

Gender and Remittances: The case of the Philippines

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Paper submitted to the Oxfam Novib Expert Meeting on Gender and Remittances, 29–30 September, 2011, The Hague, Netherlands.

Introduction

The research for this Oxfam Novib study was conducted in Cebu City, Philippines, and the surrounding metropolitan area, collectively known as Metro Cebu, which stands as the second most populous metropolitan area in the Philippines behind the Manila complex. The area was described by one of our respondents as having many families with an overseas Filipino worker¹ (OFW) member and is therefore a great place to research the effects of change that remittances have on these households. The Philippines as a whole are a major source of economic migrants, with over 8,5 million Filipinos working abroad (COMMISSION ON FILIPINOS OVERSEAS, 2009). Together, these OFWs remitted over US\$18 762 million in 2010 (BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS, 2011), showing that remittances have an extraordinary effect on the economy of the country. The importance of migration and remittances was apparent from street level before we even began our interviews, from the many *padala* (remittances) establishments such as LBC and Western Union, which transmit currency and sometimes goods across borders; posters from banks and even Jollibee (a Filipino fast food empire) advertising special remittance programs; and in the common diction, where terms that would seem to exist only in academe (e.g., OFW, remittances) are uttered with ease amongst the general populace. The Philippines is truly a “culture of migration”, to quote Asis’s (2006) usage.

In accordance with the common procedures and methods laid out between the two teams conducting research for this project (the other team consisting of our colleagues, Lieke van der Zee and Ingmar Deenen, conducted in Kumasi, Ghana), each researcher interviewed members of their own gender. Gender is an important distinction between this project and similar projects of the past; we have taken it as a theoretical assumption that gender not only affects the patterns and processes of migration and remittances, but that the reverse is true (Carling, 2005). Our project was conducted using grounded theory wherein certain theoretical assumptions were made but the data and literature were constantly consulted in an iterative pattern. Our interviews were in-depth and exploratory, meaning that while generally the same questions were asked of each respondent, the structure, length and conversational direction were steered by their responses. Although the project’s goal was to interview 20 male and 20 female respondents of migrant households, the final tally is 11 male respondents and 19 female. There were some serious difficulties in obtaining male contacts that entailed some unique attempts at gaining respondents. Generally, a snowball technique was used with the initial sample coming from the contacts of Dr. Leny Ocasiones (our faculty advisor at University of San Carlos) and our two student partners, Jeff Lim and Karen Dereche (graduate students at USC). After noticing the difficulty in gaining male respondents, new strategies included a brief guest appearance at a local radio station, where we described our project and asked listeners to contact us directly; we received many responses but over half of our new contacts denied an interview later. We also attempted respondent-driven sampling, which is similar to the snowball technique but relies upon respondents to recruit the next wave themselves rather than being recruited by the researcher (Heckathorn, 1997). While this technique did not prove successful, we think the necessity of (economic) incentive is of prime importance for

¹A similar term used in some literature is overseas contract worker (OCW), which implies the existence of an agreement of employment pre-departure. There also seems to be some implication that the title of OCW should only be applied to female migrants (see, for example, Pingol, 2001), though a thorough definition cannot be found. It can be said that OCWs are at least a subset of OFWs and since the official parlance uses the latter, and many of our respondents reported their family members having entered their country of employment on a tourist visa before finding a position, we will use the term OFW in this report.

respondent-driven sampling, a factor that could have limited the effectiveness of this technique in our study.

In his findings, Gresham (2011) concludes that among other things, a major change in the male-headed migrant household post-departure is a loss of masculinity in the face of remittances, especially when the husband earns significantly less than his wife does. These findings contrast with the general trends of the literature, although in this study all male respondents were employed. In her findings, Smit concludes that there is a difference between the impact caused by male migration and by that of female migration. While migration by women gives them greater power and influence in the households, it appears that male migration leads to the opposite. Our findings affirm many of those of Pingol (2001), who authored a similar study but whose manuscript was not found until after data production. Our studies may be limited in comparability, however, because she conducted research in the rural Ilocos region in the northern Philippines, while ours was in the urban, Central Visayan metropolis.

The outline of this report follows the main sub-questions laid out in the draft version of the Oxfam Novib Gender & Remittances Background Paper. We begin by presenting characteristics of remittance sending and receiving behaviors as they relate to gender, noting unique qualifying demographics whenever necessary (having children, for instance, dramatically affects how remittances are used). We then discuss how gender and household roles affect and are affected by remittance behavior, and whether gender has an impact on the dynamics of the household power relations (i.e., does migration and remittances empower women in the Philippines?).

Gender and the Sending of Remittances

With a single exception, all respondents reported that the decision to migrate had economic motives wherein a domestic income was insufficient to meet their individual and family needs. According to our respondent Melanie, most OFWs go abroad to support their relatives, saying that it is a Filipino habit to help your relatives however and whenever you can, exemplifying the importance of the family in Filipino culture. An anecdote that shows the power of loyalty comes from Annette, who waited 6 days in the lounge of the airport while waiting for her papers to be cleared for her to work in Kuwait. Her employer was very concerned for her and sent some money for a hotel, but she figured that it would be better spent remitted to her family.

During the interviews, absolute and relative differences between sending behavior by men and women were observed, meaning that the amount as well the percentage of the wage that was sent is dissimilar. The male household members of our respondents sent a greater part of their salary and a higher total amount, as can be seen in the table below.

	Male migrants		Female migrants	
Absolute amount of remittances	US\$25–1300	\bar{x} = \$518	US\$115–400	\bar{x} = \$252
Relative amount of income	48–100%	\bar{x} = 73%	10–80%	\bar{x} = 35%

Some important side notes about these numbers must be mentioned. In almost all cases, men sent remittances to only one person, who was usually the spouse. However, females appeared to give often to more persons. A variable that probably influences these numbers is the fact that we spoke to only one member of what can be a vast network of the OFW. In many cases, it

became clear that there were other remittance recipients. Since the migrant was not interviewed we cannot be sure about the exact numbers, but compared to the findings of other scholars, the real remitting of women must certainly be higher. The big difference here is that women make decisions about the person to whom they remit before the money is sent, while men remit to a single person who then disperses monies. Besides the spouse, women also remit to their parents, sisters and separately to their children. When remittances are sent to extended family, the receivers are usually female family members, perhaps because men are expected to provide their own income. The wives are in this concern the distributors of the remittances, and a steady remittance flow is sent to other relatives by the wife, generally to the parents of the OFW. Often it also depends on the financial situation of the family; when there is more money to spend or when a relative is in need, there is a larger amount shared with other members beyond the nuclear family.

However, it can still be concluded that women are sending a smaller amount and percentage to their *wives*. Several explanations can be made—besides the fact that the remittances of women are shared with more individuals—one reason being the kind of employment where the women are more likely to be involved. Robbie, a businessman from Hong Kong who has hired many Filipino employees, remarked that women stay mostly in low-skilled jobs (such as domestic help or the entertainment industry) with little room for promotion, while the men are employed in positions with possible promotion. As an employer, he also admits to discriminating based on gender and marital status: He prefers married men and woman because they are in a mindset of taking care of their families. The effects of these familial obligations (perceived or otherwise) are that the employees are more responsible because the greater dependency of themselves and their families on their jobs.

Another explanation is that all nine interviewed male spouses are employed and have their own source of income, while only three of the 19 female migrants have a paid occupation. As will be shown in the following section, remittances are mostly spent on investment in the future, such as real estate and the education of the children. The men staying behind would have to give up these expenditures if they did not receive remittances, however they will still have a living in contrast with the women that do not have any recourses of their own. These motives probably ground the idea that women send more often to other women. However, it also provides the freedom to send their remittances to people other than their spouse, since the spouse does not completely depend upon the remitted money.

Companies and legal policies also have an influence on the remitting behavior of OFWs. There appears to be a difference between migrants that are hired abroad (from within the borders of the country of employment) and migrants that are sent abroad by Philippine companies and intermediary agencies. Workers hired within another country are not obligated to certain remitting restrictions, while workers employed by Philippine companies are subject to remittance laws. Seafarers, for example, are required by law to send at least 80% back to a Philippines bank account of a third party. In our interviews, these bank accounts all belonged to the wives of seafarers but this is not restricted. The high number of male seafarers can explain, in part, the high remittances (and/or high percentage of earnings) sent back by male OFWs. Agencies that mediate often require a contribution or finder's-fee, but this is usually a one-time event. Another factor dependent on employment are secondary conditions such as complimentary housing, provision of food and traveling expenses, etc. Not unexpectedly, the

better these conditions are, the more money is remitted. These conditions are not gendered per se, but the country of employment and kind of work is more influential, and these may be gendered.

Furthermore, a salient conclusion from the interviews showed that spouses are in many cases not congruent to the entire financial situation of the OFW. Almost half of the women that receive remittances are not aware of the total income of their husband. The husband decides in those cases how much money is sent home, sometimes in cooperation with the wife's report of the needs of the household. Similarly, males receiving remittances are very often not familiar with the total remitting behavior of the female senders. Men appear to be more up to date about the migrant's salary, but they report being unknowledgeable of other receivers and the amount remitted to them.

Gender and the Receiving and Use of Remittances

The receiving and use of remittances in the Philippines are very similar between men and women. Our respondents reported similar types of remittances, modes of transfer, regularity of sending, and other factors. Of particular congruence is the desire by all respondents to invest heavily in the future.

Among almost all respondents, there was an interest to invest in non-consumable goods. The largest among these were the purchase of a house and/or lot of land and improvements upon existing structures, such as the building of additional stories or rooms. Since these investments require large amounts of money, many households opt for a loan/mortgage to finance the purchase of a house/lot, with remittance moneys going toward installment payments. Other large planned purchases are often financed by saving remittance money on the migrant's side and sending it as a separate, lump-sum transfer, rather than the recipient saving on their side.

Similarly, payment for the education of children is often sent in a separate monthly installment and is always listed as a priority. For example, Michelle's mother sends about \$50 weekly for foodstuffs and a separate \$200 monthly for tuition fees, and the wife of Virgilio sends tuition fees directly to the schools. The educational investment in children takes precedence over investments, sometimes to the detriment of the house or a lessening of quality of living. Alvin, after starting construction on a second story (and then firing the lazy and wasteful crew), has been trying to complete the build by himself. He has very little time to spare, however, and so there are sections of the roof that are covered in only tarpaulin. Michelle's family is in a similar situation and are barely able to live on the weekly food allowance but would not dream of taking money away from the children's education. Some

Box 1 — Analyn

Analyn is a 41-year-old mother of four who works as a professor at a university in Cebu. Her husband, John, has been in Qatar for the past 5 years in real estate. His remittances amount to about 70% of his earnings, which helps the perception that working abroad earns you lots of money. This is most evident in the story of when John's sister they buy a lot for themselves close to hers. It seemed to be a manageable lot at first, but when the contract was drawn, the area was larger and more expensive. Another, well-off brother offered to pay the entire amount of the lot as a loan for Analyn and John, who now pay back 20 000 pesos each month to the brother. Analyn complains that the lot is too far away and is never used, making it a useless purchase, but understands why John went through with it: "He was not really forced but felt lots of pressure and loyalty." In this way, one can see the effect of remittances and family ties on purchasing.

respondents told us that they live hand-to-mouth and cite tuition as a priority, saving money by cutting expenditures elsewhere. For instance, older male children pick up a job for their own pocket money and to relieve their burden on their household income. Other respondents mentioned wearing *ukai ukai* (outlet clothing) to save money.

Health and social security are also listed as investments. One of our respondents mentioned funeral insurance as a regular expense to which remittances contribute, and a few more talked about vital daily medicines that remittances allow them to purchase. Migrants' families sometimes keep a fund saved in case of sickness or emergency, but as mentioned above, saving is usually accomplished on the migrant's side.

There are some differences between remittance receivers' behavior by gender, however. While all our respondents seem to have figured out a system for dividing expenditures, non-migrating women need to discuss new expenses with their OFW husband more so than vice versa. We believe that at least part of this is because there is pressure for the woman to remain "indoors" as a housewife, and so she is more reliant on the money generated by her husband than a non-migrating man is. Nevertheless, as we have seen before with Alvin, employment of both spouses does not guarantee stress-free living, and his household relies just as much on his wife's remittances as on his double shifts.

There is not always agreement between remittance sending and spending behaviors. Many respondents argue that there is often misunderstanding between the partners. The husband of Maricel, for instance, thinks he sends enough money but Maricel thinks that he does not understand the expenses. She believes that it is common for OFWs to (mistakenly) think that it is easy living at home and receiving money, but they do not see the number and magnitude of expenditures. Interestingly, while most (large) expenditures in the Philippines are discussed, this is rarely the case for how the money is spent abroad.

There is a striking difference between women that earn their own income and they who rely entirely on the earnings of their husbands. All three employed women stated that their income is of great significance, since it makes them independent. Analyn advised other women whose husbands would be abroad: "Also have own income, be independent you never know what happens. If you just rely on what he is earning, he might have other plans than you have. In that case you have your own money."

Impact on Gender and Household Roles

Males as well as females experienced an increase in workload and responsibilities in the household and both took over the tasks of the migrated spouse. Comparably, most women take care of everything in the house by themselves, and only a minority of respondents (including men) hired a helper of any sort, which can be explained because the men are employed while the unemployed women are able to focus full-time on household chores.

The workload of men seems to be more significantly increased in the absence of their wives if they hold regular employment, however. They appear to suffer a triple burden of housekeeping, child rearing and earning a living (as one respondent exclaimed, "I'm the one singing and the one dancing!"). However, men are more likely to hire help from a person outside of the household, be it professional help or another family member such as a niece or mother(-in-law). Men place great importance on their role as income earners of the household, especially when

their wives earn a higher salary abroad. Virgilio states: "I don't want to have no work while my wife is working abroad, it's too unfair for her, and it's too unfair for my masculinity. I feel like I'm just a wife during that time: I will tend to my children, I will bring them to school, so that's the work of a housewife. It's not me, it's not my type." This sense of masculinity is also illustrated in the same of men asking for additional money from their mothers or wives. Alvin says that he very often does not have money to maintain expenses, but he does not ask his wife to send more money even though they are facing poverty. Additionally, Liberato's sons refuse to ask their mother for more allowance after they spend it all (to the pride of Liberato who explains that they are becoming "macho").

Other family members often take over some parenting roles, especially elder children and in particular daughters. (The interviewed daughters feel responsible and do not want to let their non-migrating parent do all of the work alone). In practice, this means that they take care of the children and household chores, like cleaning, washing and providing food. Michelle, for example, accepts her mother's remittances, forms a budget, and takes care of expenses and family chores; it seems that her father does few of these things and lives on his own money. Liberato, for example, transits between the city, where two of his children study and live with their grandparents, and province where his three other children live, with their maternal grandmother in residence. Alvin's older children also watch over the younger when he takes additional shifts. None of our respondents hired a helper to take care of child rearing, instead asking them to take care of chores.

The decision of which spouse will migrate depends usually on prospective job availability and economic factors, but also places much emphasis on "traditional" gender roles. Many respondents highlighted the importance of the role of women as housewife and mother, and that of men as provider and protector. These roles were played out in the case of Grace, who suggested to her husband that he should search for employment abroad since he did not earn enough to afford food for his family or to buy milk for the baby. Juan refused at first to migrate, but Grace made him feel guilty by talking about going abroad herself and he submitted, since they both thought that the children should be raised by their mother and thus Grace should remain at home. Other female respondents argue that they would have loved to migrate, to see more of the world and expand their experience, but this was not an option for since they had to take care of the family. The holding of a "regular" or full-time position usually trumps these traditions, however; Arnel and his wife decided that she would migrate since he had more of a chance of being promoted in the near future (he did).

Box 2 — Liberato

Liberato is a 43-year-old father of five who splits his time between a house in the province and the residence of his father in Cebu City. His wife, Sheryl, has been working abroad as a human resources manager for 11 years now in various locations: Taiwan, Hong Kong, and now Canada. Liberato manages a piggery and subsistence farm on his provincial land, while the children there take care of most of the chores under the direction of their grandmother. Sheryl sends money back to the family through Western Union accounts, primarily to Liberato but each child and the grandmother have an "allowance" account. Liberato is not aware of how much money the rest of his family receives and he does not ask. He sometimes saves money in the bank so that he does not have to ask his wife for more money. He told us about a trip to the hospital for his son, where he was turned away because he did not have any money. Liberato had brought his bank statements, however, and with some negotiation with the hospital clerk, his son was treated. In this case, having saved remittance money contributed directly to lifesaving.

Despite all this, both mothers and fathers are missed when they migrate to another country. Arvin, whose mother has been in Ireland nearly all of his life, does not feel that he has a close relationship with his mother and that he feels, "lonely, a little bit of empty." Many respondents mention that the absence of a parent is compensated by material goods, mainly electronics like laptops or game controllers, or by extra allowance. Besides the children, spouses also miss the physical presence of their partner. They miss a companion to share their sorrows with, especially in difficult situations such as health issues, money problems, and concerns about the children. Women also face difficulties with feelings of security without the presence of their husbands. Many female respondents reported feeling more afraid at night and missing a man to protect them, which is somewhat compensated for by having older sons in the household. Mary Jane talked about her mother's worries, which worsened after thieves broke into their house. Since then, her mother goes to bed early and wakes at 02:00 to make sure the family is safe and to begin household tasks. Fathers especially are also missed when it comes to the male roles of the discipline and education of the children.

Despite all of the changes that occur when a family member goes abroad, families remain close by keeping in frequent communication. Internet communication (chat and email) and cell phone were mentioned in every interview and with the exception of seafarers' families, who are often unable to communicate regularly, most families talk to their relatives at least several times a week. Beyond parenting, social control between spouses can be maintained across borders in this way: Juan and Melanie speak to each other by cell phone and internet and Juan wants to know what she is doing, who she is with, and where at any given moment. She is not bothered by the strict control of Juan, saying that it is very important to have good communication, there is too much temptation and competition when a spouse migrates and infidelity can occur, resulting in what she thinks are many broken homes. Virgilio also told us that his wife's family hears of anything out of the ordinary from his neighbors, whose "eyes will become big if I am home late" and he will become the "talk of the town". Thus, he comes straight home after work and does not allow many visitors into his home. Other respondents voiced an opinion that communication was important for newly separated migrant families so that everyone knows what is going on and all household members understand each other's situations.

Impact on Decision-making and Power Relations

Gender has made a lot of impact on the decision-making processes and results, sometimes contributing to the empowerment of women, but often strengthening traditional gender roles. Whether these empowering aspects remain after the migration has not been explicitly proven though and the short term of this research did not allow for a conclusion in this regard.

Female migrants seem to feel more empowered than their home-staying peers do. While most have migrated for economic reasons, the wife of Ephraim works abroad as a way to see the world. Ephraim's household does not need the extra money, and Ephraim said he just wants her to be happy, despite his reservations of her leaving. There is still a strong pull for women to become exclusively housewives. Many women in this occupation described themselves to us as "plain housewives", a motif that exhibits an amount of pride and modesty (some of the men used this term as well). It is seen as a traditional familial obligation for the breadwinner-husband to work abroad when necessary and for the wife to stop working and become a housewife, a story that we have heard several times. However, some would rather contribute economically to the household, such as Catherine, who was able to save and buy a sewing

machine to do piecework at home. Joan also feels that, “it is not good when you are dependent on your husband” and “it should be that the wife also earns an income”. Significantly, some women unquestioningly obliged their husband when he wants them to stay home without providing a reason: one woman says, “That was my husband’s choice, he don’t want me to work” and “I don’t know why”. These feelings of obligation seem to be performances of the gender roles and are not empowering women.

Communication and trust is seen as important to wives in order to maintain a good relationship with their husband. Grace reports that her husband rarely asks what remittances are spent on, saying that he knows she is a good housewife and that no explanation is needed. Her husband also has access to her friend, who reassures him on her location but she is usually at home. When it is hard to keep in contact (e.g., Joan’s husband is a seafarer and only calls once a month) the wife is in charge of all spending decisions, including unexpected large purchases, but also takes responsibility for problems: Joan says, “But is also my problem, when there is no money”. While the power of the purse has been in the hands of Filipina women for some time, the freedom of purchases and trust involved therein thus indicates an increase in women’s power in the household. On the other hand, some women reported incidents that would indicate a lack of trust. The husband of Christine similarly tries to monitor his son, asking Christine where the child is, what he is doing, what he has eaten, etc. Melanie must let her husband know exactly whom she will be around at any particular time, and he sometimes calls to verify her guests or friends by speaking directly to them. The distrust often does not extend to male migrants.

There is a double standard when it comes to the potential for a spouse to carry out extramarital affairs abroad. For women, the mere possibility is enough to prevent them from becoming economic migrants. When pondering working abroad herself, Joan said she was dissuaded because there “is a lot of temptation of women”. Similarly, Christine says, “When a female goes to somewhere else, they get easily tempted to cheat with a foreigner, because of the money”. She says her husband sees that happening very often: “That is also why he does not want me to work, because of all the temptation”. One of our male respondents reported having an affair while his wife was abroad, although he said he broke it off and we are not sure if his wife ever knew. He told us that it was brief, immediately after his wife departed, and he was reminded that his wife was making a sacrifice by being away and soon afterward stopped “fooling around”. As mentioned above, Virgilio reported an intensification of monitoring by his migrant wife after she departed that extended to her family and neighbors “keeping tabs” on him. According to Pingol (2001, p. 92), there is a “double standard of morality which is greatly challenged by the phenomenon of migration. Men, as well as women, committed indiscretions even before women started leaving for abroad. Women were expected to forgive while men were less likely to forgive”. It seems that increased communication hand-in-hand with trust has a positive effect on the marriage.

Conclusions

We can make several conclusions from our research in Cebu City. First, even when the geographical unity of a household disappears when a family member goes abroad, most of the common tasks and unity remains. This interrelation makes the households transnational, meaning ongoing activities between two or more social spaces beyond the borders of the nation-state. In the research, this can be concluded from the intensive communication and transactions between the OFW and the members behind that are still cooperating in cooperative

manner.

From our conversations, it can be concluded that the majority of the income earned in a foreign country is spent mainly in the country of origin, leading to the idea that absence of a family member is replaced by a higher household budget (and propagating the “culture of migration”). However, the absence of a household member brings extra burdens towards the non-migrating members. Aside from the financial changes in the household, significant social changes occur in families when a member goes abroad. It is hard to distinguish between the impact of remittances and the impact of migration, since the two factors are interrelated.

In this study in Cebu City, we observed trends aligning with the two forms of migration, namely whether the husband/father or the wife/mother migrates. The former has the least effect on a household and its relations. Family members take over tasks when a man goes abroad, especially their wives. These tasks are mainly family responsibilities, like taking charge of the family business, raising the children or controlling construction of property. However, what has not changed in this situation is the role of the husband as the main income earner. Male migration stimulates women to maintain their traditional roles as housewives, since the salary of the men increases by the migration and there is little need for additional income from the female spouses. Since the role of the women to be a mother and/or “plain housewife” is still favored by society (with much influence of the Catholic Church), this can be maintained when the income of the husband is sufficient to support this situation. A second reason can be explained because the migrating men still keep their role as head of the family even when he is abroad. Most men decide the amount of remittances that is sent to their families back home, and in many cases, their spouses are not even familiar with the total salary. The large majority of women were not externally employed and they totally depend on the foreign husband’s salary. It appears that this leads to a decrease in the negotiation power of women. Many women revealed their wish for a different career than being a full-time housewife, however the preference of their husband holds greater weight in this decision-making process. Within the household, the negotiation process does not change after migration, especially regarding expenditures. In addition, it is sometimes argued in the literature that remittances can lead to extra empowerment of women because of its opportunity for investment or greater freedom of spending. This conclusion cannot be found from this research. The extra burdens that come with migration do not outweigh the extra incomes. Some respondents showed their wish to start their own business or invest in their own education, but also mentioned that their increasingly time-consuming responsibilities prevent them from doing this. This evidence provides the conclusion that male migration reaffirms traditional gender roles and dynamics.

The situation appears different in the context of female migration. While men mostly remit to a single person (usually their spouse) who sometimes distributes to other family members, women often remit to additional individuals. Besides their husbands, female relatives also receive remittances, which are considered as an additional income and the women do not merely rely on this. Our research suggests that female migration leads to greater development opportunity and has a greater impact on the gender relations within the household since traditional relations are challenged. (The caveat to this conclusion is that all men in this study were employed and do not depend on their wives salary alone). This has led to greater communication between the spouses regarding spending decisions, which we argue leads to the empowerment of the female migrant. Whether these changes are temporary or permanent,

however, has not yet been explored in depth due to the longitudinal time requirement. The literature often paints “left-behind” husbands in a negative light due to their receiving a substantially increased income from their migrant wife, while conversely, the migrant wife is often portrayed in a viewpoint of “sacrifice and suffering” (Carling, 2005). While we readily admit that these cases do in fact exist, and that we have heard horrible stories from the spouses of migrants of both sexes, we believe it is dangerous to generalize either the migrant or the spouse of the migrant in such a way. We did not witness in our male respondents the “common” symptoms of unemployment, dropping of responsibilities, drunkenness, philandering, or other negative indications as a result of migration; while we indeed observed some examples of these behaviors, they in no way formed the majority of our sample and often seemed even to be isolated events as opposed to a chronic problem. Another frequent diatribe against nonmigrating husbands is their inability to raise the children due to the traditional view of the mother as the nurturing parent; on the contrary, we noted that men often “faced up to the challenge to [*sic*] child rearing just as their female counterparts have done” (Isaksen, Devi, & Hochschild, 2008, p. 65). We believe therefore that an over-generalization of “left-behind” husbands has been made, whether this is due to insufficient sampling (on our part or on the part of other authors), motive, self-fulfilling prophecy, the effects of few studies, or otherwise. The effect of this on policy can be great, in for example “the Philippine government’s [then-]current response insist[ing] that these women return home, because their absence is undermining the family” (Parreñas, 2002, p. 16), despite the obvious economic grievances this would cause. The government has since curtailed its sense of emergency but the sentiment remains. We therefore urge that policies aiming for female empowerment (e.g., breaking down gendered migration barriers) encourage the inclusion of fathers as primary parent.

As mentioned above, our findings affirm those of Pingol (2001) in many ways. As she found, the masculine role of the provider of the household in Filipino culture drives men’s migratory aspirations but contributes to their feelings of inadequacy when the wife migrates, but this was not seen as dramatically in our study. The wives of her respondents gained more control by migrating, as we also found, since they gain power as a major provider to the household income, can make decisions about their length of stay, and can decide how remittances will be spent. Despite the challenge to their masculinity, those respondents of Pingol who succeeded in becoming “househusbands” after their wife left gained a reputation as “adept housekeepers, chaste spouses and maternal fathers” (p. 229), traits our (gainfully employed) male respondents labeled themselves with pride. Comparing these two studies, our hypothesis is that the employment or employability of the father/husband determines whether he or his wife will migrate and whether a negative change in feelings of masculinity occurs if she migrates.

In summary, we find that gender roles are *challenged* by female migration and *reaffirmed* by male migration as a result of remittances. Female empowerment extends both to the female migrant and to those women to whom she remits, while male migration strengthens traditional household gender roles and makes it possible to maintain those dynamics. Communication between the migrant and his/her household provided the conduit for these dynamics to take place.

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