MIGRANTS FOR EXPORT

How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World

Robyn Magalit Rodriguez

University of Minnesota Press
Minneapolis
London

The elite were ensured their status and wealth in exchange for concessions to U.S. economic, political, and military interests that were folded into the Philippine constitution as well as passed early on by Philippine legislators. The logics of free trade and export-orientated development, two pillars of neoliberal orthodoxy that underlie contemporary economic policy in the Philippines, sustain these earlier formations and make employment overseas a vital means of survival for many ordinary Filipinos.

The Philippine government has attempted to monopolize emigration for its own ends by institutionalizing a program of labor export and mechanisms aimed at capturing migrants' remittances. At the same time, overseas employment absorbs potential political strife.

2

A Global Enterprise of Labor

Mobilizing Migrants for Export

Philippine migrant workers are practically everywhere. Wherever I have traveled, internationally and within the United States, I always encounter workers from the Philippines. When in Madrid as part of an international Philippine studies conference, I came across a Filipina caregiver walking with a young Spanish child. Interestingly enough, it was during a tour of the stomping grounds of Philippine anticolonial nationalist writer José Rizal. In South Africa during a vacation with my family in Cape Town I observed hundreds of Filipino seafarers enjoying, like us, a beautiful day at the Victoria and Albert Waterfront. When I checked in to my hotel for the Midwest Sociological Society's annual meeting in Omaha, Nebraska, the woman helping me at the front desk was a Filipina.

Filipinos and Filipinas work in countries as varied (and perhaps unexpected) as the United Kingdom, Norway, Azerbaijan, mainland China, Canada, Australia, and even Gabon (see Figure 4).

Though I am a Filipina, my own travels are enabled by my highly coveted blue American passport as well as by my position as a U.S.-based academic. I can hardly recall a time that I have had difficulty entering any country of my choice. Moreover, I can travel visa-free to many parts of the world. Most Philippine migrants, however, possess neither highly privileged passports nor professional status. Philippine citizens generally need to confront directly the immigration authorities of the countries where they hope to be employed as soon as they deplane or disembark from ships sailing international waters. As an archipelago of over seven thousand islands in Southeast Asia, the

Region	Number
Middle East	393,654
Asia	253,276
Europe	51,970
Americas	11,258
Africa	9,098
Trust Territories	7,595
Oceania	2,859
Unspecified	4,260
Total Land-based	733,970
Total Sea-based	247,707
Total	981,677

Figure 4. Destinations for Overseas Filipino Workers, 2005. Source: POEA.

Philippines does not share land borders with neighboring countries; migrants can therefore leave the Philippines only by plane or ship. Philippine passport holders will be expected to present their passports and evidence of entry authorization in the form of a visa. They can rarely enjoy international travel (for pleasure let alone for work) without some kind of restriction, unlike passport holders from the West (like me) or wealthier economies like South Korea or Singapore. Pei-Chia Lan notes that "the passport, a tag of membership bestowed by the state of origin, is also a document of personhood required for one's entrance into and circulation in the global labor market."[1] Perhaps more than the passport, a visa is necessary for temporary employment overseas as "visa restrictions on passport holders from certain countries are one of the most important mechanisms with which nation states exert their prerogative to control entry into their territory."[2] Visa requirements may include training verifications, health screening, and police clearances that are to be completed prior to departure. The question then is how is it possible for Philippine workers to be as globally mobile as they are?

In this chapter, I argue that the global scope and scale of Philippine migration is enabled by the transnational bureaucracy the Philippine

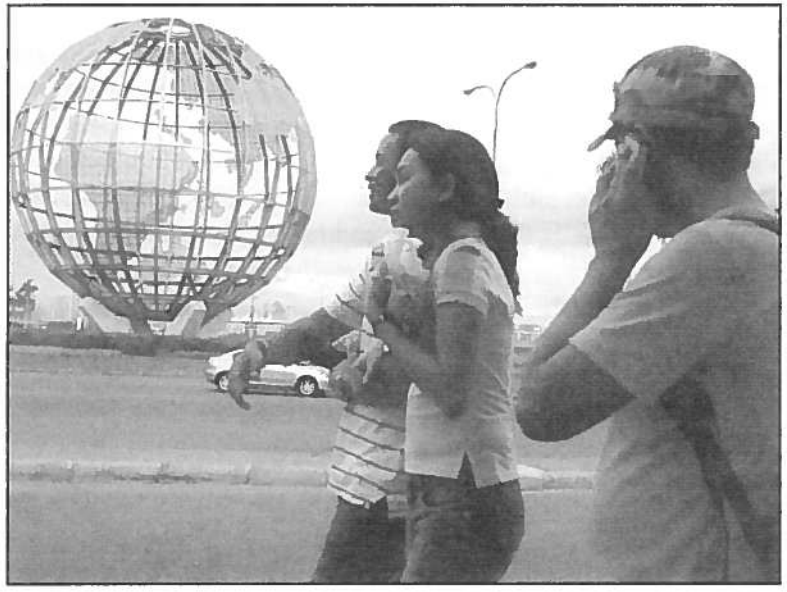

Figure 5. Manila's Mall of Asia, 2008. Photograph by Ben Razon. Source: Sugar Mountain Media.

government has developed as a means of mobilizing migrants for export. The government agencies responsible for facilitating outmigration perform the function of "authorization," that is, training and documentary processing, which together allow aspiring migrants to leave the Philippines for jobs overseas.

As Pierre Bourdieu suggests, the state possesses the power of "authorization," through which it produces "socially guaranteed identities (as citizen, legal resident, voter, taxpayer, parent, property owner)."[3] Capital and goods can flow relatively freely across borders, but the transnational flow of people continues to be highly circumscribed. States are especially careful about who is and who is not permitted to cross their borders. As Cunningham and Heyman observe, "borders permit, monitor, and halt movement. The notion of movement then needs to be seen within the context of mobilities enjoined with enclosures."[4]

Migrants' mobility is possible only if it is "authorized." In other words, migrants are mobile only when they possess passports and the appropriate visas necessary to enter another country. Philippine labor migrants' ability to cross hundreds of borders for work every day depends on migrant-receiving states' (and foreign employers') recognition of the authoritative power of the Philippine state. For instance, only the Philippine state can legitimate its citizens' membership and eligibility to travel through the issuance of a Philippine passport, which is bestowed only on those who can establish their national identities as Filipinos with official birth certificates and who can prove their travel worthiness with police clearances. Moreover, migrant-receiving states issue employment visas only after evaluating certifications of prospective migrants' previous employment, education, or training. They cannot rely solely on the certifications granted by migrants' former employers or schools; rather, they rely on the Philippine state to affirm that the documents submitted by prospective migrants are in fact valid. "Our ontological security sometimes needs to be endorsed by bureaucratic and juridical apparatus, which is when state documentation such as the passport and the visa is considered of high truth value. In this light, passports and visas, by signifying one's legal status in an official document, provide the institutional foundation of trust during international or transnational encounters."[5]

International migration, in other words, relies on relations of trust between nation-states secured through processes of "authorization" performed in large part by labor-sending states' bureaucracies. These bureaucracies are especially important sites for study because it is through mundane practices like documentary processing that labor-sending states exercise their authoritative power and facilitate the border crossings of migrants. Yet too often these practices are overlooked in studies of international migration. Certainly the migration industry and migrant networks play an important role in facilitating out-migration. Ultimately, however, the authorization practices of labor-sending states' bureaucracies are crucial to border crossings around the world.

"Authorized" migration requires that the Philippine government be closely attuned to the specific visa categories for temporary workers that exist in different countries around the world and ensure that prospective migrants conform to them. I will detail how the state gathers this information and describe the mechanisms by which the Philippine government mobilizes migrants for these jobs through, first, market-driven skills and training programs and finally through documentary processing. Through this analysis of the government's migration bureaucracy I illustrate how the labor-sending state is indispensable to international migration of Philippine workers. However, I will also provide an "on the ground" perspective that discusses migrants' experiences as they negotiate the bureaucracy to secure overseas employment.

Immigration Intelligence

Though many countries around the world have introduced restrictive immigration policies, they have not eliminated immigration outright. Instead, they might limit foreign workers to employment in specific job categories or industries or regulate migrants' entry through stringent documentary requirements. As immigration scholars have shown, different receiving countries around the world have enacted policies that aim to serve employers' needs for labor while also placating citizens' fears that immigrants are taking away their jobs. The Philippine state, however, is able to effectively mobilize its citizens for overseas work by carefully studying the nuances of a variety of immigration regimes and then preparing migrants to comply with the restrictions defined by these regimes so they can secure employment abroad.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and the International Labor Affairs Service (ILAS) play important roles in monitoring trends in labor demand globally, paying close attention to immigration policies. Based in the Philippines, the POEA as one official describes it is "an LMI [Labor Market Information] institution, generating various statistical and qualitative data that

deal with the temporary migration or contract employment of Filipino human resources around the globe." The POEA has a Marketing Branch that serves the function of "monitoring... different labor markets. We examine what the policies are for foreign workers in various countries and make recommendations about what Philippine policy should be for a specific market. All markets are monitored." The POEA's Marketing Branch has regional desk officers for nearly every area of the world including Asia, the Americas, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. The POEA coordinates closely with ILAS, which has representatives in the Philippines' embassies and consular offices around the world (Figure 6). As of 2007, ILAS had thirty-four Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs) staffed with "labor attachés" in Asia, the Middle East, the Americas, and Europe. A top-ranking official of ILAS explained that "labor attaches help with marketing by being the eyes and ears in foreign labor markets. New policies that may affect foreign labor are studied."

The Philippines' diplomatic corps contributes to market research by identifying labor market trends and ultimately initiating discussions with host countries to help facilitate Philippine workers' entry into specific labor markets, as I will detail in the next chapter. The establishment of formal diplomatic relations through the establishment of embassies and consular offices in particular countries is often linked to the presence of a market for Filipino labor (Figure 7).

Migration agencies actively circulate information about new immigration policies as a means of mobilizing Philippine workers for overseas employment by producing "Market Updates," which are advertised at government agencies and circulated in the news media. Additionally similar kinds of alerts are posted on the POEA's website.[6] "Market Updates" contain information generated by ILAS's POLO offices throughout the world as well as by embassy and consular offices that are referred back to Philippine-based migration agencies. These agencies then reconcile these data with the information that has been collected from international media and even foreign embassies based in the Philippines. Figure 8 focuses on those Market Updates collected during my field research in 2000–2001 that specifically discuss migration policy in labor-receiving countries.

Middle East

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia
Beirut, Lebanon
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Iraq (operating from the Philippine embassy in Kuwait)
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
Kuwait
Manama, Bahrain
Oman
Qatar
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Tel Aviv, Israel
Tripoli, Libya

Americas and Trust Territories

Saipan, CNMI
Toronto, Canada
Washington, D.C., United States

Asia and the Pacific

Bandar Seri Bagawan, Brunei
Hong Kong, China
Kaohsiung City, Taiwan
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Macau, China
Osaka, Japan
Seoul, South Korea
Singapore
Taichung City, Taiwan
Taipei, Taiwan
Tokyo, Japan

Europe

Athens, Greece
Geneva, Switzerland
London, England
Madrid, Spain
Milan, Italy
Rome, Italy
The Hague, The Netherlands

Figure 6. International Labor Affairs Service (ILAS) offices, 2007. Source: ILAS.

It offers a good illustration of the sorts of "market" information produced by the various Philippine migration agencies both in the Philippines and overseas. It is important to note that the migration officials responsible for doing market research pay attention to a range of countries. These range from industrialized countries that have been countries of immigration like the United Kingdom and the United States to newly industrializing countries like Malaysia and even the Isle of Man, "an internally self-governing dependent territory of the Crown which is not part of the United Kingdom."[7] The data in Figure 8 indicate that the employers of migrants include

Abuja, Nigeria
Amman, Jordan
Ankara, Turkey
Athens, Greece
Baghdad, Iraq
Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei
Bangkok, Thailand
Beijing, China
Beirut, Lebanon
Berlin, Germany
Berne, Switzerland
Brasilia, Brazil
Brussels, Belgium
Bucharest, Romania
Budapest, Hungary
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Cairo, Egypt
Canberra, Australia
Caracas, Venezuela
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Dili, East Timor
Doha, Qatar
Hanoi, Vietnam
Havana, Cuba
Holy See (Vatican)
Islamabad, Pakistan
Jakarta, Indonesia
Koror, Palau
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
London, England
Madrid, Spain
Manama, Bahrain
Mexico City, Mexico
Moscow, Russia
Muscat, Oman
Nairobi, Kenya
New Delhi, India
Ottawa, Canada
Paris, France
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
Prague, Czech Republic
Pretoria, South Africa
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Rome, Italy
Safat, Kuwait
Santiago, Chile
Seoul, South Korea
Singapore
Stockholm, Sweden
Tehran, Iran
Tel-Aviv, Israel
The Hague, The Netherlands
Tokyo, Japan
Tripoli, Libya
Vienna, Austria
Vientiane, Laos
Washington, D.C., USA
Wellington, New Zealand
Yangon, Myanmar

Figure 7. Philippine embassies, 2007. Source: Department of Foreign Affairs.

families seeking domestic workers (Malaysia). They also include hospitals and other medical facilities, public and private (United States, U.K., and Kuwait). The information and communications technologies industry (United States, Switzerland, U.K., and Germany) as well as agriculture (Malaysia) also secure workers from overseas. In addition to looking at new migration policies favoring foreign workers, the Philippines' market research analyzes political developments in different countries to anticipate potential migration policy changes that might lead to opportunities for employment. In other words, migration functionaries even try to make projections about labor market trends. These projections become important, as I detail in the next chapter, because countries with prospective employment visa availabilities are targeted for informal and formal "labor diplomacy" by the Philippine state.

The market logic that shapes the orientation of Philippine officials and government agencies toward overseas employment reveals the extent to which Philippine citizens have become reduced to mere commodities to be bartered and traded globally. The Philippine state is implicated in placing its citizens in low-wage, low-status, temporary jobs around the world. Most labor-importing countries typically set aside the most undesirable jobs for foreigners. As a labor broker the Philippine state gives over its citizens' livelihoods to the vagaries of global labor markets even as it expects them to support their loved ones who themselves are subject to the precariousness of everyday life under conditions of neoliberal globalization in the Philippines.

Defined by a logic of what David Harvey calls "flexible accumulation," global capital has given rise to radical transformations in the labor markets globally. He argues:

> Faced with strong market volatility, heightened competition, and narrowing profit margins, employers have taken advantage of weakened union power and the pools of surplus (unemployed or underemployed) labourers to push for much more flexible work regimes and labor contracts. . . . More important has been the apparent move away from regular employment towards increasing reliance *upon part-time, temporary or sub-contracted work arrangements.* [emphasis added][8]

Country, Year	Employment visas
Kuwait, 1999	"The Philippine Overseas Labor Office in Kuwait reported the following developments in the hiring of nurses of the Ministry of Health (MOH): The MOH shall employ private manpower agencies to hire and manage nurses at the MOH effective year 2000. . . . The MOH contract is for two years and renewable."
United States, 1999	"The Nursing Relief for Disadvantaged Act (H.R. 441) was signed into law by President Clinton on 12 November 1999. The law has created a new category of visas, H-1C to be used to place foreign nurses to work in areas designated as 'Health Professional Shortage Areas.' "H-1C nurses can be admitted for a period of three (3) years, and no extensions are provided." "Up to 200 H-1C visas are available to be issued each year."
United States, 1999	"A proposal for a new visa category which would allow U.S. companies to hire foreign workers to fill the nearly 350,000 vacant positions in the informational technology field was introduced."
Malaysia, 2000	"The Malaysian government lifted its ban on the recruitment of foreign workers in plantation, labor intensive industries and household workers effective 28 February 2000."
Switzerland, 2000	"According to the Philippine embassy in Berne, the business sector in Switzerland has proposed that the market for computer specialists be open to foreign workers to alleviate the shortage and meet the growing demands of the telecommunications and electronic commerce sectors in the country."
Isle of Man, 2000	"Midwives from the Philippines could be deployed to the Isle of Man to work in nursing homes as nursing aides or health care practitioners provide they have the proper work permits issued by the Department of Trade and Industry, Overseas Labour Section, Isle of Man Government."
Germany, 2000	"The German Cabinet recently approved two regulations governing the employment and residence status of foreign information technology (IT) specialists. . . . Both regulations will take effect from 01 August 2000 to 31 July 2008."
United Kingdom, 2000	"The Overseas Labour Service of the Department of Education and Employment in the United Kingdom announced that the hiring of midwives, physiotherapists, and Information Technology specialists is now open for non-European Union countries. These professions are designated as shortage occupation."

Figure 8. Employment visas in POEA market updates, 1999–2000. Source: POEA.

It is precisely these developments that the Philippine state seeks to take advantage of. An official from the POEA's Marketing Branch, for instance, describes how the U.S. information technology (IT) industry is a viable market for Philippine migrants while the Canadian IT industry is not: "This industry hires temporary workers. It is a market for Filipino workers. Unlike the Canadian IT industry, which favors immigrants, there is no prospective market there."

Of course, since countries of immigration like the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia have made it more and more difficult for people to immigrate and settle as legal permanent residents, temporary work sojourns may be the only way people from the Philippines can enjoy employment in these places. Most other countries have very restrictive immigration regimes anyway. For the Philippines to profit from the brokerage of labor, it needs to be fully cognizant of the modes of entry that do exist for job-seeking Filipino and Filipina citizens. And it is. The Market Updates listed in Figure 8 provide further evidence of the Philippines' interest in supplying temporary labor to countries that have historically been destinations for more permanent emigration from the Philippines. A 1999 Market Update for the United States details then-President Clinton's introduction of the H1C visa, a temporary, nonrenewable, three-year visa. The H1C actually offers nurses the opportunity to secure legal permanent residence but only upon the sponsorship of their employers. Migrants can be subject to extreme forms of exploitation under these kinds of conditions as employers may use the promise of sponsorship to squeeze as much as they can from workers in those three years. Studies of the Live-In Caregiver Program in Canada which operates through the same logic, have proven just as much.[9]

The Philippine state's marketing research is not limited to identifying immigration policy openings; it is also attentive to immigration policy closures. To maintain positive relations with labor-receiving countries the Philippines must regulate out-migration by discouraging migrants from attempting to seek employment in those countries that have imposed limits on employment visas. Figure 9, like Figure 8, draws on data I collected while conducting field research in

the Philippines in 2000–2001. While Figure 8 examines those Market Updates that detail available and potential employment visas that Philippine migrants can apply for to get jobs overseas, Figure 9 looks at immigration restrictions and exclusions. For instance, a Market Update for Jordon and Bahrain describes how these governments are moving toward the nationalization of employment and thereby eliminating jobs for foreigners. Market Updates for other countries like the U.K., Spain, and Israel clarify erroneous information about visa availabilities presumably to prevent would-be migrants from attempting to apply for specific kinds of jobs in those countries. Finally, there are Market Updates that provide details on new restrictions imposed by labor-receiving governments that either limit migrants' residency (CNMI) especially if they are unemployed (Italy) as well as new penalties or sanctions imposed on employers who hire migrants (Israel).

Visa regimes both reflect and reproduce globalized hierarchies between nation-states. People bearing passports from some countries (generally non-Western, peripheral states) are less likely to be granted visas than others. At the same time, these national hierarchies become a means by which employers justify the unequal treatment of specific nationalities of workers. Indeed, national differences are often racialized. Rochelle Ball, for instance, documents how in Saudi Arabia nurses are recruited according to a racialized division of labor with Americans and Europeans favored for more supervisory hospital positions (for example, head nurses), while Filipinas and Egyptians are designated to work in subordinate positions. Ball suggests that

> nurses, like other contract workers, are recruited and paid according to an international hierarchy of jobs and conditions of employment; more powerful and skilled positions are more readily available to workers from developed nations. The conditions of employment and extent of personal freedom vary by nationality, and by the relative wealth of sending nations.[10]

If employers can use globalized hierarchies to generate profits by paying differently racialized workers unequal wages, the Philippine state

Country, Year	Immigration Restrictions
Israel, 1999	"The Israeli Minister of Interior does not issue working visas to Filipino workers in any sector other than the caregiving profession."
Bahrain, 1999	"Bahrain is in the lead among the Gulf States in replacing expatriate workers with their nationals in the public sector according to a survey conducted by the Economic and Social Committee for West Asia."
Jordan, 1999	"The Jordanian government, through the Ministry of Labor, is persistently pursuing activities that give preferences to Jordanians in line with the national government's campaign to address the rise in unemployment."
Syria, 1999	Syria "only allows foreign technicians to work in multinational firms and oil companies operating in Damascus and some other parts of the country. Other categories of workers such as domestic helpers, hotel, and medical staffs are not permitted to work in the said country."
Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, 1999	"Governor Pedro P. Tenorio signed into law Public Law No. 11–69 popularly referred to as the three-year stay limit for nonresident workers."
Spain, 1999	"The Spanish Ministry of Labor denied reports that the Spanish government will allow the entry of 300,000 immigrants to relieve its labor shortage in the field of agriculture and construction."
Israel, 2000	"The Knesset Finance Committee in Israel recently approved a new law that will make it less attractive for Israeli employers to hire expatriate workers, excluding Palestinians."
Italy, 2000	"The Permit of Stay will no longer be extended nor renewed if a foreigner has been absent from Italy for more than six months except for serious reasons." "An unemployed foreigner is allowed to be enrolled only for one year in the Lisa di Collocamento (Employment List) in order to obtain another employment with work contract. If the foreigner remains unemployed after one year, his Permit of Stay will no longer be renewed and he shall be expelled from Italy."
U.K., 2000	"The Philippine Embassy in London emphasized that there is no opening for Filipino midwives in the U.K."

Figure 9. Immigration restrictions in POEA market updates, 1999–2000. Source: POEA.

stands to profit from these very hierarchies. The promise of earnings in foreign currencies stronger than the Philippine peso, however temporarily, becomes a draw for prospective migrants even if it slots them into lower-paying jobs relative to native workers. Meanwhile, when workers' wages make their way back to the Philippines, the state is able to strengthen its foreign currency reserves and thereby pay its numerous debts.

Training Philippine Labor

To complement its research on immigration policies in different migrant-receiving countries, Philippine migration agencies also train prospective Philippine migrants to comply with specific skill requirements attached to different visa categories. According to a POEA official, market research is also about reforming migration policy for "manpower development." "Manpower" is developed through skills training.

The Philippine state ensures that migrants are provided with plenty of opportunities for skills training through the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, or TESDA. Though TESDA's mandate is not limited to training workers for overseas employment (it is supposed to train Philippine workers for the national labor market as well),[11] TESDA is, nevertheless, engaged in training Philippine workers for employment abroad:

> TESDA takes responsibility for the provision of relevant, high quality technical education and skills development supportive of the needs of enterprises and the country's goals through enabling policies, responsive programs, and quality standards. TESDA integrates and orchestrates multi-sectoral and market-oriented efforts among its stakeholders to respond to the changing demands of the domestic and global environments.[12]

Skills training complements the Philippines' public education system where instruction is conducted often in English. Philippine workers' ability to speak English has long been a draw for foreign employers.[13] While the Philippine government does provide technical education and skills training directly, the education and training

offered through TESDA is actually done through private facilities. The state sets parameters for these facilities and licenses only those institutions that exhibit the capacity to address global labor demand.

Prospective migrants are often required to provide evidence of skills training to secure employment visas from host governments. Though they may already have work experience that matches their hoped-for overseas job, they are still required to provide certification of competency in particular sets of skills. In either case, prospective migrants will seek training or certification from TESDA institutions. Ed was a college graduate with a degree in architecture in his early thirties. He was hired to work as an interior designer for a Saudi Arabian company. Ed explains: "I had to take a trade test at the Santa Ana Philippine Trade Testing Center because I needed to get certification. This was just a formality, but all technical workers have to do this."

While he describes the completion of the test as a "formality," Ed also believes that he benefits from the certification process. He states, "We need to send people in a professional manner; that's why the trade test is good.... We're good workers, so it's good to expand employment overseas, but we should show professionalism. We need a classification system so people won't be exploited." For him, trade training and testing is a means by which the state helps to professionalize migrants. Professionalization, for Ed, gives people better opportunities for work because it ostensibly protects workers from exploitation. Skills training or "upgrading" and "professionalization," however, cannot fully protect workers from exploitation. Even in the United States, often figured in Philippine migrants' imaginations as the ideal country of destination (it is, after all, a "nation of immigrants"), professional workers are subject to harsh living and working conditions. The Filipino immigrant press as well as the venerable *New York Times* reported how one group of nurses from the Philippines based in New York received wages far below federal standards, were overworked, and were subject to terrible living conditions as some were forced to sleep on the floor in an overcrowded and frigid apartment. In a cruel twist of fate, these nurses were then indicted by the Suffolk County district attorney's office on charges

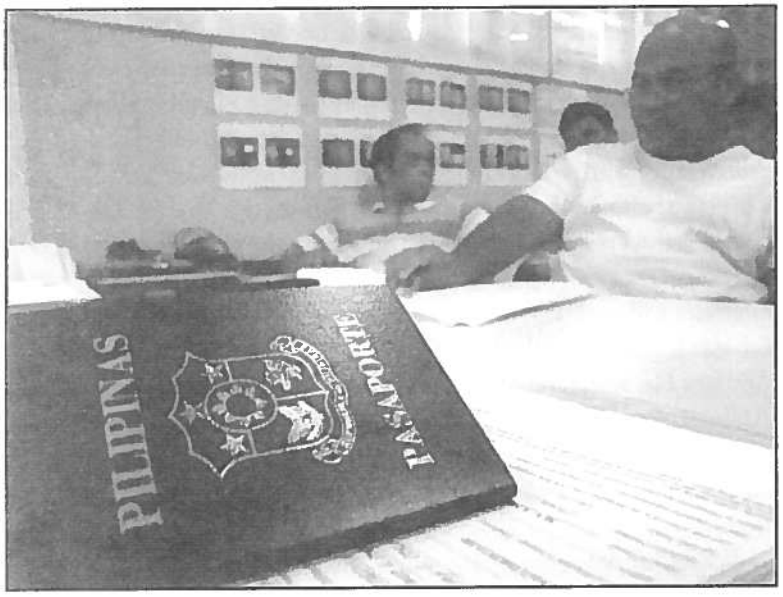

Figure 10. Seafarers in training, 2008. Photograph by Ben Razon. Source: Sugar Mountain Media.

of patient negligence when the nurses finally decided to walk out on their employers.[14]

Prospective migrants are actually expected to pay for training themselves. Rather than seeing training as protection from exploitation, some workers see it as a form of exploitation by the government. Mike complained that training programs are just "money-making ventures. The government and the centers are in cahoots! The government just makes it harder for us. It doesn't do anything for us. They're just milking us.... We're 'heroes,' we've saved the economy, but what's their help for us?" The grassroots transnational migrant workers' organization Migrante International actually protested in front of the Philippine government's office in Hong Kong on International Women's Day in 2007 against a mandatory training program for domestic workers. Though the program is aimed at "professionalizing" the domestic workers, activists claim that it is really meant

to fatten government coffers. The burdensome debts that migrants accrue from the training centers, private labor recruitment agencies, or banks to finance the costs of training (as well as other costs associated with securing overseas employment including documentary processing fees and airline tickets) can serve as a mechanism for disciplining workers. As I learned in my interviews with workers, lenders make arrangements with employers to have migrants' wages siphoned off to pay for these debts. Employers then turn around to offer migrants "incentives" for earning "extra" money. Often migrants end up working overtime and for less pay.

An astounding number of TESDA-certified courses are offered throughout the country. Numbering in the thousands, there are TESDA-certified training institutions to be found in each of the Philippines' fifteen regions. In the National Capital Region, by far the most populated region in the Philippines, the two largest cities of Manila and Quezon City proliferate with TESDA-certified training centers.[15]

These institutions offer a vast range of courses. The most numerous includes computer secretarial; computer technician; cosmetology; electronics technician; hair and beauty; mechanics (automotive and diesel); security guard; and tailoring and dressmaking. Other courses include: dental technician; health aide; pharmacy aide; care giving; computer-based bookkeeping; food and beverage services; baking and pastry arts; hotel housekeeping; industrial electrical technician; telecommunications technician; basic machine operation; industrial sewing; machine shop practice; welding; and a range of computer-related courses from computer applications to computer programming. Using the "market research" discussed above (Figure 8), the employment visa categories identified for 1999 and 2000 included, for instance, jobs in the areas of information technology, nursing and other medical personnel, and domestic workers. Comparing TESDA course offerings with the labor demand identified in this market research shows a clear match.

Immigration policies, insofar as they define specific visa categories for particular kinds of work in response to domestic labor demands,

Table 1. Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) deployment per skill and sex, 2006

Occupations	Men	Women
Administrative and managerial workers	528	289
Agricultural, animal husbandry, and forestry workers; fishermen and hunters	716	91
Clerical and related workers	3,271	4,640
Production and related workers, transport, equipment operators, and laborers	80,240	23,338
Professional, technical, and related workers	17,212	24,042
Sales workers	2,405	3,111
Service workers	16,135	128,160
Total deployment by sex	120,507	183,671

Source: POEA.

reflect gendered logics. Examining the actual deployments of Filipino and Filipina workers, we see clear evidence of this (Table 1).

Jobs in the categories of "Clerical and related workers," "Sales workers," and "Service workers," which include jobs like receptionists, shop assistants and demonstrators, domestic workers, and caregivers, which are typically typed as "female" jobs, have, in fact, been filled by Filipina women. Men predominantly work in the category of "Production and related workers, transport, equipment operators, and laborers"; it is notable that garment workers, which are classified under this category, are mainly women. Meanwhile, women dominate in "Professional, technical, and related workers"

because the jobs of "entertainer" and "nurse," which both fall under this category, are generally typed as work that women do.

Though none of the immigration policies profiled by the Philippine state's market reports in Figure 8 explicitly designate visas for men or women, understandings about which gendered bodies are most appropriate for and suited to specific types of work ultimately underlie them.[16] Chang and Ling argue that global restructuring "valorizes all those norms and practices usually associated with Western capitalist masculinity." Masculinized globalization is another process of global restructuring that "concentrates on the low-wage, low-skilled menial service provided by mostly female migrant workers."[17] Certainly, as indicated by Table 1, women work in clerical jobs and service jobs where they likely have to cater to the business and leisure needs of male professional workers.

Immigration policies are additionally shaped by racializing logics. These logics can work in contradictory ways. In some contexts these racializing logics restrict foreign workers to "3D" jobs (dirty, dangerous, difficult), while in others they may favor foreign workers who exhibit putatively positive attributes and are considered more Westernized, civilized, and desirable as English-speakers.

Some forms of labor demand, like the demand for maids, are sometimes less about securing a worker's labor power and more about reproducing the "female employer's status (middle-class, non-laborer, clean) in contrast to herself (worker, degraded, dirty)."[18] The status that the female employer and even her family members assume is a racialized (typically "white") one. The labor brokerage state, therefore, participates in reproducing unequal racial orders in supplying middle-class and elite families around the world with Filipina domestic workers.

While TESDA training is aimed at providing prospective Philippine migrants with specific skills commensurate with the demands of global labor markets as they are defined by different countries' visa restrictions, at the same time Philippine migration officials believe that it must invest in workers' training in order to maintain Filipinos' competitiveness over other nationalities of migrant workers. In 2001, the secretary of labor declared that the Philippines enjoyed

the advantage of being an English-speaking country (thanks to U.S. colonialism). But to maintain its advantage globally it would need to continue "promoting and sustaining investments in the education and training of Filipino workers." By upgrading the skills of workers, it is believed, the Philippine state is better poised to capture a greater share of the global labor markets. One official notes, "The Philippines is attempting to create a niche in skilled labor." Arguably, the Philippine state stands to profit even more from skilled workers as they ostensibly are paid higher wages and are therefore able to remit greater amounts of money.

My ethnographic research of various TESDA-certified programs, though limited since my research was primarily focused on state institutions, affirm the findings of other Philippine migration scholars that employment agencies along with training programs work to mold women to become domestics.[19] I found, for instance, that TESDA training attempts to ready poor women for employment in more affluent households overseas by teaching them the basics in household appliance operation; many do not own the labor-saving technologies that can be found in middle-class households in wealthier economies. They are also given cooking instructions on local cuisine. The training administrator for a caregiver course believed that part of her task was to discipline doctors to "live in humility" in order to prepare them to work in lower-status jobs as caregivers.

Furthermore, TESDA-certified programs, though privately owned and operated, support the Philippine state's efforts in encouraging prospective migrants to maintain their linkages to the homeland by supporting their relatives in the Philippines or by directly funding state developmental initiatives. Without any prompting on my part, the administrator for the caregiver program, for instance, described how she merely wanted to "help the Philippines." Specifically, she was concerned with the fact that many Filipina women were leaving the country to work as "entertainers." She explained, "I felt bad for the Japayukis;[20] that's why I was interested in introducing this course. I think we need to equip them with skills." She hopes that the training program will not only provide women with skills but also that it will instill nationalism. "We need to teach them. Filipino values need to be improved." Anna Guevarra's study of the recruitment and training of Filipina nurses finds that the Philippine state engages in strategic partnerships with employment agencies through which what she calls an "ethos of labor migration" is intensified.[21] My own research confirms her findings.

Documentary Processing

Documentary processing is perhaps the most important function of the migration bureaucracy. Through the bureaucracy, migrants' documents are verified to meet the requirements defined by different countries. Those whose dossiers are incomplete are instructed on what to do to be in full compliance with specific national migration regimes. Moreover, migrants' employment contracts are evaluated for their conformity to the Philippine government's standard employment contract, which was established ostensibly as a protective measure for migrants. The sense of security that the contract certification process is meant to give workers, as I will show in chapter 6, merely serves to mask the fundamentally flawed and ultimately anti-worker logic that actually organizes the Philippine government's employment contract standards.

The very spatial organization of each of the key nodes of the migration bureaucracy is structured for maximum efficiency. Migrants are processed through each agency in a remarkably orderly way despite the volume of people handled on a daily basis. The ordered operations at these agencies are in sharp contrast to the disorder and chaos that characterize the operations of all other governmentally regulated aspects of Philippine economic, political, and social life. Just outside the POEA compound, for instance, one is confronted with unruly Manila traffic: road markers and traffic signs have no meaning and are blatantly disregarded as a matter of habit. Yet the POEA manages to process thousands of people for overseas employment every day. In 2007 alone, the POEA processed a total of 1,077,623 migrants. This averages about 2,952 daily.[22]

Though the space of the bureaucracy is already highly rationalized and efficient, bureaucrats are constantly engaged in trying to better

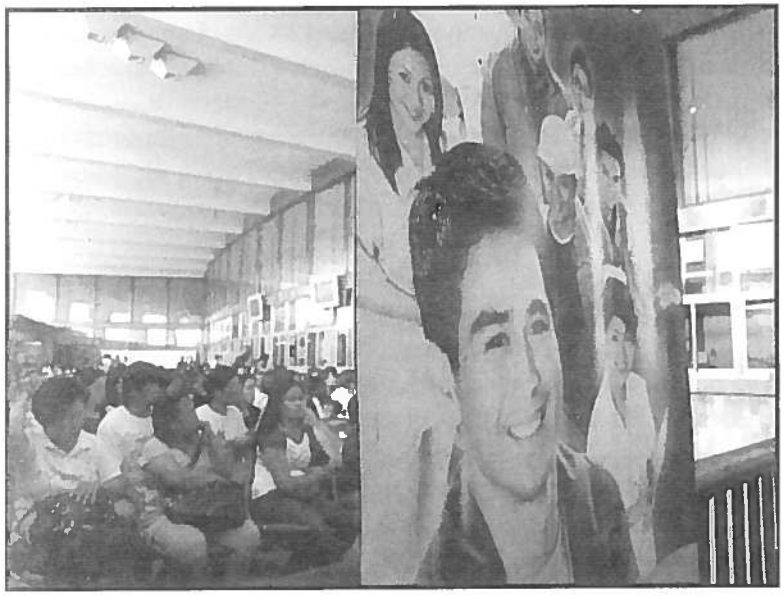

Figure 11. Prospective migrants awaiting processing at the POEA. Photograph by Ben Razon. Source: Sugar Mountain Media.

organize bureaucratic space to speed up bureaucratic processing. In 2000 the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), which oversees the POEA, launched a "Continuing Service Improvement" project aimed at institutionalizing "productivity and service quality improvement, " according to a POEA bureaucrat. As part of DOLE's project, the POEA committed itself "to improve service delivery by being recognized and certified by the ISO [International Organization for Standardization]. The ISO is evaluating how we conduct our operations. Already the sea-based center has an ISO award because it reduced what was once an eight-hour process to only three hours. DOLE wants to win a quality management award and to be the first in government to receive such an honor." The POEA even penalizes private employment agencies that fail to deploy workers within sixty days of contract certification. This is a dramatic reduction from the previous requirement of 120 days.[23] When I returned to the Philippines in 2008, I learned that the POEA achieved the goal of ISO certification.

The rational and efficient organization of the POEA, evidenced in its spatial organization and state officials' efforts to better rationalize its space, illustrates how the state is invested in the production of migrants for export. The more rational and efficient operations of the migration bureaucracy allow for the speedy processing of contractual laborers for global deployment, laborers who have increasingly become a profitable commodity for the Philippine state. At the same time, the rapidity with which bureaucratic processing is completed means that an employer can secure Philippine labor with great facility. Sociologists of development might argue that the rationalization of the bureaucracy points to the Philippine state's developmental capacity in labor export.[24] The bureaucracy operates like a well-oiled machine facilitating the process of authorization and thereby expediently speeding up the export of labor. Philippine migration scholar Maruja Asis suggests that the POEA "has made it easier for foreign employers or principals to obtain workers from the Philippines."[25] Arguably too, initiatives like the ISO certification, based on actual achievements in the migration bureaucracy, serve as a badge of honor that the Philippine state can use as proof in the international arena and at home that it is far from being "backward" and can stand side by side with other "modern" states.

From the perspective of prospective migrants, however, documentary processing is an onerous task; many spend several days going from government office to government office to secure the paperwork they need to leave for overseas work. The costs of documentary processing can be quite expensive as the Philippine government charges prospective migrants a fee for each of the documents they need.

Ryan sarcastically describes how "the only thing that goes fast is paying fees. That's the fastest, paying fees, but the processing takes long." Even before Migrante International's protests against the fees associated with mandatory training programs, it long championed a campaign against what it calls "state exactions." In 2007 the POEA generated 346.1 million pesos from documentary processing fees. These "state exactions" as I mention earlier can serve to discipline workers in new ways. Migrants are forced to work all

the more slavishly to pay off debts they incur to pay government processing fees and the other costs of securing overseas employment.

Though it is true that the spatial organization of migration offices like the POEA is ordered in a way that rationalizes migrants' documentary processing, it is also true that the space is closely policed. There is a highly visible presence of security guards in all of the Philippines migration agencies. At the POEA, guards are posted on every floor, in the stairwells, and in front of each of the different sets of service windows. They direct the flow of bodies through the building, making certain people are situated at the appropriate service windows and stay in their places in the queues. Guards often verify would-be migrants' documentation before they move from one set of service windows to another, and they even prevent people from moving on if they deem their documents to be incomplete. I found that the policing by security guards intimidated migrants. As I would try to approach people for a possible interview, I was brusquely brushed off or ignored. People were afraid that engaging in any activity outside of the prescribed purpose of the space would threaten their chance at overseas employment. One young woman fearfully queried, "You're sure you won't give my information to them [the POEA]? This won't affect my application, will it?" One effect of this surveillance, I would suggest, is to underscore the vital importance of authorization among migrant hopefuls. In some ways the monitoring that takes place in the Philippine migration agencies serves as a rehearsal for what is likely to be even more stringent examination at international borders. This becomes yet another mechanism by which the Philippine state can guarantee foreign states a properly authorized labor force that abides with immigration strictures, and perhaps it is also a way that the state can deliver employer-clients a labor force that is compliant as well.

Authorizing International Migration

The experiences of prospective migrant workers reveal how training is critically linked to the issue of authorization. Daisy, a single woman in her late twenties, failed to secure factory employment in Taiwan

though she had hoped that her sister or her brother-in-law, who were already employed in Taiwan for several years, would be able to get her a job. Desperate to join them, Daisy applied to work as a domestic worker through a private recruitment agency. She believed, rightfully, that she would easily be able to get a job as a domestic worker, given the high demand for domestic workers in Taiwan. Prior to leaving, Daisy took a monthlong TESDA-certified training program for prospective domestic workers, which taught her how to operate various household appliances, cook basic Taiwanese dishes, and speak key phrases. She was diligent about attending the classes, in part because she did not want to face any difficulties in securing her work visa. One of Daisy's friends was denied an employment visa as a sales clerk in Taiwan because it was discovered that she had falsified her employment resume. According to Daisy, "At least they [Taiwanese immigration authorities] can't question my skills because I am getting trained."

Pei-Chia Lan holds that migrant workers contend with a "bounded global market"; that is, in spite of high degrees of economic integration and high demands for foreign labor, Asian states "impose a series of legal, political, and economic regulations on migrant contract workers."[26] The Taiwanese government has, for instance, set low ceilings on the entry of unskilled foreign workers, though it is generally liberal in its acceptance of higher skilled professional workers. Given the quotas on lower-skilled workers, Taiwanese employers often attempt to bribe local officials to grant additional quotas in order to secure foreign labor. Even if employers desire cheap workers from abroad, they depend on their government to grant those workers entry. Daisy's strategy of earning a skill through a state-regulated training facility makes sense as her mobility is circumscribed by specific sets of immigration restrictions in Taiwan.

Labor-receiving governments, meanwhile, entrust only labor-sending states with the ability to guarantee that the individuals they are sending have met their requirements. An application form for authorization to work in Taiwan, for instance, indicates that "the worker and the deployment manpower agency should sign this document in person at the office of the labor authority of the labor-sending

country for authentication," which in the Philippines would be the POEA. There are consequences for those who fail to have it appropriately signed. "This authenticated document should be handed to the employer in Taiwan for purposes of processing workers' work permit. Failure to present this document would mean refusal of issuance of Work Permit by the Council of Labor Affairs, Executive Yuan, Republic of China, and would result in the repatriation of the foreigner according to the regulation."

Chiari and Lorenzo, a husband and wife with a young son, were undergoing training together as caregivers when I interviewed them. Chiari was actually a practicing dentist, while her husband Lorenzo ran a small car wash from their home. Both of them saw the caregiver training course as a chance for them to secure work in the United States through a relative who owned a care home in California. They had applied for tourist visas to the United States twice before, but were denied. Chiari described how difficult the interview process was at the U.S. embassy: "They ask you a lot of questions, but you can't explain your answers in Tagalog, only English. I don't think we gave good answers when we were interviewed before. We hope this will be a good avenue for migration because my uncle handled our H1B visa papers since we're going to work for him."

Chiari believed that after completing the caregiver training course and receiving their certificates, they would be able to better handle the interview process at the U.S. embassy. "At least when we are finished with this course we will get a certificate. When they interrogate us at [U.S.] immigration, we can prove to them that we're really interested in working there. We don't have to fake it because we'll have the certificate." She noted, "We could never go to the U.S. embassy without the certificate that we have graduated. They get so suspicious." Lorenzo joked, "You can actually buy a [fake] certificate. But if they ask you at the embassy if you understand this course that you finished, then it is good to complete it anyway." Training and the successful securing of job offers are not sufficient for migrant workers to be able to work overseas. Crossing borders for employment requires that migrants also secure visas from their host states.

In my interviews, I found that authorization from countries like the United States as well as other industrialized countries like Canada or the European countries can act as a guarantee for prospective migrants seeking jobs in any country around the world. A.J., a private English tutor in South Korea, recalls how her father, a retired construction worker who spent most of his working life in Saudi Arabia, had all of his children visit him in Saudi Arabia and helped them to travel and visit relatives in other parts of the world while they were young so that they could accumulate tourist visas from many different countries. He believed that his children's record of travel (so long as they did not violate the provisions of their tourist visas) would eventually help them to apply for overseas work once they were adults. A.J., along with most of her siblings, was able to secure tourist visas for countries in Europe and for the United States. She believed that her previous travel experience and accumulated tourist visas did in fact help her when she decided to work abroad.

An examination of the visa application requirements for South Korea reveals that A.J. may have been partially correct in her assumptions: the South Korean government exempts "holders of valid visas to the U.S.A., Canada, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand" from applying in person at the South Korean embassy in the Philippines.[27]

My cousin Peter's case also illustrates how authorization from key states like the United States is seen by migrants as opening up opportunities for other forms of migration. Peter was hired to work as a manager for a U.S.-based restaurant chain, which sent him for training in Los Angeles. That restaurant chain did not renew his contract, but eventually he got employment at another U.S.-based chain. He hoped that working for this chain would again allow him an opportunity to be trained in the United States or (the best case scenario) be transferred to work, even temporarily, in the United States. He was unable to renew his contract yet again and was left with a very narrow set of employment options in the Philippines. Peter was a casualty of labor flexibilization policies in the Philippine domestic labor market, which has led to increasing contractualization.[28] Both his U.S.-based employers required employees to sign waivers preventing them from

working in similar kinds of enterprises to safeguard against the leakage, he said, of "trade secrets." Overseas employment seemed to be his only option for a job. Reflecting on his experiences with U.S. employers, however, Peter believed that securing a job abroad would not be difficult:

> Since I went to the United States for training and I came back to the Philippines when it ended, I think I can prove to other countries that I can be a responsible worker, that I'm not going to overstay my visa. When I was in the States, your dad joked that I should just TNT[29] because there are a lot of Filipinos who do that, but I couldn't. If I was a TNT I would be separated from my family for too long. Anyway, at least I can apply for a visa somewhere else. Also, since I worked for U.S. companies, I can prove that I have good skills.

Trixie's experiences offer a different vantage point for understanding the importance of authorization. Before settling into a job as a beautician in the Philippines, Trixie had worked for many years in the personal service of a Saudi Arabian princess. She described how she had the opportunity to travel to the United States and throughout Europe accompanying her employer on her family's private jet.

> The problem was the princess was too conniving. Since they had a private jet, they somehow managed to get past immigration. But because of that none of my trips abroad are reflected in my passport. Now that I don't work for her, I don't think I will have the same kind of opportunity to work abroad.

Throughout our conversation, I could sense Trixie's acute sense of loss. At thirty-seven she was unmarried and without children since she had spent so many years abroad. Continued employment overseas, she explained, might have offered her a sense of fulfillment, allowing her to continue to support her younger siblings. But Trixie felt that because she did not have records documenting her travel it would be difficult to find another job abroad.

While the passport is an embodiment of an individual's national citizenship, it is also a mode through which migrant workers' rights are policed and delimited once they actually gain entry into another country for employment. It is frequently the passport, a migrant's

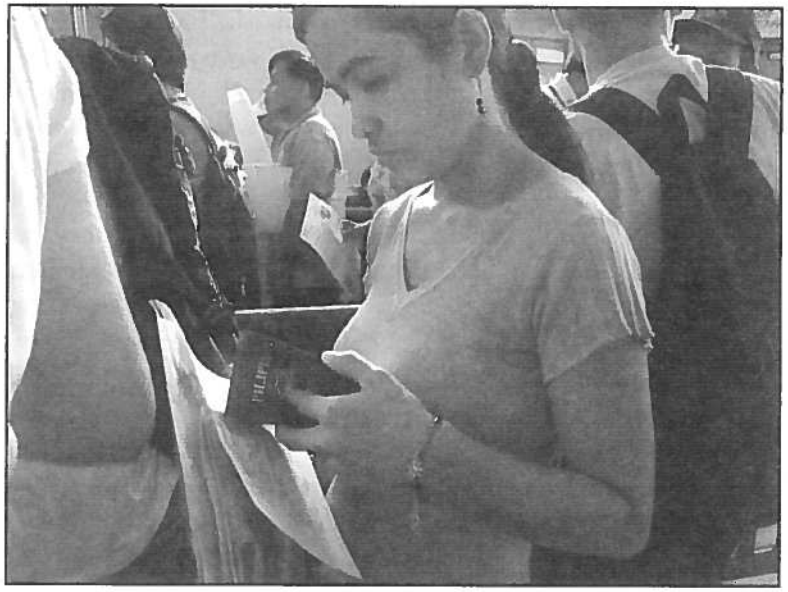

Figure 12. POEA office, Mandaluyong City. Photograph by Ben Razon. Source: Sugar Mountain Media.

primary form of personal identification, that foreign authorities examine to ascertain whether migrants can have access to public space to engage in leisurely activities and whether they can settle and marry locals. One's national origin even impacts whether one will be allowed to or restricted from participating in labor unions or other kinds of organizations. Finally, as I suggest earlier in this chapter, the ascription of national identities onto particular working bodies is important for employers in many places as nationality becomes a means of assigning differential and unequal value (and therefore wages) to different sets of workers. As Aristide Zolberg suggests, "international borders serve to maintain global inequality."[30]

Finally, it is through the authorization process that migrants frequently become acutely aware of themselves as bodies of labor. A.J., for instance, expressed a sense of consciousness about her age and her health during the course of our discussion, the significance of

which I could not initially grasp. She explained, "I work really hard 'cause I'm strong now. I have to take care of my body." Later, when I interviewed Mike, it became clearer to me why her health was so important to her. Mike explained, "Our only security is our bodies. If you fail a medical exam, it's the end of your profession. Even here if you are sick, you still have a job. But not abroad.... Who'll help us? We have nothing because we're contractual. That's where we lose." On the one hand, Mike's comments illustrate the gravity of authorization processes, including routine medical exams. Migrants' employment overseas requires that they be able-bodied persons (how "able-bodied" gets defined by foreign governments may be highly variable as age and other factors may go into its definition). At the same time, Mike's fears about getting ill also reflect the downside of contractualized work. Even as Mike may be able to earn better wages abroad, in the end he has no health or disability insurance that could help him in a time of need. Perhaps more tragically, these workers' sense of their bodies' diminishing capacities for labor over time illustrates how the logics of labor "flexibility," or, more aptly, labor "disposability" works: " 'disposability' turns on a calculation that measures the worth of discrete bodily functions,"[31] Migrant workers are only valuable (and therefore employable) inasmuch as they are useful and productive laboring bodies. Otherwise, they become mere waste that employers and states (both receiving and sending) can easily discard and replace.

Conclusion

Together the migration agencies that comprise the migration bureaucracy facilitate migration. The Philippines' migration agencies are able to assess global labor market demands by identifying visa categories specifically geared toward importing foreign workers. Meanwhile, the state's migration agencies perform the "authorizing" practices on which the global mobility of labor depends. These "authorizing" practices include the Philippine state's ability to certify prospective migrants' preparedness for specific occupations through

skills training and assessment programs offered by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), to corroborate an overseas job applicant's moral character through police clearances from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), and to authenticate the official membership and travel worthiness of its citizens with the issuance of a Philippine passport from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). Evidence from migrants undergoing bureaucratic processing illustrates the crucial importance of the state's bureaucratic work in facilitating migration.