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**Filipino Migration, Transnationalism
and Class Identity**

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Filipino Migration, Transnationalism and Class Identity

Philip Kelly

INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'class' has made something of a comeback in recent years in both academic and popular debates. But it has returned loaded with meanings that sometimes stretch its previous conceptual definitions in novel directions. Class is no longer treated solely as a relationship to the means of production, or a position within a societal distribution of resources. It is now explicitly theorized as a cultural process – through consumption patterns, bodily performance, and intersections with racialized and gendered identities. With this diversity of manifestations come different forms of class politics. Class today, then, is played out in a diverse set of registers. Not all of them are mutually compatible, but nor, I will argue, should they be seen as mutually exclusive.

While class is now understood in multiple ways, the spatiality of class has been relatively underdeveloped. Recent sociological literature has tended to treat class as a nationally constituted phenomenon (E.Wright, 1997) or, occasionally, as manifested in the urban landscape through neighbourhood studies (Reay and Lucey, 2000, Savage et al., 2005). Geographers have been more sensitive to the spaces of class – examining home places, workplaces and neighbourhoods as marked by class and containing class relationships. Nevertheless, a consistent characteristic of class analysis has been geographical *containment* within a contiguous territory, usually at a national or sub-national scale. Whether it is national, local, neighbourhood or the home, class has been seen as constituted within bounded territorial spaces.

This paper examines the implications of migration, and the transnational spaces that it creates, for our understanding of class. Starting with the premise that class is always contextual (and therefore for all practical purposes articulated through and with race, gender and other axes of identity in particular places), the process of Filipino migration to Canada will form the specific case to be analysed. While fundamentally a process of deprofessionalization, deskilling and class deterioration for many immigrants, migration, and the transnational

social spaces it creates, provide a much more complicated context for understanding what class means, especially when considered subjectively by those living the experience.

The first part of this paper reviews recent approaches to class and proposes a four-part typology to make sense of how the concept has been used in recent literature. This typology renders class as position, process, performance and politics. The second part of the paper then examines the spatiality of class and poses some questions that migration and transnationalism present for understandings of class. The third part of the paper examines the ways in which class as position/process/performance/politics is complicated in the context of migration from the Philippines to Canada. Empirical materials to substantiate this argument are drawn from statistical data sources and from a series of focus groups and interviews conducted in both Toronto and the Philippines. The paper concludes by suggesting that class analysis must be a part of understanding the migration process, but it becomes interpreted and articulated in unexpected and sometimes contradictory ways when viewed from the perspective and spaces of migrants themselves.

THINKING ABOUT CLASS

The paradigmatic days of class manifested in the form men in cloth caps, trooping off to a local factory, mine, or mill, are long gone, and in many places never existed. However, societies of all kinds are stratified according to income, access to resources, occupational categories, and labour processes – which, under capitalism, together constitute the process of surplus value production, extraction and distribution. Associated with these class positions and relationships are certain consumption patterns, identity formations, and political mobilizations. But the correspondence between each of these is seldom straightforward, and the priority given to each depends on the theoretical framework through which class is being viewed. In short, class is a complicated and multi-dimensional category. How we theorize it says a lot about how we see the relationships between structure and agency, economic and ‘other’ social processes, and consciousness and political action.

One way to typologize various conceptualizations of class is to trace the lineage of particular theorists - the “great men” approach. Wright (2005a), for example, identifies the legacies of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Bourdieu and others through the various questions that each prioritises in relation to class. Thus, while Bourdieu is presented as being concerned

primarily with the factors that dictate an individual's 'life chances' (through the mobilization and exchange of cultural, social and economic capital), Marxists of various stripes are understood to focus upon the political and economic emancipation promised by class struggle. The problem with this approach is that it tends to introduce rigidities into the discussion as the historical writings of great social theorists are treated as universal insights into class processes – even though they themselves may have provided highly nuanced and contingent analyses of their contemporary contexts. Such an approach also tends to reduce the work of such thinkers to core essences, which once again undermines the subtlety of their work. Wright attempts to avoid this by highlighting primary, secondary and tertiary themes in their writing, but ultimately one is forced to pick one's theorist and the result is that certain dimensions of class are foregrounded while others are neglected.

As an alternative to Wright's approach, I propose a typology of distinct but overlapping dimensions of class that are not reducible to a particular school of thought – in one way or another all of the major theorists on class have something to say about each element of this typology. Nor are these different dimensions of class treated as discrete and separate – they are instead overlapping and mutually constitutive. These dimensions relate to class as position, process, performance, and politics.

Position

Class as position refers to the location of an individual in a societal division of labour and a stratified structure of wealth. It might relate to the job type held by a person, to certain characteristics of that job type, or to their relative position in the distribution of resources. This is perhaps the most common usage of the concept across a range of sociological perspectives. In the UK, the creation of classificatory schemes for categorizing class groupings absorbed a great deal of attention in the 1960s and 1970s (Crompton, 1998). In the Weberian tradition, pursued most notably in the UK by John Goldthorpe, a hierarchy of occupational circumstances have been used, not without success, to predict the life chances of the groups defined in this way (Breen, 2005). In Marxist traditions, an individual's position is given by their relation to the means of production – their role in the abstract totality of capitalism (see Sadler, 2000, for a review of the geographical literature). As Wright (1985; 2005b) has recognized, however, this is often a lot more complicated than identifying those who own productive assets and employ commodified labour and those who do not. Although

the sociological and political significance of class positioning is interpreted differently in these theoretical frameworks, what they share is a sense that individuals occupy objectively classifiable locations in a societal structure.

It is important to note that the unit of analysis for such studies was typically the individual, but from that individual (usually a “male breadwinner”) a class position for their family was also inferred. There are many problems with such assumptions, but a broader critique is that placing individuals and families in such boxes actually tells us very little about how class affects their economic lives. One line of thinking has argued that class holds so little analytical value, consistency and causality that it is worthless as a category (Kingston, 2000; Pakulski and Waters, 1996). Another argument is that class so occludes other axes of differentiation, notably race and gender, that it has inhibited rather than facilitated useful analysis. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was therefore a swing away from class as a category of analysis, as debates concerning ever more refined schemes for classification and stratification seemed to disregard the wider sets of power relations governing social life, along with their diffuse everyday manifestations (Devine and Savage, 2005a). In recent years, however, it would seem that the pendulum of theoretical fashion has swung back at least partly, and a series of studies have attempted to explore the intersections of class, gender, race and other categories (Bettie, 2003; Skeggs, 2004; Crompton and Scott, 2005; M. Wright, 2001; Harvey, 1996; McDowell, 2002). We now have a language of overdetermination and intersectionality to discuss how class relates to race, gender etc., but the notion of class as a position in a hierarchy of access to material resources remains (Anthias, 2005; McDowell 2006).

Process

Class-as-position emphasises the singular location of a person in a hierarchical ordering, but such classificatory schemes inevitably also imply the nature of the relationship between different classes. Marxian schemes in particular draw explicit attention to the dynamics of exploitative relations between broad class groupings. More recent work by Julie Graham, Kathy Gibson, and their collaborators, however, has sought to reclaim a sense of class-as-process that is not dependent on broad relationships between aggregated class groupings. Instead, they focus upon the relationship in which the labour of one person is appropriated by others so that ‘surplus labour’ is extracted – but not necessarily in a waged relationship. This

surplus is then distributed through uneven societal structures of wealth sharing and concentration. Thus class becomes “the process of producing, appropriating, and distributing surplus labor” (Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolf, 2000: 2). In this way Gibson-Graham and others emphasise Marxian theories of class-as-process over theories of capitalist totality (Gibson-Graham et al, 2001b).

This approach to class has several implications. First, it liberates analysis from the necessity of aggregating class groupings and then assuming a commonality of interests, processes and outcomes on that basis. Second, a person may simultaneously participate in several class processes, holding multiple and contradictory class interests in different spheres or spaces of their lives (Gibson, Law and McKay, 2001). Third, emphasising the process of class means that class relations can be seen as constituted through other forms of social difference. Where individuals from a particular ethnic group, for example, find themselves disproportionately represented in deeply exploitative employment relationships, then a class process is being constituted through the construction of another form of difference, which may also be overlain with gender. Class is, then, in Gibson-Graham’s terms, ‘overdetermined’ by other forms of difference (Gibson-Graham et al., 2000). Finally, because class-as-process is concerned with the nature of the relationship in a labour process, it need not be limited to capitalist processes. It permits class to be seen in non-capitalist relations, for example inside the household (Gibson-Graham et al., 2001a). This implies a politics of building non-exploitative class relations rather than necessarily waiting for the revolutionary downfall of a contradiction-ridden capitalist totality.

Gibson-Graham’s post-structural political economy has not been without its critics. Some have argued that overdetermined concepts of class need not preclude a structural understanding of a capitalist totality which may remain important in informing a political project of eradicating exploitation (Glassman, 2003). Others have pointed to the political limitations of a diffuse (Foucauldian) notion of power in which contextual class processes are emphasised over collective class processes (Kelly, 2005; Lawson, 2005). Certainly, however, Gibson-Graham’s project provides the conceptual apparatus for everyday resistance, coping and improvement in the lives of those marginalised by various axes of difference (Gibson-Graham, 2006)

Performance

I have noted that class may intersect in important ways with gendered and racialized identities, but this point needs to be broadened. Class is not simply an abstract position or process; it is also played out – performed – by people in a variety of settings. Indeed, while the abstract and objective identification of individuals with a class position or process may be of most interest to analysts, class is also understood subjectively in ways that are frequently inconsistent with such abstractions. And while subjective understandings of class may seem imprecise, contradictory and unsatisfactory, it is from the everyday understanding of class in a cultural register that class politics will (or may) develop. We can identify two broad forms of class performance in which individuals may understand their own identity, and that of others, in class terms – one related to classed consumption, the other concerning classed embodiment.

Class as Consumption

While class is formally treated in many theoretical frameworks as a position and a relationship forged in the context of productive activities, an individual's class is also constructed in the realm of consumption (Devine et al., 2005). This might simply relate to the forms of consumption that are seen as marking a person's class in the productive sphere (e.g. the type of car that a CEO might drive). But consumption is also important in marking a person as appropriately belonging to a particular class category. Knowing one's way around a wine list, a symphony programme, an expensive clothing boutique, or a golf course, are not just outcomes of a particular class position - in many cases they may also be prerequisites for access to it.

Here, Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) work on the construction of taste is especially important as it demonstrates the ways in which the cultural capital associated with particular class positions (which he defines largely according to occupational type) is used to reproduce that class positioning, through family and educational environments:

A class is defined as much by its *being-perceived* as by its *being*, by its consumption – which need not be conspicuous in order to be symbolic – as much as by its position in relations of production (even if it is true that the latter governs the former) (Bourdieu, 1984: 483, emphasis in original)

As Bourdieu implies here, this dimension of class is not unrelated to position and process, as they define the material resources available to engage in consumption, but nor can classed consumption patterns be read directly from more formal class categorizations (for further discussion on Bourdieu's position here, see Devine and Savage, 2005).

Others have explored the classed nature of consumption in a variety of contexts, often finding a complex relationship between class and consumption patterns. Beverley Skeggs (2005), for example, has shown how working class identities in the UK get appropriated by middle classes. Thus one may perform the cultural habits and practices of a class to which one positionally does not belong. Alternatively, and of even more interest in this paper, it is possible that the consumption patterns of one class in a particular place may be available to a lower class in a different place. In which positional class scheme would they then be read?

Classed consumption does not, then, map directly from class position or process – but it does represent their cultural articulation in particular times and places (Savage, 2000). This connection between dimensions of class is important because consumption alone says very little that is analytically useful about how class works, even as it says a great deal about how people generally understand class. To focus on consumption alone would be to imply that class positions and processes could be transcended or transformed purely through changes in consumption. One can choose, within limits, how to articulate one's class *identity*, but one has much less freedom to choose one's *class*.

Class as Embodiment

While consumption practices represent one way of constructing a class identity and defining the barriers to entry for a given class position (or process), class is also performed corporeally in the sense that embodied attributes such as gender and race are implicated in class positioning. Indeed, as with consumption practices (and perhaps more so), access to certain class positions is often dependent upon the embodied identity that an individual presents.

Thus, as we will see later, the association between Filipina bodies and subordinate caring work, as domestic helpers, maids, nannies or nursing aides, is rooted in a cultural reading of gendered and racialized bodies and has direct implications for how those bodies are incorporated into positional hierarchies (for a different example, see Haylett, 2003: 60). Geographical work along these lines has included McDowell's (1997, 2003) studies of the intersection between gender and class positioning in the UK, while Wright (2001) and Mullings (2005) have also incorporated racialized identities in Mexican and Caribbean contexts respectively.

While race and gender represent major axes differentiating access to class positions, other bodily attributes also speak to class, including accent, comportment, gestures, make-up, dress etc. Skeggs highlights the importance of complete bodily presentations when class is being 'read':

We need to think about how bodies are being inscribed simultaneously by different symbolic systems; how inscription attributes difference and how we learn to interpret bodies through the different perspectives to which we have access....

Embodied entitlement is one of the most class-ridden ways of moving through space (metaphorical and physical). It is a way of carrying value on the body, a process in which we are all implicated intimately every day" (Skeggs, 2004: 3, 26)

Beyond issues of *access to* class positions/processes, which implies that social difference based on race and gender are external to class processes, many class relations are intrinsically raced and gendered. The notion of feminized work, for example, indicates an imbrication of class position and gendered embodiment that is not reducible to one or the other. As we will see later, in the case of Filipina women, this point can be extended to include racialization as well. But the precise ways in which such intersections work will be geographically and historically contingent – inseparable from the places in which they occur (Smith, 2000; Anthias, 2005).

The argument can be taken further still to suggest that as axes of social differentiation and unequal power, race and gender may also themselves constitute class *processes*. For example, Gibson-Graham (1996) shows that gender relations in a household constitute a class process in which surplus labour is extracted but they are based on patriarchal rather than capitalist processes. A gendered spousal relationship may thus simultaneously be a class relation.

Politics

The fourth dimension of class concerns the solidarities that arise from it, and at the same time define it. These are the political mobilizations, either individual or collective, that respond to, and articulate, the experiences of class, whether positional, processual, or performative. This might at first appear to be derivative of the other dimensions of class – for example when those with a common class position develop a consciousness of their common interests - but class politics may also emerge among those without any personal common experience. For example, activists for struggles concerning living wages, fair trade, or workers' rights might not themselves be beneficiaries of any of these. Indeed they may quite possibly be worse off as a result of such movements' successes. Nevertheless their solidarity with such goals is a form of class politics.

Positional, processual and performative dimensions of class may, in fact, lead in quite different political directions. Positional class implies the emergence (often in a functional way) of politics out of a consciousness of a collective class positioning – class consciousness as a 'reflex' of class positioning (Devine and Savage, 2005). Hence politics is understood in terms of large aggregated groupings, such as 'the working class', perhaps represented in political parties. Processual dimensions of class, on the other hand, imply political opportunities to be found outside of, or in addition to, such 'big' class groupings, focusing instead on specific class relations (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Performative dimensions of class may not imply class politics at all – focusing instead on access to class positions for those who are constructed as not 'fitting' such positions. Such a politics leaves class inequities intact, while demanding an equal chance for access to all levels of that hierarchy. On the other hand, performative dimensions of class may be central to the emergence of collective class politics as it is in the cultural field that everyday class positions and processes are articulated and manifested.

As the discussion to this point has made clear, these four dimensions of class – the positional, processual, performative and political – while derived from quite different political and theoretical commitments, are also overlapping, connected, and certainly not mutually exclusive. Different theoretical frameworks emphasize each of them in varying degrees, but the point at which their distinctions blur the most is with individual experiences and subjective assessments of class. Subjective understandings of class are not always given great credence in the conceptual literature – understood at most as ‘consciousness’ leading to political action, but relevant only once the individual reaches a theoretically correct assessment of their class positioning. In this paper, however, subjective understandings of class are given much more emphasis. This means that geographical contingency is treated as central to class from the outset. As Neil Smith (2000: 1028) has pointed out, it is in specific circumstances, places and experiences that theoretical categories are actually put to work. For this reason I use what Floya Anthias (2005: 42) calls “narratives of location” to explore the contingent self-narratives employed by Filipino immigrants to understand who, and where, they are in class terms.

SPACE AND CLASS

A considerable amount of research on class is conducted without explicitly considering the spatiality of how class is played out. The bulk of studies that take class as a position in a stratified social hierarchy implicitly adopt the national scale as the ‘natural’ frame for understanding class. This is certainly the case in Erik Wright’s (1997) comparative international research on class structures. Pierre Bourdieu, while arguing that classed consumption is historically and geographically contingent, nevertheless assumes the existence and coherence of nationally-scaled societies (Devine and Savage, 2005).

Other work has been more sensitive to sub-national variations in class structures and cultures. Doreen Massey’s (1995) classic work on spatial divisions of labour, for example, explored regionally-constituted class formations in the UK. Other geographical work in the political economy tradition has examined the politics of regional class alliances (summarised by Sadler, 2000). At a still smaller scale, research on city neighbourhoods has examined the construction of certain urban spaces as ‘classed’ and the development of particular class identities in those spaces (Reay and Lucey, 2003; Savage et al, 2005). The home, perhaps the smallest of social scales, has also been read as classed in various ways – both as an

expressive space of classed consumption and, as noted earlier, as a site of gendered class processes (Pratt 1989; McDowell, 2006; Blunt and Dowling, 2006).

Despite research at multiple scales, two points can be made about the ways in which spatiality has been incorporated into understandings of class. The first is that most of the theoretical work is being based on quite specific contexts for class relations and identities – namely, the UK, USA, and France. Each has its own history of class structures, cultures and politics and there is no particular reason to believe that theorizations in one place should have salience in another. The second point is that at all of the scales noted here, class (however it is conceptualized) has tended to be treated as contained within a given scale. Space is understood to be marked with class, and scale is understood as a container for class processes, but seldom is space seen as problematizing class and acting as a constitutive element in its construction.

In the remainder of this paper I will explore how the geographies created by migration and transnationalism can be seen to necessitate an understanding of the spatiality of class. In various ways, migration brings places together such that class (in all its dimensions) in one place is complicated by class in another. Migration usually involves labour market integration in ‘host’ societies, so that occupational type and prospects for mobility in one society are assessed relative to those in another. Migration is also an exercise in cross-cultural encounters, which potentially implies the juxtaposition of different understandings of what class means, how it is culturally connoted, and who is seen to fit at which levels in a stratified hierarchy. Another important part of migration and settlement is the establishment of co-ethnic communities in places of settlement. These too have implications for the class prospects of immigrants as they navigate new labour markets, but they also provide a cultural community within which alternative (perhaps hybrid) conceptions of class might be nurtured. Finally, migration usually implies the maintenance of transnational ties of various kinds with places of origin. These linkages imply that understandings of the various dimensions of class will be constructed in an in-between space that is not bound solely to the place of settlement where a person’s occupation, earnings and labour process are actually happening.

CLASS AND FILIPINO MIGRATION

The case of Filipino migration to Canada provides a useful context in which to explore the spatiality of class – not just because it is worth understanding in its own right as a specific instance of class formation and re-formation, but also because it is symptomatic of larger processes in the global economy. It is well known that the Philippines has become a major exporter of human labour, both for temporary contract work and for permanent migration (Tyner 2004). Philippine government estimates now claim a ‘stock’ of around 8 million Filipinos living overseas (around 10 per cent of the domestic population, although this includes ethnic Filipinos born overseas), and a ‘flow’ of remittances amounting to about \$12 billion in 2006 (10 per cent of GDP). While the Philippines represents a particularly significant instance of an economy increasingly dependent on the export of migrant labour, it is far from unique. Between 1996 and 2006, worldwide worker remittance flows increased from \$108 billion to \$268 billion. To put this in context, total flows of official development assistance amounted to just \$87 billion in 2005. The newest international division of labour, then, is increasingly between labour-sending and remittance-sending countries.

In those countries that are the destinations for temporary or permanent migrants, their presence is an increasingly necessary part of a model for labour market renewal, national economic growth, and competitiveness. Those countries that permit temporary foreign workers to sojourn in their labour markets with restrictive visa conditions have discovered perhaps the most effective strategy for continued competitiveness – availing themselves of an inexpensive, closely regulated, and numerically adjustable source of labour with all the costs of social reproduction displaced to the country of origin. In Singapore, for example, almost one quarter of the population comprises foreign nationals including large numbers working as household maids, construction workers and factory operators (Yeoh and Chang, 2001). In countries of permanent settlement, such as Canada, immigrants are selected on the basis of education, skills and professional experience, but are frequently found in the most precarious and marginalized segments of the labour market. By 2011, it is estimated that all net labour force growth in Canada will come from immigration (Statistics Canada, 2003), and this is a pattern that is repeated in several other countries of the global North. The Philippines has played a key role in this pattern of labour force renewal, providing the third largest source of new immigrants to Canada in recent years (after China and India). Once integrated into the workforce, however, Filipinos collectively experience one of the highest levels of

occupational and sectoral segmentation, primarily into low-paying and insecure jobs in healthcare, childcare, clerical, retail and manufacturing sectors (Hiebert, 1999; Kelly, 2006).

Migration between the Philippines and Canada thus provides a symptomatic instance of broader trends in urban labour market restructuring and global uneven development. Notwithstanding the point already made about class being constructed in contingent circumstances, this example is therefore important in that it suggests how class subjectivities might be complicated by the spatiality of migration, which is an increasingly important feature of the global economy. In this section, each dimension of class outlined earlier is taken in turn and the implications of transnationalism are considered.¹ In each case, class is constructed in important ways either in the context of comparisons between Canada and the Philippines, or in relation to transnational linkages between the two places.

Class as Position

Taking first the notion of class as representing a position in a structured social hierarchy, we see a clear pattern affecting many Filipino immigrants (and indeed immigrants from numerous other places as well). It is a pattern of deprofessionalization and deskilling, as educated and experienced professionals are incorporated into the Canadian labour market in subordinate roles. Accountants become data entry clerks, nurses become personal support workers, engineers become machine operators (Kelly, 2006). One way of illustrating this process at an aggregate level is through a comparison of the human capital of Filipino immigrants in Canada relative to other immigrants and their Canadian born counterparts. Table 1 indicates that, overall, Filipinos in Toronto have strikingly higher levels of educational credentials than other comparison groups. But when income levels are compared, also in Table 1, it is clear that Filipino immigrants are concentrated in the lower-paid ends of the labour market. Table 2 provides indicators of labour market segmentation and the types of employment Filipino men and women commonly find. The data indicate a high concentration in healthcare and manufacturing sectors, and within those sectors, a heavy over-representation in lower-paid and more precarious work.

¹ The evidence presented here is drawn from a research project in operation since 2001 on Filipino labour market transnationalism. The project has included analysis of official statistics, the collection of survey data, as well as personal interviews and focus groups. The material used in this paper is primarily from qualitative sources, drawing upon 15 focus groups and over 100 personal interviews in both Toronto and the Philippines.

There are a variety of processes at work here, many of which have been well documented. Firstly, institutional barriers to professional accreditation are constructed and maintained by professional regulatory bodies, mandated to administer access to specific professions in each Canadian province (Girard and Bauder, 2007). Second, the immigration programmes under which Filipinos enter Canada have implications for labour market integration. The Live-in Caregiver Programme, which enforces at least two years of domestic labour before immigrant status can be achieved is an important factor (Pratt, 2004; McKay, 2002). Third, the racialization of Filipinos within Canadian society renders women in particular as ‘suited’ to certain kinds, and levels, of work (especially domestic and caring work), which implies subtle forms of discrimination and a lack of upward mobility (Pratt, 1999; England and Stiell, 1997). Fourth, all of the previous processes are exacerbated and perpetuated by the widespread use of co-ethnic social networks for the circulation of labour market information (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003). Fifth, indebtedness incurred during the migration process, and obligations to family members left behind, mean that job searches must usually be limited to finding immediate work, rather than appropriate work – and shift work or holding down multiple jobs often means foregoing training opportunities. Finally, the distinctive workplace cultures, practices and dispositions that Filipinos bring are often devalued, and even inhibiting, in the Canadian context (Bauder, 2005; Kelly and Lusia, 2006). All of these factors hinder access to, or mobility within, occupational class structures. It is important to note, however, that the structural imperatives driving the polarization of labour markets mean that large urban labour markets such as Toronto’s are dependent upon low-waged immigrant workers – a situation that dismantled barriers to professions, for example, would not necessarily change (Shields, 2003).

Framing the issue as one of downward mobility in terms of class position does not, however, entirely capture the way in which the process is understood subjectively by Filipino immigrants. An objective analysis views Philippine and Canadian class structures as separate but equivalent entities and so a movement between the two, from an occupation ‘classed’ in one way to a new job ‘classed’ differently, could be seen as *prima facie* class degradation. If, however, Philippine and Canadian class structures are treated as evaluated comparatively *by* migrants (rather than simply frameworks for the evaluation *of* migrants) then the ways in which immigrants reconcile themselves to this process of class degradation become clearer.

The first point of comparison concerns the possibilities of mobility within class structures. In the Philippines, there is strong sense of immobility - a stickiness in the class structure, such that those in lower class positions can never aspire to exceed their particular strata in Philippine society, even if educational achievements would imply otherwise.

If I'm still in the Philippines and I have upgraded myself academically, can I really truly say that I have really risen above that? Maybe one level. But still, they will judge me probably and say "who are you marrying? This girl from that, what kind of family?"....Who you are, where you were born, where you came from, that is what you are... you cannot totally go away from that strata over there. (Focus Group Participant, Toronto, May 2004: female Filipina immigrant, Nurse, arrived in 1966)

Your status there [in the Philippines] or your situation there was precarious. You could not keep going for a long time, and so to speak, you keep running and you're staying in the same place and it is very frustrating and I think that's the drive or that's the stimulus, you know that will make you take that risk [of emigrating].... (Focus Group Participant, Toronto, March 2004: male Filipino immigrant, retired retail manager, arrived 1974)

It is important to note that both of these respondents arrived in Canada in the 1970s or earlier. Like many who arrived in this earlier cohort, both achieved relatively comfortable middle class employment. For them, the appeal of migration was the possibility of leaving behind a class system that held few prospects for mobility – partly because of dire economic times, and partly because of the perpetuation of class positions regardless of education or other indicators that might suggest potential for upward mobility. For others, especially more recent arrivals, who have not been as fortunate in their employment experiences in Canada, it is frequently the presumed future upward mobility of their children that motivates them. Thus when class positionality is considered in a transnational frame, it is not simply position in one hierarchy that is compared with position in another, it is also the prospect for mobility within that hierarchy, either across a career or across generations, that is a major factor.

The second dimension of class position that must be understood in a comparative or transnational frame concerns the extension of class identity from the individual to a wider familial network. It was noted earlier that locating individuals in a positional class structure is sometimes difficult, either because their employment doesn't reflect their full set of economic assets and entitlements, or because their current class positioning does not reflect their long term class trajectory, or because they are associated with, or related to, someone with a quite different individual class position. Introducing the migrant experience adds a further level of complexity. While immigrants themselves maybe degraded in positional class terms, the outcome for those left behind might be quite dramatic upward mobility in terms of income and consumption patterns. Indeed not only is this a common outcome of migration from the Philippines – it is also often a motivation for migration in the first place:

You know like your parents will fix the house, the house will extend and go higher, right? And then [they say]: “oh because my son, you know, is abroad in Canada”. (Focus group participant, May 2004, male Filipino immigrant, engineering graduate in the Philippines, insurance broker in Toronto, arrived 1980)

In two ways, then, class position is read in a comparative or transnational frame. On the one hand, the prospects for upward mobility are interpreted comparatively, with prospects perceived to be, on balance, better in Canada. On the other hand an individual's class positioning may not be the primary factor in their understanding of the positional class effects of migration – such effects on the prospects for those left behind in the Philippines are also significant. Indeed, migration has been represented in the language of religious pilgrimage and passion in the Philippines – a necessary sacrifice for the benefit of others (Aguilar, 1999). In both of these ways, how (and where) one's class positioning is objectively assessed may not be the way in which subjective assessments of class are constructed.

Class as Process

If, instead of class positions, we look at class processes of surplus appropriation and distribution, these processes are also found to be constituted differently when examined transnationally. Taking appropriative class relationships first, it might be expected that deprofessionalized migrants find themselves in more exploitative relationships in Canadian

society than they do in the Philippines. That is, in lower class employment in Canada, especially in domestic work, the surplus labour extracted from the employee might be greater. This may indeed be so, for example, the process of migration might remove a migrant from a domestic situation in which they *have* a maid or nanny, to one in which they *are* a maid or nanny, with all the possibilities for intensive exploitation which that implies (Pratt, 1999). In other instances, however, the move from employment in the Philippines to lower class service sector work in Canada may involve more regulated working conditions and codified regulations for overtime etc., which reduce the degree of formal exploitation.

In some cases, migrants may also be able to maintain property or even businesses back in the Philippines, financed through remittances. Thus, while they are engaged in one set of class relationships in Canada, they are engaged in quite different ones in the Philippines. One respondent described this process, whereby remittances from one sibling were used by her father to construct a small commercial building in which her siblings could operate retail shops:

“with the money Tata [father] built four commercial building in front of the house and then we had it rented, and then the two commercial stall was put up for T and Z. They put up a shoe store. And then the other stall, Tata [father] encouraged L and me to put a mini grocery just to encourage L to stay here so that the family will be solid...” (Interview respondent, Philippines, 2002: customer service manager for electrical utility, two sisters in Toronto)

Gibson, Law and McKay (2001) also illustrate this process in the case of a Filipina domestic worker in Hong Kong who is a land owner back home in the Philippines. My interviews and survey responses, however, suggest that this is not as common as might be expected. Many immigrants have a hard time surviving in a Canadian urban environment, with limited resources to invest in property or businesses back home.

A key argument of post-structural class theorists is that class processes are not just to be found in the capitalist workplace. Divisions of labour in the home may also be significantly reworked as a result of migration. This may take all sorts of forms. As noted, a middle class professional leaving the Philippines may leave behind a household helper and free childcare provided by nearby relatives. Moving to Canada may involve, possibly for the first time, shift

work, both parents in waged employment, increased commuting times, and expensive daycare costs. The unwaged labour undertaken by both male and female household members will thus be restructured with attendant changes in the appropriative class relations within the household. The precise form of these changes will vary depending on individual circumstances, but respondents generally agreed that the nature of domestic life and the structuring of a home-work balance take on a very different and largely undesirable form in Canada.

In sum, the implications of migration for the appropriative class relations experienced by migrants are varied, but in each case, the composite set of class relations in which migrants are engaged will encompass those in the Philippines and in Canada. Also, subjective understandings of exploitative relations in Canada will be developed in a comparative frame alongside the Philippines. For many, this might mean a technically greater degree of exploitation in Canadian workplaces, but encompassed within a more codified and regulated process. For some it might include the possibility of engaging in appropriative class relations in the Philippines. And for nearly all families arriving (or reuniting) in Canada, it will likely mean a reworked set of domestic labour processes. All of these elements combine to form a subjective assessment of how migration has affected appropriative class processes

Gibson-Graham and her collaborators are keen to point out, however, that distributive class processes are just as important as appropriation. Here again, processes experienced in Canada are understood in a comparative frame alongside broad distributive structures in the Philippines. There is a strong sense that distributive class processes in the Philippines are not only fairly rigid, as noted earlier, but also extremely inequitable:

Because even if a person is doing a higher-level job back home, they can't afford to buy a house, they can't afford to live in an apartment, to buy a car. The only reason I think people leave the Philippines is because of the way of life back home – it's hard. Even when I ask my mom, when I call her up [I ask] "Ma, how is it there?" She says, "....., don't come back, it's so hard back here" It's so hard back here, I mean everybody's just like living hand-to-mouth, it's so hard. They only exist. It's true the rich get richer and the poor get poorer." (Focus group respondent, Toronto, March 2005; immigrated in 2001; office clerk at insurance company, IT background in the Philippines)

Thus, emigration is an escape not just from class immobility, but also from egregious inequality. The nature of this inequality in Canada might be evaluated in relation to Canadian society as a whole, or in a comparative frame alongside the Philippines. Furthermore, it might also be evaluated in relation to the Filipino immigrant community. The ease with which so many similar experiences of class degradation can be found among compatriots in Canada makes it, for many Filipino immigrants, that much less outrageous and even a naturalized process of immigrants having to ‘start over’. I will return to this point in relation to class politics later.

Class as Performance

Class as performance intersects with positional and processual class identities in complex ways, but here we are concerned specifically with how class is read by Filipino immigrants, by their families or friends back home and in Canada, and by employers or other non-Filipinos in Canada.

The first dimension of performance concerns the consumption-based trappings of class achievement. Here we can ask what markers connote success in a particular context, and how do these change as migrants move to, and through, a different context? For many Filipinos in Canada, the consumption possibilities enabled even in a degraded class position (and quite often with the help of credit facilities) may be read through the standards of classed consumption in the Philippines. One focus group respondent articulated this idea in relation to home and car ownership in particular:

Most of us came here under the live-in caregiver programme. For majority of us previous to migration, many of us couldn’t afford a house or even a car. But coming here and earning enough in order to get a second hand car, back in the Philippines you won’t even be able to get a second hand car at your current pay rate. But here, you can do that. So the tangibility of the acquisition of these things makes you say that I’m OK. And that is part of the success. For example, when you chat with your friends back home, you will say “oh I have a car and a house” and you will be viewed as very rich and when you go back

home, they will be expecting handouts from you. (Focus group participant, Toronto, March 2006)

The material benefits of an upper middle class Philippine lifestyle are, therefore, available in Canada with working class employment. While occupational markers of class may indicate a downward movement, the consumption markers of class provide something of a compensating countermovement.

A second dimension of classed consumption, implied in the last quote, concerns the cultural capital that is acquired ‘back home’ simply in the act of being abroad. In the sense that they are consuming foreign places and cultures, overseas workers and migrants enjoy an elevated status that goes beyond financial rewards:

Because in the Philippines, especially those living in the rural areas like my parents, to them it is an accomplishment to have somebody from the family go out of the Philippines, to them it is some fulfillment and it makes them proud to think that their children are smart. And you know, they will tell their friends: okay my daughter, my son, are in the US, are in Saudi Arabia, or wherever. But to them, there is a feeling of achievement, a sense of pride in themselves that one of their children was able to go out of the country. (Focus group participant, male Filipino immigrant, college graduate, November 2004)

Don't you forget for us Filipinos when we go balikbayan [return home], they treat us like, you know, royalty. (Focus group participant, April 2004, female Filipina immigrant, legal assistant, college graduate in the Philippines, arrived 1974)

Thus migration is seen as a form of achievement – a form of upward class mobility in itself. The very act of getting out is seen as getting ahead. For many this means temporary contract work in East Asia or the Middle East. Those that make it to Canada are seen as the lucky few – achieving something that few can afford or can aspire to. Returning to visit the Philippines from a place of permanent migration such as Canada can often represent a triumphant display of the trappings of achievement. This might involve particular clothing styles, conspicuous

displays of English fluency (itself a marker of class achievement in the Philippines), and the disbursement of gifts to friends and relatives (see Kelly and Lusia, 2006; Aguilar, 1999).

A third arena in which class performances are enacted is within the Filipino community in Canada, especially in larger sites of settlement such as Toronto. Here, the educational and professional markers of class achievement in the Philippines, although not recognized in the Canadian labour market, may still be acknowledged:

Two of our friends are doctors in the Philippines. They came here and neither of them are doctors. One was working in the lab. She is a doctor! And the other had to do something else. And they [were] professionals. But when you go to the group gathering, they are not known as... everyone knows they are doctors and they are given respect, but outside that community, they are like anybody else, which is sad. (Focus group respondent, Toronto, 2006; female Nurse, arrived in 1977)

Social life in the Filipino community may also play another role. In Toronto alone, more than 250 Filipino associations exist, representing home towns, home provinces, professions (past or present), alumni associations, religious groups, cultural organizations, sports clubs etc. Prestige within these associations may provide an alternate (or compensating) channel for achieving status that is denied in the labour market. One focus group participant succinctly characterised the role that these association play for some:

You see how many associations there are, they want to be president, they want to be chancellors, I think that's one way of channelling their status. They can't do it in the workplace; they do it these big associations. (Focus group participant, April 2004, female Filipina immigrant, legal assistant, college graduate in the Philippines, arrived 1974)

Classed embodiment concerns the ways in which gendered and racialized Filipino bodies are referenced in class terms by non-Filipinos in Canada. There are two important elements to this. The first concerns racialization in the labour market, in which being from the Philippines is taken to imply a certain aptitude or suitability with class implications:

Nowadays if you are an Asian, a Filipino especially, you apply in all the service areas, not the management area level, the service area position.... they'll probably get hired. Filipinos reputation as a healthcare giver, we have a very good reputation, like we work hard, we work with quality and we are courteous and you very seldom find a Filipino that says the F-word or curses a lot, it's always with respect, so our reputation precedes us. Like if you apply, any position, I could go anywhere and that respect you can see it and it reflects back to me... even though I am just a porter, they respect me so much.... (Interview, Toronto, 2003; Male Filipino ER attendant in Toronto area hospital, arrived 1987)

But Filipinos are regarded well, right? We work hard, we are conscientious, we're caring. And so that works for us in a lot of ways. But then there is the limiting way that that also works, because then we may not be perceived in terms of a managerial role. (Interview respondent, February 2006; female Filipina immigrant, Nurse, arrived 1989)

These respondents succinctly summarise the positive but subservient tag that Filipinos have in the Canadian labour market, and the construction of a 'fit' between Filipinos and care work. The identity the first respondent sees himself as playing out for his employers is as a skilled worker, a respectful and unassertive employee, but always confined "not [in] the management area level, [but] the service area level'. This crystallizes into a naturalization of Filipino employment in subordinate occupations in the healthcare sector. The important point to note here is that the aptitudes and characteristics attributed to a Filipino in the labour market are not simply that of a generic immigrant – rather, the gendered and racialized identities that he or she carries are based upon where specifically they have come from (a process McDowell et al. (2007) identify in the hotel sector).

The second dimension of classed embodiment concerns the ways in which Filipino workers enact culturally-learned dispositions and behaviour in the Canadian workplace. In particular, what immigrants perceive to be positively 'Filipino' attributes and attitudes, learned in a Philippine setting, are then re-enacted in the Canadian context, but are sometimes seen as a cause for subordination and upward immobility:

The system expects – and this is where discrimination comes in – that you present yourself the same way that a white, Canada-educated male or female would present oneself. They don't put you in the cultural fit context... like 'oh, you don't look like a manager' or 'you're too humble' or 'you're too modest.' I had a white Canadian friend who was at the management level who advised me that 'when you go to the next job, when you go in front of the panel, my only advice to you, because I know what you can do, is you brag. Because in the way that you are, at your bragging level, it is still acceptable.' (Focus group participant, September 2005, female Filipina immigrant, government research analyst, arrived 1984)

The point to emphasise here is that the classed embodiment of Filipinos in the Canadian workplace is a product of what they bring in the way of cultural practices and how those are then interpreted (and underestimated).

Class as Politics

Despite the emphatically subordinate positioning of Filipino immigrants in the Toronto labour market, the possibilities for class-based politics appear to be limited. The continued importance of ethno-national identities (and the barriers to solidarity that this creates within workplaces), the sense of mis-placement for former professionals in working class employment, the notion that low status employment is a stepping stone to something better, the insecurities of being in a new society and different political culture, and the variety of compensating (or at least mildly comforting) benefits of immigration, all militate against the emergence of class-based solidarity in multi-ethnic Canadian workplaces. But when class politics are understood more broadly, and in a transnational and comparative frame, then two distinctive mobilizations are apparent.

The first relates to the assertion of citizenship rights. While consumption patterns were earlier noted as trappings of class achievement in the Philippines, an equally important dimension is favourable treatment by the state. A key political reality in the Philippines is that the apparatuses of the state, including its security forces, are not objective and rational bureaucracies, but are often arbitrary in their actions and primarily at the service of the

wealthy. One focus group respondent drew attention to this feature in comparison with Canada:

In terms of, like, rights. Let's say ... you get in trouble. Here [in Canada], more or less, you'll find some, hopefully the police or the government will make sure everything is fair, but in the Philippines, if you are rich, you make the rules in a way. So it is different. (Focus Group Participant, Toronto, March 2004: male Filipino immigrant, retired retail manager, arrived 1974)

In Canada, then, the state apparatus can (rightly or wrongly) be seen as being impartial, so that the rights to justice, education and healthcare - the trappings of class achievement in the Philippines - are ostensibly available as universal citizenship rights in Canada. It is precisely when such citizenship rights appear to have been undermined that broad-based political mobilization among the Filipino community in Toronto has taken place. The two main issues that have mobilized the community in recent years have been the Live-In Caregiver Programme, which specifically denies citizenship rights of many kinds to its participants, and an incident in which a Filipino youth was shot by a police officer in questionable circumstances that many felt were never fully acknowledged in subsequent investigations (Arat-Koc, 2001; Garcia, 2007). It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore these examples in depth, but they suggest that the politics of citizenship rights is far more potent than class-based politics, and yet the very importance of these rights is related to the comparative transnational frame in which they are evaluated. The fact that they are, in the Philippines, seen as class-specific rights, makes their assertion in Canada, where 'positional' class standing has been so degraded, all the more important.

A second dimension of class politics that is visible through a transnational lens concerns the language of class that locates the Philippines itself as a subordinated space in a global class hierarchy. Politically active Filipino groups in Canada have tended to adopt a discourse that sees their positions in Canada as explicitly linked to the underdeveloped and exploited plight of the Philippines. Thus the treatment of Filipinos in Canadian society is directly linked to the sense that the Philippines is a subordinate class space. While mobilization around development issues in the Philippines is not widespread in the Filipino community, it is notable that activists who advocate on issues concerning immigrant settlement in Canada are at pains to link these issues to an identity based on 'Third World' status (Pratt 2003-04). Thus

the very act of migration is seen as a product of underdevelopment in the Philippines and experiences of racialization and marginalization in Canada are read as corollaries of the global inferiority bestowed upon the Philippines by colonialism, neo-colonialism and global capitalism.

In sum, while the possibilities for class politics appear to be limited when sought in a bounded class space, if the frame is expanded to incorporate transnational linkages and comparisons, a class politics becomes more readily apparent – one based on the assertion of citizenship rights that can be read as trappings of class achievement, and based on the exploitative relationship between the Philippines and the global economic system. In this way, we can see a specifically Filipino class politics being articulated that dissolves any contradictions between ethnic and class politics, but only when viewed in a transnational frame.

CONCLUSIONS

While drawing out some consistencies in subjective understandings of class among Filipino immigrants in Toronto, this paper has not provided a particularly nuanced account of those experiences. Indeed, in seeking the various ways and spaces in which class might be constructed, a rather essentialized Filipino immigrant has been held constant. There are, of course, many axes along which ‘the Filipino immigrant’ might be differentiated – including class background both in Canada and the Philippines, but also gender, their period and place of residency in Canada, the immigration programme under which they arrived, and their level of education. Deconstructing the immigrant population along any of these axes would yield differentiated perspectives on the various dimensions of class.

My purpose, however, has been to use the example of Filipino migration to Canada as a way of illustrating both the multiple but connected ways in which class can be theorised, and how the transnational spaces created by migration necessitate an unbounded understanding of class.

In the case of positional class, indicators such as occupation are important but are inadequate to understand how people see their own class position. As Erik Wright (2005) has noted, class has a temporal dimension and current class positioning must be seen in this context.

Whether it is within a career or across generations, the potential for mobility within a class structure is as important as absolute position. But a relative assessment of this possibility *across space* is an important part of the migration decision. Another possibility is that positional class mobility deriving from migration may not actually be enjoyed by migrants themselves. The class positioning of migrants' extended families back in the Philippines is also an important consideration. In both cases, then, the frame of reference for class positioning is shifted through transnational linkages and comparisons.

In the case of expropriative and distributive class processes, again we see the importance of transnational linkages and comparisons for how Canadian class processes are read. In the appropriation of surplus labour, in some cases migrants may play a quite different role in class processes back home. We also see a comparison being made between distributive class processes in each context – with highly unequal processes in the Philippines comparing unfavourably with those in Canada.

It is, however, in the performative dimension that the migration process is most disruptive of any narrow definition of class. Various trappings of class in the Philippines are available in Canada – the consumption and lifestyle accoutrements, the security of assured citizenship rights, respect within the (Filipino) community, plus the adulation of folks back home. All of this means that self-assessments of class identity in Canada are complicated by the transnational cultural frame in which they are constituted. But the transnational frame is also important in understanding the embodiment of class identities – how cultural practices from the Philippines get translated and differently evaluated in the Canadian context, and how Filipinos are specifically racialized in the Canadian labour market.

Finally, all of this has implications for class as politics. The intersection of class with ethnically-based identities in the workplace undermines class solidarity. But also, the sense of class subordination as a temporary phase, as offset by consumption possibilities interpreted through Philippine lenses, or by compensating benefits back in the Philippines, all mean that a coalescence of consciousness around class identities in Canada seems to be a remote possibility. Where we have seen collective political action it seems to have been in response to lapses in the presumed fairness, objectivity and assuredness of Canadian citizenship rights – rights that can be read from a Philippine vantage point as class-inflected. In transnational

frame, we also see the ways in which Filipino groups in Canada construct their situation as explicitly linked to the Philippines as an exploited space of underdevelopment.

Whichever way class is used, and in this paper I have sought out the intersections of multiple meanings rather than adjudicating between them, it is apparent that the spatiality of migration and transnationalism poses a challenge. Analyses of class have tended to assume a bounded national or local scale for understanding class identity. Transnationalism requires a careful consideration of the multiple spaces and scales in which class identities are constituted.

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Table 1
Earnings (C\$) of Filipinos and Others in Toronto CMA, 2000

	Filipino Immigrants	All Visible Minority Immigrants	All Visible Minority Non- Immigrants	All Immigrants	All Non- Immigrants	Entire Population
Per cent with University education	57.0	37.3	38.6	33.1	36.0	34.6
Male Income (\$)	39,295	43,162	46,746	50,748	66,133	58,789
Female Income (\$)	31,846	33,273	39,088	36,198	45,395	40,984

Source: Calculated from Statistics Canada, 2001 Census, Metropolis Project Core Data Set Tabulations.

Note: These dollar figures refer to average employment incomes in Canadian dollars from full-year full-time employment in 2000 for the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area.

Table 2
Selected Occupational Location Quotients (LQ) for Filipino Immigrants in Toronto, 2001

LQ	MALE Filipino Immigrants	LQ	FEMALE Filipina Immigrants
5.4	Nurse supervisors and registered nurses	4.1	Child care and home support workers
5.3	Assisting occupations in support of health services	3.3	Assisting occupations in support of health services
3.6	Child care and home support workers	2.7	Nurse supervisors and registered nurses
3.0	Assemblers in manufacturing	2.2	Technical and related occupations in health
2.9	Technical and related occupations in health	1.8	Assemblers in manufacturing
2.5	Machine operators in manufacturing	1.7	Mechanics
2.1	Labourers in processing, manufacturing and utilities	1.4	Machinists, metal forming, shaping and erecting occupations
0.4	Judges, lawyers, psychologists, social workers, ministers of religion, and policy and program officers	0.3	Senior management occupations
0.4	Construction trades	0.3	Technical occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport
0.3	Professional occupations in art and culture	0.3	Professional occupations in art and culture
0.2	Professional occupations in health	0.2	Teachers and professors
0.2	Teachers and professors	0.0	Construction trades
0.2	Senior management occupations	0.0	Heavy equipment and crane operators, including drillers

Source: Calculated from Statistics Canada, 2001 Census, Metropolis Project Core Data Set Tabulations.