationships. Because of this, several groups that are pro-conventional ideology have attacked the proposed legislation by asserting that it will destroy ‘traditional’ social values which for them are worthy of preservation. One of their arguments that struck me the most is the one that concerns familial appellations. They are against the proposal to revise the column of *fu mu* [父母: father and mother] on a personal ID into *shuang cin* [雙親: both parents]. They believe this would prevent children from using the Mandarin appellations of mum and dad to address their parents. Therefore, the traditional family values and ethics would be ‘broken’. Although the causal relationship between changing the name of an ID column and stopping a certain social practice is confusing, it is obvious that the rhetoric of tradition is being used to argue for the preservation of heterosexual familial appellations.³⁴ While

³³ *Duo yuan* [多元] means ‘diversity’. *Cheng jia* [成家] means ‘having a family’ or ‘establishing a family’.

³⁴ However, it should be noted that this convention is very much Han-centred and a fairly new creation in Taiwanese society. Take the personal practices in my family for example; the appellations for mother and father have only been adopted in my generation. My mother used to address her mother by her personal name. And my grandmother used an aboriginal term, *yi a*, to address her mother.

using the conventional practice of appellation as a legal argument against the reform of marriage rights may seem absurd, it is a good example to illustrate how adopting familial appellations is perceived as a social norm.

In the Taiwanese context, the social order embedded in everyday interactions depends heavily on hierarchical relationships. Collins points out that ‘various kinds of minor conversational routines mark and enact various kinds of personal relationships’ (Collins, 2004: 18). I argue that a comprehensive analysis of everyday routines in Taiwan has to specifically take into account the hierarchical social order. In Taiwan, a social actor is very often allocated complex social relationships which are interwoven like a tight web surrounding the individual. Therefore, any given social encounter could be a rather complex situation for the social actors. It requires them to constantly identify, reassure and construct each other’s social positions through day-to-day practices in order to demonstrate proper manners and civilised selves. It would be fair to say that people are constantly reflexive in a relational and hierarchical way. Moreover, this hierarchical relationship is also gendered. This can be illustrated by the appellations used in everyday conversations.

While a senior person may address a junior one by her/his personal name, a junior person should never use a personal name to address those senior to themselves or it would be regarded as rude and offensive. This appellation system reflects the idea of *bei fen* [輩分]. *Bei fen* means the order of kinship and generations. It even goes beyond the family context. Take studying at a university for example; in the UK, it is generally a well-accepted behaviour for a university student to address a professor by their personal name. However, in Taiwan it would be regarded as unacceptable or at least uncommon to do so. A proper and polite way to interact with a professor is by using her/his family name and her/his professional title. A less formal way would be to use the family name and the appellation that means teacher (*lao shih* [老師]). Even students are categorised according to their seniority. A senior female student is usually addressed by a junior as *syue jie* [學姊] and a senior male student as *syue jhang* [學長], while a junior female student is usually addressed by a senior as *syue mei* [學妹], and a junior male student as *syue di* [學弟]. The first part of

these four terms is the same character, which means learning. The second part consists of words that refer to different siblings. *Jie* means elder sister and *mei* means younger one while *jhang* means elder brother and *di* means younger one. Through this example, we can see that gender is also a crucial component of this system of *bei fen*. It is a system of social order which is constructed and maintained through everyday practices, such as labelling gendered and hierarchical relationships by appellations in general conversations. Moreover, it can be seen that familial appellations are not only used to address family members. They are also widely adopted in everyday social interactions among social actors in non-familial relationships.

The social practice of appellations is so common and taken for granted that there is no law to enforce it, but people adjust their behaviour according to this hierarchical system. When I was studying at my previous university in Taiwan, I was often addressed as *syue jie* [學姊: a female senior study colleague] by other MA students in the department. As discussed previously, this is a conventional appellation used to address a female student who is in a class more senior than that of the speaker. However, in my case, it was because of my age. I was much older than most of the students in the department back then. Therefore, even colleagues who were in the same study year as me addressed me as *syue jie*. I felt that there was no need to use this appellation and sometimes I suspected that they were only doing so because they could not remember my name. I tried to convince them to stop addressing me as *syue jie*. I told them several times that I preferred to be addressed by my personal name. However, they found this practice difficult to adopt. One colleague even told me that he would feel awkward if he stopped addressing me as *syue jie*.

Adopting proper appellations to show respect is something to which I became very sensitive as soon as I began my fieldwork, especially when I was interacting with participants who were senior to me. Tsai Tzu-Ling was one of those participants. She was in her fifties when I first met her. We were introduced by a common acquaintance. This acquaintance is a friend of mine and a niece of Tzu-Ling's. My friend is about the same age as me and always

addresses Tzu-Ling as *a yi* [阿姨], which means ‘auntie’ in Mandarin.³⁵ In other words, we are the same generation and junior to Tzu-Ling in terms of age, social status and *bei fen*. At first, I interacted with Tzu-Ling by addressing her by her personal name, just as I did with most other participants. Then I sensed a slight uneasiness during the conversation among the three of us. So I asked Tzu-Ling whether she found it odd for me to call her just by her name. She replied ‘yes, a little bit’ and explained that it was because it was obvious that I am the same generation as her niece. After that, I used the appellation *a yi* to address Tzu-Ling, to indicate our different social statuses.

Considering this specific social and cultural context, I propose that an analysis of appellations in routine social interactions may provide insight into understanding everyday symbolic activities of doing gender in Taiwan. Through the practice of adopting proper appellations, social actors are constantly identifying, constructing and negotiating their relationships with others in quotidian verbal activities. Based on his observations of an American medical institute, Goffman developed an analysis of the symmetrical and asymmetrical rules of conduct, with a focus on deference and demeanor. He argued that ‘deferential pledges are frequently conveyed through spoken terms of address involving status identifiers’ (1967: 60–61). According to Goffman, the action of addressing a recipient with a specific term is designed to show deference and declare that ‘the expectations and obligations of the recipient, both substantive and ceremonial, will be allowed and supported by the actor’ (ibid.: 60). In other words, the adopted appellation is a meaningful source for examining the assumed and expected relationship as well as the subsequent interactions between the actor and the recipient. Here, I focus on how familial appellations are used as gendered indicators for social actors in the workplace to negotiate work as well as to make sense of relationships in the workplace.

‘It’s a way to show respect.’

According to my participants’ experiences, it seems that using familial appellations to address colleagues is a common practice in the workplace.

³⁵ It should be noted that, in Chinese, *yi* [姨] as a familial appellation is specifically used to refer to a maternal aunt.

Although such appellations seem to be less formal than job titles, they could actually be a way to denote a sense of respect in the context of workplace interactions. It is an informal strategy to mark the hierarchical differences between social actors in general conversation. Shih-Ching's account regarding the practices of appellations in the organisations that she has worked for would be a good example. Shih-Ching has pursued her career in the entertainment and media industries. She has worked for several different organisations and the work cultures vary. Some are casual and some are formal. However, when it comes to addressing a more senior colleague, choosing an appellation that delivers a sense of respect is generally considered necessary.

Shih-Ching: For example, when I worked at a record company, colleagues usually called each other by their names. As for superior staff, we would call ... the supervisor's family name is Kao, we would call him Kao *san* [桑]³⁶. [...] Just add *san*. We would not, um, use General Manager or other titles. Um, if his position were even higher, then we would use *gong* [公]³⁷. For example, we would call the Chairman of the Board Chuang *gong*. [...] His family name is Chuang. Then we add *gong*, which means grandpa or old man. We would call him Chuang *gong*.

According to Shih-Ching, the work culture at the record company was fairly casual and relaxed. It was common practice for the employees to call each other by their personal names rather than their job titles. Even so, when it came to colleagues with obviously superior positions, appellations connoting hierarchical differences would still be used. The examples she provided here are *san* [桑] and *gong* [公]. The appellation *san* [桑] is a transliterated loanword with foreign origin. It originated from the Japanese appellation, *san* [さん], a

³⁶ *San* [桑], an appellation showing respect, is a loanword originated from the Japanese language. Taiwanese Mandarin has borrowed a substantial number of Japanese words since the Japanese occupation (1895–1945). Although importing words from Japanese was tightly controlled by the KMT government, which came to Taiwan in 1945, many loanwords have survived the regulation and been used as common vocabulary in everyday conversations (see Chung, 2001). *San* is one example. These words have become a distinct characteristic of Taiwanese Mandarin.

³⁷ *Gong* [公] is a term used to refer to a senior and respected man. For example,

title that is adopted to show respect and proper manners towards the addressed, usually someone senior or of superior social status to the speaker. It is generally a gender-neutral term that can be used to address anyone in Japanese. However, in the Taiwanese context, it is more often used to address a man than a woman. The other appellation, *gong*, is very gender specific. *Gong* is conventionally used to address a male. As an appellation, *gong* has multiple meanings. It is a respectful title for a senior man or a man with eminent social status. It could also be a familial appellation for grandfather, or a married woman's father-in-law. Moreover, it could refer to a title of nobility, mostly in the context of ancient and imperial China. It is a title with a *Fengjian* [封建: Chinese Feudal] connotation. For example, after Chiang Kai-Shek, former president of the Republic of China, died, the KMT government granted him the official title of Chiang *gong* [蔣公] as a political strategy to construct his legacy. This title used to be the formal way to refer to Chiang in every textbook published by the Ministry of Education. As an appellation used in everyday conversations in the workplace, *gong* therefore could convey multiple symbolic meanings. On the one hand, it is a gendered appellation clearly indicating the superiority of the person addressed in terms of social status, seniority or generally his power within the organisation. On the other hand, the familial relationship implied by this title somehow softens the sense of formality. Instead of using the formal job title as the appellation, *gong* could be perceived as a more subtle and informal term which permits a potential personal bond between social actors despite the obvious distance created by their differing social status.

Shih-Ching also provided several other appellations, and apart from *san* they are all terms with connotations of familial relations.

Ting-Fang: How about in a Newspaper Agency?

Shih-Ching: We have to use Editor in Chief or *ge* [哥]³⁸. *Li jie* [姊], *Luo ge* [哥].

³⁸ *Ge* [哥] means older brother in Mandarin.

It is common practice for people to use familial relational appellations to address colleagues at work in Taiwan, especially referring to those who are senior or older. This may not be a unique social practice. It can be observed in other societies, such as China. However, the social meaning and interpretation may be very different according to the accounts of my participants. In his work on the gendered identities of male Chinese migrant workers, Lin uses participants' daily conversations to demonstrate 'the emergence of new extended "family relations"' among workmates 'based on their "real" familial gender relations' (2013: 96). Lin explains that this is a strategy developed by the workers to accommodate to the urban workplace setting. On the one hand, it allows them to maintain their masculine identities by constructing 'non-kin familiar social relations at work' (2013: 94). On the other hand, it could be interpreted as a practice designed to build a private social network to help each other. In his investigation of masculinity in China during the post-Mao era, Osburg argues that 'the hierarchical and gendered idiom of brotherhood' is adopted as a business communication strategy to establish 'fictive brotherly relationships' through 'elite privileges' (2016: 158; 159). However, it seems that my participants' narratives manifest a possible interpretation of the practice that is very different from those of the male Chinese migrant workers and non-state elites, and is concerned more with hierarchy than solidarity.

When I asked her personal preference of appellation, Shih-Ching expressed ambivalent attitudes toward being addressed as a *jie*. She admitted that it was not easy for her to accept it at first. Then, she gradually came to find it acceptable and sometimes even expects the respect that the term connotes.

Ting-Fang: When people first called you Shih-Ching *jie*, did you find it difficult to get used to?

Shih-Ching: I would tell them not to do so. [...] Now I've got used to it. But sometimes, people call me *jie* ... for example, I used to tell people don't call me *jie*, but sometimes, you go somewhere. Young people who don't know who I am, they might directly call my name. And then I would look twice at them. I would feel that they have no proper manners. Because, first, I'm not that familiar with you and

also it's in the workplace. For me, it's the same. Although I'm relatively old but in my work discipline, if I meet someone senior to me, or if she is more experienced than me, I would call her *jie* with respect.

For Shih-Ching, other than showing respect, *jie* seems to function as an indicator to mark distance rather than to show intimacy or a personalised relationship in the speech act. That is, proper manners indicate proper distance in terms of relationship. Power relationships are a crucial dimension in understanding the proper social distance between social actors and their interactive behaviours. As Goffman argues, 'ceremonial distance' and 'sociological distance' seem to have a common ground (1967: 64). He points out that 'between status equals we may expect to find interaction guided by symmetrical familiarity', while 'between superordinate and subordinate we may expect to find asymmetrical relations' (ibid.). Shih-Ching's account may seem contradictory; however, I argue that it actually demonstrates that using appellations is a normative social practice to indicate the appropriate social distance based on the status relationship between the actor and the recipient, which social actors may find it difficult to subvert. In the latter example, Shih-Ching was offended by the assumed familiarity in her subordinate colleague's act of addressing her by her first name.

Another participant, Chieh-Ming, is more directly critical about using senior appellations as a gesture to show respect to colleagues in the workplace. According to Chieh-Ming's observation, it is not always people who are younger than she is who will address her as *jie*.

Chieh-Ming: They're not necessarily younger. It might be people who feel that they're less experienced than you are. They feel that it's a way to show respect.

Ting-Fang: How do you feel about it then?

Chieh-Ming: Personally, I feel extremely uncomfortable. [...] I feel that I don't need you to show respect through terms of address. If

you respect me, then you respect me. I don't need any formality to verify your respect towards me. Respect doesn't come from my position, my status. It's because we should respect each other, no matter who you are.

Chieh-Ming's account indicates that the hierarchical order in the workplace is multi-faceted. Seniority is not always about age differences but could be about work experience. She also revealed her uneasiness about accepting the practice of using familial appellations as a way to show respect to colleagues. She described it as a 'formality'. It seems that, for Chieh-Ming, ceremonial acts of showing deference are entirely superfluous. She did not perceive her superordinate status in the organization as a sufficient and necessary condition for being treated with deference by others.

'Don't play that trick on me.'

As a familial appellation used to show deference to non-familial social actors, the implications of *jie* invite diverse interpretations. *Jie* is an appellation connoting both hierarchical and familial relationships. The familial connotation may therefore be interpreted as a communication strategy to project a sense of personalised closeness. In the situational context of a workplace, while it marks the recipient's female super-ordination, the actor may also use this term of address to propose a more personal relationship than that between colleagues or business partners. This increased level of intimacy from the actor may therefore not be welcomed by the recipient, particularly when their social statuses are not equal.

Some of my participants expressed their uneasiness about being addressed as *jie* in the workplace due to its implication of a less formal relationship. Hsi-Shu is one of the participants who has experienced team coordination and supervising junior colleagues. For this reason, it is not uncommon for her to be addressed as *jie* in everyday workplace interactions. Hsi-Shu told me that it is difficult for her to accept colleagues addressing her as a *jie*; moreover, she personally perceives it as improper conduct in the workplace. Hsi-Shu's account

of adopting familial appellations at work demonstrates her resistance to the personalisation of work relationships.

Hsi-Shu: I always think calling me by my name is just fine.

Ting-Fang: Then what's the reason that you find it difficult to get used to?

Hsi-Shu: Um, don't play that trick on me.

Ting-Fang: (laugh) What trick?

Hsi-Shu: Calling me *jie*. [...] I think she or he is trying to find a way to make our *guanxi*³⁹ closer, but I think it would make *jiu shi lun shi* [就事論事]⁴⁰ a difficult thing to do.

According to the online Mandarin Dictionary produced by the Ministry of Education, Taiwan, the definition of *guanxi* [關係] is 'the joint action between things or individuals' or 'influence, involvement'. It can be generally translated as 'relationship' or 'relation' in English. In speech, it is mostly used as a noun and occasionally an adjective. When this term travels to the West, its meaning is more exclusively defined. For instance, the Oxford Dictionary defines *guanxi* as a noun that means '(In China) the system of social networks and influential relationships which facilitate business and other dealings.' In academia, *guanxi* has conventionally been conceptualised as a distinct practice of business culture in China, particularly in the post-Mao era (see e.g. Wank, 1996; Tsang, 1998; Lee et al., 2001). Other than China, *guanxi* also plays an important part in the business world of other Chinese societies or communities, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, which share a certain Confucian cultural heritage (see e.g. Davies, 1995; Chow and Ignace, 2001; Hwang et al., 2009; Bedford and Hwang, 2013).⁴¹

³⁹ 'Guanxi' is included as an English word in the Oxford Dictionary, so here I followed the Hanyu Pinyin convention.

⁴⁰ *Jiu shi lun shi* [就事論事] is a Mandarin idiom which means to take the matter on its merits. The literal meaning of *jiu* [就] is 'according to' or 'focus on'. *Shi* [事] is a noun which refers to a thing or a serious matter. *Lun* [論] is a verb which means to discuss.

⁴¹ It should be noted that establishing reciprocal social networks as a business practice is not necessarily a unique Chinese social and cultural phenomenon. Research suggests

While *guanxi* has drawn attention as a specific business and cultural phenomenon, its exact definition remains contested (Tsui and Farh, 1997). While acknowledging the diverse interpretations of the term, it is proposed that 'the core idea about *guanxi* involves relationships between or among individuals creating obligations for the continued exchange of favours' (Dunfee and Warren, 2001: 192). As a business practice, *guanxi* could be perceived as a specific reciprocal relationship that is deliberately built and managed for personal favours in order to gain business advantages.

Although a substantial amount of academic effort has been expended to study *guanxi*, it is suggested that most of the studies limit their scope to 'Does *guanxi* work?' (Dunfee and Warren, 2001). Dunfee and Warren argue that most previous studies 'rely upon purely instrumental evaluations of *guanxi* and provide little consideration for ethical concerns' (ibid.: 202). The ethical concerns around the practice of *guanxi* are primarily related to bureaucratic corruption and bribery (Luo, 2002; Osburg, 2016). Empirical studies that discuss the ethical concerns around *guanxi* or its potential problems are often in the context of international patron–client relationships or, more specifically, when 'the western' meets 'the Chinese Asian' (see e.g. Tsang, 1998; Hsu and Saxenian, 2000; Hwang and Stanley, 2005; Millington et al., 2005). The investigation of *guanxi* is seldom situated in the context of interactions among colleagues at work, particularly from the perspective of gender. This is a dimension of *guanxi* practice which is revealed in Hsi-Shu's accounts.

'*Jiu shi lun shi*' is a Mandarin idiom which is often used to describe a certain attitude or principle to approach things. It means to regard business as business without involving personal preferences. That is the work style that Hsi-Shu intends to construct and maintain in the workplace. It seems that she is not very interested in building personalised, intimate relationships with colleagues. Furthermore, for her, personalising relationships at work might damage work ethics and prevent team members from interacting professionally. She does not regard *jie*, a familial appellation, as a proper way for colleagues to address her.

that there are similar concepts or practices in other cultures, such as '*rappporto clientelare*' in Italy and '*blat*' in Russia (see Orru, 1991; Michailova and Worm, 2003).

For Hsi-Shu, the personalised and yet respectful appellation, *jie*, serves as an indicator of hidden and nuanced intentions by the speaker. By addressing her as *jie*, the speaker not only projects a personalised relationship but also deliberately grants Hsi-Shu a higher position. In other words, the speaker is constructing a personalised relationship with power differences among them. This is regarded as a communication strategy that is used to ask for personal favours. Therefore, when she hears a colleague addressing her as *jie*, Hsi-Shu interprets it as a 'trick' to ask a favour from her. Personalising a relationship means demanding something that would otherwise be out of the question in the context. Therefore, she prefers colleagues to use her personal name. While a familial appellation offers a sense of personalisation, a personal name is regarded as a way to indicate individuality. Moreover, while an appellation is often gendered, the personal name is an option that offers the implication of individuality without addressing the person's gender. It is therefore comparatively gender neutral.

Chia-Chun provided another example to illustrate how using familial appellations at work is a communication strategy that is used to personalise work relationships in order to persuade colleagues to offer help. Chia-Chun was working for an insurance company. Dealing with the settlement of claims was part of her job. She told me that sometimes her colleagues would call her the *yi jie* [一姊] of settlement.

Ting-Fang: Have you ever been addressed as *jie*?

Chia-Chun: Oh, sure. *Yi jie* [一姊]. The *yi jie* of settlements. [...] When you're called that, you know that it means this person is hoping you will solve some problem for her or him.

Yi [一] literally means 'one' or 'the first' in Mandarin. *Yi jie* is a term usually used to refer to a woman who is excellent in a specific area. By addressing her as the *yi jie* of settlements, Chia-Chun's colleagues were actually referring to her as the top woman employee in the settlement of claims. It is a title with a sense of praise. For Chia-Chun, it is a flattering gesture with a catch.

Both Hsi-Shu and Chia-Chun regard *jie*, the familial appellation for senior women, as a signal notifying them that whoever using it is asking a favour from them. Addressing a woman colleague as *jie*, therefore, is perceived as a deliberate action to place her in a higher position. By doing so, the person adopting this appellation is drawing a line between herself and the person being addressed. The appellation implies a difference in power or ability between them. While it seems to create an invisible distance, the fact that it is also a familial appellation also implies a sense of closeness. In this way, a personalised and, at the same time, hierarchical relationship is implied. It is both distanced and intimate at the same time. Both Hsi-Shu and Chia-Chun are hesitant to accept this personalised appellation because they realise that there will be a request for a personal favour coming afterwards. Their concerns reflect an ideal professionalism which treats the workplace as being free from personalised relationships. Building up *guanxi*, personalised and reciprocal social networks, has been widely recognised as a common strategy to facilitate business in the commercial world of Chinese communities. But here, both of my participants demonstrate negative feelings about personalising workplace relationships; they seek to differentiate the workplace relationship from the private relationship.

However, Hsi-Shu's experiences suggest that *jie* as a personal yet respectful appellation is adopted as a communication strategy not only to ask for personal favours but also to reject a request. In the interview, she told me that a negotiation tactic that she really has an issue with is *sa jiao* [撒嬌].⁴² Personally, she found it totally unacceptable in the workplace. She used the case of a male supervisee as an example.

Hsi-Shu: Basically, I don't buy it. I really can't swallow it. I can't, I just can't. [...] He [a male supervisee] would use *sa jiao* [撒嬌] as a tactic

⁴² *Sa jiao* [撒嬌], which is conventionally transliterated as *sajiao*, is a Mandarin term which is difficult to find an equivalent English word to translate. The meaning of this term could be generally understood as acting in a spoiled and childlike way. Further details will be discussed in the following analysis.

to solve problems or *shua lai* [耍賴]⁴³. Then I heard it. It made me feel really uncomfortable. For example, I told him, ‘You haven’t completed this task yet. You might need to hurry up. Could you submit it to me next week?’ And then he might say something like, ‘Oh no, *syue jie* [學姊: a female senior study colleague], bullying, it’s bullying ah.’ [...] He was kind of joking. He said that in front of a lot of people. ‘Bullying oh, bullying oh. *Syue jie*, please don’t do this to me la.’⁴⁴

Ting-Fang: He would call you *syue jie* in such a context?

Hsi-Shu: Yes.

Ting-Fang: He graduated from the same university as you did?

Hsi-Shu: Bullshit.

Ting-Fang: Then why did he call you that?

Hsi-Shu: Kind of a respectful appellation in the workplace.

In her investigation into Chinese language and gender in the urban Taiwanese speech community, Farris (1988) identified *sa jiao* as one of the featured gender-marked verbs.⁴⁵ The meanings of *sa jiao* are defined as ‘(1) “to show pettiness, as a spoiled child,” and (2) “to pretend to be angry or displeased, as a coquettish young woman”’ (ibid.: 301). Farris further argues that native speakers perceive *sa jiao* as a communication style that ‘spoiled children of both sexes, and young (particularly unmarried) women engage in for certain strategic goals’ (ibid.: 302). However, later empirical research has contested the

⁴³ *Shua lai* [耍賴] is a Mandarin term. It means being shameless and sly. As a social act, it is often performed in a childish way.

⁴⁴ ‘Ah’ [啊], ‘la’ [啦], and ‘oh’ [喔] are common final particles in Chinese speech. The usage of sentence final particles and prolonging these words has been identified as one of the verbal features of the *sa jiao* style of communication (see Chuang, 2005; Yueh, 2013).

⁴⁵ Similar concepts can be found in other societies, such as *amae* [甘え] in Japan and *aegyo* in Korea. It is also suggested that, even in cultures or societies that do not have a term for this communication style, this does not necessarily mean that there is not any similar social practice (see Yueh, 2013).

conceptualisation of *sa jiao* as a 'female' communication style. Adopting an ethnographic perspective, Yueh uses the everyday speech data collected in Taipei, Taiwan to illustrate that *sa jiao* can be gender-neutral to native speakers. Yueh approaches *sa jiao* as 'a babyish form of persuasion' that requires team play by the social actors in the situated context and challenges the conventional categorisation of *sa jiao* as 'a women's speech act' (2013: 159; 177). She argues that 'the daily language, the media representations, and the display of gender' have contributed to the discursive construction of *sa jiao* as 'the "natural" way women talk and do things' (ibid.: 177).

The example provided by Hsi-Shu about the male supervisee demonstrates that *sa jiao* is not a 'woman-only' communication style in her workplace. Male employees adopt it to negotiate work too. As a tactic of persuasion, the purposes of a *sa jiao* act could be multiple. In this case, it is used to refuse an order from a more senior colleague. The appellation *syue jie* serves as a component of his speech act. Yueh (2013) identifies several verbal and nonverbal features of *sa jiao* performance. One is that the actor is 'portrayed as a helpless, childish, incapable, dependent, or powerless subject' (ibid.: 161). By identifying her as *syue jie*, the supervisee was indicating Hsi-Shu's seniority with a personalised touch. Moreover, the term 'bullying' also serves as a crucial indicator of the power gap. By using this term to interpret the job request from Hsi-Shu, the supervisee therefore rendered himself in a disadvantaged position, or even with comparatively powerless status.

'You are not a *mei* [妹].'

Through the analysis of my participants' accounts, it becomes evident that, while *jie* is adopted as a gendered honorific title in the workplace, it also facilitates tactical interactions to negotiate work. By being identified as a *jie*, a senior woman employee is stepping into a personalised relationship constructed by the speaker. Her professional authority and abilities are valued and yet, at the same time, she is targeted as a potential favour provider or as someone to be placated through *sa jiao*. In his theorization of deferential acts, Goffman reminds us that, since the actor and the recipient 'are likely to be related to one another through more than one pair of capacities', 'the same act

of deference may show signs of different kinds of regard' (1967: 61). Some other interview data suggests that this honorific gendered appellation could also come with sexual implications. On the topic of being identified as a married and senior woman colleague at work, Hsi-Shu mentioned her feeling of being perceived as 'desexualised'.

Hsi-Shu: I feel that we, mature and married women, tend to be desexualised. That is, if you don't try to promote your own femininity, I think that men would tend to treat you ... you're not a *mei* [妹]⁴⁶, in short. You're a *jie*, you're a *da jie* [大姊: big sister].⁴⁷

According to Hsi-Shu's personal experience, 'mature and married' woman colleagues are regarded as less feminine and less sexually attractive by male colleagues and therefore find themselves being treated in a certain way. In Hsi-Shu's narratives, *jie* is compared to another gendered appellation, *mei* [妹], which is the familial appellation for younger sister. While *jie* is generally used as an honorific appellation implying a woman's seniority at work, the social and cultural meaning of *mei* as an appellation is more complicated than simply indicating female juniority. It could also be used as a term to refer to a 'chick', particularly when the term is marked by level tone.

In order to discuss the gendered implications of *mei*, an introduction to the popular Mandarin terms which are commonly adopted to refer to beautiful young women would be helpful. The conventional, and rather old-fashioned, term to describe a beautiful woman is *mei nyu* [美女].⁴⁸ The literal translation of the term is 'a beautiful woman'. In the early 1990s, a new term, *la mei* [辣妹], emerged in the mass media.⁴⁹ It originated from the Mandarin translation of 'Spice Girls', a British pop girl group. In Taiwan, the official translation of the

⁴⁶ *Mei* [妹] is the Mandarin word referring to a younger sister.

⁴⁷ *Da* [大] literally means 'big'. In this context, it is added in front the appellation to emphasize the seniority of the referred individual.

⁴⁸ The first character of this term, *mei* [美], means 'beautiful'. *Nyu* [女] means 'a woman' or 'women'.

⁴⁹ *La* [辣] is an adjective to describe hot and spicy food in Mandarin. It can also be used to describe someone who is sexually attractive.

name of the group is *la mei* [辣妹] *he chang tuan* [合唱團].⁵⁰ This could be back-translated to English as ‘an ensemble of hot chicks’. Since then, *la mei* has become a popular term adopted in speech by the general public to refer to beautiful young women, particularly those who are identified as attractive in a sexy way. In the late 1990s, another term, *jheng mei* [正妹], was coined and has claimed popularity in online social networking platforms and the mass media.⁵¹ It has become a popular term used to refer to ‘a beautiful chick’. *Jheng mei* is not only a linguistic creation with cultural connotations but also an economic phenomenon. Commercialisation of *jheng mei* is recognised as a successful marketing strategy (see Wang, 2009; Chen, 2012).⁵²

Yu-Chen’s account of attending a male-dominated computing conference is a good example to explain the gendered connotations of *mei*.

Yu-Chen: Once I attended a conference, a conference of computer engineers. Do you know how *wu liao* [無聊]⁵³ they [male computer programmers] were? They created a Google file. An openly shared file to mark the location of every *jheng mei* [正妹] at the conference. They drew a picture, one little square mark after another. If they thought a female delegate was a *mei* [妹], they would mark it in red. See how *wu liao* they were? Extremely *wu liao*.

The gendered connotations that can be implied by using the appellations *jie* and *mei* in general therefore are more than female seniority or juniority, particularly in a society where a marriage gradient is the norm. In Taiwan, hypergamy and homogamy are regarded as the conventional marriage patterns for women

⁵⁰ *He chang tuan* [合唱團] is the Mandarin term for ensemble.

⁵¹ It is suggested that *jheng mei* is an abbreviation of *jheng dian de* [正點的] *mei mei* [妹妹] (Wu, 2011). *Jheng dian* is Mandarin slang. It could be understood as ‘hell of a good’ in English. *Mei mei* means a younger sister. But when it is pronounced with a rising intonation, it is usually used to refer to a young woman or girl.

⁵² Despite the fact that *jheng mei* has been a notable cultural and economic phenomenon, it seems that it does not attract much academic attention. There are only a very few studies on it.

⁵³ *Wu liao* [無聊] is a Mandarin term which has several meanings. In this context, it means boring, mundane and nonsensical. This term is generally used to describe a behaviour that is meaningless.

(Yang et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2013). Women are generally expected not to 'marry down'. In their study on assortative mating in Taiwan, Yang et al. (2006) identified education, earning and age as the three main socio-economic factors in assortative mating. In other words, a woman is conventionally expected to find a male partner who is older, better-educated, and has better earning capacity than she does.⁵⁴ In other words, in a heterosexual relationship, a man is expected to be more advantaged in terms of socio-economic conditions. If a woman is addressed by a man as *jie*, her seniority is labelled and constructed in the interaction. She is identified as the more advantaged one in their relationship.

By examining my participant's accounts, I have shown that *jie*, as an informal and personalised appellation, serves as a speech device that facilitates gendered interactions in the workplace. It is an indicator of the perceived and assumed relationships between the interacting social actors. On the one hand, it is adopted as an honorific appellation to show respect and good manners to senior woman colleagues by their juniors. On the other hand, it can also be used for strategic communication purposes. Being referred to as a *jie* means that a woman employee is given a superior and advantaged position in an interactive context. A colleague might use it as a tactic to negotiate work by acquiring and constructing a less powerful position for her or himself. Moreover, since *jie* is a gendered term used to indicate not just seniority but specifically female seniority, it can imply specific connotations in a heterosexual interaction. While *mei*, the appellation indicating female juniority, is also a term used to refer to 'a beautiful chick', being identified as a *jie* could be interpreted as being perceived as less heterosexually desirable. Being identified and interacted with as a *jie*, therefore, is a gendered categorisation with sexual implications.

⁵⁴ It has been suggested that, with the expansion in higher education and the improvements in women's earnings and labour participation, there are emerging changes as well as persistence in the pattern of women's hypergamy in Taiwan. For example, Yang et al. suggest that 'it seems that downward marriage in one aspect tends to be compensated by hypergamy in another aspect' (2006: 4).

Patrolling Gender Boundaries

In Chapter Four, I discussed how gender segregation at work is sustained through organisational management and practices. The gendered division of labour underpins not only the binary structure of domestic/public labour but also the arrangement of work in an organisation. Work is, therefore, gendered. Some tasks are constructed as men's work and others as women's work. Women are employed and expected to fit into this gendered deployment. However, the construction of gendered labour and women as gendered employees in the workplace are not only accomplished by organisational management but also by general interactions among individual social actors. The latter is the theme emerging from my participants' accounts of some interesting (for some, in an annoying way) little episodes about gender in their everyday work. By examining these interview data, I will show how my participants are identified and realised as gendered social actors in the workplace. I will argue that the symbolic interpretations of their gender are constantly accomplished through general interactions at work. Their labour, bodies and general work practices are constructed as gendered. The meaning of my participants' gender, as well as the meaning of gender as a social category, are therefore negotiated in everyday interactive activities in the workplace.

'But initials are more often used by men.'

When I interviewed Chih-Lu, she was working in Taipei in the local office of an international corporation. Since communicating with colleagues located in other countries is part of the daily routine, English is also the main language in her organisation. Although it is not compulsory, using an English name is widely accepted as part of the organisational culture. Chih-Lu, however, was one of the very few employees choosing to use the transliterated form of her Chinese name. She had not anticipated that it would be an issue. After being noticed by her supervisor, there were several occasions when the supervisor tried to convince her to use an English name instead.

Chih-Lu: My supervisor had raised this issue three times. [...] 'Chih-Lu, you don't have an English name?' I said, 'No. I haven't used an

English name for a long time, so if you called me by an English name, I wouldn't turn around. I wouldn't know who you were calling.' Then she said, 'Oh, okay.' The second time, she probably said something like 'uh, but if you don't use an English name, the regional staff might find it difficult to pronounce your name.' And I said, 'I don't think so. Or they can call me C.L. I don't mind people calling me C.L.' Then my supervisor said, 'Oh, right, using initials. But initials are more often used by men.' Then I was like, 'Oh, I'm not sure about that actually.' (laugh) [...] I never interpret it in such a way. All I can say is that she was really 'gender sensitive'. (laugh)

Chih-Lu's supervisor tried to convince her not to use English initials by suggesting that usually only men would do that. The way the statement was expressed was as though it was a fact. The supervisor did not provide any specific explanation to support this statement. Also, she failed to explain why, even if it was the case, it would be a problem for a woman to use initials simply because it is a practice mostly adopted by men. This is a good example to show that gender is regarded as a sufficient reason for making claims in everyday interactive situations. In other words, the supervisor was expecting Chih-Lu to adopt not only an English name which followed the work conventions of the organisation but also a name which conformed to her gender.

It seems that gender not only serves as a sufficient reason for making assertive claims in general communication, it is also adopted as an appropriate reason to doubt and confine women's ability to do things. This is shown in Hsiao-Yin's account of the disagreement between herself and a colleague about who could and should change the fluorescent tube in their office. Our conversation about the gender ratio among the staff in her workplace turned into a discussion of the gendered allocation of general tasks in her workplace.

Hsiao-Yin: I really can't stand it. Previously, we had this maintenance problem about lights. [...] There was one time, I said, 'the light keeps flickering.' The new fluorescent tube was there in our office, but no one wanted to change it. I said, 'Can someone let me use her or his desk as ladder? I'm going to change the fluorescent tube.' Then she

said, 'Don't do it. Just wait for the maintenance guy.' I said, 'Wait til when? It keeps flickering. I really feel uncomfortable. I can do it. I know how to do it.' However, she still insisted that it was not okay. [...] Then she asked her boyfriend [who was also working in the organization] for help. [...] There's only one male staff member in our office. On occasions like this, for instance, when something needs to be repaired or fixed, she would use a demanding tone, probably because she is quite senior. She would say [to the male employee], 'You change it.' I feel like, if I was him, I would feel, 'What the -?' Everyone is capable of changing the light. It's really weird that she didn't allow me to do it.

Hsiao-Yin's willingness and her ability to change the fluorescent tube were rejected. On the other hand, her colleague's suggestions were problematic for Hsiao-Yin. It seems that the colleague was insisting on having a man to change the tube. At first, her colleague tried to convince her to wait for the maintenance staff to do the repair. After that was declined, she then turned to her boyfriend. Moreover, according to Hsiao-Yin's observation, she often requested the only male staff member to take care of similar tasks when he was present. This suggests that, for Hsiao-Yin's colleague, changing the fluorescent tube is a man's task. This incident is a good example of how the meaning of a gendered body is constructed in everyday interaction in the workplace. Being perceived and interacted with as women, my participants were expected by other individuals at work to behave accordingly. Sacks points out that social categories are 'inference rich' and 'a great deal of the knowledge that members of a society have about the society is stored in terms of these categories' (1989: 272). Gender is therefore used and reinforced as a sufficient reason to allow or forbid a social actor's actions.

'I feel that a woman is...'

As a woman computer programmer, the doubtful and sometimes even shocked reactions of people towards her profession were not unfamiliar to Yu-Chen.

Yu-Chen: Or people would say, 'You're a *nyu sheng*.' I said 'Yes.' 'You can do programming?' 'Yes.'

Ting-Fang: So it's kind of obvious that they think it's a men's thing?

Yu-Chen: Yes. Some people would even ask, 'How come you, a *nyu sheng*, want to do programming?'

Ting-Fang: What did you reply to that?

Yu-Chen: I said, 'Who says a *nyu sheng* can't do programming? Don't I have a brain and hands?'

What annoyed Yu-Chen the most is not that people find it uncommon to meet a woman computer programmer, but that they inappropriately question her career choice simply based on her gender. Working in the IT industry, which is widely acknowledged as male-dominated, the unpleasant assumptions and doubts cast on Yu-Chen's occupational ability came not only from people when she first met them, but also from male colleagues with whom she had been working. They had the idea that working with a woman colleague is troublesome because she can never work like a man does. For example, they just assumed that a woman has less strength than a man does, so she is unable to carry a desktop tower on her own. And that would be troublesome for them.

Yu-Chen: They probably feel that ... um ... a woman doesn't have enough strength to carry a desktop tower. [...] But I don't think that's always the case. For instance, recently my company had a refurbishment. We had to move things around. I carried two towers on my own. [...] But you know, sometimes, it's not about whether a woman can actually do it or not, but how they [men] feel about it. Sometimes a male colleague would say 'I feel that a woman is blah blah blah...' And I would just tell him, 'I feel you should eat shit.'

The fact that Yu-Chen had demonstrated sufficient physical strength could not really change her male colleagues' stereotypical opinion of women. This suggests that the ability of a woman employee is predetermined by her gender

and has nothing to do with her actual work performance. A woman is deemed to be weaker than a man and, therefore, is less qualified. Facing this type of obvious gender discrimination, Yu-Chen could not resist fighting back with sharp and very direct comments. Since the speaker justified his sexist remark by reference to his feelings, Yu-Chen then delivered her reply using a similar sentence structure and logic to ridicule it.

For Yu-Chen, building up and maintaining the image of never holding back her opinions is something worth working on. She told me that being a direct person in the workplace could save her time because she could say whatever she would like to say, just cut to the point directly. In addition, it also makes rejection a very easy thing to do. However, while she never hesitated to give a piece of her mind to anyone making inappropriate assumptions about a woman programmer, her directness has brought her the reputation of 'being just like a man.' This can be observed in the way she is addressed by her colleagues. Yu-Chen has a nickname, Aki. Rather than just calling her Aki, her colleagues would add *ge* [哥: elder brother] after the nickname.

Yu-Chen: Everyone in my department calls me Aki *ge* [哥 : an elder brother].

Ting-Fang: Aki *ge*?

Yu-Chen: They said that 'except for your appearance, you're basically a man. Take off your camouflage!'

Ting-Fang: (laughs) How so?

Yu-Chen: Probably because I don't talk like a *nyu sheng*. I don't talk in a euphemistic way.

Yu-Chen has made a tremendous effort to show that computer programming is not and should not be a male-only occupation; a woman can also do it and do it well. However, while she survives her women-unfriendly workplace with the strategy of not holding back her opinions, this is interpreted in terms of her not being feminine rather than that there is something wrong with the male-dominated culture. By categorising Yu-Chen as a man-like female computer engineer, her colleagues reassure themselves that men are the norm in this workplace. The structure of gender duality is thus reaffirmed. Women who

survive the male-dominated work culture and achieve a professional career in it are often labelled as not feminine. If you clearly do not fit the stereotype of woman then you must be a man or like a man. An example is Margaret Thatcher; when she became prime minister, she was described as ‘an honorary man’ (Pringle, 1994: 120). This is both praise and a negative comment. Her ability and success were accepted because she was ‘like a man’. Therefore, she was also devalued as being ‘not woman enough’. Ultimately, male masculinity and male identity are still the norm in politics, as in many workplaces.

‘If a *nyu sheng* participates, we might have bad luck.’

Gender discrimination in everyday interactions not only degrades women’s professional ability in the male-dominated workplace but may also deprive them of the opportunity to perform certain tasks. Pei-Ju, a mechanical engineer, shared her thoughts about the tremendous pressure that a woman employee can face in a male-dominated workplace. For example, there is this superstition that if a woman goes onto the worksite, or construction site, it will bring bad luck and something will go wrong. So she was confronted by a dilemma. On the one hand, she needed on-site experience to demonstrate her professional ability and skills. On the other hand, there was a risk of being blamed if anything went wrong.

Pei-Ju: Yep. That is, you (as a *nyu sheng*) being in a tunnel ... for example, when we go down the tunnel at night and then other people would tell you ... ‘He has no bad intentions.’ He would say, ‘Um, but if a *nyu sheng* comes, we might have bad luck.’ He had no bad intentions. Most of the *nan sheng* [男生: men] that we are facing have good intentions. If he had bad intentions, then it would be easy to deal with. But his intentions are good.

Ting-Fang: So the reason why he said this –

Pei-Ju: He sincerely thought so. [...] He wanted to persuade you, to give you advice. ‘There is no rule saying that you have to go. Would you like not to come?’ He worried that you would be censured. Then

what kind of dilemma are you facing? On the one hand, if you don't go, you miss an opportunity to gain experience. And then this experience would ... people would use it to prove your disqualification. There are certain places that you couldn't go. [...] This kind of evidence is not in words. It's a kind of ... when you want to be promoted, the fact that you don't have certain experience...

Ting-Fang: Um, it would not be stated on your résumé, but –

Pei-Ju: Yep, but people would identify you as, for example, you can't work solely on your own. It would be taken into consideration. On the other hand, if you go, you would feel the pressure. What if ... actually there is always a chance that the machine might suddenly break down. But if other people [go] and you don't, it breaks down. People would think it just happened today. But if you go and the machine indeed breaks down, they would feel 'Wow, the superstition is (true).' [...] Really, they're all well-intentioned. But good intentions are even more horrible. Because of their good intentions, you have to reject or go against them in a delicate and tactful way.

Having been aware that the career path she chose would not be women-friendly, Pei-Ju has prepared herself for and indeed experienced all kinds of hostile situations. It is not an issue for her to have a serious argument about gender equality with any individual who has an opinion about women mechanical engineers. However, in the interview Pei-Ju emphasised more than once that she found the 'well-intentioned' gender discrimination to be the most difficult kind to deal with. The discouraging words from her male colleagues were meant to be a kind reminder, or even a thoughtful suggestion. They wanted to prevent Pei-Ju from being blamed as the reason for an unsuccessful performance. As a member of the mechanical engineering team, even though she had acquired competent professional ability and qualifications, Pei-Ju was treated by her male colleagues as a gendered colleague who needed extra care or should be excused from certain tasks. In this way, a woman mechanical engineer is categorised as a different kind of team member from the 'ordinary

male one' because of her gender. Her gender is perceived as a special situation which requires their understanding and sympathy in work arrangements. Pei-Ju's story about her personal dilemma indicates how everyday symbolic exchanges contribute to sustaining the ideology of the gendered division of labour. Even though she is not necessarily labelled through verbal communications, her identity as a female staff member is constantly identified and constructed in everyday work practices.

'They would belittle you, infantilise you.'

While the previous discussion primarily relates to interactions between my participants and their colleagues, Yu-Nung's experience shows another interactive dimension at work. When she was working in the TV and film industry, Yu-Nung had noticed that clients would praise female and male staff differently. She used a presentation experience as an example. She was in her thirties; on one occasion she presented a commercial proposal to a male-dominated organisation which had a strict hierarchical system. Most of the high-ranking staff members were attending the event. After the session, Yu-Nung was invited to have an informal meeting with the chief. When she entered the room, the chief was seated in the main chair while all the other staff members were standing aside. Yu-Nung approached the chief, chose the seat next to him and then directly asked for his comments about her proposal. Later that day, she realised that her action might have surprised other people after a conversation with a male staff member who was in charge of her reception.

Yu-Nung: He said, 'Eh, you, a *siao nyu sheng* [小女生 : little girl].' He said it like that. 'You, a *siao nyu sheng*, didn't you feel nervous or intimidated when you met with our chief and talked to him?' [...] I don't think it was the first time for them [to meet a woman who works in this industry], but strangely enough ... the reason why I use this example is that, in my area, when they talk about a *nan sheng*, they say 'you're a talented young man.' If it were a *nyu sheng*, they would belittle you, infantilise you, but at the same time appreciate

you. It feels like they really appreciate and admire you but in a reluctant way. So they infantilise you, then they feel balanced.

It seems that the staff member was impressed by her frank attitude when she was facing the assumed powerful and formidable chief. However, instead of expressing more straightforward praise of Yu-Nung's bold and confident meeting appearance, he delivered it as a question and addressed her as *siao nyu sheng*, a little girl. He was showing his appreciation but at the same time undermining her professional authority by placing her in an infantilised position. Yu-Nung then linked this occurrence with other experiences she had had in the industry. This was not the first or only time that she was addressed as 'a little girl' by male clients or work partners, even though she was clearly an adult woman with a professional and managerial title. According to Yu-Nung's observation, while a young male staff member would be described as 'a talented young man', a young female staff member would more often be described as 'an interesting little girl'. In this case, compared to 'talented', 'interesting' is a word that denotes less recognition of an individual's professional abilities.

I have presented my participants' accounts of common interactions at work in order to discuss how women employees are constantly reminded of their membership of the category of women in everyday routines. These experiences of gender categorisation constitute an important part of the 'gendered reality' of their everyday working lives (see Stokoe, 2006; Hester and Francis, 1997). Membership categorisation has been identified as an important aspect of doing gender in everyday social interactions (see Stokoe and Smithson, 2001; Stokoe, 2003; 2006). Adopting an ethnomethodological approach to studying gender and language, Stokoe proposes membership categorisation analysis as a useful tool to investigate gender and language on everyday social occasions. She argues that it is important to investigate 'how gender categories are routinely occasioned to accomplish' in 'mundane moments of interaction' because it is within the 'situated accomplishments of local interaction' that 'the routine gendering of social life gets "done"' (ibid.: 488; 468). It is by 'people's social and moral categorization practices' that gendered order is routinely achieved (Stokoe, 2003: 4). Through an examination of the interactive episodes shared by

my participants, the related 'normative conceptions' and 'cultural knowledge' about gender are therefore manifested. In her pioneering study on language and sexual politics in the case of a murder interrogation, Wowk argues that 'gender is tacitly used as a background scheme for the performing of some "other" actions' (1984: 76). Her analysis reveals that, by facilitating 'commonsense reasoning' about men and women in his defence, the murderer was actually blaming the victim for the outcome of his own criminal act (ibid.). In the case of my participants' experiences, their gender is assumed to be a proper cause of dos and don'ts about their routine work performances. They are constantly perceived and treated as gendered beings by colleagues, supervisors and clients. As women employees in the workplace, my participants are expected to perform everyday work tasks in ways that 'fit' their gender. Working as a woman therefore means working as a member of the gendered social category, women.

Interacting Heterosexuality

I was once asked by an acquaintance why 'homosexual people' always have to be so 'sexually explicit.' Knowing that I am a supporter of gay rights and have joined the Taipei Pride several times, she regarded me as a proper candidate for this discussion and expressed her enquiry in a sincere tone. She told me that she would be more than willing to support gay rights if only the campaign could be much more low-key and not 'full of sexual stuff.' I cannot recall my response exactly other than that I tried my best to engage in the conversation without unleashing the sarcastic remarks on the tip of my tongue.

It is not surprising that minorities are easy targets for stigmatisation. For non-heterosexual groups, 'sexual deviant' is always a quick label. While heterosexuals can easily pass as 'normal' human beings, lesbians, gays and any sexual minorities are often perceived as the sexualised other. The demonstration or presentation of homosexuality is thus easily perceived as excessively sexual. On the other hand, because heterosexuality is identified as the norm, it is so 'natural' that people often ignore it in everyday life. It is this 'unnoticeable' but actually ubiquitous heterosexuality in social life to which I now turn.

‘They feel the need to know your plans about children.’

In Chapter Four, I discussed how the marital and relationship status of a prospective employee would be an issue to investigate during the recruitment process. From the interview data, it appears that this is also an issue in everyday and mundane social interactions. One of the common experiences among my participants is that they are quite often asked about their heterosexual relationship status. ‘Do you have boyfriend?’ ‘Are you and your boyfriend going to get married soon?’ ‘Do you two plan to have children in the near future?’ From the wording of these questions, it is clear that only heterosexual relationships are considered. The reasoning behind these questions assumes that heterosexuality is the one and only possible sexual orientation for people to have. Also, these questions touch on the personal aspects of their lives. However, they are often posed by people with whom they do not necessarily share private information. It is as though heterosexual life is so normal that it makes a perfect subject to chat about with someone you do not know well. Hsi-Shu’s account is a clear example.

Hsi-Shu is married and has no children. Her status as a married and childless woman seems to offer her colleagues sufficient excuse to engage in social conversations regarding her pregnancy plans. In our interview, Hsi-Shu clearly expressed her annoyance about this constant prying in the workplace.

Hsi-Shu: During the past three years, my colleagues have constantly asked me why I don’t have children. They keep asking me that. ‘How come you haven’t had any children yet?’ But for what reason should I exchange such *wu liao* [無聊] information with my colleagues?

Hsi-Shu used the term, *wu liao*, to describe the information her colleagues were asking. For her, having a conversation about her pregnancy plans is boring, mundane and nonsense. She has no intention of sharing this part of her personal life with individuals in the workplace. She regards it as a meaningless social activity. Hsi-Shu continued to provide further details of the enquiries that she received.

Hsi-Shu: They feel the need to know your plans about children, or ‘do you want to have children?’ ‘Do you plan to have one?’ ‘Are you taking Chinese herbal medicine?’ ‘You can’t have anything chilled or cold (if you want to get pregnant).’ I feel that people in the workplace care a lot ... not only the workplace actually. People are very interested in whether other people are going to get pregnant or not. [...] It’s like today you ... um, it’s like something as *wu liao* as the question ‘What time did you wake up this morning?’

Hsi-Shu used the question of waking up time as an analogy to describe how mundane she felt the questions regarding her pregnancy were. It seems that a woman’s pregnancy plans are regarded as a proper conversational topic in general social interaction. It is as common as if they were asking about something routine, and they seem not to be aware of intruding on her personal and private life. I argue that this commonness is based on the ideology of heterosexual marriage. It should not be overlooked that Hsi-Shu’s personal and private life is perceived as a heterosexual one. The fact that she married a man guaranteed her the position of having a ‘normal life’ as a member of the group of ‘normal people’.

Probably it does not show in the English translation, but the ‘you’ in these enquiries are all in the singular form. The questions were posed to Hsi-Shu specifically. In other words, it was regarded as solely Hsi-Shu’s ‘problem’ that she does not have children in her married life. They did not mention her husband at all. Her colleagues provided suggestions for her to overcome the ‘problem’. The questions asked by Hsi-Shu’s colleagues were actually more than just prying into her intentions and plans about pregnancy. They were providing specific suggestions. According to their suggestions, it is assumed that her body was the problem which was preventing her from conceiving. It seems that everyone felt able to have a say about this part of her personal life, even in the workplace.

Our daily social lives are actually filled with heterosexualised details. Heterosexuality is regarded as the norm; therefore, it is often neglected by social actors. Moreover, it is powerful enough at the symbolic level to disguise it

as something else. That is, people are able to talk about heterosexuality without labelling it as heterosexual. Hsi-Shu provided a very impressive example of this. She told me that socialising with colleagues is not an easy task for her. One of the reasons is that she feels that her colleagues tend to pry into other people's personal lives, especially their sexual lives. However, they seem to be unaware that they are prying into people's sexual lives.

Hsi-Shu: They [His-Shu's colleagues] like to discuss others, other *fu ci's* [夫妻]⁵⁵sex life. For example, did you keep your legs in a higher position [during or after sex]? [...] I will be totally honest with you here. I think if someone cares about other *fu ci's* sexual life by being concerned about whether they have children or not, that kind of thing, it's like assuming that having children is only about giving birth. 'Why have you not got pregnant?' Are you ever aware that maybe they don't enjoy their sex life? This kind of thing is funny. If you care about their sex life ... It actually is. You ask her about her sexual position, ask if she adopts a certain position or not. This is discussing other people's sex life. But basically, married women in Taiwan are not willing to discuss their real sex life. You're actually talking about others' bloody sex life but you're not willing to discuss the core of that sex life. Sex is a topic that is always obscure in the workplace, but having children is not. It's so strange.

Hsi-Shu feels that, although her colleagues were talking about sex in an explicit way, they thought that they were talking about a normal part of married life: conception. In this case, talking about conception in a heterosexual marriage is regarded by Hsi-Shu's colleagues as not talking about sexual life. Moreover, they did not realise that they were intruding into a very personal and private part of other people's lives. In his analysis of 'cultural heterosexism', Brickell argues that 'heterosexuality is positioned as normative' and 'a social order typified by heterosexuality is said to be essentially neutral' (2005: 101). While

⁵⁵ *Fu* [夫] means 'husband' in Mandarin. *Ci* [妻] means 'wife'. *Fu ci* [夫妻] is the common term used to refer to a married couple.

homosexuality is recognised and marked as 'an illegitimate occupier' or invader, heterosexuality is simply invisible (ibid.). Hsi-Shu's account serves as a very revealing example to demonstrate how 'ordinary people' convey the 'normativeness' and invisibility of heterosexuality in the common talk-in-interactions (ibid.).

'What's up? You getting married?'

Heterosexual personal life is not only regarded as an appropriate and common conversational topic but also as a good symbolic resource to fill in the blanks or avoid an awkward moment in a conversation. Here is an example provided by Chih-Lu.

Chih-Lu: [...] it might be because for him it's is a subject for chatting.

Ting-Fang: So he might feel that it's a safe and proper topic?

Chih-Lu: Yes, I think it's very likely. You know, when I was planning on leaving the job, I told Jason first. [...] When I went to his office, there were many people around, interns for example. I think he wanted to let people know that it wasn't something serious. It's a subconscious behaviour. So when he stood up, he said. 'What's up? You getting married?' Like that.

Chih-Lu's colleague used a question about her marital status as a strategic move to ease the potential tension among other colleagues even though it was totally out of context. In her work on conversational practices, Kitzinger examines how heterosexuality is 'produced and reproduced in everyday talk-in-interaction' (2005: 221). She argues that using heterosexual reference terms is one of the common practices in our daily conversations. By doing so, people not only position themselves in heterosexual relationships with others but also take part in the construction of the heteronormative world. Kitzinger's work reveals the nuanced doing of gender in daily symbolic exchanges. Examining the data I collected, the construction of heteronormativity in social interactions at work is also evident. The normality of heterosexuality is constructed by appropriating it in everyday conversation.

'He asked his wife to make the call.'

It has been suggested that the workplace is often desexualised (Bruni, 2006). However, to avoid something requires first knowing exactly what to avoid. If desexualisation includes preventing any social practice that may be interpreted as sexual, individuals in the workplace could only successfully achieve this by first being aware of what could be interpreted as sexual. In other words, constructing a desexualised workplace probably requires the participants to be sensitive to and reflexive about sexuality. Therefore, it might be fair to say that, while individuals intend to desexualise their behaviour, their consciousness of this is actually a social product of sexualised consciousness. From the experiences of my participants, the desexualisation of the workplace is partly accomplished by differentiating the ways in which they interact with same-sex or 'opposite-sex' colleagues.

When I asked about her leadership style, Hsi-Shu disclosed that the way in which she interacts with her supervisees varies according to their gender. She felt that, as a woman supervisor, she could show her appreciation towards her women supervisees with a sense of intimacy through verbal cues and body language. On the other hand, if it were a male supervisee, she would interact with him in a different manner. She would not interact with him in an intimate way.

Hsi-Shu: [...] But when gender intersects with hierarchy, it would be very different. Female supervisor, male supervisor, male supervisee or female supervisee, I feel there is something different. It's very subtle. First, in the case of same sex, no matter if it's about someone in a higher or lower position, I feel that there is something you can go beyond. It's a kind of care, from the higher one to the lower one. It could be more natural. It's true. For example, he is my male supervisee. No matter what, I would never put my arm around his shoulder. When he performs well, I could not interact with him in an intimate way. But if it's my female supervisee ... when everyone performs well, I would talk to her in an intimate way.

Hsi-Shu's account indicates that she would take gender into consideration when expressing her appreciation of her supervisees. For her, in the case of same-sex interactions, there is something that she can 'go beyond'. It is a kind of intimacy that she would only express to her female colleagues through both physical gestures and verbal utterances. The physical and emotional distances can be closer. On the other hand, she feels that she should distance herself more from her male colleagues. Thus, gender serves as a baseline to determine what kind of action to adopt and also for interpreting whether it is proper or not. It is a kind of gender order that is embedded in the minutiae of everyday interactions. As the interview continued, Hsi-Shu revealed that sexuality matters in her reasoning behind this pattern of interaction.

Ting-Fang: Would it be different because of sexual orientation?

Hsi-Shu: If he was gay?

Ting-Fang: Yes.

Hsi-Shu: I might hug him. It is possible. (laugh)

Hsi-Shu's reasoning is very much based on the heterosexualised concept of gender. It seems that to interact intimately with an 'opposite-sex' colleague in a professional setting is inappropriate unless this colleague is not heterosexual. Hsi-Shu's account provides meaningful material for reflecting on the desexualisation of office scenarios. In a society where heterosexuality is assumed to be the norm, the desexualisation of the workplace is actually deheterosexualised. And it is done by being extremely aware of the boundaries with people of the opposite sex.

In regarding her supervisor as a decent man in the workplace, Che-Yuan's account reveals that avoiding heterosexual interactions with women employees is a crucial principle in constructing this decent supervision style.

Che-Yuan: It's very obvious that he would keep his distance. Even when we wear low-necked dresses, I can trust him without a doubt. He's not one of those people who would come close to you when you wear a low-cut top. He's not that kind of person. He's very, very

decent. He would never *chih dou fu* [吃豆腐]⁵⁶, even verbally. There was one time, when a colleague was eager to put out a message. It was late, probably around 11pm or midnight. She put out the information from home. However, it was inaccurate. Our supervisor was very, very angry. He was very angry when he saw that. However, it was very late, so he didn't call that female colleague. He asked his wife to make the call and ask what was going on. So when it comes to male-female relationships, he keeps the boundaries clear. So everyone trusts him very much. Because in that aspect, he is a very decent person.

From Che-Yuan's narrative, we can see that the desexualised interaction is accomplished when the social actor is heterosexually sensitive. Her male supervisor was clearly aware of the social boundaries between himself and his female supervisee. He would stay away from any 'inappropriate' interactions. In the case of *chih dou fu*, he was avoiding any gestures or verbal occurrences with sexual connotations. As for the late-night call, he was avoiding having a private conversation with the female colleague.

'Why didn't you travel with your husband?'

Hsi-Shu often feels that her colleagues show too much interest in her private and personal life. For her, the annoyance is not only about her colleagues being nosy, but also them being opinionated about her life.

Hsi-Shu: [...] I don't let people at work pry into my life. However, for example, I bring lunch to work, and then they say, 'Oh, is it made by your husband? Is your husband good at cooking?' This superficial stuff is okay, but the real everyday life of ours, I don't want to reveal it to them. For instance, there was one time I travelled with a female friend. Then, they [colleagues] said, 'It's so strange. Why didn't you travel with your husband?' 'Why it was not with your husband?'

⁵⁶ *Chih dou fu* [吃豆腐] literally means 'eating tofu'. *Chih* [吃] means 'eat'. *Dou fu* [豆腐] is tofu. The phrase is commonly understood to mean an act of unpleasant dalliance or sexual harassment.

'How come you didn't go with your husband?' 'Why did you travel alone?' [...] Generally speaking, apart from our honeymoon, I have always travelled with my friends. Then every time, people would be very, you know, incredulous and question me a lot. I have been very confused. Why can't I travel with friends?

Compared to the conversations about travelling with friends instead of her husband, it is interesting to see how coupledness is constructed differently in general conversations. On the issue of pregnancy, the husband was dismissed, but when it comes to social activities, he was regarded as the definite partner who should attend as the wife's 'natural' companion. It is suggested that, for Hsi-Shu's colleagues, since she became a married woman, her husband should be her travel partner instead of her friend. It is assumed that there must have been a reason for his absence on the journey and therefore Hsi-Shu had to travel with her friend instead. Their questions and comments demonstrate the assumption that a heterosexual couple should act as a pair in everyday social activities. In their enquiry into sexuality and sexual relations in the later modern era, Jackson and Scott point out that, despite some shifts and developments in sexual diversity, 'the heterosexual couple remains enshrined as the normative form of adult sexual relationship' (2004a: 236). Heterosexual coupledness is still regarded as the norm and its features are even being adopted into other sexual relationships. 'Long-term', monogamous and 'stable' are now the standard to define all acceptable relationships. (ibid.: 237). The establishment of heterosexual monogamy is not just about the sexual or intimate parts of a couple's life or, in Klesse's words, 'the hegemony of the core couple as the only valid script for erotic and intimate relationships' (Klesse, 2014: 73). It also includes the social aspect. As Jackson and Scott argue, 'the centrality of monogamous sexual-romantic relationships not only encourages us to de-prioritize out friendships, but also structures how we socialize with friends' (Jackson and Scott, 2004b: 155). An analysis of Hsi-Shu's account of the recurring and annoying interactions in her workplace has revealed how heterosexual coupledness is expressed on everyday social occasions. In the case

of a married woman's travelling companion, the husband is assumed to be the prioritised candidate, rather than her friend.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have used my participants' accounts to show that everyday social interactions in the workplace are also gendered and heteronormative. By examining common social practices, I have shown that the construction of gender and heteronormativity at work is not only accomplished by the organisational management but also through everyday social activities. I used the social practice of gendered appellations to analyse the construction of gendered relationships in everyday interaction. While addressing each other with the so-called proper appellations shows respect and good manners, it is also a social practice that constantly labels normative relationships in everyday conversations. This normativity is aligned with the hierarchical and gendered social order. Also, through looking at my participants' stories about day-to-day conversations with their colleagues and business partners, I have suggested that gender duality is maintained and constructed in commonplace encounters. The normativity of the gendered social order is constantly accomplished and patrolled through our daily social actions and interactions. Moreover, the construction of this gendered social order is intertwined with the normativity of heterosexuality. My participants have provided accounts of how heterosexuality is seen as a 'normal' and 'natural' part of life. However, my participants' experiences also show that the gendered social order is not necessarily an absolute one but a relationship to be negotiated. This will be further discussed in Chapter 6, in which I discuss how it can be challenged.

Chapter 6 'I Feel You Should Eat Shit': Picturing the Agency of the Misfit Self in the Workplace

Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I discussed gendered and heteronormative practices in institutional arrangements and everyday interactions in the workplace. I argued that these practices are deeply embedded within a cultural context that values hierarchical social order and reciprocal relationships. I also presented my participants' accounts of how they make sense of these practices and their reactions to the social encounters that disqualify or discriminate against women employees. These episodes not only demonstrate the gendered and heteronormative aspects in the workplace but also provide details about women employees' experiences of negotiation when they are disadvantaged by social and cultural factors in a working situation. Those details have motivated me to enquire into the mobilisation of agency and the construction of the social self. In this chapter, I will explore these themes further and present my analysis of them.

I will first start with my approach to theorising the social self. Through undertaking and reviewing a reflexive reading of the work of G. H. Mead, I will propose my own method of understanding the concept of 'the self' in the context of Taiwan. In Mead's work, language plays an essential part in his thinking on the sociality of 'the self'. Since I am working on research data that was generated in a different linguistic context from Mead's, there are theoretical concepts that I have to consider before I move on to link the theory with my data.

In the second half of this chapter, the focus will be on the construction of the social self during the process of negotiating gender. I will examine the emerging social self in my participants' accounts and argue that, while the strategies they have adopted may vary, there is one common element across my participants'

narratives: a reflexive self that does not fit into the generalised community in a given situation. In the analysis, I will point out that the realisation and construction of this misfit self may play an important role in the mobilisation of agency and, therefore, make the negotiation possible.

Theorising the Social Self

The analysis in this chapter derives its theoretical framework from sociological ideas about social selves in an Anglophone knowledge system, especially the work of Mead. In presenting my critical reading of Mead's theory of 'the self', my aim is to develop an approach that is useful for examining the contextual details of my research data. I will first explain my understanding of Mead's ideas about the sociality and reflexivity of 'the self'. Then I will discuss the potential problems and benefits of adapting his theory to a non-Anglophone context.

Mead's theory of the self

Mead conceptualises the self as deeply embedded within sociality, and his version of sociality is tightly intertwined with reflexivity. For Mead, the self can only come to exist within a particular historical and social context. According to him, 'the self is something which has a development' and it occurs 'in the process of social experience and activity' (1934: 135). In other words, Mead sees the self as the ongoing development of an individual living in a society. As an individual's social being continues, the construction of the self carries on. Moreover, this socialisation takes place in relation to other social beings. The sociality of the self is mobilised by the numerous interactive events that happen during an individual's life. The self is something that is acquired and continuously constructed through the interactions between a social being and others.

By emphasising the interactive social element, Mead cultivates the connections between sociality and reflexivity in agency. For Mead, reflexivity originates from the ability of an individual to have an objective view of her own being in a given situation. He argues that 'reason cannot become impersonal unless it takes an objective, non-affective attitude toward itself; otherwise we

have just consciousness, not self-consciousness' (1934: 138). In distinguishing self-consciousness from consciousness, Mead proposes that learning to evaluate one's own behaviour in such a way that one 'becomes an object' to oneself is an essential part of the socialisation that triggers reflexive psycho-social activity. By putting herself in an objective position, an individual is able to adopt other individuals' attitudes towards her in a specific social context. She examines her own experiences and behaviour from the perspectives of other people who are also taking part in that context. An individual then becomes both subject and object. As Jackson explains, 'reflexivity here denotes the dialogic interplay between self and other, the capacity to see ourselves as subject and object, to engage in conversations with ourselves' (2010: 126).

Mead uses grammatical concepts as theoretical tools to explain this psycho-social activity. In his words, 'the "I" reacts to the "self" which arises through the taking of the attitudes of others. Through taking those attitudes we have introduced the "me" and we react to it as an "I"' (1934: 174). By distinguishing the 'I' from the 'me', Mead is theorising the reflexivity of the self. This reflexivity is the main component in Mead's version of agency. It 'drives the development of the reflective intelligence, that is, the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations' (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 971). While differentiating the 'I' from the 'me' provides a comprehensive explanation of Mead's theorisation of agency, it would be oversimplifying his idea to view 'I' and 'me' as two distinct and independent aspects of a social being. Since Mead's version of reflexive sociality is a process that is deeply situated within the interactive context, it would be a partial reading if we neglected the aspects of time and the relational element in it. 'In Mead's work there is no assumption of a primitive pre-social "I". Rather, the "I" is only ever momentarily mobilised in dialogic, ongoing interplay with the "me"' (Jackson, 2010: 128). Both 'I' and 'me' are temporal products in a historical and social situation. In any given moment, a reflexive social being is both object and subject; for that reason, the individual is both the 'I' and the 'me'.

Rethinking Mead's ideas in the context of Taiwan

Mead states that 'the language process is essential for the development of the self'; therefore, his theorisation of the self relies heavily on language or symbolic activity (Mead, 1934: 135). Since the language of the original data for this research is not English, even though Mead's theorisation of the concept of the self is inspiring, I feel that it would be too blunt to adopt his ideas to examine my participants' accounts without considering the linguistic context of my data. Due to the linguistic differences, I have to locate alternative symbolic signals in order to develop my own approach to reflexivity.

Unlike English, the personal pronouns in Mandarin do not have subject-forms and object-forms (see Table 4). The personal pronoun stays the same. Its character and pronunciation do not change. Take the first person singular pronoun in Mandarin, *wo* [我], for example; it only has one form. No matter whether it is put in the subject or object position in a sentence, *wo* [我] is the only word that can be used. Moreover, although in Mandarin the second and third personal pronouns have female and male written forms, they all have the same pronunciation, but the male pronouns can be used in a neutral way. Therefore, it is possible to talk about a third party in a conversation without addressing his or her gender. This is one of the many cultural conditions that enable the interaction described in the previous chapter to happen. My colleague could not figure out the gender of my friend by the Chinese pronoun that I used. If it were a conversation in English, I would have to use a gendered pronoun to refer to my friend.

Mead suggests that a crucial part of reflexivity is to view oneself as both subject and object. Since there are no differences between the subject and object form of a personal pronoun in Mandarin, one may infer that a narration in Mandarin is less reflexive than one in English. Furthermore, the fact that a person can be addressed without indicating his/her gender may give the impression that verbal communication in Chinese is less gendered. That is, people probably do not care about gender very much in daily conversation.

Are Chinese symbolic activities less reflexive and less gendered than those in English? In order to answer this question, other linguistic features and cultural factors need to be considered, too. I will demonstrate that, although it might be inappropriate to directly copy the reflexivity theory proposed by Mead and apply it to the Taiwanese context, this does not mean that reflexivity is not a useful analytical tool for this research. I propose that different cultures engage in different symbolic activities, which demonstrate different models of reflexivity. I will discuss this in two parts.

Number	Person	Gender	Personal pronouns
Singular	1 st	Female/Male	我 [wo]
		Female	妳 [ni]
	2 nd	Male/Female	你 [ni]
		Polite	您 [nin]
		3 rd	Female
	3 rd	Male/Female	他 [ta]
		Animal	牠 [ta]
		Neuter	它 [ta]
		1 st	General
	2 nd	Female	妳們 [ni-men]
Male or general		你們 [ni-men]	
3 rd	Female	她們 [ta-men]	
	Male or general	他們 [ta-men]	
	Animal	牠們 [ta-men]	
	Neuter	它們 [ta-men]	

Table 4 Personal pronouns in Mandarin

Firstly, I would like to point out that lacking gender indications in verbal communication is not equivalent to practising gender-neutral communication. The conversation that I had with my colleague is also a good example to illustrate that, even though we might talk about a person without indicating her/his gender, this does not mean that gender is forgotten or neglected in Mandarin symbolic activities. My colleague did care about the gender of my friend or she would not have asked about it. In addition, even when people do not ask the gender question, this does not mean that they are interacting with others in a gender-neutral way. They probably just make assumptions about people's gender or, in Kessler and McKenna's terms, make 'gender attribution' without asking.

I would like to use a riddle to illustrate this. It is a riddle about relationships. A father and his son had a traffic accident and were sent to the casualty department of a hospital. The son was badly injured and needed an operation immediately. However, the on-duty surgeon took one look at the injured son and refused to operate. The surgeon said: 'I can't perform an operation on this patient. He is my son.' Who is this surgeon?

The 'clever' and 'humorous' answer to this riddle is that the surgeon is the mother. This riddle probably sounds dull and silly to people who believe in gender equality and women's rights. For them, this riddle is not a riddle at all and there could be more than just one correct answer. However, some people do need a few minutes to figure it out. The main twist of this riddle relies on the gender stereotyping of occupations. When the riddle is told in Mandarin, the speaker can avoid indicating the surgeon's gender even when pronouns are used. The 'surprising cleverness' of the answer depends on the audience not thinking that a woman could be a surgeon. The audience is expected to assume that being a surgeon is a 'male' occupation and therefore that the surgeon is a man; moreover, a heterosexual man. While the riddle itself can be told in a gender-neutral way, that is, the language of the narrator may not contain any obvious gendered clues, such as gendered pronouns, this does not necessarily prevent people from making assumptions about the gender of the characters in the story.

The point that I am trying to raise here is that, while the available linguistic resources are different, for example in English and Mandarin, this does not mean that the speaker of one specific language is necessarily less reflexive than the speaker of another. I believe that each language system has its own linguistic indicators and tools for an individual to generate agency within any symbolic interaction. Therefore, even though we are thinking in different linguistic contexts, Mead's thoughts on the relational and reflexive aspects of 'the self' have provided a useful map for me to develop my own approach.

Secondly, similar to many other societies, relationships play an important role in quotidian social life in Taiwan. However, Taiwanese society has its own attributes. In Taiwan, a relationship is often gendered and hierarchical. Everyday social interactions usually take place within a specific system of social order. As I discussed in Chapter Five, the conventional appellations used in everyday life illustrate this. The nature of an interpersonal relationship is expected to be established and maintained according to the social positions that the participating individuals have acquired in society. Moreover, their interactions are also expected to be practised accordingly. Under such circumstances, an individual's self-consciousness ordinarily evolves through placing herself in the system of social relations. In other words, when the social being is calculating the possible, available and appropriate action in a given situation, she has to take the social relationships among the participants into consideration. For this reason, I argue that an individual's agency in the context of Taiwan cannot be fully deciphered without acknowledging the relationships within which an individual is immersed.

I am convinced that Mead's theory of reflexivity has advantages that shed light on the investigation of my participants' experiences in negotiating gender. Accessing agency as a philosophical concept, Emirbayer and Mische propose a conception of agency that 'is intrinsically social and relational'. They see the merits in Mead's theoretical framework and emphasise its relational element. From their point of view, 'agency is always a dialogical process by and through which actors immersed in temporal passage engage with others within collectively organized contexts of action' (1998: 973-4). They point out that, in

Mead's conceptualisation of agency, 'the capacity for imaginative distancing' plays an important role (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 971). I am in sympathy with their point of view and I will further argue that this practice of distancing is not only about distancing an individual from herself but also about distancing herself from the generalised other, or sometimes from specific others.

Cultivating the relationship between 'the self' and 'the community'

According to Mead, 'one has to be a member of a community to be a self' and 'the process out of which the self arises is a social process which implies interaction of individuals in the group, implies the pre-existence of the group' (1934: 162, 164). The self emerges with a sense of realisation and assessment of the relations between the individual and other social beings in a given context. However, being aware of other social members does not mean that an individual will necessarily always follow the attitudes of these others. As Mead indicates, 'we are not simply bound by the community'; there are 'critical situations' in which an individual may speak up and against a community (1934: 168). Deploying agency and being reflexive means that 'we are engaged in a conversation in which what we say is listened to by the community and its response is one which is affected by what we have to say' (1934: 168). The result of this conversation is not predetermined. It is relational, responsive and momentary, for the self is always in a state of transformation from subject to object and vice versa. In Elliot's words, Mead's conceptualisation of the self is 'at once individuality and generality, agent and recipient, sameness and difference' (2008: 32).

When agency is understood in terms of examining the relationship between the self and a community, it is crucial not to neglect the complexity of identity. A social being often has connections with and memberships of more than a single social group. Gender, race, class, occupation, hobby... there are numerous social categories with which a social being can identify herself in a given historical moment. Since agency is a process involving dialogue between an individual and herself in relation to other social beings, it is important to consider any possible conflict between the groups with which the individual identifies and the individuals with whom she is interacting at that moment. It is entirely possible

for an individual to react against a community with which she interacts. Mead points out that 'the only way in which we can react against the disapproval of the entire community is by setting up a higher sort of community which in a certain sense out-votes the one we find' (1934: 167–8). Although I am less assertive than Mead, I do think that the potential conflicts and competitions among the multiple identities that a social being could have is one of the factors enabling an individual to 'react against' a community. Identity, like agency, is a product of social relationships. Lawler points out that 'the notion of identity hinges on an apparently paradoxical combination of sameness and difference' (2008: 2). This sense of sameness and difference comes from an individual's social experiences. 'Identity needs to be understood not as belonging "within" the individual person, but as produced between persons and within social relations' (Lawler, 2008: 6). The relational aspect of the self therefore provides a point of intersection for looking at agency through the construction of identities.

Reading Mead's words about the possible confrontational self, I then contemplated my participants' symbolic interactions with people in the workplace, especially those moments of defiance. I could not help but come up with the idea that there is probably no better data informing me about agency than the narratives of the 'critical situations' in my participants' accounts. They were not only providing information about how gender inequality still prevails in the workplace; they were also telling me stories about how they struggled with it. They were offering me narratives about how they behave and who they are in relation to other individuals in the workplace. 'Identities can be understood as being made through narratives' (Lawler, 2008: 11). Perhaps the interviews that I conducted with my participants are both a research process and a social practice of doing identities. I asked about their experiences, their thoughts and their points of view. At the same time, through the conversations, I was also sharing mine. We are generating not only data but also narratives about ourselves. Conducting this research is itself a process of symbolic interaction.

A Gendered Self That Does Not Fit in

It is probably not a surprise that most of my participants have experienced moments when they felt they did not really quite fit into their workplace since the overall working culture in Taiwan is still very much gendered and heteronormative. When the working culture is not friendly, critical situations become everyday life. A self that is distanced from the generalised community at work therefore appears in the data. Before I move on to discuss this emerging self, I have to clarify this claim a bit more in order to prevent the potential generalisation of women employees in Taiwan. I am aware that there are limits to the representativeness of my data. My interpretation and analysis are confined by the scope of this project and the experiences of my participants. Therefore, I have no intention of painting with a broad brush here. The misfit self that I am discussing is not a product that can be used to understand every interaction at work or every woman employee's story in Taiwan.

During the early stages of fieldwork, my attention was focused primarily on the instances of gender inequality in my participants' accounts. I did not pay much (or any) attention to their utterances relating to the construction of 'the self'. It was only after my interview with Siang-Yun that I put the first note about 'the self' into my fieldwork journal. Siang-Yun worked in the banking industry. Being a member of the front-desk staff requires her to wear a uniform during working hours. She then shared a story about how she and her colleagues use changing clothes as a strategy to distinguish work time from private life. This inspired me to think about the boundaries and construction of 'the self' in the workplace. I then started to pay attention to the traces of the social self that were appearing in my participants' accounts. Then, gradually, as the interviews moved on, I started to see the hierarchical structure into which their stories were fitting. I saw their personal struggles within that structure, and I realised that my participants were telling stories about 'the self' within their interactive situational engagements in the workplace. However, the moment when I realised that 'the misfit self' could be a theme to discuss in this thesis actually came much later than that.

The epiphany was delivered in a collaborative way. It happened when I joined a semi-social and semi-academic event for PhD students. We were asked to do an academic version of speed dating. We had to introduce our own research project to each other in small groups within a very short period of time. I had a printed slide with me to show my colleagues a quote from one of my participants.

Yu-Chen: But you know, sometimes, it's not about whether a woman can actually do it or not but how they feel about it. Sometimes a male colleague would say 'I feel that a woman is blah blah blah...' And I would just tell him, 'I feel you should eat shit.'

When I presented the quote, almost all of my colleagues gasped. One asked 'did she really say that?' My colleagues were surprised at the language Yu-Chen used and the bluntness of her attitude. It was even suggested that I should definitely use this sentence as the title of one of my chapters. From their feedback, I realised that my participant's reaction is probably unusual. But why is it regarded as unusual? Is it because she is a woman and thus is expected to be gentle and polite in her words? Is it because she works in a male-dominated workplace, and people assumed that she would feel intimidated and avoid direct conflict with her male colleagues? The questions that are raised by this sense of unusualness have lingered in my thoughts ever since. Maybe it is actually an enquiry that cannot be fully answered without seeing the intersection of gender, race and cultural hegemony. Considering that Asian society is usually understood through a lens of dichotomy and viewed as the opposite, and sometimes even homogeneous, entity to the 'western', I could not help but suspect that it is surprising because it is unexpected to hear 'an Asian woman' who speaks out and gives a piece of her mind. I am aware that it is indeed part of Asian culture that women are usually compelled to conform to an image of submissiveness and that the harmony of interpersonal relationships is usually positively valued.

Although I still have unfinished thoughts about what constructs this sense of the unusualness of Yu-Chen's words, I do feel the intellectual necessity to present experiences and practices that do not fit into that assumed standard. I

am interested in what makes my participants 'dare to' express their opinions in an unconventional way. In short, I believe my participants' 'unusual' narratives are meaningful material to challenge stereotypes about both 'Asian culture' and 'Asian women'. Moreover, they may provide insights into women's agency in the 'critical situation' of gender inequality.

Before presenting the analysis, I would like to devote some attention to explaining the change of writing style in the following sections. In the previous two chapters, I have presented my participants' accounts in categories. I managed to find common themes in their experiences and developed a categorisation to examine them. However, in this chapter I would like to adopt another strategy. I will focus on five participants' stories and present each person's narrative about 'the self' individually. I feel that, even doing qualitative research, I am often haunted by quantitative thoughts. During the early stages of my data analysis, one of the main strategies that I adopted was trying to categorise my participants' accounts. I located possible themes through repeatedly reading the transcripts and identified the emerging themes by the frequency of their appearances. During this screening process, data that seemed not 'representative enough' would be filtered out. However, a lack of representativeness does not necessarily mean that those unusual, uncommon, different bits are irrelevant to this research. I found it difficult to abandon the idea that this data may be meaningful in its own way, and my participants' accounts of the 'misfit self' are part of this.

I am hoping that, through the change in writing style, I can present my participants in a different way. I would like to present them as real people with background details. Those details may look irrelevant to the analysis, but I think they are useful in enabling readers to visualise them as real human beings. I know that my analysis has a limit. To avoid only capturing a fragmented glimpse of my participants, I require the help of my readers' imagination. And I hope that this alternative writing style can provide some material to facilitate that imagination. I have borrowed Mead's theories to elucidate my view on reflexivity. It is a momentary process and the results emerged in an interactive context. Although my writing strategy for this chapter is to focus on specific

participants and present them one by one, I did not intend to categorise them as 'participants with reflexivity' and label the rest as being without. Rather, my intention is to provide a just portrait of the participants. By presenting background information about the interview and details about their characteristics, I aim to provide the reader with a vivid image of my participants. Balancing between the intended strategy and accessibility for the reader, I think it would be impractical to present every single participant in this way and therefore I have only selected five participants in this chapter in order to analyse their agency. However, this does not mean that there is no sign of a misfit self in other participants' accounts.

I am still not sure what kind of rationales lay behind my colleagues' surprised reaction to Yu-Chen's account, but I would like to interpret their gasps as a sign of being challenged by something unexpected. I hope that the 'not so typical' narratives provided by my participants can serve as useful material to defy the stereotypical impressions about either women in Taiwan or women in general. In one of her talks, Chimamanda Adichie (2009) pinpoints the consequences of only hearing a single story about certain ethnic groups. She identifies the single story as a dangerous narrative because it confines our imagination and therefore shapes our understanding of ethnic minorities. 'It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasises how we are different rather than how we are similar.' We need stories that are different from one another in order to fertilise our sociological recognition and imagination of the 'empirical reality' (Plummer, 2001: xi). As Plummer argues, the world we live in is a 'plural world' which is 'constituted through multiple refracted perspectives' within which meaning is constantly negotiated (Plummer, 2001: xi). Otherwise, we might be lured into accepting what Uma Narayan identifies as cultural essentialism. We might accept the idea that "actual cultural differences" correspond very neatly to the "packages" that are currently individuated as "separate cultures" or manifest themselves as evenly distributed across particular "cultures" (Narayan, 1998: 102). Having presented and discussed gender inequality at work from the perspectives of both institutional and everyday interactional practices, I hope that this shift to

introducing the misfit self will offer, if not justifiable, then at least substantial representations of my participants. I will discuss their agency by investigating the different kinds of misfit self that are constructed in their narratives.

'I am very forthright and blunt'

It seems wrong to begin the analysis part of this chapter without introducing Yu-Chen as the first case study, since her account was the source of one of my important epiphany moments during this project. Yu-Chen and I met up at a French restaurant in Taipei. The restaurant was almost fully booked that evening. We could only manage to get counter seats. The atmosphere there was vibrant and lively. We had to raise our voices to hear each other's words. It was not a short interview and we did talk a lot. We were concentrating so much on the conversation that it slowed down our pace of consuming food. We were still having our entrée when the main courses were served. It was difficult to neglect the sense of speed in her talking. Her voice was not exactly loud but she made every word audible. She was articulate without using any fancy expressions. It was a fun interview. I was fascinated by all the stories that Yu-Chen told me.

My original intention was to confine our discussion to full-time working experience only. But I soon realised that this was obviously a naïve and silly idea. Gender and work was of course the core subject of the interview and I managed to link every question I asked to it. However, Yu-Chen's narrative went beyond that. I would not say that she digressed. I did find the peripheral information meaningful in terms of academic value. These accounts brought forth a sensible and necessary personal history which helped me to understand how she experienced gender at work and how she interpreted those experiences. The 69-page interview transcript is almost like a mini memoir. The stories she shared with me go back to her days as a high-school student.

She told me about an incident of sexual harassment which happened when she was a high-school student and doing a holiday job. Her immediate reaction was to give the offender a slap. Yu-Chen said that she did not tell her colleagues

about the incident. She said that she was '*shao bu geng shih* [少不更事]'⁵⁷ otherwise she would definitely have 'made a big thing of it' and let other people know about it. There is a previous version of self in Yu-Chen's narratives. The 'young self' is described as comparatively immature and inexperienced compared with the self she is now. This sense of comparison entails a personal history of transformation. Having more experience as a social being within society is delineated as the key to transformation. The current self that Yu-Chen is constructing has grown out of the self of the past. This current self is associated with the self back then. In her narratives, the constructions of the current self and the past self are interdependent. The social meaning of one only manifests itself when the other is presented. It would be an oversimplification to view them as two difference versions of self that are completely detached from one another.

Then I proposed a hypothetical question to Yu-Chen. I was curious as to whether, if she encountered any gender discrimination or sexual harassment in her current organisation, she would trust the official procedures and file a complaint. She replied with a positive answer.

Yu-Chen: I don't care whether it would be handled properly. But at least I would report the problem.

She suggests that her mistrust of the complaint procedure would not prevent her from reporting the case. For Yu-Chen, making a formal complaint has its own significance. Along with this answer to my hypothetical question, her accounts of her approaches to other issues at work persuades me that she would stand up for herself and defend her rights. Her insistence on taking action on problems in the workplace that concern her is one of the characteristics of Yu-Chen's narrations that I would like to highlight, along with a sense of directness.

Yu-Chen: Oh, I am very forthright and blunt. I would say, 'it's none of your bloody business.'

⁵⁷ *Shao bu geng shih* [少不更事] is a phrase that is used to describe a young and inexperienced individual. *Shao* means young. *Bu geng shih* means inexperienced in social life.

That statement has served as a token that sums up my impression of Yu-Chen. When she talked, it was her style to come to the point and never shy away from her own opinions. However, her direct attitude comes with a price. She shared her thoughts about the merits and disadvantages of being a direct person in the workplace.

Yu-Chen: For me, there are more pros than cons as a direct person in the workplace. Of course, the downside is that people would say, “you have a bad attitude. You’re overbearing and aggressive”. But, on the other hand, I can save a lot of time. Also, I can always just say no to whatever I want to reject.

From Yu-Chen’s words, it is clear that her bluntness and directness are not personal characteristics stemming from ignorance of social expectations. She knows that other people might hold a negative opinion of her interactive style. There is a reflexive evaluation about her preferred way to communicate. For Yu-Chen, being labelled as ‘overbearing and aggressive’ is the price she probably has to pay in order to enjoy the freedom to decline nonsense requests directly. Yu-Chen’s account shows an alternative form of self-image management. For her, having a negatively valued social image is a useful strategy to survive the workplace. The importance of expressing her opinion freely outweighs her desire to avoid stigmatising judgments from others. In the reflexive process, maintaining colleagues’ face seems not to concern Yu-Chen very much.

Yu-Chen is very aware of her ‘differences’. Keeping one’s mouth shut is the popular survival strategy in her company. And the mainstream of communication is conducted in a less direct way. There are not many people like her, as she would express her opinion without holding back. Moreover, being an ambitious woman computer engineer, she knows that she is definitely not a member of the majority in the IT industry.

Yu-Chen: There’s usually this chain reaction of shock. You’re a computer engineer?! You’re a woman?! You’ve been working for how many years?!

As though a woman and a computer engineer are two opposite identities that cannot coexist, Yu-Chen has surprised many people she has met on business occasions merely by her presence. The fact that she is a woman computer engineer does not guarantee her membership of both identity categories. She is one of a kind because she is a woman in a male-dominated workplace and also because she always makes her voice heard in all kinds of disadvantaging circumstances. In Yu-Chen's narratives, we see that a misfit self is constructed in the context of a challenging workplace. Her deviance is not merely something determined by the mainstream others but is also a construction of her own agency.

'I can't work in a place where I can't be who I am'

Yu-Nung's career trajectory covers several fields. It started in the entertainment industry, mainly film production and commercials, and then later gradually moved into the area of social work. When I interviewed her, Yu-Nung was in her forties and held a managerial position in an organisation. Her experiences in different industries had enabled her to observe different working cultures in different workplaces. She was surprised when I mentioned that the Workplace Gender Equality Act has been in effect since 2002. Back then, she had already acquired a managerial position in a company and, as she recalled, policy on gender equality was never included in the management agenda. This is not because there were no gender issues in that company, but because people simply did not realise it was something they should be concerned about. She clearly remembered an incident that shows how sexist her colleagues could be. It was a production company, and Yu-Nung was a supervisor, one step down from the Chief. Production was a male-dominated sector in the industry. She was one of the very few women employees in that organisation. One day, a male colleague seemed to be upset about something. And all of a sudden, he expressed his anger by muttering about working under a woman. Yu-Nung had a feeling that the woman he referred to was herself. She was astonished when she heard his grievance. He was one of the colleagues whom Yu-Nung would socialise with during private hours and she thought they had developed a good

working relationship. She did not realise that he held a grudge against her and, most of all, had problems in working with a woman supervisor.

Being a high-ranking woman supervisor had brought Yu-Nung many opportunities to experience and observe incidents of gender inequality in the organisations where she worked, especially in the business negotiation process. She had more than once felt threatened by hints of physical violence that were displayed by male colleagues.

Yu-Nung: Another case, this is also about a male colleague. The accounting record he made was a total mess. It was out of line. So I said to him, 'you might have made a mistake. I suggest you take it back and correct it'. Then he handed it in again, but it was still the same. So I circled out the problematic parts and asked him to make corrections. He then threatened to beat me up. [...] He didn't say so but acted like he was about to physically attack me.

Ting-Fang: [...] How did you handle it after what had happened?

Yu-Nung: I insisted, asking him to make corrections. (laughs)

This was not the only occasion when Yu-Nung sensed threatening signals from a male colleague. Once, in a meeting over a managerial issue, she was not convinced by a male colleague's argument and therefore provided her own opinion. The meeting turned into a heated debate. Failing to gain an advantage in the verbal contest, the colleague attempted to bring closure to the discussion by imposing emotional pressure on her. He banged on the table with his hands. However, his intimidating tactic did not bring about the outcome that he desired.

Yu-Nung: After he banged on the table, I banged on the table too. I said to him, 'don't ever think that you're the only one who dares to do that. I can do it too. So what?'

Banging on the table and yelling at colleagues were not Yu-Nung's communication style. However, in this exchange, she decided to go for it to show that she would not be silenced by that kind of threat. After she did that, she

noticed a slight look of surprise crossing her colleague's face. He probably did not anticipate that she would fight back or adopt the same tactic. Not every male colleague that Yu-Nung has worked with has used the assumed 'male' physical advantages as a way to suppress her opinion, but those who have done so are all male. None of them actually said that they would physically attack her or put violence into action, but they obviously intended to keep her quiet by displaying physical strength. A loud voice and intimidating body language are the usual tactics.

According to Yu-Nung's experience, silencing women does not only occur in male-dominated workplaces, it can also happen in an organisation where women are in the majority and which claims a reputation for gender equality. She told me about another meeting occasion discussing management. There was a proposal on flexible working hours for female colleagues who have children, who are more likely to be late because of spontaneous family issues. Yu-Nung wanted to back up this policy while a male colleague in a high-ranking position was against it.

Yu-Nung: I think it's a reasonable request. Based on the beliefs of our organisation, even if it might cause some managerial troubles, I think we should still do it because this is the price we should pay. We have to care about gender equality. He then said, 'I also have to take care of my children.' What he meant was that he is also a person with children. [...] I asked him, 'if there is something wrong with your kids, who is usually the one taking care of it, you or your wife?' Then he showed me the kind of face that he wanted to beat me up. [...] In that meeting, no one dared to argue with him on that proposal, only I did.

This male colleague tried to make an argument against the proposal by identifying himself as a parent who managed to show up at work on time without asking for special treatment. He was blind to the male privilege he has gained in a gendered society. After Yu-Nung poked holes in his logic, he clearly displayed a hostile attitude towards her.

From the episodes she told me about, I am convinced that Yu-Nung is not afraid of confrontation in the workplace. If a heated debate were what was required to reach an agreement on any business matter, she would be ready for it. She would express her opinion and hold her ground as long as it is a reasonable one. An essential part of her stories about speaking up in a conflict situation is the narrative of cherishing herself the way she is. Yu-Nung values being who she is over maintaining harmonious relationships with colleagues at work. Although she did recognise that keeping good relationships is one of the key strategies leading to a successful career in Taiwan, she confessed that it was only recently that she had begun to be aware of that. She attributes this late awareness to her personal life philosophy.

Yu-Nung: In fact, in general, I feel that a human being is always solitary. This has been my life philosophy.

Because of this philosophy, Yu-Nung did not see the need to maintain good relationships in the workplace. She even borrowed a phrase from a pop song and described herself as ‘a lone wolf’. Therefore, Yu-Nung left me with the strong impression that she holds a fairly individualistic interpretation of her existence as a social being. She also informed me that she is a person who cherishes herself a lot. When I asked if she has any office survival strategies to share, Yu-Nung answered my question with the following.

Yu-Nung: My own observation is that I don’t have any strategies. If an individual can survive, then survive. If she can’t survive, then just don’t. Didn’t I tell you? Being who I am is very important. I am *bi jhou zih jhen* [敝帚自珍].⁵⁸

When I heard it, I had no idea what the phrase meant. Yu-Nung then explained it word by word. *Bi jhou zih jhen* [敝帚自珍] is an idiom. The literal meaning is valuing one’s own shabby broom. It is a metaphor often used to describe things that have no value but are cherished by the owner. Yu-Nung used this idiom to express her feelings about herself.

⁵⁸ The term, *bi jhou* [敝帚], literally means a worn-out broom. *Zih* [自] means ‘self’. *Jhen* [珍] means ‘cherish’.

I asked Yu-Nung what had been the key consideration when she decided to quit the job she previously had, and she told me about a conversation that she once had with a friend about her determination to leave.

Yu-Nung: I said that I'm not happy. I can't be who I am here. Because she asked me why I wanted to go, and I said because I'm not happy. I told her that. I said that I can't work in a place that makes me unhappy. I can't work in a place where I can't be who I am.

For Yu-Nung, being who she is was a crucial part of working life. She will choose to leave an organisation if she finds the workplace to be a hostile or unfriendly environment for her. I feel that Yu-Nung has accepted the premise that everyone is a unique individual, so there is no point in suppressing one's characteristics in order to survive the workplace. She recognises herself as a unique individual and then cherishes this uniqueness.

'Colleagues from other departments thought I was still single.'

The sound of a typical weekend evening in urban Taipei was the auditory background to our interview. It was a Saturday evening and Taipei was busy as usual. We met up in the underground shopping mall in Taipei Main Station area. Our original plan was to find a restaurant and conduct the interview while we ate dinner. Both of us underestimated how crowded it would be during the weekend. It seemed impossible to find a nice place without having booked first. We had to compromise and in the end we found a less-crowded restaurant. A waitress informed us that, because it was a holiday and a busy time, we could only have the table for one and a half hours. The thought that 'It won't be enough time!' immediately popped into my head. So we decided to continue our interview on the underground street. Hsi-Shu and I were moving from shop to shop. Our conversation was a mixture of serious discussion on gender issues and casual talk about items in the shops. As well as our conversation, the recording also perfectly captured the sounds of the environment.

The recorded audio file starts with Hsi-Shu's thoughts on things that are unfair for women in the workplace. Hsi-Shu was critical. She has a sociological academic background and is strongly aware of gender inequality in the

workplace. Her narrative started with these words: 'Anything is about gender. Because we live in this society, everything is about gender.' She told me about her personal experiences and her observations on the unequal treatment of men versus women and that of married versus single women. Then our conversation gradually turned into a discussion about the gossip culture at work. As a married woman, she had noticed that people seem to assume that asking a married female employee questions about having children or not is a proper way to socialise with her. Personally, Hsi-Shu thinks it is very boring and she feels annoyed by this kind of social interaction.

Hsi-Shu: Take me, for example, I've been asked why I don't have children for three years. Colleagues keep asking me, 'why do you still not have children?' But why should I exchange such boring information with my colleagues?

Ting-Fang: This is nothing to do with your work.

Hsi-Shu: But they just like asking it. They need to know whether you plan to have children. Do you want to have children? Are you preparing to have one? Have you tried Chinese herbal medicine yet? Don't eat anything chilled. I feel that indeed in the workplace in Taiwan, people to some level care a lot about... not only in the workplace, I feel the same [in other social domains], people care a lot about other people having children or not.

Hsi-Shu could not figure out why other people cared so much about her parenthood plans. She used the word 'care' to describe the motivation for their curiosity. This indicates that asking a married woman about her parenthood plans seems to be widely accepted as a proper topic for chit-chat. But for Hsi-Shu, it is a personal information which she does not want to share.

Ting-Fang: Do you feel that they think it's a common topic for casual chatting?

Hsi-Shu: Of course. It's like, eh, like 'what time did you get up this morning?' that kind of simple and boring question. [...] It's like, 'eh,

is it raining over there?' It's a boring question. 'How come you haven't had children yet?' 'Do you want to get pregnant? Do you have plans for it? But I think you can.' I don't even know where this suggestion comes from.

Ting-Fang: What was your reply to this kind of question?

Hsi-Shu: Mm, I just said, 'I don't want to.'

During the interview, Hsi-Shu more than once described the gossip about parenthood plans as boring. She could not understand why people show so much interest in other people's plans around pregnancy and having children. She also could not figure out why people would feel fine about providing suggestions that she had not requested. Hsi-Shu found it very difficult to get used to this social interaction. Despite her disgust, she did not try to sidestep these offensive questions but provided an honest and direct answer. Unfortunately, this did not stop her colleagues.

Hsi-Shu: They would tell you, they would talk to you from the perspective that having children completes your life. I've heard more than ten people tell me this. If not from elderly people then study mates, friends, colleagues. 'Life can only be completed with children.'

Although Hsi-Shu has never withheld her opinion on this issue, her calm and direct answer seemed unable to stop her colleagues' 'care'. Hsi-Shu did not give in, either. The discourses adopted by her colleagues failed to convince her. The colleagues did not sustain 'a standard of consideration' and did not care about Hsi-Shu's personal feelings or her face (Goffman, 1967: 10). When information control in a conversation becomes a task that is too difficult to achieve, an alternative strategy has to be adopted. Feeling annoyed, Hsi-Shu then chooses to distance herself from those 'caring colleagues'. Her management of information control begins before a social contact happens. It begins with the selection of suitable social actors with whom to socialise. Learning from previous contacts, Hsi-Shu has identified that people who have children tend to adopt the discourse that children complete a woman's life. That is why she has more

recently tried to avoid interacting with them. Hsi-Shu labels herself as a *cian fu jhe* [潜伏者], a lurker, at work because the social culture in the workplace does not fit her. She finds it difficult to fit into the gossip culture at her workplace and has made an effort to avoid being the subject of gossip. One of her strategies is to keep her personal life and her emotions a private matter. The clear distinction that she makes between work and life results in her hiding parts of her personality.

Hsi-Shu: I can tell you, I only show less than thirty percent of my personality at work.

Besides gossip culture, she also finds it wearisome to blend in with the group of married female employees. In the previous chapter, I presented Hsi-Shu's accounts to illustrate that interactions in the workplace are often gendered and heteronormative. According to her observations, heterosexuality is often normalised in daily social interactions at work. Hsi-Shu is married. By observing other married female employees, she realised that she does not act like them. For example, she noticed that their talk is always centred on either children or husbands. She said that, because she has not changed the way she socialises, colleagues from other departments therefore assume that she is still single. As for those colleagues who know her marital status, they just assumed that her husband would occupy all her private hours and that he would be her plus-one at any social event. If he did not show up, it would be regarded as unusual and she would be asked to explain and provide a proper excuse for his absence.

Hsi-Shu: For example, I visited Nepal. I was travelling with a girlfriend. They [her colleagues] then said, 'Ah? It's strange. Why wouldn't you go with your husband? Why didn't you go with your husband? How come you didn't travel with your husband? Why did you travel on your own?'

In the workplace, Hsi-Shu tries to distance herself from most of her married female colleagues. By doing so, she is actually distancing herself from the typical image of a married woman and the related gendered culture.

In the interview, Hsi-Shu disclosed her awareness that she did not fit into people's ideal of a married female employee. In spite of this, she has no intention of changing the way she acts. The deviant and misfit self also emerges in her narratives of self-portrait. I sought Hsi-Shu's suggestions on how to depict her in my thesis. The following is her answer.

Hsi-Shu: You should seriously describe me as a middle-aged, 34, 35-year-old person who still thinks of herself as in her twenties. Also, this person, this participant, is undertaking a project of body transformation and dedicating her efforts to moving out of her comfort zone, in both personal and working life. She is getting into a mid-life adventure, although inside she is a teenage girl.

By body transformation, she meant that she was very enthusiastic about keeping up a good exercise routine at the gym. She emphasised that there is a younger person inside her. She recognised herself as a middle-aged woman but with a young spirit. Just as she refuses to act like a married woman, Hsi-Shu also refuses to see age as a limitation on her choice of lifestyle. Her account therefore constructs a self that intends to live outside the assumed social categorisations that might be ascribed to her.

'Tongzhi have to fight hard'

Every interview, with every participant, was distinctive, but the one I conducted with Shih-Ching is definitely going to stay in my memory for a very long time. The interview as a whole was a unique experience for me. I managed to meet most of my participants in public space, including Shih-Ching. However, this one happened not just in a public space but actually in a public venue where a demonstration for a campaign was taking place.

We were sitting on Katakalan Boulevard.⁵⁹ This is the main road in front of the Presidential Office Building. An LGBTQ organisation called Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights (TAPCPR) was holding an event there to

⁵⁹ Ketagalan is the official Romanised term for the name of an aboriginal community in Taiwan. It is not a Mandarin term but an aboriginal one and is used as the name of the Boulevard.

promote the Family Diversity Legislation Campaign. The title of the event was *ban jhuo* [伴桌]. The literal meaning of the first character, *ban* [伴], is 'partner'. The second character, *jhuo* [桌], means 'a table' or 'a dining table'. The term was invented by the organisers. It was used as the theme of the campaign because it has a homophonic twist relating to a conventional wedding custom. Its pronunciation is identical to that of another Chinese term, *ban jhuo* [辦桌], which is the common translation for the Taiwanese custom *bando*. *Bando* is a distinct cultural practice in Taiwan. The literal meaning of *bando* could be understood as 'doing a table of delicacies for guests' (Chen & Huang, 2011: 101). It was originally a Taiwanese term and then adopted into the Chinese language in Taiwan. *Bando* plays a crucial part in various cultural ceremonial practices, such as weddings, funerals or showing hospitality or gratitude to significant guests. On the occasion of a wedding, conventionally the bride, the groom, and the groom's parents would invite relatives and friends to a *bando*, in this case a wedding banquet, which usually has more than one table of guests. The campaign event was organised into the format of a wedding banquet to promote the idea of civil partnership.

Shih-Ching and I both attended the event to show our support. So we conducted the interview while it was going on. The background sound in the recording is the speech by the main organisers on the stage. We sat at the side of the boulevard, keeping a certain distance from the main stage in order to hear each other clearly. I had my digital recorder with me, while Shih-Ching had a cigarette between her fingertips. Situated in a campaign like that, it seemed natural for us to have a conversation about LGBTQ communities and LGBTQ movements in Taiwan. Shih-Ching expressed her viewpoint about why the gay communities have stronger bonds and ties with each other compared to lesbians. Instead of speaking out from a sense of despair or pessimism, I felt that her words grew out of an expectation of pushing the lesbian movement forward.

Shih-Ching is not the only participant in this study who identified herself as a lesbian; however, she is certainly one of the few who allowed me to record the fact and include it as research data. She is very forthcoming about her sexual identity or 'non-heterosexual identity'. During the interview, she emphasised

more than once that her sexuality was not something sensitive that had to be concealed. She assured me that it would be totally fine to include information about her identity as a lesbian in my research data. Her assurance made me realise her trust in me both as a friend and a researcher along with the weight of research ethics. From her feedback on the transcript, I know that she is discreet about anything involving the privacy of her friends and colleagues. She proposed deleting interview segments that might reveal the identities of individuals being mentioned. She explicitly explained to me that her concern was not for herself but for other people whom she has known.

Shih-Ching told me fascinating stories about her work experiences and career trajectory. Those accounts cannot be fully comprehended without knowing that she identifies as a member of the lesbian community in Taiwan. I do not mean that her sexuality somehow determines every aspect of her life. Rather, her narratives are enriched with details and perspectives that can only be acquired by an insider. She used to manage a T-bar and therefore has made close observations of social scenes in the community.⁶⁰ She told me how things have changed. In the old days, the lesbian circle was, in her words, 'very conservative'. There were only certain gendered roles available. You had to be either a T, a 'masculine' lesbian, or a Po, a 'feminine' lesbian. Otherwise, you would be mocked and marginalised in the community. It is very different now. She feels that, when it comes to gender, individual expressions and variations are very much appreciated and celebrated nowadays.

It seems that her sexual orientation is not something that she feels uncomfortable about revealing in the workplace. According to Shih-Ching, the entertainment and media industry has been comparatively friendly towards individuals who do not exactly follow the social norms. It is not uncommon to work with individuals who have come out about their sexuality. However, this does not mean that gender equality has prevailed in that industry. Occupying a mid-managerial position, Shih-Ching has access to a decision-making framework that is inaccessible to general personnel. She has observed serious

⁶⁰ In Taiwan, 't' is used to refer to a 'masculine' lesbian. It can be understood as the 'bulldyke' in the English context. T-bar therefore is a bar that has 'masculine' lesbians as its targeted consumers.

management problems that damage gender equality in the organisation. Take the recruitment process, for example; here, she has noticed the discriminatory comments made by other supervisors which I discussed in Chapter Four. As well as fighting for young lesbian applicants to have equal opportunities in the recruitment process, Shih-Ching also fights against discrimination in everyday working circumstances.

Shih-Ching: For instance, it's simply, there are people who would talk behind people's backs. They would say, 'that gay person is blah-blah-blah...', something not nice at all. I would tell them directly, 'don't talk about people like that behind their backs. If you have guts, then just say those things in front of them. Don't do that behind people's backs.' And I would say, 'she/he is gay and so what? How about me? Why don't you criticise me, then?'

Their 'deviant' sexualities have situated lesbian and gay employees in a vulnerable position in terms of hostile social encounters. They are easily targeted and labelled with their 'gayness' even if it is not the main point of the malicious gossip. Shih-Ching would not tolerate this kind of discriminatory comment and would interfere. She found such comments offensive, as well as the way in which the speakers targeted their victims. She noticed that their discrimination was actually two-fold. One is obviously sexual discrimination and the other is much more nuanced. By targeting a gay or lesbian employee, who has less power in the workplace, they were discriminating against people according not only to their sexuality but also to their positions in the organisation. She revealed her opposition to such behaviour by criticising the gossips' cowardice. She indicated that talking behind people's backs is not a fair game to play. She also pointed out the absurdity of their gossip; as though being gay is something wrong by its very nature. Then she proposed herself as a subject for their verbal abuse. By doing so, Shih-Ching stated her identity as a lesbian and made the whole thing personal to her. She intended to make the bullies understand that if they were targeting gay colleagues that meant they were targeting her too. As a senior staff member with managerial status and a truculent attitude, she would not be an easy target for them. Her description of

how she managed the situation illustrates her awareness of the hierarchy, work culture and power relationships in the workplace.

Shih-Ching has learned to use her power to defend other employees with minority or disadvantaged backgrounds or less favourable characteristics. She is doing this both for equality and for pragmatic reasons. She sees the value of employees who do not exactly comply with mainstream rules.

Shih-Ching: I feel, when I select employees...that is, during recruitment, I usually avoid hiring those who seem to be too submissive. Because I think that it's not a job for submissive individuals. You have to be flexible and spontaneous in order to do this job well.

Shih-Ching prefers to work with people who dare to challenge authority for righteous causes. She interprets this as a personal quality that a professional should have. This preference also implies that, as a supervisor, she expects her team members to be able to work independently rather than following orders from her. She told me that her supervision style is actually not typical of the industry. Most supervisors still prefer the more 'submissive' kind of employee. They incline towards a more hierarchical relationship between them and their supervisees. She knows the value of 'deviant colleagues' because she identifies herself as one of them.

Shih-Ching: I'm easily infuriated, or I should say, infuriated by things that are unfair or unjust. I would take the risk of saying whatever I want to say. [...] Many of my supervisors have told me that I can be very difficult. If I insist on something worth fighting for, I don't care who my opponent is.

While she acknowledges the stubborn part of her personality, Shih-Ching does not think that this is the sole cause of her career success. She is aware that she could not have achieved her career progress on her own. She knows that the support of her past supervisors has been influential. They respected and appreciated her characteristics. Therefore, she is trying to do the same to help newcomers. She knows what a difference a supervisor can bring to the

workplace. In Shih-Ching's opinion, the level of friendliness towards LGBTQ staff depends on the work culture of an organisation. Therefore, a supervisor with managerial power has the ability to shape it for her supervisees. Although the whole of society is more friendly and 'tolerant' towards LGBTQ individuals than it used to be, it can still be quite difficult for them to survive in the workplace without support from the organisation and their supervisors.

Shih-Ching: I think it depends on different companies and supervisors. For instance, there are quite a few children of my friends who still face the dilemma of hiding their identities.

Due to this concern, having a successful career in her view does not merely mean personal accomplishment. For Shih-Ching, it is also a path to social change. The higher an individual can climb on the work ladder, the more she can do for the community. Work has its transcendent value in the personal and the political. Shih-Ching identifies this as one of the most important strategies to improve the situation of *tongzhi* in Taiwan.

Shih-Ching: Yes, power is crucial. So *tongzhi* [同志] have to fight hard and work hard. That is, when you make it to a higher position, there are more things you can do. Then you can make a lot of things better.

'I think the fact that I did gender studies should be mentioned.'

There were some questions that I would usually ask my participants towards the end of an interview. One of them concerned how the participant preferred to be described in my thesis. Chih-Lu's answer was that it is important to her personally that I should mention her academic background of obtaining an MA degree in Gender Studies. I agreed with her because I felt that it would be impossible to offer a just portrait of Chih-Lu without introducing this piece of information about her. I have known Chih-Lu for quite some time and she never shies away from speaking up about her opinions on gender and never hides her identity as a feminist. While some of my participants, like Hsi-Shu, were practising information control to conceal certain aspects of their characteristics and personal life at work, Chih-Lu on the other hand has been very open about her background in gender studies and feminism. This has sparked several

interesting social interactions in the workplace. One of these was a conversation during a job interview. A member of the interview panel was a representative from the human resources department and she (or he) proposed a question that amused Chih-Lu.

Chih-Lu: She/he asked me, 'Are you a feminist who puts feminism into practice?' And I said, 'Eh? Of course, is there any other kind?' (laughs) And she/he continued, 'Oh, is that so? How would you practise it, for example?' I said, 'For instance, if I feel I am able to do something, I won't let my gender be a constraint influencing my decision to do it or not.' She/he then responded like, 'oh...'. I was thinking, eh? So is there a particular kind of feminism in the world that doesn't involve any practice at all? What does that even mean? (laughs)

It seemed hilarious to Chih-Lu to even think about the idea that there is a kind of feminism that does not advocate and promote the actual application of the knowledge itself. For her, being a feminist means to practise the feminism to which an individual relates. It is both a way of knowing and a way of doing. She identified herself as a feminist who challenges the imposed gender constraints on individuals by taking action personally and encouraging others to do the same. Her honest attitude about her background and identity also had a significant effect on her everyday social interactions at work. Chih-Lu is known as the feminist in the office.

Ting-Fang: Would you let your colleagues know that you're a feminist?

Chih-Lu: I would. I would let my colleagues know. And, I think someone doesn't have to say she's a feminist, it only needs her to say that she was doing gender studies, then people will naturally have certain stereotypical impressions about this individual.

From everyday interpersonal encounters, Chih-Lu has sensed that some of her colleagues might find her or her interest in feminism and gender issues

intimidating. She once mentioned to a colleague that she has been a member of a reading group for quite some time. The colleague first showed strong interest until she realised that it was a reading group that focuses on gender.

Chih-Lu: She then said, 'eh, I thought if it was another kind of reading group, I might be able to join. But if it's about gender then...it seems not... I'm very patriarchal, I'm very... I have a happy life in the patriarchal system.' My response was, 'oh, okay. I didn't intent to invite you anyway.' (laughs)

The colleague seemed to be trying to quickly draw a line between herself and Chih-Lu to show their different opinions on gender. On the other hand, Chih-Lu's response and her tone while telling this story informed me that she personally feels fine about that line. She even offered a reply that reinforced it. Chih-Lu does not mind her colleague expressing her point of view about gender because she is doing the same. Her response was given in a way that accepts her colleague distancing herself from the reading group but also rejects her participation. Through that brief social encounter, they were both displaying their membership of different social groups. It is probably fair to describe the interaction as smooth and without obvious conflict. However, there is certainly potential tension in it. Goffman defines a 'team' as 'any set of individuals who cooperate in staging a single routine' (1959: 85). This does not mean that individuals in the same social setting are necessarily interacting as a team. For Goffman, a team is a social group with a specific purpose for their social interaction. The teammates would depend on each other to 'sustain a definition of the situation' (1959: 92). Chih-Lu and her colleague might have formed a social group in that specific context. However, it is obvious that, according to the narrative provided by Chih-Lu, neither she nor her colleague have any intention of continuing or extending that social interaction. It is as though neither of them had any desire to form a team or conduct a 'team performance' (Goffman, 1959: 88). If they perform anything together in that interaction, it is to inform the other that they do not share a common interest and their views on gender are very different.

Chih-Lu also observed that, when her background in gender and feminism was regarded as a professional skillset, her name became a symbolic tool in other colleagues' social interactions. She was once assigned an administrative job on the committee for gender equality in an organisation. While she was doing that job, her colleagues tended to perceive her as an expert in and arbiter for gender equality. Chih-Lu's name would appear in their conversations as a device to interrupt a potentially gender-unfriendly social interaction.

Chih-Lu: My colleagues would say, 'shouldn't we report this to Chih-Lu? Shouldn't we...', 'what you said would make Chih-Lu angry' ...etc. So it's kind of having this branding effect.

It is interesting to see how Chih-Lu's colleagues referred her as an authoritative figure in casual conversations. This is a communication strategy that involves a designated audience in the interaction. Chih-Lu might be around but she did not necessarily take part in that interaction. By bringing up her name in the conversation, the colleague was actually including Chih-Lu in the interaction. This seems to be a subtle way to indicate that there was a problem with the interaction. Somebody might have said or done something to make that individual uncomfortable. They then used Chih-Lu as a proxy to express their feelings and thoughts. Instead of saying that she was not feeling all right about it, the individual brought up Chih-Lu's name as a communication strategy to send a message of disapproval.

Chih-Lu: Probably that's the case. Or she doesn't dare to say anything, but other colleagues would say, 'if you keep acting like this, I'll tell Chih-Lu.' It's actually not a bad thing.

Far from being annoyed, Chih-Lu felt totally fine about the way in which her colleagues used her as a shield in their struggle against everyday gender inequality. Instead of being treated as a token, it is more like a subtle way to create alliances. The individual who used Chih-Lu as an excuse to interrupt the flow of the interaction she was involved in was actually demonstrating that her stance was similar to Chih-Lu's. The individual might not feel comfortable about fighting against other social actors on her own. Chih-Lu was then recognised

and portrayed as a strong but not necessarily present ally. Chih-Lu's narratives suggest that, while it may be stressful to be a token in the workplace, there is also the liberal side of being the different one in the workplace.

The Misfit Self and Social Control

While I was drafting the analysis of this chapter, I found that, along with words, the imagery of shapes kept drifting through my thoughts. I pictured the flow of social interactions as a constantly changing mosaic composed of countless pieces. Each piece was a moment of social encounter. Among them, there were some peculiar ones. Instead of contributing regular shapes and connecting seamlessly with the others, they created extra parts, or holes, that did not quite fit the overall picture.

A sense of a different self, a self that does not fit into the generalised other or specific others, is emerging from my participants' accounts. There seems to be a peculiar social self, which sparks its agency with the light of strangeness. In those specific moments, my participants are social actors who seem to match what Simmel (1950) identifies as 'the stranger'. According to Simmel's conceptualisation, a stranger, in a sociological sense, is a social actor who is both near to and remote from a particular group in terms of human relations. A stranger is 'an element of the group itself' while her position 'as a full fledged member involves both being outside it and confronting it' (ibid.: 402–3). Through their narratives, my participants show that, in the defining encounters, they recognise and embrace their deviance in relation to other social actors; moreover, they challenge and interfere with the presumed rules of social interaction. I have shown that hierarchical relationships are generally valued and maintained at work in Taiwan. However, despite how oppressive and suppressive this may seem, it is exactly within this social and cultural context that a misfit self emerges and declares its agency in the negotiation of gender. As Simmel proposes, in the absence of shared commitments with the group, a stranger is in the position of 'a positive and specific kind of participation'; it is participation with objectivity and freedom (ibid.: 404). I argue that, in realising their 'misfitness', some of my participants are provoked into speaking up.

Acknowledging their deviance, they have developed alternative social skills to deal with the 'normal' and gendered work culture in daily life. I hesitate to claim that my participants have expressed 'a voice which is more than the voice of the community', but I am certain that they have expressed different voices (Mead, 1934: 168). Furthermore, I argue that this voice of the misfit has a significant sociological significance in challenging the social control that is maintained in and through everyday practices.

In his discussion about social control and the social self, Mead argues that 'social control is the expression of the "me" over against the expression of the "I"' (ibid.: 210). That is, social control is revealed when the social actor acts in accord with society in a way that echoes the presumed expectations of others in the community. It takes an individual to positively respond to the attitude of 'organized others' in order to maintain her membership status in a social group (ibid.: 199). To be 'me' is therefore a sensible situational strategy to secure a position as a community member. On the other hand, the selected cases I have presented bring forward another dimension of the discussion. It seems that my participants sometimes adopted alternative interactive actions other than the sensible one. In those defiant moments, they did not regard themselves as sharing common membership with others and resisted conforming to others' expectations. My participants were showing a defiant attitude through expressive interactions.

Expressive interactions are subjected to social control. In theorising about 'face', Goffman (1972) points out that face is not only a social project about the management of an individual's own social image but it also involves work on sustaining others'. In a face-to-face social encounter, an individual may adopt what Goffman defines as a 'line', 'a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts' (1967: 5). The confidence to adopt a regular act to interact socially comes from the presumed understanding of both the situation and the roles of the participants in it. It is an act resulting from reflexive evaluation. According to Goffman, 'face' is 'the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken in a particular contact' (1967: 5). That is, a social actor tends to interact with other individuals in a presentable way in order to

obtain approving acknowledgement from others. This presentability is accomplished by attending to concerns about proper interactive social manners and therefore undertaking anticipated social behaviours. By doing 'face-work', social actors are conducting ritual exchanges that are arranged through 'expressive order'. Hence, each social encounter provides a stage for the participants to collaborate in an act that is intended to 'maintain a specified and obligatory kind of ritual equilibrium' (Goffman, 1967: 45). This sense of obligation is driven by emotions such as shame that derive from morality in a society. As Goffman (1967) indicates, the moral rules determine how an individual will evaluate herself and her fellow participants in an encounter. Interaction rituals therefore channel social control into quotidian social practices. Examining the concept of face in the social context of China, Qi points out that, as a social image, it is 'a complex but efficient force of social control in social interactions, which includes incentives and sanctions enforced through both subjective and socially current perceptions and expectations' (2011: 290). There is a connection between face-work and structural social control in a society.

While there is a self-regulation aspect of face-work, this does not necessarily mean that all the practices in every social interaction are patterned and no alternative possibility is available. Goffman points out that, if an individual 'were not a ritually delicate object, occasions of talk could not be organised in the way they usually are' and therefore this person may cause trouble if she does not reliably 'play a face-saving game' (1967: 31). It seems that Goffman identifies those social actors who fail to play along with collaborative face-work as 'troublemakers', because their acts prevent daily conversation from proceeding smoothly. When I was sorting out the quotes from my participants in this chapter, it was difficult to avoid the realisation that my participants would probably be labelled as 'troublemakers' according to that definition. While this is a possible and easy conclusion to draw, I argue that there is an alternative interpretation if my participants' accounts are understood in the context of social control.

In a social context in which heteronormative and gendered interaction is considered to be the normal pattern, the expressive order is 'naturally' expected to be maintained according to this pattern. In other words, when gender equality is not regarded as common sense within an organisation, it will not be included in the rules of interactional ritual. Therefore, my participants find themselves to be deviant in everyday social life in the workplace. They may be viewed by their colleagues as offenders against the assumed expressive order. However, I would like to analyse the situation from the standpoint of my participants. For them, the other party in the social encounter is the offender, the one whose verbal or non-verbal acts have over-stepped the line of mutual respect in the social contact. Moreover, since there is a conflict between the two parties' recognition of what kind of line should be delivered in the interaction, my participants' action of 'challenging' would usually be ignored or even be considered as interrupting the expressive order. Therefore, they have to deliver a stronger and more persistent message. Their 'outrageous' acts are provoked by the refusal of other social actors to initiate the corrective process defined by Goffman. Since their challenge is dismissed and there is no 'offering' from other social actors in the given situations, my participants are actually challenging the assumed interactive rules by disrupting the expressive order in their daily lives at work.

Something that is condemned as anti-social does not necessarily have an anti-social agenda within it. In her study on self-identified shy individuals, Scott (2005) provides an in-depth dramaturgical analysis of shyness as an identity and a situational status. The common stereotypical interpretation of shy people's behaviour is that they are not quite socialised, or even anti-social. Investigating the social self that moves back and forth between backstage and frontstage, Scott points out that shy people are actually 'highly sociable and committed to team interaction but feel excluded from the common stock of background knowledge on which other people rely' (2005: 108). While Scott's participants develop skills to prevent interactional flaws and therefore manage their 'awkwardness', my participants have come up with strategies for asserting their deviance. Their accounts indicate that, while they are aware of the social

rules and that the expected performance of certain social roles is a fundamental part of reflexivity, conformity is not the only possibility. They have presented an alternative sociality derived from the agency of the misfit self. By constructing a gendered deviant self that is different from others in everyday social interactions, my participants are challenging the social ideology of gender. They are contesting the assumed moral rules embedded in quotidian practices, which are very much gendered.

Of course, it would be reckless to announce that a dramatic social turn on gender is happening. However, it is also inattentive to dismiss the potential signs of upcoming social change. While I was examining my participants' accounts of their expressive interruptions, I found myself in a place from which I was able to contemplate the linkage between their everyday experiences and the structural context. If the gendered social order in the workplace has been challenged, I would argue that the women employees who have mobilised these moments of negotiation of gender should be credited for this. By doing gender, one is also taking the opportunity to challenge or modify the given gendered social rules, because every social action of doing is a potential negotiation.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

Overview

This thesis began with an introduction describing my motivation for undertaking this intellectual quest to explore employed women's experiences of gender in Taiwan. I interpreted this research journey as an unexpected but reasonable result of several personal, political and also emotional moments in my life prior to this study. These moments had contributed to my reflections on my own academic approach to women's experiences as well as my concerns about gender equality in the workplace. I wanted to explore women's experiences of gender discrimination at work, which might be neglected from the perspective offered by the institution of law. My departure on this academic journey was motivated by questions raised by my own reflections and concerns.

With its impressive economic transformation and distinct gender patterns in employment, Taiwan has attracted sociological research proposing enquiries about and answers to patterns of women's employment. The established scholarship primarily concerns women's roles in the transformation and how their social status has been influenced by the economic shifts, as well as the relationship between women's labour-market participation and social conditions of gender inequality. Previous studies have shown that women's labour-market participation in Taiwan has been consistently high. However, this steady employment pattern does not provide a positive answer to the issue of gender equality in the workplace. Gender inequality and gender discrimination at work still shadow employed women's situation in the workplace. Moreover, it has also been revealed that, in spite of their high labour-force participation, women are still the main providers of gendered labour in the domestic sphere. While previous research has provided insightful analyses to help us understand women's employment in Taiwan, there are still outstanding questions. Considering the emerging changes and shifts in social conditions and government policy, I have proposed that further inclusive and thorough investigation into women's working lives in Taiwan is required.

After reviewing the established scholarship, I have proposed my own conceptual framework for gender, work and Taiwan as an 'East Asian' society. Inspired by ethnomethodological and symbolic interactionist approaches, in this study I chose to approach gender as a social construction which is accomplished in everyday practice by social actors with reflexivity. In other words, I adopted the perspective of 'doing gender' and viewed it as neither a compulsory doing nor a free doing, but a social construction involving reflexivity, interactions and relational practices. In order to conceptualise work, I drew help from contemporary sociological and feminist studies to expand my perspective on women's work and the social institutions of gendered labour. Although the primary focus of this study is women's experiences in the workplace, I was convinced that it would be important to be aware that the labour demands imposed on women are often gendered and transcend the boundaries of employment. In regarding Taiwan as an 'East Asian' society in the global market of knowledge production, I proposed to re-contextualise the country in order to recognise its similarities with other societies in the region as well as its significance. I was particularly concerned with the cultural legacy of Confucianism. Confucianism may be seen as a distinct characteristic of East Asia; however, this cultural feature should be comprehended within the specific historical and political context of each society. Like South Korea and Japan, Taiwan has its own unique interpretation and practice of Confucianism. The legacy of Confucianism in Taiwan is a historical result of the Kuomintang's (KMT) government policy and political institutions during the Cold War era. Certain Confucian ideologies were deliberately promoted to serve the regime's purposes. This historical and political background entails debates that contest and challenge this cultural heritage. I therefore advocated a perspective that acknowledges the localisation of Confucianism as well as the negotiation of resistance in the East Asian context.

While reading previous studies enriched my understanding of employed women's situation in Taiwan, the execution of this project offered me a reflexive examination of this understanding. Through writing about the methodology and research process of this study, I revealed the stories of the planned, the

expected and the surprising, unanticipated parts of my research journey. The original plan and design of this study underwent constant modification before and even after my fieldwork. The feminist perspective on the researcher–participant relationship and the conceptualisation of research ethics served as fundamental anchors during the process of modification. The actual interactions between me and my participants also challenged my original conception of this study. From participant recruitment to interview practices, my unexpected experiences in the research field enabled me to ponder the nuanced details and complexity of ethical conduct. I learnt that there is no universal formulation of ethical conduct considering that every participant is a unique individual and every interview is a unique social encounter in a specific situation. The complex and diverse exchanges that I had with my participants also led me to become aware that research data was generated in a highly interactive process. The multi-lingual nature of the interview data and the international aspect of this study posed difficult yet meaningful questions relating to data preparation. It turned out that the preparation work was far more complicated than transcribing; it also included translation, Romanisation and negotiation with my participants. The multiple tasks involved in data preparation brought me multiple roles in this study. I was the transcriber, the translator and also the researcher, which led to my having concerns about the power relationships between a researcher and her participants, and reflecting upon these. Moreover, due to my flexible approach to the fieldwork, the data I gathered was full of surprises. The interactive and reflexive fieldwork became the initial stage of data analysis. My thoughts and reflections generated in the research field served as the starting point for me to ponder the analytical themes.

My discussion of the data analysis was organised into three parts. Firstly, I focused on the gendered and heteronormative management practices within organisations. By examining my participants' accounts of their work experiences, I argued that women employees tend to be regarded as homogeneously marriage-oriented and family-oriented and are therefore assigned certain jobs and positions accordingly. For instance, the biased and sexist practices of recruitment showed how gendered and heteronormative

organisational practices prevented women from fulfilling their career ambitions in male-dominated industries or from attaining positions and jobs that were perceived as more suitable for men. Those who survived the recruitment process had to face other management practices that disadvantage women, such as gendered work arrangements and the gender pay gap. Due to heteronormative ideology, women were categorised by employers as suitable or unsuitable employees not just by their gender but also by their marital and relationship status. I argued that those gendered and heteronormative organisational management practices therefore contributed to gender segregation both within and between industries. According to my participants' experiences, it was suggested that gender segregation also existed in workplaces where women employees were in the majority. I also discussed how my participants make sense of those management practices and how their career orientation and work strategies were influenced accordingly.

Then I moved on to discuss everyday mundane interactions in the workplace that sustain the heteronormative and gendered social order. Examining my participants' accounts of day-to-day working life, I discussed how gender was accomplished in social actions such as adopting appellations, casual talk and body language. It was suggested that using familial appellations to address colleagues is a common practice in the workplace, especially referring to those who are senior or older. I argued that this practice reflects the ideology and social institution of gendered social hierarchy. Through adopting appellations which are perceived as proper in a given situation, individuals constantly identify, confirm and negotiate each other's social positions in everyday communications. Informal and personalised appellations serve as speech devices that facilitate gendered interactions in the workplace. While a gendered honorific appellation is adopted to show respect and good manners to senior women colleagues by their juniors, it may also be used for strategic communication purposes. In the case of using *jie* as an appellation, it was revealed that a gendered term indicating not just seniority but female seniority could imply specific heterosexual connotations. Being identified and interacted with as a *jie*, women employees are categorised as gendered beings with specific

sexual implications. On the other hand, the analysis of other general social exchanges suggested that employed women's gender is assumed to be a proper cause of dos and don'ts about their routine work performances. They are perceived and treated as gendered beings by colleagues, supervisors and clients. My participants are expected to perform everyday work tasks in ways which justify and demonstrate their membership of the gendered social category, women. I further discussed how the gendered social order in quotidian social practices is intertwined with the normativity of heterosexuality. It was revealed that heterosexuality is constructed through mundane interactions as a 'normal' and 'natural' part of life. Moreover, my participants' experiences also show that the gendered social order is not necessarily an absolute one but a relationship to be negotiated.

In the last part of the data analysis, I advanced the discussion on my participants' negotiation of gender by investigating the agency of the social self. Taking inspiration from sociological theories proposed within Anglophone academia, particularly the work of G. H. Mead (1934), I then developed my own conceptions of reflexivity and agency in the linguistic, cultural and social context of Taiwan. I argued for the importance of acknowledging gendered and hierarchical relationships when examining the agency of a social being situated in the social context of Taiwan. Pondering Mead's ideas about the self, the community and identity, I then contemplated the symbolic interactions depicted by my participants. Focusing on interview data concerning moments of defiance, I suggested that a social self that is distanced from the generalised community at work was appearing in the narratives of some of my participants. Their accounts showed that, while they were aware of the social rules and the expected performance of gendered beings as a fundamental part of reflexivity, they did not see conformity as the only possibility. Their experiences presented an alternative sociality derived from the agency of the misfit self. By constructing a deviant self that is different from others in everyday social interactions, my participants are challenging the assumed rules embedded in quotidian practices, which are very much gendered.

I am aware that the findings of this study cannot offer a definitive or complete picture of employed women's experiences of gender in contemporary Taiwan. My sample is rather small, as is usual in qualitative research. Also, my participants were obviously a distinct group of employed women who have similar backgrounds and their very own attitudes towards gender at work. The experiences they shared cannot therefore be used as research material to produce a generalised understanding of gender and women's employment in Taiwan. This is a result that I anticipated, considering the fieldwork approach that I adopted. My personal social network and feminist stance had a significant influence on the recruitment and sampling. Applying the snowballing technique in the recruitment process means that my social network was the foundation for the initial reach-out. About half of the participants were directly approached and recruited by me. They were individuals with whom I had established personal relationships prior to this study. They were recruited from the social strata to which I had access. Examining my participants' backgrounds, we can see that there are several shared indicators. Most of my participants were living and working in major cities in Taiwan, mostly Taipei. Their occupations fitted within the spectrum of white-collar and highly professional jobs. They were mostly Mandarin and Tai Yu (Taiwanese) speakers. They were well-educated and had obtained degrees from either colleges or universities. In other words, this study presented the experiences of women with certain social and cultural capital. In addition, I did not conceal my identity as a feminist and the purpose of this feminist study was fully disclosed to all potential participants. This approach therefore brought me the realisation that my own academic and political stance might have served as a filter to screen out any individual who held a different viewpoint about gender equality at work from mine. Although there was no deliberate selection, I did realise that this was a consequence of the selection process, indicating the limitations of this study.

While acknowledging the limitations of this study in terms of representativeness, I argue that the limited but specific scope can also be a virtue of this feminist exploration. The accounts shared by my participants describe not only their experiences but also their critical opinions about gender

inequality in the workplace. My participants are women with critical eyes and critical minds. It is exactly because of their sharp gender awareness that this study has been able to examine some of the nuanced details embedded in everyday mundane practices at work. As a researcher, I was primarily the one generating the analytical discussion. However, without my participants' contributions, it would have been impossible for me to do so. As Smith points out, taking up 'the standpoint of women' does not necessarily mean to 'imply a common viewpoint among women' (1987: 78). I have no intention of generalising all women's experiences of work in Taiwan. On the other hand, I would like to emphasise the value of bringing in my participants' accounts in order to prevent the homogeneous imagination of experiences of women. To emphasise the differences among women and recognise the diversity of women's experiences has been a major concern for feminist researchers (see Letherby, 2003). The scope of this study is limited, but also specific. In other words, this study may only provide a small fragment but I argue that it is also a significant and meaningful piece of the whole picture.

On the issue of specificity, I would like to emphasise that this study is a historical production regarding the development of my participants' social lives. As Stanley and Wise argue:

social life is not 'a text' in the strict sense of the word, something fixed and inscribed, but is rather both dynamic and interactional, and in it the 'texts' of social action are always available to be 're-written' as verbal accounts negotiated and remade again and again. (1993: 216)

I am aware that the accounts shared by my participants should not be viewed as eternal testimony about their lives. The analysis in this study is based on the interview data generated through interactions between my participants and me in the research field. The time and space of the fieldwork therefore shaped the historical conditions of my investigation. The participants' experiences of gender at work will have continued to expand after our brief encounters. It is

reasonable to anticipate that they will have new thoughts and new interpretations about gender at work in Taiwan. It is evident that they do. During our communication about the confirmation of the transcripts, there were participants who informed me of new updates regarding the events they had shared in the interviews. Even after the data preparation period, some participants still kept in touch with me and occasionally shared the latest 'interesting' episodes that had happened in their workplaces. Some messages expressed further concerns about gender equality in Taiwan; others delivered revised views regarding the working culture in organisations. There were also participants who suggested that I should do a follow-up study to discuss changes and updates in their careers. Through these exchanges, I have gained an awareness of the historical situatedness of this study and therefore of the potential for development for future research on the subject of women's experiences of gender at work.

New Enquiries Emerging from Social Change

Because of this research project, work became a common topic of conversation during my socialisation with friends and acquaintances. I was like a walking sociological magnet who attracted people to talk to me about their worries and complaints relating to their jobs. From their sharing, I have observed that there is a newly emerging dimension of social interaction in the workplace: instant communication via mobile devices. One obvious example would be the usage of the mobile application, LINE. LINE is a proprietary application that was designed and developed for instant communications. Although it supports most electronic devices, in Taiwan it is primarily used with smartphones. Among all the messaging applications, such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, LINE is the most popular instant communication application in Taiwan, dominating the country's market (Alpeyev et al., 2016). When I was undertaking the fieldwork in 2013, this application was already popular. At that time, it was used more for private and personal communications than for office activities. In other words, users would mostly contact individuals in their social networks about non-work-related matters. However, by the time I visited Taiwan again in 2014, the

application was being widely used for workplace communication. It has become a common practice to use the built-in settings to create a messaging group which includes every single individual in a working team within an organisation. Colleagues used it to send office documents and discuss work. Supervisors regarded it as a work platform and delivered task demands on it. It seemed to be a virtual space to accommodate all the general interactions at work outside of the physical environment of a workplace. While the gendered and heteronormative social practices that have been discussed in this study could also be observed within this virtual communication platform, it also brings forward issues that require further sociological investigation. I have heard complaints about interacting with colleagues and supervisors via instant messaging applications. A friend once told me that, although she felt uncomfortable about the interactions within the group, she was hesitant to leave it. Everyone in her office was a member of the group, so it would be seen as odd for her to leave it. Also, quitting the group would prevent her from accessing information exchanges. The setting of the virtual group creates a specific communication scenario and it requires users to develop new strategies of negotiation.

New developments have emerged not only from the personal dimensions of social life but also from Taiwanese society as a whole. The vibrant civil society and new political shifts have hinted at potential changes in relation to gender and women's employment. The most dramatic event that happened during the period after my fieldwork and before the completion of this project was the Occupy Movement. On the night of 18 March 2014, after the KMT, the ruling party at the time, unilaterally passed a trade pact with China, hundreds of students and activists stormed into Taiwan's parliament, the Legislative Yuan (see Ho, 2015; Rowen, 2015). As the news spread through online social networking and the media, this action drew the attention of the general public. After the initial move, thousands of individual supporters gathered outside parliament to put pressure on the KMT government. This then raised the curtain on an occupation which lasted for 24 days. The movement was not a sudden outcry from civil society. Prior to this occupation, there had been

several large-scale protests and demonstrations against administrative conduct and pushing for changes in the political policies of local and central government, such as the protest against the demolition of Losheng Sanatorium, the campaign for marriage equality and the diversification of family structures, and the protest against media monopoly (see Yang, 2007; Chien, 2012; Liu, 2015).

Although the mainstream media identified it as a 'student movement', the backgrounds and social statuses of the protestors were actually rather diverse. According to their systematic survey (n=989) on the demographic portrait of the movement, Chen and Huang (2015) found that the majority of the sit-in protestors outside the Legislative Yuan were individuals in their twenties and thirties with diverse backgrounds in terms of study field and occupation. The findings of this study suggest that 44 percent of the sit-in protestors were non-students and about 51 percent were women.

I happened to be in Taiwan when this event took place and I also participated in the movement as a sit-in protestor. According to my observations, a substantial number of protestors were women with full-time jobs. Some of my participants were among them. They might not have been able to stay on the scene all the time, like some of the students, but they did their best to spend private time after work to support the movement. On weekdays, they would go to the occupy site after finishing their day in the workplace. They would sit on the street and have their dinner there. They would leave around midnight to rest before the next working day. At the weekends, they would spend more time there. They were not the main organisers and they seldom caught the media spotlight. However, they formed one of the many forces that enabled this movement to be sustained. During the Occupy Movement, the area surrounding the parliament was turned into a space for public lectures, political debates and discussions. Organisations from civil society provided support and brought their own concerns into this movement. They organised campaign activities to address various social issues requiring the public's attention and awareness. The individual sit-in protesters outside the parliament were their audience and potential supporters. Take my participants, for example. After the Occupy Movement, many of them joined voluntary organisations and always kept an

eye on updated information about social movements. After the Occupy Movement, the crowd of supporters might have disappeared from the site, but many individual supporters have devoted themselves to other civil activities. The movement therefore sustained and reinforced the momentum of civil society. This momentum was part of the force that contributed to the change of ruling party in 2016.

On 16 January 2016, the official result of the Presidential Election was announced. Taiwan had elected its very first woman and single, unmarried President, Tsai Ing-Wen. While the international media praised it as a historic moment for the country and even for global gender politics, feminists and activists in Taiwan recognised that it was more the beginning of a new battle in a new era than a landmark indicating the achievement of gender equality. During the presidential campaign, Tsai had promised that a government under her lead would value the principles of gender equality and human rights. An obvious indicator is her public endorsement of same-sex marriage. Moreover, there are at least two specific aspects of Tsai's politics which may have a direct influence on employed women's situation. One is her labour policy, the other is the national care plan. On the issue of labour policy, Tsai has made six promises: to raise the minimum wage, to reduce working hours, to secure rights and welfare for atypical employment, to support young and older employees, to provide care for industrial injuries, and to encourage the organisation of unions (Yen, 2016). In terms of the national care policy, Tsai was the only candidate who emphasised the role and responsibility of the state on the issue of care. Her party, the DPP, has proposed a care policy which covers childcare, long-term care and women's employment in order to respond to concerns about the gendered labour of care imposed on women within the domestic sphere. She clearly advocated that the new government should change the current political norm that family is regarded as the main institution to provide care (Tan, 2015). Thus, Tsai's government will propose new policies that bring changes to working conditions and family labour arrangements. These changes might lead to new enquiries into women's employment trajectories, and their experiences of gender, both in the workplace and in the domestic domain.

While a new government has been formed, civil society in Taiwan has not stopped in its tracks but keeps moving forward. After the occupation of parliament, the momentum of the social movement has been diverted into other social issues. Among these, the labour movement is particularly vigorous. For example, there has been an exciting labour-movement development that was primarily initiated by women. On 24 June 2016, the flight attendants of China Airlines (CAL, a Taiwanese airline) achieved a historic strike. Since flight attendant is considered to be an occupation for women and they are indeed the major labour provider in this occupation, it would be fair to say that it was a strike primarily organised by women. It was the very first strike in the airline industry in Taiwan and was reported as 'one of the largest strikes of Taiwan's post-martial law period' (Hioe, 2016b). Several thousand flight attendants used this industrial action to protest against the company's management policy, which clearly damaged their labour rights. The management had announced a change in the report-to-duty location without a discussion with the cabin crews. This change would have directly affected the calculation of flight attendants' working hours. By doing so, the company would not only cut down the rest time of the flight attendants but also require them to work more shifts. Through management practices, the company was aiming to legitimise excessive working hours. As a consequence, the scheduled on-duty hours of a flight attendant could be extended from 174 hours per month to 220 (Lin, 2016).

Since May 2016, the Taoyuan Flight Attendants' Union has represented the flight attendants' concerns and demands; however, the management of the company continued to neglect the problem and failed to engage in negotiation. Moreover, CAL's management even handled the protest with contempt. A senior manager suggested that the company could easily find substitute labour by recruiting new staff (Hioe, 2016b). Some retired flight attendants publicly defended the company by accusing the current employees of discontent and ingratitude.

After going through the formal procedure, the union decided to undertake industrial action and announced that the strike would begin on 24 June 2016. This decision brought a remarkable triumph to the history of the labour

movement in Taiwan. The flight attendants identified their protest as a battle for reasonable rest time. They used a statement to confront the criticisms of their employer and the retired flight attendants as well as to declare their stance.

First, we would like to use this statement to address a few words to future flight attendants. No matter if it is 2030 or 2040, no matter how labour conditions will be, if one day you decide to initiate industrial action or demonstrate on the street, we promise you with today's decision and action, we will never be the substitute labour for the employer. We will never ask you to be content. We will never accuse you of damaging the company's image and dignity. Because we know that employees are the most important assets for a company. When the rights of the employed are being ignored, the we of today and the you of tomorrow have the responsibility to challenge the unfairness, including confronting a union that refuses to speak for the workers. [...] Having time to rest has become so difficult for employees in Taiwan. This strike is a battle for rest time. [...] The Taoyuan Flight Attendants' Union is willing to be the vanguard in this battle. We will let the capitalists and the government know that Taiwan has to say farewell to the era of excessive working hours and overwork.⁶¹

On 24 June, several thousand CAL workers gathered in front of the Taipei branch headquarter of the company. They blocked the traffic and occupied the main street. In the evening of the same day, representatives from the company agreed to accept all the union's demands.

This successful strike in the airline industry has inspired and encouraged unions across the nation to fight for labour rights (Liang, 2016). It is a move that may lead Taiwan's labour movement into a new era. Will this momentum within civil society be sustained and keep women employees at the forefront? How will

⁶¹ The original statement is in Mandarin. It can be accessed at: <http://www.cooloud.org.tw/node/85746>.

the growing labour movement change the work situation for employed women? To what extent and in what aspects will it influence women's employment? These are all questions prompted by the recent shifts and changes, and they deserve further observation and investigation.

Moreover, the discussion about sexism sparked by this successful strike shows that, for women employees, the negotiation of work is often tangled up with the negotiation of gender. While support from the general public has been identified as a crucial factor in this triumph, it was a support tainted with gendered perceptions of women flight attendants. In Taiwan, flight attendant is a gendered occupation. It is regarded as a job for young and attractive women. This industrial action led by flight attendants was therefore widely described as the most '*jheng*' [正: an informal term for 'pretty' or 'beautiful'] and '*siang*' [香: fragrant] strike in history. There were online forums that displayed photo collections of the women flight attendants at the protest site. These women employees were perceived as projecting the image of ideal feminine labour providers in the airline industry. While there were concerns that the sexualisation of the protestors might undermine the seriousness of the industrial action, some commentators argued that the gender capital possessed by these 'young and attractive' employees was a crucial factor contributing the success of this industrial action (see Hioe, 2016c; Lu, 2016).⁶² The conventional 'sweaty' strikes by workers with 'older' bodies and poorer socio-economic backgrounds are still struggling to gain public support.

New shifts and changes emerging in social actors' personal lives and the wider society keep women's employment in Taiwan a current sociological issue. I argue that a sociological approach to women employees' everyday experiences of gender is indispensable and could offer insights into comprehending this issue.

⁶² The conceptualisation of gender as capital possessed by a social actor has similarities with Hakim's idea of erotic capital. Hakim (2010; 2011) identifies seven gendered and sexual qualities of an individual as personal assets. She also advocates that women can use this asset to negotiate power and confront gender inequality. Hakim's work has been seriously contested by feminist researchers (see Green, 2012; Warhurst, 2012).

Sociology of Everyday Life and Women's Experiences of Gender

This feminist study is my initial academic attempt to participate in the production of the sociology of everyday life with a specific focus on employed women's experiences of gender. The sociology of everyday life is recognised as a 'well-established tradition within sociology' in the Anglophone and European academy (see Kalekin-Fisherman, 2013; Neal and Murji, 2015). The 2015 Special Issue of *Sociology* is evidence that this sociological tradition has remained strong, with exciting enquiries into and discussions about various aspects of social life. The collection of research presented in this special issue also demonstrates that this body of knowledge is progressing in its development through investigating everyday life in various societies.

While the sociology of everyday life seems to have secured its position and caught the international spotlight, research on everyday life is still struggling to claim a seat at the table of social science in Taiwan. There are limited search results for studies investigating everyday life in Taiwan. This is not to say that no local research attempts have been made. Actually there has been an interesting development in the local scene of social science studies and it is a development with a potential twist regarding everyday social life and the everyday social world. This undercurrent was steered by a group blog, GUAVA Anthropology [芭樂人類學].⁶³ The homepage states that 'GUAVA anthropology covers things that are Grotesque, Unabashed, Apostate, Virid, and Auspicious about anthropology [sic]'.⁶⁴ The main organisers and the writers are a group of anthropologists working at academic institutes. The English translation of the blog's name only provides a partial meaning of the original term. The original Mandarin characters, 芭樂 [bale], are actually a transliteration of the name of the fruit, guava, in Tai Yu [the Taiwanese language]. The term has different meanings in different contexts. It can be the name of the fruit, Taiwanese guava. It can also be used as an adjective to describe things, such as in 'bale tickets', the

⁶³ The blog can be accessed at: <http://guavanthropology.tw>.

⁶⁴ This is the official English translation provided on the blog.

Taiwanese term for bad cheques (see Salmonsens, 2015). As well as articles about their own research projects, the blog entries also cover trendy issues that have caught the public's attention. For example, the blog once posted an article providing an anthropological analysis of a popular break-up story circulating on social networking sites. One interesting feature of the blog is the writing style they adopt and the language they use. It seems that the writers aim to manage a balance between academic writing and everyday common language. As in the title of the blog, it is an attempt to bring together the academic and the contextual localness.

The appearance of this blog began a trend among social scientists in Taiwan. New group blogs have been established for other disciplines, including Sociology at the Street Corner [巷仔口社會學], Kam-A-Tiam Forum of History [歷史學柑仔店] and The Poli-Sci Market [菜市場政治學]. Like GUAVA Anthropology, these blog names all imply specific cultural twists. Take Sociology at the Street Corner, for example; the original Mandarin title is a combination of two terms. The first part 巷仔口 [hang-a-khao] is a Taiwanese term which literally means 'around the corner of an alley'.⁶⁵ The second part is the Mandarin term for sociology. Hang-a-khao Sociology therefore suggests a sociological view that concerns the local social events happening in ordinary individuals' lives. It is a research standpoint that values the common, the local and the everyday.

Considering the sociological knowledge production concerning everyday life in both global and local settings, I propose that women's experiences of gender can provide crucial and valuable insights for this body of scholarship. This feminist study is my first contribution to this scholarship. With this project as my initial academic engagement with ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism and feminism, I have demonstrated that the intersection of these perspectives is valuable in contributing to the critical inspection of gender inequality in everyday practices. In researching women's experience of gender

⁶⁵ 巷仔口社會學 [Sociology at the Street Corner] can also be translated as 'Street Corner Sociology'. It is probably a reference to the classic ethnographic work, *Street Corner Society*, by William Foote Whyte (1943).

in the workplace, this study has revealed and examined the gendered routine practices which disadvantage women in employment organisations. The empirical findings also have policy implications. In terms of legal provisions, Taiwan might have shown significant achievements, but writing the principles of gender equality into legal articles is not equivalent to achieving gender equality in routine managerial practices and individual social interactions. Detailed and sensible guidelines and rules of conduct are needed in order to actually exercise gender equality in each social action within institutions.⁶⁶ In addition, I have shown that ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework have the capacity to accommodate situational and contextual specificities within particular societies. As an intellectual traveller with the intention of challenging the knowledge boundary between 'the East' and 'the West', I have developed and proposed an approach of theorising through reflective contemplation. My critical analysis is founded on the basis of contemplating the local, the contextual and the situational.

To Add a Final Word

Once, I shared my impressions of social psychology in a first-year undergraduate seminar. It was the very first session and I was a tutor trying to persuade the group members that a module exploring social interactions was not intimidating at all, even though they would be reading about theories. I said that if I had to pick one word, and one word only, to describe the subject that we would spend a term exploring, it would be 'mundane'. That comment triggered light laughter in the room. Of course, I did not mean the mundane 'mundane'. It was a comment that came with quotation marks. I meant to explain that the theorisation of social interactions can help us to see through the mundane camouflage of everyday routines and reveal the perplexing, the fascinating and the critical.

⁶⁶ For instance, in the UK, guidelines for recruitment and job interviews to prevent openly discriminatory questions have been developed and adopted; it would be illegal to ask any openly discriminatory question.

This PhD is my personal quest within that process of 'seeing through', and during the journey a phrase struck me to guide the further exploration ahead. The phrase is '*wu liao*' [無聊; boring in a nonsensical way], a Mandarin term that appears several times in my data. It was used by different participants, but in similar symbolic contexts. They used it to describe boring and annoying social encounters that often have specific gendered and gendering implications. Those narrated situated moments are my intellectual inspirations. '*Wu liao*' therefore serves as a perfect keyword to describe what I have been examining through this empirical research on women's experience of gender and I intend to keep it as my academic compass for a considerable time.

Appendix

Appendix 1 Information Sheet

Postgraduate Research Study

Women's experience of gender at work in Taiwan

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS⁶⁷

You are being invited to be involved in this research, which is being conducted as a requirement of my PhD programme at the University of York. My supervisor on this project is Professor Stevi Jackson. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please contact me or my supervisor if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

This part of the research is intended to learn about women's experiences of employment in Taiwan, especially experiences relating to gender inequality at work. I hope the research will contribute to understanding how to better promote gender equality in Taiwanese workplaces.

What will participation involve?

You will be invited to take part in an interview, which will be carried out at a public venue or any location convenient for you. The interview will be conversational in style and will cover such issues as work history, troubles and disputes at work and observed gender inequality in the workplace. It will take approximately 60 minutes. It is intended as an opportunity for you to express your views about gender inequality at work and share your experience. The interview will be audio recorded, and later transcribed into text form. If you are willing to engage more and provide further information, another interview session could be arranged.

As part of the presentation of research results, your own words may be used in text form. This will be anonymised, so that you cannot be identified from what you said; your name will be changed and any other information that might identify you (e.g. your workplace or job title) will be excluded or disguised. All of the research data will be saved as encrypted electronic files on secure, password protected devices. Data will be kept confidential and only the researcher and my supervisor will have access to it.

Please note that:

⁶⁷ A Chinese version of this information sheet is also provided.

- You can decide to stop the interview at any point
- You need not answer questions that you do not wish to
- Your name will be removed from the information and anonymised. It should not be possible to identify anyone from any academic production on this study.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw during the interview or any time up until 31st December 2013 and without giving a reason. If you withdraw from the study all your data will be destroyed.

If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

If you have any concerns about this study you can contact me or my supervisor at the University of York using the details below.

Contact for further information

Ting-Fang Chin

Email: tc764@york.ac.uk

Phone: +886 910712904

Prof. Stevi Jackson

Email: stevi.jackson@york.ac.uk

Centre for Women's Studies

University of York

Grimston House

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YO10 5DD

UK

給研究參與者的說明

當您收到這紙說明時，表示您被邀請參與本研究。這個研究是我博士學程的一部份。我目前在英國約克大學攻讀博士學程，指導教授為 Stevi Jackson。以下資訊將協助您決定是否參與本研究，煩請您花一些時間閱讀。如果您對於本說明的內容，有任何疑問或者想要取得進一步的資訊，請您務必與我或者我的指導教授聯繫。謝謝您。

- **這個研究計劃的目的是什麼呢？**

這個研究的目的之一，在於搜集台灣婦女的職場經驗，尤其是與性別不平等相關的經驗。我希望能夠透過這個研究，對台灣職場性別平等有所貢獻。

- **訪談將如何進行？**

您將會以受訪者的身份參與這個研究。訪談的場地，以對您方便的地點為主，可以是您所熟悉的公共或者私人場所。訪談將以對話的方式進行，話題則以職場經驗為主，例如：工作資歷、與同事的關係、工作上的困擾、對職場性別平等現況的觀察．．．等等。訪談長度約為六十分鐘。期待這個訪談，可以讓您自在地抒發職場經驗以及相關觀察。訪談進行時，我會以錄音設備錄下訪談的內容，事後根據錄音內容製作逐字稿。如果您願意提供更多資訊，我們可以安排第二次的訪談。

您於訪談中所說的話語，可能會出現在後續的研究報告中。所有可能會泄露您個人身份的資訊，均會予以特殊處理。您的真實姓名會以匿名替代，而其他可能會讓他人認出您的資訊（例如：您所服務的組織名稱、工作職稱）則會被排除或者加以掩飾。訪談所取得的研究資料，會以加密電子檔案的形式儲存于以密碼保護的電腦設備中。研究資料會以密件處理，只有研究者（也就是我）以及我的指導教授能夠存取。

我想特別強調：

- 在訪談進行的過程中，您隨時可以終止訪談。
- 您可以拒絕回答任何您不想回答的問題。
- 您的名字將會以匿名方式處理。我會盡力確保他人無法從任何相關的學術作品中，認出您的身份。

您擁有是否要以受訪者的身份參與這個研究的自由。如果您當下決定接受訪談，而之後反悔了，您可以在 2013 年（民國 102 年）12 月 31 日以前，告知我退出這個研究的決定。一旦您決定退出本研究，我會將所有與您相關的研究資料一併銷毀。

如果您決定參與本研究，我將會把這紙說明資訊交予您保存，並且請您簽署一份「參與研究同意書」。

如果您對於這個研究有任何疑慮，您可以利用以下資訊，與我或者我的指導教授聯繫。

- **相關聯絡資訊**

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Prof. Stevi Jackson

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英國約克大學婦女研究中心

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York

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Appendix 2 Consent Form

Research Consent Form

Full title of Project:

Women's experience of gender at work in Taiwan

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Ting-Fang Chin, PhD programme

Centre for Women's Studies

University of York

Grimston House

York

YO10 5DD

UK

Please Initial Box

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
- I agree to take part in the above study.
- I agree to the interview being audio recorded
- I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

參與研究同意書

研究計劃名稱：

台灣婦女的職場性別經驗

研究者基本資訊：

勤定芳 (Ting-Fang Chin), 博士候選人
英國約克大學婦女研究中心

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UK

請以勾選確認

- 我已經閱讀「關於本研究的基本說明」，並且理解其中的內容，研究者亦給予提問的機會。
- 我明白我的參與是志願性的，我可以終止我的參與，無需任何理由。
- 我同意參與本研究，接受訪談。
- 我同意訪談時接受錄音。
- 在匿名處理的前提下，我同意研究者在相關出版品中收錄我在訪談中所說的話語。

參與者的姓名

日期

簽名

研究者的姓名

日期

簽名

Appendix 3 Interview Outline

Interview Outline

- **Work history**

Could you please talk a little bit about yourself and your job?

What was your work experience before this job?

- **Daily life routine**

What is your routine like during a typical working day?

How do you manage your work life and private life?

Do you have any work rules or strategies of your own?

- **Relationships with colleagues, friends and family**

Is finding a balance between work life and private life an issue for you?

How do you interact with your colleagues at work or during private time?

What are the common social activities in your company? How do you think about them?

What kind of relationship do you have with your colleagues and supervisors?

How do you deal with work stress? Do you talk about it with your friends or family?

What appellations are used by your colleagues to address you? And what are those used by your friends and family?

- **Self-identified gender roles**

Which appellations do you like/dislike the most? Any particular reason?

Do you identify yourself as a “female employee”? Do your colleagues or your employer identify you as one?

Any other social roles that you identify yourself with? Why?

- **Work environment and atmosphere**

How would you describe the work atmosphere in your company/organisation?

Do you like it?

How is the environment?

Do you think it is woman-friendly?

- **Troubles and disputes at work**

Do you like your job?

What are the advantages and disadvantages?

If you were to have trouble at work, how would you deal with it?

Have you ever had a dispute at work? How was it resolved?

- **Observed gender inequality in the workplace**

Generally speaking, do you think your company/organisation is gender-friendly and why?

Have you or your colleagues ever observed any gender inequality in your workplace?

How did you/your colleagues react?

Is there any formal reporting system for this kind of problem in your company/organisation?

What are the possible remedies?

Are you/your colleagues satisfied with the solutions?

- **Personal experience of gender discrimination**

Have you ever experienced any form of gender discrimination in your current workplace or previous ones?

What happened? How did it end?

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