Migrants for Export

Robyn Magalit Rodriguez

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5

The Philippine Domestic

Gendered Labor, Family, and the Nation-State

When Filipina domestic worker Flor Contemplacion was sentenced to death in 1995 by the Singaporean government for allegedly murdering a fellow Filipina domestic worker and the child in her care, thousands of Filipinos in the Philippines and around the world rallied to demand that the Philippine state stop her impending execution. Protesters believed Contemplacion had been falsely accused. Many thought that Contemplacion had been set up to take the fall for a Singaporean, possibly her employer. The protests were a culmination of many Filipinos' long-standing critiques of the Philippine government's migration program, especially in relation to migrant women workers. Though the state hails migrants as its "new national heroes" churches, scholars, NGOs, as well as grassroots migrant activists in Migrante International, have long contested the government's role in facilitating women's migration as low-wage workers in gender-typed and gender-segregated jobs that make them especially vulnerable to exploitation and sexual abuse.[1] Contemplacion's case exemplified the kinds of vulnerabilities Filipina migrants face at the hands of their employers and ultimately host governments.

The highly publicized and transnational nature of the Contemplacion protests produced a political crisis, one that was critically centered, for the Philippine state. At the height of the crisis the Gancayo Commission, a state-appointed body established to evaluate the impacts of women's migration from the Philippines, came to the following conclusion:

> The saddest reality as found in the mission is the irreparable damage that has been inflicted to the reputation of the Filipina woman in the international scene because of the indiscriminate deployment of our women as domestic helpers (DHs) and entertainers. Our nation has gained the embarrassing reputation that we are a country of DHs, entertainers, and even prostitutes. . . . It is said that even in a certain dictionary the latest definition of the work "Filipina" is a "housemaid."[2]

State officials' own anxieties about women's migration as reflected in the Gancayo Commission report reveal the degree to which the state's labor export policy was increasingly being questioned internally. The notion that Philippine migrants were "new national heroes" was fast being undermined by the broader public as well as by government officials themselves.

This chapter's title, "The Philippine Domestic," refers to the debates in the Philippines regarding the migration of women. These debates sprung up in the media, churches, and NGOs as well as among everyday people, particularly in response to women's increasing employment as domestic workers (but also as "entertainers") overseas. It also refers to the nature of those debates, which centered on the effects of women's migration on different sets of domestic matters, namely, family life and the Philippines' national subject-status on the global stage. These debates were intensified by the death of a woman migrant worker, widely publicized in a way similar to that of Contemplacion, that of a twenty-two-year-old Filipina migrant worker Maricris Sioson. Many of the representations of domestic workers that were produced in response to these two women's deaths continue to shape how domestic workers are discussed in the Philippines.

The labor brokerage system is saddled by intrinsic contradictions that are critically gendered. Eager to supply the world with labor, the state has inserted migrant women into global circuits of reproductive labor that separate them from their children (if they are mothers) and then require that they care for the children of their employers in faraway destinations.[3] Mothers' absence from the home triggers "hegemonic national anxiety about the global status of the Filipino people."[4] Yuval-Davis argues that "a major part of the control of

women as national reproducers relates to their actual biological role as bearers of children."[5] Hence when women cannot perform their biological role of both bearing and caring for their children, the social order on which the nation depends is threatened. As Tadiar suggests, the migration of Filipinas as domestic workers also produces nationalist anxieties because of their hypervisibility as low-wage, low-status workers.[6] The hypervisibility of Filipinas abroad as domestic workers and their invisibility at "home" (that is, the household and the nation-state) raises concerns about the gendered representation of the Philippine nation-state in the global context. Though Filipina migrants work overseas as caregivers to other children, what is more desirable, particularly for the Philippine middle-classes who remain in the Philippines, is that they act as caregivers to their children in their homes in the Philippines.

It is precisely because Filipina migrants care for the children of other nations that middle-class anxieties about the Philippine nation emerge. Filipina women's employment outside the home and, in fact, their employment as domestic workers in the households of more economically privileged classes, is broadly accepted (or perhaps more aptly, expected). It is because Filipina migrants do the work of care for people in other countries and because care work is denigrated that women's employment as domestics abroad becomes problematic and ultimately shameful for the nation-state. These gendered, middle-class contradictions of international migration fed into the protests against the hanging of domestic worker Flor Contemplacion. Migrant grassroots activists were vital to organizing the transnational mobilizations calling for the state's intervention on her behalf and ultimately bringing the state into crisis. However, the anxieties registered by the Philippine middle classes, the church, social reformers, professional NGO activists, and scholars as well as the policy recommendations put forth by these actors appear to have been most decisive in shaping the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (RA8042), which was hurriedly introduced and passed in the wake of Contemplacion's hanging. Even if some of these actors were not necessarily central to the policy making process, their orientations toward how the state ought to conduct itself toward migrant women

employed as domestics or in other so-called "vulnerable" occupations were homologous with actual policy interventions. RA8042 codified what I have been calling migrant citizenship. This chapter examines the way that gender has shaped migrant citizenship from its inception.

RA8042's "gender-sensitivity" policies specifically aim to resolve gendered anxieties induced by specific kinds of gendered labor migration. The state has introduced a new "gender-sensitive" element into migration, including predeparture educational programs to assist women in making better informed decisions before leaving their families behind. My observations also reveal how these programs attempt to instruct women on how to be better transnational mothers even if they do decide to leave. The state has also enhanced skills training for women destined to work as domestic workers or entertainers because it is believed that "skilled" workers occupy higher status over the "unskilled" in the countries where women are bound to work. Education, in short, is the answer to migrant women's exploitation

In this chapter, I problematize this notion of education. Education as it is understood and implemented by migration officials is structured by logics of neoliberal self-regulation and responsibilization.[7] Anna Guevarra's argument about the state's response to the Contemplacion hanging is correct here. She argues that "the formation of a gendered moral economy around labour migration that links family, religion, and nationalism with capitalist ideals of economic competitiveness and entrepreneurship emerges in this neoliberal framework for managing labour migration."[8] My aim in this chapter is to track the gendered logics that constitute the Philippines' neoliberal migrant citizenship. My aim in this chapter is to track the gendered logics that constitute the Philippines' neoliberal migrant citizenship. The gendered labor of women haunts the Philippine system of labor brokerage even as it is the labor of women that proves to be most profitable for the state. I specifically trace the ways the national polling center Social Weather Stations (SWS) both framed and roused debates about the "Philippine domestic." I am informed here by the "gender knowledge" approach to analyzing migration policy as delineated by Schewenken and Eberhardt.[9] They are concerned with the ways gender knowledge "can become strategic resources in struggles about

practices and the construction of reality," especially as it relates to policy making.[10] I am concerned here with how gender knowledge is constructed by SWS, the ways in which that knowledge is inscribed in migration policy, and its consequences for migrant women. Philippine migration policy, especially its "gender-sensitive" policies, very explicitly incorporates gender knowledge. The government deployed its own official studies, like that of the Gancayo Commission cited above, to understand the differences between men's and women's migration experiences. Also at its disposal, however, was gender knowledge produced by institutions like the SWS. While gender knowledge about Filipina migration was prolific and was used by Philippine migration officials, this knowledge relied on problematic assumptions about men's and women's migration. Indeed, much of the gender knowledge about women's migration from the Philippines tended to reify patriarchal understandings and led to state policies and programs aimed at regulating their gender roles and their sexuality and doing so in line with the state's larger commitment to neoliberal labor brokerage.

Contesting Women Migrants' Absence from the Home(land)

By the late 1980s, Filipina international migration began to increase significantly, and by the early 1990s, it rivaled the migration of Filipino men. A majority of these women worked as domestic workers and entertainers. Women's migration from the Philippines, however, is hardly a new phenomenon; women have migrated, most notably as nurses, since the turn of the twentieth century. Moreover, internal migration (that is, rural–urban) has been a key feature of Philippine women's employment since the 1960s.[11]

It was only during the 1990s as women's migration increased in numbers that women migrants began to surpass men. As a greater proportion of women migrants were being deployed to work as entertainers and domestic workers anxieties about the migration of women began to emerge and become increasingly widespread in the Philippines. The media was important in inciting and circulating concerns

about women's international migration in the broader public questioning to what extent out-migration was not only detrimental to the women themselves, but to the country as a whole.

The highly publicized death of Filipina migrant worker Maricris Sioson in 1991 was important in initially setting off public discussions about women's out-migration from the Philippines. Sioson, a twenty-two-year-old woman who had worked as an entertainer in Japan, returned to the Philippines dead. Though a Japanese hospital concluded that Sioson had died from hepatitis, it was a conclusion her family did not believe. A second autopsy performed by the Philippines' National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) revealed that Sioson died from traumatic head injuries. In addition, the NBI found stab wounds and cuts in Sioson's vagina.[12]

The conflicting medical reports generated a flurry of news reports. While media response to Sioson's murder focused exclusively on the details of the case, or detailed other women migrants' victimization at the hands of unscrupulous labor recruiters and exploitative employers, some civil society actors, particularly national polling institutes, focused less on sensationalized accounts of women's victimization. Instead, they drew on social scientific methods to analyze broad patterns of women's migration, examining not only its impact on individual women, but on their families and Philippine society at large.[13]

Gendered Migration and the Family

The Social Weather Stations (SWS) were perhaps most critical in beginning to engage the broader national public directly around the issue of women's migration with several sets of surveys after the death of Sioson and leading up to the execution of Contemplacion. While the media certainly played a role in garnering the public's attention to the issue, the SWS's survey research, by its very nature, would draw individual Filipinos into the debate in more immediate ways. Moreover, having gathered data according to the norms of social science, SWS's survey results and analysis could claim the status of "truth" more than information produced by the media.

While the results of the different surveys conducted by the SWS are important, and I discuss them in more detail below, more significant perhaps is how the SWS surveys framed the issue of women and migration and its impact on Filipino families. SWS survey questions about women's migration are both constitutive and reflective of gendered anxieties about women's overseas employment. Feminists have long argued that traditional social scientific methods, including survey research, reproduce dominant gender understandings through both the processes and outcomes of research.[14] The SWS is no exception, as the very questions it asks of respondents are underlined by patriarchal assumptions of women's labor and women's role in the family.

In 1994 a survey entitled "Public Attitudes towards Female Overseas Workers: Implications for Philippine Migration Policy" asked respondents a total of fifteen questions. While the survey attempted to assess how many Filipino families had a member working abroad and how many individuals aspire to overseas employment, a majority of the questions centered on the public's perceptions of Filipina migrants. One of the most notable statements in relation to women migrants and their families that the survey asked respondents to comment on was, "When the mother of the household is working abroad, there are many problems and misunderstandings in the family." Querying whether women's employment outside of the home produces familial problems starts from the assumption that family stability depends on women's presence in the home. While respondents have the opportunity to disagree with the test statement, its very framing relies on the normative assumption that functional (heterosexual) families are those where women work at home.[15]

If the SWS portrayed women's overseas labor as a problem for the Philippine family, actual survey results affirmed the assumptions made by the survey takers. The SWS found that nearly a majority of its twelve hundred respondents, especially those in the higher income brackets, believed that, in fact, the absence of Filipina women from their families produces "many more problems and misunderstandings in the family." The author of the survey report points out, "While many of these issues also directly concern male overseas workers,

the debate has singled out overseas working women." This quotation and the survey results illustrate to what extent women's migration specifically is seen by economically privileged Filipinos as especially threatening to family stability. While on the surface it would seem that these "public attitudes" reflect "traditional" notions of men's and women's roles in the family, these "attitudes," in fact, run counter to the high prevalence of Filipinas' employment outside the home,[16] whether it is to work abroad, to work in other distant locations in the Philippines, or to work in factories or on farms. In the next section, it will become clear that what is really at stake here is less women's absence from the home per se, but their presence as low-wage and low-status workers in other nations.

Gendered Migration and the Philippine Nation

Alongside concerns about the consequences of women's migration for their families were concerns about the consequences of women's migration on the nation more broadly. In the same "Public Attitudes" survey, the SWS also asked respondents to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the test statement, "Women working abroad bring shame to our country."[17] That next to questions on women's migration and family was a question on national shame relates to McClintock's argument that "nations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space."[18] The questions on the "Public Attitude" survey rest on the logic that women's employment as low-wage, low-status workers has negative implications for the global representation of the Philippine nation-state.

The "Public Attitudes" survey results revealed that there was little consensus among respondents across gender, class, and region, yet the SWS came to the following conclusion:

> On the statement that women workers overseas bring shame to the country, the predominant position is disagreement (47 percent). Still, the percentages who outright agree (21 percent) and those who neither agree nor disagree (32 percent) are, uncomfortably high.

Figure 20. Ninoy Aquino International Airport, 2008. Photograph by Ben Razon. Source: Sugar Mountain Media.

By discussing the findings in this way, SWS effectively colludes in producing women's migration as a national shame even as the "objective" figures do not indicate that the feeling of nationalist shame is widespread. It can be argued that the SWS's findings reveal that most people (79 percent) either do not believe that women's migration is shameful or are ambivalent, even as they may be concerned about its effects on families. Yet the SWS concludes that people's sense of shame is "uncomfortably" high. By highlighting the uncomfortable "fact" of nationalist shame, the SWS ultimately produces it as an issue.

Radcliffe notes how "social identities, including national identities, are constituted through relations of intersubjectivity, that is, the (partial) internalization of others' images of oneself."[19] Survey respondents' (and survey researchers') beleaguered sense of nationalism is shaped by this intersubjective process but within an international

arena. It is because Filipina migrants care for the children of other nations as low-status domestic workers that classed anxieties about the Philippine nation emerge.

Vulnerable Women and the Paternal State

If the SWS survey constituted and reflected gendered notions of women's labor in families and constructions of Philippine nationalism in a global context, they also produced specific kinds of gendered understandings of the state's relationship and responsibilities toward women migrants.

The 1994 "Public Attitudes" survey report states:

> The character of female emigration has changed. There are many more young and single women, originating from further flung Philippine provinces. Hired as housemaids, singers, and dancers, these women work at jobs that are inherently difficult, dangerous, and are unprotected by labor law in many receiving countries.

In this quotation, migrant women are characterized as innocent, young, and nubile. The report appears to suggest that because the profile of migrant women is younger and more rural than previous cohorts of women migrants (namely, migrant nurses) they therefore have less control over their migration decisions because they lack experience and skills.

These infantilizing constructions of Filipina migrants are aimed at compelling the state to respond with migration reform. They rely, however, on specific gendered logics. Because women choosing employment abroad do so either out of youthful and/or rural ignorance or as a consequence of deficiencies in their values systems, they ultimately require intervention by the paternal state to prevent them from harming their families and the nation. Whether women lack moral gumption or are simply too young to know better, the state must assume better paternal custody over them. It must control its innocent, if sometimes wayward, daughters.

State actors, however, were initially ambivalent about the gendered debates produced and circulated by the media and national polling groups like the SWS and continued to be fairly ambivalent

when the Flor Contemplacion case first erupted in public protests. In a policy analysis produced by the Department of Labor and Employment in response to the initial news about Contemplacion's imminent hanging, it states:

> It is the exception to the norm that makes the news, and in recent days we have been flooded with media accounts of the travails of some of our overseas workers. But the truth is that only a very few — less than one thousand — of all our migrant workers ever get into trouble. The great majority are an unalloyed benefit both to their host countries and to their homeland.[20]

Here the state characterizes Contemplacion's case, and other similar cases, as being anomalous. Moreover, state officials believed that communist insurgency would have greater impact on the Philippines:

> At present the country is reeling from the political fallout of the Flor Contemplacion case. . . . Against these headaches, however, there is one major political benefit that is well-nigh incalculable. And this is that overseas employment — in mopping up part of our labor surplus — provides for greater political and social stability in the country. One study of the effect of the OCW program on the Communist insurgency notes that the program has deprived the movement of many recruits. And the misery index, which the insurgents count on, has been immeasurably affected by the remittances of OCWs to their families and their communities.[21]

Here the state has an understanding of the Filipino family and national stability that diverges from broader public discussions. Whereas in public debates Filipino families and the nation are destabilized by the absence of women, for the state, the presence of remittances in the family is what secures the nation's stability. Families are the nation's bulwark against the more menacing threat of communism.

Eventually, however, the state was compelled to respond to the protests against Contemplacion's hanging, which were expanding far beyond the Philippines. It is perhaps precisely because debates about the Filipina domestic spilled over into the international arena with the globalization of migrants' protests that the state felt especially obliged to finally act. As Tadiar argues, "Regulating the export of Filipino maids is really about gaining control over the Philippine production

of labour for the global community, and thereby asserting the nation's agency and subjectivity in the eyes of the world."[22] It can be argued that the Philippine state was figuratively emasculated in the international arena because it could not prevent the execution of one of its citizens, a woman no less. Introducing so-called "gendered-sensitive" migration reforms can be understood as a state strategy to recuperate its gendered national subject status and not a measure to address the very real abuse and exploitation faced by women (and men) workers abroad.

Republic Act 8042 (RA8042), passed very soon after the execution of Flor Contemplacion, mandated many policies very specifically related to better "protecting" women migrants. RA8042 appears to directly incorporate the sorts of reforms advocated in SWS documents over the years. For instance RA8042 declares that "the State recognizes that the ultimate protection to all migrant workers is the possession of skills. Pursuant to this and as soon as practicable, the government shall deploy and/or allow the deployment only to skilled Filipino workers." For domestic workers, officially categorized as "vulnerable workers," this has meant mandatory skills training programs prior to deployment overseas. In addition to this skills training, the state also expanded its predeployment worker education programs, to better disseminate "information of labor and employment conditions, migration realities and other facts, and adherence of particular countries to international standards on human and workers' rights which will adequately prepare individuals for making informed and intelligent decisions about overseas employment." Postdeployment, in countries of destination, RA8042 mandates government services at the Philippines' embassies or consular offices, including additional training and skills upgrading programs. The state provides legal and welfare services for migrant workers in distress. Because the state has officially incorporated a "gender sensitive" approach to migration policy, it means that all of these programs attempt to address the specific problems faced by migrant women. However, appeals for increased state protections for women like "gender-sensitive" policies, as Wendy Brown points out, "involve seeking protection *from* masculinist institutions *against* men, a move more in keeping with the politics of feudalism than freedom."[23]

A critical assessment of the state's "gender-sensitive" policies along with an analysis of interviews of migration officials several years after RA8042 was passed, reveals how migration reform is ultimately less about the regulation of women's migration or even "protection" and more about the regulation of women migrants themselves. The programs created by RA8042 are mainly focused on migrants' education and "decision-making" and therefore deflect attention from the state's role in actually (re)producing ideas of Filipinas' docility as part of its labor brokerage strategy. Filipinas' vulnerability is arguably a consequence of the racializing and gendering "marketing" practices of the Philippine state. At the same time, by categorizing only specific kinds of overseas jobs as "vulnerable" the state obscures the fact that foreign employment, by its very nature (as "flexible," contractualized, and temporary) renders all migrants fundamentally vulnerable. The ways the bureaucrats and other state officials attempt to regulate migrant women echoes the very same gendered ideas that the public as reported by SWS employed in their calls for migration reform.

A migration official in the POEA explains the purpose of women workers' training, as well as their education through the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS): "Our concern is that often these workers do not send money to the Philippines or don't try to take care of family problems at home. These kinds of seminars emphasize workers' responsibilities to their families." A very high-ranking official of the POEA explains that the state must provide domestic workers and entertainers specific kinds of programs because "there are lots of social costs when a mother or elder sister is missing."

For state authorities, migration programs actively cultivate women's sense of familial responsibility. The assumption that officials make is that women are not already orienting themselves to their families' needs. As a consequence of women's lack of familial duty, families suffer a number of "social costs." If the SWS pointed to increasing problems in migrant women's family lives as a means for calling for migration reform, bureaucrats attempt to address these problems by trying to inculcate certain kinds of family values among migrant women.

If there were calls for the state to assume better (paternal) custody of migrant women, it was clear in my other interviews of officials that these paternal/parental understandings about state–citizen relations characterized their own views. In an interview with the highest ranking official of the POEA, who began to weep profusely during the course of our discussion, she states:

> We really need to take care of them. When I see the DH [domestic helpers] and the OPAs [overseas performing artists], I just cry. They're so innocent. . . . I really hope things change for them. We really have to reach out to them, to give them self-respect and confidence. . . . You know, when we are on the airplane or in the airport traveling, when we have them next to us, deep inside we're ashamed.

Here this official uses familial language in describing the state's role in regulating women's migration. The state, in her words, must "take care of" domestic workers and entertainers because they are "innocent." By doing so, she suggests, the state will not only equip them with the ability to better negotiate the challenges of working overseas, but that the state may be able to deal with the deep-seated sense of nationalist shame women's migration produces.

As I discuss above, one the most important aspects of RA8042 is that it consolidates predeparture programs for women workers. Observations of the programmatic measures instituted to fulfill this mandate reveal how initiatives meant to "protect" women workers are a means of disciplining them to perform specific familial and nationalist obligations. This is most clear in the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS).

Predeparture education has been a component of the Philippines' overseas migration program since the institutionalization of the POEA. The POEA even has its own "Workers Education Division," which has been actively engaged in enacting a variety of policies and programs, in addition to the PDOS, aimed at helping prospective migrants to make "more informed" decisions. The official I interviewed explained that many of her colleagues worried that the PDOS did not adequately influence people's behavior. She described how the POEA was investing heavily in identifying pedagogical styles that could be more effective. The idea is that people hoping to work

abroad need to fully understand the challenges that employment abroad entails, including potentially difficult working conditions and having to negotiate with an unfamiliar culture. In fact, attendance at a PDOS is a mandatory predeparture requirement and prospective migrants must provide proof of having attended a seminar before being cleared for overseas employment. Predeparture education programs are seen as especially important and even "empowering" for "vulnerable" categories of women migrants.

Though the PDOS is generally given by migrants' recruitment agencies, the POEA requires that to be employed as domestic helpers or entertainers women migrants can take the PDOS only at the POEA or through an officially registered NGO. According to an official, "vulnerable workers . . . are required to take their PDOS at the POEA and with NGOs where they can learn about their rights as opposed to going to agencies who will teach them to be docile."

The PDOS is a full-day activity that covers a range of topics including migrants' employment rights and a so-called "values formation" session, my focus here. Most of the attendees are women bound for employment as domestic helpers or entertainers. Many, however, both women and men, are there to fulfill their PDOS requirements because they sought employment not through recruitment agencies but through personal networks or direct contact with foreign employers. In one of the PDOS sessions I attended, a female instructor in her early thirties with a kindly demeanor began her session on migrants' rights with an interactive activity on "confidence building." The official at the Workers Education Division whom I interviewed indicated that she favored this instructor for her "nontraditional" teaching methods, which includes class participation and group activities.

In the "confidence building" exercise, students are asked to pick a partner and to introduce themselves to one another. They seem to enjoy the exercise as everyone engages in animated conversation. Some excitedly share how they will be going to work abroad for the very first time; some "rehires," meanwhile, enumerate all the countries where they have been employed and describe what it is like to

work in those different places. The instructor then calls on individuals to share what they have learned about their partners, pressing them to remember as many details about their partners as they can. Some have a difficult time remembering their partner's first names. Others scramble to remember points from their own conversation in case they get called upon. After a few more teams are called upon, the instructor explains the point of the exercise: that first impressions between people are important, and even more so between workers and their employers. The best way to make a good first impression with one's employer, she then suggests, is to "(1) speak clearly and (2) be assertive. When you face your employer for the first time, speak clearly and loudly. What impression do you think you'll make? That you are confident and intelligent."

The instructor then asks workers to stand up and share what they learned from the exercise. Several workers raise their hands immediately to be called upon. One woman struggles to explain in English, "To be good OFWs, we need to be able . . . [she continues in Tagalog] . . . we should be confident in ourselves in facing our employers." Another woman states, also in Tagalog, "We shouldn't be hesitant about asking for instructions." Yet another woman gets up to speak, saying in Tagalog, "Even if you don't like the work, you should do it."

Yet "confidence," as the PDOS instructor and the students define it, is paradoxically about being good and ultimately compliant workers. For the instructor, one must face one's employer with confidence in order to create a good impression, and workers concur that to be "good OFWs" one must be confident. According to some, to be confident is to be able to ask for instructions on how to do work properly, and to be confident is to work even if one does not enjoy it. Here we see some of the logics that actually underlie this ostensibly "empowering" PDOS. Reminiscent of the "self-esteem" programs launched in the state of California analyzed by Barbara Cruikshank, the PDOS's "confidence-building" exercises are neoliberal techniques of self-government and regulation. "Confidence" becomes a means by which one strengthens one's will to accept adverse conditions rather than challenging them. To do so is to be a good overseas

worker; indeed, it is to be a good overseas *Filipino* worker and therefore to take up the mantle of Philippine migrant citizenship. As Cruikshank argues, "Democratic government, even self-government, depends upon the ability of citizens to recognize, isolate, and act upon their own subjectivity, to be governors of their selves."[24]

The disciplinary function of the PDOS becomes more apparent when the instructor launches into a discussion of the nature of contractual employment. She talks about the terms of migrants' employment contracts in fuller detail, illustrating the kinds of protections the POEA has instituted to make certain that workers are guaranteed fair working and living conditions in their countries of employment. The instructor even explains how the state engages in bilateral and multilateral agreements with labor-receiving countries so that they guarantee rights to Filipino migrant workers. The instructor notes too how the Philippine state is a signatory to the U.N. Convention on Migrant Workers' Rights.

The instructor's account of workers' rights as guaranteed in their employment contracts prompts discussion among the workers; some point to the Philippine government as responsible for undesirable contractual terms. A woman who had worked in a hospital in Saudi Arabia talked about how she had signed a contract for a specific salary as a staff nurse, but instead she was relegated to work as a menial laborer in the hospital. She complained about it to the hospital managers and was luckily able to get the staff position and a higher wage. This prompts another woman who had also worked in Saudi Arabia, as a nurse, to stand up and challenge the statement made by the first woman. A debate then ensues. The second nurse states irately, "It's a problem that starts here in the Philippines," arguing that the problem does not have to do with the employer, but with the Philippine government. Other workers start to talk among themselves and chuckle in agreement. "Nigerians and Indians get better wages for less skills!" she exclaims angrily.

The instructor responds that the wage rates depend on several factors including work experience, but she concedes that other nationals do not get the same rates as Filipinos and that theirs may be better. She explains, "Our country isn't always able to get better agreements,

but it's also about labor demand and supply. On the other hand, in Taiwan you can hire two Thais for the work of one Filipino. This is true also on the ships. Why? Because they accept it. But what do you want?" she asks. "Increased wages for fewer jobs or decreased wages for more to be able to leave? That's our struggle with migration management," she explains. The instructor attempts to downplay the role of the state in setting the terms of the employment contract, despite workers' insistence that the state is accountable for their wage rates. She suggests that the Philippine state has little power to negotiate with other states over wages. Even if the state were able to secure better wages, it runs the risk of losing overseas jobs for its citizens. In short, workers must accept the work they have and be compliant workers.

What is significant about these exchanges between workers and the PDOS instructor is that, first, it becomes clear that migrants believe the state must intervene to negotiate better terms of employment on their behalf. Indeed, RA8042 has been hailed as the Magna Carta of Philippine migrant's rights. Yet in the PDOS, migrants are taught to accept the terms of employment they already have because they run the risk of losing their jobs if they make too many demands. This PDOS, however, does give workers a space to express their concerns about being exploited overseas. The PDOS instructor is able to manage the outrage expressed by workers, affirming that workers can cope with their problems by "confidently" addressing their employers. At the same time, however, she makes it clear to workers that ultimately the Philippine state is limited in its power to protect them. Even though she explains how the Philippine government works to ensure that workers enjoy protections through the certification of the employment contract and even through bilateral and multilateral agreements, she simultaneously asserts that the Philippine state is weak. The resolution workers are left with, ultimately, is to accept their conditions; otherwise they face the prospect of unemployment.

Despite these critiques of the government, most of the other workers in this seminar seem to concur with the instructor that the state cannot be responsible for unequal employment conditions and that

ultimately one should not take issue with these inequalities. One woman's final words in response to the discussion of unequal wages were: "You can't always compare [your wages with the wages of other nationalities] because it causes problems in the workplace."

Following the session on employment contracts comes the session on "values formation." For this section the instructor is an elderly woman who introduces herself as a nun who had previously worked for a nongovernmental organization advocating migrant workers' rights. She takes a very different approach from the first instructor, whom I describe above, relying less on discussion and more on conventional lecturing, though with a liberal dose of humor. Workers are just as attentive to this instructor, laughing, sometimes uncomfortably, at all of the crude jokes she makes early on in her part of the seminar.

She states, "Filipinos suffer from a cancer, a cancer that starts here and that we take with us abroad, a cancer that needs to be cured even before you leave. Values, priorities, beliefs, attitudes: this is defective in the Pinoy." She proceeds to joke about the various cultural "defects" Filipinos suffer from, including overzealous consumption, materialism, and gambling. People laugh in agreement as she describes images of Filipino migrants weighed down with baggage full of goodies purchased overseas for their relatives or at airport duty-free shops when they return from work overseas. When she jokes about how the Filipino is the magna cum laude in *pusoy,* a card game, even teaching foreigners to play, the students find it hilarious.

Her tone, however, starts to change dramatically from being funny to admonishing: "We're like this. We blow our money. But the fact is these jobs aren't always plentiful. There are limits, and we're at the finishing line. . . . You have to compete with cheaper labor." The room all of a sudden falls silent, and people shift uncomfortably in their seats. She continues with a moralizing tirade:

> You have your objective of achieving a "better life," but what are your concrete plans? Food? Shelter? Clothing? Education? What about your value systems? If you rely on the Pinoy value system will you succeed? It is not clear that you will. Food, clothing, education, will only deal with your physical needs. There is something else that's important, more than the

> dollars you send. There's the spiritual aspect. Remember, as OFWs, you are Pinoy and you're Christian. *Bayan, lipunan, pamilia* [Nation, society, family]. These aspects are within us but who is it that brings all sorts of problems to other countries? We do. It is embarrassing. Look at our country. Our heroes are dead and rotting. Take care of the dignity of your country.

In the instructor's invectives, we see family, religion, and nation intertwined as a means of governing the behavior of migrant workers. The instructor aims to discourage the unproductive use of one's wages overseas. What is important is that migrants are to send their money back home to their families in the Philippines and not to waste it on leisure or luxury items. Consumerism, according to this instructor, is a vice much like gambling and is ultimately immoral. The instructor claims moral authority early in the session by identifying herself as a nun, and it is an authority that workers appear to accept.

While problematic consumerism or even gambling may affect migrants' families, the instructor suggests that these behaviors also have consequences for the nation more broadly. She insists that Filipino migrants are embodiments of the nation abroad and to ideally represent the nation requires that migrants be morally upright individuals, refraining from behavior that may sully the image of the Philippines overseas. There are penalties for those who fail to exhibit nationalism and Catholic morality. After lamenting the "defectiveness" of Filipino values, the PDOS instructor warned workers:

> First, going abroad is not the same as it used to be. You're faced with problems that the government can't control. For example, your jobs are not always guaranteed. In Malaysia, jobs for Filipinos were stopped. The same is true for Taiwan. You're competing now with cheaper workers. You want better wages and you deserve it but they are willing to work much cheaper.

She continued, "Let's just work." Being morally upright representatives of the nation, therefore, ultimately means being good and docile workers. To be otherwise is to ultimately threaten the nation-state, which loses global labor markets to competitors.

Throughout the instructor's diatribe, workers are still and quiet, many with their heads bowed, almost in shame. Even I had a difficult time looking up at her or even looking at the other people in the room. The message clearly had an effect on everyone. Perhaps it is because she is a nun, or that she draws on religious and nationalist sentiment that makes her presentation especially effective.

When the "values formation" instructor bemoans the defectiveness of Filipino culture, she is especially worried about Filipina migrant women's sexuality:

> More and more Filipinas are becoming pregnant before getting married. They are having sex as often as they change clothes. Nowadays the wedding march is "here comes the bride, six months inside." . . . Even when a Filipina attends mass, she's dressed so sexy that instead of "body of Christ," the priest says, "Wow, what a body!"

Filipina women are "culturally defective" because they are sexually promiscuous — a problem that they bring with them when they go overseas so that the Philippines have a "reputation." She states:

> When you ask in different countries what a Pinay is they will say domestic helper or fucking machine. Men in other countries will actually try their luck on Filipinas, but you don't have to give in! They'll actually respect your decision not to give in, but because we have only money-values, we give in.

This remark suggests that Filipinas are not just sexually promiscuous; their promiscuity is linked to having "money-values," that is, women are willing to prostitute themselves for money because their values are misplaced. Yet paradoxically the Philippines actively trains women to work as "entertainers" overseas, which requires them to perform highly sexualized dance routines so that they can earn lucrative salaries overseas. In the very same building, women hoping to be entertainers are judged by a panel that includes a POEA representative in a Pre-Departure Showcase Preview. Dancers were often scantily clad and performed provocative moves. In the PDOS, however, the state attempts to define the limits of migrant women's sexuality to ensure that the Philippine state's representation on the global stage is not significantly undermined even as their sexuality is necessary to their overseas employment and ultimately their

remittances (off the job, for entertainers, and on the job, for domestic workers).[25] It is specifically the unruly sexual conduct of women migrants that are problematic for the state.

One means of being respectable women is through maintaining their roles as mothers. The instructor states:

> You'll be faced with loneliness, worry, anxiety, and homesickness. Given all these challenges, ask yourself if you can handle it physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Through it all, remember your family. Some people deal with these problems with sex, but you need to remember what our role is with God. Sex is supposed to be for procreation in a family.

Here, as Guevarra observes, the state "not only endeavours to make them into economically productive workers but also ensures that they are 'good' wives, mothers, and women. Normative gender roles thus define the moral grounds upon which Filipino women must fashion themselves as workers."[26]

If women migrants bring shame to the nation, they may ultimately cause problems for future migrants. As the instructor of PDOS's "values formation" section contends, should "bad" workers or problematic women workers tarnish the Philippines' image, all categories of Filipino migrants may lose future opportunities for overseas work. "It's in your hands," she says, "the image of this country and the prospects for your fellow Filipinos."

Conclusion

International migration has become an important developmental strategy in the Philippines as the state benefits from the millions of dollars in remittances generated yearly by its citizens employed abroad. Specifically, women migrants have come to play an increasingly significant role as overseas workers. Women's migration in particularly, however, has become a critical site for national debate as people in the Philippines, especially the middle classes, have contested expected meanings of gender as it has been transformed by international migration.

Different civil society actors have been concerned with the negative consequences of women's migration, including the extreme forms

of violence and abuse women suffer while working and living abroad, and have attempted to advocate migration reform. Research produced by the SWS to support demands for reform, however, reify problematic, ultimately patriarchal, notions of femininity. It characterizes women's migration as undermining the social and moral fabric of the Filipino family and ultimately the Philippine nation-state.

The state, though initially ambivalent about national(istic) anxieties about women's migration, even with the highly graphic and violent death of Maricris Sioson, is ultimately compelled to address them, particularly when migrants in the labor diaspora brought the issue of women's migration to a global stage with the protests against the hanging of domestic worker Flor Contemplacion. When the Philippine state finds its gendered subject status tested in the global arena, it finally responds to the broader calls for migration policy reform. It incorporates many of the same representations as are circulated by key knowledge producers like the SWS in its construction of new migration laws. Yet the paternal logics on which demands for migration reform rest have led not to the increased regulation of the state's migration apparatus, but to the regulation of migrant women themselves. Citizenship, as promised through RA8042, is critically gendered. Moreover, debates about the "Philippine domestic" reveal how tenuous the Philippine labor brokerage system truly is.