The Globalization of Transnational Labor Migration and the Filipino Family: A Narrative

James A. Tyner

Kent State University

Patterns of transnational migration have undergone rapid and dramatic shifts as a result of changes in the global economy. The countries and territories of Asia have especially been affected by globalizing processes as seen in the increased institutional regulation of transnational migration. Together, these changes in the global economy, transnational migration and institutional penetration have affected the formation and functions of families in the Asian region. Given the recency of these changes, many questions remain unanswered. How do government and private institutions, for example, influence familial relations and the migratory process? How are migrants' identities affected by these processes? Employing a narrative analysis, this paper examines the intersection of institutional regulations and the Filipino family. Specifically, I present the case of Lisa, a Filipina who formerly worked as a performing artist in Okinawa, and now resides in the United States. Through Lisa's story, I explore how institutional regulations provide opportunities and constraints on her migratory experiences, and how her changing familial situation affects her sense of self-identity. As such, this paper provides insights into the human experience associated with changing processes of globalization.

Introduction

Arising from structural transformations of the global economy, the magnitude and scope of transnational labor migration has increased precipitously. At present, an estimated 125 million people live and work outside

their country of origin (World Bank, 1995: 65). A sizeable portion of this migration, moreover, has occurred within the Asian region. In the process, transnational labor migration has impacted the formation and function of Asian families. In response to these changing conditions, researchers have directed their attention toward the role of institutions in facilitating transnational labor migration (Abella, 1992; Goss and Lindquist, 1995; Tyner, 1996b, 1999a, 1999c, 2000a,b). This body of literature, in particular, has emphasized the critical functions of government and private institutions in the patterning of migration. One area still missing from this literature, however, has been the nexus of institutions and migrant decision-making.

A second theme to emerge is the examination of the experiential aspects of migration and globalization. Kong (1999: 219), for example, maintains that there remains a need to understand the experiences of individuals who are enmeshed within current processes of globalization. Basch et al. (1994: 29) likewise advocate a greater concern on "migrants as builders of social fields" as well as the "construction and re-appropriation of practices and identities."

One aim of this paper is to bridge these bodies of literature—the role of institutions on migrant decision-making, and the experiential aspects of migration, both set within a context of globalization. My guiding question is straightforward: How is migration experienced within the context of changing family formations and how does this interact with institutional regulations? My central thesis is that the current form of institutional regulation is a consequence of present global economic reorganization. Subsequently, transnational labor migration is experienced within these larger institutional and structural contexts. To address this question I present the narrative of Lisa, a Filipina contract labor migrant who worked as an exotic dancer in Japan. I illustrate, through her migration history, the intricate association between institutional control and individual action, and how these impinge on family formation and personal identity.

Narrative analysis is currently enjoying a renaissance in the study of migration. As Watkins (1999: 299) writes, "For too long ... researchers have examined migration from the outside, gathering numeric data through surveys or census tabulations and drawing inferences about individual action." Conversely, narratives provide inside views, and offer insight into the personal goals and life strategies of migrants (Watkins, 1999).

Globalization and Transnational Labor Migration

Recent changes in the global political economy have had a profound impact on the lives of people. Advances in telecommunications and transportation

systems, especially, have "diminished" the global and facilitated the movement of capital and commodities, people and ideas. On one hand, these changes constitute a continuation of earlier trends and thus pose no radical departure from earlier periods. Previous advents in communication (e.g., the telegraph) and transportation (e.g., the shift from sailing ships to steam ships), for example, clearly impacted earlier patterns of migration. On the other hand, however, I agree with Basch et al. (1994: 24) who contend that "current transnationalism marks a new type of migrant experience, reflecting an increased and more pervasive global penetration of capital."

The current phase of economic restructuring is broadly characterized by changes in global investment patterns, with new centers of capital accumulation emerging in previously peripheral locations (e.g., Central America, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia) and a concomitant decline in industrial production in core regions. Within more developed regions there has been a decline in the secondary sector, coupled with an expansion in both tertiary and quaternary sectors. In addition, the emergence of a new international division of labor, characterized by an increased differentiation of labor on the basis of ethnicity, gender, and geography has occurred.

These structural changes in the global economy have impacted patterns and processes of transnational labor migration (Sassen, 1988). Five mutually reinforcing trends are readily identifiable. First, there has been a globalization of migration. Not only are more countries involved in systems of migration than previous eras; there has also been a re-orientation of migration flows. Thus, while there has been a decline of labor migration to traditional receiving states of Western Europe (e.g., England), other Southern European states—long associated with emigration—have become important centers of immigration (e.g., Italy and Greece). The oil-rich countries of the Middle East (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Kuwait), as well as the newly industrializing regions of Asia (e.g., South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan), likewise have become important sites of both capital accumulation and labor in-migration. Second, there has been an acceleration of migration in that the volume of migration—for both sending and receiving countries—has increased tremendously since 1945 (Castles and Miller, 1993). Third, migration systems are more diversified. Not only are more countries incorporated within systems of migration, there is a greater diversity of migrant types, including settler migration systems, student migration systems, contract labor migration systems, skilled labor migration systems, and refugee movements (Skeldon, 1992).

Transnational migration, fourthly, has become increasingly feminized (Heyzer, 1989; Zlotnik, 1995). In the Philippines, for example, which is the world's largest exporter of government-sponsored contract labor migration, over 55 percent of all migrant workers are women (Tyner, 2000a).

Reflecting the pervasiveness of gendered stereotypes and the international division of labor, the increase in women migrants is accounted for by the observation that migrant women are usually concentrated in certain occupations, including domestic services, entertainment, and health care services (Cheng, 1996:139). Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Malaysia, especially, have emerged as key destinations for female foreign domestic workers (Cheng, 1996; Huang and Yeoh, 1996; Wong, 1996; Chin, 1997).

Lastly, transnational migration has become increasingly commodified. Government and private institutions assume an important regulatory function in the global mobility of labor and the trend, at least within the Asian region, is toward even greater institutional involvement (Abella, 1992: 269). In 1974, for example, the Philippines established the Overseas Employment Development Board (OEDB) and the National Seamen's Board (NSB) to oversee the recruitment and deployment of land-based and sea-based workers respectively; these agencies, along with the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) were later merged to form the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). Similarly, in 1976 Bangladesh established the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, and in 1980 Sri Lanka established the Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment. And while it is true that earlier systems of transnational labor migration—including both slavery and indentured servitude—were highly regulated, it is also true that we now see a more globalized, and integrated, system of institutional control. Private labor recruiters in the Philippines, for example, may facilitate the movement of Indian textile workers to South Korea. Indeed, so interconnected are the institutional mechanisms of transnational labor migration, some researchers now allude to the existence of a labor migration 'industry' (Abella, 1992, 1993; Huguet, 1992; Tyner, 1998). Participants within this industry, whether they are government officials, private labor recruiters or employers, combine to manage, regulate and organize the global flow of transnational labor migration.

Transnational Labor Migration and the Filipino Family

Current processes of globalization, coupled with the emergence of more pervasive migration institutions, have significantly impacted the everyday lives of individuals and their families. As migrant workers respond to changing conditions of the international division of labor, and of changes in the global labor market, different family formations emerge. Researchers speak of seasonal orphans, solo parents, flexible citizens, and shadow households (Cruz, 1987; Ong, 1999). No matter the form, research indicates how familial relations assume a paramount role in the migratory process (Valenzuela Jr., 1999). In particular, family-derived social networks provide

information about modes of entry, employment opportunities and the adjustment process in destination societies.

Studies on Philippine migration likewise acknowledge the vital role performed by families in the migratory process (Arnold and Abad, 1985; Medina and Natividad, 1985; Lauby and Stark, 1988; Trager, 1988; Root and DeJong, 1991; Tyner, 1995; Parreñas, 2000). These studies, moreover, take as points of departure the concepts of obligation and reciprocity. Specific to the Philippines, assistance patterns within families are reciprocal and thus carry a sense of obligation, or *utang na loob* (translated as a debt of prime obligation). In addition, the social organization of personal obligations is amplified because kinship ties are composed of extended family members, including godparents who become "part of the family" through their participation in riturals such as baptisms or weddings. Within Philippine society, brothers and sisters often have separate godparents or sponsors (*ninongs* or *ninangs*) to look to as their benefactors (Pye, 1985: 125) and, as such, an individual's source of assistance, as well as debt, may not be found within the immediate nuclear family, but rather within a wider kin network. In this manner, Filipinos may make decisions through their association with uncles, aunts or cousins. Filipinos, concomitantly, are expected to repay these social debts. Failure to do so may result in being regarded as *walang hiya* (i.e., without shame), and may be accompanied by ridicule or alienation. Combined, therefore, the concepts of *utang na loob* and *hiya* are perceived to carry immense pressures and obligations within the household and to greatly inform the migration decision-making process.

Although cultural attributes of Philippine social structure conform readily with household strategies approaches, caution must be taken to not essentialize the Philippine family. As Pessar (1999: 582) contends, "Inspired by feminist scholarship, critics have objected to the notion that migrant households are organized solely on principles of reciprocity, consensus and altruism." To this end, researchers have challenged the presumption that migrant households, and especially those residing in lesser developed regions, are undivided by age, gender or family status (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Yung, 1995). As Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994: 55) explains, "Once we actually listen to the voices of ... immigrants, however, the notion that migration is driven by collective calculations or household-wide strategies becomes increasingly difficult to sustain."

Apart from the danger in reifying family strategies, household approaches characteristically fail to articulate the substantial activities of government and private institutions. The *opportunity* to migrate is often taken as given; individual migrants are presumed *a priori* to be able to pick and choose among a myriad of destinations. And yet, as this paper and other research documents, transnational labor migration is highly regulated.

Bureaucratic procedures of recruitment and deployment set in place tangible parameters within which individuals—and families—must negotiate. As such, the transnational mobility of individuals is neither a simple nor inevitable process. It is to this bureaucratic context I now turn.

The Philippines' Overseas Employment Program

Kelly (2000:16) writes that "while the Philippines has long been integrated within the world economy; the nature of this relationship has shifted significantly in the last few decades. He further contends that "the historical experience of globalization in the Philippines cannot be understood in terms of exogenous forces bearing down upon a passive and pliable site" (Kelly, 2000:16). Thus, the emergence of the Philippines' overseas employment program must be viewed as a deliberate attempt by the Philippine state to more readily incorporate itself into the changing global political economy (Tyner, 1999a, 2000a).

Prior to the 1970s, governmental involvement in overseas employment was minimal. In part, the Philippine state was concerned over the possible negative effects of a 'brain drain'. However, following a period of political and economic instability, the Philippine state reoriented its stance on overseas employment. Corresponding with a shift toward agribusiness and export-oriented industrialization, the Philippine state began in the 1970s to actively encourage the export of temporary contract labor. Codified in the 1974 Labor Code, and subsequent amendments, an intricate and flexible system of government and private institutions—dominated by the POEA—emerged to coordinate the movement of labor in order to facilitate the circulation and accumulation of capital (through remittances), as well as to reduce levels of un- and under-employment (Ball, 1997; Gonzalez III, 1998).

At present, the Philippines' overseas employment program is predicated on a symbiotic relationship between government organizations (principally the POEA, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Department of Labor and Employment) and private recruitment agencies. Clearly, though, the front-line activities of recruitment and deployment operate through the doors of private recruitment agencies. Government institutions, for their part, assume a more regulatory function and oversee issues of market promotion, agency licensing, foreign employer accreditation and worker welfare provision.

Combined, the activities of both government and private agencies have precipitated a phenomenal growth in the spatial expansion and numerical growth of transnational labor migration. An estimated, six million Filipinos live and work outside of the Philippines. Of these migrants, approximately

2.45 million (41 percent) are classified as temporary overseas contract workers; the remainder includes 1.76 million (29 percent) intending settlement migrants and 1.79 million (30 percent) undocumented workers (Gonzalez III 1998: 36). Spatially, these migrants live and work in over 160 countries and territories.

Overall patterns reflect shifting trends in the global economy. In the 1970s Philippine migrant workers were deployed predominantly toward the oil-producing states of the Middle East; by 1997, however, destinations in Asia assumed dominance. In 1984, for example, Middle East destinations accounted for 83 percent of all deployed land-based Philippine migrant workers. In 1997, conversely, this region accounted for only 40 percent. The Asian share of Philippine workers, though, increased from just 13 percent to over 48 percent during this same period. This trend is partly a reflection of more liberalized 'guest worker' programs in Taiwan, a continued demand for domestic workers in Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and a shift in labor demand in the Middle East (Cheng, 1996; Wong, 1996; Chin, 1997).

Philippine overseas employment is also significantly segmented by sex and occupation. In 1997, for example, female workers were concentrated overwhelmingly within the service sector (89.5 percent) whereas male workers were more likely to find work within the production sector (82.4 percent). The sexual-occupation segregation of Philippine migrant workers is not formally sanctioned by the POEA (Tyner, 1994). Rather, it is through the day-to-day, informal manifestations of patriarchy within the institutionalized labor migration system that accounts for gendered patterns of migration (Tyner, 1996b, 2000a).

Missing from many accounts of Philippine overseas employment is the prevalence of female overseas performing artists. This is the case despite the fact that 24 percent of all Philippine female new hires for 1997 were performing artists (30,106 out of 123,492). Moreover, 99.3 percent of these women entertainers were bound for a single destination, Japan. Viewed alternatively, we find that of the 31,315 Philippine new hires for Japan in 1997, 95 percent were female performing artists. In short, lost and ignored among the bulk of studies on globalization, capital accumulation, and industrial restructuring, is a substantial sub-system of sex-based transnational labor migration.

The migration of female performing artists differs significantly from other transnational labor flows (*see* Skrobanek et al., 1997). In part, the mobility of performing artists—who very often are channeled into various sex sectors—is related to a continued demand for sexual entertainment in destination societies. Additionally, the migration of Filipinas, specifically, into overseas entertainment sectors is associated with broader changes in

the sex industry. Through the efforts of governmental, as well as non-governmental organizations such as the Philippine-based STOP (Stop Trafficking of Pilipinas), for example, numerous anti-prostitution campaigns were launched throughout the 1980s to eliminate sex tours. However, campaigns against sex tourism did not eliminate the 'demand' for sexual excursions, but rather forced a spatial change of venue (Tyner, 1997). In short, systems of sex migration replaced, to a degree, systems of sex tourism. And hence, coincident with the Philippines' pursuit of overseas employment, the widespread recruitment and deployment of migrant workers into the sex sectors of foreign countries emerged.

The Migration of Philippine Overseas Performing Artists

Of all sectors of Philippine overseas employment, arguably the most regulated is that of overseas performing artists. As currently codified, the process of recruiting and deploying performing artists is a maze of bureaucratic licensing and accreditation procedures. An outgrowth of the highly-publicized death of Maricris Sioson—a Filipina performing artist who died in Japan in 1991 under suspicious circumstances—the current system is predicated on a series of training, testing and licensing procedures (*see* Tyner, 1997; POEA, 1998). In this section, I briefly outline the regulations for the recruitment and deployment of overseas performing artists.

Recruitment, according to the *Administrative Rules and Regulations* of the POEA, is defined as "any act canvassing, contracting ... hiring or procuring workers and includes referrals, contract services, promoting or advertising for employment" (Nolledo, 1993: 127). In the Philippines, the direct recruitment by overseas employers is illegal since the state has determined that migration is better controlled and the benefits more likely to accrue to the Philippines if the process operates through licensed recruitment agencies (Goss and Lindquist, 1995: 337). Consequently, the Philippines' encouragement of overseas employment has been attended by a phenomenal rise in the number of private recruitment agencies. Indeed, as of 1998, the POEA maintained a listing of 2,030 private agencies. It should be noted, however, that not all of these agencies are engaged in the recruitment and deployment of performing artists, as the POEA requires a separate license for this activity.

There are many forms of recruitment strategies, ranging from passive to active techniques (Tyner, 1999b). Passive techniques (e.g., the posting of job openings on a private labor recruiter's window or bulletin board, the use of television, radio, and newspaper advertisements) are those where the worker-applicant (potential migrant) seeks out employment opportunities; active techniques, conversely, include those methods where the employ-

ment opportunity is taken to the potential worker. This is most readily identifiable through the actual solicitation of applicants, wherein labor recruiters go into the towns and villages in an attempt to recruit potential workers. Although no studies have empirically documented the prevalence of recruitment techniques for performing artists, anecdotal evidence as well as personal observation suggests that the active recruitment of workers is most prevalent. Moreover, anecdotal evidence also indicates that a perceived social stigma attached to 'entertainment' work imparts spatial obstacles in the recruitment process. Elsewhere (Tyner, 1996a:85-86) I indicate that during the 1980s recruitment agents noted that many performing artists originated from rural provinces in the Visayas and, eager to exploit this finding, these agencies established regional offices in Cebu. The women, however, were unwilling to apply for entertainment work at these local offices and preferred instead to travel 350 miles to Manila. The women's reasoning, according to the agents with whom I spoke, was that they (the women) were ashamed because friends and family might see them applying for overseas work as entertainers. In recognition that women may be less willing to apply for work locally, and hence prefer to be processed through Manila, many agencies enlist the services of 'talent scouts' (sometimes referred to as 'head-hunters') in the recruitment of workers.

Once recruited, potential performing artists are required to undergo an extensive period of training. Official guidelines mandate that the training period last 90 days, in which 30 days are "devoted to value formation, household management, personal health and hygiene and operations of the government agencies involved in their deployment" and another 60 days spent on "skills training with professional trainers" (POEA, 1998: 4). All training is to be done at a properly accredited training studio. As of December 1997, the POEA maintained a listing of 334 licensed training centers. Following the completion of a training program, according to official guidelines, prospective performing artists are tested on their abilities. Guidelines indicate that this is based on work attitude, job understanding, moral values and skills competency.

Having successfully completed a period of training and testing, the potential performing artist is given a Certificate of Competency. This certificate bears the picture, job type, code number and signature of the applicant. The original certificate is then officially endorsed by the POEA for issuance of an Artist Record Book (ARB). This document contains information such as the worker's name, date of birth, photograph, thumbprint and physical description (e.g., eye color, hair color, height, weight). The artists' skill category, place of training and testing, and assigned destination is also indicated. As stipulated by POEA guidelines, only workers with authorized

and valid ARBs are *legally* allowed to obtain overseas employment as performing artists.

The final stage in the deployment of overseas performing artists is the booking. According to the POEA (1998:13), a booking confirmation is a document prepared by a licensed recruitment agency that specifies where the artist will be employed, and under what conditions. Pertinent information includes the names of the licensed recruitment agency, training center, and employment site, as well as personal and salary information.

As the foregoing discussion indicates, transnational labor migration is neither a simple process, nor free from institutional parameters. Rather, there are numerous interstices within the migratory process in which government and private institutions have been incorporated. Having thus sketched broadly the legal machinations for the recruitment, training, testing and deployment of performing artists, I now turn my attention to the story of Lisa. In so doing, my aim, to reiterate, is to tease out the impact of institutional activities and household structure on the migratory experience of Lisa.

Lisa's Story

I met Lisa,[1] a 30-year-old Filipina, via a mutual friend. Lisa is currently married and lives in a medium sized city in the northeastern United States with her husband and three children. Over the course of our conversations—attended by a mutual friend who periodically served as interpreter—I gained an understanding of Lisa's travels, from the Philippines to Japan and finally to her current place of residence, and how her spatial mobility affected her sense of identity within a context of familial change.

Lisa grew up in a small village near a major US military installation in the northern Philippines. Her father, Reynaldo, was a carpenter; her mother, Evelyn, sold vegetables at the market. Lisa is the third of six children. Her eldest brother, Gerardo, died when Lisa was very young. Other siblings include Lisa's older sister (Maria), two younger brothers (Eduardo and Ben), and a younger sister (Tess)

Life was hard for Lisa and her family. Lisa describes her family as being relatively poor; she recalls that there were many occasions in which the parents worried about having enough food for the next day. According to Lisa, her parents supported Maria most, even to the neglect of the other children. Previous research (e.g., Lauby and Stark, 1988) indicates that parents often rely on daughters to supplement their income because,

[1] All the names of people and places have been changed to ensure anonymity.

traditionally, daughters maintain close ties with their family of origin, even after marriage. Lisa explains, however, that her parents looked to Maria for support not because of gendered, but rather generational, expectations. In other words, if Gerardo had not died, he would have been expected to provide for the family. In any event, Lisa's parents utilized any surplus income that may be acquired to provide for a decent education for Maria. In this way, despite their poverty, Maria was able to attend a private school. Certainly not indicative of a unified household strategy, Maria later ran off with a boyfriend. Lisa notes that, in retrospect, her parents regret investing all of their money on one daughter.

To help her family, Lisa dropped out of middle school and began working in a candy factory. She explains that she felt sorry for her parents. It was during this time that Tess, then 13 years old (but looking, according to Lisa, much older), was approached by a distant cousin. This cousin talked excitedly about opportunities to work and earn substantial sums of money in Japan. Tess, whom Lisa describes as very impetuous, was eager to look into this possibility. That evening Lisa, Tess, and their father arranged to have dinner in the city with the cousin. Also present were two Japanese men. Over the course of the meal, the Japanese men worked to impress the family. Enough food was ordered, for example, that Lisa and her family were able to take food home for the other household members.

Conversation focused on the seemingly unlimited possibilities of employment and success in Japan. Reynaldo, however, grew increasingly suspect over the course of the meal. The two Japanese men, Reynaldo ascertained, did not operate through a recruitment agency. They also gave no indication of a manager or any other authority figure. Mostly, though, Reynaldo was concerned that his daughter was too young. The Japanese recruiters, however, attempted to assure Reynaldo that they could take care of all arrangements, including visas, passports and contracts.

After the meeting, the incident dropped from conversation. Lisa explains that it simply was not a subject of discussion. However, the seed was planted. For both Lisa and Tess, the prospect of working in Japan remained an intriguing possibility. Prior to this time Lisa had never considered overseas employment; she was simply unaware of the possibility of migrating to a different country for work.

A few months later Lisa, Tess and another cousin were sitting at a neighborhood store. Ironically this cousin herself was waiting to meet a labor recruiter to talk about the prospect of working in Japan. Incidentally, as these two episodes indicate, at least for Lisa, the possibility of employment in Japan was ever-present. Through family members, friends and even strangers, it appeared as if everyone was aware of work in Japan. On this occasion, Lisa recalls, the recruiter (a Filipino) appeared to visually

inspect her and her sister. He said that he wanted to recruit both Lisa and Tess. Remembering the earlier episode with the two Japanese men, though, Lisa was skeptical. That evening she spoke about the matter with her parents. This recruiter, Lisa explained, appeared to have legitimate credentials.

The decision to migrate, Lisa contends, was hers alone. At the time, she felt that Japan offered more opportunities than working at fast-food outlets or a factory. But more so, Lisa explains, she saw in Japan an opportunity to assert her independence, to be on her own. She was tired of asking for new shoes, and being told that there was no money. But in Japan, Lisa dreamed, she would have the ability to buy whatever she desired. Yes, she explains, she wanted to help her family. But *utang na loob* did not hang like a spectre over her decision. Opportunities in her village were limited, and Lisa wanted to take advantage of this one. She looked for her own independence—both financially and also personally.

Was Lisa concerned about the stigma of working in Japan—of being labeled a *Japayuki*?[2] Were her parents troubled? With hindsight, Lisa concedes that, yes, at first, some relatives and friends disapproved. However, when she returned from Japan for the first time, laden with material goods, everyone suddenly became her friend. With a laugh, Lisa refers to these people as 'plastic'.

Both Lisa and Tess began the process of working in Japan together. The Filipino recruiter arranged for the sisters to travel to Manila—the next day—by bus at the recruiters' expense. Once in Manila, Lisa and Tess moved into a large dormitory-like building—the talent studio. The building itself was divided into living quarters, dance floors, meeting rooms and other various offices. The owner / manager of this studio was a Filipina; her husband was Japanese-Filipino. Lisa does not know the history of the owner, of whether she herself was a former performing artist. What she does know is that the managers owned two homes, one in the Philippines and the other in Japan. Approximately 30 to 40 other women and men lived and trained in the studio.

Life, during her trainee period, was regimented. Lisa and the other trainees conducted aerobics in the morning, followed by dance routines in the afternoon and evening. The training was also exceptionally long; Lisa's

[2] The term *Japayuki* (or more specifically *Japayuki-san*) refers to women who work in Japan as entertainers. Translated as "Miss Go-to-Japan", the term is derived from *karayuki-san* ("Miss Go-to-China"), referring to Japanese women who were driven by poverty in the early twentieth century to go abroad as prostitutes in China, the Malay Peninsula, Indonesia and Africa (Lumbera, 1988: 1).

training period lasted for approximately one year. During this time Lisa was able to remain in contact with her family by phone; additionally, her parents were able to make periodic visits. In some respects, Lisa likens her experience to that of going away to college. And although Lisa never attended college, she compares her training to the stories and television shows she sees about moving away from home and living on campus.

Having completed her training period, Lisa was asked to perform at a 'booking' held at the studio. She, along with dozens of other women and men, were required to perform their dance routines behind a mirrored room divider. Hidden from sight were various club managers from Japan. Following her 'audition', Lisa was offered, and accepted, a six-month contract to work in a nightclub in Okinawa.

The nightclub in which Lisa lived and worked was a two-story establishment. Downstairs were living quarters; upstairs was the bar / dance floor. Although some clubs in Japan have both male and female performers, including transvestites, this club staffed only female performers. The majority of the clientele, were United States Marines.

The daily life of Lisa and the other performers was routinized. They had free time between 1 pm and 4 pm. The club would open around 6:30 or 7:00 in the evening (unless it was payday, in which case the club opened earlier). Normally the club would close around 2 am but again, on paydays, the club might stay open until 8 am the next morning. Dancing was, of course, required in the club. The women were expected to perform a set of dances throughout the evening. Nudity was not permitted, but the women did wear revealing clothes. For the club, though, dancing was the draw; profits hinged on the purchase of drinks. Work in the club, therefore, revolved around a drinks-quota system. Performers were required to fill a monthly quota of 800 tickets, wherein each drink was worth a specified number of tickets. A $10 drink, for example, might be worth one ticket. The club managers kept track of the number of tickets each performer collected. It was extremely difficult to fulfill a quota of 800 tickets per month. On average, Lisa recalls, most women brought in around 500 tickets. If they continuously failed to bring in an adequate number of tickets, Lisa explains, they risked deportation, regardless of the number of time remaining on their contracts. According to Lisa, therefore, her main job was to encourage the customers to buy as many drinks as possible. This set up an atmosphere of competition among the performing artists, as clients signified tickets which themselves signified financial gain and job security. Significantly, this quota system—as I discuss in the next section—affected Lisa's attitudes later in life.

Given that contracts for performing artists are six months in duration, Lisa made repeated sojourns to Japan. On one occasion while working in

Japan, Lisa began dating Steve, a US marine. Looking back, Lisa explains that she never intended to find a husband in Japan. Moreover, Lisa is adamant that she did not date Steve simply as a stepping-stone to the United States. Nevertheless, Lisa's relationship with Steve resulted in her becoming pregnant and, as such, she was forced to stop working in Japan. The nightclub, Lisa explains, does not allow entertainers to continue working if they are pregnant.

Back in her hometown, Lisa gave birth to a girl. Steve had promised that he would follow her to the Philippines to marry her. Lisa remembers thinking that she would probably never see him again but, to her relief, Steve did come. Lisa's pregnancy, wedding, and subsequent migration to the United States, however, wrought significant changes to her life. In the following section I explore more explicitly some themes that illustrate how her migration history are affected by and in turn influence personal and familial dynamics.

Lisa's Self-Identity and Migration Experiences

Through Lisa's narrative we gain insight into the different aspects of familial relations in Olongapo, Manila, Okinawa and the United States. In short, we become attuned to the contingency of familial change. Different contexts impart varied expectations and opportunities and, consequently, Lisa assumed and experienced different familial positions while in her hometown, in Manila, Okinawa, and the United States.

Lisa's self-identity, as well as her conceptualization of family, was transformed through her migratory experiences. Within the literature on Philippine international migration, women are often presumed to take the lead. Daughters, wives, and mothers are perceived to fulfill familiar obligations (Lauby and Stark, 1988; Trager, 1988; Root and DeJong, 1991). DeDios (1992: 47) writes that "Filipinas are primed by orientation and socialization to take on the role of a 'sacrificial lamb'." Medina (1991: 128) contends that women "continue to shoulder the greatest responsibility of family care: it is the wife, mother, sister, or daughter who is the primary care-giver." In Lisa's narrative, we see that her eldest sister was primed to become, in essence, the 'sacrificial lamb' for the family. As events unfolded, however, this did not materialize and, in fact, Lisa assumed much of the responsibility. Although spatially separated, Lisa was able to remit money to her family and help support her younger siblings' education. Maria, as indicated earlier, ran off with her boyfriend and to this day retains only minimal contact with the family.

Lisa also utilized this opportunity to assert her own independence. Certainly, economically, Lisa—through her experiences in Japan—may be

considered a *panalo*, or 'winner.' As Ballescas (1992: 88) indicates, *panalos* are the entertainers who are most conspicuous upon their return home. They arrive laden with money and material possessions such as stereos and televisions. However, Lisa speaks of acquiring more than simply material gains. Lisa's own sense of identity was fundamentally transformed. She saw herself, in Japan, as an independent woman; she was not an appendage of her family, but an individual who could help provide for her family in times of need.

In the United States, Lisa's sense of self was transformed yet again. She explains that following the birth of her daughter, her concept of family shifted from her earlier childhood family, with her parents, brothers, and sisters, to her incipient family. Rather than a focus on herself, and her parents and siblings, Lisa transferred her attention toward the health of her children.

Ironically, as Lisa's focus shifted, so too her perception of her ability to provide for her natal family. Lisa perceives her move to the US as one of downward mobility. Indeed, Lisa reminisces that her life was best not in the Philippines, not in the United States, but rather in Japan. In Japan, Lisa was able to move about; in the United States, without the ability to drive, Lisa feels constrained spatially. Economically, in the US, she feels more impoverished than when she lived in the Philippines. More important, however, is that she now feels *personally* impotent. Lacking in skills and education, she readily admits that she has few prospects. Her spatial and financial dependence on her husband does not sit well. After tasting independence in Japan, and assuming the important familial position as primary wage-earner, Lisa now feels frustrated that she is recast in a subservient role. Lisa intimates that this has placed a strain on her marriage.

The migratory experiences of Lisa must also be contextualized within the realm of her occupation, namely that of being an exotic dancer. For some, being an entertainer carries a stigma. As Ryan and Hall (2001: 92) write, sex workers are often marginalized as they are seen to be a threat to the social fabric. And yet, working as a performing artist, for Lisa, constituted an act of liberation. Admittedly, her experiences in Okinawa were largely positive. She was not physically beaten, raped or tortured as has happened to other entertainers (*see* Ballescas, 1992; Tyner, 1996; Skrobanek et al., 1997). Nevertheless, Lisa describes a sense of newly acquired confidence. Certainly, sex work is experienced as an integral part of many women's and men's lives around the world, and but it is not necessarily the sole defining activity around which their sense of self or identity is shaped (Kempadoo, 1998:3). Lisa has carried this over into her family life as she is able to maintain a separation between her (previous) employment and her (current) role as daughter, sister, mother and wife.

What empowered Lisa to resist the negative discourses surrounding employment as a performing artist? Consistent with other work conducted by and about sex workers, Lisa readily acknowledges her previous employment, but she views erotic dancing simply as a job. It was not, and is not, her defining feature. Dancing, and more broadly sex work, to Lisa, constituted an income-generating activity or form of labor, and not as an identity (*see* Kempadoo, 1998:3). Lisa thus views her former occupation, as do many other sex workers: Sex work becomes but work, like any other, and this attitude removes stigmas associated with victimization (Ryan and Hall, 2001:96).

Conclusions

This paper is based on the narrative of Lisa, a Filipina who migrated as a performing artist to Japan and now lives in the United States. My aim has been to juxtapose individual experiences within larger contexts of familial relations and institutional parameters. What can we derive from a single narrative? Josselson (1995:32-3) writes that:

> When we aggregate people, treating diversity as error variance, in search of what is common to all, we often learn about what is true of no one in particular. Narrative approaches allow us to witness the individual in her or his complexity and recognize that although some phenomena will be common to all, some will remain unique.

In this paper I have drawn upon one such story—and an unfinished, ongoing story—to gain insight into the complex, multifaceted processes of transnational migration, globalization and familial change. A central task of this study has been to explore the intersections of institutional control, individual action, and familial change. Cruz and Paganoni (1989:100-101) find in their study of 466 migrant and non-migrant women that:

> The respondents hardly understand themselves in relation to the nation as a whole. Their decision is certainly not dictated by the government program to reconstruct the national economy. Neither is it understood as contributing to the economic well-being of the host country. The national and international dimensions are simply overlooked by respondents who are caught up in the process of fleeing from oppressive economic situations, or acting out their own desire for something different and more liberating.

In Lisa's life and migration experiences we find verisimilitude with other studies. Her study touches on the different modes of migration, including both legal and illegal channels. Additionally, as Ballescas (1992)

and others emphasize, family members, whether immediate or distant, also are important in facilitating the recruitment of performing artists. Certainly Lisa's ability to obtain overseas employment was facilitated by extensive social networks of recruitment.

This narrative of Lisa, ultimately, is meant to illustrate the myriad aspects of institutional parameters and familial change. Her experiences are not purported to be generalizeable; nor are her experiences to be considered so unique as to preclude deepening our understanding of migration processes. Lisa understands her experiences as a pragmatic response to a particular context; she grew up within an impoverished household and saw employment in Japan as a means to improve not only her life but also that of her family. Not acting out of blind altruism, nor oppressed by patriarchal expectations, Lisa acted upon the most viable opportunity available at the time. Having availed of this opportunity, Lisa's life was further transformed. Her pregnancy and subsequent marriage was hasty and unplanned. These, too, set in place different opportunities and limitations.

In an earlier paper (Tyner, 1995) I examined the decision-making process of Philippine immigrants and argued that structural changes involving immigration policies, recruitment mechanisms, and citizenship rights are important variables in 'bounding' migratory experiences. The decision when, where, and if to move—whether to Japan, the United States, or any other location—is contingent upon familial, institutional and structural parameters. Through Lisa's narrative, I hope to add a sense of humanism to this process.

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