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(DYS)FUNCTIONAL STUDIES: THE NEED FOR A POWER ANALYSIS OF THE FAMILY IN MIGRATION RESEARCH

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Abstract

This study focuses on two effects of the unproblematic assumptions of heteronormative and patriarchal family structures and dynamics, namely: that it prevents a more complete understanding of the positive and negative effects of migration on affective and reproductive relations and it results in lost opportunities for crafting better policies and programs that would lead to adequate social protection. It asserts further that these two effects are particularly cogent because, in the Philippines especially, migration for labor is becoming increasingly feminized as women migrate to do reproductive / sexual work (nannies, entertainers, caregivers, domestic workers, women in prostitution). Thus the lack of a gendered perspective on reproductive work within and outside the family fails to take adequate stock of the realities of migrant workers. Heteronormative assumptions also tend to reinforce women's oppression across the board.

Introduction

There is a large body of migration literature that has been generated to date and even a focus on welfare and the family would require a more thorough report than what is possible for this lecture.

As I reviewed what literature I could in the area, I became increasingly convinced that much of the literature assumed mainstream conceptions of the family and the related concepts of sexuality and gender identities. With regards to the family in particular, a number of the studies have failed to interrogate the ideologies and practices which underlie this institution. Because the family is taken as an unproblematic "given" in these studies and

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documents, there is often a reaffirmation of heterosexist and patriarchal notions of gender identity and sexuality. For sure, such a finding is not confined to migration studies. This would not surprise feminist scholars who have noted that similar assumptions underlie research and theorizing in other areas. But the lack of a gender power perspective in analyzing family dynamics and structures is particularly problematic if a development issue such as family welfare is the topic of study. As Bergeron (n.d.) notes in her own observations on political economy accounts of development:

Because of this, the diversity of economic and affective relations that do not fit the functional model is rendered imperceptible in nearly all discussions of poverty alleviation, social inclusion, and economic rights.

In this paper I will attempt to focus on two effects of the unproblematic assumptions of heteronormative and patriarchal family structures and dynamics, namely:

1) That it prevents a more complete understanding of the positive and negative effects of migration on affective and reproductive relations and;
2) It results in lost opportunities for crafting better policies and programs that would lead to adequate social protection.

I will add further that these two effects are particularly cogent because, in the Philippines especially, migration for labor is becoming increasingly feminized (Lim and Oishi 1996; Engle 2004; Coronel and Unterreiner 2007; Opiniano 2008) as women migrate to do reproductive/sexual work (nannies, entertainers, caregivers, domestic workers, women in prostitution). Thus the lack of a gendered perspective on reproductive work within and outside the family fails to take adequate stock of the realities of migrant workers. Heteronormative assumptions also tend to reinforce women's oppression across the board.

Before I proceed however, I shall give a brief review of the feminist argument that sexual norms that prevail in most societies are oppressive to women and children as well persons with certain sexual orientations and gender identities. Such a critique is by no means new, but it remains cogent today as we begin to understand

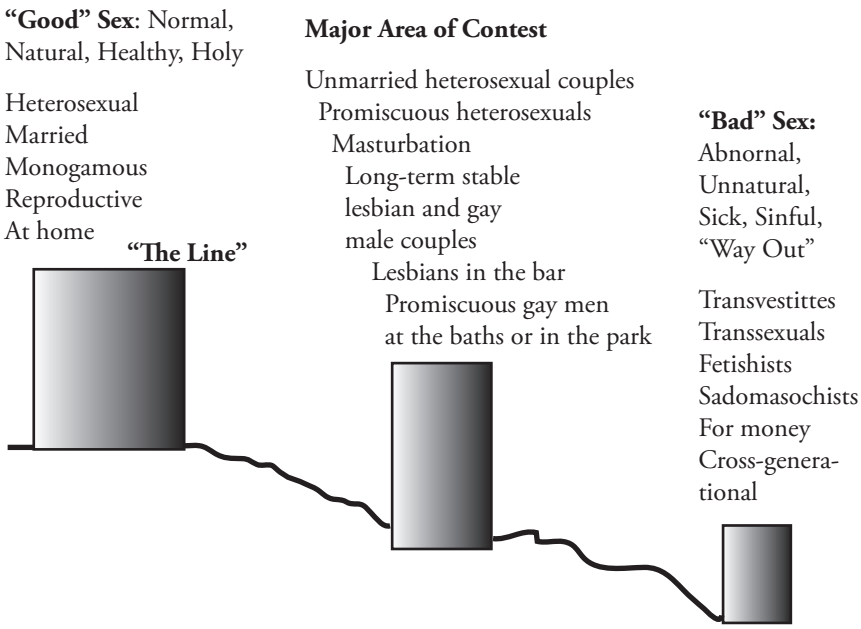
the inextricable link between sexuality, the economy and development (Bridge 2007).

After this introduction to patriarchal and heteronormative constructions of sexuality, I shall proceed to give a few examples of the underlying assumptions of heteronormative and patriarchal family norms in the literature on effects of migration on family welfare. As I do this, I will also attempt to show that such assumptions run counter to the experiences of female migrants.

Lastly, I shall attempt to show how an analytical lens that takes a more critical view of prevailing sexual assumptions can help us choose which recommendations in the literature only reinforce gender oppression and which ones may prove of more empowering. I shall also make a few new recommendations.

Sexual Hierarchies and Heteronormativity

As early as 1984, Rubin, among others remarked at a "sexual hierarchy" which is illustrated in the following:



On the left of the illustration is a description of sexuality that is inculcated and enforced through hard and soft power at macro,

meso and micro levels as "good" and "normal." Other studies of Philippine culture reaffirm these constructions (Estrada-Claudio 2002) such that the only accepted sexual expressions for women are: asexual during childhood; virginal until marriage; sexual but only with husband during marriage, reproductive during marriage. In addition, both men and women are expected to be heterosexual throughout the life cycle. I add that sexuality is construed as primarily genital--excluding other forms of sexual and affective expression such as celibacy.

This hierarchy of sexualities brings with it certain gender norms. One such norm is the sexual division of labor (Coontz and Henderson 1986) that assigns most of the reproductive and affective work (housework and the reproduction of labor power, childrearing, emotional maintenance, sexual pleasuring) to the private sphere of the family and to women family members. As Truong (1996, p.32) explains:

> Almost without exception reproduction has been and still is culturally and ideologically defined as women's responsibility. It is unrecognized, devalued, not paid or underpaid. Many studies have made clear that men's contribution to reproductive activities in the homes (maintenance and care-taking work) is disproportionately small in comparison to women's, and that state practices tend to reinforce this pattern rather than change it.

This ideology of what women do is then extended out of the home in hiring practices both within and outside national boundaries (Stichter and Papart 1990). This extension of reproductive work to paid labor, carries with it the same problems of devaluation, lack of recognition, lower pay and lower status. The sexual division of labor explains current migration patterns that are increasingly feminized. It is my view that this trend will continue because the entry into post-Fordist production in the era of globalization allows many jobs to be relocated to where labor is cheap, except for certain jobs that involve reproductive work. As Truong (1996, p.34-35) also notes of reproductive labor:

> Moreover, with few exceptions, the character of reproductive labor in maintenance makes it relatively irresponsive to technological innovation beyond a certain point. The cultural and human dimension of reproductive

> labor necessitates mediating and nurturing skills that cannot be easily replaced by automation or men, unless men are resocialized or accept to be resocialized.

Heteronormative sexuality also dictates a particular family form as normal--namely the nuclear family is a heterosexual couple and their children surrounded by an extended family of blood relations, usually limited to a certain degree of affinity.

Both within the family, in communities, nations and at the international level, this ideology of heteronormative and patriarchal sexuality are kept in place by interlocking systems of manufactured consent, force and coercion. Violence against women is pervasive whether women experience that violence in their own homes, as overseas workers in other peoples homes (Constable 2002) or in brothels (Alcid n.d.). On the other hand, an ideology of domesticity often keeps women from questioning their oppression as reproductive workers. This same normalization of the role of women as loving martyrs and reproductive slaves is seen in the literature on migration and the social effects on the family. As I have noted from the start, the majority of theories on migration, researches and policy papers, program documents and even laws studied, take the "family" as an unproblematic entity whose members have no conflicting interest or power relationships.

Gender Blind Migration Theories

Several articles reviewed in the course of the research dealt with the theories on international migration. Arango (2004) among others, presents a succinct review of migration theory starting from earlier neoclassical economic explanations of migration to other economic models that either refine this model or pose Marxist and neo-Marxist challenges. Arango notes the inability of purely economic models to explain migration data though his critique does not look at gender-inclusive frameworks or take into account gender-specific data. My own reading of neo-classical models echoes well-established critiques by feminist economists (Ferber and Nelson 1993) that these theories are inadequate. Neo-classical models can neither predict nor explain the facts of women's economic activities

including international labor migration. But the newer theories are not better. Citing a theory most associated with Oded Stark as an example of a theory that is migration specific and also specific to the "new economics of labor migration," Arango (2004) explains that:

> It shares with the latter [neoclassical classical theory] its basic cornerstone. Rational choice, but differs from it in that the actor who seeks to enhance its utility is more the family or the household than the individual migrant. Migration is a family strategy geared not so much to maximize income as to diversify sources of income, in order to minimize risks—such as unemployment, loss of income, or crop failures—and loosen constraints, given the imperfections that usually plague credit and insurance markets in the sending countries (p.22).

Several observations need to be made at this point. First is that the description illustrates an unproblematic view of family as essentially a homogeneous group with non-conflicting interests that can make rational choices for the good of all its members. This analysis remains surprisingly clueless about the amount of literature from feminist, queer and other studies that show that heterosexual families do not make rational choices in this way. Families are built around the preservation of male privilege as we have noted and men wittingly or unwittingly make decisions that preserve this privilege.

Phisacklea (2004) for example, notes that the decision to migrate is more likely to be imposed on women then men, while men are more likely to decide on these matters autonomously (or perhaps, to use another term, more selfishly). Women's anxieties of abandonment are higher when they are left behind which in turn is another factor for their desire to migrate to where their husbands have found work. The expectations for women migrants is also higher in terms of their ability to sacrifice themselves for the family in prolonged periods absence, more reliably sending remittances all the while, and the accepting a growing number of dependents over time.

The theory also does not take into consideration findings that show the differential effects on family well-being when it is the women who migrate as opposed to the men (Parreñas 2002; Scalabrini Migration Center 2000; Gorospe-Jamon 2009). In

terms of the expenditure of remittances specifically, Coronel and Unterreiner (2007, p. ii) note that:

> ...the decision and pattern of expenditures (as proven by studies in other countries) are very different in a male-headed household than in a female-headed household..the use of remittances for the best interest of children falling into the hands of fathers cannot be considered as obvious because social roles do not prepare men to be effective caregivers of children.

Evidence also exists that there is a growing number of men who abandon their families once they go abroad by not sending remittances or cutting off contact altogether. Such men may start new families in their countries of destination or in the Philippines (Marcelo 2007).

Secondly, the risks enumerated--unemployment, loss of income, crop failures and constraints on credit and insurance markets are all elements that have been shown to affect men and women differently. If these differential effects on all these economic factors where to be taken into account by these families, they would probably need a complicated algorithm to be able to determine rationally what migration strategies to take. Given the lack of information of many of the families on such economic factors and their differential effects on family members, the opportunity to arrive at rational migration decisions would be small.

Again, it is not within the purview of this paper to do a theory-by-theory critique of migration theories. Suffice it to say that feminist critiques are available (Truong 1996; Lee 1996) and that they essentially uphold the lack of gendered perspectives in a phenomenon that is increasingly about women. I will only add that there is a need to do a deeper analysis of conceptions of heteronormative sexuality and family formations in the various theories, not only to continue to question the validity and usefulness of such scholarship, but more importantly to spur the development of theories that are more gender-inclusive and empowering.

Researches, Laws, Policies and Programs

At the international level, the unproblematic view of the

family is reified in arguably the most important document to date on migrant rights, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Without diminishing the importance of this document and the great good that would result in its application, it is important to note for the purposes of this paper the definition of the family in Article 4:

> For the purposes of the present Convention the term "members of the family" refers to persons married to migrant workers or having with them a relationship that, according to applicable law, produces effects equivalent to marriage, as well as their dependent children and other dependent persons who are recognized as members of the family by applicable legislation or applicable bilateral or multilateral agreements between the States concerned.

As the recent debates on same sex marriage legislation in the United States and other countries illustrate, most national laws still define marriage and the family in typically heterosexist ways. Such definitions clearly affect social policy and social welfare policy such that women, especially poor women are disadvantaged as are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and intersexed persons (Moller 2002; Cahill, Mitra and Tobias 2002). Both the laws and the social policy that arise from these laws serve as systems of control and punishment that ensure the norm of a heterosexual and patriarchal family structure (Abramovitz 1988; Lind and Share 2003).

Ruiz-Austria's (2009) incisive analysis of Philippine laws, policies and programs on migration reveals has the same ideological underpinnings regarding the family. She also shows how these laws determine the migration experience including personal and legal definitions of other identity markers like citizenship.

Social welfare practitioners in the Philippines, guided by mainstream assumptions about the family, may reinforce women's oppression. Sana (cited in Marcelo 2007) notes:

> Government agencies like the Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA) and POEA have nothing much to offer to the families left behind in the way of addressing such issues as lack or cessation of financial support and adultery. Sana cites the case of a woman who complained to the POEA and OWWA about her husband stationed in Dubai who had stopped sending money to the family. *The woman was*

> *advised that she could sue her husband but the officials did not wish to be involved in family affairs*. (n.p.; underscoring mine.)[1]

Indeed, Sana pleads for a more inclusive definition of family based on the reality of family life in a country like the Philippines that sends large numbers of its workers abroad as a means of painting a true picture of effects of migration:

> We would like the government to see the overall effects of migration. In the Philippine context, we are reminded that a family has a mother, a father, children and dog, but so many families now have only the father or mother. This is a serious problem." (Marcelo 2007)

Taking cognizance of the social effects of the mother's absence however, does not necessarily lead to policies that promote gender equity if they only serve to uphold women's reproductive oppression in the family. In 1995 for example, Philippine President Fidel Ramos called for initiatives that would keep mothers from migrating for work. He this declared: "We are not against overseas employment of Filipino women. We are against overseas employment at the cost of family solidarity" (cited in Parreñas 2002).

Parreñas (2002) calls such posturing hypocritical noting the increasing dependency of the Philippine economy on remittances of migrant domestic workers. She also notes that this tends to stigmatize mothers and blame them their for their inability to be in two places at one time in order to fulfill their families economic and affective needs.

Coronel and Unterreiner (2007), mentioned earlier do manage to take a more gendered approach in their study of the effect of remittances on children's rights. Thus the recommendations on guidelines and programs for the use of these remittances also appear more practical. But their study does not go as far as that of Parreñas in questioning the heterosexist family and the ideology of the sexual division of labor that is intrinsic to it:

> In particular, girls need their mothers to guide them into the role of women in marriage and in the proper rearing of children. Fathers should be able to support their wives in this role (p. 49).

Thus, they tend to reiterate the stigmatization of single parent families:

> And, at this stage, it is worth mentioning that within such a HR based approach, because migration entails the separation of one or both parents from their child/children, migration cannot be seen as a decision which is in the best interest of children. Therefore, we are of the point of view that remittances can be considered to contribute to the realization (of some) of the children's rights **if and only if** they are used in an appropriate way and **even then**, it is still not proved that it is sufficient enough to compensate the physical, emotional and psycho-social effects of the separation of children from one or two of their parents (p.2).

The tension in Coronel and Unterreiner's paper can be seen further in that it recommends protectionist measures for child and women migrants that reiterate views that tend to see them as victims rather than as both victims and agents. The paper extensively uses the language of "protection of women and children" or "women, children and their families" although there is also one recommendation about doing away with guidelines and legislation that discriminate against women and children. On page 34 it also makes the recommendation that women with children below 3 years old should not be allowed to migrate for labor, a refinement of the recommendation made by former President Ramos and criticized by Parreñas for its hypocrisy. The literature also documents problems related to the problems of children born to migrant working woman who are unable to establish the child's paternity and thereby, very often, his or her citizenship. (Alcid n.d.; Constable 2002; Coronel and Unterreiner 2007). Here again the inability to question the heterosexist bias of national and international law leads to rather ineffectual recommendations that also reiterate gendered prescriptions about marriage and family and citizenship that is noted by Ruiz-Austria's (2009) analysis. Note Coronel and Unterreiner's suggestion that the solution to children who cannot establish their citizenship "includes ensuring children are born within marriage and that births are properly registered and documents kept safe" (p 27). For one thing, stories abound of children born to migrant women as a result of rape.

But the failure to interrogate the power dynamics within families is a common feature of the literature on migration and

the family and is not confined to one study alone. As another example, Opiniano (2008) does an extensive review of the social protection programs and policies directed at Filipino migrant workers and their families by governmental and non-governmental organizations. All but one of the programs described assume that the benefits and protections provided accrue to family members equally. Interestingly, one of the few programs that specifically addresses women is successful precisely because it has managed to revise the host country's bias for the husband who is also the citizen of that country:

> The arrangements are different for Filipinas in South Korea, in particular those who have married Korean husbands for "real love" or "economic convenience." A Filipina spouse, Fe Gimarino-Kim, founded the Foundation Filipino Korean Spouses Association so that the rights of foreign spouses like Filipinos, among nationalities being searched as Korean husbands' partners, are respected. The FKSA was even successful in lobbying for a Korean law that grants permanent residency status to Filipina wives, especially those beaten by their husbands and left astray after a broken marriage (p. 18).

Opiniano's analytical framework and policy recommendations mirror the same tension that arises when there is on the one hand a laudable recognition of gender, race and class discrimination in the experiences of migrant women but a failure to note that this discrimination begins in the family structures and practices of the migrant herself. Citing Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, the paper notes that social protection mechanisms may be promotive, preventive, transformative and protective. Of interest is the recognition of transformative measures:

> ...that cover the bargaining power of individuals and groups—that even cover arenas such as equity, empowerment, and social rights. These measures do not limit social protection to money or insurance schemes (p.3).

Such a framework allows for the recommendation of policies and programs that would counteract women's oppression with programs that empower women as rights holders and political actors. Indeed Opiniano further indicates that social protection mechanisms for migrants and their families must be geared to

different sites: micro meso and macro. There is also recognition that the vulnerabilities of Filipinos are not merely economic in natureand therefore social protection mechanisms must also go beyond the economic.

Yet Opiniano cites findings by Sabates-Wheeler and Waite as well as Holzmann, that migration is a social protection mechanism that fulfills only the preventive, protective and promotive aspects and not the transformative aspect. Opiniano does not see fit to remark on the exclusion of transformative mechanisms which are both entirely possible and crucial to women migrants' empowerment. Furthermore none of his own recommendations are particularly geared towards easing women's oppression in reproductive work. It would seem logical that he would recommend increasing access to reproductive health services considering he cites lack of access as one of the four major risks of this sector.

Gendered Understandings and Empowering Policies

Those studies that do take cognizance of the gender power differences in families provide us with a better understanding of the social costs and benefits of migration. Logically the recommendations that are made from such an understanding are more likely to maximize the benefits and mitigate the costs to the migrant women themselves and those whom they would wish to benefit from their work-- whether these be in their households or the larger communities.

Phizacklea (2004) reaffirms findings by Constable (2002) and Parreñas (2002) that when men exercise control over the remittances of the woman migrant worker they can use the money for luxury expenditures and conspicuous consumption, vices and womanizing--often for all three.

Where abuse is not present, Coronel and Unterreiner (2007) note that women are still more likely then men to spend the money in ways that ensure the well-being of their children.

The reverse is also true as a study of the remittances of Filipina migrant workers to Italy shows (Ribas et al. 2008). The study notes that this group of female migrant workers has a high degree of

control over the use of the remittances they send, often entrusting the remittance to a female family member. Thus the remittances are better spent:

> As women tend to prioritize remittance spending on the nutritional, educational and health care needs of household members, spending is believed to improve household food security...While remittances are mainly used to finance basic household necessities they are also used for investment –either in the purchase of lands and technology for agricultural production or in education of migrant's children and siblings (p.5).

The researchers for this study however, go beyond the confines of the family in documenting the effects of the women's remittances. They note that there is an increase in social inequity between families who have access to remittances and those who do not. They also note that certain types of land acquisition funded by the remittances reduce social inequities and increase agricultural production as opposed to others.

The recommendations based on these findings are remarkable because they fall into the transformative type of social protection mechanisms. Gender inequities in the familial control of resources are addressed by a recommendation that institutions develop better financial (saving, investment and credit) services for women. There is also a call for increasing the capacity of women so that they become better investors and entrepreneurs.

The study takes cognizance of female solidarity in affective networks of support by calling for the full participation of migrant associations and women's groups in the crafting of social policies around migration. Similarly, the study also calls for the involvement of community stakeholders in town hall meetings, etc., in the crafting of local development plans that would guide the use of remittance spending.

Studies and recommendations such as the one on migrant women's remittances in Italy, uphold appeals by other feminist scholars of migration not to see women as mere victims. Phizacklea (2004) cites her own research findings to show that women are both victims and agents in their migration stories. Thus, a woman may be a victim of violence from her husband who spends her remittances

on vices and other women, even as migration maybe her way of escaping from abuse. Phizacklea notes as well that social networks can be present both as a site of risk but also a site for protection. Lastly she makes the important point that gender power perspective on the family allows us to "retain it as a central unit without its reification" (p. 137).

Phizacklea's focus was on the migrant workers and not the families left behind. Parreñas' (2002) work on the other hand, is one of the few articles in the literature that does look at the costs of migration to the families of the women who leave from a gender-power perspective.

Gorospe-Jamon's (2009) interviews add to the growing literature of the gendered impacts of migration to Philippine families (Parrenas 2002; Scalabrini 2000). Families where the reproductive tasks left behind by the migrating woman fall to the men folk, are the least likely to do well. On the other hand, when other women take over these tasks that are left behind, they do so often in addition to reproductive work they are already doing or at the expense of their own childhoods, self-nurturance, and self-development.

Gorospe-Jamon's (2009) research also confirms other studies on migrant workers' families that undercut the continuing prejudice against mothers-in-law. Mothers-in-law are very often the women who must step into the niche left by the migrating mother. They are often godsends to the children and the husband. In this case also, female maternal power is not used for the benefit of the son against his wife, but for the daughter. The "in-laws" are often cited as an important factor in making sure that the husband fulfills his obligations to his children and spends remittances wisely.

These data underscore the importance of Parreñas' (2002) call for a "more egalitarian gender ideology" (p.41). She argues that the social costs of female migration would be mitigated with the institution of programs that challenge the sexual division of labor within families towards a more equal sharing of reproductive work.

Such a recommendation is supported by studies (Pingol 2001; Gorospe-Jamon 2009) of the families of migrant women which show that they coped successfully when husbands broke away from gender prescriptions and took up the reproductive and affective

tasks their wives had left behind.

Such an analysis would indicate that training programs like the "pre-departure seminars" required by Philippine authorities could better prepare migrant women and their families by including re-socialization modules that set-up more egalitarian modes of sharing the housework. Parenting classes that include housework skills may be offered to husbands and other men folk. Men's support services that would bring together re-socialized men such as those featured in Pingol's (2001) study with husbands whose wives are allowed to leave, could also be encouraged. The issue of abuse and violence against women in the family would also be taken up in such support groups.

Such efforts at the micro-level must however be complemented by development plans at the community and national level that address women's reproductive disempowerment. Clearly feminist advocacies to increase social service spending for health and education are important social protections that may lessen the desperation that causes women to risk migration under dangerous circumstances. Needless to say, gender fair education that socializes boy as well as girls into respecting and valuing reproductive and affective work is necessary. Access to adequate health care should include reproductive health care. Appropriate sexuality education must be made available to adolescents, many of whom may not have access to one or both parents for a variety of reasons, including migration. Policies and programs that effectively address violence against women are also necessary at the national level. Such programs must dovetail with attempts to change prevailing notions of gender identity and sexuality and not be merely programs that see abused women as poor victims of deranged individual men.

Indeed the long term goal of resocializing people so that men as well as women can be affectionate, loving and caring in embodied ways (i.e., not just in the "saying" but also in the cooking, cleaning, laundry, ironing, cuddling, and "being there") can help address the well documented findings confirmed by our research (Gorospe-Jamon 2009) that children suffer from the longing for the affection and nurturance that "only a mother can give" and that mothers are emotionally burdened by their worries and need to "mother from a

distance." I need to make clear that I have no intention of devaluing the affective ties between a mother and her children. Neither am I saying that the longing brought about by physical distance can be completely overcome. Indeed Philippine development policies should be put in place so that female migration for reproductive work ceases to be the painful alternative to joblessness. Nonetheless, fathers can fill in their children's emotional needs more effectively if they are given the skills to nurture and the capacity for self-identification as nurturers. Children's and women's self perceptions are crucial to such a reconstruction of male identity. If children can perceive their men folk as capable of the deep emotional nurturing that is still expected only of women, and if such expectations can be met by men socialized to do so, then their anxieties and longing for their migrant mother may be lessened. Similarly if women can feel confident about their male partner's capacity to nurture, they may not worry as much when they leave.

Constable's (2002) analysis of the stories of Filipina domestic helpers in Hong Kong leads her to conclude that many female employers are just passing on the reproductive work they were expected to do for their men folk. She finds further that women employers even turn to their housemaids for emotional support especially when they are having troubles with their husbands. This indicates that attempts at bridging the gendered division of labor even in the families of receiving nations would be beneficial for both the foreign domestic worker and her female employer. The literature cites many instances of solidarity among women in sending and receiving countries that can work for their mutual benefit. Thus, campaigns against violence against women, must take up violations against migrant women and the women citizens of that country, as two aspects of the same problem.

Lim and Oishi (1996) bewail the inability of major sending countries in the Asian region to come together for the sake of collective bargaining with the receiving countries. For the Philippines in particular, the situation is further complicated by the fact that Southeast Asia has both receiving and sending countries and territories. Nonetheless, such a situation can present opportunities because receiving nations like Singapore are members of the ASEAN

which can serve as a venue for a regional dialogue on migration and a mechanism for regional standards which can then be a a starting point for collective bargaining with other regions.

Apart from setting wage and labor standards the ASEAN can work on regional mechanisms for the facilitation of transnational migrant support networks. It can also include mechanisms at the regional level that enforce of court judgments and implementation of provisions for support for families left behind, especially those who have been abandoned.

Access to health care, especially to reproductive health care, for migrants may also be pushed by the Philippine government, again initially at the ASEAN as a starting point. In this regard, Thailand's attempt to allow migrant workers to use its system of a single access fee for health care (IOM 2006) should be studied as a possible model. Similarly, training and educational programs for migrant women workers can be conducted within the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Such efforts could be better focused to help the majority of Filipino women labor migrants if, as Truong (1996) has suggested, the issues of female migrant reproductive workers can be recognized in international relations and migration policy. The literature suggests that national policies governing migration in both sending, transit and receiving countries, shape the migration experience to a large extent (Lee 1996; Ruiz-Austria 2009). Policy and juridical frameworks could be advocated at regional and international levels that grant recognition to migrant reproductive workers as a distinct category of worker with differing needs for protection. Such a proactive stance may begin the process of reversing the low status granted to such workers by laws and families that keep them as a transient and low skilled workforce. This results in the lowering of wage standards, benefits, protections and permanent residency/ citizenship opportunities which are given to more highly valued (and predominantly male) job categories. It also results in the likelihood that women seeking jobs in the reproductive sector end up as undocumented workers or fall prey to trafficking.

In this regard, I would recommend that the Philippines extend to all countries the courtesy it now extends to the citizens

of the ASEAN that allows entry without need for a visa. I would suggest that it extend the periods of stay for foreigners and make no differentiation between those who come as tourists and those who come to work. Other systems of monitoring can be put in place and police action against criminal activities by foreign syndicates or individuals can be strengthened through other means.[2] I would argue that such a move would benefit our tourism industry and do away with a certain amount of graft and corruption that comes from the granting of visas, work permits and the like.

But it is the effect on the well being of our migrants and their families that is of interest. Such move would free up valuable resources in Philippine diplomatic posts abroad which are always overwhelmed by the needs of Filipino migrant workers. Furthermore, as a sending country, it is to our advantage that our own citizens be given the same courtesy of easy entry to countries that receive our workers.

I am aware that such a foreign policy position is unlikely to be reciprocated by receiving countries, given the relative powerlessness of sending countries like the Philippines. Nonetheless it adds to our capacity for moral suasion in advocating for the rights of Filipino migrants. If receiving countries were to reciprocate by having less stringent entry regulations for Filipino reproductive workers, their chances of being trafficked or ending up as undocumented workers would be lessened. Policies that discriminate against undocumented workers have affected the well being of women migrants and their children.

Advocacy efforts on the implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families should be linked to advocacies for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This would include recognizing at household, community, national and international levels, that children are stakeholders in debates around migration and must also be heard. Children are often migrant workers themselves and in many cases are more greatly at risk. Whether children are left behind or travel with the migrating parent, their rights, welfare and freedoms are affected.

The full implementation of the Convention of the Rights

of the Child directly addresses many of the problems that women migrant workers encounter. The social exclusion, denial of education and health services and denial of citizenship rights to the children of migrant workers both in sending and receiving countries are violations of the Convention.

The Convention of the Rights of the Child is in itself a document that contributes to the feminist project of unpacking patriarchal and heterosexist notions of the family by insisting on the distinct interest of the child as apart from other family members. In guaranteeing the right of the child to participate in decisions that affect his or her welfare, it contributes to radical conceptions of democracy that is brought to bear on the intimate relations in the family as well as the broader sphere of international relations. The Convention's insistence on a child's rights to citizenship, identity and social support services as serves as a foundation for concepts of universal citizenship that are not based on the power of the state or the family to guarantee citizenship.

Social movements for the protection of migrants' rights may find support from other social movements and progressive governments in advocating a minimum set of universal rights and entitlements that define global citizenship. These minimal set of rights can begin with those advocated by the migrants themselves---respect for the rights of children as distinct from the rights of the parents; access to health services regardless of citizenship status; freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment; the right to organize for mutual interest and protection, the right to the same standard of justice in court proceedings as the citizens of the host country—may be mentioned as a start.

Neo-liberal economic globalization has managed to abrogate hard-won protections for workers, their families and communities because of its insistence on the unrestricted flow of goods and money across national boundaries while strictly controlling people's freedom of movement across these same national boundaries. As I have mentioned earlier, it is this kind of globalization that has spurned the feminization of migrant labor. The answer to this control is to give equal freedom to people's movements across national boundaries. It is this concept of universal citizenship that

would best serve the interests of all workers everywhere, including Filipino migrant workers and their families.

Notes

[1] A Department of Foreign Affairs official who attended the public presentation of this research report notes her own pain at not being able to do much for these cases. She cites that previous regulations had more protections for the wife and children of the migrating worker in their employment contracts, but these were subsequently stripped away.
[2] The representative for Center for Migrant Advocacies who attended the dissemination forum for this research states that there is an increasing number of women who leave for ASEAN countries who, because visas are no longer required, lose the protective mechanisms previously put in place by visa requirements. I would argue that an attempt by the Philippine government in 1987 to ban the migration of women to work as domestic helpers was a failure. The government of Singapore merely granted prospective domestic helpers tourist visas and then granted them working permits once they had entered Singapore (Lim and Oishi 1996). But the comment points to an important point that, should a wider "visa-less" system be adopted, researches to monitor its effects can also be put in place from the beginning.

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