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From Migrant to Immigrant: Domestic Workers Settle in Vancouver, Canada

by

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Abstract: We re-assemble and re-interview 15 Filipinas who participated in a research project in 1995 when they were registered in the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP), to assess their settlement in Vancouver. Most women have experienced long-term downward occupational mobility and continue to do domestic work as housekeepers and home care health workers. We argue that this labour market outcome can be understood within these women's social responsibilities and networks, in particular, their continuing and substantial financial responsibilities to extended families in the Philippines and their limited social networks in Vancouver. Further, evaluating the ethics of the LCP requires looking beyond such labour market outcomes to assess a larger scope of benefits and costs. One benefit common to a number of women in our sample is the capacity to buy a house in the Philippines. We argue that this benefit, while significant, is outweighed by the very high cost of family dislocation.

Key words: Filipina domestic workers, Live-in Caregiver Program, settlement, social networks, downward occupational mobility, family dislocation

Filipineza

In the modern Greek dictionary, the work “Filipeniza” means “maid.”

If I became the brown woman mistaken
for a shadow, please tell your people I’m a tree.
Or its curling root above ground, like fingers without a rag,

without the buckets of thirst to wipe clean your mirrorlike floors.
My mother warned me about the disappearance of Elena.
But I left her and told her it won’t happen to me.

The better to work here in a house full of faces I don’t recognize.
Shame is less a burden if spoken in the language of soap and stain.
My whole country cleans houses for food, so that

the cleaning ends with the mothers, and the daughters
will have someone clean for them, and never leave
my country to spend years of conversations with dirt.

When I get up, I stand like a tree, feet steady, back firm.
From here, I can see Elena’s island, where she bore a child
by a married man whose floor she washed for years,

whose body stained her memory until she left in the thick
of rain, unseen yet now surviving in the uncertain tongues
of the newly-arrived. Like the silence in the circling motions

of our hands, she becomes part myth, part mortal, part soap.

Bino A. Realuyo, 2002 ¹

Bino Realuyo writes of a bargain struck by a Filipina domestic worker, to clean houses for food “so that the cleaning ends with the mothers, and the daughters will have someone clean for them, and never leave [their] country.” Such bargains are struck by Filipino domestic workers working in more than 130 countries, in what Parrenas identifies as a “female labor diaspora” (2001a: 361). The diaspora is a product of both the (labor) export-led development strategy of the Philippines’ government, and the demand in industrial nations for migrant women to fulfill low-wage service work, in particular to carry out the tasks of social reproduction that many resident women no longer

¹ We thank Melissa Wright for drawing our attention to this poem.

wish or are able to perform. And yet conditions differ from country to country, and a convincing analysis requires a nuanced appreciation of this specificity – of the concrete geographical specificity.

A peculiarity of the Canadian context is that there is a federal work visa program, called the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP), that is designed specifically to allow Canadian families to sponsor and employ non-Canadians as live-in caregivers. By international standards, the LCP is unusual because registrants have an opportunity to apply for permanent resident status in Canada after 24 months in the LCP. This promise of (eventual) citizenship weighs heavily in assessments of the ethics of the LCP and claims to Canada's relative superiority in protecting rights of migrant domestic workers. Few would argue that the program is more than exploitative in the short term, and the federal government is explicit that the LCP exists because few Canadians are willing to perform this live-in job at current wage levels. The 'wrong' of Canadians taking such obvious advantage of economic misery elsewhere is set 'right' by bestowing permanent residency on those who function responsibly within the LCP.

When nanny agents were interviewed in Vancouver in 1994, one exemplified this position when she argued: "You're not getting 19 bucks an hour [working as a domestic worker], but...you're getting Canadian citizenship...[Activist groups]'ll wreck it for these women, who come in and 99.9 percent of them are happy to be here" (Pratt 1999: 222). In a more scholarly vein, an early and astute critic of the LCP, Audrey Macklin, ventures that 'the entitlement to permanent membership [can function] as a measure of recognition and compensation,' and 'the more exploitative the consequences of temporary status, the greater the marginal value extracted from the worker... the greater the entitlement'" (Macklin 2003: 487).² She draws upon Walzer (1983) and Carens (1989) to argue that a polity cannot relegate migrants to permanent 'temporary' status without "committing a basic injustice" (2003:487). The compensatory entitlement to citizenship is a distinctive characteristic of the LCP and distinguishes Canada from other industrialized nations, such as the United States, where large numbers of domestic workers live illegality and hence in perpetual state of impermanence (Mattingly 2001).

² Macklin is developing this argument in relation to Canada's chilling inability to protect the rights of 'exotic dancers,' many of whom come from Eastern Europe. Within this context, Macklin argues that: 'the Live-in Caregiver Program, with its option for permanent resident status after two years in live-in domestic work, operationalizes the principle [of offsetting temporary exploitation with permanent membership within the Canadian nation]' (Macklin 2003: 488). Macklin recognizes the deeply problematic nature of this exchange and the extent to which self-help advocacy groups must lobby for and support domestic workers to maintain levels of exploitation within tolerable limits.

In this paper we return to the participants of an earlier research project after a period of seven to eight years, during which time all have left the LCP and become permanent residents.³ In 1995, 15 migrant workers, all registered in the LCP, participated in an extended research project at the Philippine Women Centre (PWC). Alternating between expressions of deep sadness, frustration, anger, and remarkable humor, they told rich stories of being propelled from the Philippines by economic necessity and the difficulties of their hard and stigmatized lives working and living in middle-class Canadian homes (Pratt in collaboration with the PWC 1998, 1999). Most had experienced downward occupational mobility when they entered the LCP, often leaving jobs as nurses or teachers in the Philippines to take up domestic work in Canada. They struggled to force their Canadian employers to comply with the Employment Standards Act, including new (in 1995) hourly wage and overtime regulations. This was a difficult task given that this work occurs in the private spaces of a home in which the domestic worker also lives, and we tracked the myriad ways that Canadian employers skirt existing employment and visa regulations (Pratt in collaboration with the PWC 1999). Research participants also spoke of the stigmatization that they experienced within the Filipino community in Vancouver, especially their reputation as ‘husband stealers.’

Eight years on, we listen to them speak of their experiences settling in Vancouver to explore some of the complexities of assessing whether and how permanent residency compensates for the earlier period of intense exploitation. How are we to measure relations of justice if former domestic workers continue to find themselves, now as permanent residents of Canada, enmeshed within deeply exploitative labor practices? We want to document their experiences, and unravel common factors that make settlement very difficult.

Commenting on the Swiss guest worker program, Frisch (1986) remarked: “We asked for workers. We got people instead” (quoted in Macklin 2003). The same is true of the Live-in Caregiver Program. Former domestic workers’ lives are entangled with those of others, and their settlement in Canada is conditioned by extensive obligations in other spaces, notably the Philippines. This is to say what is now commonplace: immigrant settlement and labor market experiences cannot be understood within the boundaries of the ‘receiving’ country, and are interwoven with a range of transnational experiences. But the point goes beyond this. An understanding of immigrant settlement and ‘integration’ demands more than a narrowly economic and individualistic framework, and must consider factors beyond individuals’ wage levels and occupational status. We attempt to understand

³ All but two have settled in Canada and the two exceptions married U.S. citizens and settled in the United States. One of the latter two had attained an open visa in Canada but her sister was keen for her to join her in the United States and introduced her to an older American man, whom she eventually married. The other married an older African-American man and moved with him to his home in the Southern U.S.A.

domestic workers' settlement experiences as embodied, transnational ones, paying especial attention to how social networks and familial obligations both shape and are shaped by their immigrant experiences.

1. Labour Market Experiences

Our earlier research was a fully collective enterprise. We met many times as a group and the research itself was a mechanism for these domestic workers to develop deep friendships and a common interpretation and critique of their situations. Eight years on, their lives and experiences are more dispersed and, although we attempt to develop generalizations about their settlement experiences, we begin with short descriptions of the lives of three domestic workers who have worked very hard to settle successfully, to demonstrate how they have done this in very different ways.⁴

1.1 April

It was April who coined the phrase, from R.N. to R.N., to describe her trajectory from Registered Nurse in the Philippines to Registered Nanny in Canada, a phrase that we have made much use of in subsequent analyses of the LCP (e.g., Pratt 1999). April's contract through the LCP ended in 1995 and she became a landed immigrant in 1996, a process that was delayed by its considerable expense (at \$1600 for various processing fees). From the moment of entering Canada, April was intent on returning to nursing:

As soon as I got here in 1993, a month after – not even a month – less than a month after I got into Canada, I contacted the RNABC (Registered Nurses' Association of British Columbia), and they sent me an application...to take the exam.

She soon found that restrictions associated with the LCP and the RNABC's unwillingness to accept her nursing experience in the Philippines dictated that she take a one year full time 'refresher' course. The first four years after the LCP were spent in an assortment of full-time and part-time jobs (live-out nanny, cashier, cleaner, waitress, elder care, babysitting) in an effort to save enough to go back to school. In 1997 and 1998 she was working three and then four jobs:

But I was able to save because I was earning over \$2000 monthly (net) when I was working so many jobs. Just in one job, this was my full time, I was earning \$1500

⁴ There are some methodological lessons to be learnt here. We began the present research project with focus groups but eventually switched to in-depth interviews. The latter in part were necessitated by the difficulty of assembling workers who, much more so than when registered in the LCP, did not share common work schedules. In some significant ways their paths had moved in different directions and in-depth interviews also were required to appreciate the complexity of their individual lives.

(net). So on top of that, I worked other jobs. It looked like I was working two full-time jobs in that year. I actually had some savings, but not enough to really support myself for schooling full time.

Accepted into the refresher course at a community college, and at the discretion of a low-level bureaucrat,⁵ April was able to put together a mixture of E.I. (Employment Insurance) benefits, student loans and savings to finance the one-year course. She took her final exams in June 2000 and was hired even before her received her (positive) exam result. April, now 34 years old, has been employed full time in the same suburban hospital for the last three years but continues to augment her earnings with a extra hours at another hospital: “Otherwise I get bored sitting at home doing nothing. I might as well go out and work, and earn money.” April has thus come full circle: from Registered Nurse to Registered Nanny, and back again.

1.2 Anna

Anna left the Philippines when she was 18. She had graduated from a midwifery course but could not be licensed until 21 years of age. She worked first as a domestic worker in Singapore for five and half years and then came to Canada under the LCP. She finished her LCP contract in 1996 after 24 months in Canada but for reasons unclear to her it took one and half years to obtain a landed visa and she continued to work as a live-in domestic worker with the same employer during this time. After finishing her LCP contract, she inquired about updating her midwifery skills but judged it to be too expensive: “I decided that I’d rather not spend that money on my own education. So I just took the course in Long-term Care.” Her jobs began to multiply. When she first finished her course, she worked Monday-Friday as a nanny, and then Saturday and Sunday at a nursing home. By 1999 she was still living with her employer, and working three jobs: nanny full time, cleaning at Future Shop from 6 PM until 1 AM, and then Saturday and Sunday at a nursing home. In 2000 she quarreled with the couple who had employed her as a nanny for four years, moved into housing adjacent to the Kalayaan Centre, and began working on a casual basis as a cashier at Army Navy and at the Superstore. In 2001, the jobs began ‘to rain down’ but all were on a casual or contract basis and she was holding five jobs simultaneously. She had been active at the Philippine Women Centre for many

⁵ She tells the story thus: “E.I directed me to the Training Assistance Centre (TAC). TAC interviewed me. By then I was already accepted at Kwantlen [college] and had applied for a student loan. The waiting period at TAC required two weeks. They told me that I may not be able to make it because there was no time for processing my paper [before the start of the school term]. I told her that I was already admitted and if I cannot get in during this session, I will have to go back all over again from the beginning because my RNABC application will have become due...[and] my TOFEL and other requirements will have expired. That would mean that I would have to retake the [TOFEL] exam...reapply to RNABC and you know how long it will take to gather another set of documents. It took me 2-3 years at least to do this the first time around. ..I tried to argue and explain to her...Finally she relented, and considered my application. Instead of a six month E.I. benefit, she extended it to almost one year. ..That’s how I survived for one year.”

years and somewhat more stable contract jobs began to emerge from the contacts that she developed there: at ELP (End Legislated Poverty); at FNSG (Filipino Nurses' Support Group) and eventually at Bridge Transition (a women's transition shelter), where she now works full time.

1.3 Delia

Delia, now 42, is the second eldest of thirteen children. Her family owns a large prosperous farm in Nueva Ecija: "my father was making good money in vegetable production. I did not even have to go abroad at that time." Though she has a B.Ed. in elementary education, her movement to and through Canadian society has been shaped by different systems of patronage. A wealthy family, which owns almost all of the land in her village but had moved to Canada, paid for her six month training to qualify for the LCP and then all of the expenses involved in applying and coming to Canada. They brought her to Canada in 1994 through the LCP and she worked for various members of the family in Vancouver and Toronto for the next three years, for less than \$300 a month in recognition of her debts to the sponsoring family.

After completing her LCP contract, Delia continued to live in her patron's home and the employer's daughter, who worked as an accountant at a Catholic church, told Delia of a vacancy there for a housekeeper. In 1997 Delia started at the Church part time (3 days a week) and supplemented this with cleaning jobs (in private homes at \$10/hour), which she found through her friends. Within the year, this job went full time and she continues to work there (earning \$12/hour with benefits), cleaning the residences of the priests. Delia's life now revolves almost exclusively around the Church. In 2000 her former employer sold her large house and returned to the Philippines and Delia found a shared apartment arrangement through contacts at the Church. It was a terrible experience. Not only did Delia's new roommate try to involve her in marriage scam (whereby Delia would agree to marry a potential immigrant for a \$10,000 fee), she also charged Delia \$250 for rent of her room when she herself paid B.C. Housing only \$240 a month for the entire income-assisted apartment. On her first night at the apartment, the roommate's boyfriend attempted – fortunately unsuccessfully -- to rape Delia. A priest at the church soon offered Delia an apartment adjacent to the Church, where she now lives with a former domestic worker, another participant in this research project. Delia describes her present routine thus:

After my work, I rest and take a walk for a while and then, I would be in the church – preparing for the mass and attending the church. There is a mass everyday...I can go out if I wanted to. Except on Monday night because I serve in the mass on that evening. On Tuesday, I am free. But if I don't attend the mass, I feel something is missing in me. Sometimes, if I go to an unimportant function, I feel guilty that I preferred it over my church functions.

In response to Cecilia Diocson's (the interviewer) remark: "So, aside from the church, only the [Kalayaan] Centre is your other activity," Delia responded:

Yes. Now, we have church activities on Saturdays. First, there is a mass from 8:00 AM to 9:00, which includes a Rosary. Then, we have a Legion of Mary meeting from 9:30 to 11:30. This is a mixed group – but mostly Caucasian women. Then I have lunch. After this, the afternoon is occupied visiting other members of the church and the Legion. At three in the afternoon I have to massage the old priest [this is my one hour part-time work]. Then I have to prepare for the 5 o'clock mass. Hence, my time is fully occupied. I can only get out after the mass at 7:00 PM. But by this time, I am already tired."

Cecilia observes: "You [and her roommate] are really like nuns. You are even more than the nuns," and asks: "Are you feeling happy?" Delia responded: "Yes. I am happy and contented."

We begin with these stories because they simultaneously introduce experiences common to a good number of the 15 research participants and embed them within some of the complexity and specificity of individual's lives. Filipinas often have the experience of being stereotyped, simplified and over-generalized (e.g., all Filipinas are nannies), and we have no desire to repeat this tendency. The individual stories indicate a range of experiences – from recovering previous occupational standing to significant deskilling, in Delia's case, from teacher to housekeeper. As a generalization, the latter has been the more common experience and most who participated in this study continue to do domestic work in other forms (Table 1). We want to examine variations in individual life narratives to understand why this has been the case.

2. Understanding LCP Registrants' Downward Occupational Mobility

A nanny agent who was interviewed in Vancouver in 1994 made a stark and disturbing contrast between Europeans, who use the LCP as a "jumping board" to a career ("they have their own plan, their own career, their own training back [home]") and Filipinas, who remain as nannies and housekeepers. He reasoned that "Some of them [Filipinas] will really have a little bit more plans for their life than being that way, but the majority: nannies. That's what they're going to do – housekeeping" (Pratt 1997:172). While his description of the general pattern of Filipinas' occupational achievement in Vancouver is to some extent true, he places it in a potent and distasteful narrative of cultural limitation and underachievement. To counter such cultural stereotyping, it is important to recognize how Filipinas' experiences of downward occupational mobility are the outcome of both rational planning and situational constraints. In particular, we examine the social

networks, extending from Vancouver to the Philippines, which are central to this downward trajectory.

Table 1. Summary of Occupations for 15 Research Participants

Occupation in the Philippines	2003 Occupation
Social work (1)*	Housekeeping in hotel (1)
Midwife (5)	Home care (2) Factory assembly (1) Housekeeping (1) Women's Transitional Shelter (1)
Teacher (7)	Housekeeping (2) Early Childhood Education (casual jobs at 3 different day care centres) (1) Babysitting and assortment of low-level retail service jobs (1) Waitress and nurses' aid (1) Community Settlement worker (1) Janitorial (1)
Registered Nurse (1)	Stay-at-home mother and part-time job in floral shop (1)

*Numbers indicate the number of women who fall into this occupational category

2.1 Remittances

It is commonplace to note the importance of remittances within transnational families more generally and for the economy of the Philippines in particular. Monetary remittances of overseas workers are the largest source of foreign exchange earnings in the Philippines. It was estimated in 1994 that overseas labor migrant workers sent over US\$2.6 billion to the Philippines through the formal banking system. Money sent through private finance companies, letters and return migrants is thought to bring the total closer to US\$6 billion (Karp 1995, cited in Parrenas 2001a).

In the Jamaican context, Mullings (1999) argues that receipt of overseas remittances has the effect of loosening Jamaican women workers' immediate dependency on their jobs and hence employers' control over them. But the labor market outcomes are very different for those who are sending remittances. With few exceptions the woman in our study continued to send large sums of money home on a regular basis. Anna describes her intense and continuing financial commitments to her family.

But even if I have no child of my own, I have the whole family to support back home. Although my brother is working. He is teaching but he is not making a lot of money. And my mom used to have a little business but now she is old already, so I told her to stop. Then here comes my other sisters and brother. They are all married

but then still dependent on me. So basically I am running the whole family on my own. And I am sending five nieces and nephews to school at one time. It's like you with the kids, having joy when you come home. Now I am happy that I was able to help five of them, although one of them did not finish. She got married at 17. So the four of them now. I have a seaman. I have an architect. I have a midwife and one, next year, will finish civil engineering. I also have a computer secretary...The architect is working as an architect but she is not making much money. She still needs my help to support the civil engineer student because he spends so much for books and other equipment. But it is not much compared to before. When classes started I was getting crazy to think where I would get the money. That meant thousands [of pesos]. Like I think for me, I was only lucky that I could find enough jobs, or if there is not enough money, I have to tighten my belt.

Anna was admired (and teased) by her friends for her capacity to 'tighten her belt.'

Mira: She is not spending for things at all. She likes keeping money with her. She is a bank.

Mhay: And she is not buying any nice clothes. I think her jeans are still from Singapore.

Anna: Oh now, come on. They wouldn't fit me anymore.

Mhay: That's her bag, since a few years ago.

Anna: Yes, this is my bag from when I was still in Singapore in 1992.

Indeed Anna's thrift and her hard work at multiple jobs have allowed her to purchase many things for her family in the Philippines, beyond the educations of her nieces and nephews. She has also built a house in which her brother lives. But they have had a decisive effect on her career choices in Vancouver. Early on, she enquired into the possibilities of practicing the job for which she is trained (midwife) and quickly determined that she could not pursue this option:

"I can't. I need the money. For me, being the breadwinner of the family, I cannot jeopardize my nieces' chances of going to school. So I decided that I would rather not spend that money for my own education."

Instead, she took a six-month course in Long-term Care Aid, which cost \$1700 but met only on Saturdays and Sundays. This course prepared her to work in a nursing home, where (as it turned out) she was able to get only irregular hours.

Like Anna, most of the research participants have continued to send home remittances, some more and some less than when they were in the LCP, depending on their family's needs in the Philippines and their own circumstances in Vancouver. Mira, for example, remitted \$500 of the \$650 earned monthly while registered in the LCP but stopped sending money home when she was pregnant (as a single mother) and unemployed, and she has only recently resumed now that she is employed again.

One of the exceptions to this rule is well worth noting. This is April, the one woman in the group who has returned to school for sustained retraining (one year, full time) and regained her professional standing in Vancouver. April is one of only two women who told us that they now send little money home. April sends money “only when it is needed” but there are no monthly remittances: “Not monthly except for the medication. My sister [who also came to Vancouver through the LCP and with whom she now lives] and I share in the medical expenses for our family.” She notes only one exceptional time – a “life and death situation”-- when half of her monthly salary was sent home to her family in the Philippines.

Assessing the ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ of sending large or small remittances home to the Philippines is a difficult matter. Anna understands her commitment to her family as something that distinguishes her from an individualistic white society:

“That’s really our difference from the whites. They ask, ‘How come you’re still supporting your family? You have your own life.’ Because for them, once you leave their house, they don’t care anymore whatever might happen to their parents.”

There is little doubt, however, that remittances adversely affect the occupational mobility of former LCP registrants in Vancouver.

2.2 Social Networks

The research participants are enmeshed in social relations beyond their families, and these too affect the types of jobs they have found in Vancouver. The importance of social networks for finding and landing jobs is well known (Granovetter 1974: 1985). The fact that networks are often gendered (i.e., women tend to find jobs through women, and men through men) is one important explanation for why the sex-based occupational segregation persists (Hanson and Pratt 1995) and a similar observation can be made about ethnic-based networks. Further, some networks simply lead to better jobs. Studying women migrating to Toronto from China and Hong Kong through the 1990s, Preston (2003) has found a general reliance on local and transnational networks for finding employment in Toronto, but she argues that jobs found through business associates tend to be more secure than those found through friends and relatives.

The women who participated in this research have drawn on different types of networks that span from Vancouver to the Philippines. Ruby, for instance, found her job in a private nursing home on Vancouver Island through a friend, now also living on Vancouver Island, who was a classmate in her midwifery course in the Philippines. Delia found her job at the church through the daughter of her former LCP employer, who came from her home village in the Philippines. Anna came to her job at

the women's transitional shelter through her work in the activist, non-profit community in Vancouver. Though the sample is small, we want to distinguish between two types of networks – those that are closed and relatively static and those that are dynamic and open – and argue that, although the latter are critically important for regaining the type of occupational status that every single woman in the LCP has lost, in fact the former are more common.

Yolly's case exemplifies the limits of some types of social networks. While still working as a nanny in 1996, Yolly took a Long Term Care Aide course at a private school called 'Gateway.' The course cost \$2000 and met on Saturdays from 9:00-5:30 for six months. "I went to take this course because I was thinking that I don't want to work as a nanny forever and I want to find another job. So I decided to go to school." Forward-looking and trained as a midwife in the Philippines, Yolly began to retrain even before she finished the LCP. Once she finished her LCP contract in 1997 she found a job at Classic Caregiver Services through a newspaper advertisement. She now works at Greater Vancouver Community Services (a job that she also found through the newspaper) providing home care. Her job is unionized and she earns \$18 an hour. Her hours have been cut back, however, and what the agency calls 'regular' hours is in fact a 25–30 hour week. This is arranged as a split shift, the details of which Yolly is informed of every two weeks.

Yolly: "Sometimes I work from 8:00 AM to 1pm...and then there's a few hours in between. Then I go back to work at 5 PM. 5 PM to 7, 7 to 8, or 8 to 9. Sometimes I work overnight. Like I start at 12 AM until 6 AM. "

Cecilia: But you have no social life.

Yolly: Yeah.

Cecilia: You don't see your friends.

Yolly: I miss half my life.

Yolly has applied to a hospital and other care facilities (where hours and shifts could be better and wage premiums are paid for night time or weekend hours) but they do not recognize the school from which she graduated and she has been told that she must attend a six-month full-time course at VCC, which costs \$4000. She does not see herself doing this. Asked whether she knew about the limitations of the Gateway course, she replied "No, because I just followed my friends." Clearly, not all of Yolly's networks have served her well.

In contrast, the networks of April and Anna have supported their efforts to regain their lost occupational status. There was a point when April got very discouraged about the process of trying to meet the RNABC requirements in order to qualify for the one-year program at Kwantlen College. She enrolled in and began a program at the Vancouver Community College to become a medical office

assistant. She found the support to persevere in her efforts to retrain as a registered nurse from two sources: the Filipino Nurses' Support Group (FNSG) and her former employer (from the LCP): "my former employer was pushing me to go back to nursing. So it felt that I was being pulled back into nursing."⁶ She had the skills to maneuver through a vast bureaucracy and what appears to be the 'blind luck' of managing to convince a low-level bureaucrat to reconsider her decision not to process her application for E.I. benefit (see footnote 5). It is the rich, overlapping mixture of state assistance, self-determination, support, push and pull from multiple sources that eventually sustained April's efforts to regain her credentials as registered nurse.

Anna has developed different but similarly rich and diverse networks that have led her out of her frantic pace of holding five low-paying casual (or short term contract) jobs simultaneously. Beginning her community work at the Kalayaan Centre through the PWC and FNSG, her contacts have spiraled out into a range of anti-poverty and women's organizations. As her web of networks multiply, both within and beyond the Filipino community, Anna's job stability appears to increase. In Anna's words:

Being involved in the Centre gives me opportunity to learn other avenues, which we can benefit from or access. Like with ELP (End Legislated Poverty), when I applied there. Because they have a high respect for the Centre. They know how hard we work at the Centre... That's how I was able to get the job. And at Bridge [her current job], my involvement in the community helped too. They did not call any reference. I put down Cecilia and Ning. But they did not [need to] call them. And then during the interview, there was a question in there about being an activist, like: 'what do you think of colonialism?' So I could easily answer that.

Preston (2003) calls attention to the importance of the type of contact for landing stable jobs, arguing that business associates lead recent immigrant women to more secure jobs than friends and relatives. Our sample is small and so our observations are speculative, but we would like to expand the definition of business associate and embed it within a fuller institutional and social context. Both April and Anna have had critically important institutional support (e.g., the FNSG, the PWC, and state assistance – in April's case directly, and in Anna's case indirectly through state support of the community based social service sector). Beyond this, the density and expansive natures of their networks also seem noteworthy. April was encouraged not only by the FNSG but by her former employer when she lost faith her capacity to retrain as a registered nurse. Unfortunately, the richness and expansive nature of Anna's and April's networks of support and contact was relatively uncommon among the women in this study. Yolly's case seems closer to the norm.

⁶ It is noteworthy that this is the only instance where the support of a non-Filipino employer is noted by any of the women in this study.

3. Balancing the Costs of the LCP Against Settlement Experiences

If the opportunity to settle permanently in Canada is the ‘pay off’ of the LCP experience, how do we assess the justice of this exchange? Because LCP registrants are people and not just workers, whose lives exist trans-nationally, it is no simple matter to do the accounting necessary to judge the ethics of this transaction. Such an accounting goes well beyond an assessment of individual’s wage levels and occupational mobility. In an effort to expand the discussion of the ethics of the LCP, we introduce some of the necessary complexity by considering factors that can be lined up on either side of such a balance sheet: material benefits which are invisible in Canada; and the long term stigmatization and profound family dislocation experienced by LCP registrants.

3.1 Building a House in the Philippines

The most striking asset that has been purchased by three women in our study, made possible through their LCP experience, is a house in the Philippines. This is a significant asset that is invisible in Canada (Table 2). Ruby, for example, rents a portion of a house in Richmond, a Vancouver suburb, for \$650 a month, where she lives with her husband, their four-year-old child and his two older children (aged 17 and 19) from a previous marriage. Previously they rented an entire house in Richmond for \$1200 a month but they lost this when the owner returned to live in it himself. Ruby misses this arrangement: “That pushes me to really have my own house,” and these concerns have led her to plan a move to a town on Vancouver Island where housing is more affordable. But these local arrangements must be considered in relation to Ruby’s significant accomplishments securing substantial and high status housing for her family in the Philippines.

Since the LCP, Ruby has worked as an assembler in an electrical components factory, as a nurses’ aid (in a private household), babysitting, and selling Avon products. She has large responsibilities for her family in the Philippines, and she is able to manage them because her husband has agreed that the income that she earns in Canada can be sent to them: “Of the money I make, my husband does not touch it. But the money he makes, that’s the one we use for our family here.” Ruby sends home about 25,000 pesos (@ Cdn \$625) monthly. She supports one sister who has three children and whose husband was gunned down in 2002. This sister lives in Ruby’s house in the Philippines, along with her own three children and Ruby’s mother. Ruby has almost finished paying the seven-year mortgage on this house. The house is located in an exclusive compound, where many of the houses have been purchased by overseas workers and are inhabited by relatives of these workers. Ruby describes the meaning of her house for herself and her family:

R: I made plans a long time ago. That house in the Philippines is for my old age and retirement.

C: Do you still want to go back Ruby?

R: I want to retire there. That house is ready for me. When I start receiving my pension, that's where I will be.

C: Is there a difference growing [old] or retiring here than there?

R: Back there, I'm prepared. I already have a house. And when I have my pension, I can get by with that. Here, it's already OK. If my kids prefer it here, that's alright. I don't want to be working even at old age. This is why I am preparing for this before I am 60. I would like to stay there, say, for a year or two, and then come back here.

C: You've missed the Philippines?

R: I missed it. And my house is my project that I worked hard for since I was single and young. That house was really through my own effort. That's where we had our family reunion. It's not a big house but my parents could not afford to have a house like that because we are poor. I bought it without my parents knowing about it. It was a surprise to them.

C: Really?

R: I brought them to that house after it was finished. They did not know about it. I bought a house and lot. It was already completed when my sister brought them over to that house. When they saw it and when my sister said that they should move in that house, my father cried because he said that he could not afford that house. I really felt proud about that – knowing that your parents were living a difficult life and now they can live in what people called “millionaire's row” in that part of the town.

C: That house that you bought, it's through your work here in Canada.

R: Yes. I worked hard for that in Canada. I worked three jobs at that time. I used to make \$3,000 a month and I would send most of that to them. Also, I would share that money with my siblings who also do not make enough for themselves. For me, that house is not only for me but for the whole family.

C: How many years did you work for that house.

R: This started in 1997. It was only a lot when I bought it. Then the real estate agency built the house. Sometimes, some of the money that I sent doesn't go to build that house as my sisters would spend it for themselves. But it was alright.

C: And your father died in that house.

R: My father, before he died, he stayed in that house from the hospital, with dextrose, oxygen... That's when he died in that house. I was in the plane returning to Canada when he passed away.

While not all former LCP registrants have been able to build houses on a ‘millionaire's row,’ in all cases the purchase of a house is a significant achievement that has been accomplished through their employment in Canada.

Table 2. Housing in Vancouver

Rents shared basement suite with roommates/ extended family	5
Rents self- contained apartment (market housing)	1
Rents B.C. Housing (state subsidized) apartment	1
Rents apartment adjacent to Church	2
Lives in shared accommodation at Kalayaan Centre	1
Rents a portion of house	1
Owens Trailer with extended family	1
Owens single family house	1
Have moved to U.S.	2

3.2 *Personal costs of stigmatization and family dislocation*

But for many, such accomplishments come at a very high personal cost. One cost is extremely difficult to measure; it is the intangible loss of self-esteem through the stigmatization of the LCP within the Filipino community in Vancouver. This was expressed most explicitly and fully by April. April tells of the stigmatization that she felt, first as a domestic worker and then as a waitress.

C: Those six years that you were a domestic worker, was there any impact in your personal development? Did six years of being a domestic worker, a nanny and a waitress, have any impact on you personally?

A: Yeah. Actually, (crying) ... actually, there is. It lowered one's self-esteem because the way people looked at and treated you. I don't mind working as a nanny or a waitress, but then, something hits you after a while of doing these types of work

C: It hit you.

A: Yeah. Especially in our community, people looked down on nannies and because you are working as a waitress, they think you are no good. You're nothing and your reputation is tarnished. Of course, there may be other women who were doing things other than waitressing and they compare you to these women. ... Even now, some people who knew me when I was a waitress would still derogatorily say that "*Oh, she was a waitress.*" And then they thought that you are down there among the lowlies. Even last year, someone told me that I was a "sugar mommy" when I was working as a waitress. I did not mind working as a waitress. And this woman does not even know that I was already a nurse.

When you are a waitress, of course, you have to be nice to the customers. And when you met these people outside work, you still maintain good relations with them. But some people misinterpret this. Of course, the customer that we met outside our work, don't have any malicious intentions, they are just friendly. But some people who see this puts malicious intentions into this, and tell others that I am a "sugar mommy." So, after I heard this rumour, I confronted this woman. But only a year after I heard of this rumour and this was the only time she found out that I was already a nurse after someone told her. When I go out, I don't advertise that I am a registered nurse. I

just wanted to be myself – what I was before. I don't want to brag about my improved status.

C: So, those six years (as nanny/domestic worker) have really impacted on you, including your stint as a waitress. Especially in our community and working in Filipino restaurants, people have different ideas when you are a waitress. They think that you are also doing prostitution, isn't it?

A: Yeah. That's what they thought in their minds if you worked as a waitress.

C: And this is how some in the [Filipino] community think of Filipino former domestic workers who work in few restaurants around Vancouver – especially in the East End.

3.3. *Family Dislocation*

Along with the difficulties of measuring the loss of self-esteem, it is virtually impossible to quantify another cost, and this is the cost of family dislocation. Only a minority have been joined in Canada by another family member⁷ and in two of these cases, this has been their own child from whom they were separated, for five years in one case and nine in the other. The latter family reunions have not been easy and in the case of Bing, her daughter has returned to the Philippines (and then to Vancouver) in an effort to find her own place within her transnational family.

Table 3. Family Sponsorship

Sister has moved/ is in process of moving to Vancouver through LCP	3
Has sponsored own child	1
Has sponsored child and husband	1
Has sponsored husband and sister (LCP)	1

A number spoke about their gradual resignation to the fact that other family members will not be joining them in Canada. Anna brought her mother to Vancouver in 1999 when she was working at three jobs:

I was with Diana full time [as a domestic worker], then from 6 [PM]-1 [AM] I was working at the Future Shop, cleaning; then on Saturday and Sundays, I was working in the nursing home. When I came home from the nursing home, that's when I would take my mother to go around because she was already bored. For four months, she was crying. She said she wanted to stay with me but she missed the people at home. That's why I told her, I cannot sponsor her, because of my situation. And since then,

⁷⁷ The relatively low level of family sponsorship is evident in the data reported in McKay and PWC (2002, 8). In 1996 824 Filipinos 'landed' in Vancouver through the LCP and only 198 LCP dependents. The equivalent numbers are 607 and 87 in 1997, and 875 and 139 in 1998.

she doesn't want to come... Because my mom does not want to come here, I asked the Immigration if I could sponsor my brother instead. But they said, 'No, as long as your mother is alive, then you still have to sponsor her first so she can sponsor your brother.' But she cannot sponsor my brother anyway, because he is already of age and he is not studying. He is already teaching.

Yolly says simply: 'My mother is old. And she is sick. I don't think that she would have the strength to come here to Canada. I don't have family here. Just friends.'

A further detail makes these stories even more poignant: Six (almost half) of the women from the study are single, and most are between their early 30s to early 40s. When we first met in 1995 and introduced ourselves to each other, April said by way of introduction, "I'm looking for Mr. Right." Eight years on, she lives with her sister. At the same workshop, Delia spoke of a troubled relationship: "My boyfriend calls me up [from the Philippines], but we just quarrel a lot over the phone." By summer 2003, she has come to prefer a quiet controllable life:

I think I am going to be single in my whole life. But I'm happy with my life right now. (Laughing.) I want a quiet life. And I am not sure what would happen if I got married. I don't want that uncertainty. When I see my married brothers and sisters with their problems, I said that I did not want that kind of life. It's full of headaches.

Yolly is less resigned. She continues to go to singles dances organized within the Filipino community in Vancouver a few times a year and states: "I am looking for my a double [partner] (Laughing.) Being single, I feel like my life is empty."

4. Conclusions

Assessing the LCP requires a nuanced and expansive analysis, and we understand this to be one characteristic that marks our analysis as feminist. On the one hand, it is too simple to argue that the LCP is purely and simply exploitative. Ruby's house on 'millionaire's row' is too significant and concrete an achievement to ignore, and to do so would seem an insult to her agency and self-determination. But on the other hand, it is far too simplistic to see Canadian citizenship as an even and fair trade for two years of labor as an indentured servant. The LCP reverberates through registrants' lives for years – likely a lifetime. The majority of women who participated in our earlier research have never really escaped domestic work. They continue to perform it as home care workers and as housekeepers. To fully understand the long-term repercussions of the LCP, we must also look beyond this downward occupational mobility and other labor market outcomes, to assess these women's lives more fully – especially their experiences of profound family dislocation. In our view,

on balance these personal costs are too great, and it is unjust for Canadian families to benefit and thrive precisely because of and through this severe family disruption.

Such dislocation is no doubt felt by Filipina migrant domestic workers throughout the world (e.g., Constable 1997; Momsen, 1999; Parrenas, 2001b; Yeoh and Huang, 1995), but it remains important to develop analyses within specific national contexts. Stasiulis and Bakan (2002) rightly note that the LCP appears progressive against the backdrop of the taken-for-granted oppression of female migrant workers worldwide: “Since the international consensus condones various degrees of oppression of migrant female workers...any departure from this pattern that accords foreign domestic workers *some* rights, including those commonly enjoyed by most other categories of workers and immigrants, takes on a progressive appearance” (p.243, original emphasis). It is important to critique the LCP to disrupt Canadians’ complacency about their relative virtue.

But it is also imperative to simultaneously push the possibilities that have been opened by the LCP. Large numbers of former LCP registrants are now landed immigrants or full citizens of Canada: in 1998 46 percent of ‘landings’ of Filipinos (and in that year Filipinos ranked fifth in terms of number of immigrant arrivals to Vancouver) came through the LCP program (McKay and PWC, 2002). We have documented experiences of hard work, unrelenting work schedules, the exercise of civic responsibility through intense community involvement, and either the waste of previous educational training or great efforts are required to retrain in order to utilize existing credentials. Canadian feminists can join in a struggle to recreate conditions in the Philippines so that so many Filipinas need not seek labor opportunities so far from home, but there is immediate work to be done closer to home. This is to reform immigration laws so that Filipinas can enter Canada –right from the start -- as immigrants (rather than migrants) and not be made to suffer the multiple injuries of a prolonged period of temporary status. We have attempted to show that such temporary status is a ‘basic injustice’ that reverberates long after the LCP.

4.1 Policy Implications

There are a number of policy implications that emerge from this study. We divide our recommendations between those directed toward CIC and those that address other institutions.

Recommendations for CIC

- The federal government must take stock of the large number of professionals now entering Canada through the LCP. Qualitative research suggests that a large number of nurses are now admitted to Canada through the LCP (Filipino Nurses Support Group (FNSG), 2000). There is a

need to tabulate and make publicly available administrative data on the occupational credentials of those registered in the LCP, to monitor the over qualification of LCP registrants.

- We recognize that CIC does not have jurisdiction over the regulatory bodies that currently limit foreign-trained nurses' capacity to obtain employment as nurses in Canada. However, *given the importance of having a job offer* within the current points system (paired with regulatory associations' restrictions foreclosing opportunities to obtain such an offer), CIC policy does in effect limit foreign-trained nurses' opportunities to immigrate outside of the context of the LCP. Beyond lobbying and working with national and provincial professional regulatory associations and unions, we need to think creatively about federal programs that will alleviate this 'Catch 22' situation. Ideally such programs would allow foreign-trained professional nurses to enter Canada under the points system, and carry out any training deemed necessary by professional bodies immediately upon entering Canada, and **not** after years of indentured labor and associated deskilling. One could envision a simultaneous job/educational program in which a combination of on-the-job training, practicums and written exams would allow foreign-trained nurses to study and earn a wage simultaneously and immediately upon entry into Canada.
- The documented deskilling that occurs through the LCP must be addressed, through efforts to both prevent and compensate for it in coherent and orderly ways. We have argued that access to Canadian citizenship is not adequate compensation for the experience of going through the LCP in part because deskilling leaves former LCP registrants in precarious positions in the Canadian labor market, in which they work chronically long hours at multiple, often insecure jobs, in order to live in substandard housing. For reasons of social justice (and economic rationality), efforts must be made to prevent this deskilling and to open opportunities for domestic workers to regain their professional standing before fulfilling the requirements of the LCP.

The stories that were told in the context of our small research project indicate that there are different routes to this deskilling, and thus there is no one simple remedy for it. April's case urges the need for a clear set of procedures and guidelines for RNs registered in the LCP, to facilitate re-entry into their profession. April's efforts to regain her professional standing as a nurse involved chance encounters, luck, and personal discretion on the part of low-level bureaucrats. At the very least, CIC should remove the role of chance and luck by providing RNs presently registered in the LCP with clear information about the process of moving toward accreditation in their province of residence. Yolly's route to deskilling was somewhat different and involves her unfortunate choice of obtaining a certificate from one of the many high-priced private colleges in Vancouver. She was unaware that the certificate allowed her employment only in a restricted

range of home-care situations (and not in institutional settings which generally have better work conditions). Although such colleges are a provincial responsibility, CIC could take an active role by providing information about the opportunities opened (and closed) by specific certificate programs. More generally, CIC must have knowledge of the implications of these certificate programs in order to realistically and effectively assess the long-term implications of the LCP. Ultimately we recommend a full re-evaluation of the LCP to gauge the extent of deskilling, the multiple causes of it, and a range of specific remedies. We emphasize again that there is no single route to deskilling and hence no simple remedy; the question of deskilling requires a careful and nuanced analysis.

- Now years after the actual experience, research participants recalled vividly the stresses of living in employers' homes. We repeat a recommendation that has been made many times: this is to remove the live-in requirement from the LCP.
- Most of the research participants either delayed applying for their landed immigrant status because of the high costs involved (including the \$975 'head tax') or proceeded with the aid of a loan from the Kalayaan Centre. We support the policy to remove the landing fee for refugee claimants, and urge that this be extended to LCP registrants. If the rationale for the \$975 landing fee is that there are considerable expenses associated with immigrant settlement and integration, it is an argument that has little purchase for LCP registrants, who are already *at least* two years into the process of settlement and integration by the time that the fee is collected. They have been paying taxes during this time. If the decision is taken that LCP registrants require settlement services at the point of landing (despite their 2-3 years of living in a Canadian household), and that the costs of these services exceed what they have already paid in taxes, funding should be directed to appropriate social service agencies. At the moment, the PWC, for example, is listed as a service provider in a CIC orientation package, and yet receives none of the resources generated from the landing fee. Efforts should be made to ascertain which service providers LCP registrants rely upon for settlement services, and funding directed accordingly.
- The extent of family dislocation reported by research participants was vast. A number of research participants wished to sponsor their mother's immigration to Canada but found that their mother was unwilling or unable to manage this transition, made more difficult by their daughter's long hours of work. We support recent measures to expand family sponsorship options.
- If the LCP is not reformed in fundamental ways, we recommend that the program be discontinued. One policy response to this recommendation might be that this will create the conditions for a vast, informal, illegal and even more deeply exploited labor force. Our response

is that many of these conditions already exist and that the LCP is a legal institution that veils a range of exploitative illegal practices. We have documented a number of practices deployed by employers to skirt provincial employment regulations (Pratt in collaboration with PWC, 1999). Beyond these, there is now an active black market in which labor agencies pay Filipino seniors relatively trivial sums (@\$400) in exchange for their Social Insurance Number and the use of their identities as prima facie LCP employers. These ‘employers’ terminate the labor contract once the LCP registrant has successfully entered Canada. The federal government must review the LCP and the employment agencies that have grown up around it.

Implications and Recommendations Beyond the Jurisdiction of CIC

- As it is now widely recognized, the accreditation process for professionals immigrating to Canada needs to be reworked, so that prior education and job experience are both recognized and utilized. In the case of LCP registrants, the need to recognize the skills of nurses and teachers is most obvious and pressing. Our study demonstrates the particularly alarming downward mobility of primary and secondary school teachers who have entered Canada through the LCP. Given the increased number of RNs coming through the LCP (FNSG 2000), the accreditation of nurses is also a growing problem. We recognize the many initiatives under way to address credentialization, for example the Provincial Nominee Program, an employer-driven program to admit professionals to Canada. However, coordinating with professional associations and unions remains a pressing issue. In 2001, the British Columbia Nurses’ Union (BCNU) refused to participate in the Provincial Nominee Program, insisting on the need to utilize resident labor capacity. The BCNU’s struggle for improved wages and working conditions cannot be trivialized but opportunities must be created for a fuller analysis of the deskilling of nurses within the context of the privatization of health care, which includes within it the situations of LCP registrants.
- Long after they have completed their landing process, the majority of research participants live in what many Canadians would consider substandard housing: shared basement suites. This unfortunate outcome may be an inadvertent effect of the rules adopted by the social housing system and the non-profit housing sector more generally. LCP registrants cannot apply for social housing until they have been a permanent resident for at least one year. It would be helpful to enable applications for housing while individuals are still registered in the LCP, so that an efficient transition to the housing sector could be made (for a fuller analysis, see Kalayaan Resource and Training Centre, 2002). This recommendation is aimed at housing authorities rather than the immigration system.

- If skilled childcare providers are in high demand, it should be an occupation that enables entry under the regular immigration program, without the live-in requirement and the temporary work visa status. The job must be paid wages sufficient to live independently, away from employers' homes. This requires a broad feminist coalition working towards a radical transformation of the value that Canadians place on childcare, and a national childcare policy.

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