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**Filipina Identities: Geographies of Social Integration/Exclusion
in the Canadian Metropolis**

Deirdre McKay and the Philippine Women Centre

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**Filipina Identities:
Geographies of Social Integration/Exclusion in the Canadian Metropolis**

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Abstract: This qualitative research project explored the personal geographies of social integration/exclusion for Filipino immigrant women in Canadian metropolitan areas. Though only half of the respondents had arrived under the Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP), all reported that they had to negotiate the stereotype of Filipina as domestic worker. Their experience reflects the high degrees of occupational segmentation for Filipinas in Canadian urban labour markets. To explain this situation, this paper examines life history data collected in focus-group interviews and statistical data on the Filipino community. Arriving in Canada as a contract domestic worker after doing similar work in a third country appears to be a negative predictor of economic success and social integration. Likewise, the demands of transnational households and distance from the independent immigrant community shape the Canadian experiences of Filipina LCP migrants in ways that contribute to social exclusion. The results indicate that analysis of the socio-economic conditions that yield segmentation in the national labour market (state policies, racialization, family roles, socialization) must also now expand beyond the nation state to include the global-level processes of labour export and transnational migration circuits.

Key words:

Filipino community, Live-In Caregiver Program, gender, transnationalism

1. Introduction: Filipinas in Canada

One time I went to look for a job, so I tried to find a job posting at Human Resources Canada. It was a new office to me and the computer was different from the one I used before. So, someone, one of the staff there, saw me. I said, "I'm looking for an assistant position, secretarial." He said, "Oh, I thought you were looking for a position as a domestic helper, but you speak English so well." They look down on you... That we're from the Third World – women of colour – we're only fit for housekeeping stuff, jobs like that. This story reflects my experience with the general public in Canada.

– Sarah, aged late 20s, social worker, international NGO experience in South Asia, landed in Canada in 1996 as an Independent Immigrant, presently a secretary in a non-profit organisation.]

This project has examined sites of integration and sites of exclusion for Filipino women in Canadian metropolitan areas. This working paper describes the major findings of the study, reporting on qualitative research that explored the personal geographies of social integration/exclusion for Filipino women in Canadian metropolitan areas. For Sarah, Human Resources Canada is a site that attempts to integrate her into a Canadian multi-cultural mosaic in a very particular way – by relating to her through the stereotype of Filipino women as domestic helpers or nannies. Though Sarah herself landed in Canada as an independent immigrant, her experiences of life in Canada are overdetermined by the predominance of Filipino women in the “Other” class, those arriving under the Live-In Caregiver Program.

With Luningning Alcuities-Imperial and researchers from the Philippine Women Centre of Vancouver, British Columbia, the author collected life-history interviews in a focus-group setting with 72 women of Filipino ethnic backgrounds. These interviews were held in Vancouver, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg. Thirty of the women interviewed were landed immigrants who had arrived in Canada in the independent, family-sponsored (non-LCP) or skilled migrant classes, with only three women having arrived before 1980. The LCPers were women who had come to Canada as contract migrants, with the opportunity of applying for landed immigrant status once they had completed the Live-In Caregiver Program. Some of them were “graduates” of the program; having achieved landed immigrant status several years before. Others were still “under” the LCP, waiting to make their applications for landed status and thus not yet counted among immigrant landings.

To provide additional contextual background for the life histories, representatives from seven Canadian community service agencies were interviewed. In the Philippines, interviews were conducted with staff members of five Manila-based migrant-worker NGOs and staff of the Canadian Embassy. Data from CIC and a special data order from the Immigration Data Base (IMDB) provide additional statistical context for the life history and service agency data.

Sarah's experience of stereotyping as 'Filipina nannies' was also reported by 29 of the 72 other Filipina immigrants we interviewed for this project who were not LCP arrivals but independent immigrants. They had been sponsored by family members or fiancés, or landed as self-sponsored skilled workers. For all of them, the defining experience of being Filipina in Canada was negotiating their identification, through their ethnicity and gender, with migrant Filipina domestic workers. This stereotype originated in their visibility as an ethnic group and the over-representation of Filipinas in both the LCP immigration category and in the occupations classified as housekeeping and childcare in the Canadian labour market.

On the streets of upper middle-class Canadian suburbs, immigration statistics for Filipinas translate into a visible presence: 'brown' women pushing the prams of 'blonde' babies. In Vancouver, for example, statistics on labour market segmentation from the 1991 census show that women of Philippine ethnic origin are 8.6 times more likely than expected to be found in the occupations of 'housekeeper' and 6.9 times more likely to be 'childcare worker' (Hiebert 1997: Table 5).² Women from the Philippines exhibit the highest degree of occupational segmentation of any group of women (Hiebert 1997), and this is likely as a result of the influx of Filipina women under the Live-In Caregiver Program.³ The stereotypes of Filipinas as nannies arising from the concentration of Filipina women in these occupations have come to overdetermine experiences and identities for all Filipinas: As one community organizer commented: "The LCP filters and forms the Filipino community" (Faralles 1998).⁴

Hiebert (1997:2) argues that the location of a particular ethnic group within the labour market comes to define the intra-community relations and shared imagination of that ethnic group. In the

² These index values reflect the occupational segmentation experienced by ethnic groups. A value of 1.0 indicates that the ethnic group in question is represented in that occupation by the number of individuals predicted if jobs were distributed regardless of ethnicity. A value of less than 1 shows under-representation and a value greater than 1, proportional over-representation.

³ Daniel Hiebert, "The Colour of Work: Labour Market Segmentation in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, 1991" RIIM Working Paper Series #97-02, March 1997, p. 26 and Table 5.

⁴ May Farralles, Youth worker, Ugnayan - Filipino Youth Group, Vancouver.

Filipino community in Canada, the entry of a large number of immigrants from the Philippines through a special immigration program, the LCP, bisects the community into two groups: ‘independent’ immigrants and LCPers. Data presented here suggest that the streaming of immigrants into these two broad classes of experience fractures this ‘shared imagination’ of the group and structures Filipino intra-community relations in particular ways. This bifurcation goes some way to explain Hiebert’s (1997: Figure 6) finding that the Filipino community had the highest index of occupational dissimilarity of any ethnic group in Canada’s major cities.

Data from the IMDB will show that Filipinos arriving under the LCP tend to be located in particular segments of the urban labour market and this is particularly true for women. This coincides with the findings of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC 2000) that very recent immigrant women – those who landed during the 1990s – are found in jobs that require a lower level of skill than Canadian-born and previous immigrants. By connecting labour market segmentation to the migration and immigration experiences of Filipino women arriving under the LCP, I suggest that previous migration experience and deskilling are another form of difference that must be factored into explanations constructed for the over-representation of Filipino women in low-skilled, service sector jobs.

2. Profile of Filipina Immigrants to Canada

As the profile of research participants indicates, all women from the Philippines in Canada have not landed under the LCP. The strength of the stereotype of Filipinas as LCP migrants belies this and recent immigration trends have entrenched this vision of Filipina identity further. There are two phenomena that underpin this. Firstly, a significant proportion of all female immigrants from the Philippines are arriving as LCP migrants and then applying for landed status. They thus compose a visibly gendered and ethnic minority in Canadian society. Secondly, as women of colour and coming from a single ethnic group, Filipinas predominate in the LCP migration stream itself. Filipinas are thus more ‘visible’ than the proportionately much smaller number of women from other ethnic backgrounds working as live-in nannies.

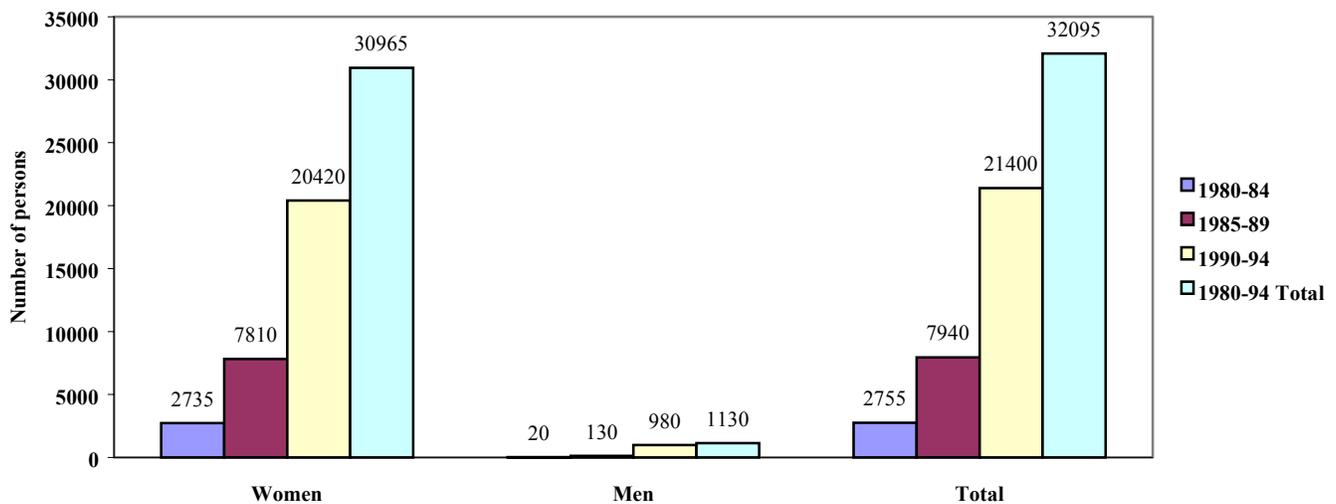
2.1 A high proportion of Filipina immigrants are landing under the LCP

There have been two major waves of migration from the Philippines to Canada. The first wave of immigrants, landing in the 1960s and 1970s, was composed mainly of medical and other professionals.

Beginning in the 1980s, they were joined by a ‘second wave’ of immigrants entering to take positions as domestic helpers. The movement of this last group was enabled by the introduction of the Foreign Domestic Movement Program by the Canadian government. In 1992 this program was reworked and the name changed to the Live-In Caregiver Program. It brings migrants to Canada as contract workers, giving them eligibility for landed immigrant status on the completion of a period of contract work as a live-in employee in a Canadian home. Since the LCP was introduced as a special immigration category, the vast majority of LCP entrants have been female.

Figure 1: Immigrants 1980-94 in the Live-in Caregiver Category

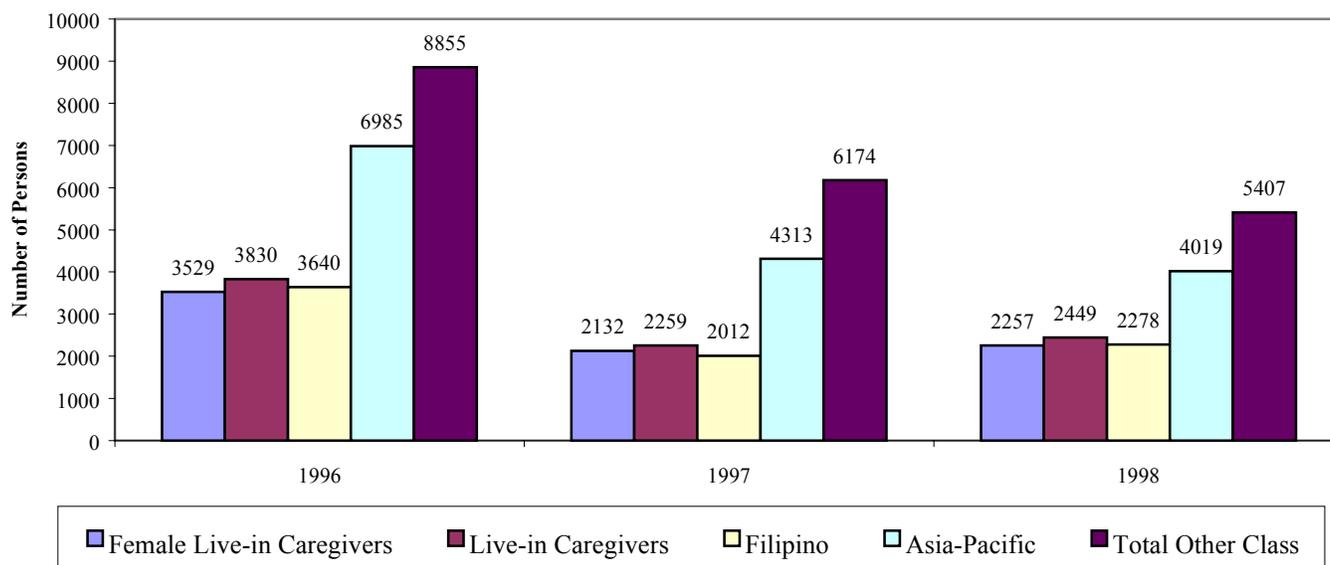
Source: IMBD data order



The LCP immigration stream means that Filipinos predominate in the ‘Other’ class (see Figure 2). According to the CIC data here, female LCPers, LCPers and Filipinos are close to identical in their numbers.

Figure 2: Other Class Immigrants to Canada

Source: CIC 1998



This dominance in the Other/LCP sub-class makes Filipinos a significant group of immigrants – in 2000, CIC reported that 58.6% of Other class landings were Filipino.⁵

In the period 1990–1994, the last period for which comprehensive IMDB data breaking down all classes is available, 51,885 immigrants from the Philippines landed in Canada, representing 9.3% of total immigrant landings. Filipino landings were a mix of independent immigrants, their spouses and dependents and LCP applicants and their LCP spouses and dependents. 33,905 Filipino women landed in all immigration classes, versus 17,980 Filipino men. Of those landing in the LCP principal applicant group, 21,400 people (72.3%) listed their country of origin as the Philippines. Almost 42% of all Filipino immigrant landings were LCP principal applicants and 98% of these Filipino LCP principal applicants were women. A Filipina landing in the 1990–1994 period, then, had approximately a 50/50 chance of being an LCP immigrant.

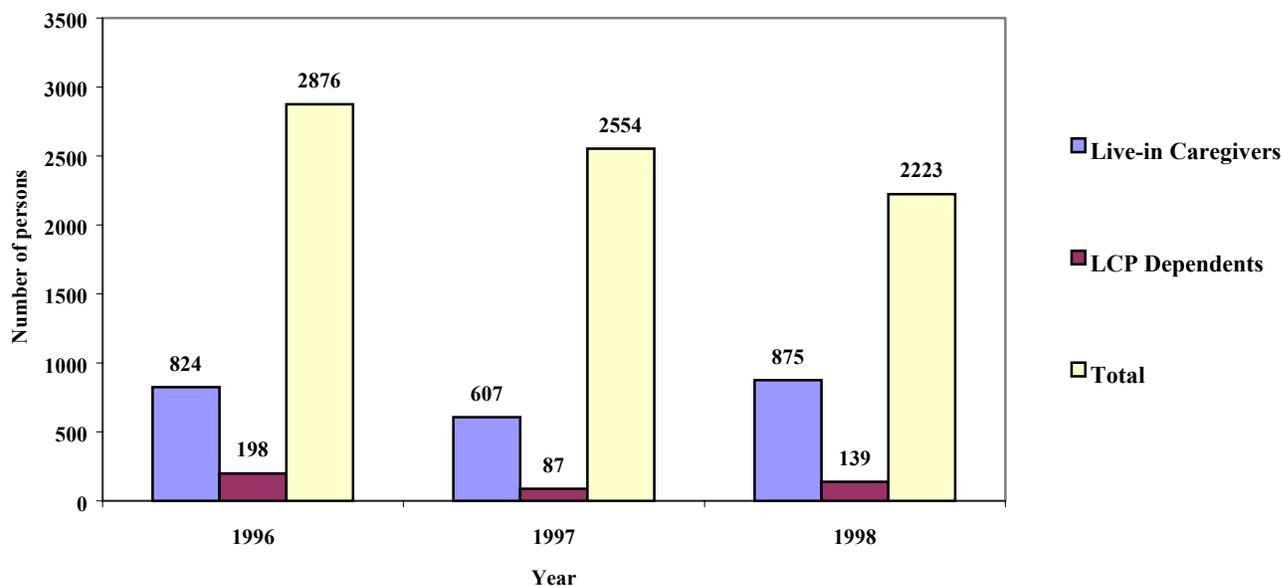
To suggest what this might mean for the Filipino community at the level of a metropolitan area, the statistics for Vancouver are illustrative. In Vancouver, forty-two percent of 1998 immigrant landings in the ‘Other’ class (where LCP principal applicants and dependents are recorded) were from the Philippines. Filipinos ranked fifth in number of immigrant arrivals for that year. In this city, a significant proportion of Filipino immigration is now composed of Live-in Caregiver applicants and their spouses or dependents. Data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (1999) show that, in

⁵ <http://cic.gc.ca/pub/facts2000>

1996, 36% of Filipino arrivals in Vancouver were coming through the LCP program. In 1997, the proportion dropped to 27%, but rose, again, in 1998 to 46%. As represented in Figure 3, over this period an increasing proportion of Filipino immigrants relative to the total number of Filipinos arriving were coming through the LCP.

Figure 3: Filipino Immigrants to Vancouver 1996 - 1998

Source: CIC 1998



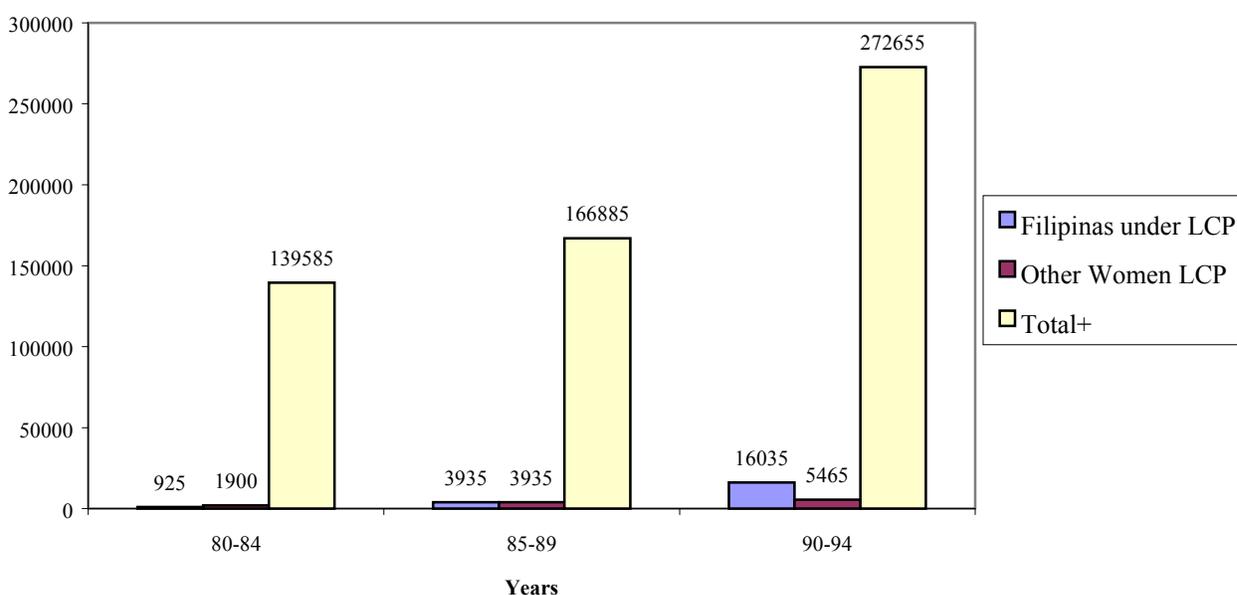
Hiebert's 1997 data on labour market segmentation are based on the 1991 census. The occupations he identifies as featuring over-representation of Filipino women, housekeeping and childcare, are also dominated by immigrants who had landed in the preceding five years (1986–1991). A woman is 3.7 times more likely to be a very recent immigrant if her occupation is categorised as housekeeping and 3.5 times more likely to be a very recent immigrant if she is working in childcare. (Hiebert 1997: Table 14.) Given the 2 to 3 year waiting period for landed immigrant status under the LCP, Hiebert's indices of segmentation likely underestimate the number of Filipinas actually found in those occupations. The large influx of Filipino LCP migrants to Vancouver and other large Canadian cities in the years following 1991 has most likely increased the index values for the ethnic and gender segmentation he reports.

2.2 LCP landings are predominantly Filipinas

When landings of people arriving as LCP principal applicants are viewed as a separate immigration category, it must be as a predominantly Filipino and female one (see Figure 4). Since 1990, Filipinas have come to outnumber other women landing under the LCP quite substantially. Filipinas are thus decidedly over-represented within the LCP migration stream. According to immigration officials interviewed by the authors, applicants for the LCP are predominantly Filipino, with over 90% of the applications coming from the Philippines.

Figure 4: Women Landing 1980-1994

Source: IMDB data order



Considering the cohort of migrant women interviewed in our research, most of the LCP migrants were between 25 and 44 years old at landing. In the period 1990–1994, the IMDB records 13,770 Filipino women in this 25–44 age group as achieving landed immigrant status as principal applicants through the LCP. Only 3,805 women from other ethnic origins landed in that class and age group. Filipinas thus made up 78% of the LCP principal applicants (aged 25–44) achieving landed immigrant status, while women from other national origins represented 22% of this group.

In the early nineties, then, at least seventy percent of live-in caregivers were Filipinas. Given the under-representation of immigrants likely in the tax records that contribute to the IMDB and the fact that it only picks up landed immigrants, rather than migrant arrivals working under the LCP, seventy percent is an underestimate. Though LCP landings only represent about 1.5 % of Canadian

immigration (CIC, 2000), the over-representation of women of a single ethnic origin in this program supports a prevalent stereotype. As we shall see, both the reality of immigration flows and the stereotyping process have significant impacts on the settlement and labour market experiences of all Filipino immigrants, as well as their social identities.

2.3 Focus Group Respondents

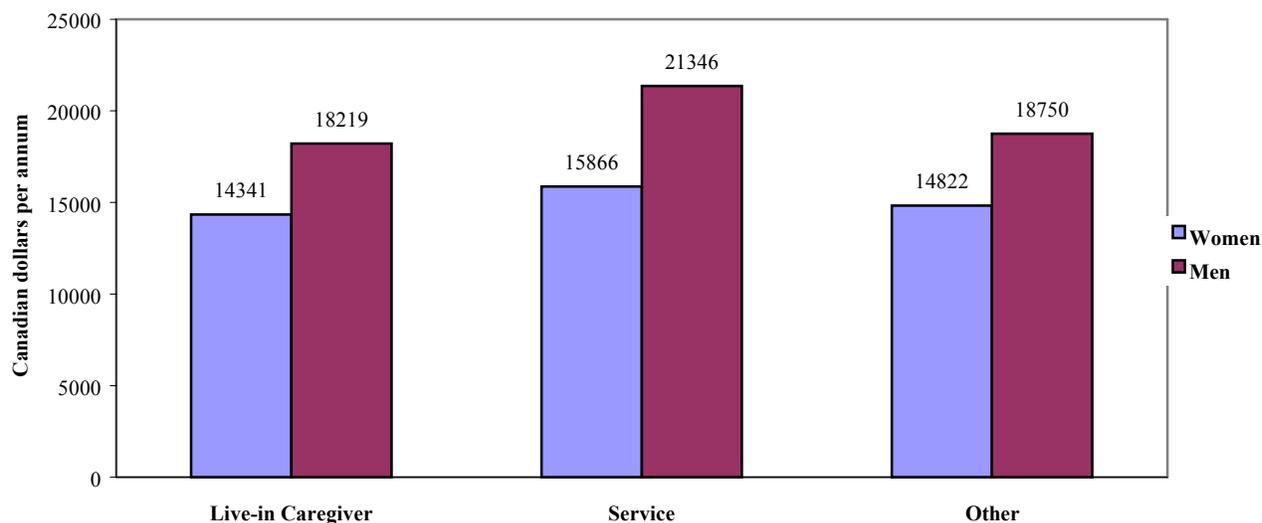
The IMDB data allow assessment of the Focus Group respondents in terms of the immigration class of Filipino immigrants since 1980: 30 have independent, sponsored or skilled immigrant status, while the remaining 42 entered Canada through the LCP. In terms of class of immigration, this ratio of 5:7 is representative of the newer cohort of adult female arrivals in the Filipino community in Canada today. In 1981–1984, 11% of all Filipinas arriving in Canada were coming under the Foreign Domestic Movement Program. This proportion rose to 28% in 1985–1989. Between 1990 and 1994, 46% of all Filipinas landing in Canada were LCP principal applicants. This sharp increase reflects the reworking of the FDM program into the LCP. When the cohort aged 25–44 years at landing is examined, 55% of Filipinas landing between 1990 and 1994 came to Canada through the LCP. When non-landed Filipinas still under the LCP are added to the Filipino community, the proportion of LCP women would increase further. So the LCP to non-LCP proportions of our focus groups loosely approximates the Filipino community in Canada today.

3. Background of Filipina immigrants

Though they are stereotyped as arriving to take up ‘unskilled’ work, Filipino immigrants are generally well educated. Immigrant Filipinos, men and women, are more likely to have a university degree (29% do), than native-born Canadians. Despite the apparent advantage in their educational attainment, immigrant Filipino women earn less, on the average, than Filipino men do, and less than the Canadian average (CIC 2000). This is true for women and men landing under the LCP (see Figure 5), regardless of whether they work in the service sector, continue care-giving or enter other jobs after they have landed.

Figure 5: Income of LCP Landings 1990-94

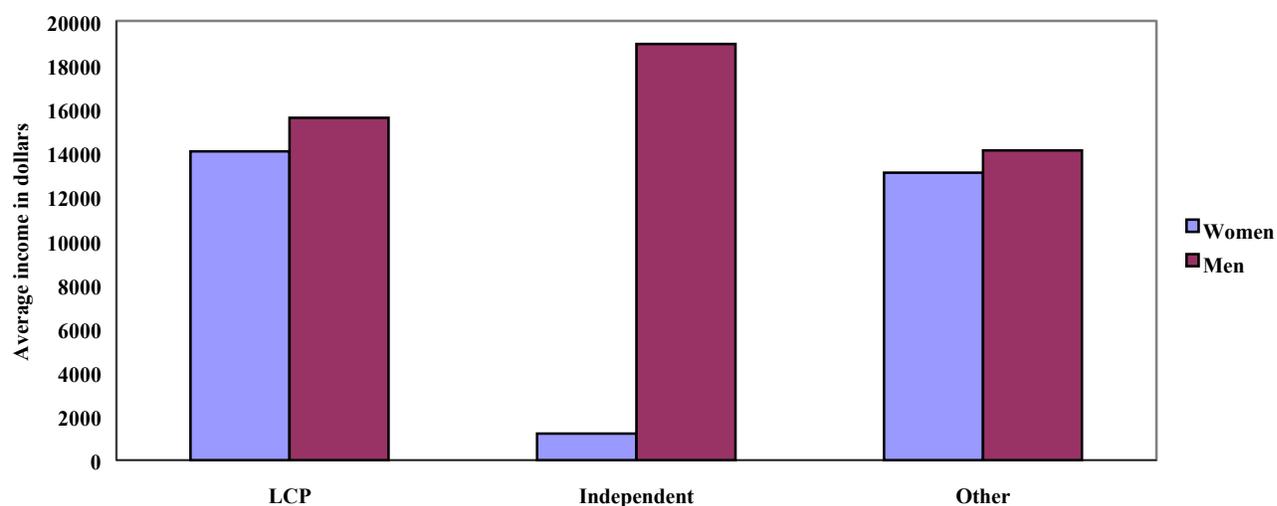
Source: IMBD data order



In the Filipino community as a whole, sex differences are greatest for independent immigrants (see Figure 6). Combined, this suggests that Filipinas landing in Canada suffer discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, gender and immigration status.

Figure 6: Filipino Immigrants 1990-94

Source: IMBD data order



Here, focus group discussion ties this experience to the LCP as their point of (non-) entry into the Canadian labour market. There are some puzzles when it comes to relating education to labour market success. Filipina immigrants, as childcare and housekeeping workers have some of the lowest returns for educational qualifications in the labour market (Hiebert 1997 Figure 3.) Working outside one's educational and occupational background for long periods leads to deskilling. Perhaps this is why, for instance, CIC reports that 32% of all Philippine immigrant women have post-secondary qualifications in health-related fields but only 20% have employment in this area in Canada.

Data collected for this project suggests that entry through the LCP itself overdetermines labour market experiences. Canadian immigration officials refer to the LCP as a 'back door' for applicants whose skills, education, work experience or family situation would not have qualified them for acceptance as independent immigrants through the regular immigration process. Selection for immigration to Canada has been based on points awarded for education, training and work experience according to the anticipated demands of the Canadian labour market. Qualifications in nursing, teaching and midwifery (those required for the LCP) have not been awarded immigration points in the recent past because there is a sufficient supply of skilled workers in the Canadian labour market already. Thus the LCP opens a route for those without the skills or education assessed as desirable by Canadian government labour market analysis. On the part of the general Canadian population, then, this creates the impression that LCP migrants are 'unskilled' and 'uneducated.'

If, as in the case of Filipinas, domestic workers are also visible minority and 'third world' in origin, domestic work is seen as particularly 'natural' for them, even if their Philippine education, work experience and class trajectory pre-migration suggest otherwise. This understanding is evident in the following exchange between a worker and her Canadian employer's adult daughter:

"... she was talking to me about life in the Philippines... And I was telling her, I never worked as a domestic back home. All of my family are educated, all the children and everything... She said to me, even though you are educated, they don't acknowledge your education here and you still belong to a poor country."

- Filipina, quoted in Stiell and England 1997: 353.

Stereotypes of Filipinas as docile, passive, unskilled, unintellectual and hardworking circulate widely in Canada (Pratt 1997). For instance:

"Your average Filipino girl is a quiet, shy personality. She does her job and that's the most important. The house has to be clean, spotless when God's coming home, sorry, the parents are coming home."

- Canadian Nanny Agent, quoted in Pratt 1997: 163.

Filipinas who migrate as caregivers are commonly contrasted to nannies from Europe:

“Europeans... It’s just a jumping board that they used because they have their own plan, their own career, their own training back there. They are not going to stay nannies. Filipinos will. That’s the only thing they know how to do... What they’re trained for...”

- Canadian Nanny Agent, quoted in Pratt, 1997: 172

In the Canadian media, the employment of Filipina domestics is described as providing women with an opportunity to improve their status and escape “traditional paternalistic attitudes” located in the supposedly patriarchal and religion-dominated Philippines (Vincent 1996). Yet many of the same patriarchal attitudes permeate Canadian employment relations, particularly in the live-in context

4. The LCP and global migration

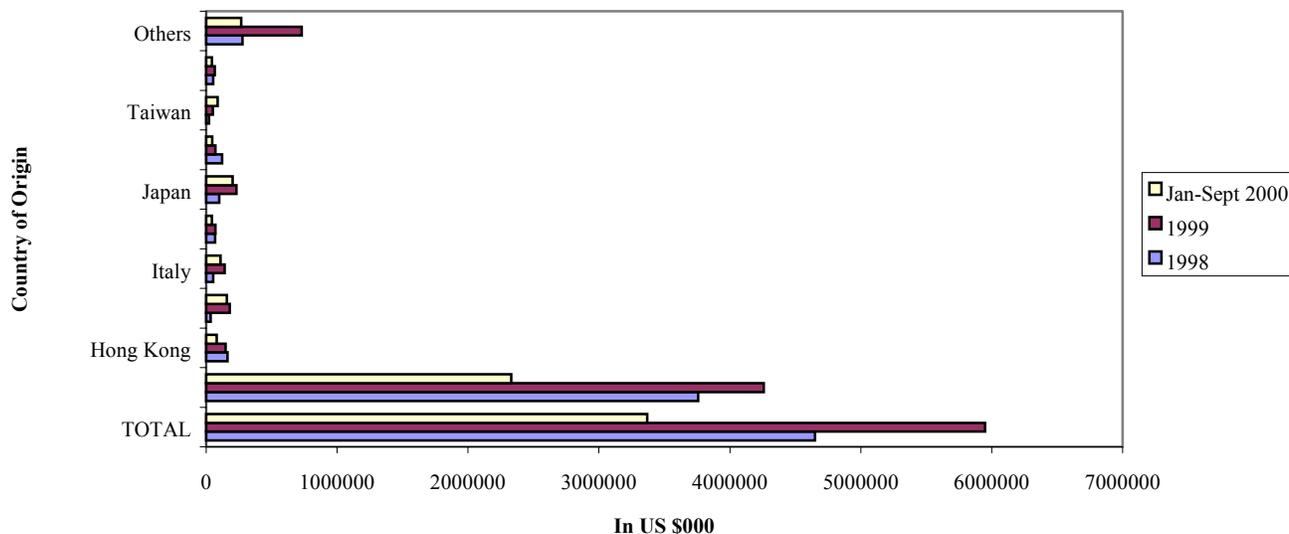
As a special immigration category, the LCP brings migrants to Canada as contract workers, giving them eligibility for landed immigrant status on the completion of a period of contract work as a live-in employee in a Canadian home. Caregivers, we have seen, enter the country not as immigrants, but with pre-immigrant status. The success of their eventual application for landed immigrant status depends on their meeting the requirements of the program: they must work for 24 months as a live-in employee in a Canadian home that must be completed within 36 months of arrival.

These are the Canadian regulations for LCP applicants but the applicants themselves have labour histories that they bring with them to Canada, along with their willingness to work under the LCP conditions and their skills base. Both in Canada and the Philippines, the LCP is designed to reward contract migration for feminised, low-paid, unskilled labour with citizenship. In doing so, the LCP brings the Canadian labour market into articulation with a state-sponsored export of female contract workers from the Philippines and the global labour market for such workers.

From the Philippine perspective, the Canadian LCP program is in competition with other countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Saudi Arabia that also hire contract workers. Compared to the other countries which host migrant workers, the wages of contract domestic work in Canada are relatively low. Money remitted from land-based workers to the Philippines from Canada is less important to the Philippine economy than flows from contract workers in Hong Kong, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Italy or Japan (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Remittances from Overseas Land-based Filipino Workers

Source: *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, Foreign Exchange Department*



The compensation for the relatively low salary and limited opportunity to remit money home is apparently the opportunity to become a Canadian permanent resident and leave domestic work. Following the pattern of migrants to the United States who have become citizens, Filipinos hope that coming to Canada will similarly allow them to have personal security and simultaneously provide more support for family members at home. For contract domestic workers, however, there is no possibility of permanent residency other than through marriage to a host national and no option to move out of domestic work in receiving countries, except in Canada.

The LCP requires that applicants demonstrate educational and experiential qualifications. LCP entrants must have a 2-year post-secondary qualification in a care-giving field – nursing, midwifery or education – or equivalent experience either through work or ‘study’ as a domestic. In the Philippines, these are professions considered as distinct from housekeeping or ‘maid’ work. Thus many LCP applicants feel there is an implied promise that, given their training, jobs appropriate to their qualifications, i.e. outside domestic work, will be available for them after they have completed the program. This is, however, not the case. If it were, ‘points’ would be given for their qualifications under the regular immigration system, rather than a special program.

Because the program requires them to demonstrate either these college level qualifications in midwifery, nursing or education or equivalent work experience, many women apply after several years in the labour force, often in Hong Kong, Singapore or Saudi Arabia. The attraction of permanent migration to Canada causes women to undertake preparatory courses or employment before making an application to the LCP. For women who do not have appropriate college education, it makes better economic sense to take a first contract in another country, then apply for Canada on the basis of that work experience. Other women learn of the LCP option while on contracts in third countries and choose to apply for Canada, rather than take another short-term contract or return to the Philippines. This strategy of doing overseas contract work in other countries first, then ‘transferring’ to Canada is called ‘deploying cross-country.’

4.1 Deploying cross-country and deskilling

Considering these women as workers, their applications to the Canadian LCP arise from within a much more globalized flow of workers. Most Filipino LCP entrants who participated in our focus groups came to Canada after several years of domestic experience in other ‘Third’ countries. Only 11 of the 42 women had not done domestic work outside the Philippines before applying to Canada. And only one of these women had done domestic service within the Philippines, prior to her migration overseas.

Migration profile of focus-group respondents

Independent, sponsored or skilled workers	30
LCP direct hires, no work outside Philippines	11
LCP via Singapore	7
LCP via Saudi Arabia/Arabian Gulf nations	3
LCP via Hong Kong	12
LCP via Saudi, followed by another country	3
LCP via European countries	5
LCP via South Korea	1
Total	72

Canadian immigration statistics do not track the third-country work experience of these women *per se*. Most of them returned to the Philippines after working overseas and applied to Canada from there, though a few processed their papers in Hong Kong or Singapore. They list their place of birth and country of origin as the Philippines and travel on Philippine passports.

Although their work experience as domestic workers outside the Philippines facilitates entry into Canada through the LCP, it appears to mark the beginning of longer periods of professional deskilling. In this regard, Canada is becoming a ‘graduate school’ for domestics where the goal of migration is not economic benefits but citizenship. The long-term intention of LCP applicants, supported by the program itself, is to migrate permanently. Because ‘deploying cross-country’ is seen as the strategy most likely to succeed by would-be LCP migrants. Hong Kong and Singapore are, for them, stopover points on their route to Canada. It is easier and cheaper to find contract work in Singapore, Hong Kong or ‘Saudi’ (the Arabian Gulf) first, and then apply for the Canadian program. Another feature of the cross-country route is that employers, either nationals or expatriates in those countries, may themselves be immigrating to Canada and choose to sponsor their Filipina employee.

Officials at the Canadian Embassy in Manila corroborated this assessment of cross-country deployment as ‘easier’, explaining that verifiable records of employment experience from Hong Kong and Singapore would get women through the approval process much more quickly. In the experience of immigration assessors, documentation of employment and education in the Philippines was often very difficult to verify and frequently false. As one official explained:

“People in Singapore and Hong Kong are usually working as nannies and have been working as nannies and can produce independently verifiable references to that point. We get everything... here and our refusal rate is very high. Everyone knows about the LCP... it’s advertised in the newspapers [by local recruiting agencies]”

4.2 The rationale for cross-country deployment to Canada

In our project interviews, women explained that their choices to apply for Canada rather than return to the Philippines were made for a variety of personal and economic reasons. The rationale they gave usually entailed both personal factors and economic concerns that combined to make permanent residency outside the Philippines their preferred option. Relationship breakdown and social isolation due to their status as single mothers was cited by some respondents as a reason to remain abroad. Economic dependence on the part of their family in the Philippines was also common concern for

¹¹ Domestic work does not count as Canadian work experience, thus any skills demonstrated in performing it are not recognized as such in the Canadian labour market.

migrants already overseas – they worried that their family could no longer make ends meet without a foreign currency income stream. For others, their time in Hong Kong or Singapore meant that their professional skills set would no longer be current in the Filipino labour market. They could only look forward to similar low-skilled, low-paid work at home.

Reservations about re-entry in the Philippines on the part of migrant women are well founded. Migrants who choose to return to the Philippines have limited possibilities for productive investments (Gibson, Law and McKay 2001). The personal savings accumulated by migrant women are usually not of the magnitude to support large-scale entrepreneurial activities. Rather, returned overseas workers frequently open small ‘sari-sari’ stores, selling basic grocery items and sweets, usually on credit. Another popular option is to invest in local transport networks, putting capital into small passenger vans or motorcycles with sidecars. Neither investment offers the same possibility for generating income for the household, nor the same social status. Thus, for Filipina migrants, once abroad, the pressures to remain overseas and find another contract are strong. The inherent insecurity of contract work means that permanent migration is a very attractive option for these overseas workers.

On completing a contract in Hong Kong or Singapore, for example, and not wanting to return to the Philippines, a migrant woman can explore several options to remain abroad which extend well beyond ‘labour market’ opportunities in the narrow sense. Networks of friends in Singapore or Hong Kong might suggest one or more of the following to a migrant: finding a new contract as a maid for an expatriate family; remaining with their current employer but negotiating better terms; working ‘freelance’ for several households; and or applying for work in a third country. As a third country where permanency is possible, Canada is an attractive option.

5 Transnational economic links and LCP applications from Filipinas

While Canada is among the most desirable destinations for contract migrants, it costs a great deal to get there. Respondents reported that the costs of applying for Canada can often only be met by earning in a currency other than Philippine pesos. The per capita GNP in the Philippines in 1997 was \$1200 U.S. or approximately P 30,000 per year. Our respondents in focus groups held in 1999 estimated that the required Philippine government deployment fees cost approximately P 12,000 (C\$ 445), the agency placement fee for Canada P 25,000 (C\$ 1042), to which must be added the air ticket (C\$ 1500), and Canadian landing tax (C\$ 835.) The processing fee at the Canadian Embassy in Manila is P5400 and non-refundable. Respondents working as nurses and teachers reported monthly incomes in the P 4500–P

7000 range, but described the total cost of applying to Canada as P 100,000 +. Thus, compared to the wages of eligible female workers, the costs of making an LCP application from the Philippines were unaffordable. Most respondents reported that they needed several years of savings from working in Singapore or Hong Kong to afford an application.

The alternative was to borrow money from other people, perhaps relatives or friends working abroad, or mortgage family assets. Such arrangements created monetary debt and debts of gratitude between the migrant and her extended kin network. A worker's migration to Canada is often understood by her family as a strategy to facilitate their own migration at some future point and family expectation weighed heavily on women migrating to Canada. Not only is the migrant obligated to remit money to her household, she must also pay off any debts she incurred in applying and migrating, as well as save to pay the expenses in sponsoring her family to join her.

Women who take contracts abroad see themselves as embedded in households that stretch across the Pacific, perhaps through two or three different nations. Their emotional ties and their earnings are part of a familial nexus of relationships, support and dependence. Remittances to 'home' form a key part of this network. In the Philippines, sending money is accepted to be the prime reason for 'going abroad.' Families and workers understand the Canadian program to be more 'work abroad' that should, fundamentally, provide a better wage. While the opportunity to become a landed immigrant is intended to compensate for the relatively lower wages offered live-in workers, the workers and their families expect more opportunities and fewer limitations.

The need to invest capital in migrating to Canada through the LCP and the requirements of the program (experience or training) push women towards first contracts in other receiving nations. Of our respondents in this study, 31 of 42 women had worked in a third country before applying to Canada. The vast majority had been domestic workers, although two had worked as nurses, one as a care-giver for the elderly, and another two in secretarial positions. Spending two to seven years as a domestic worker in a third country before coming to Canada and then two to three years working under the LCP meant that many migrant women had lost their mastery over their original professional skills set. Canada is thus becoming a 'graduate school' for domestics where the goal of their migration is not the possibility of remitting money immediately but citizenship, access to the broader job market, and a chance to reunify their family.

Although their work experience in a third country facilitates their entry into Canada through the LCP, it marks the beginning of longer periods of professional deskilling because, once landed, they find themselves unable to re-skill or gain re-entry to their 'old' professions. Instead, Filipino women in particular find themselves in low-skill, low-paying service jobs that are not dissimilar from

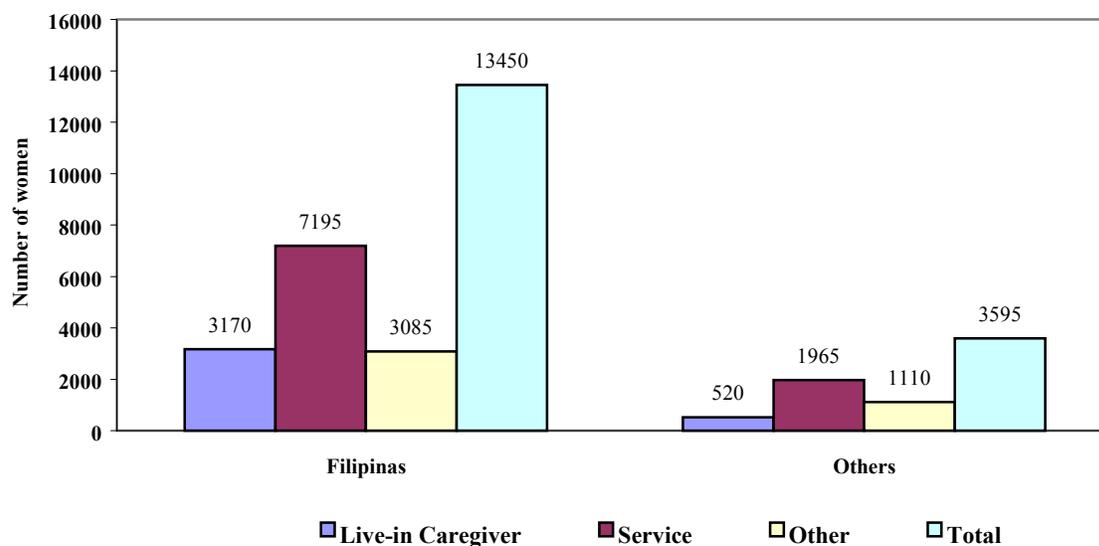
live-in caregiver work – live-out nanny, child-care worker, housekeeper, home health-care worker, nurse’s aide, sales clerk, cashier and food service worker. The following section outlines the statistical evidence for deskilling and is followed by some personal narratives of deskilling processes and data on the factors contributing to it.

5.1 Statistical evidence for deskilling

CIC reports that immigrants who came to Canada in the 1990s have not performed as well as previous arrivals, though the reasons for their lack of labour market success are not clear (CIC 2000.) In terms of the data collected on LCP immigrants through the IMDB, it is difficult to assess the correlation between industry of employment and customary occupation at landing. The landing form asks women to detail their employment history for the previous 10 years and this is then coded by occupation. The occupational categories however, do not match up exactly with the industry of employment details collected from the tax forms. Tracing women’s employment histories through the data base is thus difficult, except for particular occupational categories, such as nursing, where specific data can be ordered. Correlations between pre-arrival careers and post-landing occupations are challenging to track because of the lack of fit between employment histories, occupation on the landing form, and industry of employment data from the tax forms. Of course, how the woman filling out the form understood the instructions given can also be questioned.

Figure 8: Occupations of Women Landing 1990-94 LCP

Source: IMDB data order



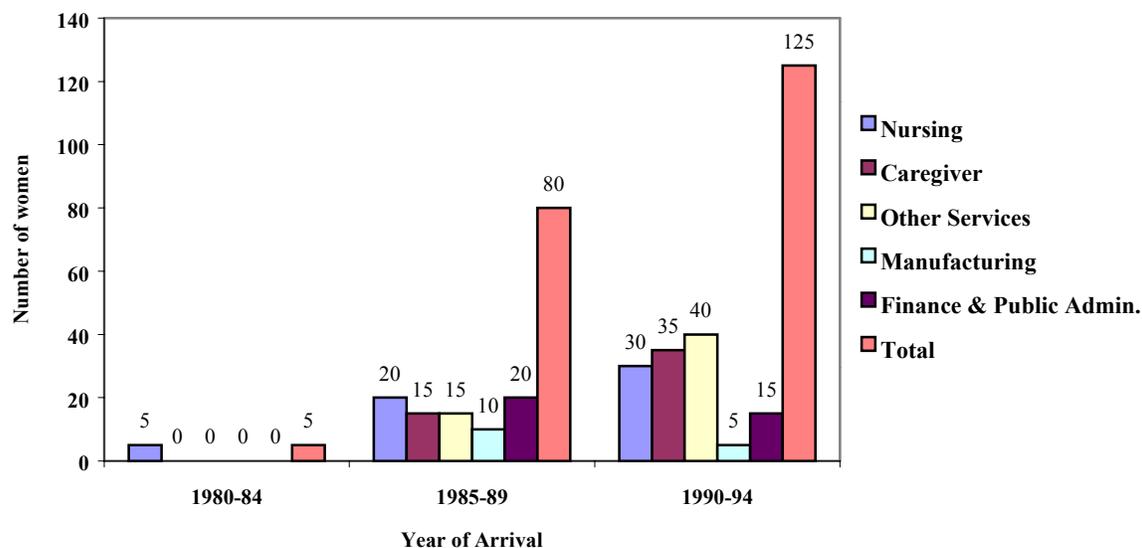
What is clear from the IMDB data is that Filipinas are significantly over-represented in that cohort of women who list live-in care-giving work as their occupation at landing. Figure 8 (Occupations of women landing 1990–1994) shows the occupation listed at landing for women who landed between 1990 and 1994. The number of Filipinas in live-in care-giving work alone is six times higher than the number of all the LCP landings of women of other national origins. In fact, other women landing under the LCP represent only one quarter of the Filipina numbers. The number of Filipinas listing caregiver as their occupation at landing likely reflects the women coming ‘cross-country’ – as domestic worker migrants from third countries. Note that the largest influx of ‘cross-country’ women is the cohort of Filipinas landing between 1990 and 1994. Their landing and entry into the (wider) Canadian labour market coincides with the CIC’s assessment that new female immigrants were having more difficulty in finding work and working for low pay, below their skill levels.

Assessing how work after landing and pre-LCP skills and education correlate is not possible for all occupations. Nursing is a useful example of the fit between customary occupation at landing and industry of employment in Canada. Until the 1980s, Philippine-educated nurses could immigrate to Canada as independent skilled workers (Diocson-Sayo 1999). Then the occupation was brought under the FDM and LCP programs.

Using the IMDB data, LCP immigrant Filipinas whose employment history over the 10 years prior to landing classified them as nurses were examined by their industry of employment at their 1995 tax return. The data suggests a definite deskilling trend for nurses arriving under the LCP (See Figure 9). Based on those filing taxes in 1995, in the 1980–1984 period, only five Filipina nurses arrived under the LCP (then the FDM.) In 1995, all five of these women were employed in nursing. Of the 1995 immigrant tax-filers landing in the 1985–1989 period, 80 Filipinas were nurses, but only 25% or 20 of those women had nursing as industry of employment. For the 1990-1994 landings, a smaller proportion of Filipinas again, 24% (30/125) were working as nurses, but a relatively larger number of nurses had landed. Most of the nurses landing in this period were in care-giving or service sector jobs in 1995. The service sector work would include occupations such as nurse’s aide, geriatric care worker, live-out nanny, sales clerk, food service worker etc. etc. Reports from the Filipino community indicate, however, that many more women with nursing education and experience as nurses arrive under the LCP than the few who are classified as nurses on the basis of their employment history as given on the landing form (Diocson-Sayo 2000).

Figure 9: Occupations in 1995 of Filipino Female Nurse LCP Landings

Source: IMBD data order



5.2 Narratives of deskilling

National-level data indicate that immigrant women, as a group, move out of low-skilled occupations in the 15 years after landing. Yet, if the anecdotal reports from the focus groups are representative, they indicate that Filipinas remain in ‘domestic’ occupations and do not move into the ‘skilled’ labour force.¹¹ This suggests serious labour market segregation on the basis of ethnicity. The statements that follow are drawn from the comments of group participants who had arrived in Canada under the LCP. These women are named with pseudonyms and their self-identified professional training.

Facilitator: *What were your expectations of Canada?*

Veronica (nurse): *My husband has an aunt here in Canada who wrote to me and asked me if I am interested in coming to Canada as a care-giver or a babysitter for a newborn baby. I was so naïve at that time that I didn't know what else I will be doing. All I know is that I will take care of a child and meal preparation and 8 hours of work per day with \$1,232 - quite a sum of money. But I was not informed of the 14% tax deduction, the room and board deduction. With the remaining \$700.00 I can't even support my three university students in the Philippines. This is a very drastic change in my lifestyle and expenses. My salary in Saudi Arabia is double the sum of money I am receiving here.*

Lydia (teacher): *I worked in Hong Kong for four years.... If I compare like my salary in Hong Kong as domestic helper and the salary as a classroom teacher in the Philippines, it is triple more than I get here. I arrived here in 1991 under LCP, for my 8 years here I had four employers and until now I am still doing domestic work or working as live-in caregiver.*

Aida (accounting graduate): *I already know that my work will be a nanny, a domestic helper. But what I knew, that is only for my stepping stone. That's only the start. Then I have hope that I could be able to upgrade myself. I can go to school, get my landed [immigrant status.] But now I feel I've screwed up because of the LCP, living and working with my employer. I've changed employers many times*

Ally (nutritionist): *I went for evaluation and my degree wasn't even recognized, even though I've passed my board exam. I proved to myself that, even though I'm not going to upgrade, I can probably be capable in whatever jobs are around. And I became realistic about it. I'm not shy to become a domestic worker. That I'm a Filipino woman, I'm not ashamed to anybody. Everybody is the same. (B)eing a Filipino... they look at us like we're small. Even though we have a good education, it doesn't matter to them. Because we're Filipino we are only a domestic helper. They only can control us because they have the money and power, of course, here in Canada*

The Filipina women interviewed attributed their career as domestic workers to both the prejudices of Canadian society and to the broader social constructions that limit the options of women migrants in transnational family networks. Canada looks attractive to Filipina workers because it offers permanent residence in a developed country. Yet, unlike Hong Kong, the salary is not cash in hand. As women interviewed noted, they only receive a portion of their monthly pay under the LCP, after deductions for food, lodging, health insurance and income taxes. With the remainder, they must cover the costs of clothing, transport, communication, entertainment and weekend lodging, as well as their obligations to family back in the Philippines. As migrant workers, rather than 'independent immigrants,' Filipinas find great difficulty in both saving money and accessing Canadian training and social welfare services. Here is one comment that introduces this positioning:

Veronica (nurse): *(M)oney-wise, we really are incapable of pursuing another career, we are helping family. We need to support our family in the Philippines leaving us very little amount for everyday living.*

Like Veronica, the breadwinner for a transnational household, most Filipinas identify themselves as workers first, rather than wives and mothers. This self-identification primarily as workers is occurring in a Canadian context where settlement services for immigrant women target stay-at-home mothers with small children who require language training.¹² Eighty percent of Filipino immigrant women (15-64) participate in the workforce, a higher rate than other immigrant women

¹² Joanne Lee, 1999, Immigrant Settlement and Multiculturalism Programs for Immigrant, Refugee and Visible Minority Women: a Study of Outcomes, Best Practices and Issues, report submitted to BC Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism, June 1999.

and native-born Canadians.¹³ This participation figure is virtually identical to that for Filipino immigrant men.¹⁴

In focus group discussions, Filipina respondents defined their vision of integration into Canadian society in primarily economic terms. It was notable how the few women we met who had been able to access services and training and exit domestic work had more positive assessments of their social integration.

Facilitator: Do you feel integrated?

May (midwife): Yes, but I just work part time jobs.

Lydia (teacher): Economically, I'm not sure, cause as I've said I'm working six days, just to have enough for myself, for my family and for my future. Politically, I'm not sure about politics. Socially, I don't have enough time to be socialized with my friends because I only have one day off and my close friends we're all the same, like we only met if there's some special occasions like Christmas, or New Year or birthdays. Culturally, I feel integrated regarding their Canadian culture like traditionally being a part in their Thanksgiving day, or Canada day.

Marilyn (journalist, social worker, and accountant): Economically, yes, I feel integrated because through human resources development I was able to access the training that I need. Like the computer skills -with the help of some of the non-profit organizations - and also the training on business management. Politically, no, because I'm not qualified to vote until I get my citizenship. The concrete example [of integration] is the LCP program designed and implemented by the Canadian federal government. I believed there is some advantages and disadvantages to this kind of policy. The advantage is they give us the access to enter Canada through the live in caregiver program. The disadvantage is most employers don't follow the 8 hours mandated working hours. We are underpaid. Socially, yes, like attending some parties, discos, seminars, conference, and training or in the church gatherings. Culturally, yes, a little bit, like Halloween, Thanksgiving, Canada day, the Victoria Day, Mother's day, Father's day, or buying lottery.

Staff members in service agencies supporting Filipina caregivers provided another perspective on the psychological process of integration and the experiences of deskilling. Many women landing through the LCP report that the experience has lowered their self-esteem, an observation made by Shona, a service agency staff member, and corroborated by Marlyn, a former nanny, below.

Shona: The perk here is that afterwards when they have their permanent landed immigrant [status], then they can work 2 or 3 jobs. They can work part-time. They can make more money. There are a lot of them, too, who want to move on to something else. But that's not necessarily possible because, if you have been working for a long time as a domestic worker you kind of – your self esteem goes kind of a bit lower, it's difficult to...actually to move on to something else.

¹³ 62% and 67% respectively. Profile - cicnet

¹⁴ Profile - cicnet.

Deirdre: Where would you say their self-esteem has been lowered by the domestic work? Here in Canada?

Shona: I think all together. I mean one thing is, if you are a domestic worker in the Philippines you are considered, as a maid, way, way at the bottom. So it's right from their own culture. Then I think afterwards it is that you are being paid the minimum wage, quite often not receiving all the things you are entitled to.... You're isolated... intellectual stimulation is very limited... and then the problem too when you are ready to go into the workforce. Most employers... will not recognize this as a Canadian work experience, being a live-in domestic worker. It is not considered as a job. It is not considered as a profession. The problem is domestic work is considered something anybody can do. In the general public, if you are a domestic worker you would be considered probably as intellectually a little bit limited. You have limited education; so the job that is left over for you to do is maid work.

Deirdre: Would you say that there are differences in the loss of self-esteem between women coming from the Philippines and Filipinas coming through other countries?

Shona: I don't think so. I see a lot of young Filipinas actually they probably, especially if they come directly from the Philippines, are able to recover very quickly – there is a lesser self esteem loss and they are much more self-assertive.

Deirdre: Are these younger women better educated than the older women who are coming through Hong Kong and Singapore?

Shona: Some of them. Not necessarily. I mean the immigration requirements are the same for everybody – that you have Grade 12 education, which is 2 years post secondary education if you are from the Philippines. No I think about education – pretty much the same still. Same level but they are less likely if they come directly from the Philippines to have actually worked as a domestic worker in the Philippines or outside the Philippines.

Marlyn (teacher, now immigrant settlement worker)

Deirdre: You were teaching in the Philippines – teaching and counselling can be kind of similar?

Marlyn: Yeah. But since then I worked in Singapore for almost 3 years and I work here for live-in care for more than 2 years. So the deskilling thing is also there, right? Like you have the hesitancy or.... Do you know that you can do it? Or, do you know that you can make it? ...Sometimes I think, 'is my communication OK?' Is my written or my verbal communication OK? You have a feeling of fear in going in to this kind of agency.

Marlyn's comments suggest how women entering Canada under the LCP face a similar set of problems to those of independent immigrants in terms of qualifications recognition. However, their 24-month live-in requirement leaves them ineligible for immediate re-training programs.

Marlyn: Because in immigration categories we have: ...visitor's visa, we have independent immigrant and LCP. LCP with live- in work authorization and LCP with landed and LCP, now citizen. But I categorize people as to who is a citizen here as who came as an independent immigrant and who is a citizen here with LCP.

Deirdre: What's the difference?

Marlyn: Well LCPers who are citizens here – some of them just stay in the service sector. LCPers – none of them have upgraded their profession.

Deirdre: Even after they have landed immigrant status they are still not upgrading?

Marlyn: They can.

Deirdre: But are they – are they actually upgrading?

Marlyn: That's the problem there. They can. But after you are landed now you are facing trying to leave a job like Marvelous Muffins, like Superstore, or a sort of secretary job. How much is the minimum wage? \$ 7.15 per week. If you have one regular job, you work 40 hours and they are only giving you \$700 or \$704 in a month. How much is your rent? How much is your food? Personal expenses? If you are planning to go to school, if you are planning to raise yourself, you have to either get a student loan or you have to borrow with your friends. Most LCPers have a family – taking their family here after they are landed. It's hard to survive. The transition phase is difficult. For most of them it leads to two jobs, three jobs – not even the time to spend for their children. Not enough sleep!

Deirdre: What about the landed immigrants who are coming as independent? Are they having the same level of difficulty?

Marlyn: Yes. Independent immigrants, they have this difficulty too. Once they come in here they have the family all together coming here. ...They don't have enough money to survive for 6 months. They have difficulty - accreditation is not accepted – experience abroad is not accepted - you have to have Canadian experience before you can get into a job. So the tendency is to go to a survival job – cleaning, maintenance, hotel housekeeping, working in a food court, making the burgers in McDonald's, homecare...

Although both groups experience similar challenges in settlement, there are distinct differences between LCP arrivals and landed immigrants. LCPers must live in their employers' homes and must wait for 24 months before they can try to find work outside care-giving. They are not eligible for training programs during that time, so they are unable to participate in the existing immigrant support programs. This means that women working as caregivers are isolated from other women in similar circumstances and, to a large extent, from the support networks of the rest of the Filipino community.

5.3 Deskilling and double isolation

Service agency workers described the ways that the double isolation of Filipinas doing domestic work contributes to their experience of being 'career domestics.'

Deirdre: What about entering into the workforce after the caregiver contract ends?

Shona: That's another big, big difficulty because you come by yourself, being sponsored by an employer or your family, you're coming by yourself then afterwards when you have finished with your live-in-caregiver work then you need to network to go into the other work field. But it's so difficult. You probably know very few people who are in that other field that you may be looking at. Because you have been working in isolation, mostly you work with other domestic workers. And I see that even more in the Filipina community, where actually between the Filipino community which is already landed immigrant – or people who came directly as landed immigrants – they look down on the domestic workers. There's a very strong separation. 'So you're only a nanny; we don't really communicate with you or we don't really deal with you.' And so the Filipinas have a tendency to stick within their domestic workers group.

What Shona describes is the way that domestic workers under the LCP are embedded in spatially bounded networks of information (see Hanson and Pratt, 1995). The boundaries of their networks are created by stratification produced by their LCP immigration status within the Filipino community and also by their ethnicity within the broader Canadian community. This was reflected in the comments that LCP respondents made on social integration during our focus group interviews.

Agnes (small business owner): I have an employer who's Filipino... he always puts me down... I'm only a maid, poor, no power, no money at all – like I know nothing. They're unfriendly to me, like they're asking me if we have electricity in our barrio, so I asked when did you go home last? I told them there's already cellular phones, pagers and telephones in most homes where I live, not just electricity now. Maybe they hadn't been home for twenty years... so, they don't know how it is.

As Agnes' story suggests, the ideas of Filipino-Canadians reflect entrenched class prejudices. There is an underlying assumption that, if someone is doing domestic work, they are of a lower status – particularly of a lower class background – and are somehow permanently fixed in that position. Since immigration criteria have changed over time, many of the newer LCP arrivals have the same qualifications as the earlier wave of immigrants. Regardless, because many Filipino-Canadians do not want to be stereotyped as 'nannies' or 'housekeepers,' they tend to distance themselves from the recent influx of Filipinas who have arrived under the LCP, creating a politics of appearances and locations that is read off the bodies of migrant women. This politics can further exclude LCP women from public spaces in their leisure time: "(N)ear the car were some Filipino men and women talking... They said, 'Oh, those are nannies. And they're trying to *look like something else*'" (Filipina, quoted in Pratt and PWC 2000: 9, emphasis in original.)

This exclusion is key to migrant women's experience of transnational households and class processes in Canada because it limits their recourse to social or monetary networks that might find them another job or assist in meeting requests for assistance from family at home. Working isolated in their employers' houses, they rely heavily on communications with their family at home for

emotional support and validation. Without social contacts outside their occupational and ethnic category, Filipinas are perhaps more likely to enter into and tolerate paternalistic interactions with their employers that, in turn, tend to limit their ability to negotiate better working conditions.

5.4 Relations with the broader society

Spaces of racialization and class were often apparent within the discursive geographies of Canada these women described, and were confirmed by service agency workers.

Annie (agency worker): That isolates those women as well – as professionals. I mean as care givers – the racism and class issues around it. The nannies are in some of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in the city.... They are all over now and more middle-income families are turning to the use of nannies. One, for the Filipinas then they rely on each other all that much more as a community – which on one level is a good thing, but on another level the reason that they have to rely on each other is because they are not really welcome in our community as care givers because the other parents have judgements about them and their employers are employers, they are not their friends.

Layers and layers of racism are involved in the whole domestic work reality. One level of it is the actual employer-employee relationship and the fact that it is generally non-white women who are doing the care for low wages etc., etc. But the other racism inherent in it is the parents who are also home, caring for children in the same community as the nannies. There's judgement... and a lack of relationship between these people.

5.5 Relations with the Filipino community

For women working as domestics, integration into the Filipino community was mentioned in ways that suggested it is understood as a pre-condition for integration into broader Canadian society.

Teresa (service agency worker): Their expectations for social integration are first within the Filipino community. They want to join that community first, and then maybe move from there to broader networks. It is very important to them that they have respect and they have a niche here in the Filipino community. And then, from there, when they feel stable there, then they start talking about interacting with white Canadians... That's their feeling – that this is a two-stage process of integration and that the LCP really holds them back in the first stage, which is the Filipino community.

Isolation in employers' homes and action by other Filipinos on class grounds were frequently cited as contributing to alienation. Relationships with non-Filipino men were seen as particularly difficult, with the men often economically predatory.

Veronica (nurse): I really didn't have a real close friend up until now because it's hard to be close to someone you only knew on weekends

Ally (nutritionist): I was isolated. I can't have a Filipino friend

Veronica (nurse): I haven't had any bad experiences of the general public. Sometimes white people are more friendly than my co – Filipinos.

Aida (teacher): Those immigrants who came here first they are, like, so high, looking down at you because you are a domestic worker. It's because we're 'only just nannies,' so, I feel degraded.

Veronica (nurse): Here old timer Filipino immigrants are snobs most of the time. On rare occasions you will meet a Filipino that will say hi or smile to you in return.

Ally (nutritionist): About the Filipino community here? When I left the Philippines I became a single mother. They look at me that I'm so little, I'm no good to the society anymore. Experiences in general public? Yes there's discrimination: they look at my colour, my hair and they back off.

6. Transnational Households

The LCP functions as a beach-head for family reunification. The first goal of a LCP arrival on landing is usually to sponsor her family members to join her.

Solana (nurse)...after being a nanny and then bringing their family here there is a huge responsibility just financially to support the family coming here. My family arrived and they were shocked. Only a two-bedroom apartment but me, three children and my husband there. They were asking for a fax machine, like at home in the Philippines. They didn't understand how hard I worked for everything...

The LCP also functions as a supplement for family sponsored immigration. When family members in the Philippines do not meet the requirements for assisted-relative sponsorship, their Canadian relatives may find them an 'employer' in Canada to sponsor them through the LCP. Often this 'employer' is non-existent or has to be paid for their services, meaning that the LCP arrival comes to Canada without work, in violation of the program and in debt but nonetheless obligated to her family network for 'petitioning' her to the country.

Mayette (nurse): My mother in law hired me directly from the Philippines under the LCP. Then they found an employer here to sign my contract.

¹⁶ These colonised patriarchal relations depend on a particular pre-colonial history of debt slavery, reviewed by Scott (1994: 224 - 229.) The condition arose from debt, captivity or birth. The Philippine institution was, in a fundamental sense, different from Western conceptions of slavery. All slaves had their price and their masters were creditors, rather than lords. They could not be seized and sold, but could be transferred between creditors/masters for a profit. Slaves themselves could amass enough wealth to secure their freedom.

By its very nature, the LCP creates transnational households from the migrant's Filipino family of origin or affinity. Migrant women struggle to combine filial or parental obligations with strategic choices that allow them more control over their own lives, relationships and the work process. Negotiating the demands of participation in their 'home' households and those of their Canadian employers, these migrant women try to negotiate contradictory expectations and to be 'good' in the eyes of all.

6.1 Class positions in transnational households

The live-in requirement of the LCP creates a situation where migrant women are positioned within two different households. Whether a migrant worker's surplus labour is appropriated by the worker herself, her family at home, or her employer in Canada depends on how the three parties involved theorise their identities, relationship and entitlements. Domestic work is often described as the exchange of one set of patriarchal relations - from the household of origin - for another, imposed by the employment relationship. Here, I hypothesise that this common outcome may be overdetermined by pressures and expectations perceived by the worker as coming through the transnational family. My analysis suggests that the entry of Filipinas under the LCP articulates their expectations of colonised patriarchal relations¹⁶ with a set of capitalist contract relations, limited by ethnic stereotypes and discourses of privacy that prevent the home from being constructed as a capitalist workplace.

Much of the female migration from the Philippines for domestic work abroad is made up of middle-class women who have combined or expected to combine education and careers with 'traditional' marriages. By taking up positions as contract domestics abroad, they are placing themselves within new and perhaps conflicting class processes across national borders. Live-in domestic work in Asia usually takes the form of a quasi-slave class position where the worker is contracted to provide domestic services in return for room and board (Gibson, Law and McKay 2001). Based on their experiences of relations with household help in the Philippines and in countries such as Hong Kong and Singapore, many Filipinas arrive in Canada expecting a patron-client type of relationship within the quasi-slave class model. They expect to be 'part of the family' and to have their subsistence needs largely met by their employer, enabling them to remit or save their actual salary. But regulations governing the Canadian program and cultural approaches to domestic work discourage this.

From the Philippine perspective, Aguilar (1999: 109) describes the worker's hopes for the employment relation in terms of paternalistic relations: "The domestic helper hopes to have the good fortune (*suwerte*) of ending up with a kind, generous, and understanding employer for such would lighten many of the usual burdens in the labour migrant's odyssey." This suggests that women from the Philippines expect paternalistic relations in domestic employment and hope that the concept of debt of gratitude works both ways – that their employer will be 'lenient' and bend the rules in return for their acquiescence to unpaid overtime and other irregularities, including incurring debts to the employer to assist family at home.

In remitting money the relations of *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) come into play between family members. As one interviewee expressed it: "I am the one who was sent to school. They sacrificed, my brothers and my parents, to pay my education. Now I am the one to earn, and to make improvements for them." Another migrant explained that remitting money to her family at home provides an "emotional advantage," ensuring that the family members who benefit from the money remain obligated to the migrant in the future (Tacoli 1996: 18.) The expectations of those at home weigh heavily on migrant women:

Ruth (teacher): "They're so proud of their little girl, she's out there, abroad, you know? She's gonna send a lot of money. We're going to be rich. Because that's what anybody who goes out of the country does – they're supposed to be sending money home. You think that you can manage it, you're from the centre of town, not the far barrios, you speak English, you're educated... you know? But for me, that's not the case, the choices that I made – I was not able to send the money that they were expecting. And that's shameful, you know."

In Canada, it is understood that Filipinas are working for the money, rather than the 'cultural experience.' Filipinas surveyed by Bakan and Stasiulus (1997: 130) were more likely than other migrant groups to cite sending money home as being their primary goal in coming to Canada. Though it is widely known that the money they earn goes back home, transnational household ties are dismissed as "just part of their culture" by nanny agents and employers (Pratt 1997: 165.) Though the 'family orientation' of Filipinas is seen to be a desirable trait, little provision is made to accommodate it. Canadian agents and employers also stereotype Filipinas as willing to work for less than other ethnicities (Pratt 1997.)

Regardless of the worker's attitude, by bringing a contract worker who lives outside into the home recreates it into a workplace, making it "a tiny, though increasingly visible, part of the capitalist economy." (Ehrenreich 1999: 62.) Having the same work performed by a live-in worker muddies the capitalist relations. The live-in nature of the program places a worker in the employer's private, domestic space as a workplace. The 'one of the family' construction of domestic workers can conceal

exploitative relations: “If nannies are constructed as other than employees and their jobs as not quite jobs, wage levels and working conditions unacceptable to Canadian citizens are legitimated.” (Pratt 1997: 167) When women are not remitting to support other family members, they are saving to reunite the family in Canada. Again, the relatively low salary creates obstacles and hardship in the reunification process.

Here, I turn to Gia’s story of migration to explore the contradictions between the colonised versus capitalist sensibilities around domestic work and transnational households.

In the Philippines, I taught Biology in high school. But the salary was small, so I applied for Singapore. I spent three years there, sending money back to my family. And I saved enough to apply for Canada. I came to Canada when I was 27, unmarried. It was hard. My family was used to me sending money home for them - for the farm, for my father who was ill, for my sister’s schooling. That was my expectation, as the oldest, that I would help my siblings complete their college. But my salary in Canada is not as much, after all the deductions.

And my employer is not very lenient... There are many irregularities – like, they are not even paying my medical insurance. Even though I am unhappy and not getting paid for my overtime, I stayed there. Just when I am thinking of finding another employer, my sister becomes sick. She needs surgery, right away. So, my family phones me and my mother tells me to get money. I tell her, I have no money saved, I can’t borrow from a bank. She tells me to borrow from my employer – an advance on my wages. So, I go to my employer and I get three months salary and send it home. I am ashamed to say to them that I am not happy, not being treated right...

But then, I’m stuck. I have to work three months more. And it’s worse. They cancel my off day at the last minute, or change it without asking. And they add more overtime, still not paid. But I can’t say anything because they gave me the money when I needed it. So, I endure the three months, and then I quit.

My family doesn’t understand that, here in Canada, it’s not like in the Philippines. My salary is all that they give me. If I am working, I get my meals and I get my room, but I pay for that with salary deduction. My clothes, my bus fare, my snacks, my writing paper, soap and make-up and if I go with my friends to a weekend place – all that I pay for. Not like in the Philippines where the employer might give you some clothes and some extras, so your salary could go back to your family.

My Canadian employer, well, they say it’s my salary and I can do what I want. But my family, they ask how much I get and they expect.... It’s hard to explain all the costs to them – processing papers and travel.... They say why don’t you let your employer pay for that? I tell them that it’s not part of the contract. They say ‘just ask’. But that’s not good. The employer will say no, or, if they say yes, then it’s good-bye to my contract – no overtime, no days off.

What Gia describes is the struggle to determine the nature of her labour, being carried out by two households - her employer in Canada and her family in the Philippines. Perhaps her family expects that the economic relations of her work in Canada would be the same as they were in Singapore, but she is negotiating conditions in a Canadian workplace. By unpacking the contradictions of Gia's position, we can explore the class politics of transnational domestic work.

Most households in the Philippines operate with information drawn from employer/employee relations in the Philippines, Singapore and Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, for instance, the employment relation experienced by most Filipina contract workers is a quasi-slave status where the salary pays the worker's surplus labour that has been appropriated by her employer. The salary goes to the family in the Philippines almost in its entirety because the worker's subsistence needs are met within the employer's household. In this situation, the worker is considered to be 'on loan' from her family unit and the major breadwinner of that household. The salary she makes overseas, then, is all necessary to reproduce her and her family. This is the claim of the family in the Philippines. They understand that the employer already looks after the migrant worker's subsistence and the family has a legitimate claim to virtually all of the funds.

This understanding of the Philippine household having claim over all the migrant's salary is the remittance relationship in the transnational households described by Aguilar: "The child who migrates suddenly becomes the major income earner in the household, and parents take pride in their child's stint overseas regardless of the type of work involved." (Aguilar 1999: 116). In the Philippines, the overseas worker becomes (is expected to be) the major breadwinner.¹⁸ In this model, if Gia's salary is payment for surplus labour, that surplus is available for appropriation by her family at home and the costs of Gia's reproduction would be borne by her employer's household. Her family seems to theorize Gia's work more as this kind of exchange between patron and client households (daughter's labour for money) than a business contract between Gia, an individual, and her employer.

In contrast, in the capitalist model of the business contract, Gia's salary is payment for necessary labour, and it goes to her so that she may reproduce herself. This is what Gia's employer tells her - "they say it's my salary and I can do what I want." Her employer theorises Gia's salary as money that she should use to pay the costs associated with reproducing herself for the job. But it is debatable whether Gia's relationship with her Canadian employer is truly a business contract. In

¹⁸ Stasiulis and Bakan (1997: 130) reported that 18 of 25 Filipinas indicated that their remittances from Canada were very important for their families at home.

Canada, the official expectation of the LCP is that the worker's salary will go into her personal reproduction under what appears to be a capitalist class process – as if she is a contract worker. Yet, in capitalist relations, the worker can withdraw her labour power as part of a group. In a household situation, where work and reproduction are mixed, the freedom to withdraw labour power is much harder to enact. A single domestic worker does not constitute a bargaining unit and is thus not truly engaged in a capitalist class process. The other factor that challenges the identification of LCP domestic work as a capitalist class process is the treatment of overtime. By ignoring the provisions of overtime and days off, her employer can appropriate the domestic worker's surplus labour just as her family can stake claim to her salary. While, under the LCP, the working day is 8 hours or 40 hours per week, workers are often asked to work for longer or simply given extra work. Extra work is received on the employer's enforcement of a tacit understanding that the good of the household comes before the employee's entitlements.

As caregivers, workers like Gia must track their own hours, negotiate the employer's agreement of the veracity of their calculations and then ask for overtime pay. In a capitalist frame, this unpaid overtime is 'super-exploitation'. In a feudal or slave society, unpaid overtime is understood simply part of the job package and will be compensated for with paternalistic largesse. Overtime work is thus seen as legitimate in a slave-type relationship. The benefit of this is other paybacks, often motivated by humanitarian sentiment on the part of the employer/owner. This is how paternalism reproduces itself. This kind of paternalism develops very easily when a worker lives in the household that is her workplace. Particularly if the worker has uncertain immigration status or debt of some kind to the family, as in Gia's case, it is difficult for her to negotiate overtime pay or days off in lieu.

6.2 Transnationalism and self-identity for LCP women

Migrant identities are, of necessity, constructed in liminal spaces – in displacements between home and work site and in contradictions between subject positions as worker, employee, benefactor, and supplicant. Through work abroad, self-sacrifice and the accumulation of economic and cultural capital, Filipino circular migrants create new roles for themselves as the benefactresses and heroines of their families and communities at home.

²⁰ See Geraldine Pratt, 1997, "Stereotypes and ambivalence:" Gender, place and culture

From the Philippine perspective, workers abroad are expected to endure exploitative working conditions because they anticipate a future reversal in their status once they return home with gifts of appliances and capital to start businesses or improve dwellings. Aguilar (1999: 132) describes Filipino overseas workers as reconstituting modern selves on a transnational plane, a process predicated on their eventual, if deferred, return home. In the process of transforming their identities, Aguilar observes (1999:125) that “the work process itself is not the source of meaning and satisfaction for the worker. In general, overseas workers derive personal satisfaction from the possibilities that are prised open by the comparatively high returns to labour.” He quotes Tigno (1993: 74): “except for some exceptional cases, Filipinos are generally satisfied with their work experience even though the training and education they received in the Philippines do not correspond with the work they do overseas.” For Filipino contract workers, “self-worth is affirmed by earning comparatively higher wages which, for many, constitute the best validator of the self “ (Aguilar 1999:119).

But this project has explored the circumstances of women who would be among these exceptional cases: a group of Filipina contract workers who have come to Canada as domestics. Unlike the circular migrants described by Aguilar, these women are in an anomalous situation. Though contract migrants, they are unlikely to return home. Rather, they have the opportunity to become landed immigrants. For these workers, it is their segregation into domestic work and the service sector that underlies their self-definition. The disjuncture between their education and previous work in the Philippines and their current positions in Canada creates alienation and dissatisfaction. Filipinas in Canada come to understand themselves not as women or as Filipinos but as workers segregated on the basis of ethnicity and status.

Understandings of social integration largely hinge on self-identity – the ongoing re-narrations of Filipina identity and autobiography that these women perform to explain and delimit themselves. Looking at two examples of more lengthy autobiographical narratives collected in our interviews, we can see how women combine familiar stereotypes of Filipinas with individual experience in ways that challenge and expand the spaces of dissent within the stereotypical norms. Stereotypes of Filipinas as docile, passive, unskilled, unintellectual and hardworking circulate widely in Canada.²⁰ These coincide with women’s received understandings of Filipina identity in some facets, but are challenged by others. In the Canadian media, the employment of Filipina domestics is described as providing women with an opportunity to improve their status and escape “traditional paternalistic attitudes” located in the supposedly patriarchal and religion-dominated Philippines.²¹ A closer look at the life histories of

²¹ Isabel Vincent, “Canada beckons cream of nannies,” *Globe and Mail*, January 20, 1996, A5.

our respondents suggests that there are many spaces in which Filipinas come to understand themselves as self-motivated, actualized professionals. The women we interviewed, looking back on lives as domestic workers in Canada, described themselves as either ‘exceptional’ or ‘lucky.’ Exceptional women broke the feminine model; lucky women made space within it to achieve professional independence.

Ally (nutritionist): With me being a girl in our family is very different. The way they bring me up you know, I tend to work harder than my other sister because according to them, I am tough and I can do it. That time I always admired my 2 elder brothers, the way they worked. So I always follow my brother .I like doing things what they do before like going to the mountains, doing the copra...

There’s a discrimination in our school that they really said that I’m a lesbian. But, you know, they can see me in cultural presentations, like folk dances. Also, at the same time I was an athlete. I was a runner and in high jump in school. I was involved in sports. My family always put in my mind that ‘you’re strong, you can do that, you can do it, you’re the strongest girl.’ That ‘s why they always ask me, come on climb to the mountain and get some papaya, banana, charcoals and go help get copras. But my two sisters, they stayed in the house, they just only good for the house. But for me... I can do everything

At Philippine Women University - all women, a private one - I learned to behave, dress properly, because we have that subject that is personality development - put make up and walk as a woman.

My experience being a woman now here I had pressure with friends and society too, being like what I’ve said when I was in primary everyone thinks that I’m a lesbian. But I wasn’t discriminated against when I was in College.

Here there’s racism towards immigrants. I know about it because I experienced it being a Filipino worker. They look into my colour and they said you know, you’re just a Filipino. And they all knew that I’m not capable and never hired me for the work but I challenged them. I said give me a chance to prove my skills, so finally they noticed that I’m hardworking and efficient.... I’m only the Filipino that’s working there and they can’t take it that I worked so hard. But for them they just work so- so, but for me I didn’t take any break unless it’s done. But for them they really get their chance to have a coffee or cigarette.

Note that this woman learns to conform to the predominant stereotypes of Filipina femininity in institutional settings, rather than domestic ones. She understands her experiences in Canada primarily as a worker, rather than a woman.

In contrast, the next personal narrative describes experiences of downward class mobility in movement between two overseas work sites. This respondent assesses the professional respect she feels she was accorded in Saudi as being more important to her than the restrictions placed on her femininity in that social context.

Veronica (nurse): About experiences as a woman: My family have a strong family values, "moral values." Especially, for the girls, I remembered my dad used to tell us "my sister and I" that we should be home by 6 o'clock p.m. because even the chickens knew how to go to their basket by 6 o'clock p.m., no chickens are loitering around after 6 o'clock p.m.

I was one of the lucky ones.... I worked in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in which Filipino nurses are treated with high respect and dignity not only because of their attitudes but with the quality of work they are giving to their patient and colleagues.... I still respect their culture and will work there if given the chance because they respected me and treated me as a dedicated nurse at the level of my professional training and knowledge.

Experiences in Canada with employer and work place? My first employer was a bitter, cranky old lady with very low regards for Filipino people and nurses especially.... She was so angry with me telling something that I will never ever tolerate, you are like your co-Filipinos coming to Canada just for money etc. etc. so I answered her in my cool that I am not responsible for my co-Filipinos and I can only answer for myself, you don't have to insult me if you don't like me working with you just tell me she got angry and told me that I am only her helper and I should not answer back, so I said, I know and I was doing it for the past seven months that I am here with you, did I ever answer you back? I said no, only today because it's too much... I never treated a person like that all my life, we had 3 housekeepers in my parents' house and we treat them like our family.

They describe their experiences in Canada in terms of economic status and identity as a Filipino worker. In contrast, their Philippine experiences are analyzed in terms of negotiating individual identities within the social constructions of femininity. These women experience censure in terms of sexuality and morality in the Philippines but race and intellectual/professional abilities in Canada. Thus Filipino women who migrate to Canada describe changes in their self-understanding reflecting their social context. In the Philippines, they define themselves through their gendered relations with peers, family and institutions. In Canada, it is their segregation as workers that provides their self-identity.

7. Conclusion

The personal stories of women's experiences of migration reported here expose the politics that demarcate the fluid boundaries between the public spaces of Canadian metropolitan areas and the private spaces of homes that are also workplaces. Similarly, they blur the divide between the national domestic space of Canada and that of the Philippines because these women move in transnational spaces that are the circuits of migration. Their stories also show up the political-economic use that migrant receiving states and their own families may make of such divides.

Here I have also shown that because women's lives and migration experiences are marginal to the discourses that describe 'proper' immigration and thus 'appropriate' citizenship, migrant women find themselves disadvantaged as workers. Individual women in this situation report that they are stereotyped and denied a sense of 'appropriate belonging' or integration in Canada. These women are ashamed of doing a 'low' job, of not fitting in, and of being ostracized by the rest of their immigrant ethnic community because of their work. Government services posit women as wives and families, not workers, yet LCP migrant women enter the Canadian labour market disadvantaged by their stereotyping as 'just babysitters.' Through deskilling these female migrants under the LCP, Canada can develop 'domestic' industries that rely on enclaves of immigrant women who do not benefit from even the most minimal regulation of working conditions, hours or pay, and have virtually no presence in civil society – in other words, women who are functionally non-citizens. Thus their migration moves these women to the margins – the margins of government services, policies and protection.

Female migration for contract domestic work is a global phenomenon. The transnational circuits that constitute the global labour market in 'domestics' articulate with the Canadian LCP as well. That the most deskilled and least integrated women interviewed had deployed 'cross-country' indicates that their labour history determines their resulting Canadian labour market experience. Thus the analysis of the socio-economic conditions that yield segmentation in the labour market (state policies, racialization, family roles, socialization) must also now expand beyond the nation state to include the global-level processes of labour export and migration.

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