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International Migration and the Restructuring of Gender Asymmetries: Continuity and Change Among Filipino Labor Migrants in Rome¹

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This article examines the different factors which may explain gender-selectivity among Filipino labor migrants in Rome, where women are around 70 percent of this nationality group. Following the analysis of labor demand in the domestic service sector, it explores 'supply' aspects, ranging from economic conditions within the Philippine labor market to noneconomic constraints, such as ideologies and expectations of gender. The research findings show that migrant women's commitments and obligations toward their households in home areas are generally stronger than those of their male counterparts. However, spatial distance and increased financial independence may provide some women with the opportunity to pursue 'self-interested' goals while at the same time keeping within the 'altruistic' role dictated by normative gender roles. Important elements affecting women's increased autonomy are life course paths, households' developmental cycle, class and migration form.

Since the mid-1970s and early 1980s, previously labor-exporting Southern European countries (Italy, Spain, and Greece) have become destinations for labor migrants, a transition which coincided with the introduction of restrictive policies in the more traditional Western European destinations (such as Germany and France) in the 1970s. While relative ease of entry is often identified as an important factor encouraging movement to the circum-Mediterranean region (*see* Castles and Miller, 1993; King and Knights, 1994) the 'new countries of immigration' of Southern Europe also reflect more visibly the global tendencies in contemporary international labor movement. In Italy, acceleration, or the steady increase in the number of people moving, translated into estimates of the number of immigrant workers, both registered

¹This article draws from a Ph.D. research project completed in 1996 at the Department of Geography of the London School of Economics and Political Science. I would like to thank Sylvia Chant of the London School of Economics, Allan Findlay of the University of Dundee, Cathy McIlwaine, Queen Mary and Westfield College, and three anonymous reviewers for their useful comments on earlier versions.

and unregistered, rising from around 350,000 in 1977 to between 700,000 and 800,000 in 1982 (ISMU, 1995; SOPEMI, 1980, 1982). In 1993, data from the Italian Ministry of Interior showed that by then the almost one million registered migrants originated from 179 different countries, and 71 percent came from Third World nations, against an average of 61.4 percent for the European Union (Caritas, 1993), reflecting the trend towards globalization, or an increase in the scope of the movement. Finally, the 'feminization' of migration is also more visible, with women accounting for almost half the total number of registered migrants (Caritas, 1993; *see also* Castles and Miller, 1993). However, the latter does not result in more evenly balanced streams. In fact, it is often the opposite, with some nationality groups consisting almost entirely of women and others of men. Migrants from Northern and sub-Saharan countries (such as Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Senegal) and from Bangladesh and Pakistan are almost exclusively male and find employment in activities ranging from agriculture to construction, mainstream services (hotels and restaurants) and street peddling. By contrast, nationality groups such as those from Cape Verde, Peru, and the Philippines are female-dominated and tend to be concentrated in domestic service (*see* Carchedi and Ranuzzi, 1987; Maciotti and Pugliese, 1991).

The purpose of this article is to examine the different factors which may explain gender-selectivity among Filipino workers in Rome, where over half the total number of registered migrants reside (Caritas, 1994). The first section provides an overview of the ways in which migration theories incorporate gender. This is followed by the analysis of Filipino migrants' overwhelming concentration in the domestic service sector in Rome (in which over 95% of the research respondents are employed). The factors examined include the role of migrant networks in providing access to specific employment opportunities, employers' perceptions of gender and ethnicity, and the impact of Italian immigration policies on the labor market. The third section looks at the reasons for moving, while the fourth examines decisionmaking processes and migrants' linkages with households in home areas, with particular attention to differences in their commitments and obligations based on gender and life course paths. The fifth section attempts to provide some explanations for these variations by examining noneconomic constraints, such as normative gender roles, and considers women's strategies to increase their control over their own lives. The discussion is based on data collected between July 1994 and April 1995, during which information was gathered through 154 questionnaire survey interviews with a 'snowball' sample of Filipino migrants (123 women and 31 men), and

through in-depth interviews with a subsample of 38 respondents. The combination of quantitative data (such as amount and frequency of remittances and estimated household income) and qualitative data (such as decisionmaking processes, gender variations in the strength of moral obligations towards kin, and perceptions of 'propriety' and 'respectability') provided a more comprehensive basis for the understanding of respondents' situations, including their subjective insights into their own circumstances.² In order to round out the picture, semistructured in-depth interviews were also conducted with a small sample of Italian employers as well as with key informants ranging from Filipino Catholic clergy, embassy personnel, migrant association leaders, and Italian trade union officials and researchers (*see* Tacoli, 1996).

The main underlying argument of the article is that, given the strength of the linkages between migrants in Rome and their households in home areas, the latter are best conceptualized as 'multi-local' units where membership relies on notions of commitments and obligations (*see* Caces *et al.*, 1985). In the context of migration, these affect both the decisionmaking process and the sending of remittances. Moreover, since commitments and obligations encompass gender norms and cultural values, women's independent migration does not contradict their important role in household reproduction. On the contrary, it often represents an extension of their maternal or filial duties. Having said that, while migrant women generally have less control over their own lives than do their male counterparts, spatial distance and financial independence may be strategically used by some of them to resist gender constraints and patriarchal authority. However, this renegotiation of normative roles appears to take place within the boundaries of gender ideologies and social acceptability, and open conflict is actively avoided. Women's migration can thus be described as both a cause and a consequence of the restructuring of gender asymmetries (*see* Tienda and Booth, 1991).

GENDER AND MIGRATION THEORIES

Although sex has long been recognized as an important variable in migrant selectivity, female migration only recently has been included within the rubric

²Only descriptive statistics (frequencies and crosstabulations) were used in the analysis of quantitative data. Inferential statistics were not used for two main reasons: 1) the sample is purposive and not representative, given the lack of a sampling frame including both registered and unregistered migrants, and 2) inferential statistics' assumptions of normalcy, representativeness, generalization and replicability do not easily capture social and power relations, which are the focus of the study.

of general migration theories, and often only as one of the various forms rather than as an analytical category in its own right. As a consequence, migrants are often assumed to be gender-neutral, and the reasons behind their movement are generally presented as gender-blind (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992; Morokvasic, 1983). For example, in the equilibrium model, population movement is conceptualized as the rational and voluntaristic decision of individuals responding to geographical imbalances in the distribution of land, labor, and capital. 'Push' factors—economic and social hardships in poorer countries—and 'pull' factors—comparative advantages, such as higher wages in more advanced areas or states—determine both size and direction of immigrant flows. In addition, the availability of marriage partners is sometimes included as a gender-differentiating factor exerting influence on female migrants (Thadani and Todaro, 1979). Critiques of this model have pointed to its failure to account for noneconomic forms of coercion in the recruitment and movement of labor, and in particular the underlying structural forces affecting decisionmaking such as class background, household patterns, political power structures at the national and international levels, and the social and cultural factors affecting men's and women's relative access to labor markets in places of origin and destination (*see*, for example, Morokvasic, 1983).

In the structuralist perspective, alternatively, population movement is viewed as the result of the uneven nature of world economic development and the sociospatial restructuring of production. While the incorporation of women into wage labor is a global process, it takes specific forms in different locations. In the periphery, women are increasingly absorbed in low-paid, low-skilled occupations such as export-led manufacturing, whereas in the core economies the expansion of jobs in the lower echelons of the service sector draw primarily on female labor (Sassen-Koob, 1984). These changes in the demand side underlie gender-selective migration. Population movement is thus explained primarily as a macrosocial historical and dialectical process. However, the emphasis on production means that the organization of reproduction is a marginal issue in this perspective. In addition, migrants, and especially migrant women, are essentially portrayed as victims (which may well be accurate in some situations), deflecting attention from the multiplicity of their experiences and from the strategies they may adopt to overcome their subordinate status (*see* Morokvasic, 1991). While both the structuralist perspective and the equilibrium model are useful in highlighting some of the reasons behind female movement, neither appears to provide a satisfactory

framework accounting for the reasons why some women migrate while others do not. In the case of Italy, they do not explain imbalances in the sex composition of the different nationality groups. In other words, why are migrants from the Philippines and Cape Verde predominantly female, whereas very few women migrate from other, geographically closer countries, such as Morocco and Egypt?

While the equilibrium model and the structuralist perspective reflect the longstanding conceptual dilemma in the social sciences of structure versus agency, more recent approaches to migration have attempted to integrate the two and to provide a unified conceptual framework for the study of population movement. Among these, the household strategies perspective is a useful starting point as it uncovers the supply side of migration, and views movement not as the exclusive result of individual decisions nor as the sole product of economic and political processes, but rather as the combination and interaction of all these factors. Migration is thus a socially-embedded process, where the domestic unit acts as an important mediator between individuals and the labor market. Early formulations of the approach rely on a definition of the household as a contained unit that “ensures its maintenance and reproduction by generating and disposing of a collective income fund” and whose behavior is seen as the dynamic adoption of “survival strategies” by which the unit “actively strives to achieve a fit between its consumption necessities, the labor power at its disposal and alternatives for generating monetary and non-monetary income” (Wood, 1982: 312–3). Migration of the whole unit or of some of its members is one such strategy.

However, several studies have shown that households are differentiated units in which individuals may have diverse and sometimes competing interests and degrees of power and where gender and generation are often critical factors in the frequently considerable disparities of inputs, benefits and activities among the unit's members (*see*, for example, Dwyer and Bruce, 1988; Brydon and Chant, 1993; Folbre, 1988; Harris, 1984; Stichter, 1990; Wolf, 1990). This has led to the conceptualization of households as an arena of ‘cooperative conflicts’ (Sen, 1990), where members face two different types of problems simultaneously—one involving cooperation, or adding to the unit's total availabilities, and the other conflict, or the ways in which these availabilities are divided among the household's members (Sen, 1990). The final outcome of these cooperative conflicts is determined by each member's bargaining power which, in turn, relates to their economic autonomy as well as to their normative roles (such as the ‘altruistic mother’ and the ‘dutiful daugh-

ter'). Indeed, as Bruce (1989:986) observes, "although the specifics of women's consumption responsibilities vary, it is quite commonly found that gender ideologies support the notion that men have a right to personal spending money, which they are perceived to need or deserve, and that women's income is for collective purposes." These differences are likely to play an important role in migration decisions. For example, Trager (1988) notes that in the Philippines parents may encourage the internal migration of daughters, who are more likely to send larger remittances and spend less on themselves than their male counterparts.

More recent conceptualizations of the household strategies approach to female migration have taken these critiques on board and have expanded the set of precepts whose analysis is necessary for the understanding of gender-selective movement. Important factors include gender divisions of both productive and reproductive labor within households, power relations and decisionmaking, and sociocultural expectations of gender and labor market segmentation along gender lines in both source and destination areas (*see* Chant and McIlwaine, 1995; Chant and Radcliffe, 1992; Radcliffe, 1991; Tacoli, 1995). Thus, the high proportion of young, single migrant women in many parts of the world is linked to their limited role in household production and to their exclusion from local productive activities, to employment opportunities in specific sectors of labor markets in destination areas, and to parental power influencing the decisionmaking process (Radcliffe, 1991; Townsend, 1993; Trager, 1988; Young, 1982).

Having said that, an exclusive focus on the household risks underestimating the impact of kin and nonkin networks on the migration of men and women. Extended kin are often at the core of a broad exchange system which represents an investment in collective future welfare (Peterson, 1993). For example, it provides the opportunity to disperse the cost of child rearing from young parents to older adult relatives. Indeed, the possibility of fostering out children to kin is often seen as an important condition for the independent migration of mothers (Andall, 1992; Brydon, 1987; Nelson, 1987). In the Philippines, relations of reciprocal obligation are based on the *utang na loob* (literally 'debt of gratitude') and form the root of alliances which are not limited to the nuclear family or kin, but are deemed to pervade the whole of Filipino society (Aguilar, 1991; Goodno, 1991; Trager, 1988). In the context of migration, these relations of reciprocity are likely to play an important role, since they often form the basis of networks linking source and destination areas. By providing new migrants with valuable information, job contacts and

other resources, networks reduce migration's financial and social costs and influence both migration decisions and the selection of destinations (Gurak and Caces, 1992). Moreover, it has been argued that the presence of female migrants in destination areas may facilitate the movement of other women by providing social acceptability and chaperoning (Boyd, 1989; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992). In this sense, networks reflect gender ideologies in source areas and are thus an important additional factor in the analysis of gender-selective movement.

Moreover, while the household strategies approach has proved useful in the analysis of rural-urban internal movement, international labor migration requires the incorporation of additional, specific aspects. The first concerns the impact of state policies in both sending and destination countries. In countries of origin, employment overseas is sometimes actively encouraged as a 'temporary' measure aimed at easing internal problems of unemployment and underemployment while at the same time providing a source of much-needed foreign exchange (*see* Abella, 1992). In the Philippines, international labor migrants have been dubbed by successive governments as the country's 'new heroes,' thus reinforcing the acceptability, if not desirability, of overseas employment for both men and women. In receiving countries, on the other hand, immigration policies can have a significant impact on labor markets and encourage gender-selective migration, for example by lifting entry restrictions for domestic service workers but not for other categories. At the same time, bilateral agreements between sending and destination countries can play a major role in determining and often limiting the sectors of employment available to specific nationality groups. Finally, access to specific labor market segments in receiving countries can be strongly affected by employers' perceptions of both ethnicity and gender. These issues are examined in the next section with reference to Filipino migrants in Rome.

FILIPINO MIGRANTS AND THE ITALIAN LABOR MARKET

Emigration is not a new phenomenon in the Philippines, although its current scope is unprecedented. The main destinations for permanent migrants are the United States, Canada, and Australia, whereas temporary labor migrants find employment in the Middle East, Asia, and Western Europe. Official data show that by 1990, 1.4 million people (or 2.3% of the national population) had migrated permanently, while some 1.2 million (5% of the labor force) were working overseas (Tan, 1993). However, these data do not account for the growing numbers of undocumented migrants. More recent estimates put the

total number of temporary overseas Filipino workers, including unregistered ones, in the range of 4.5 million (Kaibigan, 1993). The proportion of female overseas workers increased sharply in the mid-1980s, and by 1987 women accounted for almost 50 percent of departures (WRRC, 1989). The main occupational categories for migrant women are nursing, domestic service and 'entertainment' (often an euphemism for prostitution—*see de Dios, 1990*).

Filipino migration to Italy began in the 1970s and was initially almost entirely made up of women who worked as domestic helpers. Until the introduction of more restrictive immigration policies in 1986, most migrants entered the country as tourists, seeking employment afterwards. Only a few had work contracts. Among them were Filipinas who followed their Italian employers who had hired them as domestic helpers while posted in the Philippines as diplomats, airline managers or engineers working in the construction of Manila International Airport. In the early 1980s, placement agencies started recruiting in the Philippines, although in several cases the promised jobs never materialized, leaving the migrants stranded after their arrival in Italy. For this group, the relatively large number of Filipino Catholic clergy in Rome played an important role in providing support and often acting as a placement agency for domestic helpers (Kreidler, 1992; Maciotti and Pugliese, 1991).

The combination of demand for domestic helpers and the 'safety net' provided by the Church has made Italy's capital city a major destination for Filipino migrants, where almost half of them are concentrated and where they constitute the largest immigrant nationality group (Caritas, 1993). Over time, this has resulted in the development of widespread networks between the Philippines and Rome, and the overwhelming majority of respondents (86%) had friends or relatives already settled in the city upon their arrival. Support to newly arrived migrants from kin and nonkin networks ranges from lending money for transport costs, finding accommodation upon arrival, and providing employment opportunities. Such is the significance of this help that, despite restrictive immigration policies introduced in 1990 by the Italian government and the high cost of transport through smuggling agencies (which in 1993–94 was on average U.S.\$ 6,700, in some cases reaching \$ 10,000), the number of Filipinos in Italy has continued to grow at a relatively fast rate, and in Rome only it is estimated that in 1995 they were over 50,000, half of them unregistered.

While movement to Italy was initiated by women, over time the number of men has increased. Most arrived in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when

the Gulf War and economic recession in the Middle East restricted employment opportunities in that region which, until then, had been a traditional destination for Filipino male workers (*see* CIIR, 1987). In 1993, data collected by the Italian Ministry of Interior showed that 70 percent of registered Filipinos in the country were women and that over 90 percent of the total were employed in the domestic service sector (Caritas, 1993, 1994). These figures indicate that the increasing proportion of Filipino migrant men in Italy also work predominantly in this occupational niche, notwithstanding the fact that waged household work is usually perceived as a 'feminized' sector of employment.

While this has not always been the case, and in different periods and countries men have predominated in this sector (*see* Moore, 1988), both in Italy and in the Philippines contemporary waged household work is usually seen as an extension of domestic labor and consequently as women's work. The presence of Filipino men in this specific occupational niche owes to a combination of factors. Filipino migration to Italy was initiated by women, for whom (as for most other migrant women) domestic service was the main, if not only, sector of employment. Network resources thus have concentrated in this labor market segment. In addition, recruitment practices in Rome's domestic service sector appear to be based on informal contacts, rather than on more structured channels such as advertisements and employment agencies. Most workers, both men and women, find new (or additional) employment through friends and relatives, as well as through present and/or previous employers. This represents an important resource for migrant networks, since it enables migrants already settled in Rome to find employment for new arrivals in a relatively short time, in most cases regardless of their legal status. On the other hand, however, it is also a limitation, in that finding employment in different sectors may prove to be extremely difficult due to the lack of network contacts outside this specific occupational niche.

This is compounded by state policies regulating migrants' access to the Italian labor market.³ While immigration acts provide the general framework for the employment of non-European citizens, this is also determined by bilateral agreements between Italy and sending countries. Among them, a crucial one is that regulating reciprocity and the liberal professions which allows migrant workers to be self-employed or to have their own businesses in Italy, on the basis of Italians being permitted to do the same in the

³The discussion refers exclusively to the Italian immigration legislation at the time of the fieldwork (1994–95).

migrants' countries of origin. Ratification of this agreement is still pending between the Philippines and Italy. As a consequence, Filipino migrants, unlike their Chinese, Iranian and other nationalities' counterparts, cannot set up businesses such as restaurants or shops unless they have an Italian partner who is legally responsible for the activity. This clearly forecloses an important occupational avenue for both men and women and highlights the limitations of Filipino migrants' access to the Italian labor market, regardless of gender.

Employers' perceptions on gender and ethnicity also appear to play a major role in structuring demand for domestic help. Studies have noted that there is a strong correlation between religious affiliation and employment in domestic service, with a prevalence of migrants from predominantly Catholic areas, such as the Philippines, Cape Verde, and Latin America, as well as Catholic minorities from India and Sri Lanka (Hornziel, 1990; Maciotti and Pugliese, 1991). Ethnic stereotypes thus appear to play a crucial role in employers' preferences. However, gender is not a secondary factor in structuring domestic service. With respect to working arrangements, for example, women are more likely to be employed on a full-time, live-in basis, whereas the majority of men work part-time, sometimes for several different employers, and have independent accommodation. These differences, in turn, are closely related to the workers' duties, and live-in helpers are usually required to clean the house as well as care for children and elderly members of the household, whereas the overwhelming majority of part-time workers are employed exclusively as cleaners. In other words, women are more likely to be responsible for an all-round type of work which substantially covers all aspects of domestic labor, reflecting the ideology that the latter is women's work.

Educational qualifications among migrant respondents are higher than the national average, and over half hold a university degree. Most are therefore overqualified for domestic service, which also often entails a drop in professional status as the majority held white-collar jobs in the Philippines and in several cases were themselves employers of domestic helpers. While this appears to be somehow compensated by the significantly higher salaries, which are on average around U.S. \$750, difficulties in adapting to their new positions were mentioned by a number of respondents. This is also reflected in the high level of mobility, although this is best described as horizontal since it is usually limited to a change of employers rather than of type of employment. Vertical mobility, or moving from domestic service to different sectors of employment such as clerical work in Philippine remittance agencies, was

achieved only by seven respondents, five of whom were men. Within the domestic service sector, workers often attempt to move from live-in to part-time employment, which is less dependent on employers' daily routines and leaves more freedom to have a personal life; however, demand for live-in domestic workers is greater, and part-time work tends to be less secure as it usually requires several employers to provide a sufficient income.

THE REASONS FOR MOVING

Given the limited explanatory power of labor demand and labor market segmentation in Italy with respect to gender-selectivity of Filipino migration to that country, this section looks at the supply factors that are likely to affect migration decisionmaking. More specifically, it examines the reasons for moving and the ways in which these may relate to migrants' participation in the Philippine labor market as well as to their class position in home areas.

The majority of respondents interviewed in Rome, both men and women, were employed before leaving the Philippines, and of the 20 percent who were not engaged in waged work, 12 percent were students. Almost half the total sample worked in the service sector, including teaching and nursing, and a smaller group ran their own businesses. However, all felt that their earnings were insufficient to support themselves and their families, reflecting the impact of the ongoing Philippine economic crisis on most groups in society. Structural adjustment policies have particularly affected public service employment, and teachers and nurses have seen their salaries decline in real terms over the last decade (*see* Pineda-Ofreneo, 1991). Self-employed respondents, whose activities range from *sari-sari* stores (corner shops) to trucking companies, were also hit hard, and five out of thirteen migrated following the failure of their activities.

Having said that, while in most cases higher wages appear to be the primary reason for moving, there are important differences between migrants. In particular, there are variations between those whose remittances are the main, if not the only, income for their households in home areas and those from more affluent backgrounds whose financial contribution is primarily intended to support the unit's social mobility. In addition, economic motivations are not usually clearly distinguished from other reasons, such as the desire to 'see the world' and the wish to emulate relatives or friends who, in their visits home and in the pictures they send from abroad, appear to be glamorously modern and Westernized. While the complexity of the reasons behind migration defies generalizations, for analytical purposes it is useful to identify the

main categories. However, it must be noted that they are not mutually exclusive and, since several respondents mentioned more than one reason for moving, they should be taken as ideal types.

Given the high costs of transport to Italy for both documented and undocumented migrants, the proportion of respondents coming from extremely deprived backgrounds is relatively low. In these cases, poverty is often precipitated by a sudden adverse event and, particularly for women, it may be determined by the illness or death of the household's male breadwinner or his abandonment of the unit. Indeed, since divorce does not exist in Philippine law, marital disruption often dovetails with economic constraints, as fathers rarely contribute to their children's upbringing after separation and women often find themselves as the sole providers for their offspring. Financial difficulties are often exacerbated by the fact that, during their married life, women were not allowed by their husbands to engage in paid employment. The proportion of widowed and separated migrant women who were not employed prior to their departure from the Philippines is higher than the sample's average (27% against 8%), suggesting that international migration is one of a very limited range of options, especially for mature women who would find it extremely difficult to get jobs in the Philippines. By contrast, men migrating for survival are mainly single and come from women-headed households, which in the Philippines are among the poorest. In addition, female headship appears to be more frequent in migrants' households than the national average (26% against 11%),⁴ suggesting that migration of one member might be one of the available survival strategies for these units who are often marginalized within Philippine society on the grounds of moral propriety (*see* Chant, 1997).

However, while household income in home areas is often a crucial reason for moving, the significant number of migrants coming from relatively affluent backgrounds suggests that in many cases survival is not the main issue. The majority of respondents would not be classed among the poorest groups in Philippine society, and in several cases migration is undertaken in order to maintain a middle-class standard of living which is increasingly threatened by the country's persistent economic crisis. Indeed, a commonly mentioned reason for moving is to increase households' social mobility. The specific forms taken by this process vary according to the developmental cycle of the unit.

⁴This figure should be taken as indicative rather than substantive, since the lack of disaggregation by age of household head (a potentially crucial factor) in the national data does not allow a more comprehensive comparison.

Education is an important expense for families with children of school age, and remittances are often invested in the household's 'human capital' by sending children to exclusive, and expensive, private schools and universities. Other investments include the purchase of land and/or animals, setting up small businesses managed by kin, and building or buying houses, sometimes with the view to rent them out. In several cases, the intended length of stay abroad is subordinated to the attainment of specific objectives. For example, young couples migrating together often do so as a way to accumulate 'starting capital' which will allow them to begin a business and be financially independent upon their return to the Philippines.

A third reason for moving, often overlapping with financial considerations, is a desire for change, seeing the world and living a different experience. This is often linked to a general dissatisfaction with life in the Philippines ranging from feeling at a career dead-end to problems within familial relationships. Mature single women, for example, may move because they wish to escape siblings' control. For married women, on the other hand, migration may provide a socially acceptable way to escape unhappy marriages without incurring the social stigma usually attached to marital disruption (*see* Chant, 1997; Chant and McIlwaine, 1995). In the case of young single migrants, moving may be a way of affirming their independence, both financial and emotional, with respect to their parental families. The latter is related to the fourth type of motivation, in which migration is seen as a rite of passage from dissipated youth to responsible adulthood. This applies in particular to young single men, who in most cases also have few financial responsibilities towards relatives in the Philippines. What is interesting in this case is that decisions were often made by relatives, who saw migration as a solution to perceived misbehavior (such as gambling and black market dealing), as well as a way to foster positive personal growth and a sense of responsibility. This highlights the importance of perceptions in source areas in making overseas migration an acceptable, if not desirable, option.

The reasons behind migration decisions thus appear to be extremely complex and somehow contradictory, with economic reasons and the desire for change being equally important and in several cases overlapping. Having said that, women are generally more likely to state that they moved 'for the sake of the family' rather than for their own benefit, reflecting normative expectations of gender. In view of the fact that the overwhelming majority of women are not surplus labor, this suggests that intrahousehold relations play an essential role in determining gender-selectivity at the point of origin.

INTRAHOUSEHOLD RELATIONS, DECISIONMAKING PROCESSES AND LINKAGES WITH HOME AREAS

A major distinction, often reflecting power differentials within households, is whether the decision to migrate is made by the migrants themselves or by other members of the unit. While only one quarter of respondents moved following their relatives' decisions, this proportion is inversely correlated to their age at arrival in Rome. Thus, among migrants who moved in their twenties, over one third moved at the behest of their relatives. This can be explained in terms of young people being more subject to parental authority than their older counterparts, especially if they are still single and do not have responsibilities towards their own households and children. However, disaggregation by gender shows that daughters are almost twice as likely as sons to migrate because of relatives' decisions. Moreover, the strong sense of duty towards relatives, and in particular parents, which permeates Philippine familial ideology acts as a powerful constraint which can only be overcome through extreme conflict. As a consequence, even when children personally decide to migrate, this may be largely motivated by the feeling that they should 'look after the family.' While birth order is an important element of children's responsibilities towards parents and siblings, this seems to be overcome by gender. In other words, being the eldest daughter often carries stronger expectations of help and support even where there are older brothers in the household. The importance of gender is also underlined by the opposite situation, that is, relatives' opposition to migration. While this is relatively rare, and often comes from husbands rather than parents, it must be noted that no men reported such a reaction from their relatives. This suggests that in one way or another, whether through imposition of or opposition to migration, women are always more subject to familial authority than their male counterparts.

Although gender appears to play a major role in migration decisions, it is in turn crosscut by other factors such as age, marital status and household income. In other words, it is important not to take women as a homogeneous category but to account for differences through the analysis of individual circumstances. A useful conceptualization is that of the life course, which calls for attention to the importance of time in women's lives in determining different balances between productive and reproductive activities and labor force participation (*see* González de la Rocha, 1994; Katz and Monk, 1993). In this sense, women's migration plans and the linkages they maintain with households in home areas vary according to their life courses, that is, whether they move when they are young and single, when they are married with young or

grown-up children, or whether they are mature and single and planning to remain so. The discussion which follows outlines migrants' contribution to the well-being of their households in home areas and its variations on the grounds of gender and life course paths.

Among young single migrants, women's remittances are on average more than double the amount sent by their male counterparts, regardless of whether the decision to migrate was made personally or by other family members. In addition, young women also tend to provide more consistent financial support to their households, with over two thirds sending money on a monthly basis against less than one third of young single men. While decisionmaking processes are often affected by household income and parental decisions are in several cases associated with low income levels, this does not appear to influence daughters' financial contribution. Indeed, regardless of their households' economic standing, young women's annual remittances represent on average 6.7 monthly salaries, whereas for young men this figure is much lower, at 2.8. However, this high level of commitment does not translate into daughters participating in decisions on how to spend their remittances. This also applies to young men, although for the latter this is compensated by their ability to retain a higher proportion of their earnings for their personal use. The strength of familial obligations, in turn, acts as a constraint on individual decisions such as migration duration and household formation. Both are determined, in respondents' views, by the fulfillment of their filial duties as well as by the accumulation of personal savings sufficient to engage in income-earning activities (such as a small business or a corner shop) upon their return to the Philippines. However, these two objectives often appear to be irreconcilable, at least in the short run, as savings tend to be relatively small owing to large remittances.

While young single migrants in their twenties tend to perceive their stays abroad as temporary, and most of them hope, once their filial duties are fulfilled, to be able to start their own families, the circumstances of mature single migrants over the age of 30 are somehow different. For women, in particular, not being married by this age is unusual by Philippine standards, and while for some of them this is perceived as a direct consequence of migration (with filial obligations acting as an impediment to their own marriage), for others it appears to be the other way around, with singlehood as the enabling factor which allows them to go abroad and see the world. This reflects changes in the developmental cycle of households and in related financial needs. For example, once siblings complete their studies, education fees,

which are a significant proportion of remittance-based expenditure, become less important, resulting in a higher degree of personal freedom and fewer familial constraints than is usually the case for younger single women. However, financial reasons also play an important role in migration decisions among mature single migrants. In particular, the need for economic security is compounded by the lack of children, who are usually seen as an assurance for parents in their old age. Thus, while mature single migrants appear to be more able than their younger counterparts to make provisions for their own future, notably by saving more, they nevertheless keep strong links with their relatives in home areas. This may be by funding the education of nephews and nieces, since some help may then be expected from the younger generation who can substitute for one's own children in old age. Moreover, migrants' investments in home areas, such as purchase of land and/or buildings, needs both access to local market information and caretaking, and this is usually performed by relatives. In addition to material exchanges, it is also important to note that even when relatives have their own separate households (as in the case of married siblings), they actually represent the family in the widest sense, to which all migrants plan to return. In this sense, keeping good relations with siblings guarantees the persistence of emotional as well as material linkages with home areas across space and time and that there will be a place to which to return. This may be particularly relevant for women who do not wish to marry, and indeed the fact that the overwhelming majority of mature migrants are female suggests that overseas migration may well be a way to ensure financial independence while at the same time maintaining links with relatives in home areas through the provision of material support.

Single migrants usually have little responsibility for their natal unit's reproductive activities, whereas married migrants, and in particular women with children, must normally find alternative arrangements during their absences. Very few married respondents have their children with them in Rome, and in most cases child care is taken over by female relatives in home areas. In addition, children's welfare can be at the origin of migration decisions, and education, along with living expenses, figures more often among migrant parents' major remittance-based expenditure items than among their childless counterparts. However, while parental status is an important factor in determining the strength of commitments to home areas, it is also crosscut by gender as mothers tend to send proportionally higher amounts than their male counterparts. Married women's average annual remittances are equivalent to 6.4

monthly salaries, and represent 3.2 times the unit's income, whereas for men these figures are 5.5 and 2.3 respectively. Moreover, these variations appear to be influenced by migration forms, that is, whether movement is undertaken independently or involves the married couple. Men whose wives are also in Rome tend to send much lower amounts than those with spouses in the Philippines. The reason for this is that, among migrant couples, the majority if not all of women's earnings is usually earmarked for children's living and education costs in home areas. By contrast, men keep control over their own income and normally give their wives a household allowance for expenditure in Rome while keeping part of their earnings for their personal needs (usually cigarettes and beer). In addition, married women often continue to act as the household manager, sending detailed budgets on day-to-day expenses such as food, household bills and so on. This suggests that while migrant mothers often become their households' main breadwinners, they tend to lose control over their earnings as these are destined for collective consumption and also have to shoulder the primary responsibility for the unit's reproductive activities, albeit at a distance. This shows the importance of normative gender roles in determining different responsibilities within the household and how little these are affected by spatial distance.

GENDER IDEOLOGIES, MIGRATION, AND WOMEN'S STRATEGIES

Although there is wide evidence for women putting other family members' well-being before their own (*see*, for example, Dwyer and Bruce, 1988), their altruism is not a natural female attribute, but is shaped by specific cultural norms and practices, and the ways in which women dispose of their incomes are closely related to noneconomic, gender-specific constraints over their preferences. For example, women's tendency to invest in household rather than individual consumption does not necessarily mean that their own well-being is not affected, both in the short term through an increase in affection and respect from relatives and in the long term as an investment in their own futures by securing the support of other family members (Kabeer, 1995: 24). In this sense, self-sacrifice and self-interest are not mutually exclusive, but reflect culturally-specific gender asymmetries affecting women's options. In other words, gender ideologies exert powerful constraints over women's autonomous behavior by guaranteeing protection and social acceptability for those who remain within its parameters while penalizing those who trespass them (*see* Kandiyoti, 1988). This does not mean that intrahousehold bar-

gaining and negotiation between actors does not take place. Rather, it points to the importance of gender-ascriptive roles (husband/wife, mother/father, son/daughter) in shaping individuals' constraints and opportunities. The discussion which follows attempts to disentangle the complex interconnections between self-interest and self-sacrifice and their relation to women's primary role as mothers, wives or daughters. The latter are in turn cross-cut by other factors, namely household income, life course paths and intended length of stay abroad and, for married respondents, the location of their children and spouses and the general context of their marital relations.

Despite their low-rank jobs, most daughters' assessments of their experiences in Rome are positive, in that they combine independence and seeing the world with their filial duty. They also usually perceive migration as a temporary experience, and most expect to start their own families in the Philippines upon their return. However, this may conflict with their filial duty to look after the family. One strategy to ease financial pressure is to facilitate the arrival of a sibling who may also send remittances home and provide some relief from economic obligations. This may not always turn out as planned, and brothers especially may become a burden once in Rome. Indeed, several women found that they often had to support underemployed male siblings. Since this is part of familial obligations and of the debt of gratitude owed to one's parents, withdrawing such support may result in severe conflict with relatives and kin. Moreover, young men tend to leave the primary responsibility of sending remittances to their sisters. Perhaps not surprisingly, migrant women often prefer to facilitate the migration of female relatives. Daughters' strategies to increase their own autonomy can thus reinforce gender-selectivity and, given the major role played by kin networks in linking potential migrants with destination areas, this may well be a significant explanatory factor of the sex composition of Filipino migration to Italy.

With respect to married migrants with children, an important element already mentioned is whether movement is undertaken independently or as a couple. Women who migrate with their husbands usually retain their primary role as wives and have little control over their earnings. Moreover, while men generally retain a portion of their income for personal expenses, wives' earnings are earmarked for household expenditure. When household members in the Philippines, and especially children, rely essentially, if not exclusively, on remittances, wives' earnings often disappear into the household, leaving them little money for themselves. Among migrants from better-off backgrounds, where a significant proportion is saved as starting capital for a

productive activity in the Philippines, wives also retain little financial control, since savings are usually deposited in a joint account with their husbands, who also often make major decisions on how to spend this money. As a consequence, although women tend to earn more than their husbands (who are often underemployed because they feel that domestic service—or doing women's work—is demeaning), male authority is reasserted through the cultural ideology supporting the notion that men have a right to personal spending money and to maintain overall financial control of the household's income.

The presence of children in Rome may act as a powerful factor in enabling wives to increase their decisionmaking power with respect to control over earnings and migration plans, since this can be justified as being for the sake of the children. This may include the deposit of savings in an account in the mothers' and child(ren)'s name for the stated purpose of the offsprings' financial security. Mothers may also justify their unwillingness to return to the Philippines on the grounds of limited employment opportunities there for their children, even when their husbands wish to go back. In other words, women may be able to use their maternal responsibilities in their own favor within the arena of marital relations by emphasizing their mother role against that of wife (*see* also Chant, 1996a).

A similar strategy appears to be used by mothers who migrate independently and who usually motivate their moves with maternal altruism. This enables them to attain goals which would otherwise be perceived as self-interested and which range from freedom of movement to financial independence and de facto separation from their husbands. Given the social stigma attached to marital disruption and the illegality of divorce in the Philippines, migration is often the only socially acceptable option for women trapped in unhappy marriages. Mothers also appear to have more control over their earnings than wives, and while, consistent with their altruistic maternal roles, they send high remittances, several also keep separate savings accounts. Moreover, mothers' financial independence increases with age, suggesting that the latter is an important factor enabling the switch from a primary role as wife to one of mother. Age also seems to overlap with migrants' intended length of stay abroad, and younger mothers' migration is often perceived as a short-term strategy to increase the household's income and/or its social mobility. As a consequence, they are more likely to keep within their wife role and to have less control over their earnings than their older counterparts. Indeed, even when they become their units' main providers, they often make conscious efforts to avoid jeopardizing their husbands' breadwinner position, for example by leaving them total control over

their own income or, alternatively, by making their contribution invisible. For example, one respondent, whose remittances covered the significant cost of school fees, sent the money directly to her children in order to avoid humiliating her husband. Older mothers, by contrast, tend to see migration as a new start in life and often plan further moves to different countries. Moreover, while their children are in all cases an integral part of their future lives, husbands rarely are.

Summing up this section, it would appear that while women tend to have much stronger commitments and obligations towards their households in home areas than do their male counterparts, in several cases migration is not motivated solely by altruism but reflects the complex interrelationships between self-sacrifice and self-interest. In other words, some women (although not all of them) are able to pursue more personal goals such as freedom of movement, desire for adventure and escape from unhappy marriages. However, in the Philippines, as in most parts of the world, women are expected to be altruistic and to sacrifice their own well-being for that of other household members, and trespassing these gender-specific ideological constraints can result in social stigma and marginalization. As a consequence, women's ability to increase their own autonomy without incurring penalization seems to revolve around the strategic interplay between their normative roles, where maternal altruism, marital obligations and filial duty can be traded off against each other or act as a justification for more selfish desires. In this context, international migration may offer the possibility to combine self-interest (that is, the freedom resulting from spatial distance from households, in which gender roles are crystallized) with self-sacrifice (as higher earnings allow for higher remittances). This, combined with the perceived benefits of seeing the world and with the high status accorded to overseas migrants in the Philippines, contributes in making the low-rank position as domestic workers livable for most respondents. Indeed, while financial commitments to relatives in home areas often force women to accept the restrictions of live-in employment, men appear to resent far more their subordinated status in the Italian labor market, although most work on a part-time basis and often only for the time necessary to cover their own personal expenses.

CONCLUSION

The findings presented in this article indicate that gender-selective migration cannot be understood as a purely individual decision as posited by the equilibrium model, nor as the function of the needs of capital as hypothesized by

the structuralist perspective. While the household strategies approach offers by far the most comprehensive set of factors, this article has suggested that additional elements play important roles in gender-selective movement. With respect to the organization of reproductive activities within households, it is important to expand the framework to include wider kin, since the latter's support in looking after children in home areas is an essential factor enabling mothers to migrate. In addition, perceptions of international migration in source areas need to be accounted for, since they are likely to be crucial in determining its social acceptability. Despite the weak explanatory power of labor market segmentation along gender lines in both source and destination areas, gender ideologies appear to play a major role at the household level, where women's stronger commitments and obligations may affect decisionmaking processes, with parents preferring the migration of daughters to that of sons. On the other hand, migration, and the spatial distance as well as the financial advantages it entails, may allow women to pursue self-interested goals while remaining within the boundaries of their normative roles, as remittances confirm their altruism. This, in turn, points to the importance of culturally-specific ideological factors in determining who moves and who stays. Further exploration of these issues in a comparative perspective will allow a better understanding of contemporary labor migration and the development of policies which take into account the different motivations, needs and priorities underpinning the movement of different groups.

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