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Deskilling across the Generations:

Reunification among Transnational Filipino Families in Vancouver

Geraldine Pratt, Department of Geography, UBC

Philippine Women Centre of BC

Ugnayan ng Kabataang Pilipino sa Canada

Series editor: Linda Sheldon, SFU;
Krishna Pendakur, SFU and Daniel Hiebert, UBC, Co-directors

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Geraldine Pratt, Department of Geography, UBC

Philippine Women Centre of BC

Ugnayan ng Kabataang Pilipino sa Canada

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INTRODUCTION

When we began to interview Lisa about her time working as a live-in domestic worker for Canadian families, her answers were very brief. Despite working for numerous, in some cases abusive, employers and revealing fragments from her third employment situation that had all the makings for a colourful story, she truncated her account by stating: “I actually stayed with them for a while and finished my contract with them. I just wanted to finish my contract, so that I could finish my 24-month requirement under the LCP, leave them and finally get my family.” Asked how long she stayed with the abusive employer, she indicated that she stayed for more than a year, but repeated: “I just wanted to finish my contract so that I can get out of the LCP. My main purpose was to get my family. So I had to sacrifice and stayed with them [the employers].” Asked for more details about this employment situation, Lisa drew the interview back to her main point: “Even if it is at two o’clock in the morning, I would [walk the dog]. I did this just so that I can finish the contract.” Probed for details about overtime wages, she indicated that there were none but insisted: “I did not mind. As long as I can finish the contract. I just wanted to finish my 24 months with them so I can get my family.” Lisa’s husband offered that the employers’ often failed to pay on time. Asked again whether these employers paid her overtime wages: “No. My sole focus is my family and how to get them here.” And so the conversation moved—finally—to Lisa’s application to sponsor her family.

Lisa is one of roughly 20,000 women enrolled in Canada’s Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP), a temporary work visa program.¹ She is one of approximately 2,500 Filipinos who leave their country daily as overseas contract workers (Parreñas 2005). They leave because they and their families cannot

otherwise survive; an estimated 34–54 percent of the Philippines' population is directly dependent on remittances from family members working overseas (Parreñas 2005).² As an index of this direct dependence on remittances, 43 percent of the women coming to Canada through the LCP in 2006 were married, separated, divorced or widowed; many would be sending remittances to spouses and/or to care for their children in the Philippines (CIC 2007). What Parreñas describes as the "care crisis" in the Philippines answers the "care crisis" in countries such as Canada, in particular the need for affordable child care and eldercare. The often exploitative conditions of this work in the "global north" is an important story that has been told often and well (e.g., Bakan and Stasiulus 1997; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Macklin 1992; Parreñas 2001; Pratt 2004; Stasiulis and Bakan 2003).

Lisa, however, is directing our attention away from this story to focus on her sponsorship of her family's migration to Canada. She counters her exploitation under the LCP with the narrative of her transnational family and, in particular, her self-sacrifice and goal of reunifying her family in Canada. In doing so, she is stitching together programs that Canadian governments see as distinct. These are the LCP, which is a temporary work visa program for overseas migrant workers, and immigration programs for settler migrants (which include family sponsorship). The majority of Filipino women registered in the LCP do successfully apply for permanent resident status after finishing the program, and thus they live the transition from migrant worker to immigrant. But the Canadian government does not frame the LCP as a migration program; it is an employment program that is meant to address the immediate needs of Canadian families for affordable child care and eldercare.

Scholars have noted that temporary worker and immigrant programs involve entirely different sets of social relations. Migrant labourers, Sayad ar-

gues, are often viewed with suspicion, as “not like us”. They are brought into the nation to do work that citizens will not do. Their fate is “to be and remain...a ‘labour [migrant]’ – and if need be we will ensure that it stays that way to some extent... On the [other] hand, we have an immigration that we judge...to be worthy of quickly becoming a ‘settler immigration’ – and, if need be, we will help it to become that as soon as possible” (2004: 301). As Sayad intimates, the categorial differences between temporary migration and immigration not only reflect assumptions about differences between peoples; they can actively produce them (see also Ong 1996). In the case of the LCP, it has been widely argued that the time employed in this temporary visa program has the effect of deskilling domestic workers, actively producing them as low skilled workers.³

Women moving through the LCP into citizenship would seem to disrupt the fixity of the distinction between migrant worker and immigrant. After women complete the requirements of the LCP, they reencounter the Canadian state—not as an isolated worker, but as an immigrant embedded in family relations. They cross a legal and social border that discriminates between those who are in a different category from those who can be integrated. We want, however, to trace how the LCP lives on as a ghostly presence as families settle in Vancouver, to argue that the LCP experience is neither easily contained nor handily blended into a family migration strategy. Rather than reunification ending the LCP experience, the LCP sets the course for families’ lives in Canada, by drawing all of the family members into its orbit of social exclusion.

In arguing this, we run counter to government profiles of the Filipino population, which show the employment rates among immigrants from the Philippines to be especially “robust”, and increasingly so (Gilmore 2008).

Immigrants from the Philippines, even those who have immigrated within the last five years, have high rates of labour force participation (88.9 percent in 2007). Rates of employment increased by 8.3 percent from the previous year, all in full-time employment, and are higher than those for both Canadian-born and immigrants from other source countries. We argue that we need to look beneath and beyond these aggregate statistics to understand the paradox of economic exclusion existing within and alongside a robust statistical profile, and to flag a developing—as much as existing—problem among Filipino youth.

Documenting how the LCP lives on in family settlement experiences to produce another generation of deskilled workers is by no means straightforward. Official statistics are fragmented, and those collected for the LCP are not easily integrated with immigration statistics. Even those who have daily face-to-face contact with Filipino immigrants are unlikely to make the connection. As one example of the latter, when we interviewed a highly motivated and committed principal of a Vancouver high school with a large number of Filipino students—in fact a high school where in 1998 25 or so children of LCP mothers made very public accusations of being subjected to racist violence—he had no knowledge of the LCP or the concept of family reunification. Upon first hearing the term, he puzzled, “That’s not a term I would hear, or use, in education regularly. Reunification?”⁴ (Interview, May 20, 2005). A counselor at another high school with one of the Vancouver’s largest Filipino populations, who was at the time dealing closely and sympathetically with a number of Filipino students, simply “couldn’t say” whether any of them had this history of family separation and reunification (Interview, May 20, 2005).

We have attempted to document family separation and reunification by stitching together a patchwork of official statistics, and by interviewing 27

families who have lived through the experience. These were difficult interviews to arrange, despite our capacity to draw upon the networks developed within the Kalayaan Centre, personal networks of the community researchers involved, and the help of a settlement worker who provided further contacts.⁵ The interviews were difficult to arrange in many cases because of the sheer number of hours worked by many adults, schedules that simply left no time. Beyond this, these are difficult stories, even those told by immigrants who have experienced the most success. As often as not, they are stories of at least partial failure and pain. Painful stories are difficult to tell at any time. How much more so when the personal investments in immigration have been so great.

These stories are important to tell, however, because there is a danger that family troubles will be read as personal failure, family pathology or as symptomatic of community deficiency. They may be read as community deficiency because so many Filipinos settling permanently in Canada have come through this program: between 1980 and 2002 one fifth landed through the LCP, and through the 1990s the proportion was closer to a third (Kelly 2006: 10). In Vancouver the significance of the LCP for the Filipino community is even starker: in 1998, 48 percent of Filipino arrivals in Vancouver came through the LCP (McKay and the Philippine Women Centre 2002: 8).

A number of scholars identify the increasing privatization of responsibility (what some call "responsibilisation") and the growing tendency to blame individuals for their social or economic failure (Brown 2003; Rose 1999) as a characteristic of contemporary neo- or advanced liberal societies. Barnett has criticized the tendency, however, for scholars to think about neo-liberalism as a coherent hegemonic project, and to exaggerate the state's capacity for social control. He urges closer, more specific examinations of the processes

that “govern the intersections between abstract, centrally promoted plans and social life on the small scale” (2005:11), with an eye to the heterogeneity of state programs and the open-ended nature of social and political life.

This study is fixed on this intersection and this heterogeneity. Rather than a narrative about the marginalization of individual women in the LCP, this is an analysis of the unwitting production of social and economic exclusion across a significant portion of the Filipino-Canadian community. It is a study of the contradictions of state policy and practices. The significance of the analysis extends beyond the Filipino-Canadian community in Canada because temporary work visa programs are proliferating, in Canada as elsewhere, and in some countries the LCP is now taken as a model for emulation.⁶ We trace the ways that domestic workers and their families are caught at the threshold of a contradiction—between being a temporary worker without prospects and an immigrant with a future. Something has to give under the pressure of this contradiction: we argue that it is the families immigrating through the LCP that are buckling under its weight.

PROFILE OF FAMILIES THAT REUNITE

There is an uncanny way in which the LCP haunts the lives of husbands and children who reunite with women who have come through the LCP. We focus in particular on the ways it reappears in the lives of children. We focus on children in the first instance because so many women and men with whom we spoke located their hopes for migration in their aspirations for their children. But as well, for many of the families in our sample reuniting after the LCP, a husband was not part of the process (in only a third of households was a husband/father present). The circumstances of Filipinos who leave their children in the care of family members cannot be collapsed into a single story:

there is no generic Filipina overseas contract worker. As Appendix 1 indicates, some mothers were single when they left the Philippines, others recently widowed, still more divorced or separated. And for some, the LCP was not a solution to the absence of a second income; it was a contributing factor to the dissolution of the marriage. Long years of separation whilst working overseas led to divorce while registered in the LCP or shortly after reunification in Canada. Government statistics do not allow one to establish a clear profile of the number of female-led households re-composed in Canada through the LCP but, among those most likely to sponsor children (those who are married, separated, divorced or widowed), in many of the years since 1995 fewer than half have sponsored spouses (Table 1).⁷ Further, we know from interviews that a good number of marriages break down after reunification.

TABLE 1: PROPORTION SPONSORING MARRIED DEPENDENTS AMONG WOMEN MOST LIKELY TO SPONSOR CHILDREN

YEAR	NUMBER OF LIVE-IN CAREGIVERS MARRIED, SEPARATED, DIVORCED, WIDOWED	DEPENDENTS WHO ARE MARRIED AS PROPORTION OF LIVE-IN CAREGIVERS WHO ARE MARRIED
1995	1275	34.5
1996	999	49.5
1997	542	45.4
1998	506	45.9
1999	802	49.6
2000	561	52.2
2001	444	53.1
2002	281	56.9
2003	932	40.3
2004	712	77.4
2005	1114	43.2
2006	1536	71.4

Source: CIC 2007

The length of the separation needs to be stressed. Families have been separated for many, many years: the median number is eight years. Certainly not all of these years are attributable to the LCP because it is common for women to first work as domestic workers in Hong Kong or Singapore. But for the majority in our small (non-representative) sample at least six years of separation were experienced in Canada (Figure 1). A settlement worker at Immigrant Services Society, who reported dealing with 25 cases of Filipino women registered in the LCP or applying for permanent resident status each day, estimated that five to six years of separation through the LCP is the norm: "Five years, that's for the regular ones. For complicated ones [for instance, where the husband is also working overseas, or permission for children's migration must be sought from an estranged husband] it will take up to six to seven or eight years" (Interview, July 31, 2006). It is deceptive, then, to gauge years of actual family separation from the regulations of the LCP, which stipulate that 24 months must be completed as a live-in caregiver within a 36-month period, before registrants can apply for an open employment authorization and eventually permanent resident status.

It is not surprising that most of the children are rarely young children when they reunite with their mothers in Canada. The majority of children in the families with whom we spoke arrived in Vancouver in their teens: their median age was 13 (Figure 2).

FIGURE 1: YEARS OF SEPARATION

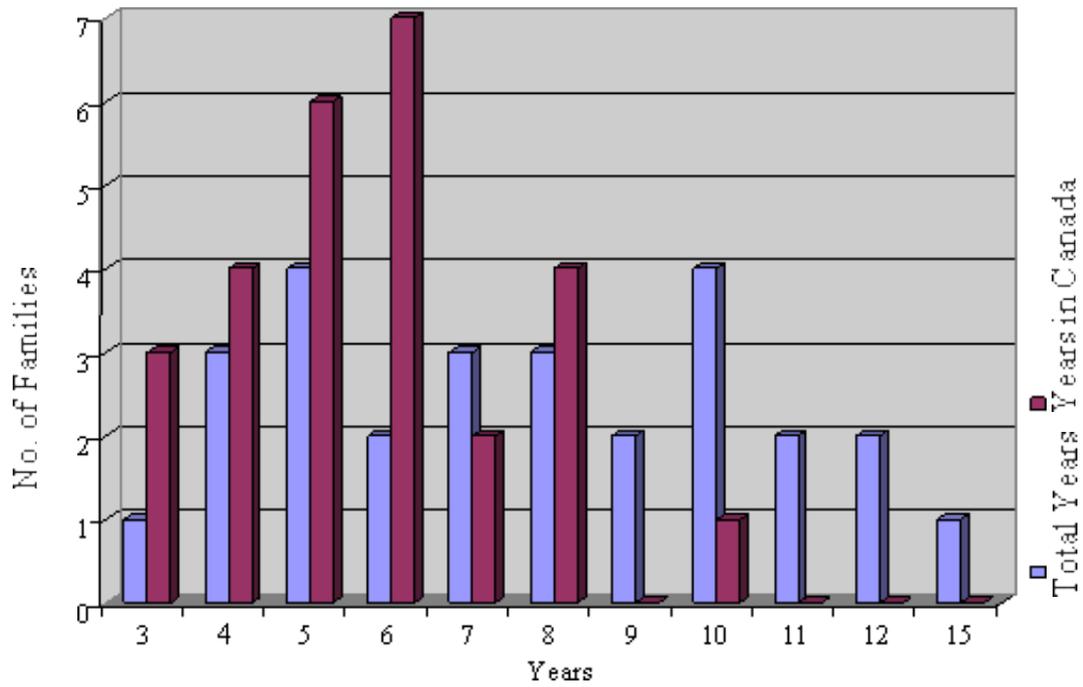
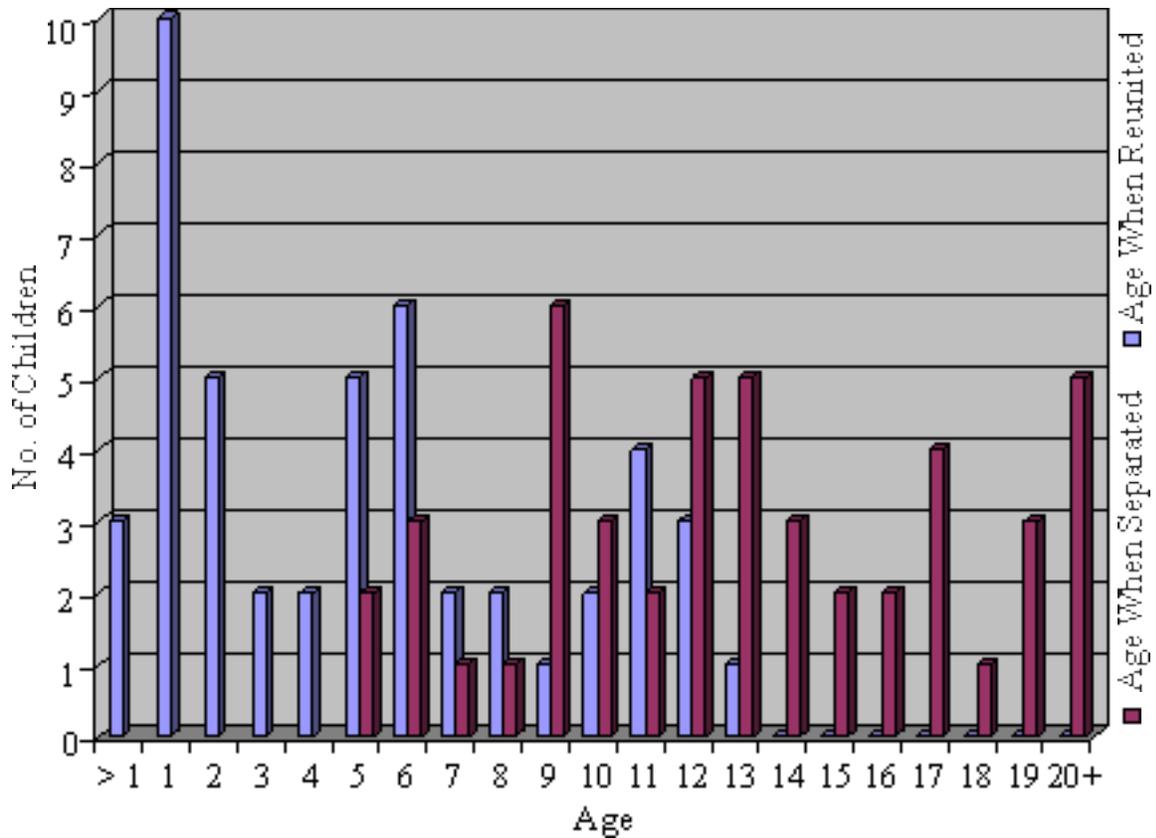


FIGURE 2: CHILDREN'S AGE WHEN SEPARATED AND REUNITED



As a final contextualizing observation, most of the families that we interviewed arrived from 1995 onwards (Figure 3). This reflects that fact that the numbers coming through the LCP jumped dramatically in 1993, as did the proportion coming from the Philippines (92 percent of all Vancouver-based LCP registrants came from the Philippines in 1995 as compared to 59 percent in 1989; for more details see Pratt, 2004). Table 2, which shows the proportion of permanent residents immigrating to Canada who have a family member who came through the LCP, demonstrates very clearly that it has only been since 1995 that significant numbers of family members have been sponsored through the LCP. We are, then, documenting a relatively recent development.

FIGURE 3: YEAR OF REUNIFICATION

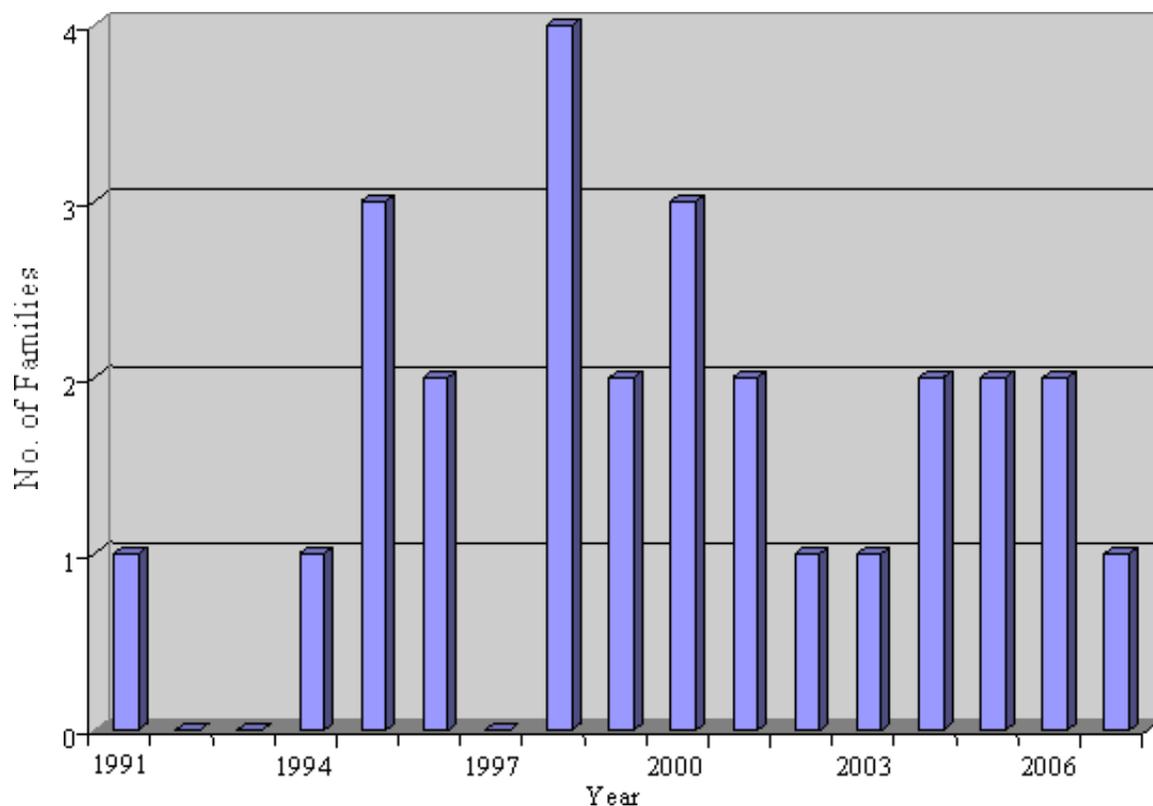


TABLE 2: PERMANENT RESIDENTS IMMIGRATING TO CANADA THROUGH THE LIVE-IN CAREGIVER PROGRAM

YEAR	TOTAL N	% OF TOTAL WHO ARE DEPENDENTS OR SPOUSES OF LCP REGISTRANTS*
1993	3013	0.8
1994	4980	7.9
1995	5457	28.4
1996	4759	38.6
1997	2730	32.7
1998	2868	31.1
1999	3261	39.9
2000	2782	36.8
2001	2625	28.6
2002	1985	23.4
2003	3304	32.5
2004	4292	41.8
2005	4552	32.7
2006	6895	48.5

* A tiny fraction immigrated when the family member was still registered in the LCP. The rest came after, either as part of the application of the person who had completed the LCP or as a separate applicant.

Source, CIC 2007

The family interviews were done between 2004 and 2008; some families were newly arrived, others reunited for over a decade. The majority of families had been reunited for at least six years and their experiences thus give a clear impression of the long-term impacts of the LCP on the lives of children (and in some cases husbands). Because the experiences of children who arrive in their late teens and early twenties are very different than those of younger children, we address each in turn.

RELIVING THEIR MOTHER'S EXPERIENCES

For relatively few of the families did the children arrive in their late teens or early twenties. Still, nine children in the sample were 18 years or older when they arrived in Canada, and though their experiences are not common, they are by no means unique. They are especially startling because the children relive so directly their mother's experiences of family separation and rapid deskilling. The clearest way to grasp this is listen to some of their stories. And so we proceed by storytelling, focusing on the circumstances of three families.

Liberty⁸ left the Philippines in her mid-thirties, when her three children were aged 13, 12, and 9. She describes her family background as middle class, evident in the fact that she was a stay-at-home mother until leaving the Philippines to do overseas contract work. Her husband worked in the Middle East as a contract worker for over a decade before Liberty left herself, but his remittances home had become sporadic and on one occasion she had to ask neighbours for food. She had been planning for many years to work abroad, but it was not until her eldest son was about to enter high school that her plans became concrete:

In my mind, I wanted him to start in a private school. I paid for his entrance test. After three weeks, the school board said that the results would be posted... And I was so happy and excited: he was number eight, in the top ten. And I said, "Oh, my son, come, come, your number, look at your name there." But on the other side of the board, it's the tuition fee.

She was unable to pay the fees and her son could not attend. But within months "God listened to my... to what I said" and her aunt, who had been working as a domestic servant in Hong Kong, notified her of employment in

Hong Kong: "It was always my dream, you know, [to provide] the best education that I could give to my children at my own expense." Liberty's husband (who she has subsequently divorced when he started relationship with another woman while she was in Hong Kong) did not want her to work abroad, but "I told him that 'I have dreams, big dreams for my children'." She first went to Hong Kong for seven years and then completed her LCP qualifications in Canada in three. It took a further five years for her to sponsor her children, by which time her three eldest children were in university in the Philippines, aged 28, 27, and 24. Sponsoring these three children had become both expensive and precarious because after 22 years of age a child must be enrolled as a full-time student in order to qualify as a dependent.

Despite her "big dreams" for her children, their experiences mirror facets of her own life. Her second daughter had a child in her fourth year of high school: "But," the daughter told us, "I continued to study [and completed a university degree with a business major in hotel and restaurant management] and the baby was not a major obstacle. My husband is an engineer. He passed the exams and he is now a licensed civil engineer. He is now working in the Philippines." Liberty, her daughter reported, "was angry [when she heard the news of her pregnancy] and did not talk to me for several months." Fearing that this would disqualify her daughter's immigration, Liberty did not disclose to Canadian immigration officials the existence of her daughter's four-year-old child, nor did she allow her to be married. Coming to Vancouver, her daughter has left her own child in the care of his father.

My husband was a mama's boy. But now nobody looks after him because he is on his own with our child and I am not there. The baby was with me for a long time, so he is finding it a little bit challenging with the baby. It was hard for me to leave them. But I thought that I have to do this for the

future of our baby because there is not much future for the child if we just stayed in the Philippines.

Two years on, Liberty's daughter works at two cashier jobs, unable to work in hotel management until she upgrades her degree. She has returned once to the Philippines to marry her husband in a civil ceremony, and hopes to sponsor her husband and child some day. In her mother's words: "She is a little bit disappointed because she has big plans for her son." Rather than bringing the cycle to a close, family reunification in Vancouver has opened a new chapter—a new generation—of family separation. Liberty says of her daughter. "That is what I told her. Now, you also experience what I experienced. The only thing is you have a fiancé who is taking care of your baby [in the Philippines] and your mother is here." This may seem like an unusual case, but it is by no means unique: the settlement worker at Immigrant Services Society happened to be working on a different but similar case when interviewed in 2006.

Liberty's eldest son, on the other hand, could not be sponsored because he failed to register for one term of university and lost his status as a dependent.

He was crying at the airport [when her other children left to come to Canada]. Both my son and my daughter's husband were crying at the airport. When I finally broke the news that he's not coming, he stopped from school. He was depressed. In his mind, he was thinking he will come and find a good job and help me.

Aged 30, Liberty's son works as a waiter in Manila, enrolled in a university course in hotel management. Liberty persists in her hopes that he will join her.

Even now, it's very stressful. I always think about that. And there are times I feel very sad and I cry. Because you see he is the one who can help me. And every time we talk on the phone I am telling him, 'Just hang on. I'll do something.'

It is not too far-fetched to suggest that coming through the LCP is his best option.

Maria⁹ traces a similar route into overseas contract work, but in her case, she and her husband made the decision together. When her eldest son was in his third year of high school (and her youngest child was just six years old),

I decided with my husband to find a better opportunity. We wanted money to be able to send our children to school. I had work in the Philippines. I was working for 20 years. We were making good money and my husband was teaching at [a private school] and at a public high school. But our salaries were not sufficient. So we talked and agreed that I would leave the Philippines to work and earn some money to be able to help the family and send the kids to college.

She left in 1990, first for two years in Hong Kong, and then directly to Canada. Her remittances were dedicated to her children's education. Her husband reported:

I saw to it that the money coming in I don't touch because it is for education. Because my salary was enough for us to survive. So that amount she sent us must be for the education of the kids. I don't touch it for my personal use.

Maria sent all but \$40 of her earnings in Canada home each month, until she began to save to sponsor them.

I did not go to parties or have a good time because I wanted to get my husband and son. My friends were complaining that I was not going out with them. But I told them that I was planning to sponsor my husband and my

son, and I am saving all my money that I get [as a housekeeper]... I spent all of my whole life for my family.

It was not until 2002, ten years after coming to Canada, that Maria was able to sponsor her husband and youngest son. After spending \$1,500 (a \$500 processing fee for each) she learned that her other three children were too old to be sponsored, and must find their way on their own as independent immigrants.

So I encouraged them to go to Hong Kong to work as nannies, and then apply under the LCP. With God's help, one of my daughters [who is a nurse in the Philippines] did manage to get to Canada under the LCP.

After 14 years of separation, at the time of the interview in 2004, the second daughter was soon to join her family, again by coming through the LCP.

If Maria's two daughters directly repeat her experience of immigrating through the LCP, her sponsored son knows first-hand some of his mother's experiences of being deskilled. Enrolled in the first year of a Bachelor of Sciences program in Industrial Engineering in the Philippines, he came to Canada "to be a student and not to forget the things I learned in school." But his English was not good, and he was placed at level 2 within the adult education system, the equivalent of first year high school (or grade 8). At first he took courses at night school: "Math 3 and Grammar. I took other courses, step by step," while working during the day as a janitor. But soon he stopped taking courses.

We looked for ways to be able to go to school, but there were not enough funds. So we looked for ways to look for jobs. And the plan for education was forgotten. We also have to work to help my siblings back in the Philippines.

He hopes that when his other siblings arrive in Canada, “they can help and I can study.” His assessment is that it is too difficult to finish an engineering degree in Canada and “I’ll just finish a technical course. It only takes 8 months.” He works with mostly Filipinos and speaks Tagalog on the job, which makes it difficult to improve his English. Consider: twelve years of separation, with all of Maria’s remittances dedicated to her children’s education, weighed against two daughters in the LCP and a 20-year-old son resigned (for the moment) to a job doing building maintenance work. When asked, “What is the best thing about Canada?” Maria’s son answered: “There is work.” “What is the worst thing in Canada?” “It’s the kind of work one gets. Like the job I have.”

Maria’s son focuses on the material barriers to finishing his high school certificate; a settlement worker at Immigrant Services Society drew attention to important psychological barriers as well. In the Philippines students graduate from high school after grade 10: “So sometimes if they are 16 years of age [or over], they come to Canada and they feel graduated” and find it very difficult to return to high school. This seems to have been a factor for one of Anna’s¹⁰ children, Joy, who was 18 when she joined her mother after nine years of separation. Anna began her time as an overseas contract worker, first in Hong Kong and then in Vancouver, after separating from her husband, when her children were 9 and 11. When the opportunity to come to Canada arose,

My father did not like it. Because, he said, “You know, your children are your only treasure. And you want to leave them? They are growing. They need your attention. They need everything from you.” I said I can still do that if I am there in Canada.

With her earnings as a domestic worker in Canada, Anna sent her children to private schools. Her daughter recalled: “Every year, every school opening,

we would have new bags, new pencils, new clothes. Of course we were happy.” By the time Anna was able to sponsor them to Canada, both were attending Central Philippine University. The youngest, Joy, was studying business management at university; her son, physiotherapy. In Vancouver, neither her son nor daughter was recognized as having a high school diploma. In the case of Anna’s son, his sister reported that the “assessment [by a counselor] [wa]s that: as long as your English is good, and you understand English, a high school diploma is not really needed.” He eventually took a six-month nurses’ aide course, so familiar to domestic workers who are trained as nurses and choose to upgrade quickly in Canada. In Anna’s son’s case, however, the path from physiotherapy (student) in the Philippines to nurses’ aide in Vancouver happened in a more compressed time frame.

Joy’s downward educational mobility has been more decisive. Her English was assessed at a grade 10 level when she arrived in Vancouver, and she required both English and Math to finish high school in Canada. Her age put her beyond regular high school, and she was enrolled for six months at an adult education learning centre. She then “lost interest” and got a full-time job at McDonalds¹¹, where she has worked the last five years. “I said, ‘What, back to high school again?’ Of course, you feel sad about this. And then I said, ‘Back to high school again. All this paper work.’ I just lost interest. What’s the point? I was already working [at McDonalds].” Her friends are mostly daughters of mothers who have come through the LCP and, like Joy, they have not completed high school.

Some of them think of their future. Like some would like to go back to school. For me, it’s different. That’s it for me. I don’t want to go back to school anymore... I have friends at work who were born here. Most of them are really focused on finishing college. But for us, it doesn’t matter. You have a full-time job. You don’t need a diploma, and it’s not a big deal. But

of course the jobs that we can get are lower jobs. It's not like office jobs, or computers.

Later in the interview, Joy envisioned herself working at McDonalds for at least another three to five years, by which time she will be close to 30 years old. She speculated that she might take a six-month course, one with a diploma, at some point in time, and recognized that she has not "fulfil[led her] priority, which is finishing school. I did not finish it." Of her mother, she says,

She always wanted us to finish school. This is the number one priority. But because I changed my life to be like this, there is really nothing that she can do about it. Of course, she might say that her daughter is only a high school graduate. But you also learn from your experience. You don't have to be a college graduate. We are not illiterates, you know.

Just three families but some common experiences. The impossibility of realizing their "big dreams" for their children led these mothers to venture overseas. And while they were able to purchase good private school and university educations for their children in the Philippines, these educations have not worked very effectively for their children in the Canadian context; in each family at least one child is presently trapped in a low level service job. In one, a second generation of university-educated daughters is coming through the LCP, a process referred to acerbically by activists at the Philippine Women Centre of BC as "a package deal". And the separation continues, either because older children have "timed out" of the sponsorship program, or they have been forced to leave their own child behind in order—once again—to realize their "big dreams" for their child.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

A Vancouver School Board multicultural worker, who has worked with the Filipino community in this capacity since 1979, judged that a more successful transition is possible when children are reunited by age 12-13 (Interview, June 6, 2005). However, neither the prospects of those we interviewed (Table 3) nor analyses of government statistics give much cause for optimism. We present analyses of both BC Ministry of Education and census data to provide a glimpse of how Filipino children are faring in Vancouver schools. We then turn to the family interviews to try to understand how the LCP is implicated in these poor educational outcomes.

TABLE 3: EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN 18 YEARS AND OVER AMONG HOUSEHOLDS INTERVIEWED

Completed university degree in Philippines (Working as cashier; sponsoring self through LCP; has taken six month pharmacy technician course in Canada unrelated to university degree)	4
Finished high school in Philippines and enrolled in university in Philippines, unable to enroll in/complete high school in Canada (Current employment: McDonalds, janitorial, unemployed, construction)	5
Enrolled in Canadian high school but did not complete and no immediate plans to continue education (Current employment: Burger King, janitorial, construction)	4
Completed high school through adult education (Unemployed, construction work)	2
High school graduate only (Current employment: fast food cook, warehouse/night shift)	2
Post-secondary course in Canada (Nurses' aid, community college)	2
Dropped out of university or college in Canada (Disability)	1
Attending university in Canada (Nursing/information technology)	2
N	22

The BC Ministry of Education data set allows one to “track” children as they move through the British Columbia school system. We identified and tracked four cohorts of children: those who began high school (grade 8) in the Vancouver region in 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998.¹² We have compared those who speak Tagalog at home¹³ with a selection of other Asian language groups, as well as those who speak English at home. We have found that children who speak Tagalog at home tend to have grade point averages at the lower end of the continuum, are less likely to have an honour flag at the point of graduation, and—perhaps most disturbing—have a relatively low likelihood of graduating from high school, even if one follows their record for four years after they would “normally” graduate, as we were able to do for cohort A (Tables 4–6). This is true for both boys and girls. Certainly, other language groups approximate the Tagalog-speaking children on specific measures. For instance, in some cohorts, those who speak Punjabi at home have equally low grade point averages. The “drop out” rates for those who speak Vietnamese at home are even worse than for Tagalog speakers. But what is particularly striking is that Tagalog-speakers are at the low end for *all* of the measures.

TABLE 4: MEDIAN GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)* FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES**

A) GIRLS

COHORT ***	LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME									
	TAGALOG		PUNJABI		VIETNAMESE		ENGLISH****		CHINESE	
	GPA	N	GPA	N	GPA	N	GPA	N	GPA	N
A	2.90	56	2.88	282	3.06	85	3.12	3290	3.42	1018
B	3.01	74	3.04	243	3.12	85	3.15	3346	3.46	1139
C	2.98	95	3.00	275	3.15	96	3.12	3388	3.50	1237
D	3.25	83	3.04	283	3.26	86	3.23	3282	3.54	1338

B) BOYS

COHORT	LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME									
	TAGALOG		PUNJABI		VIETNAMESE		ENGLISH		CHINESE	
	GPA	N	GPA	N	GPA	N	GPA	N	GPA	N
A	2.96	54	2.62	229	2.77	65	2.79	3113	3.17	1046
B	2.46	69	2.62	227	2.85	72	2.83	3171	3.19	1141
C	2.71	87	2.62	294	2.88	83	2.83	3262	3.23	1235
D	2.79	77	2.77	261	2.90	53	2.88	3076	3.27	1232

* GPA averaged over the last 52 credits for foundational courses taken (4 credits usually equivalent to 1 course).

** Includes those who had graduated by December 2003.

*** Cohorts A, B, C, D began grade 8 in September 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998 respectively. The analyses "track" a cohort from grades 8 to 12.

**** Aboriginal English speakers removed from this category.

Two lowest GPA scores in each row are highlighted

TABLE 5: PERCENTAGE WHO GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL WITH HONOUR FLAG*

	TAGALOG		PUNJABI		VIETNAMESE		ENGLISH**		CHINESE	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Girls	41.2	257	43.6	859	49.0	302	51.2	10944	71.9	3528
Boys	25.6	258	24.4	894	29.5	271	33.9	11084	54.1	3723

* Honour Flag awarded to those with an above B GPA (above 77%). Data includes those in cohorts A, B, and C who had graduated by December 2003. Data for cohort D unavailable.

** Aboriginal English speakers removed from this category.

Source: BC Ministry of Education TRAX File. Statistical analysis by Edudata Canada.

TABLE 6: RATES OF GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL*

	LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME									
	TAGALOG		PUNJABI		VIETNAMESE		ENGLISH**		CHINESE	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Girls	74	418	86	1266	69	509	78	17015	86	5500
Boys	61	468	71	1433	52	523	70	17969	82	5697

* The "normal" trajectory would be to complete grades 8-12 in five years. Data includes those who had graduated by December 2003 and indicates those for whom there is a recorded graduation date. It must be underlined that there are real limits to interpretation. Those who do not graduate may have left the British Columbia school system rather than have dropped out of high school. As long as students remained within BC, however, they are traced through this analysis, regardless of whether they changed schools within the province. This cohort-based analysis also only tracks the progress of students who were in the school system in grade 8. A child entering the system in grade 9 or later would not be included in this analysis. Cohorts A, B, C, D began grade 8 in September 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998 respectively, and thus they were tracked for different numbers of years (i.e., 8.5, 7.5, 6.5, and 5.5, respectively).

** Aboriginal English speakers excluded.

Source: BC Ministry of Education Longitudinal File. Statistical analysis by Edudata Canada.

One weakness of the BC Ministry of Education data for our purposes is that it is impossible to know how many of those who speak Tagalog at home are children of the LCP. We have turned to census data in an attempt to more closely determine the effects of the LCP on children's educational outcomes. Again, those who came through the LCP cannot be identified but we can discriminate between children who were born in Canada and those who immigrated, and assess how the timing of immigration has affected educational outcomes. And whilst children of the LCP are combined with other Filipino immigrant children, we have tried to prise these groups apart by distinguishing those who came between the ages 0-11 from those who came at a later age.

Because most family reunification has occurred since 1995, the children immigrating at an earlier age would—at the time of the 2001 census—have been unlikely to be children of the LCP (that is, they would have immigrated before Filipinas began to arrive in large numbers through the LCP).¹⁴ Only youths who were aged between 15 and 22 at the time of the 2001 census, and who immigrated between the ages of 12 and 16 are likely to have mothers who came through the LCP. (Few children of the LCP who immigrated at a younger age would have been 15 by 2001 or be expected to have graduated from high school.) Those aged 19–22 in 2001, for instance, were in cohorts A and B in the BC Ministry of Education data; those in cohorts C and D were aged 15–18 in 2001.

TABLE 7: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR FILIPINO YOUTHS IN VANCOUVER CMA IN 2001, BY IMMIGRATION STATUS, AGE OF IMMIGRATION, AND GENDER

	MALE		FEMALE	
	%	N	%	N
AGE 15–18 NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL				
Non-immigrant	16	125	17	115
Immigrated				
Between ages 0–11	19	105	13	65
Between ages 12–16	24	80	24	85
AGED 19–22 WITHOUT HIGH SCHOOL CERTIFICATE				
Non-immigrant	15	125	7	60
Immigrated				
Between ages 0–11	12	30	7	15
Between ages 12–16	24	100	7	35

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census, Special tabulations

Table 7 indicates that those aged 15–18 in 2001 who immigrated to Canada between ages 12 and 16 (and thus have a good probability of being children of mothers who came through the LCP) were less likely to be attending school than other Filipino youths of the same age in Vancouver. For both boys and girls, 24 percent were not attending school. Amongst boys aged 19–22 in 2001, those who immigrated between ages 12–16 were less likely to have completed high school than Filipino youths born in Canada or immigrating at an earlier age: 24 percent had not completed high school, compared to 15 percent and 12 percent in the other groups.¹⁵ Comparison across the four Canadian cities with the highest Filipino populations provides a starker picture (Tables 8 and 9). In Montreal and Winnipeg in particular, among the group most likely to have immigrated through the LCP there are large percentages of youths aged 15–18 not attending school—an astonishing 50 percent in the case of Montreal. While the percentage of those not attending school potentially includes those who have successfully completed high school at an early age along with those who have “dropped out”, Table 9, which shows the educational attainment for 19–22 year olds, suggests that the latter is the case, at least for those who immigrated between ages 12–16. In Vancouver, fully 54 percent of males who immigrated between the age of 12 and 16 from 1991–2001 had completed just high school (or less), as compared to roughly a third of non-immigrants or those who immigrated at a younger age. The same pattern is repeated for both young men and women in Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg, suggesting that the LCP has generated a national—and not just a local, Vancouver—problem of low educational attainment amongst a large segment of Filipino youth.

TABLE 8: PERCENTAGE OF FILIPINO YOUTHS AGED 15–18 NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL IN FOUR CANADIAN CMAs, BY IMMIGRATION STATUS, AGE OF IMMIGRATION, GENDER

	MALE		FEMALE	
	%	N	%	N
VANCOUVER*				
Non-immigrant	16	125	17	115
Immigrated				
Between ages 0–11	19	105	13	65
Between ages 12–16	24	80	24	85
TORONTO				
Non-immigrant	20	280	24	305
Immigrated				
Between ages 0–11	25	345	24	395
Between ages 12–16	17	100	22	160
MONTREAL				
Non-immigrant	15	20	6	10
Immigrated				
Between ages 0–11	16	35	17	25
Between ages 12–16	50	30	0	0
WINNIPEG				
Non-immigrant	20	165	23	165
Immigrated				
Between ages 0–11	18	45	25	50
Between ages 12–16	33	30	48	50

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census, Special tabulations

TABLE 9: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF FILIPINO YOUTHS (19–22) IN FOUR CANADIAN CMAs IN 2001, BY GENDER, IMMIGRATION STATUS, AND AGE OF IMMIGRATION

	NON- IMMIGRANT %	IMMIGRATED BETWEEN AGES		
		0–11 %	12–16 %	17–24 %
a) Vancouver males				
Without high school certificate	15	12	24	12
High school certificate	22	22	30	25
Other non-university	36	24	20	18
University (with or without completing degree)	26	43	23	44
b) Vancouver females				
Without high school certificate	7	7	7	5
High school certificate	20	12	33	15
Other non-university	28	40	25	17
University (with or without completing degree)	45	35	32	64
c) Toronto males				
Without high school certificate	10	11	25	19
High school certificate	23	29	33	23
Other non-university	27	25	25	24
University (with or without completing degree)	38	34	17	31
d) Toronto females				
Without high school certificate	7	7	15	6
High school certificate	16	24	25	13
Other non-university	21	21	31	32
University (with or without completing degree)	55	46	26	47
e) Montreal males				
Without high school certificate	6	14	43	13
High school certificate	19	19	20	33
Other non-university	35	52	16	27
University (with or without completing degree)	36	14	22	20
f) Montreal females				
Without high school certificate	9	10	9	13
High school certificate	9	10	52	33
Other non-university	35	40	31	27
University (with or without completing degree)	50	45	0	20
g) Winnipeg males				
Without high school certificate	15	18	23	0
High school certificate	23	47	48	27
Other non-university	18	13	16	0
University (with or without completing degree)	42	20	10	45

	NON- IMMIGRANT	IMMIGRATED BETWEEN AGES		
		0-11	12-16	17-24
h) Winnipeg females				
Without high school certificate	4	27	18	11
High school certificate	17	18	32	39
Other non-university	17	9	32	11
University (with or without completing degree)	60	48	17	44

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census, Special tabulations. Due to rounding error, columns do not always add to 100. Cases of extreme distortion indicate low numbers.

One factor that makes this pattern so astonishing and disturbing is that it is at odds with the norm within the Filipino community: in 2001 only 25 percent of all Filipinos in Canada had educational attainment of high school or less, and twice as many Filipinos (31 percent) had university degrees compared to all Canadians (Lindsay 2007). In 2003, only 6 percent of women registered in the LCP who were principal applicants for permanent resident status had less than 13 years of schooling (Fact Sheet on Live-in Caregiver Program). What is happening among Filipino youth?

When this question was posed to guidance counselors and principals at some of the high schools in Vancouver with the highest proportion of Filipino youths¹⁶, they described “a very quiet drifting off.” “In the classroom they’re probably some of the quietest.” From the School Board Filipino multicultural worker: “Somehow the Filipino kids are always able to blend into every part of the mainstream. They are not the ones to stand out. Even if they have problems, they do not stand out.” Despite this invisibility, she judged the challenges of children separated through the LCP to be specific to their circumstances, and to go beyond those experienced by other Filipino immigrant children.

I think the challenges have changed [since she began her job in 1979]. At the beginning when I first started working it was mainly adjusting to the

new culture, new way of life, new ways of disciplining kids. So there was the cultural clash between these two cultures. But lately with the influx of families from LCP, I think there's this reunification problem because of different expectations from both sides... So it's not simple, and I don't know. It's not an easy problem to solve because sometimes there are really some very, very sad stories. Although they have reunited when they come here, other problems come in that [cause] the family unit to just [break] down...

Interviewer (Int.): So when you began, that wasn't a part of your..

Multicultural Worker: No, no... When I started the main focus was to facilitate communication between home and school.

Int.: And now it's between parent and child?

MW: Yeah, to some extent. But like I said, [with government cutbacks] we do not get to know these things unless a crisis has come up or there's really a serious problem that is affecting the child's study (Interview, June 6, 2005).

This multicultural worker, as did some of the guidance counselors and principals interviewed, had a very clear and nuanced analysis of the ways that the LCP is affecting youths. But at one point in our first interview, she asked: "But would it not be better if you speak with the families themselves? Because then you'll really get a clearer picture." This is what we have tried to do.

THE LCP AND CHILDREN'S PROBLEMS AT SCHOOL

Certainly the struggles of Filipino youth in Canada cannot and should not be folded into those of their parents, and they are not adequately understood only in terms of the LCP. Youths described experiences of racialised conflict at school, and what they perceive to be racial profiling by police and some school officials. Compared to the children who join their mothers in their late teens and early adulthood, the LCP experience is not directly reproduced in their

lives. They have not been enrolled in the LCP themselves, been separated from their own children, or experienced the immediate downward slide from university degree to low skill job. Nonetheless, their mother's LCP experience provides the grounds for family strife, is bound up with difficulties adjusting to life in Vancouver, and leaves mothers with a diminished capacity to support their children at school.

a) Family Conflict

Many children of the LCP have been witness to and participate in a great deal of family conflict. One of our interviews was stopped short because husband and wife became embroiled in a serious argument. In four other households, we were told that the police had been called to mediate a domestic dispute. In the case of Victoria, she describes her five year old son's reaction when his father was removed by the police. Victoria had left her son when he was just four months old in the full-time care of his father and they had been reunited in Vancouver for five months at the time of the assault.

And then that time when we had an argument, my son is so sad, that his dad was being picked up by the police. "I miss my dad. I miss my dad. Where is he? I thought they will return him back right away that night." That's what my son was thinking. But then, because of what he did to me, [her husband] was charged with assault. They restrained him from getting too close, to coming closer to us. I think that was for two weeks that he had that restraining order. So it's a hard thing for my son to accept that time, and that's why my son is crying all the time. "Where is my dad?" He kept looking for his dad, and kept asking me. And even though I explained, "Why are you still defending your dad when I'm the one who is the victim here?"—I said this to my son—I can't blame my son for those emotions. He was close, attached emotionally to his dad because they lived together [in the Philippines].

Int.: Was your son present...?

V: Yeah, he was sleeping and then he was awake when the police came. That's why he saw his dad being taken... After I dropped the charges against him.

Int.: Why?

V: Because I pitied my son's emotions. That's why I dropped the charges and gave him—what do you call this?—a second chance.

Five years later at the time of the interview, the conflict between Victoria and her husband continued and had even worsened (and the police had been called a second time), and she continued to consider separating from him.

Certainly LCP families have no monopoly on marital discord and family violence, but there are common themes that anchor family conflict in the LCP, and especially a dynamic of sacrifice, debt and actual or perceived ingratitude that the staggered migration creates. In Victoria's case, the debt is monetary:

The main argument that we are always fighting [about] is money. Money and debts... And then I said to him, "I have all of this debt just for you guys, in order to be ready and prepared for having a family [join me in Vancouver]. And now you're blaming me! You should help me and support me paying all of these debts. But what do you do? I have to pay all of this on my own"... The same arguments. Even in the car, even there we fight. I will tell him, "Get out! Get out of this car!" And he will say, "Why would I get out? I'm also paying the insurance on this car."

Maria and her husband could not recognize each other's sacrifice, and being separated, they had never actually seen it. Her husband remembered becoming a single parent of four children when she left for Singapore.

I became a father and a mother to my children. It was tough for the children. Especially for my youngest son. He was only six years old... My workplace was 8 km from the *barangay* [village] where we lived. So I had to travel each morning. I had to prepare the kids before they go to school...

I put the youngest where I could be with him most of the time. But the elder one had to stay in the *barangay*. And my older daughter was with me in the high school [where I taught]. And the other boy was also in high school but in the *barangay*. So that's how it works.... [Interviewer: You have no other relatives to help you?] My in-laws are around. But they are busy with their own family, especially my mother-in-law.

But from Maria's perspective:

My husband was telling them that, because you have been away from your mom for a long time, I don't know if you can manage to deal with her. I think that this is a negative way of putting it. Instead, I would like him to tell them that, because we have been separated for a long time, they should understand her, and that she did that [came through the LCP] because she wanted us to be together. But he is different [in what he says to our children]. Instead, I feel that he is helping to alienate the kids from me. So we could not agree. I always think that I am right, while he thinks that he is also right. He says that I don't listen to him... I am very independent and I can manage alone with myself without my kids and husband. I told them that I did these things for them. [Interviewer: But at the same time he was also doing much there in the Philippines, taking care of them.] But I send them all the money that I make here. And this helps in their studies. And also our house there is close to my mother. It is only a block away.. We always have different opinions and decisions from each other. He has different views and I have different views. So, it is difficult. Although we live in the same place [and have sought counseling], the relationship is not good.

Maria's husband recognizes that she has "integrated" into Canadian values in a way that he has not, another tension created by their staggered migration experience.

In the case of Jessica's household, her father's unfaithfulness to her mother caused considerable conflict, which affected her commitments to school:

At the same time he's got a girlfriend here so probably some part of his salary was going towards the girlfriend. So it really creates a lot of conflict inside the family. So having that problem, which started from the separation

of my mom and dad, it kind of creates a hell inside your house. Like you don't want to go home anymore, which motivates you to go out [quit school and get a job], just pay rent all by yourself.

When Joseph came to Canada with his mother and siblings, they were picked up at the airport by "some random guy" who turned out to be his mother's boyfriend. He describes the scene when both mother and father (who has lived away from his family for 13 years as a migrant worker in London) revealed their respective boyfriend and girlfriend:

He called and we hear this whispering on the phone and then my mom started crying out of nowhere...then my dad was talking to her...and this girl talked to my mom telling bad things...and then of course my mom cried, right... I talked to this girl too: "Why are you talking like that to my mom? You don't even know my mom"... Everyone's crying now because it's on the speakerphone. My mom put it on the speakerphone. So my little sister is crying, my brother...

He spoke of remembering "when your parents, your family is still complete...it's happy...you want that back, right? It's really hard... You know what's happy, right? You've felt it before." Of the Philippines: "I notice it's happier there." (Interview, February 16, 2008).

Children were not simply bystanders to conflict; some described fighting with stepfathers, and with their mothers. Liberty expresses some of her difficulties with her children (aged 11, 24, 27), who had joined her only three months before the interview:

So every day, I am under pressure. I have to work, to think about the food to put on the table every day so that they would not complain. And they are also adjusting to the time, the weather and the situation here. They don't have friends around...everything is new to them. And then, I am mad all the time because I am used to a clean place and now...my children...their clothes are all over the place. And this drives me crazy... They are not happy to be

with me. That's how I interpret things here with us. And then, one time, I was really fed up. I told them, "You know, guys, instead of appreciating what I do for you, of trying to get you here—look what I get! All complaints! Here and there." Nothing that I do is valuable to them, but complaints. And so, they stopped complaining.

As another example, two brothers, Jack and James, recognized that:

We used to misunderstand her a lot. We were not very close to her. In fact, we were scared of her before. But I don't think that she has a lot of expectations for us. She was just nice to us. But sometimes she could also be gruffy. Before, she was a clean freak. She comes home and when she sees things that are not neat, she complains, and takes it out on us. Even a little mess. Like if we don't wash the dishes and she sees this, she gets mad. We know that she used to work in her employer's home and she keeps things neat and tidy. That's why she tries to bring this into our home. So, we always say, "Oh, my god, there she goes again" (Interview, August 2004).

b) The Shock of Rapid Downward Social Mobility

Women who come through the LCP not only pave the way for their family migration; through their remittances they radically improve their family's situation in the Philippines. As Rhacel Parreñas (2005) has pointed out, it is often middle class families who send family members overseas as contract workers, precisely to maintain and enhance their middle class standing in the Philippines in the face of the privatization and deterioration of public services, especially education and health care. Conely recounted that her husband did not want her to leave the Philippines to work as a domestic worker. But when she sent home her first paycheque, her family radically reassessed the situation, and said "'Oh, it's a big amount. Okay. Just stay there and don't come back. Just send the money.' That's what they said to me." Certainly, few families are as outwardly calculating as Conely's, but the remittances are significant, and

there can be a stark disjuncture between the life circumstances of women in Vancouver and those of their family in the Philippines. Many of the children went to private school in the Philippines, and a number had nannies of their own.

Susan, for instance, described her daughter as being extremely angry for almost eight months after arriving in Vancouver in 2003 at age 12, following a separation of over ten years. "The first couple of months," Susan said, "every time I would speak out, she would not allow me to finish because she would scream at me." Part of this was tied up with her daughter's belief that her mother had abandoned her father. (Susan had chosen not to sponsor his immigration to Canada.) But her daughter was also distressed by Susan's economic situation in Vancouver. In the Philippines, the daughter lived in a house purchased by Susan, in the care of a nanny. When her daughter arrived, Susan was still sharing an apartment with a roommate. After two weeks, she found a one-bedroom apartment for herself and her daughter. Initially they had no bed and slept on the floor in sleeping bags. Susan bought a second-hand bed and her friends helped her to find things for the apartment, including another bed. Susan bought things for the apartment slowly:

I just cannot afford to buy all the things that we need at once. I don't want to max out my VISA because I wanted to use it for other more important things. I did buy a television because I know that she would need to have something to watch and entertain herself... Back in the Philippines she had everything—her room and her nanny. So her new situation must be quite a shock to her. I was still saving up to be able to buy our needs... I started to buy things slowly for us. My daughter was still surprised. She asked why I was poor here. Of course, in the Philippines she had everything since I was sending money every month to take care of her. Back there she had a nanny,

and maybe a middle class lifestyle. But now here, there is a kind of levelling off... But sometimes she thinks that it is just like in the Philippines where she can buy her dress anytime and eat out. I told her that we should instead just cook in the apartment and not spend money. When she buys her dress, she thinks that spending \$150 for her dress is cheap. I don't think that she knows the value of money. She would tell me that in the Philippines she often gets nice dresses... I checked out the food bank just in case we run out of food. When she saw a candy from the food bank, she asked me where I got it. I told her it was from the food bank. She was disturbed by this and told me not to go again. I told her that I checked out the food bank so that, in case I could not find a job after my EI has run out, at least I know where to go. That was my first and last trip to the food bank. I wanted to show her how tough life could be here. She was embarrassed by this. But I just wanted her to know that there is some place that we can go to if there is nobody who can help us. (Interview, December 9, 2004.)

Susan is close to the family for whom she worked as a domestic worker for four years in Vancouver and feels respected by them: their children are the age of her daughter and when her former employer invites her over, they pick her up and "those kids would open the car's door for me." But her daughter will not join her on these visits. She says that she is embarrassed to come.

c) Mothers' Deskilling and Children's Educational Success

Susan's sense of vulnerability, which drove her to familiarize herself with the food bank, comes from her experiences of deskilling in the Vancouver labour market. Susan completed a B.Sc. in Chemistry, followed by 18 credits in Education, which allowed her to take and pass the exams as a secondary school teacher in the Philippines. There were no jobs to be found in the Philippines,

and these credentials create few opportunities in Vancouver. Following a trajectory common to many in the LCP, after completing her 24 months as a live-in caregiver, Susan took a full-time 5-month course at a community college to qualify as a nurses' aide. She found work right away: "I faxed out my first application at 10 am and got a [positive] response at once by 2 [pm]." But though she has worked five years for one company and belongs to the Hospital Employees' Union, she still has insufficient seniority to qualify as permanent staff. To her knowledge, there are no permanent positions available at this company, now or in the near future. Her work is casual, without benefits, and the hours offered to her are variable; in some months there have been none. This has led Susan to take casual work as a nurses' aide with another private company as well. As Appendix 1 indicates, this story is all too familiar amongst LCP registrants (see also Pratt and Philippine Women Centre 2003).

Deskilling has frequently been noted as one of the outcomes of the LCP experience, because women lose their skills during the years that they work as caregivers. The point must also be made that there is a circular relationship between deskilling and family separation. In the years immediately after completing the LCP many women have few resources to retrain because they are both sending large sums of money home, and saving to bring their families to Canada. The most common strategy is the one used by Susan, which is to take a short part-time or full-time course that allows entry into the most precarious jobs in the field of health care. The LCP, followed by family immigration, is thus a regulatory structure that effectively seals women's fate as an extraordinarily well-educated cadre of lowly paid, vulnerable employees, working long hours, often in an increasingly privatized health care industry. Women who must save to sponsor their families have few resources to develop their own "human capital" in Canada, and they are typically already deskilled

by the time their families arrive, often working multiple, insecure jobs. This has two important implications for how their children will fare in school.

First, in many cases, these women have been little more available to their children and husbands in Vancouver, than they were in the Philippines. Ethel relates:

I was working two to three jobs just to be able to provide for ourselves. So it is still the same. I don't have much time for them. The only thing that has changed is that they are here instead of being in the Philippines. But we are still separated because of the work. They wanted me to stay with them longer. But we cannot. We have to work in order to survive. I hate to think that this is happening to us. (Interview, August 14, 2004).

Albert's mother works at two jobs during the week, and cleans houses on the weekend. Reflecting on his time—not in the Philippines, but in Canada:

And [my mother] has to work two extra jobs. And for what? For us to get food, shelter. And we don't even get to see her. I only see her a couple of hours and then she goes back to sleep. I see her the next morning, and then she goes back to work. It's like someone stole my mom. That's what it's like (Albert, August 28, 2004).

Joseph's mother has three jobs: "We don't really see her that much. Only at dinnertime when she cooks. Every morning too." In a focus group held with youths in August 2006, a number confirmed this experience: "My mom works at night. I only see her in the early morning if I can." "Yeah, that's like my mom. Because my mom has two jobs. She leaves at 6 and comes back at 4. And then at 5 goes to another job until 1 in the morning. So she only has five hours of sleep. So sometimes we see each other on Saturdays. But she picks up some other work on Saturday too." A third youth chimed in: "Oh yeah, that's the same for me."

Consequently, there is little time for many mothers to monitor their child's progress at school, something noted by guidance counselors with whom we spoke. Commenting on a parent night for grade 10 students, a guidance counselor from the high school with the third largest Filipino population in the city noted that "with the Filipino kids, I don't think I saw too many [parents] come out. But that's sort of representative of our area." Certainly some youths credited their mothers with the fact that they finished high school. Carlos, for instance, remarked that, despite the fact that many of his friends had not, "I decided to finish high school. My mom helped me a bit." Asked how she helped, he replied "Yelling at me to go to school." Carlos's mother clearly values education: she has a Bachelor of Science and Education degree, worked for four years as a teacher in private schools in Manila, and in Canada has worked very hard to upgrade her credentials in Early Childhood Education, on a part-time basis, at night, after a day's work. And yet she rarely attended parent meetings:

Even though there's a parent meeting, orientation or that kind of thing, I just ignore them because I'm more [focused] on my job. Because that is the only source for us to live. For us to make our day-to-day living (Second interview, September 6, 2007).

She monitored his progress through his report card: "He's fine because his grades are okay. Although there's hundreds of lates, really hundreds of lates. And some absences too."

In other cases, youths assessed their parents in less kindly terms. Mai ran away from home at age 13, one year after reuniting with her mother, and moved in and out of group homes and friends' houses until 17, when she returned to her mother's house to give birth to her baby. She spoke of her sense of neglect: "We [she and her sister] were always by ourselves... My mother

didn't really care what I'm doing at school. She just could not take it." Mai got "kicked out" of high school in grade 9: "I got attention. Even though it's negative attention. As long as I got attention" (Interview, February 3, 2004).

Witnessing the numbers of hours that their mothers work in the labour force has a second effect on children's education: some children feel the responsibility to contribute to household income. In grade 11, Joseph works 40 hours a week at McDonalds and "helps out at home" by "paying a share" of household expenses. In a focus group with youths, several lamented the fact that, in comparison to the Philippines, it was common for high school students to have part-time jobs: "Yeah, if you're 17 or 18 in the Philippines, you don't have to work. You just study... Of course, if you work you have a reason. You have to help. And you need to have something if you want to go out. Or buy clothes. And also your parents don't pay for school and books. Of course, you have to think of that and help out even as little as you can."

In the case of Rosita's sons, 17 and 19 when they arrived in Canada in December 2006, neither have enrolled in school, despite the fact that education is highly valued in their household (Rosita was a high school teacher in the Philippines and immigrated, in part, so as to send her children to good private schools), and one has not completed high school¹⁷:

At this point in time, I don't know when they are coming back to school... When school started this year, my eldest son [who was studying computer science at university in the Philippines] told me: "Ma, age doesn't matter in education. So I'll help you with all these bills and things like that..." I was crying but I don't know [what else to do]... I'm pretty much open to what is happening with the expenses... And the reason that they stick to their [construction] jobs is that they can see that I cannot afford to pay the rent. (Interview with Rosita, November 16, 2007).

Jhimmy's case is particularly interesting (and disturbing) because his mother seems to have done everything to prepare him for a university education. He was enrolled in private school in the Philippines until he joined his mother at age 11. Although his mother bought a house in East Vancouver, she used her employers' address (where she continued to work as a domestic worker) to enroll her son in a public school on Vancouver's affluent west side. Asked why it was that he went to this school, Jhimmy quipped, "Because I was too smart for the east side. [heh, heh]. That's what my mom said. She said that there's less chance for me to graduate if I was on the east side." He graduated with B's and A's, English as his best subject. He experienced some racism at school at the hands of recent immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan, but he dealt with this by banding with second-generation Chinese and Caucasian students. He participated on school sports teams, including rugby and basketball.

My school experience was actually pretty good. My counselor.. I'm the only Filipino guy [in the entire school], right...so the counselor just called me and checked up on me once in a while. We actually kind of bonded over the years because she helped me a lot. Because when I was in grade 8, I remember some Greek girl picking on me. It was my first week in high school, and I got really mad and she called me in to try to talk me down. So we got close. She helped me out with my courses, and I actually graduated when I was 17. So I actually did pretty good because of her.

He remembers—in some detail—that his school friends went to college or university: "Most of them went to Langara. Some of them got into UBC. Other people, there's one friend who's going to Washington State. And then to UVic and the University of Toronto." And yet Jhimmy did not.

After high school my mom asked me to get a job, but she still wanted me to go to school. Then after a while it got hard, because I work eight hours a day, and just to help my mom out, because she can't carry the whole load.

Because it's just the two of us, paying for the house, all the food. So I want to give my share too. [Int.: So it was at 17 that she wanted you to start paying your share?] She didn't want me to pay. I just wanted me to help her out. So I just give her paycheques, whatever I can give her. And [so she did] not worry about me having money. So I don't get an allowance or anything (August 28, 2004).

His pressing need to contribute financially was no doubt tied to witnessing his mother's daily pattern of overwork at three different jobs: one as full-time housekeeper, another cleaning houses, and a third cooking for a singer, retired from Hong Kong. Despite his mother's well-planned strategy, his close connection to his guidance counselor and a cohort of peers who attended university, seven years after high school graduation, Jhimmy has completed a short course at Vancouver Community College but continues to work full-time as a cook at a fast food restaurant.

And finally, the tug of youth into employment in low-skilled but readily available jobs comes not only from immediate family responsibilities, but from felt obligations to remit money to extended family in the Philippines. Just as their mothers are often unable to invest in their own retraining in Canada because of responsibilities to remit money to relatives in the Philippines, some immigrant children feel the same obligations, with the same result. Rosita spoke of the pressure that cousins place on her sons: "Whenever he calls, of course, they would always talk about money, money, money. Like the cousins would say, 'It's my birthday. [Can you send me money?]'"" But she recognized that there are family problems "that we cannot really just ignore"; her eldest son, for instance, contributed substantially to the purchase of a car in the Philippines used to drive his grandmother to needed medical treatments.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The portrait that we present is at odds with government profiles of the Filipino community. We do not dispute the industriousness of members of Filipino community in Canada, the fact that they are fully employed, often in multiple jobs, and that this full employment yields an income that compares favourably to other groups. But when these statistics are contextualized by qualitative data, the picture shifts: there are low returns on the human capital of well-educated mothers, and parents' high educational aspirations for their children are not being actualized, in good measure because of the long-term effects of family separation. We have traced how the length of separation and the deskilling of mothers affect the lives of their children.

In so many ways, it seems odd that the Canadian state extends citizenship to families about which it knows so little. It is virtually impossible to use government statistics to directly assess how children of the LCP are faring at school, as it is to monitor the number of single-parent families assembled through the LCP. Stranger still that the Canadian government has created a program that thoroughly deskills mothers who are to become Canadian citizens and are the sole providers for their children. One way of interpreting this is as a state design to produce a new generation of fully employed low-skilled workers suitable for low-level service sector jobs; another interpretation is that these outcomes emerge from a contradiction in state policy.¹⁸ In the latter view, different government programs can be at cross-purposes; a solution for one problem can create other unforeseen difficulties. From this perspective, the LCP (a solution to the problem of a dearth of affordable child care and eldercare for middle class Canadians) has created significant problems for Filipino immigrant settlement and integration.

We want to raise some cautions about our own analysis. Through statistical analysis we have measured the success of Filipino youth against a comparative norm. We may also seem to be suggesting that the large number of female-headed households we have identified among families sponsored through the LCP is “a problem”. Both observations risk marginalizing the Filipino community in Canada and stigmatizing migrant mothers. Rhacel Parreñas (2005) has documented the ways that mothers who leave their children to work overseas are stigmatized in the Philippines, in ways that men who work abroad are not. Their children more often feel abandoned. She traces this stigmatization and sense of neglect to conventional assumptions about ideal family forms and gender norms, which offer no space for women who—by choice and more often necessity—have redefined their role as mother to be economic provider. We want to insist that university-educated, professionally accredited women taking economic responsibility for their children in the only way that they see possible is not in and of itself a problem; but separation for almost the entire life of the children, and deskilling single mothers to the point that they must work in two or three jobs do—most definitely—pose problems for these families.

Towards the end of our interview with Ligaya, she said, “I think that we are the worst family.” We have retold some of the stories that were told to us in an effort to counter this kind of self-blame, and to document the systematic ways in which the LCP creates great difficulties for families who attempt to settle in Canada long after the terms of the program have been met.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the preceding analysis, we offer the following as policy recommendations:

Vancouver School Board

- There is currently one multiculturalism worker employed by the Vancouver School Board to address the needs of the Filipino student population. Regardless of whether this number makes sense in terms of the population of Filipino students relative to other cultural groupings, the specific circumstances of the LCP experience warrant more funding for counseling and support.
- There is a need to educate school administrators, guidance counselors and teachers about the Live-In Caregiver Program and the implications that it holds for the children who have lived through its effects.
- The poor academic success and drop-out rates for Filipino youth are truly shocking, especially when it is understood that many of these students were excellent students attending private schools in the Philippines and they live within households in which post-secondary education is highly valued. There is a need for further study and specific programming to address the problem.
- Children who immigrate in their late teens (especially age 17) slide between the cracks of the regular and adult education systems. A 17-year-old interviewee reported being shuttled between the two systems, judged to be too old for the regular system and too young for adult education. The programs must be rationalized so that youths of this age do not fall out of the educational system.

Canadian Immigration and Citizenship

- In an earlier working paper (Pratt and PWC 2003), we outlined many recommendations for reforming the LCP. Our recommendation from the current research is simpler: this is to stop the family separation built into the structure of the LCP. Limiting the program to only single, childless women is no solution. The LCP must be recognized for what it is—an immigration program—and restructured so as to allow family immigration from the start. This would likely entail removing the live-in requirement and allowing women to work for more than one employer (in order to earn a living wage to allow them to purchase market rental housing).
- Barring this, the length of time processing family sponsorship documents must be shortened.
- Better coordination between LCP and settlement services. Though we do not dwell on husband's integration in this paper, the occupations of husbands in Vancouver displayed in Appendix 1 tell a story of downward social mobility and a tendency (regardless of occupation in the Philippines) to move into low-end health-related occupations or building maintenance. The settlement worker who we interviewed described the tendency for husbands to quickly move into survival jobs arranged for them by their wives, rather than accessing the range of settlement services. Women enrolled in the LCP need better information about opportunities to upgrade credentials, for themselves, their college-educated children and their spouses.
- Recognizing that LCP registrants have already paved the way for their family's resettlement, landing fees should be reduced for families whose prin-

cial applicant came through the LCP. This would also reduce the length of separation because costs of family sponsorship would be reduced.

Settlement Services

Young adults 16 and over who are directed to adult learning centres are at high risk of not completing high school. They require access to high-quality job and career counseling.

ENDNOTES

1 The numbers authorized to work through the LCP have increased substantially over the last decade from a total of 5,942 in 2000 to 21,489 in 2006 (Depatie-Pelletier 2008).

2 Remittances of Overseas Contract Workers to the Philippines doubled from 2000 to 2006, from US \$6.05 billion to \$12.76 billion (POEA 2007; reported in Kelly, forthcoming). Kelly also reports that 7.2 percent of households in the Philippines depend on international remittances as their *main* source of income.

3 There is now a voluminous literature on the LCP and its attendant deskilling, including: Daenzer 1993; England and Stiell 1997; Kelly 2006; Macklin 1992; Pratt 2004; Stasiulis and Bakan 2003, among many others.

4 The principal was, however, quick on the uptake. To contextualise his comments:

GP: Reunification. For example, the program that I have been looking at brings nannies, domestic workers, to Canada.

Principal: That's not a term I hear, or use, in education regularly. Reunification?

GP: Yeah. That's the... And so, it's often that these families have been separated for five or six..

Principal: So the mom comes here and works as a nanny?

GP: And then...

Principal: The kids would stay in the Philippines and then the reunification would be bringing those kids here to live with the mom who has been working here as a nanny.

GP: And they've been separated for five or six years. So it's not surprising that there are challenges, right? And so that's...

Principal: And they would stay in the Philippines with an aunt or a husband or someone.

GP: Yeah, somebody. A grandparent...

Principal: A grandparent, or any one of those.

GP: It varies.

5 The methodology was a mixture of individual and group interviews. The original plan was to interview families (adults and children) together, followed by interviews with individual family members. Few families agreed to do this, and the scheduling of interviews accommodated individuals' willingness to be interviewed, and scheduling difficulties. Altogether, 27 households were interviewed. Ten youths were interviewed without their parents, alone or with a friend or sibling (that is, their parents were not interviewed). For five youths, there was a repeat interview. For four families, children and mother were interviewed together (and in the case of three families, children were interviewed independently after the joint interview). In three additional families, children and adults were only interviewed separately. For six families, the husband was interviewed along with his wife. For seven families, the mother told the family story on her own, either because children were too young or did not want to participate. Four families participated in a dinner/focus group in which G Pratt and Florachita Bautista reported back on initial impressions from the interviews, and they shared their stories among themselves. The Filipino-Canadian Youth Alliance invited youth participants to an evening of feedback and discussion at the Kalayaan Center with the same objective. Various members of PWC of BC and Ugnayan participated as interviewers, and I attended as many of the interviews as possible. Youths tended to interview youths; adults interviewed adults. The interviews were long, usually several hours. In some cases, a preliminary visit to the home of the person to be interviewed was necessary to establish trust and rapport. Contacts came from existing networks of the Kalayaan Centre, from personal networks and those referred by an immigrant settlement worker (she asked families of their willingness to participate and passed along names of those who were). Although the sample is by no means representative we made an effort to diversify the sample by making contacts through different networks. Almost all of the interviews involving adults were conducted in either Tagalog or Ilocano. For youths, there was a mixture of English and Tagalog. Interviews were then translated and transcribed. A further set of focus groups was conducted with 12 youths by Ugnayan BC, and some of this material has been drawn on here.

6 This observation was made by Maita Santiago, Secretary General of Migrante International (International Alliance of Overseas Filipino Workers) at the June 16, 2006 international conference on "Prospects for peace, human rights and democracy in the Philippines", Vancouver, BC.

7 This is a very rough estimate, and possibly an over-estimate. We know that some single women sponsor their children. Some of the married dependents will not be husbands but mothers (though their interviews are not

included in this analysis, we also interviewed two mothers who were sponsored by their daughters). At the same time, some of the married, divorced and separated women will not be sponsoring children.

8 This is a self-selected name. Liberty and her children were interviewed twice: on June 8, 2005, just three months after her children had joined her and on September 11, 2007.

9 Maria and her husband were interviewed July 24, 2004 and again in a group interview/feedback session on November 6, 2004. Her youngest son was interviewed March 15, 2004.

10 Anna was interviewed July 15, 2004 and her daughter on February 9, 2004. Anna also attended a group interview/ feedback session on November 6, 2004.

11 Working in fast food restaurants is a common destiny for many Filipino youth (as evident in Table 3). Jessica, who was sent to private schools in both the Philippines and Vancouver (when she immigrated at age 17) did graduate from high school. But she was depressed and struggling during her first year in grade 12 in Canada and felt alienated from her Canadian classmates. When she got a part-time job at McDonalds her Filipino co-workers “were the nearest people that I could actually blend in with... Because most of the Filipinos here—if you see—they work in the fast food area.” After finishing high school, she worked in a fast food restaurant for two years before taking a six month course as a medical lab assistant. She spoke of her desire to motivate other Filipino youths to aspire for more than working in a fast food restaurant: “Cause I basically don’t want to see another Filipino dying in a restaurant kind-of-thing. We already have that mindset...no, no, no, not really a mindset—but you look at a Filipino right now, and it’s either they think of a caregiver, or a maintenance person, or a waitress in McDonalds.”

12 School districts were selected because of the high numbers of Filipino families in them. These include most but not all districts in the Vancouver Lower Mainland. Included districts are: Vancouver, Surrey, Richmond, New Westminster, Burnaby, and Coquitlam. The analyses do not include records from North Vancouver and Delta.

13 We must make clear that children who have been separated from parents through the LCP cannot be identified in the BC Ministry of Education data sets. The best “proxy” that we have to identify Filipino children of the LCP is language spoken at home. Although Tagalog is unlikely to be spoken in the homes of second-generation children, children identified as speaking Tagalog at home will include Filipino immigrants beyond those who have been separated through the LCP.

14 We recognize that adjusting to a new school system is an entirely different matter for a younger and older child, and that this factor confounds this quasi control group among immigrants. But since so many LCP children come at a later age, the finding that children immigrating after 11 have a more difficult time in school is troubling in and of itself.

15 This number is considerably lower than the 39 percent drop-out rate calculated from the BC Ministry of Education data set for boys speaking Tagalog at home. There are several possible reasons for this. First the analysis of the school data was restricted to school districts in which there is a sizeable Filipino population. When the census data is analysed only for census districts where there is a high concentration of Filipinos (a score of 2 on a measure of residential segregation, such that twice the number of Filipinos live in the census tract than one would expect if the population was evenly distributed), the percentage of 15–18 year old males who immigrated between the ages of 12 and 16 who were not attending school in 2001 increases to 27 percent—over one in four. We also know that 56 percent of Filipino families reported in the 2001 census that they speak English at home so that the school data is selecting a subset of Filipino students, likely more recent immigrants (Lindsay 2007). It is also the case that census data relies on parents’ reportage of their children’s activities and this may not coincide with the facts as reported by schools. In any case, we see the same phenomenon with the Vietnamese community in Vancouver. High school completion rates of those who identified as Vietnamese in the 2001 census were very low (28 percent of 19–22 year olds have not completed) but not as low as reported in the BC Ministry of Education data sets.

16 Interviews were done in May and June 2006 with either the principal or a guidance councilor in five Vancouver public schools, in four of the six high schools with the highest number of Filipino students (the principals in the other two schools would not agree to an interview), as well as two private Catholic schools with significant numbers of Filipino students.

17 The case of the younger son highlights the difficulties of older teens’ settlement. Arriving in December at aged 17, he was told at his local high school to go to an adult education centre. The adult education centre sent him to his local high school: “The school board said I was too old. At that time I was 17. So I went to South Hill adult school. They said I was too young... They told me I have to wait. So I [now] work to help my mom.”

^{xviii} As research collaborators, we are not of a mind on this issue. The position of the PWC is that the LCP is the

Canadian state's innovative way of bringing in cheap labour into Canada both on a short- and long-term basis. The PWC's position is that Canada will continue to need educated but low-wage temporary workers and immigrants in order to maintain global competitiveness in this age of neoliberal globalization, and that the LCP program is in line with the liberal philosophy that underpins the current global economy where individuals are expected to "lift themselves up by their bootstraps" while the state continues to determine patterns of inclusion and exclusion. That the women under the LCP are finding it more difficult to fulfill the requirements for landed status is a sign of their determination to survive in a transnational environment and not on the purported humanitarianism of the Canadian state.

APPENDIX 1: PROFILES OF THOSE INTERVIEWED: TRAINING, OCCUPATION, AND MARITAL STATUS

IN THE PHILIPPINES		IN VANCOUVER	
MOTHER	FATHER	MOTHER	FATHER
Nurse	Divorced in Philippines	Nurses' aid	N/A
Bachelor of Engineering	Bodyguard to judge	Housekeeper/Janitorial (2 jobs)	Welder (unemployed 3 years)
Secretary	Divorced in Philippines Contract work in Saudi Arabia	Housekeeper (3 jobs)	N/A
Unspecified university degree	Divorced in Philippines	Housekeeper (7 days a week)	N/A
Unspecified university degree (Parents substantial landowners in village)	Worked in family-owned pub	Home care	Dishwasher in restaurant
Midwife (university educated)	Agriculturalist	Home support (2 jobs)	Security guard (left wife after immigrating)
Don't know	High school teacher	Home support	Life insurance underwriter (died soon after reunion)
Bachelor of Commerce (employed as life insurance underwriter)	Divorced in Philippines	Eldercare	N/A
Secretarial course and incomplete Bachelor of Economics (short 9 credits)	Air force	Hospital housekeeping (2 jobs)	Abandoned sponsorship of husband when disclosed second family in Philippines
Nursing degree (no board exam)	Single	Home support	N/A
Physiotherapist (university degree)	Single	Eldercare	N/A
Bachelor of Science (Nursing)	Bachelor of Commerce/Sales	Nurse and cleaning (2 jobs)	Health care aid (2 part-time jobs)
Bachelor of Science (teacher; never used degree)	Military (murdered before wife's migration)	Home support	N/A
Bachelor of Science (Chemistry) (secondary school teacher)	Separated in Philippines	Nurses' aid, Casual employment (2 jobs)	N/A

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Midwife (with college degree; had good job)	1 year college Small business managing tricycles	A & W waitress	Janitorial (separated in Vancouver)
Bachelor of Business Administration (accountant)	Bachelor of Commerce/Purchasing	Salvation Army clerk (\$9/hr)	Factory/purchasing department (night shift; \$13/hr)
Bachelor of Science (Education) (school teacher; housewife before widowed)	Supervisor appliance co. (died before wife's immigration)	Cleaner at casino (2 jobs)	N/A
Registered nurse	Pre-med graduate student, Owned and managed fish farm	Building maintenance (own franchise; problem of limited work, work through night)	Building maintenance
Incomplete BA (1 year completed)	Separated while working in Hong Kong	Housekeeper	N/A
Bachelor of Science (Education)	Divorced	Part-time live-out domestic work	N/A
Registered nurse	Tricycle driver	Home support	Automotive repair (charged with assaulting wife, wife considering separation)
Bachelor of Science (Education)	Farmer (died before LCP)	Early childhood education	N/A
Bank Manager (divorced in Philippines; husband not sponsored)	Realtor (divorced in Philippines)	Don't know	N/A
Administration Assistant	Taxi owner and driver	Office (computer training)	Janitor (night shift)
Commerce/Bookkeeper	Civil Engineer	Home care	Construction worker
Registered nurse (owned bakery; husband not sponsored)	Separated (migrant worker in England)	3 jobs, cleaner	N/A
Registered nurse	Bachelor of Arts (Marketing), Office worker	Grocery clerk	Installs house alarms

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