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Stigmatized Love, Boundary-Making, and the Heroic Love Myth: Filipina Women Constructing Relationships with US Military Men Within and Beyond the Legal Framework

Love is a central theme of our popular culture... It is also one of the richest sources of the pervasive folk culture of gossip, commiseration, confession and advice-giving...Love also provokes moral deliberation...Thus, from a sociologist's point of view, love is a perfect place to study culture in action (Swidler 2001: 2).

As Swidler (2001) notes, love captures our imagination. In film, television, books and art, relationships are created, broken, maintained and redefined through different conceptions of what it means to love and be in love. I use Goffman's (1963) concept of stigma as a discredited or discrediting attribute that emerges out of interactions to focus on relationships where love is stigmatized by outsiders. I examine how people construct these relationships, and see culture as a 'toolkit' of discourses, logics, myths, and practices that people strategically but inconsistently use (DiMaggio 1997; Swidler 1986). Similar to Swidler (2001), I see 'love' as socially and culturally constructed and use how people talk about love, relationships, and marriage to study 'culture in action.' I refer to stigmatized love as occurring whenever a relationship is judged by outsiders as negative, and these judgments are based on the visible characteristics of the people in the relationship. One pairing that evokes this stigma is that of US military men who are stationed overseas and local women. These relations are often framed as illicit encounters based on sex work.

In Southeast Asia, these relationships were most visible during the Vietnam War, where there were over 3.4 million US military personnel deployed in Southeast Asia from 1964-1975 (US Department of Veterans Affairs 2014). Trailing them and their respective military bases were red light districts providing illicit entertainment. There, in the shadow of the bases, an estimated 23,000 to 52,000 Amerasian children—those with US military fathers and local mothers—were born in the Philippines alone (Gastardo-Conaco and Sobritchea 1999, Montes 1995). Yet not all of the relations between military men and local women were characterized by acts of prostitution. Sometimes relatively more durable and long-term relationships were created and maintained. Indeed, marriage to US military personnel has been one key migration pathway to Southeast Asian women since the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hidalgo and Bankston III 2008). Although these pairs take different forms (prostitution, girlfriend, spouse), each is a type of *intimate relationship*, one where 'interactions within them depend on particularized knowledge received, and attention provided by, at least one person—knowledge and attention that are not widely available to third parties' (Zelizer 2005: 14-15).

This chapter provides an empirical examination of how Filipina women construct their intimate relationships with US military men, and compares marriage migrants with those 'left behind' when the US military withdrew from their permanent bases in the Philippines. First, I'll situate the case in theories on interracial love and marriage. Second, I outline my data and

analytic approach. Following this, I focus on my findings. I show how the women talked about the base through the lens of childhood nostalgia. This is important to understand to contextualize their views of US servicemen and provide the backdrop from which these relationships were formed. Next, I show how they draw on love myths to frame their relationships and draw symbolic boundaries around their own relationship and others that may seem similar. Finally, I discuss how they further embraced their familial roles of wife and mother. Being legally or informally married to a US serviceman shapes a woman's role in her family. Their childhood memories and current conceptions of motherhood and as a wife are interconnected with how they see their relationships with these men.

Interracial Love

Some scholars use the number of interracial marriages in a society as a signal of assimilation and racial harmony (Qian and Lichter 2011), while others document how different types of interracial relationships have been regulated and/or subject to opposition from families and outsiders (Moran 2001, Childs 2005). Military-based interracial relationships, where US servicemen are stationed abroad and the women are locals, have an additional layer of stigma. These relationships not only cross racial and national boundaries; they are also seen as being rooted in acts of prostitution. We also know that sexual politics within and surrounding overseas bases serve as the structural foundation of the US military and reflect relationships of power, dependency, and exploitation (Enloe 2000), and that women of varied Asian nationalities who are in these relationships and live in the US are often racialized, have few resources, and face difficult socio-cultural adjustments (Glenn 1986).

More recent work complicates these relationships. For example, Constable (2003) shows how Western men and Asian women in correspondence relationships—those started through pen pal relationships—each draw on different ‘cultural logics of love and desire’ and ‘global imaginations’ to make particular decisions about *who* to marry, *when*, and *why*, while Yuh (2002) paints a portrait of the complex negotiations that Korean military wives make while living in the US. This chapter follows in the footsteps of these scholars, and others, who highlight women's agency and relate their choices to socio-structural conditions (Constable 2005). Rejecting reductionist arguments that see these women as passive victims, I seek to examine how these women construct their relationships in subtle and complex ways, and link these relationships to the political economy, history, and ‘global imaginaries’ of desire, love, and relationships (Constable 2003: 30). Indeed, my findings of isolation and love are not new. Neither are the differences between imaginations and reality of life abroad for Southeast Asian marriage migrants (Suzuki 2005). I draw on and extend previous work by applying Swidler's (2001) analytic lens to examine how these women use culture, in the form of love myths, to talk about their relationships, and show how they use internal boundary-making strategies (Lamont and Molnar 2002, Wimmer 2013) to differentiate their relationships from similar ones.

Data and Analytic Approach

Data derive from 17 interviews of Filipina women, collected between 2005 and 2007. One set are Filipina migrants in the US, while women in the other set continue to reside in the Philippines. Seven interviews were conducted across the US in Seattle, WA, Columbus, OH, Cincinnati, OH, and in the Southeast Michigan area, and 10 were conducted in Angeles City, Philippines—home of the former US Clark Air Force Base. In the US, participants were recruited with flyers to organizational listservs and through personal acquaintances. In the

Philippines, I made contact with a specific organization dedicated to helping Amerasian children. Participants were mothers of Amerasian children and members of this organization. Interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to three and a half hours, with one and one half hour as the average length of time. While this chapter is based on a small number of interviews, and is not generalizable to all Filipina women involved with US military men, these interviews allow me to explore how different women use culture—love myths, memories, and discourses—to talk about their relationships with foreign men.

Although they have very different sets of current life circumstances, I compare Filipina marriage migrants to the US with Filipina women in the Philippines for a number of reasons. First, they provide an ideal type of comparison of women in seemingly similar situations: relationships with US servicemen. Although the circumstances in which the women met these men may differ, it provides as close to a ‘natural experiment’ as possible. Second, the women actively compare themselves with the women in the other group and use them as a framing device to situate and understand their own lives. Investigating how each group understands not only their own group but also their comparison group is important. These women are not isolated from one another. Rather, they are transnationally and discursively connected through their relationships with US servicemen. Finally, the comparison also allows me to investigate concepts of marriage beyond its legal definition. As a legal contract, people within a marriage have certain rights, though these rights vary by country and do not stop abuse from occurring. That women use this discursive framework raises important questions: what does it mean when they describe these encounters as ‘marriages’? What does this tell us about how they actively construct their relationships, and the context in which they live? To analyse the data, I use a cultural and relational approach, paying close attention to how the women spoke about relationships and the boundaries they draw between themselves and others (Zelizer 2005; Lamont and Molnar 2002; Wimmer 2013). I heed Wimmer’s (2013) call to pay attention to the varied strategies people use to draw boundaries among those who share similar backgrounds (42).

In any research that involves talking to people, we should practice reflexivity—being aware of our own social position and how it influences interactions with participants. I have a Filipina grandmother who was raised in Olongapo City, which surrounded the former US Subic Bay Naval Base, and she migrated to the US through marriage to an US serviceman whom she met there. To try and mitigate the power differentials in the interviews, I shared my family’s stories when the women shared something that paralleled my family’s experience. Although the women might have not been sincere in their accounts, I have no reason to believe they were not, since they narrated positive and negative experiences, presenting complex and at times contradicting explanations, something we know occurs without the added stigma of interracial military marriages (Swidler 2001). While my revelation and connection also shapes the direction of what is said and what is not said, I noticed that after my disclosure, the women elaborated on their stories. They often referred to my grandmother’s experience later in the interview, explaining how it was similar or different to their own, thus providing additional insight that may not have been evident without my disclosure. Additionally, in my experience, there is room and support for both pro- and anti-US military discourses in the Philippines. I was often told anti-US sentiments by various activists, academics, and at least one of the women. Thus, when speaking with me, there is not necessarily pressure for the women to account for these relationships using one ideology over another.

Nostalgia for the base

Within the Philippines the United States is represented as the ‘land of unlimited opportunity.’ Indeed, Filipino migrants are often motivated to find work abroad to provide and care for their families (Parrenas 2005). As Imee, the only interviewee who migrated to the US on a non-marriage visa in 1976, states she moved to the US to ‘make more money, [and] have better food’ and migrated to have a chance at a better life. Many of these beliefs infiltrate broader Philippine society (Espiritu 2003), and my interviewees made a link between the ability to provide for their families and US citizenship via marriage to US servicemen. Living within the sight of the bases, the women I interviewed had extensive and up-close exposure to US citizens, their practices, discourses, and technological capabilities. One reoccurring theme in my interviews was nostalgia for the base from their childhood memories. For the women who grew up, or relocated to be near the bases, there was a stark contrast between the poverty of their lives—where in the province, outside major cities, homes often lack running water—and the vast wealth that the imposing US military ships represented. Tessa, a 65 year old marriage migrant who lived in the US Midwest with five Amerasian children, described the ships she saw as a child, ‘We went to the base and there was a lot of ship. Oh, so exciting to see a lot of big ship. You won’t get tired of it to see it.’ Maria, a self-professed prostitute in her forties who lives in the Philippines and has two children—one of which is Amerasian—recounted her experience as a little girl, ‘Maybe I was 6 or 7 or something. I run at the hill and then there was a fence and that was the base. Then whenever we go there, every afternoon...[US servicemen] said ‘Hey ma’am’ [I replied] ‘Give me candy! Give me candy!’ that’s what we do, all the time [laughs] They give us food, candy.’

She also told me how ‘When I was young, I told myself, when I get married...I wanna have an American kid. A beautiful—because I think, when I was young, I really... just like the base there...I got a chance to talk to the kids, the American kids and I got a friend. Every....like Sat-Sun, we go talk to them. Sometimes I cook and give it to them. They like me. Sometimes, during Christmas time, they give me a present or they give me a box of clothes, shampoo ... everything, and food. And they say share it to your family and I say ok.’ These positive images and interactions, and the vast resources available to the US servicemen spurred her to desire an ‘American kid,’ not a Filipino child.

Aura, a 47 year-old who had her Amerasian son when she was 19 years old, is skeptical about government officials, researchers, and lawyers trying to help Amerasian children because ‘during campaign[s] [they] say will help Amerasians, but once in office, nothing.’ She, and others like her, received no help; nothing changed after politicians seeking their votes get elected. In regards to the promises her son’s father made her, she told me how ‘Americans talk bullshit, make promise, promise, but never go thru with it; [they] don’t mean it.’ Her current understanding and rejection of US citizens reflects the experience she had in her relationship and in working at a club in Angeles City. Yet, she still told me that when she was little she ‘hope[d] to marry an American’ and wanted ‘to go to the States’ when she was younger. She dreamed of escaping the poverty in which she lived for a land of ‘better opportunities.’

The US military represented a break from poverty, a place where they could get food, candy, and other things that they may not have at home. Many of the women also had ties to the US through relatives or friends who had US husbands, who often would provide for their families still in the Philippines. Their accounts of their relationships, their romanticism of the military bases, and even the stigmas they faced while in these relationships tie back to this good will and stark contrast between poverty/wealth and Filipinos/Americans they witnessed growing up.

Constructing these relationships

The women I interviewed, both those in the US and in the Philippines, constructed their relationships by differentiating them from relationships that may seem similar. The women I spoke with in the Philippines conceptualized their relationships with these men as a type of marriage, regardless of whether they were legally married. Even self-confessed prostitutes or ‘bar girls’ described them in these terms. For example, Maria initially worked as a cashier at a bar, when a friend of hers, who thought she worked as a bar girl, introduced her to a US airman stationed at Clark. She subsequently became pregnant, and told me that she felt as though she was trapped and forced into an abortion. Afterwards, she continued working at the bar, this time as a prostitute, meeting US servicemen from both Subic and Clark. In the hotel where she worked, she and the other women would line up in front of the foreign men who were new to the area, and these men would choose a woman from the lineup. She told me that she’s had four men ask for her hand in marriage, and described one ‘marriage’ she had with a US Marine. ‘We got um...like marriage ceremony in Olongapo, and everything, I got wedding ring. All of the sudden, he’s seeing another Filipino, and then he’s cheating on me. And I don’t like that, and I say ‘no marry anymore!’’ When I ask for clarification on whether they were married or planning on getting married, she responds:

Yeah, we’re planning. Because I always trying, his relatives in the States know me already, and we are working on our paper work [to migrate to the US]. And then all of the sudden, we’re not married yet, and he’s cheating on me. And he’s lying to me too! He said he’s gotta go [on tour of duty, outside the Philippines] and then I said ‘ok.’ I took him to the airport, but he’s still here!... That night, I went out with my friends...And we go out to this one bar that we always go. And then he was there—with another girl! I was mad! I said no more marriage. I don’t want to marry you anymore!

And that was the end of her marriage to that Marine. Yet, she also describes this instance as one of many times US military men asked her to marry them. Marriage, to her and others, is one way to describe these sexual relationships. Sometimes they are short-term encounters, but often they are relatively more long-term and sustaining for as long as the man is in the Philippines—whether weeks, months, or years at a time. It encompasses a sexual *commitment* or exclusivity for the duration of the relationship. Marriage is described as a choice and commitment.

How are legal and informal conceptions of marriage tied to love? Similar to the middle-class, White Americans in Swidler’s (2001) study who simultaneously and contradictorily drew on two love myths: one that was all-encompassing and one that was a choice that required commitment and work, the Filipina women I interviewed drew on similar competing conceptions of love as destiny and explicit choice. Tessa described her first love and why she chose to marry her now ex-husband, who was not her first love, in similar terms to the prosaic-realism myth of choice: ‘I want to marry Bob because he can give me my dream.’ Ron, her first love, asked her why she was marrying Bob, and she told him ‘Cause I have a dream that I have to get out of here and want to see the world. Which, you told me you cannot provide it.’ She said he asked ‘Is love not enough for you?’ and she replied ‘At this time, no it’s not. Now, I want to see my dream first before anything else.’

She elaborates why she made this choice and how difficult it has been:

... I think about [Ron] more often when I get divorce with my husband...I always think about [Ron], he's my first love. But I didn't get it... I know he loves me, but I guess you can't get everything. But...I still think I love him the rest of my life...I guess until I die. I still, he's still in my mind, still in my heart. He broke my heart...I guess it's my fault...I guess he's not ready to commit himself. So for the first person that propose to me, I grab the opportunity. I get what I want. I travel the world, but I didn't get the person that I love. So...I got my dream. I went everywhere since I married my ex-husband, I went everywhere: cruising, see the world. But I guess I'm not really happy because I didn't get the man that I love. It's my fault. I have to live with that...it's my fault. But I have to see my dream first. Okay. To see how, how's the other country look like, but I'm not happy.

Tessa explicitly disentangled love from action, where without action, love is not enough. She felt the unhappiness that came with her choice, but the legal marriage provided her an opportunity to escape the poverty in which she lived, where her family home did not even have running water. To her, the fulfillment of her dreams, and being rescued from poverty trumped feelings that were not accompanied by action. Despite acknowledging that her love for another was more emotional, she chose the love she had with her now ex-husband—and the emotional love that she knew he felt for her—because it was accompanied by a specific action: taking her out of the Philippines.

A key difference between the White middle-class Americans and the women in my research is the role of the 'hero' or 'saviour.' The women in my study weaved love myths similar to Swidler's (2001) bourgeois (love as all-consuming) and prosaic-realism (love as choice) myths with an additional one that I call the heroic love myth. Similar to what Constable (2003) refers to as an imagined 'fairy tale' that Filipina and Chinese women use to describe possible relationships with US men, this heroic love myth is rooted in the notion of a saviour. In their construction of love, the men play a very specific role, one in which these women pin their hopes and dreams of being taken out of poverty and being provided a better life in the United States, 'the land of opportunity.' Although Tessa does not describe her love and marriage using the terms 'rescue,' 'hero,' or 'saviour,' wanting someone to take her away from the Philippines, fulfill her dreams and provide a better live reflect the very themes of the rescuing narrative and heroic love myth. This is a common theme for those who were 'saved'—the marriage migrants—even if they do not explicitly describe the beginning of their relationships in those terms. This is also true for those who were abandoned, where these myths ultimately failed. For example, Danielle, a 40 year-old former entertainment dancer in Clark and in Japan with one Amerasian daughter and one Filipina daughter, weaved the bourgeois love myth with the stigma that accompanied her relationship with her boyfriend Tim. She described to me her feelings regarding the failure of the hero and bourgeois myths:

The only thing that got me hurt was... when he came back to the Philippines he told something about me in his family and...the one thing that got me hurt was, his *lola* [grandmother]...don't want him to marry a Filipina...Cause you know...Americans, not all Americans, they think that Filipina just use American to go to the States. But that's always they think, about Filipinas who marry American...His *lola* told him if he's gonna marry me...[she'll] [d]isown him ... If he chose me ... It's in my mind, what he say about his family about me...But I never told him, never asked him to marry me. If he wants to marry me, he'll marry me, right. But...I just found out later, when I got pregnant, that he left the Philippines then. He doesn't really love me at all. If he really loves me, he'll fight for me, right?

Tim's grandmother's opposition to the relationship—which mimicked a common stereotype that Filipinas used the US men they married to migrate abroad and did not love them

—left a deep impression on Danielle. It permeated her thoughts and from Danielle’s point of view, continued to shape their relationship long after the incident occurred. She felt as though she could not tell Tim that his grandmother’s comments hurt her. Danielle wanted to believe in the power of the bourgeois love that she and Tim shared. However, Tim never returned or fulfilled his promises, and she eventually married a Japanese man who she said accepted her. She and her daughter moved to Japan to be with him. However, her marriage to the Japanese man did not work out due to, she said, communication and cultural issues. She told me that, to her friends, she makes jokes about eventually meeting someone to marry, someone to provide and ‘save’ her, but she thinks that it’s too late.¹ Like the previously described women who spoke of their childhood nostalgia for the former base and linked this to their desire to marry a US serviceman and/or have American children, Danielle lost faith in the bourgeois and heroic love myths that she previously craved.

The basis of this heroic love myth is rooted in colonialism. A common saying is that the Philippines ‘spent 400 years in the convent, and 50 years in Hollywood,’ referring to the Catholicization of the Philippines under Spanish rule, which was followed by US colonialism and the permeation of US popular culture throughout the land. These legacies continue to influence Philippine modern society. Today, the strata reflects differences in race/ethnicity, wealth, and skin color, with light-skinned Filipinos with Spanish ancestry at the top, Chinese-Filipinos dominating industry, and dark-skinned indigenous Filipinos at the bottom; lighter—*puting* or white—skin is idealized and seen as a standard of beauty (Francia 2010; Karnow 1989). The US-Philippine relationship continues to be structurally unequal. For example, in 2012 the US accounted for over 10 percent of imports, over 12 percent of exports to the Philippines,² and the Philippines received \$129,434,000 in nonmilitary aid and \$27,000,000 in US military aid.³ US popular culture, media, goods, services, and mythos also permeate the country, from Coca Cola products being sold at *sari-sari* stores (small vendors) to US movies in the theaters and English used in school, media, and as a language of the rich. Remittances from family members working in the US (and other countries) are common (e.g. Parrenas 2001). This financial security is one benefit to marriage to a US serviceman, as is the possibility of US citizenship and US migration for family members. Taken together, these practices further a mythos of America as a ‘land of opportunity and wealth.’ The varied influences of Hollywood continue to reverberate in the daily lives of Filipinos.

Boundary-making among those ‘abandoned’ by heroes

Zelizer (2005) describes relational work as ‘the establishment of differentiated social ties, their maintenance, their reshaping, [and] their distinction from other relations’ (35), and Lamont and Molnar (2002) describe boundary-making strategies, as how actors ‘define themselves in opposition to one another’ (185). The Filipina women I interviewed drew symbolic boundaries between themselves and ‘others’ in similar relationships who may ‘deserve’ the associated stigma. For the women still in the Philippines, one signal they use to delineate boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is the birth certificate—whether the man signed it and acknowledged his

¹ The concept of women ‘being saved’ by foreign men is not new, see Spivak (1994)

² For data on imports and exports: Observatory of Economic Complexity at the MIT Media Lab: <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/explore/tree map/hs/export/phl/show/all/2012/>, last accessed August 4, 2014.

³ Nonmilitary aid: <http://usoda.eads.usaidallnet.gov/query/do>, Military aid: <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/sat/c14560.htm>, last accessed August 4, 2014.

paternity. Corazon, who has one Amerasian daughter and two Filipino children, met Hugh, a Black American, in 1977. They dated or ‘married’ and Corazon experienced a double stigma—perceptions of prostitution and judgments that her relations were with a *Black*, not White, American. She encountered people who questioned her choices ‘Why not White? Why did you mess up with a Black American?’ Since her Amerasian daughter is light-skinned, people also questioned her daughter’s paternity.

Hugh told her not to worry about what others were saying. He pointed out that his father is Black and his mother is White, and he has sisters that appear White. He uses his family’s spectrum of color to account for the discrepancy between the skin color of their daughter and himself. Skin color was not an issue for him. Hugh also told her ‘I’m not stupid to sign and give her all my credential when I know that’s not my daughter.’ He was willing to sign the birth certificate because he did not question whether he is the father. The birth certificate is a legal document ‘proving’ paternity, and a man’s willingness to sign it is used as evidence of a meaningful relationship and his kindness and concern for his children. Carmen, who met her Black, mixed race US boyfriend in 1982, also told me that her daughter ‘knows her dad,’ and that he was in her life for her first two years. This, she asserted, demonstrates the depth of their relationship, that it was not a one-time occurrence. In contrast, Danielle encountered Tim’s lack of knowledge regarding the Civil Code of the Philippines⁴ when Tim questioned her on why Nancy did not have his last name. The birth certificate and a father’s and mother’s recognition of legitimate or illegitimate children come with very specific rights for the child, including but not limited to rights related to surnames and financial support. However, it does not hold any guarantees to enforcing that financial support.

The US recognizes the rights of Amerasian children born in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, and Burma during the Vietnam War. However, the Philippines is not included in any of these Acts because it was not in a combat zone; rather, it served as a logistical and maintenance hub and as a rest and relaxation (R&R) destination for military personnel (e.g. 1982 Amerasian Act aka Public Law 97-359). This means that the women and Amerasian children the US men ‘left behind’ are at the mercy of the father and whether he wants to grant recognition and support. One of the benefits of this recognition is that it serves as a pathway of migration and US citizenship. If the father is willing to apply for a Consular Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States of America (CRBA), a document used to provide proof of US citizenship, the Amerasian child will be a legal US citizen and benefit from all the rights it confers, including a US passport and entry into the US. Furthermore, since family reunification is one major avenue of immigration, it opens up possibilities for their mother’s migration.

Migration to the US is one reason why Eden, the 42 year-old adoptive mother of Chad continues to try and locate his biological father. Chad was found abandoned and sick as a baby, and the then 23 year-old, single Eden adopted him, though informally and without any documentation. She told me that when Chad was brought to her, he did not have any clothes. He also had the measles and was dying. She said that he ‘belongs’ in the US because he is Amerasian. He’s an American and should be there, not in Angeles City where he experiences discrimination by his peers and their families because of his heritage. In 2002, Eden found out she had the first of two cancers she would be diagnosed with. In 2006, at the time of our interview, she said that she forgoes her medication—which costs 20,000 Philippine pesos (or \$500) a month—to feed and clothe Chad. Part of her desire to find Chad’s biological father and

⁴ E.g., Title VIII of the Philippine Civil Code: <http://www.chanrobles.com/civilcodeofthephilippinesbook1.htm>, and the Chapter VI of the Philippine Family Code: <http://www.chanrobles.com/executiveorderno209.htm#VOt1TC7Ygrg>, all last accessed February 22, 2015

for Chat to migrate to the US is for him to find his heritage and not be on the receiving end of discrimination. However, in the US, Filipinos are racialized and discriminated against and Chad, who knows very few English words and is dark-skinned, would face a different kind of discrimination if he ever migrated. Finding his biological father is also about access to resources, and a chance for him to have a better life; she worries what will happen to him when she passes away, something she knows will be relatively soon.

Many of the women ‘left behind’ also differentiated themselves and the marriage migrants by attributing each’s fate to *luck*, be it good or bad. All except one of the women in the Philippines stated that their friends and family members who were able to marry an American and migrate to the States were ‘lucky,’ because it is seen as a move to a better life. Similar to the case of legal recognition of Amerasian Filipino children, marriage to a US citizen opened up the possibility of becoming a US citizen, with all the accompanying rights. It also allowed the women who migrated through marriage to send remittances back to their family in the Philippines, and in some cases, bring their family members to the US. Marriage migration is imagined as offering a life free from the poverty many face in the Philippines, and an opportunity to provide financial security to their family—this is in contrast to the relative inequality and hardships immigrants face while abroad.

Many of the women in Angeles City also often stated that ‘bad luck’ was the root of most of their dilemmas, including poverty, relationships with men, and the stigmas they face in the community. Corazon noted that her daughter was lucky because, although her father was part Black American, people often remarked that she was pretty. Therefore, in Corazon’s view, her daughter was immune to discrimination. Luck becomes the key determinant of fate. Almost every aspect—from appearance to having the father sign the birth certificate—is the result of luck, not the structural constraints they face.

Boundary-making among those ‘saved’ by heroes

How do the women who were ‘saved’ by the heroes construct their relationships? The women I interviewed in the US drew boundaries between themselves and ‘those women’—the women who were left behind and assumed to be prostitutes, and those who used Americans to migrate to the US and do not show enough gratitude to their husbands. Aileen and Angie, both in their 60s, were two of the four wives I interviewed together. They are married to US naval seamen, and move wherever their husbands were stationed. At the time of the interview, both lived in Seattle, which had a small community of similar couples—Filipina women married to US servicemen—because of the domestic military bases stationed there.

Aileen: This, this this, I will tell you; that, those women who are doing such a thing, you know where they associate from. Because I know them, I’ve been around those kind of women. Those kind of women, they come over here and they are grateful. But some of them, they are used to the lifestyle in the Philippines, that they can’t help it. They keep on doing it. Cause we’re military people, we know. Whether the civilians, we don’t know, but military women, most of them, 99% of them, where did they come from? Out of the bar, Olongapo or the bars from Clark Field...Some of them have a little bit of a decent background, not all of them.

Angie: It all depends on what kind of helping, like she doesn’t know how to drive, I taught her how to drive and get her driver’s license. After she gets her driver’s license, she cheating on her husband. And the husband killed himself, but before he did it, before he shot himself, he go in the house; got three children. But still, she got the insurance. She was doing well after the husband pass away. But that’s no way how to return the kindness of your husband.

To outsiders, these women presumably also have a stigma of prostitution clinging to their relationships. Yet, they drew distinct boundaries between themselves and ‘those other’ women. They judged women, who unlike themselves, had to ‘use’ the men to migrate to the US. They maintain that, unlike ‘those’ women, they could have migrated to the US without their husbands. ‘Those’ women are of questionable moral character. For the particular woman they referenced, they judged her for going out to clubs, cheating on her husband, and not showing him proper gratitude. Imee, who lives in the Midwest and is not part of a military community like the women I interviewed in Seattle, similarly asserts that ‘those women’ ‘come here married somebody, take their husband for granted and if they are Navy and are assigned to different places, the girl go[es] bar-hopping [while her husband is away].’

Tessa, who earlier explicitly described her marriage as a choice and a way to leave the Philippines and migrate to the US, is one of these women who are judged by Aileen and Angie. She experienced similar judgment by the women in the Filipino American Ohio community in which she lived. In reaction to the stigma she faced, she described those who judged her as ‘stuck up’ who only cared about ‘bragging’ about their husband’s occupation and ‘showing off’ their wealth with expensive purchases. She drew moral boundaries and judged them for improperly, and too conspicuously, displaying the wealth afforded by their own marriages. She also maintained strict adherence to expectations around marriage. She told me how she re-met Ron, the ‘love of her life’ during her marriage to Bob:

Well, I saw [Ron] before... But he’s trying to talk to me, but I said ‘No, I’m married.’ He said he knows, but he doesn’t care. But I said, ‘No, I do.’ But I know in my heart, my heart is crying for him. But I don’t do that kind of thing. When you’re married, you’re married. So, you don’t cheat your husband or anything. I know I’m not... I’m a Catholic but I don’t follow my religion, but I know it’s wrong. But, I told him. I told him that it’s not over, that I still think about him, but I can’t deal with him because I’m married. That’s the last time I saw him.

She rejected Ron, despite her deep feelings for him, in part because it is morally wrong. She could not leave her husband because of her marital vow. Cheating, that is, involving herself romantically and/or intimately with Ron, was also not an option for her, even though the reality of her marriage to Bob and her life in the US fell drastically short of her expectations.

Embracing familial roles

Women like Maria, the self-professed bar girl, also noted the disparities between their childhood dreams and visions of the US, and their actual experiences with US servicemen, which included prostitution, lost love, abandonment, and the lingering stigma associated with these sexual relations. Their Amerasian children are the most visible reminder of an assumed illicit relationship. One way women still in the Philippines deal with these disparities is to further embrace their familial role as a mother. My interview with Maria took place inside her home, while her daughter was there. Whenever we began talking about anything related to her daughter’s father she would tell her daughter to leave or gesture with her eyes to her daughter, indicating an unwillingness to discuss this in front of her. It was her way of protecting her daughter from Maria’s past and anything that may emotionally hurt her daughter.

Similarly, Danielle moved back home after she became pregnant with Tim’s daughter. She told me how she endured the humiliation she felt when her father refused to speak to her because of her out-of-wedlock pregnancy to give her daughter a better life and for her to have a

relationship with her grandparents. Nancy has epilepsy. Although Danielle's parents continued to support Danielle and Nicole by sending them money after they moved to the US, it does not cover basic necessities because Nancy's medicine is expensive, so Danielle works as an unofficial real estate agent, and for the Amerasian organization in which I met her.

Danielle also laughed and teased Nancy because Nancy had dreams to appear on *Star Struck*, a national singing competition, enter beauty pageants, and try out for her school's dance competitions. Danielle told me that she teased her daughter not to be mean, but rather to try and manage Nancy's expectations, because her epilepsy—and the inconsistent treatment of her epilepsy due to medical costs—limits what Nancy is able to accomplish in life. Danielle and Nancy often get into arguments because Danielle also wants to protect Nancy from similar 'bad' decisions that Danielle made. It was only after Danielle read Nancy's diary, where she wrote 'I want to die, my Mama get mad at me. I don't even know my dad. My Mama don't tell me,' that Danielle cried and said she understood her daughter better.

Those 'saved' also have to deal with the contrast between their romanticized images of the US prior to their move and the loneliness and isolation they experienced. They also do so by embracing their familial role of wife and mother. For example, Lisa is a 53 year-old Filipina who is married to a George, a Black seaman she met at the former US Subic Bay Naval Base. They live in a small Midwest town that is mostly White, and have two dark-skinned teenage daughters that Lisa tried to teach Filipino culture, including food, courting practices, and language. For Lisa, there were three key surprises upon her move to the US. First, is that even the US's built environment and class structure did not live up to her imagination. 'Oh my god, it's very different...the thing that we always imagine America, because they see the pictures of the New York building, Chicago, all the nice, beautiful things. But then I realize that it's just like the same, back home. That there is this rich people and there's just poor people.'

The second was the very real impact that race has in her US life. Although the Philippines' stratification system is built on socio-economic status and a gradient color line that has ties to US and Spanish colonialism, for Lisa, there was no such thing as 'race.' She and her family were color-blind, and she was raised to see 'people' and 'not color,' but that was challenged when she migrated to the US. She discovered that people at her various jobs 'assume[d] that because you're Asian or Filipino that you don't have that kind of knowledge or you're not capable of learning' and that she was judged for her marriage.

There are people out there that are very critical who you are, where you come from, they do judge you... there are those Filipinos who are, what do you call it? Hypocritical, high class, whatever, they look down upon that. But I don't never, never, never, never get that in my thing, because I feel like the only, I am very grateful and thankful, ...like I said, I always, probably people they are one looking at me asking who in the heck, excuse my language, she is, that she's only married to Black. That's probably I heard a lot of that probably, in my back... Because they do look upon, when you are married to a military, they all assume that you all came from the same background, where they call it you know, where you just meet the American by the bar and everything ... they will look down upon you because you are different race and like I said, they assume right away, that's how you met. But, uh, what do they call that...bar? Bar [girl], yeah. So, some people that's how they met them, but not all of it.

Like Corazon, one of the women 'left behind,' the context of Lisa's love is doubly stigmatized: for the associations her marriage has with prostitution, and for her husband being a Black, and not White, American. However, once she was here in the US, she found commonality with her husband's family, saying 'I found out that his family is just like mine. The way they

believe in, they have the same family...And they send money, and they give money, the same tradition I was in. Like I said, the only difference is the color and the hair.' The cultural practices in terms of family care-taking was similar to what she's experienced in the Philippines, and her sisters-in-law provided company and comfort, teaching her to cook and making sure she could find the goods and services needed. Even women such as Carmen, who has one Amerasian daughter and still lives in the Philippines noted this similarity when she said that the Black American she was with, 'He is like Filipino' with regard to food and interactions.

Finally, Lisa experienced an isolation she did not expect. She felt isolated from her husband because she knew him for only six months before they married. She also felt isolated because although she learned English, there were still language barriers. She told me '[F]or a long long time I was quiet in our marriage because I do not understand a lot of those things...[for example] Where we call it 'Where is the comfort room?' Here, 'Where is the john?'" Additionally, when she first saw the house they currently live in, she fell in love, and it was not until later that she realized the consequences of where they moved—a place with no military base, no relatives on either side of the family, and where there were heavy winters, something unfamiliar to her.

Although her husband's family did mediate the loneliness, they didn't live in the same state, so their helpfulness is limited. One way to address this loneliness and missing her family and home in the Philippines was to solidify her commitment to George. 'All I ever wanted was to stay [in the Philippines]...[but] you have to just really commit yourself about you have a husband here in America, and then you have your own, you have to, like uh...take care of your family here.' She embraced her commitment as a wife to her husband first and foremost, and this commitment helped her combat the loneliness and longing she felt for what she considered her home and family in the Philippines

Similarly, Nita, in her late forties, has an Amerasian son with a US serviceman, Barry. She was in a relationship with him for three years before he was stationed in Hawaii, and when he left, she and her Amerasian son accompanied him. However, she knew they could never marry, because he was already married—to another Filipina who was living in the US After her three year-old son was in a car accident in Hawaii Nita returned to the Philippines and broke up with Barry. Later, his wife visited Olongapo City. While there, she confronted Nita. Nita told me about their conversation 'I don't know ... why she get mad, it's already happened. I talked to her nice, that I don't have no more relationship with your husband, maybe he can have my son...that's the only thing I want from him is that my son...so he can survive.' She said that Barry sent money for his son's education, but it stopped after his wife confronted Nita.

He's nice guy, he's not bad. Only he's married, but...he tried to help us too. But, my son, is his fault, he didn't go to school. He tried to send money to him, every month. I think...when he got trouble with his wife, and his wife is trying to fight him and gets all of his money. That's why I think...it's about 7 years we don't have any...contact...any...mail...you know. Never hear from each other. Even just for his son, you know. ... But...I think his wife...when she came over here...look for my son...and she try to fight with him. That's what happened. And then, he didn't send any letters or nothing. I didn't hear anything about him any more

Barry re-contacted Nita after he divorced his wife, but told her that his ex-wife took most of his money, so he could not financially support his son or Nita. For Nita, what was important that 'he

really accept his son...even give his name.’ Having her son’s last name mirror his father’s is important because to some extent it legitimizes her son, and by extension, her relationship with Barry.

Conclusion

In keeping with the book’s theme on international marriages in Southeast Asia, I focus on Filipina women who had intimate relationships with US servicemen in the Philippines. Drawing and extending the literature on ‘cross-border’ marriages between people of different nationalities (Constable 2005), I examine the meanings that Filipina women give to their relationships with US servicemen. This includes those marriage migrants who are or were legally married. It also includes those ‘left behind’ who have Amerasian children fathered by these men, and who actively construct these past relationships as a type of ‘marriage.’ To analyse these relationship discourses, I use Swidler’s (2001) analytic lens of culture and the literature on boundary-making (Lamont and Molnar 2002; Wimmer 2013).

I found that many of these women have nostalgia for the base that is rooted in their childhood memories, and influenced by legacies of US colonialism. The marriage migrants and those still in the Philippines also draw on the two love myths described in Swidler’s (2001) work, and talk about their relationships in a way that encompasses their hopes and dreams of leaving the Philippines through being rescued by a ‘hero’ or ‘saviour.’ Finally, each set of women drew distinct boundaries between themselves and those who appear to be in similar relationships. For the marriage migrants, it is distinguishing themselves from the bar girls, or prostitutes, who they see as women who used the US men to migrate, and do not demonstrate proper gratitude in their marriages. For the women in the Philippines, they take great care to delineate how their relationships were more meaningful than short-term acts of prostitution vis-à-vis, for example, the role of the birth certificate. Part of this desire for marriage to US military men stems from the link these women make between US citizenship via marriage and the ability to provide and care for their families. Both sets of women are able to achieve some version of their desires, whether via formal (marriage, US migration, and subsequent US citizenship) or informal (live-in or long-distance arrangements that provide material and/or emotional support) relationships.

Although the hero myth is familiar to both US and Philippine society—and is similar to what Constable (2003) calls an imagined ‘fairy tale’—I tie how Filipina women use this love myth when talking about their relationships with US men, and differentiating their love from other Filipinas in similar relationships with US servicemen. Future empirical work can compare how and when people draw on this myth and its varied meanings depending on national context. When are ‘heroes’ brought into our discourses about our lives? Why do people use it, what role do these figures play? This chapter also opens up another avenue for future systematic research on the meanings of love. Swidler’s (2001) work explicitly is about White American middle-class men and women drawing on White American middle-class cultural myths to describe their relationships. What happens in a relationship when each person’s myths are not rooted in the same culture? How does being an immigrant who uses his or her own country’s myths make sense of their relationships with US citizens in the US or conversely, US citizens making sense of their relationships with people of other nationalities, when living abroad? How do they transform and/or merge the competing and contradictory love myths of both nations? Additionally, stigma is something that these women face in their daily lives, yet, I have not shown precisely whether and/or how the role of stigma shaped their discourses. Future research

should examine how couples in similar relationships based on stigmatized love more explicitly understand and react to the stigmas they face.

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