

**Gender and Philippine Transnational Migration:  
Tracing the Impacts 'Home'**

By

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## **Abstract**

### **Gender and Philippine Transnational Migration: Tracing the Impacts 'Home'**

By Katharine Laurie

This thesis explores the experiences and implications of transnational parenting: on the individual men and women engaging in transnational migration; on the children they leave behind in their countries of origin; and (broadly) on their 'home' societies. Expanded notions of development and citizenship frame the examination of migration: a transnational lens highlights the importance of the social networks and relationships migrants create and maintain across geographic and cultural borders. Qualitative fieldwork and interviews with Filipino mothers and fathers working in Doha, Qatar are used to assess the gendered nature of transnational caregiving. The findings from this study tentatively suggest few differences between long distance mothering and fathering, and that with careful monitoring and additional 'parenting work' the situation can be of limited risk to the children involved. There is no doubt of the presence of a 'culture of migration' in the Philippines, which the state fosters to serve its own developmental needs, seemingly at the expense of the individuals who face the pain and challenges of living in transnational nuclear families.

December 17, 2007

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## **Abbreviations**

ADB – Asian Development Bank  
APMM - Asian Pacific Mission for Migrants  
BLAs - Bilateral Labour Agreements  
BSP - Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas  
DAWN - Development Alternatives for a New Era  
EPZ - Export Processing Zones  
FDI - Foreign Direct Investment  
FTZ - Free Trade Zones  
GAD - Gender and Development  
GDP - Gross Domestic Product  
GEM - Gender Empowerment Measure  
GRI - Gender Related Index  
ICTs - Information Communication Technologies  
ILO - International Labour Organization  
IMF - International Monetary Fund  
IOM - International Organization for Migration  
LDC – Less Developed Country  
LNG - Liquefied Natural Gas  
MDG - Millennium Development Goal  
NEDA – National Economic and Development Authority  
NIDL - New International Division of Labour  
NSO – National Statistics Office  
ODA - Overseas Development Assistance  
OFWs - Overseas Filipino workers  
OWWA - Overseas Workers Welfare Authority  
PIA – Philippine Information Agency  
POEA - Philippines Overseas Employment Administration  
SAPs - Structural Adjustment Programs  
UNDP – United Nations Development Program  
WID – Women in Development  
WAD - Women and Development  
WB – World Bank

# **Gender and Philippine Transnational Migration: Tracing the Impacts 'Home'**

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

At a conference on transnational migration and public policy in Canada, I was struck by a presentation on the Seasonal Workers Assistance Program (SWAP). To compete with the low prices of blueberries from Peru, producers in the Fraser valley in British Columbia import seasonal workers from Mexico and the Caribbean to harvest their crops: just one of the ubiquitous examples of the reach of globalization. No one with Canadian citizenship would do the job for what they were paying. This presents an interesting spin on the 'buy local' and '100 mile diet' movements: import the food or import the people? Which has less negative environmental and social impacts and who is paying the true cost? Above all is this really what development looks like?

Mainstream discourse would have us believe that unfettered capitalism and trade liberalization contain solutions to chronic poverty and 'underdevelopment'. Undoubtedly some have prospered under these policies, but the presence of 854 billion people (and growing) living in a state of chronic hunger demands a deeper analysis of the strategy. Migration is positioned at the apex of this debate: hailed by some as a development strategy to be encouraged and managed; and demonized by others as a dirty problem, an invasion by unwanted foreigners who are out to steal jobs and infect with social ills.

What are rendered invisible in the adoption of extreme positions are the individuals and families struggling to survive and create better opportunities for their children in an increasingly globalized world. The nuanced perspectives of gender, class and ethnic effects on how people enter and experience the global marketplace are lost in simplistic rationalizations. As citizens, consumers and migrants become progressively more intertwined in transnational networks and relationships (hierarchical and



egalitarian; visible and unnoticed) the need to illuminate these complexities becomes imperative.

To a large degree gender still mediates all opportunities and experiences. It is finally being placed at the centre of development, as theorists and practitioners realize that there is no true development without the equal participation of men and women, and there is no gender equity without development. The realm of transnational migration is equally imbued with gender at all scales: global markets demand certain genders for particular roles; governments and the media portray and direct workers according to gender; communities judge migrant workers based on gender; and families place differential demands and expectations on migrants of different genders.

To add to the knowledge pool concerning gender and migration, this thesis will explore the experiences of a specific group of labour migrants: transnational mothers and fathers working in Doha, Qatar who have left children behind in their native Philippines. Through an investigation of the migration trajectories and coping strategies of this focus group, this thesis will assess the gender differentiated ways that parents experience migration, how these experiences impact on their children and broadly on their home societies.

Transnational migration weaves individuals, communities, nations, and cultures together across geographical and conceptual boundaries. This recently developed frame for understanding migration prompts us to look beyond settlement and assimilation to the social fields created and maintained by migrants and the implications in terms of migration strategies, identity formation, and cultural dialogues. Through strategic relocations to fulfill needs and aspirations, transnational migration provides sites for

continuity and reconstruction of cultural norms, gender roles, and power relations.

Through these constructions, individuals have unequal access to the opportunities and risks involved, resulting in a web of complexity defying facile explanations.

While the struggles of transnational families may seem to be a very specific and somewhat unique topic for study, in truth nuclear family transnationality provides a focal point for many larger scale processes, within specific cultural points of reference, including development, globalization, gender and migration. Transnational families represent the trials and struggles of those intermediately placed in global-local chains sustained to foster 'development'. This thesis addresses such questions as: who is really gaining from these relationships; are there genuine alternatives to the opportunities presented; who is promoting the relationships; and what are the costs borne by those who enter into the global marketplace and their families?

This study explores the gendered nature of long distance care-giving. It asks how men and women feel and act differently in the context of transnational parenting, and seeks to evaluate the impacts on the children and societies who are left behind, yet bound through webs and networks spanning physical distance. The scale of migration from the Philippines makes it an ideal case to draw theory into the tangible realm of experience; as does the petroleum based boom in the Middle East which draws large numbers of migrants to Qatar and other nations.

In the national discourse of the Philippines, migration is treated in contradictory terms, particularly for women. On the one hand migrants are portrayed as the 'heroes of the nation', sacrificing overseas with their labour in order that their families and society will live better. On the other hand, when females respond to the growing gendered

demand for workers to provide care work (and other roles traditionally ascribed to women), they are sometimes criticized as deserters, or as greedy ‘dollar mommies’. Navigating and reconciling the world of transnational migration is no easy feat. I have enormous respect and admiration for the determination and strength of the participants in this study, and the millions of other parents who make tough decisions to serve the best interests of their children.

The general layout of this thesis is as follows. After setting up the rationale for the study in this introduction, the second chapter leads the reader through the theoretical debates which inform the study. A range of perspectives on the thematic links between gender, development and migration will be channelled down into the specificities of the study: transnational parenting and the implications for children. In the following chapter, I justify the epistemological suppositions and research design, introduce the research participants, and share some observations on Qatar and the personal challenges of performing field work there. The fourth chapter sets up the historical and current socio-economic contexts of the Philippines and (with much less detail) Qatar, focusing on the issue of migration in both locales.

Chapters five through nine present the findings of the study and discuss them in reference to relevant literature. The thematic areas around which the data will be presented are the gendered contexts of migration; transnational parenting; economic and social remittances; impacts on the children left behind; and the creation of a culture of migration. These chapters present a detailed examination of individual experiences of transnational migration and parenting, and how they are tied to larger structures and forces.

## **Chapter 2 Theoretical Groundwork: Linking Gender, Migration and Development**

### ***Gender and Development***

The visions of the 1950s and 1960s for a better world with full employment, decent incomes, universal primary education, health for all, safe water supplies, a demographic transition to stable populations, and fair terms of trade between rich and poor countries, have in no case been realized. The beliefs of those times – in linear and convergent development through stages of growth, in central planning, in unlimited growth, in industrialization as the key to development, in the feasibility of a continuous improvement in levels of living for all – these now have been exposed as misconceived and, with the easy wisdom of hindsight, naïve. Hundreds of millions of people are worse off now than twenty years ago. (Chambers, 1997, p. 1)

Early development thinkers equated development with increases in wealth and material goods, as measured by such indicators as Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While these basic premises of modernization theory still hold value, a shift in thinking has gone on over the past few decades to include a number of other variables in the definition of development. Included are concepts of equity, participation, empowerment, environmental sustainability, and freedom. Despite ample theorization, practical efforts and steps forward in some of these realms, they remain largely as elusive as more simplistic economic notions of progress.

Thinkers such as Amartya Sen are broadening notions of development to include concepts such as the expansion of choice and opportunity in various personal and public realms. While based on a liberal philosophical stance biased towards western notions of individualism and weaker social bonds and expectations, there are elements of his work that have wide universal appeal.

An adequate conception of development must go much beyond the accumulation of wealth and the growth of gross national product and other income related variables. Without ignoring the importance of economic growth, we must look well beyond it. (Sen, 2000, p. 14)

Robert Chambers (1997) argues “in the spirit of decentralized empowerment and local creativity” for the need to put the priorities of people, poor people, at the centre of development projects (p. xvii). Whether termed ‘Human Scale Development’ (Max-Neef, 1991), or ‘Development with a Human Face’ (Mehrotra & Jolly, 2000) clearly primacy has been moved beyond economic growth as an end in itself and shifted to meeting the basic needs and improving the lives of people. The promise of an eventual ‘trickle-down’, from those being enriched by the resources and labour of the masses is no longer an acceptable proposition. A common thread for many theorists and practitioners is the importance of self-reliance, based on the recognition that projects where the affected communities have a strong role in planning and taking action to change their conditions are far more successful.

For this paper development will be defined as the process and state of improving the quality of life of people and societies. This includes a level of economic security, environmental health and sustainability, political stability, as well as social and spiritual aspects of wellbeing. It also acknowledges that there are multiple paths for the diverse interests and priorities of people to be achieved. Goulet, quoted in a UNESCO (1995) document, articulates this search for *another development*.

Notwithstanding the hegemony of the economic growth model, a new development paradigm is in gestation. New approaches to development are being tested out in the practice of numerous communities and movements. Their values are the primacy of needs and human rights over the accumulation of wealth; participation; ecological sanity; the building of community; and the equitable distribution of benefits arising from economic and technological advances. (p. 30)

Under this frame of *another development*, the theories and practices of both gender and migration are woven through each chapter of this thesis. Highlighted by the United Nations as the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG), the need to ‘Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women’ is to some degree on the agenda of every major development organization. Hardly a new proposition, as far back as the 1970s theorists such as Ester Boserup (1970) analyzed the role of women in development and what gender specific barriers they face. Her work, *Woman’s Role in Economic Development*, challenged the notion that women’s contributions to development were uniquely in the reproductive and domestic realms, and criticised the direction of development projects solely towards men as the ‘economic agents’, ‘breadwinners’ and ‘heads of households’ (Boserup, 1970).

### ***The Evolution of Gender in Development***

Developmental thought with respect to gender has arguably evolved through the focus on Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and finally to Gender and Development (GAD). These shifts show a progression in thinking: from the perception of women needing special consideration within the development project (the ‘add women and stir’ option); to seeing women’s issues as parallel and indispensable to the whole of the project; and finally an outlook where ‘women’s issues’ are viewed in terms of the larger set of relations between the genders. Some would argue that these approaches cannot be chronologically ordered, and that elements of each feed into theory and practice at different moments up to the present (Kabeer, 1994). Indeed, even given

the current discourse of gender mainstreaming, one often finds that the application is sometimes derived from a WID standpoint (Rathgeber, 1990).

Beginning with United Nations Decade for the Advancement of Women from 1975-1985 there emerged greater visibility of the key roles that women fulfill in development (outside of their reproductive capacities), and the invisibility of sex-related inequalities with respect to education, income and health behind highly aggregated statistics began to diminish. The shifts in thought have been represented through the United Nations conferences on women - Mexico 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985 and Beijing 1995 – which have brought together scholars, activists and policy makers from across the global North and South to move forward the project of gender equality.

As will be further explored through the gendered impacts of globalization, women have experienced disproportionate exploitation and oppression exacerbated through the New International Division of Labour (NIDL) (Mies, 1998). Maria Mies (1998) contends that modern capitalism and the neo-liberal model in particular disvalue the types of work traditionally done by women – even as demand for these services grows - and relegates them further into lesser paid, and less protected forms of labour.

As there have been critiques of mainstream feminism for representing the views and struggles of white middle class women and ignoring the diversity of issues salient to women of colour, women of different class groups and women of different sexual orientations, so there have been voices critical of the of the homogenizing influences of women and gender in development (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997). In Bangalore India, in 1984 DAWN (Development Alternatives for a New Era) was formed (Sen & Grown, 1987). This group formed by third world women sought development alternatives by

emphasizing both a basic needs approach to development, and a diversity of feminisms, to serve their goals. In this perspective a fundamental conflict is seen between women's economic wellbeing and wider development institutions and processes.

Equality for women is impossible within the existing economic, political, and cultural processes that reserve resources, power and control for small groups of people. But neither is development possible without greater equity for, and participation by, women. (Sen & Grown, 1987, p. 20)

DAWN highlights the need for third world women to voice the issues of greatest relevance to their lived realities, and work in solidarity with western grassroots women's organisations when the situation befits.

The gender and development perspective recognizes "the wider social and economic structures of society and the ways in which these can oppress both men and women" and is predicated on the argument that there must be fundamental changes in the distribution of power throughout societies if women are to gain the voice and decision-making power they deserve (Cleaver, 2002, p. 8). This outlook informs the concept of gender mainstreaming, which means that in all projects, programmes and domains the gender implications and different needs and perspectives of men and women should be integrated, as opposed to having separate 'women's units' as had been done in the past (Benad, 2002).

Related is the discourse on participation and empowerment, which has been widely heralded, particularly with respect to women's need for greater decision making power. However both terms have been somewhat diluted through their widespread use as community and international development catch phrases. Underneath the rhetoric, gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment can be seen as complementary



strategies, both working towards balancing the voices and power of men and women in all reaches of societies (Benad, 2002).

Be this as it may, despite decades of theorisation, discussion, conferences, projects and programs – and the undeniable advances that have been made - women are still disproportionately over-represented amongst the world's poorest, under-represented in political and economic leadership, and for the most part bear the weight of sustaining the coming generations with the limited resources at their disposal (Burn, 2005). As will be discussed, these factors contribute to the growing incidence of women as the primary actors in migration. Irrespective of gender, migration is on the rise as a response to the realities of unequal development, ethnic conflict and globalization: this thesis suggests that it is imperative to research this topic in reference to the different ways it is experienced along gender lines.

### ***Migration and Development***

Definitional and disciplinary perspective problems have long plagued the study of migration. Migration has been extensively theorized by anthropologists, demographers, economists, historians, lawyers, political scientists, and sociologists; resulting in its study not,

from a shared paradigm, but from a variety of competing theoretical viewpoints fragmented across disciplines, regions and ideologies. As a result, research on the subject tends to be narrow, often inefficient, and characterized by duplication, miscommunication, reinvention and bickering about fundamentals. (Massey, cited in Brettell & Hollifield, 2000, p. 2)

To further complicate matters, the diverse nature of flows of people adds complexity to monitoring and thus gaining an accurate picture of actual volume and impacts of

migration. Appleyard (1989a) breaks types of migration down into the categories of refugees, contract labour migrants, transient professional migrants and illegal and undocumented workers. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2007) estimates that there are 192 million people (approximately three percent of global population) living outside of their countries of origin.

Seen very tenuously as a development strategy, migration has been promoted as a short-term solution to the problem of excess labour, and a tool to adjust labour market surpluses with volume, type and composition of labour force sent abroad (Appleyard, 1989b). Many would argue that migration should be viewed as a developmental tool, if at all, only in the short-run to facilitate building the domestic economic base, and eventually be eliminated as a planned economic sector. Appleyard (1989b) presents the need to, “unravel the complex process which countries experience in moving from a condition of labour surplus to labour shortage and the specific role that labour emigrations plays in that transition” (p. 486).

Others approach the issue of migration by attempting to analyse the developmental impacts of the movements of people seeking enhanced labour market opportunities. As opposed to seeing migration as a tool for development, it is viewed as a negative phenomenon, a result of globalization, which must be studied to ascertain the best ways for organizations to respond to the needs of these populations or mitigate their potential for disruption in ‘host’ countries (Lobel, 2003; Sweetman, 1998).

The impacts of international migration on countries of the global South are widely theorized and highly contested. Structuralists would argue that the capitalist system has created core and periphery regions: countries are linked in unequal relationships whereby

the labour surplus from the peripheries are used (through low wages) to accumulate capital in the core (Appleyard, 1998b). In this view labour migration, while providing livelihoods, inhibits the development of the peripheries and maintains the unequal balance of power between the two. Compounding the situation is the loss of labour in rural areas which decreases economic productivity and food security, while creating greater dependence on remittances earned by family members abroad (Chimhowu et al., 2005). This can be called an asymmetrical model, whereby the gaps between the centre and the periphery are maintained and even exacerbated through migration (Koc & Onan, 2004).

Other theorists supportive of a model of balanced growth, see potential benefits of labour migration for both sending and receiving nations through increases in foreign exchange, decreased unemployment, and the reduction of income inequalities (Appleyard, 1998b; Koc & Onan, 2004). Underlying this argument is the assumption that those who migrate are unemployed, meaning that there will be no decrease of domestic productivity due to their exit. From the macro perspective an improved balance of payments and reduction in unemployment are the most commonly cited benefits of labour migration (Koc & Onan, 2004).

The specific country context with respect to labour and industry, and the differentiation of types of labour exported play a large role in determining whether the extraction of labour has positive or adverse effects on the domestic marketplace. The widely reported and theorized notion of 'brain drain' is a good example of this condition. As is the idea of 'brain waste', referring to those who due to difficulties transferring credentials (a very common situation in Canada) or characteristics of the host labour

market are not able to find employment in their area of expertise. Countering arguments about the loss of highly skilled and educated members of the workforce - as well as the investment made domestically to train them - are those who claim that many migrants are not the most skilled and educated of their societies, and that the loss of un / under-employed individuals does not harm the economy (Appleyard, 1989b).

The theories presented thus far focus on the links between economic development and migration, partly due to the penchant of economic factors – the search for greater earning potential – as one of the largest motivating factors in migration (this is of course only the case when one has a choice, holding no validity when people are fleeing violence and persecution). This said, people's decisions surrounding migration are informed by a myriad of factors: 'chain migration' (relatives following one another to a certain city or area) is one indication of the importance of personal relationships and familial social security in these processes. Socially, some would argue that through migration there exists great potential for the growth of an expanded notion of development, whereby knowledge, practices and values are shared and hybridized both in 'home' and 'host' environments, resulting in a higher global common denominator.

In this way, the benefits of migration are posited to surpass the input of hard currency to include the transfer of skills and expertise gained working in more developed economies, as well as the socio-cultural flows which have accompanied economic remittances via the movements of people across borders. The transfer, or conversation, surrounding cultural material has been exacerbated under the transnational conditions fostered by globalization. These notions will be further explored in the case study of this thesis.

The ‘push’ or supply side of the migration equation is not difficult to grasp; when there are no adequate employment or survival options in people’s immediate surroundings, they will attempt to move either within or beyond the boundaries of their country to seek out better options. Clearly people often migrate in response to conflict or violence as well as based on personal desire and ability (agency) in relation to economic or security needs.

More complicated by far are the conditions which have fostered and led to high unemployment and stagnant domestic or regional economic growth. The answers to this ‘underdevelopment’ question are highly contextualized: climatic, geographical, historically influenced stories of resource use, extraction, conflict, entrepreneurship, leadership and geo-political positions are just some of the causal conditions. The remnants of imperialism and its exploitative colonial designs have yet to be entirely dismantled, and even where present day conditions seem entirely equitable, the scars from the past have maintained a comparative disadvantage for many countries within the global South. These antecedents will be fleshed out in reference to the Philippines in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

The flip side of historical considerations and supporting conditions leads us to the pull factors of migration. The potential for improved economic opportunities, social liberties and more luxurious lifestyles are increasingly broadcast and propagated around the world through instantaneous and prolific media sources. Social networks spread personalized information, often building the status attached to migration to certain places and easing the processes of departure and settlement through ‘chain migration’.

Lobel (2003) suggests that migrants are encouraged to move through qualities inherent to globalization that require cheap labour in order to “sustain an emerging global regime” (p. 385). Even though each migrant makes their decision to go - and often to return - based on very personal circumstances, skills and responsibilities, this does not discount the vital roles played by governments of both sending and receiving countries in facilitating, directing, impeding and controlling the flow of migrant workers across their borders.

Pull factors include national policies of receiving countries, ranging from active recruitment to implicit incentives and on-going economic reliance, as well as transnational and international efforts to mobilize transnational labour markets. (Lobel, 2003, p. 385)

In the current context both the carrot and the stick are particularly strong inducements. Gendered biases are often very powerful in these macro structures and policies, labelling and funnelling male and female migrants in accordance with narrow traditional views of appropriate male and female occupations.

### **i) Bringing Gender into Focus: Women, Migration and Globalization**

“International and national migration cannot be fully understood until women become visible both in terms of statistics and as major actors in the migration process” (Zlotnik, cited in Sweetman, 1998, p. 2). This statement sums up the sentiments of many theorists who have baulked at the gender-blind examination of migration which was the norm until the early 1990s (Bauer & Thompson, 2004; Gammage, 2004; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). The arguments follow that women have long been engaged in migration, other than passively awaiting the return of their partners, but their roles in decisions to migrate, planning, facilitation, settlement, return and maintenance of social relations have

been largely ignored (Bauer & Thompson, 2004; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999; Pedraza 1991). Indeed women experience the push and pull factors of migration differently than their male counterparts at all scales and stages of migration through, familial expectations, labour market constraints, structural biases and “globalized social reproduction” (Tastsoglou & Dobrowolsky, 2006, p. 17).

People of all genders and ethnicities are confronted with economic globalization, “the process by which the forces of the market, including increasing flows of trade, investment and financial capital, expand beyond the powers of nation states”, on a daily basis (Bahramitash, 2005, p. 1). Of great import are the connections and relationships which tie the activities and experiences of people in diverse corners of the world to these global processes, of which migration is a prime example, and through which women are targeted in specific ways. Simply put, “global economic and trade policies are not gender neutral” (Burn, 2005, p. 166).

This statement resonates on multiple levels. Women’s over-representation among the world’s poorest is exacerbated by Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in developing countries that force governments to cut vital social programs which provide assistance to families trying to meet their basic needs. It is overwhelmingly women who navigate these services (under increasing strain) as they are still primarily responsible - whether there is a man in the situation or not - for the provision and reproduction of families. The reality of the larger proportion of women relative to men living in poverty has been referred to as the ‘feminization of poverty’ (Burn, 2005), or the ‘feminization of survival’ (Sassen, 2000). Under the neo-liberal discourse of participation as ‘self-help’ and its concurrent withdrawal of state supported social programs, demand for childcare,

elder care and other traditionally unpaid labour performed by women has exploded (Mayo, 2005).

Associated with the impoverishing impacts of globalization is a dramatic increase of women participating in the paid labour force, the increase of female headed households and women migrating to perform these 'care' tasks in other countries (Sorensen, 2005). Through the recent phase of globalization,

...established gender regimes have been altered as the waged labour force has become feminized and women have for the first time in large numbers been drawn out of the household or the family and into the waged economy. (Bayes, Hawkesworth & Kelly, 2001, p. 3)

While one might argue the potentially empowering aspects of women's greater access to resources through their participation in the paid labour force and as primary migrants, there are also arguments about the high risk of exploitation of women in some forms of gender stereotyped employment (e.g. maquiladora work and live-in caregiving) and the hazards of incorporation into the capitalist system (Gonzalez, 2001). This lends itself to what some are now calling the 'feminization of migration' (Kofman, 2004; Sassen, 2000). According to Young "globalization has produced new gender hierarchies intensified through class, ethnic and national membership" (cited in Mayo, 2005, p. 133). This statement articulates the overlapping nature of sociological identifiers which lead to the disadvantaged social position of some entrants into the global marketplace and the global circuit of migration.

From improved international communication systems to gender-based migration patterns, women are in the position of responding to and absorbing new demands created for carework and by the gaps in carework provision. (Litt & Zimmerman, 2003, p. 161)



The flow of care providers from the global South to the global North has been termed alternatively ‘global care chains’ (Yeates, 2004) or the ‘international division of reproductive labour’ (Parreñas, 2000). Both point to a three tiered hierarchical system involving paid and unpaid work through which individuals are connected across distance. The sexual division of labour is strengthened through the commoditisation of care (Pearson, 2000).

A common care chain typically involves an older daughter from a poor family who cares for her siblings while her mother works as a nanny caring for the children of a migrating nanny who in turn cares for the child of a family in a rich country. (Hochschild cited in Yeates, 2004, p. 80)

Parreñas (2000) posits the chain as a structural configuration, which places the migrant, who is ‘in the middle’, in a contradictory position as they navigate their status as a maid in their ‘host’ country and as a madam in their ‘home’ country (also see Lan, 2003).

Arlie Hochschild (2003) has taken the ‘global care chain’ analysis one step further and posited this phenomenon as a ‘global care drain’ through which individuals and families from the global South are deprived of the feeling and care that is redirected as a waged labour towards the global North.

...since care is a precious resource, third world children are paying the price. In this sense, migration creates not a white man’s burden but, through a series of invisible links, a dark child’s burden. (Sorensen, 2005, p. 227)

The women who have left their own families and communities to fill the caregiving needs and high consumption habits of the more affluent are simultaneously engaged in ‘survival circuits’ as they respond strategically to debt and poverty to support their families (Sassen, 2003). These configurations, with disturbing frequency take on the most heinous characteristics, involving gross labour and livelihood abuses against

undocumented migrants and those who have been trafficked and forced into the sex trade (Sassen, 2003).

The reference to ‘survival circuits’ is to multiple and interlocking circuits of globalization: one being the privileged ‘upper circuit’ of highly educated professionals in largely specialized fields engaging in global information economy; and the other being the ‘behind the scenes’ circuit which provides the physical support, service and maintenance to keep the infrastructure and people of the global cities running smoothly (Sassen, 2003). Clearly they are interdependent, and yet one is widely heralded with its innovations in information, communication, and mobility technologies, whereas the other is seldom discussed and more or less invisible unless one is looking for it. This fits closely with Appadurai’s (1990) diagnosis of deterritorialization which “brings labouring populations into the lower class sectors and spaces of relatively wealthy societies” (p. 301). This alternate narrative of globalization is clearly a result of larger global forces, and is manifested in a gendered and racialized movement of labour to serve the needs of the ‘host’ economy.

Chang and Ling (2000) refer to the ‘upper’ circuits as “techno-muscular capitalism” to depict their masculinised nature and association with “deregulation, privatization, strategic alliances and core regions” (p.27). They refer to the second set of circuits as a “regime of intimacy” in reference to its more sexualized, racialized and class based nature, as well as the private nature of the service and care work that is performed (p. 27). Regardless of the naming, it is clear that global cities incorporate diverse experiences and ways of being as individuals of different class mobility work side-by-side in an uneasy, yet interdependent co-existence.

Scholars agree that neither the extraction of value from poor to rich countries, nor the movement of domestic labour to meet the needs of more affluent communities are new occurrences (Hochschild, 2003; Sorensen, 2005; Yeates, 2004). For Masao Miyoshi (cited in Gamburd, 2000), the ‘post’ in post-colonial does not imply that the “relations of international dominance and subordination have ended”, indeed they live on in unequal terms of trade, international management of debt and foreign aid and transnational corporations (p. 30).

The lack of novelty in the distances travelled and the numbers of women engaged in Chang and Ling’s (2000) ‘regimes of intimacy’ (Sorensen, 2005; Yeates, 2004; Hochschild, 2003) masks what some believe may be new about transnational care work and women’s migration in the current context: the potentially empowering nature of such experiences, in terms of an “escape from patriarchal control within their own family or wider society” (Sorensen, 2005, p. 227, also see Barber, 2002). This project will present the reality of such an opportunity as an uneven and contradictory terrain; underscored by Naila Kabeer’s (1999) assertion that one of the pre-requisites for empowerment is choice, and a fundamental necessity for true choice is the presence of feasible alternatives. “The impact of globalization on women throughout the world has been as negative and undemocratic as it has been positive and liberating.” (Bayes et al., 2001, p. 4).

Kofman (2004) points out the tendency - when people actually consider the differences experienced between women and men in the migration equation - to focus entirely on the women who are relegated to the “intimate, racialized, menial other” and not consider the many highly skilled women who experience the process of migration in completely different ways (p. 658). This highlights the complex nature of the topic,

which is characterized by individual agency, experience and identity. The need and desire to migrate are fuelled by and tied to societal and global structures and processes but they retain personal intimacies.

In the past few decades the leap in women taking the role of primary migrant has prompted interesting analyses of the gendered patterns of migration with respect to destinations and types of work (Mahler, 1999), gendered differences in communication and the maintenance of transnational relationships (Alicia, 2000; Dreby, 2006; Menjivar, 2002), and differences in patterns of remitting money and goods to family and friends (Chimhowu, Piesse and Pinder, 2005). Some of these topics will be further considered in the chapters to come.

## **ii) The Broadening of Citizenship: Gender and Beyond**

Women and men who navigate global circuits are alternatively constrained or protected by various legal designations and labels: to a large extent citizenship establishes the rules of migration, thereby putting into jeopardy those without formal citizenship documents. However citizenship, as a concept is not as simple or unambiguous as one might imagine. The complexities can be expressed broadly in terms of substantive citizenship; the relationship between individuals and states, encompassing a range of civic activities, rights and responsibilities: or narrowly as nominal citizenship; referring solely to a legal status with which one has been endowed (Bauböck, 1994; Goldring, 2001; Mahler and Pessar, 2001).

Substantively, citizenship can be viewed “not simply as legal status but as political and social recognition and economic redistribution” (Isin & Turner, 2002, p. 2).

This engages both social and economic rights: implying access to healthcare and other social services, equal employment opportunities, labour rights, landowning rights and entitlement to a certain level of educational attainment (Castles & Davidson, 2000).

Underpinning this view of citizenship rights is the notion of the welfare state, and its responsibility to meet the basic needs of all citizens, tying the concept back to Marshall and his “liberal account of citizenship” (Faulks, 2000, p. 116). Minority groups who have traditionally suffered under views of society as universally homogenous are increasingly exerting claims to these broader rights, based on citizenship.

The sense of identity or belonging people carry from their country of origin (or chosen country of citizenship) can supersede legal classifications when it comes to explaining transnational behaviours. A ‘politics of belonging’ places people between both political and cultural borders as they negotiate legal, mental and emotional classifications. For Brah (1996) the term ‘diaspora’ explains this state, where irrespective of legal status people live in a state of “multilocationality within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries” (p.196-7). Evidence of multiple connections across nation-state boundaries displays the extent to which citizenship is a process, whereby actors engage with and claim rights and responsibilities, as opposed to waiting for an authority to bestow entitlement (Tastsoglou & Dobrowolsky, 2006).

An element of agency in citizenship suggests the struggle of women to exert their full citizenship rights. A gendered perspective reveals that women have gone from being entirely excluded from understandings of citizenship, to being included yet ignored, to their current status in social citizenship which “has been at best tenuous, incomplete and ambiguous” (Tastsoglou & Dobrowolsky, 2006, p. 13). As mentioned, in the context of

migration men and women engage in the spaces and practices of citizenship in different ways in both their 'home' and 'host' countries (Al-Sharmani, 2006; Gammage, 2004; Goldring, 2001; Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Jones-Correa, 2000; Mahler & Pessar, 2001). In her work with Mexican hometown association in California Goldring (2001) identified that within these structures women were positioned in a,

...non-political and non-decision-making role...leaving them to appear as adornments, nurturers and perhaps passive recipients of state policy, but not as agents, claims-makers or active citizens. (p. 504)

Feminist perspectives on citizenship push the boundaries of politicization beyond the public sphere to the realm of the private domain (Delanty, 2000). The implication is that issues of autonomy and identity are valid elements of citizenship, as are the publicly oriented civic aspects, traditionally viewed as 'masculine' (Tastsoglou & Dobrowolsky, 2006). Women's continued uneven access to social citizenship (lack of equity in wages, heavy burden of child and family care, etcetera) is overlaid with racial and class inequities in the realm of transnational migration. Barber (2006) discusses the inequities associated with citizenship surrounding gender, class and race; specifically with respect to Filipina domestic workers in Canada but with broader implications for an analysis of 'cultural racism' in this country and others (p. 67). Women's experiences of citizenship from the transnational perspective and through other theoretical lenses remain misunderstood and under-theorized.

As a major issue in migrants' abilities to navigate borders and claim their rights and responsibilities in various locales, some are claiming that citizenship is in a state of crisis (Castles & Davidson, 2000). While some analysts pose questions concerning the validity of the nation-state system and call for the broadening of citizenship, new policies

in migrant receiving states are tightening borders and increasing the limitations placed on the free movement of people, led in large part by the United States through policies steeped in post September 11 fear and rhetoric (Barber, 2006; Tastsoglou & Dobrowolsky, 2006).

“Citizenship will have to become transnational by reaching beyond boundaries of formal membership as well as territorial residence.” (Bauböck 1994, p. *viii*). Theorists are heralding the need to consider cosmopolitanism, collective identities, people ‘belonging’ to more than one place, and notions of universal personhood, based on the foundations of universal human rights as opposed to citizenship (Castles & Davidson, 2000; Delanty, 2000; Kymlicka, 2001; Soysal, 1994).

At odds with the traditional nation-state model many countries – including most Western European countries, as well Canada and the Philippines – now allow dual citizenship (Castles & Davidson, 2000). While these are welcome changes for transnational migrants, unfortunately most economic migrants and refugees find themselves somewhere in a grey zone with respect to citizenship. Castles and Davidson (2000) discuss the states of quasi-citizenship, denizens and *margizens*, who fall on a continuum of having obtained certain rights based the amount of time they have been in a country legally (for example those who have obtained ‘settlement permits’ or ‘residence entitlements’), and those who technically have certain basic rights in a country, but due to a lack of documents cannot claim access to health, education or protection in front of the law due to fears of deportation. These states of ‘partial citizenship’ or ‘incomplete citizenship’ apply to the vast majority of transnational migrants, particularly those working in the Middle East, and, as we shall see in this thesis, play a strong role in

shaping the opportunities and experiences of men and women living and working apart from their families.

The acquisition and awarding of citizenship is not best imagined as a means end relationship; nor is it about moving people from on “national container” to another. Rather immigration and the acquisition of citizenship is a contingent process where loyalties and attachments to countries new and old are structured by social, cultural and other forms of otherness so fundamental to the migration process. (Barber, 2003, p. 46)

### **iii) Economic Remittances: Seeds of Change or Palliative Care**

Irrespective of the ability to acquire legal citizenship and participate in a robust sense in both ‘home’ and ‘host’ societies, an overwhelmingly common feature of migration is the importance of remittances. A recent World Bank publication heralded remittances as “a promising source” of the significant resources required to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (Maimbo & Ratha, 2005, p. 2).

Indeed the numbers are staggering. Globally over US \$276 Billion - in recorded flows – was remitted in 2006 (IOM, 2007). When combined with speculations as to the amount of informally transferred money, remittances became the largest source of development finance in the global South, hence it is easy to see why international institutions are looking to better understand and facilitate these flows (Maimbo & Ratha, 2005).

Remittances strike the right cognitive chords. They fit in with a communitarian “third way” and exemplify the principle of self-help. People from poor countries can just migrate and send back money that not only helps their families, but the host and recipient countries as well. Immigrants, rather than governments, become the biggest provider of foreign aid. (Kapur, 2005, p. 339)



Some would find the normalizing of labour migration disturbing. The view that migration is a reasonable 'self-help' tool for individuals to raise their families out of poverty through personal self-sacrifice is a strategy counter to definitions of development which embrace more than just economics. Whether efforts to tailor financial institutions to better serve remittances (and those same financial institutions), better record and monitor remittances, and bring greater transparency to the process is in anyway predatory seems beside the point given the possibilities for exploitation associated with informal transfers.

The World Bank has expressed interest in furthering a process, "...to develop policies, processes and infrastructure to foster development-oriented transfer of financial resources between migrants in developed economies and their families in developing countries." (Maimbo & Ratha, 2005, p. 2). While this sounds innocuous, implicit is the idea that migrants and their families do not know how to best spend their own money, and that international migration is in some way a feasible development strategy.

There is considerable debate about whether economic remittances actually lead to development. On one side there is the view that remittances are not often saved or used to invest in business or productive capacities, but serve to increase conspicuous consumption and a taste for foreign made luxury products without contributing to domestic economic growth (Appleyard, 1998b; Chimhowu et al., 2005; Conway & Cohen, 1998; Koc & Onan, 2004; Mahler, 2001). Often studies show both contradictory and supportive evidence of these claims within one community (Georges, 1992; Koc & Onan, 2004).

A number of surveys from a range of countries have shown that up to 80 percent of remittances are spent on consumption (Chimhowu et al., 2005). The argument follows that if remittances were invested in new industries, the areas in question would be able to change the need for emigration through long-term economic growth in their own region. Instead, remittances may actually undermine local markets, lead to price increases, and foster dependence on outside financial support (Vertovec, 2001). Critics also point to the asymmetrical absorption of remittances in communities with only those families who have kin working abroad benefiting, which can lead to hierarchies and conflict at the local level (Simon, 1989). Indeed the argument that remittances put money directly into the hands of the poor can be seen as rather dubious.

The very poor and chronically unemployed seldom emigrate. The transnational recruitment process [in the Philippines] has a preference for applicants with high education, skills, working experience, ambition and economic capital. (Lan, 2003, p. 195)

Domestic hierarchies aside, it is difficult to make the claim that those who are able to migrate are not in need of the money, or would be considered affluent. Feeding and educating children can be thought of nothing less than an investment in the future, and a developmentally productive use of funds. According to Vertovec (2001),

the money migrants send not only critically supports families, but may progressively rework gender relations, support education and the acquisition of professional skills and facilitate local community development through new health clinics, water systems, places of worship and sports facilities. (p. 575)

In their work in Turkey Koc and Onan (2004) found that remittances had a positive effect on household welfare, and they argue for a wider definition of ‘productive investments’ to include “access to better nutrition and allocation of more resources to education” (p. 78). However, even as they argue the micro-level implications and benefits of

remittances for families, in their final analysis they report that “remittances neither help to reduce regional imbalances nor make a considerable contribution to the process of industrial investment” (Koc & Onan, 2004, p. 105).

Looking at the role of remittances in transnational migration, Orozco (2005) suggests the five Ts “money transfers, tourism, transportation, telecommunications, and nostalgic trade” as a way of evaluating developmental links (p. 308). The focus of his work in the Latin American context examines the positive impacts of remittances on national and local economies, of which he finds many, and how they are being translated into development strategies (Orozco, 2005). Absent from this work is a consideration of the personal costs and sacrifice involved for the migrant.

To briefly flesh out the gender dimensions of remittances, there seems to be conflictual evidence over the remitting habits of women as compared to men. Several studies point to women’s greater reliability as they contribute higher proportions of their overseas earnings to remittances (Koc & Onan, 2004; Tacoli, 1999). In the Philippine case Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2005) find the opposite to be true, with gender disparities in earnings meaning that women earn less than men, and actually send less home both as a proportion of their total earnings, and as net figures. While contrary to popular belief, their findings are compelling based on the large scale survey data from which samples were drawn, representing the four main sending regions of the Philippines (Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005).

#### **iv) Social Remittances: Cultural Diffusion and Hybridity**

The roles of remittances, beyond economic calculations, have already been alluded to, and are best understood using the transnational perspective. The term social remittance refers to the, “ideas, attitudes and social capital that flow from receiving to sending communities. They are the tools with which ordinary individuals create global culture at the local level” (Levitt, 2001, p. 11). There is debate over the very notion of a ‘global culture’ and the implication it carries that Western values are somehow seeping into societies around the world.

Culture must fundamentally be taken as a fluid and dynamic entity, in any given context. It acts not only as a guide of social relations, but is also expressed in all of the institutions of a society (political, legal, economic and social). Spradley comments on this important role of culture as, “the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate social behaviour.” (cited in Mukherjee, 1991, p. 51). Language is one of the prime underlying signifiers of a culture. The words and expressions used in a particular language (their absence or presence) can speak directly to the value system, mode of life, and way of thinking of a cultural group.

For this thesis I will be using the definition of culture agreed upon at UNESCO’s 1982 conference in Mexico City on Cultural Policies. It broadly expresses culture as, “...the whole complex of distinctive features (including spiritual, intellectual, material and emotional) that characterise a society or social group” (UNESCO, 1995, p. 91). Within this classification, I emphasize the material elements of culture: the institutional arrangements, practices, and traditions which characterize different societies. This orientation is adopted with a view to avoiding both the cultural romanticism linked to

static views of ‘traditional’ cultures; as well as the Western ethnocentricity which can filter into less concrete expressions of culture.

Interestingly, the final page of the aforementioned World Bank publication shifts its focus from economic remittances to question whether the “less visible, quantifiable, and tangible form of remittances...have a more critical impact than their pecuniary counterpart” (Kapur, 2005, p. 357). Chimhowu et al. (2005) point to the ambiguous nature of such transfers, providing examples of female children being given greater opportunity to attend school (based on remittance income, and possibly attitudes that it is worthwhile) and greater numbers of female headed households; alongside greater demand for childcare for siblings (which often falls to eldest daughters, removing them from school) and disharmony in families and communities due to these changes.

Peggy Levitt (1998) has deconstructed the notion of social remittances – what she calls “a local-level, migration-driven form of cultural diffusion” - through her extensive research with Dominican transnational populations in Miraflores and Jamaica Plain (Boston) (p. 926). She describes the many conditions which facilitate or impede the transfer of ideas and attitudes, including: the density of the social fields created by migrants (e.g. the number of people from one area who migrate to the same receiving area); the level of contact between particular transnational migrants and ‘locals’ in their host community; the geographic distance between ‘home’ and ‘host’ communities (shorter distances facilitate more contact); the status and level of trust confided in the disseminator; the social distance between the two communities (ideas which are radically new will not be received as well); and the perception of whether the ideas are ‘modern’ or ‘Westernized’ (Levitt, 2001, p. 55).

The types of transmissions are broken down into normative structures (ideas, values and beliefs), systems of practice (the behaviour and actions shaped by normative changes) and social capital (which can be loosely seen as the social expectations and relationships which affect economic and social outcomes) (Levitt, 1998). As mentioned the number of points of contact is important in the strength of social remittances, as is the fact that most individuals sharing ideas across borders will know each other personally. However, the transfer of ideas is often unintentional and unsystematic.

Compared to macro scale influences of cultural globalization, or other random point of contact transmissions, social remittances are unique in that there is a clear and identifiable pathway for cultural diffusion, which makes it particularly valuable for those interested in researching these phenomena (Levitt, 1998). In the particulars of her case study, Levitt (2001) focuses on organizational practice, social interaction, political participation and gender role transmissions from the Jamaica Plain area of Boston, to Miraflores, Dominican Republic, through the dense social fields of transnational migrants and the communities they enter and exit periodically. Levitt (2001) stresses that content wise there are both positive and negative values, ideas and behaviours which are transferred.

### ***Gender and Transnational Care-Giving***

A transnational social field can be defined as an unbounded terrain of interlocking egocentric networks that extends across the borders of two or more nation-states and that incorporates its participants in the day-to-day activities of social reproduction in these various locations. (Fouron & Glick Schiller, 2001, p. 544)

In response to the claim that simple push and pull factors are no longer sufficient to understand the intricate webs and relationships which prompt, facilitate and mediate migration, the transnational perspective offers a frame for organizing and understanding activities and relationships which transcend the borders of nation states and connect individuals and processes over various scales. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) argue the need to re-evaluate societal institutions such as citizenship, the family, and the nation-state based on the transnational social fields which embed migrants and those in their lives in “multi-layered and multi-sited” webs (p.1003). This thesis uses this lens to analyze the global flows of care and caregivers, as well as attempting to broaden the notion of citizenship to accommodate transnational realities.

Fog Elwig (2005) posits that the transnational perspective now takes us beyond ‘networks of relationships’ connecting people across multiple nations and has moved into “socio-cultural systems that transcend different nation-states” (p.190). These sophisticated conceptualizations are built upon the foundations implied by transnationality: that ties and connections with the sending country are maintained; that in some way ‘home’ and ‘host’ nations are bound into a single arena for social actions; and that these cross border strategies are used to enhance livelihoods as a form of social capital (Dahinden, 2005). Numerous scholars have called for the gendering of transnational studies, recognizing that migration, settlement, and work force participation are all experiences profoundly shaped by gender (Georges, 1992; Ghazal-Read, 2004; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999; Mahler and Pessar, 2001).

Theorists have explored the novelty of the phenomenon (Foner, 1997; Fouron & Glick-Schiller, 2001; Portes 2003; Portes, Guarnizo & Haller, 2002); the durability of

such relationships (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Portes et al., 2002; Wilding 2006); the breadth and scope of its defining characteristics (Dahinden, 2005; Itzigsohn, Cabral, Hernandez & Vazquez, 1999; Portes, 2003); the impact of exit strategies and reception in the 'host' community on the development of transnational ties (Al-Ali, Black & Koser, 2001; Al-Sharmani, 2006; Gammage, 2004; Guarnizo, Sanchez & Roach, 1999; Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Levitt, 2001; Portes, 2003); and the extent to which transnationalism is a grassroots or state-led occurrence (Gammage, 2004; Goldring, 2001; Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Portes, 2003). This thesis will explore the arena of 'transnationalism from below', but does not otherwise detail these issues due to space constraints.

### **i) Gender in Transnational Migration**

Several studies have examined the gender dynamics of transnational activities, and there is some consensus that men tend to value and focus on their civic engagement with their country and community of origin, whereas women tend to become more civically engaged in their community of settlement (Goldring, 2001; Jones-Correa, 2000). Studies suggest that men's relative loss of social status in the receiving community, and state mediation of institutionalized transnational bodies such as hometown associations explain this trend (Goldring, 2001; Jones-Correa, 2000).

However, it cannot be assumed that women are less active transnationally than men just because their activities tend to be less institutionalized. There is a clear pattern identifying women as the main transnational actors when it comes to maintaining bonds between families and kin groups and providing care work (Alicia, 2000; Hondagneu-



Sotelo & Avila, 2000; Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Salaff, 2000). This work can paradoxically be intensely burdensome to women who are working overseas earning and saving money for personal, familial, and extended kin needs, yet also gratifying and a source of great pleasure as they plan and execute large family gatherings and cater to the specific needs and preferences of their loved ones (Alicia, 2000).

Gender is particularly salient in the increasing transnational movements of domestic workers. Theorists analyze the positioning of domestic workers in the macro level processes of globalization and the creation of ‘global care chains’, or the ‘international division of reproductive labour’ (Hochschild, 2003; Parreñas, 2001 and 2000; Sassen, 2003; Yeates, 2004); the struggles and agency of domestic workers in their ‘receiving’ environments (Barber, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001); and impacts of the loss of their care work on their families (Gamburd, 2000; Parreñas, 2005a and 2003). Gendered constructions shape the demand, status and treatment of domestic workers as they navigate transnational networks. However, their agency cannot be discounted as they create new social fields and cultural spaces both physically and mentally: be it in their ‘host’ locales (Toronto parks on the afternoons they take their charges to meet up with friends, or on Fridays off at the shopping malls in Doha) and across distance in the mental and emotional networks they create and sustain with ‘home’.

Socio-cultural transnationalism (as opposed to economic transnationalism), refers to “activities that span borders that and seek to recreate community institutions and a sense of belonging” (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005, p. 902). This involves the familial and kin care work described above, including activities such as those described by Menjivar (2002) in her account of the transnational networks Guatemalan women rely

upon to access medical care for themselves and their families. They do this by combining the best features of their 'home' and 'host' environments; they provide and receive advice and diagnoses through their networks in both locales to avoid visiting hospitals and incurring costs, and they take advantage of anyone who may be travelling to obtain what they consider to be the best medicines and antidotes at the best prices (Menjivar, 2002). It does appear that women are usually more active in socio-cultural transnationalism than men.

As previously mentioned the utility of transnational migration is found in its use as a new frame for better explaining previously existing behaviours, and the intensification of such behaviours due to technological innovations. Immigrants and their families have long used creative methods to share news, transfer money and goods, and show their love and care for each other.

New technologies heighten the immediacy and frequency of migrants' contact with their sending communities and allow them to be actively involved in everyday life there in fundamentally different ways than in the past. (Levitt, 2001, p. 22)

The purely communication aspects of this include but are not limited to: letters, phone calls, sending video cassettes, sending audio cassette 'letters', sharing computer time at Internet cafes, telegrams, faxes, 'borrowing' time on friends' computers, travelling 'home' for visits, mobile text messaging, posting messages for friends and family, Internet chat rooms, postcards, webcams, Skype and relaying messages through friends and family. All of these methods have their positive features and detractors, examples include, needing to use intermediaries in cases of limited literacy (Mahler 2001); the lack of privacy inherent with community phones (Horst, 2006); and the power differentials

and dependency inherent in waiting for the ‘mover’ to make contact (Mahler 2001, Priblisky 2004).

Some hail the advent of cell phones and the internet as unequivocally positive, Vertovec (2004) for example ventures to call pre-paid long distance phone cards “the social glue” of transnational relationships, whereas others adopt a more nuanced perspective (p.221). The real-time connection, personalization of hearing a loved one’s voice, greater control over timing, initiative and privacy for conversations doubtlessly decrease the social distance between members of transnational networks. However by the same token that cell phones give greater agency to those who have not migrated to share the realities of their day-to-day lives and communicate with loved ones in crisis situations, it also opens the door for stress, guilt and distancing by those who have migrated if they are bombarded by requests for greater remittances which they are unable to fulfill (Horst, 2006).

In his 1994 article *Welcome to Cyberia* Escobar prompts us to examine the ways in which “the relationships between the first and the third world [are] restructured in light of new technologies” (cited in Horst 2006, p. 153). These are deeply complex and problematic relationships which transnational migrants and their friends and families navigate in their struggles for survival, integration and loyalty. The advent of massive technological innovation also raises issues related to the ‘digital divide’ and images of utopias and dystopias based on the merits (or lack thereof) of the decreasing importance of distance, the breakdown of boundaries, and less and less actual physical contact between people (Wilding, 2006). Some of these images seem to favour transnational networks, while other raise deep concerns about normalizing and raising the status of

these types of relationships. Further study is required to illuminate the risks and benefits of becoming more 'plugged in' and spending less time in face to face contact with other people.

As articulated by Panagakos and Horst (2006), "...access alone does not ensure adoption of new technologies as the limits of race, class, gender and ethnicity still dictate technological engagement" (p. 111). To explore the issues of class effects on ICT adoption see Chen, Boase & Wellman, 2002; Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Panagakos and Horst, 2006; and Wilding, 2006. These authors generally question the extent to which people of lower socio-economic status are able to access ICTs, citing the existence of a digital divide, especially for particularly vulnerable groups like refugees who may have the most need of family and social networks. Interestingly, even when controlled for income and education studies have shown that certain ethnic or racial groups have much more limited access to the internet, and this trend is increasing (van Dijk, 2005). These differences are partly explained by interest level and cultural resources<sup>1</sup>.

The gender issues in ICT adoption are of course of more interest to the current study. A traditional dualistic position would posit men as more naturally inclined to excel in the scientific, reason-based realm of technology, and provide them with more opportunities to adopt new technologies such as the Internet. This bias was found outside of North America by Chen et al. (2002); however in a North American study Boneva & Kraut (2002) found that women are using electronic mail more than men to maintain and expand their social networks. This is explained by the fact that women are more likely to act as the 'communication hub' for families, and seem to define themselves more through the relationships in their lives (Boneva & Kraut, 2002, p. 373). As mentioned, this piece

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<sup>1</sup> To delve more deeply into these issues see Panagakos & Horst, 2006 and van Dijk, 2005.

of research was carried out in the United States, but it is widely accepted that cross culturally women predominantly perform the ‘kin work’ such as writing a letter, or calling a relative, or innumerable other activities that maintain familial relations (Alicea, 2000; Salaff, 1997; Wilding, 2006).

While scholars should remain sceptical of technological determinism and over-optimistic prophecies about the transformative power of ICTs in everyday life, there is no doubt that new technologies have an impact on how transnational migrants imagine, negotiate and create their social worlds across broad transnational fields. (Panagakos & Horst, 2006, p. 120)

The final piece of this discussion of general transnational migration is to build upon the concept of simultaneity and what it implies for social reproduction. The concept of transnational social fields implies a certain density and narrow scope as opposed to those who engage in some transnational activities but whose lives are not woven between nations in a day-to-day capacity. In terms of ‘conceptualizing simultaneity’ Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004) direct us to the social field as, “...a set of multiple, interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources are unequally exchanged, organized and transformed.” (p. 1009).

Social reproduction occurs on three scales: the actual biological reproduction of the species; the day-to-day satisfaction of needs which enable the survival of the household; and the reproduction of values, norms and social moorings which is pertinent for the examination of gender roles or class relations (Young, Wolkowitz & McCullagh, 1981). Clearly women play central roles in all three elements of social reproduction. For this study the last two meanings are the most pertinent: transnational parenting implying a decision that meeting the daily sustenance needs of the family outweighs being physically present to engage in the mentoring and teaching of children; and the cultural

expansion or re-framing associated with transnational migration as it provides potential points of rupture in the reproduction of values and norms. Ironically the choice to focus on the day-to-day physical nourishment of the family to a certain extent removes that parent from the third meaning – the value, behaviour and norm reproduction – in a consistent form. This thesis is working under the premise that a physically absent parent still plays a large role in cultural social reproduction (the third element) with their children, and the term is used with this meaning in mind.

Recall that transnational flows are not limited to transmigrants bodily geographic mobility. They also include multiple exchanges of monetary and non-monetary resources, material and symbolic objects, commodities and cultural values...the continuous flow of ideas and information provided by global media, ethnic tourism, and religious or secular festivals and rituals. (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998, p. 19)

## **ii) Transnational Families: New Configurations, Old Values?**

..the family [needs to be seen] as a place where there is a dynamic interplay between structure, culture and agency – where creative culture-building takes place in the context of external social and economic forces as well as immigrants’ pre-migration cultural frameworks. (Foner, 1997, p. 961)

Neither a novel nor insignificant phenomenon, transnational parenting describes the condition of transnational migrants who choose or are forced to leave their children in their communities of origin while they live and work in a different country. Generally, transnational families can be taken as “families whose core members are located in at least two nation-states” (Parreñas, 2001, p. 80).

Among some immigrant populations the incidence of transnational parenting is staggering. In her study of 153 women doing domestic work in Los Angeles Hondagneu-

Sotelo (2001) found that 82 percent of live-in caregivers had at least one child who remained in their country of origin, whereas for live-out caregivers and housecleaners the proportions shrank to 42 and then 24 percent respectively – in this case the long hours, lack of personal space in a live-in capacity and hypothetically the length of time one has been working overseas are the most prohibitive for physically caring for one's own children (p.50). Similarly, Parreñas (2001) finds 54 percent of her Filipina respondents in Rome and Los Angeles had children in their countries of origin, questioning (but not necessarily excluding) the popularly held notion that female migrants tend to be young and single (p.19).

While there have been significant increases in cases where women are the primary migrants, studies show that it is still more likely that men will engage in transnational parenting (Dreby, 2006). The lack of discussion and analysis of transnational fatherhood can be explained by the different types of expectations placed on men's roles as parents.

Much of the literature prior to 1980 focused on a view of the 'monolithic family' constructed by white, middle class men, who formed their studies based on their own familial norms, assuming that others had similar experiences (Baker, 2001). This conception of the nuclear family, with two parents of opposite sexes, and enough resources to allow for the separation of wage earning and home and child care work fails to address the realities of many families. Same sex 'families of choice', polygamous familial arrangements, and notably families lacking the financial resources to fit into the mould of the 'monolithic family' remained under theorized and marginalized. Anthropologist George Murdoch's claim that at the end of the 1940's only 20 percent of the world's families were monogamous highlights the folly of ignoring the range of

relationships, groupings and roles involved in conceptions of families (cited in Baker, 2001, p. 9).

The formation of transnational households threatens cultural parameters and institutional norms marked by material inequalities between men and women as well as ideology. Thus, transnational families in their institutional arrangements invite gender transformations in the level of interaction. (Parreñas, 2005a, p. 5)

Foner (1997) refers to transnationalism as a process of cross-fertilization, “as immigrants bring new notions to their home communities at the same time as they continue to be influenced by values and practices there” (p.964). Clearly the contrasts and variability between a range of sending and receiving cultures makes analyses of this sort extremely complicated – let alone all the other factors which enter into individual conceptions of gender and identity. The general trend seems to be that depending on a myriad of factors some experience empowerment through their participation in a transnational network and find it promotes changes to traditional gender roles, while for others it is disempowering, or strengthens rigid notions associated with the gendered division of labour and responsibilities.

Women’s greater access to economic resources and the independence of participating in the paid labour force is often cited as a potential window for greater autonomy (Ghazal-Read, 2004; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999; Kibria, 1990; Le Espiritu, 1999). Naila Kabeer’s (1999) instructive conceptualization of empowerment indeed points to access to resources as the first of three constituents associated with this oft used yet seldom clearly defined term. The final two components of empowerment are agency and outcomes, and to Kabeer’s (1999) thinking, any of the three on their own do not imply that empowerment has actually taken place: once again the context and the



interplay of factors determine the nature of the experience. Both Ryan (2002) and Zhou (2000) explore the impacts of the social positioning tied to race and class on the emancipatory potential of migration, concluding that it is an unequal terrain.

Power shapes the particular contours of the migration process as well as the diverse experiences particular to people situated in different locations along social hierarchies. Besides, it also interacts with other systems of stratification, such as race and class, and with the larger socio-economic and political contexts. (Chen cited in Ryan, 2002, p. 110)

Sarah Mahler and Patricia Pessar (2001) took up the challenge of explaining these multiple scales and locations of power navigated through transnational migration with their model of 'Gendered Geographies of Power'. They propose three 'tracking levels' or 'degrees of agency': *geographic scales* (e.g. the body, the family, the state); *social location* (people's positions within power hierarchies, based on race, gender, class, etc); and *power geometry* (the types and levels of agency people express based on their social location) (Mahler & Pessar, 2001, p. 445-46). This framework is of use for analyzing people's relative abilities to act in transnational arenas, both in physical and ideological terms.

Transnationalism is contradictory for women since it both offers them new roles and opportunities that give pride and satisfaction to them, as well as stretching their responsibilities further with new burdens and obligations. (Zontini, 2004, p. 1142)

Amidst familiar stories of women left behind under the watchful eyes of their husbands' kin - hoping their husbands send much needed money and do not take up with other women - Mahler (1999) documents several roles in which women are challenging patriarchies and presenting alternate constructions of womanhood for coming generations in Northern Honduras. These roles as *viajeras*, who navigate dangerous borders entrusted with precious goods to deliver to friends and families in Latin America and the

United States; and as teachers, who having received training in larger regional centres are bringing messages to children about the unacceptability of domestic violence, allow women to challenge traditional male authority (Mahler 1999).

***a. Transnational Mothering and Fathering: Sites for Gender Role Expansion and Reinforcement***

Transnational mothering and fathering present the obvious break in terms of the ability to perform day-to-day physical tasks, but the ideological ease with which one accepts this distance and how one attempts to make up for it is potentially very different for mothers than for fathers.

...compared to fathering, mothering involves not only more overall time commitment but more multi-tasking, more physical labour a more rigid timetable, more time alone with children, and more overall responsibility for managing care. These gender differences in the quantity and nature of care apply even when mothers work full-time. (Craig, 2006, p. 259)

These findings from a large scale quantitative study in Australia indicate that the ‘stall’ in the gender revolution described by Hochschild (1995) is still a reality. The question remains as to how these conditions are modified or adapted by transnational mothers and fathers.

Dreby’s (2006) study among Mexican parents finds that in practice mothers and fathers’ transnational care-giving activities were very similar. Most respondents maintained contact with their children through weekly phone calls, and a similar range of topics were discussed. Differences registered in the ideological realm, which meant that men and women’s emotions concerning transnational fathering and mothering were at odds (Dreby, 2006). In this case, Dreby (2006) finds that for the most part the traditional

Mexican gender ideologies of the virtuous, self-sacrificing mother and the honourable husband as the provider do remain intact. However, she does note that when,

...mothers deviate from the model of self sacrifice for their children, and demonstrate self-interest by leaving their husbands post migration, fathers feel more entitled to further nurturance relationships with their children in Mexico. (p. 53)

This indicates that when women break from traditional roles, it provides greater freedom for men to do the same. Women do still express much more guilt and pain as a result of living apart from their children, which has been confirmed in many studies from different cultural contexts (Dreby, 2006; Gamburd, 2000; Parreñas, 2005a & 2001). Such emotions are prescribed according to Mexican gender ideologies, and in fact if women do not profess to suffering, they are accused of abandonment (Dreby, 2006).

The broadening of women's roles to include that of 'breadwinner' have generally not been met with any concurrent expansion of men's roles to include nurturing their children in the Philippines (Parreñas, 2005a & 2001). In fact, when it is the mother who migrates, the familial coping mechanisms tend to strengthen gender ideologies which typecast women as nurturers and caregivers. This is performed through women's attempts to 'mother intensively' from afar; through daughters taking on housework responsibilities to a greater extent than fathers; and through female kin adding to their own responsibilities to care for the children of their sisters and daughters, when the children's father shirks this role (Parreñas, 2005a).

Women's attempts to 'mother intensively' from afar can include daily text messages, audio and video messages, letters, packages of clothes, toiletries and consumer goods being sent, weekly phone calls, and a level of control exemplified by weekly dietary plans as to the children's meals (Parreñas, 2005a). One child in a transnational

family referred to how her mother was able to maintain the sense of constant care through frequent email messages, her description of “[her] nagging mother” conveys the day-to-day involvement of her mother in her life despite having infrequent physical contact (cited in Panagakos & Horst, 2006, p. 115).

An overwhelmingly common feature of the literature on transnational parenting is the social expectation that mothers are responsible for the family, and usually play the central role in organizing and managing transnational households (Al-Sharmani, 2006; Asis, Huang & Yeoh, 2004; Dreby, 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 2000; Parreñas, 2005a). Children are seen as social capital, and women are expected to be the reproducers of culture through the values, practices, and morals they pass on to the next generation, as one of Al-Sharmani’s (2006) interviewees stated, ‘I learned to be a Somali from my mother’ (p. 70).

Female kin or ‘other mothers’ who pick up the slack created by the children’s mothers being away sometimes feel overburdened, and resentful that fathers do not take on more of the carework for their children (Fog Olwig, 1999; Parreñas, 2005a; Schmalzbauer, 2004). Fathers do begin to perform caregiving activities in some cases, but they are a small minority. Interestingly, it has been suggested that fathers whose masculinity is affirmed in other ways (e.g. they have a profession with authority, or have in the past earned enough to build the family home) are more comfortable taking on work around the house and with the children (Parreñas, 2005a).

In some respects flexibility and fluidity are the hallmarks of transnational families; as Yeoh, Huang and Lam (2005) state “the transnational family is quick to transmute in the face of changing social, economic, and political conditions” (p. 308).

The unrelenting presence of structural realities prompts family members to relativise: “to consciously establish, maintain or curtail relational ties with one another, either through active pursuit or passive negligence” (Asis, Huang & Yeoh, 2004, p. 200). These individual responses mediate everyday realities through ideological lenses, in order to formulate liveable familial configurations. Unfortunately this process is more difficult for children than it is for adults.

Alongside individual coping mechanisms run group survival strategies. The concept of shared meanings becomes prominent, as these are creatively used to normalize and maintain a sense of togetherness out of disparate day-to-day realities. This ‘imaginary of belonging’ is central to maintaining the family unit when the physical and material contact which fuse most families together is absent (Besson & Fog Olwig, 2005; Vuorela, 2002; Yeoh et al., 2005). This sentiment is neatly summarized by Chamberlain’s (2005) comment that “the Caribbean became as much a state of mind as a geographic entity” (p. 176).

The imaginary nature of such understandings is also rooted in ideologies, which may give a sense of security and shared history and belief, while at the same time being oppressive to some. This situation is aptly described by Ong (cited in Yeoh et al., 2005) as she states that “the family is the primary unit of regulation and the vehicle of state power” (p. 309). It is in response to this disciplining role of family ideology that some women have chosen migration as a means to gain different experiences and escape the rigidities of their local social hierarchies (Purwani-Williams, 2005). In the extreme case, several authors cite migration for females as a strategic escape from abusive or unsatisfying marriages (Al-Sharmani, 2006; Gamburd, 2000; Silvey, 2006).

There are complex interactions between agency, relativising, subjectivities, and shared meanings. Ryan (cited in Yeoh et al., 2005) underscores this practical and ideological tension, as the “...uneven and shifting mixtures of family loyalty and responsibility on the one hand, and autonomy and agency, on the other hand [which] are continuously being traced and retraced” (p. 309). Despite these intricate dynamics, based on the literature presented it seems that practically transnational mothering and fathering present a very limited break from the traditional ideologies of the breadwinner father and the nurturant mother. Even though the mother may become the main earner of the family, she is still fundamentally responsible for the nurturing of her children, and accomplishes this through her own long distance care activities, as well as the splintering of ‘mothering’ functions, which are then performed by other females, be they kin, paid help, or eldest daughters. Parreñas (2001) sums this phenomenon up nicely, “the transnational family: a postindustrial household with preindustrial values” (p.80).

#### ***b. Impacts on the Children who are Left Behind***

Providing for children – particularly for their education – is often cited as one of the primary reasons for migration (Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrant and Itinerant People – CBCP / Apostleship of the Sea – Manila, Scalabrini Migration Centre (SMC), and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), 2004; Parreñas, 2001; Zontini, 2004). Increased opportunities with greater socio-economic status however, may come at a cost to children as they lose day to day contact and interaction with one or both of their parents.

Scholars who ignore children's presence and participation in processes of migration ...neglect a central axis of family migration, and an important *reason* why families move across national borders and sustain transnational ties. (Orellana, cited in Yeoh et al., 2005, p. 313)

Apart from notable exceptions (Aguilera-Guzman et al., 2004) the impacts on the children of a father's absence from the transnational family have been under-theorized. An obvious explanation lies in the minimal disruption to the traditional order of the family; a migrating father is still fulfilling his scripted role, and the mother is still at home to fulfill her responsibilities. Historically this has been the most common configuration of transnational families, however, the balance may be tipping as global demand for care-work, or 'women's work' increases. In the case of the Philippines, by 1994 over half of new departing overseas foreign workers (OFWs) were women (Barber, 2000).

Apart from the assessment of impacts based on the gender of the parent, there is some evidence of differentiated impacts and use of remittances based on the genders of the children (Gamburd, 2000; Parreñas, 2003; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). Most commonly the discussion is centered on female children having to assume extra familial responsibilities – even having to drop out of school – to care for other siblings (Gamburd, 2000; Parreñas, 2003). There are however indications that girl children may benefit more from increased access to education due to the perception that female children provide greater insurance in terms of old age care; and that expanded gender notions transferred through social remittances may promote the education of girl children (Chimhowu et al., 2005; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). There is not an abundance of data on the gender differentiated impacts of transnational migration on the children left behind, so this

review will continue analysing the impacts on children irrespective of gender, organized around physical, educational, emotional and social impacts.

There has been very little suggestion that kids suffer physically from either or both parents' transnational labour migration, in fact the opposite appears to be true. A recently released study on the children and families of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) reports a very clear advantage in the socio-economic status of families with parents working overseas: this is expressed in terms of home ownership; ownership of durable goods (e.g. appliances); children's actual weight and height; and the children's perceptions of their families' status (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004). Furthermore, children of OFWs are less susceptible to illness than their counterparts without migrant parents. When these results were broken down among families of OFWs, it turns out that those in which the mother is overseas were the most likely to get sick, whereas the children with both parents overseas were the least likely to suffer from colds, coughs, headaches, and stomach problems (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004).

It is worth expanding upon the nature of this study, as its extensive results will be presented for each type of impact under discussion. Commissioned by the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrant and Itinerant People, CBCP / The Apostleship of the Sea, the Scalabrini Migration Centre, and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), it was performed in seven areas of the Philippines and involved an extensive survey of 1,443 children between the ages of 10-12, as well as focus group discussions with sons and daughters of OFWs (of different age groups), husbands and wives of OFWs and community and government support workers who work with OFW families. The focus group discussions served to provide additional data



on caregivers and children of other ages, in addition to introducing more contextualized emotional responses. The study aimed to overcome the limitations of previous studies such as sampling only in communities known to be major areas of migration and the lack of baseline data due to focusing solely on the families of OFWs and not their peer groups (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004). From this point on it will be referred to as the 'Hearts Apart study' (2004), reflecting the name of the book which emerged from it.

To return briefly to the discussion of the physical impacts of transnational migrant parents on their children, the only potential negative physical impacts of living in a transnational nuclear family on the children seem to be related to excess. Several theorists mention that children can end up being materially spoiled as parents desperately try to show their love by purchasing anything the children want; sometimes leaving children with unrealistic expectations about material goods and building positive perceptions of the value of migration (Battistella & Conaco, 1998; Parreñas, 2005a; Nagasaka 1998; Zontini, 2004).

Moving on to the educational impacts of transnational parenting a survey from the Philippines indicates that 35 percent of children whose fathers were working overseas were ranked among the top ten children of their class in terms of grades, while the corresponding figure for children whose mother's were working overseas was 17 percent (Parreñas, 2005a, p. 95). The finding that children of migrant mothers had lower grades than other children of migrant parents and children in general was upheld by another study performed in the Philippines in the late 1990s (Battistella & Conaco, 1998). The most recent Hearts Apart study showed that in general children of migrant parents performed better academically, were more likely to be on the honour role, and

participated in more extra-curricular activities than children of non-migrant parents (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004). This can partially be explained by greater socio-economic status among families of OFWs, and the fact that 40.9 percent of OFW children were enrolled in private schools, whereas only 14.9 percent of children without migrant parents attended private schools (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004, p. 12).

Kandel and Kao's (2001) study of Mexican youth confirms the greater scholastic achievement of children of migrant parents; however they also discovered that due to their exposure to the fruits of migration, these children expressed lower aspirations to further their studies, presumably because migrating for work had become an appealing option for them and their labour prospects in the United States do not require extensive education.

When it came to the socialization of children, the Hearts Apart study determined that "migration does not seem to matter" (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004, p. 51). Children of OFWs were determined to spend slightly less time on chores than their counterparts of non-migrant parents, and in general other (mostly female) caregivers stepped in and taught children very similar values to those taught by biological parents. The amount of time spent on chores seems to contradict the findings of Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2003) regarding the extra familial responsibilities of the children of migrants. However, with respect to socialization,

In a survey of "solo-parents" and guardians, Paz Cruz also found that children tend to get along better with their siblings, still respect their parents and guardians, continue to practice their religion, and have not shown any health problems (for instance drastic change in energy level, weight and appetite). (Parreñas, 2001, p. 118)

The Hearts Apart study also showed consistent results between children of OFWs and children of non-migrant parents to questions about whether they are happy in school, and how important is it for them to be with their classmates (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004).

The emotional impacts of transnational migration on the children left behind seem to be the most significant, and show the greatest variation depending on which parent migrates. Gender ideologies and expectations are the most plausible explanatory factors. Commonly described reactions to fathers' migration are feelings of unease, awkwardness, and a 'gap' between children and their fathers (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004; Parreñas, 2005a). Despite these awkward feelings, in some cases from the fathers' perspective relationships were seen to improve due to the migration of the father. As one father stated, "...we value them more when we aren't there" (Dreby, 2006, p. 46).

One of the biggest factors affecting the nature of the relationships fathers are able to maintain with their children across distance is the mediation of the children's mother (Dreby, 2006; Parreñas, 2005a). If there are good relations between the child's mother and father, the mother may offer constant reinforcements of his love for them, explanations of why he is away, and generally impress upon them that he is an important person in their lives and is away working for the benefit of the family. Without these reinforcements, children will feel more insecurity and ambivalence about their fathers' absence and the reasons for it. As one Filipino child put it, "My dad is away, but so what?" (Parreñas, 2001, p. 148). This ambivalence is questioned by Aguilar-Guzman, Salgado de Snyder, Romero and Medina-Mora's (2004) study of families of only paternal migrants which found that the children of migrant fathers were more vulnerable to

psychosocial problems. This discrepancy may speak of cultural differences, as the Aguilar-Guzman et al. (2004) study was carried out with Mexican youth and the previous example is in the Philippine context, or it may highlight the wide range of experiences of children in transnational families.

When it comes to the migration of mothers, women are harshly judged by their peers, and significantly by their children if they do not visibly demonstrate their grief concerning their separation from their children (Dreby, 2006; Parreñas, 2005a). Children are reassured of their mother's love for them if they are made aware of how much pain she suffers for not being able to be with them.

Especially after my mother left, I became more motivated to study harder. I did because my mother was sacrificing a lot and I had to compensate for how hard it is to be away from your children and then crying a lot at night, not knowing what we are doing. She would tell us in voice tapes. She would send us voice tapes every month, twice a month, and we would hear her cry in these tapes. (Cited in Parreñas, 2005a, p. 107)

It seems that it is overwhelmingly this depiction of the 'martyr mom' which makes mother abroad transnational families acceptable (Parreñas, 2005a).

On the whole there is considerable support for the claim that the impacts of transnational migration on children who are left behind are not necessarily negative (Asis et al., 2004; Episcopal Commission et al., 2004; Parreñas, 2005a & 2001). A study performed by Cruz in 1987, which encompassed a survey of 212 Filipino high school and university students with international migrant parents and 90 students with internal migrant parents, revealed that "the great majority of the students in the sample (92.4 percent) have no special problem which has come to the attention of the guidance

counsellor or other school officials” (cited in Parreñas, 2001, p. 117-8). The Battistella and Conaco study of 1998 also came to the conclusion that,

...it [parental absence] does not necessarily become an occasion for laziness and unruliness...rather...the child may actually be spurred toward greater self-reliance and ambition, despite continued longings for family unity. (Cited in Parrenas 2003, p. 44)

The welcome possibility that the children in transnational families may be able to manage reasonably well is tempered by the persistence of the gender issue. Numerous studies find that potential negative impacts are the most pervasive in families where the mother has migrated (Battistella & Conaco, 1998; Dreby, 2006; Episcopal Commission et al., 2004; Parreñas, 2005a).

Children of migrant mothers suffer more than those of migrant fathers because child rearing is ‘a role that women are more adept at, are better prepared for, and pay more attention to’. (Battistella & Conaco, cited in Parreñas, 2003, p. 52)

While there seems to be some flexibility in terms of a mother taking on the role of ‘breadwinner’; she does not divest her role as nurturer, nor are fathers adopting these caregiving roles in large numbers. The result is greater pain and feelings of abandonment in the children of migrant mothers, largely due to gendered ideologies about the parenting roles.

A final comment on the impacts of migration on the children left behind speaks yet again to the context specificity of such interactions. Orellana et al. (2001) point to the constructed nature of childhood, and that it is given different meaning, length, and characteristics in different cultural and historical contexts. “There may be different assumptions about the needs, capacities, and appropriate activities of children of different ages’ depending on their cultural point of reference” (Orellana, Thorne, Chee & Lam,

2001, p. 573). In the transnational context this takes on new meaning as the social fields constructed and maintained between multiple cultural milieus interact to guide and inform perceptions of motherhood, fatherhood, and childhood.

### **Chapter 3 Methodological Concerns and Reflections**

The impacts of transnational parenting in this study were explored through a gendered lens. After extensive secondary source research, interviews and surveys were conducted with six Filipino mothers, and six Filipino fathers working in Doha, Qatar between June and July 2006. All of the respondents had left their child or children in the Philippines under the care of other family members. This section will briefly describe the epistemological direction of this study; explain the rationale for the research design of the project; provide a sketch of the participants in the study; reflect on some of the challenges encountered carrying out the research; and give some general impressions of Qatar where the interviews were carried out.

#### ***Epistemology***

The underlying assumptions for this mixed methods study are found in feminist theory. Feminist Research methods seek to illuminate the gender differentiated experiences of men and women, and challenge the ‘implicit male perspective of the dominant paradigms’ (Bologh, in Reinharz, 1992, p. 3). As a critical approach, feminism broadly challenges the dominant analyses of historical and current conditions, deconstructing language and power structures to reveal male-centered biases. Fundamental to this way of thinking is the acknowledgement that men and women sometimes experience the same events in very different ways, and that there is great value to both genders in exploring and understanding the variations and commonalities of experience, ideally contributing to more effective policy and programming.

Gender is a constructed filter through which individuals apprehend, act and interact in their relationships. These interactions are shaped by structures, often unequal and oppressive, which have (his)torically valued the gazes and experiences of one gender. Many would argue that both gender roles and parenting ideologies are continuously negotiated, reproduced, contested and reconstituted as individuals react to changing circumstances and each other (Nakano Glen 1994, Ostergaard 1992). At the core of these issues lies the following distinction provided by Oakley (cited in Brewer, 2001):

Sex refers to the biological difference between male and female, such as visible differences in genitalia and related differences in procreative function. Gender, on the other hand, refers to the social classification of attitudes and behaviours into categories of masculine and feminine....the constancy of sex must be admitted, but so also must the variability of gender. (p. 222)

This perspective informs the feminist view that gender shapes both the experiences of individuals of different genders as well as the ways that they relate socially. These relations have long been hierarchical and often oppressive to women: the feminist project seeks to balance the equation, to focus on women (not to the exclusion of men) but to balance the perspectives of those who have traditionally written reality from their experiences and those who have been marginalized and unheard.

### ***Justification for the Research Design***

As mentioned, this study adopted a mixed methods approach which combined qualitative semi-structured interviews (see Appendix one – Interview Questionnaire); surveys contextualizing different experiences with the socio-economic circumstances of participants (see Appendix two – Socio Economic Background Questionnaire); and both qualitative and quantitative secondary source information. These methods imply both



open and closed ended questions, as well as emerging and predetermined approaches, with the goal of minimizing the weakness of any single method through triangulation (Creswell, 2003). The strong qualitative slant of this study aims to provide a thick description of the ways that gender is affected by and affects the sample group's experiences: quantitative data (from the survey and secondary sources) is used to situate the narratives of the people interviewed in larger contexts. This study aimed to be exploratory in nature, while collecting some information for comparison with larger trends and broader scale phenomena. It is worth highlighting that the sample size of this study as well as the way that it was selected precludes the formation of generalizations based on the data gathered. The information can be used to analyze and explore the experiences of these twelve people, to compare their experiences to existing theories and literature, and to suggest directions for further study; however it does not stand on its own for the generation of new theories.

What the fisherman catches depends on chance, the part of the ocean he fishes in, and what kind of fish he is looking to catch. (Thies, 2002, p. 353)

Secondary source data is only as good as the original research carried out. It can be difficult to target the exact population you are interested in, and as the above quotation captures, selectivity and bias must be considered and acknowledged. This said, secondary source data often provides the most cost effective method of gaining information, especially when considering longitudinal studies, or those on a scale much larger than could otherwise be undertaken (McTavish & Loether, 2002). Based on the small sample size of the current study, secondary source data (government statistics, census data, newspaper reports, academic articles) was instrumental in fleshing out the

broader scale and tying the experiences of a small group of people to the wider set of processes and trends.

Survey data collection comes with its own set of benefits and potential drawbacks. It is a relatively cost effective way of gathering specific information from a large (or small) population, provided that it is collected in such a way that people do take the time to respond and return the survey. Because it is more formalized it leaves less space for respondents to share what is most important to them or deviate from the pre-determined pattern. This study overcame these issues by having the interviewer present to assist with completion of the survey, and rounding out the survey information with the more nuanced and personalized information from the interviews.

As such, the semi-structured interviews provided a space for respondents to share their personal experiences, beginning from a set of suggested thematic areas. The dangers of this type of methodology lie in losing focus and allowing the conversation to drift away from the subject matter of interest for the study, or conversely the interviewer becoming emotive, and shaping or pre-determining the responses they will receive (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). They do require that certain rapport be formed between the interviewer and the interviewee, and it has been suggested that the researcher must take it upon themselves to create a comfortable, accessible, and equal relationship with their subject. Power hierarchies are unfortunately a part of human experience, and a researcher must think through such issues and do their best to neutralize them by valuing different types of knowledge and being an open-minded facilitator (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

To study transnational phenomenon, it seems intuitive that a multi-cited research agenda would be the best way to capture realities, perspectives and impacts across geographically distant social fields. While acknowledging this, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) also propose that by asking questions of those living in one location about their transnational engagement, insight can be gained into the full breadth of their transnational experience. Likewise Vuorela (2002) states that in transnational families with far flung membership, “Telling the story here, primarily from the vantage point of only one of its members, adequately reveals the complexities of transnational family dispersal and reunion” (p.64). Resource and time constraints have precluded traveling to the Philippines to gain greater insight into the experiences of the children, other family members, and wider societal implications of transnational migration in this study. The value of conducting this extra research is not minimized, but as other authors have shown (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 2000; Jones-Correa, 2000; Zontini, 2004), single-cited research of transnational issues can be very informative.

Above all, the research strategy for this study was formed based on the most appropriate ways of getting the required information to speak to the thematic areas identified. This implied gaining access to those experiencing this living situation, and doing so in a manner that enabled the respondents to feel comfortable and secure in sharing their stories. Qatar was identified as a location where there were many individuals meeting the requirements of the study, and family connections facilitated the recruitment of candidates. It was by no means a random or representative sample, but this is irrelevant based on the type of analysis undertaken with the data generated.

### ***Participant Profiles***

As mentioned, the sample for this study was a group of six mothers and six fathers of Filipino origin, working in Doha, Qatar in the summer of 2006. The six men and six women ranged between 26 and 48 years old. Each person supported an average of six people back in the Philippines; including their own children, of which the women had an average of three, and the men two. Over half of the parents interviewed, currently or in the past, had other family members working overseas; and five had migrated for work themselves (either within the Philippines or externally) before coming to Qatar. All of the participants self-identified as Roman Catholics.

These men and women were working as welders, hairdressers / beauty consultants, service advisors, masseuses, architects, swim instructors and domestic workers. In some cases this was their field of training from the Philippines, and for others it was not. The participants were a well educated group: all had graduated from secondary school, and all but three had some form of training (university, college or vocational institute) beyond high school. Their salaries ranged from the equivalent of almost \$ 2,200 Canadian to just over \$ 26,000 Canadian in the year prior to the interviews, and all were remitting a significant portion of their earnings to the Philippines.

The huge variance in income is explained by the type of work the respondents did and how long they had been working overseas. The length of their overseas work caused discrepancies based on both how well participants were able to manipulate the system in Doha, as well as whether they had been working in the Philippines the year prior and were reporting an income which they were ultimately migrating to improve upon. For

example there were two women doing domestic work in the study group, and their incomes varied by over \$ 10,000 CAD a year based on the recent arrival of one of the women: she was indicating what she had earned the year before in the Philippines, and the other woman had established personal connections with ‘private clients’ apart from her main employer, which were very lucrative.

The small sample size in this study permits a slightly more detailed introduction to each of the research participants. The purpose is to personalize the men and women who participated in the study, and make some very general experiential links. In accordance with the dictates of the Research Ethics Board at Saint Mary's University all names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

**Angela** – Is a 44 year old mother of two, she was the highest earner in the sample at \$ 26, 102 CAD the year prior to the interview. She had been working on and off in Doha since 1987, which explained the trust and responsibility she had earned as manager of the hair salon where she worked, and her high salary. She was the only participant who directly described domestic violence and how she left her life in the Philippines and fled to Doha to get away from her abusive spouse.

**Raphael** – At 33 years old, Raphael was motivated, energetic, and a devoted father to his five year-old son. He feels they have a particularly strong bond because he was the primary caregiver for his son from when he was two to eight months old. Between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Qatar he had spend four years working overseas at amusement parks and private compounds as a lifeguard and swim instructor. He was one

of the lowest earners in the study (\$ 2,635 CAD) and was actively looking for other employment, in Doha, or anywhere else he could find an opportunity.

**Penn** – At 48, Penn was the oldest participant in the study, and was extremely independent, confident and unapologetic about the choices she had made for her family. Her five children ranged between 16 and 29 years old, the eldest of which was already working in Doha. Penn had been there on and off since 1995, with her mother providing the carework for her children in the Philippines. She worked at a masseuse, and had earned \$ 14,170 CAD the year before the study. She happily sent \$ 500 US a month to her mother, a large package each year for the family, and was saving money in Doha unbeknownst to her family in the Philippines.

**Stan** – Working as a service advisor at a mechanics garage, at 36 years old Stan earned \$ 8,203 CAD the year prior to the study. He was the only participant whose spouse also worked overseas, which had led to stress in their relationship (she worked in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). At the time of the interview the main caregiver for his two children in the Philippines had suddenly passed away, so he was unsure and very worried about who was caring for his children. He had been working overseas on and off since 1995, and understandably was one of the least satisfied with his current situation.

**Meggie** – As one of three sisters (two of whom were interviewed in this study) working at the same hair salon, Meggie had a strong support system in Doha, but was visibly suffering over having recently left the youngest of her four children, a two month-old to

return to work in Doha. At 40 years old, it was her second two year work contract in Qatar, but she had migrated for work within the Philippines over the past 20 years. The year before she had earned \$ 9,322 CAD, of which she deposited over \$ 600 CAD a month into her eldest daughters' bank account so that she could give the money to her grandmother (Meggie's mother) to administer.

**Erwin** – At 31 years old Erwin was one of the younger participants in the study, and after only a year in Doha was also one of the newest to transnational parenting. He was earning quite good money as an engineer (\$ 13,977 CAD) but was eager to return to the Philippines to meet his four month-old daughter and marry her mother. He spoke passionately about missing his fiancé, daughter and brother, but was also determined to follow his career to other countries, beyond the Middle East, to have different professional experiences.

**Marjorie** – Marjorie shared some expanded notions of gender; in her reluctance to marry and give up the freedom she enjoyed at a 26 year old woman; and conversely some traditional gendered beliefs; in her insistence that having a father for a son was not that important, whereas it made a big difference for a daughter. Due to this belief, she had recently married a man who was considerably her senior, and was doing domestic work in Doha, as her husband cared for both their daughter and her son of a previous relationship. She had only been in Doha for three months at the time of the interview, which is reflected in her earnings of just \$ 2,196 CAD, and her pain and worry about how her children (her son in particular) were faring in the Philippines.

**Pedro** – Since 1997 Pedro had been supporting his two children and putting his two older brothers through university working as a service advisor in Doha. His earnings from the previous year totalled \$ 9,502 CAD, which he felt was just enough to keep meeting the needs of his family, but not enough to save anything and be able to think about returning to the Philippines. His children were three and five years old, and he was comfortable that his wife was responsible for all of the home and carework.

**Nelly** – Similarly to her sister Meggy, Nelly worked as a beautician, was around 40 years old, and sent over \$ 600 CAD of her \$8,203 CAD earnings home each month. The remittances she sent provided for 12 people in the Philippines, including their parents, and a brother and his wife and children, who all lived in her home. She originally left the Philippines bound for Dubai in 1994 when her spouse passed away. She met the father of her second child (whom had yet to meet his five year-old) in Doha, but was not maintaining a relationship with this man.

**Rey** – At 29 years old, Rey had done factory work in Japan before coming to Doha in 2004 to work as a welder on the nearby American army base, and offer an informal taxi service, mostly to Filipinos living in Doha. He had other family members working overseas, and considered it the best way to provide an education for his six year-old son and save money to build a house in the Philippines. He had earned over \$ 10,000 CAD the year prior to the interview and the fluctuating amounts of money he sent home were



divided between his mother and his wife, and were used for education, savings and basic living expenses.

**Nora** – Since 1994 Nora had worked her way through successive families doing domestic work, progressively improving upon her living situation and the money she was making with private jobs in addition to her main employer. She was 39 years old, and had last seen her four year-old son when he was 18 months old. The smaller amounts of money she sent to various people (meaning that she ‘administered’ more of it herself) provided for a disabled aunt, her father, her sister and brother, and a salary for her sister-in law who cared for her son. She earned \$ 13,051 CAD, and was quite resigned to the fact that her contribution to the family was so important that she simply had to accept the separation from her child.

**Bart** – At 31, Bart was the most happy-go-lucky of the research participants. He joked about the fun telephone conversations he had with his three sons (aged three, four and five), but was serious about his pledge that he would buy them absolutely anything they wanted. He lived entirely off this tips as a hairdresser, saved some, and sent the remainder of his \$ 6,961 CAD salary home for his family’s food, rent, bills and school fees. As with all of the men interviewed, his wife administered the money and provided the carework for the children.

### ***Reflections on Fieldwork***

Appropriately for a study of transnational networks, it was the presence of a family member living in Qatar which allowed me to carry out this research. To recruit candidates for the study my sister suggested a list of her acquaintances which she knew were living the specific circumstances that I wanted to target. After receiving approval from the Research Ethics Board at Saint Mary's University, I contacted these people, explained the nature of the study and what would be expected from them if they decided to participate, and for the most part directly set up interviews or preliminary meetings with them. From this list I employed a snowball sampling technique, asking individuals if they knew any other Filipino mothers and fathers who may be interested in speaking with me. It was slightly more difficult to recruit men to participate in the study, as my sister was acquainted with more females, but the snowball technique proved to be effective.

With most of the participants the first few moments were awkward. They were obviously curious (some visibly uneasy) about what information I was looking for from them. This usually dissolved very quickly, although one woman felt it was best not to record the interview. She was very open and relaxed when the tape recorder was off, and had such interesting perspectives that I was disappointed to not have more direct quotes from her testimony. But her views are still strongly reflected in this work.

I attempted to overcome the initial uncertainty by being very friendly, clear and open about what kinds of things I would be asking. The interviews were conducted in a range of locales; cafés, a residential complex, a restaurant, a gym, a hair salon, and a women's washroom. I asked people where they were, and if there was a place that was

convenient and comfortable for them. Most people suggested something quite readily, and I was eager to not bring people back to my sister's home to allow people to be 'in their own turf' or at least somewhere neutral, as opposed to a strange location with potential class or racial baggage, and the need did not arise. This is not to say that these factors, nor the gender element, are that easy to shirk. I was careful to dress in clean, respectable and modest clothing; which I judged by the standard of foreigners in Qatar and not Nationals. Most non-Arabs wear Western clothing, women covering their knees and shoulders and occasionally their hair; but this was uncommon and though I sometimes did in other circumstances, for the interviews I did not wear a head scarf.

Through my sisters' connection to many of the people I interviewed I was able to achieve a preliminary level of trust which was slightly more difficult to build in those people who were another person, or link removed. The main strategies I used to make people feel comfortable were listening attentively, smiling, sharing some information about myself (where appropriate), and sharing observations about Qatar or asking them general questions so they were in the role of explaining this new environment to me. Once we had chatted a little bit I sometimes subtly distanced myself slightly from my sister, or more precisely from the class with which she is associated, by discussing my student status, or how surprised I was by all of the opulence in Qatar. I was not trying to disown my own privilege, but to distance myself from it (or clarify it) in order to create a comfortable space. Whether these efforts made people feel more open to share I cannot be sure.

Gender-wise, I am sure that both the men and women arrived with some notions of Western women and feminist ideals. As emerges in the findings, I wonder whether

males in particular may have tailored some answers based on trying to sound more like what they imagined I wanted to hear. However the topic over which this arose was almost quantitatively based (the number of times something happened), and the details and strength of their answers lead me to believe that they were sharing true experiences. Many of the people I interviewed ask my sister about me on a regular basis, so we are able to exchange greetings through her, which is a nice way to feel connected and share updates on the project. I would never have gained access or the trust of these people so quickly without my own transnational support network.

There were some challenges associated with the public spaces in which the interviews were conducted. The participants all seemed comfortable, but sometimes the background noise was a little distracting. Generally the level of spoken English of the participants was completely sufficient for our purposes, but when replaying the digital recordings of the interviews different language or accents blended with background noise made catching every word difficult. I believe that there is a balance to be struck between being as unobtrusive as possible with a recording device for the comfort of the participants, yet ensuring a quality recording to save time later.

Over the past three years this project has evolved greatly. Through many topic changes the themes of gender, development and culture remained static, waiting for a conceptual narrowing to clarify and bring the issues to life. Appendix three is a literature map depicting some of the earlier exploratory work as I broadly tried to learn what was being said about transnational migration, and how it fit with my interests. My original intent was to examine potential changes to gender roles through migration and the contact with different cultures. To a certain extent the study accomplishes this by means of its

exploration of the continuity and expansion of mothering and fathering roles through transnational migration. However, gender role expansion is an incredibly complex process involving multiple layers of personal experience and interpretation: this intricacy does not lend itself so much to hard conclusions as to the exploration of commonalities within experiences and potential trends.

Finally I thought that it would add to the reader's ability to picture and understand the realities of the experiences of the participants in this study by sharing some of my own observations and reflections of Qatar. The climate of the Philippines can be very hot, as well as rainy and variable, but I think that the respondents shared my shock and adverse physical reaction to their host country's climate. Of course one would acclimatize, but the violence of over fifty degree heat with wind and sand storms assisting the encroachment of the desert were to say the least, inhospitable. It is a testament to the strength of the Qatari people - perhaps more so to the Bedouin pastoral tribes that still roam the desert - that a mere thirty years ago people survived in this harsh climate without air conditioning.

As a middle class Canadian woman, I found the opulence of Qatar difficult to comprehend. Porsche SUVs, marble shopping malls, and construction on every street was the norm. These realities for Qatari nationals were all the more difficult to comprehend alongside some of the living and working conditions of the 'guest workers'. South Asian men in blue jumpsuits line the side of the road as they take their shift on construction projects, or nap clustered under the rare tree as they wait for their specially controlled transport buses: all of this in heat I would describe as unimaginable. I saw small derelict looking trailers or shacks near construction sites where some workers lived,

but stories were shared about the camps of 10,000 people or more out in the desert near the LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) Train construction sites. None of the people I interviewed were living in these types of conditions, but one interview was conducted in a small makeshift compound in an industrial part of Doha where 40 Filipino men lived; I was told they were calling it 'Little Manila'.

Any service type job was performed by someone of Asian descent, with the odd Lebanese or other person of Middle Eastern origin in somewhat 'higher class' roles (managing restaurants, business customer service, etc). In public Qatari men and women tended to stick to same sex groupings, as did migrants workers. There were a few small specialty shops with food and other items from South Asian nations where guest workers would sometimes congregate.

As a white woman, for the most part I felt ignored or 'looked straight through' by Qatari nationals (men and women), and found in the almost three months I spent there that I was able to have very few conversations with Qatari nationals. I can imagine this situation would be more extreme for people of Asian descent.

Qatari women were virtually never seen working, and if out in public often had a 'helper' tending to their children. As mentioned it was rare to see Qatari men and women interacting in public, but there was sometimes large groups of family members out together. Hanging out in cafes in shopping malls seems to be a major pastime for Qataris in the brutally hot summer months of July and August.

Newspaper reports of withheld wages, visa issues, and heart attacks due to the heat add to my general sense of alarm over the structure of work and working conditions in Qatar. This said, the people interviewed in this study were not all miserable all the

time. They had all struggled (those who had arrived in the last two years still were more so than the rest) and had built lives for themselves around jobs, friends and the odd social outing. Perhaps the most telling feature is that most were on their second or third contract in Qatar, so they obviously felt that it was not so bad for them, or that they had so few options they just had to make do with it.

## **Chapter 4 The Case Study: Defining the Transnational Field**

Filipino transnational migration and transnational families can only be understood in the context of the historical development, political economy, and cultural norms of the Philippines. The latter provide the rationale, as well as the supporting factors which underpin labour migration from the Philippines. Individuals, families, private enterprises and the Filipino state are all actors prompting and shaping the landscape of migration from and within the country. This chapter provides a general introduction to conditions in the Philippines which have both fuelled and facilitated migration. A sketch of current Filipino migration will be followed by a brief outline of the Middle East and Qatar as ‘receiving’ environments.

### ***Assessing Socio-Economic Development in the Philippines***

A chain of over seven thousand islands, the unique geography of the Philippines has shaped the character of its people and its national development. There are still eight major ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines, speaking over two hundred dialects, with Tagalog as the most prevalent (Lee, 2000). Modernization has been slow and uneven, partly due to the mountainous, spatially dispersed islands and coastal lowlands which have limited access to markets, transportation and communication; and partly due to the outward perspective of subsequent colonial rulers who effectively stymied rural development.

Almost four hundred years of colonial rule by the Spanish left deep impressions in the Philippines. The legacy of the Spaniards includes contributions to language, cuisine, religion (over eighty percent of Filipinos continue to be Roman Catholic), and



the roots of the prevailing uneven system of land tenure which saw the majority of the general populace become landless sharecroppers (Lee, 2000). Prior to the arrival of the Spanish the principal kinship unit, the *barangay*, consisted of less than a hundred households, boasted high literacy, animist religions, and seemingly democratic leadership by chieftains or *datu* (Wurfel, 1988).

In the pre-colonial period, needs were met through subsistence economies based on fishing and farming, as they continue to be in some regions of the Philippines. Wet rice agriculture and the small scale domestic textile industry were of great import. For the most part communal land tenure systems were dismantled and the Spanish began the process of attempting to link the Filipino countryside to the capitalist system and the global economy through the development of export agriculture based on large haciendas (the church itself became one of the largest landholders) and cash crops (Bahramitash, 2005). The general populace was impoverished as they were unable to obtain deeds for their lands, and their labour was appropriated by large landholders to meet federal government quotas for promissory notes which were then left unpaid (Lindio-McGovern, 1997).

The United States annexed the Philippines in 1899 after defeating the Spanish in the Battle of Manila, but faced several years of violent guerrilla warfare as Filipinos resisted falling under the domain of another set of foreign rulers. The Americans vanquished the opposition and retained official power over the Philippines until 1946. During this second colonial period, the class-based systems established by the Spanish were preserved, and large scale agri-businesses producing crops and raw materials in

demand in the United States were fostered and accommodated through free trade agreements (Lindio-McGovern, 1997).

Even after formal independence, the power of American interests in the Philippines has been exerted through the maintenance of American military bases (until 1991); billions of dollars of foreign aid which has largely been used as tied aid to support development favourable to US multinational corporations; and the structural adjustments heralded by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund which evolved in the aftermath of the influential meetings at Bretton Woods over 60 years ago (Bello, Kinley & Elinson, 1982). A prime example is the now expired Laurel-Langley Agreement, which allowed US citizens and corporations to own one hundred percent of ventures in the Philippines, while other foreign nationals were limited to forty percent (Lindio-McGovern, 1997).

After percolating since the Spanish era, the marginalized Muslim groups living in the Southern islands of the Philippines began asserting their desire for an independent Islamic state, and the Moro National Liberation Front was formed in the early seventies (Wurfel, 1988). Their agitations, however, had little to do with the declaration of martial law by then president Ferdinand Marcos in 1972. Despite his efforts to spin his actions and the new constitution as “a resurgence of power of the people to determine their future” (Marcos’ words at a celebration of the one year anniversary of martial law), the move had more to do with internal conflicts of the ruling elites, disputes between the elites and general populace, and conflicts between nationalists and foreign investors (Wurfel, 1988, p. 118).

Sadly, since this time the Philippine political and economic arenas have been mired in instability, stagnation and decay. President Marcos was peacefully removed from office in 1986 by the so called 'EDSA Revolution' when protestors gathered in the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue and started a chain of events which culminated in the ousting of the president, who had ended martial law five years prior (Bello, Docena, de Guzman & Malig, 2005). He managed to accumulate tremendous wealth during his time in office, as did a number of other politicians during the period of martial law, and this period saw his wife Imelda amass her infamous collection of shoes.

Through the subsequent presidencies of Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos, Joseph Estrada, and the current Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (despite some variation) the path towards economic liberalization has been followed but never completed. As one of the first countries to undergo the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) program of structural adjustment, the Philippines received nine loans between 1980 and 1999, meaning that for almost twenty years the IMF and the World Bank wrote the dictates of the macroeconomic policy for the country (Bello, 1999).

Mirroring the conditions of Structural Adjustment Loans issued to other poor, debt ridden countries, loans were tied to compliance with:

...the liberalization of commodity import procedures, tariff reform, an appropriate exchange rate policy, strengthening of fiscal incentives for exporters, and administrative actions to promote and facilitate export. (World Bank, 'Draft of Structural Adjustment Loan Agreement, cited in Bello, 1999, p. 167)

These measures, enforced over a twenty year period served to remove protection for fledgling domestic entrepreneurs, allow barrier free access for multinational corporations

to Filipino labour and markets through Export Processing Zones (EPZs), and to consolidate export led industrialization.

Some laud these efforts towards liberalization, citing a growth rate of 2.5 percent from 1980 to 1997, and praising the string of administrations over this time for “allowing foreign investors to become significant players in such industries as banking, manufacturing and life insurance” (Asian Development Bank, 2005, p. *vii*). While foreign capital can indeed be very useful in jump-starting economic growth, intuitively the objective of any individual or company is to gain the highest return possible for themselves and their shareholders. Put simply the interest of foreign companies is in extracting wealth, rather than fostering the type of development which will be of the most benefit to the people of the Philippines.

The results for the Filipino economy and citizenry have been catastrophic. As rural areas are further impoverished (due to poor agricultural prices, slow reform of land tenure, and the emphasis on cash crops and external orientation), people have increasingly sought better economic options in the cities. A long process of unmet industrial and urban promises have resulted in extensive poverty in the Philippines, visible in low rural consumption, as well as in the presence of 50-70,000 street children in the metro Manila area alone (Black, 1991).

Small and medium sized businesses have been unable to compete with the flood of cheaper foreign products and commodities, and many have gone bankrupt, resulting in greater unemployment, inflation and instability. The Human Development Index - tying in measurable aspects of longevity, education, and a decent standard of living – rates the Philippines at 84<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries (UNDP, 2006a). The country’s rank in terms of

Gross Domestic Product drops to 100<sup>th</sup> out of the same sample, and in terms of share of income or consumption, the poorest 20 percent consume 5.4 percent while the richest 20 percent consume 52.3 percent (based on 2004 data) (UNDP, 2006a). In 1997, 37 percent of the national budget of the Philippines was going to servicing the debt accrued to the World Bank and the IMF (Lindio-McGovern, 1997). In regional terms, these figures mask the fact that because of the huge impact of remittances from overseas foreign workers in the Philippines, the country was not as adversely affected as its neighbours by the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s. Table 4.1 outlines some developmental indices for the Philippines, disaggregated by gender when possible.

**Table 4.1 Selected Development Indicators for the Philippines**

Life Expectancy at Birth (years) (2004)	70.7
Female	72.8
Male	68.6
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births) (2004)	26
Adult Literacy Rate (%) (2004)	92.6
Female	92.7
Male	92.5
Public Expenditure on Education (as % of GDP) (2002-04)	3.2
Total Fertility Rate (births per woman) (2000-05)	3.2
Public Health Expenditure (% of GDP) (2003)	1.4
Physicians (per 100,000 people), 1990-2004	58
People Undernourished (% of total population) (2001-03)	19
Population Living Below \$1 a day (%) (1990-2004)	15.5
Population Living Below \$2 a day (%) (1990-2004)	47.5

UNDP Human Development Report, 2006a

Another factor in the less than stellar economic achievement of the Filipino economy has been the prevalence of so called ‘crony capitalism’, which sees those with wealth and influence support the election of a certain candidate, who in turns repays the favour by looking out for their business interests, effectively enriching each other (Bello et al., 2005). While high corruption is a serious matter, the Philippines is not unique in the scale of the problem, and it is clearly not the sole explanation for the country’s economic woes.

### ***Family and Gender Roles in the Philippines***

Filipino households have been described as “residentially nuclear but functionally extended” (Chant & McIlwaine, 1995, p. 15). Prior to colonisation by the Spaniards Filipinos lived in villages comprised of kinship groups called *barangay*, which as mentioned, consisted of less than a hundred families. The kin groups were historically more extended in nature than the current configuration (Wurfel, 1988), although the Filipino nuclear family is still oriented towards its extended form, with tremendous importance placed on solidarity between familial groups, which often transcend consanguine relations (Medina, 1991).

In Filipino society the family is universally regarded as the key context of material and emotional succour for every human being. Christian beliefs and their celebration of family life reinforce the values attached to loving bonds between parents and children, filial duty and respect, parental responsibilities, and obligations of mutual support within a close-knit kin network. Family solidarity is upheld as the ideal, even where it is heartbreakingly difficult to achieve. (Black, 1991, p. 8)

The pooling of resources and sharing of responsibilities fuses family members together and carries significant weight in personal decision making. The following translations summarize traits valued in the Filipino culture which promote strong family bonds and unity: *Pakikisama* (smooth interpersonal relations); *Utang na loob* (moral obligation to repay kindness); *Bahala na* (stoicism or courage in facing adversity, often with faith based undertones, 'God's will'); and *Bayanihan* (cooperative spirit to complete tasks). Above all the importance of filial duty in Filipino families fuses families together and creates the ideal of cohesion, as does religious membership (Porio, Lynch & Hollnsteiner, 1981).

Women seem to play a greater role than men at maintaining family ties and connections, in fact Illo and Polo (1990) found that "...the linkages with natal and affinal families were nurtured principally by the female members of mutual support networks" (p. 86). Networks include all manner of relatives, as well as ritual kin, neighbours and childhood friends, and were extensively used by sharing resources, work, and recreation to meet the needs of all. The persistence of these traits relates strongly to the ability of Filipinos working overseas to leave their children behind with the confidence that they will be well cared for.

Regionally, the Philippines is seen as slightly more progressive than many of its neighbours in terms of gender relations, with several female heads of state (including the current one), and women generally seeming to occupy positions of greater strength, sometimes even being portrayed as domineering in conventional wisdom (Aguilar, 1988; Chant & McIlwaine, 1995). In Tagalog the single word, *siya*, used as a pronoun for both

males and females, is demonstrative of greater equality than some cultures possess (Guthrie & Jacobs, 1966).

The roots of this phenomenon were present prior to Spanish colonisation, when men and women enjoyed equal rights to use communal land, equal inheritance rights, and lineage was traced both through men and women's families (Lindio-McGovern, 1997; Medina, 1991). Although women did not occupy positions of political power in *barangays*, under animist religions they were endowed with prestige as *Babaylanes*, or religious intermediaries responsible for various rituals. Women were also the primary agents of trade, healers, astronomers, and interpreters of culture, affording them greater freedom of movement than women in many Asian countries (Bahramitash, 2005). However, there was still a sexual division of labour which favoured men, and political leadership was largely a male domain.

From these early conditions, the status of women in the Philippines has deteriorated in many ways. The yoke of colonial domination was felt by both men and women, but there were cases of women being exchanged in lieu of some debt, and where men were forced to work to produce for their colonial masters, women would be left to tend to homes, children and farm work to support their families (Lindio-McGovern, 1997).

Among women's rights and privileges effectively destroyed by Spanish civil law were the right to divorce, to have children regardless of marital status, property rights, freedom to contract business arrangements independently of the husband, retention of maiden name, and a central role in religious practices. (Aguilar, 1988, p. 30)

During the Spanish colonial period and beyond, women fleeing poverty in the countryside were also channelled into labour intensive industries in the export economy



such as rolling cigars, as well as domestic service and sex work. Filipino women gained the right to vote in 1937, followed by ‘full’ civil rights for married women in 1939 (Bahramitash, 2005).

In most Filipino families women currently bear the brunt of child rearing and household labour, although men are reported to participate in domestic tasks, perhaps to the degree of one third of the time that women invest (Chant & McIlwaine, 1995). Over 50 percent of women aged 15 and above are also engaged in economic activities (UNDP, 2006a). Women are mostly employed in trade and service sectors, including professional, clerical, sales, administrative, and sex work, and as is the case in most countries are more likely to be involved in subcontracting arrangements where their labour rights are not protected (Illo, 1997). Concomitant with the ‘feminization of labour’, increasingly younger, single women are favoured for specific types of work (tobacco, textiles, leather, footwear, electrical machinery) in Free Trade Zones (FTZs) (mainly around Manila and Batan). The preference of women in general, and specifically younger, single women is based on perceptions of their ‘nimble’ hands, lack of dissent over poor wages and working conditions, and lack of familial obligations (Bahramitash, 2005).

Compared to women in some other Asian cultures, Filipino women have a greater voice in the economic affairs of the family, and receive relatively equal treatment in terms of education and inheritance. This picture of the ‘near equality’ of Filipino women is disrupted by the fact that women are mostly found in jobs which offer lower pay and less prestige, and that regardless of men’s participation in childcare and domestic work, these realms are still largely seen as women’s responsibilities (Chant & McIlwaine,

1995). It seems that the pre-colonial tendency towards greater gender equality was usurped by the arrival of the Spanish and the bent in Catholicism towards the subordination of women (Lindio-McGovern, 1997).

Partial equality aptly summarizes the Human Development Report statistics for the gender situation in the Philippines. The Gender-related development index refers to the three dimensions of human development mentioned earlier (longevity, education, and standard of living) adjusted to the differences between men and women: while the Gender empowerment measure loosely follows Naila Kabeer's (1999) approach to measuring empowerment - focusing women's economic and political participation and decision-making, as well as their power over economic resources. On scales from zero (being total inequality between the genders) to one (being full equality) the respective values of 0.761 and 0.533 for the Philippines depict the favourable climate in education, literacy, and longevity, as well as the discrepancies of seats held in parliament by women (15.8 percent) and the wage gap (the ratio of female to male earned income is 0.60) (UNDP, 2006a). There are of course regional and ethnic sub-group variations hidden within, for example literacy of Muslim women in the southern Philippines is markedly lower than the average (Illo, 1997).

Similar to the 'traditional' gender ideologies explored earlier, in the Filipino context "masculinity is popularly equated with men being breadwinners, being able to conquer women and to sire children" while "feminine identity on the other hand, tends to be predicated on mothering and caring roles and the domestic arena" (Chant & McIlwaine, 1995, p. 11). Aguilar (1988) cites that in poor families when necessity

dictates more flexibility in these roles, both males and females still see themselves and would prefer to maintain the expected roles.

Being a largely Catholic country, divorce is not legal in the Philippines, although on certain grounds an arduous process of court dates and documents can yield a legal separation from a spouse (Chant & McIlwaine, 1995). Given the difficulties of dissolving a marriage, compounded with legal bias, fear of retribution and the public disapproval with which single mothers are met, unsurprisingly escaping domestic violence is a gruelling task in the Philippines (Chant, 1997). Finally, perception and reality reveal a complicated picture whereby Filipino men and women negotiate roles and responsibilities based on need, personal, and societal expectations. It is however not an even playing field.

### ***Orchestrating Transnational Migration from the Philippines***

The Philippines has a long history of internal migration: voluntarily as people have searched for better livelihood options; at the behest of their families, including young women being sent to work in the homes of more affluent urban families; state encouraged occupation and cultivation of more sparsely populated regions; as well as international migration, primarily to the United States beginning in the early twentieth century (Engracia & Herrin, 1984; Findley, 1987; Illo & Pollo, 1990; Lee, 2000; Pertierra, 1992). The international flow of primary migrants was largely male dominated until the early nineties; but in terms of deployment of newly hired landbased OFWs, since 1993 women have outnumbered men, sometimes by as little as four percent, but with a peak of 72 percent females and 28 percent males in 2001 (POEA, 2002).

The ability to migrate overseas for work permanently or temporarily is largely mediated by wealth and education (Lan, 2003). Only those with a useful skill or education, and the funds to pay recruiters and government fees will have any chance of going overseas. Between destinations, wealth, skills, connections and whether one wants to migrate temporarily (the Middle East specializes in contract labour) or permanently (European and North American destinations are the most likely to lead to citizenship) dictate where you have the aspiration and opportunity to go. Often the Middle East and Asia are on the less desirable end of the scale and Europe and North America are seen more favourably (Findley, 1987; Raphael - Participant interview, June 5th, 2006).

As of December 2006, stock estimates by the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (2006), place over eight million Filipinos (of the total population of over 80 million) living and working overseas on temporary, permanent, and irregular bases. The incidence of economic migration is certainly prolific, with 10 percent of the total population (in the year 2006), or over 17 percent Filipino families with at least one family member working overseas (in the year 2000) (Bagasao, 2005).

The Central Bank of the Philippines (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas) (BSP) reported over 12 billion US dollars in remittances to the Philippines from all destinations in 2006, with almost two billion coming from the Middle East (BSP, 2006a). In this same period a mere 1.2 billion US dollars entered the country in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (BSP 2006b). While the Bank of the Philippines cautions that the origin of remittance funds are not entirely reliable due to the practice of sending remittances through correspondent banks, of which many are located in the United States, there is no mention of additional flows of remittances (i.e. informal channels such as goods and money

carried in directly or sent in *balikbayan* – returnee gift - boxes) making the remittance estimates conservative. Given the country's entire Gross Domestic Product of 84.6 billion US dollars, at almost 12 percent of GDP, remittances from overseas workers are clearly significant (UNDP, 2006a).

The above figures highlight both the enormous number of Filipinos engaged in labour migration, as well as the tremendous impact they have on the economy of the Philippines. A gendered perspective reveals the significant increase of Filipino women migrating, as well as patterned differences in types of work, destinations and earnings. In 2006 60 percent (184,454) of newly hired Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) were women, and the vast majority of them were described as household and related workers (POEA, 2006). The bulk of the 123,688 male Filipinos deployed in that year were hired as construction workers and factory and related workers (POEA, 2006). The strongest geographical patterns have tended to put more males in the Middle East, while women have found more employment in Asia; overall Filipinos can be found working in almost 200 countries worldwide (IOM, 2007).

Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2005) confirm that Filipino men and women tend to be hired to different types of work overseas, as well as discovering that there is a gender gap in remittances. They found that male migrants were older, had more education, and had greater earning power overseas. A surprising discovery was that women tended to send less money home, and the finding was not completely explained by the disparity of wages experienced by women when compared to men. This does contradict other studies which expect that women will send more money home than their male counterparts based on greater feelings of responsibility and reliability (Chant & McIlwaine, 1995; Tacoli,

1999). Irrespective of Semyonov and Gorodzeisky's (2005) finding, if the jobs perceived to be 'women's work' are in demand in the global marketplace, then those in labour sending countries such as the Philippines will tailor their 'product' to meet the need.

The explosion of international migration from the Philippines is not without precedent, and has not happened spontaneously. Recognizing the enormous value of migration and remittances for easing domestic unemployment, improving balance of payments and increasing domestic consumption, the government of the Philippines has actively encouraged the marketing and recruitment of its citizens to work overseas, without openly admitting this goal. Remittances in the Philippines have surpassed Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) by more than 20 percent, and are a much more stable inflow of capital (ADB, 2004). Despite dated claims that it views labour migration as a short term answer to internal unemployment and balance of payments problems, since 2001 the Filipino government has been setting the target of deploying one million workers each year (Asis, 2006b).

In the 1970s the Philippines followed the example of other countries such as Korea, and instituted mandatory remittance schemes from 30 to 70 percent of earnings (depending on profession) to ensure that those who chose to work overseas on a contract basis would continue to contribute to their families and the national balance of payments (ADB, 2004). While this program was dissolved due to strong resistance, in 2003 another initiative to encourage economic activity at home by overseas Filipinos was passed in the form of a Dual Nationality Act. As long as the second country recognizes a Filipino national's citizenship, they are allowed to live and earn elsewhere (with citizenship rights in the 'host' country) as well as maintaining the right to buy land,

invest, save, and operate a business in the Philippines (ADB, 2004). In the current Labour Code of the Philippines, Article 22 states that,

It shall be mandatory for all Filipino workers abroad to remit a portion of their foreign exchange earnings to their families, dependents, and/or beneficiaries in the country in accordance with rules and regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labour. (Government of the Philippines, 2007)

No monetary values were discernable in association with the article, nor was there a system of verification through the Central Bank of the Philippines, as had been the case with the previous mandatory remittance scheme, so its enforcement is questionable.

Used as a model for the ILO, the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) established in 1974 and renamed and re-organized in 1982, works in conjunction with the Overseas Workers Welfare Authority (OWWA), and the Federal Department of labour (Tyner, 1996). Its responsibilities include everything from overall regulation of labour migration (and domestic private recruiters), maintaining relationships and brokering deals with foreign institutions, promotion of Filipino workers, and the welfare of deployed Filipino workers (Tyner, 2000 & 1996).

To compete for contracts, Filipino workers of different genders have been represented as possessing specific traits deemed desirable by employers and governments (Tyner, 2000 & 1996). As the biggest labour exporter in the region, the industry is highly developed in the Philippines, and the government has a role in all three phases, from contract procurement, through labour recruitment, and worker deployment. None of these processes are formally gendered, however, images of Filipino workers as reliable, docile, competent, and low-cost, are actively encouraged through promotional brochures for overseas companies and governments, and local mass media is widely used to recruit

people for occupations that are ‘natural’ for them based on their gender (Tyner, 2000 & 1996).

High domestic unemployment has been cited as the major ‘push’ factor behind international migration, however in the coming chapters we will see that this condition appears to be changing. In the case of the Philippines, the lack of rural development and ensuing low productivity and high unemployment have been bred of an unjust system of land tenure with few large landowners orienting production towards export. The Asian Development Bank (2004) cites that two thirds of Overseas Filipino Workers are from rural areas, and that the remittances they send are used directly to meet daily subsistence needs. The industrial project has likewise been mired in uneven and marginal growth. The seeds of this system are found in the Spanish colonial era, and they have been nourished, if masked, through the period of American colonial rule, as well as by the interference of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

In an increasingly globalized age “the Philippine state orchestrates and depends upon labour migration and the funds it generates” (Barber, 2000, p. 406). In the 33 years since the Overseas Employment Program began in the Philippines the government has successfully signed 13 Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) (12 with labour receiving countries and one with a labour sending country) (Go, 2006). These agreements are ostensibly to protect Filipino workers; the terms covered include “labour recruitment, special hiring agreements and labour, employment and manpower development agreements” (Go, 2006, p. 6).

Many labour receiving countries are unwilling to sign BLAs because it can tie them into exchanges with one country (when they may have offers from various sources);



other nations may well expect to sign the same sort of agreement; and the receiving government would claim that the OFWs are already subject to the laws of their country, the same as any national would be, and in that respect they are already protected (Go, 2006). It is for these reasons that the Philippines has not signed BLAs with Saudi Arabia, or several other of the largest receivers of OFWs. The Philippines does have a BLA with Qatar, which is more geared towards ‘manpower’. The following are important features of this sort of BLA:

- a. Promotion and strengthening of areas of cooperation in the field of labour, employment, and manpower development;
- b. Exchange of information on relevant research, technical expertise, and other matters that would enhance employment promotion and labour administration in both the Philippines and the labour-receiving country;
- c. Enhancement of the welfare and protection of the rights of Filipino workers in accordance with the labour laws of the receiving country; and
- d. Establishment of a Joint Committee composed of members from both the Philippines and the receiving country to do a periodic review of the agreement and its implementation. (Go, 2006: 6-7)

As much as Bilateral Labour Agreements are signed to protect the workers, it seems clear that mechanisms such as BLAs are also used by governments to exercise control over the flow and nature of migration.

There are also a number of transnational lobby groups which are very active in pushing governments (including that of the Philippines) to respect the rights of migrant workers. One example from the Philippines is The Asian Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM), which through advocacy and networking is working towards establishing a movement of migrants of different nationalities struggling in solidarity for their rights

(APMM, 2006). Their press releases and urgent action letters invite a wider audience to become informed and engage with the struggles of migrant workers. MIGRANTE International, an international alliance of Filipino Migrant organizations is also very active in lobbying the Filipino government to do away with exorbitant fees which the government collects for migrants' deployment and focus on domestic development to break the cycle which forces so many Filipinos out of their own country (MIGRANTE, 2007).

In one respect the Philippines stands out as a model: it is one of only three labour sending countries to have ratified the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Family (Iredale & Piper, 2005). It is postulated that the high costs of implementation and monitoring, as well as the suspected high degree of collusion between government officials and recruiting agencies have prompted other countries not to ratify the convention (Iredale & Piper, 2005). As is the case with many UN treaties and conventions, ratification is not always promptly followed by implementation and the eradication of the situation in need of change.

### ***Assessing Socio-Economic Development in Qatar***

As previously stated, the Middle East has been one of the less attractive migration destinations for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), largely due to relatively lower wages as compared to Europe or North America; strict rules of public conduct which limit freedom of movement (especially for females); and the impossibility of gaining permanent citizenship to a Middle Eastern country (Barber, 2002). It has also traditionally been a region where more male than female OFWs have traveled for

employment, due to demand for workers in construction. Global demand for the petroleum products has generated enormous wealth in the region, hence the demand for construction workers, and a largely male workforce of overseas guest workers.

Despite the drawbacks, according to the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency, in 2004 there were an estimated 1.8 million OFWs in the Middle East, 45,795 of whom were deployed as new hires or re-hires to Qatar (POEA, 2006). In the period from 1998 to 2006 there has been an increase of 427 percent in OFWs deployed to Qatar (POEA, 2006). With respect to the gender balance, the ratio of males to females in the region is rising, although census data for 2004 found that there were still less than half the number of female to male OFWs in Qatar, and regionally the gap had closed slightly more (National Statistics Office, 2005). As the economies of Middle Eastern countries expand, more Filipino women are finding work as nurses, domestic helpers, entertainers, beauticians and as nannies.

Qatar only gained full independence from the British in 1971, and the development of oil and natural gas reserves have rapidly transformed the small peninsula into an economic giant. Currently the GDP per capita of Qatar sits at 29, 800 US dollars, and it is expected to become the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in 2007 (CIA, 2007b). In a few short decades the capital, Doha, has bloomed from an outpost in the desert into a bustling city which houses 90 percent of the country's estimated 900,000 inhabitants (CIA, 2007b).

This rapid growth has not been problem free. Approximately 25 percent of the country's residents have national citizenship, and the result is a highly racially stratified society, whereby extreme wealth sits alongside relative poverty and desperate working

conditions (Oxford Business Group, 2005). Table 4.2 offers a comparison of the same set of indices presented for the Philippines.

**Table 4.2 Selected Development Indicators for Qatar**

Life Expectancy at Birth (years) (2004)	73.0
Female	76.2
Male	71.4
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births) (2004)	18
Adult Literacy Rate (%) (2004)	89.0
Female	88.6
Male	89.1
Public Expenditure on Education (as % of GDP) (1991)	3.5
Total Fertility Rate (births per woman) (2000-05)	3.0
Public Health Expenditure (% of GDP) (2003-04)	2.0
Physicians (per 100,000 people), 1990-2004	222
People Undernourished (% of total population) (2001-03)	n / a
Population Living Below \$1 a day (%) (1990-2004)	n / a
Population Living Below \$2 a day (%) (1990-2004)	n / a

UNDP – Human Development Report, 2006b

Masked by this data from the 2006 Human Development Report highlighting near gender equity in terms of literacy and higher life expectancy of women than men in Qatar, are the realities that not a single woman holds a seat in parliament, nor are there apparently any ‘poor’ people living in Qatar. There is no data to report either the Gender Related Index or the Gender Empowerment Measure, which is surely not indicative of equity (UNDP, 2006b).

Although far less conservative than its large neighbour, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Muslim Shar’ia law is used for family and personal matters, and women and men

must be extremely wary of starting relationships with members of either gender (CIA, 2007b). Workers in some professions are subjected to yearly physicals including mandatory pregnancy testing (Angela – Participant Interview June 18th, 2006; Barber, 2000). Filipinos have created niches in this sometimes hostile environment by fostering guest worker networks providing transport services, and shops specializing in Filipino foods.

This chapter has situated the present study in the socio-economic and historical context of transnational migration between the Philippines and Qatar. In development studies the antecedents of current issues are essential for analytic depth. The nature of Filipino culture and gender roles are also essential to understanding individual motivating factors and challenges inherent in migration. While not exhaustive, this snapshot of these conditions leads us into the findings from the current study and their analysis.

## **Chapter 5 Gendered Contexts of Migration**

This chapter traces the journey of transnational migration. Beginning with the structural factors which prompt migration, the discussion moves into the meso-scale connections which affect migratory decisions, before exploring the personal rationale for migration, individual trajectories and personal outcomes of the participants in this study. These experiences will be framed and analyzed with reference to successive debates in migration, transnational migration and gender theories; the latter permeating all aspects of the discussion.

A brief portrait of the gender breakdown of Filipinos working in Qatar situates the discussion. Next, the chapter moves into an examination of the structural or macro-level determinants of migration, which filter through to the proceeding levels of analysis; the meso / family / community level, as well as the micro / individual decision-making processes in migration. The result is some blending of the discussion as the personalized information from the interviews demonstrates the interplay of both larger and intermediate level pressures and incentives on the individual choices people make. The meso-level perspective assesses the presence, strength and gender differentiated ‘use’ or maintenance of transnational networks, which are analyzed in the context of literature on transnational networks and social capital; explicit here are the benefits and personal sacrifices involved in transnational network membership. Finally the micro-level experiences of migration; agency and outcomes for the participants will be examined. Major threads of this section of the analysis are the economic need; gender differences in exit strategies; and gender-based plans for the use of income. In terms of outcomes for the participants, the final section will consider how the reality of the situation compares

to expectations for men and women migrants; and the reception the respondents have received in Qatar.

I want to get more experience because I'm planning to go to the US, or anywhere. Not here anymore because it's very easy to come here...it's very easy, you have even three hundred dollars you can come here to work. There's a lot of hiring, but it's not easy to live here.

- Raphael

The government of the Philippines estimates that in 2006 there were 45,795 Filipino workers deployed to Qatar (POEA, 2006). In that same year 60 percent (184,454) of all newly hired Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to all destinations were women, and the vast majority of them were described as 'service workers' (POEA, 2006). This categorization includes household or related workers; caregivers and caretakers; and medical workers (POEA, 2006). The bulk of the 123,688 male Filipinos deployed to all countries in that year worked in production: they were hired as construction or factory related workers, as engineers or related workers, or as hotel and restaurant workers (POEA, 2006).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the shift in the overall gender balance of OFWs to favour women is not mirrored in the Middle East. The ratio of male to female Filipinos in the Middle East is still strongly skewed towards males, with census data from the Philippines for 2004 showing that there were still less than half the number of females to males working in Qatar, even though regionally the gap has closed slightly (National Statistics Office, 2005). The historical preference of male workers in the Middle East has been due to demand for workers for the oil and gas, as well as construction industries (Parreñas, 2000). General fluctuations in the number of female OFWs in the Middle East over the past ten years can possibly be attributed to the strength of different national

economies; relationships and agreements procured between the Filipino government and foreign administrations; and sensational media reports of gender based violence in some countries (Barber, 2006 & 2002).

The gender and employment breakdown for Filipino workers in Qatar is not available, but the interviews conducted in this study did find all female respondents working in service occupations (domestic work, nannies, beauticians, and masseuses). However the men in this sample - with the exception of one architect and one welder - also worked in service related roles such as: mechanical service advisors; hair stylists; and lifeguards / swim instructors.

Before my wife didn't want me to go outside [of the country to work] , she wanted me to stay with her, but she realized that nothing happens, we'd always stay down...only six months work, then stop. It's very hard, it's better if I leave and go outside the country. - Raphael

While common threads weave through their stories, it is immediately apparent that the experiences of the respondents are diverse, and defy attempts at generalization. The individual circumstances leading to migration, characteristics of the individuals involved, the support systems at their disposal, their situations in terms of sponsors, spouses, other family members and employment, and many other variables all prohibit blanket statements and assumptions about the realities of living in a transnational nuclear family (Al-Ali et al., 2001; Al-Sharmani, 2006; Foner, 1997; Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004; Pries, 2004). This study however does identify some of the broad trends which distinguish the experiences of men from those of women.



### ***The Macro Level – International and State Structural Mechanisms***

As previously discussed, to place all of the initiative (or blame) for migration with the movers themselves is to ignore the larger forces of globalization, which inherently require cheap, mobile and gendered labour to meet needs of production and service delivery at optimal prices. The analysis of the ‘care deficit’ in the North creating ‘global care chains’ and the ‘international division of reproductive labour’ fall under the realm of macro scale triggers of migration (Hochschild, 2003; Parreñas, 2000; Yeates, 2004).

The level of government engagement in Filipino labour migration is evident in its recruitment of ‘suitable’ candidates; its contract procurement work and advertising of the Filipino labour force to foreign companies; and its role in actual deployment and the welfare of OFWs (Tyner, 2000 & 1996). The gendered nature of this regulation has already been discussed. These structural mechanisms include the adoption of a Bilateral Labour Agreement, which facilitates and promotes migration from the Philippines to Qatar.

National scale economic policies also filter into individual decisions to migrate. Examples of this include the decision of the Filipino government to orient production towards international markets as opposed to domestic demand: or the race by the Qatari government to develop the Liquefied Natural Gas resources sitting below the Persian Gulf. These macro forces intersect with and provide the conditions of everyday life at the micro-scale of individual and family choices; these imprecise boundaries lead to some repetition in the coming sections, as respondents describe the forces informing their decision-making.

As mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, Mahler and Pessar's (2001) framework 'Gendered Geographies of Power' provides an alternate lens for examining the interplay of agency and structure. This conceptualization situates individual agency in relation to *geographic scales*, *social location* and *power geometry* (Mahler & Pessar, 2001). These links to location are instructive in terms of the ways that race, gender and class effects are experienced differently in different geographic contexts (as in transnational migration) as well as at different scales (the body, the family, the community, the state). To relate the three-tiered scalar model with 'Gendered Geographies of Power', it is apparent that at the larger scale of whichever geographic location individuals are able to express little agency other than responding to policy or circumstance. To a certain extent this defines the range of options, although within this array the social positioning of an individual affects how vocal, active and effective they are in pursuing their interests.

#### **i. The Push to Migrate from the Philippines**

The Asian Development Bank (2004), reports that although economic growth has been moderate in the Philippines, it has not been sufficient to respond to a growing workforce, resulting in high unemployment. Nor does 'moderate economic growth' illuminate regional, ethnic, gender or class-based distribution of the benefits of economic development. As Hondagneu-Sotelo (1999) points out, "each country's migrant labour is racialized and gendered in particular ways and this labour demand changes over time" (p.572). Unsurprisingly these economic concerns based on internal labour demand were at the forefront for every person interviewed in this study.

There are differences between living in the Philippines and here [Qatar], because the salary here you cannot get from the Philippines. Of course they pay more than double. That's why I am sacrificing without my family here. Even if it's hard on me it's the only way to do it, and to pretend that you do not miss your family.

- Rey

It's because of poverty, that's why I came here.

- Bart

I came to work here [Qatar] because in the Philippines it's very hard to find a job. If you find a job, it's only six months that you work there, after they will get another employee because there are a lot of applicants now. We have, I think, almost 100 million in population in the Philippines now, it's very hard. Also we need to look for some job outside the country because the salary there is lower than here.

- Raphael

The United Nations cite an unemployment rate for youth aged 15-24 of 16.4 percent in the Philippines (UN, 2007), meanwhile the National Statistics Office of the Philippines state that as of July 2007 the unemployment rate for adults was just 7.9 percent, and the rate of underemployment was 22 percent (NSO, 2007). Regional data for the Philippines show some areas (notably the National Capital Region) with unemployment rates as high as 13 percent, and some areas with unemployment figures as low as three or four percent (NSO, 2007). Despite regional differences the national rate seems strangely low for a Less Developed Country (LDC).

This anomaly speaks to recent economic improvements, attributed by some to macro-economic reforms, as the International Monetary Fund reports that the unemployment rate of the Philippines hovered between 11 and 12 percent from the year 2000 to 2004 before beginning its drop to under 8 percent this past summer (IMF, 2007). Further explanation for the lower than expected unemployment rate in the Philippines

may lie with the number of Filipinos who have left the country to work overseas combined with reported stronger demands for labour internally, as well as lack of consistency in the collection of labour market statistics (NEDA, 2007).

The drop in unemployment can be put into perspective with real income based indicators: between 1990 and 2004 15.5 percent of the Filipino population lived on less than one dollar a day and 47.5 percent lived on less than two dollars a day (UNDP, 2006a). It is unlikely that many of the people living in extremely dire circumstances are able to access labour migration as a poverty alleviation strategy (Lan, 2003), but these statistics represent the severity of the economic situation in the Philippines and the general climate, which for many is geared towards survival and not much more.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita for Canada - a country where some live in poverty, many consider themselves to be middle class, and some live opulently - is \$31,263 (PPP) (UNDP, 2006a). This compares to a GDP per capita of \$4,614 (PPP) for the Philippines (UNPD, 2006a). While this does not mean that quality of life is necessarily almost seven times better in Canada, it is instructive as to the challenges Filipinos are facing. Given that the entire Gross Domestic Product for the Philippines is 84.6 billion US dollars, the country's external debt of 54.06 billion US dollars is staggering (UNDP, 2006a). Although the burden is decreasing, the UNDP (2006a) cites debt service as a percentage of GDP for the Philippines at 13.7 percent, or just over the contribution of the remittances sent home by migrant workers. Simply put, the government of the Philippines has a strong interest in maintaining the flow of this 'easy money' into the country.

Women are placed in contradictory positions over multiple scales in the process of migration. Within Filipino national discourse OFWs are hailed as the ‘heroes of the nation’ sacrificing for the good of the country: however the gendered perspective reveals that within the same national narrative female migrants are sometimes blamed or made to feel guilty for deserting their families (Parreñas, 2003). Although this view simplifies what in reality is a complex and dynamic dialogue between actors, it remains the case that as demand increases for the gendered care work that women are deemed to have intrinsic abilities to perform, - to the point where it is considered so ‘natural’ it warrants little or no compensation - the bind on women in the Philippines increases. The placement of migrant women performing domestic work in relation to the global care deficit has already been problematized, but it is within this view of the conflicting demands placed on Filipino women that we can finally see the real ‘push’ and ‘pull’ of migration.

## **ii. The Pull to Migrate to Qatar**

Oil and gas have made Qatar one of the world's faster growing and higher per-capita income countries - in 2006 per-capita income equalled that of the EU. (CIA World Factbook, 2007b)

The construction of several massive Liquid Nitrogen Gas trains (LNG trains) to exploit natural gas resources from under the Persian Gulf is the driving force behind the boom in the Qatari economy. With growth rates hovering between twenty and thirty five percent since 2003 there is little confusion about the need for workers in oil and gas, construction, and all of the service related industries spinning off from this rapid economic growth (Qatar National Bank, 2007).

The main [reason I am working in Doha] is because I earn much more than I earn in the Philippines, and also experience, it's a different style of work from the Philippines in here, so I can use it for other places I go, it's an opportunity to make much more from here, so that's the main [reason].

- Bart

This economic incentive was expressed by every single respondent.

As discussed, 'receiving' countries such as Qatar rely upon the procurement of cheap labour to perform the tasks that their nationals will not (Lobel, 2003). Through constructed notions of acceptable work for different genders, this demand affects men and women differently. Traditionally there have been more male OFWs in Qatar than females, and they occupy more visible spaces (construction as opposed to home-based work) which suggests greater risk of abuse of females as their work domain is often private, more intimate and isolated. The growing demand for care work is more keenly felt in other regions, but is a factor in the Middle East as well.

As dictated by the Qatari government, all foreign workers enter into two to four year contracts, which then can be renewed if both the sponsor and worker are amenable. Combined with the prohibitive expense of travelling to the Philippines, this means that most Filipinos working in Qatar visit their families once every two years. Several respondents commented on the difficulties of dealing with a sponsor that they were not happy with.

I'm planning to go back in the Philippines this July, if my company will permit me to go home. I hope they will because my mother was really sick.

- Stan

I am planning on going to visit [the Philippines] because, you know, I have finished [my] contract already, this coming month. Only to visit and come back, but maybe I'll find a job with a better salary here.

- Rey

Due to strict Qatari immigration policies, enforced by rules such as the sponsor's right to 'safe-keep' the passports of guest workers, virtually all of the respondents imagined they would at some point return to retire in the Philippines, although some were attempting to use their work in the Middle East as a springboard to other international destinations.

After ten years I will go to America...to Alaska [where he has a cousin living]...I like snow! It's much better than the heat here.

- Rey

I don't have a plan, but I won't be here for too long...I want to go to other countries, because you know when you are in life you have to go to the other countries to see the differences.

- Erwin

Although the Philippines does have a Bilateral Labour Agreement with Qatar, it is formulated around coordination of meeting the needs of Qatari employers (in terms of skill sets and numbers of workers) and protecting OFWs from human rights abuses in Qatar: citizenship is never an option (Go, 2006).

Of course this type of information – the regimented nature of labour migration to Qatar and the scant opportunities to visit home – is shared among networks of families, friends and communities. However, given the draw of regular work and better wages than one can gain in the Philippines these factors do not dissuade many Filipinos from migrating to work in Qatar.

While it appears that the process is not grassroots, but institutional in nature, there is strong evidence in this case study that there was a high degree of agency in all participants' exit strategies. Limited domestic choices, personal contacts with experience in the region, resources, as well as private and government recruiting efforts all informed peoples' decisions to seek work in Qatar. Other studies, such as the work of Gammage

(2004) in Haiti support this voice and agency (of women in particular) through the process of migration. As the following sections will demonstrate, institutional forces shaped the landscape, but individuals personally sought out the opportunities best suited to their needs and abilities.

### ***The Meso Level – Family and Community Networks***

Some authors claim that migration has outgrown the frame of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, basing this argument on the ‘routinization’ of migration; the familial and community networks surrounding these movements; and the ensuing changes to the social fabric of high migration communities (Asis, 2002). While none the less relevant, these themes do not replace the need to examine the broad forces (labour abundance and capital scarcity enticing people to areas with capital abundance and labour scarcity) which promote migration. An examination of these forces is important, but far from sufficient.

For some theorists the national scale factors – government policy, agencies of recruitment and deployment, etc – act as middle or ‘meso’ tiers between the macro scale international mediators of migration and the individual micro scale determinants (Tastsoglou & Dobrowolsky, 2006). Others distinguish the ‘meso’ scale as beyond the structural level theories, and consider the family, community and region in this intermediate tier (Hugo, 2002). For this paper, the meso scale will be taken as these regional, community and familial factors which promote or inhibit migration.

The question of the role of social networks in facilitating migration is of particular consequence. Many participants in this study described familial configurations involving



widely flung membership, and others with immediate family members living in Qatar as well.

My wife actually, she's working in Saudi Arabia, she works as a nurse, and she's been there for almost five years, and somewhere else in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Every two years she has some vacation for a month, and sometimes we see each other, I think only once in this five years.

- Stan

My brother before me, he's working as a serviceman in the United States Navy, and he has two children also, both girls and they are with his wife [in the United States], they have migrated to there a year ago. The eldest he is in Spain and next to him is in Mexico. So we are four brothers altogether.

- Stan

Over half of the participants in the current study had (currently or in the past) family members working overseas in addition to themselves.

In spite of distance, transnational ties and the shared experience of living out of one's home nation builds a support and communication system which facilitates chain migration, and ultimately maintains the familial unit, often in some reconfigured state (Asis et al., 2004; Chamberlain, 2005; Foner, 1997; Silvey, 2006; Spitzer, Neufeld, Harrison, Hughes & Stewart, 2003; Yeoh et al., 2005). Gammage (2004) instructs that social capital is essential to the process of migration as it facilitates the creation of migration patterns, binds people together in transnational relationships and allows people to maintain a sense of self and family. Adding to this Dahinden (2005) voices the importance of this social capital in migration as a pool of different kinds of resources which members of the transnational network use and rely upon.

These phenomena are clearly demonstrated by the respondents in this study as two of the participants are actually siblings, one having come first and assisted her sister

in the migration process. In addition, another woman has a sister working in Qatar, one more has a sister working in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and one mother has a son already working in Doha. She spoke specifically of how much the presence of at least one of her children in Doha eases her pain. There were several other mentions of the roles and power of family networks in acquiring work and providing support overseas.

I had an opportunity here, I grabbed it, and for my future for my children, because in the Philippines, I cannot give anything for my children, it's hard there. Here I can get them anything they want. She [my stepmother] helped me get the job here. - Marjorie

One of my sisters she's working here in Doha and the other's in the Philippines...I have two brothers and four sisters. - Nora

Heering et al. (2004) deepen this work through the assertion that males rely more heavily on a 'culture of migration' or the density of transnational relationships of a community or family than females do. The personal stories from the current study indicate that these women relied more upon social networks in terms of finding work than the men did, given that more of the women had other family members working in the country or the region. Of course it is worth reiterating that the scale and arbitrary selection of this sample do not permit generalizations based on these findings.

Salaff (2000) and other researchers have concluded that women do more of the relationship and kin maintenance 'work' in transnational networks<sup>2</sup>. In the current study it was not possible to gather information on the regional networks of friends, neighbours or more extended family of the participants in the Philippines, and whether the men or the women sampled are more engaged in maintaining these relationships. In hindsight, during the research design I would have incorporated questions to uncover this kind of

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<sup>2</sup> Also see Alicea, 2000.

information; however the nature of the approach taken precludes that some general thematic areas were predetermined and others arose from the analysis of the interviews.

As mentioned in the second chapter, other studies have indicated that the degree of discrimination and hostility in the ‘host’ environment is strongly positively correlated to the creation and maintenance of tight transnational networks (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005). The findings presented later on in this chapter regarding the incidence of discrimination experienced by respondents in this study are indicative of strong transnational ties between families and communities in the Philippines and Qatar. This is again claimed to be more prevalent in males than females, which the present study can neither confirm nor deny. The excerpt below demonstrates the potential risks and jeopardy that migrants face, and the potential of transnational networks in mediating those risks.

Before when I was working at the Sheraton there was one lady who came here being told she was going to work as a private tutor for this child, she’s a teacher back in the Philippines. And when she got here she’s not, she’s a housemaid. And she lives in one room without a lock, without light, without air-conditioning. So I wanted to help her, my friend also helped her to come, but she didn’t know that her situation would be like that. So what she did, she pulled her out from [the home of] the sponsor and put her in my room, for awhile. And she’s always crying because the sponsor wants to get her back. So nobody....they hadn’t done her visa and if the visa is not done then you should leave the country in about week, but the sponsor didn’t give her any money, so how can she go home? So I did some fundraising with some other Filipinos, to help her get home.

- Angela

### ***The Micro Level – Personal Migration experiences***

As mentioned all of the participants in this study expressed their agency in the decision to migrate. None of the respondents felt that they had been coerced, and that the ‘choice’ to work overseas had been their own. Despite this their narratives show high degrees of personal sacrifice for their loved ones in the process of decision making. The theme of self-sacrifice resonates strongly throughout this paper through the words of everyone who participated in this study.

The money is for education for my brothers, and for my family, because my family is only farmers, my parents is only farmers, I had to give them support also. - Rey

I tell my children ‘I’m here to work for you, for all of you, for your future, please finish your studies, I am sacrificing because I love you all’ - Meggy

It’s too difficult, that’s why I told my friends, on this day I don’t know if I’ll go straight to Qatar or I’ll go back and stay in the Philippines, because my son told me before, ‘you’ll go back? You’ll leave me again? How long will you stay there? Don’t leave me, don’t leave me’. That’s why it’s very hard. - Raphael

The works of Asis (2002) and Purwani-Williams (2005) add texture to this situation with the assertion that for women migrants working overseas is simultaneously an act of sacrifice as well as an experience serving their personal interests. This is demonstrated by some of the women in this study as they discuss the sense of adventure which led them to work overseas, or the positive feelings associated with earning their own money. However for many Filipino women “the personal is also the family” and the majority of both male and female respondents in this study seem to reflect this attitude in their actions more than any self-serving instincts (Asis, 2002, p. 74).

Some of these perspectives on choice are echoed in Naila Kabeer's (1999) assertion that choice only exists in the presence of more than one viable option, which numerous respondents in this study felt was not the case in their decision to work overseas.

Actually they forced me [Laughs]...my brother, my sister, my parents and my wife....strongly encouraged me to come [laughs again] - Bart

It's very difficult to be without your family like this, very hard, sometimes you just want to go home, but you cannot. It's very lonely like that. - Erwin

There's nothing I can do, so I will stay. - Bart

Despite the positive assertions that each parent working in Doha had made their own decision to come, the quotes below show the traditional gender stereotypes implying the asking of permission on the part of the female (the one female in the study who considers herself to be married) and the taking of the decision and then the confirmation after the fact on the part of the male.

At first no [her husband didn't support her decision to go to Qatar] but I said that I had an opportunity, and that I want it. He said okay. - Marjorie

Actually the decision [to work overseas] is mine, I confirmed it with her [my wife] that I'll be going. Actually in the year 2000 she left first [to work in Saudi Arabia], then she promised that she'll come back after a year, and then the year comes again. She made this promise and she broke it. So I decided to go as well. - Stan

As will be seen, this is supported in the literature and speaks to the enduring nature of certain gendered ideologies associated with transnational migration (Craig, 2006; Dreby, 2006).

The respondents in this study had between one and five children living in the Philippines, and on average women had one more child than men did. Unsurprisingly the need for money to support and provide for these children was the most common theme with respect to reasons for migration.

We need to save the money for the future of my children and also to buy our own house, small land, to live like a standard living. Not like before we are in the very worst situation sometimes, I don't have anything money to buy bread for them so I need to go to somewhere else to look for a job to earn money for them.

- Bart

I want most to earn some money for my kids, I can work a lot. After two years I'll return to visit.

- Marjorie

You know, [at] this time, we have a lot of financial problems...a job in the Philippines is not enough to support your family. We need my earnings to build a house and for education for my child.

- Rey

Actually it's really our nature [on why he chose to work overseas]. I mean our government really can't really give us a high standard of living, at least here we can feed our children, most of us don't have this option in the Philippines so we are forced to go overseas and work for better life, to be able to feed our children.

- Stan

All of the twelve participants in this study had completed high school and seven had completed further training at a college, vocational institute or university. These findings aptly demonstrate both the general level of education in the Philippines - in 2002 30 percent of the tertiary school aged population were enrolled, 34 percent of women and 26 percent of men – as well as the above average educational attainment of migrants (International Labour Organization, 2002). Remembering back to the discussion of the

unemployment rate in the Philippines, the Philippine Information Agency maintains that the education system needs to be more responsive to the job market; there are jobs, but despite the highly educated Filipino workforce the graduates lack the skills needed to fill available positions (Philippine Information Agency, 2007). It seems likely that frustration over unmet expectations arising from greater education with a lack of corresponding employment opportunities or status is one of the factors pushing Filipinos to seek overseas work.

The individuals who participated in this study have different specific motivations which led them to Qatar. Within the broad picture of primary factors: the lack of employment opportunities - perhaps primarily in sectors in which Filipino graduates are trained - compounded by greater education and expectations of better employment; the rising cost of living; a need to provide for families; and the costs associated with education and insufficient wages in the Philippines, lie more individual motivators. These ranged from opportunities for adventure;

Why come here? To come here is just because a friend of mine is working here. I never planned on coming here. It's just, my friend said 'come on, try it, try to work in Doha, it's nice, it's a quiet place'. And I just said okay, why not come and see. But I just never thought I'd be here all this time. To start it was just to try it.

- Angela

to the loss of loved ones or loss of employment.

Before coming I was working in the Philippines in electronics and suddenly they shut down the electronics [plant] and I was unemployed. It is very difficult to find a good job with a good salary. At that time I was single.

- Nora

You know I have to support them all...my brothers and most especially my kids. I am supporting my two brothers until now...it's because my parents have both passed away, so it was my

decision. I have to support them all, to finish their studies, because in this time now it's very difficult without finishing your studies, of course you cannot find easily a job. - Rey

Regardless of original intentions, at the time of interviewing all respondents felt that their income was necessary not only to meet basic daily living expenses for their families, but also to earn some money to save for the education of their children, to start small businesses, for their retirement, or for home construction or renovation. Half of the men, compared to only 15 percent of the women, stated that they needed some of the money to start a business when they returned to the Philippines.

If I can save money, I plan to make a little business for my family. - Raphael

I'm planning to have a business, I'm looking to open up a restaurant, because my mother, she cooks very well...and I love food! I want to be a chef too. - Erwin

This is of particular interest to the debate over the value of migration to the sending country as migrants return to their home countries and stimulate domestic enterprise with the proceeds of their overseas work – be this through economic resources garnered abroad or ideas, attitudes and abilities (Kapur, 2005; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Levitt, 2001; Maimbo & Ratha, 2005; Vertovec, 2001). As opposed to fuelling false assumption of the productive orientation of men's activities and the consumptive orientation of women's, this finding is tempered by the fact that prior to migration 30 percent of the women already had small businesses while none of the men did. The experiences of these twelve men and women provide an interesting jumping off point, as a pilot for further studies on these issues.

Gender differences emerged in decisions to migrate both based upon contexts of exit from the Philippines, and expectations for migration. All of the six males involved



in this study – save one who was eager to return to the Philippines to marry his girlfriend – were already married to the mothers of their children. This contrasts starkly with the marital status of the women in the sample: one woman of the six considers herself married to the father of one of her children; and five women are estranged (one was widowed) from their husbands and would be divorced if it were an option in the Philippines.

I guess I'm a single parent [laughs].

- Nora

The very first time [I came to work in Doha] was in 1987, long time isn't it! [Laughs]. I was single at that time. I stayed like three years, then I got married, then I came back here. - Angela

Because of, you know, I find more money for my children, because I don't have a husband.

- Nelly

Chant (1997) discusses the paucity of women-headed households in the Philippines, stating that the absence of legal divorce and associated conservative social moorings in this strongly Catholic country prompt couples to stay together even if the marriage is not working. Conditions of female poverty and vulnerability certainly exist in the Philippines (among both married and single women), but to avoid the social stigma of being a single mother, women will often reside with parents or other kin to hide their status as 'marginal (m)Others' (Chant, 1997, p. 3). Incidence of families headed by females is increasing in the Philippines, and additional economic opportunities for women through migration may well be a factor in this growth. The presence of five out of six (essentially) single mothers in this small sample bears further discussion.

The obvious explanation is that overseas work provides an escape route for women in troubled relationships, as suggested in the literature review (Parreñas, 2005a).

This would seem to be exceptionally poignant given the impossibility of divorce in the Philippines. When expressing their rationale for going to work overseas, only one woman stated the need to get away from an abusive relationship.

The thing is, after a few months he wants me to go home, he says he's not feeling well and...blah, blah, blah...all those reasons, but he just doesn't want me to work here. So then I go home, and he doesn't let me come back. That was 1994. Then I set up a business...like a small factory...making shoes. But the marriage is not working. He beat me...I was a battered wife, he is beating the kids and I had been pregnant again...by then I had two kids. He keeps beating me, beating the children, until finally in July 1997, I said that's it, I cannot take it anymore. You know I have that business, and he beats me, just throwing all the things, whatever he can pick up he would throw it at me. So my sister said 'make a decision'. I really excelled at that business with shoes, as I said, I had 30 workers, but I just left it. That's why I smoke [Laughs]. So in October 1997 I just decided to come back here [to Doha]. I left my kids with my sister, and now they are okay, they have a better life.

- Angela

The prevalence of single mothers in this study mirrors that of Parreñas in her 2005 study, but contrasts her 2001 work in Rome and Los Angeles which found more married than single Filipino women working overseas. All of the single mothers in the present study reported that there was virtually no contact between themselves and the fathers of their children. In some cases this was a comfortable situation, but for others there was fear that their 'ex' husbands would try to contact their children, take them away, or harm themselves or their children.

Despite the attraction of working in Qatar and the high hopes for solving financial woes some respondents felt disappointed or disillusioned with their actual experience working overseas.

Those plans I made for my family, is just to have some savings, so whenever we get old and are not able to work, we will be able to stay together. That's the reason, but what I'm earning,

actually I'm not really earning, just maintaining the daily consumption of my family. I'm not earning really.

- Stan

It's bad for me [working in Doha] because I'm away from my family. It seems like I'm in a jail...nobody can visit you, you cannot come to their place, so you know even we have fun here, go to some restaurant, it's different than when you have your whole family together. So it's bad for me, but I don't have any choice.

- Bart

My feelings is difficult to explain, most especially this summer, it's very hot, and then you are far away from your family, your wife, only the time you can say to your family, you have to call by telephone, how's your day, how's your family this time, by only sharing information. I am happy to work here also but still, the salary, maybe it's not enough to support completely my family.

That's why until now I am looking for bigger salary.

- Rey

These comments do not accurately portray the entire sample, as many were satisfied with the amount of money they were sending home, and generally content with their lives in Doha. Some participants in the study felt lucky to be in the positions they were, aware that much about their experience was dependent on the sponsor, who is in a position of power, and can easily have a worker deported if they are unsatisfied with the relationship.

It's not so bad, I'm very lucky compared to others. Doha is a place where the pay is not so bad if you're lucky with your sponsor, the thing here works through sponsorship. If you're not happy, if you want to work somewhere else you can't if your sponsor doesn't want you to go. It's like, it's a slavery. I'm just lucky because my boss is okay. He's nice, nice to work with.

- Angela

It's good here. I can earn money, that's why I came here.

- Nora

Again this highlights more of the variability of the experience based on a range of factors, as well as a gendered division: in terms of salaries the women were generally more satisfied with their experience than men were.

This last point is explicable due to the fact that in this sample the women were found to be earning more than the men on average. As will be discussed in the chapter on remittances, this greater earning power is linked to the fact that the women had generally been living in Qatar for longer, so had built strong working relationships and climbed in their fields. Educational attainment did not seem to be a factor in the income discrepancy, as a slightly greater proportion of the males in the study had achieved a university / college / vocational level of education than the women.

It can perhaps be argued that the ability to earn an impressive income overseas (by home standards and compared to their male counterparts) permits women to assume greater financial independence and economic empowerment. In reality such is the personal and fluid nature of empowerment, that some of the women interviewed may have found working in Doha to be an empowering experience, as the accomplishment of providing for parents, siblings and children may invoke; whereas others may present it as a disempowering experience, being subjected to the whims of employers and greater restrictions on their personal freedoms in the Middle East. While measuring the extent or presence of women's empowerment upon labour migration is beyond the scope of the present discussion, it is possible to draw out some preliminary hypotheses.

Taking access to resources as a primary indicator of empowerment, the earnings won by women in this study would indicate they have gained a measure of empowerment through their migration. While access to resources is extremely important, it is but one element of in Naila Kabeer's (1999) framework to measure empowerment, followed by agency and outcomes, which are also required to assess a transformative difference in a person's life. The women in the study ultimately made the decisions about how much

money was sent to different family members; to varying degrees directing how it was to be spent. Societal and family pressures may have made them feel that they were required to remit, but there is still a level of agency in these actions, as women indicated it was their decision to work overseas in the first place. In addition, half of the female respondents described new relationships in Qatar, which contained elements of precariousness due to societal norms and laws, but do speak of greater freedom and choice on the part of this group of women.

The final element of empowerment discussed by Naila Kabeer (1999) is that of outcomes. Two women in particular stand out in this regard, both Angela and Penn had been working Qatar on and off for many years, and both expressed considerable pride in the barriers they had overcome and the accomplishments associated with their overseas work. These included running one's own business, putting their children through school, and reaching levels in their career where they could choose their circumstances. Based on this triad of factors to measure empowerment, my preliminary impulse is that the women in this study have gained a degree of empowerment through the experience of transnational migration. This inkling is tempered by the tears of one respondent as she described the pain of being away from her nine month-old; perhaps indicating that alongside temporal changes in migratory experiences are transformations in one's personal sense of empowerment<sup>3</sup>.

Apart from the participant's satisfaction (or lack thereof) with the amount of money they were earning, was the issue of discrimination, and how they felt they were being treated living in a small, extremely rich, socially conservative country where the

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<sup>3</sup> To explore the issues involved in women's potential empowerment through migration see Alicea, 2000; Barber, 2002 & 2000; Bauer & Thompson, 2004; Foner, 1997; Gamburd, 2000; Ghazal-Read, 2004; Kibria, 1990; Mahler 1999; Pessar & Mahler, 2003; Ryan, 2002; and Zontini 2004.

people granted citizenship are a small homogenous group from one ethnicity. As mentioned, the Middle East is often not the most hospitable and welcoming of destinations, environmentally nor socially.

I have been very lucky, all of my employers either part time or full time they have been very very good to me. But the first two years I was not lucky. I was with this Arabic family, and you know the Arabic family can be very difficult. In two years I can't talk to anybody, even the lady, and I can't go outside, just inside the house...in two years. They said, don't talk to anybody, always she remind me that she is the lady. And I'm working from 7 o'clock until 12 [midnight] or 11...or during Ramadan if they are having a party, sometimes until 2 o'clock. And my salary is only 150 [dollars]. Even the telephone, they said 'you cannot touch the telephone'. Just one or two times they allowed me to call and my family sometimes called. They did not allow me to lock or even close the door [to my room] even I sleep [with it] open, because if you lock the door they think that you are doing something....they are very, like jealousy.

- Nora

More men than women spoke directly of discrimination or 'cultural problems' – mostly described as nationals "looking at you very small" (Nora). Literature confirms voices from this study implying that males feel more strongly the relative loss of status and injustice of nationality determining which types of work one can do and how much one will be paid for it (Goldring, 2001; Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Jones-Correa, 2000).

Even if you know that you are better than them [at your work] they will look very low at you because of your nationality and things like that. And I think that it's also because of the religion, there's something especially in Arab countries. But, you know, I'm just here to work, to get some money.

- Erwin

Really my work is as a service advisor. It's really different from my work as a service advisor in the Philippines because I'm dealing with lots of nationalities, with different mentalities.

Hmm...so it's really some Qatar nationals, or Qatar citizens, are making lots of problems. Some discrimination, that stuff. Really they are treating us...I don't know how to explain that...it's different. Deep in my heart, really it can be hard to find a word to show, who I am and how they treat us, but sometimes I've heard some words that are very hurtful, about us. - Stan

Yes, [I have been discriminated against] from salary...discrimination for nationality. If you are Filipino, and he is Lebanese, have same work, Lebanese have much greater salary than yours. Filipino, Sri Lanka, India....the Filipino will have a little bit higher than Sri Lankan and Indian....this is discrimination. - Bart

In Doha, for the most part people of certain races do certain jobs, inhabit particular spaces, and are treated in a particular manner based on race, class and gender; while others co-exist in the same city occupying different spaces, doing different types of jobs, and living very different existences. As discussed in the literature review, Saskia Sassen's (2003) depiction of the 'survival circuits' servicing global cities aptly suggests the hierarchical and symbiotic relationships between people sharing the Doha urban environment.

Filipinos make a little bit more than Sri Lankan, then Bangladeshi, Nepali, China...umm, I don't know about Thailand, maybe. - Bart

As for me, here in Qatar it's okay, but it depends on the companies if they treat Filipinos in a good way or um, if there are changes with the salary, or if they act in a way that's not fair. - Raphael

[There are] lots of rules here, it's different from my country...I need to adjust, it's a big adjustment. - Bart

Both men and women spoke of strict rules, several saying that it felt like jail, others just expressing what they felt to be limits to their personal freedoms.

First time I'm scared here because [it's a] new place, I had to find another friend, because they are not allowed here...so many things are not allowed here. But I feel comfortable now.

- Marjorie

Every year you have to have a test [a pregnancy test], like for us we are under the FNB [food and beverage section], you know the person to person contact, so we should have a medical test every year...a yearly medical to check everything, even the pregnancy test, HIV test, all these things.

- Angela

I'm coming [to the Philippines] in October, because rules and regulations in my company, in two years contract he gives 42 days of vacation. In one year you get 21 days, but your ticket back and forth is yours [you must pay for it], not the company.

- Rey

No, you cannot get a boyfriend, if you have a man friend like that...it's not easy they said. There will be too much trouble they said.

- Marjorie

Of course each experience is unique, but despite the high occurrence of discrimination (eight out of twelve respondents indicated that they had experienced it in some form) all of the participants (except two new arrivals) had exceeded the amount of time they had originally planned on spending working in Doha. This phenomenon indicates either the absolute necessity for their labour; potential amelioration of the situation as they learned to navigate in their new environment; or the lack of other feasible options.

Several critical points emerge from these findings and the discussion of the contexts of migration of the participants in this study. One quickly surmises that there is a great deal of variability in the experiences of these twelve people. Based upon exit



strategies, family circumstances, profession or trade, sponsor, length of time overseas and gender, people have varied experiences living in transnational nuclear families. Broad commonalities in the findings from this study are the economic need and incentive to undertake overseas work, primarily to benefit their families and their children in particular; the prevalence of women in failed relationships who are working overseas; mixed feelings over their time in Qatar with respect to earnings, treatment by Qatari citizens and employers and general satisfaction; and feeling in control of their decision to begin working overseas but then undertaking this work for longer than they expected to. This last point is coloured with a general feeling of choice – with a lack of viable options – which plays into but does not eliminate the potential for women’s empowerment through the migration process, which I hypothesize seems likely for certain members of this case study.

The interviews undertaken in this study demonstrate the importance of transnational networks as support systems through the process of migration. The high incidence of family members living nearby, particularly for women, supports claims that women cultivate and make use of these networks more than men do. In all of these people’s stories what stands out is the high degree of personal sacrifice alongside agency, adaptability and flexibility which allow them to make a difficult situation work to their advantage.

Because I don’t have experience I plan [to be working in Doha] five to seven years, I don’t have experience, I don’t know what will happen here. And also, my main reason is to earn much money to bring to my place, but later on, my first three months it was really bad, I want to go home, I want to go, but later on I adjust, but it’s neat, my family they need more of my salary. There’s nothing I can do, so I will stay.

- Bart

## **Chapter 6 Transnational Parenting**

Even though I'm here far from you, I'll always love you.

- Meggy

This study employs a transnational perspective to explore the ability of Filipino mothers and fathers to maintain and foster relationships with the children they have left behind in the Philippines. Through comparisons between the findings of the interviews conducted in this study and relevant literature, this chapter will explore how transnational parents keep in touch with their children and discuss some of the implications of this long distance caregiving. The impacts on the children living in these situations are examined in more detail in the eighth chapter of this thesis.

Beginning with an exploration of the impact of new communication technologies on these relationships, this chapter goes on to examine role of the other parent or caregiver in the long distance relationships that people maintain with their children. These topics, as well as the proceeding ones will all be analyzed through a gendered lens. The second half of the chapter delves into some of the struggles involved in parenting transnationally: including the feeling of a 'gap' that some parents experience; the reconfiguration or re-framing of relationships; the economic focus that parents use to express their love for their children; and potential explanations for similarities in behaviour between males and females in the sample.

The first broad revelation is that the proliferation of affordable new communication technologies has increased the ability of parents to know what's going on and be involved in their child's lives in a day-to-day capacity. This greater ability to participate in transnational networks is generally considered to be a very positive change.

It is very different now...before I would wait one month for letters...then hear what they were doing before that. Now I get nervous when the phone rings because I'm afraid it's a problem, or they need something.

- Penn

This statement highlights both the benefits of feeling closer to family through instant communication discussed by Vertovec (2004), as well as the potential for increased pressure on the migrant, who may face increased requests for money or just the fear of receiving bad news (Horst, 2006). While both views were expressed, the participants in this study generally focused on the benefits these technologies brought to their lives.

Family communication is good...I text message with my wife and my son...sometimes call, sometimes email.

- Rey

Sometimes my daughter, is just sending me some text messages which are not really, you know [serious], just jokes and things like that, that's how we do it [keep in touch]

- Angela

Sometimes we use the webcam...you can see your children, your wife...even your dog maybe [laughs]

- Pedro

Whereas in the past people experienced a true time gap and disconnect from the daily lives of their loved ones, this study suggests that the widespread availability of mobile phones, and access to the internet through cafes, have enabled people to remain in day to day contact with family living in geographically disparate regions, bringing the concept of simultaneity to the fore. The long weeks and months of waiting for letters with news of loved ones has given way to real time interaction with webcams, digital videos, pictures, internet phones, text messaging and of course mobile phone calls. As various authors have argued, these improvements in the 'mechanics' of transnationalism

do not confer that it is any way a new phenomenon (Foner, 1997; Fouron & Glick Schiller, 2001; Portes, 2003; Portes et al., 2002), but they do permit people living in geographically distant places to remain much more involved in each others' lives in a day to sense.

In this study gender differences in the adoption of these technologies seemed to be negligible. This contradicts both studies which show women to less likely to use the internet (Chen et al., 2002), as well as studies which indicate that women use information communication technologies (ICTs) more due to their roles as the 'family glue' (Boneva & Kraut, 2002). Every person interviewed in this study had their own mobile phone, and for the most part some member of their family at home did as well, although in a few cases those in the Philippines relied on a landline.

With respect to the frequency of contact with their children and duration of calls, there were no noticeable variations between mothers and fathers. Almost every respondent (irrespective of gender) said they spoke to their children at least once a week, often built into their routine at a set time on their one day off. This is consistent with Dreby's (2006) study of Mexican transnational mothers and fathers, but contradicts Parreñas' (2005a) work in the Philippines which maintains that "migrant fathers rarely communicate with their children" (p.69). In the current study, internet phone was preferred due to the cost (although it was more difficult to access), but some spoke on their mobile phones, while others used them mostly for text messaging, which sometimes put them in contact with loved ones multiple times over the course of a day.

Sometimes now I speak for 6 minutes, it depends, sometimes I speak for 20 minutes, 30 minutes, if I'm using the internet phone....from mobile to mobile it's too expensive. - Raphael

Every Friday I call them in the Philippines, or use the internet, I can see my wife and my child...it's a little complicated [Laughs].

- Rey

I call twice a week, and they send me a picture on the computer, that's how I communicate with them.

- Marjorie

[I use internet phone and webcam] often, but it's very hard, because it's far and it's so hot to walk...if the weather were okay I'd go almost every Monday, but in this terrible season I can't.

- Bart

The postage system was described as very expensive and unreliable, so when gifts were sent home it was almost exclusively done through friends or neighbours travelling back to the Philippines. The ability to rely on neighbours from home to transport gifts is indicative of the density of the network of Filipinos migrants working in Qatar. Several respondents commented on the general prevalence of migration from their town or region.

My kids always ask for something....it's like I have so many neighbours here in Doha, neighbours from back home, so if they know that someone is coming, my daughter will call me, say 'oh, I know this one is coming, I need this and this and that'.

- Angela

While these mechanisms of transnational networks are not called upon as frequently as cell phone or internet use, they are nonetheless powerful tools which bind people together across geographical distance. Researchers have found that transnational activities flourish in areas where there is a large number of immigrants from the same community or geographical area, as the opportunities to hear news, send goods or letters with other travellers, or reminisce about what sometimes become glorified homelands are multiplied (Levitt, 2001; Portes, 2003). This phenomenon will be of import to the discussion of

social remittances in the following chapter. Thus far in this sample no blatant gender differences in the frequency or methods used to maintain parental / child transnational relationships have been uncovered.

Similarly, the nature of the conversations described by the respondents showed little difference topically across gender lines – either of the parent or the child. General themes discussed were health, wellbeing, activities, schoolwork, and other family members.

[We talk about]...their behaviour, they have to be good, nice to their mother, grandmother and aunties, what are they doing, mostly what are they playing and also of course their studies....it's important.

- Bart

'How's your day?', 'are you okay there?', and 'I miss you', 'study hard' I say to my son, and 'take care of your sister'

- Marjorie

Then I ask, 'how about your studies?', then he asks me 'daddy, I need a game boy, I need this, I need that [laughs]' he's always asking for toys. And sometimes he asks me, 'why can't you come back home?' I say, 'because I'm busy, because I'm working here, but soon I will go home' he tells me okay, where's the ticket, I'll go to Doha...sometimes he jokes.

- Rey

The lack of variation found in transnational mothering and fathering – in terms of frequency and nature of contact – exhibited in this study supports Dreby's (2006) work with Mexican parents living in the United States. However these findings are quite surprising, and will be further analyzed in the latter half of this chapter to consider possible explanatory factors for this unexpected result.

Based on the interviews conducted in this study, it appears that the developmental stage of a child strongly affects their ability to understand the situation, or build a

relationship with a parent who is not geographically present. Four of the mothers and three of the fathers in this sample had left the Philippines when their child (or in some cases multiple children as they visited and left again) was less than two years old, including one man who had yet to meet his child, as he left when his girlfriend was one month pregnant. The average age of children on departure for females is five years old (which is skewed by one woman, who left several children when they were almost in their twenties), and two years old for males.

I'm just calling and 'hello baby' [to the four month old daughter he has yet to meet] ....I'm always asking her [his partner] to put the phone near so that she [the baby] can hear my voice.

- Erwin

When I left he is only one year old, it [developing a strong relationship] didn't happen with us.

- Nora

She [my three year old daughter] says to me, 'how are you papa? Please come now. I need you' she speaks very simply.

- Pedro

When a child is very young the other parent or caregiver has a larger role to play than is normally the case in helping her / him understand why their mother or father isn't with them. This supports the work of Parreñas (2005a) and Dreby (2006), which describe the importance of the mediating role of the other parent or caregiver.

The strength of our relationship [with my kids] of course, depends too much upon my wife...through communication only, through telephone, but um, of course I want to hear them also, even though they are not very big [3 and 5 years old]. I feel close, but I miss them also.

- Pedro

Apart from when the children were too young to communicate by phone or understand where their mother or father was, there was one mother who communicated almost

entirely with her mother, as opposed to directly with her children. Her children range from 16 to 29 years of age, and she felt that she got very accurate information and was able to learn exactly what was going on with her children by using her mother as an intermediary.

In general parents worked very hard to make their children understand why they were not with them. As important and valid as this is, until a child reaches a somewhat advanced stage of development the idea of sacrifice and the need which prompted their parent to go overseas may not make sense to them, nor be emotionally acceptable.

I talk to them always, if I'm far, if I'm not there, 'be good' I say, and 'I'll be back as soon as I can'. Sometimes if they are angry at me because I'm not there, it's hard for me too. 'I need to sacrifice for your future I say', okay, my son can understand me, but my daughter not yet. Maybe after two years she's five years old and then she can understand me. My husband tries to explain it to my kids too.

- Marjorie

[I am] very excited to visit, even my daughter she told me 'please come back, please come back now', 'I miss you!'

- Rey

We talk about]... her studies, you know, I try, I have to [make her] understand why I'm here, you know, and why I'm doing this, all about how I'm doing this for them.

- Angela

Parents expressed their love for their children, listened to the challenges their children face, and tried to offer advice, but they never discussed their own problems with their children.

As for my problem I don't want to tell. I'm always asking about what's happening there, is there any problem, their life, what's happening....but we're always okay here [laughs].

- Nelly



I don't talk about my problems because I don't want them to worry. - Angela

I give them advice....study hard, don't get a boyfriend....I'm always praying, all the time  
- Meggy

Mostly [they tell me about problems] I am the only one working and they think that I am a rich man. - Bart

Despite communication issues based on age of the child, or sharing of the struggles of parents most parents expressed their belief that they have very strong relationships with their children.

We're very close...my relationship with my kids, I know that even though I'm away from them, we're still in touch, it's really close...because I try to explain to them, like with my daughter, I keep on telling her, look, there are just the three of us now, you're the big sister, that's your little brother. You know, when my son, he still didn't know how to go to the bathroom alone, it was my daughter who was helping him, cleaning him up...she is the one doing that for my son. I let them grow up, like really close, because I said, 'nobody will help us [it's] just the three of us, and you are the big sister, you must act like a big sister to your brother', and I keep on telling them don't fight. - Angela

It is a strong relationship, before when he was two months I was the one to take care of him because I didn't have work and my wife was working,...from two months to eight months I was the one to take care of my son, that's why I know. That's why I miss him too much. - Raphael

During my visit in the Philippines both of them [my two kids] are very close to me, because of course they know I'm their father, and it's a long time with nothing...every time they are jumping on me, hugging me. Only that time, because you know during the visit in the Philippines both of

them are really happy to see you....even when you're sleeping both of them are climbing around on you.

- Pedro

### ***Difficulties and Challenges – The Gap***

Numerous parents expressed their difficulty coping with the situation, although those emotions were expressed less by mothers and fathers who had been overseas for longer periods of time. Those who had recently arrived (within the last year) spoke the most frequently and with the most passion about how hard it was to be separated from their children and their families.

Sometimes I get lonely, being able to get to sleep is very hard, even sometimes I work until 8 o'clock and don't sleep until 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock...I can't sleep...because it's very hard when you are far from each other.

- Raphael

Sometimes if I'm talking to them on my mobile, I'm also crying.

- Marjorie

It's very hard because it's very far....you feel every time homesick...you don't have your people....sometimes I take medicine, even if I don't feel any fever or headache

- Raphael

The first time I left I was sad and lonely, every day I would leave my work and cry. The second time, it's good, now on the third time its okay, I'm just here for my family.

- Rey

Parreñas (2005a) indicates that it is more likely the children of migrant mothers to discuss feelings of abandonment – based on prescribed roles of mothering – and that children of migrant fathers speak more of 'the gap' or feelings of embarrassment or unease around their fathers. These findings cannot be strongly supported or rebutted based on the data gathered in the current study. As Erwin expresses, for him the pain of separation is

strongly linked to what those connections were like and the strength of particular relationships prior to migration.

It depends on the family, on how close the family is. I was really close to my brother, he's my best friend. I have no other friends, but him. He's always sending me text messages that he misses me, and that we should be going out together. That's why sometimes when I get a message from him I don't like to read it, because it really affects me. - Erwin

Aside from the pain of separation, some parents felt a lack of caring or respect from their children. Notably the following quote comes from the only parent in the study whose partner was working overseas as well, leaving the children entirely with extended family.

I usually ask them if they miss me. I tell them I love them so much, but my children, I don't know if they appreciate it, they're really very young, and I feel that they are very far from me. Even though...I don't know...they're not with me, then I make a phone call, and they just want to play, they don't want to talk with me. - Stan

It's really very hard for me to explain the things I feel. I really miss them so much. But it's them, they don't respect me the way that it should be. I mean, I feel that they don't miss me. I don't know if it's their age, or that they don't know me now....she [his wife] tells me that every time she goes my children say I love you [to my wife]...they've never told me that...and I don't know. I really love them. There's a gap between me and my children. - Stan

In her work with Filipino children of migrant parents Parreñas (2003) found that in families where both parents had migrated more responsibility landed on the children left behind, especially female siblings<sup>4</sup>.

A more common dynamic in the current study was the description of a different type of relationship people shared with their children. They described definite closeness,

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<sup>4</sup> Also see Valenzuela, 1999.

but not in a traditional parent / child way of interacting. These experiences resonate with Devasahayam, Huang and Yeoh's (2004) discussion of the transformations of transnational families as "migrant women and their family members define and negotiate family ideals, gender identities and family relationships" in response to the challenges and opportunities of living apart from each other (p.138). Some participants in this study discussed this in terms of other family members acting as surrogate mothers or fathers, or solely in terms of their own absence.

So that you know what's happening, my daughter, since when she grew up, she was without me, she was one year eight months [when I left]... I leave [her with] my mom, so when we saw her again, she's already five years old, so me and my daughter, we're not really like I am her mom, you know, so that's why the relationship is only like sisters. Like my son now, he's only nine months, and I came back here, so how's he....how can he feel like I'm his mom? Like they know that I'm their mom, but the feeling, the feeling, is different because they've grown up without me since they are young. So for me it's more like we are sisters, or just like friends.

- Nelly

We're very close....They talk to me like their playmates, they don't treat me like their father. They ask me what I'm doing, if I've eaten already, even if I don't ask them if they got a star [school reward] they just tell me, they tell me everything.

- Bart

Everything is open for me - if she has a boyfriend, if she has a problem - I'm a sister....no mother, no mother! [Laughs]

- Nelly

These statements indicate parents seeking out ways of perceiving and understanding their relationships with their children when they seem to stray from traditional norms. As mentioned in the literature review, Asis et al. (2004) have used the term 'relativising' to

explain this condition whereby individuals mediate everyday realities through different lenses to make sense of their experiences.

An extremely common feature of the interviews was that all parents who had children old enough (basically able to speak) were dealing with their requests for toys, gifts, costumes, etc. Every respondent stated that they showed their love and support for their children financially, sometimes vocalizing other forms of care as well, but not always. The more common response was for parents to agree to their children's requests for toys and presents. Lan (2003) asserts that both remittances and gifts are essential as migrant parents attempt to "maintain emotional bonds on the basis of material dependency" (p.195).

[She says] 'Mommy can you buy me a Barbie?' and I say 'okay I will' - Marjorie

[On how do you show care and support] well....as for support it's financial, and love, my feelings, being a hard worker, going straight, being faithful [laughs]. - Rey

In my situation right now, I just send money, everything they want, they get everything they want, I don't care if I use all my money just for them. - Bart

Of course I have to give the things they are asking me for...the financial. - Stan

I support him [my son] through money, and calling from the telephone, and buy a lot of toys for [laughs nervously] - Nora

This phenomenon was also described by Zontini (2004), and pursued to hypothesize that it can create unreasonable expectations for material goods, as well as promoting a favourable disposition in children for pursuing their own migration one day. In contrast

Angela, who had been in the Middle East for twenty years on and off described the limits she sets to what she will provide for the whims of her children.

But you know I don't always give them what they want, I always say 'I don't have that much money; I'll be here forever if I keep giving you every little thing'. I don't spoil them. I don't spoil them. I always say, 'you know you're lucky that you have all that you do'.

- Angela

Just my son now, all he's asking is [for] toys...nothing else you know... he's still young...like or he won a silver medal for his tae kwon do, last month...so he says to me 'mommy I got the silver medal so you should give me the TSP'....the personal family theatre computer...I said no that is banned, you can't have anything like that, I don't let them have those toys, no video games. I don't let them play that. I said you have a computer in the house, [.....] if you want to play, play on the computer, there are games on the computer, and then you have time to study as well. My sister is always giving them that, one hour a day for the games, after that, study, you know and they have some activities they do, like swimming lessons, sports, you know, like the tae kwon do, all those things, it's better than being on the computer.

- Angela

Some theorists discuss attempts by mothers to 'mother intensively' – to be involved in every aspect of their child's life, some kind of a super mom – even at a distance (Parreñas, 2005a). While some mothers were in daily contact with their children through text messages, there was nothing as extreme as preparing diet plans for their child's weekly meals to indicate an attempt to adhere to a strictly gendered role of what or how a mother should be. In this study there is no indication that either the mothers or the fathers perform more tasks or actions to remain closer to their children than the other.

Given the strength of traditional gendered roles within families (Brewer, 2001; Craig, 2006; Hochschild, 1990) the seeming lack of gender differences in transnational

parenting found in this study merits further investigation. Possible explanations for this finding lie in rarities of the sample; bias in the methods of data collection; and the breaking down of gender differences in parenting with distance, perhaps in practice without corresponding changes in the ideologies of mothering and fathering.

As discussed in the methodologies chapter, the participants in this study were not recruited through random sampling, rather, connections in Doha were used to suggest suitable candidates: the sample group is not claimed to be representative of Filipino parents living in Qatar, Filipino migrant workers, or transnational parents in general. Upon analysis of the data, it is clear that the male population of the sample group does diverge from the average male Filipino worker in the Middle East. The majority of Filipino men working in Qatar work as construction workers, whereas apart from one man who worked as a welder on the nearby American base, none of the participants in this study do this sort of work. It is purely speculative whether this professional deviance from the norm could indicate that the male participants in this study were more educated than other Filipino fathers working in Qatar, or whether this would have any impact on their comfort level with broader gendered notions of fathering.

Another concern which always enters in this type of research is the possibility that respondents answered questions in ways that they perceive as favourable to the interviewer. With the preconceived notion that Western women favour and expect greater equity and wider gender roles, comes the risk that the men I interviewed in this study tailored their answers to be more acceptable to me. I do not find this to be particularly likely, given the confidence and emotion with which all of the respondents

spoke about their weekly (sometimes bi-weekly) phone calls and their experiences of separation.

The children of transnational fathers in this study ranged in age between less than a year and nine years old: they were generally younger than the children of the women, who spanned from under a year to 29 years old. In explanation of the lack of gender differences in parenting I am suggesting that the younger average age of the children of the fathers precludes somewhat generic and stock conversations with their children. With the greater age of their children, one or two of the mothers describe receiving advice from their children, or discussing more complicated issues in their lives.

She understands [that her mother is away to earn money for her studies], but sometimes she also wants to give me advice. She's also my advisor [laughs]. ...hold on...there's two texts I have here in my mobile...'don't be sad, you have to show the children what is right, stumble to persevere, heart to be strong, falter is human, lose to try harder, pray to overcome them all' ... that's the message to me.

- Meggy

It cannot be verified whether as their children age the fathers in this sample who claim real closeness with their children now, will maintain that closeness as their children approach adulthood. This also flags the possibility that the interview style was not open enough to allow individuals to express the true depth, or lack thereof, of their relationships with their children. Perhaps with more time to build relationships and re-visit the interviewees, a more nuanced (and gendered) picture of their transnational parenting practices would have emerged.

Another line of explanation for the lack of variance in transnational mothering and fathering considers the possibility of change in parenting roles at a distance, or more specifically the potential that those changes are more practical in nature than ideological.



The presence in the sample of two men whose fathers were absent during their formative years may be indicative of a trend in the Philippines (potentially an impact of migration), or it could be another anomaly in the group of men interviewed. While one man was the son of a sea-based migrant father, and the other simply stated that they had been abandoned, they both treated this matter as a strong incentive to do better by their own children; indicating that they worked very hard at keeping in touch so that their children would not feel deserted as they had. This could imply a change in distance fathering in response to personal experiences of how difficult it can be for the children left behind.

It can be postulated that while women generally work hard at providing care for their children irrespective of distance, in the transnational context men are pushed to put more effort into these relationships than they otherwise might. Parreñas (2005a) explains that in her study upon visits home to the Philippines fathers engaged in more cooking, cleaning, and childcare work than would normally be the case for a Filipino male. They were attentive to their children's needs, which was noted and appreciated by their children. Male respondents in the current study alluded to similar efforts on their parts. Again, there is a tentative suggestion that more instantaneous communication technologies are allowing Filipino fathers to extend those 'mitigating the gap' actions they engage in when they are visiting and provide more care than they normally would at a distance as well, precisely because they are physically distant and are trying to make up for that in some way.

He would call about 20 times in one month. It's because he said that he did not want to write anymore. We did not have a phone before, but now that we do, he just calls all the time. He reasoned that instead of just spending his money on material things, he would just use the money

to call us. Whenever he calls, he just asks us how we are doing and has us tell him what is going on in our lives. (Efren, Filipino child cited in Parreñas, 2005a, p. 81)

Another consideration is the prospect that in transnational nuclear families fathers who are abroad perform the same actions as their female counterparts, but ideologically it is easier for them as they internalize less guilt or pain in the situation based on their adherence to gender prescribed roles as opposed to the women who are shirking the traditional mothering tasks. It is a purely subjective enterprise to evaluate the pain or guilt of one person as compared to that of another, but based on the language used by respondents and the general feeling of the interviews conducted, this gap between practical and ideological change cannot be ruled out. The word guilt was not used by any mother or father in the study, but it hung in the air as some women discussed how old their children were when they left, or how long it had been since they had seen them. Literature does support the claim that women feel more guilt than men for living apart from their children (Parreñas, 2001).

There are clearly numerous potential explanations for the lack of gendered differences in mothering and fathering practices at a distance observed in the sample group of this study. Given this general doubt, it is impossible to make clear conclusions about the experiences of these men and women; rather, the range of possible issues with the sample, the study and types of change, highlight what an interesting phenomenon transnational parenting is, and provide future researchers with cautions and clues for the creation of their studies.

Based on the earlier discussion of transnational migration, the participants in this study fall under a broad definition of transnationality. The somewhat unique circumstances in Qatar - which do not encourage assimilation (preferring to isolate

different ethnic groups) and the impossibility of gaining citizenship – dilute if not remove the longer term perspective of living in networks both between and within multiple nations. This potential lack of durability does not negate the fact that Filipino mothers and fathers working in Qatar live their day to day lives by creating networks and social fields spanning multiple nations, and indeed organize their families across physical and symbolic borders. Nor can the extended periods of time (over twenty years) which some participants had spent living in Qatar be minimized, simply because they know that when their working life ends they will most likely return to the Philippines to retire. As the participants in this study demonstrate, they may well have family members in other countries as well through which they can continue living in transnational spaces – figuratively or physically.

Within this small sample the findings reveal that there are some diverse experiences of maintaining connections with children at a distance. One discovery is that for this sample of individuals the age, ability to understand what's going on, and communication skills of the children are significant determinants of how well people cope with living in a nuclear transnational family. The participants in this study demonstrated that the early days of separation are the most painful for the parents, and if the children are very young when they depart it seems to prompt the construction of a more friendship or sibling based relationship with their mother or father.

I know because before, when I was small, I was also far from my dad, that's why I know. When you're with your father or mother its better, that's why I always ask my wife what's happening there.

- Raphael

Another important finding relates to the reconfiguration or 'relativising' of relationships in transnational families. The majority of respondents in this study

described their relationships with their children as very strong, even if they are of a slightly different nature than what one expects as the parental role. While they discussed the pain of separation and the struggles they face, they described their expressions of love for their children, their attempts to shelter their children from their own problems and their attempts to have their children understand why they were away. Most seemed relatively comfortable that they were showing their love and support by providing for their children economically, and were generally not worried about spoiling their children.

He'll ask, 'papa, can you buy me any good shoes there, or any costume, like superman', and I'll say yes, I'll do it, no problem.

- Raphael

Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) support these findings with their description of transnational families as “able to reconstitute and redefine themselves over time contingent on spatial practicality and emotional and material needs” (p.3).

An important finding was the limited impact of gender on the ways that mothers and fathers express care and maintain relationships with their children from a distance. This unexpected result was dissected by examining potential incongruities in the sample and sampling methods, which may have resulted in this surprising conclusion; and by discussing the possibility that this finding is indicative of a change in the gendered nature of parenting at a distance, be it purely practical and not ideological, or both. Clearly no firm conclusions can be drawn from this small sample, but it is possible that the distance pushes fathers to work harder at their relationships with their children than they would in person, and that while their actions do not differ much, women may feel more guilt over their distance from their children's lives.

I'm not exactly sure because it's new, she's just a newborn baby, but I am sure that I love her, and that I will raise her. Whatever happens, she's my child and I would not be here in this place if my

mother, if my parents did not prove that [the importance of those things] to me.

- Erwin

The improved ability to maintain and forge relationships, without face to face communication begs several important questions. Do these types of long distance relationships provide an illusion or simulation of close bonds, or do they offer enough elements of the actual experience to make them 'real'? Does the very possibility of maintaining relationships in this manner - the partial elimination of space and time - further promote living under such circumstances, to the detriment of the unattainable aspects of proximal relationships? Does the distance prompt people to value, appreciate, and work at their relationships with their children in ways that may be overlooked or taken for granted when one has physical proximity to their child on a daily basis? Irrespective of these issues, transnational families - by necessity - continue constructing bonds and relationships and finding ways to adapt to and understand these relationships across multiple locations.

## **Chapter 7 Economic and Social Remittances**

As suggested in the literature review there is considerable controversy over the impact of the economic remittances - the gifts and currency - routinely sent by migrants from higher wage potential countries back to their countries of origin. Nor are the influences of social remittances – the ideas, knowledge, values, skills and beliefs transmitted through transnational networks and their outcomes in behaviour – easy to isolate and assess. However both carry significant weight given the current explosion in labour migration.

This chapter will tease out and reflect upon some of the implications of remittances through the testimonies of the research participants, analyzed in the context of relevant literature. Starting with gender as an analytical category, the chapter will examine the volume and frequency of economic remittances sent home by the respondents; leading into a discussion of who administers this money for them and what it is generally used for. It will then move into an exploration of the social remittances conveyed by the participants in this study; focussing on assessing the significance of such remittances which are then linked to potential reinforcement and changes in gender roles.

Peggy Levitt's (1998) categorization of factors affecting the strength of social remittances in transnational migration will be used as a primary framework, with different elements added to broaden the perspective: this acknowledges the fact that it is a relatively new frame for examining these types of social interactions, and there is much to be gleaned from different perspectives. Several different examples of the content of social remittances will be evaluated with respect to the current case study.

The importance of economic remittances on national economies and individual households cannot be underestimated. As the biggest source of financial resources entering the global South, it is no wonder that researchers and policy makers are paying attention to remittances. From those who tout its resistance to internal economic shocks and ability to deliver money directly into the hands of those most in need; to the critics who focus on dependency, the pervasiveness of immediate consumption and associated lack of transformation in the home economy, the debate is heated and remittances increase every year heedlessly.

Every month I send money, during my salary... I cannot stop sending...I would be in trouble [laughs].

- Pedro

Remittances were of course a vital and regular concern of all the overseas parents interviewed in this study. Everyone sent money home once a month and amounts ranged from just over \$200 CAD (generally people who had been working in Qatar for less than one year) to almost \$800 CAD a month. Orozco (2005) echoes that 60 percent of migrants send money home regularly, meaning once a month, as indicated by the participants in this study.

Every month, every month we send three times, because if we're earning a little bit here we send it.

- Nelly

Yes, every month I send money...sometimes big sometimes small...it depends...normally 15,000 pesos (\$336 CAD)...to my wife's bank account.....sometimes she calls me...'need more'...because in the Philippines very high price, everyday gasoline, foodstuff, high price...but the salary is small.

- Pedro

I send money every month [to two families] ...when I get my salary, I send it right away...I send to my wife's parents, and then my parents ...actually it's not that much that I send, because I came here by agency, I've got a low salary as well...for my parents, sometimes from 10 to 15,000 in pesos (\$ 224 – 336 CAD), and for my wife it's around 20-25,000 (\$ 448 – 561 CAD)...sometimes if they have check-up with the doctor I will send more. And of course I'm paying to live here, but only food, my accommodation is covered by the company. I am saving money here too.

- Erwin

In real terms, men and women sent almost the same amount, averaging \$448 (20,000 PHP) and \$493 (22,000 PHP) respectively. Even though women sent slightly more money back to their families, as a measure of earnings men sent considerably more 'home' each month at 61.4 percent of their salaries compared to the 47.7 percent that women sent.

Before they are not studying, and I sent 10,000 pesos (\$ 224 CAD) a month...and now that they're going to school, I need to send all of my salary for a whole month...do you believe it? And then the next month I will not send money...so she needs to budget for the whole thing, because it's 25,000 pesos (\$ 561 CAD), so that's good for 2 months...and then what I save in this month I put in the bank, and then she can go in the bank anytime if it's very necessary...if she needs to spend more. I use my tips for my personal expenses...I have my tips

- Bart

It's not the same [how much I send each month]...sometimes [I send] two hundred dollars if only for the allowance, if they have to pay something, sometimes five hundred dollars...To my father it's only 1,500 pesos (\$ 34 CAD) monthly, to my auntie it's only 500 pesos (\$ 11 CAD) monthly, and for my sister and brother – not every month for my sister and brother, just if they need – so it depends how much they need

- Nora

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2005) indicate that Filipino men generally earn more working overseas than their female counterparts, and that when the wage gap is controlled men proportionally send more 'home' to their



families in remittances than women do. Men remitting a greater proportion of their earnings are contrary to a common perception supported by some theorists that women are more reliable in this capacity and consequently are increasingly being encouraged to migrate in support of the family (Chant & McIlwaine, 1995; Chimhowu et al., 2005; Tacoli, 1999). The actual tendency for men to remit more is perhaps explained by a need in male overseas workers to feel like they are the breadwinners of the family, whereas as for women there is a lower expectation. This study cannot test the validity of this hypothesis.

The biggest challenge was when we were just starting, when our experience was beginning...it was very difficult, very challenging...sometimes my son goes to the hospital and we don't have anything, and the hospital just take my son in the emergency...the nurse said, this is private, maybe you cannot take it...so I was very angry...I go to the head office, and I speak very crossly with the Taiwanese owners of the hospital...I said if something happens with my son, you are a dead man [Laughs] ...it's and emotion for a father, you know...and then my mother came and then they have the money and I said, 'that's the Philippines, it's different if you have money' ...this lesson is too strong in my mind, so that's why I'm here

- Bart

Challenging the findings of Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2005) the women in the present study earned substantially more than the men, averaging \$12,000 CAD (554,000 Philippines Pesos – PHP), to the men's \$8,000 (391,000 PHP). Compared to the 2003 Filipino census finding that average family income in the Philippines was \$3,332 CAD (148,616 PHP), making the incentive for Filipinos of either gender to work overseas unambiguous (Government of the Philippines, 2005).

The higher wages that women received do not seem to be based on higher status, or more value being placed on the work they do in Qatar. This phenomenon is explained by the fact that in this sample the women had spent an average of 7.72 years working in

Qatar, while the men averaged only 2.96 years. Likewise the women who participated in this study were older than the men and older than the commonly established age range for migrant workers. Studies show that the majority of migrants are under 35 years old, whereas the women in this study ranged in age from 26-48, with an average age of 40, and the men ranged from 29-36, with an average age of 33 years old (Chimhowu et al., 2005: 92).

**Table 7.1 Comparisons by Gender of Average Age, Years Working Abroad, Salary and Amount Remitted per Month.**

	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>
<b>Age (years)</b>	39.5	32.7
<b>Number of Years Working Abroad</b>	7.7	3.0
<b>Yearly Salary (\$ CAD)</b>	12,000	8,000
<b>Amount Remitted (per month in \$ CAD)</b>	448	493

\*All data is presented in averages

Through their examination of labour migration and remittances in the Philippine context Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2005) confirm the earning power of overseas workers increases with age, level of education and the length of time one is employed abroad. This is true irrespective of gender and the findings from this study support this tendency, except with respect to education. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in this case study as a group the fathers were found to be marginally more educated than the mothers.

Another gendered difference emerges in who was chosen to administer and budget the remittances sent back to the Philippines. For the most part this was the same person responsible for the caregiving of the children the participants had left in the Philippines. This deviated only in two cases where daughters were responsible for retrieving money from their mothers' bank accounts and dividing up the remittances and the migrants' mothers were the primary caregivers of them. To greater and lesser degrees

the overseas workers created the budget themselves and specified exactly who was to get what and what the money should be spent on.

I send a budget...but you know I'm not getting a high salary. Every month I send 10,000 pesos (\$ 224 CAD), it costs 700 or sometimes 800 Riyals (\$193 – 221 CAD)...to my wife and also I'm giving to my mother...the money is for foods, everything, and to my child, what he needs and my wife she budgets, but actually it is not comfortable, it's not enough, but she budgets, she budgets the money....Only these last two months I started saving here, before I had a lot of debt...because sometimes you support also your family...my mom is sick, sometimes you give money for medicine, that's why you cannot save it...big money

- Raphael

The choice of administrator of remittances and caregiver was overwhelmingly female<sup>5</sup>. Five of the six men had their wives (or a combination of their mothers and wives in two cases) administer and budget the money they sent home, and the final male respondent (Stan) was in a terrible position whereupon his wife was working in Saudi Arabia, and the person taking care of his children had recently passed away. He was unable to say exactly who was taking care of his children, and what the in-laws he was sending money to might be doing with his earnings.

Monthly, I'm sending 1,700 Riyals (\$480 CAD)...actually I send it to, whoever's there...actually 1,700 is the maximum, sometimes I send 1,000 Riyals (\$283 CAD)...for my children I send 1,200 (\$339 CAD)...sometimes I send it to my wife's sister, or mother in law, mostly with my in-laws, because my kids are living in their house.

- Stan

It was my wife's parents [who were caring for my children] but a month ago my mother in law died, she died of an internal organ disease. It happened very quickly, I don't know who's with them now...some relative. I don't want to speculate on this...I think they're staying sometimes with my mother and father, in my house with my parents, and sometimes with my in-laws. I don't

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<sup>5</sup> Chant and McIlwaine (1995) confirm that Filipino women are usually responsible for household financial management as well as carework.

know really how they can manage that, but it's very risky because it's five kilometres from the house...so there's some kind of transportation like tricycle...very dangerous, like motorcycle. The distance is long, and it's not safe, it's very far. I don't want them to go there, to be moving back and forth. So I cannot answer you about this thing [about who is caring for my children] I really don't know, it's really painful.

- Stan

This terrible uncertainty was one of the most distressed and pained experiences shared in the interviews conducted for this study. Stan was not even telling other friends he worked and lived with about the situation because he did not want them to worry about him, or have it reflect badly on the decision to live in a transnational family (one of his friends was recently engaged with a woman back in the Philippines). Of note in the gender examination central to this study is that before this situation fell apart, it was his mother in law who had been caring for his children, meaning that all of the men had left their children with female caregivers and administrators of their remittances.

Their mother [takes care of our kids], she's not working, I tell her to stop...before we got married she's working, because she's always pregnant, every year, it's difficult for her to work.

- Bart

My mother has the bank account, and my wife [he sends separately to both of them].

- Erwin

My wife's the one who's taking care of my son, I always speak to her, update her, but she is the one acting as a father and mother while I'm not there. They live only two now, because we built a very small house...it's better they live in their own space, because if they want to do anything, they can do it...because you know sometimes if they're living in together with your family if she wants anything she's maybe ashamed in front them, because you know we didn't stay [with them] for too long before.

- Raphael

All the women in the sample save one had entrusted other female family members to administer the money they sent home and care for their children. This gender divergence in the sample can be explained given that all of those women are estranged from their husbands, prohibiting their shift into the role of caregiver for their children. Sadly the ease of this explanation does prohibit a deeper view of whether their husbands would have felt comfortable and able to step into the role of caregiving in the absence of their wives.

Sometimes now my daughter is lonely, you know, she's a teenager now and...all of these things, my sister knows what is happening right, and it's not really me, you know, but I really trust my sister a lot so, she's the one who also looks after the other needs that I have. - Angela

She's not taking money without my permission, that's why I trust her. - Bart

Gamburd's (2000) extensive work with Sri Lankan transnational mothers indicates married overseas workers tend to remit to their spouses (though in the case of males they do the caregiving work reluctantly and less frequently), and that single women tended to hand their remittances over to their parents. The findings of the current study deviate slightly in that several grandmothers were the primary caregivers of their grandchildren, and one was involved in budgeting remittances, but otherwise there were sisters, sisters in law and daughters in the role of administrator of the income being sent from Qatar.

My sister makes the budget...but that 400 dollars (US), if there is some important emergency thing, it doesn't include that...it's only for their expenses, for whatever my kids need, you know.

- Angela

I'm setting up the account for my daughter, the account is with my daughter then my daughter gives it to my mother...my mother she's the one who budgets it all - Meggy

I send the money to my daughter (who is 15 years old). She's the one now who manages my money. To buy things, to buy food, for paying for any expenses, this is the one. She pays the bills. - Nelly

My sister is like a second mom to them, we're very lucky that way, some other families, they are not so lucky. - Angela

It's my mother who's having all the pain. - Penn

[Describing how she provides financially for her children and her mother fills in the rest.]

This portrayal omits the one woman who considers herself to be married to the father of one of her children. He both budgets the money she sends home, as well as acts as the primary caregiver for her two children.

It is my husband who does the budget...takes care of the needs of everyday...for daily expenses, food, school supplies, anything they need in school...my mother in law pays all the expenses in house...lights, water, all the bills...for now I only pay for food. - Marjorie

This situation had become quite stressful for her, and she worried that he was favouring his own daughter over her son from a previous relationship. The potential for neglect in this situation makes her understandably anxious.

If I think we need something for my son, he [my husband] always questions me, but if [something is] for my daughter, no problem, it's different. It's hard for me to act the same way. I'm worried for my son. He cannot talk always to my husband, he's afraid; I think he's afraid of my husband...because before he cannot do [or] say anything to my husband, only for me. Maybe he cries always, he tries to understand until now, maybe my husband gets mad, he doesn't do the right thing, and my husband gets mad, and my son is scared. - Marjorie

She had appealed to her cousin to keep an eye on the situation, but her husband was opposed to getting a webcam or a mobile phone for her son to speak freely to her. Lan (2003) identifies that it is not uncommon for mothers working overseas to feel that their husbands were struggling in their new roles as caregivers back home, particularly with respect to budgeting. But this particular situation clearly has more complexities.

Some studies suggest that necessity, and the difficulty of giving feedback or being at all critical of the job a family member was doing in raising one's children prompted some migrants to hire non-kin caregivers (Lan, 2003). The choice of paid caregivers over family to ease the sensitivities of giving criticism or suggestions for parenting was not widely seen in this study. One mother in this study reported having extra help in the home, but more to ease the burden on her sister, with whom she described a comfortable relationship.

We have a maid in the house, to help my sister, because for me, the important thing is that she looks after my kids.

- Angela

For my sister in law I pay monthly salary for her, 2,000 pesos (\$ 45 CAD), and allowance of my son is 3,500 pesos (\$ 78 CAD), except the tuition, except other things, uniform, stuff like that is extra.

- Nora

### ***Use of Remittances***

Debates persist over the use of remittances and their contribution to increased savings, local community development, or purely increased consumption and the necessity or luxury of these economic inputs. Interviews in this study generally revealed that remittances were primarily (but not exclusively) used to meet basic consumption needs; this includes food, rent, school fees, and medicines, among other things.

It's used for food...the primary needs

- Stan

If I go, I have the post dated cheques ready for their allowances, so every month I give it to my sister, because with post date cheques she can just get the money at the bank...I pay the full year tuition fees for the children [at once]...so the money that I'm sending every month that my sister is holding is just for allowances...it's for food and if they want to go out...the cheque is for about 20,000 pesos, which is about 400 dollars

- Angela

That money, it's including the house (rent), electricity, food, everything they need, and the school fees also.

- Bart

This finding is supported by numerous studies and reports, including that of Chimhowu et al. (2005) who identify that data from a range of countries indicate that 80 percent of remittances are spent on consumption<sup>6</sup>. Some theorists claim that remittance dollars spent on consumption (as opposed to increasing savings or investing in the local economy) do not lead to the development of families, communities or nations; while others argue that health and education are the basic building blocks of development and without them no further growth can occur (Koc & Onan, 2004).

It's used for our children, for food, and then we have this small land, at this time they are harvesting the land, there are workers, maybe 5 or 6, they have to be paid. Then we have insurance for my daughter...health insurance and then educational plan...we're paying I think, quarterly...savings for university. That is the only way to get ready for the future, if in case I have no job here; I'll go back [Laughs].

- Pedro

In addition to meeting the basic needs of their family members, many respondents were actively saving money to start small businesses, buy or renovate homes, buy insurance, or to save up for their children's educations.

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<sup>6</sup> Also see Koc & Onan, 2004 and Mahler, 2001.



If I can save money, I plan to make a little business for my family.

- Raphael

I'm planning to have a business, I'm looking to open up a restaurant, because my mother, she cooks very well...and I love food! I want to be a chef too.

- Erwin

The findings from this study reveal that the extent to which people were able to engage in these secondary level activities with their remittances depends on how long they had been working overseas and hence their earning power.

Of course first of all the money is for food and they're also saving in the bank, they are not using it all.

- Erwin

Many migrants commence their journeys by borrowing huge sums of money from family members or money lenders to pay recruitment fees and for their passage overseas. None of the participants in the current study commented on having incurred debt during the process of securing their work in Qatar. However, they were not directly asked if this was the case, so the possibility that the first remittances they sent back were used to pay for their recruitment and passage cannot be ruled out.

Of the twelve person sample, seven people already owned their own homes. Two more were in the process of buying or renovating, and those who had not begun the process were the participants who had spent the least time working in Doha. There were slightly more females than males who already had their own homes, which can be explained by their greater age, greater number of years working overseas and higher salaries.

We have a house now, it's my fathers' house, but we make renovation already, we make a little bit big extension. We are now building a house.

- Pedro

There were indications of remittance use on non-essential consumption, including purchases that were not geared towards starting enterprise or leading to greater family security.

Now, I gave a motorcycle [to my brother]...I gave 10,000 (\$ 224 CAD) down, then I gave 16,000 (\$359 CAD) for cycle, then I gave almost 30,000 (\$ 673 CAD) for all...just for extra, so he can go riding...only one time [did I send him the extra money] because monthly he pays [makes the payments on it].

- Pedro

Many other respondents described the gifts that they purchase for their children, but this usually involves them sending the money to a family member who will actually make the purchase, or waiting for their visit home every two years (if they are able to). A few respondents discussed sending gifts with other people, but only one spoke of friends or neighbours travelling with any sort of frequency. None of the respondents used the postal system.

I send my money [not so much gifts] and let my sister know how to budget it because it's very hard for us, it's not all the time some other people are going to the Philippines [and could take things back for us]

- Stan

Money only, because shipping is too expensive, we're just asking for them to buy what they need.

- Nelly

In every case the money provided for the basic necessities for their children, as well as numerous other family members including parents and siblings. The average number of people in the Philippines being supported by both male and female OFWs was six.

For me, I have so many family in my home that I support. I have 12 people, my mom, my dad, my children and I have my brother and a wife, sister in law and they have also one boy, and I have also nieces...four nieces.

- Nelly

[I am sending money to] my father, to my old maid auntie, she is paralyzed, so every month I send them money.

- Nora

My mom, she is just looking after them...to feed them...that they go to bed. They live in my home with my mom and my dad...also with two nieces and another boy, the son of my brother. There is no work for my brother, that's why I'm supporting them...also for studying.

- Nelly

A key feature, and risk in some theorist's classifications, is the dependence created by families, communities and nations relying on remittances. Mahler (2001) discusses this phenomenon through a gendered lens in work with transnational networks spanning El Salvador and the United States. Finding a greater number of male remitters than female receivers, she observed that often the women were at home waiting for funds, unable to contact their partners through their own initiative. This phenomenon can indeed be extrapolated. Gender dynamics aside, we are confronted with the power differential created as families and nations are hanging on the whims of overseas workers for remittances upon which they rely for their survival (Bagasao, 2005; Mahler, 2001). Other critiques focus on the risks that remittances may actually undermine local markets, lead to price increases, and intensify existing hierarchies and conflict at the local level as the families receiving remittances gain wealth and status (Simon, 1989; Vertovec, 2001).

These arguments are countered by the view that remittances skirt the losses due to bureaucracies and corrupt governments and effectively transfer money from economically richer countries into the hands of those who are in need (Maimbo & Ratha, 2005). Instead of worrying about personal or collective dependency, the World Bank is focused on creating development strategies around remittances – trying to encourage

them to be used for certain things and improving the efficacy of the financial institutions which support them (Maimbo & Ratha, 2005).

In addition to the sending of remittances, the mobilization of migrant (and their relatives') savings and investments at home (through acquisition of land, property, or small businesses) is spurring economic growth en masse – especially in rural areas – traditionally neglected by the private and public sectors. Orozco, 2005: 308

While this terrain remains contested, the reality is that while the decision to migrate and remit is deemed the best option by the decision makers – the movers and their families – this phenomenon will continue.

### ***The Non-Material Transfers – Social Remittances***

From the start therefore the traffic in ideas, remittances and people was two way and continuous. (Chamberlain 2005, p. 76)

The transnational perspective compels us to examine the implications of the networks and connections which migrants construct and maintain spanning cultures, countries and time zones. These relationships facilitate the sharing of ideas, knowledge, skills, practices, beliefs, and norms for the consideration of parties in multiple countries and cultural contexts, sometimes promoting the diffusion of new practices or ideologies.

The factors affecting these local level (as opposed to macro) diffusions are numerous and complex. Peggy Levitt (2001; 1998) provides us with several key factors to assess in the breakdown of social remittances. These include: the density of the transnational networks (e.g. the number of people from one area who migrate to the same receiving area); the level of contact between particular transnational migrants and 'locals' in their host community; the geographic distance between 'home' and 'host'

communities; the status and level of trust confided in the disseminator; the social distance between the two communities (ideas which are radically new will not be received as well); and the perception of whether the ideas are ‘modern’ or ‘westernized’ (Levitt 2001, p. 55). Clearly the breadth of these factors exceeds the capacities of this study, however each variable will be considered in turn to roughly assess the potential strength of social remittances in this case study.

Peggy Levitt’s study of the transnational migration networks created between Miraflores (in the Dominican Republic) and Jamaica Plain (a community in central Boston) demonstrates a level of transnational density absent from this study. When one particular area of a country organically develops into the major sending region for one particular receiving community the result is many reinforced local pathways for social remittances. Among the small sample of Filipino mothers and fathers interviewed in this study there is evidence of some density in the form of other family members or neighbours from home living and working in Doha, but nothing as strong or definitive as the case study used by Peggy Levitt. Her findings with respect to the creation of dense transnational networks between certain sending and receiving communities are confirmed by work in Sri Lanka (Gamburd, 2000), Mexico (Goldring, 2001) and the Philippines (Pertierra, 1992).

[...] it’s like I have so many neighbours here in Doha, neighbours from back home, if they know that someone is coming, my daughter will call and ‘ooh this one is coming, please send me this and this and that’.

- Angela

One of my sisters she’s working here in Doha and the others in the Philippines.

- Nora

My brother is working in a factory, maybe coming here in next year.

- Pedro

My wife is now with the baby, but she's planning, she wants to come here, and leave her daughter...maybe after my contract ends, I'll take her...maybe here in Doha, but it depends

- Erwin

Respondents in this study are from various regions of the Philippines, so it is impossible to extrapolate how dense the transnational ties are from the assorted sending communities.

The level of contact between migrants and nationals in their 'host' environment is the second determinant in the strength of social remittances. Each individual in this study had differing levels and depth of contact with Qatari nationals and other nationals based on their employment and living situation; ranging from hairstylists or service advisers who interact with many different nationals on a daily basis, to domestic workers who live and intermingle with the same (either Western or Qatari national) employers every day.

Here it's okay, they are good people, I work here and we communicate with each other, I am very open.

- Raphael

This factor attempts to assess the level of integration or assimilation of migrants, indicating the extent to which they are exposed to, understand deeply and may be adopting values, ideas, practices, beliefs, skills or knowledge of the 'host' society. Given the variability of the experiences of the participants in this study, the previously mentioned problems with racism and discrimination, and the power relationships at play in domestic (and other) service work, I deem it unlikely that the respondents in this study are adopting many of the value sets of Qatari society.

Sometimes people only speak Arabic, you leave and maybe they don't understand...communication is a problem.

- Rey

If you are in an Arabic family they are looking at you very very small and they're treating you very bad.

- Nora

As the quote suggests at times language barriers were also significant deterrents in the transfer of cultural moorings.

Apart from a level of integration with Qatari Nationals the Filipino mothers and fathers interviewed in this study are surely gathering, assessing and filtering a range of different cultural ideas from their Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Canadian, Thai, Nepali, American, British and other co-workers, employers and friends. Many of the respondents lived in multi-national settings, and had close friends of different nationalities, implying deeper levels of personalized explorations of other cultures. Despite the fact that these individual impressions and evaluations lack the group reinforcement of being surrounded and ensconced in a culture of people with (mostly) shared values as they are exposed to with the 'host' society, they are no doubt powerful.

In some regards there is less consistency in these experiences in terms of shared meanings, as the Filipino may be living with a Bangladeshi, work with a group of Thai people, and have customers or clients from the United Kingdom. However the common experience of being 'foreign' may invoke a kinship and openness that allow for greater apprehension of different values, ideas, skills and knowledge from all of these people. These relationships may be very significant to transnational migrants and important parts of their social networks, but due to complex and multiple stimuli, actions and reactions, tracing the origins and eventual adaptations or hybridizations of new information and behaviours from these experiences are nearly impossible to trace.

I'm not against Filipinos, but I don't have a lot of Filipino friends, because you know...well, it's the same with every nationality... you can find a group of people, if you have mingled with a lot

of people, then the problem comes. So then I have just decided to have friends who are all different nationalities, it's better than to be just in one group. And I'm learning a lot from them, and also they're learning a lot from me, right. So with me, living here for a long time, this works better for me, than being with a lot of Filipinos who are always gossiping. - Angela

Both the geographic and social distances between the two communities affect the dissemination and strength of social remittances. In the Miraflores and Jamaica Plain case study, the relatively short physical distance between the two communities allowed people to travel between them with relative ease, increasing the possibility for the generation of social remittances (Levitt, 2001). The six or seven hour flight between Manila and Doha (of which the majority seem to have stopovers of over ten hours) decreases the ease of remitting social values back to the Philippines.

Likewise the social distance between predominantly Islamic Qatar and the majority Christian Philippines is substantial. Levitt's (2001) general argument is that where there is a small social distance between 'home' and 'host' society (e.g. that of the United States and Canada), one will absorb and adopt different cultural norms, ideas, skills, knowledge or ideas more easily, sometimes even imperceptibly. This is not the case in the current study.

Culturally, Qatar can be seen as more strict in terms of social rules than the Philippines in many ways (e.g. dress, socializing between men and women, consumption of alcohol) (Barber, 2000). Many of these social rigidities are based in the fact that Qatar is an Islamic state, with power held by hereditary precepts in a monarchy (CIA, 2007b). While the five percent Muslim population of the Philippines draws significant attention, the overwhelming majority of the population (81 percent), and all of the respondents in this study, are Roman Catholics (CIA, 2007a). Alongside the traditional dress (abaya and



hijab for women; gutrah and dish-dash-ah for men), largely Muslim population and overwhelming material opulence found in Qatar, these great differences result in a large social distance between these two countries, and hence decreased impact of social remittances.

As for the range of people of other nationalities living and working in Qatar, the webs of social distance are too complex to chart. Aside from broad assumptions about social distance between various groups based on shared elements of identity related to being Asian, being ‘foreign’ workers in Qatar, or of a certain religious faith, it is risky to comment on the impact of these relationships. A general lack of assimilation in Qatari society limits the extent to which Filipinos would adopt and transfer new cultural material back to the Philippines.

A further consideration in the strength of social remittances is the status and trust placed in the migrant, who is the person doing the disseminating. In Peggy Levitt’s example from one ‘home’ community there are a host of potential disseminators interacting with various members of that same community, in more than one location. In this case study there are 12 individuals from different parts of the Philippines, interacting and sharing their experiences with their individual families, in different communities, towns and regions of the Philippines. The result is that one can postulate that these migrants hold considerable trust and respect with their families and community circles, but this claim is unsubstantiated by the data collected in this study. The extent to which respect automatically afforded to elders and parents in the Filipino context, as opposed to earned (generally a more Western ideal) leads one to believe that these parents are

potentially strong disseminators of social remittances, but as stated this cannot be proven or disproved.

The final variable suggested by Levitt is the degree to which elements of the 'host' society are considered to be modern or Western. It is difficult to say whether this factor is of the same import in an Asian and Middle Eastern context as it was in her work in the Americas. Doha is certainly a city full of bright and modern shopping malls replete with technologies and gadgets of all descriptions, which do seem to have broad appeal with nationals and guest workers alike. Women's clothing stores display a range of goods that do not seem synonymous with the virtual complete coverage that Qatari women don. If part of being 'Western' is deemed to imply more risqué dress then the younger women wearing hijab and tight jeans would indicate that Westernizing forces are present, even if often hidden by a layer of black fabric. Whether the modernity or luxury of the surroundings and opportunities in Doha create more credibility for the altered ideas of remitters is impossible to comment upon in this case study.

This brief sketch of the potential weight of social remittances from the participants in this study to their networks in the Philippines and beyond highlights several issues. Firstly the breadth and diverse nature of the information needed to assess the existence and strength of social remittances make them exceedingly difficult to measure and evaluate. Secondly it seems important to note that beyond the factors considered here are a host of other more personalized determinants of social remittances. Length of time overseas combined with individual experiences in other countries as well as certain pre-migration exposures will tend to slowly normalize different cultural traits, perhaps resulting in very subtle modifications to behaviour and values and their

transmission to other members of shared social fields. Peggy Levitt (2001) demonstrates just how contextual social remittances are with her assertion that people of colour maintain stronger transnational ties – implying greater reliance on the social capital created and maintained across distance, and perhaps greater transmission of information through those channels.

Thus far the discussion has remained in the realm of the existence and strength of social remittances. Despite the hypothetical nature of some of the information presented, and several factors indicating that social remittances between Filipino workers in Doha and their social networks may not be as strong as those in other geographical circumstances, the wide prevalence of contact and overlapping factors prompt me to adopt the view that even in this case study social remittances are being transmitted among these groups. This section will explore several aspects of the content of those remittances.

Before considering the ever-present gender question, I will assess the potential skill and knowledge transfer through the transnational migration of Filipino mothers and fathers to Qatar. Given the rapid growth in communication technologies, it is safe to say that through their long distance caregiving activities men and women have learned new technological, particularly computer, related skills. To permit the instantaneous communication many are coming to rely upon it is necessary that the people on the receiving end – the families back ‘home’ – gain some of the same technological skills and knowledge in order to use a web cam, write instant messages, or send digital videos.

Several of the participants in the current study are working in occupations where they will inevitably apprehend and transfer business knowledge and skills back to the

Philippines through their own social networks. Three of the female participants were virtually in charge of running a salon in an exclusive club, with a great degree of freedom from their direct boss. One of the young men was a quite recent architecture graduate who was gaining valuable experience with computer design and modelling. Several male participants were working as service advisors in the automobile sector, and will be transferring different business skills back to the Philippines in the small businesses they and their families plan on opening.

Due to the gendered focus of this study, as well as the prolific literature on gender role transformations in different cultural contexts, the social remittances explored here will be centered on gender roles.

In this community [Miraflores] transnational migration re-creates patterns of gender and class inequality and creates new frictions between parents and children, men and women, and poorer and more advantaged community members at the same time that it opens up opportunities for others. (Levitt 2001, p. 13-14)

Vertovec (2001) states that among other impacts of remittances and overseas work there is the potential to "progressively rework gender relations" (p. 575). In a World Bank funded study Chimhowu et al. (2005) state that "non-traditional ideas" gleaned during overseas work experiences can result in gendered changes with respect to girl child education, while simultaneously exacerbating existing biases if girls are removed from school to care for other children in the absence of a parent (p. 84).

The biggest challenge for me is about my children...she have some...what do you call this....she wants to finish her studies....that's why I want to work here, I want to help her...that's the challenge for me, I want to give my support to my children. - Meggy

Overwhelmingly the literature (which is extremely biased towards women) suggests that gender roles can be both reinforced and reconfigured through the process of

migration (Alicea, 2000; Foner, 1997; Ghazal-Read, 2004; Kibria, 1990; Mahler, 1999; Purwani-Williams, 2005; Ryan, 2002; Segura, 1994; Silvey, 2006; Spitzer et al., 2003).

Of particular importance to this study are the findings and potential social remittances with respect to the ideologies and practices of mothering and fathering.

...migrant women become transnational breadwinners but remain burdened by their gendered duties as mothers and wives back home. (Lan 2003, p. 204)

Filipino conceptions of motherhood and fatherhood have been presented as a somewhat fluid set of dynamics, from historical phases with more equitable gender roles, through more strict and repressive phases for women, and now moving with global trends towards greater freedom and choice for mothers and fathers. The findings of this study support both the traditional and revolutionary elements of these cultural movements. Clearly these shifts are governed by forces above and beyond social remittances; however the experiences of the father or mother and how they interpret them play a large role in what they are transmitting back to their families in the Philippines.

The traditional elements are expressed in the comfort and ‘natural’ acceptance by some of the mothers and fathers in the study that their wives should easily and happily provide the carework for their homes and children.

Of course I am happy my daughter is with my wife. - Erwin

All of that...cooking, cleaning...she is the responsible one for housework. - Pedro

[...] and I told her, it's your responsibility, you should be there, it [problems they are having] won't happen if you're there...that's what I told her, and it is the truth. - Stan

The final quote is from the man who felt his wife had shirked her mothering duties so that she could work as a nurse in Saudi Arabia and was clearly angered and disappointed in

her choice. Stan expressed feeling let down that she was not fulfilling her traditional role.

In the following exchange a female respondent expresses gendered notions of added legitimacy needed for girl children. Her daughter is three years old, and is cared for by her husband.

I decided to get married because of my daughter... because she's a girl...yes [it's different with a girl]...it's hard for me with the girl...for my son it's okay because he's a boy, but with a girl...oh...you know what they say about it...maybe she'll get married too soon...it's hard for me.

- Marjorie

These examples from both men and women demonstrate the reinforcement of gender roles through the process of migration, and the ability people have to mentally adjust their new physical realities to previously apprehended social norms. Some theorists even suggest that women participating in transnational migration actually adhere more tightly to traditional expectations as they attempt to adjust to caring at a distance (Georges, 1992). Through various channels of communication, the security of relying on these more traditionally accepted ways of doing and being are shared back through transnational networks. This could be called a social remittance or a transnational social reinforcement.

Yes, I'm comfortable [with the situation]... if I'm not I call her...you know I can't sleep if there's even the slightest problem that I know of...I cannot sleep...I need everything to be arranged...because I am a very emotional person...sometimes I hit the cabinet, I break everything, if I'm not happy, so I need to know everything is fine.

- Bart

Its hard mothering far away from them, I can't take care of them.

- Marjorie

My relationship with my wife really is very good. Because you know she is taking care of our relationship also with my kids...and every time she tells me 'take care of yourself because your children are growing now, our children are growing now'

- Pedro

Barber (2000) suggests that the act of migration by single Filipino women is in harmony with traditional ideas about women's roles, including caring for siblings and taking care of parents. In this case study the prevalence of women in failed marriages suggests that in addition to fulfilling traditional gender roles, women migrate based on the need to survive as single parents and support their families.

Even though there's no divorce, I just leave it...I don't have any plan of getting another one [husband] you know, so that's why I just leave it. I'm not that young to be pushed with someone else again, and I don't want to...like okay get somebody and then...for instance for me it's like this, as long as my kids are happier now...if I have a boyfriend here, before I tried, and we planned to get married. So I told my sister, and I said 'don't let the children know about this', and we were going home, and then she told my kids and my daughter didn't talk to me for a few months, so they don't want me to get married again. So if my kids don't want, I don't want. You know I just want my children....there are so many families, where the mother re-marries, and then it's not happy because the step father is abusive with the daughter, you know.

- Angela

I have been married three years, I was not married before [with the father of my son] ...I decide to marry only in 2003...I did not want to get married, but I have two children now so I want to be married.

- Marjorie

Since the time we are separated, we don't have any communication. We married in 1996, when I was in the Philippines for six months after I was here with the Arabic family...we separated in 2001; my son is almost 1 year at that time.

- Nora

There is an implication is that these women were already living somewhat outside of the traditional precepts of gendered roles before they left their home countries, or

alternatively that different contract periods abroad have affected how they view these relationships. It is also possible that the social rigour with which women's honour is valued in Qatar could make women feel bad about their deviance from the traditional. But the fact that these women have fought hard to be where they are, and seem to occupy different social spaces than Qatari women, leads one to believe that they are not judging themselves on the same criteria. Nothing emerged in the data gathered in this study to indicate these negative feelings, or that this had been communicated back home.

I really don't know where my husband is, and I don't want to know...it's better like this...I really don't need him anymore, even my kids don't need to see him...they have no contact, but you know I told my kids that if ever you grow up and are the right age to make the decision, you know, then if you want to see your father, I won't say no, he's your father you know, but right now, they are under my custody...so it's best this way.

- Angela

Maybe I worry if his father will take him...right now his father does not see him, because he is afraid of my brother. But someday I want him to meet his father, because he needs that. But someday, not now, not this time because he is very ...um.

- Nora

The study did encounter numerous examples of new flexibility in parenting roles. One of the fathers was the primary caregiver for his son between two and eight months of age, while his wife pursued an employment opportunity. He had thoroughly enjoyed the experience, felt very close to his son, and was visibly distraught over living away from his child.

It is a strong relationship, before when he was two months I was the one to take care of him because I didn't have work and my wife was working,...from two months to eight months I was the one to take care of my son, that's why I know. That's why I miss him too much.

- Raphael



For this particular couple these were choices they felt they could make prior to the migration, indicating expanding roles for mothers and fathers in the Philippines irrespective of migration or social remittances.

Another husband exploring the care work aspects of fatherhood - who had not come from a professional position of authority as literature might suggest is necessary to make a man feel okay in that role - was back in the Philippines performing all of the carework for two children under ten years old (Parreñas, 2005a). While not speaking directly to social remittances through networks spanning Qatar and the Philippines, these expanded notions of masculinity and fatherhood bode well for gender role expansion in general.

He cooks, cleans, does the laundry...my husband takes care of my children...he do it all.

- Marjorie

Me I do it before, but also we can share...he is working there before, but not now...now it's too hard for him [to do the home work] ...but he says 'okay, I will', 'I can do it now'.

- Marjorie

In addition to this case, all of the men in the study expressed equal pain and sacrifice associated with being away from their children, and spoke at length about the strength and importance of their relationships with their children. Far from a strict traditional view that their role as breadwinner was sufficient and exclusive, demonstrates the personal value they place on being present for moral guidance for their offspring, and greater social acceptability for emotionally present fathers. It also suggests movement away from the view that the mother is always the social organizer and manager, as many scholars have implied (Al-Sharmani, 2006; Asis et al., 2004; Dreby, 2006; Hondagneu-

Sotelo & Avila, 2000; Parreñas, 2005a). This does not negate a general preference that mothers be the ones taking care of the children.

Before my wife was working with Smart – telephone dealer – but not now...he's coming my son,  
so okay, she stopped, and I said 'I will go outside' - Pedro

The impacts on gender role socialization and relations in the Philippines are far too complex to tease out from this small study. Perhaps global movements towards equity will prevail, as Filipinos venture out and taste greater economic freedom and different models of gender roles, but perhaps conservative forces will cycle back into austere expectations, rules and opportunities for males and females. Regardless, of their diffuse nature and the difficulties in measuring them, social remittances are important mechanisms in transnational social networks whereby practices, ideas and behaviours are framed, filtered, shaped and sometimes appropriated. Social remittances will enter the discussion again with respect to the circularity of migration and the impacts on the children of migrant parents.

This chapter has waded into the debates surrounding economic and social remittances, where possible testing the ideas of various theorists against the findings from interviews performed in Doha in June 2006. With respect to economic remittances the data reveals that all of the participants remit regularly (once a month) and that the women in this sample earn more due to their greater age and number of years working overseas, but as a percentage of salary they remit less than men. These findings are supported by relevant literature. Unsurprisingly the vast majority of the care work and administration of economic remittances in the Philippines is performed by women, seldom with any compensation.

Similar to other studies, respondents in this case study indicated that the money they send home is for a variety of uses: the most important being basic consumption, but savings for businesses and the construction of homes were also important to many participants. In this study irrespective of gender each participant supported an average of six family members back in the Philippines.

Having the resources to provide for one's family is obviously important, as is the national level economic boost brought by the influx of foreign money. However the risk of rural stagnation due to labour shortages, price increases, the creation of new local hierarchies and the general dependence on outside support present strong arguments that migration should be dealt with as a response to poverty and not facilitated as a development strategy. The consumption versus investment debate is far from clear-cut, given that general health and education are some of the cornerstones of development (Chimhowu et al., 2005). The simple fact according to Koc and Onan (2004) is that "households receiving remittances are found to be better off than non-remitting households" (p. 78).

Social remittances were examined using Peggy Levitt's (2001) frame of six factors affecting the strength of this local level model of cultural diffusion as a point of departure. Generally the case study did not support the existence of very powerful linkages for the transmission of social remittances. For example great geographical and social distances between Qatar and the Philippines, and low density of transnational social networks moderate the flow of ideas, practices and social capital between communities and across borders. This is not to say that they do not exist. The respondents in this study are certainly having a range of experiences with Qatari and

other foreign nationals, which are colouring their perceptions and frames of reference.

This phenomenon was discussed in terms of alterations or continuity of gendered notions of mothering and fathering, and examples of both were found in the sample. It is extremely difficult to draw out the sources of change or durability, or the extent to which these ideas take root in the transnational social networks these people maintain.

## **Chapter 8 Impacts on the Children of Transnational Migrant Parents**

The purpose [of coming to work in Doha] is for my family, that's the reason, to give education to my child, to care for my family. - Rey

Apart from the analysis of the motivations, migration trajectories and consequences for the men and women physically moving in transnational networks are the impacts and actions of those who do the daily care work in their absence, as well as the children they leave behind. The children are of central importance to the family: in the decision making process to work overseas; in terms of remittance investments; in terms of aspirations for the future. The irony lies in the potential suffering of those children due to decisions being taken to represent their best interests. This chapter will attempt to assess the benefits and the risks associated with growing up as a child in a transnational household.

An examination of the implications of transnational migration on the 'other mothers' or caregivers back in the country of origin is beyond the scope of this paper. As mentioned in the methodology section, the ideal situation would be to perform multi-sited research to ascertain the impacts on the members of transnational families who do not move however resource and time constraints have made that impossible in this study. This shortcoming does not hamper the ability to discuss the issues and challenges, ascertaining a general picture of the impacts of transnational parenting on the children who remain at 'home'.

Children are often ignored as social actors in the process of migration and viewed solely as dependents who respond to the actions of others (Fog Olwig, 1999; Orellana et al., 2001). Although they are not the main decision-makers in a family's migration strategy, children certainly engage in relativising and other coping mechanisms to adjust

to living in transnational nuclear families (Asis, 2006a). In some migration trajectories children are actually the first family members to travel overseas (so-called ‘parachute children’) or they may play key roles in helping the family adjust and access services if some of the children of a family are able to migrate with their parents (Orellana et al., 2001; Valenzuela Jr., 1999).

Public perception of the impacts on the children left behind by migrant parents in the Philippines is not positive. Using literature and the findings from the current study, this chapter will seek to explore the validity of this judgment. Social adjustment, physical well-being and educational attainment will be used as categories of assessment, and the tools used to mediate negative impacts will be examined.

The emotional, social, physical and educational impacts on the children in this study can only be gauged by the parents’ knowledge and impressions of their child’s day-to-day life, and as such is greatly limited in some circumstances where the parents are not in close contact. Some respondents provided quite detailed information while others were vague and uncertain, demonstrating that they were not as close with their children as they may like to be or think they are. Due to the range of ages of the children involved, some were too young to identify characteristics or lasting traits. The varying abilities of children to understand and cope with living in transnational families are highly dependent on their developmental stages. This factor will be given greater consideration in the latter section of this chapter. Some authors note differences in the relationships that transnational parents maintain with their male and female children (Parreñas 2005b), given the age variability, scope and depth of this study, it was impossible to extract gendered differences in the treatment of children.

As mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, the 2003 study commissioned by the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrant and Itinerant People, CBCP / The Apostleship of the Sea, the Scalabrini Migration Centre, and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) (2004) is a large scale investigation covering seven areas of the Philippines which uniquely gathered data from both the children of migrant families and those with both of their parents at home. It will be used as a point of comparison for many of the topics touched upon in this section. Their main survey sample was 10 – 12 year olds, but focus groups with older children, caregivers, and those involved in service delivery to these populations widened the ability to make inferences from their findings. Again, it will be referred to as the ‘Hearts Apart study’, reflecting the name of the book which emerged from it (2004).

### ***Physical Impacts***

In terms of the physical wellness of their children living in the Philippines, most parents reported that they were very healthy.

Everybody is healthy [all my 4 kids], everyday they are in school, every Saturday and Sunday they have time off.

- Meggy

Health is very good, they are well.

- Bart

Their health? Now they're okay, but I think of my daughter...I just ask them to keep after her.

There's no problem, I just want her to take some vitamins.

- Nelly

They are very healthy...actually I have some pictures here...my wife is beautiful, hey?

- Stan

The Hearts Apart study not only supports the finding that the children of OFWs are generally healthy, it actually reports that they tend to be taller and heavier than the children of non-migrants (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004, p.43). Moreover the study indicates that the children of non-migrants are more susceptible to illness than those who have either one or both of their parents working abroad (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004). This can logically be associated with increased consumption and access to health care associated with the greater incomes generated working outside of the Philippines (Chimhowu et al., 2005; Episcopal Commission et al., 2004; Kandel & Kao, 2001; Vertovec, 2001).

In this study those from rural and urban areas identified seasonal colds to do with the rainy season, or other minor illnesses, but generally the children of OFWs (male or female) did not have major health issues.

Sometimes their health is okay, without any problems, but sometimes also they encounter terrible colds, sometimes they get sick from always playing outside...suddenly it rains, and then they encounter a bad cold.

- Pedro

Their health is okay...they're not sick from now.

- Marjorie

They have had some health problems...broken arms, illness, urinary tract problems...that's why when I hear the phone ring sometimes I am nervous.

- Penn

He's healthy but sometimes he gets a fever.

- Nora

These concerns seem to be of a normal childhood nature. The Hearts Apart study offers a gendered view of the situation, demonstrating that among the categories of children with parents working overseas (mother abroad, father abroad, and both parents abroad)



children with an absent mother were slightly more susceptible to illness (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004 p.45). While there was no indication of this in the present case study, through the literature this marks the beginning of a trend in this direction.

### ***Educational Impacts***

With respect to scholastic performance, the majority of respondents in this study indicated that their children both enjoyed and were successful in school.

During the year, they got some awards for school, and they're very active. - Stan

My last one he's not supposed to be allowed to go school, because he's just going to turn four, but he likes to go with his brothers. They all like school. - Bart

Actually my eldest daughter has a scholarship at the school. Yes, and the other one, the third one, she gets a privilege because at this school with the three sisters, one is free. So I have only one tuition fee for them, for my children. This college is semi-private. - Meggy

Yes, he likes school, and he speaks more since he started school, he's very talkative. If you ask a question he will answer you...too much. - Raphael

He's enjoying school, being with the other children. - Nora

In their study of elementary school aged Filipino children Battistella and Conaco (1998) found that children of migrant parents generally got lower grades than their classmates and this finding was most pronounced in children with migrant mothers. Several other more recent studies find the opposite (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004; Kandel & Kao, 2001). In particular the Hearts Apart study found that at the elementary school age the children of OFWs out performed their peers; however within the migrant categories once

more the children with migrant mothers were less likely to achieve the same academic success (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004). Generally they found many more children of migrant parents on the honour roll and involved in extra curricular activities (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004), while Parreñas (2005a) again found that there were fewer children of migrant mothers than migrant fathers on the honour roll. In the current study it was not possible to distinguish any gendered differences in the educational attainment or opportunities between daughters and sons.

The following comments express a few difficulties experienced by the children of the research participants. The statements reveal quite specific circumstances which may have been affecting the children's educational experiences: namely a history of domestic abusive; and a child who is left with a step father he does not feel comfortable with. While generalizations are not possible in this study, it is interesting (and corresponds with the literature) that both of these cases where children are struggling a bit with school are families where the mother is working overseas.

They're good in school, you know my son...he is one of the top three. In his computer subject he's one of the top four. It's excellent, he's really good. My daughter is a little bit...you know...because of the problem when she was young...the family problem she suffered with. But before, she is really good at school as well, but after that problem that we get in our family with my ex-husband, I think she lost that...I don't know...the push to study...ambition or something. But now it's coming back, its okay now, again its okay.

- Angela

School's okay, but sometimes he says 'no mama, it's hard for me' and I said 'okay, if you don't know, try to understand it, and ask dad to guide you'...'okay, I will' he says.

- Marjorie

He goes to public school. But it's hard for him now, I tell him to try his best, and he says 'okay I will mom'. He does like to go to school. 'Okay, that's fine I said, it's hard for you, so do your best', I try to understand with him.

- Marjorie

In the current study there is no way to compare the academic achievement of the children of the individuals interviewed with their classmates. However, the prevalence of positive comments regarding academic performance; and the specificity of the two cases where scholastic difficulties were expressed, lead to the interpretation that apart from the last case, the children of the participants in this study were not suffering scholastically due to their parents' work overseas.

The socio-economic advantages of having a parent working overseas seem to benefit these children in various ways including the physical well-being already mentioned. In this study children whose mothers and fathers were away equally shared a 50 percent likelihood of attending private schools. Some justified the choice based on proximity to their homes - as the extra money to travel to a public school may make the nearer private school an economically equivalent option - while others expressed the common perception that private schools are superior.

They are studying in a private catholic school...the tuition fee is really giving me [problems]...you know it's expensive...and this school was about 200 metres from our house, so instead of going to public school but you have to spend money for transportation. So I decided to make their school this private school...in the end the compensation [spending] will be the same.

- Stan

My son started last year, for the kinder, now he's going into kinder 2. He's enjoying it, and the school is just at the back side of my house, he can go just by walk. That one is a private school, and my daughter she's at the public school. She decided to go to that school, I'd like her to go to the private school, but she likes it.

- Nelly

Right now he's starting from public school, because the private school is very far away, and you spend big money on private, and public it's good also. He's only starting...but I think at grade one, if I have money, I will send him in a private school. Before I studied in a public school, that's why I wanted to send him in a private school...I think it's much better. - Raphael

In comparison with the children of non-migrants the Hearts Apart study found that a significantly higher proportion of the children of OFWs do attend private schools (40.9 percent compared to 14.9 percent) (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004).

### ***Emotional Impacts***

Children with parents away suffered in their social development and in their psychological and emotional wellbeing. This was particularly the case when the mother was abroad. (Hugo 2002, p. 36)

In reference to the context of migration in Indonesia, this finding from a recent study highlights widely held beliefs about the potential negative impacts of migration, and the pattern of gender differences (Hugo, 2002). These views or perhaps the severity of the claims are contested by several studies in the Filipino context. Without access to the children themselves, in the current study an evaluation of the emotional health and socialization of the children of the respondents can only be inferred through their parents' knowledge and estimation of their children's social adaptation.

Emotionally, it was difficult for many parents to gauge the general happiness or malaise experienced by their children. Of course for the parents of very young children it was impossible to do a deep emotional analysis, but parents of older children also struggled to respond. This feeling is reflected in the number of parents who did not feel they could comment on the general happiness of their children.

I don't know if they're happy, I cannot answer that now.

- Marjorie

All of these things my sister knows what is happening, so it's not really me, you know.

- Angela

I really cannot say if they're happy.

- Stan

Before I left he was crying, but now I don't know how he feels, but I ask my cousin how is my son. 'He's always playing outside' she said. So maybe he cannot play inside the house, I don't know.

- Marjorie

Many parents spoke of the emotional difficulties of adjusting to living in a transnational family, both for themselves and their children. As Meggie puts it, "I think they're happy, but, you know, sometimes kids need a mom, it's very difficult".

Irrespective of gender, parents worried about and connected with the pain of separation as experienced by their children.

When I go, my son, the eldest, he cries...unlike the younger one. He wants to go with me in the airport, but when I go I just go alone, I don't want any of my family there with me...because it's very hard for me, very difficult for me to go.

- Stan

I think they are happy...but sometimes you know children they need their mom. They feel also sad, because they need me. It's really different the children without parents, without mom. It's very different.

- Nelly

Sometimes when I get back here my daughter worries about me, even on the way to the airport she's crying 'why is my papa going?' Even my wife she's crying, even I don't want to go.

- Pedro

I don't know, from now maybe I'm not there. And he cannot talk always on the phone. He's afraid; I think he's afraid from my husband. Before, he cannot do or say anything to my husband, only to me, maybe he cries always. Maybe my husband gets mad at him, maybe he doesn't do the right thing, and my husband gets mad, and my son is scared. - Marjorie

I don't think that he's too happy because I'm not there at his side. I mean he's happy, but he's happier when I'm there, because he told me, 'come on daddy let's go to the beach' and I could go with him because I was always there. Now he's sad because I'm not there. We're not together in my place like before. - Raphael

Several studies performed in the Philippines use a modified 'Social Anxiety Scale' and 'Loneliness Scale' to assess the emotional health and social development of children left behind by migrant parents; on both scales the higher the score (from 0 to 12, 19, or 24) the greater the degree of anxiety or loneliness experienced by the child (Battistella & Conaco, 1998; Episcopal Commission et al., 2004). Remarkably the Hearts Apart study reports that the children of migrants surveyed in their 1,443 child study are less anxious and less lonely than the children of non-migrants (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004, p. 50). One potential explanation for this are the long hours non-migrant parents must work, associated with great levels of stress, to support their families. Perhaps the extreme situation of parenting from a distance actually places more of the spotlight on those relationships, and when one physically lives with their children (under difficult economic conditions) less time and energy are invested in the children. Aranda (2003) claims in fact that "migration actually heightens the meanings of kinship and family that may have been taken for granted before migration" (p. 623).

Generally all the children in the Hearts Apart study described themselves as somewhat happy to very happy (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004). There were no

great variances between the children of migrants and non-migrants, and within the migrant groups the children with mothers and both parents overseas responded slightly less positively (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004). Some parents in the current study also believe their children to be generally happy.

He's a happy kid...like me, always laughing.

- Rey

This being such a subjective matter, it is easy to see how parents might focus on their fears of insecurity, or the difficulties that their children face living transnationally, as opposed to assuming happiness. The sentiments of the children in this study may reflect the results of the Hearts Apart study.

Some parents in the current study said that their children experienced stress over the separation from their parent, but more identified school, and playground or sibling issues as the major stressors in their children's lives.

Sometimes when I'm talking with them on the phone, sometimes they get very stressed if they get hurt...you know, they're crying over the phone, 'my cousin hit me'. There's a pain in their heart that you are not there.

- Stan

Sometimes they get stressed about school...different subjects, money...

- Meggy

The Hearts Apart study found that for their sample school was the aspect of life that children were the most preoccupied by and was the most problematic for them (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004). This was true of children of non migrant parents as well, but the feeling was held more widely with the children of migrants. This could be related to some understanding of their parents sacrifice for them, particularly for their education, hence their greater preoccupation with school and higher grades.

In chapter five – Transnational Parenting - parents reported that they discussed the problems their children were facing, but did not want to burden or concern them with their own problems. As it turns out children may be engaging in this same strategy with their parents. Asis (2006a) reports that children will sometimes not share problems or concerns with their overseas parents due to the distance, so as not to get into trouble, or not to be burdensome to them (p. 63).

It was only upon her return that she discovered the problems her children had encountered, which they never wrote about to shield her from problems. (Asis, 2002, p. 82)

Due to lack of access to the children themselves this cannot be commented upon based on the findings of the current study.

One of the fathers in this study shared that one of his children reportedly wakes up frequently in the middle of the night without explanation, as Rey explains, “sometimes he just wakes up at 1am, I have no idea why”. The Hearts Apart survey found that the children of migrant, especially of female OFWs got less sleep than children without absent parents (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004). Other parents did not feel they could comment on the stressors affecting their children, or the whether issues their children face are normal stages of development as opposed to anything related to the distance of a parent – it is of course possible that these ‘normal’ developmental issues are exacerbated by the migration of a parent.

I cannot say. I don't know if they ever feel stressed. Every time I call them they are playing outside...they are shouting, they are singing they are laughing.

- Bart

I don't know what makes them stressed, because I'm not there, but my daughter, she's moody. I think it's normal, she's a teenager. Like when we're talking on the phone sometimes I can feel that she's frustrated...or I don't know.

- Angela



Strong rain makes him too scared because before there's a typhoon in the Philippines...they waters go deep into the house, so he feels scared from the start. He got scared too much in the typhoon.

- Raphael

### ***Impacts on Socialization***

Somewhat unsurprisingly all parents, irrespective of gender, thought their children were well socialized. They described good relationships with siblings, cousins and classmates.

Only the children of the neighbouring house [are around my children]...because sometimes they are visiting the neighbouring house, going back to my house, because you know in the province people are very close, very friendly.

- Pedro

She has many friends; they are always coming in my house [Laughs].

- Nelly

Before [when we lived in Manila] he didn't have any friends because he was just in the house.

But now he can go out of the house where we moved in Mindanao. He can play together with his cousin.

- Raphael

Other family members providing care for the children of OFWs were instrumental in conveying values and social norms. The Hearts Apart study found that there is great convergence in the values passed on to the children of migrants and non-migrants.

Overwhelmingly kindness, generosity and sensitivity to other people; belief in God (with the vast majority of the children identifying themselves as Roman Catholic); and the importance of family emerged as the most important values for the elementary school aged children (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004). The level of information garnered in

the current study was not as specific with respect to the value formation of the children of migrant parents, but the importance of religion was very clearly confirmed.

Sunday always they are going to church - Nelly

I'm not sure if they attend church...because they are studying at a catholic school, so I don't know if my in-laws will bring them to church on Sundays too. I never asked. - Stan

He goes to a catholic school, just at the back of the church. - Nora

My brother and sister they have a small business, so they need to tend the business more than they can make it to church, but on special occasions they all go. - Bart

As opposed to being deprived, several studies indicate that having a parent working overseas increases the socio-economic status of the children who remain in the Philippines (Battistella & Conaco, 1998; Episcopal Commission et al., 2004; Hugo, 2002). As discussed in the previous chapter, this is one of the explicit goals of migration, and one of the factors promoting its reproduction. With respect to the socialization of children there are reports of children becoming too accustomed to receiving whatever they ask for from parents struggling with the guilt of having left, and seeing this as their way of demonstrating care for their children (see Chapter six and Parreñas, 2001). Battistella and Conaco (1998) found evidence of 'spoiled' behaviour in 23 percent of the children in their study (p. 226), which is supported by other literature<sup>7</sup>.

For the most part parents identified 'normal' kid behavioural issues – fighting with cousins, worrying about school, getting scraped up in the school yard – and believed their children to be generally happy.

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<sup>7</sup> See Parreñas 2005a and Nagasaka, 1998.

Sometimes they fight, they argue a lot [her son and daughter]

- Marjorie

Sometimes he's fighting with the grandchild [another relative living with her son], because they are almost the same age, three years old and four years old.

- Nora

However these relationships were not without challenges for both children and parents. Parreñas (2005a) identifies four potential challenges to the functioning of transnational families: the overburdening of kin care-givers; threats or breakdown of marriages; the emotional distance between the parents and the children; and the risk that the children do not receive sufficient guidance (p. 161). It is only appropriate and feasible at this point to comment on the final two of these challenges (the second was discussed in chapter seven and sufficient data was not collected to discuss the first).

With some sadness, some parents reported that they really could not comment on their kids' sense of wellness or lack thereof. This condition speaks to the existence of an emotional gap between parents and children. The instant communication technologies which have brought more simultaneity into the lives of transnational migrant networks can have a role in reducing this emotional distance as parents and children have the opportunity to share more of the small details of life which breed closeness.

She understands. She knows that we have to earn money to support her studies. She understands, but sometimes she also wants to give me advice. She's also my advisor [laughs]. ...hold on...there's two texts I have here in my mobile...'don't be sad, you have to show the children what is right, stumble to persevere, heart to be strong, falter is human, lose to try harder, pray to overcome them all' ... that's the message to me.

- Meggy

This emotional distance is best eliminated through communication, both with children and the other parent or caregiver.

Unfortunately there are two cases in the current study which seem to fall prey to Parreñas' (2005a) fourth challenge of transnational parenting: the risk that the children do not receive sufficient guidance.

My mother in law she's the first person, next to my wife, having some respect for my children, and she's gone, and now I don't know. And my wife, I told her to stay home, stay there, and take care of our children, but she's gone. ..Maybe it's her sister, my in-law who's caring for them...like that...

- Stan

I don't think that he gets enough guidance from my husband. It's different because he's not the father of my son, so it's hard for me. So I'm asking my cousin there, 'can you see my son'. I always protect only my son from now. I'm trying to ask my husband 'can you teach my son using the mobile', but he says 'no, not now'. I asked why, and he didn't answer me. Then I asked my cousin there, because it's near my house there, she said 'okay, I will'. My cousin teach my son texting, so then if something happens he can ask me.

- Marjorie

Both Stan, whose mother in law had just passed away leaving his children in a sort of 'care limbo'; and Marjorie, who feared that her elder son (of a previous relationship) was not being well cared for by her current husband understandably felt much less comfortable with the emotional care and guidance their children were receiving.

If I have something to give to my son, he [my husband] always has some questions for me, but with my daughter, never. It's hard for me to act the same way.... I'm worried for my son

- Marjorie

Aside from these two more extreme cases, the findings from the current study, supported by the in-depth perspective of the Hearts Apart study (and others) seem to show that the children of overseas parents need not suffer due to lack of guidance. It is very possible for them to be healthy, happy well-adjusted children. This statement must be tempered by the fact that several of the studies this work relies upon were completed

with children in the 10 -12 age range, and there is some reason to believe that as children move into adolescence very different emotional issues with respect to the absence of a parent may arise (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004).

A second important note deals more specifically with gendered differences. Numerous studies and authors confirm that children whose mothers have migrated for work are the most susceptible to the potential negative impacts of migration (Aranda, 2003; Battistella & Conaco, 1998; Episcopal Commission et al., 2004; Hugo, 2002; Parreñas 2005a). From their study with elementary school aged children in the Philippines Battistella and Conaco (1998) determine that,

...the single most important finding in the survey is that the absence of the mother has the most disruptive effect in the life of the children. (p. 237)

Due to the complications of the wide range of ages of the children in this study; the lack of access to the children themselves; and the parents' lack of certainty about the experience and feelings of their children, the current study has not unearthed overwhelming support for these claims. Both of the children expressing difficulties in school were children of migrant mother families. Both were dealing with somewhat exceptional circumstances, which is perhaps it is indicative of the different contexts of migration with prompt women to undertake overseas work, and contribute to the greater challenges faced by the children of migrant mothers.

As mentioned, a child's understanding of the reasons for their parents' absence is a huge factor in mediating the potential negative impacts of parental migration. In the current study most mothers and fathers explain the reasons for their absence on a regular basis (irrespective of age), in addition to their partners and / or other caregivers clarifying the reasons for the situation.

I told her already when she had grown up...I told her what is happening, what happened, because before we don't have contact with her, because we don't have telephone before. She knew me only when she was five years old, that I am her mom, when we see each other. Even my son now, I try to explain to him. Because he is always asking 'when will you go home?' why don't you go home?' 'Come now, come now' and then I explain to him why I cannot go home because we are waiting for two years for my work, so we can go home. That we are working here to make money for you.

- Nelly

Sometimes he understands, sometimes not, but my wife always explains, everyday she says that 'your father is overseas for your education'.

- Rey

Yes, he understands that I'm here so that he can go to school...'we need money' I said... that we need to sacrifice, but that I'm not going for so long. 'If I can't stay here, we cannot eat I said'. 'Okay, I will he said'.

- Marjorie

When I ask them [if they know why I'm here] they just answer me quickly. They tell me 'its money...to eat, to go to school', you know. Simple as that, without feeling they just tell me like that...straightly.

- Stan

From these responses it is clear that it is not always easy to communicate the reasons for what can seem like abandonment to a child. The intellectual and the emotional separation can be tough to reconcile for an adult, let alone a child any stage of development. The success of this strategy is largely dependent on the age of the child.

My daughter understands why I'm away, but my son, not really. He's so young...you know...and when I left coming here he's only more than a year old. When I left the first time my daughter was 10 months old.

- Angela

My wife explains to my daughters that I am here for our people, to support our family, to support the study of my brothers, some other expenses to support, all for my family. It's the most important, that's why I'm here. We have to explain it all to my daughter; even she's five years old, so that she can understand that her father is away for the family. - Pedro

As far as now he doesn't understand why I'm here. But I always speak to him, and try to talk to him like this...why I am far from him. - Raphael

I'm not sure if they understand why I am working overseas, but their mother, she is explaining everything to them, about why I'm here. But I don't know what they think about it, they ask always for toys...always toys. - Bart

Most of the respondents claimed that from around the age of five years their children had clearly understood the reasons for living apart from their parent, and while many had felt their children's sadness, none reported their children expressing anger or resentment over their decision to work overseas. One could hypothesize that these emotions may emerge more in the teenage years. In these voices we also hear the hope that the message has been received.

He [her four year old] knows that I'm working here because I want to earn money for him. - Nora

She's not angry, she's understanding, just she needs to go not seeing me very long time. But I explain to her like this, I go four years without seeing them, so I explain to her like this...'here's why I cannot go home, because I need to get a house, and then my money is not enough, so that's why I cannot go home, that's why I always extend my contract' - Nelly

The survey completed for the Hearts Apart study found that on average mothers left to work overseas when their children were between five and nine years old, and fathers left

when their children were slightly younger (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004, p. 16). In the current study the average age of the children of migrant mothers (on departure) was 5 years old (which was bumped up significantly by one mother who did not depart until three of her five kids were over 17 years old, meaning the mean is much lower), and the average for fathers was two years old.

He was only eight months when I left the first time. It's very very hard to go on the plane. My wife is in the airport, and she is crying and I am crying.

- Raphael

He was one and a half years old when I left, so I haven't seen him since then. [Her son is now 4 years old.]

- Nora

Maybe he's around three when I first went to Japan, I can't really remember.

- Rey

I was here already when my second daughter was born, because you cannot stay for longer than six months, usually the company does not allow you to stay for longer than two or three months, because your visa will expire, maybe they will terminate you by the company.

- Pedro

When I first left I think they were 4, 3 and 2.

- Bart

When I left the first time my eldest was one year and three months, then I deliver my second baby away. My third daughter was 2 years old when I left. So the last one is 15 years later [laugh]...I left when she's two months old.

- Meggy

In her study of Honduran transnational families Schmalzbauer (2004) identifies that transnational parenting is the most difficult when the children are younger and are not able to understand where their parents are; it is especially difficult when there is so



little contact that the parents are forgotten entirely<sup>8</sup>. Given that the ages of the children when their parent first left are slightly lower than what literature would lead us to expect in this study there is potentially a greater risk of children feeling an emotional gap from their parents in this study, and perhaps more negative impacts will be suffered by these children.

Despite the reoccurring theme in the literature of the importance of making it clear to children in transnational nuclear families why their parents are working overseas, the Hearts Apart study found that only 51 percent of children in these households said that their families had discussed why their parent was gone (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004, p. 18). This surprising finding does not seem to be reflected in the data gathered for the current study, however perhaps it is again indicative of the difficulty of communicating in a deep meaningful way to a young person why one of the most important people in their life might be absent.

In her book titled 'Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes', Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2005a) identifies several other key factors which can mediate the impacts of transnational migration on children. Parents expressed that their children fared better when parents were able to monitor the situation carefully, implying open communication with the other parent or caregiver. This not only ensures that the children are receiving guidance, it also ensures that children know that their parent is being kept up to date on their activities leading them to feel more loved and less left behind. She also pinpoints the value of having the whole family involved in large visible projects (house building is the best example). Tangible demonstrations of the use

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<sup>8</sup> Also see Asis, 2002.

of the money help children to understand and feel united in the family strategy of transnational migration (Parreñas, 2005a).

This chapter has traced the impacts of transnational migration of a parent back to the children left behind in a country of origin. Despite the limitations mentioned in the data collection for this section, with the support of several well done studies of the same nature conducted in the Philippines a number of interesting points emerge. The perceived benefits of migration do seem to reach children in some respects. The children of migrant parents seem to be healthy and due to the advantages of private school and the added emphasis (and perhaps pressure) placed on education by their parents achieve well at school. In fact there is evidence that they outperform their peers in both of these domains. Already a very interesting gender pattern emerges, whereby of all configurations of migrant parents (father abroad, mother abroad, and both parents abroad) the children of migrant mothers do not perform as well as the other groups mentioned.

It is much more difficult in absentia to assess the emotional health and socialization of children of transnational migrant parents. Many of the parents (of both genders) had great difficulty commenting on the happiness of their children or what sources of stress may be for their children. Most parents worried about the pain of separation their children may be experiencing, but despite this felt that their children were well socialized. Literature suggests that children may not be open with their parents about problems they are facing, to avoid overburdening them or being punished.

For children, two main risks in transnational families are the emotional gap which may separate them from their parents, and the lack of proper guidance with their other parent or caregiver. In this study it seems that the lack of information the parents were

able to give about the emotional wellness of their children may indicate the presence of an emotional gap. This is of course a tentative suggestion, given the lack of supporting data. Two respondents in particular were struggling with the lack of guidance their children were receiving. More generally, the younger age of many children in the sample, and the difficulty of ascertaining subjective (and fluid) information from a third source prohibit blanket statements that these children are suffering. The literature clearly suggests that there are risks, but that children can survive and adapt quite well in these circumstances.

To mediate risks, the strategies of communicating the reasons for migration to the children, monitoring the situation, and engaging in visible projects with remittance money to display the reasons for the absence of a parent were suggested by literature. Parents in this study all attempt to use the first strategy, however the average low age of their children could stymie its effectiveness, as demonstrated in their comments about whether they feel their children have understood that communication. As demonstrated in the preceding chapters of this thesis, to varying degrees of usefulness all of the participants in the study attempted the other two strategies – monitoring the situation through regular communication with their children and their caregivers, and through the construction of homes - but individual circumstances (including the amount of time someone had been overseas, status of their partner, etc) strongly mediated outcomes.

The literature strongly supports the position that children whose mothers are working overseas have the greatest likelihood of suffering the negative effects of migration. This is intrinsically tied to the persistent gendered constructions of familial roles and responsibilities - while it is now more acceptable for women to be

breadwinners, society still expects them to manage the home and do the carework as well. As one of the participants in this study (Stan) told his wife, “it’s your responsibility, you should be there, it [the problems the family is having] won’t happen if you’re there”. The implication is that in addition to the general lack of involvement of fathers when the mother is working abroad, it is potentially more the negative construction of absentee mothers that result in adverse impacts. The distance between the expectation of a widely held societal norm and the realities of local and global demands for income and labour is particularly difficult for children to mentally reconcile, and this may result in more pain of separation for the children of migrant mothers. Parreñas (2003) states that,

...the overwhelming public support for keeping migrant mothers at home does have a negative impact on these children’s adjustment. Implicit in such views is a rejection of the division of labour in families with migrant mothers, and the message such children receive is that their household arrangements are simply wrong. (p. 53)

Studies show that men are less likely to take over the guidance of children. In her 2005 study Rhacel Salazar Parrenas (2005a) found that most children of migrant mothers do not have any contact with their fathers, the findings of the current study echo this pattern. Other female family members are usually the caregivers for children whose mothers are working abroad, but there seems to be a large mental hurdle in terms of living apart from one’s mother. Meggie, a mother of four who has been migrating to work both within the Philippines and overseas for almost 20 years, voices her traditional notions of the role of motherhood as compared to fatherhood, “kids need a mom”. These ideas seem to lead to more pain for both the mother and the children in families where the woman is deemed to have greater opportunities for overseas work than men – an increasing phenomenon in the Philippines today.

With some degree of certainty it is possible to say that the children of the participants in this study are faring well physically and scholastically. More debate exists over their emotional health and socialization. The young age of some of the respondents' children may indicate that they struggle more to understand the context of their familial configuration, and the two exceptional cases presented indicate that the risks are very serious. As the children of these men and women pass through different developmental stages they will face the normal challenges associated with growth and change; living apart from their mother, more so than living apart from their father may exacerbate those challenges.

## **Chapter 9 Creating a Culture of Migration**

The transformation of the Philippines into a country of migrants has bred alarm, angst and anxieties about the future of the family, and, by extension, Filipino society in general. (Asis 2006a, p. 46)

Thus far this thesis has explored the contexts of migration; the transnational relationships that Filipino parents have maintained with their children; the social and economic remittances which they have transmitted to the Philippines; and the potential impacts of these activities on their children. This chapter will move further into an analysis of the impacts of transnational migration on the families, communities and the societies from which migrants draw parts of their social networks. Specifically it will investigate the presence of a culture of migration, discussing the elements of the current study which support the creation and reproduction of these conditions.

A culture of migration can be thought of as a general atmosphere which predisposes members of a community, region, or nationality to migrate. To examine this condition international, national and local factors will be analyzed. While there may be some very organic local scale forces leading to this characterisation; the contribution of larger, often very distant, structural forces to this phenomenon cannot be ignored. The role of families and communities in the circularity of migration will be considered before presenting the contributions of macro policies and conditions to the creation of a 'culture of migration' in the Philippines. Both relevant literature and data collected from the twelve participants in the current study will be used to assess the situation.

[This] migration culture is based, to a large extent, on family relations centering on the parent-child tie and involving extensive and diffuse networks of exchange which integrate migrants and the families they leave behind into coherent social fields. (Fog Olwig, 1999, p. 280)

The concept of circularity or a ‘culture of migration’ implies much more than whether or not the children of migrant parents feel inclined to follow in their parents footsteps, or the sheer volume of migration; although it is astounding that in 2006 for the first time the number of Filipinos deployed to work abroad (as new and re-hires) exceeded one million people (POEA, 2006), meeting the goal set by the Filipino government in 2001 for the first time (Asis, 2006b). When members of a community “valorize foreign wage labour positively, along with the behaviours, attitudes and lifestyles associated with it” there emerges a predilection towards migration, which is widely accepted as a reasonable livelihood option (Kandel & Massey, 2003, p. 982). This can intensify local hierarchies and displays of wealth and status through the conspicuous consumption of remittance receiving families in comparison to their neighbours; involving networks of people much beyond those who have actually migrated. In the Indian context Ali (2007) argues that,

The culture of migration, by shaping the effects of migrant remittances, transforms traditional ideas of marriage and status and links them instead to migratory movements. Thus migration changes local culture in a way that affects not only those families that send migrants abroad, but also those who remain at home. (p. 38)

This statement implies potent social remittances in Ali’s (2007) case study in Hyderabad, India; as he notes changes in the observation of marriages and other ceremonies, as well as alterations in the type of partner which is desirable, ‘gulf-employed’ now ranking very high on the list (p. 46).

Children, especially the children of migrant parents, are in key positions to be exposed to the potential increases in wealth and status associated with remittances and

therefore look favourably upon migration as a livelihood option. The Hearts Apart study reports that:

The children's responses indicate that overseas migration will continue. This early, the children are already entertaining thoughts of migrating and working abroad, and their career plans are very much shaped by what would be marketable abroad. This has implications not just for the family but for the country as a whole. (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004, p. 58)

In the current study, in terms of children's opinions on migration many parents felt unable to respond due to the age of their children, or never having asked them. Some respondents were from high migration areas, where virtually every one of their neighbours had some family member working overseas, whereas others could not comment on the extent or normalcy of the phenomenon in their child's life.

In the Philippines, one of the biggest jobs [is working overseas]; especially in our place....the number one job is going overseas.

- Stan

Most of us [Filipinos] would want to work overseas...the money here...it's better to save money here. And here we don't pay tax, we don't pay our accommodation, we don't pay our transportation...so that's our savings. Apart from that it's about the exchange of money.

- Angela

In the few cases of parents with older children, some were entering into studies or careers which are in demand in overseas locations, and others still had expressed the desire, or were already overseas working in Doha and in other destinations, supporting the finding of the Hearts Apart study. In this sample it was overwhelmingly the mothers who reported these tendencies in their children. This however can be explained by the fact that on average the children of the mothers were 15 years old whereas the children of the



fathers averaged just five years old, implying less ability to think about migration or future plans in any serious sense.

Yes, he has a dream, because when he was two years old...there was a contest on the radio, and he said to me, 'daddy I want to join this contest, because I want to have a house and I want to have a car and anything that I want'.

- Raphael

My son is funny, he wants to be batman! Before he wanted to be the Spiderman, it's different; it's all about for fun. But maybe five years from now, some of them will say, 'I'm gonna be a doctor, or I'm gonna be an attorney'. But at this time it's all about superheroes!

- Bart

Actually they never told me anything like that [what their dreams are] and I want to let them feel their childhood, play, don't think about the future. Maybe in a few more years I'll know something like that.

- Stan

My sister in law just told me that sometimes he wants to be a police, sometimes a doctor, [laughs] every time changing.

- Nora

Now I ask him again, and he says 'now I have an ambition daddy, I want to study very well, because I want to have good job'.

- Raphael

By comparison the mothers were able to share more of the career aspirations (or choices) of their children. All of the children over ten years of aged have expressed interest, started studies, or already begun careers which leave them poised to work overseas (nursing, massage, seafarers, beauticians) – if they have not already departed.

Australia, she wants to work in Australia or USA, she won't come to Middle East...Inshallah. [Laughs].

- Meggie

My daughter she would like to work overseas

- Nelly

[My daughter says] ‘Mommy you’re still there, I want to work there so that we can be together.’

But if I’m back in the Philippines I think that she will stay in the Philippines too. I would rather let us to be all together, but now I have to be here, I’m still in the earning / saving period, you know.

- Angela

My second daughter wants to work overseas too.

- Penn

I told her, when you finish school, I’ll pick for you where you go...I’ll bring you here in Doha.

She says ‘I want now’ I said I can’t afford for you to study here, it’s very expensive. She wants to come here, but she’s happy when I go there. I think she’ll come here in Doha.

- Nelly

The Hearts Apart study found that 47 percent of all children, and 60 percent of the children of OFWs were interested in migrating to work abroad (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004); and Asis (2006b) reports that in a nationwide survey of 1,200 adult respondents performed in 2002, one fifth of the population of the Philippines expressed their desire to migrate. This strong propensity for the condition to reproduce itself implies that the benefits and gains perceived domestically of overseas work are persuasive. It also implies that at least a portion of the talent pool of young Filipinos is not geared towards domestic growth and innovation.

As mentioned in chapter four – Gendered Contexts of Migration – the unemployment rate in the Philippines is currently just under eight percent, implying that there are local employment opportunities (NSO, 2007). However, the Philippine Information Agency contends that the education system needs to be more responsive to the job market and that while there are jobs, the highly educated Filipino graduates lack the skills needed to fill available positions (PIA, 2007). This indicates that the ‘culture of

migration' is indeed encouraging young people to pursue careers which are in demand outside of their country, leaving less qualified applicants for domestic positions. In his study of Muslim migrants from Hyderabad, India to the Middle East and the United States Ali (2007) uncovered the same phenomenon.

...it is the culture of migration among Hyderabadi Muslim professionals and labourers that promotes migration to the US and Saudi Arabia, even though opportunities at home are greater for some, and opportunities abroad are more restricted for others. (p. 37)

With higher incomes, families receiving remittances have access to greater consumer goods, creating an allure which draws others into international migration and acting as a strategy for upward mobility (Kandel & Massey, 2002). Overseas work is seen as the route to material success, and presumably the hardships suffered are deemed not overly burdensome, or simply justifiable.

Young people who grow up and come of age increasingly expect to migrate internationally in the course of their lives. For young men, especially, migration becomes a rite of passage, and those who do not attempt it are seen as lazy, unenterprising, and undesirable as potential mates. (Kandel & Massey, 2002, p. 982)

Kandel and Massey (2002) identify gender differences in the likelihood of engaging in migration in the Mexican context, with males expressing more determination that at some point they would migrate to the United States. In the current study, one mother had a son who was already working in Doha as well, but otherwise the older children who were planning to move overseas to work happened to be young women.

The preceding analysis draws attention to the concepts of circularity and social reproduction. While true of any society, the role of the family as the key unit of social reproduction seems particularly durable in the Philippines due to the extreme value placed on family (Battistella & Conaco, 1998; Martin, 2000; Spitzer et al., 2003; Wolf,

1997). With respect to transnational migration the strength of families in the Philippines is one of the key factors which allow the health and survival of transnational families. As children learn the fundamental values of their society from secondary family members, and their parents in absentia, they are taught the importance of that unit – of the role of the mother as *ilaw ng tahanan* (light of the home or she who brings radiance to the home) and the role of the father as *haligi ng tahanan* (the pillar of the home, or he who makes the home stand) (Parreñas 2005a, p. 163).

That's the difference from Europe, the culture. Even if you have your own kids you can stay with your mother.

- Bart

This importance and durability of the Filipino family is nuanced with the inherent flexibility of household composition in the Philippines (Nagasaka, 1998). This trait makes adaptation to the challenges of living in transnational nuclear families easier, as a history of close relationships with extended family and the *Kumpadre* system (a system of reciprocal relationships akin to god parents which is based in Catholicism) allow for child fostering and households configurations which differ from the Western norm (Battistella & Conaco, 1998; Nagasaka, 1998).

A migration culture, such as exists in the Caribbean, is manifested through its families, and to be a mirror of that culture, and of that family, is to maintain an emotional or material link with the Caribbean, regardless of place of birth. (Chamberlain, 2005, p. 177)

We have a small compound, the whole family. We are three brothers and two sisters...they are all still in the Philippines...so we are very close, with the cousins and everybody.

- Bart

The Hearts Apart study showed that children were thinking and speaking about the importance of family, the sacrifice of their parents reinforced the dedication that they are expected to show for the family unit (Episcopal Commission et al., 2004). As Asis

(2002) puts it, “In the Philippines, migrating for the sake of the family runs through the script of migrants, men and women alike” (p. 74). While this is indicative of the reproduction of at least some elements of family solidarity in the Philippines, this does not rule out the long-term risk (or potential) that living in transnational nuclear families may alter the form and content of social reproduction in the Philippines.

What happened is, my daughter, since when she grew up without me, she was one year eight months [when I left]... I leave [her with] my mom, so when we saw her again, she's already five years old, so me and my daughter, we're not like really...I am her mom, you know, so that's why the relationship is only like sisters.

- Nelly

This commentary on the enduring and fluid elements of the Filipino family and the migration aspirations of the children left behind by migrant parents is not sufficient to assess the presence of a culture of migration in the Philippines. In fact this side of the equation speaks of agency; but also of responsiveness to and contiguity with global and national conditions. Running alongside the narrative of sacrificial mothers and fathers responding to the needs of their families and youngsters seeking more cosmopolitan lifestyles, are the broad structural forces which promote a culture of migration. One could argue that families and communities adjust culturally to take advantage of opportunities, which are created by events and decisions taken far beyond their control.

Starting at the national level, the Filipino state has played a large role in the creation of a culture of migration. The formation of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) in 1974 (with subsequent reorganization in 1982) was a concrete step by the national administration to promote, recruit, regulate, and filter Filipino workers to different receiving countries (Tyner, 1996). As opposed to focusing its energy on domestic diversification, the government of the Philippines has encouraged and relied

upon the overseas work of its citizens to improve the country's balance of payments and increase domestic consumption.

The Philippines is one of the largest labour exporters in the world, which can certainly not entirely be explained by flexible yet dedicated family bonds. From acquisition (and the signing of Bilateral Labour Agreements); through labour recruitment and worker training and deployment, the government is highly engaged in a gender specific process of migration (Tyner, 1996), so much so that Saskia Sassen (2003) states that the Filipino government is actively using migration as a development strategy.

One would not intuitively imagine that labour and gender dynamics in Canada would have a role in the creation of a culture of migration in the Philippines, but this is exactly the case. As presented in the second chapter of this thesis, the movement of many women into the paid labour force in the last half century has been accompanied by a shortage of labour to provide the care work – the cleaning, cooking, and child-rearing – in the global North, which have, and continue to be regarded for the most part as 'women's work'. Canada's controversial 'Live-In Caregiver Programme' (of which a majority of participants are Filipino women) is generous compared to the treatment migrant caregivers receive in many countries: it is also a rigid program based on race, class and gender concerns which places women in positions where they are extremely vulnerable to abuse (Barber, 2000). The situation in Canada, as in many countries is posited as a 'care deficit' (Hochschild, 2003; Parreñas, 2003). This phenomenon represents the structural demand that induces women to engage in migratory circuits, in turn feeding the formation of cultures of migration.

This situation is particularly pronounced in the realm of care work, but in other industries – construction in the Middle East, farm work in Canada and the United States, factory work the world over – demand for cheap, gendered labour acts as a structural draw of people out of their local economies and into the global marketplace. Gamburd (2000) reflects upon various transnational movements, “goods (oil), people (labour), money (petro-dollars) and ideas (development ideologies)” in her consideration of Sri Lankan women working in the Middle East, demonstrating the vital demand for the cheap source of labour upon which the extraction of the resource wealth from the Persian Gulf is predicated (p. 19). And of course someone must take care of the children of affluent Arabic and ex-patriot workers. This conceptualization places migration as a product of global capitalism (Georges, 1992).

In the Philippine context, Parreñas (2003) states that “care is now the country’s biggest export” (p. 41). As mentioned, the flow of care providers from the global South to the global North has been termed alternatively ‘global care chains’ or the ‘international division of reproductive labour’ (Parreñas, 2000; Yeates, 2004). Both pointing to a three tiered hierarchical system whereby women in the global South leave their own children and families with kin or paid caregivers while they migrate to care for children and elders in the global North. Nyberg Sorensen (2005) posits this as a ‘care drain’ in countries such as the Philippines, which the mothers and fathers in the current study can attest to.

The phenomenon is at its most poignant in the ‘care industry’ but the general scenario of the ‘pull’ for seasonal, contract, part-time and temporary workers in a variety

of lesser paid industries removes skilled and non-skilled workers from their families and communities to meet the production demands of other countries.

A new labour force has been increasingly segmented, deskilled, and globalized into a new international division of labour increasingly independent of specific places and their populations across the world. (Ryan, 2002, p. 103)

The Filipino government has worked hard to promote Filipino workers as reliable, docile, competent, and low-cost, to place them competitively alongside citizens from other countries who may vie for the contracts, and remittance income they are interested in (Tyner, 2000 & 1996). The result of these large scale structural machinations is the widespread migration of Filipino men and women to work in a range of sectors, the subsequent increase in conspicuous consumption of their families, and the propagation of the trend as those who have remained in the Philippines witness their ‘success’ and follow in their footsteps.

This chapter has focused on the presence of a ‘culture of migration’ based upon global and national structural conditions and the migration intentions of the children left behind by transnational parents. Overwhelmingly, as literature from several cultural contexts has suggested, in the current study those of an age to have considered such things were of a favourable disposition towards their own migration, if they had not already undertaken it. The enduring strength of the Filipino family (as expressed by parents and children) ensures the social reproduction of both the positive and negative perspectives on migration. In this realm migration seems set to continue as a strategy for Filipino families: despite the associated risks and pain, as a Dominican migrant told Sorensen (2005), “in order to move up you need to move elsewhere” (p. 228).



Transnational migration is a site for both the strengthening of traditional expectations and the broadening of opportunities and ideas, through the movers themselves, the children they leave behind, their communities and societies. While prompted and regulated by larger structures, there remains a great degree of agency, interpretation and broad diversity in transnational experiences. Ethnicity, class and gender shape the way that individuals are channelled and treated in global migration, and reflect back upon the absorption, rejection or 'creolization' of the social transfers involved in transnational networks (Foner, 1997). The social reproduction of gender roles in particular seems to have some continuity within the family, however there are indications that some women and men are widening their perspectives on gender roles, and will one day be able to filter these altered impressions through to their children.

It is a strong relationship, before when he was two months I was the one to take care of him because I didn't have work and my wife was working,...from two months to eight months I was the one to take care of my son, that's why I know. That's why I miss him too much.

- Raphael

I don't think anything; it's up to me to do what I want! [On having her first child without being married]. It was hard for me to get married, I cannot go anywhere that I want anymore...before, okay, I can go anywhere where that I want...then I was free.

- Marjorie

These reconfigurations take place through windows opened by relationships of global supply and demand: individuals bodily move to serve a system mediated by governments and corporations. Saskia Sassen (2003) calls on us to "recapture the geography behind globalization", in order to "recapture its workers, communities and work cultures" (p. 257). While Filipino fathers and mothers, particularly single mothers, deem labour migration to be their best option of a moment to achieve a standard of living

and lifestyle they aspire to for their children, they will respond to the structural forces surrounding them. When the chain is broken; when the Filipino government redirects its attention inward or the fuel for growth or travel dries up, Filipino parents will no longer have to make the tough choices.

## Chapter 10 Conclusions

This study has explored the gendered experiences of Filipino transnational mothers and fathers. The goals of the study were to better understand how males and females experience transnational parenting, and what the impacts on their children and home societies are. A great deal of data was collected from the twelve people who were interviewed in the study, as well as from an extensive range of scholarly articles and books. After briefly recapping the general findings in each thematic area of data analysis, the findings will be synthesized to comment upon the broader issues.

The first thematic area was the context of migration, which confirmed the assumptions that for this sample both the lack of well paying employment opportunities in the Philippines and the draw of the economic boom in Qatar were the main reasons for migration. Respondents of both genders spoke of poverty and the need to feed their families; however, the class-based bias towards those of slightly higher means having access to migration suggested by the literature was demonstrated in this study, through the general high level of education of the participants (all but three had some form of education beyond high school). Both male and female participants expressed agency in the decision to work in Qatar, but some mentioned directly that there really were no other options, demonstrating the extent to which macro-level factors or *geographic scales* beyond their control define the scope of individual agency. Based on this sample, one could tentatively support literature suggesting that women make more use of transnational networks than men do, given the greater number of women who had sisters, children or other family members working near them in Doha or in the region.

Perhaps the most interesting finding from this chapter was that the majority of the women in the sample were single mothers, while all the men were married (one was engaged but eagerly awaiting his wedding). This study cautiously suggests that labour migration presents an opportunity for women who are in a somewhat un-socially acceptable state to escape some social judgment and provide for their families. However, the macro level determinants of migration increase the complexity of the decision-making process: women are placed in contradictory positions as they respond to global demand for their work. In the national discourse of the Philippines women are both encouraged and praised for their economic contribution, at the same time as they can be subject to criticism for leaving their children and families. This research provides an interesting pilot for a larger study which should not control for gender, and has a larger, random, representative sample to explore this phenomenon.

There were many commonalities in the sample in terms of transnational parenting: irrespective of gender the situation is the most painful in the first few years of separation; parents show their love and support for their children by sending money (in addition to care and concern expressed through telephone calls and mediation through a spouse or other caregiver); and if the parent leaves when the child is very young they seem to develop a different kind of relationship with their parent, more of a sibling nature. Technological advances in information and communication technologies do not change the nature of transnational relationships, but they do allow people to be more 'present' for the day-to-day events in the lives of their loved ones.

One of the most interesting findings in this sample is that there was no great gender difference in the frequency and for the most part in the nature of the contact that

parents maintained with their children. One other study reports this finding as well, but its surprising break from prescribed gender roles merits further examination. As suggested in chapter six - Transnational Parenting - particularities of the sample, the methods of data collection or a practical expansion of fathering roles are potential explanations for this finding.

Based on profession, the sample did not represent the average Filipino father working in Qatar, and the study group also contained two men who had grown up without their fathers present, which may have broadened or changed their thoughts on fathering. The younger age of the children of the fathers as compared to those of the mothers resulting in more general ‘stock’ answers, as well as a lack of time or interview style may have missed some of the nuance and texture, which in fact differentiate the long distance relationships which the mothers and fathers in this study maintained with their children back in the Philippines. The final possibility is that in the special conditions of long distance parenting men are putting forth more effort towards their children than they would if they were living proximate to them. Given other indications in the current study of the continuity of gendered notions of mothering and fathering, if this third explanation is the case, I hypothesize that their practical behaviour has changed, but the ideologies which both the men and the women wield with respect to mothering and fathering remain unchanged (based on evidence from other parts of the data analysis).

The theme of economic remittances resonates from the macro through to the micro level of analysis; their importance in transnational networks is demonstrated by the fact that on average the participants in this study were supporting six family members back in the Philippines. Gender-wise, women in the sample earned more than men (due

to their greater age and number of years experience working abroad) but men remitted a higher proportion of their salaries. All families used remittances both for basic consumption and for productive investments (building and renovating homes, education costs, opening small businesses), and it was overwhelmingly women who both provided the care work for children and acted as administrators of remittances for both mothers and fathers, neither of which provide a break from gendered social norms in the Philippines.

While equally important, social remittances were more difficult to track, as the mothers and fathers live in multi-cultural contexts whereby they interact with Qatari nationals, as well as citizens of many other Asian and Western countries. Extrapolating social remittances was also greatly hindered by lack of access to the Philippine-based portions of the participants' social fields. This said, in this case study the adoption of new technologies is a presumed by-product of the participation in transnational networks for both the 'movers' and their families; as is the acceptance of business and entrepreneurial skills, dependent on the subject and what type of work experience they were gaining in Qatar. The theme of gender runs strongly through the entirety of this paper, so it was natural to investigate the presence of altered gender precepts through social remittances.

Mirroring most literature on the topic, in this case study there are examples of both enduring traditional gender ideologies as well as transformations in the way that males and females think about and perform mothering and fathering. To give one brief example of each: the general trend that carework and household budgeting was largely delegated to women in the Philippines speaks to the enduring nature of a gendered

division of labour; however, as indications of potential change, one man back in the Philippines was a full-time caregiver, another had spent six months doing all of the care work for his infant son, and as previously mentioned the fathers in the sample were *practically* engaging in the same distance caring activities as the mothers (this final point is a tentative suggestion, based on the other potential explanations outlined in chapter six).

The impacts on the children of global migration were one of the principal foci of this study. Generally, the findings indicate that the families in this study were able to engage in mitigation activities, meaning that the impacts on their children need not be overly harmful. Literature suggests that the children of transnational parents benefit from increased familial consumption and educational opportunities; as demonstrated by higher measurements for weight and height, the receipt of awards and increased presence on the honour roll of the children of migrants as compared to their peers. The single sited nature of this study can neither corroborate nor challenge these findings, but they do seem plausible based on the information provided by the parents.

The literature implies that negative impacts are centred around the gap between parents and children and a lack of guidance; which were both present in the sample group of this study, but in a few select cases as opposed to more generally. The gender perspective reveals that of different categories of migrant families, children with mothers abroad tend to suffer more from the negative impacts and enjoy the positive impacts to lesser degrees. Again there the findings of this study cannot speak to this trend in the literature. This last piece of information does demonstrate a general degree of durability in gendered expectations of mothers and fathers in the Philippines. It is worthwhile

noting that whether or not children and parents can survive distance relationships without major trauma seems secondary to the point that for the vast majority of families it is challenging, and involves pain for all parties involved.

The final area of findings discussed the creation of a culture of migration in the Philippines. This is overwhelmingly the case based on the numbers of Filipinos being deployed to work overseas; personal accounts of friends, neighbours and family members engaging in the practice; the aspiration of all of the children in the sample (who were of an age to have considered such options) to work overseas, if they were not already doing so; national studies indicating the desire of adults and children alike to work overseas; the international ‘pull’ mechanisms which continue to demand cheap, gendered and racialized labour; and the policy engagement of the government of the Philippines in promoting labour migration. Clearly some of these variables exist in reaction to others, but as trends emerge they also tend to take on wings of their own in a culture of migration. Whether the net balance of impacts from labour migration in the Philippines is positive or negative, it will not come to an end until these conditions cease to exist.

It seems pertinent to zoom out to the larger question of the role of migration in development. This study seems to indicate that in the context of transnational parenting, whether or not it is survivable, it is difficult and there are unavoidable negative consequences. If one measures development in terms beyond the economic - encompassing values of subjective wellbeing, equity, spiritual fulfillment, environmental sustainability, or empowerment - it is not being served by migration of the sort described in this study.



Amartya Sen (2000) speaks of development as the expansion of choice. This conceptualization resonates with the experiences of the participants in the current study on many levels. As individuals and families examined options to keep food on the table and put their children through school, labour migration seemed like the best *choice*. However examining the structural conditions mediating the options of these families, these seem to be *choices* made in the absence of other viable alternatives. This is not an amenable condition for empowerment – for people being able to take charge of and have control in their own lives – or for development. Paradoxically, were the government of the Philippines (or other countries) to suddenly implement policies curtailing migration, people would be left worse off in terms of survival options and *choices* for their lives and those of their children. Clearly a focus on internally driven national development is a long-term goal, and would involve a range of domestic policies alongside the slow retreat of the governments' promotion and facilitation of international labour migration.

The fact that the women and men who participated in this study experienced migration and transnational parenting in different ways is not surprising. Gender permeates the experience from the macro scale of global demand for labour down to the personal ideologies of the men and women navigating transnational networks. The most general finding is that women suffer disproportionately - through societal and their own expectations of what mothering should look like – as do their children. Alongside this generalization is the escape mechanism that migration seems to provide for single mothers. The ability to provide a decent standard of living for their children and live relatively free of judgment on one's social status is arguably a very positive thing for women; however as it nourishes children it also puts them in some jeopardy.

The impact of economic remittances in the health and educational prospects of children contribute to the development of families, communities and the Philippine nation. Continuing the trend of overseas work through a culture of migration where by young people tailor their skills to the international marketplace does not serve development in the Philippines in those same ways. Nor do the risks to the emotional health or socialization of Filipino children bode well for coming generations.

Social remittances are inevitably very important impacts of migration, which will be further discussed in years to come as potential fractures in the social reproduction of values, ideas and behaviours in the 'home' context. A study with less breadth and more depth is required to trace and assess the impacts of social remittances through 'home' communities. Intuitively the negotiation between gender continuity and change will continue to circulate through transnational social networks, morphing as it does so. Of import here is the idea of 'indigenization', 'creolization', or 'hybridization'; as no practice, behaviour, value, attitude, skill or piece of knowledge is transmitted through a social network without being altered through the new eyes that experience it.

In the final analysis, despite the benefits of transnational migration presented in this thesis, the risks are substantial enough to preclude its consideration as a viable development policy. This comment is not of terrific worth, because as long as the global order maintains its current form and the demand for low paid, gendered labour exists, nations and individuals will rise to meet this need. The structural forces are enlarged, as we respond to greater environmental pressure and travel by conventional means (with conventional fuel sources) may become no longer viable, but while there is a demand and a route to make it work, people will continue to respond to economic and social pressures

through migration. This suggests that the development policies then enter into the realm of providing viable domestic options so that people are not ‘forced’ to migrate. Policy responses should include broadening notions of citizenship to protect people in whichever country they may be working, and intensified efforts at damage mitigation and the provision of services to ease the risks and pain of transnational migrants and their families.

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## Appendix 1 Interview Questionnaire

### Migration History

1. Describe the geographic distribution of your family and the history of such distribution. *[Who lives where? Who went where when? How long have you been living here yourself?]*
2. Describe why you ended up working in Qatar? *Was it your decision? Were your family supportive of the decision? What specifically did you / your family plan to spend your earnings on?*
3. Can you briefly describe your feelings about working in Qatar and how you have been treated? *[Have you experienced discrimination living here?]*
4. When you first left the Philippines, how long did you plan to spend overseas?
5. Do you currently have any plans to return to visit or live in the Philippines? *[Explain why or why not.]*

### Connections with Children

6. Can you tell me a bit about your child / children? *[What are their ages? Genders? What grade in school are they in?]*
7. In what ways do you communicate with your child / children living in the Philippines? *[What methods do you use? How often? What kinds of things do you talk or write about? (E.g. Their problems? Your problems?) Are there differences between the contact you have with your sons and daughters?]*
8. How would you describe the strength of your relationships with your children living in the Philippines? Can you provide an example that illustrates the closeness or nature of the relationship(s)?
9. In what ways do you provide care and support for your children?
10. Do you send money and /or gifts to family or friends in the Philippines (or other countries)? On average how much do you send and how often? Who administers this money? What is it used for?

### **Impacts on Children**

11. In your absence, who takes care of the day to day needs of your child / children?  
[*Who do they live with? Where is the other parent? Who does the cooking? Does someone make sure they go to bed at a certain time? Does someone check their schoolwork?*]
12. Are you mostly satisfied with this arrangement? [*What are the biggest challenges with this situation?*]
13. Can you tell me a bit about your relationship with your children's mother / father?
14. Describe as best you can the day to day life of your child / children? [*How is their health? Do they enjoy school? Do they attend private or public school? Are they successful in school? Do they want to continue with school? What are their dreams? Do they have many friends? Do they get along well with their sisters / brothers / cousins? Do they attend church (or another religious institution)? What makes them feel stress? Are they generally happy?*]
15. How old were they when you first left? Have you been able to visit them? How do they think about you being away from them? [*Is there any resentment? Do they understand why you are working overseas?*]
16. What are their thoughts on migration? Do your children have friends or classmates whose parents are also working overseas? Do you talk about such matters with your kids?

## Appendix 2 Survey Questionnaire

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**This Information will be Kept Confidential**

**Please answer the questions you feel comfortable with**

1. **Chosen Pseudonym** \_\_\_\_\_
  2. **Year of birth** \_\_\_\_\_
  3. **Gender (M / F)** \_\_\_\_\_
  4. **Number of children living in the Philippines** \_\_\_\_\_
- 
5. When did you arrive in Qatar? \_\_\_\_\_
  6. What was your last country of residence? \_\_\_\_\_
  7. What was your immigrant status on arrival in Qatar? \_\_\_\_\_
  8. What is your current immigrant status? \_\_\_\_\_
  9. What is your marital status? \_\_\_\_\_
  10. What is your ethno-cultural background? \_\_\_\_\_
  11. What is the country of origin and ethno-cultural background of your partner/spouse?  
(If Applicable) \_\_\_\_\_
  12. What religion (if any) do you identify with? \_\_\_\_\_
  13. How many members are there in your household (where you currently live)?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
How are they related? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. How many family members remain in your country of origin? \_\_\_\_\_  
 How are they related to you? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
15. What is your level of education? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Are you employed? \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes, what is your current job? \_\_\_\_\_
17. If you are employed, do you work full time? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Part time? \_\_\_\_\_
18. What was your line of employment in your country of origin, or the last country you emigrated from? \_\_\_\_\_
19. How many members of your family are presently employed? \_\_\_\_\_  
 How many are in school? \_\_\_\_\_
20. Please check which average **household** (yourself and your spouse) income you came closest to last year (**values in Philippine Pesos**). [If you prefer, state an estimate of your average household income in whichever currency you feel most comfortable with. \_\_\_\_\_]

<b>Under 60,000</b>	
<b>Between 60,001 and 100,000</b>	
<b>Between 100,001 and 150,000</b>	
<b>Between 150,001 and 200,000</b>	
<b>Between 200,001 and 250,000</b>	
<b>Between 250,001 and 300,000</b>	
<b>Over 300,000</b>	







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