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Gendered Constructions of Overseas Filipino Workers and the Politics of National Shame

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how men and women migrant workers are represented in the political discourse. It does so by looking at political and media texts of two life and death cases of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs)[2] or contract migrants. It argues that even as they are hailed as "heroes" in such anxiety-ridden moments, gendered discourses come into play, foregrounding a "politics of shame." The study further suggests that such discourses are grounded in gender ideologies surrounding migrant work in which there is disproportionate "national shame" about the nature of women's[3] work abroad but none toward migrant men's. Overall, it contends that gendered shame legitimizes and expands the state's "protective" stance, thereby shaping how it regulates women migrant workers.

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[2] This is a term used to refer to Filipino labor migrants whose work abroad is temporary in nature, based on specific job contracts.

[3] While cognizant of the discursive nature of gender identity, the author uses the term “men” to mean males, and “women” to mean females, in this paper. These terms are also used interchangeably throughout the essay.

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Introduction

The Philippines has one of the most active emigration flows in the world. Daily deployment of more than a million migrant workers addresses labor surplus and helps stabilize the lower-middle-income economy. Migrant remittances account for eight to 10 percent of economic output (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, 2019), making them an essential growth driver. In 2019 alone, Filipino emigrants sent a total of USD30.1 billion cash remittances to their families in the Philippines (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, 2020). Unsurprisingly, the bureaucracy catering to migrants' needs has expanded in the 45 years of state-sponsored overseas employment, making it a "model" in migration governance. From pre-departure to reintegration and repatriation, the state's omnipresence in "protecting" its "modern-day heroes" is palpable. As such, the country's development plans since 2004 contain provisions about labor outmigration.

Despite migration's supposed benefits, it is inherently crisis-prone. Since the first Gulf War, the government has been confronting life and death cases of migrants in host countries. Government officials and politicians attempt to "rescue" those who are on death row. Philippine embassies work double time when conflicts, disease, or disasters strike in their areas of responsibility. A repatriation plan mechanism is in place to guide diplomats on bringing Filipino migrants back to their families, depending on the severity of the emergency in the host countries. Expectedly, the media customarily reports on the number of Filipinos caught in such situations on migrant work abuse.

Since the 1980s, migrant Filipino women have flocked abroad in search of better jobs. Domestic work is currently the major job category occupied by Filipino migrant women in Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Anxieties and shame about migrant women's work abroad shape media and public reaction to these cases. For this reason, not much has been written about cases of migrant men who figured in similar situations abroad. Moreover, there is relatively little examination comparing the extent to which gendered discourses shape public emotions to life and death cases of migrant men and women.

Therefore, this paper examines how men and women migrant workers are differently represented in political discourse via a form of linguistically-informed textual analysis. It does so by looking at two life and death cases of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) or contract migrants: Flor Contemplacion, a domestic worker executed in Singapore for the crimes of murder in 1995, and Angelo dela Cruz, a truck driver kidnapped by Iraqi militants at the height of the war on terror in 2004. It argues that even as both were hailed as heroes in such anxiety-ridden moments, gendered discourses come into play, foregrounding a "politics of shame." Such a politics of shame is grounded in gender ideologies surrounding migrant work in which there is a disproportionate national shame about the nature of women's work abroad but almost none towards migrant men's. Studying labor outmigration from the Philippines, understanding collective emotions, particularly the gendered nature of shame, is important. Knowledge of this expands information about Filipinos' stance towards the "culture of migration" and how it reifies latent gendered discourses surrounding migrant work. It likewise can lead to a better understanding of why women's work abroad occupies significant attention from state regulation.

The paper is organized into three sections. The first part locates the study within the realm of the recent scholarship on shame and gender and how this has been used, albeit in limited ways, in explaining the complexities of labor outmigration. The second part presents the cases of Flor Contemplacion and Angelo dela Cruz, two overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), whose cases brought national and international attention and produced gendered discourses. However, the politics of shame, as shown in the succeeding sections, was directed only at Contemplacion’s migrant experience. Finally, the paper concludes such discourses legitimize and expand the state's protective stance and regulation of women migrant workers.

Labor export, gendered emigration, and national shame

This paper links gender and shame, particularly national shame. It also draws from feminist analysis linking gender and nation in its assumption that these two concepts are social constructs (McClintock, 1995; Verdery, 1994; Yuval-Davis, 1997). By treating gender as a

construction, they see it as a set of meanings associated with femininities and masculinities and not just biology (Verdery, 1994). Nation, on the other hand, refers to "a cultural relation intended to link a state with its subjects and to distinguish them from the subjects of other states" (Verdery, 1994, p. 227). Three areas in which the two are interlinked are conferring citizenship and political rights, national symbols, and nationalist and state-building projects, whereby notions of femininities and masculinities are utilized.

Meanwhile, in defining national shame in this paper, Ahmed's (2004) work, which conceives of national shame as a "narrative of reproduction," is useful (p. 108). Ahmed (2004) argues that there are two ways through which national shame can be reproduced. One is when a subject does not conform to the "national ideal," therefore failing to reproduce the normative notion of a "good citizen." The second is when a nation treats "others" badly, thereby bringing shame to its subjects. This paper draws from the first definition in adopting the argument that migrant women's work abroad brings shame to the nation while absent in perceptions about migrant men (Parrenas, 2008; Ricordeau, 2017; Rodriguez, 2005, 2008, 2010). It assumes that women's domestic work, entertainment, or mail-order brides abroad are far from traditional notions of Filipino womanhood. Such is especially the case when their absence threatens their domestic duties at home even as Ricordeau (2017) maintains that Filipino women's choice to work abroad is part of a family decision. While the sense of shame for these types of work may be contradictory with state programs that encourage Filipino women to migrate, this ideology of domesticity is precisely what secures them a niche in the overseas labor market (Parrenas, 2008).

Studies linking gender to shame has recently gained attention among scholars from multi-disciplinary perspectives (Fischer, 2018). The increased attention to the concept of emotions in the social sciences helped push this research agenda and the "turn to affect" in the humanities and the social sciences (Wetherell, 2015, p. 139). Manion (2003) points out that linking gender and shame is nothing new in that from Aristotle to Freud, the different ways men and women are associated with shame have been problematized. Because of the feminized character of shame as akin to weakness, it is often linked with women and not to

her male and supposedly masculine and strong counterpart. In her emphasis on how men and women differently experience shame, Sandra Bartky (1990) argues that "Women, more often than men, are made to feel shame in the major sites of social life. Moreover, it is in the act of being shamed and in the feeling ashamed that there is disclosed to women who they are and how they are faring within the domains they inhabit, though, as we shall see, this disclosure is ambiguous and oblique" (Bartky, 1990, p. 93). For this reason, Bartky notes, women tend to change or regulate their appearance to conform to patriarchal demands. Nonetheless, she asserts that it is not that men never experience shame; women have so internalized it due to their socialization and their subordinated position in society.

While shame has been studied by social scientists (Wetherell, 2015), early focus is on the individualized understanding of shame by psychoanalysts, who, according to Scheff (2000), missed out on its social dimension. For this reason, attention to emotions and linking it to collective and gendered identities (Ahmed, 2004; Ase, 2016) is a step in the right direction. Specifically, empirical studies on national shame and its gendered dimensions have risen of late. For instance, Ase's (2016) account of Sweden's Cold War crisis, when a Soviet submarine was thought to have intruded in its territorial waters, is insightful. The incident generated heightened media coverage in which explicitly gendered narratives, Ase explains, were made in othering the Soviet Union and representing Sweden and its military. The use of media representations enabled Ase to construct how the intruder ship came to symbolize feminized shame on Sweden's territorial integrity. To not compromise the "neutral soldier" (Ase, 2016, p. 117) ideal, following Sweden's neutral foreign policy, media narratives utilized gendered discourses to feminize the Soviet military. In sum, Ase's study underscores the gendered dimension of shame in the context of a military and territorial crisis during the Cold War. In China, Zhao (2013) explains that national shame was implicated in the East-West tensions amidst its bid to modernity. To counter the shame of feminized women with bounded feet associated with the West's dominance over China, the government mobilized women to be the source of national pride by regulating their bodies, clothing, and location in the public arena. Nonetheless, Zhao points out that this transformation had been a means through which

Chinese women could liberate themselves, despite still serving nationalist projects. Shame has also been used positively. As documented by Kelly (2019), it was used by women for resistance in her work on South African women who used gendered discourses to shame and mobilize men to support their anti-apartheid protests in 1959.

Fischer (2018) points to the difficulty of writing on shame due to the term's "slipperiness" "which makes identifying, defining, and analyzing" it an "inexact science" coupled "with the affective toll it may take on the researcher" (pp. 1-2). Despite this difficulty in studying shame, its links to Filipino outmigration must be studied. According to journalist Sheila Coronel's (2005) observation, "Migration... cannot be anything but an emotional issue in this country. No other concern can cause so much grief, as many officials have found when they were forced to deal with the public outcry over the government's indifference to abused OFWs." In particular, studying the connection between national shame and gendered discourses is imperative as labor outmigration entails managing the bodies of men and women for deployment abroad, in which constructions of femininities and masculinities are implicated. Nevertheless, only a few scholars have studied national shame and Filipino emigration with some notable exceptions.

Aguilar (1996) pioneered discussions on "transnational shame" in the context of Filipinos in Singapore. In his essay, he attributes this emotion to Filipinos' low job status abroad, which was felt not only by upper and middle-class Filipinos in the Philippines but also among OFWs occupying white-collar jobs (p. 101). According to Aguilar, shame resonates among OFWs in managerial- and information technology-related jobs in the city-state, owing to the large number of Filipino domestic helpers it employs. During his fieldwork, the issue of Flor Contemplacion heightened this tension.

While Aguilar focused on class and job categories, others specifically looked at women's work abroad and how this has shaped notions of shame relative to outmigration. For instance, in her study on the debates surrounding the Flor Contemplacion issue, Rodriguez (2005, 2008, 2010) contends that the low-level job status (i.e., entertainers, maids) creates national shame, particularly among the middle and upper classes. Her work, however, focuses

not only on class but also on shame's gendered nature. Accordingly, "the nation-state is shamed because it cannot control its women, whose fate is in the hands of foreign men" (Rodriguez, 2008, p.5). However, with this argument, it is not labor export per se of women that is attacked by this argument, but the type of work that women do that affects the "national subject-status" or image of the country. For her part, Oishi (2005) extends the concept of gendered shame in claiming that it shapes emigration policies. Drawing on feminist notions of nation, she claims that because women are symbols of nationhood and its dignity, abuses committed to them by foreigners are often seen as "humiliation for the state and the nation" and that emigration ban is usually the policy recourse in cases of massive public outcry (Oishi, 2005, p. 100).

However, it was Cruz (2012) who argues that Filipino men and women migrant workers are differently represented in public discourse. According to him, male outmigration has "less discursive visibility" compared to females due to historical traditions reinforced by political-economic conditions, shaping men and women's societal roles (p. 513). Nonetheless, Cruz did not use discourse analysis of textual materials as this study does. Thus, studying how the two are differently constructed in this paper not only extends Cruz's arguments but also implicates the language of media and political texts in shaping such constructions.

In furthering his claim, Cruz (2012) recommends attention to men and masculinities in understanding migration and gender norms in the midst of global economic processes. While Cruz's contention is consistent with those who refused to ghettoize women in migration studies (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999), there is still value in looking at migration's feminization for two reasons. First, research on the feminization of migration entails not merely looking at women's migrant experiences but their location in feminized job categories such as domestic work and caregiving. After all, Piper (2008) argues that it "can refer to a number of different issues, such as the absolute number of female migrants as out-going migrants or incoming migrants, the increasing participation rate of women (whereby the absolute number of male migrants might still be higher or the balance between the two sexes almost equal, such as in Cambodia and Vietnam), their dominance in certain sectors or specific migration streams, etc"

(p. 1292). Indeed, Filipino women are dominant in low-skilled jobs such as domestic work and caregiving. In the 1970s, when state-sponsored labor export began, men predominantly comprised labor outmigration. However, global economic restructuring resulting in the privatization of care work paved the way for more Filipino women's entry into labor outmigration. Immigration policies as part of new labor market demands and the aging population in some countries also profoundly influenced the feminized composition of migration patterns from the Philippines, starting in the 1980s, when massive demand for gendered labor started (Oishi, 2005). Second, focusing on women migrants can bring stark focus on inequalities intersecting with race, class, ethnicities, and other intersectionalities important in gender studies (Parrenas, 2008). In other words, these arguments suggest that the academic literature has been focusing on women migrants for valid reasons, but equal attention must also be paid to men's migrant experiences. By employing textual analysis of two case studies on a male and female migrant in one study, this paper joins this discussion. Nevertheless, in discussing the plight of both migrants and how they are differentiated in discourse, the analysis demonstrates another way in which studies on gender and migration can be pursued; that the literature need not always expand in a dichotomous manner. Doing so provides a comparative analysis on how societal and political discourses have distinct representations of men and women migrant's journeys, which could not be done by focusing only on one sex.

The relatively few studies characterizing how migrant men and women are differently implicated in discourse is surprising, given the gendered nature of outmigration trends from the Philippines, as earlier mentioned. Currently, domestic workers and nurses are the quintessential image of Filipino women migrant workers, while men are seafarers and construction workers. Moreover, the Philippine state's use of language to supposedly elevate the status of women's work abroad and hide the supposed "shame" it brings is ubiquitous in policy documents (Encinas-Franco, 2013). In 2006, when planeloads of domestic workers returned from conflict-ridden Lebanon, then-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo launched the *Super Maids Program* to upgrade their skills. Subsequently, government documents carried

the name "household service workers" to pertain to domestic workers. At one point, to downplay the low-skilled jobs of most Filipino contract migrants, Arroyo called them "expats" in a global meeting held in Manila (Official Gazette, 2008). In the 1990s, the term “Filipino entertainers” in Japan connotes prostitution, making the term "japayuki" derogatory as it came to be synonymous with this type of workers. Before long, the government designed a series of auditions to prove that would-be deployed Filipinos had talent and had been certified by the government. The government term had also changed to "overseas performing artists." These discursive practices can be likened to hiding, which, according to Fischer (2018), is a "classic mechanism of shame" (p. 5).

In sum, the literature indicates that shame, particularly national shame, is linked to gendered discourses, which includes class-based emotions. In the case of the Philippines, this link has been used in the analysis of labor outmigration as discussed above. Therefore, this paper draws from these works by exploring how discourses of national shame and the gendered nature of migrant work are linked. However, it tries to complement such literature in three ways. First, it presents how a male and a female migrant worker were differently constructed in two pivotal moments in Philippine emigration history. Doing so highlights that national shame is disproportionately associated with women's work rather than that of men. Second, it draws from a linguistically-oriented methodology analyzing media and political texts, which has not been used extensively in previous studies. Lastly, as earlier mentioned, it contributes to methodology in terms of veering away from the trend in the academic literature that focuses on women alone or in men alone (albeit with less attention), thereby expanding the analytical reach of gender and migration studies.

Methodology and Methods

This paper draws from the interpretive qualitative methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), drawing from Ruth Wodak's (2001) work, specifically, her use of the discursive strategy of predicate analysis of texts. CDA draws influence from critical scholars such as Foucault and Althusser, who highlight the political nature of language and the consequences of discourses

that emanate from them. Predicate analysis is conducted by selecting and extracting from the texts the words, phrases, or predicates that describe specific attributes of a social group, which in the case of this study, are migrant workers. The decision to use predicate analysis as a method is consistent with the present study's aim to look for the linguistic manifestations of gendered discourses. By looking for words and phrases or predicates that describe OFWs, which predicate analysis is aimed at, the researcher can acquire a sense of how media and political texts portray migrant workers in this study.

The study used a combination of media, parliamentary texts, and press statements. The Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI), the nation's most widely read newspaper at the time of the cases, was used for both cases. The media reports' timeframe is one month (March 1995 and July 2004) when the case was brought to media attention to cull the texts that figured in public discourse when the issues were most salient. Selected television reports for both cases complemented these. According to Ase (2016), media portrayals of critical occasions in a nation's history "can shed light on the framing and reframing of social identities and subjectivities" (p. 120). For this reason, the use of media texts is essential in this study.

Transcripts of parliamentary or Senate public hearing on the Flor Contemplacion case were also used to complement media texts. These are verbatim accounts of committee deliberations and discussions to respond to the issue. Meanwhile, since there were no public hearings on the dela Cruz case, press statements from the Office of the President were used as a substitute during the month (July 2004) the issue occupied wide public attention.

Texts were read carefully by the researcher with an eye for predicates that described Contemplacion, dela Cruz, and migrant workers in general. Subsequently, the predicates were gathered and initially coded in each of the cases based on the specific text genre (i.e., Senate public hearings and PDI). Following this, a more systematic coding was performed to formulate categories of discursive themes. For television news reports, the text of the broadcast report was considered in the predicate analysis. However, visual images in the reports also provided the researcher with additional information. In discourse analysis, it is not necessarily that one looks into texts that explicitly articulate the word "shame." The idea is to look for words or

predicates that associate migrant work with shame to the nation. CDA does not usually involve counting the frequency of words in the text, as in content analysis methods.

The study zeroes in on two cases that are argued to have had a huge impact in the 36-year history of state-sponsored labor export. These cases were chosen explicitly as these were important discursive events when labor export as a project was put into question and where emotions of anxiety and shame surfaced gendered norms and societal scripts that are deemed "normal" and "commonsensical." Moreover, the researcher considers these cases chosen as pivotal events or nodal points that show a "conjunctural settlement" defined as "A combination of events and ideas in which the interests represented by different discourses are subordinated by a specific configuration of a dominant discourse for a period of time" (Harris and Kirk, 2000, as cited in Harris, 2008, p. 663). The two cases depict watershed events in Philippine international labor emigration history. While there are cases that arguably made media headlines and generated public discourse, they did not generate prolonged media attention. They did not result in government response in the way that it did in these two cases. The Sarah Balabagan issue came up on the day Flor Contemplacion was buried. Balabagan was a domestic helper in the United Arab Emirates who was sentenced for killing her employer who raped her. Her case also sparked an international outcry and generated media attention. However, Balabagan's case gained prominence only after Republic Act 8042 or the Migrant Worker's Law, whose passage is attributed to the Contemplacion issue, has already been passed.

The study is subject to some inherent limitations encountered when studying the language in texts. In particular, the problem of validity and reliability of the analysis or the extent to which the study results can be supported is common among studies using discourse analysis. Because the study used CDA, which is known for privileging triangulation, this has greatly enhanced the results' validity. For instance, the use of various genres of texts or intertextuality has enabled the researcher to check against different materials if the outcome will yield similar results.

Finally, Jennifer Milliken (1999) points out that researchers usually find it a problem to stop conducting discourse analysis. In other words, when does one know when there are already enough texts analyzed to yield results? She notes that "[a]n analysis is said to be complete (validated) when upon adding new texts and comparing their object spaces, the researcher finds consistently that the theoretical categories she has generated work for those texts" (Milliken, 1999, p. 234). The researcher heeded this advice in undertaking the predicate analysis of texts.

Discussion and Analysis

The following section details the context and the various discourses surrounding the two cases found in the texts.

The Flor Contemplacion Case (1995)

During the term of President Fidel Ramos, Cory Aquino's successor, the Flor Contemplacion case changed the context of overseas employment in the Philippines. The country had just been touted as the next economic tiger that would finally take off or to use its local version, "pole vault" from the "sick man of Asia to an industrialized country." His vision was expressed in the *Philippines in 2000*.[4] But the country's bid was anchored on depressed wages to boost the export economy's competitiveness and attract investments. Like the Aquino administration, budgetary allocation for social services was also relatively low to accommodate foreign debt allocation that would undermine investor confidence if left unpaid. Unemployment also remained a perennial concern, and as such, state-sponsored labor export remained an important feature of the Ramos administration and its development strategy. In 1995, the time that the Flor Contemplacion issue gained media attention, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA, 1995) data indicate that domestic

[4] This was the term President Fidel Ramos used to enunciate his vision of the Philippines in the year 2000. He assumed office in 1992.

workers' monthly deployment reached more than 17,000 monthly, while the total number of domestic workers to total outflows constituted about a third of total deployment.

In 1995, Singapore convicted and hanged Flor Contemplacion, a Filipina domestic worker, for killing Delia Maga, a fellow Filipina maid, and her ward, Nicolas Huang. The case resulted in massive public protests and diplomatic rows. Then-President Fidel Ramos recalled the Philippine ambassador to Singapore and downgraded the status of the Philippine embassy. The labor and foreign affairs ministers resigned in the wake of the outcry spilling over to other Filipino migrants worldwide and further encouraged the political opposition to beat Ramos' senatorial slate in the mid-term elections. Multi-sectoral groups, including the influential Catholic Church, used the occasion to criticize the labor export program and the lack of adequate protection for migrant workers.

Nationwide protests from NGOs, the Catholic Church, rightists, and leftist groups were immediately launched, severely criticizing the labor export program, labor and embassy officials, and their perceived lack of protection for OFWs. While Ramos made last-ditch diplomatic efforts to stay the execution, Contemplacion was finally hanged on March 17th. Mass demonstrations were held around the country and abroad, some of which paraded coffins as a form of symbolic protest.

Angelo dela Cruz Case (2004)

In her first State of the Nation Address (SONA) as president in 2001, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo underscored job creation as a means for poverty alleviation as a policy priority of her administration. It was clear that this was to be carried out by continuing labor export. This was concretized in her administration's development plan, which stated that "[o]verseas employment remains to be a legitimate option for the country's work force" (National Economic Development Authority, 2001, p. 114). The increasingly aggressive state promotion of labor export during the Arroyo administration is also explained by the fact that in 2004, remittances were already hugely contributing to the country's gross national product (GNP) and had consistently dwarfed foreign direct investments. Arroyo was also facing a legitimacy

crisis in 2001 when she took power via extra-constitutional means that ousted President Joseph Estrada. Apart from this, she faced allegations of fraud in 2004 for having won a very slim margin over the popular actor Fernando Poe, Jr., thereby making the dela Cruz case an even larger political issue. On the foreign policy front, Arroyo declared that her administration would pursue "The Eight Realities of Foreign Policy" which included U.S. support in fighting domestic and international terrorism (De Castro, 2010). For this reason, the Philippines was one of the first to join U.S. President George W. Bush's Coalition of the Willing by sending nearly 200 contingent of medical workers, police, and soldiers to Iraq in mid-2003.

Meanwhile, Angelo dela Cruz, a 46-year-old truck driver, was one of the 522 newly-hired male drivers and one of the 1.4 million Filipinos in the Middle East in 2004 (POEA, 2004). In July of that year, dela Cruz was abducted by terrorists in Iraq, where the U.S. war on terror was waging. The hostage-takers demanded that the Philippine government withdraw its forces in Iraq. In the context of the prevailing international norm and state policy, the government is prohibited from negotiating with terrorists. This condition was further complicated by the Philippines' existing commitment to fight terrorism alongside the U.S. under The Coalition of the Willing. The Philippine state negotiated nonetheless, disregarding these two apparent constraints that theoretically could have prohibited negotiation. The Philippine state's act even violated its commitment to the Coalition by withdrawing its humanitarian contingent from Iraq to the quiet and tempered displeasure of U.S. President George W. Bush's administration and the other members of the coalition. Arroyo's decision prompted Washington to recall its ambassador to the Philippines for urgent talks with state department officials (De Castro, 2010). U.S. military and financial aid to the Philippines were also reviewed.

"Heroic" Returns

President Corazon Cojuangco Aquino first articulated migrant heroism or *bagong bayani* as a label for migrant Filipinos in the late 1980s before Filipino domestic workers in Hongkong (Encinas-Franco, 2013). Because by this time, remittances were already greatly contributing to the cash-strapped economy, OFWs were seen as heroes sacrificing for their families and

extending the nation. This heroic representation was further highlighted in the Contemplacion and dela Cruz cases though their arrival in the country evoked different emotions.

In the context of Contemplacion, the nation was perceived as weak because of its inability to protect its migrant worker, a woman at that. Unsurprisingly, her body's return to the country in March 1995 was met by massive protests, collective grief, and anger at Singapore and the diplomats who betrayed her. For example, then Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte led the burning of the Singaporean flag in front of the city hall, days after Contemplacion's execution. In hanging Contemplacion, he stated that the Singaporean government "effectively hanged the Filipino spirit"... "despite the pleas of the Filipino nation on bended knees" (Marfil, 1995b). In this account, Contemplacion's body became a symbol of the nation, humiliated by Singapore, which insisted that the Filipino people apologize for all the protests launched against the city-state. Meanwhile, television aired live footage from Singapore encouraging Filipinos to light a candle for the fallen OFW even as the print media dubbed the day of Contemplacion's execution as "Black Friday."[5] When Ramos arrived from his foreign trip the day after Contemplacion was hanged, he hailed her as a "heroine" (Marfil, 1995a). By then, the public was convinced that Contemplacion was neglected by her government and unfairly tried by a foreign country notorious for its authoritarian rule.[6] For example, in the parliamentary hearings, the head of a migrant recruitment association referred to Filipino migrants as "our new heroes of today but they are not getting this help" (Senate of the Philippines, 1995b). Likewise, another resource person called OFWs "our new heroes" to highlight the urgency of reviewing the overseas employment policy and program. Thus, the utter shame at the supposed inutile government officials for their inability to protect Contemplacion was palpable in these discourses. As a response to the public reaction on the

[5] In the Philippines, Black Friday, refers to Friday of the Holy Week, during the Lenten season. Among Catholics constituting 85 percent of Filipinos, this day is usually observed in prayer and solace, along with religious rituals marking the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

[6] Singapore's authoritarian reputation became widely known in the early 1990s when Michael Fay, an 18-year old American student, was sentenced to caning, a form of corporal punishment legally meted out in the city-state. The case attracted worldwide media attention as Americans protested against what was perceived to be Singapore's harsh system.

issue, Ramos subsequently asked the heads of the labor and foreign affairs ministries to resign, a move touted as unprecedented at the time.

Meanwhile, in a televised address to the nation, Arroyo delightedly announced dela Cruz's homecoming and defended her decision. On July 20, 2004, dela Cruz came home amidst a triumphant nation. He was treated "like a king" and a "celebrity," with the government proclaiming his return as a nationwide thanksgiving day (Aning & Orejas, 2004). Even more, Dela Cruz's hostage status was framed as heroic in differing contexts in state and media accounts. At an overseas employment meeting held on July 9, 2004, when news of dela Cruz was already gaining media attention, Arroyo informed the migration industry stakeholders about the looming hostage crisis. She made a pitch that "OFWs are truly our contemporary heroes*"* (Official Gazette, 2004a). The media likewise linked dela Cruz with an iconic Filipino hero, Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino, Jr.,[7] by choosing as newsworthy the yellow ribbons used by activists and ordinary people waiting for the freed hostage's return. One of the many front-page stories on dela Cruz in the PDI, chose the headline "Yellow ribbons sprout in Metro for Angelo" (Salaverria & Orejas, 2004). It quoted the League of Filipino Student (LFS) National Chair, "As the country waited for Aquino, we are also now awaiting Angelo dela Cruz's return*"* (Salaverria & Orejas, 2004). Overall, the media highlighted human interest stories depicting the nation's excitement and unity in the midst of dela Cruz's homecoming. The *"parang bayaning pagsalubong*" (heroic-like welcome) bestowed on dela Cruz was extensively covered (Bolok, 1995a; Bolok, 1995b). At the press conference held during his triumphant arrival in the Philippines, dela Cruz profusely thanked President Macapagal-Arroyo for saving him, even adding, "*di ko makakalimutan kailan man"* (I will never forget this) and affirming his *"utang na loob"* (debt of gratitude) to her (Bolok, 1995b). Thanking the president for saving him not only reifies the state as a "protector" of OFWs but also downplays the fact that had the government addressed unemployment and inequality, dela Cruz would never have risked his life by

[7] Benigno Aquino, Jr. was a staunch critic of Ferdinand Marcos, the Philippine dictator who was ousted in 1986 through what is dubbed as a "People Power Revolution." Aquino was assassinated upon his return to the Philippines in August 21, 1983 after being exiled in the US for three years. Many believe that his assassination ignited the move to remove Marcos in office and end his 20-year rule of the country.

working abroad in the first place.

Overall, these predicates about dela Cruz suggest national pride in welcoming a "hero" who made headlines worldwide. The idea that his plight compelled Arroyo to spoil the country's military alliance with the U.S. and assert its sovereignty all the more made his return festive and a cause for celebration. Indeed, the differing constructions of Contemplacion and dela Cruz's return support feminist scholarship linking gender and nation (McClintock, 1995; Yuval-Davis, 1997). As Ase (2016) puts it, "Men and masculinity are historically associated with the defense and protection of the nation, whereas women and femininity are boundary markers and embody national territory" (pp. 114-115).

Gendered Locations: Public and Private Sphere

The gendered nature of shame also shaped the gendered discourses in the two cases. Because women are traditionally ascribed to perform domestic roles, it is not problematic when women do so in the confines of their homes and country. However, it becomes threatening and an embarrassment when they work abroad and care for the children of foreign "others," as in the case of Contemplacion. Parrenas (2008) aptly refers to this as the "force of domesticity," or societal factors relegating migrant women as their children's main caretaker despite having independently gone to work abroad (p. 9). Following this, dela Cruz's work as a driver is "normal," and acceptable implying that childrearing is solely the mother's responsibility and not of the father's.

For instance, predicates of "domestic helper" were accompanied by predicates casting Contemplacion as a "mother" in parliament and media discourses—a "mother" whose absence is feared to result in separation and care deficit. A legislator decried Singapore's harrowing treatment of Contemplacion by stating that as a "mother facing execution is prevented from touching her children who were allowed to visit her" (Senate of the Philippines, 1995a). Under this logic, he opined that women should just "stay home instead of caring for the children of others abroad" (Senate of the Philippines, 1995b). Therefore, there was strong support in the hearings, for the eventual phase-out of domestic worker deployment abroad or a ban on

recruiting married women. According to this idea, what is shameful is that Filipino mothers are abroad working for other families instead of their own, resulting in family breakdown and juvenile delinquency.

In the Angelo dela Cruz case, both the press statements produced by the Office of the Press Secretary and the media repetitively referred to dela Cruz as a "driver." While indeed, this was the occupation of dela Cruz in Iraq at the time he was kidnapped, it is noteworthy that the findings of the predicate analysis did not indicate anxieties related to his job. There was also no indication that his job brought problems to his family. In other words, there were no accompanying linguistic manifestations that would show shame in dela Cruz's work in the Middle East, unlike in the case of Contemplacion. If anything, dela Cruz was depicted as a "Filipino everyman" (Orejas, 2004) in media and state discourses, disregarding the fact that dela Cruz hardly represented OFWs abroad in 2004 because in the overall period between 2001 to 2006, Asian Development Bank et al. (2008) reports that women constituted a big majority of total OFW deployment abroad. Drivers also constitute a tiny percentage of OFWs compared to domestic helpers.

The huge information gap resulting from the news blackout was compensated by several human-interest stories reinforcing dela Cruz's many roles in familial life as a "brother," a "dutiful father" (Orejas, 2004), and "husband" (Labog-Javellana, 2004). He was desperately needed and loved by his family. This portrayal is in stark contrast to Contemplacion's portrayal discussed above. Dela Cruz was a breadwinner, who had to work abroad to send his children to school (Orejas, 2004), with none of the anxieties and shame associated with Contemplacion's role as a "mother" and the fear of a family separation.

Contemplacion was consistently represented as a "mother" coupled with pictures of her children even as the rumored separation between Contemplacion and her husband also occupied media attention. This may seem trivial compared to the nationwide outrage and the execution of Contemplacion, but van Dijk (1991) argues that in news discourse, "[m]any ideological implications follow not only because too little is being said, but also because too many, irrelevant things are being said about news actors" (p. 114). These predicates and images

are productive of how the feminization of migration is considered a social cost of migration due to the absence of mothers but not so much of fathers.

Indeed, the predicate analysis in the two cases resonate with the Filipino perceptions on migrant women in a nationwide survey (Abrera-Mangahas, 1994), a year before the Contemplacion case. Among others, the survey found that most Filipinos disapprove of women working abroad because it causes family problems. This could explain why dela Cruz's work abroad was depicted as normal and not shameful because a man working abroad is deemed commonsensical and natural compared to women's overseas employment. Moreover, the lack of shame associated with the work of dela Cruz as a driver was shown when in the wake of his kidnapping, there were no calls to ban drivers from deployment abroad. The calls were for a temporary ban on deployment to Iraq of all workers until the situation has stabilized.

Another issue shaping the discourse of shame about Contemplacion's work is rooted in anxieties among class-conscious Filipinos. Live-in domestic workers are regular members of Filipino households belonging to middle and upper economic classes. However, local domestic workers occupy the lowest stratum of Filipino society, usually informally recruited and suffer poor working conditions (International Labor Organization, 2004). They are predominantly women, generally lacking in higher education, and are internal migrants themselves. Their ubiquity in Filipino homes is such that popular culture depicts them either in comic or tragic situations (Coronel, 2005). Such a situation suggests why there is supposed to be a sense of humiliation in anecdotes of wealthy and professional Filipino women mistaken as maids abroad. At a national level, diplomatic protests and outcry from Filipinos ensued when the word "Filipina" has come to be synonymous with domestic worker. For example, news about the Oxford English dictionary using "nanny" as one of the definitions of the word "Filipina" was met with complaints because it cast "a slur on national dignity" (Coronel, 2005). This was the same reaction when a Greek dictionary included the word "Filipineza" as "domestic worker from the Philippines or a person who performs non-essential auxiliary tasks" (Sipin, 2017). Unsurprisingly, none of these strong collective emotions figure in

the work of Filipino drivers abroad. Many reasons can be offered. Unlike domestic workers[8] (nannies, caregivers, cooks), migrant Filipino drivers do not necessarily work in households, as the case of Angelo dela Cruz. Some work as truck or company drivers. However, even if they are family drivers, they are also issued a license, making their jobs not a natural consequence of their socially ascribed roles, unlike domestic workers. Before the skills training initiated by the Philippine government, domestic workers bound for abroad hardly had training. In other words, domestic work entails working long hours in the private sphere with their jobs treated as "natural" for women. These reasons imply why there is a sense of shame for domestic work and not for drivers. In making domestic work as the symbolism of the "Filipina," the nation is humiliated due to the feminized, cultural, and class-based meanings attached to this type of job. England (2005) explains that care or domestic work is undervalued as it is typically done by women and women of a different race and ethnicity and is lowly paid. Also, Harcourt (2011) insists that "In the hierarchies of patriarchal knowledge it takes on the stigma of the 'lesser sex' and lower value" (p. 255).

Gendered Bodies and the State

Finally, discourses surrounding the cases of dela Cruz and Contemplacion constructed them as innocent victims needing to be rescued by the state. They were both depicted in bodily terms, describing how they were tortured. Dela Cruz was a "hostage" who his "captors threatened to behead" (Labog-Javellana et al., 2004) and appeared on global television news with his face hidden by a mask. The nation waited with bated breath for news about his plight. Similarly, Contemplacion's coffin magnified the belief of many that she was a "victim of injustice," "who was tortured into making the admission" (Labog, 1995).

But the consequences of their representations as bodies were different. Dela Cruz's plight reified the masculinized state as an able protector of its citizens, explaining the joyful and celebratory nature of his return. Conversely in Contemplacion's case, the state was

[8] Under the International Labor Organization Convention 189, family drivers are included in the definition of domestic workers.

feminized and shamed for its inability to save and protect its women, thereby causing massive outpouring of protests. That it was a foreign "other" who executed her made matters worse, warranting the diplomatic protest and the burning of the Singaporean flag. In the words of Zhao (2013), "In many ways, women's bodies were centralized as the symbols of national pride and the vehicles of national shame" (p. 192). Notably, while domestic workers in Filipino households are regular fixtures, news about abuses by their employers do not generate such collective uproar. The death penalty was also enforced in the Philippines at that time, indicating how local and migrant domestic workers are differently perceived.

But more importantly, the context in which their victimization occurred likewise reinforced gendered discourses of migrant work. In the case of dela Cruz, the sense of adventure and risk was emphasized because the kidnapping occurred at the height of the war on terror in Iraq. In the case of Contemplacion, the discursive logic was that she should never have been in Singapore in the first place because of her maternal and familial roles. The stark contrast is even made more significant because Contemplacion's work as a domestic worker in the private sphere is equally fraught with precarity since such is not regulated by labor laws. While dela Cruz's "dangerous" job occurred in the context of terrorism, Contemplacion and most domestic workers face daily challenges due to their location in the unregulated private sphere of domestic work. Abuses by employers and recruiters are reported by the media on an almost daily basis. Even as both of their victimization resulted in diplomatic fall-out, the outcome for Dela Cruz took a different turn. Dela Cruz's job as a driver was represented in the press statement as part of the Philippines' historical relations with the Iraqi people, in these words, "[o]verseas Filipino workers have established decades of friendship and cooperation with the Iraqi people, particularly in reconstruction projects and delivery of basic services and that 'Mr. Angelo de la Cruz is part of that tradition'" (Official Gazette, 2004b). Notably, the employment ban that followed dela Cruz's incident was a blanket prohibition to deploy OFWs to Iraq, and was not job-specific. For Contemplacion, the response was increased state regulation and surveillance of migrant domestic workers, including periodic ban during high profile cases of abuse. According to Nana Oishi (2005); because women are symbols of

nationhood, abuses committed to them by foreigners are often seen as — "humiliation for the state and the nation" that — " [w]hen such a public reaction occurs, the state often acts promptly to restrict or ban female migration..." to highlight its masculine role as "protector" (pp. 100-101). Simply put, the responses from their victimized bodies were also gendered, highlighting feminist scholarship of women's bodies as sites of contestation and discipline. The regulation of women migrant workers is therefore justified to "protect" them from harm. Women and their bodies often serve as "boundary markers" (Ase, 2016, p. 115) to preserve traditional norms and appease the moral panic and shame over their status abroad. More significantly, it elevates the masculine state as a "protector" of its women rather than an active facilitator of labor export.

Conclusion

The paper has endeavored to look at the gendered discourses and how the politics of shame on women's migration surrounded two life-and-death cases of migrant Filipinos. In contributing to the scholarship on gender and shame within the area of international migration, it argues that anxieties over the type of work that women perform abroad are discursively embedded in media and political texts. These are not found in perceptions about migrant men's work. The cases of Flor Contemplacion and Angelo dela Cruz are emblematic in two aspects: first, they represent pivotal moments in Philippine labor outmigration in which the contradictions of labor export widely surfaced. That the need for remittances and enhanced family welfare may at times be at the detriment of OFW protection. Second, they are symbols of Filipino OFWs' low-level jobs abroad and in which public discourses showcased normative assumptions about migrant men and women's jobs and status abroad ensued. Though both were hailed as heroes upon their return to the Philippines, Contemplacion's dead body was met by angry protests against Singapore and the Philippine government. Dela Cruz's was celebratory because he was saved from capture and death. Furthermore, media and political texts contained different emotional reactions about their jobs and plight abroad. Dela Cruz's work as a driver was deemed normal and did not threaten his role as a father, whereas

Contemplacion's domestic work evoked shame and endangered family stability. For this reason, policies banning and discouraging women's employment in certain job categories find political and public support. Finally, both were victimized abroad but resulted in different policy consequences. In the wake of the Contemplacion tragedy, the Philippine Congress approved a landmark law expanding state regulation on migrant workers but specifically tightened its surveillance of domestic worker deployment abroad. Currently, migrant domestic work is one of the most heavily regulated job categories in the Philippines. A set of training and pre-departure employment sessions are routine processes they must undergo before they are sent abroad, not to mention periodic deployment bans in controversial cases of abuse, as mentioned above.

Overall, the gendered shame discourse examined in this paper not only legitimates control over migrant women's bodies. It also upholds the state's "protective" role, thereby downplaying its huge role in facilitating labor export as an economic strategy.

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