

### 3. POVERTY ERADICATION: CONFRONTING FAMILY POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

## FAMILIAR STRANGERS: MIGRANT FAMILY REUNIFICATION IN CANADA

*Denise L. Spitzer*<sup>1</sup>

### A. INTRODUCTION

From 1960 through 2008, the number of global migrants increased from 75 million to over 214 million (Cymbal and Bujnowski 2010). While migration is not a new phenomenon, it has intensified in breadth, depth, and frequency in the past 40 years with the rise of neoliberal globalization. This phenomenon is characterized by shifts in manufacturing that first moved from industrialized centres in the global North to the margins of Northern industrial states, and later fractured into subcontracted production chains that have spun out across the globe in search of ever-cheaper sources of labour and production costs (Delgado Wise, Covarrubias and Puentes 2013). Concomitantly, international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with the support of multinational corporations and select governments, demanded the implementation of Structural Adjustment measures in borrowing/indebted nations that included a reduction in the public provision of health and social services and burgeoning support for privatization (Bello 1999; Delgado Wise, Covarrubias and Puentes 2013). In the South, urban centres had already become the sites of widespread rural to urban migration due to the increased concentration of land in the hands of a few wealthy individuals and families (Castles 2011). The exodus from rural areas was exacerbated by the environmental impact of resource extraction; resultantly, cities in industrializing countries played host to a growing pool of un- and under-employed workers who were (and are), in essence, a reserve army of labour (Castles 2011; Delgado Wise, Covarrubias and Puentes 2013). Declining employment opportunities in countries of the global South, the increase in global networks of decentralized production chains, and the readily deployable reserve army of labour coalesced into making out-migration an important alternative means of sustaining one's family (Delgado Wise, Covarrubias and Puentes 2013). Furthermore, a migration industry comprised of state supported programs and policies as well as private interventions in the form of recruitment agencies and training centres also emerged that help sustain and normalize labour migration in the absence of remunerative employment at home (Hugo 2005; Rodriguez 2010; Wright 2006). Global financial institutions and numerous nation-states maintain that this outflow of labour—and most importantly the

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<sup>1</sup> With Sara Torres, PhD (L'Université de Montréal, Canada).

remittances they send home—is helpful not only for individual families, but is key to reducing poverty in the South world (Faist 2008; Geiger and Pécoud 2013; Piper 2009).

In this paper we draw the links between the declining social and economic opportunities for people in the Global South and the escalating number of workers, especially women, who leave their families to seek temporary and precarious employment in the global labour market. Specifically, we draw from research we conducted with Filipino families to illustrate the impact of familial separation and reunification under the auspices of the Canadian Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP). While this Program offers successful applicants the right to transform their temporary foreign worker status into permanent residency, thereby allowing for permanent resettlement and family reunification, we assert that these transactions must be located within the context of neoliberal globalization and the legacy of neocolonialism.

## **B. MIGRATION AND FAMILIAL SEPARATION IN CANADA**

Welcoming over 248,000 immigrants in 2011 (CIC 2014a), Canada is among the top five countries with the highest absolute number of international migrants (Cymbal and Bujnowski 2010). In recent years, however, the numbers of temporary migrants entering the country have exceeded those of permanent residents. In 2008 for example, nearly 400,000 temporary foreign workers arrived in Canada as compared to 247,243 permanent immigrants (Thomas 2010). The Federal Government appears committed to the deployment of temporary foreign workers<sup>2</sup> despite the critiques leveled at these policies for: enhancing the precarious nature of work with workers bound to a single employer upon whom they are dependent for housing as well as wages, compelling their separation from family members as they are required to enter the country as sojourners, and creating a permanent underclass of workers (Pratt 2012).

*When the war broke out, everyone went to different directions... The best thing that can happen in life is to have your husband and your children with you. I'm thinking too much. My mom died in the war. Most of my family died in the war. I want my husband with me... What can I do for him? I'm thinking too much. I developed diabetes and high blood pressure, high cholesterol. I developed all of these things because I am thinking too much because my husband is not with me.*

*—Fatoun, Somali refugee in Canada (1)*

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<sup>2</sup> Note that at time of writing, the Federal Government has instituted a moratorium on the employment of temporary foreign workers in the food industry (May 2014) in response to public outcry regarding the outsourcing of jobs to temporary foreign workers in light of high unemployment amongst Canadians.

In addition to temporary foreign workers, refugees, refugee claimants and circular migrants are also subject to familial separation. For example, the Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program (SAWP) is a circular migration program that is predicated on familial separation as a means of impelling return to one's home country and of controlling workers' behaviour in Canada as those with positive evaluations are 'named' by employers—that is they are given priority for entry—and are thus able to return annually, ensuring some economic stability for workers' families (Hennebry 2012).

While migrant workers may mitigate the financial challenges of households in their home countries through the transfer of remittances, familial separation across borders may also strain family networks and relationships (Bernhard, Landolt, and Goldring 2005; Parreñas 2005; Spitzer and Torres 2012). Moreover, spouses who live apart for an extended period may be inclined to develop new intimate relationships (Parreñas 2005; Sobritchea and de Guzman 2006; Spitzer and Torres 2012) although Rousseau, et al. (2004) report that separation may in fact enhance some couples' relationship.

*Our children, even if they are at university, they live at home. Until they get married, they are with the family. It doesn't matter what age they are. The mother will cook for them, wash their clothes and take care of him, thinking, my child is at university studying. If we can, we take care of him, wash for him, feed him, and when he gets married, he's in the hands of his wife. You can raise your brother's children, your sister's children, if they need a hand, if they don't have enough economical support. They are part of your family and they keep with you. That's part of our culture.*

—Aman (Spitzer 2006:50)

Moreover, familial separation may engender considerable stress for workers and their family members. Women migrant workers who are often tasked with familial caregiving responsibilities regardless of their location may in particular suffer from guilt and anxiety with regards to their physical absence from children, parents, or partners (Bernhard, Landolt, and Goldring 2005; Lam, and Tsoi 2005; McGuire and Martin 2007; Torres, et al. 2012). Pratt's (2006) study of family reunification of former foreign domestic care-workers and their families undertaken in Vancouver noted three common experiences: marital discord, intergenerational tensions and poor occupational prospects for the children. Others such as refugees and refugee claimants may be tormented by the absence of family members whose lives may still be in danger as they may yet reside in refugee camps, their homeland, or in an unknown location (Spitzer 2006).

The presence of family members and the social support they can provide is integral to health and well-being particularly amongst immigrants (Dunn and Dyck 2000; Stewart, et al. 2008). Family members also play an integral role in integration into Canadian society and entry into the labour market especially in the first four years of resettlement (Li 2007). Reuniting with family members is not a privilege granted temporary foreign workers, but one reserved for permanent residents or citizens. Moreover, the definition of family under Canadian immigration policy is one that is decidedly nuclear and Euro-centric and circumscribes who may join a successful applicant for permanent residency (PR) status. The immediate family members that qualify include one's spouse and children under the age of 22 unless they are single and enrolled in full-time academic study. <sup>3</sup> This description is predicated on a particular notion of adulthood and individualism that is not shared by other societies that embrace greater interdependence amongst family members who help sustain a household materially and emotionally (Spitzer 2009). To sponsor other relatives such as parents, grandparents, or siblings, under 19 years of age, one must sign an undertaking assuming financial responsibility for family members for a period of three to 10 years, depending upon their age. Importantly, sponsors must meet an income threshold in order to be eligible to bring their relations other than a spouse or children to Canada (CIC 2014b). As racialized immigrant women are most likely to experience a precipitous decline in professional and economic status (Chui 2011; Chui and Maheux 2011), they are disproportionately excluded from being joined by their kin. Resultantly, single workers are less likely to be able to access familial support in Canada.

In light of the contributions they make to Canadian society and the skills gap they fill in the labour market, the 40th Canadian Parliament's Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration stated that: "All temporary foreign workers should be eligible to apply for permanent residency status after working 24 months within a 36 month period, with the possibility of extension in extenuating circumstances" (Tilson 2009: 13). Furthermore, the Committee recognized that family separation was not in the best interests of workers, children, or Canadian society and they recommended that immediate family of temporary foreign workers should have the opportunity to accompany the worker to Canada and be granted an open work permit (Tilson 2009).

## **FOCUS ON THE PHILIPPINES**

Currently, 14% of temporary foreign workers in Canada are from the Philippines, comprising the largest single national group (Thomas 2010). Over 8.2 million Filipinos work abroad, approximately 10% of the population or nearly a quarter of the total labour force (Go 2012; Ruiz 2008; Weekley 2006). Years of neo-liberal measures that opened markets

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<sup>3</sup> At present, the Canadian Government is considering reducing the age to 19 and eliminating the exemption for adult students.

and reduced demand for local products resulting in pressure to devalue the currency led to a rise in unemployment and poverty (Bello 1999; Bello, et al. 2009; Kalleberg and Hewison 2013). Resultantly, the Philippine government has promulgated a labour export policy that facilitates the out-migration of Philippine workers (Go 2012; Rodriguez 2010; Weekley 2006). Remittances from overseas workers comprises more than 13% of the country's GDP (Ruiz 2008) and an estimated 34% to 54% of the populace is dependent on remittances for their continued survival (Parreñas 2005). Indeed, out-migration is so common that over 9 million Filipino children have at least one migrant parent (Parreñas 2005). Gender roles that describe men as breadwinners and women as 'the light of the home' are enshrined in the Philippine Constitution and are inculcated in the populace through its religious and educational institutions such that the children of migrant mothers, as opposed to those with absent fathers, are more apt to feel abandoned despite ongoing contact with their overseas parent. Concomitantly, migrant workers are heralded as heroes of the economy and as the international demand for care-work has continued unabated, thousands of Filipino women migrate annually to labour as domestic workers (Parreñas 2005; POEA 2010). Migrants from the Philippines, predominantly women, comprise well over 90% of workers who have entered Canada under the auspices of the Live-In Caregiver Program (CIC 2005; Kelly et al. 2011).

### **C. CANADA'S LIVE-IN CAREGIVER PROGRAM (LCP) AND FILIPINO FAMILIES: A CASE STUDY**

#### **CANADA'S LIVE-IN CAREGIVER PROGRAM (LCP)**

For more than a century, Canada has engaged in the importation of foreign domestic workers to care for children, the elderly and people living with disabilities under the auspices of a variety of different temporary worker and immigration schemes (Arat-Koç 1997; Schechter 1998; Spitzer and Torres 2008). The current iteration, the Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP), instituted in 1992 enables workers to settle permanently in Canada after they fulfill their obligations under the Program. LCP workers must speak one of Canada's official languages, have completed the equivalent of a Canadian high school education, and be in possession of a bona fide offer of employment caring for children under 18, persons with disabilities or the elderly, and to have undergone six months of full-time care-giver training or have 12 months of experience in a related field such as nursing, teaching, or caregiving in another country (CIC 2006). In reality, 63% of live-in caregivers in 2009 possessed a Bachelor's degree or higher, a substantially higher proportion than the 39.5% of economic immigrants to Canada with university degrees (Kelly, et al. 2011).

For their part, employers must provide a private, lockable room, "acceptable working conditions, reasonable duties and fair market wages" (CIC 2006) outlined in a standard

contract; notably, wages, overtime payment and access to worker's compensation differ across the country (Spitzer and Torres 2008). LCP workers are allowed to change employers; however, doing so requires a change in permit that may take an undetermined amount of time to process. Processing times for bureaucratic matters become quite salient for LCP workers as they must complete 24 months of employment under the Program in a 48-month (formerly 36-month) period or be deported (CIC 2010). Upon completion of their obligation under the LCP, live-in caregivers may apply concomitantly for permanent residency (PR) status, which enables them to remain indefinitely in Canada and eventually apply for citizenship, to bring immediate family members (spouse and children), avail themselves of a broader range of health and social programs, and pay Canadian rather than foreign student tuition at post-secondary institutions, and to obtain an open work permit that enables them to take up employment in any sector (CIC 2010; Spitzer and Torres 2008). Obtaining the open work permit may take from three to 12 months to process during which time they must remain with their LCP employer. The PR application uses information provided when workers first apply to the LCP that includes the names of children and/or their spouse who are eligible to join them in Canada upon completion of the Program (CIC 2008). Therefore, even if a couple's relationship has soured during their years apart, the former LCP worker is compelled to bring her spouse to Canada if he so wishes. Importantly, unless children over the age of 22 are enrolled in full-time academic study, they are considered adults and ineligible to join their parent. Moreover, if any family member fails the required medical examination or has a criminal record, none of the family is allowed to join the former LCP worker in Canada (CIC 2008). Consequently, LCP workers are anxious about completing the Program in as short a time as possible, to limit the possibility that family members will fall ill or age out of eligibility to be reunited with the family (Spitzer 2013).

## **ANTICIPATING FAMILY REUNIFICATION AFTER THE LCP**

In our research study, *Transnational Families in Transition: Filipino Families*, Canadian Issues that included interviews with former LCP workers and dependents (children and spouses) in Ottawa and Edmonton (see Appendix 1 for details), all participants referred to the long separation from their families as a major source of stress, which combined with harsh working conditions under the LCP and holding multiple jobs after completing LCP and holding multiple jobs after completing the LCP, had an impact on their health and well being. While LCP workers who had children and/or spouses could anticipate being reunited with family members after obtaining their PR status, the definition of immediate family as spouses and children meant that single, childless persons were required to sponsor family members, typically parents and/or grandparents, under a different program stream, one that required a minimum income and that demanded a promise of financial support for a specific period of time (CIC 2008, 2014b).

*... When they weren't here, I woke up at night... I thought that I can't breathe. But, I cannot do anything... I'm so depressed I'm just sitting in the corner and think about them.*

*—Elvira (2)*

## **FAMILY REUNIFICATION AFTER THE LCP**

Between 1993–2009, 52,493 people, between 95% to 98% women, came to Canada under the LCP. They were reunited with 30,028 dependents, 20,000 of which joined 34,237 former live-in caregivers to form lone-parent households (Kelly, et al. 2011). Importantly, each year families remain fractured as a family member's health or criminal status voids the application for any of those listed to migrate, a spouse decides to remain behind, or children are no longer deemed eligible due to their age or because the course in which they are enrolled does not meet immigration criteria (Torres, et al. 2012).

*We are like strangers. ... They feel that I am no longer the same Mom I used to be. I said, "I am the same, but then how can I [be]?... My last vacation was in 1999." My children are growing up without me and I am not there when they are sick. It's been 8 years that I've been away.*

*—Annie (2)*

Reuniting with family members on Canadian soil after years of separation can certainly be a welcomed and joyous process despite the readjustment and tribulations that often ensue. Both mothers and children held high expectations about being reunited once again; however, these dreams were often curtailed by harsh socio-economic conditions that meant there was often little time available to try to redress the years of separation from family, which ranged from three to 16 years. Working in low-wage jobs—often in multiple positions—with little flexibility, meant that women had little time to spend with their families upon arrival. While two participants were able to take time off work to re-acquaint themselves with family members and help orient them to their new environment, the vast majority were too enmeshed in their employment to spend time with family. Furthermore, the transition from long distance mothering to on-site parenting challenged mothers in creating bonds with their children. Mothers felt the need to transform themselves into makers of rules and of structures to address the growing pains of adolescence within a new country and society—a new role that was not always appreciated by their children. In addition, children were compelled to not only adjust to life in Canada

but also to cope with the sentiments of being torn between a mother who, despite frequent communication, was still in essence an unknown figure and the people who had been caring for them in recent years and with whom they have developed emotional bonds. Socio-economic issues, family separation and reunification, therefore, are matters that cannot be disentangled.

*They didn't really know me and I don't know them, too. So it's kind of tough getting connected... I come home, I am so tired and I can't even sit them and say, "How was your day?"... And even over the week-end, I hardly see them. I work, too. At some point my kids told me: "You're too far away. You're here, but you are too far."*

—Melodie2 (in Spitzer 2013)

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

After reunification, however, most former LCP workers felt conflicted. On one hand, they felt a sense of accomplishment at having brought their family to Canada, were happy to be reunited with family, and were suffused with love for their children and spouse. Conversely, they reported a high level of stress due to the financial pressures to make ends meet.

While after the LCP, workers' efforts were often directed towards saving for immigration costs for the family, including travel and landing fees, while paying for rent, food, and utilities, costs that either part of a standard deduction or handled by their employer. After family reunification, costs associated with living in Canada escalated and demands multiplied, creating a seemingly unrelenting burden on the migrant and her family. In one instance, a family's dream of co-residence was shattered as family members had to scatter across a region in order to find employment so they could contribute to household coffers; thus they remained separated albeit in the same country.

*Working, working. We will see each other when we go to bed. Yeah like that, always busy because we have a lot, we have all jobs here.*

—Alyin (2)

Like other migrants in Canada who often find themselves situated in a racialized hierarchy in the labour market regardless of education, deskilling was common amongst our informants as demands for "Canadian experience" often excluded them from employment opportunities and further entrenched these migrants, like others from non-



European countries, into the least remunerative jobs (Galabuzi 2006; Haan 2008; Picot, et al. 2009; Pratt 2003/4; Zietsma 2007). As Kelly (2006) has noted Filipinos in Canada are employed at higher rates than other immigrant groups; however, they occupy a distinct poorly waged section of the labour market characterized by clerical work, healthcare, hospitality, retail and manufacturing. Specifically, while 57.1 % of our sample were university educated, they reflect this larger trend wherein Filipino Canadian workers are thrust into “deprofessionalized versions of their occupational identities back home in the Philippines [that] result in anomalously low earnings” (Kelly 2006: 36). While trapped in low wage positions that are generally incommensurate with their education and prior work experience, former LCP workers felt pressured to provide not just the basic necessities for their family, but to purchase services or materials that would make the adjustment to life in Canada somewhat easier or more tolerable for them, such as a vehicle to avoid the challenges of waiting in the cold for public transportation, which is generally less frequent than in the Philippines. Moreover, they were still expected to send remittances back to the Philippines to continue to support extended family members back home.

#### INTERGENERATIONAL TENSIONS

Although family members kept in frequent contact via phone or electronic means, reuniting after a long physical separation, was often fraught. Relationships and attachments change over time and it was often a challenge for mothers to regain their children’s love, trust—and even recognition. Lucinda, for example, stated that the greatest difficulty she experienced was realizing that her daughters who had been raised by their grandparents “do not feel that I’m the mom.” Other women noted a discrepancy between their children’s chronological and the emotional ages—a lack of maturity—as some expressed the need to be ‘babied’ in ways the women found disconcerting. For example, one 11 year-old daughter demanded her mother bathe her. Conversely, some children felt that their mothers had not acknowledged that they had in fact matured since they last resided together and they chafed against strict guidelines on their movements and behaviours as though they were still children instead of young adults.

*Of course now it’s, she’s bigger, she’s a teenager,...you can see, she’s in an adult body, but I’m sure emotionally she’s, probably like eight years old or six years old, right, like, the emotional attachment with both of us so, I think that’s, um, it’s the work that has to be done. Ah but she’s smart, she’s, you know, responsible, but, she doesn’t know us, we don’t know her too!*

—Ramona (2)

Age appeared to play a role in how children responded to reunification with their mothers. Younger children generally voiced their simple pleasure at being with their mothers; however, older children often expressed more complicated sentiments as they navigated different familial roles and relationships. For example, often older siblings, especially daughters, assumed a maternal role in their families in their mothers' absence. While some resented having to take on these responsibilities, this situation also led both to friction between the daughter and the mother who appeared to want to usurp this status position from her after having apparently "abandoned" it, and to confusion from younger siblings who were unsure to whom to turn. Some of the daughters admonished their mothers, telling them when they have children, they "don't want to be like you, mom," meaning they would not put their own offspring through prolonged separation. Given that providing a better life for their children was often the primary rationale for enrolling in the LCP, mothers found these remarks particularly painful.

*The ideal hope was, when I see my mom, it's just going to be all right—like communication is not going to be that difficult, and I'll be able to talk to her about everything, but it wasn't like that.... I think part of me is still angry [with my mom]. About her not being there.*

—Mariana (2)

## **MARITAL MATTERS – GENDER MATTERS**

One phenomenon that occurred as a result of separation is that approximately a third of fathers stopped working soon after their spouses moved to Canada as a live-in caregiver. In receipt of remittances from their wives, a minority of these men assumed greater childrearing responsibilities, others simply relinquished their jobs, while others who were unemployed halted their search for employment. This had a significant impact on the LCP workers' ability to save monies for their family's immigration and settlement needs and recalibrated traditional gender roles, which had further influence on marital relations as men felt that their masculinity was undermined.

*When either the father or the mother goes abroad, there's a tendency that some temptations will come the other way, so...and sometimes, one is working, sending the money, and the other, the wife or the husband is using it in vices: that's a problem... Yeah, and some other, Filipino overseas workers, when they go, to other countries, they get married again! That's a problem! Yeah. So, that one left in the Philip-*

*pinos, or, either way, when you go abroad, your wife or your husband, keep another, partner, and that's already broken family.*

*–Igorot (2)*

The sense that their masculinity was being eroded was often heightened upon arrival in Canada. Their wives who had resided in the country for several years were the experts and were relied upon to navigate this new environment and help orient family members along the way. Men's lack of familiarity with Canadian society enhanced their sense of dependence on and resentment towards their spouses particularly as they commenced their search for employment. Women felt tasked with securing employment for their husbands and often deployed the social networks comprised of friends, former LCP employers, church, and members of the Philippine community that they had nurtured over the years to locate possible job opportunities for them. When they did obtain work, they found themselves, like their spouses, subject to deskilling and relegated to some of the lowest echelons of the labour market as their credentials and foreign work experience carried no weight with potential employers. The recognition that their job prospects were not as they anticipated led to some confusion regarding the path to take to reassert their role in the family. For instance, Raphael felt conflicted about his desire to be the family's breadwinner and his need to return to school in order to regain credentials in his profession. For some couples, men's perceived loss of job prestige further exacerbated anger towards their wives and heightened marital tensions. Men's role was further challenged by adult children particularly if they were contributing to the household income as they were more apt to assert their own independence and less prone to unquestioningly obey their fathers. Furthermore, men were no longer the sole authority in the family as their spouses expected to assume a greater stake in parenting than they were able to do previously. Some men, however, recognized that they needed to endure changes and challenges part of the sacrifice they were making for their children's future, and over time, some felt they recovered or reconfigured their sense of masculinity.

*They have to listen to me ... because [I] know what is going here. Especially my husband, sometimes he complains. "You have to listen to me so, later you'll understand why it is like that. You will realize why it is like that."*

*–Natalie (2)*

Interestingly, one response to reunification was to seemingly re-entrench traditional gender roles in the home. Women who might have been the sole or major breadwinner in the family, potentially working multiple jobs, were expected to assume full responsibility

for cooking and housework even if family members performed these tasks while in the Philippines. While some women found this burdensome and requested greater household assistance from family members, others assumed this 'woman's work' without complaint.

*Well, you know, they [their wives] act like they know everything there. Then again, ... you're the man of the house, ... you look like down, you look like you're nothing, this and that. But then again ... you learn how they do it here, too. And then, ah, just adjust yourself.*

*–Raphael (2)*

#### **D. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In addition to the exigencies of conflicts and catastrophes that has led to the dispersal of refugees across the globe, neoliberal globalization has engendered greater frequency of familial separation as increasing numbers of individuals seek work in different parts of the world whether for opportunities in high tech fields, further education or for the vast numbers who are compelled to find employment outside their homeland due to low wages and un- or under-employment. In this paper, we have explored the impact of familial separation on a particular subset of migrant workers who are engaged in a Canadian temporary foreign worker program—the LCP—that uniquely offers successful applicants the right to permanent residency, family reunification, and resettlement. Despite its unique characteristics, the Program offers us the opportunity to explore some general insights into migration and family separation where reunited familiar strangers must learn to mend weakened bonds and reorient themselves to different roles—or attempting to return to pre-separation ones—within their household and their new environment.

Firstly, the matters of family separation and reunification cannot be relegated to the individual family, but are inextricably linked to larger political-economic and historical contexts. In the case of Filipino workers and the LCP, the Philippines' labour export policy and the efficiency of its migration industry, facilitate the out-migration of workers—and laud their efforts—to compensate for under-development and impoverishment of the country due to neoliberal globalization and the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism. As Parreñas (2001) has noted, care-work is one of the Philippines' major exports, and a segment of Filipino foreign domestic workers have opted to realize their "Canadian dreams" through the auspices of the LCP (Spitzer 2013). Through the LCP, "... families are able to purchase the labour of less economically advantaged Southern women to take care of their children or family members. Poor women in Canada and in Southern countries bear the inequalities and inequities of patriarchal systems that undervalue caregiving. For poor Southern women, selling their caregiving labour in Northern mar-

kets may be their best option, although it relegates them to disadvantaged social locations (Torres et al., 2012, p.228).” In essence, women are responsabilized for both saving the Philippines economy and maintaining the well-being of their families at home, emotionally and materially.

Secondly, policy measures have a significant impact on family reunification. The presence of family has the potential to improve and maintain health and well-being through emotional, informational, and material support and to aid in immigrant integration and resettlement. However, Canadian policy may actually constrain family reunification and confer negative health benefits by elevating the stress of Canadian migrants who are concerned about relatives left in their homeland. By narrowly circumscribing the definition of family to refer to spouse and children under 22 years of age, other family forms such as multi-generational, extended families are excluded from the potential for reunification. Moreover, the age limit placed on adult children eligible to join migrant parent(s) not only reflects Western notions of individualism, it prevents these family members from contributing to the welfare of the family as a household in Canada as they might be expected to do in their homeland. In addition, the sponsorship agreements put in place to enable the migration of other family members creates an undue financial hardship on immigrants, in particular single women from non-European backgrounds. The relegation of racialized migrants to the lowest echelons of the labour market regardless of education and work experience creates further stress for those hoping to reunite with family as they are faced with enormous costs related to the immigration and resettlement process. Consequently, workers may find themselves forced to take on multiple poorly waged jobs, resulting in greater work-family imbalance, and potentially greater inter-generational tensions as there is little time left to re-acquaint themselves with the familiar strangers who are their kin.

### **E. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

We must recognize that other issues such as intergenerational solidarity and work-family balance cannot be extracted from matters of socioeconomic class and poverty. Furthermore, all of these issues—and any potential remedies—must be situated in the context of racialized status, gender ideologies, neo-liberal globalization, and historical/neo-colonial legacies. As Renato (below) suggests, the challenges of family separation and reunification spawned by the need for remittances from abroad would not be as relevant if there were decent employment opportunities and fair wages.

*I want to see Philippines, like... there is work for the Filipinos, the family doesn't go anywhere. Filipinos doesn't have to go anywhere to*

*work. Just here in the Philippines, you know, enough living for the Filipinos.*

*–Renato (2)*

## **POVERTY REDUCTION**

- Ratify and Enforce ILO Convention C–189 Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 that outlines a decent work agenda for domestic workers.
- Ratify and Enforce the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.
- Recognize that many live-in caregivers are health professionals, therefore the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel may apply.
- Recognize care–labour as skilled work.
- Establish an independent Office of Migrant Labour to hear complaints of migrant workers and to educate migrant workers and their employers about their rights and responsibilities.
- Allow family members to accompany migrants as recommended by CIMM of 40th parliament (see Tillson 2009).
- Ensure that temporary foreign workers are used for short–term gaps in the labour demands and open permanent immigration for broader set of skill levels as the need or un– and semi–skilled workers is on–going.
- Allow temporary foreign workers to be tied to a sector and not an employer to ensure that they have options for mobility.
- Require employers to pay a living wage based on Provincial standards.
- Raise minimum wage.
- Identify strategies to end discriminatory hiring practices where demands for “Canadian experience” are code words for whiteness.
- Ensure that employers: obey migrant worker contracts and provide them with the same wages as Canadian workers.
- Monitor deductions to ensure they are allowable and reasonable and that recruitment fees are not being extracted from temporary foreign workers under another name.

## **INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY**

- Family to accompany migrant workers.
- Redefine ‘family’.
- Affordable housing options so families can live together more readily.

## **WORK–FAMILY BALANCE**

- Recognition of credentials.
- Live–out status.
- Offer better state–supported childcare, eldercare, and home care for the infirm and persons with disabilities.

## **NOTES**

(1) All names are pseudonyms. From D. L. Spitzer, 'Migration and Menopause: Experiences of Maturation in Three Immigrant Communities,' 1998.

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## **APPENDIX: OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDY**

### **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the study were to: (1) Examine the impact of separation on the families of former live-in caregivers from the Philippines now residing in two second tier Canadian cities, Ottawa and Edmonton; (2) Explore how family members renegotiate gender, parental, familial, and marital roles; (3) Situate the experiences of informants in the context of gender, globalization, identity, socioeconomic status, and the local host community; (4) Illuminate the impact of these phenomena on the health and well being of former live-in caregivers and their family members; (5) Identify supportive individual, familial and/or community coping or adaptive strategies as well as ways for governmental and non-governmental agencies to support these efforts; and (6) Consider the implications of these findings for Canadian immigration and labour policy and society.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

In addition to conducting a survey of relevant national and provincial policies pertinent to family reunification, we employed three qualitative data collection methods: interviews, focus groups and visual ethnography. Specifically, we conducted 51 semi-structured interviews between July 2009 and April 2010 in Ottawa, Ontario and Edmonton, Alberta about the experiences of family reunification among Filipino former live-in caregivers with 28 former LCP workers, nine spouses, and 14 children. Of these participants, 70.5% of the interviews were with individuals at least one of whose immediate family members was also interviewed. Second, we involved former live-in caregivers and their family members (who participated or who were new to the study) in Ottawa to communicate their stories of familial separation and reunification through the use of photographic storytelling. Finally, we shared the findings from interviews and photo-voice projects in focus groups with community members and policy influencers in Ottawa and Edmonton.

### **SAMPLE**

Sixty-eight percent of the former live-in caregivers immigrated to Canada between the years 2000 and 2010; approximately one third immigrated to Canada between the year 1990 and 1999. While several mothers came to Canada after working in other countries, such as Taiwan and Hong Kong SAR, the length of separation upon arriving in Canada varied. More than half (52.4%) of mothers were separated for 3 to 4 years; 19% were separated for 5 to 6 years and 9.6% were separated for 5 to 10 years. Notably, the impact of separation varied among various family formations. The length of separation of spouses

with no children was much shorter, as nearly one fifth (19%) of these couples were apart for 1 to 2 years. The brevity of their separation was largely due to the fact that these workers married after having come to Canada, but before finishing their contract under the LCP. With the majority of the long-term married couples, the woman often worked in another country prior to coming to Canada; therefore, the separation time could range between 10 to 16 years. Because of these other countries' migration policies, mothers went back to the Philippines once a year for approximately a month long vacation. Once in Canada, only a few mothers were able to make a trip back to the Philippines.