

**‘Sending Dollars Shows Feeling’ – Emotions and Economies in Filipino
Migration**

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ABSTRACT: This paper analyses the conceptualization of gender, relationships, and emotions that underpin ‘care chains’ approaches to Filipino labour migration. In a case study of long-distance intimacy and economic transfers in an extended Filipino family, I show how contextualizing migration within local understandings of emotion fractures expectations created by care chains accounts. This case instead reveals agency, diversity, and new forms of global subjectivity emerging through long-distance emotional connections within the translocal field shaped by labour mobility.

KEY WORDS: labour mobility, emotion, care chains, transnational migration, Philippines

Introduction

This paper explores intimacy and economic exchange in a migrant family, suggesting how an account of emotion can add to our understanding of transnational mobility. I demonstrate how emotion offers us a lens through which to theorise migrant subjectivities beyond the familiar narratives of victimization and exploitation produced by more economic perspectives. After reviewing the literature on global care chains and intimacy, the paper works through a case study of a migrant family that illustrates the emotional dynamics and material structures that characterize a

socially-embedded transnationalism. By engaging this case, I develop an analysis of emotion that contributes to debates over care and intimacy in transnational migration.

The case study explores the long-distance intimacy and economic transfers of two Filipino migrants in Hong Kong and their family members in the Philippines. While the amounts of money remitted by such individual migrants are small, when added together with those sent by their compatriots, they create flows of value that can reshape national economies. Recent reports suggest a tenth of the Philippine population is working abroad and remittances support half the country's households (Francisco, 2006). There are an estimated 8.5 million Filipino migrants and emigrants sending \$10.7 billion (US) home to the Philippines each year (Francisco, 2006). The allowances, gifts, repayments, and small investments they send home now outstrip both Overseas Development Assistance and Foreign Direct Investment, attracting the attention of both national development planners and overseas aid donors (Bello, 2005). Government initiatives attempt to redirect monies received away from consumption and into productive investment that can revive the ailing Philippine national economy. International donors advocate reduction in the fees charged by banks and finance to handle remittances, arguing that more money arriving in the country will produce economic growth.

Government and aid donors encourage investment strategies directed towards improving the economic status of nuclear family households. However, taking the nuclear family household as the natural object for development planning does not necessarily reflect the experiential realities of migrants' family networks and remittance distribution practices. My migrant respondents distribute their remittances through extended family networks in order to sustain emotional intimacy and share opportunity and security across a wider field. The simplified accounts of migrants and households that inform government and donor policy fail to acknowledge the

important ways remittances express and construct intimacy and the diversity of extended family relations. Much recent research on migration and transnational household forms also reproduces these same nuclear family based and economic simplifications, applying a commodity-chain type analysis to the export of migrant labour from developing countries such as the Philippines. Indeed, the migration of Filipino women to take up care-giving work overseas has become the touchstone for a new sub-field in migration studies, that of global care chains, defined as ‘a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring’ (Hochschild, 2000, p.131).

Money versus love: ‘care chains’ and transnational families

The care chains approach develops a feminist theory of services globalization, integrating concerns over familial intimacy with the macro-scale economic arguments of international political economy. It argues that the globalization of labour markets is drawing third world women to the developed North to perform not merely physical labour – ‘caring for’ – but, also crucially, emotional labour – ‘caring about’ (Yeates, 2004, p.371). ‘Caring about’ refers to ‘having affection and concern for the other and working on the relationship between the self and the other to ensure the development of the bond’ (Lynch and McLaughlin, 1995, pp.256-257, cited in Yeates, 2004, p.371). The care chains analysis thus elaborates on dependency theories of North-South economic inequalities by conceptualising the inequalities between first and third worlds as arising in terms of **both** productive labour and emotional labour. Economics and emotions become two separable fields, economized in a similar manner. Physical labour can be contracted on a rational basis and can be measured

relatively easily as surplus value appropriated by employers and others in the care chain. However, the emotional labour involved in developing solidary relations with employers and their households cannot easily be either quantified or contracted (Yeates, 2004, p.371 and Yeates, 2005, p.7). Nonetheless, Hochschild (2000, p.136) theorizes care chains as extracting what she calls ‘emotional surplus value’ from families in one place and delivering it to another, usually in the embodied form of a female migrant worker who performs emotional labour for a wage.

Hochschild (2000, p.131) typifies a global care chain as ‘an older daughter from a poor family who cares for her siblings while her mother works as a nanny caring for the children of a migrating nanny who, in turn, cares for the child of a family in a rich country’. The absence of women from the third world sending households creates a care drain, where children and the elderly suffer from a deficit of feminine parental and filial care (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Hochschild, 2000). These sending households are assumed to be the natural unit that supplies the labour and provides care for the migrant’s dependents (Dunaway, 2001, cited in Yeates, 2004, p.384) and usually appear to be understood as nuclear family households where there is a universal and defined gendered division of labour. Within this model, emotions tend to be economized – even though this value is difficult to express in monetary terms – and thus migration is theorized as the channel through which ‘care resources’ are being appropriated from and delivered to nuclear families (see Yeates, 2004, p.373; Yeates, 2005, p.9). By extracting caring labour from one place and transferring it to another, the ‘care drains’ described in this literature are taken to exemplify the ways global capitalism penetrates intimate relations and emotional life within the household. This theory of care drains also reveals the ways that gender, relationships, and emotions are conceptualized – often in universal terms – by the academics involved. For many of the scholars writing on care chains, this

penetration of the intimate by the economic is understood as an outcome of capitalist globalization, leading to negative impacts for development in the global South and the alienation, abuse and neglect of children. Research in this field has thus focussed on transnational motherhood and parenting, demonstrating that families lose ‘care resources’ and thus intimacy when migration causes the natural carers – the mothers – to be substituted by another person. Hochschild (as quoted in Sutherland 2005) suggests that this penetration of the economic into personal life leaves ‘an emotional void’ within the family.

The care chains approach produces as its subject a migrant-victim best understood in terms of her class position and her role as the object of global capitalist expansion and restructuring (Silvey and Lawson, 1999, p.122). In contrast, a ‘post-structuralist’ approach to migrant agency requires theorizing migrants as embodied, self-aware, and self-reflexive agents operating across multiple social, cultural, or linguistic frames (Silvey and Lawson, 1999). Post-structuralist research approaches migrants as subjects who can interpret their own mobility in a reflexive manner, rather than as economically driven labourers responding to global forces (Gibson *et al.*, 2001; Silvey and Lawson, 1999, p. 126). The global care chains approach, however, does not adopt such understandings of diversity and agency. Instead, it produces generic accounts of the meanings of migration for migrants.

When it comes to theorizing intimacy, the account is similarly singular: a care chains analysis typically treats intimacy as only ‘truly’ possible when the mother is physically present, and all other forms of diverse emotional connection achieved by migrant mothers and their households as somehow inadequate. In contrast, a post-structuralist approach would theorize intimacies as contextual and multiple, attending to the experiences, contexts, and interpretations offered by the migrant subjects

involved and also attending to the relationships beyond the nuclear family into which migrants might choose to direct their earnings.

In this article, I approach emotions and intimacy in migration by investigating the role of the rest of the extended family where a woman has migrated for caregiving work abroad, contextualizing mobility within local understandings of emotions. My argument attempts to unpack assumptions about universal emotions and family forms that underpin care chains accounts. This approach does not argue that migration is simply a personal choice for individuated subjects and its consequences thus simply personal and individual problems. Instead, the analysis suggests the variability and dynamism of sociocultural norms for family structure, emotional understandings, and intimate exchanges across the globe and over time. By taking emotions seriously and considering them cross-culturally, the analysis challenges prevailing ethnocentric assumptions of nuclear family forms and universal emotions that underpin care chains and similar dependency-driven models of migration. Rather than assuming that supra-local and familial institutions and agencies alone appropriate and redistribute the value produced by migration, this argument explores how experiential understandings of the social meanings and value generated by labour mobility are embedded in local, cultural, and emotionally intimate relationships.

Care chains and intimacy

Rhacel Parreñas' (2001, 2005a, 2005b) work with Filipino migrant mothers – 'servants of globalization' – and their 'left behind' children has provided the foundational empirical data for much of the care chains literature (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Hochschild 2000; Sørensen 2005; Yeates, 2004, 2005). In research

with children of migrant mothers, Parreñas (2005a and b) found that global, structural restrictions limited the intimacy possible for transnational families, particularly those living in rural areas. As a result, long-distance communication between family members was not always smooth or equal. Parreñas (2005b) observed that children and migrants' other dependents often do not have access to cellphone 'load' or call credits to initiate emotional exchanges. Instead, they had to wait for displays of caring from abroad. Parreñas (2005a, p.333) concludes from this data that mobility and distance mean transnational family forms of intimacy in Filipino migration are not 'full'. She sees that larger systems of inequality deny members of the transnational families she studied the 'joys of physical contact, the emotional security of physical presence, and the familiarity allowed by physical proximity' by migration (2005a, p.333). She finds that migrants' remittances and phone calls are merely efforts to generate a 'semblance of intimate family life across borders' (2005a, p.334).

In Parreñas' (2005b) study site, she observed that fathers of all social classes avoided providing emotional labour for their children while their mother was abroad. This observation, along with the accounts of 'left-behind' children, led her to conclude that the children of migrants suffer emotional neglect. On this basis, she argues that an absent mother sending money simply cannot replace her physical presence at home, providing emotional labour in the home. Her analysis appears to work from a tacit assumption that only care arising from face-to-face intimacy with a mother is authentic. By theorizing intimacy as arising only from this gendered co-presence, this analysis universalizes what is a very particular account of intimate connection – one that reflects contemporary, common-sense understandings of intimacy and gendered family roles that predominate in the middle-class, northern-European 'West'.

In a social history of intimacy in contemporary Britain, Jamieson (1998) argues that most ‘Western’ subjects would describe intimacy as a quality emergent from intense, long-standing interpersonal connection. What are popularly considered to be ‘true’ (and thus valid) forms of intimacy typically require, as necessary conditions, long periods of face-to-face contact, shared expressions of affective states, and the mutual disclosure of a person’s emotional self-understandings, desires, dreams and individual life story. In popular accounts, intimacy in everyday life is understood to emerge only from such shared histories. These English-language notions of intimacy rely on what are relatively recent (post-Victorian era) Western norms for heteronormative, middle-class romantic and nuclear-family household relationships. Intimacy’s antithesis, alienation, is associated with the global, urban, and technologically mediated world of the marketplace, a sphere where the idealised nuclear family form is under threat.

Certainly, the distinct circumstances that enable what Jamieson describes as ‘true’ intimacy – face to face contact, mutual disclosure of dreams, desires, and life story – are not and have never been universally obtainable. Instead, much more practical, mediated forms of intimacy prevail. Jamieson (1999) concludes that, despite the popular belief that dyadic, face-to-face, and confessional encounters generate intimacy, acts of practical love and care actually materialize shared emotions and create intimate connections in the contemporary United Kingdom. Her close social and historical analysis demonstrates the Western ideal of intimacy in daily life to be largely unobtainable for the majority of the population.

Indeed, emotions and intimacies have never been either static or universal and scholars are documenting other, newer, versions of intimacy that do not require face-to-face interaction as a necessary precondition. Berlant (2000, p.1), for instance, describes intimacy as ‘having at its root an aspiration for a narrative about something

shared, a story about oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way'. This recognizes that intimacy is made through emotional labour – the work of connecting, sharing, telling stories, listening, responding – rather than being a quality inherent in human interactions, but does not necessarily preclude long-distance and technologically mediated forms of closeness. Given recent technological innovations, the creation of shared stories over long distances is increasingly both possible and available. People are using communications technology to generate narratives of connection around the globe. This technological mediation can be particularly important for people whose livelihoods preclude intense and ongoing face-to-face encounters with kin: sailors, long-distance traders, rural-urban migrants, and sojourners of all sorts. While these mobile subjects are typically adults, technological innovations increasingly allow them to connect with children in their sending communities. For many such communities, the history of migration and sojourning is a long one, and technology has enabled people to make their long-distance communications more regular, intense, and intimate. In such situations, assuming that 'valid' intimacy can only arise through face-to-face connections extends a Western, middle-class norm to non-Western contexts, maintaining a Western emotional hegemony. Research on transnational families needs to unpack and loosen the kind of culturalist and classist assumptions underlying this evaluation of intimacy, or scholars preclude the possibility of understanding long-distance families and emotion from the perspective of migrants.

Rethinking care chains

Recognizing that the Western ideal of the nuclear family is not a universal one, migration research has begun to rethink the 'care chains' approach. There is a growing recognition in the literature that 'family' actually covers a multitude of forms of relatedness and emotional connection. Yeates (2004, 2005, p. 9) calls for care chains research to extend beyond the nuclear family into intergenerational analyses and suggests research should attend to the wider cultural contexts for diversity in family forms and emphasise the 'linguistic, religious, cultural, and familial factors influencing migration'. Sørensen (2005, p. 12) argues that migration and mobility need not always dissolve intimate relations, cautioning that a focus on 'care drains' risks missing the nuances surrounding emotions and forms of intimacy. In her evaluation, the care chains literature relies too heavily on 'organic notions of *present* mothers, domesticity, and morality, and culturally coded narratives of "family values"' (2005, p.12). New case studies are emerging that challenge the idea of care drains, finding that migration can, in some contexts, create positive transformations in the emotional connections within transnational families.

One study exemplifying this trend is Pribilsky's (2004) research with Ecuadorean migrants to the United States. Pribilsky found that transnational mobility allowed Ecuadorean fathers to develop more intimate forms of emotional connection with their children, creating a different intensity of emotional bonds across distance than would be possible with the local culture of parental 'respect' in Ecuador. Long-distance economic transfers from America both signified parental care and expressed new forms of emotional exchange, with money sent home generating new emotional understandings and subjectivities. Pribilsky's ethnography concludes – based on self-assessments of his migrant respondents and comments of their families – that the mobility of migrant Ecuadorean fathers enables 'better' kinds of emotional expression and 'closer' forms of intimacy between parents and children. Pribilsky's findings of

closer or better intimacy contrast strongly with Parreñas' conclusion that the migration of Filipino mothers generates emotional distance and neglect. However, one set of conclusions does not falsify the other. The parental 'love' and intimacy both authors evaluate do not refer to the same experiences, social roles, and categories in both nations. We cannot assume that emotions, gender roles, family life, and intimacy can be compared as if they were sociocultural universals. Instead, we need to ask how particular roles and relationships are gendered in specific cases of migration and examine what people mean by emotion and intimacy in particular contexts.

Transnational emotions and emotional grammars

For migrants, the ability to recognize and respond to their own and others' emotions – 'emotional literacy' – is necessary to their success in new socio-cultural contexts. Psychologists studying intercultural adjustment find that the ability to recognize specific emotions in both oneself and others of the host culture predicts 'cultural adjustment' and happiness for transnational migrants, even if these emotions are negative ones (Yoo *et al.*, 2006). What more can be said about the meanings of emotion and the ways it works cross-culturally?

While emotions and the ability to recognize and understand them may create group identities and enable inclusion, anthropologists find significant diversity within the ways individuals 'appropriate symbolic forms related to emotions and emotional experience' (Good, 2004, p.532). Most anthropological accounts posit emotion as exclusively cognitive and symbolic, and thus not universal, while many sociological accounts tend to treat English-language concepts as universals across all cultures (Wierzbicka, 2004). Both approaches – the cognitivist and the universalist –

oversimplify human experiences of both agency and power. What stands for ‘culture’ in many accounts of emotion can be problematic for theorising migration: culture usually marks a field bounded by language differences, if not national borders. Within these (supposedly) bounded spaces of language/culture, individual accounts of emotion are described as representative for cultural or language groups. The limits of this theorization are evident in the everyday observation that, quite frequently, emotions expressed within the same culture are not necessarily transparent to others who share that culture. People’s emotional performances often entail quite conscious forms of work as they attempt to suppress the expression of some emotions while ‘showing’ or intentionally revealing others.

There are conflicting accounts of emotion across disciplines. In an influential study of the role of emotions in connecting individual experiences to more collective ones, sociologist Sara Ahmed (2001, p.10) argues that emotions produce effects on subjects such as ‘alignment (bringing into line with another), identification (assuming the image of another), and appropriation (taking the place of another)’. For Ahmed, emotions such as rage, shame, anger are transparent and universal experiences. While her account is compelling, it is ethnocentric in that it assumes all actors share the same emotional vocabulary, an assumption that is strongly criticized by anthropologists and linguists, in particular. For linguist Anna Wierzbicka (2004, p.585), emotions mark the psychic work the individual does to shape a self against the implicit models offered by culture(s) of what selfhood ought to be. Like Ahmed, she understands emotion as having performativity, but argues that different vocabularies of emotion make a difference to people’s emotional experiences (2004, p.579). Rather than describing other categories of experience as simply subtypes of emotions recognized lexically by English, she suggests research should focus on the role of particular emotions in guiding the narratives of self-making implicit in cultural

models of personhood. Research on intercultural and transnational experiences of emotion must thus resist the need to assume a bounded container of ‘culture’ or society or a universal form of ‘subject’. Instead of accepting a universal or homogenous frame, theorizing emotions in a mobile and intercultural context requires an interrogation of the shifting meanings of both ‘self’ and ‘culture.’

The concept of emotional grammar (Nussbaum, 2001, p.149; Beatty, 2005) offers a way to theorize how emotions perform alignment, appropriation and identification in long-distance social fields. Beatty (2005) mobilizes this concept to argue that mastering a new sociocultural context requires one to learn a new emotional grammar that he defines as a representational frame that specifies particular emotion-words as labels for complex affective experiences. As a tool for learning new emotion-words, emotional grammars allow the self to be experienced in new ways. Learning emotional grammars involves both learning new words to describe new feelings and learning how to appropriately represent (or suppress) emotions in cross-cultural social situations. In inter-cultural experience, emotional grammars generate empathy. This occurs when one first takes up the affective response of another, and then learns the appropriate emotion-words to label it. Intimacy arises from empathy, because people share the embodied affective states represented by the words they use to capture their experiences of emotion and the stories they then can build from these shared words. We can theorize transnational mobility as requiring migrants to learn new emotional grammars that are then layered on to the more familiar emotions and forms of intimacy they bring with them from home.

For a Filipina migrant, work abroad requires her to conform to emotional norms and performances drawn from another socio-cultural field. This is true for my respondent, Alicia, a college-educated Filipino health professional who has become a ‘maid’ for a Cantonese family in Hong Kong. In interviews, she explained to me that

her job required her to ‘swallow my feeling’ and not ‘show’ emotional responses to the work or to the ways her employers speak to her. In Hong Kong, she has learned a new set of gestures of deference, affection, and gratitude and this is, for her, part of the ‘the mundane emotional labour of the workplace’ (Thrift, 2004, p.57). Working as a midwife in a rural health clinic back in the Philippines, she did not have to act as a maid but now, she has to ‘follow them’ (her employers) in displaying appropriate feelings and suppressing inappropriate ones. Alicia is not simply learning a new register for emotion, but also concealing her own responses to her particular social situation, suppression being necessary because her employers would potentially recognize many of these responses as displays of displeasure. For Alicia, this work of expression and suppression occurs in translation, between Filipino and Cantonese cultural frames and her rather bounded and everyday life in Hong Kong is actually lived across a complex set of translocal relations that require sophisticated techniques of self-management. Alicia deploys multiple emotional grammars in order to create and sustain long-distance intimacy with ‘home’ while maintaining sympathetic and supportive relations with her employers. Such complex mobilisations of emotion across space are now an integral part of reproducing transnational flows of people and value (Thrift, 2004, p.58.)

In the next section, I explore these mobilizations of emotions and economies across space by examining how the experiences of Alicia and her extended family extend the care chains model.

‘Sending dollars shows feeling’

Alicia comes from Ifugao Province – a rural area in the mountains of Northern Luzon in the Philippines. The emotion that saturates her relations with those at home is *iliw* [the verb form is *mailiw*] – a distinctive local category. In the narrative that follows, I trace *iliw* through long-distance relationships between kin, connecting shared experiences of this emotion to both subjectivities and structural forces. Local cultural context is a key to understanding how emotions shape this particular translocal social field (Yeates, 2005). In the Philippines, the nuclear family as a socio-legal construct was introduced during the Spanish colonial regime (Aguilar, 1998, p.219). While the notion predominates in government regulations, it does not necessarily adequately describe kinship as practiced by most rural and working class Filipinos. Broader, extended family networks remain definitive for most Filipinos, reflecting an indigenous bilateral kinship system where the everyday enactment of relatedness extends to third cousins.

In Ifugao Province and among other indigenous Filipino societies, sibling relationships are an important part of such extended family networks.¹ People expect brothers and sisters to demonstrate care by enacting exchanges – particularly from older to younger – across the lifecourse. Such familial forms of practical care are increasingly supported with paid employment outside agriculture, which is now an essential part of a reconfigured domestic economy across Southeast Asia (Rigg, 2001). In Alicia’s community, work outside the village is justified because it offers much greater returns to labour. Finding a well-paying job in an urban area or overseas satisfies family expectations that adult children will contribute to both their natal and marital households. The search for work often takes parents out of the village, leaving their children with grandparents, aunts, and uncles.² Children, too, move to take advantage of educational opportunities that are often connected to part-time work or sponsorship from relatives. As a teenager, Alicia, went to a lowland

town as a ‘working student’, doing domestic work for the household of distant cousins while completing her high school education and training in midwifery. Her husband Aldo also left the village to complete high school, living with a childless uncle and aunt who sponsored his studies. After graduation, he worked in a small-scale gold mine and then as a mechanic in Manila, before returning to the village in his twenties. Internal mobility within the Philippines and the practice of caring for children within the extended family have characterised Ifugao livelihoods and culture for several generations.

The narrative below comes from a December 2005 visit to the Philippines and Hong Kong. Initially, I met up with Alicia and Aldo’s extended family in their village in Ifugao, then travelled on through Manila to visit Alicia and Aldo in Hong Kong.³ *En route*, Aldo and Alicia shepherded me through meetings and interviews with a stream of text messages and phone calls.

One December evening, I sat with Lucy on the front steps of Aldo and Alicia’s house in Ifugao. Lucy was waiting for a truck to take her back to her own home, husband, and children, about 30 minutes down the road. It was dusk and clouds were rolling down the mountains around us, rain falling in intermittent sheets. We were huddled under my umbrella, chatting, when her phone rang. It was Aldo, calling from Hong Kong. He wanted to know when I would arrive there, and if I could carry some packages for him. Lucy and I answered together. We handed the phone back and forth, switching from English to a mix of Ifugao dialect, Ilokano and Tagalog. ‘Can you bring some Ifugao yeast?’ Aldo asked me. (He was planning to brew Ifugao rice-wine for his Hong Kong employer.) Then he asked about my trip, the weather, the food. I started to worry about how much the call would cost him and begged off, telling him that we would catch up when I arrived in Hong Kong. Afterwards, I asked

Lucy if I had been rude. ‘No’, she said, ‘he is *mailiw* now and wants to talk about home’.

Mailiw is an emotion. It does not really seem to have a good equivalent in English.⁴ When I asked Lucy for the meaning of *mailiw* she said, ‘It’s your [English speakers’] feeling of homesickness. That feeling in your stomach you get when you are away for too long and it feels... wrong to you. And you want to see your place, your family, and your friends again’. To illustrate her point, she told me about her young cousin. He had come to live in Lucy’s household from across the province in order to complete his high school education as a ‘working student’. However, his *iliw* grew so strong that he had to go home. ‘He never showed it to us’, Lucy said, ‘but he tells me that at night, he used to cry, by himself. He missed his place’. I asked if being *mailiw* is a feeling you should be ashamed to show to other people. She paused and then replied, ‘it’s natural... but if it is too much, then you are not adjusting to your companions now. If you are *mailiw*, you are not enjoying your new place, so you cannot show them that’. When I ask if she was offended that her cousin left, she said, ‘No, we understood. His feeling was too heavy to stay’. When I asked her about her brother Aldo and his feeling, she replied, ‘When his feeling is heavy, he must call!’

Lucy’s insight into Aldo’s feeling works as a moment of judgement (Wierzbicka, 2004). As she describes it, *mailiw* is affectively ‘heavy’ in the body, but a state that one can choose to some extent to reveal – Aldo and Lucy translate this as the English ‘show’ – or conceal from others. By elaborating on a particular affect, *mailiw* encapsulates a distinctive emotional grammar. A feeling of being ‘heavy’ in the body, *iliw* is conceptualized as a state of longing for place and people left behind; the word labels a disemplaced corporeality.⁵ While Lucy, Aldo, and Alicia speak fluent English, they rarely translated *mailiw* in our succeeding discussions. *Iliw* was something they expected me to understand as the key to their explanation of their

shared experiences because it worked as the ground of the intersubjective long-distance field in which they interact. As Ahmed indicates, identifying *iliw* in Aldo allows Lucy to create empathy and thus sustains intimacy between home and abroad. The extent to which one feels *iliw* also marks one's adjustment to new circumstances. When Lucy's extends *iliw* across the translocality to Aldo in Hong Kong, she brings Aldo into alignment with local Ifugao cultural norms and the expectations of his family. Just like her young cousin, if Aldo cannot contain and manage his *iliw*, he may have to come home. By identifying *iliw* in Aldo and helping him to assuage it with talk of plans and tastes of home, Lucy extends and maintains the translocal sociocultural field.

A week later, I was in Hong Kong with Aldo, where he explained to me the dense network of indebtedness and emotion between himself, Alicia, and their family in the Philippines. In 2001, Alicia found a job in Hong Kong, doing domestic work for a wealthy household. Aldo's younger sister Lucy and her husband Gerry were instrumental in Alicia's migration. To fund Alicia's expenses, Aldo borrowed from Lucy money she had taken as a loan, secured through her job as a government schoolteacher. Aldo supplemented Lucy's loan money with the proceeds from the sale of four pigs from Gerry's farm, money he 'borrowed' without asking his brother-in-law Gerry's explicit permission. Aldo expressed 'shame' when he talked about this, even though Alicia was able to repay the outstanding amount to Lucy and Gerry within four months of arriving in Hong Kong. Lucy and Gerry can thus take partial credit for Alicia and Aldo's subsequent transition from poverty to relative economic security. A sense of obligation and expectations of reciprocity underpin their sibling and in-law relationships, entwining economic calculations with expressions of family intimacy.

Aldo arrived in Hong Kong in 2004, sponsored by Alicia's savings. He now works for Alicia's employer as a gardener and security guard. As household staff under Hong Kong's migrant worker program, Aldo and Alicia each earn HK\$3640 per month – more than the government-mandated HK\$3240. In 2005, Aldo gave up his weekly day off for an extra HK\$1000 per month working night shifts. Aldo finds this has brought him closer to his employer, who appreciates that it is a sacrifice for Aldo to have no official free time to run personal errands and visit friends or worship. Aldo's errands include visiting the bank to remit money home, negotiating loans in advance of his salary with a finance company, attending religious services, and buying groceries and sundries for Alicia and his employer. Running these errands gives him a chance to visit with other migrants from Ifugao. Rather than being onerous, working nights in fact allows Aldo to pass more or less freely through Hong Kong on most afternoons. He can absent himself from his employer's house as long as he has his mobile phone with him.⁶

In these interviews, Aldo told me the feeling of *iliw* is in the heart and in the head, and he, specifically, feels like crying when he is 'having *mailiw*'. But he can soothe himself. 'When I'm *mailiw*, I'll take a picture and look at it – a picture of my family – it makes my heart feel better.... and I'll call home. Now that we have cellphones, it is much better. Before, when I could not call, I felt very *mailiw*, but now, just a little. Because every time I have that feeling, I can call'. Both Aldo and Alicia spend between HK\$300 and HK\$600 each per month on 'load' for their phones or to send to people at home, more if there is a family crisis. This amount works out to one sixth of their earnings. Aldo thinks all Filipino migrants in Hong Kong share this feeling: 'In general, OFWs [Overseas Filipino Workers] here [in Hong Kong] get *mailiw* when they are hard up with work. When they remember their purpose in the Philippines, and the situation there, that's the time they are homesick'. For Aldo,

work takes his mind off the *mailiw* feeling. He does not share this feeling with others, but keeps it to himself. ‘I just control my feeling and say “Oh, I’ll be going home soon, the time will come” – like that. And I take a cigarette and a coffee and say, “I’m here”’.

Mailiw motivates Aldo to stay connected to his family and friends in the Philippines by telephone and money transfer. He says, ‘We feel close by calling them, and saying hello, or by sending texts. We are no longer sending letters; it’s too slow. Sometimes we send tapes when people are going home. Speaking on the phone, mostly, is what keeps us feeling close’. The content of these telephone exchanges expresses intimacy for Aldo: ‘I show my feeling for my family by giving my advice and asking them what is happening, if there are any problems... things like that’. Aldo admits, however, ‘Sometimes I don’t want to talk to them because they only talk to us when they need money’. After making this comment, he quickly moved on to explain how sharing money is also a way of sharing emotion: ‘Sending dollars shows feeling! I am happy sending because I know they need it and that’s my obligation. I am here in Hong Kong to send money so they’ll have some money for food, clothing, things in the house and medicine... I’m happy if I sent dollars to them because I know that they are also happy. We share the feeling’. While Aldo and I were sitting together in Central’s Statue Square and doing this interview, he received a text from Alicia’s sister, Tricia, asking him to remit money to pay for his mother-in-law’s health plan, renovations in the kitchen of his house and some seed capital for her to set up a small (corner-type) *sari-sari* store. We read the message together and he laughed, saying: ‘feeling close is... also feeling like a bank’.

Alicia and Aldo make a series of regular remittances to the Philippines to invest in their livelihood and support their family. Initially, they borrowed against their salaries to buy rice fields now farmed for them on a share-cropping basis by Alicia’s

parents. Together, they remit P 7000 each month for the care of their 11 year old son who stays in the new house Aldo and Alicia have built, again by borrowing against their Hong Kong salaries. The allowance for their son includes P 4000 for household expenses such as food and school books and P 3000 for his principal caregiver. Since Aldo's 2004 migration, Alicia's younger sister Tricia was principal caregiver for her nephew, assisted by Aldo's sister Lucy and Alicia's parents. In mid 2006, Tricia married and started her own family. Aldo and Alicia transferred care of their son and the remitted allowance to one of Aldo's younger brothers, who is helping Aldo invest in a citrus plantation in a neighbouring province. Tricia and her family will remain in Ifugao as caretakers for their house. Now that the house is 'fixed', Aldo and Alicia plan to focus their remittances on acquiring more agricultural land that will initially be farmed by their family members in their absence. The citrus plantation is their first attempt at this investment strategy.

Aldo and Alicia also make a number of special payments, usually gifts and 'loans', each month. For example, between September and December 2005, Aldo sent money to a sister working with a foreign-owned call-centre in Manila. She had been 'training' there – without salary – for the previous two months. He funded the wedding expenses of a brother who is a shifting cultivator on the rural frontier in Nueva Viscaya. He sent money for his father's remarriage and relocation outside of Ifugao. He also provided financial support for another brother who has migrated to work on a farm in Bukidnon, a frontier province in the uplands of the southern island of Mindanao. Alicia directed her earnings during this period to servicing their bank loans, paying her mother's pension plan, saving for an upcoming vacation visit back to the Philippines, saving for their son's school fees in a new school near his uncle's home, and preparing a gift of cash for her younger sister's wedding. Alicia and Aldo expect that some of these transfers will oblige the recipients to reciprocate in the

future, while others are their own reciprocation for past generosity and closeness shown to them.

‘Feeling close’ – intimacy and constant contact

The acts of practical care described by Jamieson (1998) build and sustain Aldo and Alicia’s intimacy with those at home. While Parreñas’ (2005a and b) suggests that migration diminishes intimacy in transnational families, this does not appear to apply to their case. Discussing his life before his wife Alicia migrated, Aldo described himself as an unemployed, heavy-drinking and emotionally distant partner, father and brother. Before her migration, he and Alicia lived in a house with a dirt floor, no electricity, and no running water. Their son was malnourished and they struggled to find the money to send him to school. In these circumstances, Aldo depended on his siblings, including younger sister Lucy, for ongoing small gifts of financial support. Aldo resented this very deeply. He remembers that, before Alicia migrated, his siblings treated him with pity and perhaps a twinge of contempt. It was Alicia’s departure that ‘turned (him) around’. For the three years Alicia was on her own in Hong Kong, he was a ‘single father’. During that time, he took on domestic obligations, gave up drinking, and worked, he recounted, diligently, to be a better father and to administer Alicia’s remittances and regain some respect in the community. In our interviews, he explained to me that, despite the distance, work abroad has allowed him to ‘respect’ Alicia properly, provide for his son and offer him good ‘advice’, and engage with his siblings as both equal and patron, thus to forge what he feels are closer and more appropriate ties with his family.⁷ When I asked Aldo to reflect on their parenting, pre-migration, he explained that, while they now

express care for their son through phone calls, text messages and gifts, their pre-migration circumstances had not allowed them to be nurturing parents. Alicia, too, describes Aldo as being ‘redeemed’ and a much improved partner and husband because he enjoys more support and respect within their kin network and community. For Alicia and Aldo, intimate care involves a certain material security and minimal level of provisioning that both enables and conveys the appropriate expressions of emotion.

While Alicia is not working as a nanny, she does perform emotional labour in her role as a maid. Her employers have two teenaged daughters. When she is ‘on duty’ she must be constantly available to the daughters and their mother, taking on practical tasks, such as cleaning and ironing, as well as providing emotional support and advice on clothing choices, social relations, and whatever else she may be asked. Though she does not provide physical care for children or the elderly, she must work on the relationships to build an emotional bond that will secure her both good working conditions and ongoing employment. One of Alicia’s prized possessions is a gold locket that her employers presented to her at Christmas, evidence, she says, that her care for them is reciprocated in their gestures of concern and reward towards her.

Rather than relying on unpaid family labour, as described by Hochschild (2000), Aldo and Alicia have remunerated both male and female relatives who care for their son. In Ifugao, the average household income is approximately P 4500 per month for a farming family of four, so a combined P 7000 allowance for a single person and a child provides a comfortable living, by local standards. Alicia and Aldo share the cost of this care. The responsibility does not fall solely on Alicia in her roles as wife and mother. Oscar, their son, has access to his caregiver’s mobile phone and regular top-ups of load from Hong Kong so that he can stay in touch with his parents. According to Aldo, Oscar sends them two or three text messages each day to which his parents

always reply and they have a 30 minute voice call with him every Sunday. Oscar socializes with three classmates whose mothers are also working in Hong Kong, so Aldo hopes that he does not feel his situation is unusual. Both Aldo and Alicia are familiar with the widespread concerns that parental absence will produce emotional distress and maladjustment in children like Oscar, but they judge that the alternative – a life of poverty and malnutrition with quarrelling parents – would undermine whatever emotional advantages his parents' presence might bring. Moreover, since both of them spent part of their adolescence living with relatives while pursuing education outside their village, they consider this to be a normal part of development towards young adulthood in the Ifugao extended family tradition. Living with his aunts and uncles gives Oscar the opportunity to learn about the wider world and become 'close' to his family and this, in turn, will provide him with practical and emotional support in later life.

Ironically, Aldo's migration to Hong Kong has actually allowed him to feel closer to his family of origin because it enables him to meet his economic obligations as a sibling. This has occurred even as the entire family has become more mobile, with its members now spread out in sites across the Philippines and in Dubai and Singapore, as well as Hong Kong. Aldo's own individuated goals for saving and investment motivated him to join Alicia in Hong Kong, but he now finds these goals have become secondary to his expressions of care for his extended family. Lucy, Aldo's sister, agrees with Aldo's account of his transformation. She told me she now feels 'closer' to him since he has 'remedied' his situation by migrating to Hong Kong because he can now take on his proper role as an older brother by providing resources and advice, not just for his son, but also for his younger siblings. According to Aldo and Lucy, this kind of sibling relationship requires acts of practical caring and economic exchange, rather than simple proximity. Though their intimacy now arises

at a geographical remove, both siblings consider it better than the forms of intimate connection they experienced before the brother's migration. They do not find texting and calling between Hong Kong and home means they grow apart. Rather than being caught up in a commodity-type chain where care is exported and the household is left devoid of emotion, in this case, at least, migration has produced and enhanced locally distinctive forms of intimacy.

For Alicia and Aldo, not all of these intimate connections with Ifugao are ones they evaluate as positive. They also experience *iliw* as constraining their agency. Because of the strength of the feeling and the impetus to perform *iliw* appropriately through constant contact and gifts, they cannot save their overseas earnings for bigger investments or, at least, they cannot save as efficiently as they might wish. 'Everyone always has their hand open, so Aldo's money becomes scattered', Lucy says of her brother. To forgo these expressions of caring and save his Hong Kong earnings, however, would undermine intimacy and thus Aldo's security and identity within in the family group. Aldo, Alicia, and their family at home constantly evaluate their intimacy as it is expressed in economic terms. From Hong Kong, Aldo and Alicia try to ascertain what the appropriate balance of expressions of closeness and economic gifts and demands might be. In the Philippines, Aldo's siblings compare notes on the amounts he sends them and the purposes to which these will be put, trying to figure out with whom he currently feels 'close' and with whom he is 'dismayed'.

Aldo's new source of secure income occasionally generates family conflict, with his younger siblings expecting generalised reciprocity – gifts without obligations – from him. However, they do not accept that these transfers entitle Aldo to direct how they will spend his money. Since migrating to Hong Kong, Aldo has observed how his Cantonese employer manages his economic dependents. Talking with me, he expressed a wish that his siblings would show a similar style of kind of deference

when he, as brother/patron gives them ‘advice’. In this desire, he is asserting what is for him a new emotional grammar – an outcome of his experience of intercultural living. However, between Hong Kong Cantonese and Ifugao Filipinos, there are very different understandings of the kinship obligations enacted in these long-distance transfers of value and exchanges of emotion. While Aldo now identifies with a patriarchal Cantonese style of family management, his siblings think his brotherly care should stop at gifts and not extend to interventions in their lifestyles or spending. Over the phone, his siblings reject his advice, saying ‘you are not our father’. His younger sister in Manila complained to me about Aldo’s attitude to her requests for cash in these very terms. Aldo says his siblings’ attitude ‘dismays’ him and causes a heavy feeling but he cannot turn away his siblings’ requests for money. He feels obligated as an older brother and, from *iliw*, to demonstrate his care for his younger siblings. Aldo’s choices around sending money are judgements situated, for him, in both Ifugao and Cantonese emotional norms.

Instead of taking the form of a commodity chain where women’s emotional labour is exported from a nuclear family household, the connections mapped out in this case study suggest the translocal family relationships involved in Filipino migration are both place-specific and dynamic. The intensity and content of intimate exchanges varies across peoples’ lifecycles. Parents care for children, who later provide practical care for parents, and similar exchanges and reversals happen between siblings. People involved in these exchanges of care often have different expectations and perceptions of the social meaning that should be attached to gifts and allowances. Communicating over distance can, in these circumstances, make relationships more, rather than less, emotionally empathetic and thus strengthen intimate connections. Indeed, while they are at work, Alicia and Aldo are often simultaneously involved in text message exchanges in their roles as

sibling/parent/wage-earner/investor/advisor and friend. As domestic staff, Alicia and Aldo cannot make long-distance calls on their employers' landlines and must rely on mobile phones. Many of the messages they send and receive are about economic transfers – the allowances, gifts, donations, and investments remitted home from their Hong Kong salaries. These transfers sustain and build their relationships in the Philippines, creating a form of constant contact through which they redistribute and invest their Hong Kong earnings in a future to be shared with family at home.

This reliance on mobile phones indicates how technology can profoundly change the ways that intimate lives are lived. Text messages and voice calls enable an experience that Urry (2000, p.186) calls 'being both here and there at the same time'. Because mobile phones offer the possibility of being in contact with others at almost any instant, mobiles effectively make these others virtually present, moment-by-moment, across distance (Lasen, 2004, p.6). Aldo and Alicia estimate each sends and receives at least five messages a day from family and friends in the Philippines. Often these messages are 'just to say hello'. For Aldo and Alicia and their community, failing to answer the phone and not texting back promptly are read as indications of emotional distance and displeasure, so people in all sites invest in keeping communication constant.

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that these flows of emotion and value in translocal communication relays are clearly not moving without frictions and diversions. Because coming to know the intimate and subjective is methodologically challenging, I have relied here on an illustrative example, rather than drawing on a large body of similar cases. Moreover, because relationships between emotions and subjectivities are processual in nature, to argue that intimate economic relations alone shape the emotional self-understandings of my respondents is to offer only a partial picture. The emotions and self-understandings of migrants are not separable from

their interactions with nation states – of both origin and destination – and broader communities. Important spaces of subjection lie beyond the translocal field this paper explores. For migrants, living in an extended community space requires people to inhabit a complex assemblage of laws, cultures, relations, and technologies. The legal framework of Hong Kong’s temporary worker program denies Aldo and Alicia the privileges of citizenship. This means that it is not possible for them to invest in property or other productive assets in Hong Kong. Thus, if they want to accumulate savings and invest in productive assets in the Philippines, Aldo and Alicia **need** their extended family to help find and manage these investments. Moreover, since the Philippine government cannot provide widespread social benefits, investing in such kin networks is a strategy that should entitle them both to reciprocal aid, acting as an insurance policy that they hope will provision for their eventual retirement, care of their child should they meet an accident, and any emergency medical assistance they might need. To enable the intimate connections with home necessary to maintain their kin relations, Alicia and Aldo are taking on additional debt through a finance company, paying high mobile phone rates, and often paying surcharges for finance agency or ‘expedited’ bank transfers home in the case of a crisis. Despite the extra expense and minor family conflicts, the transfers of money open up into shared stories and shared judgments as Alicia and Aldo text home to discuss with their family how to spend, what to invest in, and what the outcomes of their gifts have been. They are participating in a shared narrative of long-distance familial progress that does not exclude those left at home from development or those away from secure accumulation.

These findings differ from those of Parreñas (2005a and b), but this does not suggest that we should dismiss the feeling of loss her research documents among migrants’ children. Traditions and conditions in Aldo and Alicia’s Ifugao village

mean that the model of a mother-as-ever-present-housewife in a nuclear family is not a common shared expectation. Instead, extended family networks and distributed child rearing are the norm. This may well be quite different from the socio-cultural context in Parreñas' research site, which appears to be a much more urbanized area in the central Philippine islands.⁸ My data, as hers, shows that the transnational family is a contested emotional field. The desires she reports among left-behind children for a present mother reflect what the Filipino media portray as a middle-class family life. These desires may well reflect the sociocultural norms for family relations in her research site, but this does not appear to be the case in rural Ifugao. In Ifugao, the categories of emotion and intimacy people deploy in order to understand their experiences of migration appear to be much more locally contextualized.

Aldo and Alicia's story supports Jamieson's (1998) insight that the Western, middle-class version of intimacy is largely illusory. This version of intimacy does not apply to their lives in rural Ifugao. Instead of a loss of intimacy, their mobility requires emotional labour and new emotional grammars to create and sustain new forms of intimacy across distance. Here, local culture and distance combine to make the emotional and economic aspects of relationships virtually impossible to distinguish. As Aldo and Alicia's story shows, in Ifugao, distinctive, culturally-inflected forms of economic exchange have always been fundamental to familial intimacies with transfers of value enacting the practical love and care necessary to show and share feeling. While they feel ambivalent about constant requests for money, Aldo and Alicia are brought into line with the emotions of home by *iliw* and the necessity to 'show' and 'share' feeling with their kin. Instead of the 'emotional void' predicted by Hochschild (Sutherland, 2005), the translocal field between Alicia and Aldo's Ifugao village and Hong Kong is full of rich connections that form part of a local field of intimacy. As Aldo describes it, intimacy is more than the 'familiarity'

described by Parreñas (1005a, p.317); it is a ‘sharing’ of ‘feeling’ underpinned by the emotion of *iliw*.

Conclusion

Our emotions give us self-awareness, provide insights to the world around us, and move us to act – regardless of how we describe or categorize emotions. Moreover, since we experience our subjectivity (or self-identities) through our emotions, our emotional understandings and vocabularies are vital to their constitution. Here, I have shown how the care chains argument that migration necessarily diminishes intimacy for migrants and their families ignores many of the nuances attached to culturally-specific emotions and modes of intimacy, particularly the ways that these are expressed in practical and economic terms. By attending to these cultural specificities, I have demonstrated how the translocal field of intimacy my respondents inhabit elaborates on previous co-present relations – forms of extended family kinship – in which economic exchanges, local mobility, and intimacy are deeply entangled. In contrast to the care chains approach, my analysis has shown that, within this distinctive translocal field of intimacy, emotional nurturing and economic provision are not separable, nor is emotional labour gendered as feminine.

For my respondents, caring relationships have always taken on practical, transactional forms. The content and gendered roles involved in these forms of caring are not, however, the universals anticipated within the care chains approach. Instead, a specific translocal emotional grammar sustains intimacy and directs flows of value home for migrants. In Alicia and Aldo’s case, this involves highly localized family relations and gender roles that complicate the nuclear family universals underpinning the care chains approach. The work of caring – the showing and sharing of feeling Aldo discusses – is equally expected of men as fathers, brothers, and uncles. Thus,

we cannot describe relations within this extended family as an instance of the export of female labour through a commodity chain localized in the household. Instead, Alicia and Aldo's extended family instantiates a globalised innovation within Godelier's (1975) 'kinship mode of production'. This is not household production, per se, but a sharing mechanism which ensures a kin group, writ large, access to the means of production over a wide area, securing livelihood where local conditions are (cash) poor. Here, the extended family is much more than simply another 'rent-seeking' actor like the finance companies or employment agents who are positioned to appropriate the surplus generated through migrant workers. Intimate family relations expressed and maintained by economic exchanges form the ground for migrant subjectivities, as these subjectivities are revealed through the emotions of migrants.

Alicia and Aldo's extended family represents arguably represents much more than a care 'chain'. Indeed, in this case the care chains analysis - with its emotional and cultural universals - would obscure what is an emergent sociocultural form of translocal living now reshaping rural Asia. This form is a rhizomatic space that extends through several nations and where gifts, loans, and small-scale investments circulate through a kinship mode of production. My respondents mediate their connections across this space, 'showing', and 'sharing feeling' through the local emotional grammar of *iliw* and new ways of creating shared stories enabled by technology. Within this new emotional field, we find new and distinctive forms of agency and subjectivity produced through long-distance emotional connections. As Callon and Law (2004, p.10) observe, agency and subjectivity have to do with emotion: they see mobile phone text messages 'about nothing' as ways of 'making materials for extending and enriching subjectivities'. In the forms of constant contact - text messages and calls - through which my respondents assuage *iliw* and 'show'

and ‘share feeling’, both migrants and non-migrants alike are recreating themselves as global versions of an Ifugao subject.

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Notes

1. Siblings are defined as the other children of one or both of one’s parents.
2. Grandparents are defined as the biological parents (or current partners) of one’s biological parent or that parent’s current partner. Aunts and uncles are the biological siblings or half-siblings of one’s parents and of one’s grandparents. The classification of aunt or uncle is sometimes extended to cousins (usually first cousins, but sometimes more distant) of parents and, on a ‘fictive kin’ basis, to close – but un-related – family friends.
3. I have been a regular visitor since 1992.

4. The English word 'love' as used to describe interpersonal connection does not translate directly into Adyangan Ifugao either. Instead, the verb used is *penhod* – which means 'like' or 'appreciate' and is often used with food, clothes etc.
5. In his Ilokano dictionary, Geladé (1993, p.244) defines *iliw* as longing, homesickness, nostalgia. *Maiiw* – the verb – means 'to remember with affection' (as in an absent friend, relatives, etc.); 'to long for', 'to long to see'; 'to visit' (an absent friend, etc.); 'to be homesick, nostalgic'.
6. Aldo has apparently taken on the obligation of calling in himself, rather than at the request of his employer. As a result, Aldo was able to spend several afternoons with me and show me through his migrant version of Hong Kong, while I was only able to interview Alicia twice.
7. Aldo's comments echo Pribilsky's (2004) finding that Ecuadorean migrant households develop new emotional grammars for parental care.
8. Parreñas locates her study site in Region VI, so it is possibly the metropolitan area of Iloilo on the island of Panay.

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