Deconstructing The Supply and Demand for Care Work: Some Policy Implications

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Abstract

Globalization has changed the topography of world markets and the processes of exchange and agreements. Some of these changes are: movements of human labor across countries; the widening wage differentials between the North and the South; the leveling up of standards of services and the changing concept of work across time and space. There are certain demographic changes that have affected the supply of and demand for labor in different countries. There is an aging population in richer countries in need of elder care and domestic service on one side, and an oversupply of labor in developing countries willing to take on the job and wage gaps amongst countries on the other. This article seeks to show (and hypothesize) that these processes of labor exchange have affected perspectives about the meaning/s of care work, which used to be work in the intimate sphere, but is now part of the public sphere. By looking into the labor market within which these movements are taking place, policy gaps were identified which the Philippine government have yet to attend to and improve on.

Keywords: globalization, concept of work, productive and reproductive work, intimate work, work in public spheres

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Introduction

Globalization has been characterized in varying degrees of perspectives and interpretations across countries and histories. In common thought and parlance, some interpret it as "the world getting smaller," "fast-changing technology," "fast-paced innovations," "digitized information," "merging cultures and changing values." Others would say "brain draining, brain sharing and brain circulation" (Daugeliene, 2009), "expansion and extension of services," "casualization and de-unionization of labor," 'sub-contracting and informalization (Hoq, 2009) of women's work," "farmers facing stiff price competition when cheaper imported farm products are allowed in local markets," "cheapening of labor and the greying area of the intimate and public spheres of work."

Globalization has also affected women's and men's work and work choices differently (Hawkesworth, 2006). Across time and countries, the meaning of work has evolved between the distinctive "intimate" and "public" divide. The divide historically emanated from the sexual division of labor, which categorized work into "work for men" and "work for women." This crystallized when the first means of production were invented (spears, bows and arrows) by men, who used them for hunting. This invention signaled the rise of male authority and power. Men were able to increase their herds of animals not just for survival but for domestication and expansion to feed all their family members and captive slaves (Engels, 1884). With the rise of male authority came the "overthrow of mother right," which gradually marginalized women across the slave and feudal forms of societies.

Henceforth, the societal transformation from industrial revolution towards capitalism intensified this segregation of work for men and work for women. Industrialization brought on the expansion of factories that produced commodities at a fastpace, both in amount and innovation, thus expanding demand for labor—primarily for men, then women.

From the home as women's intimate workplace, to public places like factories, as industries grew women's presence and contributions to work grew as well, even beyond expectation. Sociologists have typified these contributions into: (1) producing goods and services for domestic consumption; (2) producing goods and services at home

for sale or exchange elsewhere (cottage industry); (3) caregiving and volunteer work; and (4) working for pay (Lindsey, 2011).

This paper is about intimate work. Borris and Parreñas (2013) categorize intimate work as comprehensive, encompassing gender, race and class, which embody power relations, either as individual engagements or in the context of global economic transformations. The expanse of discourses around the world relating to intimate work occupies thematics such as family concerns, women's work participation in the public sphere, care work and/or elder care, and welfare states.

Others referred to it as "care work," which is the work of social reproduction required to maintain human life throughout the life-cycle (Truong, 1996), or what neo-Marxists in the 1970s called "reproductive labour" (Federici, 2010). The term "domestic worker" has also been used similarly with care workers, reproductive workers and household workers as occupational category.

My interest in this study stemmed from the fact that intimate work is very close to family concerns, and families have always been given a high and special regard not only in the Philippines but in other Asian societies (familialist) as well. Apart from its association with family concerns, intimate work has been identified to cover other home health aides. Outside the home, intimate work has been identified to include call-center operators, sperm donors, nail manicurists, housecleaners, sex workers and prostitutes (Borris, 2013). These types of work entail touch, closeness and personal care, which can be both paid and unpaid, performed to sustain day-to-day survival.

As an aside, sex work and prostitution, particularly legalization thereof, created huge debates among feminists, particularly legalization. Its settlement or disagreement ended on strategic and cultural considerations. They were not made part of this paper as they entail and deserve a different research treatment and approach.

This paper focused on care work and domestic work, which when done in everday life outside of one's own home, reveals that intimacy and work entailing intimate acts can have monetary value. (Borris & Parreñas, 2013). As we open our understanding of intimate work moving to the public sphere, this paper culled some questions and concerns deserving policy propositions, primarily seeking the protection of labor in the intimate sphere, and a point of leverage across country engagements and positioning.

Objectives of the Study

With these as backdrop, this paper aims to: (1) deconstruct the supply and demand of "intimate work" with its meaning amidst globalization and migration; (2) present differing conditions of women migrant domestic workers in selected countries; and (3) identify possible policy gaps emanating from these conditions.

Importance of the Study

In the world of work, no matter how ubiquitous, women's contributions are invisible, if not marginalized or trivialized. By getting into the nuances of the concept of work, we are: (1) creating new knowledge about viewing work from different contexts and perspectives; (2) providing novel ways of understanding work situations with inclusivity rather than fragmentally; (3) broadening possibilities for adjustments and interventions; and (4) setting opportunities for policy formulation.

Scope of the Study

This paper focuses on care workers, both domestic and institutional, and migration to selected countries in Asia and the Middle East. Data used were taken from secondary sources.

Research Approach and Methods Used

As an approach, the paper takes a feminist perspective and positioning. Qualitative research, being complex and multi-disciplinary, is used because it fits the study of globalization. The study uses deconstruction as a tool to analyze the supply, demand, and changing concept of work, from being intimate to public, across time and considering contexts and contents. A more detailed discussion of deconstruction is included in the review of related literature. Specific quantitative data, taken from secondary sources, are used to provide a concrete situationer for women migrant workers in care work in three selected countries.

Review of Related Literature

On globalization and migration. Globalization as a phenomenon encompasses our economic, political, social and cultural lives both at the macro and micro levels. The macro phenomena are the multinationals with their huge capital investments, international migration of people, and movements of billions of remittances, among others. The micro phenomena refer to changing relationships in the workplaces, cultural integration and repulsion, as the case maybe, and adapting work attitudes and behaviors with changing management styles. Common to both is the closer interconnectedness, communication and exchange, despite physical distance (Eriksen, 2010).

David Harvey (1989, as cited in Eriksen, 2010) calls it "time and space compression." Technological innovation has a lot to do with it. Whoever has access to technology can transform economies faster and with greater efficiency. Speed in transportation is part of it.

Globalization goes hand in hand with modernization. In a modernizing world, with the gift of technology, what used to be concrete and tangible has become abstract and virtual. Trading takes place via cyberspace. Payments can be done across the miles with values of commodities agreed upon and consummated through the Internet. These changes in technologies though, Eriksen emphasized, should be placed in proper context. Different societies and cultures react and respond to technology innovations differently.

Globalization has created huge amount of wealth for some, but there are also losers. For countries not as economically and technologically advanced, the playing field for trading and engagement is not fair. Each country's fundamentals are disparate. However, struggling countries like the Philippines participating in a trading body, like the World Trade Organization (WTO), face an engagement with difficulty.

Eriksen (2010) presented globalization's dialectics as a two-edged sword. With globalization, the world has shrunk, has become borderless and quick to cross, but with globalization, the world has also expanded as we become more aware of our differences, thus widening the North and South divide. It has homogenized work standards, labor markets, work practices and lingual expressions, but it has brought heterogenization with the realities of diversities. It has brought centripetal forces among countries connecting people through

multi-media, but it is also centrifugal as it has made us aware of our uniqueness as a nation and race.

In the Philippines, labor has moved from the country of origin to more developed nations in a search for greener pastures. This is the take-off point of this paper's objective to look into the changing concept of work—from the intimate sphere to the public sphere.

Filipino migration has been going on for more than a century. The first wave of Filipino migrants, about 120,000 in all, went to Hawaii to work in pineapple plantations from years 1906 to 1934 (Asis, 2006). Even now, Filipinos continue to move to find better opportunities abroad.

To date (February 2013), there are more than 10 million Filipino migrants spread out in 192 countries (David, 2006). As social scientists say, a Filipino diaspora is occurring—the word "diaspora" coming from the Greek word *"sporas,"* meaning "scattered like seeds" (David, 2013).

After the first wave came the second wave of professionals in the 1960s to the 1970s, followed by the third wave, a mix of professionals and semi-skilled workers in the 1980s to the 1990s. Since then, even house work has been exported. Remittances from OFWs have been estimated at US$2 billion monthly, fueling the economy. The country has yet to see these amounts go beyond consumption, to see them become productive to make multiple returns to diasporic investments.

Like globalization, migration is double-edged. With the benefits comes the cost. It is said that for every 4,000 Filipinos on average who leave the country every day, an average of four Filipinos come back in caskets. Social costs are inevitable, such as long parental absences resulting in unguided or misguided growing children, family dysfunctions, and worst of all, horrible stories of violence and abuse inflicted upon our workers in foreign lands. Yet, the diasporic story does not end.

On deconstruction. Historically, deconstruction is interconnected both with structuralism and poststructuralism. Structuralism and post-structuralism are streams of literary criticisms in Western schools during the 20th century. Deconstruction emanated from structuralism. Structuralism as a code of thinking and method of analysis was practiced during the 20th century. It originated with Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 - 1913), a Swiss linguist who focused

on conventions about how language functions. Saussure preferred to value the 'rules' in language rather than 'expressions' of language. He was more concerned with deep structures rather than surface what actually happened. According to Saussure's critics, his approach was synchronic (existing now) rather than diachronic (existing and changing over time).

As a structuralist, Saussure considered the relationship between two words—the signifier and the signified—as fixed. For example, in work as a curse, the word "curse" is the signifier, and the word "work" the signified.

Curse (signifier)	Work (signified)

His analysis tends to be static rather than dynamic. This could also mean that there is only one way of looking at things and applying solution to the problem. Saussure's structuralism is said to be ahistorical as it ignores how history affects the present. As times passes and as history evolves, ways of looking at things change.

Jacques Derrida, a French philosopher (1930-2004), came upon a way of looking at word relations and word meanings differently through what he called deconstruction. Deconstruction came after structuralism; hence, it is considered within the realm of poststructuralism.

Following Derrida's paradigm, post-structuralism as a theory questions the reliability and stability of meanings (Balkin, 1996). While structuralism plays around with the so-called signifier (word) and the signified (concept), poststructuralism unfolds the flexibility of meanings, which, as we see from Budd's study *The Thought of Work* (2011), has changed across time and contexts. Derrida, therefore, thought of using deconstruction as another way of looking at events and situations.

According to Newman (2001: 4), "deconstruction is a way of reading texts—philosophical texts—with the intention of making these texts question themselves, forcing them to take account of their own contradictions, and exposing the antagonisms they have ignored or repressed."

Briefly, deconstruction can be used to: (1) critique to show or surface the incoherence of meanings; (2) show privileging of one concept over another; and (3) expose conceptual oppositions.

How do we do that? Let's use the following example of conceptual oppositions:

Paid work	Unpaid work
Privileged	Under-privileged

This way, deconstruction is able to distinguish opposite concepts with their positioning. Deconstruction exposes the different meanings and interpretations we can attribute to a text. Derrida posits that these meanings are actually fluid, and that the meaning of a word depends on the meaning of the contradictory word.

What else does deconstruction do? Is it possible to have more than one opposites? What if more than one privileging can take place at the same time?

Deconstruction as a form of analysis can also look for what is de-emphasized, overlooked or suppressed in a particular way of thinking . Hence, deconstruction can be used in policy studies to show what is there, what is not there, and what can be done next. Deconstruction tells us that texts and words can have multiple meanings. Deconstruction does not claim that ideas and concepts have no boundaries, but that differing boundaries can be minutely examined to create new contexts to become bases of new judgments (Balkin, 1996).

The bottom line for deconstruction is to properly grasp the meanings of word relationships. We need to disentangle the assumptions and knowledge systems creating the illusion of singular meaning. (Underscoring by the author).

The intimate and public spheres. In life, the so-called intimate sphere is very much connected with the public sphere (Oshikawa, 2011). Emiko Ochiai (2011) simply defines intimate sphere as a conglomeration of people staying or getting together expressing love and care towards each other. From an Asian perspective, this would immediately connote relationships and dynamics of and within families. Why talk about it now and why in the context of work?

Feminist Linda Lindsey (2011) dispels the myth that a woman's place is in the home. In fact, this myth never had any basis in truth. In terms of female participation at work, history tells us that women have performed major roles in societies through the work they do:

foraging, agriculture for domestic use or for trade and exchange, food production and processing.

As societies evolved from primitive to slave, then slave to feudal, some non-farm activities, both paid and unpaid, had women as laborers, innkeepers, shopkeepers, crafts workers, nurses, printers, teachers and child-care providers. Women continuously honed their knowledge and skills adapting to evolving environmental demands and challenges. Using their native and adaptive intelligence, they were able to invent and reinvent local skills and apply and reapply local and indigenous traditions. From this local knowledge, they became the local care-givers, health maintenance providers, and spiritual leaders *(babaylans)*. In health care, some women acted as dentists, physicians and pharmacists (Lindsey, 2011).

In the 21st century, with the world becoming smaller yet more complex, some things have become easily accessible but socially costly. Families have spread their confines through what we call "global householding" (Peterson, 2010). With family members away from home yet digitally reachable, family relationships are heavily tinged with emotional emptiness and lack of physical connectivity.

Presentation of Discursive Analysis and Implications to Filipino Migrant Workers

Getting more intimate. Housework is an intimate form of labor. It entails personally putting in one's efforts—physical, emotional, mental, psychological and even spiritual. It requires a load of communication skills and a host of loving and caring behavior to maintain homes. The houseworker, usually and often traditionally the housewife (homemaker), does the same things repeatedly everyday, and the tasks are never-ending. In short, it is a maintenance-type of work, or self-sustaining support-type of work. If the houseworker fails in these tasks, other members of the family will not be able to do their tasks as efficiently, e.g., husbands are unable to go to work and children to school. As Maria Mies (1986) would argue, the reproduction of the labor force is largely dependent on the housewives' labor, which is unpaid.

In the Philippines, to be married is automatically to become a housewife, unless a prenuptial agreement is laid to specify division of conjugal roles and obligations inside the household. Otherwise,

a woman is expected to perform household chores or reproductive work (work that is associated with a woman's reproductive roles—conception, birthing, child care, child-rearing, nurturing, washing, ironing, house cleaning, cooking, etc.). She has to accomplish these tasks apart from doing productive/paid work, if she decides to get employed or self-employed. There were no such expectations during pre-colonial times. This gender-based division of work between female and male became distinctively evident, practiced and socially constructed during the colonial era (Spanish and the American colonization).

Oshikawa (2011) has defined "housewife" from a constructed norm of the female nature with the context of a modern family. This means "housewife" portrays women as essentially of a loving nature; hence, it is a natural choice for women to stay at home, do the household chores, take care of family members, while men stay out of the house as breadwinners.

Intimate work can also be public. So, for quite a time, housework was not recognized as "work," simply because it has not been marketed and valued in the public sphere. But despite modern-day Western influences, a group of feminists discovered the housewife ideology, which helped create a national identity (Oshikawa, 2011).

The national identity enters the picture as women's roles embody traditional ethics, maintain the essence of our (Asian) culture, values and social relations at home. Mothers manage work relations at home or else things will never get done and family relations will turn into chaos. Men, on the other hand, are busy earning a living and engaging in "nation-building" in the public sphere.

In Eastern societies, we have what we call the "housewife ideology" (Oshikawa, 2011), wherein a woman, despite her modern, rational way of doing things (methods of work), also needs to have the basic skills of managing the home in order to be regarded as a good wife and a wise mother. Suffice it to say that there are women who have chosen to be both and more, working either as self-employed or working for an employer for compensation (productive work), on top of their reproductive work at home. Now she is not just a good wife caring for her husband, not just a wise mother caring for her children, but a partner in breadwinning. She is now a "superwoman."

Intimate work, like care work turning public, is not simply a trend, as we have seen from the extent of Filipino women migrant

workers in the past decade. It has become a necessity for most women of Southern countries to look for opportunities in the Northern countries, armed with their homegrown skills of caring for the household. The Northern countries' increasing demand for intimate/care work is a result of their ageing population and decreasing interest of their younger population to engage in this kind of work; but turned out to be a rediscovery of the role of Southern women in an extremely neo-liberal world of work.

Going back to Derrida, using the "paid-unpaid" concept opposition, we can now see how the word "unpaid" took on a privileged meaning and position because now, the rural poor woman's knowledge and skills gained monetary value in the international labor market. For Derrida, no meaning is ever stable.

"No meaning is ever stable"		
Intimate sphere	-------->	Public sphere
Unpaid work	-------->	Paid work
Own household	-------->	Global household

Transformation of Meanings, Movements and Directions

Situation in the Philippines. In the Philippines, women, mostly from the rural areas, took advantage of the rediscovery of the need for their unpaid, home-grown skills, and marketed these to the public (global/international scene) in exchange for payment.

Table 1 shows a simple distribution of what people of working age are engaged in. A little over half of the labor force is in services, while a third remains in agriculture, and the smallest number are in industry. Conventionally, a country about to industrialize should have a larger percentage of its labor force in industry. This still seems to be a dream for the Philippines, as mapped out in the Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016.

The bar graph in Appendix 1 gives us the latest picture of male-female employment by sex and age group. Three in five (60.8%) of the total employed persons in January 2012 were males. Majority of the employed population (26.5%) are in the age range 25-34.

Table 1. Labor force distribution by occupation, 2010

Occupation	Percentage
Agriculture	33%
Industry	15%
Services	52%

Where are the Filipinos going? Lest we forget, Filipinos overseas are not part of the Philippine labor force statistics. Once abroad, they form part of the labor force of the destination country (ILO definition).

The pie chart in Appendix 2 shows where Filipinos are going abroad. The biggest chunk is in the Middle Eastern countries (44.1%). This is followed by Filipinos in Asian countries (36.3%). There are 8.6% in Europe, 7.6% in North and South America, 1.7% in Australia, and 1.7% in Africa.

Categorization, Classification, Commodification

The supply side. Overall, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) has recorded a total of 8,187,710 Filipinos outside the country in 2008. For documentation and monitoring purposes, they have been classified into immigrants or legal permanent residents, contract workers, and irregularly documented migrants (see Table 2).

Table 2. Estimated Number of Filipinos Outside the Country, 2008

Immigrants or legal permanent residents	3,907,842	48%
Contract workers	3,626,259	44%
Irregularly documented migrants	653,609	8%
Total Estimate	8,187,710	100%

Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas 2008.

In a 2009 study (ACHIEVE, 2009 as cited in Sobritchea, 2011), OFW contracts processed by POEA peaked at 1.48 million, including both new hires and rehires. (See Table 3.) Majority of them are land-

based (71%). From these land-based contract workers, 35 percent are new hires; 20 percent of new hires are domestic workers, and most of whom (97%) are women.

Table 3. Contract processed for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) both rehires and new hires, 2009

Land-based	1,043,555	362,878 (new hires); 20% of new hires are Domestic workers (71,557); 97% of Domestic workers are women (69,669)
		680,677 (rehires)
Sea-based	435,515	
Total rehires and new hires	1,479,070	

Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA)

Table 4 shows which category most of our contract women workers belong to—domestic workers. This job category topped the list of jobs overseas for 2009.

Table 4. Occupational Category of OFWs, 2011

	Male	Female	Total
All Occupational Categories - Total	181,145	217,830	398,975
1 Household Service Workers	3,204	135,877	139,081
2 Nurses, Professional	2,054	13,814	15,868
3 Waiters, Bartenders & Related Workers	5,866	6,082	11,948
4 Caregivers & Caretakers	565	8,858	9,423
5 Wiremen Electrical	9,341	37	9,378
6 Plumbers & Pipe Fitters	8,789	29	8,818
7 Welders & Flame-Cutter	7,800	28	7,828
8 Laborers/Helpers General	6,520	491	7,011
9 Charworkers, Cleaners & Related Worker	2,999	3701	6,700
10 Cooks & related workers	3,040	2,051	5,091

Source: POEA, Overseas Employment Statistics, 2011.
Note: Combined total number of OFWs-new hires with occupational disaggregation (covers at least 95 percent of the total deployed land-based new hires)

Women migrant workers. Where are most of our women migrating to find work? This paper uses the ACHIEVE 2010 found in Sobritchea's study, which identified top ten countries Filipino women enter as domestic workers: (1) Hong Kong; (2) Kuwait; (3) United Arab Emirates; (4) Saudi Arabia; (5) Qatar; (6) Italy; (7) Cyprus; (8) Singapore; (9) Oman; and (10) Bahrain.

Table 5. Age Distribution of Filipino Domestic Workers (percent), FGD participants (n=141)

Age	Hong Kong (n=64)	Singapore (n=45)	Qatar (n=32)	Total (n=141)
<20	0	0	3	1
20-24	3	7	19	8
25-29	9	13	16	12
30-34	16	20	19	18
35-39	27	22	13	22
40-44	25	29	9	23
45-49	13	7	16	11
50-54	8	0	3	4
55-59	0	0	0	0
60-up	0	2	0	1
no age mentioned	0	0	3	1
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

The ACHIEVE study used focus group discussions (FGD) to gather information from the migrant workers. Among the FGD participants, majority are based in Hong Kong, followed by Singapore and Qatar. (See Table 5.) Sample participants were taken from these three countries following certain criteria: (1) large number of Filipino women migrant domestic workers; (2) presence of non-government organizations working with migrant domestic workers; (3) proximity of the host country to the Philippines, except for Qatar.

Table 6. Marital Status of FGD Participants, in Percent (n=141)

	Hong Kong (n=64)	Singapore (n=45)	Qatar (n=32)	Total (n=141)
Single	39	49	50	45
Married	50	38	31	42
Separated	6	11	9	9
Widow	5	2	9	5
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 6 shows that being married or single is almost a negligible factor in the decision to work abroad as domestic helpers.

Table 7. Number of Children of FGD Participants, in Percent (n=81)

No. of children	Hong Kong (n=39)	Singapore (n=24)	Qatar (n=18)	Total (n=81)
1	41	37	11	33
2	23	25	28	25
3	10	21	22	16
4	10	17	22	15
5	13	0	6	7
More than 5	3	0	11	4
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 7 shows that there is an inverse relationship between the women's choice to migrate and the number of children they will be leaving behind. This runs in consonance with the cultural norm of women playing the intimate role of household caring.

Without oversimplifying things, some women, even those who are overqualified, do settle for intimate or care work. For some, it could be out of a sense of practicality in the face of poverty. In a world with structural asymmetries, a lack of jobs available either rural or urban-based, a tight labor market resulting from labor oversupply, a lack of training to equip people for non-farm opportunities, and the longtime unresponsiveness of the state to attend seriously to these concerns, the choice to embrace a job way below one's competencies can be painful, yet remain the most practical option. This has been a way to cope with poverty in desperate times.

Breaking away from the capitalist market economic perspective, this phenomenon is a re-discovery of the value of reproductive work from being unpaid in one's own abode to being paid in another family's household(reproductive-productive divide).

Even the Macapagal-Arroyo administration took advantage of this by promoting the export of domestic work for the dollar remittances it brings to families and balance of payment management it settles. The other extreme though is the risk of abuse and violence some face, which comes with the choice to earn a living for the family.

The demand side. To look at the demand side of the intimate or care work is to take a glimpse at the situation of transnational care work needs of developed countries. I will be citing some country examples. Singapore is one such country with a high demand for women domestic worker and nursing care.

Singapore. Singapore has a rapidly aging population, and is now facing an eldercare crisis (Huang, 2012). Fertility rate has slowed down remarkably, and the old-age support rate has decreased. In Huang, et al's study (2012), Singapore society has assigned the responsibility of the caring for their elders to the state. The hierarchy of responsibility for eldercare starts from the individual, the family, the community, and the state. There is a trend of 'othering' care work in Singapore. This trend has taken on serious discussions that cut across several issues on—gender, nationality, differing notions about the meaning of "elderly care" as being dirty, demanding and demeaning (3Ds) for the Singaporeans.

On the contrary, Filipino nurses and domestic migrant workers do not look at it that way. Filipinos, being more family-oriented, look at elderly care as a natural and integral part of family responsibility (Ruiz, 2011). For Filipinos, it is something cultural and familial, whereas in Singapore, eldercare has been commodified, as a result of the cosmopolitanized Singaporean society (Huang, et al, 2012). Urbanized living, the need to earn to cope with the city lifestyle, and the need to fulfill family obligations are some factors that gave elder care work a different meaning. These socioeconomic transitions affected family cultures, social relationships and social demands that the Singaporean state had to address. Singapore tapped the oversupply of labor in the Philippines to match their demand for elder caregivers. Aware of their

future needs, migration policies were set accordingly—classifying the highly skilled institutional nurse care from low-skilled caregiving and domestic work. At present, Singapore has a high level of acceptance of Filipino workers, especially intimate and care work.

For its own purposes, Singapore has formalized two categories of foreign workers—foreign talents and foreign workers. Foreign talents are the high-skilled and professionals. Foreign workers are the semi-skilled and unskilled, mostly in construction and domestic care work. Care work is further categorized into : (1) the migrant workers who are hired to take care of the elderly in private domiciles; and (2) the foreign healthcare workers who are employed in institutions, i.e., nursing homes (Huang, et al, 2012).

Singapore has set very learn separate state policies for each type. In 2006, no less than the Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, declared that immigration of the skilled and talented was crucial to Singapore's long-term growth and prosperity strategy. For advantages, foreign talents may apply for permanent residency and citizenship after two to six years. Foreign talents are given "employment pass" for entry; an S-pass for middle-level (technicians)workers; and "work permit" for semi-skilled and unskilled workers, including domestic workers (Sobritchea, 2010).

Singapore considers unskilled workers as transients. Aptly, the government applies the "revolving door" policy—a two-year pass at a time, renewable up to eight years. This pass is tied to an employer upon a concluding agreement. This puts their work status in a more precarious and unstable situation. Moreover, all employers hiring domestic foreign workers are required to pay monthly levy, which serves as a de-motivation to demand for more domestic help. Apart from these policies, domestic work permits are given with conditions not to marry Singaporeans and become pregnant. Workers undergo medical checkups every six months to make sure they are not pregnant or carrying venereal diseases. All employers are also required to pay bonds of S$5,000 (US$290) to the government, which is forfeited if the domestic worker fails to comply with any of the conditions. They should also insure their domestic workers for not less than S$10,000 (Sobritchea, 2010).

A much better incentive awaits the professional talents. To make them stay longer, they are given tax breaks, permanent residency status after two years of work, and eventually citizenship.

Japan. Similarly, Japan is facing a two-pronged demographic crisis: a declining birth rate and an aging population. In 1999, fertility rate was at 1.34 children per woman, and this has continued to decline. Life expectancy for females is eighty-four (84), and seventy-seven (77) for males. Morgan (2001) foresees Japan's demand for elderly care (home health-care aides) to further increase in the years to come. The UN reported that Japan is aging so fast that it needs 600,000 workers yearly until year 2050 to maintain a population equilibrium.

Like Singapore, the burden of caring for the elders in Japan automatically falls on women's shoulders. It is now termed "nursing care hell" (Jenike, 1997, as cited in Morgan, 2001). Japan's urbanization has resulted into gradual loss of traditional family-orientedness. With job opportunities available in urban areas, young Japanese workers and professionals have moved away from family abodes to live in the cities and peripheries. Japanese women labor force participation continued to increase by choice. This phenomenon led to changing attitudes towards familial roles and obligations (Morgan, 2001).

In 1994, a survey by the *Asahi Shinbun* (a countrywide newspaper) showed that there is a decreasing number of Japanese women in their 40s and 50s who felt responsible for their aging parents (less than 30%). Japan has a family-based welfare system, but it is getting too taxing for the lower income group due to high rent and decreasing living spaces. The survey revealed findings of elder abuse, called "silver harassment" or *shiruhara* (Morgan, 2001).

In light of these phenomena, the Ministry of Justice raised the idea of opening its doors to foreign workers, which eventually led to opening the doors for "home helpers"—unskilled workers (Morgan, 2001) in Japan's occupational definition. This idea contradicts Japan's long-established policy of disallowing unskilled workers to enter the country. Japan had existing restrictive policies to deal with, which the ICCRA (Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act) instituted in 1952, twice revised in 1981 and 1989. These revisions came about as a result of social changes affecting Japanese society, e.g., the increasing entry of illegal foreign labor with corresponding sanctions. Japan also saw the need to manage professionals and Japanese descendants, thus allowing residency and legal employment.

As exceptions, there are trainees, students and migrants of Japanese descent who are permitted to perform unskilled labor in Japan. However, to prevent Japanese employers from illegally employing and exploiting these trainees as cheap labor, Japan launched

a technical internship program with corresponding technical skills tests to be passed.

Qatar. Qatar occupies the top spot in terms of having the most international migrants (foreigners comprise 87 percent of its 1.9 million population, according to the 2013 estimate). Before oil was discovered, Qatar depended on fishing and pearl hunting. When oil and natural gas were discovered in 1940, Qatar's economy soared, giving the country a gross domestic product per capita that was highest in the world (CIA World Factbook, 2012). Total GDP in 2012 reached $191.004 billion, considering purchasing power parity (PPP).

The Filipinos are one among the top three largest expatriates in Qatar, composing 11 percent of its 1.9 million population. Other migrant workers come from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and India. Sex-disaggregating, there are more working-age males than females. Filipino migrant workers in Qatar are almost everywhere—in construction, manufacturing, services, but mostly in low-skilled jobs. They are employed as temporary contractual workers with little chances of becoming permanent residents. Female migrant workers mostly come from Indonesia and the Philippines, who are typically employed in the domestic sector, usually in education and health care (Commission on Filipino Overseas, 2013).

Qatar's foreign workers policy is rather strict. There is a sponsor law that controls the entry of foreign labor in Qatar. This law allows a Qatari company or outfit to sponsor and get working visa for a foreign employee, which gives the employer the control over the workers' movements while the contract is effective. The workers are not allowed to change employment, buy cars, or rent a home without the sponsor's consent.

Qatar has yet to totally comply with ILO's eight core labor standards. So far, it has only signed three. Qatar has not ratified the ILO Convention on Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining, Convention on Equal Remuneration and Convention on Minimum Wage and the Convention on the Abolition of Forced Labor (Sobritchea, 2010).

Qatar has been accused of having an abusive, unfair exit visa system that makes it difficult for foreign workers to transfer or move out of the country. Sarah Leah Whitson, executive director of the Human Rights Watch, Middle East and North Africa Division, has exposed this issue to protect future migrant workers.

Hong Kong. Hong Kong has an open policy for foreign workers but is closed to permanent residency. As of 2009, foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong numbered at 264,275, where almost half of them (48%) were Filipinos.

In Hong Kong, wage violations are rampant, varying according to gender and ethnicity. Among foreign workers, Indonesians are mostly underpaid compared to Filipinos and Thais. While Indonesians get an average monthly income of HK$3,073, Filipinos get HK$3,847 and Thais get HK$3,903. More women are also underpaid compared to men (Kershaw & De Golyer, 2006, as cited in Sobritchea, et al., 2011).

On the bright side, foreign employees are protected by the Occupational Health and Safety Ordinance, whatever their citizenship or documentation status may be. Employment contracts for foreign workers require employers to provide for medical care and treatment for their employees. Access to subsidized health care system is open to migrant workers as well, but not to undocumented workers and those without valid work permits. As stated in Chapter 57 of the Laws of Hong Kong, migrant workers are more protected when it comes to wages, benefits, access to health care, including reproductive health care (Sobritchea, et al., 2011).

A new concern is being raised by longtime foreign domestic helpers (over seven years) in Hong Kong: to be allowed to acquire permanent residency. Migrant worker applicants have posed the question to the Hong Kong government, claiming that deprivation of permanent residency is a "'breach of their mini-Constitution/Basic Law."

On the other hand, some analysts say that allowing permanent residency will definitely have an impact on the whole Asian region. There will be an influx of labor in Hong Kong, which will add to the existing 250,000 temporary workers from Indonesia and the Philippines (7% of Hong Kong's working population). Work permit holders in Hong Kong are mostly low-skilled. This can further depress the wages of low-skilled migrant workers if labor supply increases. From the Hong Kong government's point of view, this access to cheap domestic help will create a "standard-of-living benefit" among the middle and upper classes who can afford it. With this, wage gaps will intensify, which worries the Hong Kong government. For them, this is not the answer to their present problem, which is to increase fertility rates of the reproductive-age population. Labor migration that

cheapens and widens wage gaps without appropriate labor rights is likewise an undesirable working condition (Bowring, 2011).

Policy Implications

The four country examples presented different pictures of the situations of Filipino migrant workers.

The UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) has put forth the global value of feminization of migration vis-à-vis sustainable development. There are 215 million international migrants worldwide. Half of them are women. A substantial part of female migration has been documented and characterized as of a temporary type of work, undocumented, and at risk of trafficking and smuggling. Low-wage and low-status domestic work has been classified as "women's work." Some are hidden in the informal economy, which is most likely prone to discrimination, harassment and abuse (UNDP, 2013).

What issues do we see from here?

1. From the presentation of data, we see the Philippines as the supplier of labor in the market. From the demand side, countries needing our services have already designed policies clearer than ours. For example, Singapore and Hong Kong have drafted different policies for skilled care workers and for low-skilled and unskilled workers. The Philippines, as the supplier, should have a grasp of its database for managing the outflow not only of health care workers, but also of professionals. Unplanned and un-managed outflow of care and health workers can affect our own labor force stock, like teachers leaving to become domestic care workers. Out there, the demand for care work will continue, as Japan and Singapore have each forecasted. Hong Kong seems to have the same trend of increasing demand for care work. From the Philippine side, low-skilled and unskilled women who are interested in these jobs will definitely opt to migrate. This case appears to be much bigger than it seems. The root of the problem actually lies in not having enough to provide for their families, schooling for children, decent housing and investments for

longer term needs. Unless our women are provided with appropriate opportunities and skills, migration will always be an option. Unless a change in mindset takes place among our women and offsets this desire to leave their own families, migration will continue. The bottom line is: Do we as a nation really care? Are we happy to see our women leave their own children to take care of others?
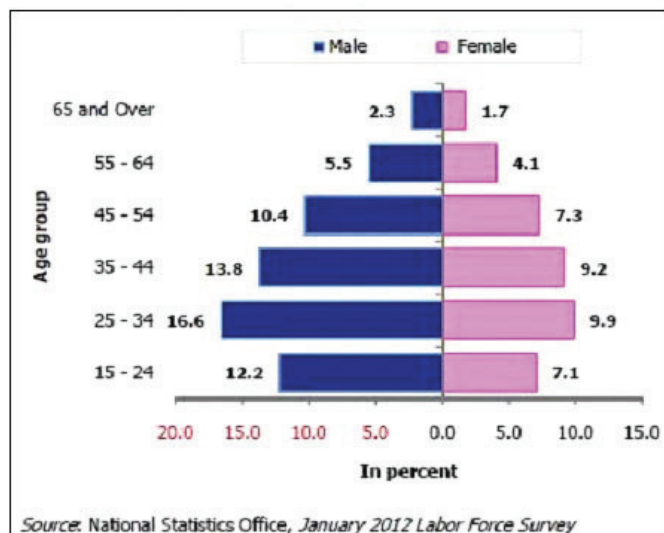
2. Processes for assessing the conditions, documentation and monitoring of Filipino workers, including the undocumented workers, should be well-established right in our own backyard. This implies strong deterrence against and monitoring of illegal recruiters, with corresponding punishments set in place. The monitoring could be from country to country, outflow and inflow. Wage and compensation status and situations should be reported at any point in time. If this was done earlier, anomalous acts against women migrant workers could have been prevented, e.g., in the "sex for plane tickets" case allegedly committed by embassy and consul officials.

3. From our end, there is a need to reduce the "push" factors that encourage Filipino women to work outside of the country. This includes creating jobs in the local market, and training, re-training, and leveling up of skill-sets leading toward self-generating income or local entrepreneurship. This means mass human resource development planning.

4. Provide stricter policies of outmigration for all types of migrant workers to avoid the de-skilling of our workers. This will address the problem of brain draining our human resources. In the field of care work, there are qualified and professional nurses and teachers who deserve to get the appropriate jobs and wages in their destination country. However, because of misguidance and anomalous processes, some are forced into jobs far below their competencies. There is a need to further strengthen Philippine recruitment policies.

5. Labor matching needs to be addressed accordingly. This requires having access to demand requirements and continuously inventorying our labor supply.

6. What can the government do to give importance and value to unpaid women workers in subsistence farming, and those in their households doing housework and eldercare? The US has undertaken surveys of house-workers to measure their

contributions to GDP. Other countries, too, have conducted surveys to estimate home-based unpaid women (United Kingdom, Finland, Germany, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Norway, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Japan and New Zealand). In the Philippines, the first effort was done in 1998 by Virola and De Perio. The first valuation of unpaid work was done from 1990-1997. Findings showed that from the usual GDP contribution of 35-40 percent, the share of unpaid work rose to 50 percent. However, the National Statistics Office (NSO) discontinued this effort for lack of budget support (Virola et. al., 2007).

7. How do we address the issue of other countries categorizing "home care" as "unskilled?" Can we negotiate this bilaterally? Better yet, the question to ask is, do we continue to be a supplier of intimate labor or care work to the world? Or do we deserve better?

8. Lastly, is care work or intimate work defined in our labor code? If not, what is its implication to women's labor rights?
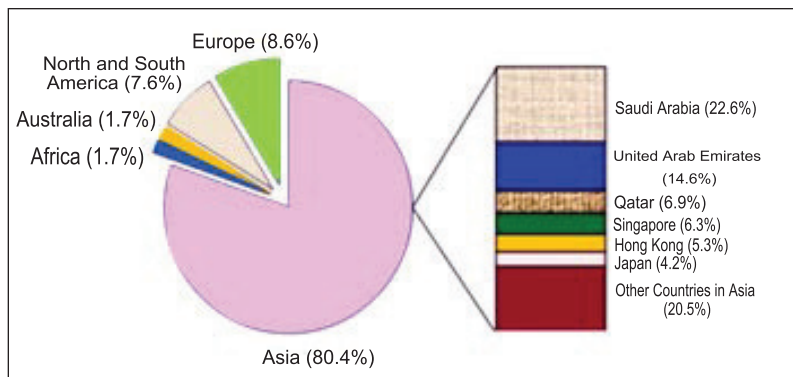
Appendix 1

Percent Distribution of Employed Persons
by Sex and Age Group: January 2012

Source: National Statistics Office, *January 2012 Labor Force Survey*

Appendix 2

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