

**NAVIGATING LIVES:
The Spatiotemporality of the Gender Identity,
Agency and Subjectivity of Filipino Seamen's Wives**

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of

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DECLARATION

This work has not been previously accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Abstract

This thesis looks at international labour migration from the point of view of those who are 'left behind'. It focuses on the experiences of Filipino women married to Filipino seamen and specifically examines the spatiality and temporality of their gender identity, agency and subjectivity. Through the concept of social imaginary, it reconceptualises the role of these women in migration and considers them to play a more active role in migration processes than is suggested by the label 'left behind'. How the women were constrained by and creatively responded to their material and social relations not least those obtaining in the alternating absence and presence of their husbands is approached from a generative theory of subject formation. The spatiotemporality of these women's gender identity, subjectivity and agency is elaborated through critical analyses of aspects of their experiences and lives: 'on being on their own', routine and the temporal organization of family life, 'imagined communion' and intimacy, and autonomy. These analyses show the embeddedness of the women in material and social contexts including ties of reciprocity and indebtedness. They demonstrate the mutual implication of space and time, show their navigation of the spatial and temporal dimensions of their lives, as well as link the women's subjective and personal experiences to wider social and political narratives. The thesis concludes with a synthesis of and further reflection on the implications of the main arguments of the study. This includes a discussion of some specific strategies employed by the women to negotiate their spatiotemporal locations: 'waiting game', 'mental choreography' and 'gender negotiation'. Finally, it reflects on the study's theoretical, empirical, methodological and policy contributions.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: SPACES AND TIMES OF HOPE

*The most beautiful sea
hasn't been crossed yet.
The most beautiful child
hasn't grown up yet.
Our most beautiful days
we haven't seen yet.
And the most beautiful words I wanted to tell you
I haven't said yet.*

Nazim Hikmet¹

This Chapter 1 provides an outline discussion of the aims and substance of this thesis, and a synthesis of the chapters' arguments to show how they contribute to the realization of this project's objectives. The lines from Nazim Hikmet's poem with which I began this chapter allude to many of the themes of this thesis: space, time, horizon, the hopeful expectation for the future, and narrative. With some poetic licence, I speculate that they could also very well be the loving words of a waiting wife or husband longing for the other. They could be the utterances of a spouse steeling him- or herself in order to face and endure a life apart, or simply a difficult one. They could very well be a promise.

This thesis is about migration, and about what may be said as the promise of migration. For millions of Filipinos and other people from other parts of the world, migration is a means, sometimes the only one, of improving their social and economic possibilities. Even national governments see it as critical to their political and economic stability, if not survival. Indeed, states such as Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Bangladesh, but most especially the Philippines—described

¹ Nazim Hikmet, 9-10 pm. Poems. Trans. Randy Blasing and Muten Konuk. Quoted in John Berger, *Hold everything dear: Dispatches on survival and resistance*. London: Verso, 2007.

by Stephen Castles (2000a, p. 5) as ‘the labour-exporter *par excellence* of the current period (rather like Italy a generation ago)’—have labour export policies that are an integral component of their foreign and economic policies dependent as they are on the remittances of millions of their citizens working anywhere from Afghanistan to Zambia.²

Migration does not only involve crossing spatial boundaries or ‘geographical mobility’ (Harvey 2006 [1982] cited in Rogaly 2009). It is equally an act that negotiates the difference or distance between the present condition of migrants and their families and the future they want to realize. Migration is underpinned by imagination and hope (Jackson 2008; Kabeer 2007; Mahler and Pessar 2006). Migration, according to David Harvey, ‘represents the hope and striving for a better life’ (quoted in Rogaly 2009, p. 1978). As Henrik Vigh (2009) has demonstrated, it is a way by which people navigate their way out of limited social possibilities in order to enhance their life chances. It is vitally concerned with the future, with the horizon. To the extent that migration is a purposeful activity, a goal, ‘time and space are directed’ (Tuan 1977, p. 128). For many people, migration represents times and spaces of hope. It constitutes *timescapes* of better possibilities and lives.

More specifically, this thesis examines both the experiences of migration of wives of Filipino seamen and their social and personal investments into their husband’s migration. It looks at them not only as being affected by and creatively responding to the consequences of migration but also inquires into what they contribute to migration processes. It looks at the place of these women dialectically: if the times and spaces of migration direct them, how might they in turn direct the times and spaces of migration? In other words, I examine whether and how the subjective experiences of these women may be linked to wider social and political histories and narratives bearing in mind that they are not the migrants themselves. In the context of how migration has become ineluctably braided with the political and economic condition of the Philippines and with the political projects of the Philippine state, how might the

² This is not an exaggeration. There are indeed overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in Afghanistan and Zambia. Those in Afghanistan have refused calls for them to go back to the Philippines on account of how dangerous the place has become.

women's personal investments into and experiences of migration be understood, for example, in relation to the state's instrumentalist rationalisation of the export of its people as prime commodities and the state's simultaneous construction of these overseas workers as modern-day heroes? How might the question concerning the link between on the one hand, these women's investments into migration, its impact on them and their responses to it, and on the other hand, their gender identity, subjectivity and agency be posed such that their experiences are not framed as merely subjective and personal?

In trying to find some answers to these questions, I have relied on women's narratives of their experiences: their descriptions of their routine and quotidian lives; the practices that sustain their families and their ties with other significant people; the difficulties they face, endure and try to overcome; as well as the hopes and aspirations they have pinned on migration. These narratives have been profoundly insightful, enlightening and moving, and they have made it possible to give a richly textured account of the nature and experience of what it is to live and sustain a family in the context of the alternating absence and presence of their husbands and other social and economic conditions they have to deal with. However, these narratives are limited and partial, and their telling motivated (Abu-Lughod 1993). First, there were aspects of the women's experiences that simply were 'unspeakable', that is, they were too private, intimate and sometimes painful to talk about. Second, they were the product of a specific interaction between a researcher and a participant. The reflections and narratives this interaction engendered were made at a specific point in the lives of the women thus providing perspectival accounts of their experiences. Third, the meaning and salience these narratives came to take no doubt was shaped by my own 'partiality'. How I made sense of them was informed by my own set of experiences, perspectives, biases and, not least of all, my position within the research. Their narratives have therefore been framed by my own critical interpretation of their life projects. However, in analysing the women's narratives, I have endeavoured to situate the women, their experiences and what they said in their material, familial, social, religious, cultural, historical and economic contexts. This attempt to understand them in context constituted the

reflexivity that I hope always attended and informed my representation of these women.

My account, indeed, narrative, of how these Filipino seamen's wives navigated their lives is based on these stories that the wives shared with me. The spatiotemporal dimensions I identify and discuss as critical to and constitutive of their gender identity, agency and subjectivity are based on these narratives supplemented by observations and my momentary occupation, sharing and inhabitation of some of their physical-social spaces. So is my examination of their negotiation of these spatial and temporal dimensions. Narratives are therefore central to this study in two ways. One, they constitute the empirical basis of this study. It is through how the women described their lives that I examine the spatiotemporality of their experiences. Narratives lend themselves to this undertaking for, as Somers (1994, p. 616) has written, they are 'constellations of *relationships* (connected parts) embedded in *time and space*' (emphasis in original). Two, narratives are crucial to how the women made sense of their experiences, that is, they provided the women with a way to locate themselves in time and space. It was through narratives that they expressed how they understood and saw themselves in relation to their 'past, present and imagined future' (Henriques *et al.* 1998 [1984], p. xiii). As argued by Paul Ricoeur, narratives are linked to our capacity to understand and interpret what we go through in life and are the means for expressing selfhood (McNay 2000; see also Bruner 1987). As Somers and Gibson (1994, pp. 58-59) have also argued, 'it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and [...] that we constitute our social identities'. Here, Mary Steedly's notion of 'narrative experience' is useful 'to evoke the ways that stories and experience are coproduced in everyday life' (Faier 2009, p. 82). Faier (*ibid.*) explains that for Steedly, 'stories do not simply express life experience; they are themselves lived out, structuring imaginations and assuming flesh and quotidian form'. For Steedly, narratives are 'part of the ongoing, dialogic, and constrained ways that people selectively make and remake the past as they craft lives and selves in the present' (Faier *ibid.*, p. 82). Yet, as I will discuss in Chapters 4 and 9, how the women experienced their

present and saw themselves was profoundly informed by their consideration of their future. Their present was inextricably bound up with the horizon (see also Adam and Groves 2007; Faier 2009).

Chapter 2 of this thesis aims to put forward a perspective that helps enable us to attend to the subjective and personal experiences of left-behind wives and that, equally crucially, simultaneously underscores the social aspects and links of their experiences. This literature review chapter consists of three interrelated components. The first provides a discussion of the consequences on the women of the absence of their husband due to labour migration and how these women have responded to their life situations engendered by such absence and separation. It looks at wives of both land-based and sea-based migrant workers and highlights some of the factors identified in the literature as determining and shaping the experiences of these women. The studies cited examine different geographic locations and historical periods. This is not to suggest that the experiences of different women are trans-historical but rather to show that, despite different contexts, there are similarities in, and enduring features of, the women's responses to the absence of their husband. The second examines the spatial and temporal dimensions of these experiences particularly as they relate to their gender identity, agency and subjectivity. The third provides a conceptual discussion of the link among experience, agency, narrative, and subject formation, and presents a discussion of a theory of subjectification that incorporates the spatiality and temporality of gender identity, agency and subjectivity.

Chapter 3 explains how the research upon which this thesis is based was done. It provides both a descriptive discussion of research method and a reflection on methodological issues. It discusses, for example, the selection of participants which was based on the identification of factors that influenced or mediated the experiences of women in the literature review in Chapter 2. It discusses the epistemological status I give to interview data and links this status to the relation I make in chapter 2 between experience and agency and between agency and narrative. Further, I reflect on how this status requires a data analytic perspective that coheres with the perspective I take concerning the

interrelation of experience, agency and narrative. In this chapter, I also examine some methodological issues that have ethical implications, and ethical issues that have methodological consequences. Finally, I reflect on the epistemological, methodological and ethical questions raised by doing research in one's own society, as well as on the application of research ethics procedures emerging from a Western social, cultural and educational milieu on a different society.

Using the concept of 'social imaginary', I rethink in Chapter 4 the passive role of the women that the label 'left behind' would seem to suggest.³ I discuss how Filipino seamen's wives play an active role in the migration of their husbands and in migration processes more generally, and argue that the women's experiences of migration and their participation in migration processes help to socially institutionalize and legitimize migration (Kanaiaupuni 2000). This reconceptualization is based on a discussion of the history of migration in the Ilocos Region where the fieldwork was done and of the labour export policy of the Philippine state. This puts into context the labour migration of the women's husbands as well as the role played by the women in the development and dissemination of cultures of migration which are linked to imaginaries that have developed over time due to the Ilocos Region's long history of migration. Based on this reconceptualization of the role of the 'left-behind' women in migration, the chapter then examines how these women's experiences may be linked to the history, economy and politics of the Philippines.

Whereas Chapter 4 considers that part of the experiences of the women that the label 'left behind' does not capture, Chapter 5 provides a broad description of what it is like for the women to be on their own; when, in the words of one interviewee, they become 'a single parent'. This chapter's exploration in broad terms the 'left-behind' experience of Filipino seamen's wives focuses on those moments, events and crises which do not happen every day but which, when

³ There are negative connotations to the term 'left behind' (see for example Archambault 2010). I use it advisedly. I would have liked to indicate this with scare quotes but doing so would have littered this thesis. Also, the Filipino seamen's wives I interviewed referred to themselves as 'nabati' which is best translated as 'left behind'. This partly explains and justifies my use of the label which I will interrogate in chapter four.

they did, made the absence of their husbands acute and revealed the complexities of their lives. It explores this aspect of the women's experiences as involving the 'feminization of responsibility', that is, when women became in charge of almost everything: from the day-to-day physical and emotional activities of sustaining the family to making decisions on matters that the husband (or both wife and husband) should be making. It also explores how during this time, women had opportunities to do or learn to do 'masculine' tasks. Hence, the 'feminization of responsibility' is not about the tightening of the link between 'women' and 'home' but an exploration of the various ways, dynamic and mechanisms by which the women gained some leverage on authority and power in relation to their husband. In this sense, I also explore some of the strategies that the women employed in order for them to obtain some changes in how things in the family were done.

The issue of time is the subject of Chapter 6. Here, the focus is on the temporal organization of the family considered in the context of the alternating absence and presence of the women's husband. I focus on the day-to-day routines of the women which help them to structure their time and activities as well as enable them to put order into their lives. This chapter also examines what happens to these routines when husbands are home, and how the wives respond to the departure of their husband. In other words, this temporal order is set against the disruptive effects of the absence-presence and departure-return of husbands. While the focus is on the temporal dimension of the family's activities, the chapter considers the spatial context of the times of the family. Chores, leisure, and other activities involving the women or their children occur in specific places and have implications for the way wives move within and around this spatiotemporality. This chapter shows that these inhabited times are spatial also because the material activities of sustaining the family embedded the women in ties of relatedness. These mothers frequently relied on others, mostly their own mothers, siblings or other relatives, to help them. These ties place them in relations of indebtedness and reciprocity which are forms of social and structural locations. Routine not only help women structure and organize their

lives and so impose order in what would otherwise be chaos; their routine was itself shaped by the social ties they could draw on for help.

Chapter 7 explores another site in which women are engaged in the work of sustaining family relationships. The chapter argues that this site is the spacetime of ‘imagined communion’ obtaining in the family members inhabiting different places. ‘Imagined communion’ becomes the locus of the reproduction of family and of affective ties and is itself evoked and produced by these emotional and material activities. Affective ties hence exceed the physical, temporal and spatial boundaries of the home inasmuch as the husband-father lives and works in a ship. I inquire into what the women do in order for their husband to experience co-presence and have a sense of being emotionally and intimately linked to his family despite his physical distance. In other words, I try to answer the question of how the absent or missing husband can become present and experience a mediated sense of being with his family. I also explore the ways by which wives and husbands ‘remit affection’ (Aguilar 2009a), have intimacy and sustain some of the features of relationships of co-living couples. In a limited scale, in cognizance of the limitations of this study, I advert to the women as sexual subjects and describe the contexts within which the sexual component of their identity, agency and subjectivity is reconfigured. Finally, I examine how technology is the condition of possibility of ‘imagined communion’. I look into how telecommunication technologies enable and mediate family relationships in the context of absence and physical separation. I look into what specific forms of communication technology are available to the women and their families and consider their availability, and the non-availability of other forms, in the context of the political economy of telecommunication in the Philippines. I also consider the dynamic of communication, specifically frequency, obtaining in the fact that husbands cannot always pick up mobile phone signals where they are thus demonstrating the spatiotemporal dimensions of communication, and consequently of this ‘imagined communion’.

Chapter 8 examines the women’s desire and struggle for autonomy. Here, the discussion is underpinned by a relational understanding of autonomy, that is,

that self and identity take shape in the context of community and social interaction (McNay 1992). Autonomy does not mean atomised individuals, monads, but rather intersubjectivity. I try to specify autonomy, that is, look at its various forms and the different ways it was experienced by the women. I look at the different ways through which they won some form of autonomy or independence, their motivations for wanting it, the opposition they met and the support they got. I also look at failures. Furthermore, I attempt to demonstrate that autonomy and identity are intertwined with the women's material, cultural, social and discursive locations. My examination of the implication of self and autonomy in the women's socio-material relations provides a fine-grained and intimate analysis of what I have called 'the minutiae of becoming autonomous'. I show that achieving some autonomy takes a long time, involves a lot of waiting, enduring and oftentimes suffering in silence. Indeed, for some of the women, the long road to autonomy begins with breaking their silence, in them finding their own voice. My discussion reveals that autonomy is both concretized and symbolized most by the women having and living in their own house, itself a project that takes a long time to realize.

Chapter 9 serves as my discussion and concluding chapter. It synthesizes the main ideas and arguments of the thesis and brings together the various spatial and temporal dimensions of the women's lives and experiences which were material to their gender identity, agency and subjectivity. Here, I revisit the concepts of navigation, social imaginary, cultures of relatedness, as well as reflect further on the relation among experience, narrative, migration and subjectification. In relation to these reflections, I examine the subjective dimension of agency by looking more closely at how the women considered their present position in relation to their past and future, and elaborate on the critical role played by hope in how women perceive and grasp their horizon. I link hope and the imagination of a better future, and consider the relation among migration, imagination and subjectivity. The imagination, Rosi Braidotti (2006, p. 163) has written, 'is the necessary counterpart of affectivity.... The faculty of imagination plays a role in making it possible for the subject to discern and gain access to the contingent realities of social existence and how

ordinary experience is constructed'. Indeed, as Arjun Appadurai (1996) has said, imagination is no longer 'mere fantasy', 'simple escape', 'elite pastime' and 'mere contemplation' but a 'social practice' (p. 31). Based on my engagement with the empirical data, I conceptualize three strategies to describe the ways women have negotiated the conditions of their lives: 'waiting game', 'gender negotiation' and 'mental choreography'. I conclude the elaboration of the insights of my thesis with a consideration of its theoretical, methodological, empirical and policy contributions.

Chapter 2

MIGRATION, WOMEN 'LEFT BEHIND' AND THE SPATIOTEMPORALITY OF SUBJECTIFICATION

This study looks at international labour migration from the point of view of those who are left behind. It focuses specifically on the experiences of Filipino women married to Filipino seamen who crew ships plying international sea lanes and addresses the spatial and temporal dimensions of these experiences particularly as they relate to the women's gender identity, agency and subjectivity.⁴ By focusing on these women, this thesis addresses the marginalization of a specific group in Philippine migration scholarship. Most studies have focused on land-based workers and their families. Very few have looked at Filipino seafarers, who comprise the largest number, as high as 28 per cent (Wu 2005), of seafarers in the whole world. At any given time, there are around 275,000 Filipino seafarers on-board international ships and although they made up less than 4 per cent of the 8.2 million Filipinos living and working overseas in 2008, they contribute 20 to 25 per cent of total overseas Filipino workers' remittances which reached a massive US\$18.76 billion in 2010. Fewer still have examined what wives of Filipino seamen go through. This study hence investigates the nature and experience of being left behind with Filipino seamen's wives as illustrative case.

In their work that attempts to reframe the 'migration-left behind nexus' in Asia, Toyota and colleagues (2007, p. 157) provide a succinct summary of what have been the foci of most studies: on decision-making processes prior to migration which do not say much about the consequences of migration on those who stay behind; on migration and remittances which centres on migration's impact on

⁴ In this thesis, I use seamen and seafarers interchangeably. 'Seamen' is the term most commonly used and understood in the Philippines. Because I focus on women married to Filipino seamen, my use of the masculine form intends no sexism.

source communities and which has had the tendency to cast the left-behind in the role of passive recipients; on the relationship between migration and development which has primarily been concerned with questions about the role migration plays in poverty alleviation. They point out that although there are studies which have focused on the left-behind ones, the concern has been on ‘economic welfare, health and well-being’ (Toyota et al. 2007, p. 158) and that very few have examined the experience itself of being left behind.

It has been argued that space and time are coeval, that they are inextricably linked (Castree 2009; Grosz 1995; Harootunian 2005; Rogaly 2009; Tuan 1977; Weston 2002) and that both are involved in the production and representation of gender (Weston 2002) and subjectivity (Grosz 1995). However, space has had primacy over time in social, historical, philosophical and interpretive analyses (Grosz 1995; Harootunian 2005; Weston 2002). In terms of the relation among space, time and subjectivity and agency, work has focused on either the temporal (e.g. Hitlin and Elder 2007; McNay 2000) or spatial dimensions of subjectivity particularly in the context of work/employment (e.g. Kirby 1996; Nelson 1999; Hanson and Pratt 1995; Pratt 2004; Secor 2003). However, more and more work has begun to examine the simultaneous implication of subjectivity in both (e.g. Burkitt 2004; Davies 2001; Glucksmann 2000; Halford and Leonard 2006; Highmore 2004; May and Thrift 2001; Vigh 2006, 2008, 2009). In the migration literature, it is the spatial dimension of migration that has been emphasized (Cwerner 2001) despite both spatial and temporal dimensions being similarly and simultaneously involved. There is a growing body of important work that links subjectivity and agency with both space and time in processes of migration (e.g. Aguilar 1999, 2002; Anderson 2007; Faier 2009) particularly with respect to precarity (e.g. Ahmad 2008; Anderson 2009, 2010; Jackson 2008; Papadopoulos *et al.* 2008; Rogaly 2009; Vigh 2009). However, research into the simultaneity and mutual implication of time and space in subjectivity within migration has focused on the migrants themselves. International labour migration entails prolonged separation between migrant workers and their families (Hugo 1995). The experience of absence and distance fundamentally and significantly alters ‘the inner workings and

everyday life of an entire household' (Toyota *et al.* 2007, p. 157) and potentially engenders positive changes in gender identities, roles and relationships, and hierarchies and ideologies (see, for example, Chant 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 2003; Hugo 1995, 2002, 2008). How families and women left behind are impacted is of course shaped by the multi-layered interactions of various factors unique to them, including the social (that is, political, economic, historical) and cultural conditions, as well as gender ideologies and hierarchies obtaining in their societies.

This chapter aims to put together a discussion of the experiences of left-behind women, a discussion centred on how they shape these women's gender identity, agency and subjectivity. Equally important, it simultaneously examines how their experiences of being left behind might be clarified by a consideration of their spatial and temporal dimensions. Based on this discussion, the chapter then provides a more theoretical or conceptual discussion of subjectification which frames and underpins this thesis. In this context, this literature review chapter is not solely concerned with positioning this research within the body of available studies, a positioning that is grounded on the identification of lacunae in existing scholarship. While it does this (as indicated, for example, in the first two paragraphs of this chapter), it is equally concerned to put together an argument towards a theoretical and methodological perspective that is sensitive to, and that can be used to provide substantive description and conceptualization of, the phenomenological experience of left-behind women. In other words, this chapter argues that to give substance to the nature and experience of being 'left-behind', one important way to do this is to consider the spatiotemporality of the women's gender identity, subjectivity and agency. This strategy makes us pay critical attention to their embeddedness in socio-material and affective relations.

The chapter is organized into the following parts. The first provides a discussion of how left-behind women have been affected by, and responded to, their husband's absence due to international labour migration. All of the studies cited in this section pertain to women whose husbands are land-based migrant

workers and are drawn from different geographical settings and time periods. The second part focuses on women married to seamen and identifies some of the factors that shape the experiences of these women and that distinguish them from women married to land-based migrant workers. The third part presents a discussion of the spatiotemporality of subjectivity, that is, how the process of subjectification is implicated in space and time particularly in the context of migration and the family. I will draw on the discussion provided in the first two parts to make explicit the spatial and temporal dimensions of subjectivity. The fourth section provides a discussion of a generative conception of subjectification, a discussion based on the relation I make among experience, agency and narrative.

2.1 In the Absence of Their Husbands: Women Left Behind

The migration of husbands has consequences on the position of women within the family, on their roles and responsibilities, on their sense of autonomy, power and competence, on their social standing, and on their mobility. These consequences are intertwined: a woman's sense of autonomy, for example, is linked to her changed position and new roles which might in turn impact on her social standing. As already mentioned, these consequences are mediated by various social and cultural factors.

2.1.1 Becoming Household Heads

Many women left behind become *de facto* household heads performing the responsibilities of their migrant husbands (Chant 1992a, 1992b; Hugo 2002). Siegel (1969) noted that the outmigration of men from Aceh, Indonesia resulted in women doing more agricultural tasks (cited in Hugo 2002). Graham (1997) also has written that because of the migration of their men to Malaysia, women in East Flores, Indonesia had to work the gardens that produced local food (which traditionally they did not do) and also gained *de facto* control of the land (cited in Hugo 2008). Similarly, Colfer (1985) has shown in her study of East Kalimantan (Indonesia) women whose husbands left for work in East Malaysia that the absence of their husband resulted in the women's increased involvement in rice and vegetable production. Although the women found

agricultural work (and life without their husbands) very difficult as it involved felling trees and building fences and field huts, the women demonstrated competence and autonomy not only in these tasks but also in providing for their family (Colfer 1985 cited in Hugo 1992).

Caroline Brettell's (1986) study of demographic change and family history in Lanheses, a parish in northwestern Portugal, also showed that where emigration involved married men, the women-wives who were left behind farmed the land, raised the children, and performed other related productive and reproductive responsibilities. Brettell notes that what began as a strategy for dealing with the absence of their husbands helped to sustain this long tradition of male emigration (Brettell 1986, pp. 95, 137). This is also illustrated by Glystos (2008) who undertook, at the household level, an analysis of the 'dynamics of power relationships' which develop when men emigrate and women stay behind. Focusing on male emigration from the Greek island of Kythera to Australia just before and after the Second World War, he argued that this emigration became possible only because women (especially wives but also daughters) took on the responsibilities of their husbands, sons, or brothers. Their new economic, familial, and social responsibilities afforded the women more authority and decision-making powers in managing family affairs and household resources.

The absence of husbands does not only re-structure households. It can also reinforce existing social and household structures that are advantageous to the position of women. Sally Cole's (1991) ethnographic study of a fishing village on the north coast of Portugal showed that widespread male emigration to Brazil, Mozambique and Angola since the nineteenth century strengthened the already women-centred character of the maritime household. Women attained a central place in the household through their active participation in economic production (they fished with their husbands or fathers, gathered seaweeds, sold their catch, etc.) and their management of household resources. Equally important, daughters were favoured to inherit household property and thus encouraged uxorilocal residence that helped to strengthen the relations of

women with their matri-kin. Male emigration provided conditions which led to the development of a variety of women-centred household configurations.

2.1.2 Improved Familial and Social Standing and Expanded Social Spheres

Rose and Hiller (2006), in a study employing oral history interviews of Mexican women from Periban in the state of Michoacan (one of the two three states sending migrants to the U.S.) whose husbands migrated to the U.S., found that the husbands who returned to their newly empowered wives had to reconcile their traditional notions of family structure and gender with the transformations that they, through their absence, had helped to set in motion. The authors noted that although most of the wives who went back to their natal families or lived with their in-laws came under increased supervision by parents, parents-in-law or male relatives, the women talked about how they came to exercise some authority while their husbands were away. They mentioned how they had to become the major decision-makers in the family, how many of them had to take on at least a part-time job, and how some had to assume the role of the breadwinner.

Hoodfar (1997) concluded in his Cairo-based study that the consequences of the women's husbands' migration were positive for wives who were less educated, who did not have a stable source of income, and who were more bound to traditional gender ideology. He noted that they had greater access to their husbands' income during and after migration. They either became their household's financial manager or became their husband's equal partner in deciding how to use the money. Becoming financial managers when their husbands were away provided these women both with the opportunities and challenges to develop skills and competence to run their households. They had to learn how to shop, deal with banks, the post office, and other government offices. They had to make decisions concerning their children and their relationships with relatives and neighbours. For most of the women, these were entirely outside of what they used to do, outside of the female domain they had hitherto occupied. Their husbands' migration had given them access to a new set of experiences that pushed and expanded the boundaries of their existence.

As a consequence, they became more mature and self-confident. They also grew closer to their husbands, who, returning from migration and realizing how much more competent their wives were in shopping and budgeting, insisted that they continue with the arrangement.

Gulati's (1993) study of Kerala women showed that not only did the migrant households enjoy improved material lives as a result of the men's migration but also improved social standing. For the women/wives who became *de facto* household heads, the migration had opened to them experiences that they otherwise would never have had. They had to go to banks, a place they had never been to before, to open an account in order to receive their husbands' remittance. For those who were literate, signing their names posed no problems. For those who were illiterate, religious and cultural strictures had to be set aside, particularly for the Muslim women whose photograph had to be taken by a man and which had to be kept by the bank for identification purposes. This experience in turn impressed upon them the value of literacy and education which some had been deprived of simply because they were female. This recognition of the value of literacy and education has led families to give importance to the education of girls (Gulati 1993, p. 118; see also Hadi 2001). Gulati explains that these women had never before been in charge of money matters; hence, it was not just the experience of receiving a substantial amount of money that was new to them. Handling it was just as alien and so was being responsible for how it was going to be spent (p. 122). Their having to deal with institutions such as banks, post-offices, etc. where transactions were characterized as impersonal and unmediated by blood or kinship connections exposed them to a different kind of interpersonal interaction. That they had to go to these places armed with bank passbooks and identification broadened their knowledge of financial matters and got them acquainted with how to handle money (p. 119).

2.1.3 Migration, Cultural Values and the Position of Women

Migration helps introduce more secular values and attitudes to the community (Hadi 2001; Hugo 1992, 1995). Hadi (2001) has examined the link between the

position of women in rural Bangladeshi society and migration's introduction of secular values. Focusing on women's position at the family level, he found that overseas migration enhanced their position in their families and modified cultural values in traditional communities by introducing secular ideas. The absence of men expanded women's roles in family affairs, an expansion that included those that traditionally belonged to the male domain. It also enhanced women's participation in and capacity for decision making. Hadi (ibid.) has attributed this to the fact that they were less under the domination of men. However, although women gained authority and power, their new status was circumscribed and required constant negotiation. This is because women's power in migrant families depended upon male support and access to resources. Moreover, even though they were absent, husbands retained decision-making for important matters such as the sale or acquisition of land, the building of a new house, or the migration of another family member (Hadi ibid., p. 60). Nevertheless, the women's relative control of resources and their freedom and autonomy in managing their households enabled them to develop self-confidence and to become more independent.

Women in migrant families also gained more autonomy when they decided to form an autonomous sub-unit within extended households which freed them from the control and influence of in-laws, thus enabling them to exercise more control of their households and domestic affairs (Hadi ibid., p. 59). Such autonomy is enabled by their migrant husbands' remittances which gave them economic and financial independence. Also, as a result of their husbands' migration, attitudes to the education of female children, which had been given a low priority in rural Bangladesh, were also changing. The secular influence of their husband's overseas migration, Hadi argued, was critical in the importance that these families now give to female education. Finally, these migrant families considered dowry in marriage to be an unacceptable practice.

However, an important issue that bears on the autonomy of left-behind women is whether it is sustained when their husbands have come back. Gulati (1993) noted in her Kerala study that resistance to new values and attitudes particularly from mothers-in-law was muted because the ones introducing them were the

very people they depended on. Hadi (2001, p. 60) acknowledged that it is possible that this change might just be temporary. Nevertheless, although it is possible that their new status and roles will not be sustained once their husbands returned, it is also likely that some of the secular values adopted will be sustained. In their study of the link between husband migration and the autonomy of wives left behind, Yabiku and colleagues (2010) argued that because 'both men's current migration and its cumulative history have significant, independent relationships with women's autonomy', the effect of the men's migration on the autonomy of their wives 'may not be temporary but rather that it may persist even after the man comes back' (Yabiku *et al.* *ibid.*, p. 302).

2.1.4 The Burdens of Women Left Behind

Although migration engenders positive changes in women's social and subjective experiences, the absence of their husbands also has negative consequences. Rose and Hiller (2006) showed that although the wives succeeded in instituting significant changes to family and gender, they also described their lives as one of loneliness and suffering. The wives spoke of not having seen their husbands for two or three years, of their children not knowing their father, and of other things that made their separation acute, making the women describe their lives as overflowing with this loneliness and suffering (Rose and Hiller *ibid.*, pp. 138-139). Brettell's (1986) study revealed instances of left-behind wives having extra-marital relationships and children out of them. When their husbands found out about what happened during their absence, they never came back to Lanheses because of the shame their wives had brought upon them. Women left behind had to deal with their physical and sexual longing for their husband. Part of their duty was to keep the family intact which rested fundamentally on remaining faithful to their husband.

Glystos (2008) noted that although the absence of the women's husband brought them new freedoms, it also imposed new restrictions on them and their family especially the female children. This new power dynamics severely limited their mobility. In combination with the additional responsibilities the

husband's or father's absence brought, daughters were forced to quit schooling (Glystos *ibid.*, pp. 100-102). The wife's new role, Glystos explained, demanded three responsibilities focused on the household and its welfare. First, she had to manage the household in all its activities. This included looking after the family's internal affairs, ensuring her family was fed and clothed, and maintaining the social standing and respectability of the family in relation to the village and island community. Second, and related to the social aspect of her first duty, is that she had to ensure that her family behaved and acted appropriately. In this sense, her disciplining of her children, as well as of herself, was meant to protect the family from becoming the subject of malicious gossip, offensive behaviour, verbal abuse, and generally, public or social censure. This was a particularly important matter because at a time when very conservative views and strict traditional morals governed and dominated male-female relations and social activities, the absence of the husband-father, who was the protector and guarantor of the family's honour, made the female family members especially the wife-mother particularly vulnerable. Third, the wife must keep her moral obligations to her husband, what Glystos referred to as the 'Penelope-waiting-for-Ulysses-to-return' attitude (p. 100). This obligation is linked to the second one. To avoid situations that might be misinterpreted or exploited and which could then put into question its honour, the family literally stayed home. Members, especially the wife, withdrew from most social and public activities, keeping conversations only to family relatives and close neighbours.

Thus the contradiction Glystos points up. The wife might have been freed from the domination of her husband but the social aspect of this patriarchal order remained. The consequence is that the physical and social space she enjoyed while her husband was away became even more restricted. Glystos also points out that although she became a different woman acquiring a new identity, part of her new identity demonstrated an internalized conception of self that remained captive to patriarchal ideology. This was aptly demonstrated by the wife in taking upon herself to restrict the family's movement so as not to give those around her cause or reason to suspect or accuse her of overstepping the

acceptable social bounds of behaviour. What becomes apparent is that although the husband's emigration provides opportunities for a wife to expand her role, part of the household strategy pushes her to adopt measures that drive her and her family to a life that is even more restricted by the continued presence of the rule of the 'Father'. The husband's absence peeled away a layer of submission only to expose, and be subjected to, a social layer that in turn reveals a dynamic of internalization – the self-imposition that the wives resorted to. We see in Glystos' study how the dynamic of male emigration impelled the wife to resort to austere, if not extreme, measures in order to protect the standing of the family in the community in his absence.

In relation to the operation of values and practices meant to preserve male honour that Glystos underscores, Gulati (1993) noted cases of women whose freedom of movement was heavily policed. The case of one wife is illustrative here:

My position is rather awkward. Of the 13 persons living in this house, I am the only outsider. I am also the youngest of the five ever-married women. Although I am married to the most important person who is everyone's hope, I cannot go out of the house without the permission of my mother-in-law, or, if she is not around, my sister-in-law. Also, they do not want me to go out of the house unescorted. (quoted in Gulati 1993, p. 38)

Ennaji and Sadiqi (2008) have noted that in rural and semirural communities in Morocco, left-behind women found it difficult to work outside of the home because it undermined the social role and image of their (migrant) husbands as breadwinners. Mary Elaine Hegland (2010) also shows how Tajik social and cultural values particularly those governing the relationship between daughters-in-law and parents-in-law significantly shape the experiences of left-behind wives. Set against the background of depressed economic conditions and opportunities in Tajikistan as a result of the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, Hegland's study shows how the wives of Tajik men who emigrated to Russia not only had to provide and look after their family and take on other additional responsibilities obtaining in their husband's absence but also serve their in-laws who they lived with. They also had to deal with their mothers-in-law being the

primary recipient of their husband's earnings. Both their serving their in-laws and their secondary position in relation to their husband's income obtain in traditional gender and generational hierarchies. In Tajikistan, the mother is 'a man's first and foremost responsibility' (Hegland 2010, p. 21) and this explains the privilege she commands in respect to her son's earnings. Traditionally also, the youngest son has the duty of looking after his parents. His wife and (female) children will do the actual work, work that adds to the burdens of left-behind women whose husbands, because of the precarious economic situation in Russia, are not always able to financially support them.

Like Glystos, Hoodfar (1997) has noted a similar process of resorting to traditional ideology in order for Egyptian women to protect their rights with respect to their access to their husbands' income. He examined the impact of male migration on domestic budgeting and on the position of women within low-income households in Cairo. With the migration of husbands, households have become temporarily headed by women.⁵ This has significant implications for the financial management of the household since in Egyptian society it is traditionally the men who are responsible for this. The migration of men therefore has serious implications for household budgeting. The issue of budgeting/financial management in Egyptian households is very important because a woman's access to her husband's income can say much about the power relations between the couple. Wives who acted as their household's financial manager were seen to exercise more authority over their households. Hoodfar (1997) explains that because very rarely did husbands and wives shop together, access to money and the ability to exercise authority over how it is spent become particularly important. The lack of access to their husbands' finances meant that women had very little influence over how it was spent. With the migration of their husbands, however, women were put in a different situation.

⁵ Hoodfar (1997) notes that in urban centres such as Cairo, nuclear households predominate and in rural Egypt, migration hastens the nuclearization of family and increases the decision-making power of the wife, usually at the expense of the mother-in-law. For a similar study in the context of Yucatan, Mexico, see Bever (2002).

The consequences of their husbands' migration especially on access to financial resources and to making decisions concerning household expenses varied. Hoodfar (ibid.) concludes that male migration had negative consequences on the position of women who were gainfully employed especially the more educated ones who worked in the public sector. Their husbands' migration reversed the family's budgeting pattern. Prior to migration, husbands were responsible for the family's daily and living expenses and the wives spent their money on durables which they can lay claim on. With migration, husbands did not send money for the family nor did they give any lump sum (which is also an accepted practice) when they came back. They instead spent part of their money on durables for which the wives did not have any say either. Not only did the wives lose access to their husbands' income, they also lost any influence over the disposal of financial resources. Prior to migration, husbands and wives together discussed and decided on household expenditures. This equality stemmed from the fact that their salaries were more or less the same. With their husbands now earning ten times more, migration 'reinstated the hierarchical structure of family relations and re-affirmed the traditional gender roles' (Hoodfar ibid., p. 91). These wives said that although migration improved their lives materially, it eroded their position within the household. In order to regain their position, that is, their rights to their husbands' income and to spend their own income as they see fit, many of these wives invoked traditional and Islamic family ideology specifically that which pertained to the division of family responsibilities which put on men the financial responsibility of sustaining the family.

2.1.5 Social Structure and Left-Behind Women's Experiences⁶

Household structure and living arrangements can limit the degree of freedom wives can enjoy or exercise. For example, Desai and Banerji (2008) tried to account for why some women found freedom and responsibility in their

⁶ By structures we mean here 'both material factors such as the distribution of land ownership and to ideologies, such as those associated with "proper" behaviour for men and women' (Rogaly 1998, p. 27).

husband's absence while others did not. Their findings suggest that the migration of husbands had positive and empowering effects on the wives left behind if they lived in their own households, that is, not within an extended household particularly one with an older woman. Wives of migrant husbands who became *de facto* household heads were more likely to make their own decisions to manage daily life as well as longer-term decisions concerning the well-being of their children. Also, these women faced greater labour demands and were more likely to join the labour force (Desai and Banerji 2008, p. 349). Those who lived in extended households did not have to deal with these challenges and so missed the opportunities that would have given them reason to break (free from) rigid gender rules. Desai and Banerji concluded that the effect of male migration on women left behind, particularly its empowering consequences, is 'moderated through household structure, with greater freedom in households where no older woman is present' (343). In contrast, Yabiku and colleagues (2010) write in their study of southern Mozambique women married to migrant husbands that the impact of men's labour migration was not fully mediated by intervening factors, namely women's employment outside the home, lower fertility, and residential independence from extended family members. Their study suggests that the absence of the woman's husband had a 'direct' consequence on her autonomy (Yabiku *et al.* *ibid.*).

Gulati (1993) argues that for women whose independence is linked to their access to their husbands' earnings and who are constrained by the extended family, their response is to initially put up with the situation. This is in recognition of the fact that their husbands' migration was made possible by the cooperative effort and sacrifice of all family members who helped to raise the money for the migration. Only later, when the debts had been paid, or when enough money had been saved to build a house of their own, did they move out. Gulati also argues that a wife's opportunities to be on her own depended on her age and the stage of marital life-cycle at the time of her husband's migration. For older wives with children, there were minimal barriers for her assuming household headship. In fact, Gulati found that the longer their husbands have been away (at least three years), the more was their desire to live in a household

of their own. Younger wives, in contrast, were subject to the authority of their mothers-in-law. In some cases, money was sent to the mother-in-law instead of the wife. The only way to gain control of her husband's earnings was to live in a separate house.

Dawn McCarty and Rick Altemose (2010) highlight the institutional and structural links of the experiences of left-behind women from Central Mexico: the state, the Roman Catholic Church and the family. They report that the women 'talked about the church as it supports and enforces a submissive role for women, the government as it fails to help support, protect, and educate rural and poor women, and the traditional family structures that give women subservient roles' (ibid., p. 289). Despite, however, the 'coercive' force bearing upon these women to conform to traditional ideology, these left-behind women are defying these systemic and structural constraints. Necessarily, the absence of the women's husbands has caused changes in their economic and social roles and their response reveals how they have opened up possibilities for themselves:

the majority of the women in the study were taking initiative in changing their lives. Since jobs are all but unobtainable in rural Mexico for poorly educated women, many are organizing themselves into small production groups and cooperatives [...] The women were starting quilting groups, growing tomatoes and rare mushrooms, developing cooperative childcare and sewing cooperatives, and more. They sought out their own training and educational opportunities, negotiated contracts, collected and managed their own resources. (McCarty and Altemose ibid., p. 295)

The authors argue that these women's activities indicate that they would seem

to be in the process of distancing themselves from the institutional roles as traditionally defined for women in Mexico. As they become breadwinners, organize themselves to work collectively and take responsibility for the welfare of their families, they gain power; perhaps creating a paradigm shift among this population. (McCarty and Altemose 2010, p. 297)

2.2 Wives of Seafarers

Thomas (2003) notes that in order for a seafarer marriage or family to be sustained, it was vital that the wife was independent and capable of managing domestic and family responsibilities, as well as possessed the strength to deal with the emotional and other demands of her husband's absence. Paradoxically, this independence, capability, and resilience left seafarer-husbands displaced. With wives managing household and finances, husbands face the dilemma of being displaced, made redundant or unnecessary except as provider. Both seafarer and wife recognized the impact of long periods of separation on the structure and routine of the family. On the one hand, husbands accepted the fact that for the family to manage and survive their absence, it had to have its routine. On the other hand, wives recognized the importance of their husband's authority position to their masculine identity. Thomas and Bailey (2006, p. 143) explain that although 'practical routines were difficult to disrupt for the duration of the seafarer's leave period', wives nevertheless reported 'engaging in "emotional labour" in order to manage the seafarer's sense of role displacement'. They write further that these wives 'took steps to help preserve their husbands' sense of masculine identity' which 'could be seen as taking a more symbolic rather than substantive form' (Thomas and Bailey *ibid.*).

Thomas and Bailey (2006) suggest that the husband's desire to become involved in the family was not so much to assert their authority and affirm a 'hegemonic' masculine identity as much as to be recognized not only for their breadwinning role but also for being a husband and father. The authors point out the importance of achieving a life balance within the work patterns of the seafaring husband. It might be argued that the wives' attempts to downplay their competence are themselves balancing acts meant to attain this balance. So is the husband's recognition of the changed circumstances of the family because of the nature of his job. Thomas (2003), whose study drew mainly from the experiences of officers and their wives, reveals that this negotiation and renegotiation of gender roles occur primarily in response to what the couples recognize as necessary processes of sustaining family life and relationship both when the seafarer-husband is home and away. Although this

can be fraught with tension, Thomas (2003) did not identify any further social, cultural, or religious ideologies and expectations that wives (and their husbands) had to contend with.

Some of these are highlighted in Sampson's (2005) work on Indian seafarer wives. In India, the expectation for women or wives to submit to their husbands' authority continues to exercise a 'coercive' force. There is a strong social pressure on Indian women to conform to traditional gender roles. This pressure was felt even more acutely by wives who lived with their in-laws. Hence, women who lived in their own households were, of course, freer both in terms of physical and social mobility: their social networks and contact with the outside world expanded as a result. But even these women acknowledged that familial and social pressure to conform to traditional gender roles continued to weigh on them (*ibid.*, pp. 69-72). So despite having become very competent, possessing the confidence that they were capable of anything, many of the wives downplayed this sense of independence and power, recognizing that it threatened their husbands' masculine identity and authority as head of the household (*ibid.*, p. 70). Consequently, women took extra efforts to (re)assure their husbands of their central importance, efforts that involved cutting back on social activities to give their husbands time and attention.

Sampson points to the mediating role played by the seafarer's rank in the family's capacity to establish their own household. Seafarers of low rank obviously earned less than officers and this was a crucial factor in deciding whether their family could live on its own. Initially, wives of seafarers with much lower earning capacity were more likely to live in joint households where they come under the supervision, control, and restriction of their in-laws. They would eventually move out but this process occurred more quickly among those who earned a lot more. Thomas *et al.* (2003) provide a more detailed discussion of the significant consequences on family lives and husband-wife relationships of the length of a seafarer's contract which varies according to nationality and rank.⁷ Officers have shorter trips (three or four months) and hence more

⁷ The working conditions of seafarers are shaped by other factors such as labour conditions and labour policies in countries of origin. This is especially salient in the case of Chinese seafarers

frequent leave. In contrast, low-ranking seafarers have trips that last for as long as 12 months (sometimes even longer), and with new requirements to get training and certification, their leave time spent with family is considerably reduced. Aside from the obvious implications this has on the quality of time seafarers can have with their wives and children, their long/prolonged absences have long-term consequences on their becoming part of the structure and organization of family and of family life. With the wife becoming the figure around which family life revolves, re-adjusting to a life with the seafarer husband-father presents challenges to the entire family.

Although the experiences of seafarer wives cannot be said to be so radically different from the experiences of the wives of other labour migrants, there are nevertheless factors that are unique to the working conditions of seafarers which inevitably impact upon their wives and families. One factor identified in the literature discussed above is rank which determines a seafarer's length of contract (another factor) which in turn shapes a whole range of consequences for the women left behind. Related to rank, seafarers are also subject to more stringent and regular certification, both training and medical, compared with some of the labour migrants who figured in the literature review. This in turn is linked to regulation governing the shipping industry (Thomas *et al.* 2003).

The literature review highlighted how women left behind dealt with their situations and noted what the studies reviewed identified as factors that shaped the women's lives and experiences without their husbands. These factors are educational attainment and employment status (Hoodfar 1997), age and stage in the marital life-cycle (Gulati 1993), and household structure (Banerji and Desai 2008). For the studies of seafarer families, factors included rank and nationality (Sampson 2005; Thomas 2003; Thomas *et al.* 2003). These point not only to the socio-historical and cultural specificity of the location of the women's lives and experiences, of their lives being intimately braided with the contexts they inhabit, and to the broader, global forces that shape their lives but also to the

(see Thomas *et al.* 2003, pp. 51-52). Thomas and Bailey (2009) mention employer's policies, type of trade, and routes sailed. See also Chin 2008a, 2008b).

interaction between the ‘local’ and the ‘global’, that is, those that shape the labour migration of their husbands which bear on them. In the following section, I will attempt to make more explicit the spatial and temporal dimensions of the women’s experiences especially as they relate to their gender identity and agency.

2.3 A Prolegomenon to the Spatiotemporality of Subjectivity: Migration, Family and Cultures of Relatedness

Although I provide a subject-level analysis of the nature and experience of being left behind that is focused on the wives of Filipino seamen, I situate these women within their various locations and contexts of their experiences. I do not therefore look at them as atomised individuals but rather as part of or belonging to a wider social context. As wives and mothers, their most immediate social context is that of the family, and when one talks of the family, kinship and other ties of relatedness are not far behind. In addition therefore to the context of migration, I examine in section 2.3.2 the family context of these women.

2.3.1 Migration and the Spatiotemporality of Subjectivity

For women who stay behind, there are undoubtedly temporal dimensions embodied in experiences of waiting and preparing for the return and departure of their husbands; of their spouse’s absence; of the tasks they become responsible for while their husbands are away; of freedoms and constraints that accompany their being left-behind; of receiving their husband’s remittances. As will be treated more extensively in chapter 5, time is not only mechanical clock time but also social time (Adam 1988, 1995). The women do not only deal with an increased demand for their time (on account of, for example, more work to do because of additional responsibilities) or cope with loneliness or boredom (the passage of time measured in hours, days, weeks and months). They have to deal with the social consequences and implications of their husband’s absence (the time and duration of separation). As Brettel (1986) showed, there was the real risk of marital infidelity and Glystos (2008) showed that some women took

extreme measures to protect their reputation to the point of limiting their physical and social movement.

The times and experiences defined by their husband's absence have spatial dimensions that are not only physical but also social and ideological (Glucksmann 2000; McDowell 2003; Massey 1994; Nelson 1999; Pratt 2004). Gulati's (1993) study showed that the social space of the women expanded. This was most clearly illustrated by the experiences of a number of illiterate wives who suddenly had to engage in financial and social interactions that not only required literacy but also ones that went beyond familial and kin interaction. The absence of their husbands literally took them out of the confines of their homes and expanded the social space and 'discursive geographies' (Pratt 2002) within which they now had to negotiate their lives. Almost all of the studies cited in sections one and two demonstrated an expansion of the roles of the women. This resulted in them becoming more competent and independent. However, Hoodfar's (1997) study demonstrated that Cairo women with higher educational attainments and income-earning capacity resorted to traditional Islamic ideology in order to protect their position in the family with respect to their access to their husband's income and their freedom to spend their own income as they see fit.

As discussed in sections one and two, women left behind negotiated relationships with other people, people who could significantly influence their spatial and temporal mobility. Living with their husband's family, for example, had the consequence of their identity and agency being subsumed under the authority of their in-laws. Also, it might be argued that in their situation, it was clear that the 'self' was inextricably bound up with others and that autonomy did not mean atomised individuals. It might be argued that they negotiated their situations according to the 'resources' they had (Sewell 2005; see also Cole 1991; Resurreccion and van Khanh 2006; Secor 2003). They were aware of the balancing acts they had to perform (as well as of the possibility that these positive developments in gender relations might last only for as long as the husband was away). Moreover, the physical absence of their husbands did not mean the absence of the exercise of their power and authority (Gardiner 1995;

Hadi 2001). They also had to negotiate this dynamic particularly in the context of decision-making and, as I will show in chapter 6, sustaining long-distance family relationships is one aspect of family life where Filipino seamen's wives are able to exercise and express various forms of agency.

The women's desire for more autonomy was fuelled by their living with their in-laws which had consequences on their spatial movement and the control they had of their time. Their realization of autonomy, concretized by having their own house, had temporal dimensions to it. For seamen's wives, their husband's rank (whether officer or rating) determined the length of their contracts and their salary and these had consequences on the organization of family life particularly the wives' autonomy from their husband's family. Women whose husbands had higher ranks and therefore higher salaries were able to establish their own household much faster than those married to ratings. Living in their own house enabled the women to experience freedom from being supervised by, or from the control of, in-laws particularly their husband's mother.

Subjectivity, as Ortner (2006) has argued, has both individual and social/cultural components each implicated in the other (see also Holland 1998). Subjectivity, argues Ortner (*ibid.*), is the basis of agency, that 'it takes shape as specific desires and intentions within a matrix of subjectivity – of (culturally constituted) feelings, thoughts, and meanings' (p. 110). It is 'the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear that animate acting subjects' as well as 'the cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought, and so on' (Ortner *ibid.*, p. 107). It might be argued that the subjectivity and agency of the wives were in large part linked to their exercise of whatever power they had in both contexts of opposition/resistance and solidarity. These women met resistance from people around them (as in the case of young married women and without children who lived with their in-laws), and they were opposing conventional gender rules and roles. But they also sought the help of other women, male relatives and their own husbands. These women's experiences then were shaped not only by domination/power imbalances (their subordination) but also

by solidarity. As Ortner (1984, p. 157) has argued, cooperation, reciprocity and solidarity are vital components of social being.

We can look at the women left behind as having been engaged in a project that had subjective as well as social consequences (see also Kleinman and Fitz-Henry 2007). The experiences of the women left behind may be seen as part of the domestic (and ultimately social and cultural) production, reproduction or revision of gender identities and relations. These have implications for the organization and distribution of power and authority. Identities take shape in 'situated practices' (Pratt 2004) and a sensitivity to the spatial and temporal contexts of women's lives and experiences helps enable us to 'see the ways in which agency is animated in practice through the times and spaces of individual lives' (Halford and Leonard 2006, pp. 671-672). As such, gender identities are vital to our understanding of subjectivity and agency (Goddard 2000 cited in Pink 2004).

2.3.2 Family, Cultures of Relatedness and the Spatiotemporality of Subjectivity

The preceding discussion already demonstrated the location of women within families not only because many of them were mothers but also because they lived in extended households, with their in-laws or close to their relatives. It also already highlighted the spatial and temporal dimensions of the women's gender identity, agency and subjectivity within the context of families being re-organized by migration. I wish in this section to look more closely at the link between migration and family and the implication of women left-behind in both. The argument here is that families and the women are not only both impacted by migration but that the alteration of families by migration is also a process that impacts on the women. We noted above some of the conflicted, negative and messy aspects of family life of left-behind women (see particularly discussion of Glystos (2008) in section 2.1.4). Building on the discussion of the literature above, this section aims to provide a perspective that could adequately incorporate the positive and negative aspects of the women's experiences particularly with respect to their relationships with their families and in-laws.

Migration certainly forces us to interrogate our notions of ‘the family’. The absence of fathers, mothers, children, siblings or in many cases, all at the same time redefines family roles, responsibilities and obligations. With family members located in different places, the practices of maintaining and nurturing family relationships are also necessarily redefined. These changes put into question the view of families as an institution. David Morgan’s (1996) concept of ‘family practices’ captures the sense in which families in migration tend to be defined by the flexibility and negotiability of roles and relationships rather than by the hierarchy and fixity of roles (Yip 2004).

Morgan (1996) has written about the links among space, time, gender and family relations. He has argued that ‘time and space are key axes around which the analysis of family processes should be developed’ (ibid., p. 137).⁸ He argues that in families, conceptions of space and time as well as their use are frequently woven around gender. This is particularly evident in housework and leisure which reveal differences in the kind and amount that men and women do and enjoy, as well as where and when they are done or enjoyed. He notes that inequalities and imbalances, for example in the distribution of housework and in the allocation of leisure time might be linked not only to traditional gender ideology but also to gendered conceptions of time.⁹ Furthermore, he points out that ‘[g]ender is not simply a variable which influences behaviour and outcomes within family processes. It is in these processes themselves, organized around issues of time and space, that gender is constantly being created, shaped and modified’ (ibid.)

Morgan’s examination of the family, however, did not include how it is being redefined by migration even in his work that reflects on ‘change and fluidity in

⁸ Morgan notes that family members might have different conceptions of time and space which bear on family activities, practices and relationships. Such conceptions are linked to age and life course. Family relationships change over the life course which almost always includes geographic mobility and hence, separation and distance (Morgan 1996; also Finch 2003). Also, becoming a parent, for example, has implications on the career or work trajectories of mothers which impact on the social spaces they will occupy including that within the family. Here, motherhood significantly defines not only the spatiotemporality of a woman’s experiences and responsibilities but also becomes central to her gender identity (see also Holloway 1999).

⁹ He cites, for example, the work of Davies (1990) who argued that ‘night-time might be seen as private time by many husbands and fathers; women, with open-ended caring responsibilities, may not be able to maintain such clear-cut temporal boundaries’ (Morgan 1996, p. 150).

family life' undertaken partly in the context of risk which is considered as a component of late modernity and the result of an increasingly globalized economy (Morgan 1999a). How might the idea of 'family practices' be used or extended conceptually to clarify the experiences of families whose lives and situations are defined by migration (see also Asis *et al.* 2004; Yeoh 2005)? I try to address this issue by locating the women in material practices of caring, relating, and linking with their significant others and considering the location of these women within families through the concept of 'cultures of relatedness'. The concept resonates with the re-conceptualization of families less as a structure-defined institution and more in terms of practices (Morgan 1996; 1999a, 1999b; see also Jamieson and Cunningham-Burley 2003; McKie *et al.* 1999; Roseneil 2005; Silva and Smart 1999; Smart and Neale 1999; Yip 2004).

Janet Carsten (2007, p. 3), with whom the concept has been most associated, explains that 'cultures of relatedness' looks at kinship as lived experience rather than as structure or system of classification (cf. Miller 2007). She argues that although the social, material and affective connections of people to others 'can be described in genealogical terms' (Carsten 2000, p. 1), there are other ways of accounting for how these connections are established and maintained. Carsten (2007, p. 4) has written that 'kinship highlights the symbolic elaboration of the everyday world of the family'. On the other hand, kinship, as relatedness, relies for its construction on everyday practices – 'small, seemingly trivial, or taken-for-granted acts like sharing a meal, giving a dish of cooked food to a neighbour, dropping in to a nearby house for a quiet chat' (Carsten 2000, p. 18; see also Aguilar 2009a, p. 7). Furthermore, Carsten (2000) has noted that many anthropological studies have tended to focus on the 'positive and harmonious aspects' of kinship neglecting the fact that it is also about 'disconnection and disjunction' (p. 24) and that relatedness can be stressful, unpleasant, if not oppressive. It also thus frequently requires hard work (Aguilar 2009a; Carsten 2000). The advantage of looking at kinship as practices of relatedness and of highlighting its processuality is that the negative side of kinship is given importance (Aguilar *ibid.*; Carsten *ibid.*). The failure of relationships is an important concern of 'cultures of relatedness'. Aguilar (*ibid.*, p. 7) has noted

that ‘this negative aspect of sociality is also part of the scheme of relatedness, which had no place in earlier studies of kinship’. Most crucially in the context of this research, viewing kinship as a process ‘is particularly relevant in analyzing transnational families, whose members, despite biological or legal ties, work at being related despite or because of the physical separation’ (Aguilar 2009a, p. 7).

Locating the women within families and other kin relations provides an important venue for examining the spaces and times of their lives and experiences. Family relationships are nurtured over time and the practical and routine activities that underpin the organization of family life occur in specific spatial and temporal locations. Nurturing and maintaining ties require material and affective practices that have spatial and temporal entailments. The absence of family members due to migration has consequences on the spatial and temporal organization and dimensions of these families. It also has consequences on how family ties are nurtured and sustained. It is important to capture this dynamic and the concept of ‘cultures of relatedness’ provides a way of exploring not only how women are embedded in kinship ties (biological or legal) as Aguilar (2009a) has pointed out but more importantly, how they negotiate this embeddedness as it is reconfigured by, and in response to, migration.

2.4 A Generative Paradigm of Subjectification

In this section, I examine more explicitly the relation between experience and agency using some of the literature cited in the preceding discussions to provide a more conceptual link between them. Based on this discussion, I examine the relation between agency and narrative which forms the basis of my discussion of a generative paradigm of subjectification.

2.4.1 Experience, Subjectivity and Agency

Experience is what I would call the concrete ways by which the women navigated and negotiated their particular physical and social locations, ones that

have spatial and temporal dimensions to them. Here, experience includes not just physical activities but also the emotional, affective, and mental engagement that their particular situations entailed. It involves both routine and creative and imaginative interactions with their social worlds, and encompasses the ‘everyday practices’ they employed ‘to sustain relations’ (Papadopoulos *et al.* 2008, p. xii). It might be said then that experience involves thought, affect and action and their passage through space and time. In this sense, experience ‘is the medium through which people engage with the things that matter most to them, both individually and collectively’ (Kleinman and Fitz 2007, p. 54). Such a view accords with Bourdieu’s argument that experience refers to how we directly understand the conditions of our existence (McNay 2008, p. 181). Experience can thus function as a critical basis for further thought and action. More critically, as Bourdieu has argued, ‘an analysis of experience ... is crucial to an account of agency...’ (McNay *ibid.*). This is because experience is linked to broader social structures (McNay *ibid.*) and intersubjective since ‘it involves practices, negotiations, and contestations with others with whom we are connected’ (Kleinman and Fitz *ibid.*, p. 53).

We noted in sections one and two that the women’s experiences were inextricably bound up with their social and structural locations. How they were affected by their husband’s absence and how they responded to these consequences speak to their negotiation of their various social positions. Their experiences embody agency and its exercise to the extent that these women were trying to go beyond the limitations imposed by their gender and social locations. However, as Cole’s (1991) study showed, the women’s ability to overcome their situation was also enabled by a creative use of social structure and as Hoodfar (1997) also showed, women protected their access to their husband’s income by recourse to traditional Islamic ideology (see section 2). Agency, at this point, might thus be simply defined in the limited sense, as (McNay 2008) points out, as denoting ‘both the sense in which individuals are not just passive bearers of social roles and a more politicized sense, where individuals are understood to actively challenge their conditions of existence’ (McNay 2008, p. 194). However, as I hope to show in chapters 3 and 8, left-

behind women's agency also involves imagination, the emotion of hope, as well as the acceptance of suffering and sacrifice as vital components of their contribution to their husband's continued migration and to the reconceptualization of their role in this migration (see specifically chapter 3). McNay (ibid., 195) argues that agency has subjective dimensions 'such as will, self-understanding and intention which are crucial to explaining some of the political implications of action'. McNay's conceptualization of agency, based on Bourdieu's 'habitus', as embodied practice which 'exteriorizes dimensions of embodied existence – for example, emotions – in respect to social relations' (ibid.) provides a perspective that incorporates these subjective dimensions into agency.

2.4.2 Agency, Narrative and a Generative Paradigm of Subjectification

Most of the accounts of the experiences of left-behind women in the literature cited in sections one and two were based on informal conversations and interviews and told as narratives. In this section, I discuss the relation between agency and narrative.

Narratives are 'a way of expressing development over time' (Becker 1997, p. 26) and as Paul Ricoeur has argued, the meanings of our actions emerge only with the passage of time (cited in Becker ibid.). Narratives are thus crucial to people's capacity to make sense of what they go through in life (McNay 2000). For Ricoeur, narrative does not only give order and coherence to experience; it is that which also at the same time shapes identity and the means for the expression of selfhood (McNay 2000, p. 85). Narrative, for Ricoeur, is 'a universal feature of social life; it is the fundamental mode through which the grounding of human experience in time is understood' (ibid.). Meaning does not inhere in action; it is rather the result of our project to make sense of it and it is here that narrative becomes vitally important to the interpretation of experience (McNay 2000, pp. 94-95). Acts of self-narration become central to the formation of identity (ibid., p. 81):

experience is organized along the temporal dimension, in the form of a plot that gathers events together into a coherent and meaningful

structure which, in turn, gives significance to the overall configuration that is the person. (McNay, *ibid.*, pp. 81-82)

McNay argues that narrative captures the temporality of the self and explains that this temporalized conception means that ‘the self has unity, but it is the dynamic unity of change through time’ (McNay *ibid.*, p. 74). This implies the coherence and durability of the self and means that ‘there are limits to the way in which subjectivity may be transformed’ (*ibid.*).

Gender identities are not free-floating: they involve deep-rooted investments on the part of individuals and historically sedimented practices which severely limit their transferability and transformability. Although subject formations receive their shape from prevailing social conditions, certain predispositions and tendencies may still continue to effect embodied practices long after their original conditions of emergence have been surpassed. This durability partly suggests that a coherent sense of self is not just an illusion... (McNay *ibid.*, p. 18).

McNay states that in order to allow for an active dimension of agency, subjectification has to incorporate an account of how the coherence of the self is maintained (*ibid.*, p. 74). Such durability is vitally important in informing the way a subject understands and locates itself temporally (McNay *ibid.*, p. 18).

The ontological claim of the durability and coherence of the self is central to the generative paradigm of subjectification which addresses the limitations of the negative conception of subject formation. McNay explains that in the negative paradigm, associated most with Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, although identity is taken to consist of multiple subject positions, the temporality of the subject or self is not adequately accounted for. It considers the coherence of the subject as ‘the externally imposed effect of power’ (McNay 2000, p. 27). In other words, it is the negative moment and process of subjection that is privileged (McNay *ibid.*, p. 2). It considers solely the idea of temporality as retention – ‘the sedimentation of disciplinary effects upon the body’ (McNay *ibid.*, 31). In this paradigm, the subject is essentially passive (McNay *ibid.*, p. 161; McNay 2003). Moreover, as Bryant and Schofield (2007,

p. 336) have noted, the self in the Foucauldian-derived perspective ‘is constituted by a series of disjointed incommensurable subject positions that have no chronological relation’ (Bryant and Schofield 2007, p. 336).

The coherence of the self, as Bryant and Schofield (2007, p. 336) have written, ‘involve[s] generating a singular, connected life trajectory through linking previous experiences to subsequent ones’. Temporality underpins the linking of past and present experiences (Bryant and Schofield *ibid.*) which might then inform future action. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu on the relationship between agency and the future orientation of practice, McNay (2008) clarifies that because we cannot predict what will occur next, ‘action is never simply reproduction’ (p. 183). However, as Bryant and Schofield (*ibid.*) argue in their work on sexual subjectivity, temporality has to be understood in its relation to the generative nature of ‘practice’. Drawing on the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, they write:

It is precisely because this process is generative that it necessarily involves and invokes the concept of time. For Sartre, the human subject develops in relation to the reflexive accumulation of actions over time. This is not, however, a simple linear process of addition and accretion. Rather, it is a dynamic and dialectical project [...] The ‘project’ of being human [...] is intrinsically generative, involving actions that are predicated on their predecessors but never in an automatic and mechanical fashion that ensures their mimetic reproduction. (Bryant and Schofield *ibid.*, p. 336)

The coherence of the self is thus something that is generated over time, through making sense of what it goes through. Vital to the formulation, and indeed, formation of this coherence is the reflexivity that is exercised, one that informs later events and actions in life. How people learn from experience helps to engender the unity of the self, one that is attained through and defined by change through time (McNay 2000). The self is durable but at the same time amenable to and capable of change. But as has been pointed out, contra the negative theory of subject formation, this change has its limits (see also Binkley 2009). Subjectivities are not ‘momentarily generated and then vanish as the next discursive construction occurs’ (Bryant and Schofield 2007, p. 337).

A generative theory of subjectification acknowledges that subjects live in contexts where determining constraints not only are ever present but indeed shape them. However, they are also theorized as active by considering the temporal aspects of subject formation dialogically (McNay 2000, p. 4). In addition to retention, it incorporates protention – ‘the future-oriented dimension of praxis as the living through of the embodied potentialities, and as the anticipatory aspects inherent within subject formation’ (McNay 2000, pp. 4-5). It is by simultaneously looking at how subjects are determined or constrained by material and social relations and how they creatively and imaginatively respond to them that a more adequate account of agency is made (McNay *ibid.*). The subject is neither only the effect of power nor solely the product of human intentionality. McNay’s account of a generative paradigm of subjectification provides a conception of subject formation and agency that makes us sensitive not only to how left-behind women are constrained by their material and social relations but also to how they negotiate these constraints.

McNay’s account, however, has relied exclusively on a theorization of the temporality of subjectification. Its spatiality was not explicitly addressed. The work of Henrik Vigh allows us to incorporate this aspect into the generative paradigm. In his work on crisis, Vigh (2008), rather than put crisis in context, examines it as context, that is, ‘as a terrain of action and meaning’ (p. 5). Viewing crisis as a prolonged condition, that is, a state of affairs, rather than as a turning point or ‘a defined period of transition’ (p. 10), he considers agency not simply as a matter of capacity (p. 10) but as a question of possibility. The issue is hence: ‘to what extent are we able to act within a given context’ (p. 11). He links this sense of agency to the concept of horizon which has both temporal and spatial dimensions (p. 16) that need to be negotiated. Vigh argues that crisis situations compel agents to consider how they may move within a social environment but also how this social environment moves them as they seek to realize their goals (p. 18). Crisis-as-context ‘clarifies the extent to which action must be seen as motion within motion, and the limitations of a faulty understanding of the relationship between act, environment and plot’ (p. 18).

Vigh has elsewhere called ‘navigation’ the way one moves within a social environment and how one is moved by that same environment (Vigh 2006, 2009). He explains further that navigation is ‘simultaneously keep[ing] oneself free of immediate social dangers and direct[ing] one’s life through an uncertain social environment, towards better possible futures and improved life chances’ (Vigh 2009, p. 97). The central ideas of navigation – how a person moves within, and is moved by, social forces, and the concern for the horizon (understood as having temporal and spatial dimensions) – resonate with McNay’s dialogical conceptualization of the temporality of subjectification, that it involves both retention (being determined by social relations) and protention (being able to respond creatively and imaginatively to constraining social relations with such actions having a future orientation). Vigh’s concept of navigation involves negotiating the temporal and spatial dimensions of a social environment. It is geared towards overcoming the present: a condition that, in the contexts of youth soldiering (Vigh 2006) and migration (Vigh 2009) in which Vigh writes, is characterized by social and economic limitations. It is aimed at realizing a better and brighter future.¹⁰ To that extent, agency is both spatially and temporally implicated. The implication of subject formation in both the temporal and spatial dimensions of social relations which Vigh’s notion of navigation makes possible is what I want to incorporate in McNay’s conceptualization of the generative paradigm of subjectification.

Conclusion

I have sought here to put forward a way of looking at the lives and experiences of left-behind women, a project that has necessitated this chapter to be less conventional. Its aim was not simply to survey, however critically, the available literature in order to locate this study within existing scholarship and hence underscore its uniqueness, significance and potential contribution to knowledge. Or, because the literature review identified factors that mediated the experiences of left-behind women, to how it might inform how my research was to be done particularly with regard to sampling. Equally importantly, it

¹⁰ Vigh’s concept of navigation lacks an explicit theorization of gender.

aimed to develop a theoretical lens with which the nature and experience of migration of women married to Filipino seamen might be examined. In this wise, I have provided a description of both the positive and negative social and subjective consequences on left-behind women of the prolonged absence of their husbands. An examination of the spatial and temporal dimensions of the women's experiences comprised an important aspect of the discussion, a discussion based on a conceptualization of time and space as coeval and inextricably linked. The examination of the spatio-temporality of these women's lives and experiences underscored the location and positioning of these women in various social and material contexts and how their husband's absence either expanded or limited their social, ideological and discursive spaces. These spaces help to enable us see how their gender identity, agency and subjectivity were constituted by and emerged from the times and spaces made possible and defined by their husband's very absence.

For seamen's wives, it is not only the prolonged absences of their husbands that define their experience of migration; the alternation of their husband's absence and presence, which sets their life's tempo and rhythm, equally shapes their lives and experiences of and within migration. The alternation is contingent on their husband's rank which has implications on the length of their contracts and on their salary. These have consequences on the spatiotemporality of their identity, agency and subjectivity inasmuch as they determine the ability of husband and wife to build their own house and hence for the women to live apart from their in-laws. Their living arrangements had direct consequences on their spatial mobility both in and out of the house as well as on their control of their time. Their sense of who they were and what they were capable of doing was not only due to performing new roles and responsibilities as well as to new possibilities opened up for them by their husband's absence. These new responsibilities had opened up and/or expanded the physical, social and ideological/discursive spaces they occupied. The return of their husbands not only necessitated adjustments to routine established in their absence but also negotiations in roles and responsibilities to accommodate or incorporate the husband back into the daily and material activity of maintaining a family.

The links I made among experience, gender identity, agency and subjectivity in my discussion of the literature on left-behind women served as the basis for a series of moves I made to provide a more conceptual consideration of the relation first, between experience and agency, and second, between agency and narrative. My discussion highlighted how narrative is central to our ability to make sense of our actions and experiences and to the constitution of our social identities. To extend the implications of that discussion, we might argue here, following Rogaly (2009) who writes in the context of the exploitation of precarious agricultural workers in an Indian village, that narratives might also function as a 'space of representation' enabling the recovery of dignity (Rogaly *ibid.*, p. 1982). Narratives are also then political in that they are vital in asserting our 'selves' and identities against those that would deny them respect or recognition. Narratives thus demonstrate the expression and exercise of agency.

Finally, the discussion of a generative paradigm of subjectivity proposed a conceptualization of subject formation underpinned by a notion of the coherence of the self, an idea that is rejected as illusory and essentialist by the negative theory of subject formation which has come to dominate conceptualizations of identity, agency and subjectivity. The generative conception considers subjects as both determined by and determining of their socio-material relations. The discussion of this theory of subject formation loops back to the spatiotemporality of gender identity, agency and subjectivity. In the next chapter, I will reflect further on the implications of taking experience, agency and narrative relationally on research method particularly with respect to analysis of data, and on the link between personal and political narratives.

BRINGING 'LEFT-BEHIND' WIVES INTO VIEW

This chapter is concerned with the methodological aspects of the research. It presents the research questions, discusses the data-gathering method used, locates where the research was conducted and how access was negotiated, explains the sampling strategy, describes how data analysis was done, and provides a reflection on fieldwork relations. The chapter combines both a simple description of strategies used and a conceptual reflection on methodological and ethical issues.

3.1 Research Questions

This thesis examines how Filipino seamen's wives negotiated their lives and experiences arising from a context of migration seen as both process and experience. It also seeks to reconceptualise the women's participation or involvement in migration. As will be argued in chapter 3, these women have a more direct link to migration than is made in their conceptualization as 'left-behind'. To generate empirical data that address these objectives, the following questions were asked:

1. What personal investments do the women make in the migration of their husbands?
2. What roles, responsibilities and obligations do the women perform and take over from their husbands in their absence?
3. How do women respond to the difficulties and challenges brought about by their husband's migration?
4. What factors enable, constrain or shape the women's capacity to deal with them?

5. What resources (personal, social, cultural, religious) to help deal with their situation are available to them?
6. What are the impacts of the husband's absence on family life and routine?
7. What adjustments to family routine, arrangements, and activities established in the husband's absence are made when their husbands are home? Why are these adjustments made?
8. What impacts does their husband's absence have on their self-efficacy?

3.2 Method

This thesis relies on narratives and accounts of women's experiences related to the migration of their husbands as well as their personal investments into migration. To generate these accounts, semi-structured interviews were conducted.

I had initially intended to do this research using observation techniques but doing so would have posed methodological and ethical challenges. It would not have been practical and sensible to do, for example, non-participant observation in an x number of seafarer homes. I would have had to live with each seafarer family for a certain period of time in order to do observational work which did not guarantee yielding the data I needed. Being able to observe was conditional to finding an x number of wives (and their seafarer husbands) willing to let me live with them. Ethically, this is highly controversial; it is intrusive to the family's privacy and potentially damaging to the wives and their families. Finally, there was no single village with enough number of seamen's families where I could have conducted such an ethnographic study. If there had been one, I could have lived with a non-seaman family and observed and interacted with the seamen's wives in a less controversial manner. In this context, it is worth emphasizing the merits of interviewing:

[i]nterviews are widely used in social research because respondents can act as the eyes and ears of researchers; interviewees can recall and summarize a wide range of observations in seconds, which would take weeks and months of observational work to achieve. They can also speak about things that cannot be observed. (Seale 1999, p. 59; see also McKeganey and Barnard 1996).

Moreover, as Matthew Gutmann (2002, p. 6) has acknowledged,

for better or for worse, most of what ethnographers ‘do’ is talk to people. We talk to people about what they think, what others think, and about what they and others say they and others do. We also ‘observe’, and these observations may be important, but I think on the whole many of us rely far more on words about deeds than on the deeds themselves.

For the interviews, I had already identified specific topics for investigation and had a fairly defined focus around which issues and questions were to revolve. Bryman (2004, p. 323) explains that where a study already has this focus, semi-structured interviews are preferable to unstructured interviews ‘in order to address the[se] more specific issues’. Moreover, because the topics or issues I had identified were informed by the literature review, which meant that I brought into the interviews certain informed ideas about women’s experiences of life without their (migrant) husbands, semi-structured interviews allowed me ‘to deal more explicitly with the presuppositions [I brought] to the interview in relation to aspects of the interviewee’ (Flick 1998, p. 87). To be sure, the interviews were also steered in certain directions by the women and this highlighted issues which I had not anticipated or which I thought were not as critical to their lives (see also Beardsworth and Keil 1992). This enabled me to pursue, as Beardsworth and Keil (*ibid.*, pp. 261-262) have explained, an iterative process of incorporating issues and refining my questions in later interviews pursuing lines of inquiry suggested by my earlier interviews.

Two pilot interviews were conducted (one in July 2009 in the UK and another in San Gabriel in September 2009) to test and refine the interview questions. The importance of piloting has been well argued (e.g. Sampson 2004). My pilot led me to appreciate how the use of Ilokano (the native language of the Ilocos Region and most of Northern Luzon) or Filipino would help minimize

asymmetries of power relationships between researcher and participant. It flagged how English was a marker of social and class cleavages in the Philippines. My first pre-pilot interviewee asked whether she had to speak in English; if she had to, she wasn't sure she had enough reserve of English. She worried in jest that the interview would not yet have finished but she would have run out of English. The language factor had the potential of putting her in what Wetherell (1998) calls 'a troubled subject position'. Her anxiety about the use of English was not only due to whether she spoke it fluently enough but also with what her English fluency level implied. In the Philippines, English is the language of government (together with Filipino), of the elite, of the educated. It is frequently a marker of class and educational attainment. This was tellingly demonstrated when she said that she did not want to come off 'boba' (thick). Her concern was therefore loaded with a history of political, economic, social and class hierarchy.

My pilot interviews were supplemented by casual conversations with several men and women many of whom were my relatives and friends whose spouses were in Hawaii or mainland United States about 'life without a spouse'. This was done immediately before the start of actual interviewing in February 2011. I also showed some of them the list of topics I had identified for my interviews and the corresponding questions I would ask and sought their feedback on what else I should focus on.

3.3 Fieldwork Site

I conducted my fieldwork in the town of San Gabriel (a pseudonym) in Ilocos Norte, Northern Philippines from February to September 2010 (see Figure 3.1 below). San Gabriel is an agricultural town and based on income, is classified as a third-class municipality.¹¹ It has a land area of 6,550 hectares and consists of 43 barangays (roughly, villages) 18 of which comprise the poblacion, the

¹¹ The National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) of the Philippines defines a third-class municipality as one with an annual income in the last three calendar years of more than PHP 35 million but less than PHP 45 million (roughly between GBP 500,000 and GBP 640,000 at an exchange rate of GBP1 to PHP 70).

town proper or urbanised area. As of 2007, its population was 32,345 and had a labour force of 19,766 almost 43 per cent of whom were unemployed. There are 11 grocery stores, 376 sari-sari (small variety/convenience) stores, seven pharmacies and 30 agribusiness establishments. The town's public transport system is provided by 1,500 tricycles (motor bike with a sidecar) and more than 40 passenger jeepneys all of which are privately owned (Municipality of San Gabriel 2009a).



Figure 3.1. Map of Ilocos Norte and Northwestern Luzon, Philippines

I chose San Gabriel as my research site for its long history of migration, particularly to Hawaii. The town's biggest houses are owned by families of Hawaii emigrants, locally called Hawaiianos (which later on came to refer to

anyone who has moved to the United States), and these concrete markers of economic mobility have highlighted social and economic inequalities in the town. As will be detailed in chapter 3, migration has been used to escape the economic and social limitations in the Ilocos Region and the Philippines. In order therefore to see how migration brings economic and social improvement, and to get a sense of how migration is invested with the hope for improved life chances, it was necessary to conduct the research in a place that has participated and been significantly affected by migration. Not only is there a large number of people from San Gabriel who have immigrated to the United States and elsewhere, it also has a considerable number of labour emigrants, those who left the country for overseas jobs through the labour export policy of the Philippine state. San Gabriel is suitable in terms of providing access to see how permanent migration and temporary labour migration are differentially perceived by people. Also, because I was interested in narratives and accounts of women's experiences of the migration of their seamen-husbands, I had to speak their language so that the disclosure of stories and their analysis would not suffer from language issues and the mediation of a translator.

Identifying women who were married to seamen was done in two ways. First, I asked family members, relatives, friends, neighbours, former school mates and teachers if they knew anyone I could interview. I excluded wives who were my neighbours and family friends as the nature of our prior relationship made interviewing them problematic. There was also the issue of managing our relationship after the interview. Second, I negotiated with the principal of San Gabriel National High School if I could ask students whether they were related to, knew or was a neighbour of a married seaman. In going from room to room asking the students, I was accompanied by the most senior department chair. This generated a list of more than 80 names, and combined with the names identified by my first means, gave me a list of almost a hundred women. With the village of residence of the women also provided by the students, I then sought people, women particularly, to introduce me to the women. My own and my wife's relatives were particularly helpful in asking people they knew to help provide introductions or vouch for me. This was not, however, always possible

and in many instances, I was on my own. Relying on the information provided by students, frequently just the name of the seaman and his village of residence, also led to one embarrassing incident. After introducing myself to the seaman and explaining the purpose of my visit and my research, I asked him if his wife was around and if I might speak to her whereupon the seaman told me his wife passed away several years ago.

Being accompanied by someone the women knew was crucial in speaking to the women and in minimizing suspicion. The information sheet, which was in Ilokano, was not of much use. The women were more receptive and more positively predisposed to giving me a chance if I personally explained to them the purpose of the research. Kinship ties or the ability of the women to place me within 'familiarizing' systems helped to convince them. In a number of instances, I was first asked what my surname was, which family I came from, who was my mother, etc. All of these were ways of identifying me in their own terms rather than relying on the researcher identity stamped on the research information sheet. In three other instances, women agreed to be interviewed because they knew my family or one of my siblings belonged to the same high school class as they did. They made clear they were agreeing to be interviewed because they knew my family. I think that this was their way of being assured that whatever it is that they were going to say, they knew that they told it to someone they could trust and someone trustworthy because 'known' to them through other members of my family.

Not all introductions, however, worked. I had seven rejections (two of which were by wives of captains) and two who backed out. Various reasons were given (although I did not ask for any) some of which had nothing to do with the research. One of the captain's wives did not want to be interviewed because a week before I spoke to her, her house was burgled and was suspicious of anyone wanting to ask her about her life as the wife of a seaman. Understandably, she did not want someone she hardly knew to be inside her house. Indeed, there were a few who openly expressed suspicion about my intentions. One asked me whether I was doing surveillance (agtiktiktik). The women's initial hesitation was overcome when I assured them that I was not

going to ask them about how much their husband earned although I made it clear I would ask them about budgeting. The wife who thought I might be snitching was reassured when I told her I had interviewed other women in a neighbouring village one of whom referred her to me. She asked me who I had interviewed there and I mentioned an interviewee off the top of my head which was a marvellous stroke of luck as she happened to be this woman's best friend. She then quickly called her up by cell phone to confirm whether I had been telling the truth.

Revealing the identity of one interviewee to another is an ethical issue that brings up another. If the only way interviewees can feel reassured about participating is by knowing who else has participated which is also their rapid way of gauging a researcher's trustworthiness, is this an acceptable reason to do so? Equally importantly, if researchers are going to ask interviewees to talk about very confidential aspects of their lives, to divulge and expose themselves and potential participants ask for only this information (a name of another who has participated), refusing would seem to me to regard researchers as occupying a privileged position whereby they ask the questions and get answers. Revealing one participant's identity is part of the negotiation of the research dynamic, from issues of access to a reciprocal relationship between researchers and participants. What is involved here is an 'economy of trust' and as a researcher, I decided in favour of giving the information. In the case that prompted this reflection, the potential interviewee was referred by another I had interviewed and as such, suggests that the former would have the right to know who had referred her to me.

I assured the participants of the confidentiality of what they were going to say. I explained to them what the consent form was for before asking them to sign. I assured the participants that they will remain anonymous, that they will be given a different name, and that any information that might identify them will

not be used.¹² I asked for their permission to record the interviews all of whom agreed.

Aside from my interviews with seamen's wives, I also interviewed telecommunications personnel in Ilocos Norte's capital city, Laoag for data on telecommunications infrastructure and facilities, information used in chapter 6 to provide the necessary context for the prevalent use of mobile phones among seamen's families. From July to August, I conducted research in various libraries in Metro Manila and visited the 'seafarer's market' near Luneta. In September, I conducted a few follow-up interviews with the seamen's wives.

3.4 Sampling Strategy

Forty women were interviewed following a purposeful sampling strategy which enabled the selection of interviewees who would provide rich insights into the central questions of the research (Coyne 1997; Draucker *et al.* 2007; Smart and Neale 1999). In qualitative research, there are no hard and fast rules regarding sample size (Tuckett 2005; Bryman 2001). Because qualitative research aims for depth and detail, sample size is usually small and derived purposefully rather than randomly (Tuckett 2005). This is to ensure 'richness of data about a particular phenomenon' (*ibid.*, p. 49). For this study, the following parameters – based on different circumstances, residential arrangements, points in the lifecycle of the seamen-husband and wife, and points in the seafaring career of husbands – were used to select interviewees:

- wives in full-time employment
- wives not in employment
- wives with dependent children
- wives with adult children

¹² Pseudonyms given depended on the women's age. I prepared a list of names that I thought was suited to the women on this basis. Older women had names that were more Spanish than American-English. I showed this list to women born in different decades and whose ages approximated the ages of my interviewees, some of whom were themselves mothers of adult children to find out whether the names would be 'appropriate' for a woman of a certain age.

- wives with no children
- wives who live with their in-laws
- wives whose husbands have risen to rank of chief engineer or captain

These parameters, identified in the literature review as factors that mediated the experiences of left-behind women, were set to ensure that interview data can be collected from a wide spectrum of backgrounds, situations, and conditions that bear upon the experiences of seamen's wives. This was also to help ensure that diverse insights, understandings, and perspectives arising from different circumstances and experiences are collected. Or where similar insights and perspectives were collected, such similarity would not be solely attributed to a lack of diversity in the backgrounds of the sample respondents. The sample is not representative of any population. There was no sampling frame from which to select interviewees and the composition of the small sample was not aimed at generalizing about a whole population. However, the 'strategic' selection of the interview sample based on a range of circumstances identified above helped minimize bias, that is, the likelihood that interview data would come predominantly from a certain set of interviewees and the 'world of experiences' they inhabited.

3.5 Profile of Women and Their Husbands

This brief section provides a profile of the women who participated and their husbands. It is derived from socio-demographic information collected immediately prior to the interview. Table 3.1 below shows the number of wives according to rank of their husband.

Table 3.1 Distribution of Wives According to Husband's Rank

| OFFICERS | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Deck Department | |
| Chief Mate/Officer | 1 |
| Third Mate/Officer | 1 |
| Boatswain (Bosun) | 2 |
| Engine Department | |
| Chief Engineer | 2 |
| First Engineer | 2 |
| Second Engineer | 1 |
| Third Engineer | 2 |
| Fourth Engineer | 3 |
| RATINGS | |
| Deck Department | |
| A/B | 12 |
| Engine Department | |
| Oiler | 7 |
| Pump man | 2 |
| Machinist | 1 |
| Radio operator | 1 |
| Electrician | 1 |
| Others (Cruise Ship) | |
| Waiter/Head Supervisor | 1 |
| State Room Attendant | 1 |
| TOTAL | 40 |

Source: Socio-Demographic Information Sheet: Study of Filipino Seamen's Wives

The longest-serving seaman has been working for 37 years while one husband has only been working for one year. Average number of seafaring years of the women's husbands was 17 years. Average length of contract is 10 months and leave, three months. Two women said that their husbands had had only two or three weeks of leave.

Of 40 interviewees, only four were without a child. Of the 36 mothers, one fostered a child. The average number of children is 2.19. The youngest interviewee was 21 years old, the oldest, 53 years old. Average age for the 40 wives is 38.3. (The youngest husband was 30 years old, the oldest, 57.) Mean age for husbands is 45. Table 3.2 below shows the age range distribution of the women and their husbands.

Table 3.2 Age Distribution of Wives and Husbands

| Age Range | Wives | Husbands |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| 20-24 | 2 | 1 |
| 25-29 | 4 | 1 |
| 30-34 | 8 | 9 |
| 35-39 | 8 | 10 |
| 40-44 | 7 | 8 |
| 45-49 | 4 | 4 |
| 50-54 | 7 | 6 |
| 55-59 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 40 | 40 |

Source: Socio-Demographic Information Sheet:
Study of Filipino Seamen's Wives

Only eight of the women were in full-time, paid employment, with six of them in the public sector (teacher, social worker, etc.). Of the 32 who were not in paid employment, 19 were engaged in some form of income-generating work (farming, raising livestock, buying and selling, etc.). Table 3.3 below summarizes the employment and economic profile of the women.

Table 3.3 Employment and Economic Activities Profile of Participants

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Wives' Economic Activities | |
| In Paid Employment: | 8 |
| Public Sector | 6 |
| Private Sector | 2 |
| Not in paid employment but engaged in some form of work | 19 |
| Not in paid employment and not engaged in some form of work | 13 |
| Total | 40 |

Source: Socio-Demographic Information Sheet: Study of Filipino Seamen's Wives

At the design stage of the research, conscious effort was made to avoid bias and this was to be done by limiting to ten the number of women to be interviewed known to or recommended by a single initial source. This rested on the assumption that women knew others who moved within the same circle due to class, socio-economic standing, work or some other basis. In other words, the thinking was that the women they could recommend would be from a limited demographic. This turned out not to be the case since in San Gabriel, familiarity

with or knowledge of others did not solely depend on actual interaction with people but also on stories, news or gossip shared with others. People also had the propensity to locate others within familiar systems such as kinship and village of birth or residence.

I conducted all the interviews. The shortest interview lasted just under 40 minutes; the longest almost two hours. The average length of the interviews was one hour and 20 minutes. All of the 40 interviews were conducted in Ilokano except for two which were done in Filipino. A number of interviewees, however, mixed Ilokano, Filipino and English languages. My interviews were enriched by more informal conversations with the women after the interview, when they were relaxed by the absence of a recorder. This was also a time when they asked me questions with a number of them saying that it was now their turn to interview me. Indeed, in some instances these 'exit' conversations were more insightful and revealing than the parts of the interviews which explicitly inquired into certain topics. I think that it was the combination of the absence of my pen, notebook, and recorder as well as the fact they were also asking me questions that significantly lessened the guardedness of the women.

Most of the interviews were done in the residence of the research participants. Because of this, I also managed to have conversations with ten husbands who were on leave at the time of the interview. I saw husbands (hand)wash clothes with their wives, cook lunch for the family, look after babies, and do house repairs or improvements. One interview was done while the husband was on video-skype 'talking' to and watching the family: children going in and out of doors or playing. Two wives were interviewed at their children's school's waiting areas while four were interviewed in their place of work. These provided me with opportunities to observe women in the different locations of the performance of their various roles as wives and mothers as well as how wives and their husbands helped each other do house work. I also encountered some of my interviewees in San Gabriel's hospital (with one wife taking her seaman-husband who had been suffering from dizziness to the emergency room), while taking my own children to school and waiting for them to come out, on jeepneys on the way to the province's capital, Laoag City, and at

different fast food stores which provided me with some opportunities to have conversations with them – informal and outside of the context of a research interview. More opportunistic observations included seeing interviewees walking with their husband to the village church or a number of them participating in ‘libot’, a Roman Catholic rite of procession of saints. These observations enabled me to think more about what women did outside of their homes and in what context.

Finally, I attended services at the town’s Baptist Church upon the invitation of one interviewee whose faith and church activities were central to her life and family. I was also invited to a few lunch gatherings to mark the arrival of the husband of a number of the women. These were also attended by a few seamen’s wives related either to the seamen or the wives. In these gatherings, I saw and heard the women in a different light. I heard them exchange banter, frequently of a sexual nature. In the last one I attended, the women, all related to each other, mercilessly teased one wife whose husband had left for his first contract only two weeks before. They repeatedly asked her when her husband was coming home (which they already knew) and then said, ‘ah, you’d have to wait quite a long while’ (a ket mabayag pay ngarud ti panaguray mo a) and broke into laughter. Her husband happened to join the vessel which was the ship of the husband of the wife hosting the lunch. In my interview, the wife had shared with me her husband’s description of the ship: that it was old, they spent so much time just removing rust and repainting it, and it did not have enough heating. The women then proceeded to ‘scare’ the young wife that her husband would have to deal with the same conditions that the host-wife’s husband did. While the women laughed, the host-wife assured the young one, ‘but look, my husband made it alive’ (kitaem ket nakaawid met).

I reflected on the function of these women’s teasing and thought that they were in some way pedagogical. Their teasing, I thought, was not so much to remind the woman of her ‘loneliness’ or of the possibility of her becoming widowed as much as to tell her to just laugh about it. In this sense, they were showing her a strategy with which to survive the long wait. And I speculate that the young wife braving to smile amidst the barrage of the older women’s banter instead of

breaking into tears might be said to indicate that she understood in a very deep level the lesson they were trying to teach her.

It was also in such gatherings that I got to observe how these women shared stories, gossip and resources. I listened to them ask if they had heard of what happened to so and so, update one another (when one was due to give birth, etc.) and when they will get their allotment (so the promised dates of paying money borrowed had to be renegotiated). It was from their conversations I got updated about what had happened to a wife who had agreed to be interviewed but who had the interview re-scheduled several times citing body pain. It crossed my mind that she was probably telling me she no longer wanted to be interviewed but I refused to read it that way. I wanted to interview her for the perspective I thought she would provide, and nothing was going to discourage me. I was told that she had been diagnosed with cancer, has had an operation, and would soon start therapy. I was both stunned by how quick things happened and relieved that I did not think she was malingering when she had the interview postponed.

If these gatherings afforded me with opportunities to observe, they also gave the women the chance to observe me. In one instance, I saw them watching me struggle with what one wife served me: a mix of the internal organs of a goat with some generous broth spiced with the animal's bile and blood. At least I tried. I also felt that they were interested to find out whether I would drink with the other men, which I did mainly because I knew of how social drinking, particularly in that instance, would mediate my social relations with all those present (see also Brandes 1988; Gutmann 1996).

3.6 Transcription and Analysis of Interviews

I did all the verbatim transcription of the interviews which took me more than 250 hours to do. My transcription practice was guided by a conviction that how women talked about their lives and themselves, the particular words, images and metaphors they used are significant to a description and conceptualization of their spatiotemporality. This point was underscored for me in one of my pre-

pilot interviews when a wife described her difficult situation as akin to bearing a cross (*kasla agibaklay ti krus*). Hence, the careful and faithful transcription of the interviews (see, for example, Becker 1999; Bloor *et al.* 2001).

It was also necessary to do this type of transcription because any interview extracts quoted in this thesis had to be translated into English. A translation based on a paraphrased transcription (which in itself already constitutes a translation) of interviews risks losing the nuances of the women's representation and narration of their lives and experiences. Translation is a complex activity. In translating culturally loaded terms, concepts, and metaphors, the *aporia* of rendering them into English adequately is always present. Translation always involves interpretation so that what is presented as coming from the interviewee already carries traces of the researcher's or translator's mediation. In this sense, translation, and research more broadly, is not only invested with biographical and identity work (Coffey 1999) but also with interpretive frames and politics (Giordano 2008; Papastergiadis 2000; Rafael 1988, 2005; Riessman 2008).

The analysis of interview data poses a 'critical methodological challenge' (Melia 1997, p. 30), one obtaining in the epistemological status they are given (Dingwall 1997; Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Melia 1997; Silverman 2001). In this study, I take interview data as accounts that 'are not simply representations of the world' but rather also as 'part of the world they describe' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, p. 107; cf. Atkinson *et al.* 2003; Dingwall 1997). Following Silverman's (1997) typology of positions concerning the status of interview data, I am taking a constructionist perspective (Holstein and Gubrium 1995) which considers interview data as providing access to people's experiences and lives. It also considers these accounts of lives and experiences as constituted in their telling. Interview data may thus be analyzed for 'what' they tell us about the world (social actors' emotions, experiences, etc.) and for 'how' this world is constructed (Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Silverman 2001). The analytic objective is to demonstrate the link between what is said and the experiences and lives being studied and not simply a description of the 'situated production of talk' (Holstein and Gubrium *ibid.*, pp. 79-80). By focusing on both form and

content, we can treat interview data as ‘a means of gaining insight into a world beyond the story that the interviewee tells, a means of getting a handle on a more complex set of ideas than the ones that the interviewee is ostensibly talking about’ (Melia 1997, p. 34; also Melia 1987).

Given the link between narrative, and identity, subjectivity and agency as presented in Chapter 2, I did a narrative analysis of the interview data. In doing narrative analysis, I made sure that my view of narrative (as linked to identity and agency) agreed with the narrative analytic perspective I took. A narrative perspective that coheres with this conceptualization of the relationship between narrative and identity is what has been called experience-centred narrative research (Squire 2008; Squire *et al.* 2008). It is underpinned by ‘a necessary link between narrative and agency’ (Squire *et al.* 2008, p. 7). It takes narratives as providing access to individual experiences and takes as axiomatic ‘stories as ways of expressing and building personal identity and agency’ (Squire *et al.* 2008, p. 6 citing Brunner 1990). More generally, narrative analysis, at least that which I do and provide in this thesis, considers the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts of the production of narratives (Mishler 1986, 1999; Riessman 2002; Squire 2008; Venn 2005; Whooley 2006).

Following Squire (2008), I started with a thematic description of interviews. I identified emergent and recurrent themes and this process started with my writing of field/interview notes which I did after each interview. These notes included a summary of what was said in the interview, identified parts of the interview that made it different from or similar to other interviews, examined my performance – what I did ‘wrong’, what else I should/could have asked, how I felt, etc. By reflecting on each interview after it was done, I began to generate ideas about what was pressing to these women. This process of reflection, thinking through and generation of ideas continued with the transcription of the interviews which was done as soon after each interview as possible. After each transcription, I revisited my notes for the relevant interview and added further reflections.

Based on these themes, I prepared an indexing/coding frame. The women's responses were categorized accordingly with most of them having multiple categories.¹³ This was followed by the formulation and testing of theories 'moving back and forth between the interviews themselves and generalizations about them' (Squire 2008, p. 50). One dilemma that obtains from the analytic framework of experience-centred narrative analysis, and which has methodological and analytic consequences, is what appears to be a built-in possibility for the plurality of valid interpretations. The question then is how a case might be made for a particular interpretation (ibid., p. 50) or which version of narrative 'truth' (Freeman 2003) is given primacy. I addressed this issue by taking the strategy I describe below.

Coding necessarily implies a degree of abstraction such that the specificity of the women's experiences is diminished (Davies 1990). I sought to capture a sense of the complexity of the lives and experiences of the women. Hence, although themes were identified which implied building into the accounts a certain degree of coherence (insofar as similarities were sought), I addressed this dynamic by, for example, using cases and 'exemplars' that had particular theoretical significance (see also Smart and Neale 1999). I sought cases that differed from, contradicted or did not fit with initial working generalizations with the goal of arriving at more complex and nuanced conceptualizations and analyses. This was because although it is safe to say that the women have 'shared experiences', it was necessary to retain the particularity of each woman's experience. Such experience was profoundly affected by the women's socio-economic standing prior to marrying, by whether they lived with their natal or their husband's family, by their relationship with their mother-in-law,

¹³ I did the coding manually. The women's narratives of various aspects of their lives and experiences were then used to inform and be the substance of key themes that became the topics of the thesis' empirical chapters. Separate MS Word document files were created for each of the codes putting together all responses from 40 interviewees in a single file. This facilitated a more focused analysis for each theme. During the writing of the empirical chapters, I only had to look at hard copies of files pertinent to the codes belonging to the same theme. This may seem too laborious given the existence of software for the analysis of qualitative data such as Atlas-ti and Nvivo. When I went for my fieldwork, I had not attended a training workshop for either of these softwares. By the time I came back near the end of September 2010, I had already coded all 40 transcripts. By the time I had attended an Atlas-ti training and much later on Nvivo, I had already written several chapters using the method I devised. Given also the small number of interviews I did, my system was fit for my purpose.

and by other factors unique to them. I show how crucial these factors were in the cases I use to illustrate certain situations and experiences. By setting and analyzing the narratives against their material, social, cultural, and ideological contexts, I am thus able to present competing narratives and perspectives that afford us much broader explanations for the women's lives and experiences (for example, conflicts between seamen's wives and their mothers-in-law with respect to who receives the monthly remittance).

3.7 Fieldwork Relations

Prior to my fieldwork, I was concerned about how my being a man was going to affect my ability to invite women to participate. There was also the matter of how the cross-gender nature of the study was going to affect the interview itself. Admittedly, it was the sensitivity of some of the issues the thesis was concerned with, particularly the absence of sexual intimacy that caused me this concern. I thought that as a male researcher whose participants were women, there were questions (and therefore spaces of these women's lives) that were already foreclosed to me or that I would have difficulty negotiating. McKeganey and Bloor (1991) noted that the cross-gender nature of their study affected the physical spaces they had access to. Brandes (1992) reports on his fieldwork in Andalusia where strict gender domains or sexual boundaries prevailed and which defined his 'informant pool and research possibilities' (p. 33), and as a consequence, his access to the women was gained through their husbands. Although Pingol (2001), who interviewed the husbands of migrant women, noted that gender did not pose serious problems to her relationship with her participants, she nonetheless acknowledged that she was able to discuss sexual matters more openly with the wives because she was also a woman and a wife. Gender, however, does not only affect researchers and their access to participants. Cunningham-Burley (1984), in her examination of 'issues of gender and method in the portrayal of grandfatherhood' (p. 325), showed 'gender differences in the portrayal of grandparenthood' (p. 328) particularly in the ease with which grandfathers and grandmothers talked about it (ibid.).

Two things might be said of how gender shaped my research. First, as pointed out above, gender affected the kind of questions asked, the degree of probing done, and the comfort both me and the women had during the interview, that is, the ‘micro-world’ of the dialogic and co-constitution of meaning and sharing of stories. Even then, other factors were present such as the fact I am married and have children (and away from my wife for seven months of the fieldwork) which allowed me to draw from a discourse of ‘shared experience’. Indeed, in many interviews, women assumed that as a father and a married man, I knew and understood what they were saying. Second, there was the wider environment within which the interview was located and in which gender was only one factor influencing it. Cultural, social and age factors dictated the amount of privacy I had in interviewing the women, and to a certain extent, the degree of openness that we could talk about private and intimate matters. Domestic arrangements (for example, shared residence) determined in which part of the house I could interview them. A few women, particularly those below 30 years old, were initially accompanied by another woman whose presence I thought was primarily to protect their honour. (The companion would eventually leave us alone). The husbands of two women were present during their interview and participated in the process. Although I thought that they would have left us alone had I been a woman, I was convinced their ‘interest’ also lay in what would be talked about. Despite their presence, I was still able to ask the women my questions on intimacy.

While I was rightly worried about how gender would affect how well I conducted the research, reflecting on the issue now leads me to agree with Loizos (1992, p. 173):

It is not so much whether the fieldworker is male or female, *tout court*, which is likely to be decisive, but the combination of gender, age, marital status, and topic of research interest. If all the values in the equation are ‘wrong’, then the researcher is indeed disadvantaged.

To what extent these values might go ‘wrong’, I argue, depends in part on the character participants see the researcher to possess or demonstrate. In the section on access, I talked about how the introduction of others and the

participants' ability to locate me within 'familiarizing' systems ('you are the brother of so and so', etc. rather than checking my university student profile) helped to assure them there was nothing risky about their participation. This did not always work indicating that if women did not want to participate, there was nothing anyone could do to change their mind. In interview-based research, there is very little time, if at all, for researchers to cultivate a 'reputation' or character based on interaction between them and their interviewees prior to the interview.

That reputation preceded me by way of the people who introduced me to them. It was my responsibility during the interview to build on that. Pitt-Rivers (1992) writes that in research, there is the element of presenting a certain kind of persona, a projection of character meant to win acceptance. A researcher needs 'a certain amount of charm or at least the sincere desire to make of himself agreeable to persons whom he might not in other circumstances have chosen as companions' (ibid., p. 140).¹⁴ I certainly made every effort to make myself agreeable. Where interviews were conducted in the women's house, I removed my shoes or sandals and left them by the door as a gesture of respect. Where other family members were around, I made sure to say 'addaak, tata, nana, manong or manang' (a way of paying courtesy to them; 'tata' for their father, 'nana' for their mother, 'manong' for an older male sibling or relative, 'manang' for a female one).

These were particularly a conscious and strategic act as I wanted to demonstrate through my actions that although I was at a personal level a stranger to them, culturally and socio-economically, I was not. I invested these acts with these meanings hoping, by virtue of shared culture, that they would see them in the way I had meant them to be interpreted. These were my ways of negotiating my relationship with the participants prior to the start of the interview. All throughout my interaction with them, I used terms of respect ('manang' for

¹⁴ In my discussion of gender here, I have exclusively drawn on studies and reflections of male researchers. There is no sexism intended here. I am aware of a number of feminist reflections on fieldwork (e.g. Wolf 1996) but I am especially concerned with my situation as a male researcher conducting a study of women. I have no intention here to trace lineage to a masculine genealogy.

women older than me; 'ading' for those younger. I spoke in Ilokano, our native language, and assured them the interview would be conducted in the language they were most comfortable with. Where appropriate, I spoke only in Ilokano taking care not to mix in Filipino or English words. Where my interviewees mixed languages, I also did. I spoke in a tone and manner that I thought would indicate my respect for them. Michael Bloor (2001, p. 392) has written that

[a]ll encounters between researchers and researched are species of social relationships governed by conventions of politeness and etiquette; in the case of ethnographic research the relationship in question may well embrace fondness and regard. Fieldwork methods and fieldwork relations will shape the nature and content of members' responses.

In one instance, I failed to stop myself from expressing an indirect judgement on one decision a family had made. This particular family had spent more than half a million pesos for a daughter's care-giving course and application for a job overseas. It is a considerable amount by any, but particularly San Gabriel, standards. The interviewee had talked about her husband's wish to retire. With the money going to the daughter's emigration, he had to continue working to save some money for retirement. I was concerned that the daughter might not be able to leave given what I thought at that time the shrinking market for overseas jobs what with the global economic crisis. And so I asked what she felt about the fact that they have spent a lot of money and her daughter was still waiting to go. (Immediately I recognized the arrogance of my question: what business did I have? It is not my money, it is not my life.) She said that she was happy her daughter did the course and that she had no regrets for as long as their child accomplished something and made something of herself. Because it was an investment for the good and future of their daughter, it made her and her husband happy. Her response totally rebuffed me and my cost-benefit analysis yet at the same time showed some of the mentality informing cultures of migration. Fortunately, because I always kept a respectful tone, I hoped that the severity of the offense of my tactlessness was somehow minimized by it.

Below, I talk about three experiences which I hope will show how I negotiated fieldwork relationships. The first is quite humorous and I write about it if only to show that the quality of the responses I got from a particular interviewee about a particular topic might all have been due to my ‘incompetence’. I highlight methodological and ethical issues in the second and third experiences.

3.7.1 Asking about Intimacy

Asking the women about intimacy with their husbands was fertile ground for misinterpretation. The absence of their husbands so suffused their lives that questions about what they talked about during phone conversations or about what wives found difficult during their husbands’ absence were almost always understood to allude to issues of intimacy or its absence. My generic question about what the women and their husbands talked about during phone conversations elicited giggles and laughter (not the nervous kind) even from interviewees who were in their 40s and early 50s.

My interview question concerning the couples’ topics of phone conversations was asked at the beginning of the interview and was intended to inquire into non-intimate aspects of their lives. My question concerning how wives dealt with missing their husbands was placed near the end of the interview for strategic reasons. Although she tried to give a generic answer, when Maricel struggled as she alternated between giggling and suppressing her giggles, she inadvertently alluded to something more private. Here is the relevant section of my interview with Maricel, in her early 30s and with two children:

Ket no makataw-tawag ni [lakaymo,] ania met ti pagsarsaritaanyo nokua?

[Giggles]. Dagita ubbing nokua, manong. Kumkumustaen na kami nokua. Kasdiay met kaniak. Sa... [begins to laugh] gagangay met iti agasawa a... Kumusta kunana met.

[When your husband calls, what do you usually talk about?

[[Giggles]. The children, manong. He would ask about how we are. I do the same. Also... [begins to laugh] the usual with couples... How are you? he asks.]

The interview with Maricel on this question lasted much longer than is indicated by the brevity of this extract. She eventually asked me if we could skip the question and come back to it when she had collected herself. When I asked Dolores, in her 50s, what she and her husband talked about now that their children were all grown up (older than 18), her response was parenthesized by laughter:

[laughs] No tumawag a ket dayta met kumusta, [laughs] kastoy latta kunak met a, isu met [laughs].

[[laughs] When he calls, ‘how are you?’ [laughs] ‘so-so’, I say, like that [laughs].]

How my question was framed or understood within absence and intimacy is also evident in my interview with Laura, a chief engineer’s wife. At the time of the interview, she had given birth to their third child only ten days back. I asked her what she felt about her husband having to leave in a few days time so soon after having a new baby. She had talked about how her husband liked her cooking and how she shifted the focus of her attention from her children to her husband. Because of the birth, she had had very little chance to do either. This was what I had in mind when I asked the question but Laura understood it in terms of sexual intimacy. I asked follow-up questions according to my framing of my original question and Laura answered based on what she understood I was referring to.

Paano yun, siyempre kapapanganak mo pa lang tapos aalis na sya?

Yun nga eh.

Sa iyong parte anong feeling mo dun?

Nalulungkot. Kasi siyempre hindi mo naibigay yung ano mo, responsibilidadmo sa kanya dahil hindi nga pwede. Yun. Eh ano na lang, nililibang ko na lang sya sa mga bata. Para maging masaya sya bago sya umalis. Sabi nga nya sa akin, pagbalik ko na lang.

Magma-make up ka?

Oo. Sabi ko babawi na lang ako. Ganun na lang.

Utang. Naiintindihan naman siguro nya ano?

Naiintindihan.

[How is that then, of course you've just given birth and he is soon to leave?

Yes, that is true.

How do you feel about it?

Sad. It's because I wasn't able to give him my what, my responsibility to him because it is not really possible. That's why. I try instead to make him enjoy his time with the children. So he is at least happy before he goes. As he told me, 'when I come back'.

You will make up?

Yes. I said I will make up for it. No other way.

You owe him. Of course he understands it?

He understands.]

Although Laura and I proceeded from different perspectives, the resulting conversation still made perfect sense.¹⁵ This interview extract also shows how not to ask questions: the last question is certainly leading.

3.7.2 In/Sensitivity

Asking the women how they dealt with the absence of their husbands was sensitive to them for at least two reasons. First, it was a topic that was too private and sensitive to talk about. In asking about it, I forewarned them that what I was going to ask next was something they could choose not to answer.¹⁶

¹⁵ I realized what was going on in this part of the conversation when I transcribed the interview.

¹⁶ Giving them this reminder was my way of transitioning to the topic. It was a challenge to smoothly move from previous topics which did not always refer or have any connection to it. It made it easier for me to even ask the question and I thought that it reminded the women that they had the power to direct the interview.

Second, it was sensitive, and this I would only realize in the course of my fieldwork, in that the question somehow put them in a defensive position and it did so because the question resonated with perceptions and suspicions of infidelity that surrounded them. And so when I asked the question, women parried it immediately with a response that defended their honour and dignity: that they were not like other women who would seek to satisfy their sexual needs by having relations with another man. In turn, this put me on the defensive because I had no intention to even suggest infidelity and I was concerned not to offend them. Needless to say, I assured them I was not questioning their character. Aware that the matter was sensitive (but only in the first sense discussed above especially in my early interviews), I always made sure that my tone was especially polite.

Why did I inquire about this matter aside from the fact that their husband's absence was obviously something they had to face? I had been interested in finding out how couples rationalized their situation. More specifically, in one of my pre-pilot interviews, a seaman's wife described her life using the Christian imagery of bearing a cross. This led me to think of this issue in terms of how they would have worked through the absence of physical and sexual intimacy within a discourse of sacrifice (that I thought might potentially be informed by religious discourse), that is, whether this deprivation would be made sense of as a necessary part of providing for the lives and futures of their family or children. Although most of the interviewees were understandably evasive, I did get meaningful answers. I do not think that any sort of the most intense participant observation would have accessed more substantial answers nor do I think that my research suffered from not obtaining 'more frank' answers (see discussion of intimacy in chapter 7).

3.7.3 Testing the Limits of What is Ethical

I am convinced that I established a working relationship with my interviewees that helped to enable the disclosure of experiences and stories that otherwise I would not have had the privilege of listening to. I wish to further illustrate this with a discussion of another issue that I would like to use as a contrast to the

issue previously discussed. Whereas I was hesitant to probe the issue of intimacy out of respect for the interviewees and also out of my own discomfort, when the issue concerned the women's relationship with their mothers-in-law, I kept asking questions to such a point I had to ask myself whether going further was still ethical. At least two women asked to be reassured before answering that what they were going to say would be confidential. In the split-second I had to decide whether or not to proceed further (albeit cautiously) with my probing, I had to weigh whether doing so already constituted gratuitous 'voyeurism' or necessary for a 'thick description' and understanding of how these women suffered from and lived with their mother-in-law. I wrote in my fieldnotes that

there was really nothing so controversial and damaging about what the women initially hesitated to share and that perhaps my own doubts about probing further might not only have been due to ethical considerations but also fed by their initial hesitation. But their refusal at first might also have been to avoid having to relive these painful episodes in their lives, ones that are recurring. It might also have been out of a real sense of concern that talking about it might worsen their situation hence their wanting to be assured of the confidentiality of what they said. I am glad I kept asking for not only would I not have known those details; I would not have known what it is like to push the boundaries of what was 'ethical'. Was this Machiavellian? (Fieldwork notes, 8 September 2010)

Asking the women why their relationship with their mother-in-law was not good also involved dealing with the emotional pain and fear (of the consequences of disclosure) they had as well as the location of the disclosure (in two instances, in their mother-in-law's house). My negotiation of fieldwork relations clearly shows that negotiating the cross-gender nature of the study did not have to be limited to dealing with the gender dynamic. Successfully negotiating linguistic, cultural, social, demographic (such as age) and spatial factors, which might also help attest to the good character of the researcher, is equally vital not only to researcher-participant relationships but also to the wider relational context (for example, how husbands, parents, or in-laws might react to or perceive the interview) within which wives, particularly, are located.

However, researchers do not have the sort of power nor influence to enable them to control for the contingencies of human relations and interactions. As Brandes (1992, p. 38) has put it:

Our gender identity, like our age, marital status, and personality, will always in some way intervene. It is neither we as individuals nor the structure of the societies and cultures we study that alone determines the information available to us. Rather, an interaction of all these factors is what yields the final corpus of data. Under such inevitable circumstances it is comforting to know that whatever we learn is a lot, as long as we are honest about the conditions under which the learning took place. ...the way we interact with our informants can be as filled with cultural information as their words and deeds.

3.8 Reflections on Doing Home Ethnography

In an earlier section, I mentioned that my interviews were supplemented by observations and my access to the cultural and social worlds of the women's lives which I share by virtue of my being born and growing up in San Gabriel. My sharing with them, for example, the native language also allowed me to grasp the nuances of their responses, as well as the cultural, social and religious allusions of the metaphors they used not only to talk about, but also to configure, their lives and experiences. Here, one example is enough to illustrate this. One wife spoke of her family's financial situation as sometimes 'nakibbutan' (emptied). 'Nakibbutan' is a term used in 'sungka', a game played by two players whose goal is to accumulate as many shells from the competitor's reserves (49 for each player) distributed equally at the start of the game into seven pits. When one of the players loses all his/her shells, then s/he is 'nakibbutan'. The road to 'nakibbutan' is frequently preceded by one of the players having empty pits (each must always contain seven shells or stones at the start of every round) so that if one player loses even just one shell to the competitor, s/he will have one empty pit called 'puor', fire (or gutted by fire). I found the wife's use of the idiom of a game to describe her family's situation (and by extension her efforts at financial management) suggestive of how she has to deal with outside forces over which she has very little control or

influence and also of the ways by which she can distribute her 'shells' in order to protect her house from being 'nakibbutan' (emptied) and ultimately gutted by fire.

I do not intend to overstate the advantages of my being a 'native' of San Gabriel nor do I wish to downplay the advantage (and vantage point) it has afforded me. The way I negotiated my relationships with the participants, how I interacted with their husbands and relatives, and my analysis of the interviews and data made full use of my linguistic fluency and access to the history, culture and sensibilities of the people. As Gutmann (2002, p. 38) has written on this matter:

Interpreting and explaining cultural and individual feelings, attitudes, and practices is a dicey business that takes more than mere linguistic fluency in a language. Rather, it requires cultural fluency to be able to contextualize the words, inflections, and nuances, to distinguish kidding from kvetching.

Yet my research in San Gabriel made clear to me my limitations. Twenty-five of its 43 villages lie outside of the poblacion, its urban area. Of these 25, I set foot on 11 of them for the first time during my fieldwork and only because of it. I have yet to see or set foot on four or five more villages. In some ways, my fieldwork was the time for me to know San Gabriel more and my tricycle rides to those villages I had hitherto never been to provided me with a way to imagine and experience a small slice of the women's lives and their concerns. As one interviewee said, she and her children went to Sunday mass in the capital city, some 12 kilometres away from where she lived because the fare was cheaper than that to San Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church, less than five kilometres away. She would have had to hire a tricycle for 60 pesos whereas the jeepney fare to Laoag City would only cost her about half of it. Even as a 'native' of San Gabriel, I had and continue to have experiences that are, to borrow from Geertz (1973), near to and distant from those of others from San Gabriel. Both have been important to my capacity for reflection, to step back to see things with more criticality and to banish common-sense assumptions as far as I could.

The role of where my interviewees lived in helping me to understand their lives acquired much more importance than I had recognized. It also had practical consequences for my fieldwork. I negotiated interview appointments with women using my knowledge of when during the day women were most and least busy. This minimized the 'inconvenience' of the interviews because they were plotted around their time. There obviously was a right time to do things and this is socially and culturally determined. In San Gabriel, there are things that are best done in the morning and things that must never be done in the afternoon in order to protect and preserve one's health and strength, for example (see Pertierra 1997). I tried to make myself as least intrusive as possible. Additionally, a number of middle-aged women advised me to be extra careful when interviewing in certain villages as many 'mannamay' (roughly, witches) lived there. I was never to go there on Fridays as this was when they were most powerful and that if I went, I should bring with me a 'pauli', a sort of protection. This mattered to my research because the woman who was to accompany me to introduce me to the wives I wanted to interview taught for a number of years in the village's elementary school and believed herself to have been a victim of a 'mannamay' and there was no way she was going there on a Friday. Whatever might have been my own thoughts about it were of no consequence. My beliefs and the pace and rhythm I wanted my research to take were not going to take precedence.

Although questions remain about doing home ethnography (Baca-Zinn 1979; Zavella 1997), the critical issue for me, following Loizos (1992), is that I am able to remain adequately aware of my position in the society and culture where I conducted my study as well as in the issues I investigated. This is not so much about being able to keep my objectivity as much as it is about being able to exercise what Scheper-Hughes (2001, p. 318) has called a 'highly disciplined subjectivity'. Of equal importance is the quality of the relationships I had with my participants (see Narayan 1997) which influenced the quality of our interaction and their sharing of their stories. This was particularly crucial because no amount of 'being an insider' could have substituted for the quality of interviews done. Nevertheless, I have always borne in mind that my

interaction with the participants was based on ‘ethically and emotionally fraught relationships’ (Rutherford 2003, p. xx), ones that were acutely temporally and spatially limited (see also Peletz 1996).

One ethical issue of studying my own people or society, one that I grappled with most particularly after the fieldwork, is the sense of accountability I felt I had not only to the women and their families but also to San Gabriel. As Zavella (1997, p. 43) has written of this predicament: ‘[a]long with the cooperation engendered by one’s insider status comes the responsibility to construct analyses that are sympathetic to ethnic interests...’. Because many of the stories I had been privileged to hear were very sad, I thought about what sort of ‘San Gabriel’ is going to be represented and what sort of stereotypes of the Philippines held by outsiders would this representation be taken to somehow affirm (cf. Crapanzano 1985; Scheper-Hughes 2000, 2001). Although I was fully aware, and remain fully aware, of the non-generalizability of my findings and that readers would be critical enough to see this, the fact is that it led me to think more seriously about how I was going to write, about how I was going to use the data, about representation. Baca-Zinn (1979, p. 218) has argued that such dilemmas ‘serve to remind us of our political responsibility and compel us to carry out research with ethical and intellectual integrity’. What I have done, particularly in the context of conflicts between the wives and their mothers-in-law, was to examine the cultural and economic contexts of these conflicts. The dilemma I faced led me to take a more socio-historically and culturally contextual approach to my analyses which helped me locate the women and their relationships within material and social practices so that even if the result is an unflattering picture of people, place, etc., I have provided a means by which they could be better appreciated or more fairly judged.

In relation to this, I have written my discussion of the accounts and narratives of these women in the ‘ethnographic past’ to clearly indicate their partiality and particularity (see also Faier 2009; Rutherford 2003). This does not mean that they are no longer true and that the problems and issues no longer obtain in their lives. It is to point out that what was said represents a particular way in

which the women's experiences were apprehended and represented linguistically and affectively, and the particularity of the way I have interpreted and conveyed them in this thesis, a way that can only be seen to demonstrate the 'deeply perspectival nature of cultural knowledge' (Peletz 1996, p. 35 citing Rosaldo 1988) and that, as James Clifford (1986) has noted, all ethnographies can only present 'partial truths' (see also Farmer 2005). It also registers the specific, that is, research, context in which these accounts were generated and by the specific group of people I interviewed: wives/mothers. My use of this ethnographic past also indicates my view that as these women move on with their lives, they will be engaged in a process of reinterpreting their life narratives. What they shared with me is but one instance of this process, a process I helped to put in motion.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described and reflected on how the research upon which this thesis is based was done. I reflected on the analytic and writing strategies that underpinned it. Also, I highlighted some methodological issues that have ethical implications and ethical issues that have methodological consequences, and reflected on the epistemological, methodological and ethical questions raised by doing research in one's own society. I wish in this concluding section to reflect further on two issues I discussed above.

First, I wish to briefly reflect further on the appropriateness of applying research ethics considerations and procedures prevailing in UK (or more generally Western) societies and universities to societies where a different set of societal and cultural norms and values might prevail (see also Farmer 2005 especially chapter 8). I specifically refer to the usefulness and appropriateness of the research information sheet in introducing the research and in inviting participants, and the 'objectivity' or informed consent that potential participants are supposed to be able to exercise in making a decision to participate or not. I was able to speak to women (a most important first step) to introduce and explain the research by way of people I knew and people they knew. The

impersonality that the research information sheet somehow embodies and the implicit objectivity (participants should in no way be influenced, leaned on to participate, etc.) that underpins it existed in tension with how I was framed in familial, kin and other forms of relatedness (what I called familiarizing systems or ways of establishing kinship or affinity). Checking my university profile, phoning or emailing me to ask me further questions about my research or to inform me of their decision to participate or not was simply not how the women would go about my request to interview them. No one among those to whom I gave an information sheet and who said would later contact me, did. Because of this preference for the research to be explained to them in person (because it enabled them to immediately ask me questions to address whatever it was that concerned or worried them), when wives were not home for me to personally discuss my purpose, I asked whoever was home when it might be a good time to pay them another visit while at the same time giving a copy of the information sheet.¹⁷ Finally, the fact that I needed others, particularly those familiar to the women, to introduce me implied that there was an inherent recognition that access to them (that is, being able to talk to them to invite them to participate) was best negotiated by kinship or other forms of social networks. It is my argument that such networks do not necessarily compromise the ability of the women to make an informed decision on their participation.

The issue I have raised might be considered not only for questions of appropriateness but also for reasons of focus. Ethical considerations, as Janet Finch (1984, p. 82) has pointed out, ‘tend to focus upon the point of access or of data collection rather than upon the use of the material’. Finch (*ibid.*), as a feminist sociologist, was concerned about the potential for information given by women to be used ‘against the collective interests of women’, a concern that resonates with that expressed by Bourgois (1995) and Nader (1972) on the poor. Although it might be argued that the issue of representation with which

¹⁷ In this context, it is worth bearing in mind another dynamic at work here. Inasmuch as I was the one in need of their assistance, I had to show that I recognized this relationship. Asking those I approached to text, call or email me indicated that I did not give them the sense of importance appropriate in this context: I needed something from them so I should go to them. This goes back to the way how interactions, particularly in this context, must remain negotiated in personal and face-to-face ways.

Finch is concerned involves people other than the researcher and the participants (for this involves the reception and use by other people of such representation), the substantive point she makes concerning the focus of research ethical considerations is relevant to my research. My work flags the issue of how to represent, for example, other women, specifically mothers-in-law, who are implicated in the lives of the women I interviewed. How do we go about representing people who are part of other people's lives but whose own versions or accounts are not sought? In talking about the obligation I felt I had for my own society (see section 3.8 above), I argued that providing socio-cultural and economic contexts to, for example, the sources of conflict between the daughters-in-law and the mothers-in-law would help minimize the injustice that might be committed against people who are not thereby sought to speak for themselves.

The second issue I wish to reflect further on is my project of linking the women, that is to say, their lives and experiences, to broader Philippine political and economic contexts. This might be said, following C. Wright Mills (1959), to involve linking biography and history. In this chapter, I have attempted to provide a discussion of how interview data, narratives, and agency and identity might be linked. Also, the form of narrative analysis I do is not limited to method as strategy in that I look at how these women's narratives might be linked to Philippine history and its economic and political conditions (see Mishler 1999; Whooley 2006). This is not to revert to a form of functionalism or determinism. Instead, my strategy takes the accounts or narratives of these women's participation and experience of migration as useful frames for thinking about the Filipino nation-state particularly in how it is implicated in migration just as these narratives framed the ways by which these women navigated their spatiotemporal locations. My narrative analysis moves from a thematic analysis to an examination of the intertwinement of these women's narratives with the Filipino nation's. I pursue this braiding of the personal and the political further in the following chapter where I examine the participation of the women in the migration of their husbands.

Chapter 4

HISTORIES AND DREAMS

In this chapter, I wish to argue that the wives of Filipino seamen are not simply 'left-behind' to navigate the consequences of their husband's migration. They are agents in making migration the route to improved life chances. They look at their husband's going away not only as their response to endemic poverty and/or the lack of opportunity in the country for upward mobility but also as a route towards attaining and sharing in some social possibilities (Vigh 2009, p. 93). Broadly, then, I aim for two things: first, to demonstrate how the women's link to migration might be reconceptualised through the concept of social imaginary; and second, as a consequence of the first, to examine how this reconsidered link binds these women more tightly with the history, economy and politics of the Philippines. In making a case for the link between these women's personal investments in (their husband's) migration and the socio-political and economic narrative of the Philippines, I provide in the first three sections of this chapter a discussion of the contexts within which the labour migration of the women's husbands and the women's participation in cultures of migration must be understood. In the fourth section, I link the concept of social imaginary to migration, and discuss how migration becomes 'a technology of the imagination' (Vigh *ibid.*, p. 94) used in search of better lives, if not of 'naimbag a biag' (the good life). In the fifth, I discuss how the wives position themselves in relation to their husband's work and absence. I conclude with a reflection on the women's relationship with the state.

4.1 A History of Migration

The Ilocos Region, on the northwestern coast of Luzon, has had a long history of outmigration. The massive migrations of Ilocanos which began in the mid-1850s have been collectively referred to as the 'Ilocano movement' (McLennan

1980, p. 105). This section provides a brief historical discussion of the economic condition of the region and I begin with a description of the situation in the 1970s and 1980s when contract labour migration became a government policy.

4.1.1 The Ilocos Region and Ilocos Norte

The Ilocos Region, comprised of the provinces of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union and Pangasinan, (see Figure 3.1, ch 3) has been characterized as resource-poor, its small and rugged land mass inhospitable to large-scale cultivation of cash crops (Sharma 1987). In the words of one of its most prominent writers and social critics, F. Sionil Jose (1959), it is

miserly in its product. It is a narrow strip of plain, hemmed in one side by the sea and by the bald, cogon-covered hills on the other. In some points of the Ilocos, the sea and the mountains meet. This paucity of arable land has transformed the Ilocanos into some sort of praetorian guard destined to be the first to clear the forests wherever they may be. (quoted in McLennan 1980, p. 118)

It has had a long history of being the country's most densely populated region (McLennan 1980; Smith 1977; Xenos 1998) and in relation to Central and South Luzon, the inhabitants of the Ilocos Region were distinguished by their economic impoverishment (Margold 1999). Ilocos Norte, where San Gabriel is located (see Figure 3.1, chapter 3), has consistently been described as resource-poor (e.g. Arnold and Abad 1985). It is characterized by a hilly terrain which becomes hillier the farther one moves from the coast (Findley and Jong 1985). The province was described in the 1970s and 1980s as one of the less urbanized provinces in the Philippines with three-fourths of the population living in small rural barangays or villages in 1980. In 1970, only about 17 per cent of the population lived in the poblacion or urban area/town proper (Findley and Jong *ibid.*, p. 19). The province shared the Ilocos Region's problem of unemployment and underemployment which was more serious than in other regions (*ibid.*, pp. 21-22). Ilocos Norte's family income was lower than the national average. As Findley and Jong (*ibid.*, p. 22) have written:

In 1975, the average family income for Ilocano families was P5,525 compared to almost P5,840 nationwide and P10,469 for Metro Manila. With the high inflation of the late seventies, by 1981 the regional family income rose to P11,270, but in Ilocos Norte it rose to only P9,828, which was P5,552 in 1978 pesos. Not only was average family income lower in Ilocos Norte, it failed to keep up with cost of living increases.¹⁸

Despite, however, the general economic depression of people in Ilocos Norte, they compared very well with the rest of the national population by several measures of human capital development and education (Findley and Jong 1985). It has been noted that the combination in Ilocos Norte of depressed incomes, poor agricultural prospects, and relatively high levels of education led to high levels of outmigration (Findley and Jong *ibid.*, p. 23). Between 1960 and 1970, for example, the outmigration rate for the Ilocos Region was 32.6 per thousand; Ilocos Norte's was 85. The 1960 Census revealed that 'nearly one in seven among those who had been born in Region 1 [Ilocos Region] were [*sic*] found to be residing outside the region' (Smith 1977, p. 136).

4.1.2 Out-migration from the Ilocos Region

The high level of outmigration in Ilocos Norte and in the Ilocos Region more generally has a longer history which has been dated to the middle of the nineteenth century (e.g. McLennan 1980). Jane Margold (1999, p. 67) has written that '[b]y the end of the 19th century, the region's soil had been depleted and its limited arable areas divided up into tiny, scattered smallholdings'. However, the economic situation of the region is not due only to poor soil and the environment's adversity which McLennan (1980) has argued might have been the result of human agency. Greg Bankoff (2007, p. 340) has written:

Though hazards affect everyone in the archipelago to a lesser or greater extent, some regions are more prone to disasters than others. A comparative analysis of the total number of tropical cyclones

¹⁸ In San Gabriel, the starting salary in 2010 for a municipal government employee was 66,000 pesos (salary grade1, step 1; see Table 4.6, this chapter). It does not represent a substantial difference in real income terms as the peso has been devalued considerably. In 1983, one US dollar was equivalent to nine pesos; now it is 46 pesos.

experienced by each major region of the archipelago between 1903 and 1918 shows that Northern Luzon receives by far the highest number of such events. ... No fewer than seven of the ten provinces or sub-provinces most exposed to strong typhoons are also situated within this region: Cagayan, Ilocos Norte, Babuyan Islands, Abra, Ilocos Sur, Isabela and the Batanes Islands.

Furthermore, Bankoff (2007) also writes that between 1751 and 1903,

[t]he four provinces that comprise this area and that include the three northern provinces of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur and La Union as well as Pangasinan account for 36 per cent of all recorded inundations over this period (43 events), a figure entirely consistent with the higher incidence of typhoons there and that coastline's greater vulnerability as the most hazard-prone area in the Philippines.

The Ilocos Region also faced severe population pressures. As Smith (1981, p. 12) has explained:

the Ilocos Coast had already achieved a quite high ratio of population to agricultural resources by the beginning of the 20th century, reflecting the evolution of population in the 19th century and earlier. The contrast with the Philippines as a whole at that time is dramatic; remarkably, the level on the Ilocos Coast in 1903 was not achieved by the entire country until quite recently. Other census evidence corroborates this picture of substantial population pressure on land at the turn of the century.

Around the beginning of the twentieth century, the national average population density (excluding Manila) was 90 people per square mile. In contrast, the figure for Ilocos Sur was 492; for La Union, 459. The two were in fact the two most densely populated provinces (España-Maram 2006, p. 18). The population pressure had a massive negative impact on agricultural production and land use systems and put enormous strains on social arrangements with respect to production and distribution (Smith 1981, p. 10): 'In 1903, two-thirds of the farms on the Ilocos Coast were below one hectare in size, compared with about half the farms below that size nationwide. And the tenancy rate was near 30 per cent, compared with about 20 per cent nationwide' (ibid., p. 12).

Outmigration has been identified as one important response to relieve the mounting population pressure in the Ilocos Region.¹⁹ To be sure, outmigration was also linked to the economic policies pursued by the Spanish colonial government, most crucially the shift to tobacco production. As a consequence, by the end of the nineteenth century, the region became a rice-deficit area (Trager 1988; see also de Jesus 1980). There had also been the collapse of its traditional industries (such as indigo). As McLennan (1980, p. 121) has summarized:

it is clear that the late eighteenth and the entire nineteenth centuries were a period of social and economic turmoil in Ilocos. For some, commercial occupations provided a solution for a period of time to the declining agricultural opportunities. After the mid-nineteenth century, external factors undercut the commercial florescence of the Ilocos region. Others early attempted to resolve their difficulties by taking up arms against the government of their own principalia. When it became clear that rebellion was futile, large numbers of Ilocanos began to migrate. As reports from the earlier emigrants drifted back to the Ilocos coast regarding the availability of land in the Central Luzon Plain and elsewhere, migration began to accelerate. The Ilocano movement has remained the primary solution to declining living standards in Ilocos ever since.

The number of Ilocanos who had moved out of the four provinces of the Ilocos Region by the end of the nineteenth century has been put at more than 290,000 or 36 per cent of the population (Xenos 1998, p. 47). Whereas there were only about 50,000 Ilocanos in the northeastern provinces of Luzon at the beginning of the twentieth century, by 1960, they comprised 67 per cent of the Northeastern Luzon population: 65 per cent (or 289,340) in Cagayan, 66.7 per cent (or 294,984) in Isabela and 77.7 per cent (or 107,358) in Nueva Vizcaya (McLennan 1980, p. 114). In 1970, only 88 towns out of the 196 in Luzon where Ilocanos were the dominant ethnolinguistic group were on the Ilocos Coast itself (Smith 1981, p. 14).

¹⁹ Other responses were control over marital fertility, delayed marriage, and relatively high levels of celibacy (Smith 1977, p. 136).

4.1.3 Ilokano Migration to Hawaii

Migration overseas also became a strategy of overcoming the economic limitations of the Ilocos Region. Compounding these problems was the refusal of the government to reform the land-tenancy system in existence which gave the landlord most of the harvest and very little to the farmers (España-Maram 2006). The exploitation of peasants was intensified by the American colonization of the Philippines beginning in 1898 which tied more tightly Philippine agriculture to world capitalism (Teodoro 1981, p. 12). To be sure, American colonial policies with respect to agriculture built on policies, systems and relations that Spanish rule instituted (Sharma 1987).

These American capitalist interests and those of Filipino elites would determine the flow of Ilocanos to Hawaii to work on the island's sugar plantations (Sharma 1987). Officials of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA) conducted aggressive recruitment missions beginning in 1906 in the Philippines which at that time was American territory. This meant that although Filipinos were citizens of the Philippines, they were also US nationals (Aguilar 2010) and were therefore not covered by immigration restrictions. In 1908, the Gentleman's Agreement was signed, restricting Japanese immigration to the United States. Japanese workers had hitherto comprised the majority of Hawaii's sugar plantation labour force. With the immigration restriction and with Japanese workers increasingly becoming militant, plantation owners looked for alternative sources of workers (Ngai 2004). The early missions of HSPA officials to the Philippines were not successful primarily because there was resistance from the local sugar industry which feared that the exodus of workers would adversely affect their interests.²⁰ To be sure, when HSPA officials came to the Philippines, they saw the potential in the local sugar industry and invested heavily in it. So as not to jeopardize their own interests, they recruited from the Ilocos Region which traditionally had been a source of (the cheapest) workers for the sugar plantations in Central Luzon (specifically Pampanga). Not tied to the competing interests of Philippine sugar which had

²⁰ There are three regions where sugar plantations were located: Negros/Panay in Central Philippines; Batangas and Laguna in Southern Luzon; and Pampanga and Tarlac in Central Luzon.

been infused with Hawaiian/American capital and considered ‘superfluous for the development of the Ilocos’ (Sharma 1987, p. 28), Ilocanos became the ideal workers.²¹

From 1915 to 1931, the Ilocos provinces would become the dominant source of workers for Hawaii. Ilocos Norte supplied the most number of workers. Table 4.1 shows the number and proportion of Filipino labourers who migrated to Hawaii from 1916 to 1931.

Table 4.1 Number and Proportion of Filipino Labourers Migrating from the Philippines to Hawaii, 1915-1931

| Province | Number of Emigrants | Percentage |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Abra | 2,522 | 2.51 |
| Bohol | 5,497 | 5.48 |
| Cebu | 13,014 | 12.97 |
| Ilocos Norte | 30,641 | 30.53 |
| Ilocos Sur | 15,768 | 15.71 |
| La Union | 4,690 | 4.67 |
| Leyte | 1,621 | 1.62 |
| Oriental Negros | 3,791 | 3.78 |
| Pangasinan | 11,136 | 11.09 |
| Tarlac | 3,969 | 3.95 |
| 40 other provinces | 7,542 | 7.51 |
| Total | 100,371 | 100 |

Source: Data aggregated from Sharma 1987, pp. 17-18.

From the Ilocos Region (Abra, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union and Pangasinan), 67,279 emigrated to Hawaii representing 67 per cent of all emigrants from the period. (If those from Tarlac, where Ilokanos outmigrated to, were added, they would comprise 71 per cent). Ilocos Norte alone contributed almost a third of all emigrants.

²¹ Ilokanos dominated this recruitment mainly because the two other provinces where the recruiters went to, namely Pampanga (in Central Luzon, Philippines) and Negros (in Central Philippines), were also dependent on a sugar plantation economy. For people in these two and nearby provinces that supplied workers for these local sugar economies to go to Hawaii and work in rival sugar plantations was cast by the elites as unpatriotic, a stance that Resil Mojares (1983) has exposed for its hypocrisy.

From 1909 to 1946, almost 126,000 Filipinos went to Hawaii through HSPA (Sharma 1987, p. 16 citing Dorita 1954, p. 131). It was from among them that workers for mainland USA were recruited for employment (Teodoro 1981, p. 13).²² Their presence changed the ethnic composition of the plantation labour force. Whereas in 1915, Filipinos comprised only 19 per cent of workers and Japanese 54 per cent, by 1930, Filipinos comprised 70 per cent and Japanese 19 per cent (ibid., p. 14). This labour migration would become the conduit for later Filipino and especially Ilokano migration to Hawaii and mainland United States beginning in the mid-1960s. The 1965 Immigration Act abolished the national origin quota system which restricted immigration from countries in the eastern hemisphere (prior to this, there was discriminatory preference for European immigration to the US). The Act allowed for family reunification and Filipinos already in Hawaii took advantage of this opportunity to petition for the immigration of family members. From 1960-1964 before the liberalization of US immigration policy, only a little more than 15,000 Filipinos entered the US compared with the 215,000 who did in the period 1980-1984. Between 1970 and 1976, almost 27,000 Filipinos entered Hawaii through the family reunification provision of the Act (ibid., p. 30). Ilocanos are now the dominant Philippine ethnolinguistic group in Hawaii comprising almost 80 per cent of the Filipino population (Aquino 2000).

Figures from a 2009 village-by-village survey of migrants from San Gabriel conducted by the municipality's Office of Planning and Development showed that out of 4, 090 listed as living or working abroad, almost 58 percent are in Hawaii and about 15 percent in US mainland and Alaska (Municipality of San Gabriel 2009a).²³ This overseas population comprises 13 percent of the population of San Gabriel (Municipality of San Gabriel 2009b).

²² Moving accounts of Ilokano and Filipino migration to the United States, the racial prejudice they suffered from and the collective movements they built are found in Bulosan (1973 [1946]) and Vera Cruz (2000).

²³ The 'survey' called 'Sons and Daughters of San Gabriel 2009' was a simple enumeration of overseas migrants and where they migrated to. I was given a print out of this list which, at that time (May 2010), had not been tallied and analyzed by the Office of Planning and Development. Although the listing was conducted village by village, it is not by any means complete, something I can say by the absence of names from my own village and from those adjacent to it. Because of its focus on those who are overseas, only a few seafarers included.

A social levelling, if not inversion, of some sort was put in motion by emigration between the landless but 'moneyed' Hawaiians and the Ilocos elites, who were increasingly experiencing difficulties as a result of the deteriorating economic condition in the region. Henry Lewis (1971, p. 18) noted that 'a paradoxical situation developed where upper class landlords often mortgaged lands to their own tenants, at least those with savings income from relatives overseas'. To be able to buy land from the landed gave these Hawaii emigrants a social status that hitherto had eluded them. In turn, this process would create a new form of social distinction as emigration to Hawaii created changes in people's 'horizons of expectations' (Pertierra 1992, p. 2) even as it also widened social inequality. Emigration bestowed upon both the emigrants and their families and relatives back home new possibilities and realities, foremost of which were a considerably improved life as well as social respectability and the possibility of emigration itself. In his work on the development of a culture of waged labour in American Philippines, Bankoff (2005) has argued that this development expanded the life expectations of Filipinos beyond their attachment to their *barrio* (village) and ethnolinguistic group.²⁴ This, he suggests, was most clearly instantiated by Filipino migration to Hawaii:

Just how deep the notion of a further mental horizon had sunk into the psyche of ordinary people, especially the young, comes through in four complaints filed at the Bureau of Labor in 1910 by parents requesting to have their underage sons, who were working in Hawaii without their consent, returned home. (ibid., p. 85)

For those to whom this possibility was not available, a different route to improving economic prospects and attaining a higher social standing in the community was provided by international contract labour migration. The survey of San Gabriel migrants cited earlier showed that almost 20 percent of the overseas population of 4,090 are contract workers (Municipality of San Gabriel

²⁴ I would argue, however, that because Ilocanos have been migrating in large numbers since the 1850s, the expansion of their horizons antedates the development of a culture of waged labour. Nevertheless, I agree with Bankoff's assertion that Hawaii represented a furtherance of this horizon and the possibilities it was seen to represent.

2009a). Table 4.2 below shows where these OFWs are working and their number.

Table 4.2 Distribution of Overseas Contract Workers from San Gabriel, by Region and Country (as of 2009)

| Region | Country | Number | |
|-------------------------|--|--------|------------|
| Southeast Asia Total | Singapore | 74 | 82 |
| | Malaysia | 6 | |
| | Vietnam | 2 | |
| East Asia Total | Korea | 20 | 205 |
| | Japan | 5 | |
| | Taiwan | 48 | |
| | Hong Kong | 130 | |
| | China | 2 | |
| West Asia Total | Saudi Arabia | 83 | 168 |
| | United Arab Emirates | 48 | |
| | Israel | 3 | |
| | Lebanon | 4 | |
| | Bahrain | 4 | |
| | Kuwait | 15 | |
| | Jordan | 2 | |
| | Qatar | 9 | |
| Europe Total | Norway | 28 | 296 |
| | Cyprus | 4 | |
| | Greece | 23 | |
| | Spain | 58 | |
| | UK | 6 | |
| | Italy | 163 | |
| | Denmark | 3 | |
| | Ireland | 4 | |
| | Others | 7 | |
| North America Total | USA | 7 | 42 |
| | Canada | 35 | |
| Others | New Zealand, Australia, Africa, Brazil | 8 | 8 |
| | | | 801 |

Source: Office of Municipal Planning and Development, San Gabriel 2009.

It is to a discussion of the Philippine labour export policy that we turn.

4.2 International Contract Labour Migration from the Philippines

In 1969, only 3,694 contract workers left the Philippines to work overseas (Alegado 1997). Today, that figure is less than the number of Filipinos leaving the country on a *daily* basis to work abroad. In 2009, more than 1.4 million Filipinos left the country for the same purpose, almost 350,000 of whom were new-hires (POEA 2009). As of 2008, almost 8.2 million Filipinos were overseas, around 4.28 million of whom were temporary and irregular migrants (Commission on Filipinos Overseas 2009). In 2009, over 330,000 Filipino seafarers were deployed, comprising more than 23 percent of total OFW deployment for that year (POEA 2009) but only about four percent of total Filipinos overseas. Total remittances for 2010 reached a staggering US\$18.76 billion, almost 20 percent of which was contributed by seafarers (POEA 2010). These remittances, which have grown year on year defying global economic crises, have been critical to the survival of the Philippine economy.

4.2.1 The Political Economy Context of the Philippine Labour Export Policy

International contract labour migration (ICLM) is defined as the ‘temporary, contracted, and highly controlled international circulation of Third World workers exported from labour surplus to capital-rich nations’ (Ball 1997, p. 1603). The export of labour was undertaken as a development strategy aimed at providing the country a temporary but vital source of national income (Gonzalez 1998; Kelly 2000). Given the dire economic and financial straits the country was in, overseas employment allowed the government to ease the country’s worsening unemployment situation. Through ICLM, the Philippines exported its unemployment problem (Tyner 2009).²⁵ Estimates indicate that ‘unemployment levels would be 40 per cent higher without labour migration’ (Castles 2000, p. 108). Finally, it became a source of foreign exchange for the country’s international transactions, for addressing balance-of-payments deficits

²⁵ Moreover, it was wedded to the political fortunes of the Marcos authoritarian regime as the worsening unemployment problem was radicalizing workers, making them sympathetic to the communist cause. The policy therefore not only addressed unemployment but also spirited away a brewing force that Marcos perceived threatened his grip on power (Bello *et al.* 2009; Rodriguez 2010).

(Hugo and Stahl 2004) as well as for paying its external debt (Ball 1997; Battistella 1999), which had grown from US\$355 million in 1962 to US\$2.7 billion in 1972 to US\$24.3 in 1983 and US\$28.3 billion in 1986 (Boyce 1990; Krinks 2002; Montes 1992). Indeed, under the Marcos regime foreign borrowing was a major component of the country's development strategy (Boyce 1990; Broad 1988). Economic growth in the early years of martial law was in fact spurred and sustained by international loans (Hutchison 1997; Hutchcroft 1998; Krinks 2002). The dependence of the Philippine economy on the continued flow of loans from international institutions, namely the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, meant that the country became much more vulnerable to IMF-WB economic policy prescriptions, particularly from the end of the 1970s when these lenders made further loans conditional to macroeconomic structural adjustments (Bello *et al.* 1982; Bello *et al.* 1994; Boyce 1990; Broad 1988; Doronila 1992; Kelly 2000).²⁶

How are foreign-debt servicing and ICLM linked beyond the obvious answer provided by foreign exchange earnings/remittances? Ball (1997, p. 1608) traces the relationship to 'changes in the composition of loans to the Third World and a centralization of loans in the hands of multilateral agencies'. Ball explains that in 1981, commercial banks accounted for 42 percent of net loans whereas multilateral financial institutions accounted for 37 percent. By 1988, however, commercial banks only accounted for six percent and multilateral agencies 88 percent of net loans (p. 1608). The consequence of this, Ball explains, is that in order to establish their credit worthiness, states 'have followed the dictates of

²⁶ Called structural adjustment loans (SALs), their availability, according to Bello *et al.* (1994, p. 27), was predicated on the following conditions: a) radically reducing government spending, in order to control inflation and reduce the demand for capital inflows from abroad, a measure that in practice translated into cutting spending in health, education, and welfare; b) cutting wages or severely constraining their rise to reduce inflation and make exports more competitive; c) liberalizing imports to make local industry more efficient and instituting incentives for producing for export markets, which were seen both as a source of much-needed foreign exchange and as a more dynamic source of growth than the domestic market; d) removing restrictions on foreign investment in industry and financial services to make the local production of goods and delivery of services more efficient, owing to the presence of foreign competition; e) devaluing the local currency relative to hard currencies like the dollar in order to make exports more competitive; and f) privatizing state enterprises and embarking on radical deregulation in order to promote allocation of resources by the market instead of by government decree.

structural adjustment and export-oriented policies of the IMF and the World Bank, and redefined the development process as participation in the world market' (p. 1609). These policies prioritize debt servicing and foreign-exchange earnings through export intensification (McMichael 1996). In order to comply and keep their 'good debtor status' and so have continued access to foreign loans, borrower-countries cut spending on social services on the one hand, and accelerate 'the path of export-oriented development through industrialisation, largely unmitigated resource exploitation, and labour export, on the other' (Ball 1997, p. 1609).

Although the labour export policy was meant as a stop-gap measure to address the Philippines' unemployment problems, trade deficits and ballooning external debt, it has in fact become a structural feature of the Philippine political economy (Alegado 1992; Camroux 2009, Lindquist 1993; Rodriguez 2010; Tyner 2004). Almost 40 years after it was begun, there are no signs of it being phased down. On the contrary, since 2001, the Philippine state has pursued an even more aggressive program of deploying at least a million Filipino workers annually. If export processing zones became a prime mechanism for the Philippine state to attract foreign capital, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) itself became an export processing zone in charge of exporting Filipino labour (Rodriguez 2010).²⁷

²⁷ The overseas employment program was originally intended as a state monopoly. Two government agencies were created, namely the Overseas Employment Development Board (OEDB) and the National Seaman Board (NSB) which were tasked with market development, recruitment, and the securing of the best possible terms of employment for land-based and sea-based workers, respectively (Gonzalez 1998). Due to corruption, inefficiency, and legal challenges from the private sector (Asis 1992), the government changed its policy to give the private sector greater participation in the labour export industry. The state's policy change was also based on the realization that "conflict [with the private sector] would result in less capital accumulation for both sectors, and through a partnership, greater levels of accumulation would be possible than if either had a monopoly" (Tyner 2000, 137; see also Gonzalez 1998; Kelly 2000). Thus, in 1978, four years after the labour export program was adopted, the state reinstated private sector participation. This state-private sector partnership resulted in a massive growth in overseas employment. From 1975 to 1982, for example, the total number of processed workers rose by 772 per cent despite the fact that contract workers were being deployed to the same geographic region, the Middle East (Ball 1997; Tyner 2000; also Agunias 2008). In 1982, the state's regulatory function was strengthened with the creation of the POEA to take overall responsibility for the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of the country's overseas employment program (Battistella 1999). This mandate consolidated the POEA's regulatory function which consisted mainly with regulating private recruitment agencies, and the marketing of Filipino labour(ers). The private sector retained its role of recruitment, processing, and employment of Filipino workers (Abella 2004).

POEA's task of marketing Filipino workers meant intensifying its drive to seek markets for the country's prime export 'commodity' (Massey and Taylor 2004). This meant an increased spatialization of deployment (more countries targeted) and occupational diversification (Battistella 2004). In 1975, Filipino contract workers were deployed to 74 destinations. By 1987, this figure rose to 130. At present, Filipinos are destined to 197 countries and territories (Agunias 2008). The country has earned the dubious distinction of being the world's biggest source of state-sponsored contract labour. In 2006 alone, around 1.2 million Filipino contract workers were deployed to over 190 countries, and Philippine ICLM has seen a 25-fold increase in deployment over the last three decades (Agunias and Ruiz 2007). Since 2001, the Philippine government has pursued a three-pronged strategy of exporting Filipino labour: sustaining existing markets, expanding existing markets, and entering non-traditional markets (Tyner 2009, pp. 84-86).

4.2.2 Economic, Demographic, and Social Backgrounds to Filipino ICLM

There are economic, demographic, and social backgrounds to Philippine labour migration, factors that needed to be present in labour-receiving countries in order for it to occur and thrive (Castles 2000, 2007). In other words, while the Philippine economy was struggling, other economies were experiencing unprecedented growth and development.

The rapid economic growth and modernization in Asian economies first by Japan, then Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea, and then followed by Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia comprises the economic background (Castles 2000, p. 114). This 'created demand for labour', while the slower growth in the Philippines and other East Asian countries 'made labour reserves available' (ibid.). Prior to the growth of these East Asian economies, there was the 1970s 'oil boom' in Saudi Arabia and other West Asian (or Middle East) countries which opened construction job opportunities for male Filipino workers. The demographic factor refers to the situation in which the 'countries with the fastest economic growth have also had the most rapid decline in fertility' (ibid.) The consequence has been that these economies

'have run into labour shortages, while other countries have stagnant labour surpluses' (Castles 2000, p. 114). Because of the economic growth in labour-receiving countries, citizens have had more opportunities for educational and occupational-career advancement leading to a situation in which local workers refuse to do certain types of jobs (the 3-D: dirty, difficult and dangerous) which then get filled in by migrant workers (ibid., p. 115). This is one of the social backgrounds of labour migration.

Although the economic, demographic and social backgrounds help explain labour migration, we need to keep in mind that very little of it can occur without any political background (ibid). None of this labour migration could occur without the state as a player. We turn below to a brief discussion of the rise of the Philippines as the manning capital of the world.

4.3 Filipino Seafarers: The World Shipping Industry's 'Crews of Convenience'?

In the late 1960s, only about 2,000 Filipino seamen worked in international ships a year (McKay 2007). Today, between 250,000 and 275,000 ply the international sea lanes a year. They make up about 28 per cent of the global labour force (Amante 2005 citing data from SIRC's 2003 database). The emergence of the Philippines as the shipping industry's biggest supplier of seafarers might be accounted for by three events.

4.3.1 The Greek Connection

Filipino seafarers caught the attention of the world shipping powers quite by happenstance. In 1966, a Greek vessel docked in Manila and requested a Philippine company, El Greco Shipping Enterprises owned by Peter Toundjis, to provide it with Filipino seafarers to replace some of its crew. The Greek vessel offered employment on a trial basis. Although El Greco was principally 'an owner's protecting agent' which provided 'foreign vessels in port with food, water, bunkers, lubricants and spare parts as well as arranging for repairs and other requirements', (Toundjis 1975, p. 7), it acceded to the request. Toundjis

believed that this Greek experiment proved providential as it marked the beginning of Filipinos working on Greek ships. As he recounted:

The word quickly circulated in Piraeus, London, New York and other international maritime centers that Filipino sailors are good and dependable. El Greco thereupon launched an information campaign to sell the Filipino seaman, undertaken through brochures distributed to more than 2,000 shipowning [*sic*] companies all over the world. The brochures generated inquiries from all directions and helped put the Philippine crewing industry firmly on its feet. (Toundjis *ibid.*, pp.7-8)

4.3.2 The Deregulation of the Shipping Industry

Whereas in 1960, Asians comprised a mere 15 per cent of the seafaring labour force, by 1987 they (primarily Filipinos, South Koreans, Indians and Indonesians) represented 67 per cent of the same work force (McKay 2007, p. 66 citing Turnbull 2000). This ‘great crewing shift’ was caused by the deregulation of the shipping industry beginning in the 1970s (Alderton *et al.* 2004; Alderton and Winchester 2002), a response to the economic repercussions of the oil crises in 1973 and 1979 which particularly negatively affected the shipping industry. To reduce its losses, the shipping industry looked to cut its operating and labour costs. One of the ways by which these were reduced was for owners to register their vessels with flags of convenience (FOC) (Stopford 2008).²⁸ Up until the 1970s, ships and their crew were considered ‘extensions of their nation states’ (Ruggunan 2009, p. 182). This direct link was severed by ‘flagging out’. Whereas only 5.5 per cent and 21.6 per cent of the world fleet was registered under FOCs in 1950 and 1960 respectively (Ruggunan *ibid.*), by 2005, 89 per cent were registered with flags of convenience (Stopford *ibid.*).

²⁸ The shipping industry responded to diminishing profits by organizational restructuring and the use of technology which reduced the number of crew needed to do a certain job. There is no space here to discuss in detail these developments. See Alderton *et al.* (2004), McKay (2007) and Ruggunan (2009, 2011) for discussions of the ramifications of the oil crisis in the 1970s and the globalization of the shipping industry.

Flagging out enabled ship owners to circumvent the regulatory frameworks as well as labour and maritime laws of traditional maritime nations (Ruggunan 2011; Sampson 2003) including the hiring of an international crew who can be paid much lower wages and who can be made to work in inferior conditions (see Couper *et al.* 1999). As Alderton and Winchester (2002, p. 37) explain:

In the ‘traditional’ maritime states there have historically been some restrictions on labour, both in terms of their nationality and pay and conditions. FOCs, by contrast, have few such restrictions and the crews aboard vessels flagged to these states are often labelled ‘crew of convenience’. This is for a number of reasons. Firstly, such seafarers tend to be from the less developed countries of the world. Secondly, and partly as a result of the former point, they tend to be less well paid than their counterparts from the more developed nations of the world.

The shift in employment strategy in FOC shipping created massive employment opportunities for Filipino seafarers as shown by Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Number of Deployed Filipino Seafarers 1960s-2009

| | |
|------------|---------|
| Late 1960s | 2,000 |
| 1975 | 23,534 |
| 1980 | 57,196 |
| 1985 | 52,290 |
| 1990 | 111,212 |
| 1995 | 165,401 |
| 2000 | 198,324 |
| 2005 | 247,983 |
| 2009 | 330,424 |

Sources: Amante 2005; McKay (2007); POEA Overseas Employment Statistics, 2009

The dominance of Filipino seafarers as ‘crews of convenience’, however, cannot be solely attributed to the deregulation of the shipping industry. The Philippine state was and is an important player in making the country the world’s manning capital.



Figure 4.1a The Luneta Seafarer's Center, more popularly known as the seaman's market.



Figure 4.1b A close-up of the booths at seaman's market.

4.3.3 Labour Brokering: Filipino Seafarers as Cheap and Subordinate(d) Workers

The 2003 SIRC Global Seafarer Database shows the following rank distribution of Filipino seafarers: 72.2 per cent ratings; 19.1 per cent junior officers; and 8.7

per cent senior officers (cited in Amante 2005, p. 5). Table 4.4 below shows the distribution of Filipino seafarers according to position.

Table 4.4 Deployment of Seafarers by Top Ten Occupation, 2007-2009

| | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total | 226,900 | 244,144 | 329,728 |
| 1. Able Seaman | 31,818 | 34,563 | 45,338 |
| 2. Oiler | 19,491 | 20,941 | 27,483 |
| 3. Ordinary Seaman | 17,355 | 18,715 | 23,737 |
| 4. Chief Cook | 7,778 | 9,022 | 12,651 |
| 5. Second Mate | 7,873 | 8,694 | 12,119 |
| 6. Bosun | 7,737 | 8,603 | 11,555 |
| 7. Messman | 7,810 | 8,320 | 10,536 |
| 8. Third Engineer Officer | 7,056 | 7,995 | 11,307 |
| 9. Third Mate | 6,559 | 7,349 | 9,857 |
| 10. Second Engineer Officer | 6,369 | 6,878 | 9,557 |

Source: POEA Overseas Employment Statistics, 2009

Not only have Filipino seafarers come to dominate the crewing labour force but, as McKay (2007) has pointed out, also occupied and dominated the lower ranks of international crewing. This phenomenon points to two things: one, the Philippine state as a labour broker (Guevarra 2009; Rodriguez 2010; Tyner 2004, 2009) and two, the state's specific strategy of 'niching' (McKay 2007). As the labour export policy has already been discussed, I focus here on the making of a market niche for Filipino seafarers.

Steven McKay (2007, p. 69) has argued that the segmented character of the seafaring labour force has lent itself to how the Philippine state has positioned its seafarers. He explains that there remains a strong current among shipping companies to fill in positions according to nationality. He cites the example of Japanese and Greek ship owners who hire Filipinos to fill in the majority of lower-level ratings positions, and Filipinos fill in only 40 percent and 14 per cent respectively of senior officer positions in Japanese and Greek ships (cf. Mitroussi 2008). The Philippine state has been quick and aggressive to maintain Filipinos' dominance of this lower market segment.



Figure 4.2 A vehicle going around the streets of Manila, T.M. Kalaw St, right in front of the seaman's market. Will these new officers-eligible get officer posts?

McKay (ibid.) also argues that the carving of a niche for Filipinos in a segmented market entailed the construction and ascription of national and gendered identities. For Filipinos to be ideal for these subordinate positions, they have to be seen to possess (or be made to possess *innately*) qualities that make them tractable, pliable, and docile. As has been noted, employers tend to have a preference for groups they see as being good at being subordinate which character is then ascribed to the whole group (Waldinger and Lichter 2003 cited in McKay ibid.) McKay notes that the Philippine state has been complicit in the construction and dissemination of such a racialized and gendered representation of Filipino seafarers in order to maintain if not increase Filipino seafarers' dominance of the market.

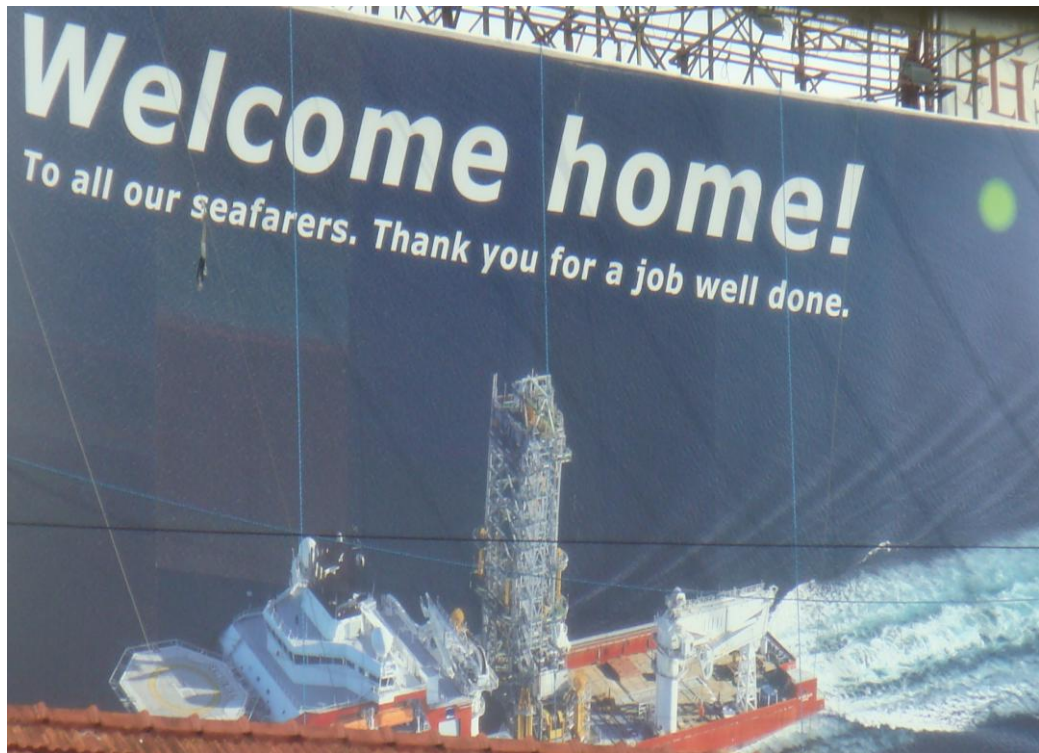


Figure 4.3 A giant billboard close to Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Closely linked to this niche are attempts to keep Filipino seafarers affordable and cheap. For example, the POEA, which is responsible for implementing the Standard Employment Contract (SEC) for seafarers, considered the 'most important document concerning seafarers' employment' (Binghay 2005 quoted in Terry 2009, p. 472), delayed implementing for several years the wage recommendations set by ILO (McKay 2007, p. 71).²⁹ To illustrate, POEA's standard contract in 2003 pegged the basic minimum wage for able seamen (AB) at \$385 a month, which is \$50 less than ILO's recommendation of \$435. It is also \$915 lower than the International Transport Workers' Federation's (ITWF) \$1,350 monthly benchmark pay for ABs (Amante 2004; McKay 2007). Moreover, Captain Gregorio Oca, then president of the ITF-affiliated Associated Marine Officers and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP), the biggest union of Filipino seafarers, was instrumental in having

²⁹ Terry (2009, p. 472) explains that the SEC, 'which all seafarers must sign in order to work on a foreign ship, is a list of rules and regulations that both seafarers and shipowners agree to follow during the course of employment. Among its provisions are definitions of duties; specifications of working hours and overtime; procedures for termination of employment, filing of grievances and repatriation; and [...] a schedule of benefits for injuries and illnesses that are contracted during employment'.

the scheduled increase temporarily frozen. Oca argued that increasing the wages of Filipino seafarers would make Filipino labour more expensive and less competitive (see Table 4.5 below for a comparison of salaries of ratings according to nationality and type of vessel). Oca saw the 50-dollar increase as causing Filipino seafarers to be priced out of the labour market and claimed to be concerned more with securing the long-term employability of Filipino seafarers than with the increase (Amante 2004, p. 87).

**Table 4.5 Monthly On-Board Salary of Ratings
According to Nationality and Type of Vessel (in US \$)**

| Nationality | Dry Cargo | Tanker |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| United Kingdom | 3300 – 3960 | 4620 – 4950 |
| South Africa | 1430 – 1650 | 1650 – 1950 |
| Russia | 1330 – 1485 | 1430 – 1485 |
| Croatia | 1430 – 1485 | 1430 – 1485 |
| Montenegro | 1420 – 1485 | 1485 – 1595 |
| India | 1280 – 1485 | 1335 – 1485 |
| Poland | 1210 – 1485 | 1540 – 1650 |
| Romania | 1210 – 1485 | 1430 – 1650 |
| Philippines | 1155 – 1485 | 1210 – 1485 |
| China | 900 – 1100 | 1060 – 1320 |
| Ukraine | 935 – 1045 | 1045 – 1155 |

Source: International Shipping Federation, cited in Ruggunan 2011, p. 87

4.4 Migrant Imaginaries: ‘Naimbag a Biag’ and Cultures of Migration

The first three sections of this chapter examined the historical, economic and political contexts of migration in the Ilocos and the Philippines. I build on this discussion to underscore in this section migration’s link to factors that are not purely economic. Although economic gain and social possibilities are linked, they are not the same (Vigh 2009). The economic motivation for migration has to be viewed alongside ‘social and cultural goals’ (Trager 1988, p. 9; also Maram-Espana 2006) in order not to reduce the ‘complex social motivations’ that underpin migration to ‘simple economic logic’ (Vigh *ibid.*, 92). As Raul Pertierra has argued, the objective conditions and the economic aspirations that become the initial motivation for migration cannot be denied. However, such

objective structures ‘are mediated through cultural practices and values of which the economic is one mode’ (Pertierra 1992, p. ix). Hence, this section aims to tie political economy to cultural and social logics informing aspirations for better lives (see also Constable 2003; Faier 2009).

Migration, following Vigh (2009, p. 94), might be seen as ‘a technology of the imagination, ... an act through which people come to imagine better lives in other times or places’. For seamen’s wives, it is a way of bridging the gap between what is socially desired and what in the Philippines is economically possible which the wives have pronounced as limited, if not unavailable for improving their social possibilities. Migration as technology involves a strong sense of duty beyond the self and is a way of increasing the chances for better social options, a means ‘towards better possible futures and improved life chances’ (Vigh *ibid.*, p. 97). The pursuit of a better life and for many, the good life, constitutes and is constituted by ‘cultures of migration’ (Asis 2006; Baggio 2008; Castles 2000, 2008; Hilsdon 1997). Both are mechanisms that feed on each other. Where there is continued reliance on migration to provide for the needs, and realize the aspirations, of families, ‘migration values develop and are nurtured in families’ (Asis 2000, p. 264). Migration might also be a means for people to address what they experience as their marginalization in the national community because of their social and economic exclusion (Castles 2000, p. 125).

The search for life, one better than what is presently available, and the desire for a good life, might be argued to be at the root of the desire to migrate. In order to live, and to live a good life, one must leave. This helps to engender ‘cultures of migration’ in which this philosophy is ‘incorporated into behavioural and cognitive aspects of culture in Philippine communities’ (Hilsdon 1997, p. 50). Futures are imagined at home (a ‘home’ or locality that has, however, been linked to an outside economy) but are realized, or at least actively worked for, elsewhere (cf. Vigh 2009, p. 143).



Figure 4.4 A poor family's house, San Gabriel.

Everyone in San Gabriel, many of whom are related to Hawaiians, has glimpsed these futures in the lives of Ilokano immigrants to Hawaii and US mainland who bought lands, built large houses, and whose social standing rose. Their lives abroad were by no means easy but the improvement and transformation were visible and concrete. They inform the migrant imaginaries of many in San Gabriel including seamen and their families, oftentimes intersecting as many seamen in San Gabriel have gone on to immigrate to Hawaii, California, and Washington in the USA. A number of the seamen's wives I interviewed have done courses in care-giving in preparation for their own migrations or have themselves been labour migrants. At least two seamen's wives have the chance to move to Hawaii or California.



Figure 4.5 The house of a Hawaii/US immigrant. It is popularly referred to as ‘the mansion’. Photo used with permission.

The settlement migration to Hawaii and the United States which frequently involved spousal separation for many years has arguably given ‘social legitimacy’ (Oishi 2005) to seamen’s wives being left behind by their husbands. Spousal separation has become socially and culturally acceptable as it is a part of the migration process that has concretely brought about positive economic, social, and individual-subjective consequences. Wives or husbands wait until their spouse is able to petition for them to follow. In the space between, the separation is punctuated by short visits. Thus, it is not only that this migration to Hawaii has socially and culturally legitimized this separation but on account of this legitimization, it is as though seamen’s wives can draw from a cultural and social reserve that might be said has over the years been prepared for them.

This Hawaiian migration has built what may be called a social and cultural predisposition or preparedness, a repertoire, for a life of temporary separation. Men or women leaving behind their spouses and children, and families left behind are not faulted for such separation because this arrangement has become

a feature of the social and cultural life of the Ilocos. Indeed, cohabitation became acceptable in a predominantly Roman Catholic society, with people getting married many years after their children had been born in order not to jeopardize their immigration to the United States.³⁰

The combination of the very real prospect of economic and social stagnation, the desire for a better life if not ‘naimbag a biag’ (a ‘good life’) and better social possibilities (for themselves but also for their children, more especially), and a long history of emigration from the Ilocos especially to Hawaii has arguably shaped how the wives have come to understand and appreciate their implication in their husband’s labour migration. Some of the wives I interviewed, when explaining why their husbands have to go, advert to this Hawaiian connection as in the following:

Awan met Hawaiianomi. Awan met sabali a pangnamnamaan no di isuna. No adda koma met Haw-Hawaiianomi a ket maymayat koma. Mayat koma met ti plastarmi. Isu met lang ti pagsapulan biag ana ngarud ti mabalin.

[We do not have family members and relatives in Hawaii. We have no one to rely on except him [husband]. If we had Hawaiianos, oh how much better it would be. We would be in a good position. That [seafaring] is our only source of life so what can we do?]

The reference in the wife’s answer to *plastar*, which I have translated as ‘position’, not only refers to their economic condition but also social status. That the wife should look at her husband’s seafaring as existing below migration to Hawaii and to look at it in the context of migration to Hawaii reveals how Hawaii looms large in the imagination and historical experience of San Gabriel. This is demonstrated further by the case of Leonora who spurned what her parents saw as their golden opportunity to improve their material, economic and social position by refusing to marry a ‘Hawaiiano’ and marrying instead a seaman. According to her, her parents were disappointed (and she had to live with this disappointment which her parents expressed in action even

³⁰ A change in civil status entails a reapplication for immigration, which would bring the process back to step one, prolonging what is already a protracted wait that many people describe as ‘pagurayan patay’ (like waiting for death to come). Cohabitation became another strategy of migration. This justification for cohabitation contrasts with what is highlighted in, for example, Kabamalan (2004) and Williams *et al.* (2007).

after several years have passed) that she threw away a life that could have given not only her but also her entire natal family a more secure and better life since she herself would have been a migrant with a real chance for permanent settlement in the United States. She could then sponsor her parents' migration to Hawaii who in turn would be able to sponsor their other children's migration to Hawaii who will then sponsor their spouse's and children's migration. (These spouses would also then be able to sponsor the migration of their own parents repeating and widening the cycle of migration). Her case reveals the hierarchy of migration reckoned through the social possibilities that they enable and the extent to which migration has become an escape route, a strategy for improving one's life chances.



Figure 4.6 House of an overseas contract worker, San Gabriel. Work on-going. Photo used with permission of owner.

People from San Gabriel who are now in Hawaii are not necessarily all economically better off than seamen's families but there is recognition of the differential possibilities afforded by settlement migration and contract labour migration. Another wife I spoke to already had an appointment for an interview

at the US embassy in Manila. If her interview—the penultimate stage of a process that began with her parents petitioning her for immigration more than five years back—were successful, she could leave with her two small children for Hawaii within six months, leaving behind her seafarer husband who will have to go through the same process and wait for at least five years before he could join them. Although they now have a comfortable life owing to her husband’s seafaring, to her, Hawaii ultimately offered better chances for the whole family to stay together and to live a similarly, if not more, comfortable life. As she explained, her husband works as a seaman for the money, and if he earned this money doing a different job in Hawaii, it did not really matter for what did was that he would not have to be away for long periods of time.

This ‘framing’ of their experience of labour migration and of their experience of its consequences is akin to ‘social imaginary’ (Taylor 2004) understood as a way of making sense, of ‘meaning-making’ (Vigh 2009, p. 99). Our social imaginary helps define, writes Henrik Vigh (*ibid.*, p. 100)

the expected continuations of our horizons [...] which is exactly what allows us to get a grip on the world [...] enabling us to act in it. The social imaginary is the key faculty through which we anticipate the unfolding of the social environments our lives are set in – evolving positively or negatively from the *potentialities* of its current state [...] the social imaginary allows [...] us to anticipate, position and act in relation to a world that is constantly approaching and engaging us... . (emphasis in original)

It is through the social imaginary that the wives become not simply implicated in migration but also become active agents in shaping the contours of migration, that is, how migration shapes not only their quotidian lives but also how their lives are ultimately organized, that is, how the possibilities made available by migration come to alter their perceptions of their future and of their capacities for enabling the conditions of possibility for these altered circumstances. Their social imaginary conceives of their husband’s undertaking of contract labour migration as a family strategy that occurs within and as a result of the Philippine state’s labour export strategy, itself a consequence of and response to

the economic rut the Philippines has been in for a very long time. However, this link between migration and economic mismanagement does not really matter to them. What looms large to them is the fact or threat of nothingness (*awan met biagmi, ana ngarud biagmi no di mapan*), of a life of pure hardship (*puro rigat met ti biag, rigat met latta ti adda, utang met laeng ti pagpulgosan*). Wives themselves see migration as offering the possibility of escaping this condition. It makes it possible for them to even think of a future. For these wives, migration becomes an escape route and they help develop cultures of migration. Their social imaginaries foster and reinforce fantasies, dreams, and desires of a good life.

This possibility — a future imagined as possible and graspable — gives the wives the courage and strength to endure and even enjoy a life marked by long separations. A number of the wives I interviewed said that in their married lives, they have had more years living apart from their husbands than together. One wife calculated it as in 18 years of being married she and her husband have been physically together for only the equivalent of about five years. Yet their marriage has not fallen apart, she has her own career, her daughter has grown up well, and she has several businesses to run besides. In other words, although many of them are unable to have a future guaranteed by settlement migration to Hawaii and mainland United States like the one wife waiting for her interview with an American consul, their husband's seafaring enables 'positive social being and becoming' (Vigh 2009, p. 103).

The social imaginary of seamen's wives, informed by what migration is seen as offering and making possible, is shaped by these migrant imaginings. These 'migrant imaginaries' (Vigh 2009) engage the lack of social possibilities at home or the possibility of social and economic stagnation. These conditions shape how families—seamen and their wives—strategize in order to improve their economic and social position. Migration is their way of rerouting their lives and dreams for what is gained by migrating is that which is not available, that which is not present. This imaginary is also shaped by a long history and social context in San Gabriel of migration to Hawaii. Ultimately, it is this social, 'migrant' imaginary that allows us to draw a more direct link between

the women's personal investments into their husband's labour migration and to the Philippines's history. History is used here not in the limited sense of an account of the past but in the sense of a continuing and persistent national narrative of economic and social marginality.

But it is not only through these women's imaginary investments that they become active agents in their husband's migration and in migration in general. The responsibilities and roles they assume and the task of maintaining and sustaining their families including relationships and ties that are attenuated externally (even transnationally) become part of the condition of possibility for this migration. These women sustain the viability of migration and their success provides legitimacy to migration as a way out of economic and social impoverishment. As Shawn Kanaiaupuni (2000, p. 8) has said in the context of Mexican nonmigrant women, they 'permit the social institutionalization of migration'.

4.5 Sacrificing Wives

These women's dreaming of a better life of course entails sacrifice. They exchange one difficult life for another but one which offers a promise of a better life. They cite their difficult life. Irene, for example, described the affinity between their life and hardship with the following: 'Rigat met laeng ti adda' (there is nothing but hardship). Because of it, they are willing to endure, indeed will themselves to endure. Dolores said she accepts it as part of her life ('awatek a parte amin ti biag daytoy') because if her husband did not leave, they would not have anything to live on ('awan pagbiagmi'). Worse, if their husband did not go, they would not have a life ('ata no di met mapan, awan met biagmi'). It is this thought that she steels herself with. Nora expressed the same sentiment when she said that in order for her family to have a better life, she has to sacrifice ('agsakripisyo [...] tapno [...] makalung-aw met iti panagbiag').³¹ It is important to bear in mind that when women spoke of their poverty or difficulties, they were not simply referring to the absence of material comfort

³¹ 'Lung-aw' connotes being able to keep the head above water so that one can breathe and not drown.

but also to their social standing that is always perceived and experienced in terms of others (see also Cannell 1999). In his work on slum dwellers in Tondo, Manila, Pinches (1991) captures this sense very well: ‘it is the experience of not being valued as human beings, of having to endure humiliation, disapproval and rejection, of constantly having one’s dignity challenged’ and of ‘being shamed’ (quoted in Cannell 1999, p. 18).

In the women’s responses, there is clearly a persistent reference to life (biag) or to living (panagbiag). It is manifest that ‘the possibility of gaining an adequate life is seen as ...spatially distant’ (Vigh 2009, p. 96). In San Gabriel, local government personnel do not earn much as clearly shown in Table 4.6 below:

Table 4.6 Salary Scale of San Gabriel Local Government Employees

| First Tranche Monthly Salary Schedule for Local Government Personnel in Fifth Class Provinces and Cities and Third Class Municipalities Effective January 1, 2010 (In Pesos) | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Salary Grade | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 | Step 7 | Step 8 |
| 1 | 5,490 | 5,600 | 5,712 | 5,828 | 5,946 | 6,066 | 6,190 | 6,316 |
| 2 | 5,957 | 6,077 | 6,199 | 6,325 | 6,452 | 6,583 | 6,718 | 6,855 |
| 3 | 6,464 | 6,594 | 6,727 | 6,864 | 7,002 | 7,146 | 7,290 | 7,441 |
| 4 | 6,970 | 7,110 | 7,255 | 7,402 | 7,553 | 7,707 | 7,864 | 8,025 |
| 5 | 7,517 | 7,669 | 7,824 | 7,982 | 8,145 | 8,312 | 8,481 | 8,655 |
| 6 | 8,106 | 8,270 | 8,438 | 8,609 | 8,785 | 8,965 | 9,147 | 9,335 |
| 7 | 8,686 | 8,861 | 9,042 | 9,225 | 9,413 | 9,604 | 9,801 | 10,002 |
| 8 | 9,309 | 9,497 | 9,688 | 9,886 | 10,086 | 10,291 | 10,502 | 10,717 |
| 9 | 9,975 | 10,177 | 10,382 | 10,594 | 10,808 | 11,028 | 11,254 | 11,482 |
| 10 | 10,666 | 10,882 | 11,102 | 11,326 | 11,556 | 11,792 | 12,032 | 12,278 |
| 11 | 11,358 | 11,586 | 11,820 | 12,058 | 12,303 | 12,553 | 12,809 | 13,068 |
| 12 | 12,095 | 12,338 | 12,586 | 12,840 | 13,099 | 13,365 | 13,635 | 13,912 |
| 13 | 12,881 | 13,139 | 13,402 | 13,671 | 13,946 | 14,229 | 14,518 | 14,811 |
| 14 | 13,718 | 13,992 | 14,271 | 14,558 | 14,850 | 15,150 | 15,457 | 15,769 |
| 15 | 14,634 | 14,929 | 15,232 | 15,541 | 15,858 | 16,182 | 16,512 | 16,851 |
| 16 | 15,611 | 15,925 | 16,247 | 16,578 | 16,914 | 17,258 | 17,610 | 17,970 |
| 17 | 16,655 | 16,990 | 17,332 | 17,682 | 18,042 | 18,407 | 18,782 | 19,164 |
| 18 | 17,771 | 18,127 | 18,492 | 18,865 | 19,246 | 19,634 | 20,033 | 20,439 |
| 19 | 18,962 | 19,342 | 19,729 | 20,126 | 20,531 | 20,946 | 21,368 | 21,801 |
| 20 | 20,236 | 20,639 | 21,051 | 21,474 | 21,905 | 22,345 | 22,795 | 23,256 |
| 21 | 21,337 | 21,760 | 22,193 | 22,634 | 23,085 | 23,546 | 24,019 | 24,501 |
| 22 | 22,507 | 22,950 | 23,403 | 23,866 | 24,339 | 24,823 | 25,318 | 25,822 |
| 23 | 23,747 | 24,212 | 24,689 | 25,174 | 25,669 | 26,176 | 26,694 | 27,224 |
| 24 | 25,067 | 25,554 | 26,054 | 26,561 | 27,082 | 27,613 | 28,156 | 28,712 |
| 25 | 26,468 | 26,979 | 27,501 | 28,035 | 28,580 | 29,138 | 29,706 | 30,290 |
| 26 | 27,956 | 28,492 | 29,041 | 29,601 | 30,173 | 30,757 | 31,354 | 31,965 |
| 27 | 29,538 | 30,102 | 30,678 | 31,264 | 31,864 | 32,478 | 33,104 | 33,745 |
| 28 | 31,221 | 31,813 | 32,417 | 33,033 | 33,662 | 34,306 | 34,964 | 35,636 |
| 29 | 33,011 | 33,633 | 34,266 | 34,914 | 35,575 | 36,251 | 36,941 | 37,645 |
| 30 | 36,753 | 37,450 | 38,164 | 38,892 | 39,635 | 40,396 | 41,171 | 41,964 |

Source: Office of the Treasurer, Municipality of San Gabriel

Seafarers’ income easily dwarf what local workers make as shown in Table 4.7 below. At an exchange rate of 45 pesos to one US dollar, a messman, the lowest paid crew in the table, will earn more than the highest-paid employee, probably the mayor, of San Gabriel (see Table 4.6 above).

Table 4.7 Salary of Filipino Seamen According to Position, 2007³²

| Position | Salary (in US dollars) |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Captain | 4,500 |
| Chief Officer | 3,200 |
| 2 nd Officer | 2,500 |
| 3 rd Officer | 2,350 |
| Chief Engineer | 4,200 |
| 2 nd Engineer | 3,200 |
| 3 rd Engineer | 2,500 |
| Electrician | 2,200 |
| Bosun | 1,700 |
| Able Seaman | 1,500 |
| Ordinary Seaman | 1,150 |
| Fitter | 1,600 |
| Oiler | 1,500 |
| Wiper | 1,150 |
| Chief Cook | 1, 600 |
| Messman | 1,000 |

Source: <http://www.ofwguide.com/articleitem-604/Salary-Guide-for-Filipino-Seamen.html>

In order for the whole family to have a life and a future, it has to be broken, torn apart ('awan mabalin ata no agtiptipkel kami'), albeit temporarily. This breaking apart might be seen as an effort to link together space and time, that is, the seeking of life in another place is an attempt to secure and guarantee the present and future life of a family. The domestic territory of the Philippine nation-state is crossed for the sake of another domestic institution, the family. The wives' sacrifices must be seen as a contribution to the securing and guaranteeing of the family's present and future. But precisely because the remittances are sent back home, and through the banking system, a move the Marcos government made to ensure that remittances pass through the state, the Philippines' present, at least, is temporarily guaranteed.³³ The Philippines is

³² The International Transport Federation (ITF) and the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) have their own rates but salaries are determined by the companies or employers.

³³ Executive Order Number 857, issued by Marcos in December 1982, made it mandatory for overseas contract workers to remit regularly 50 to 80 per cent of their income through the Philippine banking system and failure to do so meant stiff penalties. Marcos, however, revoked his order due to its unpopularity which gave his military regime an even more negative image (Rodriguez 2010). However, seafarers have had no choice since their salaries are paid by manning agencies located right in the Philippines. It is in the shipping industry where the Philippine state has exercised most its extractive reach (Aguilar 2003).

thus also a domestic entity which survival (and future, too,) is partly the labour of Filipino seamen's wives.

The sacrifice of wives is framed within a horizon in which better and more social possibilities (cf. Vigh 2009, 93) are the expected returns. Thus, their implication in their husband's migration is not sacrifice in the limited sense of mere suffering or as part of mere existence but, to follow the imagery of their description of their lives (*narigat, natuok, aganus ka a talaga, agsakripisyoka a talaga, patibkerem ti bagim ken nakemmo*) and the future orientation to which they are attuned, a journey through what could be their *via dolorosa* – a temporary, if repeated, suffering that hopefully will bring about not just economic but also social upliftment, if not redemption.³⁴ Although Nora described her life as pivoting around debt (*utang met latta ti pagpuligosan no adda mayat nga agpautang*), she was still able to say: 'Addanto latta met. Dumtengto latta met. Saan ngata met a puro rigat ti biag' (Something will come. It will come someday. Life, I don't think, is all hardship.)

For many of the wives I interviewed, life indeed has not all been hardship. They mention visible signs of improvement such as being able to buy more electrical appliances, afford private schooling for their children, pay for piano, ballet or voice lessons, etc. Many have been able to purchase status-symbol objects such as cars and sports utility vehicles (SUVs), sometimes owning two or three. But without a doubt the most important of all, they have been able to build a house. Indeed, in a number of instances, when people gave me directions, I was simply told to look for the biggest house, which, I was assured I would not miss. In such instances, house numbers, street names, and post codes, although already in place, do not matter. Mercator's innovations (and innovations of Mercator) are less to be relied on than visual descriptions, visual descriptions that certainly index economic and social status.

³⁴ This is paradoxical because although families may succeed in improving their lives, the exodus of Filipinos suggests, as Pertierra (1992, p. 151) has argued, the 'irredeemability of local society' and leads to a 'form of economic involution' fuelling further and more reliance on migration (see also Cruz and Paganoni 1989).



Figure 4.7 A chief engineer's house, now popularly referred to as the 'Blue House'. It is the first three-storey residential building in San Gabriel. It has been uninhabited for a number of years since the family moved to California. Photo used with permission.

Most of those who have enjoyed the most significant material improvement are those married to senior officers (chief and second engineers) clearly because they are paid a lot more. Nevertheless, there were some women whose situation rank, on its own, is not able to account for. Aida's husband worked as an oiler in a cruise ship and Josefa's was a fourth engineer. Their family's economic standing was due in large measure to these two women's success with their business ventures whose capital outlay did not come from their husband's earnings. Josefa's natal family also owned tracts of land which were planted to rice and other crops and therefore saved them considerable amounts of money which would have been spent to buy rice, the staple food. Several other families who were doing well had already some social capital to begin with: many of them had parents who were themselves migrants particularly to the United States. Two other officers' wives were professionals (one an accountant and the other a head teacher). In contrast, the family of Lourdes, who was never in paid employment and whose husband has only been seafaring since 2002, owned

three sports utility vehicles (two of which were the rage in the Philippines at the time of the interview). Their house was also being constructed at that time. Lourdes's parents and all of her siblings were in Hawaii and three of Lourdes's sons, all in their twenties, were themselves seafarers. The combination of these circumstances has led to Lourdes's family's ability to enjoy a comparatively much better life.

Even for wives whose lives were only beginning to be transformed, they felt the benefits of separation as acutely life-changing. In the words of one interviewee, 'nakakaluwag': with more money, they feel less constrained, more able to breathe. This description is apropos because the financial and material gains of separation-through-migration provide families with more spending power and the social space in which their family is positioned expands. With many constraints removed by this improvement (no longer will they have to worry where to get the next meal or where to get money when a family member gets ill, etc.), wives feel also some physical effect—they can breathe more easily. Life begins to become easier (to 'soften' [become less hard]).

Conclusion

I have sought here to reconsider the seamen's wives' investments in and experiences of their husband's contract labour migration. Rather than see them merely as 'left-behind' ones who have to deal with the consequences of migration, I conceptualized the women as actively shaping and reproducing migration. I examined their active participation in migration through the concept of the social imaginary which is informed by the experience of migration, the motivations behind it, and the possibilities and hopes that are pinned on the process and experience of migration. Such a social imaginary shapes and is shaped by the aspiration for 'naimbag a biag' (good life) and the development of 'cultures of migration'. Millions of Filipinos try to realize their dreams of a better life, or of the good life, by working in other countries as labour migrants. As my discussion in the first three sections of the chapter showed, their movement out of the country is inextricably bound up with the

Philippines' socio-economic and political realities and to a long history of out-migration in the Ilocos. The work women do provides social legitimization (Oishi 2005) to migration and helps to ensure its viability and socially institutionalizes migration (Kanaiaupuni 2000). The women's participation in their husband's migration therefore is not simply through being 'left-behind' wives but equally in their motivations for and investments in migration that spring from the fact that they, as Xiang (2007) has also pointed out in the context of left-behind women in rural China, have been socially and economically left behind. Their dreams have histories.

However, the wives neither linked the departure of their husbands to the failure of the Philippine state to provide for its people nor explicitly saw it as occurring within the labour export policy of the state. Perhaps, they have come to stop expecting anything from their government, which, ironically, has increasingly come to depend on overseas contract workers for survival. Moreover, the state's neoliberal policies have withdrawn state subsidy for social services which Filipino families consequently now have to be responsible for. The state's dependence on its migrant population is inversely proportional to the people's dependence on it.

This points to a process of subjectification in which a state actively constructs a relationship with its citizens through which it can justify its extraction of these people's affection and patriotism remitted as money. Filipino migrant workers do remit money but more for the sake of their families and less out of a sense of nationalism as constructed by a parasitical state (see, for example, Rupert and Solomon 2006).³⁵ That the women never adverted to the state is not so much an indication of their lack of political consciousness as much as it is an indication

³⁵ The husbands of two wives I interviewed saw the state's representation of Filipino seafarers as the best as plainly a deceitful conceit. They both used the word 'linuluko' (root word: loco) to mean that it is both foolish and intended to fool seamen. It is important to clarify here that overseas contract workers are not politically apathetic or indifferent. In fact, many of them are engaged in activist work. The extent to which their activism is 'nationalist' in orientation has not been examined systematically and it is important to remember that political activities are not reducible to 'nationalist'. Where Filipino overseas contract workers show no concern for or interest in what happens to the Philippines, this very lack of concern might still be construed as political particularly in the context of social services (that are supposed to be provided by the state) becoming the responsibility of individual Filipinos.

of the insignificance of the state in terms of their economic and social well-being. Although their lives are ineluctably and inexorably entwined with the nation-state in the sense that their aspirations and strategies for attaining them are both a consequence of and response to the state's failure to provide adequate social possibilities, beyond this, the state is of little real consequence to them. Whatever happens to them or to their families is their responsibility, which in itself is a ramification of the state's neoliberal policies (Rodriguez 2010). Filipino families, migrant or not, have not only borne on their own their hardships but also the state.

An examination of the identity, subjectivity and agency of Filipino seamen's wives must therefore take into account their vexed relationship with the political qua state. The state is both absent and present so that although migrants and their families turn migration into a personal and family strategy to navigate economic problems, they and their experiences cannot be completely divorced from their political qua state context. They may not be the migrants themselves but their agency and subjectivity are shaped by this absence-presence of the state. They are certainly not reducible to the workings of the state but they do engage the conditions engendered by it. Their lives, experiences and the ways they navigate (out of) the conditions of their lives speak to the presence-by-its-absence of the state. Moreover, the time of their lives without their husbands might be said as a time when they go through their own process of social being and becoming. In succeeding to maintain a family in the face of tremendous odds and challenges, they develop confidence, self-efficacy, skills and strategies that enable them to navigate the various roles they have to assume and perform and a life that for many will be dominated by the absence of their husbands. The following chapter begins my examination of the situation of the women focusing on what it is like for them to be on their own.

Chapter 5

ON THEIR OWN

When he is not here, it is hard being a single parent. Everything becomes your concern. Your children are your concern, you alone, preparing everything they need for school, especially when someone falls ill, you are on your own [laughs] you are on your own ... It is really difficult being the wife of a seaman, sacrifice, umm . because you look after everything. The maintenance of your house, the maintenance of your children [laughs], everything, which is what makes it difficult. You are also concerned about your husband whether he is safe because he is at sea you do not know if his condition is always good because they are out at sea. It is quite dangerous when there is a typhoon. Your worries are doubled. You worry about those who are here with you and you worry about your husband. That is what makes it hard. If it is about finances, it is good but even if you have money, if he is not around you have no one to tell your problems with your children. It is hard because even if you tell him, you are away from him and so he cannot do what he must for his children. So disciplining your children and raising them to be good and responsible children are all yours. That is really hard. Hard. I think it is what has caused my illness [laughs]. [...]That's because everything falls on you. Stress Everything is your concern.³⁶ (Lilia)

In chapter 2, I discussed the personal, familial and social consequences on women of the absence of their husbands. In the last chapter, I argued that seamen's wives are more than simply 'left-behind' ones. The work they do in sustaining their families in their husband's absence helps to ensure that migration is worth undertaking and socially legitimate. In this chapter, I examine what it is like for the seamen's wives to be what Lilia, in the quotation

³⁶ In Ilokano: Ay ket no awan isuna a ket narigat ti agbalin a single parent. Amin problemam, ti annak problemam, panagisaganam ti masapul nga sumrek, aglalo no daytay adda agsakit bukodmo amin [laughs] bukodmo amin, ay bukodmo amin ... Narigat a talaga ti asawa ti seaman, sakripisyo ahm . ata problemam amin. Amin nga kua ti maintenance ti balaymo, maintenance ti annakmo [laughs] amin nga kua isu dayta ti rigatna. Siempre no kasta a ket problemam pay diay asawam no safe isuna ata adda idta danum dimo met ammo no kasano no kanayon a nakua diay kondisyon da idiyay ata siempre a ket danum. Delikado met no agbagbagyo. Doble-doble ti problemam. Problemam dagita adda idtoy, problemam pay ni lakaymo. Isu't rigatna..ay . isu't rigatna. No financially a ket nasayaat met ngem ti rigatna latta uray adda kuartam no awan isuna a pagibagaam ti problema ti annakmo. A ket narigat uray ibagam kenkuana a ket adayo ka met di kad dina maikua diay kuana kadagidiay annakna. Dikad bukodmo amin tay panangdisiplinam ti annakmo kasano a padakkelem a.. tay nasayaatda a nga annak a.. Isu dayta ti rigat na a talaga. Rigatna. Isun sa pay ti nakaal-alaak ti sakitko [laughs] [...] Dayta problemam amin. Stress . amin problemam.

above, referred to as being ‘on your own’. The aim is to provide a broad description of the impact of their husband’s absence on them, how their roles, responsibilities, and tasks are redefined, and prefigure the issues succeeding chapters will examine. Admittedly, this chapter focuses on socio-material and emotional practices that are primarily concerned with sustaining and caring for families. The intention, however, is not to firmly link the women with the domestic, private sphere of the family but to recognize and draw attention to the centrality of this sphere in the women’s lives without however suggesting that they are limited to it.

This chapter consists of five sections. It begins with a description of what it is like for wives with no children to be ‘on their own’. This provides a picture that enables a comparison with what it is like for women with children. Section two focuses on the roles and responsibilities that women have to assume or ones that become intensified because of their husband’s absence. The third focuses on the experiences of women ‘left-behind with something’, those who got pregnant while their husbands were on leave. I also briefly talk about women dealing with emergencies. The fourth deals with the new skills and competencies women developed and the last explores how the women negotiated power and the gender dynamic embodied in the performance of roles and responsibilities, when their husbands were home. This will be examined more closely in the next chapter. I conclude with a reflection on the possibilities for negotiating gender constraints afforded by the women’s being ‘on their own’.

5.1 On Their Own: Wives Who Are Not Yet Mothers

‘Boring’ and ‘lonely’ was how two wives described their life when their husbands were away. They took refuge in their job or in having pets to ease the oppressiveness of what they felt was the slowness of time, making waiting for their husbands seem long and protracted. Donna found her job to help take her mind away from the absence of her husband: ‘At least idia’y office adu’t makasarsaritak, adu ti ubraek haanko nga mapupuotan nga aglabas ti aldaw’.

(At least, at the office I have plenty to talk to, I have plenty of things to do that I don't notice the passing of days.)

In contrast, because Rowena lived alone in her husband's family house, the feeling of loneliness was even more acute. She would sometimes invite nieces and nephews to sleep over but during the day when they were in school or went home, she only had her pets to keep her company and to while her time. She commented that the life of a seaman's wife was boring and lonely (Ti biag ti asawa ti seaman, naboring. Boring nga nalungkot). To keep herself occupied, she partnered with another seaman's wife selling their home-made food to other parents. These have sold well as they were easy to cook and therefore ideal for breakfast, and for those with school-going children, for packed lunches.

These wives and their husbands desired to have children. For the first wife, her getting pregnant and giving birth were a matter of time. In contrast, the second wife had already started looking for a child to adopt or foster while not having completely given up on having her own child. Both women are convinced that having a child not only will keep them busy but also ease the loneliness of not having their husbands around. This is confirmed by Alicia who resorted to fostering. Her husband's 86-year old aunt (whom she looks after) and sibling lived with her. She was thus not alone and her caring responsibility for her aunt-in-law at least kept her busy. Yet she confirmed the boredom and tediousness of life, and the difference the presence of a child made in her life: 'nagrigat ngamin tay awan kaduam. Ta uray adda tay auntie nga kua ken tay kabsatna kasla sabali la tay adda ubingna. Isu nangalaak ti ubing. (It is very difficult to have no companion. Even if his aunt and his sibling live with me here, it is different when you have a child. That's why I took ('fostered') a child.)

If boredom, tediousness, and slowness characterized the life of women without children, the picture is completely different for those who have children. We turn below to their experiences.

5.2. Becoming A Single Parent: The Burden of Responsibility

‘Kasla pasan ko ang daigdig’ (It’s like I carry the world on my shoulder) was one wife’s dramatic description of her situation when her husband was away, drawing attention to how she felt overburdened with responsibility, an experience that Yen Le Espiritu (2002) has also seen as defining the lives of women married to Filipino stewards in the US navy (see also Cruz 1990; Cruz and Paganoni 1989). Despite many of the women being surrounded by their, or their husband’s, family who could provide them with assistance in times of difficulties, many of the mothers said that there were aspects in which others simply could not substitute for their husband. They especially found it difficult to become both mother and father at the same time, something that could not be delegated to somebody else although others might help look after children. Below, I discuss two areas in which the boundaries of the roles of these mothers were extended and consider the ambivalences and ambiguities which the practical, physical and emotional demands of these expanded or intensified roles bring into relief.

5.2.1 Raising and Disciplining Children

A responsibility that wives-mothers found difficult and which always reminded them of the impossibility of becoming both mother and father, no matter their attempts to doing everything, is raising and disciplining the children. ‘Bukbukodam’ is how they said it: to be burdened with and perform a responsibility that was supposed to be a shared one. It is also a responsibility that the women seemed to acknowledge as a man’s job, or at least which the husbands were more effective at. As Dolores said:

Tay duma la ngamin ti adda ama, adda kabutengda. Tay panagaywan aglalo no dumadakkel dagita annak, siyempre talaga narigat . . narigat ti awan lalaki talaga. [. . .] Saanda ka a denggen dagita ubbing.

[The difference, with a father around, is they have someone to fear. Looking after the children especially when they are growing up, that is really hard . . it is really hard when a man is not around. [. . .] The children don’t listen to you.]

The mothers considered discipline a critical part of raising good and responsible children. This became even more critical then with the absence of their husbands who they acknowledged was the authority figure the children really recognized. The matter of disciplining children hence made visible tensions in their attempts to do mother and father at the same time. Linda conceded it as impossible to do:

... sika nga nabati, punuam diay kaawanna. Kaslang dobliem koma ta bagim ngem saan mo talaga maaramid ta siempre agduma ti ama ken ina. Sabali lang met ti kua ti ama.

[you who are left behind, you fill in his absence. It is like you turn yourself into two but of course you can't really do it because being a father and a mother are two different things. Being a father is simply different.]

The wives were not only stretched figuratively ('you turn yourself into two') but also literally. Wives acknowledged that there were differences in the way they and their husbands disciplined their children. Fear (buteng) seemed to define children's receptivity to their father's verbal instructions to behave. In contrast, women described how their patience was tested before their children eventually listened to them. A number of wives recounted instances of when their children seemed to first wait for them to get mad and smack them before they behaved or took them seriously. Linda illustrated this dynamic well:

Ngem no ni amana, maminsan la a sao. Maminsan lang. Mas kabutengna. Denggenna a sigud. Maysa a tawagna laeng ket umasideg a sigud. Ibagana nga agsardengkan, agsardeng. No siak ket awan. Tama na anakko. A, awan latta. Haan nga mangikaskaso ngem no makapungtotak metten malipakko, daydiayen denggenakon. Diak man ammo no apay nga urayenna pay lang nga agpungtotak.

[But if it is her father, just one word. Once only. She is more afraid of him. She listens right away. Just one call from him and she comes right away. He tells her to stop, she stops. With me, nothing. That's enough, my child. Nothing. She pays no heed but when I get angry and smack her, that's when she listens. I don't know why she still has to wait for me to get angry.]

Another issue related to discipline that the wives alluded to concerns the connection made by the parents among raising children, discipline, and instruction. Disciplining was also seen as teaching or training children to be good, behaved, and responsible. Inasmuch as it is seen as instruction or moral pedagogy, wives felt burdened not only by the absence of their husbands (whose job it was to discipline children) but also because moral instruction was one of the wives' responsibilities. There are practical reasons why mothers wanted their children to be easier to handle (children can help with household work, help look after their siblings, or generally make situations easier for mothers) but these practical considerations were wedded to moral and social expectations. As such, it is burdensome. They said it was difficult because so much was at stake.

This matter concerned most especially mothers who had children approaching adolescence and adulthood. They described it as particularly difficult since these ages brought with them specific issues such as rebelliousness and this was a period, according to them, when their children started to stay out more and later. With other children and with the business of running the entire family, they could not possibly keep an eye on them, what they were up to. They were concerned that they would fall off the narrow and straight path, pick up vices, not do well in school, and the like. One wife described it as 'di ko matengngel isudan' (literally, I can no longer handle them).

What made the situation worse was that the wives felt that because they were with their children, their husbands expected them to be able to see to this part of raising the children. There was, therefore, an added psychic burden on the wives. As Maria said: 'Sisiennaka ta asawam a no haanmo maisuro ta annakmo.' (Your husband will blame you if you fail to teach and rein in your children.) Irene said that despite giving everything she had, she still got faulted by her husband. Still another, Nancy, whose teen-aged daughter got pregnant, felt very relieved that when the pregnancy was discovered, her husband was home. She said that aside from the fact that she would not have known how to break it to him had he been at sea, she was also worried that he might put the blame on her for failing to keep an eye on her daughter:

Di mo la nasubaybayan ta anakmon no kunana kaniak ana ti masaok? Uray naistiktoak ket diak met innoras a mabantayan ida.

[If he told me, ‘you failed to keep an eye on your daughter’, what could I say to him in response? Even if I am strict, I can’t keep an eye on them 24 hours.]

The task of raising children and of raising them well involves disciplining them. What was clear from the wives was the importance of the presence of the father in the upbringing of the children, a presence that was, however, severely limited by the nature of their jobs.³⁷ If one of the reasons for their seafaring was to provide for their future, this future was also potentially compromised by their absence since the raising of children implied ensuring they had the values and predispositions that would maximize the fruits of this very labour. If the children grew up not valuing, for example, education or training that would help them secure a better future and life, then part of what is claimed as one of the reasons for the father’s going to sea is not realized.

Although the wives did their best to raise and discipline their children well, they knew that they could do this better with their husbands around. For this reason, all of the wives with children who were going to school (even the ones in kindergarten) encouraged them to study hard so as not to waste their father’s hard work and sacrifices. They encouraged them to do so because studying hard meant that, particularly for those who were entering adolescence and adulthood, they stayed away from bad influences. Part therefore of the wives’ strategy for motivating their children to be good and responsible was an inculcation of appreciation for what their father was doing. Wives frequently reminded their children of their relatively better material comfort and the better opportunities for education they now had access to, opportunities that would only be wasted if they did not learn to listen to and heed them. A number of mothers shared the disappointments of fathers when their children abandoned their studies because they had gotten into serious responsibilities (i.e. got, or got someone, pregnant).

³⁷ This implies that fathers had to be good role models, something that, based on my interviews, not all of the husbands could be said to exemplify.

Here, we might usefully consider the women within what has been called in family life studies as the principle of ‘linked lives’ (Elder 1994, 2001) which has been used to draw attention to how ‘[r]oles, role configurations, and pathways in the life course unfold as part of a complex system that involves other life courses’ (Macmillan and Copher 2005, p. 862). In other words, that ‘others, be they children, spouses, partners, or parents, exert considerable influence on individual experiences and attainments over the life course’ (ibid.). The pressure on the women is not only due to the fact of additional roles and their associated responsibilities and tasks but also to how these are linked to a future horizon, that is, what becomes of the children. Their obligation therefore is not only to attend to the present needs of the family (see to it that the children are fed, that they are physically and emotionally cared for, etc.) but also to ensure that their future is not compromised by the absence of their father one of whose reasons for leaving is precisely to provide for this future. If migration, as discussed in the preceding chapters, is used to secure a better future, to navigate the lack of social and economic possibilities in the Philippines, then the concept of ‘linked lives’ is useful to clarify how various members of the family can contribute to or compromise this future.

5.2.2 Looking After Sick Children

A child falling ill brought immediacy and acuteness to the wives’ being on their own. All the mothers mentioned this particular situation; in most instances, it was the first they mentioned in response to my question about what they found most difficult with their husband’s absence. It could be as simple as a small baby having a cold but which left the women sleepless and worried. Or it could be a more serious condition such as the fatal *dengue* (haemorrhagic fever) requiring immediate hospitalization. A sick child did not only mean more physical work for the mothers. It also exposed them to situations that left some of them emotionally and mentally drained.

Taking a child to the hospital had, of course, financial implications as did every visit to a doctor. Women were careful to point out that whether or not they had the money did not really matter. They would have taken a child to hospital even

if they did not have as yet any money because the only thing that mattered was the life of that child. They could worry about the money later on. However, it was nonetheless an important consideration especially when the illness did not quickly manifest any serious consequences, particularly among those who were less financially established.

Aside from the money involved, there were logistical considerations. The ability to get to and from the hospital itself was something wives had to arrange. This was not a problem for those who had their own vehicles. For those who did not, their movement was more limited and hence added to their burden. Wives had to arrange with neighbours who owned a tricycle or a passenger jeep to take them to or pick them up from the hospital. The time the wives could go home and go back to the hospital depended on how far they lived from it and the size of the vehicle they had access to. To save on costs, wives could take public transport but that meant that they went home and back to the hospital during the day or when it was still light and public transport was still available. This movement was contingent also on the availability and arrival of her replacement to care for her child, someone who most likely will also have her own responsibilities for other people.

The wives pointed out that just because they were at the hospital did not mean that they did not have a house/hold to take charge of. Indeed, this was what made things very difficult for the women: they had to divide themselves between two places which required their attention simultaneously. Unquestionably, help was always available: a mother or aunt or a sibling will help look after the other children (if there were any), wash clothes or prepare meals and surely even alternate with them at the hospital. However, it was impossible for them to disengage completely from one space or set of responsibilities. Although it was relatively easier for mothers who looked after sick children at home than those whose children were in hospital, the physical, emotional and mental demands of attending to what were virtually two sets of responsibilities also took a toll on them. Because although they did not have to divide themselves between the hospital and their home, the full and intense attention demanded by a sick child competed with their other responsibility of

running the household and of looking after the other children. A wife with four boys described her sheer exhaustion when her children fell ill one after the other, if not at the same time. Mothers whose children required hospitalization faced even more challenging prospects. A wife recounted the two times her children were hospitalized. With both her parents already old, and siblings who also had young children of their own, she had no one to alternate with her in the hospital.³⁸ Indeed, although many of the mothers could rely on their parents, siblings, and other relatives and even friends for help, they said that it was in times like this that they sought their husband's presence.³⁹

A number of the mothers had also worried that their husbands would think they had been negligent. As one wife said:

Ammom, no agsakitda kunam uray talaga nga agpatpatnagak a di maturog. Nakua . ata siempre daytay nerbiyos mo a nga adayo ni lakaymo ay binaybay-am sananto kuna [laughs] no adda mapasamak ... dikad' kasta .. Isun sa nga kasla medyo alisto a bimmaket ti tao [laughs] ta dayta tay ubing no agsakit .. isuda't kuaek.

[You know, when they [her children] were sick, even if I had to stay up all night. Because . of course your husband is away he might then say you neglected your children if something happened. That's how .. Maybe that's why I seem to have aged too quickly because when the children were sick, I focused on them.]

This concern for being faulted or even blamed put psychological pressure on the mothers to put in even more effort in looking after their children especially when they were ill. Wives felt accountable to their husbands for what went on and what happened at home. Those who were in paid employment and who

³⁸ In the Philippines, family members of those in hospital assist in looking after them. Tasks may include feeding them, giving them a wash, changing their clothes, and the like. Moreover, because hospitalization is not free, someone has to be around to make decisions such as whether tests or procedures could be done since they had to be paid for. If an expensive operation is required, someone had to be there to confirm that the family can afford to pay for it. Nothing can proceed without the family concerned being 'informed' first.

³⁹ Indeed, it was times like this when they needed the assistance of their family yet also made acute their need to show they were capable of having their own family. There was the tension generated by the fact that this should be the concern and affair of her and her husband. I should make clear that this tension does not get in the way of what actually happens, which is that the wife will eventually rely on her family, relatives, and friends but the point they make is that the person they would want to rely on most is their husband. However, wives will then quickly say that if their husbands were not away, they would not be able to afford to pay for hospitalization.

employed helpers said that one thing they did not delegate to them was taking their children to a doctor. As Rosario explained, there was a limit to what can be passed on to others. Their feeling of being on their own was compounded by this sense of accountability, of ‘owning’ and ‘owning up’ to everything (‘bukbukodam’ or ‘bukodmo amin’), of having to make all the decisions that exhausted women. As one wife said it: ‘sika amin ti agpanunot’ (literally, it is you who have to think of everything). What she said points not only to the physical work wives had to exert but also to the emotional and mental labour that went with holding the family together in the absence of their husbands.

When children became ill, the caring role of mothers became most prominent. Yet, as these women said, they themselves needed to be cared for, or even just comforted. Although they had their families to help them, as Julie pointed out, the assuring presence of the husband was different and irreplaceable: ‘sabali latta tay adda tay asawam a kaduam, adda inta sibay mo nga pagibagaam. Adda katulongam. (It is something else when your husband is here. You have a companion, he is beside you; you can tell him. You have somebody to share the burden with.) Another wife described it as ‘awan mangtarabay kenka’, that is, she had no one beside her to encourage and give her comfort. I think that this was what all of the women were trying to convey when they said they were responsible for everything despite the fact that they were surrounded by their own people who they knew they could always ask help from.

We might look at being ‘on your own’ and ‘becoming a single parent’ as involving a time and process when the responsibility and obligation to sustain the families of migrant men become associated with women (cf. Chant 2006). As will be discussed in chapter 7, although absent husbands and fathers might have presence and exercise some form of authority in absentia (e.g. Gardner 1995), at issue here is the actual physical, emotional and mental work that has to be done. This is also a time and process when their primary responsibility of mothering becomes intensified (as it now has to encompass fathering). This intensification of the parenting of the mothers, however, is not to be confused with what has been identified as ‘the ideology of intensive mothering’ (Hays 1996). Intensive mothering is underpinned by a high level of self-sacrifice and

methods of raising children that are ‘child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive’ (Hays 1996, p.8). What I am describing here is an intensification of the work that mothers have to do, one that is indicated by their becoming ‘single parents’ but having to do double the work. The mothers’ fear of being blamed or faulted is also underpinned by mothering being ‘steeped in normative discourses – “labor of love”, “the family”, and “good mothers”’ (England and Lawson 2005, p. 79).

5.2.3 Decision-Making

The absence of their husband has had consequences on the process of making decisions. Rather than discussion and consultation occurring first (or of husbands making the major decisions), many of the women have had to make decisions first before they could consult their husband. Below, I present different cases of making decisions that have no doubt been affected by the absence-distance of the women’s husbands and by the difficulty of contacting their husband when needed. I use these cases to illustrate the nuances of decision-making processes and to underscore the contexts within which the women’s decision making might be best appreciated.

5.2.3.1 Making Decisions Both Husband and Wife Should Have Made

When Alicia decided to foster a child, she did so to ease the sense of solitude she felt without her husband around. She did not live alone for her husband’s aunt and younger brother lived with her. She had a caring role for her aunt-in-law which kept her occupied. Yet, despite the presence of other people who were not completely unrelated to her and despite the responsibilities she had for them, she said that the quality of her life would improve if a child were around. This child, according to her, would make a lot of difference because her responsibility toward him or her would not be merely out of a sense of obligation or duty but more out of love and of the joy of having a child around. As she said, ‘the noise made by a child is something else’.

So when her husband’s brother’s wife gave birth to her fourth child, she asked the couple if they would be willing to give the child for her to foster. She

discussed this matter with them, and was able to discuss it with her husband only after the decision was made. Her husband, according to her, had no objections and was in fact very supportive. He was quoted by the wife as saying: ‘sika no isu ti kayatmo, mangalaka’ (if it is what you want, by all means do so). Although by the time Alicia could discuss the matter with her husband he was presented with what was effectively a decision, a decision that was difficult to undo considering the stage matters were already at, there was no deliberate attempt by Alicia to exclude her husband and to use this situation to force upon him a *fait accompli*. Alicia said that her husband did not object because one, both of them were in their mid-forties and so have come to realize that having their own child was becoming remote; two, he understood his wife’s need and desire for a child; three, the child was a blood relative; and four, fostering the child would ease the situation of his brother’s family.

5.2.3.2 Making Decisions on Behalf of Husbands

A number of the wives said that their husbands would leave them with the assuring statement that if anything needed doing or a decision taken, that these wives just made the best choice (see also Espiritu 2002). Still, as the husband’s representative, they tried to make the choice that their husbands would have made or at least a choice that they had had the opportunity to discuss particularly if it involved a lot of money. Wives also felt burdened if such decisions involved results that if undone would have enormous financial implications. Thus, sometimes, making decisions were not always seen in terms of how they were potentially empowering but in terms of anticipated reactions of husbands and their possible consequences on the whole family if they made the ‘wrong’ decision. To be sure, husbands whose wives have had to decide on their behalf accepted the decision as done, that although they might have wished something else, there was nothing much they could do.

Grace mentioned the perimeter fence she had had constructed for their eatery-variety store-billiard hall because, according to her, there had been attempts of break-in, and was concerned with her husband’s reaction. She had discussed the need for it with him on the phone but at that time was not yet clear exactly what

it was going to be like. Her concern therefore was not that a perimeter fence was built at all but whether it was the kind the husband would have built. In the end, whatever was her husband's opinion did not matter as the whole thing was already there by the time he came home. He had to 'accept' it just like many other decisions she has made. In her case, the husband recognized that decisions have to be made, and whether or not it was the decision he would have made no longer mattered (as much). The wife said that her husband would just keep quiet or say it was fine. Both she and her husband have learned that their situation demanded understanding of the dynamic of their lives of separation which affected decision-making. As the wife said, 'I can't always talk to him because signal is not always available. And it is different when he is here because you can really talk things over.' Finally, husbands, because informed of decisions after the fact, view them with a bit more detachment and hindsight; they were not within the 'crises' that these decisions were meant to address. Husbands were not in the eye of the storm, as it were, unlike their wives who were there and for whom the very making of these decisions in itself caused them worry.

Alicia, because her husband was the eldest in his family and whose parents were both dead, became involved in making a decision that concerned her husband's younger brother. This was a particularly vexed situation for her because she was an in-law and was surrounded by her husband's relatives. Careful not to step on anyone's toes, she first consulted her husband's aunts, uncles, the *barangay kapitan* (village captain) who also happened to be her husband's relative. Only after the decision had been made and the deed done involving her brother-in-law was she able to discuss it with her husband. Thrust in that unenviable position simply because her husband was the eldest sibling of his family, she went about her 'responsibility' in a manner that protected her husband's position and that did not open her up to criticism.

Making decisions over matters that wives felt should have been first discussed with their husbands gave the wives no small measure of unease. They felt relieved only when they had informed their husbands of their decisions. It is a complex dynamic that cannot be reduced to wives seeking the approval of their

husbands or of wives clearly having less power to make decisions. As representatives of their husbands, these decisions were not merely personal but ones that also revealed their embeddedness in layers of social relationships and obligations. Their attitude towards making decisions in the absence and on behalf of their husbands does not so much reveal indecisiveness as provide clues to the considerations they bear in mind and so shape the dynamic of their '(in)decisiveness'. The sometimes 'unreachability' of their husbands already shaped this dynamic. The consequences they tried to avoid cue us in to their social, kin, and economic obligations and standing. These wives' experiences show how circumscribed their decision-making was and provide us with a better understanding of how and why they cannot take decision-making lightly. Even if decisions were oftentimes initially made with, and accompanied by, doubt, prevarication, and tentativeness, the fact is that decisions were made, and made with the best of intentions. To be sure, there was sometimes a 'refusal' to take full responsibility for them as with Alicia who consulted her husband's elders. This turned out to be a wise decision for not only did it show her sensitivity to social norms but also became a mechanism for unburdening herself of the full responsibility of decision-making. These wives demonstrate a competence for balancing the social implications of making decisions on behalf of their husbands with the risk of making the 'wrong' decision and thereby 'misrepresenting' their husbands. They reveal that in these situations, decision-making was not just about being decisive.

5.2.3.3 Decision-Making that Excludes Husbands

Some wives can of course be very decisive particularly if it involved them personally. Linda, for example, decided to leave her husband's family house where they had lived with her in-laws and did so while her husband was at sea and before she told him of this decision. She had found living with her mother-in-law without her husband around quite unbearable. She vowed never to live again in San Gabriel unless in her own house. She had agreed to go back to her in-law's house because her husband was on leave but, more importantly, her husband had agreed to build their own house. At the time of the interview, she was waiting for the blueprint of the house for construction to commence.

Linda made a decision that at first excluded her husband. His absence and distance made making the decision easier for her. We might see that she had not consulted or informed her husband of her decision before actually leaving because she did not want to be talked into changing her mind. We might also see her decision as being strategic in other ways. Viewed from her in-laws' perspective, what Linda did was defiant, one that disregarded 'structures of respect'. However, her defiance still showed respect for 'social values' since leaving while her husband was away and without knowledge of this decision effectively absolved him of whatever conflicts were there between her and her in-laws. She also left open for her husband the role of restoring the order of things. When the husband came home, he had to go get her and their daughter and bring them home. Ill-feelings that remained were temporarily set aside in this 'rite of restoration'. Her mother-in-law could not refuse her because it meant refusing her own son who most likely supported her for many years. However, this rite of restoration was only transitional. As already mentioned, the wife had in fact used her decision to leave as a ruse to convince her husband to build a house she can make into her own home, albeit one that was going to be just a few steps away from her in-laws' house. In this way, although the husband remained the agent for restoring things, she also got to position herself to re-order structures of authority and respect. She also avoided the unpleasant, if not humiliating, act of going back to a place she had fled. Her decision initially not to tell her husband of her action, a calculated risk she took, also points to a dynamic of avoiding being prevailed upon. She might be seen as providing an instance of decision-making that can be the counterpoint of the first two cases discussed.

5.2.4 Budgeting

Related to decision-making is budgeting. The women's degree of control in terms of how to spend their money is clearly bounded. First, they did not have to consult their husband when it came to money allotted for family expenditures: food, children's clothes, school expenses, and others that had anything to do with the provision for the needs of the family. However, a few women reported feelings of discomfort when it came to buying items for

themselves. Some of the women, particularly those who were unemployed and were therefore completely dependent on their husband, said that the way they spent money was informed by the sense that 'it is not their money'. They absolutely had no problems spending for the needs of the family because it was not for them personally but really for the children. Also, they had a clear agreement with their husbands that their allotment (or monthly allowance) is for the maintenance of the family. Women were also therefore uneasy when neighbours or friends borrowed money from them particularly when it involved a fairly large sum. Second, major projects and purchases were made in consultation with the husband or when the husband was home to make the purchase himself. As Agnes explained, it was respect due her husband. One wife, however, defied this arrangement.

| Date | Mobile Number | Trace Number | Load Amount | Load Balance |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 7/24/09 | CALONG'S ALDTEE # 7,866.94 | | | |
| | - 500 thanksgiving offering | | | |
| | - 1500-1 sack rice | | | |
| | - 700 fuel oil bay KC | | | |
| | - 985-black shoes/sandals K&C | | | |
| | - 2000 smeldo L&L | | | |
| | - 700 shirt | | | |
| | - 235 briefs (3) | | | |
| | - 155 20pcs alaxan TK | | | |
| | - 75 eyemo | | | |
| | # 1,016.94 | | | |
| | - 480 (6-day gift Tikboy) | | | |
| 8/24/09 | # 13,704.63 | | | |
| | - 2,500 part. (gifts along Jimboy) | | | |
| | - 2,000 smeldo L&L | | | |
| | - 1,989.75 Ayala Life | | | |
| | # 7,214.88 | | | |
| 9/24/09 | # 13,478.45 | | | |
| | - 150 change oil tricycle | | | |
| | - 2000 smeldo L&L | | | |
| | - 1283.50 earring Amie Wicky | | | |
| | - 6000 anchor pendant along | | | |
| | - 2200 anchor pendant along | | | |
| | # 1774.95 | | | |
| 10/29/09 | # 13389.42 | | | |
| | - 14809 - 6-day Calot (Jollibee) | | | |
| | - 2500 - renewal Kinto | | | |
| | - 2000 - smeldo L&L | | | |
| | - 4000 - given to Tatang & Amie Perry | | | |
| | - 500 - 2 raincoat Tatang | | | |
| | # 10419.58 | | | |
| 11/24/09 | # 13,386.42 | | | |
| | - 9,500 part. along | | | |
| | - 120 SC online | | | |
| | - 2000 smeldo L&L | | | |
| | - 1500 1 sack rice | | | |
| | - 210 extra job | | | |
| | - 2000 Solmuy | | | |
| | - 1789.75 Ayala Life | | | |
| | # 2133.33 | | | |
| 12/23/09 | # 20,847.50 | | | |
| | - 7000 pig (swee) | | | |
| | - 1500 gift along | | | |
| | - 2000 smeldo L&L | | | |
| | - 10000 part. along | | | |
| | - 2000 part. along | | | |
| | # 2452.50 | | | |
| 1/27/10 | # 20,624.70 | | | |
| | - 90 - beach walk | | | |
| | - 155 alaxan paper | | | |
| | - 265 extra job along | | | |
| | - 88 small sum | | | |
| | - 2000 Amie Perry | | | |
| | - 2200 smeldo L&L | | | |
| 1/23/10 | 10000 part. along | | | |
| | - 1500 - part. along | | | |
| | # 4526.30 - 600 | | | |
| 2/26/10 | - 20666.15 | | | |
| part. 10/6/09 | - 20,000 - part. along | | | |
| | - 2200 smeldo L&L | | | |
| | - 1989.75 Ayala Life | | | |
| | # 3522.60 | | | |

Figure 5.1 A wife's record book

Marissa bought a motor bike without her husband's knowledge, a purchase that involved a considerable amount of money, one that in the eyes of her husband was unnecessary since she already owned a smaller one. It was money that the husband said, according to her, they could have added to what they already had to buy the lot of land they had been eyeing. The husband, according to her, felt bad that she had not waited for him to be back home before making the purchase. Although the motor bike indeed initially became a source of arguments, her husband eventually accepted it with the wife saying, 'what else can he do, it is there already' (ana pay ngarud maaramidanna, adda idtan), pointing at the motor bike. Marissa might have made the decision aware that if the husband knew, he would be most certainly against it, and with the calculation that with the deed done, her husband would eventually resign to it.

Women who were employed seemed to have more say in where money went and because they also contributed to the family coffers, did not feel frivolous if they bought items for themselves. However, once husbands had made up their mind about the purchase of something, there was very little that wives could do to change their mind. Rosario, for example, said that she vigorously objected, to no avail, to her husband's decision to buy a car because of the maintenance expenses involved which she said was like spending for a college education. Feminist analyses of the household indicate that how resources are allocated and who allocates them depend on cultural notions of gender (Busby 2000, p. 187). In the case of these seamen's wives, where in all but two were the men the main or sole earners, it is the combination of their masculine gender and the fact of them being the main providers that gives them more power. Although most of the women said that their husbands did not interfere with how they spent for the needs of the family, this tends to demonstrate the gendered association between the women and the responsibility for looking after the family. Two women who earned just as much as or more than their husbands did exercised considerably more control of and authority over the family's finances. My empirical data would thus suggest that another factor that informs the dynamic governing the management of resources is the level of direct financial contribution the women made to the family's finances.

5.3 ‘Nabatian’: Left Behind With Something⁴⁰

The long absences of their husbands have also placed almost all of the mothers in situations where they gave birth without them. Some women with three children never had their husbands around for most of their pregnancy and delivery. Their husbands came back only when their children were already five or six months old. In other cases, the children had had their first birthdays when they returned. In most instances, the husbands left shortly after the women got pregnant or a couple of months after giving birth. Ironically, the decision to leave shortly after the birth of a child was justified as being for the entire family’s welfare and future.

Wives were often left on their own to worry about their delivery. Money was an important concern. Leonora recounted how stressed she was worrying about the sufficiency of the money she had. Her last ultrasound had indicated she might require a caesarean delivery for which she did not have as yet the money. She explained that because her husband, who worked on a cruise ship, had sometimes not been paid promptly (there was sometimes, she said, a delay of two to three months), she borrowed from other people. Judith had gone to hospital for a check-up during her eighth month as she had wondered why she seemed to be passing water always. Once there, she was told she had to have a caesarean delivery as her water had ruptured and there was very little amniotic fluid left (‘awan danum a paglanglanguyan diay ubing’; literally, the child no longer had any liquid to swim in). At that time, she recounted, her only concern was the life of her child and it was only after the delivery that she got to think about how much she had to pay. Like the first wife, she had to source this money from other people.

After delivery, those who lived surrounded by their natal family and relatives were assured of abundant assistance and this eased the absence of the husband.

⁴⁰ ‘Nabatian’ was the women’s humorous way of referring to their getting pregnant during their husband’s leave. It plays on the word ‘nabati’ (left behind) and I translate it as ‘left behind with something’ to capture the sense in which they are not the actor but the recipient of an action done by another. ‘Impregnated’ would be another way to translate it, capturing the sense in which the women are semantically configured as passive vessels or receptacles.

Those who already had other children but who had no relatives of their own to rely on, paid for help for at most three months after delivery just so they could focus on their new baby. The absence of their husbands became more acute particularly because this absence had made it difficult for them to rely on their in-laws' help. Grace, whose in-laws did not volunteer their assistance, later on welcomed their unwillingness to help explaining that had they done so, she would have been in their debt. The experience of Gina, who had no relatives in San Gabriel and whose husband left only a week after giving birth gives us an idea of the practical difficulties arising from the absence of a husband:

Mahirap, yun pa nga na nanganak ka na wala yung kamag-anak mo, kapatid tsaka yung asawamo. Mahirap kahit gusto mong.. me gusto kang gawin, kainin. Di mo masabi sa kanila na kung nahihiya ka. Yung biyenanmo, mag-utoska di mo magawa. Iba talaga kung kamag-anakmo o asawamo.

[It's hard, you gave birth, without any of your family and husband. It's hard, you want to do something.. you want to eat something in particular. You can't tell them because you are not comfortable to. Your mother-in-law, ask her to do something for you, you can't do that. It is really different with your own family or husband.]

Wives did not only face practical concerns. Others had to deal with situations that involved more emotional and mental distress. Lilia, who gave birth to her two children both prematurely, said the delicate condition of her infants added to the things she had to deal with. Although these wives lived with their natal family around them, it was only human for them to desire the presence of their husbands. They longed for their comfort, like the wives who looked after unwell or seriously ill children.

It is clear that the departure and return of the women's husbands, and consequently, of the broad rhythms of their lives are dictated by economic imperatives. The welfare of the family was cited as the primary reason husbands did not take very long leaves. This, in turn, was linked to the availability of contracts which husbands feared they would lose if they did not yet go. Some wives appealed to their husbands to postpone their departure (even asking them to turn off or not answer their mobile phones when their

agency contacted them). The now shorter contracts of seafarers and the precariousness of job availability have therefore come to determine how much time their husbands can spend with their family without income. Husbands have to go, leaving behind wives to sort out on their own their deliveries and to deal with the additional work the birth of a(nother) child brings.

A number of the wives also faced emergencies and tragedies. Three suffered from flooding and had to evacuate and make their house liveable again. One suffered from fire gutting their residence and had to find a place to stay only to move again. She spoke about the difficulty of having any sense of stability and of the sense of security this stability brought about ('narigat ti agsimpa'). One suffered the death of a child eight hours after being born. Another had eclampsia. All throughout these trying times, their husbands were away and although the wives could rely upon family, relatives and friends, the task and burden of moving on were principally theirs. At the same time as assuring themselves and their children that they somehow will pull through, they also had to assure their husbands that although they were desperate for their presence, they should not worry too much. Indeed, the wives comforted their husbands even though they were the ones most in need of help and care. As the wife who lost her child recounted to me what she said to her husband when she told him of what had happened:

A ket awaten tayo a kunak met. Awantenta a nga isu ti kastana, isu ti talaga nga kastana. Wen a kunana met.

[Let us accept it, I said. Let us accept it is really her fate, it is what was meant to be. Yes we should, he said.]

One could also hear, in these comforting words, the wife saying this to herself while sharing her grief and pain with her husband. At the time of my interview with her, it had been more than six months since the loss of her child and her husband had not come back yet from the sea. He still had ten months left on what the wife said was a 24-month contract (12 months then extended for another 12 months). As tragic as it may seem, they have had to deal with their loss separated physically and only comforting each other through the mediation of mobile technology. At least for Alicia, the wife who fostered a child, her

husband was home when she had an operation for breast cancer. Her husband also stayed home for more than seven months to be with her for her chemotherapy but finally had to go because they had used up their money for her medical bills.

So far, my discussion of the experiences of the women might be said to denote a time and process when a ‘feminization of responsibility and obligation’ (Chant 2006) occurred.⁴¹ I use the phrase here to describe both the process in which one, the responsibility and task of raising and looking after a family becomes clearly and more intensely associated with women, and two, as a result of the first, some changes in gender practices occur and women see how their sense of self-efficacy, esteem, or agency has been positively affected. Below, I illustrate more clearly the second aspect of this process.

5.4 Doing A ‘Man’s Job’

Aside from making decisions on behalf of their husbands, wives also learned to do simple repair work and drive vehicles, which are not conventionally part of domestic work, which is, as Gutmann (1996, p. 149) has pointed out, ‘generally considered to encompass cooking, washing, cleaning, and child care’. The most common repairs they did were changing busted bulbs or fluorescent lamps, leaking faucets, and blocked sinks. Most of them had to learn to. Others learned because their husbands showed them how to so that they could do it when they were not around. Two said that they knew how to do these things even before marriage since, as one said, they were all-around women at home. Another wife who admitted not knowing how to cook and iron clothes prior to getting married not only learned to do them but also had become quite good at fixing faucets. She proudly asserted that as long as she had a ‘llave de tubo’, (wrench) she could do it. Two women mentioned climbing their roofs (these are two-

⁴¹ I am appropriating here a concept developed in the context of gender and development and which was intended by Chant (2006) as a reconceptualization of the relationship between women and poverty which she argues the earlier concept of ‘feminization of poverty’ can no longer adequately account for. In this regard, Sassen (2002) has also offered ‘feminization of survival’.

storey houses) to seal holes. One woman who cut down a tree recounted being asked by her elderly male neighbour if she was a man.⁴²

Many of the wives persevered to learn to drive (a car, small motorbike, tricycle) for very practical reasons. They would not have to rely on others to drive them to work or take their children to school. They also saw how useful it was during emergencies explaining that if they needed to go to the hospital, for example, they did not have to trouble others especially in unholy hours. It was especially useful for some as they lived in barangays that were not well-served by public tricycles, something I can attest to because of my own experience of interviewing there. Indeed, the woman I interviewed gave me a ride home, bringing with her two of her youngest children, fully aware that there was no other option especially given that there was a strong downpour, the first and signalling the end of summer and the beginning of the monsoon season. Two of the women had children who studied in another barangay which made transport an issue. With their mothers able to drive a tricycle, they saved money and time from not being dependent on public ones. The husband of one of three wives did not drive and they would go out with the wife driving the tricycle and with him sat in the sidecar. Neighbours, according to the wife, found the sight of them quite humorous with the husband, a former soldier who fought battles on Mindanao, not at all minding getting ribbed.

Learning to fix things was given an economic rationality by the wives. Rather than 'pay' (mangtandan) someone to do it, they might as well do it themselves even if it was not done that well. 'Isu pay', they said, referring to the money they could save from paying someone to do it. Others referred to the shame of asking someone else to do something (many can now say) as simple as changing a bulb or fixing a faucet. Indeed, being able to do these things gave the women a feeling of competence since they no longer needed others to do them. Doing the small repairs did not cause the women the sort of agony caused

⁴² Only one interviewee said she did not learn to do these things. If something needed doing, she had her retired father, who lived just across the street where she lived, to do it. Perhaps it was the ready availability of help that prevented her from having to rely on her own. Another wife, who lived with her mother- and siblings-in-law, was in charge only of her room. Most of the small repairs were done by her mother-in-law.

by disciplining children and looking after them when they were sick while their husbands were away. When we talked about these small repairs they could do, it was always something that made them laugh, something that made them feel good, and a little bit proud. A sense of accomplishment suffused the way they answered my questions which contrasted with the feeling of heaviness at being on their own to raise the children. Maintaining the house while their husbands were away did not take so much a toll on them because as they said, those they cannot do because beyond their ability, they can ask relatives or neighbours or simply pay a professional to do them. They did not worry that their husband might think they had been remiss of their duties since they also had an understanding that major repairs that could wait would be done when the husbands got back.

5.5 Liberating Surrender

Many of the wives explained that because their husbands were away most of the time, it was really the financial needs of the family that their husbands were responsible for. This was not to belittle their husbands. After all, the well-being of the entire family depended so much on the husband's hard-earned money and there was no doubt the wives appreciated this. What the wives wanted to underscore was the inseparability of the family's financial well-being from other aspects of raising and maintaining a family.

This might partly explain why the wives 'surrendered' responsibilities and tasks to their husbands when they returned. British seafarer wives have been reported to engage in emotional work (such as downplaying their competence) to accommodate their husbands' sense of role displacement (Thomas and Bailey 2006). In contrast, the wives in my study simply wanted a break from having to maintain the house and their household. Wives gladly had bulbs replaced and faucets fixed by their husbands not to massage their egos by making them useful in the house and therefore their presence appreciated. However, there is a strategic reason why wives, for example, left their husbands to look after the children, to do the budgeting, purchase of food and other provisions, and oftentimes cooking. The wives explained that it was so that their husbands

would come to appreciate how difficult it was and is to be left behind with so much responsibility (see also Asis *et al.* 2004). Becoming a single parent not only ‘impose[d] heavy burdens and feelings of obligation and inadequacy’ (Lewin 1997, p. 206) but also entailed a lot of physical and emotional work. Women unburdened themselves and gave themselves a short break from a ‘role overload’ (Arendell 2000). Such unburdening, as will be discussed in the next chapter, was strategic. Wives wanted their husbands to know what it was like to be made to think (*agpanunot*) and to know (*makaammo*) about practically everything. As will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, this is one way by which women initiated and negotiated changes in gender practices with their husbands. Although women did not talk about whether and how their husbands initially resisted such adjustments to how things were done at home, the fact is that this strategy worked.

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has focused on that part of the women’s lives when their husbands were away. All of the women have had to face their own difficulties. The younger wives with only a few years of experience of the life characteristic of migrant workers, specifically seamen, are only beginning to get used to it. A number of them said that it is difficult being married to a seaman referring to the separation involved. But a more accurate perspective was provided by one of my older interviewees, Lourdes, whose husband was a land-based migrant worker first before becoming a seaman. She said that in the seven years her husband worked in Saudi Arabia, he only came home thrice for one month each time. As a seaman, he can now be with them for at least two months every year. Those whose husbands have been going to sea for many years have gotten used to the life and have developed the self-efficacy to confidently deal with difficulties. As Luisa said:

Ket daydiay kaawanna, ania man nga daytay.. siyempre awan met isuna nga pagsanggirak, aglalo no adda ubrak nga problemami koma, nga daytay makayam nga itakder uray awan isuna. Mas lalo ka nga tumibay ata dayta ngarud nasursurom ti tumakder iti bukodmo nga saka.

(Because of his absence, whatever it is.. because he is not here for me to lean on especially when we have problems I have to face, I have become capable of carrying them without him. You become stronger and that is because you learn to stand on your own feet.)

However, it is important to bear in mind that being used to does not mean being immune to the sorrows of life. Women take things in perspective and learn to rationalize things. As Mildred said:

Maitedna diay financial needs ngem narigat latta met. Haan met lang nga didiay ti kailangan kasi attention na met ti familyna ti kailangan koma. Kailangan daydiay ngamin trabahona, kaya no choice.

[He can provide for our financial needs but it is still difficult. That is not the only thing we need because we also need his attention. But because that is the nature of his job, so there is no choice.]

In their husband's absence, the women had to develop resilience and tenacity, and be pragmatic: with their husband's income, they could at least afford their child's hospitalization and afford to send them to better schools. In many ways, it might be said that the contribution of the husband is his absence, or migration. His presence is made felt by his absence, an absence that enables him to provide for the family. And it is the women's bearing up that comprises part of their contribution. Without them being able to do this, the benefits of migration cannot be fully enjoyed. Wives mentioned how 'unreachable' their husbands were, that is, that they could not speak to them right away as communication was dependent on the availability of signal. Nevertheless, as will be shown in chapter 7, although women sought the presence of their husbands when their children were seriously ill, most of them did not tell their husbands of such things unless necessary.

Their husband's absences were times when women expanded the spaces and boundaries of their roles and responsibilities. Only eight of the women I interviewed were in full-time employment and this might be seen as binding them more inextricably with the domestic sphere. This is not entirely wrong but the absence of their husband also provided them with a different context within

which gender was done. Almost twenty of those unemployed combined their full-time mothering with some form of income-generating activity thus also requiring us to problematize the link between these women and the domestic. In other words, we need to be more specific with the nature of this link. This chapter has sought to delineate the ambiguities, ambivalences, and tensions that attended and characterized the women's exercise of power and authority. This was particularly shown in my discussion of decision-making which highlighted how circumscribed it was.

I have provided in this chapter a description of the broad picture of what it was like when seamen's wives were 'on their own', when they became 'a single parent', when becoming a father became part of being the wife of a seaman. This has helped to identify, and so anticipate, a number of the themes pursued in succeeding chapters such as communication, housing and autonomy, how women dealt with loneliness and longing, and their embeddedness in ties of relatedness, to mention a few. I have thus provided in this chapter a useful context within which to appreciate the women's accounts that reveal the specific ways they moved through space and time and how their sense of self was shaped in this movement. I paid attention not to the day-to-day activities of the wives but on those aspects, which when they happened, revealed the complexities and tensions that characterized the life of a 'nabati' (left behind) and a 'nabatian' (left-behind with something).

These experiences were times measured not in days, hours, and minutes. Rather, they are what might best be called as episodes or moments. It is not every day that a child falls ill or is hospitalized, or someone is asked to decide on the life course of a brother-in-law. These might be called the times of *when*, when these wives' aloneness became most felt: when disciplining children became difficult, when children fell ill, when decisions had to be made, when they had to deal with emergencies and life tragedies without the comfort of their husbands. In short, in those times when wives had to think, act, and do on their own, or on behalf of and for their husbands. If identities are linked to what people do and if gender is bound up with material practices of doing and with the contexts in which these doings occur (see, for example, Sullivan 2004; West

and Zimmerman 1987), then these women might be said to redefine their identities and their sense of agency through those additional roles and responsibilities they had to do, some of which conflicted with their more 'conventional' ones.

Tensions attend the women's efforts to negotiate the consequences of their husband's absence. Although it affords possibilities to redefine the dynamic of gender and power between husband and wife, there are gender practices that remain recalcitrant, and that is because they are frequently justified by the husband's being in most of the cases, the sole or main earner. Some practices are problematized and redefined, but in other aspects, they 'more often than not fail to conform to the institutional reorganization of families' brought about by the migration of their husbands in which case 'gender remains stubbornly conventional' (Parrenas 2005, p. 166). But the real potential lies in negotiating 'gender constraints' (Parrenas 2008a) so that while some practices might persist, others might be changed not only out of necessity but also out of a re-examination of what practices might define what it means to be a woman and to be a man. I introduced this process of negotiation in the section on 'liberating surrender' and I will explore the ways by which women have negotiated constraints in the succeeding chapters. My strategy is to embed this exploration within the various temporal and spatial locations of the women so that we see how they have materially and creatively dealt with the various challenges posed by the absence-presence of their husbands. I begin this in the next chapter with an examination of the temporal organization of domestic life.

Chapter 6

THE TEMPORAL ORGANIZATION OF FAMILY LIFE

In the last chapter, I focused on the responsibilities the women faced in order to sustain the family less on a day-to-day basis or regularity but rather on those that happened on a longer-term time continuum. This chapter picks up from it and examines this aspect of maintaining the family which the wives did and continue to do on a daily or regular basis. However, although the focus of this examination of the temporal organization of family life is on the everyday and routine activities, it is done in the context of the ‘timeframes’ (Adam 1995; Nowotny 1994) in which these activities and their doing occur, namely when husbands are away and when husbands are home. Between the two exists a transition period, one that is most linked to the departure once again of the husband and is a period of time dominated by ‘emotional work’ (Hochschild 1983). These timeframes shape the script and rhythm of life of these families and therefore may be said to shape their family temporal order, one which, following Eviatar Zerubavel (1985a, p. 2), ‘regulates the structure and dynamics’ of family life.⁴³

The chapter is divided into four parts. The first provides a brief theoretical contextualization of the analysis I wish to provide here. The three remaining sections correspond to the timeframes—when husbands are away and when husbands are home, and the transition period—when husbands depart again (which essentially frames the two and therefore may also be considered a timeframe). Each of these three parts covers tasks and activities, whether involving physical or emotional work, that constitute the everyday life of the families and that comprise the work of sustaining and maintaining the family.

⁴³ The phraseology borrows from Zerubavel (1985a, p. 2) who writes of a sociotemporal order which ‘regulates the structure and dynamics of social life’. See also Zerubavel (1979) and Southerton (2006).

These three parts also consider those ‘routines’ that do not happen on a daily, weekly, or even monthly regularity but which, because they happen repeatedly and regularly in the course of the seamen’s career (and which therefore come to be seen by the wives as part of the routine of their lives) nevertheless shape the structure, cycle and rhythmicity of the lives of families dependent on seamen.⁴⁴

6.1 The Domestic Organization of Temporality

It has been noted that much less attention has been given to the temporal organization of the home than waged work. Where work has dealt with temporalities of home, they have been examined in relation to work temporalities and to the tension that underlies the two (e.g. Nansen *et al.* 2009), a tension that has helped to give rise to the conflicted relationship between women and time (Forman 1989; Nowotny 1994) particularly in Western industrialized societies where the increasing incorporation of women into paid work has not been accompanied by changes in traditional gender ideology that assigns to women the ‘second shift’ (Hochschild 1989), the housework that needs to be done to reproduce family life (Brown 1982). Although changes in the division of housework have been documented, women continue to do more or most of the housework and care work (Craig 2006; Maher 2009; Pesquera 1997). Moreover, these tensions have been examined in the context of couple relationships, predominantly heterosexual, in which both husband and wife go home to a house on a daily, or some sort of a frequent, regularity and where there is a gendered division of domestic labour. Where both husband and wife work, it has been documented that housework, for the most part, has remained the preserve of women (e.g. Hochschild 1989). As Silva (2002, p. 179) has written, ‘[e]veryday life generally means the taken-for-granted continuum of the most mundane activities, and it has been strongly identified with women, because it has been linked with repetition and routine’. This link between the everyday with a particular gender has been problematized (e.g. Davies 1990;

⁴⁴ Here it is helpful to define rhythmicity. Zerubavel (1985a, p. 9) refers to it merely as the recurrence of activity patterns. I am partial to Barbara Adam (1988, p. 89) who explains that it ‘entails cycles, structure, and processes with variation’. Adam’s conceptualization of rhythmicity is an attempt to provide an alternative to Anthony Giddens’s notion of repetition that allows for ‘reversible time’.

Hochschild 1989, 1997, 2003; Silva 2002; Smith 1987) as has the division of household work in the family (e.g. Craig 2006; Hartmann 1981; Wall and Arnold 2007). Arlie Hochschild (1989, 1997) has provided insightful discussion of gender ideologies and gender strategies that underpin the division of housework (or homework), as well as the 'economy of gratitude' that informs and shapes this dynamic.

The particular case of seamen's wives affords a different perspective into the tension between waged work and homework, and the organization and division of domestic work. In contrast to couples who live together, women married to seamen live without their husbands for periods much longer than they with them (see also Swift 2010). Hence, the link between women and routine, housework, and caring for families is strengthened. Because their husbands are away, there is a sense in which the everyday is feminised. However, as I showed in the previous chapter, women are also 'masculinized' when they do tasks their husbands would normally do. Moreover, as will be shown later, because of the regularity or intermittence of husband absence, the cyclicity of departure/absence and return/presence contributes to a dynamic of sharing homework characterized by flexible gender-crossing. Finally, in contrast to work-family life patterns of Western, industrialized and highly urbanized countries or societies, the temporalities of lives of women I present here obtain in a rural or agrarian society but which, however, are wedded not only to the rhythms of a highly globalized shipping industry but also to one with a history of international migration.

Temporalities and rhythms of homework are linked to wider socio-economic developments (Brown 1982; Hochschild 1989, 1997; Silva 2002; Smith 1987; Sullivan 2004). The routine of seafarer wives may be said to be linked to the flow of goods and capital around the globe. The rhythmicity of their life is a manifestation of, a means of dealing and a way of living with, this global flow which the work of their husbands helps to keep in motion (cf. Lefebvre 2004) and upon which their lives depend. Their adjusting to the temporal and spatial dislocations brought about by their husband's work has meant their establishing

order within the domestic realm, an order that relies on and embeds ‘gendered ideologies and strategies’ (Hochschild 1989) as well as practices and kin-social relationships. What is notable with the domestic order the wives (and their husbands, too) put in place over time is its ability to accommodate the ‘disruptions’ caused by the husband. Indeed, it may even be said that, because this order was put in place precisely to deal with the cyclicity of their husband’s absence-presence, it is built on both order and disruption. Disruption and a corresponding adjustment punctuate and rhythm their domestic temporality. This order is thus time-bound, that is, it works through this absence-presence timeframe. Yet, as I will show below, there is also a limit to the ‘disruption’ that wives can accommodate, a limitation determined both by economic and emotional considerations.

This order is achieved and works through the routines of the wives. To a large extent, how the wives organize their everyday lives depends on routine (cf. Silva 2002; van den Broek *et al.* 2002). Their routine helps them get a handle on their responsibilities just as these responsibilities help structure their routine. Thus, wives organize their lives but at the same time (the realities of) their lives organize them, too. Stage in the life course is an important factor. For example, wives with school-going children have a set of responsibilities and do a set of corresponding life-sustaining socio-material practices that organize and structure their lives, and which distinguish theirs, for example, from that of those with adult children.

These activities are done at particular times. There is thus temporality in action, that is, action implies a time element (Adam 1988, 1995; Pertierra 1997). And these actions are done in specific places. Time, then, has a topological dimension and ‘times and spaces are mutually produced through socio-material practices’ (Nansen *et al.* 2009, p. 184; also Davies 1990; Silva 2002).⁴⁵ These

⁴⁵ Zerubavel (1985a, p. 142) proposes a view that considers ‘territoriality’ in time by which he means ‘a temporally defined *niche of inaccessibility*’ (emphasis in original). For seamen’s wives, ‘territoriality’ would have to be redefined as their taking charge of responsibilities and tasks while their husband is gone. It is therefore both spatial and temporal but its spatiality refers more to domains of responsibilities than to the physical geographies of tasks and responsibilities. My concern hence is on the territoriality and not on the inaccessibility. See also Davies’ (1990, p. 42) critique of Zerubavel.

practices themselves have to be considered in ‘contexts’ of temporality. Lewis and Weigart (1990, p. 83) have identified institutional and cultural structures of social time. They give the school as an example of a social institution that helps to structure time. Attending mass on Sundays would be an example of the cultural structuring of time. We will see later how the routines of the wives are determined by or follow these institutional and cultural contexts. I would like, however, to add a domestic context to the constitution of time, a context from which the institutional and cultural cannot be separated. Both are bound up with the domestic and may even be seen as extensions of the domestic.

Lewis and Weigart (1990, p. 84) have written that three cycles ‘organise social time into smaller and larger temporally embedded structures’: daily, weekly, and yearly (see also Zerubavel 1979). These cycles provide people with meaningful ways of making sense of, marking off, and reckoning (the passage of) time. Routines of work and activities associated with school and church are ways by which the seamen’s families experience, inhabit, and live time. ‘School’ is Monday to Friday and thus has a daily regularity. ‘Church’ is Sunday (at least for Roman Catholics and other Christian groups) and hence marks time weekly.⁴⁶ The wives’ routines may therefore be seen within social time cycles (daily, weekly) and within temporality contexts (domestic, institutional, cultural). The routines of wives (and in many ways, of the family), which are structured by temporality contexts, are important not only because they are the means by which wives structure time. Routines also embed the wives in spaces or domains of responsibilities as well as in kin and other social relationships especially during their husband’s absence. These routines enable us to locate these wives in spacetime since they show wives organizing and acting within the sociotemporal order (for example, the time structure imposed by schools and churches) even as this order organizes their domestic life.

⁴⁶ The yearly cycle is, however, less useful for the seamen’s wives for although they, too, mark time in years, it is their husband’s cycle of absence and presence, of departure and return that frames more their experience of longer periods of time, those that have more duration. Years are marked by either the presence or absence of their husbands which do not necessarily coincide with a January-to-December reckoning of the year or to its reckoning into twelve months.

6.2 The Script of Life: When Husbands are Away

In this section I look at routines of work, housework, childcare, and leisure following Silva's (2002) categories of routines. Not all of these routines apply to all the women as the majority of them, for example, were not in paid employment. Only eight of 40 women interviewed were in waged work. A number of them had some form of business or economic activity that brought in some income and in most cases was secondary to their childcare and housework. Four did not have children. The use of these four categories is heuristic and is not meant to suggest that there are clear cut delineations between them nor that they can be compartmentalized as such. As I will show specifically in the case of mothers who had young children, these routines were intermingled and how and when they were done can be characterized by the notion of 'meanwhile', that is, these mothers would be doing tasks simultaneously.

For the four women who did not have children, this ready source of work and meaning was missing.⁴⁷ These four wives then needed to find things to do to fill and structure their time so it did not become drawn out but also to make sure that what they did provided 'ontological security' (Giddens 1990). It is to these women's routines or attempts to have routines that we next turn.

6.2.1 Routines of Women without Children

Of the four women with no children, only one was employed. Her work, which was from Monday to Saturday, at least relieved her of finding something to occupy her. She did not have plenty of housework to do since she lived with her husband's mother and three grown-up siblings. Not having much else to do, she brought home work from the office because although she watched television, played music or electronic games in the evening, she found them to be inadequate distraction ('dibersyon': diversion). Sunday was time for her to go

⁴⁷ They all wanted to have children with one saying that she is saddened that she will never have a child of her own as her husband who is twice her age was treated of a medical condition leaving him unable to produce an offspring which then left her worried that no one is going to look after her when she is old. Becoming a mother was this wife's base of her 'ontological security' (Giddens 1990).

to Mass and to visit and have lunch with her natal family who lived in another village. She shared that her husband had actually asked her to quit her job but negotiated to continue working convincing her husband that it would be very difficult for her when he is away especially because she did not have a child to whom she could devote her time and attention.

This was precisely the challenge for the three other women particularly for two who had no responsibilities for extended members of her or her husband's family. One lived alone in her husband's family house while the other lived with her natal family. The former did not have much to do because she cooked only for herself, washed only her clothes and cleaned a house that was never messed up. The latter wife did not have much to do because there were many of them who shared the housework. Despite this, they said that they still got up early. The last of the childless-unemployed wives looked after her husband's elderly parents. At least for her, she had caring work that partly occupied her. Her routine was based around the needs of her parents-in-law. She cooked three meals a day, washed clothes other than hers, and regularly administered her in-laws' medication.⁴⁸ According to them, no one ventured far from the house for the sole purpose of entertaining themselves. Their outside activity consisted mostly of going out for chats with neighbours.

The wife who lived on her own teamed up with another seaman's wife who had two young children to make and sell food items. The one who lived with her natal family sold Avon products. The last tended a *sari-sari* store (a small store that sold a variety of food, cooking, and cleaning items).⁴⁹ The demand for their 'work', however, was not constant. It depended on the amount of orders, for example, the wives who sold food items got. There was thus an ebb and flow in

⁴⁸ My focus here is on what women did and what served as the conditions of possibility for this work. I will not comment on the dynamics and relations of power that underpin this particular wife's chores for her in-laws. Suffice it to say that because of her caring responsibility for them, she has had very little chance to visit her own family who lived in another province, something that she should be able to do more easily inasmuch as she does not have children.

⁴⁹ The three women explained that aside from providing them with something to do, they also made a modest income which they claimed was the fruit of their own labour ('bukodmo a nagbannogan'). For these three women, the work which they originally intended to occupy themselves, something that relieved them of boredom, also became a sort of work that generated a return they did not simply call 'profit' (*ganansiya*) but rather as income (*sapul*), effectively also framing it within ideas of work.

the demands on their time and because their work was on a demand basis, it did not provide a consistent structure to their time. Nevertheless, it gave them something to do.

6.2.2 Routines of Mothers in Paid Work

The eight mothers in paid employment depended on others to do the housework or care work for them. Two relied on paid helpers and the rest on their mothers and other members of their own families. In other words, for most of these women, kin relations made it possible for them to become both mothers and workers at the same time. Such reliance on them deepened and strengthened ties of dependence, indebtedness, and reciprocity. However, they still helped particularly with looking after children before and after work. Six of the mothers had school-going children and were involved in getting them ready in the morning. They did not, however, prepare their children's breakfast. For most of these working mothers, their paid work day began at 8 o'clock. The teachers', however, began at 7:15 (their school time-in). Classes began at 7:45. Four of the mothers went home for lunch from 12-1 pm which gave them a little bit of time with their children who also went home for lunch. In the case of the mother whose son was only two years old, her lunch break was also a time to check on him. For reasons mainly of distance and/or money, the other three mothers had lunch where they worked.

Because they relied on others to do the housework and much of the day-to-day activities that sustained the family, the work of mothers, particularly those who employed helpers, consisted of supervision, which is to say that their work consisted of making sure that things were done and were done properly. For those who relied on mothers and other members of their own family, there was more trust and confidence (*kumpiansa*) that their children would be properly looked after and hence lessened this task. Both sets of mothers were involved in childcare and some form of housework (like helping prepare the evening meal) only after five pm when they finished work. Helping do housework, however, was these wives' prerogative. The mother whose son was not yet in school took

over looking after him once she got home from work and left the housework to her helper. The others said that, because they recognized how difficult it was to both look after children and do housework at the same time, they did whatever they could or what was there left to do. One task that mothers did not pass on to their helpers was taking their children to a doctor when they were ill. Also, most of the mothers felt that helping their children with school work was their job. And this would be done after the evening meal but prior to the family watching television, which mostly comprised the family's time together during the weekdays. When their children went to sleep, these mothers either read, watched more television, and, for the three who were public (meaning government) school teachers, corrected the work of their pupils or prepared for their lessons the following day.

It is clear that most of these mothers did not face any conflicts between being able to pursue paid work and raising a family at the same time precisely because they had other people to take over housework and care work. For many of them, they did not have to face the dilemmas of 'care deficit' encountered by working mothers in advanced industrialized societies who employ 'speed up' and 'cut backs' (see, for example, Hochschild 1989). However, the pursuit of other work- or career-related activities such as postgraduate study as in the case of two mothers (see section 6.2.5 below) undoubtedly ate into the attention they could give their children. This was attention that their helpers or mothers could not do, or do just as well as they could.

6.2.3 Routines of Unemployed Mothers with Young Children

Unlike mothers in paid work, those who were not employed could devote their time and attention to housework and care work. Nevertheless, many of them still depended on the help of their families with whom they lived (and who also depended on them financially) or on paid help. This was especially the case for mothers who had both very young children and school-going ones. However, there were a number of wives who neither had family nor paid help but still

managed to do these responsibilities. In this section, therefore, I look at the routines of mothers who had family and/or paid help and those who had neither.

6.2.3.1 Unemployed Mothers with Family and/or Paid Help

For unemployed mothers with family or paid help to rely on, their day either began with preparing breakfast for their children or, for those with school-going children, getting them ready which always included a morning shower. For those who prepared their children for school, either their mother or paid help prepared breakfast. Because school started at 7:45 for children (they attend a flag raising ceremony every day at 7:30), mothers said that they got up no later than six a.m. This gave them enough time to take their children to school depending on how far and accessible the school is.

Mothers who had young children other than their school-going ones would leave their younger children to either their mothers or paid help in order for them to be able to take those going to school. For one wife who had paid help, it was her father-in-law (who lived in another village some distance away) who took her son to school. She would then look after her other child while her helper did most of the housework. Most of the mothers who took their children to school went home immediately to do a combination of care work and housework. To be sure, some of the housework would be done by their family members or paid help or did the work themselves while their other child or children were looked after. Work included washing clothes, cleaning the house, preparing lunch. One wife took their goats to graze. Mothers who relied on paid help had much less housework to do than those who lived with their mothers. Housework was fitted around their school-going children's schedule. Lunch should be ready or be almost ready by the time the mothers picked up their children for lunch break at around 11:30. Children are taken back to school for the 1:00 p.m. resumption and picked up again by four in the afternoon. In between, wives did whatever was there to do: looked after their other children, watched television, ironed clothes, had siesta or rested, went for a chat with neighbours or relatives.

Mothers who had no children to look after other than the one going to school waited for their child in school. For them, this time spent waiting for their children to finish was time to socialize with other mothers. Many of the wives considered this time important not only because they could at least be out of their house but also because they were able to meet other people and even make good friends with some of them. This time was considered 'relaxing' as wives not only shared gossip and jokes but also got to talk about their problems or situation in a way that was light and with other women they considered sympathetic to them. They said that some of the mothers also had migrant husbands.

Some mothers, however, had a more complicated situation. One case will illustrate this. Jennifer had two children who attended two different schools. Her older son went to a school in the capital city while her daughter attended a preparatory school in the village where she lived near her in-laws. Her son started at seven in the morning and finished at 3:30 in the afternoon while her daughter started at one in the afternoon and finished at 3:00. Her mother-in-law would go to her house by six in the morning when she took her son to school. Her mother-in-law picked up her daughter to be looked after at her in-law's house. Jennifer would then stay at her son's school till 11:30 as she would then have to be home in time for her daughter to go to prep school. Her brother-in-law, when available, would pick her son up from school. If not, she had her daughter picked up by somebody else and looked after while she picked her son up. She would then drop by her in-law's house to get her daughter and head home with both children. Now that both attend the same school in the capital city, things have become more manageable for her.

Without any paid helper, Jennifer began her day at 4 o'clock a.m. She prepared her children's breakfast (which they will eat in school upon arriving) and lunch, washed clothes, and cleaned the house. All of these were done before she woke her children up at 5:30. She gave them a shower, dressed them, and took them to school. A tricycle picked them up at 6 a.m., an arrangement she had made in

advance, for the 10 or so kilometre trip to her children's school. They are there before seven.

6.2.3.2 Unemployed Mothers Who Were on Their Own

Unemployed mothers who did not have a paid helper or their own family to rely on for help were logically the busiest of all mothers in terms of the housework and care work they did. The way they did homework and care work involved time elasticity and time deepening (Roberts 2002). Most of them described doing several things at the same time (time deepening) and did these tasks in a more quickened manner (time elasticity). They also got work done while their children were still asleep because by the time their children awoke, they would not have time to do them anymore. Their children waking up meant that it was time to do another set of routine or tasks. A mother who had to take children to school but who also had a younger one to look after managed to do both by bringing the whole brood with her. She eventually transferred her children to a school nearer to where she lived to make her school trips easier and in fact also learned to drive a tricycle.

A mother who also farmed and raised pigs organized her day according to her children's school schedule and to the intensity of the sun's heat, that is, she did her farming activities when the heat was at its most tolerable. This meant preparing packed lunch for her children because as she explained, picking her children up from school for lunch wasted a lot of time. It meant that she would have to stop doing her other tasks at around ten to prepare lunch and then for her to pick her children up at around 11:30 and then take them to school again before one p.m. For her, this got in the way of her farm work since the best time to do it was in the morning. This also meant getting up early to prepare breakfast, wash clothes and feed her pigs so that by the time she came back home from taking her children to school, she would have done some of the work that comprised her daily routine. She could then go to the fields before it became too hot.

What characterized the activities of these women was what could be said as the maximization of time and opportunities. This could be seen in how all of the mothers talked about doing at least two things at the same time and trying to do things while their children were still asleep. For many of these mothers, training their children to be able to do things on their own was an important component of their strategy for making their work more manageable. Being able to lessen their work on one child enabled them to devote more time to a younger one who needed more constant care, for example. Some mothers who had teen-aged children, especially daughters, were able to rely on them to help in housework or in looking after the younger ones. This was particularly the case in the afternoons when the children would have come home from school when mothers would be busy again preparing supper, and on weekends when they, for example washed clothes. The presence of the older children would offer the younger ones company so that mothers could at least just have one work to focus on and not multi-task.

6.2.4 After-School Routine

After school, most of the mothers allowed their children to watch television to rest. Some of them watched with their children. Others allowed their children to play outside the house. Thereafter, they or their helper prepared the evening meal, had supper, helped their children with their lessons or school work, and got them to bed. Some said that they watched some more television before retiring. For most of these mothers, television viewing by the children during school days was minimal. The children, however, were allowed to watch more television during weekends which the mothers considered as the family's time to relax and bond.

Roberts (2002, p. 176) has argued that home-based leisure particularly watching television 'operates as a time buffer' which can be 'squeezed when hours of work lengthen, thus preserving people's priority uses of leisure'. However, watching television, specifically when mothers used it to occupy their children was put to other strategic uses. The television performed a function of 'time

deepening' (Roberts 2002, p. 177). In the case of one wife, for example, letting her children watch television after picking them up from school constituted rest time and entertainment for the children even as it simultaneously gave her time to prepare the evening meal. She would also spend time watching with them and so turned watching into family time. The television was also therefore something used to get other things done. Multi-tasking was aided by this appliance. It was both media (something done to relax) and something through which other tasks were done. To many of the wives I interviewed, television viewing composed a significant amount of family bonding time. But this 'family time' was not exclusively leisure time since mothers were also simultaneously doing a number of tasks: homework, care work, and leisure demonstrating how these tasks were interwoven by the wives. There was, in other words, a 'temporal integration of the multiplicity of tasks' (Gluckmann (2000, p. 114).

6.2.5 Weekend Routine

Weekends for most of the mothers represented a different tempo and pace of life. It was experienced generally as a time when both mothers and children relaxed. They did not have to wake up before six in the morning. They did not have to eat early. They did not have to take a shower in the morning. Weekends were not 'school time'. Most of their day consisted of family time by which they meant they ate together, watched television after lunch, had siesta, watched more television and then had dinner. Weekends were also a time when working mothers contributed to housework. It, however, consisted predominantly of going to the town's 'tiendaan' (market) for food.

For two mothers, however, Saturday was devoted to another aspect of their working lives, which is the pursuit of a master's degree. Both were studying part-time and although they did it only on Saturdays, this meant that their weekdays also included researching, reading, writing, and occasionally preparing for presentations. Both admitted that their studies took away practically the whole Saturday away from their children and shared that their

children often commented on their absence. Although they felt guilty, they justified it as the only way for them to rise up in rank and so receive a higher salary. They explained that given how teachers are appallingly paid low, such an increase would be most welcome.⁵⁰ Moreover, they claimed that it was part of their commitment to teaching. They considered doing the masters as part of their continuing education. The consequence, however, was that they had not been able to attend to the educational needs of their own children. One mother felt ashamed that her son lagged behind in class when the social expectation was that as the son of a teacher, he should be among the better ones. The other hired a private tutor to help her children with their school work. During the summer break, she left her children with some work to do which she then checked when she got back from school. She also left for her sons written instructions tacked on walls on how long they can play on the computer.⁵¹

Sunday was a day reserved for Mass (for Roman Catholics) or fellowship (for Baptists and other Christian groups) and was a time when the whole family went out together. For these mothers, going to church was important because it was time the family used to thank God for His blessings and time to pray for their husbands. Sunday was also a time mothers used to instruct children to remember their own father in prayer. These activities were a marker of the weekly reckoning of social time and although wives allocated Sunday as primarily a day for the Lord, this 'day' was only actually as long as the Mass lasted. The observance of a specifically delimited 'sacred time' (Zerubavel 1985a; also Zerubavel 1985b) represented by the practice of mass or fellowship exists alongside or is followed immediately by practices of 'profane time'. What wives marked, then, is a time especially devoted to God whose goodness and protection they acknowledged and sought. The fact that church service was the first they did registers this priority and importance and only when this had been observed did the families then proceed to their more worldly concerns. Right after attending mass the family then made use of the rest of the day to do

⁵⁰ Government or public school teachers are paid a starting monthly salary of around 14, 000 pesos, roughly equivalent to £200 at an exchange rate of 70 pesos to one British pound.

⁵¹ As a head teacher, that is, as head of a department, she was required to report for work even during the school summer break although her time was more flexible.

groceries, eat a meal together at a fast food establishment, and at least for one wife, whenever possible, having video communication with her husband, an internet-enabled facility she did not have in her own house. Sunday, therefore, did not signify a strictly ‘sacred time’ but rather constituted the ‘devotional rhythm’ (Sillars 2010) of the family.

6.2.6 Routine: Everyday Time and Life Time

There is a sense, particularly among mothers who were on their own, in which routine is cumulative (Adam 1995; Davies 1990; Maher 2009) and has a future orientation to it. Routine accordingly is not just repetitive, the boring and mindless kind or one associated with the ‘commodified rationalized clock time of employment relations’ (Adam *ibid.*, p. 95). Acts of bathing, feeding children, for example, though repetitive are actually geared towards physical development, growing up and maturing. As children grow, they are expected to be able to care for themselves, if not for their siblings.

Marunong nang mag-isa, basta pagsasabihan lang. Kung dumating, ‘magbihis ka na ng damit’ pagdating galing sa school. Tinuturuan ko na lang sila para hindi naman ako mahirapan.

[. . .]

Basta sasabihin ko lang. O mag-tooth brush ka, mag-bimpo ka, mag-shampoo ka, mag-sabon ka. Pag makita kong di ayos, pabalikin ko uli.

[He can now be on his own, I just give him instructions. When he comes home from school, ‘change clothes’. I train them so it is not too hard on me.

I just tell him. Brush your teeth, use a face towel, shampoo your hair, wash your body with soap. If I see that he has not done it properly, I make him do it again.]

This repetitiveness is training geared towards independence. It demonstrates that the doing of chores, for example, is not simply about getting those chores done. They are inextricably bound up with other rhythms of life: becoming old enough to do certain things, becoming responsible. There is hence a pedagogic

dimension woven into these daily rhythms of life. For many of the mothers, they did not only have tasks to do but also that there was meaning to what they were doing. Children were not only a source of 'work' or responsibility which in turn structured their routine, but also that there was a corporeal embodiment of the temporal trajectory of their work. One mother with four sons (three of whom became seamen themselves) and one daughter credited her routine of prayer and church service as having played a critical part in the upbringing of her children. She explained that her children growing up in the word of God ('gapu iti pannakangngegda iti sao ti Apo') helped her in no small measure in instilling in them discipline. She is convinced that had it not been for her faith that included prayer and fellowship in their daily and weekly routines, not only would raising five children have been so much more difficult but also that her four sons could have taken life paths different from what they actually have.

The homework and care work invested into these 'maternal times' (Adam 1995, p. 95) linked everyday time with the life time (see also Chaplin 2002). On some occasions, children were a source of wise counsel and comfort. One wife shared of how her children, especially her 13-year old daughter would help her deal with her worrying when her husband had not yet called:

Apay ngata haan met la tumawagen ket adda koma inta kastoyen kunak nukua. Awan pay tawagna kunak nukua kadagita ubbing, di pay timmawag ni papayo ket adda koma isuna iti kastoyen ket, apay awan pay ti tawagna? Ibagada met nukuan, baka naperdianda mamang. Baka haanda nakaruar mamang kunada nukua. (18)

['Why hasn't he called yet when he is supposed to be already there?' I say. He [her husband] hasn't called I tell my children, your father hasn't called when he is supposed to be there already, why hasn't he called yet? And they tell me, may be they needed to repair something, mama. May be they weren't able to go out of the ship, mama they would say.]

6.2.7 Leisure: A Risky Business

For married women, especially mothers, leisure is a problematic concept (Davies 2001; Forman 1989). Messner, for example, has noted that 'women's time spent in visiting, parties, outings, or watching television is certain to

contain some obvious work, in preparing, serving, and putting away dishes'. He concludes that much of this "free time" is also *work*' (quoted in Forman 1989, p.3, emphasis in original). Messner points to the work inherent and involved in these leisure activities and I point to similar observations in the section discussing how mothers used television watching as medium for doing other things. Here in this discussion of the wives' leisure activities, my attention is on how women transformed work into leisure.

Relaxation, for most of the women was housebound or linked to their work of sustaining family life. There was a tendency for the wives to pursue 'privatized' forms of entertainment. There was the redoubtable television. For a very few others, there was the karaoke-videoke set which allowed them to sing and entertain themselves in the privacy of their homes. Women also chatted with neighbours who were most often than not their relatives or their husbands' relatives. Earlier, I pointed to how some mothers found the time waiting for their children to come out of school their 'social' time, that is, a time to be with friends. One wife found doing the grocery both an escape from work (that is paid work) and getting more deeply engaged emotionally and mentally with family work:

Kaslang when I go to the grocery ket kaslang mapukaw ti problemak. [. . .] Awan mapanunot mo a hang-ups mo eh. Awan mapanunot mo a heart-breaking instances in school kasi sabali ti purpose mo eh. My focus when I am doing my grocery ket I have to choose the best food for my children.

[When I go to the grocery it is as though all my problems disappear. [. . .] You don't think of your hang-ups. You don't think about any heart-breaking instances in school because your purpose is different. My focus when I am doing my grocery is I have to choose the best food for my children.]

A few wives did cross-stitching and their work actually became their living room decoration.

Other women's form of leisure actually involved finding more work to do. One wife explained she did not want to be just sitting down doing nothing ('ta di tay la agtugtugaw'). This wife had two school-going children making her busy

from morning until lunch time. This should be understood to mean that there are peak times of women's busy-ness and there are periods in their day that they needed to fill. Women, particularly those with children who were all in school, found the afternoons as just such a time. For many of these wives, filling in this 'empty time' equated to finding something 'meaningful' to do. Some raised pigs, chickens or goats. Others had vegetable gardens. A couple of mothers farmed. For most of these wives, this was a pleasant distraction, what the wives called 'dibersyon' (literally, diversion). As one of the wives who farmed explained, her farm was something she could visit ('napia lang nga adda sarsarungkaran').



Figure 6.1 A seaman's wife who farmed was working on her corn harvest when I arrived at her residence to interview her.

There was also, of course, an 'economic rationality' to all of their activities. Those who raised animals had something to sell or had food for the family. Those who tended to vegetable gardens had access to food items and the wives did not have to buy them. 'Rather than buy them' ('isu pay a gatangen') is how one wife put it. One wife who sold processed food items such as sausages, tapas, tocino (a form of cured meat) had to deal with her neighbours' questions as to why she still had to make more money when she was already 'receiving money', that is, provided abundantly by her husband. Such comments suggest

that although it was not a questionable activity, she defied other people's expectations. Her neighbours looked at her activity solely as economic whereas she looked at it as a way to have something to do to while her time. Thus, their activities not only occupied them and hence filled their empty time but also earned them a little profit or produced goods that saved them from spending money. As the childless wife who made and sold similar food items said of what she was doing, 'libangan lang' (just for leisure).

But why did women choose to do something that made money or that saved them money? Is there a 'social unconscious' informing the wives' choices of activities that constituted their time for relaxation? These activities took them out of the house but only in the context of something socially acceptable. Spatially, they did not move too far away from their house. They interacted with neighbours or with people they knew. They relaxed but their activities also simultaneously involved work, creating more an image of a shrewd wife. In the absence of forms and rituals of socially sanctioned extra-domestic entertainment such as a trip to the pub, wives transformed work into leisure or therapy. Relaxation, paradoxically, was to be found in work.



Figure 6.2 The sari-sari store (corner store) of a seaman's wife

In San Gabriel, which is largely rural-agrarian society, the sensibilities and values that would sanction the pursuit of personal leisure or relaxation might be argued to be as yet not fully developed. The forms of relaxation available to women were thus not only limited by stage in the life course (with young children), socio-economic standing, and religious beliefs but also by pervasive values inhering in what remains to be agrarian societies. Going out on their own to engage in practices of ‘care of the self’ (Foucault 1986) made wives contend with the image of a married woman whose husband was away. None of the wives would ever contemplate going to a disco or some other form of night entertainment. Not only are these unavailable but also that availing themselves of such leisure activities would have been socially frowned upon. Even going to a cinema on their own potentially risked their reputations. Drinking at home with friends remains mostly, if not exclusively, a male activity.⁵² Clearly, there are socio-cultural limits to what women can choose to spend their ‘free’ time on.



Figure 6.3 A *rakit* which a wife used to cross the river to get to her farm.

⁵² Although during my research, as my female companion and I were headed to the house of a woman I could invite to participate in my study, we were invited by a group of women known to my informant for a drinking session. These women, however, were in their 40s and 50s. I have heard of old women drinking but only on their own and never publicly but this was the first time I have ever encountered and even heard of women drinking together.

6.3 When Husbands are Home: Shared Time and Time Out

In this section I look at the effect of the presence of husbands on routines of housework, childcare, and leisure. I explore practices of ‘shared time’ and ‘time out’ to describe the way the wives, particularly the mothers, experienced the changes in family life and routines brought about not only by the fact of their husbands’ being home but even more importantly also by how these husbands made their presence felt by the whole family.

What was it like for the women when their husbands were home? How did their husband’s presence and stay for a few months affect the structure of their time, as well as in a more practical sense, the work and amount of work they did? How were their husbands incorporated into their family’s routine? How did the husband’s presence alter or expand aspects of the families’ activities, as for example, leisure? Broadly, the coming home of husbands had two effects on family routine and activities. First, wives experienced a considerable improvement in their situation and a lightening of their work load; and second, at least for a couple of wives, it refocused their attention from their children to their husbands.

6.3.1 A Time to Share

In Chapter 5, I mentioned that women ‘surrendered’ tasks to their husbands (disciplining children, budgeting, and purchase of food and other goods, for example). As also previously discussed, there were strategic reasons why wives did this.⁵³ While it is important to consider how wives involved their husbands in family life and in the tasks of maintaining family, it is also important to look into how husbands saw and felt about being home.

I would like then to expand this idea of ‘surrendered tasks’ as also essentially a way of sharing the burden, task, and time of looking after the whole family.

⁵³ To reiterate: so husbands ‘live’ the wives’ difficulty, that is, see for themselves what being with children demanded and entailed; know how prices of commodities have gone up which would then make husbands increase their wives’ monthly allotment; and prove that wives are not profligate and are actually doing a good job of ‘husbanding’ their finances.

This surrender could also be seen as a form of sharing work and time. It is time for the father or husband to do his share for the family. When they were away, their absence was in the performance of their breadwinning role. During this time, wives often felt a profound sense of 'being on their own'. In contrast, wives saw the presence of their husbands as a time when they had their 'kadua' (literally companion) to do part, if not half (kagudua), of the work. Women referred to this time as having their 'kabadang', a person who shares and helps in carrying the load. For this reason wives expected their husbands to help while a few had a feeling of entitlement to it.

However, husbands, according to their wives, acknowledged that their absence meant missing, and missing out on, a lot of things. Particularly for those who still had young children, wives noted that their husbands felt that their bonds with their children needed to be rekindled and made more 'real' and less mediated by technology. They looked after children, played with them, and cooked for the family because, as wives said, husbands-fathers also wanted to 'serve' their families, win (back) the affection of children, and establish a symmetry of life's rhythms with the whole family. I was fortunate to see husbands cooking for their families, handwashing clothes with their wives, cradling babies, and coming home from the market with food supplies. Although I only interviewed wives, I had conversations with ten husbands before, during, or after the interview with their wives. These husbands said they were willing to do housework, look after children, etc. Of course, this depended on what husbands were good at. Others did the buying of food from the market but not the cooking. It is important to point out that for those husbands who did not cook for example, it was not on account that they found it a disagreeable task for a man to do but simply that they were not good at it. Some husbands did not volunteer to wash clothes because their washing had been criticized by their wives in previous attempts. They would help in rinsing and hanging the washing to dry but wives would also find fault in how they hang clothes. One wife admitted that the house was tidier when her husband was around because he was very good at it while another said that her husband was better than her at cleaning.

Such initiative and willingness to become involved was claimed by both wife and husband as their husband's way of making up for those times they were not there. As a husband stated:

Isu a gimmatangak pay iti lugan ta talaga a kayatko nga no addaak siak ti agitulnog ken mangala diay inauna. [...] So habang addaak for three months, siak deretso mapan agitulnog Ipakitak met nokua a nga siak a ket amada.

[The reason I bought a car is that I want to be the one taking my son to and picking him up from school. [. . .] So during the three months that I am here, I will do it without fail.... I want to show that I am their father.]

The wife of the husband just quoted above confirms what he said:

...saanko masapul nga ibaga pay laeng kenkuana. Kaslang ipakitana met ti panagayatna kadagita ubbing tapos siempre nabaybayag ti kaawanna so iparikhanna met ti kaaddana. Punpunnuanna tay kaawanna. Sa makitana met nga uray adda kaduak nga agubra ditoy balay, narigat met latta so no adda isuna, talaga a tulungannak ngem saan ko a masapul pay lang a kaslang obligaren pay lang nga umuna.

[I don't have to ask him. It's like he wants to show his love for the children and also because he is away most of the time, he wants them to feel his presence. And besides he can see that even though I have a helper, it is still difficult so when he's here, he really gives me a hand but I do not need to make him feel obligated first.]

After taking the son to school, the wife shared that her husband would then look after their younger child. As the wife said, even with a helper, it was still difficult and her husband's help made a lot of difference in making the workload lighter. We can imagine how wives who neither lived with their natal family nor had the service of a helper welcomed the helpfulness of their husbands.

This notion of shared time, characterized by a mentality between husband and wife that family responsibilities are to be shared and to be done cooperatively, leads to the lightening of the work of women. It obtains in the husbands' willingness and desire to do his share of the responsibility of making family, in the wives' desire to serve their husbands, in their expectations of how each was

supposed to spend his or her time, and in their desire to foster and experience a time of family togetherness, of becoming a family. Because it is deferred (it happens only when husbands arrive after at least six months) and contracted (it lasts only for as long as husbands are on leave) only heighten each partner's desire to make this time positive, worth sharing. While the concept of 'shared time' is an attempt to capture the material labour and practices as well as the ideological and emotional motivations of both husband and wife (as accounted in the main by wives) to produce a family experience that is meant to be positive, the concept does not rule out tensions that rupture this project to make and foster positive family relations during this abbreviated time. As I will show below, 'shared time' competes with the husbands' 'own time'.

6.3.2 Time Out: Shared Work, Lightened Burden

Most wives reported that they experienced a lightening or easing of their work load ('nakanamnam-ayak', 'malag-ananak') as husbands took over some of the work they did (school run, budgeting, buying of provisions), helped in housework and in childcare, and for generally being around. This 'time out' provided the women time to be freed of some of the housework and childcare. One wife with three children and no helper shared that her husband would ask her to slow down. Her husband would tell her that the work she was rushing to finish could wait.

The work done by husbands was not simply those associated with the masculine gender for many of them volunteered, offered, or took the initiative to do tasks that are in traditional gender ideology feminine-identified. Their contribution to the household maintenance involved a lot of the blurring of heteronormative gender boundaries. As one wife said, 'obra ti babai, obraenna met' (a woman's job, he also does). Another wife said, 'obra ti balay, obraenna' (housework, he does). This resonates with Virginia Miralao's (1984) observation in the context of the effect of women's employment on the gender division of labour in the household. Miralao concluded that although the employment of women did not appear to lead to 'dramatic redefinitions of wives' and husbands' roles in

household management' it nevertheless brought about 'a greater amount of gender-crossing in the activities of the household' (Miralao 1984, p. 386 quoted in Chant and McIlwaine 1995, p. 300). What is notable here in the case of seamen's wives is that the women described a willingness among their men to do housework (see also Dalisay *et al.* 1996; Espiritu 2002; Eviota 1982; Pingol 2001; Parrenas 2008b; cf. van den Broek *et al.* 2002). 'Shared time' denotes then a process by which tasks and work are de-linked from any necessary gender identification.⁵⁴ To be sure, however, mothers remained the primary parent since when children needed something or needed comforting, they automatically called for them. Because children are with their mothers most of the time, their emotional 'loyalty' is to their mothers (see also Nippert-Eng 1996; Swift 2010, ch 4).

While most of the wives welcomed their husbands' willingness to share in the housework, childcare, and other work and while a few wives deliberately turned over activities to them, one wife claimed that she was not comfortable asking, let alone demanding, her husband to do housework (specifically washing dishes and clothes) and insisted on doing these even though her husband would offer to do them. To be sure, she described her husband as very considerate and helpful. She said that when her husband offered to wash dishes and clothes, she would ask him to look after their baby instead so that she could do them herself. Within her mental framework of serving her husband, he helping in childcare was more acceptable than he doing housework. But as I witnessed myself, even this she could not strictly enforce. During the interview, it was the husband who prepared lunch without her asking him to. This would suggest that arrangements such as this wife had for herself were flexible and that at least in their case, tasks were done by whoever was available or free.

⁵⁴ Rhacel Parrenas (2008b) has noted that migrant fathers tended to do more housework than did fathers in mother-away families and speculates that since these migrant fathers are the financial providers of the family, their masculinity is not threatened or emasculated by doing housework.

6.3.3 Time Out: Making Room

Mothers particularly of young children gave their husband and children a time together all their own. Similar to what Hochschild (1989) called as the process and act in which mothers 'made room' (p. 228) which, in some ways, contrasts with the effort they made to make their children speak to their fathers when they are on board ships. They made sure father and children talked or father talked to their babies. When husbands were away, then, wives mediated relationships. They were a medium through which father-children ties were maintained or children were made aware of the presence or existence of their father. When husbands, however, were home, they limited their mediation. One wife explained that she cannot force her children to warm up to their father. With her husband home, she let her husband find his own way of winning his children's affection. Another wife said that no matter how much she sometimes wanted to join in what her husband and children were doing, she restrained herself, reminding herself that for almost a year, she had the children all to herself. She thus enabled her husband to have his own time with the children within this family time (a time when the family was whole). Distancing, however it is done, is making room and paradoxically a way of fostering ties (cf. Hochschild 1989).

Time out therefore has both external and internal dimensions to it as well as spatial-temporal ones. Both are meant to foster ties, to deepen relations. One, mediation, is done to bridge a gap caused by absence and distance and the other, distancing, a form of emotional management. Paradoxically though, the internal aspect of time out does not make the wife any less important but rather makes her even more central to the life of the whole family even as she momentarily and fleetingly takes a peripheral role during the time the father and children re-established bonds that were stopped, cut, or broken. Moving in and out of the timespace of emotion and relationships forms a vital part of the rhythmicity of seafarer wives. She thus cuts out a space for her husband even as her husband, on his own initiative and desire, makes room for himself precisely by integrating himself into the family routine. This way he achieves temporal

symmetry with the family from which he was distanced, a rhythmic harmony or symmetry he himself helps to orchestrate.

6.3.4 Time Out: From Maternal Care to Marital Care

Although most wives talked about serving their husbands, only two wives said that they looked after their husbands more than they did their children when their husbands were home. Only one of them, however, explicitly talked about a shift in the focus and recipient of her attention and care. I call this shift in care focus as time out from maternal care to spousal care:

Siya naman yung inaasikaso ko. Siya naman. Pag ano, pag wala sya ang panahon ko lahat ng orasko puro sa mga bata. Pero pag nandito sya bale yung mga bata iaano ko sa nanayko, siya naman ang aasikasuhinko.

[I attend to him. It's his turn. When he's not here, all my time is focused on my children. But when he is here, I turn over my children to my mother, and I attend to him.]

Because her husband was a (new) chief engineer whose work pattern consisted of three months work followed by one month of paid leave, the alternation of the focus of her attention was not, according to her, a source of conflict since her two older children were already big (14 and 7 years old). However, when I interviewed her, she had given birth to their third child only ten days before and so had not lavished her usual attention on her husband who came back a week before she delivered. She described her routine as involving managing how the children behaved when he was home. She acted as the link between them. She would tell her husband how to handle the children. Hence, although she shifted her attention to him, this did not mean she completely abandoned her children for her time with him included fostering father-and-children relationship, an 'emotional choreography' (Sillars 2010) similar to what the wives discussed above did.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ 'Emotional choreography' describes the way people hold (and behold) each other. I use it here to complement Hochschild's 'emotional work' or 'emotional management' and to capture the work done by the wife to choreograph how her husband and children felt, behaved, and moved in each other's presence at least in the first few days of her husband's arrival.

6.3.5 More Time (To Be) Out

When women went out during the time their husbands were away, most of the time it was in the performance of their responsibilities: taking children to and picking them up from school, purchase of food, or going to mass on Sundays. All these were still part of their domestic responsibilities. A few of the older wives said they went to the provincial capital only when necessary (withdraw some money, for example as San Gabriel did not have any banks or ATM/cash machines). Wives never went out to have a personal time for leisure. Indeed, some of these women pointed out when I asked them how they relaxed that they were not like other seamen's wives who have gone astray, implicitly asserting that staying close to the house/home was a sign of their virtuousness. The wives' association of going out with impropriety, as I will show in another chapter, is a response to social attitudes that frown on women, particularly those whose husbands are away, who go out too much. Their not going out for personal reasons and even more so to have some fun is hence to avoid being framed as a loose woman.

When husbands were home, women had more time to go out, that is, to spend some family time outside of their house. Because the husbands are home, they could more freely go out; they are 'relaxed' (in the active sense of this word) by the husband's presence since going out with him would not put her under a cloud of suspicion. Women mentioned that these times out were not only pleasurable as they were such a welcome change to the space within which they moved most of the time and to the routine that structured their lives. Women who lived with their in-laws said they felt rejuvenated not only by time spent relaxing and having fun with the whole family but also by the feeling of 'being away', of 'going away' even only for a brief period of time. Women, particularly those who lived with or near in-laws, felt happier.

However, one wife's time out of the house became time in the house. When her husband was away, the time waiting for her son at school was essentially her time to be out of the house in order to be with friends. She therefore found it such a pleasurable time, a time she considered her leisure time. With her

husband around, she lost this time with friends. She and her husband would together take their son to school, go home together, and then pick him up. The time during which the son was in school was time the husband wanted they spent together. This change to her routine (practically the loss of her leisure and 'social' time) was not unacceptable since someone, and her husband at that, would be home to keep her company. It made perfect sense for her to shift how, where and with whom that period of time was spent. When he goes back to work, she goes back to how, where and with whom this time was spent. Again, we see in this particular case how a wife's routine and rhythmicity are structured by the husband's cycle of departure and return. For her, going out took other forms as the whole family would drive to the beach, eat out, attend mass together, etc.

6.3.6 Contested Time

Although wives found their husbands to be such a welcome presence and their helpfulness even more, dealing with their husband's social drinking was a vexed issue. While they understood their husbands' desire and even need to spend time with friends for drinks and other leisure activities, they wanted their husbands to strike a balance between their family obligations and their social needs. They explained that because their husbands were away for a long time, they needed social relaxation but for precisely the same reason, the wives wanted their husband's time for, and with, them. Because the husbands are home for only a short period of time, the wives wanted them to make the family the primary recipient and object of their time. Wives tried to negotiate the tension between the pull of family obligations and their husband's social integration (which had consequences on family time, on the family's financial condition, on the worrying imposed on the wives concerning their husband's safety while they were out, as well as on the marital relationship where husbands used their time to have liaisons).

The husbands' own 'time out' from the family hence has the potential to strain domestic harmony, that which husbands and wives achieve and establish

through cooperative working, through shared activities and expectations (shared time and doing of parental and marital responsibilities). To be sure, a good number of wives reported that their husbands were good at exercising responsibility and good sense. One wife with two young children, for example, expressed gratitude for her husband's being considerably reasonable. The last time her husband was home, she did not allow him to go out at night since at that time they did not have a helper and she did not like the idea of being on her own when her husband was in fact home on leave. In the few times he has gone out now that they have a helper, the wife expected her husband to be home by 10 p.m. as she did not want to be worrying about his safety and such a 'curfew' was not too much to ask inasmuch as he was no longer a bachelor who did not have any responsibilities to others.

Others, however, had to deal with husbands who did not seem to know their limit. Three wives were so displeased by their husbands' unbridled behaviour (drinking, gambling, womanizing) that they sometimes wished their husbands went back. To them, their husbands were a 'kunsumisyon', someone who gave them worry, or more precisely, a headache:

Basta sangsangpetna kasla lang napalubusan a diak ammo. Pero okay lang a mapan kaso, ti lang kaanak ket sumangpet ti dis-oras ti parbangun, daydiay lang ti kaanak kaniiana. Siyempre asino nga asawa koma ti mangayat ti kasdiay nga dis-oras ti sangpet di ngamin? Masapa met pumanaw ti malem nokua, san to la sumangpet ti parbangun mayatka ngarud met nokua?

[When he's home he's like a wild animal set free. But it is okay for him to go [drinking], what I do not like is that he comes home at dawn. Of course, what wife likes her husband to come back at such a time, right? He goes out early in the afternoon, and then comes back only at dawn who would like such a thing?]

The husband's 'time out' to socialize had consequences on the wives' routine as well. For example, when their husbands entertained their 'barkada' (gang of friends, often male neighbours), some wives were expected by their husbands to wait for them to have dinner together. Drinking also added to the wives tasks since an inebriated husband needed to be helped and added to the wives'

cleaning. Waiting for husbands to come home, for example, meant worrying about them and not having a good sleep.

Wives also thought about the money involved in drinking since it would be their husbands who almost always certainly paid for these drinking sessions. Wives were rightly concerned about budgeting wisely for during this time they lived on saved money.⁵⁶ The following captures this concern and dynamic of who spends:

Dati kasdiay isuna ngem kunak pinagsabihak, ay no kasta nga bar-barkada latta ket awan mangyari ti biag tayo. Awanen a kastam lattan. Dagita barkada, no maawananka ti kwartan, dida ka met mapadawatan kunak kania.

[He was like that before but I told him, if you are always like that, nothing is going to happen to our lives. Nothing you will always be like that. Your friends, when you no longer have money, they won't give you any I said to him.]

Also, wives were concerned about the health and safety of their husbands – one that is tied to their ability to get a new contract and hence tied to the well-being and life of the whole family. With medical exams (required at start of each contract) becoming more stringent and rigorous, wives would like their husbands to stay as healthy as they possibly can. The risk of a career cut short or permanently ended was a thought that had real consequences even on the wives' 'routine', that is, on the demands and expectations they had on how husbands spent their time home. When husbands persisted in drinking, gambling, and womanizing (which involved spending money, danger, or disease) they became a burden to their wives, a burden wives said they rather did not have. It was in these times they wanted their husbands back to sea. The husband's 'time out' also shows that some of these women did not really have a time out of their own, that is, a time they could devote to themselves and not have fun *with* the family.

⁵⁶ Technically, their husbands are 'paid' since their 'leave pay' is included in their monthly salary. However, this 'unpaid leave' had real effects on how women spent and saved money.

6.4 Getting Used To: Departure and the Temporal Boundaries of Adjustment

Time heals, so the cliché goes. But the condition created by spousal absence inadequately rendered affectively and visually by the word ‘missing’ is not completely sutured. Adjusting to this absence particularly to the time immediately after the husband’s departure is both a means of dealing with the ‘wound’ of separation and proof of the recurring presence of ‘pain’ (a cut, a gap, or a break). Thinking about the promise of life this separation brings forth makes this ‘sufferance of pain’ or sadness, however fleeting it may be to those who have gotten so used to it, makes it bearable, justifiable, and meaningful. It is therefore simply not the passage of time that heals (for this metaphor might be appropriate to things we would want consigned to the past and not to what is a fact and part of the ‘present’ of wives) but the psycho-material practices and activities performed by wives in order to ‘understand’ the rhythmicity and chronicity of parting.⁵⁷

For one childless wife, the departure of her husband disturbed her physiological balance: ‘Di ka makatur-turog, haanka makapang-pangan inggana a haan mo mauray tawagna’. (You can’t sleep; you can’t eat until he’s called). Normalcy was restored by her husband’s first call after departure. Another wife described her husband’s departure as involving a ‘break’, a temporal and spatial cutting of the process of bonding. Another wife described hers as a stoppage (as in road traffic) of a life together. A fourth wife dramatically described what she always felt like when her husband goes as ‘kaslang mapugsat man amin nga angesen. [...] ay hindi talaga ako natuto’ (it’s like all my breath is being cut off. [...] I never really learn).

What these wives are effectively describing is a deferral of lives to the exigencies and contingencies of a ‘greedy job’ that is inextricably linked to the global; hence the adjustment in order to resume it. ‘Hindi talaga ako natuto’ (I

⁵⁷ I use ‘understand’ here to mean an ‘active engagement with the world’ (Beller 2006, p. 154) that is productive of social relations and based on experience. The Ilokano word for fellow (human being/person) is *pada*; for experience, *padas*. What I would like to advert to here is that part of the wives’ capacity to accept and face the kind of life they live might be seen in light of the co-experiencing of their husband’s hardships at sea.

never really learn) suggests that adjusting is an active process (one that cannot be left alone to the passage of time) of learning, and of teaching one's self to deal with the situation. Time heals because it is made to.

6.4.1 'Ordinary a Pasamak'

One woman has gotten so used to her husband's going away that she described it as an 'ordinary a pasamak' (an ordinary event). Being left behind, at least specifically that time limited to the departure of the husband has been relegated to the mundane. Yet this particular wife readily acknowledged that the husband's departure was associated with negative feelings. For most of the wives, their husband's return was anticipated with excitement and generally looked forward to with positive expectation whereas their departure was responded to with justification: necessity, sacrifice, the good of the family. 'Mailiw-liwagto manen; para iti masakbayan ti ubbing kunak met. Sakripisyo lang.' (You'll get over it again; it is for the children's future, I say. Sacrifice.)

This particular wife who can now talk of her husband's departure as an ordinary event has adjusted over time to his intermittent absence. Some wives whose husbands have also been seafaring for many years but who, however, still feel 'separation pangs' talk of emotional preparation and practical activities to help with the transition.

6.4.2 Getting used to: 'Iyaw-awanmo'

For most of the wives, their most common way of adjustment was through *tungtong*: neighbourly group chats. Such activity eased their situation as it involved interacting with other people, going out of their house to go to the next house which also thus tightened social relationships. The ritual departure of their husbands is repeatedly, momentarily kept at bay so that wives are not always reminded of them (husbands are 'forgotten') until such time they have again gotten used to their husband's departure and absence.

6.4.3 Avoiding Getting Used to Husband's Presence

For a number of wives, there was a certain limit to how long their husband's stay was enjoyable and welcome. We have already mentioned a couple of wives who sometimes wished their husbands were away on account of their unruly behaviour. Also, when husbands were on leave, families relied on saved money. Once this was depleted, and husbands were still unable to go, they begin to accumulate debt. Except for the chief engineer's wife, all the wives did not want their husbands to stay too long on account of the fact that they did not have any income while their husbands were home.

Nagrigat a. Panpanunotem to manen ananto man ti riknana no pumanawen. A ngem ana ngarud mabalin ket naurnungan ka man ti utangen kasdiay. Didiay man ti panpanunotemon a. [. . .] Ana ngarud ti kanenyo.

[Oh, it's tough. You think about what it is going to feel like when he goes. But what choice is there when you have piled up debts again, like that. You think about that again. [. . .] What will you eat.

Some wives, however, also did not like their husbands to stay too long because they did not want to get used to their presence too much which would then make their adjusting to their departure and absence tougher. As one explained:

Kasla kaykayat ko nukua no detay.. mas a bumaba tatta kasla ton next month sumakay, kaykayat ko ti kasdiay.

[. . .]

Kasi no sumakay. Bumaba tatta after 7 months sumakay, nagrigat man nga iliwliwag ta bagimon. Kasla nasabay man ta bagimon.

[I prefer that, for example, if he comes home today, next month he goes back. I prefer it that way.

If he came home today and goes back after seven months, it's going to be very difficult for myself to get over it. It's like your body has gotten so used to him being around.]

The physical presence of husbands then have temporal boundaries set by the emotional and psychic reserves of wives effectively determining their 'tolerance' level for their being at home. Their desire for their husband to be

around was tempered by this ‘internal limit’ harboured within this very desire for their presence. Beyond this time limit, re-adjusting to the absence became more difficult. To be sure, this determination of how long their husband’s stay was positively experienced cannot be dissociated from the financial fortunes of the family for indeed they subsisted on money saved and as such can only be used up. It can only be replenished by the departure of the husbands, which is one of the temporal markers (return being the other) that frames the rhythmicity of their lives. Equally crucially, this departure hinges on what wives have accrued over time, that is, their ability to get used to their husband’s absence which is compromised or weakened when husbands ‘overstayed’. It becomes more difficult (‘Narigrigat ngamin nokua’), a wife explained.

This does not mean that wives drove their husbands away or explicitly made their desire for them to go before things became more difficult. Neither does it mean that this ‘transition period’ did not pose any difficulties. For indeed, the departure of the husbands meant, at least for some women, the resumption of their own routine suggesting another set of routine shared with the husband. This ‘shared routine’ to be sure was characterized or made different precisely by the presence of the husband. For example, family time spent with the husband involved a lot more time spent outside than when they are on their own. The crucial category of experience, and of the experience of time is its ‘sharedness’ for when the husband goes, the wife reverts back to her own routine and to a routine of her life, that of being on her own again:

A ket another adjustment man nokuan a. Agadjustka man a talagan. It takes ano month nokua ata mangrugi kan diay routinemon e diay routine mo man nga . kuan a.. no la mabalin ket saan mo pay la palubosan a mapan a ngem isu met ti tay kunakon isu met ti pagsapulanna... Agadjustka a .. inton nokuan a ket medyo maiad-adjust monto man tay bagimon mayat to manen.

[Oh it’s another adjustment again. You really have to adjust again. It takes about a month because you have to go back to your routine, your routine when he was what.. If it was only possible to not let him go just yet but like I’ve said, it’s his job. You adjust.. and once you’ve adjusted yourself again, everything becomes all right.]

The routine of wives have therefore the quality of cyclical to it, and by routine here I refer not only to the four sets of activities (work, housework, childcare, and leisure) but also to the longer or durational aspects of their lives: the rhythmicity of the socio-material and psycho-emotional practices and work that underpins their lives as seamen's wives. They get used to this cycle but 'getting used to' actually involves a lot of physical, material, and emotional work. We saw in the section on the routines of wives when their husbands were away that wives relaxed by doing more work and dealt with their husband's absence by staying more in the house.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the temporal organization of family life using a qualitative conception of time (Adam 1988, 1995; Hassard 1990; Nowotny 1994; Young 1988; Zerubavel 1979, 1985a, 1985b). I have looked at the routine activities of wives when their husbands were away, and what happened to these routines when their husbands were home. I explored how wives responded to their husband's departure which primarily involved emotional work and adjustment.

In dealing with the aspect of social time in the life of these women and their families, we showed that their lived and inhabited times were spatial, they were implicated in places and in social locations. In the absence of their husbands, the ability of many of the wives to manage their households and to do their multiple and varied tasks relied on social relations, primarily affinal, and secondarily consanguinal. The performance of their routines embedded them in ties of reciprocity and indebtedness. Just as routine helped them to structure and organize their lives, so did these relations provide a social structure that provided wives with the resources to avoid care deficit. When husbands were home, the sharing of responsibilities demonstrated what I would call 'gender negotiation' to denote the process which made possible the crossing of gender boundaries when it came to the performance of housework and childcare. My discussion looked at the conditions of possibility for this gender crossing. It is

worth reiterating that there is, on the part of some of the wives, a strategic surrendering of tasks and a willingness on the part of the husband to demonstrate how they ‘cared’ for their families. Because husbands are away most of the time, they recognize that if they want to really become part of the family, particularly of the lives of their children, they have to be more than physically present. This process of gender negotiation is tied up with what has been called an ‘exchange of understanding’ (Hochschild 1989).

Both husband and wife recognize that they are making sacrifices and although wives bring in less or no money at all (with the husband the main or sole breadwinner), there is recognition of the importance each contributes to the family’s welfare. This ‘exchange of marital gifts’ (Hochschild *ibid.* p. 139) – the understanding and recognition that they are both protagonists performing different roles help at least reconcile gender ideologies and strategies (Hochschild *ibid.*). The gift of appreciation, which is not always readily given by the husband (hence the wives’ strategic surrender of tasks) is also what wives want their children to give their fathers. Wives, as I showed in the last chapter, almost always invoked their father’s hard work for the good of the family and used it as the content of and strategy for their moral pedagogy.

The gift of recognition which helped create a more harmonious domestic temporal order when husbands were home did not always eliminate conflicts and tensions in wives’ expectations, for example, in how husbands behaved when they were home. Although the workload of many of the wives was made lighter by their husband’s helpfulness, a number of them found their excessive drinking and spending time with friends, gambling, or womanising a burden they did not want to bear. The ‘time out’ of these husbands contrasted with some of the forms of ‘time out’ the wives practised. Of 40 women interviewed, only one mentioned going to the parlour to have her hair done as her form of therapy (and still we can ask how often she did). The rest had home- and church-based ways of relaxing and reason for going out. Women also made room for their husbands. At least two of them became the focus of their wives’ attention making their children secondary to him. Other wives distanced

themselves to make room for their husband to re-establish relationships with their children.

But wives did more than distance themselves. They mediated these relationships. When husbands depart, it is not just wives who have to live this departure and absence. There are children, many of them still very young, who must grow up not seeing and living with their father for longer periods than they actually do. Many of them have in fact grown up in this kind of family set-up. And part of the routine of wives is to help their children also adjust to their father's constant leaving, to make them understand and appreciate why they constantly have to depart until such time these children can appreciate by themselves that these departures are their umbilical cords to a better life. For many, if not all of them, their future rests on and is guaranteed by this absence.

Finally, to be able to give even a partial description of the everyday lives of the wives when their husband was away and plot the ways they inhabited this time, we need to bear in mind that their experience of the everyday depended not only on a structural location but also equally on a future horizon. This, I argue, informed and attended how some of the wives moved within the timespace denoted by their husband's absence. There is no doubt that being in waged work or being a mother particularly of young and/or still dependent children provided the content and structure of their time as well as determined the amount of their work. However, how women went about their lives, how they went about performing their responsibilities, and what meanings they invested into their actions and activities were bound up with an anticipation of the future. Their activities were attuned to this future variously coded as 'pagimbagan', 'pagsayaatan', 'para iti masakbayan', 'sakripisyo', 'a ngem ana ngarud', 'isu met ti pagbiag'. For many of the wives, their children's future or the good of the family acted as the purposive context of their lives as left-behind wives and the horizon to which they attuned their everyday lives and routines.

In the next chapter, we look at how some routine activities, admittedly necessitated by the absence-presence of husbands, were part of the ways by which wives negotiated distance and separation to maintain family ties. We will

also look at how they navigated the personal and social consequences of their husband's absence.

Chapter 7

IMAGINED COMMUNION AND THE INTIMACY OF ABSENCE

Seamen's wives know absence very well. Their lives are striated by it. They prepare for and live this absence and its consequences. It is in this sense that I talk of the intimacy of absence in their lives. This chapter attends to this absence by looking at the ways by which these women have tried to lessen its presence and to the means that have helped them ameliorate it. In so doing, it relocates these women from 'home' (where they were located in chapters 4 and 5) to a space of imagined communion.⁵⁸ This space, which incorporates both their home and their husbands' ship (which is both their home and place of work), might be said to have its origins in the home (or in making home) but which is not, however, analogous to it. It exceeds the physical, temporal and spatial boundaries of the home in that this space extends to that which is outside of it but which it attempts to incorporate and so in a sense domesticate and embrace.

I dwell here on the wives' activities that bring their husbands home and that bring 'home' to their husbands. These activities enable them to become intimate despite the absence, separation or distance, and to make the absent present. This space of imagined communion then becomes the locus of the reproduction of family and of affective ties and is itself the result of these emotional and material activities. To the extent that this work is not limited to and contained in the home, although the home (or a sense of it) is ultimately the recipient of this work (and also its outcome), the space is simultaneously both foreign and domestic. It is a space produced by and in the overlapping of the internal and external locations of members of the family and to which their ties are extended.

⁵⁸ 'Imagined communion' borrows from Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community'. See his influential *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991).

This chapter investigates the communicative practices obtaining in this absence and separation and which produce that sense of home in an 'elsewhere'. I do not so much listen to the content of these communication activities as analyze the functions to which these practices and events are put to use. I therefore 'listen' to the speech acts of these women that serve to keep the family together in the context of this separation. I also examine how wives communicate to their husbands risks that arise from their being left-behind wives. The first part situates the predominance of mobile (or cell in the Philippines) phone communication among the women in this study within a consideration of the 'political economy' of telecommunication in the Philippines and in the context of migration. It also briefly looks at the wives' use of pre-paid phone cards which, together with the mobile phone, has made communication between them and their husbands affordable. The second part examines communication designed to foster family/ affective ties including father-children relationships. In a sense, these are communication events and practices in and through which husbands are made 'present'. The third examines how intimacy is mediated by communication technologies and focuses on how wives and husbands remit affection to each other. The fourth looks at how these telecommunication technologies are implicated in what the wives experienced outside of the immediate context of their families or home, experiences arising from the absence of their husbands. I specifically address how other people exploited the absence of the women's husbands as times of moral laxity and vulnerability and how women dealt with what was being communicated to protect their relationship with their husband.

7.1 The Political Economy of Telecommunication in the Philippines

In the Philippines, access to the internet remains, by global standards, at a low 25 per cent. In contrast, 60 million Filipinos (of 90 million) are mobile phone subscribers (Pertierra 2010). This scale of penetration and acceptance of the mobile phone has partly been attributed to Filipinos' 'strong cultural orientation for constant and perpetual contact' (Pertierra 2006, p. 1).

7.1.1 Framing Mobile Phone Communication

Rather than merely attribute the Filipinos' need to keep in touch to an essentialist cultural trait, it makes more sense to see it, among other factors, in the context of migration, and hence in the separation of family members and relatives. This would put the Filipinos' need to communicate within a more historicized political-economic context. The pervasiveness and (the now) mundanity of migration necessitates communication and the exploitation of that technology that allows them in the most affordable way to maintain family ties and relationships. I therefore take the position of Manuel Castells and his colleagues (2007, p.125) who have argued that '[p]eople shape communication technology, rather than the other way around. Yet, the specificity of the technology reflects onto the way in which people conduct their lives' (see also Arminen 2009; Horst and Miller 2006; Miller and Slater 2000; Wilding 2006). This position offers a sounder and more nuanced way of looking at the social consequences of new communication technologies than the perspectives provided, for example, by Ito *et al.* (2005) who argued in the context of Japan that mobile telephony leads to individualization and atomisation at the expense of sociality or social relationships. Rather than, as Wilding (2006) says, see new communication technologies as giving rise to brave new worlds, it makes more sense to see how they 'have been incorporated ... into the familiar, ongoing patterns of everyday social life' (Wilding 2006, p. 126). We turn below to a historical contextualization of the mobile phone's place in the lives of Filipinos.

7.1.2 The Liberalization of Philippine Telecommunications

The deregulation of the Philippine telecommunications industry, which gathered momentum during the administration of President Fidel V. Ramos (1992-1998), opened up to at least eight other players a sector that had hitherto been a monopoly of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT), which was, despite its name, a private business which majority stake was 'owned' by the family of Antonio Cojuangco, allegedly the favourite nephew of Ramos' predecessor, Corazon Cojuangco Aquino. A report on the political economy of reform during the Ramos administration described the

Cojuangco family as ‘politically well-connected’ whose influence extended ‘across the three branches [executive, legislative, and judiciary] of government’ (Bernardo and Tang 2008, p. 18). In 1992, around 800,000 Filipinos, of whom 75 per cent lived in Metro Manila, were waiting for a telephone line. But ‘instead of expanding its network to meet service demand’ (Bernardo and Tang *ibid.*, p. 18), PLDT spent heavily to protect its market share (Tiglaio 1993) which was over 90 per cent of the entire country’s telephone lines (Bernardo and Tang *ibid.*).

In 1995, only 1.4 million telephone lines were available. By 2000 the number dramatically rose to 6.9 million which improved telephone density from 2.01 in 1995 to 9.12 in 2000. However, there was a heavy urban bias to the roll out of telephone service. Of the 6.9 million lines, 4.9 million (or 72 per cent) went to 36 urban centres. Metro Manila, where only about 14 per cent of the Philippine population lived, had 47 per cent of the total, equivalent to 3.2 million lines. Country-wide, by December 2001, only 52.4 per cent (or 844) of the 1,609 towns and cities had fixed line coverage. Only 654 (or 40.6 per cent) had cellular phone coverage (Salazar 2007, pp. 280-282). Salazar (*ibid.*, p. 282) writes that ‘despite about 4 million fixed lines lying idle, 745 [*sic*] cities and towns were still without fixed line local exchange services’.⁵⁹

The liberalization of the Philippine telecommunications industry was pursued following a Service Area Scheme (SAS) which divided the market into 11 areas distributed to eight international gateway and cellular telephone operators. Each operator was assigned a profitable and an unprofitable area ‘to ensure both operational viability and the provision of rural telephony’ (Salazar *ibid.*, p. 243).⁶⁰ However, rural telephony seemed to have been condemned from the

⁵⁹ Salazar gives the figure of 745 but this might be a typographical error. If we deduct 844 from 1609 (the total number of Philippine towns and cities), we get 765.

⁶⁰ The SAS was drawn up in 1994 based on consultations involving the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC), and industry players. When the new players’ plans were examined by the NTC, it became clear that they were all targeting highly urban areas such as Metro Manila, Cebu, Davao, Baguio, and Subic where there was a high demand for telephones (Salazar 2007, pp. 242-243). The SAS was meant to correct this urban bias ‘by allowing a company to earn profits but at the same time, ensure that part of those profits was channelled to serve less profitable areas’ (Salazar 2007, p. 243).

beginning since operators were directed, at minimum, to install one rural exchange line for every ten urban lines installed (Salazar 2007). Moreover, there was a decline in the demand for telephone line connections precipitated by the 1997 Asian financial crisis. With the decline in incomes and the consequent instability of the economic and financial situation of many Filipino households, prepaid cellular phones became the alternative which had the advantage of mobility (Salazar *ibid.*). Text messaging, introduced in the Philippines in September 1994 by Globe Telecoms, has also made communication cheaper. The Philippines has become ‘the texting capital of the world’ with the volume of text messages sent ten times the per capita world average (Lallana 2004 cited in Pertierra 2005). It is estimated that Filipinos send two billion texts daily (Office of the Press Secretary 2009 cited in Aguila 2008/2009).

Table 7.1 below shows the spectacular growth in mobile phone use in the Philippines, a growth best appreciated comparatively within the Southeast Asian region:

Table 7.1 Cellular Mobile Subscribers in Selected ASEAN Countries, 1990-2005

| Country | Total Number of Subscribers (Thousands) | | | | | | As % of Total Number of Telephone Subscribers | | |
|--------------------|---|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---|-------------|-------------|
| | 1990 | 1991 | 1995 | 1999 | 2001 | 2005 | 1999 | 2001 | 2005 |
| Malaysia | 54.6 | 70.9 | 872.8 | 2,990 | 7,480 | 19,545 | 40.3 | 61.6 | 81.7 |
| Philippines | 9.8 | 33.8 | 492.7 | 2,750 | 11,700 | 34,779 | 48.5 | 77.9 | 91.2 |
| Indonesia | 21.0 | 24.5 | 218.6 | 2,220 | 6,520 | 46,910 | 26.8 | 47.5 | 78.6 |
| Singapore | 51.0 | 81.9 | 291.9 | 1,630 | 2,990 | 4,385 | 46.5 | 60.6 | 70.4 |
| Thailand | 66.3 | 210.0 | 1,087.5 | 2,340 | 7,550 | 27,379 | 31.0 | 55.5 | 80.1 |

Source: Salazar 2007, p. 363 based on various ITU Reports, 1993-2007

The accessibility of mobile phones to low income groups reversed what initially was the trend in 1991 when only those in high income groups could afford a mobile phone. By the end of 2005, around 34.8 million Filipinos were mobile phone subscribers whereas only 3.4 million were fixed line subscribers. This

number represented 91.2 per cent of telephone subscribers while the remaining 8.8 per cent were subscribed to fixed line phones (Salazar 2007). By 2007, the number had risen to 57 million mobile phone subscribers (NTC Report 2007). Mobile phones, due to their affordability and accessibility became a rational and logical alternative to fixed line phones (Salazar *ibid.*).

The mobile phone's penetration into ordinary Filipino lives may also be accounted for by how its cost was later built around the (weak) purchasing power of many Filipinos. Two marketing strategies, for example of Smart, the country's leading cellular phone service provider, illustrate this. The first, electronic load (or e-load) enabled users to purchase load for as low as Php 30. Before, the minimum cost of a phone card was Php 300 (Nagasaka 2007). E-load enabled many Filipino users to buy load depending on how much they can really afford at the time of purchase. The second, 'pasa load', enabled users to share (pasa) their phone credit or load (hence the name) 'to their friends' or relatives' cell phones by sending to a designated number their text messages that include the cell phone numbers of beneficiaries and the amount they want to give' (Nagasaka *ibid.*, p. 103). Initially the minimum amount that could be 'passed' was Php 10 but this was later reduced to one peso (Nagasaka *ibid.*). Globe Telecoms, Smart's closest competitor, later provided similar services: 'auto-load' and 'share-a-load' (Nagasaka *ibid.*). I would argue that the business model for these two strategies was based on the Filipino 'sari-sari' (convenience) store and the selling of goods through the 'tingi' system.⁶¹ This further embedded the mobile phone in systems many Filipinos knew well because it was partly through them that they negotiated and transacted their daily lives.

To summarize this section, two fundamental reasons might explain the mobile phone's ubiquity in the Philippines. The first is its 'leapfrogging' of the physical infrastructures that are the requisites of landline phones and internet.

⁶¹ I can explain this system better by illustrating it. A seller of goods say, a *sari-sari* store owner, will repack a litre of cooking oil into smaller quantities the cost of which will be easier to be borne by buyers. Or a cigarette vendor will sell by the stick rather than by the pack. See also Matejowsky (2007).

The mobile phone opened many remote towns and villages that were not attractive enough for the profiteering eyes of telecommunication companies owned by rent-seeking oligarchs. The second is its affordability not only in the sense of the cost of a mobile phone unit but also equally of how its cost was adapted to the economic power (or weakness) of the general Filipino populace. The combination of these two factors enabled many rural and urban poor households to become linked to family and relatives both in the Philippines and overseas. The landline phone, which previously had seemed so essential, became simply dispensable.

7.1.3 Telephony in San Gabriel

The mobile becoming an alternative to the landline phone might be demonstrated by the experience of San Gabriel. The town's first household telephone lines were installed in 1992. People who wanted (and who have long waited) to have telephones at home recall with good humour the excitement generated by the announcement asking people to register their names if they wanted a connection. People remember the rush going to the municipal government office to have their names listed which was also actually a way of determining the demand for telephones.

Installation was initially limited to the *poblacion* (the town proper covering only 18 of a total 43 villages) where only 30 per cent of the town's population of 32,345 (as of 2007) resided (Municipality of San Gabriel 2009a). However, three villages outside of the town proper but which were near the *poblacion* and lay along or traversed by the national highway were included. Later, however, residents of a village farther from it (it is in fact a village that served as San Gabriel's border with the next town) but bisected by the national highway requested that telephone coverage be extended to their area. Because the national highway passed through it, the village's distance from the *poblacion* was neutralized by its accessibility. The request was granted since enough number of households was going to subscribe and therefore justified the extension of the telephone area coverage. The telecommunications company manager I interviewed explained that enough people could afford to pay for the

subscription since there were many Hawaiians and overseas migrant workers in that area. Not only did this manager advert to the source of funding of these households but also to the coordinates of this telecommunication. This resonates with Vertovec's (2004) argument that improvements in telecommunications infrastructure have significantly been driven and will continue to be driven by transnational migration practices.

Only 765 households out of a total 6,289 (11 per cent) had landline telephones, 720 or 94 per cent of which were in the poblacion (see Figure 7.1) inclusive of the three adjacent villages and 45 in the border village (including a neighbouring village). Only 23 of 43 villages (53 per cent) had landline phone connections.



Figure 7.1 Map of San Gabriel showing poblacion where landline telephone connections are concentrated. Dots indicate location of villages.

For those who had no landline phones and access to internet at home, the mobile phone was their recourse. Even those who had landline phones had mobile phones, which were welcomed particularly by those who lived in villages not served by landline phone connections. They were either those who

could have afforded a landline phone but could not get one because their village was not covered by the roll out or those who could not afford a connection. An antenna, with a 5-kilometre coverage radius built around 1998 or 1999 atop a hill has greatly improved mobile phone signal in San Gabriel at least for those who subscribed to Smart cellular phone service. There are now around 2,800 subscribers of mobile phone broadband internet from this provider alone.⁶² Of the seven wives who had home internet access, two used mobile internet. Both lived in villages not served by landline connections due to their distance from the poblacion.

7.1.4 Cheap International Telephone Calls and Pre-Paid Phone Cards

Steven Vertovec (2004) has written that processes of global linkage particularly ‘among non-elite social groups such as migrants’ were facilitated more by ‘the boom in ordinary, cheap international telephone calls’ (p. 219) than any other technological development. He notes that these cheap calls became these migrants’ main connection to their social networks particularly in their source communities as they enabled and facilitated ‘everyday’ transnational connectivity. For Filipinos, of whom 40 per cent or so live below the poverty line, these cheap international calls were truly a windfall, if not manna from communication heaven. To illustrate, based on 1989 exchange rates, a three-minute landline call cost US\$13.40, way beyond the reach of ordinary Filipinos who earned, on average, a daily wage of US\$ 8.25 (Paragas (2009)). The liberalization of the telecommunications industry both in the Philippines and abroad, however, considerably brought down the cost of a mobile phone call from the Philippines to anywhere in the world to US\$0.50, or 5 per cent of the 1996 average daily income of Filipino workers (Paragas 2009; see also Klopfenstein 2002; Salazar 2007).

⁶² This is as of June 2010. Figures provided by Engineer Roger Butay, Head of Smart Wireless Division, Laoag City, interviewed on 10 June 2010. Smart is the Philippines’ largest cellular operator. By 2005, it had more than 15.4 million subscribers (Salazar 2007).

However, in San Gabriel (or in the Philippines more generally), it was not just that international calls have become a lot more affordable but also the availability or accessibility of telephones that facilitated transnational connectivity and communication. Prior to the installation of landline phones in San Gabriel in 1992, residents relied on two public phone booths close to the municipal government building (and one other in a village served by the national highway) if they wanted to make or receive phone calls. One can thus imagine the jubilation felt by those who had long waited for a landline phone when it finally arrived. Yet the arrival of landline phones excluded many, even those who could afford one, on the basis of where they lived. One interviewee who lived in one such village went to the extent of renting a house in the town proper just so she could get one and be able to have better communication with her husband. For the rest who did not have the financial wherewithal to do the same, it was the mobile phone that gave them connectivity—local, national, and global—as with many others in San Gabriel and in the entire Philippines.

All of the wives in this study used a mobile phone to communicate with their husbands, either through text messages or calls. Although only about seven had home internet connection and a few others occasionally communicated with their husbands through internet at cafes or at a relative's house, the mobile phone was the most pervasive communication device they used. Most of those who had home internet connection and a landline phone also had mobile phones. Only a few had home access to several ways of communicating with their husbands, such as video calls (skype), chats, emails, landline phone calls, mobile phone calls, and social networking sites (such as Facebook). Access to these media was simply not available to most of the women. To many of them, the mobile phone was all they had. With their reliance on mobile phones, these wives became consumers of another communication innovation, the prepaid phone card, which has made calls cheaper and hence contributed to the expansion of international communication through telephones (Mahler 2001; Vertovec 2004; see also Silverstone *et al.* 1992).



Figure 7.2 Globe Telecom’s products and services aimed at families of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

None of the wives I interviewed had a mobile phone that had a payment plan (or post-paid). All relied on pre-paid phone cards and many of them made extensive use of the ways by which mobile phone service providers have made it possible for phone card credit or ‘load’ to be shared with others (such as through pasa load) or how a pre-paid phone card’s call time can be prolonged (such as ‘unlicall’ [for unlimited call]). This would suggest that many of the wives found the mobile phone not only as the one available to them but also the one which financial outlay could be more flexibly suited around the financial needs and expenditures of the family. It has been noted by Fortunati (2002) that because mobile phone calls cost substantially more than landline ones, they are used sparingly. However, the mobile phone was the only one available to many of the families. The availability in the Philippines of pre-paid phone cards that

allow for ‘unli-calls’ made mobile phone calls relatively cheap and affordable.⁶³ Phone cards are thus an important item in the family budget. The use of pre-paid phone cards gave the women a sense of being more in control of money spent on their mobiles as they always knew how much ‘load’ they have got left and they could have a record of how much money they have spent on phone cards. This is unlike using a post-paid mobile phone plan in which they would only find out how much they have spent after every billing month.

All of the seamen’s wives recognized how mobile phones have greatly improved their communication with their husbands. Those who were already married during the ‘phoneless period’ said that because of the mobile phone and other communication technologies that are now available and to which they have access, they have become ‘lazy’ at writing letters. They describe a process by which the need to write letters to their husbands has lost its force of necessity. However, although writing letters is now a thing of the past, some ‘traditional’ or asynchronous ways of keeping in touch have persisted such as the sending of children’s or family pictures, a request husbands would text their wives. What seamen’s families would show is that their use of new technologies is contingent on their capabilities, needs, and the sophistication with which they can use these technologies.

All of the wives talked of how, because of better and faster means of communication, they are able to deal with separation more easily, specifically with worrying about their husbands’ health and safety. Most importantly, family relationships have benefitted from constant or more regular and frequent, because cheap, communication. Yet, as Vertovec (2004, p. 223) has noted:

[f]or migrants and their kin in distant parts of the world, telephone calls can only provide a kind of punctuated sociality that can heighten emotional strain as well as alleviate it. This mode of intermittent communication cannot bridge all gaps of information and expression endemic to long-distance separation. Nevertheless, cheap international telephone calls join migrants and their

⁶³ In using ‘unli-calls’, wives dialled an access number followed by the mobile number. Pre-paid phone cards for unli-calls cost Php 100 (roughly £1.50) and have to be used within five days. Each call lasts only for five minutes and wives would have to redial again.

significant others in ways that are deeply meaningful to people on both ends of the line.

We turn in the following section to a discussion of how telecommunication, particularly through the mobile phone, has enabled and shaped possibilities for (re)producing a real and imagined sense of family in the context of lives dominated by absence and separation.

7.2 Co-Presence: Bringing the Absent Father Home

To better appreciate how new telecommunication technologies have facilitated and fostered family relationships, this section begins with a discussion of husband-wife/family communication prior to the mobile phone becoming easily available in San Gabriel. Succeeding parts will provide a short description of the dynamics of communication between the seamen and their families obtaining in the mobility of the seamen and with the ways wives have utilized communication to help their absent husbands experience an absent presence (Gergen 2002) in their families.

7.2.1 From Mail to Mobile

Wives, who were at least 40 years old at the time of the interview, described communication with their husband through the postal system as excruciatingly slow. One wife, who has always lived in San Gabriel, some 500 kilometres away from Manila where all letters bound for and sent from the Philippines first make their stop, recounted that in one year, she got only four letters from her husband. This, she clarified, was not due to her husband's lack of interest in writing back. Another wife, married to a cruise ship crew and who lived for a couple of years in Manila and hence got her letters more quickly, reported receiving letters once a month. A younger wife who also lived in Manila for a

few years said she received two letters in one month, documenting some improvement in postal delivery.⁶⁴

It might be argued that wives and husbands communicated ‘in the past’. This is due to the nature of letters as a communicative practice and to the postal system’s unreliability and slowness. What was recreated was a sense of, for example, what happened during the past month which husbands would get to read about with even more time lag because, as wives said, of their having to move from port to port. Letters narrated events that have ‘long’ happened and therefore removed any sense of immediacy from their narration. Laura, for example, compared her letters before her husband became a chief engineer to *telenovelas*, a popular television genre known for their extremely convoluted and drawn-out plots. The comparison is to the length of her letters because in the intervening time, she would have accumulated so many things to share with her husband. Husbands and wives were thus at a spatial and temporal remove from these events.

In contrast, because of instantaneous communication, a few of the wives said that it was as though their husbands were with them. Arlene said: ‘Kasla everyday kam met lang nga agkadjakdua, everyday nga tawag, text, email kasdiy’. [It is like we are together every day, calls every day, text, email, like that.] Dina also talked about this sense of presence.

Itatta nga adda cell phone any time adda communication dikad haanka unay nga.. agpininnadamag kay latta, di adda latta communicationyo. Kasla adda met laeng inta sibaymo latta.

⁶⁴ Writing and receiving letters were important to both wives and husbands, but particularly more so the husbands partly because of the dynamic obtaining on ships. Wives I interviewed and husbands I had conversations with talked about seamen being mercilessly teased by others if they did not have a letter among the post delivered. Apparently, the delivery of letters was a ‘public’ event as letters were ‘dumped’ on a table by whoever was in charge. Seamen described how they would rush to fish out theirs and whoever left empty-handed was easy to spot. Those who expected not to have one chose instead to stay in their cabin to spare themselves of the teasing. One wife, who had a period during which she rarely wrote to her husband (this was caused by her discovery that her husband was having an affair with another woman, a discovery she made because the other woman was also at the airport to send him off), recounted how other seamen in San Gabriel who worked with her husband on the same ship, visited her to ask her to write to her husband as he ‘could no longer think properly’. On the other hand, one husband recalled buying a bicycle to use to send letters as post offices were far from where they docked.

[Now that there are cell phones, we have communication anytime, you are not that.. you update each other, so communication between the two of you is there. It is like he is beside you.]

This sense of co-presence is a consequence of husbands and wives being able to get in touch quickly, share news and for the husband to even take part in family activities despite being physically absent. It is this co-presence that was not possible when wives and husbands relied on letters. These telephone conversations enabled the family to 'share affects and emotions, allowing their non-present partners access to the experience on the spot' (Arminen 2009, p. 98). Through these new telecommunication devices, Filipino seamen and their families not only 'retain a sense of collectivity' (Vertovec 2004, p. 222) but also negotiate relationships in new ways. Through them, as Sarah Mahler (2001, p.584) has said about transnational Salvadorans, although 'they are still physically distanced [...] they can now feel and function like a family'.

7.2.2 Dynamics of Communication

When wives talked of the frequency of their communication with their husbands, they were specifically referring to those times when their husbands could pick up cellular phone signal. During these times, communication between them was intense. One wife described how the flurry of text message exchanges between her and her husband left her unable to get much housework done because she did not want to make her husband worry about why she had not responded to his text messages. She explained that because phone signal is not always available, her husband was only taking advantage of when there was. Another wife said that her phone conversations with her husband were sometimes once every fortnight, once a week, or when they are in Malaysia, once every two days. Another wife shared that when her husband's ship was travelling from South Africa to Australia, her husband called her only once a week via satellite phone. Due to cost, these calls were only two to three minutes long. Another wife said that as long as her husband was not on work duty and there was signal, their phone conversations could last however long they wanted it to last since she used a prepaid phone card that enabled her to make

unlimited calls. Only one wife said she had daily phone conversations with her husband but which were only for two minutes. As the wife explained, it was just to hear each other's voice. When at port, calls lasted a minimum of 30 minutes. While all of the wives welcomed the ease with which they could now communicate with their husbands, Nancy said that because of those gaps of one or two weeks, her husband would call four times a day, explaining he was taking advantage of being able to call them. The consequence, however, is that the frequency of the calls left them with nothing to talk about. No new events had happened so sometimes she felt it was too much (*maumaak pay ketdin*). Other wives could not help but be anxious when their husband failed to call on the expected day.

Another factor that affected communication between the seamen and their wives/ families was time difference. Rosa, for example, said that she chatted with her husband at 12 midnight or talked to him via video call-webcam at four or five in the morning depending on when her husband was off-duty work. She would wake up her children because her husband also wanted to see and talk to them. She explained that although her mother would tell her that her health was going to suffer, 'seeing' her husband made all the waiting and waking up worth it. We turn to what Filipino seamen's wives did to produce this semblance of family.⁶⁵

7.2.3 Fostering Father-Children Relationships

When wives and husbands talked on the phone, wives made sure their husbands also talked to their children. Bearing in mind that many of the wives gave birth without their husbands around and that their husbands saw their children for the first time when they were already many months, sometimes more than a year,

⁶⁵ Although the focus of the discussion is on the agency of wives, this should not be taken to mean that the communication behaviour of the seamen-husbands was wholly determined by their wives. To be sure, when they called, they asked to speak to their children. My focusing on the wives is not meant to draw a link between wives and kinwork, 'the work of maintaining family relations' which Michaela di Leonardo (1987) has demonstrated, as 'generally the work of women in households' (quoted in Wilding 2006, p. 135).

old, wives made a conscious effort to ‘introduce’ father and child to each other. Or because their husbands are not around to see their children grow, wives try to establish emotional ties between children and their father so that when they are home, they already have something to start on. Equally importantly, it is so that their children will not see their fathers as strangers. As to why wives ask their husbands to speak to their children, Maricel explains:

Tapnon uray awan ni daddyda, at least makuada saan met didiay closeness da ngem didiay communication, tay mangnggeg da met ti boses na tapno no sumangpet a ket ammoda met ti kua.. kaslang.. closeda.. kasdiay.

[So that even if their daddy is not here, it is not their closeness but their communication, at least they can hear his voice so that when he comes home, they know.. it’s like they are close.. like that.]

Wives also showed these children pictures of their father to reinforce their phone talk. Although they put in this effort, they know that the emotional bonds a child has for his or her father cannot be forged through voice and aurality and there is no substitute for the physical, tactile, aural, and visual that their presence simultaneously enables. Rosario talks about how pained she is during the first few days of her husband’s coming home when she sees her children behave towards their father like he was alien to them; in her words, as though they were not his own children (see also Espiritu 2002). Yet the wives knew that without those phone conversations mediating their relationships, ties between father and children would be so much more fraught with estrangement and awkwardness.

Maintaining or developing father-children ties through telecommunication technologies is a complex undertaking. However, most of the wives shared how they have been able to forge these relationships mainly through mobile communication. Wives, particularly those with young children, talked about how fathers were pleased and buoyed by their phone conversations with them (with some children even singing to them). Others, such as Maricel, coached their children to tell their fathers not to sleep with other women. There were a few wives, however, who pointed to the impossibility of catalyzing father-children emotional bonds particularly from children. Their experiences show that communication cannot always fully bridge the physical and emotional gap

caused by the separation (see, for example, Parrenas 2008b). Gina shared that although her husband wants to talk to their children, the children find it difficult not only to express warmth but also, more fundamentally, to even want to talk to their father:

yung mga bata parang hindi masyadong ano sa kanya. [...] Pilitinko muna bago nila kausapin yung papa nila. Mahirap ano, medyo yung loob. [...] Kasi nakasanayanna mula noong pagkasilang, yun na. Pinipilit ko sila malayo kasi loob nila.

[the children are not that [warm] to him [their father]. [...] I have to really insist before they talk to their father. It is difficult, the ties. [...] Because they've gotten used to it since birth. I have to force them, they are quite distant.]

However, Gina clarified that it is different when her husband was home. Although it took time for the children to adjust to their father's presence, because the husband did things to win their affection, the children eventually warmed to him. Nevertheless, this did not lead to warmer phone conversations later on. Josefa shared her husband's comment that their daughter took the initiative to talk to him only when she wanted something.

Wives are aware that distance and separation can have negative consequences on relationships (Fortunati 2005; Sahlstein 2004). They use the affordances of telecommunication technologies to ameliorate and mitigate the negative consequences of this separation, consequences that have implications for the work they do as mothers and wives. For those whose situations have been more complex and circumscribed (by factors such as whether their children were already growing up before the era of affordable mobile phone communication in San Gabriel), even the inadequacy of telecommunication technologies to facilitate warmer father-children ties still communicates to both wife and husband the need to do something about these strained relations. In this sense, communication conveys its own limits. Nevertheless, although there were mothers who have not facilitated warmer father-children relationships through communication technologies, more mothers in this study said that their children and husband succeeded in having meaningful emotional relationships through mobile phone communication. Mobile phone

communication has enabled fathers to lessen the emotional gaps caused by separation due to migration (see also Aguilar 2009a, ch. 11).

7.2.4 Creating a Space for Husbands in the Lives of their Children

One of the ways by which wives brought a sense of home to their husbands is keeping them updated with their children's activities and accomplishments. For husbands whose wives gave birth without them around, stories about their babies they have yet to see enabled husbands to 'see' the growth of their children. Husbands would ask whether they are already eating solid food, are already walking, have grown teeth or are beginning to say words. For husbands with school-going children, such updates enabled them to imagine a place for themselves in what is going on in their children's lives and make meaningful attempts at inserting themselves in these moments. By knowing what is going on or what had recently happened, fathers can engage their children beyond formulaic 'how are you' questions. By knowing what their children are up to, husbands according to the wives, feel as though they are home. And because they learn of these things quickly, sometimes while they are happening, they are afforded more meaningful participation. These phone conversations help 'in generating a strong sense of shared space and time that overlooked – even if only temporarily – the realities of geographic distance and time zones' (Wilding 2006, p. 133). They allow husbands to 'bi-locate', that is, be on his ship yet also experience a sense of being home. As discussed in section 7.2.2, this sharing of space and time is contingent on the frequency of communication between husband and their families. Moreover, how spatial and temporal boundaries and differences are bridged is determined by kinds of communication technologies they have access to.

Mildred's husband, apprised of the fall of his children's school quarterly marks, told his children of his disappointment:

apay nababa ti gradesyo kunana ket. Dayta lang ti daw-dawatek kaniayo kunana ket di yo pay maited kaniak kunana ket. Amin nga kayatyo ket gatgatangek met kunana. Nga uray no nangina ket gatgatangek met. Dakayo ket dayta la ti dawdawatek ket di yo pay makua. So haan met agun-uni dagita ubbing nukua. So bagbagaanna

met nukua. Lalaingenyongamin met a a ket nag-sui ni papayo kunak nukua. Ilalaingmi met mama kunada met nukua.

[why are your grades low? he said. That is all I am asking of you, he said, and you could not even give it. Everything you want, I buy it, he said. Even if it is expensive, I buy it. You, that is all I want from you, you can't give it. So the children will not say a single word. So he talks to them. Give your best, see your father is upset, I would say. We are giving our best, mama they would answer.]

Her husband then devised a reward system to motivate them to apply themselves harder.

no adda perfect ket bayadak [...]. Isu adu nukua, urnungenda nukua [...] Isu nga no sumangpet ket iruarda amin daytay perfectda nukua bayadanna met nukua. Isu maay-ayo dagita ubbing nukua, isu nakaad-adu ti perfectda. [...] manu ngarud nukua papa. Ibagamet nukua ni papada ket sangagasut ti maysa. Ti ay-ayatda, no sumangpet ni papada ket nakaad-adu ti kwartada....

[if you get a perfect score [in a quiz, homework, project, etc.], I will pay. So they have many, they collect and keep them. When he comes home, they bring them out and he pays them. The children like it very much, so they have many perfect scores. How much, papa? Their father would say, one hundred pesos each. How they love it, when their father is home, they have plenty of money.]

When wives make their husbands aware of what is going on at home particularly with respect to their children, they make it possible for them to become more involved in their lives. Michael Billig (1995) has talked about 'banal nationalism' to refer to the routine and everyday practices in which people talk, express and practise nationalism, in other words how they experience an everyday sense of nation and national identity. We might speak of a banal sense of family arising from the wives' attempts to apprise their husbands of what their children are doing (cf. Christensen 2009; Licoppe and Heurtin 2002). These frequent telephone conversations enabled fathers to make their presence felt not only through establishing emotional ties with their children but also, as Mildred's case demonstrates, in disciplining their children. It is to how fathers are involved in disciplining children that we turn in the next section.

7.2.5 Disciplining from a Distance and Vitiating Authority

When wives updated their husbands about their children, they also ‘reported’ their children’s misbehaviour and asked them to talk to them. In this way, wives enabled their husbands to exercise parental-paternal authority from afar. Telecommunication devices helped these fathers exercise what Raul Pertierra (2005) has called ‘a post-corporeal agency’. Yet, as I will show below, this authority is vitiating by the fathers’ absence.

When talking about husbands’ involvement in disciplining children, we need to have a firm grasp of the nature of the disciplinary issues raised by the wives. These issues are age-related or linked to stage in the life course. The first is behaviour associated with growing-up children, that is, when children become more difficult to handle and the problem is exclusively behavioural and part of growing up. The second concerns grown-up children, that is, adult or approaching-adulthood children whose behaviour is a worrying concern because it has consequences on their future and on the situation of the entire family.

The first type of discipline-related issue allows fathers to simultaneously exercise authority and tighten emotional bonds with their children. Because husbands are away, wives say that they tend not to scold their children but to talk to them in a tone that is gentle yet firm, and in a manner that will strengthen their relationship. Teresa says that sometimes it is not just her voice but also her blood pressure that is raised by her son’s stubbornness. Her husband, who would ask their son if he had been spanked by his mother, would tell him:

sobrang makulit ka siguro siempre hindi naman magagalit ang mommymo. Para matulungan mo naman siya magpakabait ka rin. Para yun lang naman ang maitulongmo sa kanya.

[maybe you are just very stubborn otherwise your mother would not get angry. So you can help her, be good. That’s all you have to do to help her.]

These children will say yes to their father promising to behave better. But because they are children, their mothers say they go back to being stubborn once the conversation is over.

The second type of discipline-related issue poses more challenge to the father's authority. Unlike the first type, this one involves more a parental concern for two things. The first is to ensure their children took their studies seriously so that they have a chance for a better future. Maria shared:

No tumawtawag, agibagaak nokua. [...] Tawagam deta anakmo, bagbagaam.

Ana met nukua ti ibagbaga na?

A ket haanda nga agbalballog. Haanda nga makibarkada, tumulongda kaniak didiay. Agbasada a nasayaat ta para ti masakbayanda didiay.

[When he [her husband] calls, I tell him about things. Call your child, advise him/her.
What does he say?

That they should not be gallivants. For them not hang out with friends, that they should help me. For them to study hard because it is for their future.]

The second is to remind adult children to become responsible. Dolores recounted one such conversation between her husband and their eldest son:

Agsingsingpetka barok. Haan kayo nga agbarte-bartek, kasdiay.

Aggaggagetkayo, tulunganyo ta bagbagiyo... .

Denggen met dagitay ubbingyo?

'Wen, wen', kunkunada met. Ayna Apo!

[Be good, my son. Do not drink too much, like that. Work hard, help yourself

Do your children take heed?

'Yes, yes', they would say. Oh God!]

“‘Yes, yes’, [...]. Oh God!’ makes it clear that this paternal advice is not really taken to heart. Without the father being physically there, his children can say

one thing to him and do another. Situations such as illustrated in these two cases expose how fraught with tension and contradiction father and children relationships facilitated by the mobile phone might be. In disciplining children, fathers can only advise and encourage their children. They can perform the role but not exercise authority to ensure that what is said is also done (see also Espiritu 2002; cf. Parrenas 2008b). To be sure, even in families where fathers are around, grown-up children may still misbehave. Seamen-fathers might be said to be more constrained than fathers who are around by their distance because they do not want to strain further relationships with their children that are already affected by their absence.

7.2.6 Breaking and Withholding News

For seamen who are away from their families, relatives, and other kin and social relations, knowing about what is going on in their lives and about what is happening in their neighbourhood, village, and town helps them retain, as one interviewee put it, a sense of ‘still being there’. Consequently, they will have little difficulty participating in family, neighbourhood, and village ‘talk’ and affairs when they are back for their leave. Most importantly, knowing about what was happening to their families gave them a sense of still being responsible for them, as well as it being an expression of the respect due them as husband, father, or member of the family. Precisely because they are a member of the family and an important one, being given access to news and information countered any feeling or sense of being excluded which would have only heightened their separation.

7.2.6.1 Breaking News

Most of the wives preferred to tell their husbands positive news about their families or about the activities of their children. As much as possible they did not want to give their husbands any cause for worry. When they relayed news of illness or death, it was mostly about neighbours and other people which they thought was not going to negatively impact on their well-being while on ship.

However, one wife said that she did not keep things from her husband because the less she told him, the more worried he got. For a few others, telling their husbands eased the burden they had to deal with. However, they assured their husbands that it was not something that they could not deal with and so they should not worry. For two other wives, however, there simply was no point in withholding something that their husbands will eventually know about.

For those who managed the news that they shared with their husbands, there were, however, instances when they were impelled to break bad or serious news about their families. These instances involved them dealing with certain dynamics that shaped the breaking or embargo of news. Some wives told their husbands what otherwise they would have withheld, worried that their husbands would ask why they had not been told right away. This suggests that for husbands, they have a right not only to be told of these things but also to be told of them right away. Others did not want their husbands to know of these things from other people—which their husbands particularly disliked—something that, because of available telecommunication devices, wives cannot monitor, let alone control.

7.2.6.2 News Embargo

For many of the wives, it was precisely their husbands' living and working on a ship that sometimes made them hesitant to break certain news to them. Some wives imagined their husbands thinking of jumping off their ship, something wives think because of reports of their husbands' behaviour when they hear about family circumstances. These reports reach them through vacationing seamen whom their husbands worked with on the same ship or through these seamen's wives. To be sure, most of the wives said that their husbands preferred knowing everything to being kept in the dark. Some wives described their husbands as becoming restless ('maburiboran', 'di makatalna', 'di makaidna') when they are told something happened but only get bits and pieces of information. This made them suspect even more that something more serious than they are being told had happened. Some husbands, knowing that their

wives chose the news they told, in fact asked their wives to tell them about 'bad' news. Of 40 wives interviewed, only one, Maricel, had 'instructions' (bilin) from her husband, whom I also talked to informally, not to tell him anything about incidents or illnesses 'that are not that emergency' (meaning serious). If she can still deal with them on her own, then it would be best for him and his ability to concentrate on his work not to know them. When the situation was serious, and wives were duty-bound to let their husbands know such as when a child is in hospital, wives resorted to lessening the severity of the situation. In such instances, wives intended to give their husbands the full version once things improved. Dina's case demonstrates this dynamic.

Dina's son suffered from a kidney infection and was in ICU for eight days. She merely told her husband that their son was in hospital. Whenever he called to inquire about him, she simply said that he was getting better. It was only a month after their son's discharge that she told her husband of what really happened. She explained to him that she had merely tried to prevent him from becoming too worried to focus on his job that he might injure himself. Although the husband understood her concern and conceded that his son's illness would have really distracted him, he insisted that she should have told him everything from the start.

It is not just wives who tried to spare their spouse of worry. Janet, for example, learned about her husband falling ill only by asking her husband's work mate about how he was. She also knew about the injury he had on-board ship through this same person. She knew that her husband did not want to add to the things she had to think of but as his wife, she expected her husband to tell her of these things. Janet's husband faced the predicament many seamen's wives have to face, which is that they are no longer their husband's only source of news and information.

7.3 Missing Husbands

The preceding sections have looked at wives as agents using telecommunication devices to facilitate family ties. This section focuses on spousal ties. I begin this

section with a discussion of quarrels then move on to how wives and husbands encouraged each other. Although the section heading points to an absence (that of the husband) and alludes to issues of intimacy, I am expanding the semantic field of intimacy to encompass spousal arguments conducted over the phone. Although they are arguments, they nonetheless produce the sense of proximity and dynamic characteristic of couples who live in the same house. Although they are not 'positive' intimacies narrowly defined, they speak to the strains of separation and to the ways lives are negotiated and conducted across different spacetime locations. Finally, I briefly discuss sexual intimacy between separated couples.

7.3.1 In Good Times and in Bad: Phone Spats and Encouragement⁶⁶

Living apart exacts a toll and it is during telephone conversations (and even text message exchanges) when tensions which have lain dormant can erupt. It is in these events that pent-up emotions and fears get ventilated. A single word, uttered in a particular way, can be taken by one as implying more. Or a question, intended as a joke, albeit expressive of one's insecurities could be interpreted as 'fishing for something' and become a source of an argument and 'tampuhan' (a period when couples do not speak to one another).

Josefa and Raquel recounted phone quarrels caused by their questions about other women which the husbands were understood to have taken as accusations of infidelity. Three other wives did not like their husbands' questions about where they were putting their money, offended by what they perceived as accusations of profligacy. One wife's phone arguments with her husband stemmed from his 'jealousy'. Because of the time she finished from work, she got home late and sometimes got a ride from her male office mates. Leonora recounted a phone argument in which she gave free rein to her anger, repeatedly calling her husband 'useless' (awan serserbim'). About to give birth at the time of this recounted argument, she explained that she was under a lot of stress: she

⁶⁶ The discussion presented here is based on only eight interviewees who provided responses to this sort of phone conversation. However, it is safe to assume that more women have had, at one time or another, an argument with their husband over the phone.

had not received any allotment for at least two months and she worried about how she was going to pay for a likely caesarean delivery. Finally, Aida, who has a successful business but one that has taken so much of her time and energy admitted that she was presently (that is, during the time of the interview and the few days before it) not in good terms with her husband. As she put it, ‘saankam nga agfriend’ (we are not friends).

ta no [...] tumawag, isu met ti orasko, makatur-turogak unayen. Isu tay bagsakan nak nukua.... Sigawannak nukua kunana nukua, ngayon lang tayo mag-uusap tapos inaantok ka na!

[when he calls, that is also the time when I am very sleepy. So he slams the phone. He’d shout at me saying, it is only now that we can talk and you are already sleepy!]

Although they sometimes exchanged harsh words, couples encouraged each other. Acknowledging her fault, Leonora, cited above, apologized to her husband for having only seen her own predicament and forgotten her husband’s own situation. Reminded by him that at least she was surrounded by family and relatives whereas he did not have that kind of immediate kin and social support, she encouraged him to be strong and to bear his situation with perseverance. Karen helped her husband, who had wanted to come home even before his six-month contract ended, to endure the separation. Indeed, he even extended his contract for two and a half months.

Sometimes, wives encouraged their husbands by communicating to them both a sense of their obligation and their central role in the future of their family. Rosa provides an exemplary illustration. She said that there had been times when her husband, a cruise ship crew, came close to giving up.

Ket makaib-ibitak nukua met a. Ibagbagak nga agan-anus ket babassit pay dagita annakmi. Narigat ti agpabasa no awan ti kwartam. Awan sabali nga tumulong kaniami no di sika kunkunak.

[...]

Isu nga tay patpatatagek latta ti nakemnan. Pakatawaek kasdiay.

[And I would be close to crying. I tell him to endure because our children are still small. It is going to be hard to send them to school

if we did not have any money. No one is going to help us except you, I tell him.

That's why I just keep on encouraging him to be strong. I make him laugh.]

Husbands also gave their wives emotional and moral support. Most of the wives said that when they told their husbands of their difficulties, their husbands encouraged them and were sorry for not being with them during such times. Lilia and her husband talked about trusting each other, with Lilia emphasizing that just as she exercised self-control so did she expect her husband to do the same. Finally, Lourdes and her husband, both devoted Christians, have drawn courage and fortitude from their shared faith. Lourdes said that they always encouraged each other through, and found strength in, prayer.

7.3.2 The Intimacy of Absence

When couples encouraged each other, they were simultaneously expressing and communicating concern and love for each other. Their words were performative. They were invested with their selves and made to conjure up their physical presence. The words they uttered and the text messages they composed and sent to each other substituted for what they lacked in physical intimacy. To the extent that what they said was also meant to convey themselves, their words simultaneously evoked their absence and presence.

7.3.2.1 Intimate Conversations and the Joy of Text

Understandably, most of the women were quite hesitant to let me 'listen' in to their spousal conversations.⁶⁷ When I asked Norma, in her mid-40s and the owner of an internet cafe, about how she told her husband she missed him when

⁶⁷ I find 'listen in' quite appropriate. When wives answered, and most often in narrative form, they recreated the conversations they had with their children, their husbands or whoever was involved as though they were addressing these people and not me. In that sense, I was 'transported' to those conversation events and provided with a subject position as though I was listening to them.

she did, she replied: ‘LOL, yun na lang!’ (Laugh out loud, that’s all!). However, there were a few who did not mind giving me an answer. Lourdes readily said that her conversations with her husband always included him asking her never to lose heart followed by expressions of his love for her. She narrated that he said ‘I love you, too’ even though she had not yet said anything. Similarly, Rosario recounted her conversation with her husband a week after Valentine’s Day, widely observed by Filipinos. Having failed to greet him, she asked him what he did to which he responded: ‘Awan a. Inim-imagine ka’ (Nothing really. I imagined you).

Rosario’s response to my question ‘if you miss your husband and he calls, what do you say to each other?’ allows us to glimpse how husbands and wives who are apart might have intimate moments of conversations:

Ay kua met a. Ana’t ub-ubram. Adda met dagiti parte na nga antianna ti yanmo? Ana ti badom? [laughter] [...]Ana’t badom kunana nokua. A siempre a ket nakashortsak [talking to husband] ata napudot ngamin aya met a. Ala im-imaginen ka latta ngaruden.

[Well. What are you doing? There are times [my husband asks me] where are you? What are you wearing? [laughter] [...] ‘What are you wearing?’ he’d ask. Naturally, I am wearing shorts because it is very warm [explanation for my benefit]. I am just going to imagine you then.]

Rosa, whose house does not allow for much privacy, said that when she talks to her husband through webcam, she would bravely say she misses him a lot despite everyone else in the house overhearing it. ‘Even if they all hear it’ (‘uray dengdengenda latta’), she said.

The mobile phone is considered ‘the communicative instrument that, potentially more than any other, can influence the traditional management of intimacy and distance’ (Fortunati (2002, p. 48 citing Morris 1971). Given the physical space available in many of the wives’ houses which frequently precluded intimacy between wife and husband, the mobile phone has enabled the couples to ‘strengthen personal intimacy inside family intimacy’ (Fortunati 2002, p. 50). Raquel, for example, shared that her husband sent her naughty and sexually

charged text messages which, she said, excited her ('mai-exciteak met nokua'). Text messaging, more than phone or voice calls, enables wives and husbands to express their longing for each other, expression that was constrained by speech and physical environment. The orality and aurality of the expression of intimacy for many of these couples are replaced with visuality: rather than said and heard, it is read. Communicating spousal intimacy contrasts with wives' efforts to foster father-children intimacy particularly between father and children who have not seen each other. Whereas facilitating father-children intimacy used voice calls (orality-aurality) and visuality (mothers showed children pictures of their fathers), spousal intimacy within family intimacy relied on what cannot be (or must not be) overheard: the written. Intimacy thus becomes 'textographic' or 'scribed' (Pertierra 2005). Mobile phones not only enable mediated intimacy but also 'discursive intimacy' (Pertierra 2008).

7.4 The Persistence of Absence

The long absences of their husbands require the women to deal and live with their longing for them but also with social perceptions about what they might be capable of doing or be tempted to do because of and during their absence. This section deals with this period of their lives when they become, or are seen as, 'vulnerable'. I first attempt to convey a sense of how women experienced this aspect of their lives.⁶⁸

7.4.1 Displacing Longing: From Eros to Agape?

A few of the wives gave indication of their sexual longing and recognized that those whose spouses are away 'were closer to temptation'. As Leonora said:

Wen aya kasi human being tay met lang aya. [laughs] [...] adda latta met diay riknam nga kasdiay ngem [laughs]. Kunam ket [...] agaramidak ti kastoy-kastoy [laughs] [...] tapnu lang pangkastam

⁶⁸ Bearing in mind the sensitivity of the matter, answers to my questions were frequently oblique. Understandably, there are personal and cultural reasons for the inability to talk openly about this matter. I provide here a composite account.

lang diay rikriknaem aya. Ngem adda met didiay talaga nga butengmo, nga kuaennaka ni Apo Diyos. Kasi mostly nga makaaramid di ba ket dagitay mapanpanawan, haan met nukua kaniak. Ken diak itulok [laughs] ta narigat no maperdi ta pamilyak.

[Yes, because we are only human beings. [...] that desire is there. I say, 'I am going to commit this [...] just to [satisfy] what you are feeling. But you have that fear, God strikes you with it. Because those who [have affairs] are mostly those who are left behind, I haven't done it. And I am not going to allow it to happen because it is hard if you destroy your family.]

How then do the wives cope? When I asked the seamen's wives, 'no ngarud mailiwka kenni lakaymo'? (what if you longed for your husband?), as in chapter 5 where we showed that in order for women to relax, they did more work, three wives said that they busied themselves and used work to deal with their longing for their husbands. Maria, one of these three, combined work with going out, which I understood to mean as going to neighbours for chats and visiting her relatives who lived in another village:

Ikuak lattan adingko ti panagtrabaho. Ikuak ti panagtrabaho ken nukuan kasdiay. Ammom a no adda luganmo agpaspasiar ka lattan kasdiay. Didiay latta ti pangikuaakon. Trabaho kaslang awan panunotko lang kenni lakayko kasdiay nukuan a. Trabaho lattan.

[I deal with it through work. I deal with it through work. You know, if you own a vehicle [she owned and drove a tricycle], you go out. That's how I deal with it. Work so that my mind is taken away from my husband. Just work.]

On the other hand, fifteen of those who had children said they forgot about their husbands by focusing on their children.⁶⁹ Agnes's response encapsulates what these women said:

⁶⁹ It is well to remember that my discussion here of what wives did to deal with their physical and sexual longing for their husbands relied on what these wives could realistically share with me given personal, cultural and various other reasons not least of all the research dynamic obtaining in the interviews. Although there were suggestive responses, I have chosen not to speculate primarily because when wives did talk about them, they referred to other wives. Because I interviewed most of these women in their houses, there is also reason to believe that there was little possibility for mediated sexual intimacy (cf. Aguila 2008/2009; Pertierra 2006). In the first place, only seven of the wives had home internet. Also, just as Rosa's case demonstrates, there are spatial requirements for it. It is more likely that when husbands and wives did share to each other their longing, it was in the manner suggested by Raquel whose husband sent her sextexts. More importantly, the point of this section has not been to investigate

Awan, ang-anguék latta diay anakkon a. Awan, isu latta ti ar-
arakupek. Kasdiay lattan. Isu latta ti pangipappapasakon kasdiay. No
tumawag a ket isu ti pangipapasak ti iliwkon. Siempre awan met
sabali nga outletko no di lang diay anakko. Isu ti pangifocusak diay
attentionko.

[Nothing, I kiss my son. Nothing, it is my son who I hug. That is
what I do. It is to him I express (sate) my longing. If my husband
calls, then it is to him I express my longing. Of course, I have no
other outlet except my son. I focus my attention on him.]

How do children ease these wives' longing? Two wives might offer
illumination. Linda looks back to when she did not yet have a child:

Ket makasangitka met a. Ngem idi adda anakmin a, kasi nagka-anak
kami met nga kua eh. Kumbaga diay attention ko kenkuana, napan
yantay ubing isu. Idi awan pay anakmi ket permi nga mail-iliwak
ngem itattan ket masanayak metten. Diay attentionko, diay ubing.

[You cry. But when we had our daughter, we did not have to wait
long for a child. My attention for my husband went to our daughter.
When we did not yet have her, I missed him terribly, but now I am
used to it. My attention is focused on the child.]

Alicia, who we met in chapter 5 as the wife who fostered a child without first
discussing it with her husband, provides a description of how children might
serve as conduits for rechanneling feelings and emotional needs meant
originally for their husbands to meet. She also clarifies how children can be both
a source and recipient of material and practical work—care work—that keeps
her busy and occupied. This also generates a relational context in which the act
of caring (including the emotional investments it entails) enables her child to
become herself someone who can both love and care for her.

Ket mas medyo maikuan ti iliwmo kenni lakaymo ata adda
tartaripatuem nga ubingen. Dita no marigatankan a ket, tay ubing
met ti kuamun. Malpas ka nga agubra tay ubing ti aw-awirem
metten. Pumasyar-pasyar kayo met ti kaarruba a. Isu dagidiay met

how telecommunication technologies have enabled, and how the reality of separation has
necessitated, the exploration of mediated sexual expression and agency (cf. Pertierra 2007). In
this, the mobile phone has particularly been vital as it provides a means to privacy; the mobile
phone becomes a space that only the owner (in theory) has access to (see as well Pertierra 2006,
pp. 77-95).

lang, kasta met lang idi kua a ngem deta lang adda ubingmo nga pang..maibsan bassit detay iliwmo kaniaana. Adda met mangararakup kenka, mang-angango kenka [laughs].

[You can deal with your longing for your husband more easily because you have a child to look after. If you are finding your husband's absence difficult, well you've got the child. After doing housework, you take care of the child. You go to neighbours with her. It is those things, you still miss your husband, but you have your child to ease your longing for him. There is someone to hug you, kiss you. [laughs]]

These women's physical and emotional longing for their husbands are rerouted and 'translated' and the children are the medium through which this work is accomplished. They are also its recipients. Yet, Alicia also indicates that this only helps to ease her longing for her husband; it does not make it go away completely. Lilia talked about how she expected her husband not to gratify his needs with other women because she, too, had to control her own. We turn in the next section to a consideration of how women not only have to contain their needs and desires but also fight off propositions from men who make them in the knowledge of their unmet needs.

7.4.2 Women 'Like Parched Earth in Need of Rain' and Gossip

In the previous chapter, we saw how seamen's wives took care to be above suspicion. They did everything they could so that they would not become the subject of gossip. The absence of their husband also contributed to what Marissa described as how other men saw women like her: that they were vulnerable or 'easy-to-get'. She described how she thought men saw her: 'ti ngata panangipagarupda, kaslaakla agrekrekkang a daga masapulna ti tudo' (they probably think I am like parched earth in need of rain). Her perception of other men's perception of her was based on her experience of receiving text messages and mobile phone calls from men propositioning her.

7.4.2.1 'Like Parched Earth in Need of Rain'

To understand how some of the women laboured to protect their reputations, we need first to have an idea of how they, particularly those below 40 years, were cast as 'vulnerable women' and so accordingly approached by men mostly through text messages. This will also further contextualize these women's vulnerability to becoming the subject of malicious *tsismis* (gossip) and so better understand what they meant when they said they did not go out much. I will present Marissa's case because she gave a detailed account of her experience.

Yes, I will admit. There are men who will really [try to exploit the fact that] some women do not have their husbands around. They have the impression that you, the woman, they think you can be tempted easily. They probably think I am like parched earth in need of rain. But I am not saying I will not be tempted because I cannot see the future. That's why I say [to her husband], 'let's keep on praying that it won't happen'. But the truth is, there are really a lot, a lot who are tempting [propositioning]. I pray that it won't happen.

How do you mean, a lot come here [to your house]?

They don't come here. I mean, many text me, many call.

Many naughty ones?

Naughty ones.

From here?

Yes.

You know them?

I know them because they introduce themselves. But others...

They introduce themselves. How do you mean?

Why, who are you? Who do you want? You. What do you want from me, they will also tell me [what they want]. Why when you know I have a family, I tell them. Nothing, I just like you. They probably liken me to an unmarried woman, an unmarried woman who is... I tell them, if I did what you want me to do, my family is going to be destroyed. What if you were in my position, I will reverse the situation, you're the one with a family and I don't, I tell them. Or we both have families and somebody liked you. You liked each other and in the end you both destroyed your families. That is what is always in

my mind. But I am not going to say anything with finality because that is difficult to do. You can't see the future. That is why what I truly do is pray. That no man will succeed in his designs, that no one is going to be hurt. Of course, someone will be hurt, someone will suffer. Especially your husband who is away. He is there working.

Do you tell this to your husband?

Of course. There was one time he was here, he was home. And my cell phone, I leave it anywhere. But I never expected it to be that way. There was someone who had been contacting me and he texted 'Well, now that your husband is home', he said, 'what about us then'? But I had no relationship with that man. What he probably wanted to do was to destroy me because I did not succumb to what he wanted to happen. Before my husband came back, he [her husband] would sometimes ask me who I spoke to on the phone, who I exchanged text messages with. And I said, oh there are many. But I never thought he [the man who wanted a sexual relationship with her] would be so serious [as to send her such a text message that suggested they had a relationship]. But I said, before my husband came home, there is someone who is doing this, I only wanted to protect myself from what might happen. There was one time that, 'I heard your husband is now back, what now then?' he said like that. 'Why, what is this?', my husband asked. Reply to him, I said. So my husband replied to him and what he said is 'I don't need you for now since my husband is here, when he is gone, then it will be the two of us again', my husband texted. And they texted each other until the man admitted we did not have anything, there was nothing. Stupid man. I told my husband about it so he was not going to think anything.

Marissa was honest enough to say that although she does not want to ruin her family, she cannot divine the future and so cannot speak with certainty that she will not be tempted. I take what she said not as an indication of a possibility (that she is open to it) she will, or an intent to, stray so much as it is an indication of how great the temptation is. Marissa protected herself by preempting the possible consequences of these propositions. By showing the text messages to her husband, she avoided making them the source of arguments between them.

7.4.2.2 Gossip

A few other wives became the subject of malicious gossip. These wives claimed that these rumours about them behaving improperly, which came from, and spread by, their husbands' relatives, were meant to destroy their marriage. The object-recipient of these rumours was of course their husband. Like Marissa, these wives told their husbands of these rumours to forewarn them of what was being spread against them. Like men who think of seamen's wives as vulnerable particularly the younger ones because of the absence of their husbands, those who spread the rumours think of these women as easy targets of gossip precisely for the same reason. In both cases, these 'assaults' on these women were done through mobile communication particularly text messaging which enable information and gossip to circulate instantly (Horst and Miller 2006; Pertierra 2008). As one interviewee said, with the sophistication of mobile phones now, it was easy for someone with malicious intentions to take a picture of her talking to someone and send it to her husband. The relatives' ability to communicate with the women's husbands has also led to increased surveillance (Horst 2006). While women bore the consequences of the absence of their husbands finding help in advances in communication technologies, the same technologies were used in other people's attempts to undermine the work that they accomplish to (re)produce a sense of family and to foster closer family ties despite distance and separation.

Conclusion

With over ten million Filipinos living and working overseas, separation has become warp and woof of the fabric of many Filipinos' lives. It is a paradox that what connects Filipinos with many others is this shared experience of separation due to migration. With international communication becoming more affordable and accessible to many Filipinos through mobile phones, separation has become easier to deal with. Mobile communication technology and also internet-enabled communication such as video calls, emails, chats, and social networking (Facebook) have enabled those separated from their families to experience virtual co-presence in place of physical co-presence.

Filipino seafarers and their wives and children have tremendously benefitted from these developments. Compared with land-based Filipino workers, however, communication between seamen and their families is less frequent because dependent on the movement and geographic location of the seamen. Although it is possible to call their families using their ship's satellite phone while they are at sea and when they cannot pick up mobile phone signal, the prohibitive cost of satellite phone calls militates against its frequent use. Nevertheless, seamen's wives have benefitted from the affordances of particularly mobile phone communication. It has made it possible and easier for them to foster ties between them and their husbands despite absence, separation, and distance. It has enabled husbands to experience co-presence and wives have facilitated the possibility for their husbands to experience meaningful interactions with their children. Because of this co-presence, these seamen can have more than 'spectral presences' (Rafael 2000) especially in the lives of their children.

Through instantaneous communication events facilitated by mobile phones, wives and husbands are now able to experience intimacy despite being away from each other. Encouraging each other, for example, is a vital work performed by husbands and wives. It is a work that constituted part of the intimacy that they were able to demonstrate to each other. Nevertheless, a life of separation is never easy and is always fraught with anxiety, tension, and misunderstanding. Telephone conversations (and even text message exchanges) are not simply communication events through which family members might be drawn closer together. These are also times when the messy aspects of maintaining a family become visible and audible. Wives and husbands can now have 'domestic spats' in real time. Mobile phone communication has enabled Filipino seamen's families to create 'narrative and imaginary spaces' (Perterra 2005, p. 26) that help reproduce family and affective ties. This has implications for how the link between intimate relations and the domestic is conceptualized. As McNay (2000, p. 71) has noted, the domestic sphere has predominantly been the site for the reproduction of intimacy among family members. Communication technologies have enabled family relationships to be

reproduced outside of the confines of domestic physical togetherness. Consequently, intimacy is unbounded (McNay *ibid.*). My limited access to how wives and husbands expressed intimacies towards each other nevertheless pointed to some of the ways by which the women dealt with their physical and emotional longing for their husbands. Lives defined by separation and the absence of one spouse inform the sexual subjectivities of the women. This is not only in the way the women sublimated their desire but also in how they dealt with gossip and other men's propositioning.

This has important implications for lives lived in different spacetimes (cf. Campbell and Ling 2009; Castells *et al.* 2007; Katz and Aakhus 2002; Liccope 2004; Light 2009; Mante 2002) and the case of seamen's families demonstrates how separation and distance no longer preclude the involvement and participation, particularly of the seamen, in the daily lives of their families. In this sense, as Pertierra (2008, p. 176) has argued, these communication technologies are *techne* in that they are 'a way of dealing with others in the world' and in that they enable 'new ways of being in the world'.

Powerful as it is, even in its consideration as, and with its transformation into, *techne*, the communication possibilities, co-presence and connected presence enabled by mobile phones can never fully substitute for human and physical contact particularly between husbands and wives. A number of the wives became the target of ill intentions precisely because of the absence of their husbands. They either became the subject of malicious gossip or propositioned by other men simply on the basis they might be 'like parched earth in need of rain'. This different type of communicative act, based on assumptions of the physical needs of these women, attempted to undermine them. Whereas the seamen's wives' 'talk' was meant to foster family ties or had the consequence of reproducing 'real' domestic or family situations (such as quarrels), this other talk—gossip and propositioning—registered a different sort of intent, which was to create tension and friction, and ultimately a potential breakdown in spousal relationship. To be sure, some of the gossip may be seen as attempts by the husband's family to assert ties that these (sea)men no longer consider

primary to them. Viewed this way, gossip was, paradoxically, a way of reforming or rebuilding relationships particularly a mother's sense of right, entitlement, and access to her son's 'affection' qua income that was superseded, but not eliminated, by marriage.

We might also productively consider the women's work to bring home to their husbands and to bring their husbands home through a notion of liminality (Turner 1967; 1995 [1969]; van Gennep 1960; also Aguilar 1999; Nippert-Eng 1996). This is an appropriation of an idea applicable more to the husbands who undertake journeys but it is my argument that although wives do not depart, leave home, their husband's departure gives rise to contexts and situations in which women undertake symbolic journeys such that their obtaining experiences transform them. There is a sense in which their experiences as left-behind wives and mothers and their experiences when their husbands are back are already being recreated and reproduced, that is, anticipated, by the material and emotional work wives (and husbands) do to reproduce family life through telecommunication. This is a transitional timespace that facilitates family life when husbands return. Husbands will not only find it easier to re-incorporate themselves into their families but that the family they left behind will also find it easier to absorb them back, that is, re-incorporate their lives into their husbands' and fathers'. This way, too, the feminization of responsibility and the temporal organization of domestic life, the subject of chapters 5 and 6 respectively, might be placed within a perspective that allows us to see the transformative potential of the repetitiveness and cyclicity of these aspects of their lives. By repeatedly going through these experiences, women 'learnt both to survive, and to triumph' (Nicholson 2008, p. xii).

This imagined communion in which husbands had virtual co-presence was also a time when some of the women were imagined to be other than what they were and thereby became subjects of gossip. I have limited my discussion of gossip in this chapter to those that did not lead to anything more than the husband supporting their wives. More than this, however, the experience of being gossiped about made the women more assertive and became a reason to fight

back. In this sense, this timespace of imagined communion was also a liminal experience. Being the subject of gossip helped produce some of the conditions of possibility for the transformation of these women. It impelled some of the women to find and have a voice, and engendered and intensified their desire for autonomy. We turn to this topic in the next chapter.

ANTINOMIES OF AUTONOMY

When wives defended themselves from malicious gossip that they perceived were meant to destroy their 'kinatao' or personhood, they were not only protecting their character. They were, more fundamentally, asserting themselves. This is to say that they were asserting a self that was the real them, a self that was not merely being misunderstood but rather intentionally misrepresented. We can detect from this dynamic that identity is formed in relation to others and that, particularly in the case of these wives, identity is shaped and defined in opposition to others. Their experience demonstrates how identity-making occurs always in relation to others, and its imbrications in structures and relations of power.

This chapter examines the women's desire and struggle for autonomy in lived and material contexts, in 'the ways that subjectivities and meanings come into being through practices of relation' (Faier 2009, p. 23). It investigates how the self 'comes into being through community' (McClintock 1995, p. 262) and underscores the relational and dialogic construction of identity. Being a wife is not just a status one assumes with the act of contracting marriage. For all of the wives who took part in this study, the (civil) status 'married' (which re-signifies the women as 'wives') is a process of becoming shaped by the vagaries of their lives, constantly defined and redefined, negotiated and navigated. For them, becoming a wife did not only mean taking on a new role and a different set of expectations, responsibilities and obligations. It also meant entering or becoming part of a new set of relationships (particularly her husband's family and relatives). Very often, these new relations needed to be carefully managed showing more clearly how the self is 'constructed in the context of social interaction' (McNay 1992, p. 10).

To demonstrate how autonomy (as well as the desire for it) and the self are shaped by and in relation to others and in the quotidian lives of these women, that is, in their physical, material, emotional, mental/psychic labour and practices that comprise their daily lives, this chapter focuses its analytic lens on what I call the ‘minutiae of becoming autonomous’—those aspects that inform, shape and serve as the basis of these women’s sense of autonomy, subjectivity, identity and agency. They might seem small and inconsequential but they were so wedded to these women’s lives that these aspects’ necessity might be likened to the oxygen they breathed. Indeed, a number of these women drew a link between living in their own house and breathing freely.

The first part of this chapter examines how, for some of the wives, autonomy begins with finding and having a voice. I situate this possession and development of such a voice in the context of the tension arising from a strong cultural injunction to respect one’s in-laws and bearing up with mistreatment from difficult mothers-in-law. The second looks into how autonomy, for a number of the women, was linked to ‘controlling the purse’, an issue that, once again, involved mothers-in-law. The third looks into the dynamic of working or desiring to work (understood here as paid and self-employment) and how it constituted the selves they cultivated or would have wanted to cultivate. The fourth deals with the experiences of a few women who contemplated separation from their husbands, a prospect they considered because of how their situation had become intolerable. I focus on the role played by the mother-in-law in bringing about this possibility as well as on the husband’s infidelity. I examine how separation exposed further the women’s dependency on their husbands and how infidelity was rationalized culturally and pragmatically. The last examines how having their own house comprised a vital foundation and location of these women’s autonomy.⁷⁰ Indeed, finding a voice, controlling the purse and issues surrounding working as aspects of autonomy might be said to find their concretization in having a house of their own. To that extent, it is the logical extension of finding a voice, of a voice finding its own dwelling and abode. I

⁷⁰ In this chapter, I have included only the English translation of the interview extracts for reasons of word count and space. The interview extracts in the original language are appended to the thesis.

end this section with one wife's narrative of a turbulent life finally becoming calm, of a wife whose story illuminates the antinomies of autonomy. In the conclusion, I deal further with the dialectic between autonomy and interdependence.

In keeping with the spirit of this chapter, I have chosen to let the women talk more than I have been able to allow them in previous chapters. The cases I present throughout include long quotations and this is part of my attempt to make content consonant with form, voice and register. I am aware that despite the women speaking to tell their stories, their narratives and voices have been framed by my own critical understanding of their life projects and endeavours and by the story that is narrated in this entire thesis, a narrative that did not emerge fully formed in my head but one which developed in the process of writing. I have, however, tried to give these women my utmost respect, as I have always tried to do (and hopefully succeeded to do) in the preceding chapters. I have sought to always contextualize what they said, and this contextualization—whether economic, political, social, historical, cultural, or religious—constituted the reflexivity I have been able to exercise. Although mothers-in-law appear here and in the previous chapter as the women's *bete noire*, I have also sought, whenever I thought it appropriate and necessary to provide justification, to understand these mothers-in-law and so provide an explanation for their actions (see, for example, the last section of chapter 6). Admittedly, however, this is the narrative of the wives.

8.1 'When the blessed meek learn to talk back': Respect, Wives and Mothers-in-Law

When it is genuine, when it is born of the need to speak, no one can stop the human voice. When denied a mouth, it speaks with the hands or the eyes, or the pores, or anything at all.

Eduardo Galeano, 'Celebration of the Human Voice/2'

Every one of the wives spoke of a cultural expectation to show respect to their parents-in-law; that if they were taught since they were young to respect their

parents and other elders, such respect, even more respect, in fact, is to be shown their in-laws.⁷¹ A few of them said that they may disrespect their own parents but never their in-laws. When these women married, they (and their husbands) were fully aware of this cultural injunction and would have always treaded carefully not to offend their parents-in-law. These ties not only bound them to structures of affection and respect but also located them in new contexts to define, redefine and assert their selves. This was particularly true of wives who went on to live with their husband's family and came under the close watch of their mothers-in-law.

The inculcation of respect functions as a disciplinary practice (Foucault 1977). It is a way by which children and adults learn to police or surveil their own selves. 'Respect for parents, elders and in-laws' acted as a cultural and social force that made people watch how they behaved, what they said, and the tone in which they said what they said. It was a way by which parents and elders exercised authority and perpetuated hierarchy. Where virilocal residence was practised, this cultural premium placed on respect compelled the women to suffer in silence for, after all, it might be argued to be tacitly founded on a 'culture of silence' (Freire 2001 [1970]).

The relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law is traditionally conflict-filled (Bennett 1983; Hegland 2010; Pauli 2008; Wolf 1972; for sons-in-law, see Pingol 2001). Judith Brown (2004), who refers to the existence of a 'mother-in-law belt' extending from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, describes in ideal terms (in the Weberian sense) the relationship between the two women: 'At marriage the wife enters into a life of servitude and is expected to be obedient, submissive and stoic in the face of gratuitous mistreatment, both psychological and physical, until she becomes a mother-in-law herself' (Brown 2004, p. 168). Although none of the women I interviewed who lived with their mother-in-law became a servant to her or to her husband's family, most of them

⁷¹ Indeed, Article 357 of the Civil Code of the Philippines, arguably a codification of Filipino social and cultural values, explicitly instructs a child to obey and honor his parents and to respect his grandparents and old relatives (Pangalangan 1995, p. 21).

endured mistreatment and initially suffered in silence. Gina and Marissa illustrate this.

8.1.1 Gina: 'Bad Words'

They were meddling. Controlling you. They were even the ones getting [my husband's] income. Everything, even your money, they controlled. Even your taking of pills, they had to shout, as though we did not have a mind of our own. [...] they wanted me to take pills because it was difficult to look after children when they did not help me look after the children. [laughs] When they did not look after the children because I had a helper at that time.

[...]

I just kept quiet. When it became too much, that's when I talked back. Super. I really had a row with her [mother-in-law]. I couldn't stop what came out of my mouth. They were really bad words, because I was just in my room, not saying anything. She even dragged in my family, saying things about my family. I have had too much, so I just, you know, even if my husband was there, it was good my husband was around. He tried to cover my mouth, that's enough he said. Then he turned to her, it's your fault mama, she [the wife] she wasn't even saying a single word yet you kept on and on and on there, he said.

Gina relates that living with her mother-in-law included suffering verbal abuse, constant monitoring of her activities, invading her own life such as being told to take her birth control pills which she felt infantilized her ('kala mo wala kaming sariling isip [as though we did not have a mind of our own]), and her mother-in-law controlling what she deemed was already more rightly her money. She was, in her own words, being controlled.

8.1.2 Marissa: 'I Became Shameless and Disrespectful'

Aside from the mistreatment she suffered from her mother-in-law, what pushed Marissa to 'become disrespectful' was her mother-in-law's gossiping about her.⁷² Her story indicates that she used to have good relations with her

⁷² There is close affinity between respect and shame in Ilokano. Torres-Mejia (2000, p. 141) proffers that respect is reducible to '*mabain*, which means "to be ashamed", to be self-effacing toward the person whom one respects. Shame is the acknowledgement of one's inferiority and

neighbours who are her husband's relatives. Her mother-in-law's gossiping had poisoned this relationship and turned them against her. She said that lies about her having illicit affairs were spun around her doing a care-giving training which, as a matter of course, required her to go out of their house and be seen with classmates, both male and female.

Many studies of gossip have focused on its function, following on the heels of Max Gluckman (1963) whose functionalist approach to gossip and rumours asserted that they strengthened group unity (Stewart and Strathern 2004). For Gluckman, rumour and gossip reinforced norms, and policed individual conduct (Stewart and Strathern 2004, p. 37). Gluckman has been criticised for taking gossip only as negative slander (Mohl 1997) and for taking the community, rather than the individual, as the centre of analysis (Paine 1967). For Paine, gossip advanced the interests of the individual doing it, denigrated others and catalyzed social process (Stewart and Strathern 2004, p. 37). In affecting social activities and relations, either the negative or the positive consequences of gossip have been the focus of research (Stewart and Strathern 2004). In this respect, what is emphasized is gossip's disciplinary power or its use as a form of social control (Faier 2009; Mintz 1997; Morin 1971; Wolf 1972) or its being socially constructive (Capps 2010; Mohl 1997; Spacks 1985).

Yet, what becomes evident in Marissa's case is not so much that gossip is a form of social control or that it could lead to self-empowerment as much as that gossip, as she experienced it, produced both positive and negative consequences simultaneously. The sheer need to defend one's self, reputation and family emboldened Marissa to speak out. Yet, we can also see the force of the cultural injunction to respect one's in-laws in her characterization of her becoming assertive as turning into a disrespectful woman. More crucially, her mother-in-law, who oppressed her, might be said to have lost in her attempts to marginalize her. I would therefore agree with Stewart and Strathern (2004, p.

of one's dependency, which is accorded not only to those who are economically superior but also to kinfolk, elders, neighbours, teachers, politicians, and church ministers; to social superiors such as parents, elder relatives and ritual kin'. (emphasis in original) See also Jocano (1982).

30) who have noted that ‘there is always the possibility of both positive and negative results, and sometimes these may be mutually implicated: a “positive” result for some people may be “negative” for others’.

But I learned to talk back. If you’re not used to, like you’re the quiet type. But because of how they belittle you, that’s how you learned. I am like that. I am really like that. Then, I did not know how to talk back, I did not know how to fight back. But when I realized, why should I allow it, why should I be oppressed? Why do I not fight for myself when in fact I can? That’s how I learned.

[...]

You know, my behaviour now, like I have become shameless. If I hear something, what I want to do is confront the person right away. That’s because you do not want to be gossiped about. Maybe I became paranoid because of what happened. I became very disrespectful because of what happened. Sometimes, though, I realize why should I be affected like this when there is no truth to it. I really don’t want to be treated lowly. I really do not like to be, what I want is when something is said to me, I confront the person. You have any evidence, like that. My mother-in-law, when she says something like that, I really talk back. Before, I was never capable of talking back to her. But because they themselves taught me. She tells me, you are shameless/disrespectful. It’s you who taught me, I tell her. When I moved in to this house, I say, did you hear me say anything? No. Did you hear me talk back? No. It was you who gave me my horns, I said. You’re shameless/disrespectful. I am shameless/disrespectful because of you. I learned to talk back because of you. If I don’t fight for myself, you mean to say you want to trample on me, you’ll just step on me, I said. What I want to do is leave this house, show them I will live without her son [Marissa’s husband]. I am only thinking of my children.

[...]

That’s how I steeled myself. If you know you are right, you know you are not doing anything [not having affairs], I really talk back. Before, if they shouted at me, I would shut up immediately. But now, try doing that to me, just try, if I hear something from your mouth [mother-in-law]. I am not afraid of you, you gave me my horns, I said.

Talking back was only the beginning for these women to become autonomous. Finding and having one’s voice is a critical first step in the assertion and development of identity and agency, and a crucial beginning in their exercise of

power and in addressing the asymmetries of power relations in which they frequently found themselves. Gina's breaking her silence was a point of no return. It was this experience that made her want to move out of her mother-in-law's house where she felt she could not breathe ('para kang hindi makahinga'). Marissa's talking back was a defiant and belligerent act, shocking her mother-in-law by the force of her assertiveness and new-found confidence. Her mother-in-law could only say in the end she was 'natangsit' (arrogant and not showing respect), thereby exposing her expectation that she should only be meek. Her mother-in-law had only succeeded in making her otherwise. A word for a word, the attempts to dominate her backfired on the mother-in-law as Marissa told her it was she herself who taught her to talk back.

Gina and Marissa demonstrate that there was a limit to what they could bear. Unlike, however, the proverbial last straw that broke the camel's back, what was broken was the women's silence. What emerged from it was a sound, the sound of the women's voice answering back and the splintering of an old self giving way to a new one. When such silence was broken, it was always in a confrontation, with one – the daughter-in-law – raging. Experienced by the wives as quite liberating – both a release and being released – 'talking back' was a defiant act precisely because it meant becoming freed from an ideological and cultural doctrine that valued silence, understood as obedience, submission and subservience.

Marissa's defense of herself against gossip also responded to ideology. Stewart and Strathern (2004, p. 30) have said that '[f]or words to be harmful, ... they have to be spoken in contexts of ideology that are congenial to them'. Marissa could not simply shrug off the slanderous gossip about her because her character and potential actions were being framed by discourses and representations about the (mis)behaviour of left-behind wives. No doubt most of them are imagined but some of it has been founded on a number of women who strayed and whose example, over time, has come to haunt left-behind women, exploited as it were to police the behaviour of women, a policing that falls on the shoulders of women. As Deborah Jones (1980, p. 196) has said, 'the fault lies not in female maliciousness, but in sexist moral codes which women

enforce but do not create'. Thus, as Stewart and Strathern (2004, p.30) have said, it is 'the ideological and historical context rather than the words themselves that ultimately produces the effects'. Gossip indicates that women 'bear the moral burdens of family separation' (Dreby 2009, p. 34).

8.2 Becoming the Allottee and Control of the Purse

After marriage, women, specifically those who lived with their husband's family, did not automatically become the recipient of the 'alote' or allotment.⁷³ The Philippine government has decreed that seamen 'send' at least 80 per cent of their salary—the allotment—to their allottee.⁷⁴ Because of this regulation, unmarried seamen were compelled to designate a beneficiary who, most often than not, was their mother. Both institutional or governmental and familial obligations ensured that the mother became the 'legal' recipient of her son's affection remitted as allotment. Women who moved into their husband's family not only had to live with his kin but also with this arrangement that had been in place. Six women in this study who lived or used to live with their mothers-in-law waited for at least two years (with one saying she waited for 10 years!) before they became their husband's beneficiary. This, however, did not stop their husband's financial support for their mother or natal family which the wives perfectly understood.

Getting their husband to have them replace their mother-in-law as the main beneficiary was, however, fraught with conflict and tension. As in some of the wives' sufferance of their mothers-in-law, there was a limit to the wives'

⁷³ It is interesting to note how 'allottee', the beneficiary or recipient of something, came to be translated as 'alote', the object itself that was (to be) received. The person receiving and the object received became elided. However, women I interviewed used the verb 'nag-alote' to refer to their becoming the allottee; for example, 'Idi nag-aloteakon' (literally, 'when I became the allottee'). When women said 'idi nag-aloteak', they might be seen, at least symbolically, to be transforming a status or identity from one that is merely designated to one that is attained through a process of conversion. Viewed this way, there is a dynamic process by which the women identified with the money being received. They used 'alote', a noun, to refer to the money but turned this noun into 'nag-alote', a verb that might be argued to indicate both the process of their *becoming* the allottee and of their *being* the allottee.

⁷⁴ In practice, it is the seamen's manning agency that sends or deposits the money to their beneficiaries' account, ensuring that the Philippine government's decree is followed and guaranteeing that the government benefits from the seamen's remittances.

acceptance of the existing arrangement. The women asserted that as wives, they should be the beneficiary and that this was an important component of their position and status as wives. As Gina said:

Because in [my husband's] first and second contract, it was they [who received the allotment]. He [her husband] himself decided to transfer it to me. But then still what my mother-in-law wanted to happen is I hold the bankbook but the account is in her name and her son. I hold the bankbook. That's what she said. I did not say a word. It was up to my husband. Eh, may be he thought that I was going to insist, nag him [laughs]. Of course, who would agree to that? What woman will agree to such an arrangement? What am I to you, I said [to my husband].

The allotment was therefore not merely about money but also about what this money symbolized. From the wives' accounts, we can also argue that this was the case with most of the mothers-in-law. Aida (who did not live at all with her mother-in-law) shared that her mother-in-law, who has four other children working overseas, still asked for money from her husband. She recalled what her mother-in-law once said to other people and which reached her: that her son's affections were no longer hers. For the mother of Aida's husband, the money her son gave her was appreciated not only on the basis of her economic need but also that she interpreted the money as symbolizing she still had a place in her son's universe of affection. The money meant that her son had not cut a metaphorical umbilical cord that now reversed the original mother-and-child relationship. Most mothers, however, did not have other children to depend on and hence might have viewed their daughters-in-law as threatening their economic well-being.

To appreciate this, we need to understand the class origins and socio-economic standing of many, if not most, of Filipinos who become seamen. Many Filipinos who take maritime-related courses that will later on enable them to work on ships, preferably on international lines, come from rural and poor backgrounds. Anecdotal evidence also indicates that they would not have been the top academic performers in their class who would then proceed to do prestige degrees in law, medicine, and engineering. Or because of their

economic standing would not have been able to afford expensive degrees. Working on international ships is seen by many Filipino families as one escape route out of poverty.⁷⁵ Many of these seamen's mothers would have been full-time mothers. With no one else to rely on, we can at least understand, however partially, the rationale behind their desire to hang on to their son's money.⁷⁶ It is also helpful to understand some of the husbands' initial hesitation to change their allottee from their mother to their wife within the context of 'utang a naimbag a nakem' (utang na loob in Tagalog; debt of the inside or debt of gratitude) which shapes all forms of social interaction and relationships. Not only is it an expression of a child's gratitude to his or her mother who is emotively and fondly seen as having sacrificed a lot (a common idiom is that in giving birth to children, one of the mother's feet was on a grave underscoring the debt a child owes his or her mother). If parents, especially mothers, have only their children to rely on in their old age, and if despite their poverty they worked very hard and sacrificed a lot to send them to school (insakad), it is with both a sense of duty and gladness that children support them. A seaman's continued help to his family and even relatives is also an instance of the practice of 'utang a naimbag a nakem' in another register (see also Cannell 1999). Having made it, a seaman refusing to help financially or in whatever way will be seen as turning his back on or abandoning his family or kin. Partly, it is a sense of obligation that compels them not only to help but also to share with others, significant others, whatever it is that they are now enjoying. There is also the crucial element of 'asi' (kindness and pity) that informs the practice of sharing and helping others.

The seamen's wives knew this very well and they themselves shared with their own families whatever it is that they can share to help. At issue was that they were at the mercy of their mothers-in-law. Wives who lived with their mothers-

⁷⁵ Wives I interviewed made it clear that working on domestic ships was not a lucrative enough alternative. Crew men are poorly paid and the wives explained that working on domestic lines meant separation anyway so they might as well be separated but have better financial remuneration.

⁷⁶ I provide this discussion not to condone them but to go beyond simply attributing their behaviour to attitude or personality, although this should not be discounted. In fact, two mothers-in-law who wanted to retain control of their son's allotment had worked full-time.

in-law and who received their allowance from them recalled how very little freedom they had even in the way they spent their money. Laura, for example, uses the word 'pinapakialaman' (meddling) to describe her experience. Marissa shared how her mother-in-law constantly reminded her how to spend her son's money:

When he [Marissa's husband] was sending the allotment to his mother [her mother-in-law], she'd say a mouthful. It was as though I was going to spend her son's money senselessly, like I was going to fritter it away like I did not value it. As though she did not know I would spend it on his children, on her grandchildren. She said a lot. She would do this, do that [makes hand gestures to indicate a mouth that did not stop from talking].

Her finally becoming her husband's beneficiary led to her mother-in-law taking drastic, if not desperate, action:

I've been through a lot, a lot. I have heard a lot from her. In his [her husband] last leave, she wanted us to separate. That's what she wanted. I told my husband, yes, if that is what your mother wants, then let us separate. Why, she might say I am pursuing you. That I won't live without you. That's why I left.

Even wives who did not live with their mothers-in-law suffered as a result of their becoming the allottee. Nancy, who lived just across the street from her in-laws, recalled how her relations with them (not just her mother-in-law) progressively soured and became unpleasant when she started receiving allotment.

All of the wives who lived with their mothers-in-law did not work and were fully dependent on their husbands. Becoming the controller of the purse gave them a sense of control, one that obtained for them both symbolic and material purchase on power. This boosted their position in a house dominated by their mother-in-law's authority inasmuch as she owned the house. Becoming the recipient of their husband's allotment peeled away one layer of the structures of power they had to negotiate. In this process, their mother-in-law ceased to exist as the source or giver of their allowance, as the financial mediator between

them and their husband. They obtained direct access to their husband. With their becoming the recipient, it became untenable for their mother-in-law to tell them how to spend their son's money. They could finally experience being in control of their spouse's money and as many of these wives pointed out, it was not as though they were going to spend it mindlessly. Becoming in charge of budgeting and allocating their allowance, of 'husbanding' it, bestowed upon them a powerful validation of their being wives. That is to say, it is they, and not their mother-in-law, who must now count as primary to their husbands. Becoming the allottee therefore restructured the ties that bound them, ties both hierarchical and affective that strengthened and reinforced spousal relationship. It was a restructuring that mothers-in-law might have perceived as marginalizing them, and hence as a threat to them. As Gina asked it simply, 'What kind of a woman would agree to such an arrangement? What am I to you [her husband]?'

8.3 Autonomy, Identity and Work

As discussed in chapter 5, work for many women has become an important element of their identity but which often conflicted with their other roles and responsibilities particularly to those who were married and had children. They redefined their gender ideologies and performed gender strategies in order to smooth out the tensions that arose from the demands made on them by their work, husbands and children (Hochschild 1989). In this section, I examine how women looked at work and the motivations they had for wanting to work. I first look into how women in paid employment viewed their work in relation to their husband's 'contractual' work. I then analyze how a woman's narrative of her daily routine encodes tensions between what she actually did as a mother and her attempt to present a self and identity that fitted in more with conventional representations of women's identities built around the relationship between motherhood and work. Finally, I look at the tension between the desire of some of the unemployed women to work and their husbands' view of what these women's 'proper' role was.

8.3.1 Women's Work as Source of Back-up Income

Seven of the eight women who were in paid employment had been encouraged by their husband to give up working. None of them did. Two explained that their work helped them cope with the absence of their husband. Two said that their work enabled them to keep their minds sharp and to apply what they had studied. All of them, except two wives whose husbands received pay while on leave, said that their work was a source of income—fall back income—during the months their husbands were not at sea which they understood to be unpaid.

These wives were hesitant to give up work not because they were in pursuit of a career and not because their identity as women was so bound up with their work that giving it up would have meant the loss of this basis of their identity. Many of them had in fact thought of becoming full-time mothers but the experience of relying on saved money when their husbands were home and the uncertainty their husband faced in getting their next job convinced them to hang on to their jobs.

For others, the duty to help their family or siblings was an important consideration. Donna said that her job was important to her because it enabled her to help her natal family. As the eldest child and because she had a job, she had an obligation to help her siblings. Although her husband had offered to help them, she was not comfortable giving them his money. Her husband had made known his wish for her to give up working even before they got married. When they got married, however, she negotiated to continue working until they had a child explaining that working would help her deal with his absence. Her parents, however, had encouraged her to continue working even when she already had children advising her that she and her husband take a pragmatic view. With how difficult life has become and with jobs being very scarce, her parents told her she was lucky to have one and should thus hang on to it. They offered to look after her children when they arrived.

Although Donna agreed with her parents, she had to reconcile what she, her parents and her husband wanted. Although helping her family was very important to her, she also would like to look after her children (when she had

them) full-time. After all, her husband had promised he would help her siblings. Like the other wives, however, she, too, was concerned about those months when her husband was on leave. She and her husband had been working hard on building an accommodation for students, a business she will manage with her background in accounting and finance.

Most of the women in full-time employment saw their work as complementing their husband's work. There is no doubt that working gave them a sense of fulfilment and accomplishment aside from earning them their own income, income they could spend as they saw fit. The importance and value they gave their work came not so much from any personal investments into it. It is instead better appreciated in terms of how it functioned in relation to the contractual nature of their husband's work. But far from diminishing the value of their employment, looking at it this way makes it even more important because during those times their husband was 'nabakante' (literally, 'had a vacancy; meaning, not at work'), they became the main providers of the family. The women felt secure that they still would have some money, albeit small. They would not have to face the prospect of having to borrow money and accumulate debt to which payment would go the first few months' salary of their husband, as happened to some of the women who did not have work. When their husband asked them to give up work, they resisted, making it clear to them that their job was important to them because of its importance to the well-being of their entire family. To be sure, this made them important because although their husband was the family's main earner, they, too, were also depended upon. Their identity and sense of self-importance engendered by their work simultaneously derived their salience from how this work functioned for the family. In this sense, the personal is at once familial.

8.3.2 Work and the Presentation of Self

As demonstrated in chapter 6, many of the women who engaged in some form of economic activities (selling food items, farming or raising livestock) had these activities built around their domestic responsibilities and obligations. They were fitted in into their routines and into their rhythm of life and thus did

not conflict with their primary role, that of being a mother. Aida, however, was one whose business activities so consumed her time that she was frequently too tired to even talk to her husband or emotionally engage with him the way he expected her to (see also Thomas and Bailey 2006). I have chosen to single her out because although she admitted that she practically neglected her husband, she was concerned to say that she did not neglect her children. I asked her what her daily routine was like when her husband was away:

I take care of children. Because I have a business venture, when I get up in the morning, I get the list [names of people and their transactions] ready. Then I go out to collect, come back to the house, go out again, it's like that. When I get home, we eat, I take a short rest then I will have plenty of people to attend to. Those who are .. I will just tell you, those who are renewing [loans], like that. I release money. I take a nap at around three o'clock. Around four or 4:30, I get up, 5 o'clock I take a shower and go out of the house again to collect. Rest. Then 10:30 in the evening, at 10:30 in the evening, I come back home. Because I also attend to my other business activity, there [fronting the public market]⁷⁷

[...]

At what time do you get up then?

6:30.

You get the children ready for school or it's your mother?

No. They [the children] know that I am very tired. Our helper does it. She wakes them up, gives them a bath, changes them to their school uniform and takes them to school. **But I supervise/follow up on them.**

The interview extract above shows how Aida has framed her work within caring. Yet, both structure and substance of her answer indicate she does very little care work. Her claim that she does is stated at the beginning ('I take care of children') and end ('I supervise/follow-up on them') of the interview extract. Between these two statements are detailed descriptions of her work activities. Her narrative of her daily routine is dominated by her work, and her claim to taking care of children is contradicted by her last statement: that the work of

⁷⁷ Aida has three stalls selling 'empanada', a popular local foodstuff sold mainly in the evening.

getting her children ready for school has been delegated to her helper and the children understood this because they knew she was always very busy and tired. Aida's case exhibits the tension between on the one hand, a concern to present a woman's identity or self that subscribes to popular and conventional images of what a mother is or does, and on the other hand, what mothering she actually does.

I am, however, less interested in the internal contradictions and inconsistencies of Aida's narrative than in why she had to talk about her work within a claim she also does care work. She is, I argue, engaging with public or popular discourses of what constitutes a good mother, and therefore what constitutes women's roles and identities. Her response to my question simultaneously was drawing from, and responding to, traditional conceptions of being a mother. It is very likely that privately, Aida was not bothered at all that she did very little work to look after her children. The structure and content of her response suggested that making money was more important to her identity as a mother than looking after her children. I would argue that how good she was as a mother, at least privately for her, was not determined by the amount of care work she did for her children. How she chose to respond to my question reveals the 'force of domesticity' (Parrenas 2008a), that is, how women's roles and identities are constructed by and through the private sphere embodied by the house, a private self that she did not necessarily subscribe to and actually live yet which she felt compelled to publicly assert to be performing.⁷⁸

How Aida's identity as a woman and mother is bound up with work is linked to her past, to a vow she made as a young woman oppressed by poverty and by

⁷⁸ Aida might have seen me, a male researcher who she knew is himself a father, not only as an individual but as a representative of a certain set of ideological, socio-cultural and gender expectations. As such, and not knowing exactly where I stood on this matter, she strategically slotted me as a conservative. I do not see Aida as lying (as being inconsistent and hence her answer unreliable) and the content and structure of her answer 'betraying' her. On the contrary, it is the inconsistency of her answer—or what I prefer to call the tension between the structure and content of her answer—that is most significant. My 'awareness' of the internal dynamic of her answer, of the external dynamic of the interview (how I might not have been just a male researcher but a particular kind of man and audience), and of the broader social and cultural dynamic pertaining to 'mothers' that Aida might be said to be engaging enables me to see the mechanisms involved in her construction and presentation of herself.

others because of it. For ten years she worked as a domestic helper first in Singapore when she was only 19 years old then in Hong Kong where she met her husband. To earn some extra money, she sold small items to fellow Filipinos and cleaned the flats of expatriates in Hong Kong. Even then, she said, she had always been driven to work, to extricate herself from an abject existence. Before, her very own relatives did not want to have anything to do with her and her family because of how poor they were.

Before, he just passed by, in his car, not saying anything to you because of how impoverished we were.

[...]

They now greet you because you have something but for me, those who treated us with disdain I never repaid them with the same thing just because I have attained something. I never did to them what they did to us; instead I showed them that I have not changed. Those who treated us badly, they now even come here to our house. Once, my mother went to them to borrow some rice but they never gave her any. They even said, 'why, is this a rice mill where you could borrow rice from?' Go to the rice mill and ask there. Now, it is the reverse. He's now got a very hard life. Now he comes here for help. He borrows rice here, money. But I've never repaid him with malice. I give him [rice, money]. 'Why do you give him?', my mother says. You know what I said, when you were in his situation, how did you feel? He did it to me, she said. That's over. That's past. God has shown it to him so let go of it, he's pitiful. Those who talked about and slandered me because of how impoverished we were, they're now lying flat on their back. It's as if God had turned things the other way around that they should go through what we went through. I now have plenty of relatives, plenty.

The 'history' of Aida's desire to work helps us better appreciate why her being and becoming a mother and her identity as a woman might be defined less by the actual work she did to take care of her children but more by providing for them, a specific aspect of motherhood that still comes into conflict with the more traditional aspect of performing care work and which has also posed some problems for the quality of time she can give her husband. We also see how her identity is socially implicated, how the self she has cultivated is asserted in relation to her past and to people around her, and to how it is presented to

others such as me, according to how Aida thinks it strategically appropriate to present it.

8.3.3 Work, Women and their Husbands

For women who did not work, discourses about the well-being of the family and women's central role in its provision were deployed by their husbands to stop them from working. Sometimes it was a combination of their husband's fears, of their strongly held views about the role of women, and on the rationality of working if the pay did not seem to justify it. Maricel did not work not only because her husband worried that she might be courted by male co-workers and that things might develop from there—a link she strongly disputed—but also because he had made the conclusion that her working would not make enough money to make leaving the work of looking after the children to somebody else worth it. If she had a good salary, (he mentioned 50,000 pesos a month, close to his monthly income) then he would definitely agree to her working and that he would even consider staying home. Maricel's husband makes a cost-benefit argument hard to dispute, and his assessment of the salary prospects of her wife has solid basis. Even she arrived at the same conclusion and decision. I wish in this section to highlight how a discourse concerning the family's good was used by husbands to stop their wives from working and how this very same discourse underpinned the desire of women to work as well as a desire to prove that they too can earn their own upkeep.

8.3.3.1 Women Desiring to Work Abroad

Four wives wanted to work overseas. One had a nursing degree and two finished a six-month care-giving course financed by their own husbands. One trained as a teacher. The two women who did the care-giving course realized after their training that although their husbands agreed they do it (and indeed invested money into their training), their husbands had really no intention of letting them work, much less let them leave for work abroad. These women wanted to go when their situation was still much easier (such as having then

only one child) but now, even they conceded that leaving had become difficult. Still, one of them continued to harbour the desire to work abroad.

It is important to emphasize here that the work these women sought was overseas work. Their husbands were therefore opposed to it on this basis. The women said that their husbands were concerned about who would look after the children and told them that it was not good for the children to have both parents away. Their husbands said, according to the wives, that there was nothing like the love and care that the children's own mother can give. But it is also important to emphasize that these women were seeking these jobs for the sake of the family. They frequently mentioned wanting to help their husbands particularly because they knew that at a certain age, their husbands will find it difficult to get a contract.⁷⁹ Indeed, this was a spectre that haunted the horizon of all of the women who participated in this study. In fact, a few of them had husbands who were already finding it increasingly difficult to get a job for reasons of diminishing health (see also Bloor 2011). Not only is there a surplus supply of workers (anecdotal reports indicate that there are about 950,000 Filipino seamen around 250-270,000 of who will be aboard a ship at any one time) but also that the precarity, that is, contractual nature of seamen's jobs, makes for the 'disposability' (Rodriguez 2010, p. 48) of these workers much easier and appear the norm and legitimate. They are 'only valuable (and therefore employable) inasmuch as they are useful and productive labouring bodies. Otherwise, they become mere waste that employers and states... can easily discard and replace' (ibid.).

Just as their husband's work was contractual, the family's fortune was tied principally to the life-span of the men's seafaring career. To that extent, the family's future appears to be a contracted life. It is certainly difficult to comprehend, particularly by those whose cultures expect their women to give up work once the children arrive, how these women can even contemplate

⁷⁹ To be sure there are other reasons for wanting to go such as perhaps being able to help more their natal families. The literature on migration also cites escaping an unhappy and even abusive marriage as another. As I will also show in a section below, the desire to work abroad is sometimes fuelled by the need to prove that women are not simply sponging off on their husbands, as their in-laws accuse them to be.

leaving their young child or children to their mothers, sisters, or mothers-in-law and say they are doing it for the welfare and future of the family. But for many migrant women, or women desiring migrant work, the good of the family is indeed their consideration. While others do not leave for the sake of the family, others do so precisely for it.

We see the narratives of these women's desire to work abroad as resonating with the narratives of the women in paid employment. These would-be or aspiring migrant workers construct a 'working identity' as a complement to their husband. They do not see their (desire to) work as necessarily competing with their husbands but rather see it in the context of the whole family, specifically as part of the family's future horizon. Mildred, whose 40-year old husband is already facing career-threatening health problems and who in fact almost did not get certified as fit enough for his present contract, shared that her husband has been telling her that when he stopped, it will be her turn to go abroad. Her husband has several siblings in Italy and it was he who provided and/or lent them the money for their migration. Mildred shared that her going to Italy was a real prospect. She, too, desired to work and to work abroad and their story narrates how migration is a family strategy to make a living. The trajectory of her life narrative, of her life's journey, as it were, suggests a potential departure from the narrative of those wives forbidden by husband and circumstance to make that journey. Whereas they wanted to go for the sake of the family with their husbands not letting them go also for the sake of the family, Mildred was encouraged by her husband to go, something which she herself wanted to undertake. Their case, to be sure, obtained in their specific circumstance, in her husband's negative prospects, in his working career he himself saw as possibly coming to an end.

8.3.3.2 Work and Financial Independence

Whereas in the section above, the women were prevented from working abroad by their husband for the sake of the children (that is, of husbands posing to them the difficult question of who will look after them and of the prospect of the children having both parents not around), Irene, whose story I discuss

below, was prevented from seeking overseas work simply because the husband did not want her to work. Her motivation was more to escape a difficult marriage and to have her own money which she had freedom to spend. At the time she wanted to do so, her only child had just turned two but she had an older sister willing to look after him.

First, his question to me is why, is our budget not enough? Why do I have to go away when he is already working? Second, no one is going to look after the children. No one is going to raise them. There is nothing like the mother herself guiding the children while they are growing up. My reason is that, particularly after our last argument, I really feel like I am being strangled. I also want, it is different when you have your own money. Because with your own money, you can buy what you want. If it is his money, it is controlled, you can only buy what you must buy. If you like something, and it comes from your own money, like I said, if you want to buy clothes, you can buy. Like that [...], I thought may be he does not want his ego to be challenged.

[...]

I tell him if I could have a stall, sell things at the public market. Never would he agree. Just so I have my own money.

Irene made it clear that her husband's main consideration was that there was no need for her to work since he was providing well for the family. He saw her working as suggesting that he was not succeeding in this role and as a challenge to his masculine identity that is centred on it. Irene explicitly referred to her husband's ego being offended. Although he, too, deployed a discourse of family welfare built around the mother being there to look after the children, he seemed to have exploited this for his benefit, to consolidate his claim to being the family's sole provider. This is supported by the fact that Irene's appeals to her husband to have a small stall to sell goods at the town's public market fell on his deaf ears. This she could have easily accommodated into her family's routine especially because she lived with an adult sister who acted as her helper. With her desire to have a modicum of financial independence remaining an unfulfilled one, her husband's money was a reminder of how very little freedom she had to make decisions of her own. Her husband had practically decreed that

her place was in the home and succeeded in making her completely dependent on him, a dependence she saw as strangulating her.⁸⁰

Marissa's reason for wanting to work abroad resonated with Irene's. Her desire for financial independence was motivated by her mother-in-law who kept on reminding her in words and deeds that she was completely dependent on her son and that without him, she would be living a different life. Marissa was motivated to finish a care-giving course which she saw as her passport to a work abroad. She wanted to prove that she, too, was capable of earning money and that she did not have to rely on her husband. Her husband, however, did not let her go. From her account, his masculine identity was not built on making her dependent on him, in contrast to Irene's. And Marissa's desire to work for financial independence did not seem to be so much originally internally motivated as springing externally, that is, as responding to her mother-in-law's insult. We see in both Irene's and Marissa's cases attempts to construct identities, identities springing from different motivations, asserted in different contexts. Who they were and the autonomy and freedom they could exercise were intimately braided with financial independence, an independence they could not pursue.

8.3.3.3 Work, Independence and Social Age

Rosa, too, was concerned with her independence. But she was asserting it not in relation to her husband or mother-in-law but in relation to the people around her, her neighbours. Like Irene, she said that her husband's decision not to let her work had to do with his male ego which was hinged on his conception of himself and role as the family provider. Yet, he had to learn to become pragmatic when he was out of work for eight months. Having miscalculated the amount of time he needed to get a transit visa, he was never able to join his

⁸⁰ All of the women said that they had total freedom when it came to spending for food, schooling, children's clothes, etc. A few other women shared Irene's feeling of being uncomfortable buying personal items such as clothes. Also, when it came to big purchases, most of them said they waited for their husbands to avoid problems. Interestingly, they used this sense of 'it is not my own money' to politely refuse people borrowing money from them.

cruise ship in Europe. Within a short time, they used up their savings and Rosa insisted she look for work although at that time she was still breastfeeding her small son.

The first job she got was as a sales assistant. She worked for 12 hours from eight in the morning to eight in the evening, standing most of the time. Her daily wage was 100 pesos, less than two British pounds. She lasted only one day. Having earlier worked at fastfood chains when she was still unmarried, she quickly found work in one where the shorter hours and shift duties made working easier for her. Rosa alluded to some resistance from her husband and to her feeling better at her second job because her husband had finally agreed. She was also concerned to demonstrate that as adults, they were not dependent on her mother and that her working was to prevent their neighbours from talking about them. While Rosa worked, it was her husband who looked after their son. During that time, therefore, a reversal of roles occurred.

As in Irene's case, we can see in Rosa's how her husband's perception of himself as the family's provider shaped his attitude towards her working. But the independence that Rosa was concerned to assert showed a more social orientation, one that was asserted in the context of social censure. She did not want her neighbours to think that they were being fed by her mother ('patartaraken kami lang'). She did not want to be infantilized by her neighbour's talk that, having assumed adult status in getting married, they continued to depend on her mother when others expected that it should now be the mother depending on her. Rosa's strong position on this is already indicated by the word she used: 'patartaraken' which comes from the root word 'taraken', an animal being raised as livestock or pet. Being fed like an animal dependent on its master or owner demoted them in terms of social age and diminished their social respectability and standing. She was determined to maintain the equilibrium between their chronological and social ages. In doing so, she also showed her husband that gender order does not have to be rigid, that there are alternative, if not better, gender arrangements.

Being able to work was vital to the sense of autonomy that Irene, Marissa and Rosa wanted to have. Their sense of independence had different publics: Irene, her husband; Marissa, her mother-in-law; and Rosa, her neighbours. Any sense of autonomy or independence is social. These three women's narratives demonstrate the circumscribed nature of agency and the various socialities of autonomy.

8.4 Separation and Dependence

Here, I would like to further examine antinomies of autonomy in the lives of these women. I focus on separation specifically on how it exposed these women's dependence on their husband, and on how the women's husband's philandering were tolerated for the sake of the children or for more pragmatic reasons.

Marissa's and Irene's situation reached a point where separation seemed the only option. Although Irene did not live with her mother-in-law, she said that the reach of her meddling was long. Moreover, it seemed to her that she had to compete with his natal family in terms of his devotion and commitment. She recounted having once said to him that she was going to return him to his mother ('isublika ken nanangmo'). What added to her grief were nagging suspicions he was having an affair, suspicions based on text messages she discovered were stored on her husband's mobile phone. She also happened on one message he composed and sent but which he failed to erase after sending. She was sure that the message could not have been intended for a male friend. She threatened separation but reminded her husband not to forget his responsibility to his children. By responsibility she meant 'sustento', financial support. Marissa also briefly left the house where she lived, on account of her mother-in-law's treatment of her, leaving behind her two children because as she said, she had no means of supporting them.

For Irene and Marissa, separating from their husband would have meant the end of their suffering in the hands of their in-laws, and additionally for Irene, from her husband's infidelity, an infidelity she said her husband seemed to have been

cavalier about, which only all the more infuriated her.⁸¹ Irene and Marissa were painfully aware that separation brought with it its own problems. Irene's reminder to her husband not to forget his responsibility to his children was as clear an admission of her inability to provide for the children as Marissa's statement she had no means to support her children. Fortunately for Marissa, her husband stood by her and stood up to his mother saying that if she left, which was what his mother wanted to happen, he, too, left. With that threat coming from her own son, Marissa's mother-in-law ended up begging her son to stay.

Even if they wanted separation, it was not something Marissa and Irene could really afford. Their worries were dominated by economic concerns. How the children would suffer socially and emotionally did not come out, revealing how the financial side of separation weighed heavily on and against them. Irene also faced the dilemma that, as a woman reared in a culture that accepted male infidelity as part of the rite of passage of Filipino husbands, separation on the basis of her husband's infidelity (which she had not as yet proven beyond doubt) would have been, paradoxically perhaps, a potential source of social consternation. Simply put, in Catholic Filipino culture, infidelity seems hardly to justify separation.

8.5 The Meaning and Significance of a House

The social and individual meaning and significance of a house have been widely examined particularly in anthropology. Much of the literature has focused on how the house and its construction is the focal point of kin and social relations, validates and strengthens social and individual identities and

⁸¹ Irene was by no means the only one whose husband was philandering. There were wives in this study whose husbands had practised worse cases of infidelity (see the last section of this chapter). Infidelity by males in Philippine culture is largely tolerated, frequently considered part of Filipino patriarchal masculinity. It is rare for couples to separate on account of marital infidelity by the husband. As Ponce (1986) has noted, extramarital affairs by married Filipino men do not threaten the integrity of the nuclear Filipino family. Infidelity by the wife, however, would have been unpardonable and swiftly punished. It is little wonder that many of the wives took care to be like Caesar's wife. Lydia expressed the culturally-informed pragmatic attitude of women towards their husband's infidelity. She said that as long as she did not see the woman and as long as he came back home to her, it was fine.

statuses, and affirms filial obligations (Aguilar 2009a, 2009b; Carsten 1995; Carsten and Jones-Hughes 1995; Grigolini 2005). As Pierre Bourdieu (1977, p. 89) has observed, the house 'is the principal locus for the objectification of the generative schemes'. In this wise, it is 'the tangible embodiment of the practices of a culture, which allows persons to appropriate the world in creative and new ways while reinforcing existing structures and institutions' (Aguilar 2009a, p. 101). This section broadly shares this concern but my strategy is to highlight the social significance of the house by underscoring how it matters to individuals. I examine here specifically how the way a house was inhabited played an important role in engendering 'housing problems' and house construction.

What a house meant to the women varied depending on their location in kin relations. Where wives lived with or near their husband's family and had good relations with them, owning a house may have meant independence but not with the intensity with which it was desired by women whose relations with their mothers-in-law with whom they lived had become unbearable. Women who lived with their natal families wanted a house of their own also to become independent but this desire was not engendered by oppression. I wish in this section to unpack the significance of the house to the women and to nuance the sense of autonomy or independence that was attached to it depending on who they lived with and on the experiences they had living with them.

8.5.1. The House as Declaration of Independence

Two women who lived with their natal family yet have begun building their own houses cited as reason their desire to be independent for doing so. One explained that living in her own house would teach her what it is like to be a wife, to be a mother, to be in charge. She wanted to experience what it was like to be concerned with what was missing in the house and not have her mother do the worrying for her. Maribel explained that having her own house would enable her and her husband to know what it was like to have and raise a family of and on their own. So while her children were still young and had fewer things to worry about, she and her husband have begun what for many is a long process of building a house. They knew that once the children went to college

or university, money was going to be tight and building a house much more difficult.



Figure 8.1 A seaman and his wife's unfinished house. Building has stopped due to lack of funds and the seaman's inability to get a new contract because of illness.

Men, even more so, wanted to prove their capacity to be 'padre de familia', one that is boosted by the fact that they were earning well. A wife who initially lived in her husband's family house but later on had a small house of their own built on her husband's family's compound said that her husband refused to build a more permanent and bigger one where their house now stood. She shared that if her husband was to build one, it would have to be on a piece of land he owned. Her husband not only wanted to avoid future problems arising from the division of property when his parents died. He also wanted to prove that in due time, he would be able to buy his own piece of land. Her husband linked his notion of independence from his parents not only to having his own house but also to building it outside of his parents' property and on his own. Men who moved into their wives' family also felt that they could not move and

act freely. As Lilia said of her husband, he had their house built so he would have the power and freedom to do as he pleased.

8.5.2 The House as a Tangible (Sign of a Better life)

In contrast to the women and man discussed above, Dolores was not concerned about independence since she lived near her husband's family, not with them. Her house was not a declaration of personal independence; it was more invested with social significance.

Dolores, her family and her mother used to live in a small hut, its walls and floor made from bamboo slats, its roof from palm leaves. The house they presently live in was built by dint of her own determination. She recalled telling her husband that she wanted to have their old hut replaced with a concrete (cement) house and that he asked her how could she when there was no money. By that time, however, she had scrimped long enough to have set aside enough money to have it built. This surprised even her husband. Dolores was (and is) understandably proud of her achievement; she herself helped build the house. She said that her children liked their father more because they saw her as tightfisted and he generous. But as she said, had she not been tightfisted, they would not have their house.

For Dolores, her family's house did not only stand as a concrete manifestation of her frugality. For her, it was important that the money her husband made be put to something concrete and tangible. This philosophy to use money for something tangible ('*tapno adda pakakitkitaan*'; literally, so you have something to see it in) is common to people in San Gabriel. For Dolores, too, the house was her way of showing (but not showing off) that they had a better life, one provided by seafaring. The house is a living and inhabited memorial not only to her frugality but also to her husband's labour. Occupying a place of honour in her living room wall was a framed picture of her husband and his ship.



Figure 8.2 'Ships ahoy!': Interior decorations of a seaman's family's house.

Lilia, whose family initially lived on their own in her family house, explained that living in her own house gave her a sense of security, peace of mind as well as pride in that their house was the product of their own hard work.

8.5.3 The House for the Oppressed Daughter-in-Law

In the first section of this chapter, I talked about women finding their own voice, a voice directed against their mother-in-law and about how it was the beginning of a process of self-assertion. It might be argued that living in their own house was the beginning of these women's self-determination, when finally they were not dominated by their mothers-in-law. Women employed various ways to realize this. Linda, mentioned in chapter 4, left her mother-in-law's house and vowed never to go back to San Gabriel until her husband had built her their own house. Although she did not exchange words with her

mother-in-law, her action spoke louder. There were a few women, however, like Grace, whose voice remained muted: ‘siyempre minsan masakit, iniinyak ko na lang’ (of course, sometimes it really hurts, there’s nothing I could do except cry). She, however, directed her voice to her husband, a voice insistent in its demand for autonomy. Before discussing what having their own house meant to women living with their mothers-in-law, I wish to discuss first how the women described living with their mother-in-law.

8.5.3.1 On Living with their Mother-in-Law

For most of the women, living with their in-laws was generally unpleasant. Grace, who described what she felt like when her husband was coming home, effectively described her life with her mother-in-law.

You are excited it’s like you will now have an ally. [...] You’ll feel comfortable because he is there, you can smile really beautifully. You will be able to laugh. But if he’s not around, nothing, you’ll be very quiet. It’s as though even your breathing is not free. It’s like it is really hard to breathe.

Grace used the word ‘kakampi’ (ally), alluding to divisions or rifts in the house and metaphorically representing her experience as living with enemies. Her husband’s return meant she could smile again, that she could breathe freely again. Convincing her husband to build her even only a basic house was not easy. The availability of money was not the only issue in her husband’s case. Her husband’s indecision to build one for his own family had to do with kinship structure. As the youngest son, he will inherit the family house and building one for his family therefore seemed to misuse money, something Grace herself understood. But she was desperate to move out of her mother-in-law’s house. It did not matter to her that the house was only a basic structure and that it was unfinished. She would take charge of getting something done little by little.

For these women who lived with their in-laws, having their own house was seen as giving them the possibility and actuality for self-determination. By self-determination I mean here the ability to control things in their families that

otherwise would have been difficult to do had they continued living with others. We turn to these in the following.

8.5.3.2 'You can cook and eat what you want'

For some of the women, living with their in-laws meant a re-education of their palates. As the 'naikamang' (the one who moved in to the family) and as a daughter-in-law, some of them felt obliged to help cook. This was particularly the case for women who did not have a separate arrangement for cooking; in other words, they were not a separate household. If they cooked and ate from the same pot (agkakabanga), then the women would have offered to cook. This meant they had to learn to cook the way their in-laws did. Getting their 'templa' (how they wanted their food to taste) was very important. This was both a time and process when wives adjusted their own taste buds, if not 'reeducated' them. In some cases, women adjusted not only to how food was prepared but also to the preferred food of the family. This limited their preparation of their own preferences.

8.5.3.3 'You can control your expenditures better'

A number of women cited the strain put on their budgets by living with others. This was true also of women who lived with their own natal families, that is, where multiple households lived in the same house. For women who lived with their in-laws and who already had the issue of allotment to contend with, expenses for food and utility bills added to the things they had to carefully manage. This was more conflicted where they were not a separate household, meaning, they did not prepare food separately as it meant that they bore most of the expenses. When women tightened their belts according to their financial situation, they often heard negative remarks from their mothers-in-law, remarks that reached them, however, through other people. This was what happened to Grace, and her mother-in-law's gossiping about her not buying food motivated her to have separate cooking arrangements. Becoming a separate household was a first step towards having more control of how much the family spent. This

mattered a lot to the women because it also meant that they could save more. The 'unpaid' leave of their husbands loomed large in their horizon.

8.5.3.4 'You have more privacy'

Many of the women appreciated a certain amount of privacy, particularly those who lived with their in-laws and who shared a house with the families of their husband's siblings. Indeed, there were a number of women who lived with two or three other families aside from their in-laws. Grace's description of her living arrangements illustrate what usually happens when multiple families or households live in a single house. Grace said that the only space her whole family could consider 'their own' was the room where they slept. It, however, did not have a door; all it had was a flimsy curtain which she herself had put. The children of the other couples freely went in and out of the room, even when she would have wanted to rest or have a siesta with her children.

Certainly, these women's desire for more privacy obtained from the fact that they shared the house with other families. There were many people and situations to deal with as well as dynamics of relationships shaped by differing ages, hierarchies, personalities and temperaments. Misunderstandings, tensions and conflicts were built into this kind of situation. Their own room, which many of them considered as their only place of refuge when a particularly difficult situation happened, could not even be completely closed off to others. Having their own house ensured their privacy and although their rooms will have doors, there would not be as compelling a need to have a door with which to signify that that space was theirs and theirs only. They could just leave it open in the same way that in San Gabriel and in many other rural places in the Philippines, gates, main doors, back doors and windows were left open until families retired for the night.

8.5.3.5 'You are more relaxed'

Because the women lived in a house that was not theirs, their movement within it was constrained. Most of the time, they did not even decide what television program to watch. Since the television is a 'public' unit sited in the sala (or lounge area), viewing was communal. It is rare for a family to have a television unit in a bedroom where private viewing would have been possible. Living with in-laws gave the women the feeling that they were constantly being watched. Because of this feeling, they did not have the freedom to do what they wanted to do. They said, for example, that if they did not feel like washing the dishes just yet, they could not put off doing it. They felt compelled to behave according to 'expectations' or to ones they imagined were expected of them. As one wife said, having her own house would enable her to do just this, to do as she pleased. Another said having her own would enable her to breathe.

Related to this constraint on the sovereignty they had in terms of physical movement and in how they used their time is the freedom they had to entertain their own family members and friends. The feeling that they did not own the house affected how comfortable they felt regarding this issue. Marissa not only endured being treated badly by her mother-in-law but also seeing her own mother and sister disrespected. Her sister had helped her look after her children when she did her care-giving course.

When my sister came here, she [mother-in-law] told her to leave and to never come back. [...] I told my older sister, let it be but when I have my own house, I will try to utter those words to her so she will experience what I am going through, how it hurts to be told those words, I told my older sister.

Having their own house was seen by the women as their means of having the freedom to do what they wished to do. As Mildred said:

... if you had your own house, you can do what you want. If you lived in somebody else's house, you are embarrassed to even rest. You can just be idle if it was your own house. You can sleep if and when you want.

Grace referred to how this freedom had liberating effects not only on her movement but also on her body:

Nothing in you hardens (tenses), that's it. Because it is yours, you can move freely. You can do what you want to do, unlike when, you really are, it's like someone is watching your every move, like you are being observed. Like you are being monitored that's just how you feel.

For women who lived or were living with their in-laws, all of the experiences discussed above contributed to their desire to have their own house. Linda summed up the women's desire to live in a house of their own:

...you never know what sin you are already committing. You think what you're doing is okay. To them it is not. If you're not feeling well, if you're living in someone else's house, you are forced to do your chores. If it was your own house, you can say that can wait. I am going to just sit down, I have a headache you say you can always do so. You really have to be on your own. It is different when it is your own, you really can see you can really be independent. The house you see as a symbol of your independence.

The house demonstrated their capacity to stand on their combined feet. As Marilou said, it symbolized their independence. Building one's own house has of course financial implications. Money was not always available so a house became a long-term project, finished over many years. It was a process adapted to the financial situation of the family, moving in-sync with the family's life course. With children going to college or university, resources had to be prioritized and so the building and completion of the house was done little by little, at times modular. As Luz said, their house evolved as a series of extensions, emerging from work done when there was money saved for it. Their house grew as their children grew up.

For Nancy, the construction of their house, begun by her husband while she worked as a nanny abroad, was the turning point of her and her family's life. It marked the time when her lot took a turn for the better. Her experiences encompass many of the other women's experiences: having a philandering husband, suffering from in-laws, leaving behind her children to work abroad, having a house built over many years. Her experiences capture the richly textured lives of women married to seamen and they synthesize the drama and

complexity of becoming autonomous. It is only a propos that I end this section with (an abridged version of) her story.

I've gone through a lot [laughs]. Because I experienced bad treatment from his [her husband] family. I experienced them all. My husband had affairs with other women when he was on leave. I went through all, financial problem, I experienced it all. [...] I wanted to separate from him but he refused. [...] he would stay the same, he would have affairs. I was wallowing in debt that's when I thought of working abroad.

[...]

My youngest child was two years old at that time. My husband did not know, he was at sea and learned about it when I was already there. He couldn't do anything anymore.

[...]

I was away for only two years. [...] By God's mercy, when I went abroad, that was also when my husband began to be more responsible. I was abroad, that's when he started building a house. . .

[...]

I looked after an infant.

[...]

Oh, I would be crying. I would be crying. If I sent my ward to sleep, I would be crying. I would be crying. [...] I could hardly eat. I started a lot of letters because I wanted to write, oh, I had scarcely begun when I started crying again. I was never able to send anything because I never got to write anything. If I sent my ward to sleep, I would remember my children. [...] It is truly hard to go away. Sacrifice. Sacrifice but what I thought then was that if I did not go abroad, I would not [...] be able to pay off my debts [...] at that time, I thought it was my only way of being freed of my debts.

[...]

...he had affairs with plenty of women. [...] when I was away.⁸² [...] I said at that time, have your fill. You will one day catch a disease but must I burden my mind with that problem? [...] Oh, Mother of God, I am just going to think about my children, I said then. If we separate, then we separate. If not, it's okay still. [...] it was okay if he went on to have trysts [laughs] that's okay [laughs].

⁸² Nancy's husband had affairs even before she left for work abroad. Her husband's reputation for womanizing was so bad that people joked that if an electric post wore a skirt, he would have sex with it. Nancy also recounted discovering one of his affairs while she was at the airport to send him off. The other woman was also there to do the same!

[...]

He knew [it was because of him that I left]. He knew that's why you know he was a spendthrift. Spendthrift. Money had no value to him. Buddies, drinking that's why when I was abroad, he started building a house so he's money would go to something tangible. That's when I think he stopped having affairs with other women.

[...]

...that's what I spent a lot on, cards to call. I called almost every day. I'd ask about my children. Then, he went home after his contract finished, he went home and that was also the same time my stepdaughter came to live with my children. I did not know at first. Every time I called, it was she who answered and so I asked who she was and my husband said she was my oldest daughter's classmate. Why, does she live there? No, she comes during the day and I called only during the day time. [...] Then he told me the truth. She's my daughter when I was still a bachelor. *Alla*, I did not speak to him for a long time. I would call but talk only to my children. [...] Now because I thought about how my children felt, I talked to them if they could accept her as their sister. Yes, ma, they said. You will not get jealous if I buy something for her? No, they said so I accepted her. I wanted to show of course because it is easy to separate from your husband but what about the children? It is not that hard to break-up but I thought that there will come a time when he would calm down. By God's grace [laughter in voice], he's settled down.

[...]

By God's grace, I am not saying that we no longer have financial problems because we still do but money is no longer such a problem. And my husband has calmed, he does not go out any more. Before, God, buddies, if not women, buddies, he'd come home at dawn. I did not. I bore them all because of the children...

[...]

Even though all his family and relatives, God, even though they did not talk to me [...] I bore them all on my own. I faced a lot, really if you think about it, I went through all [...] then, I was begging my husband to leave me so that your family and relatives would stop persecuting me.

[...]

It started when I began receiving my allotment. I do not know if they were jealous.

[...]

I began fighting back when I saw his mother's letter to him, and that letter and so I began fighting back on my in-laws. I read her letter to my husband, I saw it inserted, it was not true and during those times, thinking about it, my husband did not write for two months. Oh, now I know, my husband believed his mother...

[...]

That is what we were like, it's like I had lost [interest in him], I did not write to him, I was even about to forget him. I just focused on my child, I only had one child then. We start anew, he said. We start all over again. No change. When he was on leave, he would have 'women'. Until I became used to and tired of it. Even if I left him, he would come looking for me, he would search for me, he would not let it be.

[...]

God, [laughs] every .. I came back in .. in 2000, the house looked like a skeleton. Then, with the little money I made, I had the ceiling done then when my husband went to sea, I would have things done little by little depending on my savings. Tiles, gradually, up to now, we are still doing things. [laughs]. Come to think of it, it is only now that we can do the polishing. See, what year is it now, it is now 2010. Ten years, oh 12 years.⁸³ Every time he comes back, he has some work done. If he is not here, I get done whatever it is I can get done.

[...]

...I hope that God will not give us anymore a big trial because our life as a couple now seems light. We seem to be harmonious and at peace. My life is running smoothly now. In the past, God, it was turbulent!

Conclusion

I have examined in this chapter the process of becoming autonomous, a process fraught with anxiety and conflict. My examination of this process was premised on the insight that no autonomy and identity occur in a social vacuum. The women's 'selves', and their construction of these selves, can only make sense, and be made sense of, in the context of their social location and implication. Assertions of self and identity are made in relation to others, whether that might be in the form of recognition or conflict. To that extent, selves and identities are constructed relationally and dialogically. Moreover, autonomy and any sense of

⁸³ Construction began in 1998, after Nancy left for work abroad.

‘self’ are constructed in relation to, and in the context of, the women’s material, cultural, social and discursive realities. I have attempted to understand the women’s desire and project for autonomy in the context of the most intimate and minute aspects of their lives, what I have called ‘the minutiae of becoming autonomous’.

Autonomy, for these women, was never meant to set themselves apart from others. They did not conceive of autonomy in terms of ‘atomized and free-floating individuals’ (Aguilar 2009a, p. 178; see also Zialcita 2000). It did not mean turning away from filial, kin and communal obligations. Rather, it meant being able to exercise a sufficient degree of self-determination the exercise of which would have given them a position in which to view their social location and their participation in it in more positive terms. Oppression and maltreatment intensified their desire for it while giving it a new slant and nuance. This self-determination was almost impossible for women who lived with mothers-in-law whose position in the family was perhaps threatened by their son’s marriage, that is, by their daughter-in-law. This self-determination was constrained and the desire for autonomy, particularly for those who suffered from their mothers-in-law, was motivated by a desire to be free, to escape their oppression. In contrast, women who lived with their own natal families desired a house of their own so that they would learn how to stand on their own feet. To be sure, this is also something that wives who moved virilocally desired. Linda put it succinctly when she said that the house symbolized their capacity to be on their own.

Also, becoming autonomous for these women did not equate to becoming sufficient unto themselves. Autonomy for them did not make interdependence anathema to it. Those who were in paid work saw the fruit of their labour in complementary terms: their work provided supplementary income for the family, income that became most crucial when their husbands were not at sea. They saw their work in relation to the contractual nature of their husband’s work, and not solely as a career that comprised a vital plank of their identity as women. Others desired to work abroad and this desire was principally justified in terms of the future of the family. They wanted to help their husband earn so

that they could save for the future, and that future is really when their husband could no longer work. Some wanted to work overseas to prove to others that they, too, could be more than just their husband's dependents. Still others wanted to work and they wanted to so that they would have some money of their own. What they desired, given the fact that they had children to look after and the scarcity of paid jobs available in a largely agricultural town, was not to have an income to support their family but to have their own money, one that, because it was they who toiled for it, lessened their sense of dependence on their husbands. More crucially, it was money they would have the freedom to spend as they saw fit.

Women who lived with their mothers-in-law and whose mothers-in-law received their husband's allotment felt the absence of this same freedom in how they spent their money. They were told by their mothers-in-law 'to spend it appropriately'. Such meddling by mothers-in-law combined with other forms of mistreatment the women suffered in their hands taught them to talk back. Reared in a culture that puts a premium on respecting parents and elders, these women began the process of asserting their 'self' and identity with their answering and fighting back. They were not merely redefining their relationships with their mothers-in-law but also began an arduous process to change the terms which formed the basis of this relationship. For by answering back, that is, in facing their mothers-in-law, these oppressed women were questioning, that is, turning their back on, the cultural and social ideology that has taught them to suffer in silence. They began to demand and practice a more horizontal, rather than vertical, exchange of respect, a demand that ironically became possible for them to make only by becoming 'shameless' and 'disrespectful'.

Another ideology that women engaged was the cultural and social acceptance of husband infidelity. Nancy's Lothario of a husband is not exceptional, neither is her decision to stay with him. The decision of wives not to leave their husband who has had sexual affairs with other women is culturally and socially sanctioned and pragmatic. Taken to its logical extreme, a wife leaving her husband on account of his extra-marital affairs would even potentially face

social criticism. Infidelity by the husband was not reason enough to dissolve a marriage. Husband-and-wife relationships did not only involve them but also children and wives would always consider the interests of the children. Nancy herself frequently alluded to this in her story. Many wives will do so because their financial situation is such that they depend on their husbands and with children to feed, they have to be pragmatic. Their selves have to be subsumed for the sake of the children until such time that their husbands tired of sowing wild oats. As a strategy, they endure and practice ‘female altruism’ (Brickell and Chant 2010; Browner and Lewin 1982; cf. Herzfeld 1991).⁸⁴

Women who lived with their mothers-in-law also practised ‘female altruism’ ironically in the face of female cruelty; they dealt with the difficulties and challenges of living with them as best as they could. They bit their tongues in silence and to silence themselves. Their experiences intensified their desire for a house of their own, a space within which they could exercise freedom, for themselves and for their families. Just as Virginia Woolf (1993 [1929]) posited a link between female creativity and the space—what she called ‘a room of one’s own’— they had to pursue it, these women linked their independence, freedom, autonomy, identity and agency to a house of their own. The house was the condition and space of possibility for them to have a life of their own. A house of their own is ‘an important expression of [their] agency and creativity’ (Pauli 2008, p. 181). As many of the women said, having a house of their own would enable them to breathe, and to breathe freely. Moreover, having a house of their own, even to those who lived with their natal families, enabled them to exercise more control over their spending. Money, which they did not (always) have in abundance, also meant life. Living with their mothers-in-law felt like extinguishing the life out of them whereas living in their own house was imagined as life-giving and life-affirming.

⁸⁴ I use strategy in this context as defined by Browner and Lewin (1982, p. 63): ‘a pattern formed by the many separate, specific behaviors people devise to attain and use resources and to solve the immediate problems confronting them. It represents a choice made by an individual, not necessarily consciously, between various options or competing ways of achieving satisfaction with respect to some external or internal exigency or constraint’. Strategy does not mean ‘intentionality or perfect knowledge on the part of the women’ (ibid.).

But having their own house did not mean that these women escaped their in-laws totally. Two of the wives who had difficult relationships with their respective mother-in-law were going to have their house built on a piece of land given to them by their husband's parents and within the family's compound. Their own house will give them self-determination but also locate them in the community of their husband's family and relatives and in proximity to the person who they wanted to stay away from. Kinship and the paucity of money, however, have made it more difficult for these women and their husbands to build elsewhere. The piece of land is their husband's birthright or inheritance; using it saves them money that could then be added to their budget for building their house.

Family and relatives are part of the fabric of life of these women. Although building a house is an assertion of autonomy, the two cases cited above also demonstrate the location of the couples in blood and kin relations. This separation yet location in a group might best be captured by the word 'cleaving'. The word 'cleave' means to 'split apart or separate' but also 'to stick or cling together' (see also Hau 2002). Also, women who initially lived with their natal families built their own houses just a few steps away from the house where they were born and grew up in. For many of these women, building a house close to their natal families meant that they remained close to them, that they were not abandoning them. It also meant that they had access to the help that their family and relatives can provide just as they continued to be accessible to their families and relatives in their own times of need.

In talking about their lives, the women conjured up identity tropes of journeys. 'Adun a ti nagnaakon' (I have walked through many paths) said Marissa. Nancy employed an almost similar trope: 'adu't naglabasak' (I've been through a lot), 'napadasak amin' (I experienced them all). These lives, narrated and represented as journeys, point to how identity emerges from the social spaces and relations the self comes into contact with, as well as to the physical, material, and affective entailments of these experiences. The self and identity are inextricably intertwined with life experiences. Self, identity and life are a process of becoming: of crossing borders and boundaries, of transgressing

structures of relations and respect yet also of deferring one's own personal interests relationally (for the sake of others) and temporally, of the personal constrained by the social. For those whose selves emerged and formed in the crucibles of life, their becoming was not only a time to face their antagonists but also to strengthen alliances—with their husband, other family members, neighbours, friends, even with God. Autonomy is hence intersubjective and to the extent that the self is always implicated in and with others, autonomy is social and collective (Castoriadis 1987; McNay 2000). Autonomy is at once interdependence, relatedness and community. Self-determination also means building, and building on, solidarities.

NARRATING NAVIGATED LIVES

‘My life is running smoothly now. Then, my husband was tempestuous.’ Thus did Nancy conclude her narration of her life story presented in chapter eight. Her juxtaposition of images of movement characterized by calm and peace on the one hand, and of turbulence on the other hand, and of a movement through time and space (from a past to a present and to a future that is alluded) conjures up a woman who has not only endured but also prevailed. She describes her husband before as a tempestuous sea (‘nadawel ni lakayko idi’) and her husband now as ‘natalna’ (calm or peaceful) and portrays herself as a woman who has not only handled a difficult husband but also successfully navigated a turbulent life. Nancy’s metaphor of taming a tempestuous and turbulent life has led me to consider the women’s life and experiences from the perspective of navigation (Vigh 2006). Irene, whose story I also discussed in the previous chapter, also pointed to this process and strategy of navigation when she described how she negotiated problems caused by her conflicted relationship with her in-laws as ‘lumuglugarak lattan’, a strategy based on knowing her place and positioning herself accordingly.

This chapter pulls together the various strands of the temporal and spatial dimensions of the women’s lives already discussed in the previous chapters, dimensions produced in their very concrete experiences. It attempts to provide a more analytic and conceptual discussion of how they negotiated their lives within both macro- and micro-political, economic, and social contexts and processes. In talking about the women’s passages through space and time, I have relied on narratives generated primarily through interviews. Narratives are vitally important to the construction of identities and selves, and in the exercise of agency particularly with respect to how the women plotted themselves in space and time. In their narration of their life experiences, of their situation and

suffering, of their aspirations, dreams and hopes, they constructed themselves, deliberately or not, as actors struggling against various forms of disruptions and constraints. In their narration of themselves as subjects and actors, they revealed how embedded they were in material, cultural and discursive structures. These narratives also revealed the spatiotemporal specificity of these selves and agencies, a specificity that obtains in their articulation in the dialogic exchange of the interviews. I mention this at the outset of this chapter not only to emphasize the link between narratives and agency, a point made in chapter two, but also to acknowledge the basis of the ideas expounded on in this chapter (and the entire thesis): the women's narration of the phenomenological dimensions of their lives and my making sense of their spatiotemporal dimensions.

The first part of the chapter reconsiders migration as itself a form of social navigation that then engenders consequences that themselves have to be navigated. The second part synthesizes ideas around temporality and deals with the idea of 'horizon' or the future, understood in its temporal and spatial dimensions, that is always brought to bear upon the present. In other words, the present, which the women lived always with a consciousness of the past (of what their life used to be), is attuned to this future horizon. The third part centres on the spatiality of the women's lives and experiences. Through the concept of 'cultures of relatedness' (Carsten 2007), I synthesize ideas presented in the previous chapters that dealt with the embeddedness of the women within family, kinship and other ties – ties of reciprocity and indebtedness or within what Vigh (2006) has called 'an economy of affection and obligation'. Here, I conceptualize a navigational strategy which I have called 'waiting game'. The fourth section focuses on another theme that underlies much of the ideas advanced throughout the thesis. I synthesize here ideas concerning the navigation of boundaries, that is, the making, marking, crossing and negotiation of temporal and spatial boundaries. The fifth section provides a critical reflection on the role of experience in the constitution of identity, subjectivity, and agency. In this section, I conceptualize the work done by women when their husbands were away as involving what the women referred to as a lot of 'mental work'. I then discuss hope and imagination and the link between the

two. This discussion serves as my way of providing a synthesizing statement on how the women navigated their temporal and spatial locations (including economic and social) with an eye for that which is yet to come but which they already live as horizon, or, in other words, a lived future. In the sixth section I remark on the focus that this study has taken – an analysis of the consequences of migration on the level of the subject. Finally, I reflect in the last and concluding section on the theoretical, methodological, empirical and policy contributions of the thesis.

9. 1 Migration and Social Navigation

In chapter 4, I looked at migration as a way of imagining a better future, that it is a form of ‘social navigation’ (Vigh 2006, 2008, 2009). It is a means by which millions of Filipinos have navigated the nation’s economic stagnation, if not deterioration and the consequent lack of economic and social mobility for families and individuals. As social navigation, migration is a means to improve life chances. By looking at migration as social navigation, I underscore one of the themes that underpin this thesis: the intertwinement of the personal and the political.

9.1.1 National Narrative and Personal Predicaments

It has been argued, most cogently by Benedict Anderson (1991), that a people’s sense of belonging to a nation and of how they are related to their fellow nationals (what Anderson referred to as their sense of ‘horizontal comradeship’) is the work of imagination. This act of imagining, which Anderson has linked to print media particularly newspapers and novels, and hence to acts of reading, enables people to have an image of their communion live. For contemporary Filipinos, however, the act of reading might not be the prime mediating technology of nationalism and of their belonging to the Filipino nation. I would argue that migration has become a far more effective technology of national imagining (see also Appadurai 1996). Belonging and imagination would therefore crucially include material and embodied practices, what Michael

Billig (1995) has called ‘banal nationalism’. One’s relationship with the nation comes to be cultivated and expressed in the case of millions of migrant Filipinos and the other millions who depend on them on, for example, remittances and the regular sending of the iconic box (of goods); on how they respond to reports of exploitation, abuse, and death of fellow overseas migrants; of how the Philippine state protects (or more likely, fails to protect) overseas Filipinos; and of how the Philippine state has turned the export of labour as a critical component of its development and foreign policies.

Yet it would be erroneous to fail to advert to the discourses (and the shifts in them) that the Philippine state has used to rationalize, promote and manage its labour export policy. Indeed, various Philippine governments have built notions of citizenship and patriotism around the export of labour. The appellation ‘bagong bayani’ or ‘new national heroes’ is emblematic of these attempts by the Philippine state to lay claim to these Filipinos and their earnings. The government’s provision for dual citizenship has also been perceived as another way to keep the state’s claim upon the ‘loyalty’ and ‘patriotism’ of these Filipinos. Yet overseas Filipino workers, now also variously called overseas Filipino investors, (yet another way of claiming them) see through the manoeuvres of the state and have parodied, if not rejected, the status conferred on them. For the government’s ‘bagong bayani’, they have coined ‘gagong bayani’ (stupid heroes). ‘Gago’, stupid, plays on the word ‘bago’, new or modern-day (see also McKay 2007; Rupert and Solomon 2006). Their valorization and heroization in the instrumentalist discourse of the state and in official rituals of recognition (such as the annual rite where the Philippine president greets arriving OFWs at Manila’s Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA)) contrast starkly with the abuse and disrespect they routinely get from state functionaries.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ I have personally witnessed OFWs being badly treated by NAIA’s immigration officials and other airport, mostly security, staff. In one instance, on my return to the United Kingdom in September 2010, a male airport official (I presume this on the basis of his wearing a suit) instructed a group of female OFWs waiting for immigration checking to move to another position which previously was closed. No one moved and this incensed the official into a fit of paroxysm in which he called the women ‘tanga’ and ‘bobo’ (stupid). What I saw happen at the airport must be nothing compared to the lack of (timely) support and protection from the state

Migration demonstrates how the national condition, its narrative of underdevelopment or failure to develop, is inextricably linked to the personal fortunes and individual strivings of Filipinos, a link that is made tighter by their act of crossing the country's borders. It also reveals how this relationship is fraught with conflict and tension. Filipinos migrate not with the express intention of helping improve the nation's economy but to improve the fortunes and possibilities of their children and/or siblings and provide for parents a better life. What mediate therefore the relationship between Filipino overseas migrants and the Philippine nation are these migrants' families. Although the nation is only secondary, if not an afterthought, it is nevertheless important in bestowing a nobler purpose upon these migrants' departure. However, the state could also draw upon Filipinos' attachment and devotion to their families by tapping into Philippine political, social and cultural discourse in which national belonging is imagined as a family: the nation is a mother and Filipinos her children.⁸⁶ Thus, although migration as a mediating technology is dependent upon socio-material practices, these practices no doubt also derive from these migrants' genuine concern for their personal and familial economic and social advancement.

Migration is also therefore simultaneously an act of imagining in which the personal and familial horizons of Filipino migrants become meshed with the nation's narrative and horizon. Migration becomes both the means and space of convergence for the personal and the political. However, personal biography and national narrative do not become fully elided. As Aguilar (2003, p. 152) has pointed out, 'the official policy has resulted in a substantial (but by no means

that OFWs suffer in their countries of work, reports of which routinely fill the pages of Philippine newspapers and online publications.

⁸⁶ The promotion and rationalization of the labour export policy have gone through several discursive shifts: 'an unfortunate necessity (under Marcos), through being lauded as a sacrificial act (Aquino and Ramos) to being portrayed [by the Arroyo government] as the much-vaunted Filipino contribution to the global economy' (Camroux 2009, p. 30; also Tyner 2004, 2009). Working overseas has been cloaked in nationalist rhetoric, with Marcos claiming in the 1970s that the labour and remittances of the overseas contract workers were vital to the regime's project of building the 'New Society', and beginning in 1988 during Corazon Aquino's administration (1986-1992) contract workers were cast as *bagong bayani* (new national heroes). The 'sacrifice' that workers make for their families is appropriated by the state as a sacrifice for the nation. For an elaboration of the emotive figure of the nation as mother, see especially Iletto (1979); see also Galam (2008) and Maceda (1998).

exact) congruence of migrant labor and origin-state interests' (Aguilar (2003, p. 152; see also Scheper-Hughes 2008). It might be argued that alongside this congruence is a strong sense of 'disaffection' understood as 'emotional distance, alienation, antipathy, and isolation but also ... disloyalty to regimes of power and authority' (Manalansan 2010, p. 217).

To be sure, migration is also a way of navigating the dire consequences of structural adjustment policies in the early 1980s and more neoliberal restructuring since then on the Philippine economy and ultimately and especially on poor Filipinos. With the devaluation of the peso, the Philippine currency, real incomes dropped making it almost impossible for most Filipinos to pay for public services such as education and health care that increasingly became privatized (Parrenas 2008a; Rodriguez 2010). Migration became the single most consequential and viable way for Filipinos to afford these social services even as brokering this labour migration became the state's instrument to absolve itself from the responsibility of directly providing these social services to its citizens (Rodriguez *ibid.*, p. xix). As Rodriguez (*ibid.*) further argues, through brokering this labour migration, the state has instituted the 'responsibilization' of Filipino citizens in at least two ways. First, they become solely responsible for education, health and other social services. Second, through the various ways it has made migrant work an act of patriotism or nationalism, the state makes Filipino citizens 'directly bear the costs of neoliberal restructuring as their remittances go to debt servicing' (p. xix). Between 1970 and 1998, the Philippines allocated US \$77.6 billion for foreign debt servicing (for principal and interest) yet by the end of 2000, its debt still amounted to US \$52 billion (Diokno-Pascual 2001 cited in Parrenas 2008a). In 2010, whereas the Philippine state spent the equivalent of Php21.75 per Filipino per day for debt servicing (US \$1= Php45), it only spent Php 6.85 per Filipino per day on education, Php 1.10 for health, and Php .16 for housing (IBON Vital Signs 2010).

9.1.2 Migration and Navigation

Because of the scale of Philippine migration, it might be said to have become part of the way Filipinos live; indeed, of how they make a living to ensure they stay alive. In the 1970s and 1980s, Ilokano radio commercials announcing job opportunities abroad referred to them as ‘ballasiw taaw’ (literally, across the sea) a description that no doubt emanates from the Philippines’ being an archipelago. As strategy, migration – of crossing the sea – might be said to have become routinized. Yet in contrast to routine, migration represents and embodies a purposive acting upon the world, mindful of possibilities and risks, and orienting one’s gaze towards an examination of future prospects and taking a course of action that, based on this calculation, is believed to produce the best results without, however, any guarantees. Migration is embarked upon as an act of risk-taking (see also Rafael 2010) to secure one’s prospects and future in an otherwise insecure, unstable terrain and debilitating social and economic situation (Vigh 2006, 2008). For the two or three thousand Filipinos leaving the country every day for work overseas and the millions who have left before them, it is the economic terrain that is precarious where the only thing certain about it is its uncertainty and the only thing predictable is its debilitating stagnation. For all of the wives interviewed, migration offered the possibility of motion, of economic and social mobility. Migration, as a ‘macro-form’ of social navigation, engenders social, familial, and subjective consequences that seamen’s wives have had to navigate. In this sense, social navigation is ‘motion within motion’ (Vigh 2006), it is moving within and across two social terrains.

How the women navigated their husband’s migration and also how they navigated migration *with* their husbands were demonstrated in my discussion of how the wives negotiated changes in their roles, responsibilities, and obligations; used communication to re/produce family and affective ties; organized and re-organized their daily lives; and dealt with their structural locations (for example, living arrangements) to initiate and accomplish changes in what and who they are and what they are capable of. In the section that follows, I attempt at a consideration of how time was not simply a background in the women’s lives (something that passed) but was instead a vital element

that shaped their lives and experiences, one that itself had to be navigated. Time was not abstract but lived, and lived because it was both an embedded and a structuring component of their existence.

9.2 Lifetimes: Women, Routine and Horizon

Throughout this thesis, I have considered migration as the context within which wives navigated their lives. I have paid close attention to how their husband's migration has shaped the rhythmicity of the women's lives and their experiences obtaining in it. As I demonstrated in chapter 6, the lives of seamen's wives, as well as their sense of agency and selves might be characterized by a forward movement through recurrence. In this section, I underline another theme that has been central to my analysis of the lives and experiences of the women: temporality.

There are two central issues I would like to address here.

The first is the impact of the husband's absence-presence on the women's routines (or how they temporally organized their lives and activities). These routines, structured by and around the absence-presence of their husbands, are also times when, as shown in chapter 6, some sort of gender restructuring around roles and chores occurred. The husband's absence frequently meant 'the feminisation of responsibility and obligation' (Chant 2006) whereas the husband's presence instantiated moments when husbands did 'women's work'. I explored in chapter 6 this process of gender crossing through what I called practices of 'surrendered tasks', 'shared tasks', and 'time out' and considered these under the overarching idea of 'gender negotiation'.

Arlie Hochschild (1989) makes a distinction between gender ideologies and gender strategies in order to underscore the contradiction and tension between the two. Gender ideology denotes ideal types of masculinity and femininity and a person's identification with them. As such, it defines their expectations of themselves and others in terms of roles and responsibilities. Gender strategies, on the other hand, are specific ways resorted to by people to reconcile the gap between reality and their ideal(ized) conceptions (George 2005). My

understanding of Hochschild's concept of gender strategy is that it is something that an individual can do in order to cope with the messy reality of family and household life and negotiating it with a partner is not always necessary. For example, a wife can take upon herself to adopt certain gender strategies to adjust to her husband's recalcitrant demands for or expectations of who should be doing the housework and what kind. Although there is the element in gender strategies of both wife and husband agreeing to a certain way of sharing the work, the point is that a wife who gives up demanding her husband to share equally in housework and care work can then all by herself adjust to her husband in order, for example, to keep the marriage intact.

My notion of 'gender negotiation' as specifically practised by wives in 'surrendered tasks', 'shared tasks', and 'time out' attempts to capture the negotiated aspect of doing housework and care work.⁸⁷ Its purpose, as explained by the wives, is to make the husband appreciate the work that the wives do, for them to see how difficult it is to be overburdened with responsibility. In a sense, it might be considered a form of gender strategy but one that specifically addresses the negotiated dynamic that underpins the husband's performance of many of the tasks of their wives. To be sure, this negotiation does not only originate in the wives' experiences of 'being on their own' and 'becoming a single parent' as discussed in chapter 5 but also in the desire of husbands to make up for those times they were away. Hence, although seafaring is a job that might be seen to tighten the link among 'husband', 'father' and 'provider', it is also a job that exposes the mutability and contingency of gender practices. In other words, it is a catalyst in bringing about changes in gender roles, expectations and practices. The demands that seafaring puts on both men and women help to engender an environment that arguably is conducive for both husband and wife to institute 'a new moral economy for gender relations' (Gutmann 1996, p. 261).

The second issue I wish to comment further on is the link between routine and horizon. It might be argued that many of the routine activities of the wives,

⁸⁷ However, as discussed in chapter 5, some husbands have 'time out' practices of their own that conflict with the 'time out' that is negotiated with wives.

particularly those with children, were intimately braided with the future horizon which functioned as the purposive context of their everyday or quotidian lives. The absence of their husbands and why their husbands have to be absent in the first place were justified and rationalized by a consideration of the future. 'Routine' here refers not only to frequently performed actions that provide structure to the conduct of life. As I argued in chapter six, 'routine', specifically as they pertain to the seamen's wives, must be taken to include those that do not happen daily, weekly or even monthly. There are events in the life of seamen's wives, which because they happen repeatedly and at regular intervals in the course of their husband's career, come to be seen by them as part of the routine of their lives. These events shape their life's structure, cycle, rhythmicity and meaning. They include the alternation of absence and presence, departure and return as well as the cycle of the family living on saved money during the seaman's leave. The pervasive view of the women that their husbands are not paid when they are home has significant consequences on how the women spent money and on their money-saving practices so that they would not fall into debt. It is in this sense that I link routine and horizon. Horizon might be understood in other words as 'lived future' (Adam and Groves 2007) which 'refers to the future experienced as a constitutive element of the present, something without which there could not be a temporal aspect to experience' (Adam and Groves *ibid.*, p. 123). Considering horizon as 'lived future' makes the future 'neither empty nor abstract' but rather as 'a lived aspect of our experience that embeds us within a meaningful world' (*ibid.*). The women's routines, based on the wives' description of them, not only embedded them in their present but also located them in a future.

All of the wives knew that the time will come when their husbands could and will no longer get a job. The women and their husbands were investing in their future (through sending children to school, saving money, starting some business projects, buying property, etc.) because, aware that their husband's seafaring will come to an inevitable end, there was a real possibility that they will go back to a life characterized by 'there is nothing but hardship'. Migration as social navigation and the social navigation wives do help make possible that

it is not only the present, but also the future, that is secured. Social navigation involves ‘an informed, imaginative and integrated sensitivity to the shifting dimensions of potential that fringe the present’ (Adam and Groves 2007, p. 128).

Although all the women were married to seafarers, it is important to highlight differences in the social possibilities that the women and their families have so far realized through their husband’s seafaring. These social possibilities that have so far been actualized bear upon how the women and their families perceive time, particularly the future. And their perception of the future, of what potentially lies ahead for them, impacts on their experience of their present. How they spend money, for example, is linked to how they see their position in this future time. The projects they undertake in the present are bound up with their calculation, if not speculation, of the future.

There is no doubt that these women’s families have enjoyed better lives. Compared with other families in San Gabriel who have no access to overseas remittances, these families have far more purchasing power which translates to better housing, education for children, food, and clothes and a better access to a more middle-class lifestyle. Their social standing has also been vastly improved. However, among these seamen’s families, these social possibilities vary. As shown in chapter 3, women married to seamen of high(er) ranks (chief engineer, first, second etc) were financially better off and their husband’s higher salaries afforded them a consumerist lifestyle. Wives whose husbands were officers were far more optimistic about the future than women whose husbands were almost approaching ‘retire-able age’ and still are ratings, were more optimistic than women whose husbands are ratings because they are still establishing themselves, and certainly were more optimistic than a couple of wives who faced the negative prospect of their husbands’ career being ended due to ill health and who already pinned their hopes on themselves undertaking migration. These officers’ wives had reason to be more optimistic because with their husbands earning a lot more money, they were in a stronger position to secure their future with investments in farm lands and business ventures, and through bank savings. However, as I demonstrated in chapter 4, rank, on its

own, cannot fully account for the stronger financial position of some of the women or of their better economic situation.

Navigating the present by a consideration of the future, of prospects, bestows upon many of the women's (and their husbands') thinking of and acting upon their condition a certain amount of purposiveness. It does not, however, make the future less uncertain and precarious. Indeed, it is this awareness of the future that makes them acutely aware of the limits and finitude of their possibilities for improving their life chances, a finitude that is tightly linked to the health and age of their husbands. This purposiveness helps give the women the mental and emotional strength that helps to make the present and the future more navigable as well as with the pragmatism (coupled with forbearance and longsuffering) that so often guided their decisions as couples. With limited resources, especially in the first few years of their married life, wives and husbands set priorities and work towards achieving them one after the other. Also because of limited resources but also because of obligations to families, husbands and wives, for example, will also live with their natal families or in-laws until such time they have the financial capacity to build their own house.

9.3 Spatial Becomings: Cultures of Relatedness

In this section, I provide further discussion of a third theme that has framed this study, the spatiality of the women's lives and experiences. The most immediate structural location and spatial context of the wives is the family not only because they have a family of their own but also because many of them lived with their natal or husband's families.

This thesis has examined how wives negotiated relationships with their husbands while they were at sea and how mothers worked to foster affective ties between their husband and children. In chapter 2, I presented a discussion of the concept of 'cultures of relatedness' which underscores the processuality of kin relations'. This was borne out in my discussion of the relationship between fathers and their children which mothers fostered particularly in the context of the 'imagined communion' I presented in chapter seven. Because of

the way the relationship between father and children was mediated by communication technology available and accessible to the family, what became highlighted was not the hierarchy between the family members but the distance and absence that had to be bridged. Indeed, fathers downplayed their exercise of authority and focused on nurturing and sustaining a sense of closeness between them. The exercise of too much authority, which underscores the hierarchy of power between father and children, was avoided in favour of minimizing as much as possible the gap between father and children, both in terms of hierarchy and distance. Their relationship was thus defined not so much by structure as by the acts of cultivating it.

I also examined how the women navigated relationships with their husbands' family and how their experiences of living with or near their in-laws defined their 'selves' and their sense of power and agency. Mostly, for those who lived with their mothers-in-law, the women's conflicted relationship with them was a critical factor that shaped their experience. My examination of the relationship between the two women particularly in chapter 8 shows that kinship is a negotiated experience and that the ties between them are 'negotiated relationships' (Finch and Mason 2000, p. 164). The terms of negotiation initially put the seamen's wives at a disadvantage but women worked often over considerable periods of time to establish themselves as their husband's primary relation particularly with respect to who receives the allotment. It is true that the relationship between them was negotiated and lived experientially and it was played out not only within the boundaries of the house they both lived in (but which the mothers-in-law owned) but also in the broader context of the neighbourhood which was frequently brought into the lives and relationship between the two women by the older women's gossiping. Their relationship itself was a site for the renegotiation (albeit conflicted and sometimes 'violent') of their ties.

Yet my analysis also reveals that the relationship between the two women was significantly shaped by a cultural script. How the younger women encountered their mother-in-law, how they experienced (living with) her was conditioned by

a cultural code that gave the older women access to respect and authority. This shows the continuing salience of kinship as structure (Miller 2007), as ‘a set of normative categories’ (ibid., p. 536) or a ‘given principle’ (ibid, p. 537). To be sure, this structure was part of the experience of the specific ties of relatedness that were formed and re-formed and which daughters-in-law had to navigate. It was an element that constituted the transformation of what for many of these daughters-in-law was an oppressive relationship. Living in a separate house not only would mean freedom for the women (or what they said as being able to breathe freely) but also meant being able to see the mother-in-law—daughter-in-law relationship from a different vantage point and experience it with more distance and space.

9.3.1 Navigating Timespace: The ‘Waiting Game’

Sherry Ortner (2006, p. 129) says that social life, viewed from a serious games perspective, ‘is actively played, oriented toward culturally constituted goals and projects, and involving both routine practices and intentionalized action’. Games ‘are built upon power relations at the micro-level’ (ibid., p. 151) but whose ‘ultimate purpose is to understand the larger forces, formations, and transformations of social life’ (ibid., p. 130).⁸⁸ I draw on these ideas on serious games to talk about an aspect of the lives of the women and their families and which might be seen as a strategy that they used to navigate their social and economic locations.

In my formulation, ‘waiting game’ refers to the women’s endurance, that is, to how they endured whatever was there to endure. It also refers to how women steeled themselves and to how they passed, or more accurately, filled their time in order to ‘forget’ their husbands. It refers to how they occupied themselves to ‘speed up’ time. It also refers to a sense of timing, of knowing when to make a

⁸⁸ Ortner (2006, p. 130) explains that ‘serious games have nothing to do with formalistic game theory, popular in the harder social sciences. Interpretations of social life by way of serious games involve neither game theory’s formal modelling nor its assumption that a kind of universal rationality prevails in virtually all kinds of social behaviour. On the contrary “serious games” are quite emphatically cultural formations rather than analysts’ models. In addition a serious games perspective assumes culturally variable (rather than universal) and subjectively complex (rather than predominantly rationalistic and self-interested) actors’.

move, of acting because they have reached the limits of their capacity. It connotes a sense of right timing, that is, of making demands or acting because 'the right time for action has arrived'. It involves awareness, for example, of their economic situation and a calculation of when it is the right time to do certain things. It is meant to capture the strategy adopted by the women (and by their husbands, too, of course) of attaining goals over a long period of time such as for example the building of their own house. Yet the waiting game is not just about time, the biding of it; it is not just about the deferral of action, the calculation of when the women and their husbands were in the best position to undertake something.

Waiting game is also about place, the location of actions and activities that precede the 'right time', the moment of action. In other words, 'waiting game' also refers to the physical and social spaces where these women were located or which they occupied while they waited. The prime example of the spatiality of 'waiting game' is the living or residential arrangements of the couples. While waiting for the time when they could afford independence, wives (and their family) either lived with their natal or husband's families. Such an arrangement, as shown in chapters 4, 5 and 7, embedded women (or their husbands) in the social space of kinship relations or cultures of relatedness that served as a fertile ground for the development of the women's identity, subjectivity and agency. In chapter 7, I particularly paid attention to how women who lived with their mothers-in-law were located in hierarchical structures that relied upon prevailing cultural injunctions to respect one's parents and elders. I develop 'waiting game' also to refer to how women negotiated the spaces created by their husband's absence, that is, the discursive and ideological spaces to which they were positioned as women without husbands, women whose husbands were away or as one wife put it, 'as parched earth in need of rain'. The gossip, for example, that was spread about them and the sexual advances from men some were subjected to not only relied upon images of what left-behind women are assumed to be but also reinforced these images. They had real consequences on how the women disciplined themselves (or how they were disciplined through surveillance by gossip) in that these women's mobility was curtailed.

Worse, in some cases, many of the women themselves curtailed their mobility. This brings us to ‘boundaries’, another important concept this thesis has been referring to.

9.4 Boundaries: Sites of Passages

The women’s navigation of their temporal and spatial locations meant boundary work. Navigating time and space necessarily involved the creation, maintenance, crossing, transgression or blurring of boundaries. While boundaries also functioned to position them (in this sense, boundaries ‘told them their place’), boundaries are also porous and permeable (Cunningham-Burley *et al.* 2005; Jamieson 2005). Indeed, over time, many of the women transgressed boundaries built and demarcated by, for example, culture. Boundaries ‘clarify a range of interfaces from roles and gendered relationships within families and relationships to the relationship between families, family members and wider social institutions’ (Wassoff and Cunningham-Burley 2005, p. 263). Boundaries might thus also be conceptualized as *sites* of passages. Several levels of boundary work might be identified to specify how it is integral to the ‘mobility’ of women, to how they navigated their lives and to how moving within and across boundaries contributed to their sense of self and agency.

One of the boundaries the women had to negotiate was between roles they did particularly those that they had to assume in the absence of their husbands and the tension these created in relation to what they were more ‘associated with’. Among those women who were in paid employment or who had successful business ventures, there was also the tension between their caring and providing roles that had to be reconciled. In this sense, they were not only negotiating boundaries but also identities, selves and agency which were being shaped by and intimately bound up with the performance of these roles. Other women who wanted to venture into ‘work’ space outside of the context of the home were prevented by their husbands from doing so or were only allowed to because their financial situation had become desperate (see also Mannon 2006). To

these women, their husbands' conception of their proper place closely tied their identities and agency to being wives- and mothers-as-carers which made it difficult for them to be both carers and earners.

Although work on boundaries and boundary making, particularly on work and life balance (e.g. Cunningham-Burley *et al.* 2005; McKie *et al.* 2005; Nippert-Eng 1996) has examined the important role they play in structuring women's lives and informing and shaping their sense of self, identity and subjectivity, scant attention has been paid to how migration or the separation of members of families impacts upon how women deal with boundaries. No doubt this is a consequence of the society upon whose realities and experiences they are drawing from. I draw from a society where migration is a fabric of life and in which separation and absence are thus important factors affecting family, social, economic, political and other aspects of Filipino life. This reality has to be addressed as a matter of course and necessity.

Another area in which boundaries were negotiated and boundary work was done was in the relationship between the wives and their husbands. There was real temporal and spatial distance that had to be bridged. Intimacy between couples, and family and affective ties had to be maintained in order to reproduce a sense of 'family' not only when husbands were away. The blurring of boundaries in this case was also meant to make the coming home of husbands, that is, their physical re-integration into the family, less difficult and problematic. Women, however, not only dealt with spatial distance. Even more critically, they were negotiating the 'transnational' coordinates and spaces to which their family ties are extended. Communication with their husband was contingent on the availability of phone signals and how long it took their husband to get from one port to another. Yet, as I also showed in chapter 7, the quality of communication between the seamen and their families was determined by their access to communication infrastructures and technologies. Although the financial standing of families is one important factor shaping what communication facilities they can access, where they resided was equally critical. For wives who resided outside of landline coverage in San Gabriel,

they made do with mobile phones while those who lived in the town proper (poblacion) had access to a wider range of media, for example, communication via skype and social networking sites such as Facebook which were particularly appreciated because they enabled seamen to see their family or pictures of them. The capacity of some of the women to bridge the spatial and temporal distance and differences was also therefore constrained not only by what communication technologies they can afford but also by what are available to them because of where they reside (see also Mahler 2001; Parrenas 2008a; Sassen 2000). Thus, their capacity for such bridge work and the quality of intimacy they can produce and reproduce are bound up with the state of telecommunications in the Philippines and with class and economic inequalities that structure Filipino life.

If the preceding discussion instantiates work that bridges boundaries, in other instances, women were compelled by social and cultural prejudice to leave boundaries intact. I refer specifically to husband infidelity that was tolerated and to wife infidelity that was condemned. However, many of the women made known to their husband their expectation that just as they had to endure the absence of sexual intimacy, so did they expect their husband to do the same. Hence, these women might be said to be demanding their husbands to impose upon themselves the same strict moral standards that society puts exclusively upon these women. Again, work on boundaries related to intimacy such as those of Jamieson (1998, 2005) has failed to advert to migration even though migration has long become a condition of modernity posing conditions and risks that impact on the maintenance or dissolution of relationships.

Related to the 'waiting game' discussed above and to how women's behaviour was policed during their husband's absence was the blurring of the distinction between work and leisure, a third site of boundary work. In order for women to relax, they engaged in what has frequently been labelled as 'informal economy'. Selling food and clothing items also provided a number of the women a legitimate reason to go out more often and farther afield hence improving their mobility, albeit this movement was seen as an extension of (domestic) work. I

noted in chapter 5 how some wives only went to the capital city to buy necessities or to withdraw money from banks or cash machines. Some other women farmed or raised livestock to distract themselves, helping them 'forget' their husbands. These women might be said to have merged (domestic or care) work and leisure. This is not simply about some form of work involved in relaxation or leisure activities. Women's leisure activities, such as entertaining friends, frequently involved cooking, washing up and cleaning (Forman 1989). Or that women had very little 'pure free time', that is 'time "uncontaminated" by family caregiving' (Lois 2010, p. 423). The case of these Filipino seamen's wives is different and more extreme in that work itself becomes leisure. They relaxed by doing more work and this work was itself justified for its financial contribution to the family's coffers.

A fourth environment in which boundaries abounded was the relationship between women and their in-laws. Where women lived with their mothers-in-law, negotiating this relationship did not only involve the demarcation of space but also, more importantly, the negotiation of hierarchy that was underpinned by cultural and social codes of respect. As has been noted by F. Landa Jocano (1995, p. 5), Filipino social organization is based, among others, on generation (order of descent) and seniority (see also Medina 2001). Shared residence, which meant the lack of privacy and the circumscription of the agency of the women to do what they would have wanted to do, paradoxically was replete with invisible boundaries. Or, it engendered attempts to draw boundaries. Boundary work was also involved in redefining and restructuring mother-son relationships, a task that involved their husband's allotment and which resulted in the transgression of boundaries between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law. Where daughters-in-law transgressed, they expanded the space of their selves and power.

Co-residence became a transitional phase and what Winnicott (1971) has called 'transitional space'. 'Transitional space' has been conceptualized as a fertile ground for individual and cultural creativity (see, for example, Aitken and Herman 1997). However, the case of these women reveals that viewing the

women's co-residence and their experiences obtaining in it as transitional phase-space also makes visible the often abusive contexts and dire straits of these women's lives. Indeed, it was a period that might be said to have been defined by *ressentiment*, one of whose critical elements is 'the sense of injustice based on the belief that one does not deserve to be in the subordinate position' (Rollins 1997, p. 265). *Ressentiment* refers not only to the hostility felt by those who are mistreated but also 'toward those whom one feels unjustly have power or an advantage over one's life' (Rollins *ibid.*, p. 266). Nevertheless, this transitional phase-space was fertile ground for the growth and development of the women's sense of identity, self, power and agency. In other words, they and how women made sense of these experiences were directly linked to their social location which was structurally defined. As Wylie (2003, p. 31) has argued in the context of standpoint epistemology:

What individuals experience and understand is shaped by their location in a hierarchically structured system of power relations: by the material conditions of their lives, by the relations of production and reproduction that structure their social interactions, and by the conceptual resources they have to represent and interpret these relations.

Yet in these women's struggle for autonomy, power was not itself transcended or overcome but only reconfigured. As McClintock (1995, pp. 319-320) has noted, identity 'comes into being through ceaseless contest and results in a dispersal and realignment of power rather than a vanishing of power'.

Women who lived with their natal families did not suffer from what some of the women who lived with their in-laws did. For most of these women, particularly those who were in paid employment, their natal family was a source of help just as they were a source of help to their natal family. However, a few of them had to deal with tensions. In chapter 3, I cited the example of Leonora whose decision to marry a seaman and not a Hawaii immigrant disappointed her parents. She not only had to live with her parents but also with their disappointment.

Finally, women must negotiate statist discourses of 'family' and the reality of family life caused by migration and the relationship between the state and the

family. Migration might be seen to invert the relationship between the Philippine state and families inasmuch as instead of families being supported by the state, it is the state that is supported by families through remittances, and instead of the state providing employment for its people, the state, through migration, exports its unemployment and underemployment problems thereby putting the onus of employment on the people themselves. In Philippine political discourse, the family is considered as the basic unit of society and the state is mandated by the Constitution to protect its integrity and sanctity. What is normatively framed as ‘the Filipino family’, aside from being centred on a heterosexual couple, is one that lives together. However, the everyday, concrete reality is that millions of Filipino families have had to live apart because of the state’s inability to keep it together. Many of the women expressed the desire for their whole family to live together but that there was no choice (‘a ngem ana ngarud’) since there was nothing but hardship (‘rigat met la ti adda’). With its labour export policy, the state has in fact been instrumental in undermining not only the normative framing of the Filipino family (see Parrenas 2008a) but the family itself. But the state has been quick to avoid responsibility and accountability particularly with respect to the ‘social costs’ of migration such as marriage dissolution, family disintegration, juvenile delinquency and drug abuse. The social costs of migration, although debatable given conflicting research findings, have been blamed particularly on the migration of mothers and wives and have led to calls to discourage them (single women were exempted). The Philippine state has taken the position, consistent with the discursive shifts in the way it has viewed and justified its role with respect to labour migration (see, for example, Tyner 2009), that it is not accountable for the consequences of the migration of these women. The decision to migrate is the choice of the women migrants (and all other migrants) and its job is merely to manage and facilitate these choices which are an exercise of their human right to travel and seek better economic and social opportunities (see Tyner *ibid.*). In this calculus, the state moves away from labour export promotion to ensuring Filipinos are able to exercise their human rights. Since it is the choice of Filipinos to migrate, they are responsible for the consequences of their decision (Guevarra 2006).

Yet the exodus of Filipinos (their ‘choice’) has greatly been engendered by the failure of the state to provide the social and economic possibilities for its people and by its aggressive promotion of labour migration. The reorganization of many Filipino families, that is, the separation of members, is tied to the state’s labour export policy through which those possibilities might be realized. Consequently, the fictive boundary between the private and public spheres is simultaneously exposed and dismantled, and reinforced. Seamen’s wives (as well as wives or husbands of other migrant workers) have had to navigate on their own the consequences of migration. The Philippine economy has been propped up by remittances which have been used by the state for foreign debt servicing (Enloe 1990; McGovern 2003; Parrenas 2008a; Rodriguez 2010). The families of migrant workers have not benefitted from any policy that would have eased their situation such as, for example, child care benefits or tax breaks. In short, women or left-behind families have had to bear the burden of migration while the state fully benefitted. But by not contributing anything to the welfare of the family such as for example government-subsidized health service, the neoliberal Philippine state also manages to maintain the division between state and family in the sense that the concerns of the family become configured as hardly the concerns of the state. But as discussed in section 9.1, Filipino migrant workers’ remittances are used to pay off the Philippine state’s foreign debt.

9.5 Migration, Navigation and Experience

If migration is an experience and not just a social process (Parrenas 2001), how did the women deal with this ‘meta-experience’? What lessons did they learn from their lives that have been so shaped by migration? In this section, I wish to consider how their experiences over time have helped them navigate their lives. Experience is itself a navigational tool teaching the women valuable lessons on how to survive and prevail. Experience has temporal and spatial elements and going through certain experiences not only makes the women get used to difficulties but also are transformed in the process of experiencing. The women frequently made references to the link between life as constituted by ‘padas’

(experience, and also ‘fellow travelling’) and ‘labas’ (‘going through’ but also ‘the past’). This pedagogic function of experience might be restated as ‘learning from life’. This new consciousness of their becoming, of what they are capable of has profound consequences on their lives and how they live it. For many of the women, there was a direct link between living in their own house and their sense of their independence, of their capacity to be and stand on their own. Yet living in their own house did not mean that they were abandoning their families, that they were defining themselves in terms of their own selves.

More than finally providing the wife with her own domicile and domain that will afford her more freedom, the house is also a concretization of how they have successfully navigated their personal, social and economic locations. The house shows their success in improving their social possibilities and lives. With no or very little assistance from the government except by going through the state’s labour export policy, the seamen and their wives have accomplished what most likely would have been impossible had their husbands not become a migrant contractual worker. The house might be seen to embody the couple’s independence not only from their families but also from the Philippine state. The house is but another concretization of how the personal is political, a relationship that is, however, paradoxically established by how the state widens the gap between it and the Filipino migrant families. As long as Filipino families have to strike out on their own and despite the fact they do manage to survive and even thrive, the question of where the Philippine state is and what role it plays in their lives makes the strivings of these Filipino families even more profoundly political.

9.5.1 Mental Choreography

In chapter 5, I introduced the idea of ‘mental work’, which is how I translated the wives’ description of their lives when their husbands were away as a time when they were in charge of worrying over, of thinking and of knowing about everything (‘Sika amin ti agpanunot’; ‘sika amin ti makaammo’.) ‘Agpanunot’ (think) and ‘makaammo’ (know) both refer to a mental or cognitive act that is the first stage in a series of actions culminating in accomplishing something. It

is not limited to acts of thinking although it is an important aspect of it. It means being responsible for everything and this becomes most felt when there are family emergencies such as illness. It combines thought, action, and feeling and is a strategy that is significantly bound up with the women's situation of being 'on their own', of being overburdened with responsibility for long periods of time. I therefore translate it, in the specificity of these women's lives and experiences, to cover the physical, emotional, and mental work involved in looking after and raising a family. I would now like to reconsider this kind of work to call it 'mental choreography'. I draw from two available conceptualizations. The first is Sillars' (2010) 'emotional choreography' which I used in chapter 6 to describe and capture the work done by the wives-mothers to manage or choreograph how their husband and children felt, behaved, and moved in each other's presence at least in the first few days of their husband's arrival. Translating 'sika amin ti agpanunot or 'sika amin ti makammo' as 'mental choreography' expands the idea of choreography – of how one moves within, across or about space according to the beat, rhythm and tempo of the demands of their lives obtaining in the absence-presence of their husbands – to include both thought and action and not just affect. The semantic field and reference of 'mental' is also expanded to include not just thought or the cognitive but also action and affect. To that extent, it is a form of work or activity that resonates with Arlie Hochschild's 'emotion work', which is the second concept I draw from. 'Mental choreography' encompasses all aspects of the burden and responsibility of taking care of others which significantly includes but is not limited to, for example, 'provisioning' (Elson 1998) defined as 'the activity of supplying people with what they need to thrive, including care and concern as well as material goods. At the heart of provisioning is looking ahead and making preparations' (ibid., p. 207). 'Mental choreography' also underscores the balancing acts of the women both when their husbands are home and when they are away, and how they deal and cope with their problematic relationships with their in-laws.

9.5.2 Hope and the Imagining of a Better Future

Tied to the idea of ‘mental choreography’ is how women thought and felt about the future. The horizon loomed large to them. They looked at and lived the present according to this future and to that extent, horizon is also ‘lived future’ (Adam and Groves 2007). Although the thesis has narrated many sad stories of these women, and indeed many of its arguments have been based on them, the focus of this study has been to show how they have not been defeated by their condition. After all, the research was undertaken to examine how their identity, subjectivity and agency were shaped by their experiences. Although it might be said that all of the women have gone through difficult times, and many of them had and continue to have difficult lives, most of them, however, were optimistic about the future. Even the few wives whose husbands were facing the end of their careers were hopeful because of alternatives that have become possible or available to them.

In the women’s ‘lived future’, the past, however, was something that has never really been left behind. A memory of their hard life was important in imagining their horizon. Many of the wives wanted their children to have a (deep) sense of their hard life for they want their children to have a sense of purpose and direction so that this hard life does not have to be perpetuated. They do not always succeed but in attempting to do so, they navigate future lives, not theirs, in which they will forever be implicated. They try to steer their children’s lives (and their lives) by providing an anchor, a memory of their hard lives, or of what it used to be like. By doing so, children might be led to appreciate what they have and be encouraged and inspired to make their lives even better. Parents have also either encouraged or supported their children to undertake their own migrations, their search for better social possibilities. Their future is such that their horizon is somewhere across the sea. Their hopes are pinned on migration.

Agency might then also be understood not only to refer to capacity or ability to act but also to possibility (Vigh 2008). If agency as possibility denotes ‘to what extent we are able to act within a given context’ (ibid., 11), then agency is also

about overcoming constraints and limitations and therefore about furthering or expanding what is possible. Although this thesis has examined how migration is a form of social navigation, of improving one's life chances, of realizing economic and social possibilities elsewhere and how women navigated (the consequences of) migration, the role played by affectivity has not been underscored. If navigation is concerned with moving within the present (encompassing both time and space dimensions) with a consideration of the past and future or horizon (and with an acute awareness that this future cannot be fully known, let alone determined), then we have to reflect on how women 'felt' about the future. What role did emotion play in the women's imagination of a better future?

In dealing with the relationship between imagination and the future, one emotion that mediates the two is hope. In chapter 4, I quoted a poignant statement from a wife who described her life as revolving around debt (*utang met la ti pagpulgosan*). Despite her difficulties, she said that something will come, that life is not going to be all hardship. In different ways and in varying degrees, the women expressed feelings of hope and optimism. To that extent, hope not only helped the women endure, to become durable; hope constituted how they perceived their and their family's future. Hope shaped how they cast their gaze on the horizon and how they imagined their prospects, however uncertain they might be. Considered this way, hope is not only emotion that resides or is generated inside a person, a feeling one has. It has materiality; hoping is action. It is an active and material labour that obtains in the concrete socio-structural contexts of these women. As Lois McNay (2008) argues in her examination of hope in the work of Pierre Bourdieu:

Bourdieu ties his discussion of temporal uncertainty to a discussion of the emotion of hope which itself is connected to social location. Hope is an emotional expression of protension defined as a practical sense of the forthcoming. [...] Although protension is a general feature of agency, an individual's capacity to experience hope is conditioned by the ways in which power relations shape the agent's expectations and orientation towards the future. (McNay 2008, pp. 183-184)

Emotions emerge through practice and practice is both the product of power relations that have been internalized into the body and also of an active engagement with social structures. (McNay *ibid.*, p. 185; cf. Crapanzano 2003)

McNay (2008) writes, citing the work of Beverly Skeggs, that the better positioned people are, the more hope they have. But the wife cited above and a number of other wives did not have much in life, they did not have many options or alternatives yet they were filled with hope; they were hopeful. They had faith that the future was not going to be as bad and as hard as the present. Indeed, faith was an important element of the hoping of these women. For many of them, it was not enough that they had inner strength, that they were resilient and tenacious. Their possession and exercise of these qualities or resources was linked to their faith in God. They spoke of the dangers their husbands were exposed to, of the risk that always accompanied their husband's departure. They contended with the possibility that their husband might not come back alive. Their husband's leaving entailed taking great risks and was a gamble they had to take (see also Aguilar 1998; Bankoff 2004; Mojares 1983; Rafael 2010). These things they cannot do anything about, they say, except to leave them to a higher power, thereby recognizing the limitedness of their capacity. By doing so, their hopes become more powerful and deeper, more vital to how they look at the future. Hope, as a constitutive element of the women's navigation of their social horizon, is also a navigational tool. It is a positive force and resource aiding them to manoeuvre what have frequently been rough, if not, turbulent times. It enables them to view their life, despite the difficulties and challenges, not with resignation and fatalism but with resilience and tenacity. Hope manifests their 'talent for life' (Scheper-Hughes 2008) and their 'capacity to aspire' (Appadurai 2007). To this extent, these women draw attention to a political economy of emotion (Scheper-Hughes 1992, 2007; also Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990) which underpins the personal-familial and politico-economic (structural) origins and motivations of migration. Hope is that which enables Nancy to declare 'my life is running smoothly now' or Nora to say 'something will come; life is not all hardship'.

9.6 Migration and Subjectification

In this thesis, I have specifically focused on how the women's identity, subjectivity and agency have been shaped by migration. I argued that these women should not only be seen for how they deal with the consequences of migration. Through the concept of social imaginary, I linked them more directly to migration, that is, they are not merely the left-behind ones who have to 'suffer' the consequences of their husband's absence. Instead, they invest in migration, partaking in the production and reproduction of cultures of migration. To the extent that they actively participate in making migration a form of social navigation, that is, a way of expanding their social and economic possibilities, they cannot be seen simply as the recipients of the process and experience of migration.

How the women viewed migration as their redemption from social and economic stagnation is encapsulated by the expressions women used: 'what choice is there' (a ngem ana ngarud), 'there is nothing but hardship' or 'hardship is all that there is' (rigat met la ti adda), 'we won't have anything to live on' (awan met pagbiagmi), and 'we won't have a life' (awan biagmi). The last one (awan biagmi) might refer not only to physical existence but also to social existence. Nevertheless, there are real consequences to them of the alternating absence and presence of their husbands. Hence, despite their own personal investments into their husband's migration, the wives had to negotiate the set of experiences and situations engendered by their husband's participation in overseas contract labour. All the women worked hard to develop and possess those resources and capabilities that would enable them to do so. All of them learned to be strong and to stand on their own feet, to rely on themselves during those times their husbands were away. At the same time, a number of the women, specifically those whose husbands became seamen only after many years of married life, said that their husbands pursued such a job because their husbands knew that they [the women] were strong enough to endure their separation. My subject-level analysis considered the everyday practices of the women as crucial in illuminating the processes by which these

women developed these resources and capabilities (see also Ong 1999; Parrenas 2001; Vigh 2006).

However, in paying attention to the women's everyday practices, what I called 'the minutiae of subjective becoming', I simultaneously demonstrated how these women moved within or were implicated in larger contexts and environments. For example, in my discussion of communication, I showed that the predominance of the mobile phone as means of communication is tied to the political economy and state of telecommunication in the Philippines. Through examining how women's lives and experiences are embedded in family and kinship ties, I demonstrated how autonomy is not about unfettered individuals or monads but rather about interdependence. Moreover, although their husband's migrant contract work linked them even more to the domestic or family sphere, I demonstrated that it was also characterized by the blurring of gender boundaries. By looking at migration as a form of social navigation, I linked the Philippine nation's narrative of underdevelopment to the personal predicaments of Filipinos, to their strivings to enhance their life chances, and to the role played by the women in these acts of searching for social possibilities across the sea. I showed how the dreams of many in San Gabriel (and in the Philippines) might have been forged in (their collective) history and how in many ways their preparedness to face and endure a life without their husbands is built on what became a common experience of both men and women of being left behind when their spouses left for Hawaii or California.

The identity, subjectivity and agency of the women are intertwined with institutional and structural contexts, that is, the political, economic and social realities that comprise and constitute their social possibilities. On the other hand, they also comprise and constitute the desire for migration and its construal as a way of obtaining better social possibilities. A subject-level analysis does not preclude looking at the women in these contexts. Indeed, they are *sine qua non* to such an analysis (Ong 1999; Parrenas 2001). It is by looking at their location in these contexts that we can see more fully how women bridged the gap between their desires and aspirations for a better life, if not a good life and the reality of what is available and where it is available. It enables

us to appreciate the burdens they are willing to carry and the sacrifices they are willing to make. As one wife said: ‘agsakripisyo [...] tapno [...] makalung-aw met iti panagbiag’ (we have to sacrifice so that we can have a better life). ‘Makalung-aw’ comes from the word ‘lung-aw’ which connotes being able to keep the head above water so that one can breathe and not drown. It connotes being able to stay afloat in treacherous waters. Migration is how women and their families have navigated social and economic uncertainties in the Philippines, the threat of going under such difficulties.

9.7 Conclusion: Reflections on the Thesis’ Contributions

Because the preceding discussion has provided both a synthesis and further development of the major arguments of this thesis, I would like to use this concluding section to reflect further on the theoretical, empirical, methodological and policy contributions of the study.

9.7.1 Theoretical Contribution

This thesis contributes theoretically and conceptually to three areas. First, it contributes to conceptual discussions of subject formation by critically deploying a generative conception of subjectification. I argued that McNay’s (2000) development of a generative theory of the subject is focused on the temporality of subject formation and lacks an explicit theorization of its spatiality. I incorporated this spatiality into a generative theory by way of Vigh’s (2006, 2008, 2009) concept of navigation. Whereas McNay considers temporality as dialogically involving retention (the sedimentation of imposed practices) and protention (the creative responding to constraints imposed by social relations), Vigh similarly conceptualizes navigation to explicate how people are moved by (being constrained or determined) and move within (creative engagement) their social environments, ones that are seen in both their temporal and spatial dimensions.

In taking a generative conception, what I have highlighted is not only how the women have been shaped by their conditions but also how they have creatively engaged the constraints imposed by their social and material relations. In this

sense, I underscored how they are both determined by and determining of their structural locations. This is not to celebrate or romanticize agency but to highlight ‘not only the desire of the ordinary people to react to their life situations, but, more importantly, the active ways in which men and women seek to shape their lives every day’ (Gutmann (1996, p. 260).

Second, the thesis contributes to conceptual discussions of the relation between space and time. My argument has been that spatiality and temporality are not only important to understanding these issues but also that temporality and spatiality cannot be understood apart from each other. Space and time are ‘coeval and co-constituted’ (Castree 2009, p. 28). The contribution is in two areas. One, the thesis looks at the simultaneous implication of space and time in the identity, agency and subjectivity of women married to Filipino seamen. Second, it examines the simultaneous implication of space and time in the context of the formation of subjectivities in migration processes.

Third, the thesis provides a reconceptualization of the role of the women in migration processes. Although I have used the term ‘left-behind’ to refer to the seamen’s wives, I argued particularly in chapter 4 that they have a more active role in the migration of their husband. Through the concept of social imaginary, I offered a perspective that views the seamen’s wives as not simply ‘left-behind’ ones but also equally, ones who invest into the migration of their husbands and are therefore active players in the production and dissemination of cultures of migration. This and combined with the material, physical and emotional work they do as wives and mothers, helps to socially institutionalize migration (Kanaiaupuni 2000).

9.7.2 Empirical Contribution

I sought to examine the nature and experience of being left behind, an aspect that has not been given adequate attention in migration studies. More importantly, I focused on the wives of Filipino seamen, an even more neglected group in migration scholarship. The thesis provides a ‘thick description’ of the lives of the women and located them in socio-material contexts of practices and

relations. I provide empirically-based conceptual categories for describing the specific ways by which Filipino seamen's wives navigated their temporal and spatial locations, namely 'gender negotiation', 'waiting game' and 'mental choreography'. The thick description was not limited to providing an intensely micro-analysis of these women's lives. I located them within macro contexts such as the 'structures of respect' that governed their relations with their in-laws, the discursive disciplinary frame of gossip that policed their behaviour, and the state and political economy of telecommunication in the Philippines which shaped communication between the seamen and their families.

Moreover, I developed a discussion centred on what I termed 'the minutiae of subjective becoming' in the context of the dialogic relation between autonomy and intersubjectivity. The fine-grained analysis I provided of how the women won differing degrees of independence and autonomy from their husbands, natal families or in-laws was undergirded by a consideration of the social and economic underpinnings of their aspirations for more self-determination.

Finally, I have approached the problem of meshing the temporal and spatial dimensions of these women's experiences through the concept of navigation (Vigh 2006, 2008, 2009), which enabled me to look at migration not only as a terrain or context for the lives of the women that had to be navigated but also as itself a strategy for navigating the absence of economic and social possibilities in the Philippines. The women's lives were thus not seen merely within issues, for example, of work-life balance. Their lives and experiences engendered by the alternating absence and presence of seamen-husbands that characterize work practice in the shipping industry and the contractual, and frequently precarious, nature of their husband's employment were framed within labour migration.

9.7.3 Methodological Contribution

My work was based on interviews and although I cannot make any claims to contribute to methods, I wish to offer some methodological reflections on the process and dynamic of interviewing with respect to gender. My research demonstrates that the force of gender to inform the research dynamic is socially

shaped, that is, the context within which gender operates is constructed not only by the researcher and the participant but equally by where gender becomes even more salient in the research process. My research underscores that the negotiation of gender boundaries is also informed and shaped by the broader contexts in which sensitive topics (e.g. sexual intimacy) are imbricated (e.g. gossip and the policing of women's behaviour).

As discussed in chapter 3 and elsewhere in the thesis, the absence of the women's husbands so suffused their lives that questions about what the women found difficult were understood in the context of the absence of sexual intimacy and the problems they gave rise to such as gossip. The force of this absence, its pervasive presence in the lives of the women, helped facilitate a conversation around intimacy issues that was not exclusively focused on, and delimited by, (the absence of) 'physical acts of intimacy'. The matter was broadened to encompass ideological, social and cultural terrains and so reduced the awkwardness of talking about these very intimate and private matters. My research points to the possibility of the researcher's gender and that of the participant becoming no longer such a haunting issue. In such instances, although it is an insistent presence that always needs to be acknowledged, it becomes only one among various sites where gender matters. An awareness of the various ways and sites in which gender becomes salient helps in navigating the effects of gender in cross-gender research.

9.7.4 'A Modest Proposal': Policy Contributions

My discussion of the policy implications of my work centres on two issues. First, many of the women spoke of financial difficulties and of taking them a long time to build their house. Although the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (which administers a welfare fund collected from overseas workers and their employers as mandated by law) has in place some financial assistance schemes, they are mainly for the overseas workers themselves.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ They include credit programs to assist returning migrants reintegrate in the country, insurance coverage, disability assistance, financial assistance in case of illness that does not derive from work, repatriation assistance, legal assistance to workers who encounter problems, airport

Based on the experiences of the women, it would help if their families had access to financial help. The following policy-related recommendations are made.

A. Access to credit assistance during husband's leave

Many of the women mentioned their tight financial situation around two or three months into their husband's leave. This was a time when they have used up most of their savings. To be sure, they prepare for this period but there have been times when their husbands had unexpectedly taken longer to board their next ship. Access to a credit facility to help them during this particular period would significantly ease the situation of the women and their families and provide a mechanism that lessens their dependence on other people who might be equally or even more hard up.

B. Access to hospitalization fund

Emergency expenditures are not, from the accounts of most of the wives, budgeted for. When a family member falls ill and hospitalization is required or when the woman herself has to have a caesarean delivery, the money is sourced from the family's monthly allowance and savings. Again, this credit fund would ease the women's situation. Repayment terms should be built around the financial capacity of the families.

C. Access to housing loan to speed up the construction of the families' house

Considering how long many of the wives had to wait before construction of their own house could commence and how long it has taken for their houses to be constructed, this housing loan should at least make the construction faster and improve the allocation of money for the family and how families plan ahead for the future.

assistance, and a medicare program. Seafarers can avail themselves of training grants for career advancement, free refresher course training, and loans for training (Scalabrini Migration Center 2000, p. 122).

Many of the financial difficulties of the women and their families can be addressed. The Philippine state's institutionalization of the forms of financial assistance suggested above will significantly improve their situation and relieve them of much of the mental and emotional strains of worrying where or from whom to borrow money. It will also ease the financial burden particularly of those whose children are in university or college and are at the same time building a house.

The second policy recommendation addresses the women's mobility and their limited leisure activities due to concerns with gossip and accusations of infidelity. Their situation might be improved if they were organized into an association. This is a recommendation addressed specifically to the local or municipal government of San Gabriel which can initiate their organization. The local government could also offer free use of some of its facilities. A seamen's wives' association will provide a venue for the women to have some form of entertainment or fun outside of the context of home and 'work-as-leisure'. The association can enable the women to engage in leisure activities that do not come in the form of work and without the associated fear of being seen as philandering. This will also potentially help expand each woman's social network. Such an association might also expand the women's spatial and temporal mobility and help improve the spatial and temporal dimensions of their experiences, and ultimately their lives.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1-A. Research Participant Information Sheet: English Version

Research on Filipino Seafarer-Wives' Gender Identity

I would like to invite you to participate in my research project that looks at how seafarer-wives' lives are shaped by their experiences of not living with their husbands for long periods of time. This information sheet explains what your participation means for you. Before you decide, it is important that you fully understand why I am doing the research and what it involves. Please read then this information sheet carefully. If you would like to discuss this with your husband, please feel free to do so. You can inform me of your decision later.

Why am I doing this research?

Millions of our fellow Filipinos now live abroad working as contract workers. Many of them leave their wives, husbands, or children behind. There have been studies of the lives and experiences of these contract workers. Their contribution to our economy is well documented but the consequences of their absence on their families as well as the social cost of their absence have only been explored in general terms. Most of these studies have focused on land-based workers and their families. Very few have looked at Filipino seafarers, and fewer still have examined what their wives go through in their husband's absence. My study addresses specifically this aspect and looks at how the wives' experiences have shaped how they look at what they are capable of as women.

Who can take part?

I wish to talk with seafarer wives from Bacarra and neighbouring towns. Specifically, I would like to invite seafarer wives with varied backgrounds such as those without and with children (adult, dependent), those in and not in employment, those living with their in-laws/parents, wives whose husbands have been seafaring for five, ten, or more years, and wives married to seafarers of various ranks. I am concerned to explore explanatory variables, factors or contexts that might provide a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of seafarer wives.

What would be involved?

I would like to interview you to ask questions about your experiences as wife and/or mother whose husband is away for long periods of time. I am interested in what you would consider as the impact of your husband's absence on family routine and organization; in the resources you are able to draw from to help you deal with your husband's absence and its consequences; and in how all of these experiences have impacted how you view yourself, that is, what you think you are capable of as a woman. You do not have to answer a question if you do not wish to. You only need to let me know so we can move on to the next question or topic. The interview will last for about one hour and with your permission, it will be tape-recorded so that I have a record of what you shared for purposes of data analysis. You have the right to refuse to

be tape-recorded. Additionally, even if you agree to be tape-recorded, you can let me know if you do not wish certain parts of the interview to be recorded.

Before or after the interview, I will also ask you for some socio-demographic information (such as age, number of children, how long you have been married for, etc.).

What will I do with what you shared?

I will transcribe the interview for purposes of analysis. After transcription, I will destroy the tape of your interview. If you are interested, I will give you a copy of the transcript of your interview. It will be stored for at least five years before they are destroyed. What you share(d) with me will be the basis of my PhD thesis which will be assessed in order for me to gain the PhD degree. You are welcome to see the final thesis. It may in the future be published as a book or as articles in academic journals.

Will everything you say to me be kept confidential?

I will not share with anyone, except my supervisors, whatever you share with me. You will be given a different name, so will your village and town. No transcript will be identified by name. You will be identifiable only to me. All socio-demographic information sheets, taped interviews, and transcripts will be kept safely locked in my office filing cabinet. All electronic versions of these transcripts and socio-demographic information will be password-protected.

What if you change your mind about your participation?

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any stage including after the interview has been completed without giving a reason.

Who am I?

I am Roderick Galam, a PhD student at Cardiff University and my research is being conducted under the auspices of the Seafarers International Research Centre, a unit of Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences. I am, like you, an Ilokano having been born and grown up in Bacarra, Ilocos Norte. I am supervised by two senior research staff of SIRC. The research has the approval of the School Research Ethics Committee and is funded by the Nippon Foundation. If you would like to know more about me or the work of SIRC, see www.sirc.ac.uk and <http://www.sirc.cf.ac.uk/Nippon%20Fellows/index.html>. If you would be interested in taking part or have any questions concerning the research, please feel free to contact me at tel: (077)6703242 or email: GalamRG@cardiff.ac.uk. I would be happy to answer any questions and look forward to your participation.

APPENDIX 1-B. Research Participant Information Sheet: Ilokano Version

Impormasion para kadagiti makipartisipar itoy a panagsukisok: Gender identity ti asawa ti agtartrabaho/agbanbaniaga iti taaw (marino)

Kayatkayo nga awisen a makipartisipar itoy a panagsukisok a mangadal iti pannakabukel ti padas dagiti asawa dagiti agtartrabaho/agbanbaniaga iti taaw bayat iti kaawan dagiti asawada iti dennada iti naunday a panawen. Ilawlawag daytoy nga information sheet no ania ti kayat a sawen ti partisipasionyo. Sakbay nga agdesisionkayo, nasken a maawatanyo a nasayaat no apay nga ar-aramidek daytoy a proyekto ken no ania ti pakaseknanna. Basaenyo koma a nalaing daytoy. No kayatyo a pagsaritaan nga agassawa ti linaon daytoy, aramidenyo koma. Pakaammuandakto koma no ania ti mapagnumuanyo.

Apay nga ar-aramidek daytoy a panagsukisok?

Riniwriw dagiti kadaraantayo a Filipino ti agnanaed ita iti ballasiw-taaw kas contract workers. Adu kadakuada ti nangpanaw kadagiti asawa ken annakda iti nakayanakanda a daga. Addan dagiti panagadal iti kabibiag ken padas dagitoy a contract workers. Dokumentado met ti naitulongda iti ekonomia ti pagiliantayo ngem di unay nadakamat ti imbunga ti kaawanda iti panagbiag ti pamiliada ken ti epekto daytoy iti gimong. Kaaduanna kadagitoy a panagadal ti nagpokus kadagiti agtartrabaho iti takdang (land-based) ken iti biag ti pamiliada. Manmano laeng ti nakadakamat kadagiti agtartrabaho iti taaw (marino), ken ad-adda pay a sumagmamano laeng ti nangamiris iti mapasasamak kadagiti assawa dagitoy a mangmangged bayat ti kaawanda iti sidong ti asawada. Daytoy nga aspekto ti kangrunaan a pakaseknan ti aramidek a panagsukisok: no ania ti imbunga dagitoy a padas tapno mabukel iti kapanunotan dagiti nabati nga asawa no ania ti kabaelanda nga aramiden kas babai.

Asino dagiti mabalin a makipartisipar?

Kayatko ti makisarita kadagiti asawa dagiti marino (wenno agtartrabaho iti taaw) a taga-Bacarra ken kaarruba daytoy nga ili. Kangrunaanna, kayatko nga awisen dagiti asawa dagitoy a marino a naggapu iti agduduma nga agpang ti biag kas koma kadagiti awanan wenno addaan anak (manakman, dependent), dagiti addaan wenno awanan trabaho, dagiti makikabkabbalay kadagiti nakaikamanganda, dagiti babbai a nasursurok pay ngem lima a tawen nga agtartrabaho iti taaw dagiti asawada, ken babbai a nayasawa kadagiti marino nga agduduma ti ranggoda. Kayatko nga amirisen dagiti agduduma a pasamak, rason wenno konteksto a mabalin a makatulong a mangilawlawag tapno maawatan a nasayaat ti kasasaad dagiti (nabati nga) asawa dagiti mangmangged iti taaw.

Ania ti mairaman itoy a panagsukisok?

Kayatkayo a makasarita maipapan kadagiti padasyo kas asawa ken/wenno ina a pampanawan ti asawana iti naunday a panawen. Interesadoak a mangammo no ania dagiti ipagarupyo a kangrunaan nga epekto ti kaawan ti asawayo iti dennayo, iti pannakaiwardas ti inaldaw a biag iti pamiliayo; kadagiti mabalinyo a pagkamangan wenno aramiden tapno masbaalanyo ti kaawan ti asawayo iti dennayo ken dagiti

mabalin nga ibunga dagitoy; ken no ania ti epekto dagitoy iti panagkitayo iti kinataoyo, wenna, iti kabaelayo kas babai. Saan a nasken a sungbatayo ti ania man a saludsod no agpangngadduakayo a mangsungbat. Ngem ipakaammoyo koma kaniak tapno mapantayo iti sumaruno a topiko. Mabalin nga agpaut iti maysa nga oras daytoy nga interbiu, ket no ipalubosyo, mai-tape koma daytoy tapno adda rekordko iti ania man nga imbingayyo para iti panangamirisko kadagiti datos. Adda karbenganyo nga agkedked no diyo kayat a mai-tape. Maysa pay, uray no mayatkayo a mai-tape daytoy, mabalinyo latta met nga ibaga kaniak no adda dagiti paset ti interbiu a diyo kayat a mairekord. Sakbay wenna kalpasan ti interbiu, adda dagiti sumagmamano nga impormasion a nasken a saludsodek kas koma iti edad, bilang ti annak, no mano a tawenyon nga agassawa, kdp.

Ania ti aramidek kadagiti imbingayyo nga impormasion?

Isuratko ti resulta ti interbiu tapno amirisek. Kalpasan daytoy, dadaelekton ti tape a naglaon iti interbiu. No interesadokayo, ikkankayo iti kopia iti naisurat a resulta ti interbiu. Maidulin daytoy iti uneg ti sumaglilima a tawen sakbay a madadael. Maibatay ti tesisko para iti PhD iti imbingayyo kaniak nga impormasion. Maeksamen daytoy a tesis ket daytoy ti mangeddeng iti pannakagun-odko iti doktoradok. Mabalinyo a basaen ti kopia ti tesis. Posible pay ketdi a maipablaak daytoy kas libro wenna kas artikulo kadagiti journal a pang-akademiko.

Agtalinaed kadi a sililimed amin nga imbingayyo kaniak?

Diak ipaduyakyak iti asino man ti ania man nga imbagayo kaniak, malaksid kadagiti superbisorko. Maikkankayo iti sabali a nagan, kasta met a mabaliwan ti nagan ti naggapuanyo a lugar. Awan ti nagan nga agparang iti transcript wenna ti naisurat a resulta ti interbiu. Siak laeng ti makaibaga iti kinasiasinoyo. Amin dagiti sociodemographic information wenna dagiti banag maipapan iti kabibiagyo, ti naka-tape nga interbiu, ken ti transcript daytoy ket matulbegan iti pagiduldulinak a kabinet. Maprotektaran amin nga electronic version dagitoy a tape ken impormasion babaen ti panagaramatko iti password.

Kasano ngarud no agbaliw ti panunoty maipanggep iti pannakipartisiparyo?

Boluntario ti pannakipartisiparyo iti gannuat ket mabalinyo latta ti agbabawi iti ania man a kanito, uray kalpasan ti pannakainterbiuyo. Saanen a nasken nga ilawlawagyo pay no ania ti rasonyo no kas pagarigan agbaliw ti panunoty.

Asinoak kadi?

Siak ni Roderick Galam, mangal-alaak iti doktoradok iti Cardiff University. Maisyangkat daytoy a panagsukisok babaen ti tulong ti Seafarers International Research Center, maysa a unit ti Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences. Kas kadakayo, maysaak met nga Ilokano a nayanak ken dimmakel ditoy Bacarra, Ilocos Norte. Dua a senior research staff ti SIRC ti mangimatton itoy isayangkatko a panagsukisok. Inaprobaran daytoy ti School Research Ethics Committee. Aggapu met ti pundo daytoy iti Nippon Foundation. No kayatyo ti ad-adu pay nga impormasion maipapan kaniak wenna maipapan iti SIRC, mabalinyo latta a sarungaran ti

www.sirc.ac.uk ken <http://www.sirc.cf.ac.uk/Nippon%20Fellows/index.html>. No interesadokayo a makipartisipar wenno adda saludsodyo maipapan itoy a panagsukisok, kontakendak koma itoy a telepono: (077)6703242 wenno ag-emailkayo iti GalamRG@cardiff.ac.uk. Sidadaanak a mangsungbat iti ania man a saludsodyo ket namnamaek koma ti pannakitinnulongyo kaniak.

APPENDIX 2. Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Seafarer-Wives' Gender Identity

Name of Researcher: Roderick Galam

| | | Please initial |
|---|---|---------------------------|
| 1 | I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have obtained satisfactory answers. | |
| 2 | I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any stage of the interview without giving a reason. | |
| 3 | I agree to take part in the study. | |

Name of Participant Signature Date

Name of person taking consent Signature Date

2 copies: 1 for participant and 1 for research file

APPENDIX 3. Socio-Demographic Information Sheet

Interviewee Number _____

1. Name: _____

2. Age: _____ 3. Religion _____

4. Husband's age: _____

5. How long have you been married for? _____

6. How many children do you have? _____

7. How old are they? _____

8. Are you in paid employment?

If yes, what is your occupation? _____

9. Do other people live with you in the house?

____ Yes ____ No

If yes, who else live with you?

10. Do you have relatives who live near you? ____ Yes No ____

If yes, who (how are you related) and how many _____

11. Are you from a seafaring family?

____ Yes ____ No

12. How long has your husband been a seafarer for? _____

13. What is your husband's rank/position onboard? _____

14. How long has he held this rank for? _____

15. What type of vessel/ship does your husband board? _____

16. What is your husband's usual route? _____

17. How long is your husband usually away onboard? _____

18. How long is your husband usually at home/on leave? _____

For interviewer use only:

Date of interview _____

Time of interview _____

Location of interview _____

Length _____

APPENDIX 4. Interview Guide

Research on Filipino Seafarers' Wives Gender Identity

1. Experiences of husband's absence

- a. What have you found difficult with your husband's absence?
- b. What have been the benefits of your husband's migration?
- c. What have helped you deal with the absence of your husband?

2. Roles and responsibilities performed by wife

- a. How has your husband's absence affected your responsibilities for the family?
- b. What roles/responsibilities of your husband have you found relatively easy to assume?
- c. What have been more problematic?
- d. Who or what have helped you with your additional responsibilities?
- e. How about when your husband is back? [do you stop doing them?]

3. Routine

- a. Please describe to me your day-to-day activities.
- b. How do you relax?
- c. What happens to your routine when your husband is back?

4. Working

- a. For employed wives: Why have you continued working?
- b. What does your husband say about your working?
- c. For unemployed wives:
 - c1. Why have you decided not to work/give up work?
 - c2. Would you have wanted to work? Why?

5. Budgeting

- a. On what financial matters can you decide on your own?
- b. On what financial matters do you need to consult your husband?
- c. How has the absence of your husband affected budgeting for the family?

6. Communication

- a. How do you communicate with your husband?
- b. What do you usually talk about?

7. Intimacy

- a. During what situations do you sometimes wish your husband was around?
- b. If you miss your husband, how do you deal with it?

8. Self-efficacy

- a. Because of what you have experienced as a result of your husband's absence, what can you say about what you are capable of?
- b. What or who helped you develop this?
- c. Has anything prevented you from becoming more independent/competent/confident?
- d. If so, could you tell me and explain how?

9. Others

I would like to know if there is any aspect of your life and experiences as a seaman's wife that you think I have not covered and that you think is important in understanding the lives of seamen's wives?

Thank you very much for your time.

APPENDIX 5. Profile of Interviewees

1. Agnes. 33 years old with one child, 3 years old. Married for 5 years. Lived in own house but near to natal family. Worked full time. Husband is 3rd engineer who has been seafaring for 10 years. Worldwide (mainly Europe/America) mostly cargo and tanker. 6 months contract and 2-3 months of paid leave. Must be available when called to board.

2. Rosario. 41 years old, 2 children aged 11 and 8. Married for 13 years. Lived in own house but close to her own relatives. With two helpers, one stay-home and another non-stay home. Worked full time. Husband is a chief mate (only a year before interview) seafaring now for 21 years. Worldwide route.

3. Norma. 46 years old, one daughter 15 years old. Married for 17 years. Lived close to husband's family and relatives. Worked full time. Husband is chief engineer (only in the last two years) seafaring for 37 years. Worldwide route.

4. Maricel. 33 years old with 2 children, 7 and 2 years old. Employs a helper. Married for 8 years. Lived in natal family's house. Husband has been seafaring for 11 years. Worldwide.

5. Arlene. 28 years old, one son aged 5. Married for 6 years now. Lived in husband's family house but not with them. Husband is 3rd mate (since two years ago). Has been seafaring for 10 years. Worldwide.

6. Maribel. 30 years old. Married for 5 years now. Two children, 6 and 3 years old. Lived with natal family: mother, brother and brother's children; and daughter of sister who is in Dubai. Husband has been seafaring for 10 years. Worldwide route.

7. Dolores. 52 years old married for 29 years. 3 children: 28, 27 and 25 years old. Lived near husband's family and relatives. Husband has been seafaring for 19 years and for the last 8 years has been bosun. Asia, America. Three weeks of leave.

8. Janet. 34 years old. Married for 12 years with 2 children aged 12 and 7. Husband has been seafaring for 14 years and has in the past one year been a chief engineer. Since marriage, contract has always been 24 months (12 months initial and 12 months extension).

9. Luisa. 44 years old. Married for 6 years with one son, 5 years old. Mother and brother and his wife and child live with her. Worked as domestic helper in Hong Kong for almost 10 years. Husband has been seafaring for 8 years. Worldwide route.

10. Irene. 33 years old married for 8 years. 2 children aged 6 and 3. Lived close to natal family, with older sister and her daughter. Husband has been seafaring for 10 years. Worldwide route.
11. Lydia. 50 years old with one daughter, 25 years old. Worked full time. Husband has been seafaring for 19 years, cruise ship attendant.
12. Donna. 25 years old, no child yet. Lives with in-laws. Worked full time. Husband has been seafaring for 9 years. International route.
13. Gina. 37 years old. Married for 13 years, 2 children 11 and 4 years old. Husband seafaring for 16 years, AB in the last 11 years. International route. Used to live with in-laws.
14. Linda. 38 years old. Married for 8 years. One daughter, 6 years old. Husband seafaring for 19 years. Pump man in the last 3 years. International route.
15. Mildred. 36 years old. Married for 11 years, 3 children aged 12 and 10 years and 8 months old. Used to live with in-laws but now has own house. Her brother live with her. Husband seafaring for 15 years, oiler for 13 years now. International route.
16. Rowena. 35 years old, married for 9 years. No child yet. Lives alone in her husband's family house. Husband seafaring for 10 years, oiler in the last 5 years. International route, cargo.
17. Grace. 35 years old. Married for 14 years, 2 children, 9 and 2 years old. Husband seafaring since 2006. AB in next contract. International route.
18. Dina. 38 years old married for 15 years. Two children aged 12 and 6. Used to live with in-laws, built a small house in husband's family's compound where her mother and younger sister (21 y/o) live with her. Worked full time. Husband has been seafaring for 12 years, oiler in the last 6. International.
19. Aida. 40 years old. Married for 12 years, 2 children aged 9 and 6. Worked for 10 years as domestic helper in Singapore and Hong Kong. Husband seafaring for 18 years (cruise ship). Oiler. Europe.
20. Josefa. 48 years old. Married for 27 years, one daughter 15 years old. Worked full time for more than 10 years as one company's stop insurance agents before the collapse of the insurance sector. Lived in natal family's house with parents. Husband seafaring for 29 years, 4th engineer. International.
21. Leonora. 26 years old. Married for 1 year. One child 5 months old. Worked full time. Lived with parents and one sibling. Husband seafaring for three years. AB less than a year ago. International, cargo.

22. Marissa. 30 years old. Married for 11 years, two children aged 10 and 8. Husband seafaring for 4 years. AB in the last 3 years. International.
23. Karen. 26 years old. No child. Married for 6 years. Second wife. Husband seafaring for 28 years. Machinist since 1986. International.
24. Rosa. 21 years old. Married for 3 years. Two children, 2 years and 2 months old. Lived with natal family. Husband seafaring for 10 years. Cruise ship. International (Europe/USA).
25. Lourdes. 50 years old. Married for 26 years, 5 children (4 boys, 1 girl; girl is second oldest) aged 25, 24, 22, 21, 19. Three boys seamen themselves. Husband used to work in Saudi Arabia. Started seafaring in 2002 as electrician. International (Asia, Europe).
26. Maria. 51 years old. Has been living with partner for 20 years. Four children aged 18, 14, 13, and 10. Husband has been seafaring for 13 years; an oiler in the last 12. International route.
27. Lisa. 40 years old. Married for 17 years. Three children aged 17, 15 and 11. Lisa was a domestic helper in Greece where she met her husband. Husband seafaring for over 20 years. 3rd assistant engineer in the last 10 years. Worldwide.
28. Judith. 32 years old. Married for 12 years. Two children aged 12 and 9. Seven months pregnant (3rd child) at time of interview. Husband seafaring for 11 years, AB in the last 2 years. Asia/international, cargo. Husband's contracts have been long, the shortest has been 12 months. He's had 23 months, 18 months, and last contract might be extended to last for 18 months.
29. Alicia. 43 years old. Married for 10 years. 1 foster child. Lived among husband's relatives. Husband seafaring for 16 years, AB in the last 7. Worldwide. Was in remission from cancer at the time of interview, husband stayed home for 7 months to be with her during chemotherapy but had to go back to sea as money has been depleted.
30. Julie. 34 years old. Married for 10 years. 2 children aged 7 and 5. Husband seafaring for 15 years. First engineer for less than a year. Worldwide.
31. Raquel. 36 years old. Married for 10 years. 2 children aged 8 and 6. Worked full time. Husband seafaring for 1 year. Asia. Contract of 1 year. Leave of 4 weeks. Started as OS (4 months) and then AB.
32. Sheila. 21 years old. Married for 1.5 years. No children yet. Lives with natal family. Husband has been seafaring for 7 years. Oiler in the last 4 years. Worldwide.

33. Laura. 35 years old. Married for 18 years. Three children, 14 and 7 years old, 10 days old. Used to live with in-laws, now lives in her own house with her own mother and brother. Husband has been seafaring for 15 years, chief engineer since 2009. Worldwide. Three months contract.
34. Luz. 45 years old. Married for 27 years. 4 children (28, 26, 24 and 18). Used to live with in-laws. Has a sari-sari store. Husband has been seafaring for 20 years bosun in the last 5. Worldwide.
35. Teresa. 41 years old. Married for 8 years. 1 child, 8 years old. Husband seafaring for 10 years, oiler for the last 5 or so years. Worldwide.
36. Lilia. 44 years old. Married for 19 years. 2 children, aged 17 and 11. Father lives with them. Husband seafaring for 20 years, radio operator. Worldwide, tanker. Training to become a deck officer.
37. Nancy. 45 years old. Married for 25 years. Three children aged 24, 19, and 13. Has one stepdaughter aged 27. Husband seafaring for 28 years, 2nd engineer in the last 2 years. Worldwide.
38. Evelyn. 52 years old. Married for 31 years. 4 children aged 29, 18, 17, 12. Mother-in-law lives with her. Husband seafaring for 10 years, mess man. World wide cargo.
39. Nora. 51 years old. Married for 26 years. 5 children aged 27, 25, 19, 16 and 7. Husband seafaring for 26 years. 2nd engineer in the last 8 years. Worldwide.
40. Elena. 53 years old. Married for 24 years. 4 children aged 21, 18, 16 and 10. Seafaring for 21 years. Pump man. Worldwide.

APPENDIX 6-A. Interview Extracts Quoted in Chapter 7 (Ilokano original)

Interviewee: Marissa (pages 216-217)

Wen, talaga aminek. Talaga adda met tay haanmo maikkat nga tay tao nga dagita lalaki nga ammoda nga awan ta asawada. Ti ngata met ammoda ket sika nga babai tay, ti ammoda ngata a ket alistoda nga masolisog. Ti ngata panangipagarupda, kaslaakla agrekrek-kang a daga masapulna ti tudo. Ngem haanko met ketdi ibaga nga haannak masolisog, ta haanko met makita ti masakbayak. Isu nga kunak ket, agkararagta latta nga haan nga . a dumteng daydiay. Ngem ti agpaypayso adu nga talaga ti, adu't mangsul-solisog. Ikar-kararagko lang nga haan.

Ana ti kayatmo nga sawen, adu ti umay?

Haan met nga umay. Kayatko nga sawen, adu ti agti-text, adu ti agtaw-tawag.

Adu ti sutil?

Adu ti sutil.

Nga idtoy?

Wen a.

Am-ammom?

Am-ammok ata agpaam-ammoda. Ngem dagitay dadduma...

Agpaam-ammoda. Ana't kayat mo a sawen?

Apay asinnoka kadi. Asinno ti masapulmo? Sika. Apay ana't masa-pulmo kaniak, ibagana met. Ana nga gapu ket ammom nga kastoy ammom nga adda pamilyak kunak kaniada. Awan lang kursunada ka lang. Tay pangiyar-ariganda ket kaslang balasang, kaslang balasangkang nga detay... Kunak met, no patulan ka adda maperdi nga pamilyak kunak. Ana ngata met no siak kaspangarigan koma met ta sika met, ibaliktadko ti sitwasyon, sika met ti adda pamilyana siak ti awan kunak. Wenno agpar-parista nga adda pamilyana ket kaspangarigan tay maysa nga tao ket kinayat naka met. Nagkinnayatan kayo tapos diay ud-udina addanto maperdiyo na pamilyan agparis kayo. Didiay met ketdi ti panpanunotek. Ngem haanko met ketdi ibagbaga nga agsasao ti paleppas, kasi narigat ti agsao ti paleppas. Haanmo met makita ti masangwanan. Isu nga ti talaga nga anak, agkararag. Awan agballaigi, awan masaktan kasdiay. Siyempre adda met masaktan, adda marigatan. Aglalo diay asawam nga adayo. Adda idiyay nga agub-ubra.

Ket maibagbagam detoy kenni lakaymo?

Wen a. Adda ngarud naminsan nga adda, nga simmangpet. Ket siyempre a ket ta cell phone ko idisok latta. Ngem haanko ekspektaren nga kasdiay. Adda daydiay naminsan nga adda nangluko kaniak nga kunana ket, 'Ay adda gayam ni lakaymun' kunana, 'kasanu ngaruden', kunana. Ngem awan relasyunko kadaydiay a tao a. Siguro ngata met talaga nga perdiennak kasi haanak nga pimmayag diay kayatna. Before nga simmangpet ni lakayko, agdamdamag met isuna ket. Asinno met ti katawtawagmo, sino met ti kate-textmo kunana kaniak. Ket adu met a kunkunak kasdiay. Ngem haanko gayam nga napanunot nga idiyay gayam uneg na ipay-payso na. Ngem kunak a ket, ta before nga simmangpet isuna, adda kastoy a, tay afterak lang diay mabalin nga ma-anan. Adda naminsan nga detay, adda gayam ni lakaymun ana ngaruden kunana met nga kasdiay. Apay ana daytoy kunana, ket replayam a kunak met. Isu rineplayanna ti inbaga na ket, 'Haanka pay lang masapul itatta ket adda met isuna, no awan ton a ket duatan to manen', kunana. Ket isuda ti nagtintinext a inggana nga inamin diay lalaki nga awan met gayam. Laglag. Imbagak met latta a tapno awan met masasaona.

**APPENDIX 6-B. Interview Extracts Quoted in Chapter 8
(Ilokano Original)**

Gina (page 227)

Nakikialam sila. Kinu-control ka. Sila pa nga me hawak nun ng sweldo. [...] Lahat ng ano bagay, pati yung pera mo silang humahawak nun. Pati yung pagpi-pillsmo kailangan pa nilang isigaw, kala mo wala kaming sariling isip nun. [...] gusto nga nila mag-pills daw, mahirap daw ang mag-alaga ng bata samantalang di naman silang nag-aalaga ng bata di ba. [laughs] Samantalang di naman silang nag-aalaga dahil may yaya naman ako noon.

[...]

Hindi ako sumasagot. Super na nung napuno na ako, dun ako sumagot. Inaway ko talaga sya. [...] Sobra nga eh, di ko na napigilan yung lumabas sa bunganga ko. Mga bad words na, kasi tahimik na lang ako dun sa kwarto hindi na ako nagsasalita. Pati yung pamilya ko kung anu-ano na ang sinasabi nya. Di napuno na ako, di nag-ano na lang ako kahit nandun pa si, buti nandun si [husband's name]. Tinatakpan na lang niya yung bibigko, tama na sabi niya. Tapos inano naman niya, kasalanan niyo 'yan mama hindi na nga umi-imik, salita ka pa ng salita diyan, sabi niya.

Marissa (page 229)

Ngem nasursurok ti sumungsungbat. [...] No koma sika nga tao ket haanka nga naruam nga, tay tahimik ka nga tao. Ngem gapu ti panglalaitda kenka ket idiyaka nga nasursuruan kasdiyaynak. Kasdiyaynak a talaga. Haanko ammo idi iti sumungbat, haanko ammo ti lumaban. Ngem idi narealize ko nga, apay nga agpakastoynak, apay nga agpaidadanesnak. Apay haanko a kaya nga ilaban ta bagik, ket kayak met? Idiayak a nasursuruan.

[...]

Ammom ti ugalik itattan, nagbalinak kasla awan babainnan. Tay no adda mangngegko ket ti kayatko ket detay innak komprontaren a sigud. Didiay ngarud dimo kayat tay mais-istoryaka. Siguro nagbalinak a paranoid gapu kadaydiay nangyari. Nagbalinak nga awan babainna gapu kadaydiay nangyari. Ngem no met dadduma met ket mareal-realizeko apay nga agpapa-apektoak ti kastoy ket awan met ti kinaagpaysuanna. Tay haanko kayat talaga ti mai-down. Haan ko kayat talaga ti, ti kayatko no adda maisao kaniak ket innak komprontaren. Adda ebidensyam kasdiyay. Ni mama no agsao ti

kasdiay ket talaga nga sungbatak. Idi a ket haanko kaya nga sungbatan. Ngem gaputa isuda met ti nangsursuro kaniak. Kunana kaniak ket awan babainmo. Sika ti nangsursuro kaniak kunak. Apay idi naikamangak kunak mangmanggeddak kadi nga agsasao? Saan. Manggeddak kadi nga sumungbat? Saan. Sika ti nangted ti sarak kunak. Nagtangsitka kunana. Natangsitak gapu kaniam, nasursurok ti sumungbat gapu kaniam. No haanko i-fight ta bagbagik, kayatyo nga sawen ilitlidak, tay paddapadakandak kunak. Ti kayatko koma ket tay pumanawak idtoy, tay kayatkon ipakitak kadakuada nga agbiagak nga uray awan ta anakda. Ti panpanunotek lang ket dagita annakko.

[...]

Didiay ti nagtangkenan ti bagbagik. Nga ammom la ketdi nga hustoka, ammom la ketdi nga awan ti ar-aramidem, talaga nga aramidek sumungbatak. Awan idi kua a ket tay bugbugkawandak lang a ket, agsardengak a sigud. Ngem itattan ala padasendak nga kastaen kunak padasenyoy, adda la manggedgko ta ngiwatmo kunak. Haanka kabuteng, dakay ti nangted ti sarak kunak.

Gina (page 232)

Kasi nung una at pangalawa sila, siguro nung pangatlo napag isip-isip niya. Siya mismo ang nag-ano, nag-bawi na. Pero gusto pa ng biyenan ko noon na ako ang hahawak ng bangko pero pangalan daw nya at anak niya. Ako ang hahawak ng bankbook. Yun ang sabi nya, hindi ako umimik. Bahala na yung asawa ko. Eh napag isip-isip nya siguro, siyempre away-awayin ko rin. [laughs] Siyempre sino ba naman ang ano dun di ba? Sinong babaeng papayag? Ano ako sa iyo sabi ko.

Marissa (page 234)

Ket idi ni mama na ti pangpangtedanna, adu ti saona. Nga tay igastosmo ti husto nga. Tay kaslang igastosko diay kwarta diay anakna ket kasla awan lang. kasla awan lang, tay ibarbarayuboy ko lang kasdiay. Nga di na met ammo nga ti pangigasgastuak ket dagita annakna, dagita appokona. Adu saona idi. Kastoy nga kastoy, kasdiay nga kasdiay.

Marissa (page 234)

Adu a, adu ti nagnaakon a. Adu ti nangngegko nga kuak kanianan nga tay nga tay . kadetoy sangpetna itoy, tay kayatna agsina kamin. Didiay ti kayatna idi. Kunak met ken lakayko idi, ket wen no isu ti kayat ni nanangmo a nga agsinata a ket, di agsinata kunak. Apay, ibagana pay ketdi nga hab-habulenka. Haanak nga agbiag no awanka, wen. [...] Isu nga nagtalawak idi.

Aida (page 238)

Agalagaak ti ubing. Dikad adda met negosyok aya, itattan no makariingak ti bigaten agurnusak ti listaan. Tapos rumuarakon innak agsingir, santo man agsubli ti balayen ag-kasdiay latta. Ag.. ana't nagannan.. No sumangpetak mangan kamin, aginanaak bassit adonto man umay nga tao nga entertainekun. Dagitay kasla koma .. ibagak latta a, ag-renew kasdiay. Agi-releasak man kwarta, tay alas-3 isu tay maturugak. Bandang alas kuwatro or 4:30 agriingak, 5:00 agdigusak manen innak man agsingiren. Aginanaak. 'to man 10:30 ti rabiin, san to man 10:30 agawidkam ditoy. Ata agbantayak ditoy ta deta empanadaan, ata kukuami met tay empanadaanmi, empanadaanmi dita.

Wen, agbantayak manen.

Ana oras kayo ngarud nga agririing nukua manang?

6:30.

Isaganayo nukua dagidiay ubbing nga agbasa wenno ni motheryo? Haan. Ammoda ngamin nga mabanbannogak adingko, daytay kadmakduami nukua ti mangriing kaniadan. Tapos bangonenna ...ay .. riingenna, pagdigusenna ida, sukatanna sa nanto itulod dita iskuela. **Ngem subsubaybayak met lang.**

Aida (page 240)

A ket idi kua a ket lablabsannak latta a gapu ti kinarigat ti panagbiag.

[...]

Pansinendaka itattan ata ana ngarud ngem kaniak ading, dagiti nangikaskasta kadakami haanko sinubadan ti dagitay gaputa kastoyak. Haanko nga sinubadan ti kasdiay, inpakitak nga siak ket

tay datiak. Ket didiay tattao nga nangikas-kasta kaniakon dumap-ay da pay kanun. A ta mapanla umutang ni motherko ti bagas idi haanda kano kayat ikkan. Kunana kano, apay pagpabayo-an ditoy ta idtoy ti pagutangam, inka umutang diay pagpabayo-an kunana. Ket itatta metten baliktad isu ti nakarigrigat ti panagbiagna dayta nga tao. Ket idiy amin ti pagdap-ayanna, idtoy ti pagsangbayanna, ti pagutanganna ti bagas, kwarta. Ngem haanko sinubadan ti kinatorpe, ikkak latta. Apay ikkam ket kastoy-kastoy kuna ni nanang. Ammom ti kunak, idi dakayo ti adda ti kalagayanna ana't riknayo. Inaramidna met kaniak kunana, nalpas daydiayen. Nakaraan daydiayen. Inpasarming la ni Apo Diyos isu baybay-anyon ket kaasi. [...] Dagiti manglablablab kaniak gapu ti kinarigat ti panagbiagmi, itatta nagdadatada metten. Kasla inbaliktad ni Apo Diyos nga isuda ket riknaenda no ana ti napaspasamak kadakami. [...] Adu't kakabagiakon itatta, adu.

Irene (page 244)

Umuna, ti questionna kaniak apay agkurkurang kano payla ti budgetmi. Ana kano pay la gapu nga umadayoak ket adda kano met isuna nga agsapsapul. Maikadua, awan mangkita kadagita ubbing. Awan mangpatanor kadakuada. Awan tay kas ina kano met la nga mangguide kadakuada habang dumadakkelda. Ti met rasonko, aglalo tay naudi a nga panag-anami ta no talaga dadduma nga mabekkelakon, masaksakalakon kadeta nga sitwasyun aya. Kayatko met tay, sabali la ngamin ti kabukbukudam ti sapul. Ata tay kabukbukudam nga kwarta, no adda kayat mo, magatang mo. No sapulna ket nakacontrol, no ana la ti mabalin nga magatang isu lang ti gatangem. No adda kayatmo met ngarud yanta sapulmo nga kwarta, tay kunakon, no gumatangka koma ti arwatem makagatang ka latta. Ganun [...], napanunotko siguro haanna kayat nga maana makua diay egona ganun.

[...]

Ibagak pay a dita karinderya, aglaku-lakoak dita tiendaan. Pulos haanna latta kayat. Napia lang met nga adda kabukbukudak a kwarta.

Grace (page 253)

Excited ka kumbaga me kakampi ka na. [...] Parang kumportable ka kasi andyan na siya, parang makakangiti ka na nang maganda. Parang nakakatawa ka na rin. Pero pag yung wala siya, wala lang

parang tahimik ka lang. Parang pati paghinga mo eh hindi maluwig. Parang ang hirap huminga talaga.

Marissa (page 256)

No umay idtoy idi ni manangko, pagtalawenna. Haankanto um-umay idtoyen kunana. [...] kunak kenni manangko, kunak, bay-am ta tonno met adda balayko, padpadasekto met nga siak ti mangbalikas kaniada ti kasta tapno mapadasanda met ti riknak. No kasano't sakit ti mapagsao-an ti kasdiay kunak kenni manangko.

Mildred (page 257)

...no adda bukodmo a balay ket maaramidmo diay kayatmo aya. No makikab-kabbalayka ket siyempre no kayatmo ti aginana koma ket, mabainka. Agulda-uldagka latta dita no adda bukodmo a balay. Maturog ka no kayatmo....

Grace (page 257)

Parang walang matigas sa iyo, yun. Kasi sarili mo na, makakagalaw ka na nang maayos. Kung anong gusto mong gawin magagawa mo, di tulad ng ano, talagang naano ka, parang bawat kilos me nakatingin sa iyo, parang tinitingnan ka. Parang minomonitor ka pakiramdam mo lang yun.

Linda (page 257)

...dimo la ammo ti pakabas-basulam. Ti ammom okay diay ar-aramidem. Kaniada gayam ket. No madmadi ti riknam, no makibal-balayka maaramidmo inkapilitan. No bukodmo a balay a ket, madamdaman to daytan. Agtugawak man pay laeng, nasakit ti ulok kunam mabalin latta kasdiay. [...] Ket talaga met nga suminaka. Sabali lang met tay bukodmo nga makitayo met nga talaga, kayayo nga talaga. Ta balay ket makitam nga kasla simbolona koma.

Nancy (pages 258-260)

Adu't naglabasakon [laughs]. Ata napadasak ti saan a napintas ti panangtrato ti pamilyana kaniak. Napadasak amin. Napadasak met a

nagbabbabai ni lakayko no agbakasyon. Napadasak amin, financial problem, napadasak amin. [...] Kayatko met nga agsina kami idi ngem haanna met kayat. [...] kasdiay latta met ni lakay idi agbabbabai uray kasdiay idi a nailumlumak iti utangen isu idin napanunotko ti nagabroad.

[...]

... Two years ta inaudik idi. Saanna ammo ni lakay adda inta barko idi sana la ammo idi addaak idiyen. Awan met naaramidannan.

[...]

Two years ko met la ketdi a. [...] ala kaasi ni Apo Dios idi nagabroadak isu met ti bulonna kasla gapu a nagsingpetan ni lakay. Addaak abroad isu't nangrugianna a nagbalay . . .

[...]

Nagtagibiak.

[...]

Agsangangitak a. Agsangangitak. No paturogek diay alagak idi agsangangitak. Agsangangitak. [...] ...ay diak diak makapangpangan. Nakaad-adu ti irugik a suratko ta agsuratak koma a apagrugik awan manen agib-ibitak manen. Awan maibus-busonko a suratko idi ata awan met malmalpasko. No paturogek tay alagak, ala malaglagipko a dagita annakko. [...] Narigat met ti umadayo a talaga. Sakripisyo. Sakripisyo ngem ti pinanunotko idi no diak umadayo saannak [...] makaiwalin ti utangko idi [...] talaga nga isu ti pinanunotko idi a pakalung-awak.

[...]

...ngem idi a ket agbabbabai. [...] Idi awanak. [...] Kunak idi ket hmm, agumaka kunak. Adda ngata met sakit ngem isu ketdi ti panpanunotekon a pagproblemaakon? [...] ayna Apo, dagita latta annakko ti panunotekon kunak idi. No agsina kami, agsina. No saan, ok latta. [...] ...ok latta no napan nakisinnarak [laughs] mayat latta [laughs].

[...]

Ammona. Ammona isunga isu't gapuna nga kaslang ata ammom idi kua gastador. Gastador. Awan pateg ti kuarta kaniaan kasla barkada, inum isunga idi nakakuaak metten kaslang nagbalay ket tapno adda

pakaipanan ti kuartanan. Dayta met isu't ammok a a nagsardenganna dagita agbabai.

[...]

...isu ti naggastosak iti card a pangtawag. Nganngani inaldaw nga agtawtawagak idi. Kumkumustaek idi dagita annakko. Tapos immuna a nagawid nalpas ti kontrata ni lakay, nagawid usto met a sumangpet diay siyumanko. Saanko pay la ammo idi un-unana. Kankanayonak a tumawag isu met ti makasungbat idi a ket asinno daytoy kunak a ket iti kunan lakay idi kaeskuelaan dagita annakmo dayta inauna kunana. A ket apay agyan dita haan umay ti aldaw lang ata aldaw pay lang ti panagtawagko idi. [...] Isu di inpudnona. Anakko idi baroak. Alla nabayag met a a diak nagtaw-tawag idi dagita annakko idi ti kasar-saridak. [...] Itan a ket gapu ta ti panpanunotek ana ngata ti rikrikna dagita annakko, kasarsaridak isuda no maawatyo isuna a kabsat. Wen ma kunada met. Saan kayo nga agselseles no adda tay gatangek a para kaniaan met a. Haan kunada met di kad' inawatkon. Ipakitak met a nga siempre nalaka't makisina a ngem dagitoy annakko? Alisto lang met ngem pinanpanunotko kunak idi addanto latta met pinagtalnana. Kaasi ni Apo Dios [laughter in voice] nagsingpet metten.

[...]

Kaasi ti Apo medyo haanko met ibaga nga kasla kua ta adda met latta pagkasapulan ngem saan unay a problema ti financialen. Sa nagtalna met ni lakayen saan met a tay kunak a saan met a rumrumuaren. Idi kua a ket Apo barkada, no saan a babai, barkada, sumangpet parbangon. Diak latta kinasta.. Kinayak amin kasta ti ata dagita latta annakko ti kua...

[...]

Uray amin a kabagian na idi Apo adu, uray saandak a pagpagunian idi [...] binukbukodak latta. [...] Adu a problemak perpermi no pampanunotem ket napadasak amin a kasta [...] siak ti agpakpakaasi idi nga isinanak ngaminen tapno talnaandak dagitoy kabagiam kunak idi.

[...]

Manipud idi nagaloteak. Kasla isu ti kinagurada. Diak ammo no apalda kasdiay met.

[...]

Ti pay kua idi ket timmangsitak idi adda surat ni inana kania, nga didiay a surat so medyo a talaga a lumabanak idin kadagidiay nakaikamangak idin. Nabasak didiay suratna ken lakay, nakitak naiyipit, saan met ngarud nga usto ket daydiay nga kua idi a tiempo no panunotek dua a bulan a saan a nagsurat ni lakay. Oh ammokon medyo mamati ni lakay...

[...]

Kasta idi ti plastarmi, kaslang awan ti kastak idin, saanko a sursuratan, malipatak pay ket idin, isuna idin. Ta met latta anakko idi, maymaysa pay laeng anakko idi. Balbaliwanmi kano manen ti mangrugin. Balbaliwanmi manen ti panagbiagmin. Kastan to met manen. Habang a nakabakasyon, adda met latta babai na kasdiay. Inggana a naruamakon. [...] Uray taltalawak isuna idi, sapsapulennak met saanna met ipalubos.

[...]

Apo, [laughs] tunggal .. idi.. idi 2000 a simmangpetak ket rough, kasla kalansay pay lang, rough tapos di sangkabassit met a kuartak, pinagpabobedak idi kuan simmakay ni lakay, in-inutek ket no ana ti maurnongko. Tiles, in-inutek ket inggana itatta ket mapatpatarimaan pay laeng. [laughs]. No tutuusem ket ita lang ti pannakakastanan tay talaga nga kuan ipolishen. Ne, kitam ket ana nga tawen itan, 2010 itan. Ten years ay 12 years. Tunggal sumangpeten, agpatrabahon, dayta. No met no met awan kasdiay no ana met ta kumporme met ta maipakapetko.

[...]

...sapay la koma ta saanna kami ikkan ni Apo Dios iti nadagsen a pannuboken a ta kasla ita ket nalag-an ti kuamin nga agassawa. Kaslang naurnos kami ita. Naannayas ti biagko itan... Idi kua a ket Apo, nagulo!