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Re-Masculinizing the Hero: Filipino Migrant Men and Gender Privilege

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Re-Masculinizing the Hero:
Filipino Migrant Men and Gender Privilege

INTRODUCTION

Since it was first developed by Raewyn Connell and her colleagues, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been central to the debates and theories concerning men and masculinity (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985). When introduced, the idea of hegemonic masculinity represented a clear critique of gender role theory and launched a more dynamic approach recognizing the social construction of multiple masculinities, and the power relations between them. The theory posits that in a particular society at a particular time, there is generally a most valued or "currently accepted" way to be a man – a hegemonic masculinity - which sits atop a gender hierarchy above both all femininities and other subordinate and/or marginal masculinities (Connell 1987).

But as the application and development of the theory expanded, so too did the critiques. Some argue that the concept is under-theorized and that there remains too much slippage between hegemonic masculinity as a cultural ideal and as a referent to an actual group of dominant men (Beasley 2008, Flood 2002). Others claim that the theory is overly structural and does not account for subjectivity and actual practice (Whitehead 2002). Still others critique Connell's approach as unnecessarily dualistic and categorical, creating a "binarism" between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities (Demetriou 2001, Coles 2009). And while supporters have ably defended the overall theory and acknowledge the "internal complexities of masculinities," nevertheless there are key questions still to be addressed (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 852). In particular, the relation of actual and varied practices of men to the boundaries between hegemonic masculinity and other marginal or subordinate masculinities remains to be fully explored and theorized.

This paper focuses on labor migration and a group of migrant men to address this gap in the masculinity literature and develop the notion of what I call "hegemonic masculine privilege" or the ability of some men to transgress certain gender roles or appropriate competing gendered practices but without serious stigma or challenge to their overall masculinity. Approaching the theories of masculinity through a labor migration lens has several advantages. First, although masculinity studies have long acknowledged how central work and breadwinning are for men in constructing gendered identities, analyzing work that is done geographically far from home highlights more clearly the separation *and* connection between the spheres of production and social reproduction, as well as differences *and* connections between work and providership (Willis 1977, Townsend 2002).

Second, migration brings out the importance of non-economic elements of masculinity that are nevertheless linked to work and employment. As Kimmel (1996) has demonstrated in the case of the United States, although breadwinning remains central to meanings of modern manhood, the loss of autonomy at work coupled with the rise of bureaucracies has meant that American men often turn to sport and leisure activities to fulfill other key elements of masculinity – such as risk-taking, adventurousness, and worldliness. Yet, as will be detailed below, these elements are precisely the ones that both migrants and non-migrants associate with migratory work – even more so that the character of the work itself.

Finally, studying migrant labor highlights the existence of and interactions between different national or regional masculinities. As other recent studies have shown, there remains a quite diverse range of masculinities among regions and countries and transnational flows only complicate how masculinities interact with other types of difference (Ford and Lyons 2011, Donaldson et al 2009).

The empirical case this paper analyzes is that of contemporary merchant seafarers from the Philippines. Seafaring has a traditionally been a men-dominated profession and in the Philippines this is no different: 97 percent of Filipino seafarers are men. But in a global labor market of roughly 1.2 million workers, over 347,000 – or approximately 28 percent all seafarers - are from the Philippines (POEA 2011). In fact, Filipinos are far and away the largest national group - more than the next four nationalities (Russian, Indian, Ukrainian, and Chinese) combined (Ellis and Sampson 2008). But despite their numeric dominance, Filipinos remain on the bottom rung of a hierarchical occupational ladder, sailing overwhelmingly as non-licensed, lower-level crew and are under-represented at the senior officer ranks (Amante 2003). What makes their case particularly interesting for the study of gender is that this group of workers, channeled into the lower ends of the global market and subordinated at work, nevertheless often construct themselves as "masculine exemplars" or idealized versions of masculinity (Connell 2005).

Drawing on interview data with seafarers, their families and members of their communities, I argue that Filipino seafarers make sense of their migration, work and agency in large part through a lens of masculinity. Seafaring provides these men the means to fulfill the key elements of successful adult masculinity – work, breadwinning, family, and community respect - what I call, following Townsend (2002), the Filipino "package deal." But Filipino seafarers go even further, considering themselves masculine exemplars because their jobs allow them to fulfill not only the economic elements of adult masculinity, but also other key, non-economic elements of masculinity, such risk-taking, physical aggressiveness and worldliness, that are often harder to accomplish for women or other men in different occupations. Filipino seafarers – through their precarious work and anchored by their providership – try in a sense re-masculinize heroism and exercise a kind of "hegemonic masculine privilege" in which they are able to transgress certain gender roles or appropriate competing gendered practices but without serious stigma or challenge to their overall masculinity. However, this heroic masculinity can also be quite fragile. Seafaring as an occupation remains unstable and insecure, separates individuals from their families and communities, and contains many contradictory elements. This then requires continual construction and performance of a broad masculinity across multiple locations and across both the productive and re-productive spheres.

The paper draws on a combination of semi-structured interviews and extensive ethnographic field research conducted onboard three merchant ships with Filipino and mixed-nationality crews, and in a small provincial town in the Southern Philippines. Over 60 interviews with seafarers – both onboard and in the Philippines - were conducted between 2006 and 2009. In addition, 70 semi-structured interviews with both men and women were conducted in 2010 in a seafarer-sending community with family members of seafarers as well as with community members with no seafarers in their extended family in a small town in the Western Visayan islands in the Southern Philippines.

FILIPINO MASCULINITY

Most theorizing about hegemonic masculinity has been based on Western and industrialized or post-industrial societies. Reading across the most well-known studies, hegemonic masculinity in the West includes: being powerful, competitive, heterosexual, able to provide, being emotionally "strong", aggressive, risk-taking, and able to dominate both women and other men (Connell 2005, Kimmel 1996, Whitehead 2002). Townsend (2002), in his study of middle-class white American men, argues that the dominant masculine cultural values center on employment, homeownership, marriage and fatherhood, which together make up a "package deal" of successful adult manhood. Townsend further breaks down fatherhood into four elements - emotional closeness, protection, providership, and endowment. But Townsend's primary point in identifying these elements of the "package deal" is highlighting the inherent tensions between the elements that make it an ideal that not all – or even most – American men can fulfill. For example, the men in Townsend's study found it

increasingly difficult to reconcile demands for emotional closeness to children with demands from employment, homeownership and providership. Similarly, Holt and Thompson (2004) highlight the tensions between what they label the "breadwinner model" of masculinity that focuses on providing for family, earning respect of others and playing by the rules, and the "rebel model" of masculinity that exalts the rugged individual "bad boy" that acts against the rules and controls others through fear (see also Kimmel 1996). Holt and Thompson argue that men often try to reconcile the tensions between these two models by fashioning themselves as "man-of-action" heroes, who, through their consumption and leisure activities, combine elements of the breadwinner and rebel models to cast themselves as heroic despite constricting circumstances.

Despite the lively scholarship on masculinity in the West and in other parts of the world, the scholarship on masculinity in the Philippines remains surprisingly thin (for a recent exception on regional masculinities in Southeast Asia, see Ford and Lyons 2011). Pingol's (2001) study of men in the Illocos region of the Philippines whose wives work overseas is one of the only book-length treatments that attempts to define Filipino masculine norms. In her study, she finds that the local ideal of manhood centers on being, "good providers, virile sex partners, and strong fathers" (Pingol 2001: 8). Parrenas (2005), in her study of transnational families with one or both migrant parents, similarly emphasizes fathers' breadwinning role and points out that Filipino fathers are considered the "pillar of the home" (*haligi ng tahanan*), the one responsible for building and providing for the family home.

But in the Philippines today, with its weak, service-dominated economy, high un- and under-employment, and relatively high level of female labor force participation rate, not all men can be sole providers for their families.[1] Pingol notes that when this is so, men often redefine their actions and the norm of manhood as "being in control" rather than primarily as provider. In her study, a masculinity based on "being in control" was achieved along either two tracks: one of self-control and earning respect from others through independent earning, self-discipline, leadership, endurance of suffering (*kinalalaki);* the other through controlling or being feared by others achieved through physical domination, risk-taking, and displays of "macho" culture (*malalaki*) (Pingol 2001).

Based on previous studies and my own analysis, I argue that the "package deal" of successful adult Filipino masculinity centers on employment, providership, family-orientation, and community standing/respect (see also Rubio and Green 2009, Tremlet 2006). However, the dominant element of the Filipino package deal, and central to all other key elements, is providership. My interviews with family members of seafarers and community members with no seafarer relatives reflected the centrality of providership. When asked to "what does it mean to be a man in the Philippines", Maria, a locally-elected official (*barangay councilor)* without a seafarer in the family noted, "we look at the man to be the breadwinner for his family…. He is loving ... responsible, and knows what to do with his life. He will send his children to school so that they will be properly educated… You will respect a man if you see that he takes responsibility for his family." Similarly, Carlos, a retired former business owner combines the broader notions of care and responsibility with material providership: "If you are a true man, you have to take care and provide for your family. To prove your manhood, you have to take care of your family."

Providership is so central because it serves as a bridge connecting the two most crucial arenas for constructing adult masculine identity, the productive and re-productive spheres (Townsend 2002). This is particularly true in the case of seafarers. While the physical and technical character of their

[1] Official unemployment is 7.4 percent and underemployment 19.4 percent. Interestingly, men's unemployment figures are higher than women's (7.4 percent and 6.7 percent, respectively). The labor force participation rate for men is 78.8 percent and for women, it is 49.3 percent. Approximately 27 percent of the population lives at or below the official poverty level (NSCB 2010).

work onboard allows them to construct a particular *masculine* identity (in the arena of production), their dollar remittances sent back home to their families helps bolster their *paternal* identities (in the arena of re-production). Indeed, seafarers as a group are arguably the largest per-migrant remitters from the Philippines. Although Filipino seafarers make up less than four percent of the estimated total number of Filipinos living outside the Philippines, they remit US$3.8 billion per year, or over 20 percent of total remittances back to the Philippines (POEA 2011).

Based on their work and remittances, Filipino seafarers identify themselves not just as successful men, but as "exemplars of masculinity" (Connell 2005). They see themselves as being able to deliver the Filipino "package deal"– as workers, providers, husbands, fathers, and respected community members – but also able to make claims on other, often competing elements of masculinity that go beyond successful, responsible adult manhood. For example, the men I interviewed, while acknowledging the relatively high earnings of the job, nevertheless often highlighted how seafaring allowed them to take action as well as risks, be adventurous and worldly, exercise physical power, and demonstrate their sexual prowess or experience.

As self-identified exemplars, seafarers willingly take on the mantel of "new heroes" (*bagong bayani* – discussed in detail below) but in ways that try to "re-masculinize" the term. Heroes, of course, have long been associated with models of masculinity (Connell 2005, Synnott 2009). While definitions of heroes and heroism vary, as an idealized reference group, their traditionally recognized characteristics include: being courageous in the face of danger; exercising agency, autonomy and control; being cunning, physically tough and adventurous; and willingness to sacrifice themselves (Campbell 1949, Kimmel and Aronson 2004). Heroes have also been such potent models of masculinity because they embody a combination of competing elements of manhood noted above. Focusing on the US, Holt and Thompson (2004: 427) argue that the "ideology of heroic masculinity blends together two seemingly competing models: one emphasizing respectability, organized achievement, and civic virtues, and the other emphasizing rebellion, untamed potency, and self-reliance."

In the Philippines, "traditional" national heroes have been overwhelmingly men. In a 2011 national survey, nine of the ten people named as "genuine Filipino heroes" were men (Social Weather Station 2011). Tellingly, the top three named were Jose Rizal, Andres Bonifacio, and Benito "Ninoy" Aquino, Jr. – all men who fought, suffered and died for the nation.

If "traditional" heroism in the Philippines remains identified with men, why do I argue that today's seafarers seek to *re*-masculinize the hero? The re-masculinization argument has much to do with the rise of out-migration from the Philippines since the 1970s and the feminization of that out-migration from the 1980s until the late 2000s. As other scholars have documented, the Philippines embarked on a migration- and remittance-led development strategy after 1974, promoting labor out migration both to relieve domestic political pressure as well as to earn much-needed foreign currency (Parrenas 2001, Tyner 2004, Guevarra 2009). While early migrants were primarily men concentrated in construction and going to the Middle East, from the 1980s, the Philippines began broadening its labor profile, sending out increasing numbers of domestic helpers, nurses and entertainers – all occupations dominated by women. This feminization peaked in 2004, when 74 percent of labor migrants from the Philippines were women. It should also be noted that by 2004, remittances totaled $US8.5 billion, representing roughly ten percent of the Philippines Gross Domestic Product and equal to 100 times the level of foreign investment in 2003 and surpassing the combined value of the top five Philippine merchandise exports (POEA 2005). But particularly in the 1980s, with the increase in women migrants also came increasing cases of migrant abuse and rising activism by women migrants themselves calling for greater government protection (Gibson, Law, McKay 2001).

Facing this criticism of their migration policies and now reliant of the foreign exchange migrants generated, the Philippine state responded, not necessarily by improving conditions for migrants, but by "honoring" primarily women migrants as the nation's "new" or "modern day heroes" (*Bagong Bayani*). This was enshrined by the annual "Bagong Bayani" awards that the Philippine state has given out since 1984 to "outstanding and exemplary Overseas Filipino Workers" for their economic contributions to the nation as well as "enhancing and promoting the image of the Filipino as a competent, responsible and dignified worker" (POEA 2011) Most interestingly, the term "new hero", aimed at women migrants and shaped by the Philippine government, taps into particular cultural and religious understandings of heroism, highlighting the ability of an individual to sacrifice and suffer – Christ-like - for the nation but downplaying individual agency, autonomy or control – those elements that are arguably more closely associated with heroic masculinity (Rafael 2000). In a speech to award overseas workers, then-President Gloria Magapagal Arroyo appealed to the idealized national character of sacrifice and delayed gratification: "to all our honorees, I say, congratulations and thank you for what you do for our country. You epitomize the seven million great Filipino workers . . . who labor patiently in the great Filipino tradition of *pagsusumikap* (working hard) and *pakikipagkapwa* (getting along with others)" (Arroyo 2002). Migrants are thus "honored" as heroes, but primarily for the more passive elements of heroism: enduring hash conditions, sending their remittances home, and a willingness to sacrifice for their families and "suffer" for the nation. Filipino migrant women have nevertheless embraced this label of "new hero," in large part because it gives them more national visibility, increases their political leverage, and acknowledges the broadening of women's gender roles to include providership (which as noted above has traditionally associated with masculinity).

Filipino men seafarers have also generally embraced the "hero" label, but more so because they are able to re-claim a masculine heroism, combining providership with other traditionally masculine elements of heroism beyond the ability to (passively) suffer, such as: being physically tough, willing to take risks, and being adventurous and worldly. One seafarer explained the benefits of being a seafarer in this way: "People in the neighborhood tend to idolize you because you always have many stories to tell, about certain experiences, women… for example, surviving a storm in the middle of a sea is a big thrill you can share with other people… neighbors think that going abroad means being rich, that is why some seamen tend to be so proud." Here, the seafarer combines a number of elements – story-telling, hetero-sexual prowess, risk-taking, and income – to explain seafarers' strong self-image. Another unlicensed seafarer noted, "seamen are *"Bagong Bayani"* because on-board, you cannot really be sure of your life there. And you always think of what is best for your family. We are called *"Bagong Bayani"* because we sacrifice, we think of other people. …. We also help the government because of the remittance that we provide for the country."

In many ways the Filipino seafarer constructs himself as what Holt and Thompson (2004) calls a "man-of-action hero." For Holt and Thompson, studying American men, the "heroic men-of-action embody the rugged individualism of the rebel while maintaining their allegiance to collective interests, as required of breadwinners" (Holt and Thompson 2004: 428). Both the American and the Philippine model for such a "man-of-action hero" focuses on agency, but while the US model emphasizes individualism, the Philippine model emphasizes "being in control", being adventurous, providing and suffering for one's family, and humility to earn community respect. Thus the Filipino seafarer as a man-of-action hero sees himself as a provider and man of experience who can (generally) resist temptation (even if he sometimes succumbs), but remains in control for the sake of his reputation and his family.

In this sense, the seafarer does not conform to a single hegemonic model, but rather, as a heroic exemplar, combines elements of multiple masculinities. Being firmly anchored in his providership role, he can then transgress other gender roles, exercising a kind of "hegemonic masculine privilege" of transgression – able to appropriate elements of subordinate or marginal masculinities or even

femininities, but without being stigmatized by them. In many ways, this is similar to Demetriou's (2001: 345) approach to hegemonic masculinity in which he develops the notion of dialectical pragmatism, or the appropriation of elements or practices from marginal or excluded groups of "what appears pragmatically useful and constructive" for a dominant group to remain powerful. In Demertiou's study, he focuses on straight men's appropriation and mainstreaming of certain element or practices of gay masculinity, such as dress or body image. In the case of Filipino seafarers, who draw the core of their masculine identity from their earnings and breadwinning, they are nevertheless able to appropriate elements of a "rebel model" of masculinity, such as sexual adventure and risk-taking, without being slighted as somehow immature or irresponsible men.

Yet what makes seafarer masculinity exemplary also makes it fragile. Although seafaring provides the context for heroic masculinity, it is also an unstable, insecure and steeply hierarchical occupation with often-contradictory elements (Alderton et al, 2004). Thus particularly for Filipino seafarers, it requires situational performance and continual construction of masculinity across multiple spheres – from onboard at work, to onshore in port, to in the community back home.

CONSTRUCTIONS OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINE PRIVILEGE AMONG SEAFARERS

Onboard ship

Seafaring, and work more generally, from at least the pre-industrial period onward, has been deeply connected to masculinity (Hohman 1956, Reid 1993, Kimmel 1996, Baron 2006). Today's merchant seafarers, while hailing from across the globe, nevertheless continue to be overwhelming men. And organizationally, work relations onboard, modeled along military lines, remains rigidly hierarchical. Filipinos, as noted above, continue to sail primarily as lower-level crew or junior officers and are under-represented at the senior officer level. As a result, in all-male, mixed nationality crews in which authority is often segmented along national lines, masculinities also get segmented. For example, in one study of two cargo ships with Norwegian officers and Filipino crews, the Norwegian sailors constructed themselves in terms of a hegemonic masculinity in direct contrast to the subordinate masculinity of the Filipino crew: "The discourse among Norwegians was mostly about being a good sailor, meaning *physically strong*, *masculine*, *conscientious* and *responsible…* contrasting themselves against the Filipinos. The Norwegians' view of the Filipinos was …stereotyped as being *physically weak*, *feminine*, *negligent* and *irresponsible*. … Filipinos are regarded as feminine and quite often labeled as homosexual" (Ostreng 2000:7).

Yet the Filipino seafarers interviewed for this study vigorously resist such an ascribed, subordinate masculinity by first re-inscribing their exploitative and "3D work" – dirty, dangerous and demeaning - and reinterpreting it "into a heroic exercise of manly confrontation with the task" (Willis 1977). As Coles (2009) similarly noted, such inversions are typical of working class masculinities, in which manual workers carve out of a dominant masculinity, despite their subordinate positions. Thus when asked if seafaring was "man's work," one unlicensed seaman noted, "I think the cult of masculinity really exists. Maybe it is because of the work. We cannot afford to be weaklings. For example, in the logs, we need to be quick, we need to be energetic, work is continuous. It is really a macho world because all of us are males there. A woman will not be able to do the work." Similarly, a chief mate responded, "that is true because there are more types of ships which need manpower like log ship, tanker, general cargo, etc. So these need "macho" effort and/or manpower. They pull chains and when they eat, they eat a lot because this is necessary."

Filipino seafarers also found other ways to describe their work and worth in masculine terms. Displaying manual skill mastery has long been a working-class strategy to perform masculinity (Maynard 1989). In adjusting to their relative immobility to higher ranks, Filipinos often stressed their experience, ingenuity and creativity [*diskarte*], which set them apart from their less manually dexterous senior officers. A Filipino captain, commenting on why he preferred a Filipino crew bragged, "The Filipino, he can fix anything - Jack of all trades – even if there are no spare parts. Other nationalities, if they see there are no spare parts, they will say, 'OK, that's it, we'll wait 'til we're in port.' But Filipinos somehow will get it working again. They'll will make a new part or fix one."

But although Filipino seafarers generally embrace their occupation, the insecurity of seafaring work and their subordinate status often prevent them from pursing other elements associated with "blue-collar" masculinity at work, such as aggressive competitiveness, risk-taking or showing off in dangerous ways (Paap 2006). Instead Filipino seafarers tended to embrace a "cautious masculinity" that plays down assertiveness and risk-taking and instead focuses on self-control, the ability to do one's job, and the ability to provide for one's family. A non-licensed deck worker explained, "You shouldn't complain too much or make too many reports. They will think you're a troublemaker and maybe you won't get a line-up [selected for possible hire]… If you get a bad report, it can be very bad for your career. … the seaman really needs to work. His family needs it. His kids need it. … So we Filipinos are very careful to think, think, think before we do anything." In this sense they connect the productive and reproductive spheres to help them make sense of their actual work. An emphasis on providership helps them endure what might otherwise be viewed as exploitation.

Yet this kind of masculine construction and re-inscription is quite fragile, since those more powerful might not read it as such. For example, this cautious masculinity can often be interpreted by others as meekness. One South African manager comparing Filipino and local seamen commented "The Philippine rating is a very low problem type of rating. He doesn't get into fights, he doesn't drink too much, he doesn't get into trouble and miss the ship, but at the same time they have no or little initiative. They need to basically be hand-held by the officers and pointed out exactly what is required for them to do their job' (cited in Ruggunan 2005:72-73).

Despite their limited ability to construct an assertive masculinity through work, Filipino seamen act in other ways to assert their masculinity while aboard ship. These expressive acts of masculine recovery are most often performed among their peers in the more power-neutral or leisure spaces onboard. For example, during research voyages for this project, one way the lower-level seamen expressed their physical prowess and competitiveness despite their subordinate status was through basketball. A court was set up in a space not marked by obvious workplace hierarchy. Officers and lower-ranking crew took part in these regular afternoon games on deck, providing an opportunity for lower-ranked sailors to out-perform and physically dominate their superiors in ways that were not possible during the working day. Other opportunities to express their masculinity took place primarily in the mess hall and the adjacent recreational area. While off-duty, the Filipino crew, as well as some Filipino officers, spent much of their time playing cards, watching movies, and quite often, watching taped sporting events such as cockfight derbies from Manila, boxing matches, and basketball games. In multiple ways, these moments re-created for many Filipinos the common male "*barkada*" or friend groups found throughout the Philippines. The recreation area provided another opportunity for lower-ranking men to publicly outdo their superiors and highlight another aspect of Filipino masculinity: verbal or vocal eloquence, performed –in this case - through Karaoke and competitive singing.

Thus despite their general subordinate status and inability to be "in command," Filipino seafarers nonetheless manage to affirm their masculinity by accentuating other "heroic" elements: courage and endurance under physically dangerous conditions, cunning and creativity in their work, sacrifice

for their families. Importantly, their high pay and providership allows them to still claim a mature and successful masculinity and overcome the stigma of what might otherwise be considered simply subordinate, blue-collar work.

In Port

While under contract, one of the primary locations where Filipino seamen most freely affirm their manhood is in port. During nine to twelve month contracts onboard, port visits provide one of the few opportunities for the seamen to compensate for the lack of autonomy onboard by asserting their masculinity. Port visits are also a chance to engage in risk-taking, in part because ports provide a liminal context between work and home, where one's actions can be performed for and witnessed by male peers, but not by superiors or families. A common activity for some seamen is to visit local bars or seaman's clubs to relax, drink alcohol, and/or meet local prostitutes. As noted earlier by Pingol (2001), virility and hetero-sexuality is a core element of Filipino masculinity. In the case of seafarers, in subordinate positions onboard, (hyper)sexuality can serve as both outlet and compensation. One retired seafarer boasted, "when they say that you are a real man, you have to have the right attitude. For instance, seafarers joke that for you to be a real seaman, you have a woman every time you dock."

Yet seafarers also recognized that hyper-sexuality is not an element in the package of mature, success masculinity. Such sexuality and risk-taking (risky due to the possibility of contracting a sexually transmitted disease which can disqualify a seafarer from working) is considered irresponsible and immature. So seafarers often temper their boasting about sexual exploits in port by also putting it into the context of their broader providership. A chief officer noted, "… some seamen, you know, have two families. But I don't think that's fair to your children. I always think about my kids, and their future. I think it's OK to go to bar girls sometimes, even if you have a wife already, its natural. But it's not good if you have a second wife."

In port, seafarers again demonstrate their combining of masculine elements to compensate for their onboard subordination. Shore leave provides the seafarers an opportunity to "take action," exercise virility, take risks, be adventurous, and a chance to become worldly. But they are also careful to avoid the stigma of an immature hyper-masculinity. They can do this in part by claiming that while they *could* always engage in such activities, (and sometimes do) they have the self-control and respect for their families not to. And again, it is their providership role that allows them to bridge mature and marginal masculinities without stigma.[2]

Back Home

So far, the focus has been on seafarers onboard and in port. But it is really "back home" in in one's residential community and in the sphere of re-production, where a seafarer gets to "cash in" the various types of capital – economic, social and cultural - that he accumulates as a worker at sea. And while seafarers might want to project themselves as masculine exemplars and "man-of-action heroes," identities and meaning are, of course, negotiated with families, communities and the broader society.

[2] Of course this points to the glaring double standard concerning sexuality for men migrants versus women migrants. In the case of seafarers, they construct their own unfaithfulness and sexual adventure as "natural" and acceptable, whereas their own, number one worry is their "cheating" wives! And for women migrants, it would be very difficult to construct such actions as acceptable or "natural."

In general community members respected seafarers, particularly because seafarers had high earning capacity and could thus provide for their families. But locals also recognized that seafarers stood out from other migrant workers as well as local professionals, acknowledging the difference and difficulties of seafaring. A retired business owner commented to an interviewer, "for example, in your case: you are a graduate, a professional... if you compare your work with that of a seafarer, your life doesn't have any risk. If you sail on the sea, it's hard. Your ship may sink. But if you work at an office, you're safer…." Another community member without a seafarer in her family noted, "the difference is they stay on the sea. They go around the world…. They have respect. Of course they have sailed on the sea and have been to other countries…. They can give a comfortable life to their families… Maybe, seafarers have a lot of money (laughs)." A third community member also recognized their contributions to the locality: "They are dollar earners, they contribute to the economy, and also in the improvement of their communities. In Barangay X [a neighboring village] before, the houses there were just *nipa* (palm frond or leaf) huts, now most of the houses there are mansions."

Seafarers, of course, also celebrate this image as "good provider" when at home between work contracts, but they also want to project a heroic masculinity beyond providership to emphasize their differences. The building of houses is a primary example. Like other migrant workers, seafarers often invest heavily in building large houses to show to others the fruits of their overseas labor (Parrenas 2005). And as noted above, for men – traditionally considered the "pillars of the home" - housing is central to demonstrating their breadwinner masculinity. But seafarers have a reputation not only of building large houses, but homes that also display their occupation. A junior officer explained, "people can see that seamen have money. In my town, there are lots of seamen, and they can build houses…. And you can always tell a seamen's house. They always put an anchor on the gate. An anchor, or a propeller if they are from the engine department. And maybe on their car or jeep, the name of their ship, so everybody knows they are a seaman."

So why such prominent occupational displays? I argue that such symbols allow the seafarer to project the "provider plus" model of heroic masculinity: while a large house can demonstrate publicly one's high income and ability to provide for one's family (typical of many overseas migrants), the occupational signs signal non-economic masculine elements embodied in seafaring - such as risk-taking, adventure, danger, and world-wide travel - that are not open to other "regular" overseas workers.

High earnings from seafaring also support other elements of masculinity, such as community recognition and respect. In weighing seafarers' reputations and influence on the community, one local resistant commented "their influence differs. Well, they are able to help their families. Being a seafarer can help you improve your life. It's really for their family. You can affect other people by loaning them money, you have value. Because if you are not known, then you're nobody. People here won't care who you are."

Another community member tied her assessment of seafarers to *how* they used their earnings: "seafarers have good reputations because they are able to have their children obtain degrees in nursing or medicine. Of course, your family's reputation increases if your children take up good degrees …. Your respect for a seafarer changes if he's able to have his children graduate….." Another way that seafarers build community respect is by sponsoring home-coming parties ("blow-outs") with their friends (usually other men), where story-telling in central. As one seafarer explained, "[my neighbors] have high regard for seamen because they know that they have high incomes. *You* try telling stories in your town; nobody would pay attention to you. But if you are a seaman, before you open your mouth to tell a story or joke, everybody would already be laughing. That means, *'bilib sila sa iyo'* [they believe you/have faith in you]."

But community recognition cuts both ways and some seafarers are also criticized as less than responsible, fully mature men because of their reputation as "womanizers," "one-day millionaires" and "show offs" prone to a wide number of vices. A retired local farmer complained, "there are respected seafarers but there are some who aren't respected because of their bad ways. …. They would tell stories about how when they arrived in Manila they tasted different women, and they would show off their necklaces. There are some seafarers, you wouldn't recognize as seafarers. … my second cousin, he's a chiefmate but you won't believe that he's a seafarer. He doesn't even wear a watch. There are seafarers who wear double bracelets, double watches, necklaces, going around the town wearing shoes. They're really showing off." Along the same lines, another community member noted, "That's it, they project themselves as seafarers….. If you are a seafarer and you have money, then you are respected. The level of respect given to you is dependent on the amount of money you have…. For example, if they go to cockfights, they show off because they are seafarers, so they bet big time. When they gamble, they show off that they have a lot of money."

The community norm around adult masculinity, then, is one that values earning, breadwinning and worldly experience, but also demands restraint, humility and prudent investment. A local civil servant explained, "when their [seafarers'] families are showing off, I get turned off. When they play majong. When they drive fast with their cars. And when they do not want to be associated with poor people…. They are exclusive…. and to think they used to be poor. They spend a lot. What you call conspicuous spending, overspending. Alcohol, cockfight, gambling. It is ok if they spend a lot on their children's education. If their children would like to study in Manila, they can afford to send their children there. That is wise spending." As shown here, and as noted by others that have studied migrant men over the life cycle, returning seafarers must carefully walk the line between displays of wealth to reflect masculine status, and expenditure of earnings that meet community standards of "wise spending" and hence mature masculinity (Osella and Osella 2000).

Seafarers, as contract workers, must also face extended periods between contracts at home when they are not earning. From interviews with seafarers and their families, these stints between jobs range from two months to two years. During this time, seafarers' masculine reputations often hinge again on the character of their spending or saving. One community member summed up local feelings about seafarers' arrival and extended stays at home: "'yes! a seafarer has arrived. His neck is rusty from all the gold he's wearing. And the bracelet is thick.' That is the seafarer, they have plenty of money when they first arrived, then they will pawn their jewelries, go back to Manila and apply again."

In response to this image, seafarers again try to project a more responsible, professional image to balance the hyper-masculine and negative masculine stereotypes of seafarers by emphasizing saving and investments. A brother of a seafarer commented, "The motto then was 'one day millionaire, 6 months *mantiner*' (one day millionaire, 6 months of scraping by). That is their motto before because when they land, they spend all their money. That was around the 1980s. They always have blow-outs and treat their friends … But the younger generation now have realized what is right and what is wrong. So they save. They also have blow outs, but they save." As with their story-telling about their exploits in port, seamen at home boast about their *capacity* to act as rebels and can even digress occasionally upon return, as long they can also demonstrate that at their core, they remain self-disciplined, humble as prudent family providers.

Providership for one's family is especially linked to children and a final key element of Filipino masculinity, fatherhood. Approximately 75 percent of seafarers from the Philippines are married, and 71 percent have children (Amante 2003). In many ways, the seamen interviewed do generally subscribe to Filipino gender norms of conventional fatherhood, performing – as best they can - their roles as familial authority figures. Yet being a good husband and father means both providing for one's family and also being emotionally close. For seafarers, migrant work takes them away from the

family and can undermine marital and paternal bonds. In fact, the most common lament among seafarers onboard was separation from wives and children and the fear they were growing apart from kids emotionally. An engine room worker and young father summed up the feelings of many seamen: "I do not get to see my family often because we are at sea for nine months and are on vacation only for a few months. I feel that I am growing old but I am not growing old with them. I miss them. It feels like I am left out. They are all there, growing old together, and then I come home and see them and I feel like a part of me is missing."

Because of the emotional difficulties of being separated from their families, seamen, upon their return home often try quite hard to re-establish emotional bonds with their children. In fact, many seamen break with gender role stereotypes and expand their household duties when they are on vacation in order to build closer, more intimate relations with their families. Speaking about returning home, a married Bosun said, "well, I'll be the one to cook for my kids, go shopping, take them to school, stay home. I try to do the things my wife does for 9 months, to give her a break and let her relax. I like to do those things for my kids." Such attempts to break from gender stereotypes and be more emotionally involved in their children's lives were also noted by community members without seafarers in their families. A local barber explained, "their work is difficult since they stay on the sea. Aside from that, they are also risking their lives. Unlike us working on land, we can run if there are troubles…. [When they are home] usually seafarers are involved in the household activities. When they come home they are the ones who cook, arrange their homes. They engage in activities they enjoy doing."

Again, seafarers are able to transcend a "traditional" gender boundary or appropriate non-masculine practices without being stigmatized. In this case, they are able to take on feminized caring tasks to be more involved and emotionally close parents. Yet crucially, the seafarers are at home "on vacation" between contracts and generally retain their social identities and (master) status as employed providers. This contrasts with Pingol's (2001) and Parrenas (2005) findings about Filipino men with families whose wives worked abroad. In these cases, men left at home whose wives were primary family providers did not take on family and childcare roles, but rather passed these duties to other female relatives. As Pingol noted, these men, often unemployed, usually performed their masculinity as non-providers by distancing themselves from (feminized) family caretaking in order to earn respect as men.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

While focused on a relatively small group of men, the analysis Filipino seafarers nevertheless makes it possible to engage with some of the fundamental issues in the scholarship on masculinity. Chief among those issues has been the theorizing of hegemonic masculinity. Connell's original thesis is recognized for moving analysis beyond a singular model of masculinity. Subsequent analyses, such as Townsend's (2002) notion of the "package deal" of adult manhood developed this focus on multiple – and sometimes competing - aspects of masculine identities across productive and reproductive spheres, as well as changes over the life course.

Yet the pluralizing of masculinity, while a clear advance, has often led to the *categorizing* of multiple types of masculinity – hegemonic, subordinate, marginal - defined against one another and usually as distinct models without much constitutive interaction (Connell 1987). As Demetriou argues, "hegemonic masculinity and non-hegemonic masculinities are thus constructed as a *dualism*, as two distinct and clearly differentiated configurations of practice" (Demetriou 2001: 341, emphasis in original). However, if one starts with observations and analyses of the actual practices of a specific group of men, such clearly differentiated categories or practices becomes problematic. In particular, a focus on men workers in migration brings out and makes more visible the multiple strategies,

locations, and practices associated with the broad performance of masculine identities, often not confined to one particular model. Filipino seafarers in this study demonstrate that even under a late industrial and increasingly global society, work and providership remain central to mature masculine identity.

But while providership has long been recognized as a defining element of the *category* of hegemonic masculinity, I have argued in this paper that being a provider or breadwinner is better approached as a core or "master status" of masculine gender identity which allows for greater flexibility, borrowing and transgression at the boundaries of masculine practice (Hughes 1945). My approach parallels Demetriou's (2001) critique of Connell and his own theorizing of hegemonic masculinity that is closer to Antonio Gramsci's original emphasis on hegemony based on flexibility, appropriation and consent rather than straight-forward domination. Thus rather than a clearly differentiated configuration of practice, models of masculinity are better understood as a combination of affiliated but cross-cutting practices situated around a core principle or ideal.

This analytical approach is operationalized through the case of Filipino seafarers and their construction of what I call "hegemonic masculine privilege." In this more flexible model, seafarers, anchored by their providership, have the opportunity and ability to selectively transgress boundaries and norms beyond those generally associated with mature adult masculinity. This gender privilege is akin to a form of middle- or upper-class privilege like "slumming", in which members of a dominant group "have the freedom to enter and exit a subaltern space more or less on one's own terms" (Heise 2010: 43). Hegemonic masculine privilege operates in a similar fashion: organized around providership, it allows men breadwinners a dialectical pragmatism, or the ability to move through and borrow gender practices of subordinate groups without stigma (Demetriou 2001). Although such borrowing and improvisation results in hybrid and changing masculine practices, ultimately hegemonic masculine privilege reasserts the centrality of providership to masculinity and thus reinforces patriarchy and the broader gender order.

The dynamics of hegemonic masculine privilege is most clearly demonstrated by Filipino seafarers in their re-masculinization of heroism. As noted above, the declining domestic economy in the Philippines, the rise of female labor force participation, and the feminization of out-migration as national development strategy, have all made it increasingly difficult for Filipino men to meet the "traditional" gender demands of being their family's sole of even primary provider. But as Connell (2005: 84) has noted, such difficulties should not be interpreted as a "crisis of masculinity" but a "crisis in the gender order," brought on, in large part, by changing historical conditions. Filipino seafarers, who often earn enough to fulfill the demands of the Filipino "package deal" of adult masculinity based on providership, nevertheless go further, re-claiming a masculine heroism or a more exalted "heroic masculinity" by combining providership with other non-economic elements of masculinity, including adventure, physical danger, and risk-taking that are not easily attainable by migrant women workers or other men.

Thus, for example, Filipino seafarers working in "dirty" and physically dangerous jobs onboard can turn potentially humiliating work into something heroic on at least two fronts – while the skill, adventure and danger associated with work on ocean-going ships allows seafarers to construct a particular *masculine* identity as worldly working class or "man-of-action heroes," their dollar remittances and investments in their houses and children help bolster their *paternal* identities as middle-class "good providers." But clearly, without the high earnings and their claim to providership, such subordinate jobs can be more easily viewed as simply exploitative.

Similarly, seafarers are able to perform other key elements of masculinity, such as virility, in port. Yet sexual risk-taking, in the absence of providership, is likely to be viewed as immature and as a kind of marginalized hyper-masculinity. But when coupled with providership, stories of temptation and the

occasional sexual transgression allow seafarers to both boast of their sexual exploits while also claiming the longer-term self-control and autonomy of a mature "professional" masculinity.

Back home, returning seafarers perform multiple – and at times competing - elements of heroic masculinity, through their spending, story-telling and parenting. While their free spending often reinforces their reputations as one-day millionaires, and their sponsoring of "blow outs" provide a platform for story-telling, seafarers are also mindful of community standards for humility and thus stress their investments in their homes or children's education to demonstrate maturity and self-control. The use of occupational symbols on their large houses seems to epitomize their claim to a kind of hybrid masculinity of responsible heroism – advertising both the adventure, danger and exceptionalism of seafaring work while at the same time signaling their high earnings and paternal investment in their families.

Finally, seafarers again transgress certain gender norms or traditional roles in the area of parenting. Lamenting their long separations from family members while onboard, seafarers interviewed often tried to expand their care work when home and deepen their emotional attachment with kids to claim "good fatherhood." Such transgression of traditional gender roles seems to at least show a potential for altering the existing gender order in which men demonstrate their familial love primarily through more than just material provision. Yet when analyzed alongside recent studies of unemployed or stay-at-home Filipino fathers you do not engage in such care work, it seems that seafarers' appropriation of non-traditional gender practices in successful in large part because their master gender status is that of provider, which does not threaten existing gender relations and allows their "manhood" to remain unquestioned despite their increased child-centered parenting.

This particular group of migrant men, it seems, demonstrate an adroit ability to adjust their gendered practices, enacting what I have called hegemonic masculine privilege. Yet it is crucial to point out that their heroic masculinity remain fragile and contained: while seafarers' hybrid masculinity might be locally hegemonic, they are not necessarily dominant, either in their industry or at a regional or global scale. And because it rests so heavily on providership, any instability that threatens their breadwinning clearly undermines their heroism. Filipino seafarer, when stably employed, do seem to be able to combine a variety of competing gender practices that draws on breadwinner, rebel *and* engaged-parent models. Yet it is the area that they control the least – the global labor market – that may have the greatest influence on the construction of their masculine identities. Merchant sailors from the Philippines, while still numerically dominant in the seafarer labor market, nevertheless face stiff competition from below from emergent supply nations such as Burma, China and Bangladesh as well as continued limited upward mobility into the less-numerous senior officer positions, due to competition from existing officer supply countries such as Greece, Germany, Russia, and India. Seafarers also remain vulnerable over the long term due to insecure contract-to-contract employment, extended periods of between contracts without pay, no guaranteed pensions and persistent age discrimination against older seafarers (Alderton et al 2004).

Ultimately, while migrant seafaring work makes possible the knitting of gendered practices towards a heroic masculinity, it can also make precarious the realization of such an ideal, due to the employment instability that threatens men's ability to provide, and the long periods of separation from wives and children that can threaten marital and paternal relations. The rewards, risks and high community and family expectations thus reveal the fragility of these men's gender projects and the need for their ongoing and situational performance.

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