The Transnational Institutionalization of the Ideal-Filipino-Hero of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Vancouver, Canada

by

Rincy Dominic C. Calamba

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Name:	**Rincy Dominic C. Calamba**
Degree:	**Master of Arts (Sociology)**
Title:	**The Transnational Institutionalization of the Ideal-Filipino-Hero of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Vancouver, Canada**
Committee:	**Chair: Amanda Watson** Assistant Professor, Sociology and Anthropology
	Evelyn Encalada Grez Supervisor Assistant Professor, Labour Studies | Sociology and Anthropology
	Cindy Patton Committee Member Professor Emeritus, Sociology and Anthropology
	May Farrales Committee Member Assistant Professor, Geography | Gender Sexuality, and Women's Studies
	Jessica Ticar Examiner Assistant Professor, School of Social Work Algoma University

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Abstract

“Diri sa Canada lawas jud imong kapital”

“Here in Canada, you are the capital.”

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Vancouver, Canada experience ongoing systematic conditioning processes that are rooted in Philippine colonial history. Utilizing a multi-ethnographic approach and a framework drawn from Berger and Luckmann’s concept of institutionalization and Foucault’s biopower, I rethink the Filipino labour diaspora and interrogate how empire, labour, and migration, shape Filipino trajectories. Existing scholarship has documented the structural and working conditions of Filipino labour migration; this research contributes by foregrounding how these arrangements between the Philippines and Canada are lived, internalized, and reproduced through the institutionalized subjectivities of the Filipino citizen, the ideal migrant, and the Bagong Bayani (new hero). These subjectivities sustain systemic inequalities, coerce joining the labour diaspora, and render OFWs more vulnerable to exploitation while glorifying their sacrifices as noble contributions to family and nation. I further discuss the agency and resistance of OFWs, who actively reimagine their subjectivities and challenge these neocolonial paradigms.

Keywords: Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs); Filipino labour diaspora; Neocolonialism; Migrant subjectivities; Biopower; Institutionalization; Bagong Bayani

To the Filipinos of the diaspora

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

"Living here in Canada. It's tough... You have to survive." -Participant 4

From the Chinese labourers who built the Canadian Pacific Railway in the late 1800s to the thousands of Filipinos who supply care for Canada's children and elderly today, Canada has long benefited from the labour of migrants; yet those who have come to fill job shortages do not necessarily benefit in equal measure. Walia (2010) argues in Transient Servitude: Migrant Labour in Canada and the Apartheid of Citizenship, the terms of Canadian worker programs make temporary migrants extremely vulnerable to abuse by both employers and the state. For example, multiple scholars have criticized Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) (Preibisch & Binford 2007; Binford 2019; Grez 2022) and the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) (Bakan & Stasiulis 2012; Tungohan et al. 2015) for institutionalizing the exploitation and precarity of migrant workers.

These programs have been further criticized for creating conditions in which workers become structurally dependent on their employers for legal status, making them afraid to contest abuses or demand better working conditions. It is this structural vulnerability that constructs migrant workers as a "perfect workforce" in global labour capitalism, fashioned to be "commodified and exploitable,...and expendable" (Walia, 2010, p. 171). To make matters more complex, there are agreements between countries that send labour and those that receive it. The Philippines and Canadian states participate in a transnational labour regime that positions the Filipino labour diaspora as a solution to poverty and national development in the Philippines; while in Canada temporary, foreign workers are held within the state in a "relationship of exploitation and social/political subordination" (Sharma, 2012, p. 26).

At the individual level, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are often received in Canada as ideal labourers, expected to work long hours without complaint and remain in precarious employment. The restrictions of a temporary status enable violence and exploitation of OFWs and, in turn, prevent workers from feeling safe to seek help when they face violence within the intimate space of the families they work for (Pratt et al., 2020; Cohen, 2000; Tungohan, 2013). These burdens reflect institutionalized exploitative

conditions that produce benefits for states but harm migrant workers. This dynamic highlights the structural inequalities that force migrants to prioritize work over their families and demonstrates how migrant labour's overwhelming demands trap migrants in cycles of precarious overwork. At the same time, this overwork cannot be separated from the socioeconomic conditions that push Filipinos to work abroad; poverty, social inequality, corruption, and limited opportunities in the Philippines contribute to make migration appear as the best viable path for survival.

Encouraged and pushed by the discourses that frame migration as an escape from structural socio-economic and political violence, Filipinos are directed to seek opportunities abroad; however, once they move to a new country, their lived reality is often one of exhaustion and debility from overwork. Indeed, many OFWs describe life and work in Canada as being centered on the survival of their families, yet that survival remains uncertain despite their sacrifices. Many of the people interviewed for this project recounted the story of Maria, an Overseas Filipino Worker who migrated to Canada. As reported by Brend (2021), Maria worked multiple jobs in Canada to save money and bring her husband and two children to the country. Her sudden death became major news in the OFW community in Vancouver. While news reports at the time did not disclose the identities of the two accused, coverage in The Vancouver Sun (Carrigg, 2021) and Toronto CityNews (2021), as well as commonly shared accounts within the Filipino community, suggested that the young suspects were known to Maria. In response to a question about news involving fellow OFWs in Canada, one participant recounted Maria's story.

> *"So there was OFW that she was killed by [someone who knew her]. I think that was the most difficult story, especially as an immigrant… I think because of the years, because of the gap that they have. They're away from each other. They don't have this much connection[...] They don't have a good relationship because we can't see our moms here. They really have double jobs or triple jobs to support their family and they don't have quality time with their children… And I think the moral of the story is like because the parents were overwhelmed and because we're overwhelmed working here [in Canada]. We don't have time with our family. And I think that's what should change in the future… Because that's the problem here."* [1] *– Participant 10*

[1] Due to protections under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, identifying details shared by participants such as the relationship between the victim and the accused—have been redacted. These edits do change the essence and substance of their interviews. These edits are necessary to comply with Canadian legal and ethical research standards as the accused was a minor at the time of the event.

While Maria's story is extreme, it is emblematic of the systemic harms embedded in neocolonial labour regimes that exploit temporary migrant workers. Her case reveals how Filipino migrants become entangled in international labour systems that extract their labour while severing their filial and social ties. It reflects the broader realities of OFWs in neocolonial labour regimes that demand overwhelming work and sacrifice, sometimes at fatal costs.

This master's thesis investigates the experiences of Filipino migrant workers in Greater Vancouver through the lens of critical Filipino studies, a framework that interrogates the enduring impacts of colonialism, empire, and global capitalism on Filipino subjectivities and labour migration. Rooted in postcolonial critique, this interdisciplinary approach emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s through the work of scholars such as Rodriguez, Manalansan, and Espiritu (2020), who challenged U.S. imperialism and examined how empire continues to shape diasporic Filipino lives. This approach enables a deeper understanding of the role of neocolonialism in sustaining the systemic inequalities that disadvantage OFWs and foregrounds the shared neocolonial entanglements between the Philippines and Canada.

The overall objective of this study is to examine the lived experiences of OFWs within a neocolonial framing, focusing on both the individual and structural factors that shape migrant labour life. This thesis traces how the subjectivities of the ideal migrant and Bagong Bayani (new hero), figures which are widely studied in diaspora and migration scholarship, are connected to notions and instrumentalizations of Filipino citizenship. While a significant body of literature critiques the exploitative nature of Canada's temporary labour migration programs (Sharma, 2012; Bakan & Stasiulis, 2012; Binford, 2019; Mooten, 2021), this research adds to these studies on the plurality of the experiences of violence and resistance of OFWs, and it contributes to a wider understanding of the multi-faceted ways that the Filipino diaspora is sustained and resisted, especially through the institutionalization of complex subjectivities that shape how Filipino life is managed. I draw from Berger and Luckmann's (1966) institutionalization which refers to the process through which repeated practices and expectations become routineized, normalized, and historically embedded, and come to appear as social realities, shaping and regulating human behavior and understanding of society.

This research intervenes by interrogating how narratives of ”choice” can also be theorized as produced or constrained within a neocolonial labour export regime. I wish to build more examination into how OFWs come to internalize and embody promoted norms on sacrifice, resilience, docility, and national duty, which continue to shape their lives as migrant labourers. This thesis addresses this gap by analyzing how these subjectivities are produced through institutions, histories, and daily practices before and after arrival in Canada. Central to this inquiry is an examination of the mechanisms that drive Filipinos' aspirations to become labour migrants, despite the systemic risks embedded in these pathways. I will also discuss how the socio-economic priorities of both Canada and the Philippines sustain the labour relationship between the two states; and how institutions reproduce neocolonial labour dynamics through the migration regimes, labour policies, and workplace cultures that disadvantage and take advantage of OFWs. This study also inquires as to how OFWs negotiate and resist these institutionalized subjectivities and understand how OFWs practice survival, belonging, and community within Canada's temporary labour regime.

This study aims to contribute to critical Filipino studies and build on the works of Filipino scholars such as Rodriguez, Tungohan, and Espiritu, who interrogate how empire, labour, and migration, shape Filipino trajectories across the diaspora. Using a framework drawn from Berger and Luckmann's concept of institutionalization and Foucault's concept of biopower, I argue that the neocolonial labour arrangements between Canada and the Philippines are biopolitically institutionalized to OFWs through the subjectivities of the Filipino citizen, the ideal migrant, and the Bagong Bayani; the institutionalization of OFWs as a 'perfect workforce' extends beyond Canada and can be traced back to the Philippines, rooted in neoliberal capitalist directives and our colonial history. I further explore how OFWs in Greater Vancouver resist and refashion these institutionalized identities in their daily lives. Greater Vancouver holds a distinct position in the Filipino diaspora due to its immigrant demographics. As of 2021, 42.2% of Greater Vancouver's total population were immigrants, and among this group, 10.0% were born in the Philippines (Statistics Canada, 2022). This makes Filipinos a significant minority group in the region.

This thesis is guided by three interrelated research questions that explore the institutionalization of OFWs through a neocolonial lens.

1. In what ways is Filipino citizenship and its expectations surrounding national identity, national belonging and, “state responsibilities”, instrumentalized to normalize and sustain labour migration under neocolonial conditions?

To explore this question, I drew on qualitative data from my interviews through open-ended interviews. I asked my participants about their motivations to become labour migrants, which they often articulated in push and pull factors. Participants were asked to share their stories of how they chose to become migrant workers in Vancouver. These stories offered insight into how instrumentalized citizenship, such as poverty and filial and patriotic duties push OFWs overseas and pull them to work in Canada.

2. How do Overseas Filipino Workers navigate and make sense of the subjectivities of the ideal migrant and the Bagong Bayani (literally means New Hero, a cultural trope in the Philippines that valorizes OFWs as heroes for their sacrifice and labour away from their families) within Canada’s labour regime?

In my interviews I extend the nexus of construction on the ideal migrant and question their experiences of the informal “seminar” or interaction with border officers and in their experiences in applying for a permit to Canada and upon crossing the border. I also inquired about whether they knew of the figure of the Bagong Bayani and whether they identified with it. This led to a reconceptualization of the Bagong Bayani as OFWs reject its imposition pointing to the irony between the title and their lived objective reality. Additionally, I asked them about the difficulties they face being an OFW in Vancouver. Through these interview questions I got insights into how state processes and cultural narratives shape migrant subjectivities and experiences.

3. How do OFWs enact resistance and negotiate their subjectivities within Canada’s temporary labour regime, and what roles do Filipino identity and cultural practices play in these everyday acts of survival and self-making?

Using open ended questions, I asked my participants whether they felt at home in Vancouver and how they cope with the difficulties of OFW life. This naturally led into conversations about their strategies of belonging, survival, and the everyday expressions of expertise and resistance as they engage in community building, draw strength from Filipino cultural values, and reimagine their position in the diaspora.

In answering the first two research questions, I identify three logics through which these institutionalizations operate—the Filipino citizen, the ideal migrant, and the Bagong

Bayani—as they have become relevant in the answers of my participants. I theorize these neocolonial scripts to be subjectivities, instead of identities. I borrow from Tyner and Belsey who explain that the notion of "subject" emphasizes the role of language in the internalization of cultural meanings; unlike "identity" which suggests uniformity and sameness, the term "subjectivity" recognizes embodied contradictions, inconsistencies, and contestations (Tyner, 2004; Belsey, 2022). Tyner also draws from Foucault and adds that "subject" highlights ambiguities and nuances;

> "Foucault writes that the word "subject": "subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to" (Foucault, 2000, p. 331; Tyner, 2004, p. 18).

This theorization of "subject" allows for a more complex insight into the cultural modes of institutionalizations of Filipino labour streams to Canada, especially their practice of agency and creativity that highlight how they refashion and reimagine their subject positions. It questions the colonial forms of being that shapes who is imagined to be employable and disposable. Rather than treating these subjectivities as fixed, I approach them as historically and continually produced and negotiated through state policies, capitalist labour regimes, and everyday practices.

Chapter 2.

Theoretical perspectives

To understand how neocolonialism shapes and negotiates Filipino lives and trajectories across borders, this thesis draws on two major theoretical frameworks: Berger and Luckmann's theory of institutionalization and Michel Foucault's concept of biopower. Taken together, these theoretical tools make it possible to examine how migrant subjectivities, everyday experiences, and trajectories are institutionally produced and governed. The following subchapters expound each theory and clarify how they guide the analysis of the OFWs experiences in this study.

2.1. Institutionalization

In their foundational work, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann (1966) describe institutionalization as a social process in which institutions create habitual patterns of behavior that regulate human actions. They highlight that this process of social control reinforces itself as long as actors continue to produce and reinforce it.

Berger and Luckman (1966) coined the term "habitualization" to describe the patterns of behavior that emerge as an effect of institutionalization. For them, habitualization is all the human activities that are routineized, ritualized, and standardized as they are repeatedly performed through time (pp. 70-71). Thus, habitualization makes behavior predictable and renders individual behavior easily regulated.

Social order is the result of such an effort of regulation. As individual actors in social groups interact and develop typified actions that become interlocked and entangled as the routines solidify into prescribed roles that each individual plays out in their social interactions. For Berger and Luckman (1966), the roles that are assigned and which individuals habitualized have specific functions in the institutional order. These defined functions also distribute knowledge to actors relevant to their own assigned roles. This distribution of knowledge creates a division of labour and functions to maintain social order.

As specialized actors continually interact and perform the patterned behavior of their roles, institutionalization perfects and reinforces itself. Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain that as these roles are performed throughout time, they attain historicity and become historical institutions, going beyond mere actions repeated by individuals. In short, they become a reality of their own, one that appears objective to the actors that perpetuate the roles through their actions. In this way, repeated actions become external to the actors, and comprise a social reality that exerts control over individuals, a looming force that coerces individuals to operate in the ways they are expected and institutionalized to act.

Despite this crystallization of institutions in reality, Berger and Luckmann (1966) reiterate that this system of social order is still man-made, and therefore changeable. The actors responsible for institutionalization and their reinforcement and perpetuation still hold consciousness capable of changing and even abolishing them. However, this becomes difficult as institutionalization is transmitted to new social groups that know no other reality other than the preexisting one created for them. This historicity further empowers the objectivity of institutions, as they become preexisting and standard in social reality. Institutionalization then becomes more real and difficult to shape. It legitimizes itself as it continues to exist throughout time, creating, perpetuating, and enforcing social order.

Institutionalization is a key term in this thesis as I use it as a foundational theory in explaining how structures of power and labour materialize, making Filipino labour migration an expected and almost necessary route for Filipinos to take on. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that it is a process where patterns of behavior become embedded and learned in our social reality. It makes these developed routines coercive and historical, as they become repeatedly learned and performed; they cement themselves into society's consciousness and become like external institutions of being, identifying, and knowing. This concept is important in analyzing how becoming an OFW, and in turn its subjectivities of the Filipino citizen, the ideal migrant, and the modern-day hero, is in fact an institutionalized way of being, reinforced by the state and neocolonial discourse.

Berger and Luckmann's theory focuses on institutions and how they shape patterns of behavior through norms and social roles. They view power as embedded in the routinization of social life, in a form of control that operates through habitualization and the internalization of social expectations. In contrast, Michel Foucault expands this theorization of power as something more direct, disciplinary, and embodied. He adds how

institutions directly manage not only patterns of behavior, but also the body and life itself. Although Foucault does not write about colonialism, his ideas on disciplines, biopower, and population management provides a useful lens for examining how systems of power and neocolonial regimes build upon these institutionalized norms to economize life and yield useful, productive bodies.

2.2. Biopower

Foucault (1978) proposes that sovereign entities such as the state have “indirect” powers, which he calls biopower, which means control over its populations to condition their existence for the state’s growth, defense, or survival. The state exerts a strong, active influence over the lives of its constituents to optimize their behavior and create a controlled population, subject to whatever regulations it deems necessary. Foucault argues this biopower is focused on the level of life and organizes our living conditions through the sovereign exercise of political power, administering our ways of living through guided constraints. While Foucault does not explicitly discuss colonial relations in his works, his theorizations on power and control provide tools for examining how states regulate populations. Thus, I will engage with a discussion of the colonial and racialized dimension of control and biopower as I talk about scholarships on coloniality in the literature review.

Foucault distinguishes two forms of biopower that are not opposites poles but co-opting processes of power over life. The first of these poles positions the body as a machine. It centers the body as a disciplinable apparatus, whose capabilities should be geared for optimum function in a system heightened for efficiency and economic productivity. Biopower seeks to create docile individuals, aiming on exploiting them for their usefulness and intent on priming them for production. Power over life simulates this process through discipline and politics over the human body. The second of these poles is dedicated to the species body, focused on the species’ biological processes such as propagation, births, mortality, and living conditions. Here, biopower is made effective through interventions and regulatory controls. Entities such as the state, (and the neocolonial systems within which the state operates), strives to invest in life and carefully manage the availability and docility of population for the fulfillment of its economic purpose (Foucault, 1978, pp. 139–145). Foucault also refers to this technique as governmentality, or the way power governs populations through the use of institutions, knowledges, and security measures. Governmentality relies on knowledges and techniques of security to affect the conduct of

individuals, manage the population, and more importantly to discipline bodies to produce desired outcomes. (Foucault 2007, p. 144). This form of governmentality is now also applicable in the management of health and well-being of the population to sustain a desired manageable workforce.

Biopower is exercised through a myriad of ways. Foucault specifies that the development of disciplines in the fields of education, economy, politics, and public health play huge roles in the subjugation of human bodies and its control. While he does not explicitly discuss migration, his framework has been extended by scholars to show how the state manages mobilities, regulates labour migration, and governs migrant bodies in ways that maximize economic productivity (Rudnyckyj 2004; Sharma, 2018). Through biopower, systems of hierarchies are organized that cement relations for dominance and subordinance (Foucault, 1978).

For Foucault (1978), biopower is essential in the growth of capitalism, as profit accumulation "*would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes*" (p.141). He adds that at the same time, biopower was necessary as capitalism needed the population optimized to be available and docile. Segregating the population into social hierarchies of economic processes exerted systems of domination and hegemonic relations. The accumulation of profit and capital go hand in hand with the pushing of human groups as economic productive forces (p.141). In this perspective it becomes clear how biopower is utilized for the growth of capital and the maximization of profit.

Through the combined lens of institutionalization and biopower, these systems of control emerge not only through social and habitual practices, but also through biological and socioeconomic conditions. Foucault's (1978) analysis extends from institutions simply shaping identities and roles to actively disciplining and regulating the lives of the populations themselves. This demonstrates how power can be exercised not only through coercion but also the normalization of behavior through the emergence of biopower within the modern liberal state. In this study, I apply his insights to understand how similar processes of biopower, regulation and structural violence are in Canada's border regimes, immigration policies, access to healthcare, and other structures that regulate the lives of migrant labourers. My use of Foucault highlights how 'soft' forms of power in immigration

laws, bureaucratic procedures, and institutional norms in the Philippines and Canada shape OFWs' experiences and the conditions in which they work and live.

With regards to systems of governance, Foucault states that:

> "power was exercised mainly as a means of deduction (prelevement), a subtraction mechanism, a right to appropriate a portion of the wealth, a tax of products, goods and services, labour and blood, levied on the subjects. Power in this instance was essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it" (Foucault, 1978, p. 136).

Foucault's understanding of power as a means for control and the seizure of bodies and life relate with the labour experiences of Filipinos in Vancouver through the disciplinary structures that encompass their status in Canada. This understanding of bio/power and institutionalization signifies that the OFW labour experience in Greater Vancouver is contingent upon our post/colonial histories, social location as racialized minorities, neoliberalism, and the socioeconomic situation of our communities. Coloniality and our post-colonial history plays an important role in this schema of labour extraction, as it is a major contender in negotiating and influencing the trajectory of where OFWs position themselves in the capitalistic world order.

Tied to Foucault's concept of biopower is neoliberal governance, which aims to deregulate the state's economic roles for free market rationality, but also extends this logic to all spheres of life. Neoliberalism is a set of forces in our society that operates in culture, politics, and governments that values free capitalistic competition at the center of social organization (Wilson, 2017). Foucault argues that Neoliberalism goes beyond than just a market-centered ideology, progressive taxation policies, and destatization of governance, but it extends these market metrics towards every aspect of human life; be it personal, cultural, vocational, educational, political, and transforms the relation of public and private with the state (Brown, 2016; Foucault, 2008).

Foucault extends his analysis of biopower to include how individuals are reshaped to treat themselves as enterprises, organizing themselves according to the ethos of productivity and profit. Discussing biopolitics, he refers to the 'theory of human capital' as one of 'capital ability', where "*the worker himself appears as a sort of enterprise for himself*". He formulates the worker as a '*being for himself, his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself, the source of (his) earnings*' (Foucault, 2008, as cited in Puar,

2017, p. 14). Foucault continues that the individual becomes an 'abilities machine', primed for efficiency and economic productivity. Biopolitical governance then shapes not only structures and social roles but also embodied ways of being, as individuals are oriented to be docile and market oriented. Biopower and its power over life shape docile individuals, maximizing their utility for production.

This logic is discussed in *The History of Sexuality*, as Foucault (1978) argued that '*man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question* (p. 143)*.* Through biopolitical techniques, the state develops bodily discipline to the OFW through its economic integration in the state. Following Agamben's (1998 p.10) reading of Foucault, the OFWs' condition under Canada's migrant labour regime reflects what Agamben interprets from Foucault as *'a bestialization of man achieved through the most sophisticated political techniques'.*

Berger and Luckmann's theory of institutionalization reveals how repeated social practices and roles become embedded as compulsory realities, conditioning Filipinos to see labour migration as both natural and necessary. Biopower builds upon institutionalization and expounds that these institutionalized patterns of behavior are not only systemic but also embodied processes. Biopower furthers the analyses by adding that these methods of control are not done through hard power and direct force but by the regulation of life itself; this is done through disciplining the body and regulating the population. Biopower shows institutionalization and its norms are codified into structures and laws through policies that prioritize economic productivity and measures of control. Together, the theories of institutionalization and biopower provide the primary framework for understanding how the lives and labour of OFWs in Greater Vancouver are shaped and managed.

This thesis uses biopower to trace and explain the regulation of the Filipino and OFW populations by Canadian and Filipino systems conditioning us for migrant labour and productivity. These theoretical lenses frame the ways in which Filipino migrant labour is produced, managed, and experienced across transnational spaces. In the succeeding chapters, I investigate the labour experiences of Filipino migrant workers in Greater Vancouver and examine what dynamics, institutionalizations, and biopolitical controls are at play that facilitate the "indentured labour" that is a relational experience of OFWs in Canada. My study traces their experiences and how such systems of power operate in

their labour conditions and affect their lives, particularly how the three aforementioned subjectivities of the Filipino citizen, the ideal migrant and the *Bagong Bayani*, are imbued within the transnational labour system.

Chapter 3.

Methodology

3.1. Research Approach and Positionality

In my framework, I employ what Barrett, Hanna, and Palomar (2021) a transnational queer diasporic methodology to center the multiplicity, contradictions, and sometimes, discontinuities within the Filipino labour diaspora. Their framework acknowledges the importance and diversity of insights in queer diasporic epistemologies. Although their work is concerned with queer and trans Filipinx narratives, their methodological approach fits well with OFWs and migrant labour as it centers their own interpretations and highlights the transnational context of their experiences. I apply their methodology towards the transnational and transcultural experiences of OFWs. I also define "queerness" with Velasco (2021) who uses the term "queer" to describe how the diaspora and Filipinos' transnational labour compel a reworking of the nations' gendered and sexual politics, where heteropatriarchal politics are negotiated. She argues,

> The Filipina trafficked woman / sex worker corporealizes the gendered and sexual anxieties of the Philippine nation, as her body signifies the gendered subordination of the Philippines to an international division of labour. Thus, transnational labour functions to "queer" the Philippine nation not only because the diaspora has the potential to disrupt the politics of nationalism but also because transnational labour unsettles the very heteropatriarchy of the nation itself (Velasco, 2021, p. 6).

Here, Filipinos in the diaspora become "queered", not in the sexual way, but "queered" as they experience the disruption of a heteropatriarchal order, where women become transnational breadwinners and men become emasculated in overseas work. Fajardo (2011) and Tadiar (2004) argue that the Philippines has been historically shaped by political and economic emasculation or feminization through the Western imposition of colonial and postcolonial structural inequalities. Following the transnational queer diasporic methodology, the framework acknowledges and responds to beliefs and ideologies that rose from the diaspora and theorize from OFWs unique transnational position and colonial experiences. I apply this framework to grapple with my position as a Filipino researcher, shaped by colonial legacies and experiences that I share with the

participants. This approach allowed me to consider our own histories, values, and lived reality more meaningfully.

With this, I recognize my status as both an insider and outsider with the participant community–being a student-worker in Canada with temporary status, with my Filipino upbringing, but without my legal status as an OFW. Dowling (2010) argues that being an insider can result in more credible data as having this position participants are more likely to speak openly and the researcher is better positioned to understand their perspectives.

This paper is grounded in my positionality as a transgender Filipino international student working in Canada. My theoretical choices and analysis are deeply informed by my personal experiences, both through my encounters with the OFWs in Vancouver, my immersion in the Filipino migrant discourse as I grew up in the Philippines, and as I work and study in Canada. I always remember the night when I was in elementary school and my father instilled in me that I should go far away from our hometown, away from the mountains of Mindanao island. He said I should be a nurse and follow in the footsteps of his sister, who worked as a domestic helper in Lebanon. Even though he knew she had faced harassment from her employers, he still pointed to the gifts she brought home from migrant work as proof of its rewards. This was the first time I remember being socialized into taking career paths oriented for labour-export. When I finished high school during the Philippines nursing boom in 2012, they urged me again to join my cousins in the medical industry, as it would only take a nurse 1 to 2 years of experience in the country before they could work in the USA. I wanted to study literature at the time and International Studies-Sociology became our compromise, as they were convinced that I would be working overseas with the word ‘international’ in my degree’s name. Still, that agreement was layered with the expectation that I would work outside the country. It has been many years since, and I am their living dream and anchor for themselves and my siblings to live and work in Canada. Like many Filipino children urged by their families and their governments, I absorbed these institutionalizations and learned our export-oriented trajectory. We were raised to be OFWs.

3.2. Methodological Framework

This research employed semi-structured interviews as a key qualitative method that allowed for a deep exploration and discussion of OFWs navigating their lives in Canada.

Semi-structured interviews offered flexibility to speak freely and reflectively about their personal histories and labour experiences as OFWs. This method centered the agency of the participants as it allowed them to decide what to focus on and emphasize, and also what to skip. In theorizing my framework of decolonial praxis in research methodologies, Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021) argued that researchers must exercise critical reflexivity, respect the self-determination of participants, and listen effectively. This means engaging with both heart and mind, while building a relationship grounded in trust; all of which are key steps toward decolonial research approaches. As such, semi-structured interviews aligned well with these principles by allowing flexibility, creating space for participants to choose what to share, and more importantly, recognizing them as knowledge holders and not as victims. The open-ended format further supported their agency in prioritizing their chosen narratives, emotions, and insights in their own words and in the language they felt most comfortable using.

3.3. Participant Selection and Interviews

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they had lived experience as OFWs. For this research I sought participants who fit the following criteria: 18 years of age or older, born and grew up in the Philippines, currently working in Greater Vancouver, Canada. Filipinos who gained Canadian citizenship were also part of the interviews, as many continue to live with the long-term effects of labour migration and precarity. These choices were guided by the research aim to examine how everyday life among OFWs in Vancouver are shaped by Canada's labour programs.

Participants were recruited via personal networks and through informal community groups. Additional participants were then scoped through snowballing from the initial interviews. Interviews were done intermittently over a period of 13 months around August 2022-September 2023. Open-ended questions inquired about their life in the Philippines before coming to Canada and motivations for becoming an OFW, their working experiences, interactions with the Canadian government, and their processes of "homing," or their practices to establish and feel at home, which Borges (2018) argues are the creation of spaces of survival and resistance against colonialist violence.

The sample consisted of 13 OFW interviews, which allowed for in-depth engagement with each participant's story while still capturing a diverse range of experiences from the

community. This number was also appropriate given the scope of the study and the absence of research funding.

All the interviews were conducted in a mix of Bisaya, Filipino, and English languages. Participants were free to choose which language they were most comfortable with to truly communicate the richness and essence of their experiences and lives as labour migrants. As Tannenbaum and Har (2020) argue, the mother tongue is the language of attachment and emotion. First languages play a crucial role in the expression of identity, memory, and self-construction. Filipino and Bisaya are the amongst the most common native languages of the Philippines. Bisaya, also known as Cebuano, is widely spoken in Southern Philippines where I come from. Being able to switch freely between Filipino, English, and Bisaya allowed the participants to move between the language of work and the language of home when discussing their lives and struggles.

During the interviews, I handwrote detailed notes, about a page per participant, which highlighted emerging themes, emotional parts, and points they emphasized. These notes served as an early reference for identifying possible thematic directions and were later used alongside the transcripts during the coding process.

(See Appendix A for the full interview schedule.)

3.4. Data Analysis

I used thematic analysis to identify patterns that emerged across the interviews and capture semantic and latent meaning, following the framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2023). I manually organized and coded the interview transcripts using a combination of my handwritten notes and second round of coding in Microsoft Word. Later, I refined these manually as the codes were grouped and categorized. The data from the interviews and my personal involvement with the community allowed me to connect our shared lived experiences. This triangulation of data sources resulted in repeating narratives about family, heroism, migration struggles, borders, precarity, overwork, among others, which became major themes of the thesis. The three subjectivities of the Filipino citizen, ideal migrant, and modern-day hero came naturally as I recategorized and regrouped the themes I found from their stories.

Several challenges arose during this research. Interviews were originally all planned to be held in person. But, given the nature of the work of OFWs in Vancouver, some who do 'nonstop' work, sometimes every day of the week, it was difficult to do all interviews in person. Some could only offer their time via phone interviews. As a community member-researcher, I also had to carefully navigate my insider position, balancing relational trust with ethical research boundaries. I remained critical as I interpreted these narratives, being conscious of my positionality as a researcher.

Being critical for me meant constantly reflecting on how my own position shapes the way I interpret people's stories and questioning my biases and assumptions. I had to be aware of how my beliefs and background influence what I notice, who I include, and what I leave out. Being critical means that I stay accountable for the community, to the research, and to the knowledge I am producing. For example, I remained careful to not romanticize the struggles of and resilience of OFWs through the lens of victimhood. Instead, I situated their experiences through broader systematic structures of neo/colonialism and the diaspora.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Given that parts of this research draw on informal observations and conversations encountered through my daily lived experience as a member of the Filipino OFW community, these autoethnographic insights are presented as personal reflections rather than formally collected data. No identifying information is used, and any quotes or sentiments referenced are paraphrased or anonymized to protect privacy. Since these interactions were not part of a formal research process, this approach respects ethical principles while acknowledging the embodied knowledge gained through community participation.

I use the "Filipino community" and "OFW community" interchangeably at times as OFWs are a specific segment of the Filipino diaspora. My own positionality is shaped specifically by being an OFW in Canada; we share language and culture, sometimes the same systems of oppression, migration related forms of precarity, and the experience of being the "other" within Canadian systems and borders. Being closely affiliated with my participant group and being active within the Filipino community encouraged me to be critical and self-reflexive of the embodied experiences of my fellow Filipino migrants in

Canada. This allowed me to critically examine our relational histories, experiences, and encounters with the neocolonial structures that surround us, particularly our shared complex relationship with temporariness and labour in Canada. Prolonged engagement with the OFW community provided a deeper understanding of how institutionalization shaped everyday migrant life, which guided the framing and direction of this research.

My community engagement began when I arrived as a student in September of 2021 in Vancouver, on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. At that time only had the Filipino community to seek refuge with and feel at home with. My community engagement further deepened as I got employed in 2023 with the Migrant Care Worker Precarity Project, investigating how care workers in Canada, most of whom are OFWs, are negatively impacted by the changing policies of care work. My community connections grew stronger through my volunteering role with the Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers' and Caregivers' Rights, advocating for care workers, most of whom are also OFWs, and assisting them as they navigate the labour landscape in Canada as temporary migrants.

As a Filipino settler in Vancouver, I participate in various community spaces and celebrations. These included informal gatherings and everyday interactions. I did not enter these spaces with the formal intent to conduct a study, as such I do not consider them fieldwork; rather as reflections while I lived and moved within the community I am a part of. Over time I found myself often returning to these recurring conversations and moments shared by OFWs. Some discussions led to inevitable moments of reflection. I took notes of these sentiments when it reminded me about my work and the shared feelings of displacement and struggles with migrant labour. These reflections guided the direction and tone of my writing, especially in framing the narrative through a critical lens and centering OFW voice and resistance.

Chapter 4.

Historical Background: Colonial Legacies and the Making of the OFW

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) is the general term to refer to Filipinos who live and work outside the national boundaries of the Philippines. According to the latest data from the Philippines Statistics Authority based on a 2024 survey of overseas Filipinos, there are currently 2.16 million Filipino workers overseas (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024). Another comprehensive report by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, estimating the aggregate of all Filipinos residing or working overseas whether they were permanent, temporary or irregular counted that there are 10.2 million Filipinos in total who are living and/or working outside the Philippines (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2013). Scholars have pointed out that this large-scale migration demographic trend is a result of historical and institutionalized state practices (Espiritu, 2003; Rodriguez, 2010; San Juan, 2011).

This history of labour export and providing the world's labour markets with Filipino workers is largely influenced by the country's colonial history with the U.S. Rodriguez (2010) studied this phenomenon in her book *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labour to the World* and argues that this migration stream is a colonial legacy of the U.S. Her study finds that the labour brokerage system of the Philippines is a colonial labour system institutionalized by the US for its benefit; Rodriguez defines labour brokerage as a neoliberal strategy that is comprised of institutional and discursive practices through which the Philippine state mobilizes its citizens and sends them abroad to work for employers throughout the world while generating a "profit" from the remittances that migrants send back to their families and loved ones remaining in the Philippines (Rodriguez, 2010). She also finds that the Filipino diaspora has been greatly influenced by neocolonial structures and is empowered by neoliberalist values. San Juan (2011) similarly argues that these neocolonial structures of political, economic, and military dependence on the USA maintain the cycle of systemic underdevelopment and foreign control over material and human resources. This comes after centuries of colonization that entirely transformed Philippines ways of life and structures of living.

The Philippines was a colony of multiple empires throughout history. From 1565, and for the next 333 years, the Philippines was under the colonial rule of the Spanish Empire. This conquest was carried out in the name of their king, Philip II of Spain. They enslaved our people and named our islands after their king. In 1898, Spain sold the islands for $20 million to the USA during the Spanish–American War and transferred colonial control to the U.S. It was not until the end of the Second World War in 1946 that the U.S. granted Filipinos sovereignty and recognized us as an independent republic. This may have ended formal colonial control, but these centuries of colonial rule had reorganized Filipino institutions to be neocolonially extractive and effectively dependent upon the US. This ongoing neocolonial relationship is evident in the export-oriented trajectory of Filipino labourers and the labour brokerage system between the Philippines and the Global North.

Rodriguez (2010) uses a historical approach in tracing how the Filipino worker comes to be a convenient labour source for the service and health sector of the US. She argues that when the Philippines was a USA colony, Filipino nationals were exempt from immigration restrictions and so the US actively sought young male labourers in the service sector as 'houseboys', chauffeurs, and hotel workers. This then led to a stream of out-migration that the USA directed towards the agricultural sector and employing Filipinos in sugar plantations in Hawaii. More importantly, Rodriguez (2010) finds that the USA colonial initiative also started the training of Filipino nurses in americanized nursing education facilities in the Philippines. Choy (2003) documents that by 1979 and 1989, Filipino nurses constituted the overwhelming majority of outsourced health workers, with most being received by the U.S., U.K., and Canada (p. 2). This laid the groundwork for Filipina migration to the US and to the rest of the world. It is also the foundation of the institutionalization of labour exportation as endorsed and supported by the USA and Philippine governments.

In *Campaigns of Knowledge: U.S. Pedagogies of Colonialism and Occupation in the Philippines and Japan*, Schueller (2019) recognizes the immense colonial influence of the US upon the Philippines, with colonial education and tutelage being a very strategic part for a colonial self-governance. Schueller (2019) argues that schooling was a core technology for the US Americans in the process of subjectification and directing Filipinos' "*modes of thought, behavior, aspirations, and desires*" to mold them into docile subjects for the US American powers (p. 3). It is an ultimate technology to empower US American imperialism and especially for the *"biopolitical reproduction of colonized and occupied*

subjects" (p. 8). In describing US American colonial methods in the Philippines, Li (2023) characterizes this as transforming the Philippines into a "commodity market and investment site" of imperial rule (p. 2).

Rodriguez (2010) similarly examines how the U.S. utilized Filipino elites as collabourators for establishing Filipino-US American economic ties and engendered labour migration outflows. Here, the US used the Philippine population itself as colonial state apparatus in advancing their labour exploitation motives. Rodriguez cites how the U.S. recruited young sons of elites and exposed them to training and education in US American universities, so they can later be tools of recruitment and work as collabourators of its colonial labour enrollment. She described this process as some sort of utilization of socialization and institutionalization for strengthening the labour relationship between the two states:

> Benevolent assimilation also aimed at transforming the hearts and minds of ordinary Filipinos in the Philippines through education, what Renato Constantino calls the "miseducation" of the Filipino (Rodriguez, 2010, p. 5)."

Rodriguez cites the important role of education in accelerating this process, and how it is also a tool of the colonizers' continued economic exploitation of the Philippines. As a result of this colonial historicity and embeddedness in the Philippines structures and culture, OFWs occupy a unique position as labour migrants due to this prior US American enculturation before leaving the country itself (Espiritu, 2020).

Tungohan (2021), argues that the Philippines is a "neocolonial state" that permits "legal human trafficking" by placing its workers in precarious situations in labour-receiving countries. With Canada as an example, she argues that Filipinos are placed at the bottom of a racialized labour hierarchy as they arrive to work in other countries. They are recruited as labour migrants to fill-in undesirable positions in their host countries in a sort of neocolonial arrangement. They become commodified as simple labourers who fill the labour market gap of the rich countries. Despite the issues inherent in these labour systems and the commodification of OFWs, the diaspora continues. San Juan Jr.'s (2011) work comes to mind when he argued that the US American neocolonial formation of the Filipino is so thorough, that even today, Filipinos still believe that working/living in the US [or the West] is the *"true fulfilment of their hopes and dreams"* (p. 10), with the Philippines remaining a neocolonial polity. Tungohan (2021) concurs with Rodriguez that the Philippines is a "neocolonial labour brokerage state" that exports its citizen's labour to rich

states and at the same time advances neocolonial agendas from the past. This makes the labour migration system of the Philippines a colonial reproduction of the exploitation of the Filipino by its colonizer or, in this case, more developed nation-states.

While these studies looked at the neocolonial origins of the Philippine labour diaspora, I will add how the socio-economic motives of both Canada and the Philippines continue to keep Filipino workers in Canada in a state of colonial labour brokerage. It begins in the Philippines, and during and after having status as migrant workers in Canada the neocolonial process continues and is facilitated to the OFW through multiple avenues. It persists through Canadian labour policies, migration regimes, and work cultures that continue to disadvantage, marginalize, and exploit OFWs. As Schueller (2019) argues on the creation of Asian pedagogical subjects,

> "colonial racism, even when directed toward Asian subjects…, proceeds from discourses that are multiple, fragmented, nuanced, and ever shifting both spatially and temporally. Discourses of race, empire, and tutelage are not fixed but malleable concepts of analysis, but that does not make them any less hegemonic in a particular time and space (p. 18).

I adapt these insights in my exploration of the institutionalization of migrant labour into Filipino lives and how it is institutionalized through diverse and complex structures and subjectivities. Filipino scholars such as Parrenas, Tungohan, and Pratt have documented historical, political, and labour dimensions of the diaspora. My work contributes a different analytical entry point through applying institutionalization as a central theoretical lens. With Berger and Luckmann's theory of institutionalization, I conceptualize the Filipino labour diaspora and its subjectivities not only as a product of policies, global inequalities and culture, but also as a deeply structured social reality, being continually re/produced and normalized across time and space. My approach foregrounds how these forces become "common sense" as they are institutionalized into the everyday expectations, identities, and modes of being 'Filipino'. In the next chapter, I explore literature on the scripting of three subjectivities—the Filipino citizen, the ideal migrant, the modern-day hero—through which these discourses are experienced and contested by OFWs in Vancouver. These categories also structure my analysis later in the thesis.

Chapter 5.

Literature Review

This literature review is structured around existing scholarship on coloniality and the three subjectivity categories that I build my analysis upon—the Filipino citizen, the ideal migrant, and the modern-day hero or the *Bagong Bayani*. While the theoretical framework of this thesis is based on Berger and Luckmann's institutionalization and Foucault's biopower, these frameworks alone do not fully account for the power relations and historical realities that shape Filipino labour. As such, this thesis also draws from scholarships on coloniality, particularly Fanon, Simpson, and Walia, to discuss how the institutionalization and biopolitical governance of OFWs are shaped by enduring colonial relations and how Canada's temporary labour migration regime reproduces colonial systems of exploitation and governance.

Discussion on coloniality is then followed by analysis on the three institutionalized subjectivities that neocolonialism utilizes to manage and influence the trajectories and experiences of Filipino migrant workers. Organized thematically, I discuss the literature and academic debates around these three as I use them when I engage with the data from my participants in the analysis chapter later in this thesis. This structure follows how I analyze my data and focus on the lived experiences of OFWs.

5.1. Coloniality

Both institutionalization and biopower are situated within the systems of coloniality and neoliberalism. The migration policies and migrant labour patterns of being and becoming are heavily shaped by the colonial history of the Philippines. Maldonado-Torres (2007) argues that coloniality refers to the persisting structures of power and domination that remain after formal colonial rule has ended. These formal and informal structures of control take form in ways that are both structural and intimate. Fanon (2002) argues that coloniality also operates psychologically within the colonized subject, an internal mode of colonial conditioning. As such, these manifest in the lives of Filipinos and influence decision streams towards migrant work; in particular towards temporary labour streams in Greater Vancouver, Canada.

Fanon's (2002) theories on colonialism's material and psychological effects provide lens for understanding how colonial hierarchies persist in shaping labour migration and racialized subjectivities. His concept of a "double process", where colonial domination is both economic and internalized, illuminates how colonial logic continues to structure identity and labour even after formal decolonization (p. 13). Coloniality is a nuanced process that establishes the colonizer's "superiority" both in material and psychological ways. This double process is evident in the ways of how states such as Canada and the Philippines position themselves in their relationships with the people and the international community with regards to their imposition of colonial values and systems to their people.

Maldonado-Torres (2007) builds on Fanon to articulate the concept of coloniality as enduring power relations, and "*ongoing forms and structures of unfreedom that remain and multiply"* beyond the end of colonial administrations (pp. 243–245). This process persists as regimes of power between the colonizer and the colonized take on different mechanisms to continue. They are present in the aftermath of formal colonialism as it takes on different forms of domination and exclusion, operating through both formal institutions and intimate, everyday life.

Extending Fanon's analysis of colonial subject formation in settler colonial territories, Coulthard (2014) argues that colonial powers in Canada has transformed itself from the "exclusion/assimilation double" model to one that is based around recognition and inclusion. He argues that there has been a shift in the colonial governance of the Canadian state in its contemporary liberal form of colonialist, racist, and patriarchal dispossession of Indigenous lands. Coulthard (2014) asserts that the settler colonialist state produces compliant subjects and regulates Indigenous colonial resistance and anti-nationalism through frameworks that appear accepting, inclusionary, and reconciliatory. However, this transformation in governmentality is only another form of state domination.

While Coulthard's work is grounded in Indigenous-settler relations, his theorization of Canada's shift in colonial governmentality is useful in examining how migrant workers are managed in the settler-colonial state. This insight is useful where OFWs seem "included" in the settler-colonialist state through the opening of labour migration schemes that attract Filipinos to come to work in Canada. They are touted with the promise of assimilation and the granting of a permanent residence in exchange for completing certain requirements such as a number of years worked within Canada. This inclusion is highly conditional and

highly regulated. Scholarship (Bagon et al, 2024; Mooten, 2021; Walia, 2010, Tungohan et al. 2015) has proven that systemic barriers exist that impede migrants' full assimilation and inclusion within Canadian society as permanent residents and not merely as "secondary citizens" with unequal rights. Their entry to the Canadian sphere of economic participation subjects them to colonial governance of subject-making that promotes the sustenance of the settler-colonialist state.

In the Canadian context of settler colonialism, Simpson (2017) argues how the structure of colonialism is an ongoing series of processes that dispossess and control the Indigenous peoples within its borders, while organizing social, political, and economic life. In this continual process, both the land and the bodies of Indigenous peoples are commodified as capital, as means of acquiring capital, and are reified as subjects of economic exploitation. By settler colonialist violence, Simpson (2016) explained,

> "We have experienced four centuries of apocalyptic violence in the name of dispossession in the part of the Nishnaabeg nation I am from and live in. White supremacy, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy have targeted and continue to murder, disappear, attack, criminalize, and de-value our bodies, minds, and spirits" (p. 21).

It is an expansive dispossession of Indigenous people from their lands, normativities, and identities and reattaching them to structures for the economic and political benefit of the hegemonic state (Simpson, 2017, pp. 41-44). Her work resonates with Fanon's (2002) ideas that settler/colonialism not only controls the colonized's land and the material landscape, but it is a layered process that also colonizes their well-being, transforming their identity, altering their psychic and social worlds, reshaping identity and subjectivity, to fit the colonizer-state's gendered economic and political rule. The institutionalization of these overlapping processes work together in maintaining a colonial hegemony.

Simpson's (2017) work does not directly theorize OFWs or migrant workers, but she affirms that settler colonialism is a structure that, for the purpose of dispossessing Indigenous people, maintains *"a series of complex and overlapping processes that work together as a cohort to maintain the structure"* (p. 45). For the state to sustain settler colonialism and through its asymmetric power, it sets up webs of systems of control through negotiations, policies, and laws (Simpson, 2017). As Canada's neocolonial efforts extracts resources and people as well from the Philippines, Filipinos become entangled in Canada's settler colonial processes as racialized migrant labourers who work in the

sustainment of the structures of the settler colonial economy. Racialized migrant labour becomes necessary as the settler colonial capitalist structures that Simpson describes create ongoing demands for disposable workers. While Simpson's analysis is based Indigenous peoples and on her experience as part of the Nishnaabeg nation, her theorization on settler colonialism as an ongoing disruptive structure helps illuminate how Canada, in sustaining settler colonialism relies on racialized migrant labour and extends its capitalist networks globally through neocolonial extraction.

Canada's direct resource exploitation of Filipino lands include the large-scale mining operations of several Canadian mining companies that operate in the Philippines which have led to environmental and human rights concerns. Walia and Chu (2015) argue that Canada is complicit in global displacement, noting that 75% of the world's mining companies are headquartered in Canada and that they are four times more likely to be implicated in human rights violations than non-Canadian companies (pp. 4-5). Even in Mindanao, in Southern Philippines where I come from, these companies have already been operating. TVI Pacific is a resource and mining company headquartered in Alberta. TVI had begun mining operations in the ancestral domain of the Subanon people, on Mount Canatuan, a place the local Indigenous People (IP) community holds sacred. The Canadian company displaced the IPs of the area, divided their community, damaged the rice farming and fishing industries downstream from their mines, and militarized the area (MiningWatch Canada, 2003; Rights & Democracy, 2007). Despite these reports, TVI Pacific Inc. (2011) maintained that *"relative to the undeveloped economy of the region... [it] has created a significant number of jobs that are appreciated by the local people"* (p. 2).

These intimate forms of coloniality intertwine with the labour diaspora that brings OFWs like Maria to decide to come and work in Canada. The intimacies of coloniality manifest in "*corporeal, epistemological, and ontological domination"* and especially in structures *"inside and beyond the colony"* (Figueroa-Vásquez, 2020, p. 31). Thus, engaging in colonial analysis brings us to analyzing how grander social and political structures actually permeate the intimacies of daily life beyond the Philippines, and into the experiences of OFWs entering Canada through temporary labour programs.

There is a clear connection between colonial histories and the capitalization of people within a global capitalist system through "providing jobs." Mohanty (2003) argues that

global labour systems rely on the production of people and gendered, racialized inequality, specifically the production of the *'Third World/racialized, or marginalized woman worker'* to maintain a profitable international division of labour. This global process of producing racialized and gendered labour subjects, as Mohanty describes, is further reflected in the structural patterns Walia identifies across temporary labour migration programs worldwide.

Walia (2021) states that there are universal elements of oppressive structures that exist within all migrant worker programs in all transnational labour partnerships. Despite migrants emigrating from separate origins, prompted to labour abroad by different experiences, and reach different destinations, they soon share a common experience with other labour migrants upon entering transnational worker programs. Walia explains that these similarities are profound because structured hierarchies of power and oppression exist in these labour systems. They are regimes of oppression and exploitation that devalue and exploit the labour migrants for capitalistic profit and service. They face multiple barriers and impediments that seek to keep the system in place where the employer has utmost control over the labourers. They are structured global dynamics of capital flows, labour segmentation, and regimes of exclusionary citizenship (Walia 2021). Race, gender, and citizenship play primary roles in these systems of oppression and power. She specifies these commonalities as:

> **"First**, migrant worker programs are state-sanctioned programs of indentured work… **Second**, migrant worker programs are a form of legalized segregation… **Third**, migrant worker programs are a form of neoliberal insourcing… **Fourth**, migrant worker programs are both the result of and [reproduces] racism… **Fifth**, migrant worker programs are a carceral regime with intense control, discipline, and surveillance of… the totality of life" (pp. 168–172).

In *Never Home: Legislating Discrimination in Canadian Immigration*, Walia and Chu (2015) argue that Canada is complicit in global displacement, with its capitalist interests forcibly displacing migrants to Canada. Canada's programs are 'capitalist outsourcing' in an "apartheid system" where migrant workers of colour whose ancestors were enslaved now faced a similar situation of lack of legal and social rights in Canada (Walia, 2021; Marchitelli, 2016). Her framework helps explain the institutionalized processes and biopower evident in Canada's neocolonial labour empire that manage and condition migrants and in turn OFWs.

These intersecting analyses of coloniality reveal how colonial systems of control, economic extraction, and labour regimes persist well beyond formal colonial rule. From Fanon's theorizing of internalized coloniality; Maldonado-Torres' enduring unfreedoms, Simpson's settler colonialism and dispossession of Indigenous people, and Figueroa-Vasquez's structural and intimate mechanisms of domination; to Mohanty and Walia's critiques of transnational neocolonial power and labour relations, coloniality emerges as an enduring and oppressive structure. It continues to create subjectivities for domination and profit, as it embeds itself in institutions and everyday life.

The colonial systems and its social structures, along with the temporary migrant programs, are set in place to keep the flow of OFWs in the current conditions of difficult transnational labour. Institutionalized roles and bio-political controls work together to direct Filipinos for transnational labour, and towards Canada's settler-colonial labour economy. As will be developed next, the institutionalization of the three subjectivities—the Filipino citizen, the ideal migrant, and the modern-day hero—are part of these biopolitical neocolonial techniques that optimize migrant workers for capital production.

5.2. Institutionalizing the "The Filipino Citizen"

In *Unpacking "Transnational Citizenship",* Fox (2005) argues that citizenship is a relational concept and traces its definition to be contested. These definitions vary but some are foundationally attached to the state and the rights that it protects and enforces, or citizenship grounded in rights that constitute "enforceable claims on the state" (Tilly, 1998, as cited in Fox, 2005). Alternatively, other definitions of citizenship are based on being members of civic or political communities (Fox, 2005).

Aguilar (2014) argues that in post-colonial states in Southeast Asia the notion of citizenship is problematic and difficult to ascertain due to the postcolonial status of several nation-states including the Philippines. He argues that "*its substance in semidemocratic, dictatorial, or authoritarian regimes, or where mass poverty exists, is highly contentious*"; that globalization, Eurocentric values, and Asian values contest in the renegotiation and practice of citizenship. (p. 201) Here, Filipino citizenship is contested, nuanced, and shaped by institutions that seek to benefit from its utility. While this discussion focuses on the Philippine state, Filipino citizenship is further reworked once migrants enter settler-colonial states such as Canada. In this context, migrant workers are granted entry into the

state as labour-subjects, whose presence within the state are rendered as temporary and conditional through their immigration status and labour migration schemes. Here, Filipino citizenship becomes reconstructed upon crossing borders and becomes more layered in the settler-colonial economy that needs their labour.

Citizenship-making in the Philippines has emerged through a broader nation-building project that predates the contemporary labour export systems. The Spanish colonial period laid the foundation for classification of racial categories that continue to permeate Filipino life today. The encomienda system was a strategic policy of the Spanish crown that was enforced in the Philippine islands until the middle of the 17th century. Learning from its experience of imperial expansion into the Indies, Spanish settlement needed to secure Indian labour to operate its colonies, whilst still maintaining basic human rights for its colonial subjects (Anderson, 1976). The encomienda system served to extract labour from the natives and "for half a century was the most important system in the Spanish Philippines for the ordering of Filipino society and labour" (Anderson 1976, p. 27). At this time the Spanish crown granted Spaniards and soldiers, representatives of Spanish imperialism, the position of Encomendero. As Piscos and Rodriguez notes,

> "The procedures in establishing an encomienda were not properly followed. An encomendero went to a village and announced the following: "Take heed that I am your master, and that the governor has given you to me to protect you" (Piscos, 2017 p. 21)

> "The Philippine encomendero had the right to impose tribute on male residents of his encomienda…and to to indoctrinate the indios with Christian teachings and to train them to become loyal subjects of the Spanish crown". (Rodriguez p.7)

At that time they had stratified the population into an established hierarchy that was racially determined through "economic status and level of 'Hispanisation', but lineage, blood, and phenotype" also played prominent roles (Rodao, 2018 p. 430). The Spaniards established a colonial social system with the encomienda system. The highest social positions were occupied by European born males, called Peninsulares, and the lowest were assigned to the natives of the islands, called Indios (Anderson, 1976) . The indios experienced injustices of forced labour and "slavery had deeply penetrated the colonial society' (Piscos p. 34). Anderson (1976) argues that this was the earliest and most important system of the Spanish colonial era that arranged a system for Filipino society and labour. Such colonial discourses contributed to the categorization of Filipinos and the institutionalization

of subjecthood of the natives under the Spanish crown. Despite not being a direct institutionalization of modern citizenship of Filipinos, the encomienda system is an institutionalization of the vassality of Filipinos under colonial rules and policies that structurally impose indentured labour. Here, Filipinos are experienced colonial exploitations and subjecthood as being "vassals" and liege subjects of Spain.

Coming to modern times, scholars have examined how notions of Philippine citizenship have been historically framed to serve US imperial interests that upheld postcolonial control. Aguilar (2014) called this "*instrumental citizenship*", and is notably applied to former dictatorial President Marcos Sr. in his instrumentalizing of citizenship to integrate Chinese Filipinos into the "*boundaries of the imagined national community*" and in his Balikbayan Program which encouraged the return of OFWs and former Filipinos to the Philippines for tourism, investment and reassimilation (pp. 201, 213). The Philippine state as a neocolonial polity has institutionalized labour migration through policies that invoke Filipino citizenship rights and political belonging. In 1974, the Marcos administration adopted the Labour Code of the Philippines that governed the employment practices and labour relations of Filipino citizens. Similarly, Cabato (2006) argues that this legal code institutionalized the economic strategy of reliance on Overseas Filipino Workers and encultured migrant labour onto the Filipino reality. Collantes (2018) also adds that Marcos' recognition of overseas work as the solution for the high unemployment and high population growth in the country started the implementation of state-promoted and facilitated employment of Filipino citizens overseas. These scholars emphasized how Filipino citizenship has been re/framed by legal and ideological structures that supported labour migration.

Scholars have explored how the institutionalization of overseas labour since the 1970s governmental push for its citizens to work overseas has shaped the arrangements of the Filipino family; Collantes (2018) notes that intimacies of the families and partnerships have shifted and absences became a standard familiarity in Filipino citizens' households. Asis (2006) argues that as Filipino citizens and families become more dependent on the labour diaspora, an obsession with the wanting to become OFWs have been encultured into the Filipinos. As citizens become more knowledgeable and gain more experiences on the complex processes of labour migrations, they can also draw and socialize other family members into joining them in the labour diaspora. The desire to become OFWs is not just an individual inclination but a filial inclination as well; as families learn together to become

migrants, the diaspora continues. In this way, the labour diaspora becomes a generational project.

In his research on the gendered discourses in the making of Filipino citizens into migrants, Tyner (2004) draws on Foucault, and posits that,

> [M]igrants are made discursively. When governments, private recruitment agencies, employers, activists, and the “migrants” themselves speak of migrations, they do so within their own discourses, their own understandings and interpretations. Such discourses generate the meanings of migration through language and the social relations of state and private agencies, employers, migrants, and so forth. Consequently, through the deployment (literally and metaphorically) of discursively made migrants, spatial (and gendered) patterns of migration are produced (p. 3).

For Tyner (2004), the production of migrants from citizens is not only state-sanctioned but is a nuanced process in knowledge-production that involves migrants themselves. These could be families and kin as well that reproduce state subjectivities in the promotion of institutionalizing citizens’ migrant labour streams. Here, the institutionalization of Filipino citizenship and labour migration is through engagement with discourse.

Tyner (2004) draws on Foucault again and argues that power/knowledge relations become foundations of discourse; that institutions, organizations, and disciplines produce knowledge that manifests into rules, regulations, mandates, and policies that constitute discursive formations and bodies of knowledge. Tyner suggests that discussions of migration then produce migrants through multiple, contradictory, and contested discourses. Citizen-making and the production of migrant subjectivities then are nuanced, multifaceted, and elusive to definition.

In *Cultural Citizenship as Subject-Making: Immigrants Negotiate Racial and Cultural Boundaries in the United States,* Ong *(1996)* argues that these complex modalities of citizen-making, are often shaped by transnational capitalism. One of these processes, cultural citizenship, is one of self-making and being made under institutions;

> “citizenship is a cultural process of "subject-ification," in the Foucauldian sense of self-making and being-made by power relations that produce consent through schemes of surveillance, discipline, control, and administration (Foucault I989, I99I)… “{C}ultural citizenship" [refers] to the cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic

> forms… Becoming a citizen depends on how one is constituted as a subject who exercises or submits to power relations" (pp. 737-738).

Citizenship is also subjectification by the state that is institutionalized not only by state-policies, institutions and measures, but also by fellow citizens subject by the same state.

Citizenship-making in the Philippines has been reconfigured by the state to normalize the creation of OFWs from its citizens (Rodriguez, 2010). Governed by colonial neoliberalist policies, the state heavily endorses overseas work as solutions to the country's socio-economic challenges. Migrant labour under globalization is touted and legitimized as a strategy for upwards social mobility and employment for its citizens. In fact, Rodriguez (2010) argues that it has reconfigured citizenship and combined it with nationalism and belonging to becoming OFWs; Rodriguez (2010) also argued how citizenship is one of the instruments by mechanisms the Philippine state uses to "*disciplines migrants as cheap workers for the global economic order*" (p. 342). Migrant labouring is equated to nationalism and political belonging to its citizens. When Filipinos citizens go overseas to secure livelihoods they enter a neoliberal market under the management of the brokerage state. She argues that,

> "By brokering labour, the Philippine state attempts to contain the multiple social dislocations that are the consequence of its aggressive implementation of neoliberal economic policies. It represents employment abroad and remittances as the fulfillment of a new form of nationalism. Contemporary Philippine citizenship has become a modality of governmentality…New iterations of citizenship, what might be termed oxymoronically enough migrant citizenship, become a means by which the state deftly masks how the entitlements of Philippine citizenship are in fact dwindling under conditions of neoliberalism" (Rodriguez, 2010 pp. xxvii, xx).

State governmentality of citizenship such as this are ideological modes of institutionalization of labour work that re/define cultural/national belonging through remittances and migrant work. Practice of migrant work and its continuous institutional and individual recruitment direct citizens to ideological orientations related to nationalism. These contribute to citizens' commitments to pursue migrant work.

The literature demonstrates that Filipino citizenship has been shaped not only by legal frameworks but also through strategic discursive processes that normalize and support labour migration to be a national duty and an aspiration. Aguilar, Tyner, Ong, and Rodriguez study how citizenship is institutionalized through multiple avenues, in state

policy, filial duties, and neoliberal market logics. As such, these works establish how biopower is operated through state institutions and transition Filipinos into OFWs.

My research builds on this scholarship by analyzing the lived experiences of Filipinos through the lens of Critical Filipino Studies, biopower, and institutionalization. I extend these discussions by drawing on participant narratives to examine how citizenship is socialized from a young age to frame labour migration not only as a civic responsibility, but also as a familial and economic necessity. I look at how this framing of labour migration constitutes a form of biopolitical governmentality that manages Filipino lives through kinship, poverty, and promises of upwards social mobility through a neocolonial labour empire. This new perspective complicates earlier discussions of agency in the diaspora as it looks at the influence of biopolitics in the narratives of choice and the decision to engage in OFW work. More importantly, I look at how this foundational subjectivity of the Filipino citizen makes way for other subjectivities to build upon, such as the ideal migrant and the *Bagong Bayani*.

5.3. Institutionalizing the Filipino "Modern-day hero"

Scholars such as Encinas-Franco (2013), Guevarra (2010), and Rodriguez (2002), have analyzed the institutionalization of OFWs as national heroes by the Philippine state and the construction of the language of migrant heroization. These scholars trace the language of heroism and constructing Filipino migrants as heroes way back in the year 1988 when the former president Corazon Aquino referred to OFWs as the '*Bagong Bayani*' or 'new national heroes and heroines'. Rodriguez (2002) also accounts how former presidents Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada greeted OFWs with 'heroes' welcome', continuing the tradition of constructing the overseas workers as 'new national heroes'. Encinas-Franco (2013) states that this valorization attached to the Filipino labourers has become so prominent that it is found in many facets of the Filipino social reality, from government and documents to programs and announcements. In this practice of heroization Filipinos are "encouraged to take pride" (Solomon, 2009, as cited in Encinas-Franco, 2013, p. 97).

Encinas-Franco adds one major proof that the state officially implements the use of heroization through the *Bagong Bayani* Awards (translates as modern hero awards). The awards

> “seek to recognize and pay tribute to our OFWs for their significant efforts in fostering goodwill among peoples of the world, enhancing and promoting the image of the Filipino as a competent, responsible and dignified worker, and for greatly contributing to the socio-economic development of their communities and our country as a whole. The BBA aims at providing proper recognition to deserving nominees, thus setting up examples for others to emulate, and for the country to be proud of” (Bagong Bayani Foundation, Inc. 2021).

Encinas-Franco (2013) argues that appropriations of this discourse and rhetoric make it naturalized and lead to it becoming "endlessly repeated and widely disseminated across the media to the point that values, beliefs, and logics underlying the discourse are taken for granted in society at large" (Morooka, 2006, as cited in Encinas-Franco, 2013, p. 98). Guevarra (2010) also posits that Filipino nurses are special recipients of notions of heroization due to their ability of bringing in continuous flows of remittances back to the country, and their initial influences in shaping the labour migration stream and Filipino culture. The heroization shapes discourses around the OFWs which how their lives and labour are spoken about and such discourses regulate the ways in which narratives are acceptable and expected. Following Berger and Luckmann’s framework, such institutionalizations contribute to making the heroization of the OFW a taken-for-granted social reality. The repeated recognitions and proclamations of the *Bagong Bayani* through the media and state discourse turns it into external objective fact. Over time this becomes absorbed and internalized by OFWs, their families, and the broader public. Here, it goes beyond mere state circulations and awards, but it becomes institutionalized as a “natural” fact of what it means to be an OFW.

Marshall (2018) and Guevarra (2010) also looks at the role religion plays in this process of OFW heroization. Guevarra argues that

> “The state’s construction of Filipino workers as God-fearing, self-sacrificing, highly productive workers and citizens echoes [religious] ideals and is represented by the iconic figure of the Bagong Bayani” (p. 25)

Religion plays a key role in the reinforcement of the OFW heroization as Filipinos are mostly Christians, owing to Spain’s colonial efforts of Christianization. Both scholars look at the interplay of religious culture and the heroization of OFW martyrdom as they toil overseas and go through labour hardships that are likened to that of Jesus Christ. Marshall (2018) argues that religious culture valorizes sacrifice, submission, and martyrdom for the sake of a greater good. She looks at the New Testament, and how in this sacred Catholic

scripture the story of Jesus Christ's suffering and willingness to sacrifice himself for humanity creates a resonance and an icon worthy of emulation for migrants. Through this, OFWs can cope with their hardships and think that Jesus suffered the same way and conceive that their struggles abroad resonate with that of the son of God's. Guevarra (2010) argues that religion has been the base through which Filipinos were culturally managed by Spain, and especially through the figure of the Virgin Mary; she was the figurehead who carried the idealized values of purity and being a sacrificing mother. For Guevarra (2010), these values have influenced the ideological framework of the Filipino diaspora and the successful implementation of state discourse of overseas work as being a rewarding "sacrifice". With the Virgin Mary being the mother of Jesus, comes her pain being intertwined and paralleled with Jesus's sacrifice. This reinforces the feminization of the *Bagong Bayani* and the notions of maternal suffering, endurance, and being submissive which are traits often normalized to OFW women.

This heroism and valorization come at a price, as Rodriguez (2010) argues that OFW heroism comes with responsibilities and expectations that the state enforces. The Philippine state expects OFWs to be "exemplary representatives" of the nation overseas, particularly in the labour that they perform and acting as quasi-ambassadors of the state by being law-abiding diligent migrant workers. OFWs should also seek to return to the Philippines upon finishing their contracts. More importantly, OFWs are to send their remittances, as the state can in fact, regulate migrants to obtain remittances (Rodriguez, 2010).

Recent events also illustrate this contradiction in the state-sponsored heroization. For instance, in March of 2025, when OFWs advocated for a "zero remittance week" to protest the International Criminal Court detention of former president Duterte, Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Juan Ponce Enrile, stated that,

> "If such an advice is followed by some OFWs, what will happen should Congress, for instance, retaliate and cancel or also suspend the tax privileges of the OFWs that follow the advice? The OFWs are income tax-free on their earnings abroad; they do not pay travel taxes; they do not pay airport fees; they are exempt from the documentary stamp taxes on their remittances; and they are also exempt from filing income tax returns" (Bajo, 2025).

Mckay (2007) argues that constructions of heroism, by the state, agencies, and other institutions, also work to mask and diffuse the suffering of OFWs, especially seafaring

men. He argues that evoking sentiment around the 'modern-day hero' to migrants proceeds to enculture enduring sacrifice and suffering for the nation. At the same time, the state is also careful in emphasizing a subtle form of heroism, one that does not carry ideas of aggressive heroic masculinity that might lead to complaints and organization, but just enough to stress subordination and docility (McKay, 2007). This is emphasized by Turgo (2021) and his studies on seafaring men where heroic nationalism and hegemonic masculinity are performed differently and in varying ways, as the precarity of seafaring demands a masculinity shift. For Filipinos on board ships they practice gender shifts "*to respond to changes in relation to … survival*" (Turgo 2021, p. 1773). For Fajardo (2011), Filipino seafaring men are "*key masculine cultural and economic figures for the Philippine*s" and for these men to embody their honoured masculinities they often find ways to enact them strategically and unconventionally (p. 5). In Turgo's (2021) examples, their subjectivities compel the seafarers to "adjust" their masculinities as strategies to keep employment and prestige back home. These included, being docile, uncomplaining, and meek to higher ranking officers, and at the same time adjusting notions of virility and emotionality for self-preservation at sea. OFW seafarers are idolized and looked up to by their local communities in the Philippines and are seen as representatives of hegemonic masculinity; For this, they receive prestige and are honoured by the Philippine state for the international labour they do for the love of the motherland (Turgo 2021, McKay, 2007). They may be labeled as modern day heroes but such consecrations also beset male seafarers with the need to endure the grievances of their subjectivity as contract workers at sea.

While scholars such as Encinas-Franco, Guevarra, and Rodriguez, have detailed the state's role in constructing OFWs to be heroic and remittance-driven, my research pushes their studies further as I discuss the *Bagong Bayani* subjectivity under a neocolonial lens, critiquing how it operates as a biopolitical tool to manage and discipline migrant labour. I examine how this subjectivity is felt, refashioned, and resisted by OFWs themselves. More importantly, I look at how OFWs strategically reclaim and critique the *Bagong Bayani* figure, offering a more complicated discourse of its subversiveness, as they leverage it to assert agency, resist exploitation, and reframe the meaning of heroism on their own terms. Missing from the literature is also the discussion that it is not only the Philippines that promotes the subjectivity of the *Bagong Bayani*; Canada promotes this subjectivity as well,

as the state benefits from the availability of productive, cost-efficient, and heroized Filipino labourers, thus it also reinforces it through its own biopolitical mechanisms.

5.4. Institutionalizing the "The Ideal Migrant"

Several scholars have researched on how states, agencies, employers, and even fellow migrants have stakes in shaping the subjectivity of what they consider to be the good migrant or the ideal migrant (Collantes, 2018; Grez, 2019; Liang, 2011; Rodriguez, 2010; Tungohan, 2021). Multiple actors are involved in the institutionalization of this migrant subjectivity. These actors collude and compete in the mapping of ideal migranthood that their processes also engender constructions of gender, class, race, citizenship (McLaughlin, 2010). With the colonial history of the US in the Philippines, the Philippines state is involved in the management of colonial governmentality. Schueller (2019) argues that it induces colonial subjectivities of the ideal migrant through what David Scott has called the "desiring subject". Building on this, the role of the Philippine state is crucial in the production and management of what it considers to be ideal migrants. Imbued with colonial systems of dependence and export, the state participates in this process of training colonial subjectivities.

Tungohan (2021) examines the Predeparture Orientation Seminar (PDOS) of the Philippines and how the Philippine state employs techniques of psychological and cultural control over its people. It manufactures the subjectivity of an 'ideal migrant' in its efforts to shape the Filipino identity just before they are deployed to work outside its national boundaries. An 'ideal migrant' entails being an OFW who is uncomplaining and docile in the face of hardship, abuse, and any difficulties that one could face in the time of working overseas. It reproduces a colonial mindset to the Filipinos, refurbishing them as "Filipino values". Tungohan analyses this process and how the state instills nationalism to the OFWs to see themselves as subservient colonial subjects to the Philippines and to the host country. The Filipino state makes colonial subjects of its own people for export to foreign authorities and employers. Becoming a compliant and passive migrant worker becomes a patriotic obligation, as if colonial mentality is the national standard for the people. Tungohan (2021) argues that through institutionalizing the subjectivity of an 'ideal migrant', it continually benefits from the profits of its past's colonial system. I will further discuss the PDOS in the Chapter 6.2.1, discussing border and control.

On one hand, promotion of the ideal migrant subjectivity benefits receiving states as they gain access to Filipino migrant workers already institutionalized into the imaginary of the "Great Filipino Worker" (Guevarra, 2010). As the Philippines supply them with ideal labour, they profit from the steady stream of workers that are skilled and have been socialized to adapt and accept precarity. On the other hand, Filipinos might also perceive this subjectivity as ideal as it answers national concerns on unemployment and socio-economic issues, as well as gaming it as a pathway for personal advancement. Guevarra (2010) argues that the Philippines is often characterized as having a natural source of untapped ideal labour resources. This idea is rooted from our colonial history which has left us with legacies of debt and weakened social structures. The marketing of ideal migrant subjectivities become an oversimplified solution to employment and upwards social mobility, while masking the systemic neocolonial structures at play.

Tungohan (2021) also looks at diasporic communities and how these communities reinforce bonds of solidarity with fellow migrants, ensuring that they adhere to the ideal migrant values. She states how online spaces are also effective modes of practicing performance and confirming other's performance to ideals of the 'ideal migrant'. In these spaces, people engage in open criticisms and determine whether fellow OFWs are good or bad migrant subjects. Online communities then also tend to function as neocolonial tools of reproducing the Filipino identity as good, docile, hard-working, and passive. These online communities often work to control OFW behavior and ensure that they adhere and identify to neocolonialist patriotic and nationalist values of Filipino subservience to employers and host countries (Tungohan, 2021). Shubin and Findlay (2014) argue that language plays a key role in the enculturation of the ideal migrant, through social codes and norms in language that are formed and demanded by other people (in this case, the diasporic community), particularly expectations about migrant trajectories.

Polanco (2016) does a similar study on the manufacture of 'ideal migrants' but, instead, she focuses on the processes that Canada establishes to create the ideal migrant through 'managed migration'. She stipulates that under neoliberal globalization, governments and corporations have become able to facilitate regulation of workers for low-wage employment jobs across labour intensive sectors like agriculture, construction, service, and hospitality. She adds that Canada achieves 'managed migration' and the ability to create a low-paid manageable work force through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) (Polanco, 2016). These commodifying programs also give minimal rights and

excessive restrictions on the movement of migrant workers (Grez, 2019). The scholars discuss that through (im)migration schemes, these programs can utilize transnational recruitment and employ workers they deem as 'superior' and highly productive. This means that the type of workers who are being sought are those who are motivated and discipline migrant subjects who they entice and control with the promise of permanent residency. This allure of a more stable immigrant status motivates subjects to consent to precarious working conditions. In this sense, Canada manufactures an 'ideal migrant' of their own.

Barber (2008) offers an interesting insight into these institutionalizations. She upholds migrant workers agency and creativity in achieving their goals; she argues that workers negotiate their positions with the ideal migrant subjectivity and performs it to fit into available market opportunities. These acts foregrounds the agency of migrants and she labels them as "performances of subordination" (Barber, 2008 p. 1268). This highlights the complexity involved in the labour migration processes and the negotiations in the processes wherein migrants can sometimes downplay their skills and identities to appeal to employers. These capture the tensions in the demands of multiple actors for the migrants to perform the ideal migrant. As such, migrants must be resourceful and flexible to be acceptable in the terms of the employers and the community who expects them to do so (Spiliopoulos & Cuban, 2025).

Like training centers for migrants that recruit, train, and discipline pre-departing migrants (Liang, 2011), the PDOS, the TFWP, the state, and even the migrant communities themselves enforce a form of migrant governmentality that perpetuates the ideal migrant subjectivity. These are done through their policies and culture that develop knowledge on migrant rules, duties, and prohibitions. Foucault (1997) calls these techniques of control and regulation as "*technologies of the self*", wherein they essentially train governable subjects; these technologies shape the behavior and conduct of people and "*submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject*" (p. 225). He discusses that these technologies "*permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves*" (p. 225).

Analyzing recruiting agencies that follow a similar framework of training and regulating (prospective) migrants (and domestic workers), Liang (2011) draws on Rudnicki (2004)

and calls these systems as "technologies of servitude" that ensure workers are skilled in body but also disciplined in mind to possess the attitudes necessary for productive work. Guevarra also adds that these are "*technologies of government*" for the Philippines (and I add that for Canada as well) to ensure labour-brokering programs that produce empowered, responsible, self-accountable workers (Guevarra, 2010; Rose & Miller, 1992). They are technologies that institutionalize the ideal migrant. This is relevant to my study as it completes the subjectivity trinity of the Filipino citizen, the new Filipino hero, and the ideal Filipino migrant.

Existing scholarship on the ideal migrant subjectivity has mapped how states, agencies, and even fellow migrants participate in producing migrants as subservient, docile, and self-sacrificing subjects. Much of this work focuses on managed migration programs and pre-departure mechanisms that prime migrants for global labour markets. From Tungohan's analysis of the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS), I expand the nexus of the construction of the ideal migrant and analyze the powerful and informal post-arrival "seminar" OFWs undergo upon entering the Canadian border. I analyze how OFWs make sense of institutionalized ideal migranthood not only through state messaging but through their own understanding and embodied experiences of precarious temporariness and the *kayod carabao* (literally "carabao labour," meaning relentless hard work) ethic. In doing so, I extend the literature on the ideal migrant by foregrounding first-hand narratives of OFWs and tracing how their lived experiences reflect, reproduce, or resist state policies and institutional discourses that uphold ideal migranthood.

Finally, there is also limited studies on how the makeup of Filipino culture contributes to the complicating and disrupting of these subjectivities. Cultural values such as *bayanihan* (community cooperation) and *tsikahan (informal, often humorous gossiping)* can both reinforce and unsettle the expectations placed on the ideal migrant, revealing contradictions within migrant subject formation. My research addresses this gap by examining the lived experiences of OFWs in Greater Vancouver, highlighting how they navigate and contest the institutionalized subjectivities, emphasizing their uniquely Filipino resistance, agency, and expertise within Canada's neocolonial labour regimes.

Chapter 6.

Analysis

6.1. The Filipino Citizen

> "As long as we treat migrant, displaced labour as dependent wards of philanthropic largesse, we won't see them for what they are: the very heart of a global labour force whose movements are linked to war, capital flows, policies imposed by states and international financial/economic bodies, racist and patriarchal security regimes, and the struggles of working people on every side of every border." (Walia, 2021 p.20)

6.1.1. The Push Factor: Political Socialization of Poverty

It is imperative that we begin the analysis through Filipino citizenship, as I argue that it is through the socialization of being a Filipino citizen that the other subjectivities follow. It is first identifying with Filipinoness that the others develop from. In this study, I understand citizenship not merely as a legal status with the nation-state but also as a socially driven subjectivity that is produced and cultivated socially. I extend it beyond a legal project, as I link citizenship with nationalism and belonging within the Filipino community, which also entails performing the cultural expectations of being an OFW, such as enduring labour and remittances. This form of citizenship formation conditions Filipinos to understand labour migration as a moral, familial, and patriotic civic responsibility.

Klandermans (2014) argues that personal identities are the roles and positions a person occupies which form one's personal identity. At the same time, every place a person occupies is shared with other people. Since one shares this identity with others it becomes a collective identity. This primary identity Filipinos learn becomes the foundational characteristic through which the hero-migrant and ideal migrant build upon. National consciousness and identification with being Filipino are learned at an early age as we are socialized into narratives of nationalism through school, media, and culture. We learn what it means to be Filipino and the identifying qualities to belong in this social group. Identity formation at this stage not only entails being socialized by cultural and traditional norms but also learning of the socio-economic situation of the homeland and its inhabitants. It is in this stage of life that a collective ethnic identity forms within the Filipino psyche.

Collective identity politicizes when it becomes the focus of a struggle for power. Social groups frequently engage in power struggles as they seek to establish, modify, or protect a power hierarchy. The politicization of an identity evolves through a series of events that gradually reshape the group's dynamic with its surroundings. This progression usually commences with the recognition of common grievances (Klandermans, 2014). For example, answering to the reasons on why she decided to move to Canada, one participant recounts,

> *"I think the fact that I grew up in a poor family, I think that's what influenced me or pushed me to join my parents here to become an OFW. Because I've seen the struggles that they've been through for years…I think that's one of the reason. It's really the poverty. Poverty is what really influenced me to go here. And I also have my family back in the Philippines to support. That's what give me a reason to keep going to work, so I could help them one day." -Participant 10*

> *"It's difficult, but you know, you have to be strong because of poverty. What challenges you may have for me. When I went abroad I'm with God first and also the strength. And I was already decided that what struggles I may think I will overcome them." -Participant 7*

While Participant 10 and 7 do not explicitly mention neo/colonialism, their narrative reflects how poverty is experienced as a generational and almost normalized condition of Filipino life. Across most of the interviews, participants repeatedly described how poverty affected their lives in the Philippines. These recurring reflections reveal not just personal hardship but a collective identity shaped by shared experiences of economic struggle. This collective sense of being poor and Filipino emerges as a powerful social reality, a shared sense of being poor and aspiring to uplift one's family. These narratives reveal how internalized poverty is a normalized condition of Filipino life that obscures the role of historical and ongoing neo/colonialism, while managing Filipinos towards becoming labour migrants.

I interpret the normalization of poverty to be a mechanism of colonial biopower that regulates labour relations. Filipinos have become displaced by global capitalism and have been pushed outside the country to become low-wage workers globally (Rodriguez, 2010). It is through institutionalized poverty, (experienced by Filipinos through historical neo/colonial extraction, weak social protections, underemployment, labour export-oriented economy and culture, and chronic deep-seated political corruption), that Filipinos are pushed to become OFWs for survival. As such, I view poverty to be a mechanism by which

the Philippine state disciplines its citizens as what Rodriguez (2010) calls its functions as a labour brokerage state.

Most of the participants when asked about their lives before coming to Canada, in connection with their motivation in coming to Vancouver, answered similarly and often responded with the struggles of poverty. The deprivation and socio-economic hardship in the Philippines become a main characteristic of what it was like to be Filipino before having moved to Canada. It is these conditions that shape how being "Filipino" is experienced and understood before migrating to Canada. These accounts reflect broader structural issues. For example,

> 'Migrante believes that Filipinos were practically pushed to leave their families and country because of extreme poverty imposed on the Filipino people by an unjust and exploitative social, economic and political system in the Philippines' (Migrante International, 1994).

The socialization of Filipinos within poverty is in fact a process of politicization. This is biopolitics in which colonial systems control our population and condition us to struggle for survival, our common grievance. It uses our poverty to discipline our bodies and teach this system of hierarchies of economic subordinance, in which we are primed to overcome through migrant labour.

Poverty becomes part of the national ethnic identity, which I argue correlates poverty and the socioeconomic struggle to our collective understanding of selfhood and the Filipino identity. Li (2018) states that ethnic identity is a sense of belonging shared among people of a nation or political community. As poverty is a common marker shared by many participants, and consistently mentioned, it functions as a common thread that binds individuals to a belonging in a shared national political identity. I argue that the socialization of poverty in the Filipino psyche is the institutionalization of Filipino citizenship and its position in the global labour market. It is an emplacement of the Filipino citizen in the global capitalist system that is imposed by neocolonial powers, such as Canada, for its benefit. Interestingly, centering poverty as the primary motivator for becoming an OFW and entering the global flow of labour shows how poverty is a marker for community and ethnic identity. Experiencing poverty and being surrounded by it during one's formative years, that it influences one to pursue becoming an international labour migrant, is political socialization of the Filipino citizen on global inequalities.

In *Making Citizens,* Wasburn and Adkins Covert (2007) claim that early political socialization was seen as playing the role of inculcating values espoused by the American political system; and that socialization occurs within evolving historical and social settings. Historical contexts include macro-level political and economic circumstances and events defining a specific era. These may entail periods of war or peace, economic downturns or prosperity, and domestic unrest or stability (Wasburn & Adkins Covert, 2017). In this case, the subjectivity of the Filipino citizen is fashioned during the height of the ongoing neocolonial labour diaspora. For its benefit, the neocolonial system is institutionalizing citizens in poverty; it is creating identities through poverty. Having grown up in impoverished conditions emplace the Filipino in the neocolonial system that enforces the belief that labour migration is the only viable route to economic survival.

This historic and social setting is very apparent in its economic form. Neo/colonialism has created such a schism in the economic setting between the Global North and the Global South, that it prompts labour migration. In this case, one participant recalls how different life is between Vancouver and the Philippines,

> *"I would say yes. But it feels different than in the Philippines. It's so, so different. Like you can see the struggle of the people and I could relate, I can. I feel touched because here (Canada) you can see. You can see how comfortable life of some people are, that they could eat. But in the Philippines. You have neighbors that are having difficulties. You can appreciate the little things in life. That's why I like it. That's why I like life in the Philippines. I mean you can appreciate it here. But you're too comfortable in a way that. It's OK; It's like everyone is equal. Everyone is. But the quality in the Philippines. I can appreciate it more because you can see what life is like without money." -Participant 10*

This differentiation shows the stark variation of the social and economic context between the post-colonial states and the Global North, which induces the institutionalization of the struggle and the want to better social and economic conditions through overseas work. Participant 10's narrative also shows how the Filipino citizen experiences the global disparity of poverty, seeing how conditions in Canada are much better, that even the right to eat and food are recognized and especially remarked upon. It is also very interesting that the participant even appreciates having known what life is like without money. This reflection also reveals how deprivation becomes reframed as resilience and still reinforcing the perpetuating conditions of precarity.

This showcases the gross inequality present in the Philippines, where enduring the struggle and showcasing the strength and resilience of the Filipino become appreciable. This culture of endurance and resilience originates from the history of struggle against Spanish and US American colonial rule. Today, this narrative is evoked once more in the struggle against inequality produced by empire and neocolonial liberalism. This setting reinforces the gap of life in the Philippines, which is associated with 'struggle and resilience' and streams this into labour migration. This is institutionalization of diasporic nationalism in the Filipino consciousness that also redirects attention away from the very neocolonial capitalist systems that produce systematic global inequality. This sets up the background for the labour migration stream towards Canada and the intergenerational call for Filipinos to become OFWs; and also sets the other subjectivities of neo/colonial institutionalizations.

6.1.2. Kinship and Citizenship

Aguilar (2009) posits that Filipinos have fostered the significance of family, emphasizing its central role in both the individual well-being and societal cohesion. He adds that the "*the 1987 Philippine Constitution enshrines 'the sanctity of family life' and binds the state to "protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution*" (p. 95). This ascertains that filial membership and support is not only a cultural tradition but an institution in itself, enshrined in the state's constitution. As the state declares the family an autonomous institution, by way it effectively offloads state responsibility of care and welfare onto the family's granted autonomy. Here, citizens are necessitated to be responsible providers for their family, and fulfilling this filial obligation is also fulfillment of civic duties and of one's Filipino citizenry. Filial support then becomes a matter of not only fulfilling love for the family but also love for the country. The expectation to support the nuclear family is deeply embedded in Filipino culture and identity; and a good way of doing so, as is prevailing in the social discourse of our historical context, is labour migration.

For example, one participant recalls how it is her advocacy to look after people, or to work, because it is in our nature, and that because it is naturalized in our collective Filipino consciousness;

> *"Because I think it's in the nature of our culture to look after children or elderly. Because of the difficulty in the Philippines, we all carry this advocacy to look after them. Also the nurses taking care of the sick. I think*

> *it's. I think because of our situation there, our economy. It's natural to the Filipinos to be like that. We're spread around the world, right? And mostly it's medical jobs that we do. There's different jobs. Also some professionals, but I think if you percentage it, there's really a lot in the medical world. It's like it's naturalized (to) the Filipinos." -Participant 7*

More importantly, not only does Participant 7 recognize the institutionalization of kinship and care work as a way of supporting the family, but she also links this naturalization of kinship and support in the Filipino citizen's subjectivity to the widespread socioeconomic inequality in the country. What is often framed as an "intrinsic" Filipino ability for care work has actually been racialized and popularized in mass cultural discourses, such as the trope that most Filipino migrants are nurses. Filipinos are not naturally inclined to care work, instead, normalized care work is produced through kinship under conditions of economic difficulty. The precarity and global inequality Filipinos experience generate conditions that give rise to a culture of diasporic care work.

This story highlights how systemic pressures and global economic inequalities breed routes through which OFWs engage in care work across borders and how care is exported. It is the desire for upward social mobility and escaping poverty that motivates the labour diaspora's push for Filipina women who do unpaid filial domestic duties in the Philippines to perform the same reproductive labour overseas in a paid setting (Lan, 2003). It transitions care work for the nuclear family into a transnational form of labour, where domestic work is commodified and extended across borders. In order to supply the needs of families in the Philippines, one must fill in the labour needs of the care work industry of the Global North.

It is within this context of naturalized kinship-based care that OFWs come to Canada through its temporary labour migration regimes in which they experience precarious living and working conditions as care workers. Mooten (2021) argues that temporary labour programs such as Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Program and the Caregiver Streams are rooted in racist and discriminatory immigration policies, and as such are "institutional racism". In Canada care workers are experiencing heightened precarity due to the state's prolonged and difficult process of applying for permanent residence status; during this period of holding temporary labour status, care workers remain vulnerable to precarity and exploitation from their employers (Bagon et al, 2024). While a substantial body of scholarship has examined further the experiences of what Parrenas (2005) calls an *international division of reproductive labour* (p. 29), this discussion shifts the focus toward

the prior socialization and the naturalization of care through Filipino kinship. Rather than mapping the chains of care internationally, I examine instead, how this labour migration is institutionalized under harsh economic conditions which render labour migration (through care work or other forms of labour) a desirable path for upwards social mobility for one's kins.

Aguilar (2009) adds that kinship in the Philippines extends beyond just the nuclear family; historically, we value an emphasis on siblingship and extended family ties. Kinship in our culture is cognatic and bilateral, meaning both maternal and paternal sides of the families are considered close kin and are usually part of one's filial social universe (Aguilar, 2009). In Filipino mag-anak means family, and it is anchored around the root word anak which means child, reflecting a kinship system that is focused on the child and siblingship. This then extends to the word kamag-anak, the term for the extended family. The use of anak in both words highlights how Filipino kinship and siblingship is expansive; even extended kin is linguistically and culturally framed to be as intimate as nuclear kin. A common observation is that families give support to their members, which in the Philippine setting is far beyond what is expected of the family in western countries and cultures. These strong kin loyalties give Filipinos an inability to identify with state instrumentalities such as social services and welfare institutions for support, as Filipinos would rather seek help and support from their kin rather than government-based aid and social institutions (Miralao, 1997). This preference reinforces the performance of kinship with Filipino citizenship as it outweighs developing institutional relationships with the nation state. Here, to perform Filipino citizenry becomes less about state institutions but more about upholding family support, and filial loyalty. In effect, kinship becomes a practice of citizenship. As one participant puts it,

> *"As Filipinos, we know that if they are related to us, we give it to them readily. There is no hesitation to give to them, because you know that. You know who will receive it; and we're supportive to our families. Because there are relatives and family support each other." -Participant 5*

With these very close family ties in mind, it is also important to recognize how these strongly bonded family units serve as the primary socializing agents for individuals. The kinship social universe combined with the poverty they experience forms an 'interaction system in which the individual actively participates' (Wasburn & Adkins Covert, 2017). Being socialized in this social circle that the best way to support your kamag-anaks is

through overseas work reinforces and institutionalizes the neo/colonial dynamics of the labour diaspora. Here, families break up in order to support each other and are conditioned to perform labour in the west. Young Filipino citizens learn of this life script early on, which cements the labour diaspora as a family-centered labour system.

This institutionalized neo/colonial labour system largely shapes the demographic of the country. Having about 10% of the Filipinos living overseas, families are fragmented and framed by the labour diaspora. The distribution of kamag-anaks internationally also distributes the support needed to sustain large family networks back home. Some participants recall,

> *"We're actually OFW. Most of them. And two siblings on my mother's side. And like two from my father's side also. So they said like, the work here (abroad) is good, but it's hard to save money because they need to budget it for their families that they are supporting. It's hard to support their family, because it's hard to budget and they can't save enough." -Participant 3*

> *"I mean, in my life experience. What influenced me was my cousins. They really encouraged me. I mean, I am interested to what I really wanted was not to come to Canada first. I wanted to go to Hong Kong first to start there. But then my cousin, they really said no, you don't need to go there. She said I will help you, but you just find a way to go to school there and have all the paperwork processed. I can handle it. She said, even your fare I will handle it." -Participant 11*

The diaspora shapes the Filipino family and the socio-political identity of the Filipinos. Children growing up in a largely OFW family learn of the experiences of their parents and how diasporic labour functions as a means of kamag-anak support. This is socio-political learning.

Such orientations that are absorbed during pre-adolescence in the family tend to endure; families where children strongly identify with the politics of their parents are more likely to instill lasting partisanship, sense of political efficacy, and loyalty to nation (Wasburn & Covert, 2017). Children are also taught to be proud of their parents as they are modern-day heroes of the Philippines. Children also tend to see their parents as sources of binding social rules (Wasburn & Covert, 2017). Parents thus come to stand not only as caregivers but also sources of values to learn from on the dynamics and responsibilities of the family. Building on this, Parrenas (2005) demonstrates how children of OFWs come to understand that the suffering their migrant mothers experience abroad becomes acceptable under notions of necessity and desperation for the family's survival. They learn

from their mother's narratives of grief that her sacrifice is for the provision of the family. Through her affective storytelling of her suffering, her departure and absence from the children's life becomes framed as acts of responsibility. Together, this connects the labour diaspora to the performance of citizenship, as OFWs become positioned as stewards of the state as they toil to provide for the family. This connects the labour diaspora to civic duties and performance of citizenship as parents are now labour stewards of the nation from which children also learn socio-economic values of labour migration as a civic fulfillment of Filipino filial duties and citizenry.

6.1.3. Pull factors: Neoliberalism and the Pursuit of Better Wages

Neoliberalism as an economic philosophy centers the market at the heart of its definition and goals. And with the Philippines' colonial history with the USA, neoliberalism has been imposed upon the state through western forms of governmentality and their control and use of coercive international financial institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank (Mudge, 2008). These institutions are mechanisms to legitimize the hegemony of the USA and impose its global neoliberal regime order through imposing draconian economic programs on Asian economies; their structural adjustment programs resulted in greater inequality, economic stagnation, and deepened poverty (Bello, 2004). However, this is just one point of neoliberalism's imposed neocolonial systems in the Philippines. A more useful description of neoliberalism for this study would be also how it roots itself not just to the institutions and the economy, but to the private and human lives affected by its west-focused neoliberal reforms.

Neoliberalism also reshapes the worldview of the citizens to one which fits its neo/colonial agenda. It operates a form of colonial rule by reproducing colonial hierarchies through market governmentality rather than formal and direct methods of domination. In the Philippines, it produces conditions that reshape the worldview of its citizens that normalizes economic insufficiency of the country, while institutionalizing overseas labour to be a necessary survival strategy. Neoliberalism institutionalizes the Filipinos to adopt a worldview that necessitates labour migration. What I want to develop more is what Choy (2003) calls the 'culture of migration,' referring to the powerful narratives about the promise of migration circulated by media and OFWs already abroad that continue to shape desires to pursue work overseas. As one participant shared:

> *"It's known in the Philippines that if you're gonna work there (Philippines) … it's not enough. What you earn is not enough… So that we could rise from poverty a bit and send your kids to school, a lot of Filipinos, especially the women … will go abroad so that. So that they could pay for the needs of their families and also to help their families, especially their parents." - Participant 7*

Neoliberalism and its neo/colonial rule have created institutions and conditions that make it known to the Filipinos that the country itself is not sustainable to support one's family in the provision of basic needs. The intimate disalienation of Filipino lives through poverty and western labour's promise turn us to recognize the inferiority of our socio economic situations, in comparison to the west's. This illustrates Foucault's theorizations of biopolitics and governmentality; here, neoliberalism does not simply restructure governance, but produces individuals whose desires and decisions, such as migration are oriented by market logics. Filipino citizens find it difficult to stay in the country in order to financially support the basic means of survival, the basic right to live. Personal decisions to migrate become shaped by broader governing forces that make migration the solution to poverty, rather than systemic redress.

Through their established institutional control in the country, colonial powers' techniques of governance conceive of citizens in new ways as subjects of responsibility, autonomy and choice, and seek to act upon them through shaping and utilizing their unfreedom. (Rose, 2006). The decision to leave and become an OFW is endorsed by the state by way of domination through measures that construct labour migration as an act of autonomy, a decision out of filial responsibility. However, this is not autonomy but colonial neoliberal governance *"at a distance" "through the instrumentalization of a regulated autonomy"* (Rose, 2006, p.157).

Fanon (2002) also recognizes this as the duality of colonial drives wherein hierarchies are established materially and psychologically. Neoliberal governmentality frames OFW work as agentic and diasporic freedom, but it is also a neocolonial directive. An OFW shared how Canada enticed them due to its better social infrastructures and employment stability,

> *"There's a lot of benefits here in Canada. Like you can get free health care. You can get student loan when you study. There's a lot of jobs here. Like in my experience, I don't have experience before applying a job. And they really accept you... My life will get better here in the future." -Participant 3*

This reflection captures Participant 3's agency in the decision to migrate, yet it also points to how systemic conditions in the Philippines, shaped by historical neo/colonial governance, make the appeal and opportunity of the Global North more viable. These are often the narratives OFWs give on the push factor of their reasons for leaving the country, often framing their departure as an economic necessity amidst the backdrop of the lower value of the Philippine peso to the dollar. The role of colonial history and the global neoliberal regime is not so much in the community discourse. Instead, corruption and politicians are common answers to poverty that lead to labour migration. However, the political system we have now is also a byproduct of our colonial history and the current neoliberal rule. Collantes (2018) argues that the *"colonial American mission to train Philippine leaders for self-governance only resulted in the "grafting" of a government system into a context of "highly unequal economic and social power relations and an authoritarian political culture"* (p. 54). By reconstructing our system to operate under the neo/colonial agenda's social systems, the Philippines have been structurally behind other states, which also become push factors for OFWs. These structures are both byproducts of imposed neoliberal dependence, but also of neocolonialism that maintain socio-economic imbalance between the Global North and the Philippines.

In the context of Kutay's (2022) argument that neoliberalism intertwines itself within our political constitutions, which maintain dependencies and hierarchical global relations, Participant 3's account illuminates how these structures manifest in socio-economic comparisons between the Philippines and Canada. Neoliberalism reproduces itself in the transnational comparisons between Canada and the Philippines and the migration "opportunity" that organizes Filipino lives. Multiple participants lamented how they and their families would fare much better here due to the better and more inclusive social institutions Canada offered:

> *"If there's a chance to stay here then it's better because there's more benefits here. And this is better,kind of, especially in medical, because medical is expensive for us. Your money will be gone if you do it there (in the Philippines)." -Participant 6*

> *"I chose Canada because here in Canada there are opportunities for me to bring my only child. So, I decided to come to Canada, because I know the government of Canada. It's like they have good, especially with the medical. They have a clean government and my real purpose is really to bring my family here. So I went to Canada. And also, in Canada, it's a*

bigger salary here compared to Taiwan. So that's one reason. That's one of the reasons." -Participant 7

"I told her I want to go to Canada because I thought I can bring my children in Canada. Although I can bring my children in Dubai, it's not the same as Canada. And especially with the health care. So I said yes, I would prefer that, so I can bring my children." -Participant 8

"The health care system here is much different than other countries. You get treated and then you go home without paying anything. I like how they make their health care system as perfect as possible. And the education system itself, like kind of best education system is one of the top 10. I think the best in the whole world. I'm not sure how true that is but I would say it's true and it's very standard. It's more Filipino community here. So, I like Vancouver more than any parts in Canada. And my family is here. It's hard to move to a different place in Canada or different place in the world when your family is not there." -Participant 10

The setup of the neoliberal world order shapes Filipino perception as well, as it frames migration as a rational opportunistic choice. Participants frame Canada as a place of opportunity and better living with better social institutions, in contrast to the precarious life they have also narrated in the Philippines. This comparison makes the "pull" factor of working in Canada survival strategy and a socio-economic pursuit. For Ntitham (2011) this strong awareness of disparities and its acceptance shows the inequality Filipinos face which legitimizes OFW dispersal. This "institutionized pulling" is rooted in coloniality, as it maps the Philippines as lacking and upwards social mobility as dependent on the Global North (Canada). The Philippines is cast as a site to escape from. Neoliberalism benefits from this framing as it masks centuries of colonial extraction, while keeping a system in place that extracts from OFWs to fill labour gaps in the west. San Juan (2011) argues that this inequality which determines the flows and goals of people reflects a global class war that is concealed through "free market" ideals.

The American Dream, being deeply embedded in our aspirations and goals as Filipinos, contributes to a neocolonial labour arrangement. Here, I add that the embedded collective desire of western achievement (Canadian Dream) forms an institutionalized self-governance that works against Filipinos, willing to commit to devalued commodified work for the 'dream'. Tadiar's (2022) theorizes that the European-American's imposed colonial mode of living has systematised a social reproduction of disposable workers appropriated for capital production within a minimized life. In this diminished life, or what she terms the "remaindered life", of the dispossessed population, the capitalist hegemony also

restructures their desires and subjectivities to sustain their disposability. This is a neocolonial arrangement that keeps the Filipinos dependent on foreign employment. This also reminds me of Schueller's (2019) ideas of US American colonialist governmentality where they exercise biopolitic governmentality to condition populations. US American colonialism provides Filipinos with structures to reproduce and keep these conditions.

Another signature of neoliberalism is the conversion of non-economic domains and activities into economic ones; as all spheres of life become interrupted by neoliberalism (Brown, 2016). These processes also operate in our daily lives by way of our very existence being commodified and reduced to economic value. Caliskan and Callon (2009) refer to this as the "economization" of life. Nostalgic for a unified family, OFWs often relate experiences of the hardships, describing how labour migration has interrupted family life and suspended filial love and belonging. One participant narrates:

> *"Being an OFW, it's difficult because you're far from your family. And as a mother, it's difficult to be far from your children. And of course, you also think about the future of your kids. A lot of our fellow Filipinos, especially the women come to other countries to help their families, especially their kids." -Participant 7*

Here, Participant 7 is positioned as a market actor who, because of the demands of her role as a migrant labourer, is denied filial continuity. She negotiates her position from within the structures, mitigating the emotional and material costs and demands of providing and non/being with the family. Connecting fellow Filipinos and fellow mothers in her situation, Participant 7 establishes how this economization is almost universal to the OFW experience of parenthood. Much like Brown's description of neoliberalism, we see in Participant 7's account how all aspects of life, including care, motherhood, and family relationships, have been shaped by market logics. Her role as a provider is not only economic but also entangled in how neoliberalism produces citizens as globalized human capital. All aspects of life, including the personal, is commodified; ideal citizenship is institutionalized to be participation in the Global North-led neoliberalist, capitalist system. Neoliberalism not only redefines the personal, but it also redefines citizenship, where participation in our constitution's protecting and strengthening of the 'sanctity of family life' becomes participation in the Global North-led neoliberal order. The Filipino identity, bound in our citizenship, is led to participatory experiences in the global neoliberal empire.

I argue labour migration then to be institutionalized practices of citizenship. I borrow from Lima (2020) who lays emphasis on participatory citizenship as "*a fundamental political battle that depends on the distribution of power and the ability and opportunities for the poor to engage in the political sphere in order to try to overcome disadvantages"* (p. 9). When everyday as an OFW is an act of overcoming global socio-economic disadvantages, everyday becomes an act of participatory Filipino citizenship. When 11% of Filipino citizens leave for work overseas (Mckenzie, 2012), it speaks of the poverty brought upon the country by the neoliberal regime. The institutionalization of Filipino citizenship is an institutionalization of our commodification. Theorizing with biopower leads into how the global system instrumentalizes our citizenship to bind Filipinos to the interests of the global elites and neo/colonial global capitalism. These are socio-political consequences Filipinos experience when using a Foucauldian analysis on neoliberalism's influence. It highlights how colonial power relations and structures of domination lead to inequalities that povertizes and disadvantages Filipinos and OFWs.

6.2. The Ideal Migrant

> "Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhahitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short,. those who ,cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal" … The only legitimate" inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites." (Anzalduá, 1991 p. 3)

6.2.1. Border and Control

The Canadian state constructs the subjectivity of the ideal migrant as fearful, clean, and compliant, before entry and especially at its borders. In all of the migrant stories lay the universal experience of crossing the border for the first time. Migrant people of colour often experience the neo/colonial scripts present in all border entries. Walia (2021) theorizes that:

> "The US–Mexico border must be understood not only as a racist weapon to exclude migrants and refugees, but as foundationally organized through, and hence inseparable from, imperialist expansion, Indigenous elimination,

> and anti-Black enslavement. US–Mexico border rule intersects with global and domestic forms of warfare, positioned as a linchpin in the concurrent processes of expansion, elimination, and enslavement, thus solidifying the white settler power of racial exclusion and migrant expulsion" (p.43).

These are relational systems of power that operate similarly in Canada with its white supremacist and racist history of its treatment of Indigenous people and immigrant people of colour. Canada has its share of solidification of white settler power and racial exclusion. This is evident in its time-period known in the literature as the "White Canada" or the "Keep Canada White" era (Mooten, 2021). In this era, a racial/ethnic hierarchy in immigration policy emerged that judged potential migrants according to their distance from, and proximity to, 'white British' ideals (Bakan and Stasiulis, 1997; Mooten, 2021). Unto this day, and despite Canada's many efforts in revising its immigration policies, Filipinos and OFWs still experience this imperialist and neocolonial exclusion that Canada employs in its institutionalization of an ideal migrant. This form of border exclusion comes in a multitude of processes. One participant shared,

> *"Actually, we waited for about two years before we could go here. We had 3 medicals. A lot of money, because there's delays … we waited for two years before the final documents to come, for us to arrive here … Because I think there's an expiration ... Then the embassy keeps on asking for another medical. So that's why it took us three times." -Participant 3*

Borders, in its physical sense, are primary in the exclusion of people it considers undesirable; but in Participant 3's experience, border exclusion already begins even before entering Canada. In their official website, Canada asks mostly residents from the Global South to undergo medical examinations and provide a certificate upon submission of requirements and be assessed for admissibility to Canada. Whereas applicants from the Global North, such as those members of the EU and OECD, are exempt from such requirements[2]. These examinations cost a lot of money to the immigrants to fulfill visa requirements[3]. As the medical exams are always time sensitive, they often expire while waiting for the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC —the federal

[2] See Government of Canada, "Find out if you need a medical exam – Country requirements," https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/medical-police/medical-exams/requirements-temporary-residents/country-requirements.html

[3] See St. Luke's Extension Clinic, "Canada Visa Medical Exam – Fees and Process," https://slec.ph. This is the cost for completing the required medical exam at a Canadian-approved panel clinic in Manila.

department responsible for immigration and citizenship matters in Canada) to process the application, which leads to a repeat of the costly tests.

It is a violent inscription of people from the Global South, and especially OFWs, that institutionalizes us as unclean and dirty, not yet an ideal migrant. I recall Walia's (2021) discussion of how medical examinations have also been used to test Black women under Canada's Caribbean Domestic Scheme during the 50s, Commonwealth Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program during the 60s, and the contemporary Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. She argues that these are based on Canada's racist assumptions on people of colour and "*state formation through white supremacy*" (p. 54). The additional requirements OFWs have to execute a racial filter that seeks to permit only ideal migrants in the eyes of the state, placing racial filters and promoting what Walia (2021) calls a white polity and white racial state. In her study on colonialism in West Africa, McClintock (1995) terms these filters as 'purification rituals' in the 'poetics of cleanliness' committed by the racial state. She denotes the body as a terrain of meaning where values are contested and imposed upon by one culture over another. There, Africans were inscripted as unclean, unhygienic, and in need of domestication; here, OFWs are institutionalized as sick, diseased, and needing verification for health by Canadian-appointed health inspectors. Both systems institutionalize the legitimacy of western imperialism as they enforce violent symbolic, cultural, and economic values "*with the intent of purifying and thereby subjugating the unclean African [and OFW bodies] and imposing filtering those deemed useful to the mercantile and imperial economy"* (McClintock, 1995, p. 226). The state institutionalizes ideal migranthood through these filters and symbolic formation of the ideal migrant body.

This process is not just a bureaucratic requirement but a biopolitical institutionalization. Drawing from Foucault, these migration filters regulate the populations health and the body, enforcing a governmentality that ensures the OFW body is already purified and governed by state apparatus before entry to Canada. These "purification rituals" and biopoliticking expose imperial management of life and the body, institutionalizing ideal bodies who are deemed clean, compliant, and admissible for capital production. This is constitutive of racial capitalism that OFWs experience in the process of crossing the border. These are neo/colonial scripts perpetuated by the racial capitalist state. Such chosen inclusions and exclusions of people based on geography and race reenact those of the "white Canada" policies. These immigration frameworks display the racialized power

differentials that disadvantages people, especially OFWs and people from the Global South. It is gross preferencing dynamics that OFWs absorb and learn in the migration process to Canada.

My own institutional exposure to pre-departure governance further illustrates how border control is enacted before territorial entry. During my time as an international studies student in the Philippines, I had first-hand experience with the PDOS program as I was an intern with the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) in April-May of 2015. This coincided with the height of the tension between the Philippines and Indonesia as OFW Mary Jane Veloso was on death row for drug smuggling and was set to be executed by the Indonesian government on April 29, 2015. As part of my internship came my responsibility to partake and assist in the facilitation of the PDOS while being assigned in the Migrant Integration and Education Division and Guidance and Counselling Program of the CFO. I participated in multiple PDOS for Filipinos bound for the USA, Europe, the Middle East, Oceania, and East Asia, as these were the categories in which they were organized in. Through these sessions, I found that the PDOS were not just for immigrant workers but also for emigrants such as wives and husbands, petitioned for emigration by their foreign spouses, for au pairs and for Filipinos petitioned by family members abroad. During the sessions, participants were encouraged to discuss their personal lives, their relationships, and their plans abroad. Topics such as human trafficking and domestic violence, and marital expectations were central to these discussions.

Each “regional” based PDOS was different and tailored to the expected cultural and labour shifts in the destination countries. Despite this, there were recurring themes across the sessions, that they should be well prepared and be well-informed as future overseas Filipinos, and that they are future “ambassadors of the Philippines.” Interestingly, minor children who were bound to be permanent emigrants with overseas parents or sponsored Filipino spouses also underwent a similar PDOS orientation which they called peer counselling. In these sessions minors would be informed of the future lives of being abroad and share with their peers the pressures and their expectations of emigration.

I observed how migrant subjectivities are actively formed pre-departure. The PDOS functions not only as an informational seminar but also as a behavioral project of the Philippines for future OFWs. From a biopolitical theorization, the PDOS serves as "technologies" of control of the state, where migrants are collected within an actual state-

owned infrastructure and are coached on proper migrant knowledges and acceptable behavior as future ambassadors. These seminars are institutional trainings where the Philippines participate in the production of the ideal migrant before it sends off Filipinos to Canada and elsewhere. For Tungohan (2021) the PDOS serves not to merely inform OFWs of their rights but it formally institutionalizes the ideal migrant subjectivity. The ideal migrant becomes co-produced.

The institutionalization of ideal migrant scripts continues, as Filipinos actually arrive at the border and pass through border security. Walia (2021) argues that "*the entanglements of border formation in imperial expansion, anti-Black enslavement, and Indigenous elimination are mirrored in our contemporary moment with border agents"* (p. 59). Most of the participants recall how their first encounter with border agents were riddled with emotions of fear and anxiety as the thought of never gaining entry despite years of waiting and thousands of pesos spent loomed over them. A lot of the participants share the same sentiment,

> *"When I arrived in Vancouver it was so scary. That was a scary part because you know they're in a security uniforms and they will ask questions. You know. If you're lying [they have] like those screen screening tests." -Participant 4*

Another participant added,

> *"Of course I was scared because your contact here ... they might check that … they ask a lot of questions in the immigration. "Who's your contact here? How long is your stay?" All of that. "How many years here are you coming back to the Philippines after your contract?", questions like that. So I said yes and answer. But of course you're so nervous, right? Because you don't know…You take that contract to the immigration and the work permit … I was feeling panicking. You don't know where to go or where to line up ... You don't know where to go. I was nervous at that time. But after I was given the work permit, it was okay and I was able to breathe." - Participant 6*

In this border, the state secures itself institutional domination over the newly arrived prospective migrants. Before they are granted entry, the state cements its governance and absolute power over entry and refusal to OFWs. It forces compliance with its institutional biopower through modes of inciting fear and the denial of a future in Canada. Ahmed (2004) argues that fear is not merely a personal emotion but a structural response to perceived threats of violence. What is constructed as "fearsome" is closely tied to the

politics of mobility, wherein fear legitimizes spatial boundaries and authorizes who may or may not occupy certain spaces (in this case, Canada).

These are stages wherein the state, through the steep difference in power, employs what Deumert (as cited in Jones, 2023) calls an 'infantilizing register', wherein immigrants in the port of entry follow a string of commands, with an excess of verbiage that silences migrants. Theatrics such as these refashion are 'colonial memories, discourses, practices, and materialities' of the past into new colonial normalities of the present. (Jones, 2023). Neo/colonialism is institutionalized in these operations. The terror the participant experiences in the border is staged. And as Pratt (2012) writes, state terror is theatrical; it alters our perception of reality and it makes more visible certain notions of what is real. The script of the ideal migrant is coached into OFWs as they are tutored by the state, through fear, that it now holds all the power and control of their lives as they enter Canada. It alludes to the dynamics that labour migrants of temporary status will experience with their stay in Canada. This is institutionalized upon entry as Canada constructs an ideal migrant. By design, Canada's ideal migrant is disempowered and fearful of the state, fearful of state officers, of absolute exclusion, of refused entry, and merciless deportation.

The border as a structure and the border officers, as agents of the state, are instrumental in this institutionalization of neo/colonial scripts. It is through them that the framing of the state's hegemonic rule is made known. They are physical manifestations of the social structures that inscript the neo/colonial subjectivities. One participant shared their experience with visa agents wherein they discussed their future interaction with border officers who held all control over their entry. They shared,

> *"They (visa agents) always say to input properly our dependents on the paper, that we write the correct data. Some (visa) agents write or explain each question. Sometimes it's ok because they understand. Though they say some of those who have your paper are strict. Some are strict and some are okay. They are strict and just let your paper be incorrect. Some applicants have incomplete requirements and are just to follow. If you get an impatient immigration [officer] to sign and approve your visa it's tough. It depends, that's what they say. So, I always pray about that. You don't have the control over this. So you might have to wait again for another chance." -Participant 6*

McKeon (2008) calls this the "*theater of border control*", where prior to migration Filipinos learn of scripted performances from visa agents for their border crossing. State agents like border officers are instruments of the state in establishing its structural social order

over migrants. The border officers are the disciplinary apparatus of the state; state power made physical. They enforce a sense of vulnerability and criminality to the OFW in the process of migration, where to be 'unideal' is to be criminal and to be refused entry. The state creates manageable subjects among those who enter Canada from developing countries.

The use of "state authority" reflects what Puar (2017) identifies as a longstanding strategy to discipline racialized populations as part of the biopolitical management of those who are deemed "not quite/not white" enough. These power dynamics are utilized by the state and weaponized to institutionalize and dictate characteristics of the ideal migrant—fearful and obedient. These institutionalizing theatrics around "entry" into the state is reminiscent of Foucault's (1997) "*technologies of the self*" and how power produces migrant subjectivities through self-regulation and control, attuning OFWs to perform a specific cleanliness and docility that is admissible by the state.

6.2.2. Kayod Carabao*:* Endurance of the body

Figure 1. **Carabao, dubbed as a beast of burden, working in the rice field (riso.ch, n.d.).**
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le_labourage_%C3%A0_l%E2%80%99aide_de_buffles.jpg

After having arrived in Canada, OFWs enter the realm of Canadian labour. Experiences of labour in Canada are often described by participants as difficult and lived daily as a struggle of continuous work. Life in Canada as a labour migrant is largely shaped by the labour that you perform, often being done in excess and precariousness that is inherent in labour migrants without permanent residence and equal rights. One participant likens OFWs to animals working in the fields,

> *"Life here is really working. Kayod Carabao… Your capital here is really hard work. And it's also lonely… [we] only have one day off here and it's only like a half a day. Cause it's just Saturday. Cause Saturday whole day you're cleaning and on the Sunday you go to the morning in the church and then go to work again in the afternoon. That's my life here. That's what my life here was like before. Until now it's even worse... I don't really have a proper day off." -Participant 11*

Participant 11 likens their life in Canada to that of the Philippines' national animal. Carabaos are traditional farm animals who cultivate the rice paddies and are culturally a symbol of Filipino hard work. I read their comparison to that of the Carabao as an interpretation of biopolitical power where the state possesses biopolitical rule and control over the OFW's lives and bodies. The "*kayod carabao*" metaphor powerfully illustrates how this logic materializes in OFWs' lived experiences. Participant 11's comparison of their life to that of a carabao, beasts of burden central to Filipino agricultural labour, mirrors Foucault's concept of the "abilities machine" and what Agamben (1998), building on Foucault, describes as "the "bestialization of man". While Agamben's reading of Foucault is contested, his interpretation of bestialization usefully captures how neocolonial labour regimes reduce OFWs to a carabao-like existence. This testimony also reflects how migrant workers are not only exploited for labour but also conditioned to work excessively and rest minimally.

The OFWs' experiences represent an institutionalization of daily exploitative labour in Canada. The voiced recognition of likening oneself to an animal and how it is a normalized experience of OFWs in Canada explicitly underlines how biopolitics institutionalize a script of a desired labour migrant—hardworking, docile, and uncomplaining, like a carabao. This institutionalization of nonstop docile labouring is frequent in many participants' experiences;

> *"In a day here it starts with working right away. It's only work … Like it's more so about finding money instead of finding quality time to rest; like it's more about support and fighting and supporting your family." -Participant 10*

> *"I think it's a non-stop grind for us. That's all I can think of. It's like unstoppable." -Participant 12*

Such narratives are examples of the Marxist philosophy of reification. Petrovic defines reification as,

> "The act (or result of the act) of transforming human properties, relations and actions into properties, relations and actions of man-produced things which have become independent (and which are imagined as originally independent) of man and govern his life… Reification is a 'special' case of alienation, its most radical and widespread form characteristic of modern capitalist society." (Bottomore, 1983 p.463)

The OFW is reified in their experience of labour in Canada. As the participants remark, they feel reduced to only the value of the labour they produce, that their lives in Canada begin and end only in the realm of capitalist production. It is inescapable; It is 'unstoppable'; it is normalized. Here, the social relations and existence of the OFW in Canada is reified, commodified, and is institutionalized by the state as a social fact. They recognize that they are being socialized in Canada only as labourers, as machinized individuals to output capital.

Foucault's theory helps explain how individuals are shaped to internalize capitalist modes of being, self-valuing, and self-regulating. Here, the OFW is primed to be a disciplined self-governing subject, whose value is tied to the generation of economic output. This "non-stop grind" described by Participant 12 and the days being only about work for Participant 10 reflects a system wherein they are not only commodified, but institutionalized to be tireless, ever-working and to experience everyday life as "finding money" and "fighting". They are routineized to live and work around being productive; thus, reinforcing neoliberal and neocolonial ideals of an enduring tireless ideal migrant.

The politics of labour institutionalized by Canada to its labour migrants is a 'non-stop grind', a labour with little rest and one that is continuous. These are ideal experiences that the state codifies in the labour migrant system. These are enduring exploitations made to benefit the capitalistic state. In this life of 'nonstop' work, participants have repeated how they are in a state of permanent exhaustion. In being OFWs in Canada, not only are they in a constant mode of working, but at the same time, they are experiencing an enduring tiring exhaustion. Some participants live this occurrence and state,

> *"Filipinos here actually, they're used to the struggle, to the being tired. Because life in the Philippines is not that easy." -Participant 3*

> *"Here it feels like you're working so hard. I feel it's not enough. That's why it's so stressful sometimes. But you're gonna enjoy your life, or else you're gonna be crazy if you think it seriously, You're gonna be crazy." -Participant 4*

They define their life in Canada as always struggling, stressed, and tired. These definitions of Canadian migrant life are what Berlant describes as a "slow death", a product of ongoing structural inequality and suffering (Berlant, 2007, Puar, 2017). This "slow death" is in a form of *"neoliberal and affective capacitation or debilitation as mediated by different technological assemblages"* (Puar, 2017 p. 2). Through Canadian biopolitical techniques,

OFWs live in a state of debility and slow death. Their bodies endure the exploitation operated by the capitalistic state. Foucault describes this as *'death becomes durational*' (as cited in Puar, 2017, p. 11). Puar discusses this and continues that the slow death in a capitalist system occurs not within a contained event but in "*a zone of temporality...of ongoingness, getting by, and living on, where the structural inequalities are dispersed, the pacing of their experience intermittent, not prone to capture by a memorable impact*" (2017, p. 11). Thus, OFWs remain in this state of a slow precarious death. Tadiar's (2022) conceptualization of *Remaindered Life* echoes this as well, that the dispossessed populations lives' are "*denigrated and … expunged*" (p. 13) as they are absorbed into a life whose dominant structures make living as an enterprise and a disposable capital-making venture. OFWs in Canada experience a remaindered life, one that is absorbed in processes of capital production, a slow death to generate value for the global labour regime.

The institutionalized OFW experience in Canada is of a reproduced constant precarity that has legitimized through time. OFW lives in Canada are shaped to be a form of sustained capacity and debility, a permanence of survival mode. Institutionalization occurs when patterns of behavior are habituated and reproduced until they are perceived as natural. In this sense, the daily struggles of OFWs that are marked by stress, exhaustion, and endurance are not only biopolitically imposed but also socially reproduced as the expected reality of migrant life.

On one hand, OFWs are capacitized through the remuneration of wages, enough to sustain filial support back in the Philippines and satisfy the socio-economic needs of the networks of kamag-anaks. This capacity-building provides for the needs and survival of fellow Filipinos. Yet, on the other hand, it also emplaces OFWs in an effective state of unremitting debility. Puar (2017) calls this the 'neoliberal opportunity' or the 'neoliberal choice', where debility and profitability coexist in what he terms a *'liberal eugenics of lifestyle*'. The wages in Canada that sustains migrants' needs demand for a productivity that reifies and bestializes the body. In exchange for the right to live, you have to be an 'enduring Carabao', teetering between exhaustion, endurance, and slow death. As a result of neoliberal biopower, Povinelli (2011) calls this '*a realm that includes affective, physical, and social conditions that can depress the brain and immune system, rupture organs as well as bonds with families and friends, and orient violence inward'* (p. 128). The 'neoliberal choice' is one constitutive of daily exploitation and violence, severing OFWs

from physical health, healthy relationships with their families, and reorients their lives to capitalist production as debilitated ideal migrants. Life in Canada institutionalizes its OFWs to become a commodified ideal migrant, persistent in the violent conditions of a neoliberal, neo/colonial, and capitalist state.

In this regard, the debility OFWs experience are also apparent in their workplace, in their encounters with coworkers, people who do not share their disempowered status as temporary residents. In many cases, OFWs often perform "unskilled" or undervalued labour in Canada and are often in jobs that are gendered or considered domestic work. The fact itself that these jobs are labelled as "unskilled" is of concern as it institutionalizes the undervaluation ascribed to migrant labour, often associated with care work and the service industry. Despite it being skilled work, these terms reinforce labour stereotypes that often diminish migrant labourers in a hierarchy of labour, regardless of expertise or experience. Additionally, this helps in further justifying the exploitation and debility of migrant work. Thus, their experiences are coupled with racialized, gendered, and class-related exploitation (Collantes, 2018). One participant shares,

> *"I think racism … being a Canadian, they think of Filipinos as workers only. That's what I feel. It's not in my work, but with my father's work. It's like easy for them to look down on us, especially in the hospital. If you're housekeeping, If you're janitor... They demand so many. Like they demand workload from you. It's like they take advantage mostly on working hours because you are hardworking. They ask us favors … Oh my God, this is like you're being used. And then Filipinos also sometimes don't know how to speak English. So, it's like you're a stranger in Canada. And they always emphasize that they're the first people who arrive here. So, you should respect them." -Participant 10*

Institutionalized debility becomes apparent in the workplace as this capitalist violence takes on interpersonal form through interactions with coworkers. It is not only the state that sustains these conditions, as the state has reproduced this discourse in the population's psyche as well. As a racially marked community, OFWs are exposed to this racialized capitalist violence. Being marked as a labour migrant and a "hardworking Filipino" opens the possibility of such labels being taken advantage of by privileged others. Velasco (2021) conceptualizes this popularized figure as the "global Filipina body", a symbolic figure that does not refer to all Filipina women but to all Filipinos who are subjected to devalued and feminized transnational labour. Under a neoliberal global labour arrangement, the figure is disproportionately concentrated in gendered jobs such as care

work, sex work, and domestic labour. The global Filipina body is symbolic of the labour setup that takes advantage and exploits Filipinos for racialized and gendered neocolonial labour and what Velasco (2021) calls the "*subordination of the Philippines to an international division of labour* (p. 6)" While feminization is central to her theory, the global Filipina body does not need to be a woman but it encompasses the labouring experiences of men as well. This is especially evident with the Participant 10's narrative of her father working in the janitorial sector and experiencing the symptoms of emasculating treatment and degrading labour conditions. His narrative illustrates how neoliberal and neocolonial labour regimes position Filipino labour, regardless of gender, as feminized and subordinated. Especially with OFWs whose status are hanging and temporary, the politicized label of the hardworking Filipino, societal norms and cultural expectations arise from these conditions; these ideological forces construct scripts in workplace dynamics. In this context, the process of institutionalizing an ideal labour migrant is remade at the site of work. The ideological frameworks of commodification and endurance transition and continue as they take form in symbolic violence in the workplace.

6.2.3. Barriers to Permanent Residence: Perpetually Precarious

In *Racism, Discrimination and Migrant Workers in Canada: Evidence from the Literature,* Mooten (2021) emphasizes that a large and growing body of literature confirms that Canadian temporary labour migration programs are inherently racist. She argues that,

> "Their unequivocal rootedness in racism and discrimination inform the current nomenclature of immigration policies. In other words, though racism may no longer sustain or substantiate these programs, they may not be free of racism, due to the fact that they arose from racism. Some scholars point out that racism and discrimination are an intrinsic part of the matrix that make up these programs, depicting it as 'institutional racism" (p.7).

These programs are byproducts and modern versions of the neo/colonialism that Canada institutionalizes through its labour policies. Under neoliberal frameworks, the temporary migration streams continue to operate and invite migrants from developing countries to work here and not grant these migrant workers a clear path to citizenship. Keeping them in conditions that Walia (2021) calls '*permanently temporary',* deprive migrant workers of the same social and labour rights and protections granted to permanent residents in Canada. This lack of protections keeps the OFWs in a state of fear and panic of losing their status and always needing to be employed to keep a working status. It is through the

OFWs, and fellow documented and undocumented workers, that Canada meets its labour shortages. Through the temporary migrant programs, the unfilled jobs which were deemed dangerous in nature and/or low-paying were met with the recruitment of temporary migrant workers with challenged access to permanent settlement (Mooten, 2021).

I argue that Canada's racist temporary migrant programs operate as neoliberal migration streams that institutionalize ideal migrants, one that is hyper-aware of their permanently temporary status and linked to the control and reification of the state. The ideal migrant is temporary and stripped of rights which are granted to citizens and permanent residents. Through a regime of language competency and state-induced precarity, he is denied permanent status.

In their study on the role of neoliberalism in increasing the precarity of temporary foreign care workers (some of which were involved in this study), Joseph and Leach (2017) argue that Neoliberalism enables the state to withdraw from provisions on labour rights and regulations which contribute to precarity in care work. Additionally, they argue that, under neoliberalism, the state strategizes the immigration policy to increase the number of these temporary workers with precarious status (Joseph & Leach, 2017). It is this manufactured racist precarity that the state uses in institutionalizing the ideal temporary OFW. In her experience of precarious status, one participant shared the difficulty in applying for PR due to difficult English (International English Language Testing System [IELTS]) language requirements,

> *"I went to the government. I'm just disappointed. But for myself because the government wanted the foreign worker knows how to speak English, right? Why are they giving? Why more than nannies in the listening and the reading exam. It's difficult for me. Why are they just not only giving the written exam and the speaking exam? because they just want to know that this person knows how to speak English, right? So she's capable to work here, right? But they include the listening and the reading. It's so difficult. That's the one that I'm disappointed about." -Participant 8*

To institutionalize precarity of workers and the ideal migrant, the state weaponizes the English language exams as a barrier to permanent residency. This is a common and increasing concern among the OFW communities that I encounter, especially those who are in the careworking sector. It is an often-expressed concern of the OFW community that their prospect of permanent residence in Canada is barred by the expensive and difficult English language tests that the government demands for their PR applications.

These are often hard for the workers to comply with, as the language exams cost $359–375 + tax[4]. First, this alone is a financial burden for many migrant workers and OFWs who earn around the minimum wage. Second, it is an additional burden for OFWs to study for the test given that many already work more than 40 hours per week. As one participant already mentioned, "*I don't really have a proper day off."* The test acts as a tool by which the state regulates its migrant workers and keeps the precarity of OFWs in temporary status in Canada.

Farell (as cited in Gibb, 2015), calls this the '*new word order'*, by which migrant workers become required to demonstrate (English) language competence, and those that lack the language skills experience financial and social detrimental effects. English linguistic capital becomes the marker for gaining occupational and social rights. Here, language becomes the interpellative tool to reinforce the subjectivity of the ideal migrant. Language and the struggle to prove linguistic literacy in Canadian standards legitimizes the barrier and unattainability of permanent status and equal rights. Language becomes a pillar of white Anglo-Saxon supremacy that filters those deemed as un/qualifying. Tupas (2015) argues that the Philippines institutionalizing English-only policies in its institutions, prepare Filipinos to learn the language on their way to becoming future OFWs and cheap labour for global capitalism. Yet, the unattainability of English qualification legitimizes the temporariness and precarity that OFWs experience by passing onto them the burden of linguistic merit, that the Canadian dream of permanence exists, and it is up to them to qualify for its merits. Polanco and Zell (2017) argue that this linguistic capital is linked to other forms of capital (economic for the high exam costs) and reinforces the border-drawing practice of gendered and racialized assumptions of entry and belonging. Here, language becomes a tool for exclusion. Language becomes border.

Border and exclusion through language persists after crossing entering the state. Complicating migrant biopolitics through language is also the discourse on Filipino-English accents. In Creese and Kambere's (2003) *"What colour is your English?"*, they argue that immigrants of colour in Canada with "immigrant, non-white" accents are prevented from fully participating in civil society. Instead, they occupy Anzaldua's (1991) "spaces in

[4] As these prices fluctuate, please see the most up-to-date information on current IELTS test fees in Canada. See the official IELTS site administered in Canada by the British Council here: https://www.ielts.ca/register-for-ielts/

between". They are institutionalized as ideal migrants who remain outside the border and outside state belonging, but performing as temporary subjects for needed work.

The temporariness and institutionalization of the ideal migrant are further intensified by long processing times of their applications. Once OFWs meet the linguistic requirements, the temporariness persists through an induced period of waiting for the results of their applications, which could also be denied. One responded adds,

> *"Because I came here as a live-in caregiver. So basically I have to to finish my contract for two years in employment. After that, if I finish my contract, I am eligible to apply for a permanent residence, which is really good for me because it's very convenient to apply way back before. But it's just the frustrating part is when you wait for a year for two years for the processing time. That I don't like at all." -Participant 4*

This institutionalized waiting reinforces ideal migrant subjectivities of OFWs. Through the long waiting times under the control of the IRCC, the habitualization of the temporary ideal migrant continues. This biopower of delaying permanence is used by the state to fashion a lasting induced temporariness, which denies OFWs of rights and keeps them in performing reified labour under a temporary status. Multiple studies have shown how the bureaucratic delay in PR increases precarity, denies migrants of rights, and furthers migrant anxieties (Caregivers Action Centre et al., 2020; Mooten, 2021; Bagon et al., 2024). This delay is crucial in constructing the ideal migrant, as it grants the state more capitalistic benefits as it continues to exploit labour from temporary workers.

In all these times of labour and status precarity, the ideal migrant is disempowered. Without the protections and rights granted by a permanent status, OFWs live in fear of deportation and losing the job and life they have in Canada. The delay of their status is a denial of their status. One participant working as a care worker relays how she lived and worked in fear, and was scared even of her employer because of the insecurity of temporariness,

> *"There was a time that there was a nurse that they wanted to deport, because the nurse did not declare that he had a wife. He declared single. And like that's like me, because I experienced of hiding. And what if someone will report me? And at that time when I went out I was. Because I didn't know what my employer would think right? I might get deported. So when I saw the police it's like I feel troubled because of course; what if they might pick me up? You know, that's what was in my mind at that time. So every time I left downtown, every time I see the police, I feel scared,*

because you don't know that they might deport you suddenly." -Participant 6

Her experience bares the effects of temporariness to OFWs in Canada. They remain anxious about any interaction with the state or any of its officials due to the constant looming threat of deportation. Here, state security officials become bearers of possible expulsion from Canada. This furthers the inequities that migrant workers face as now they don't want to avail of social services and structures that exist to assist migrants due to fear. As such, OFWs who lack permanent status are often disconnected even from their own communities, as they fear even their fellow migrant workers to report them. OFWs in such situations are alienated and isolated with difficulties in accessing migration and labour rights information. This could also result in physical and mental health risks that are exacerbated by barriers to basic rights (Alcaraz et al., 2021).

Prolonging temporariness prolongs precarity and keeps OFWs ascribed to the characteristics of the ideal migrant, fearful of the state, hardworking, and lacks equal rights. Bal (2015) argues that, "*deportation laws are a key feature of guest-worker regimes around the world. They are a crucial part of a legal order enacted by labour-receiving states to ensure that migrant workers remain temporary and disposable*" (p. 267). The constructed fear of deportation therefore is one tool which the state employs in further institutionalizing the ideal migrant. The constant threat of deportation makes OFWs apprehensive of engaging in any matter that involves the state or any that requires declaring their identities and status. In conclusion, the state institutionalizes OFWs to be ideal migrants by constructing them to be perpetually precarious and permanently temporary. To the state, they remain to be rightless economic subjects.

6.3. The *Bagong Bayani*; the Modern-day Hero

> "The hyper-visible, transhistorical figure of the modern hero/slave erases specific (and diverse) realities of migrant labour. Spectacles are constructed to 'essentialize [...] even as they "disappear" the traces of the performativity of that construction.' The spectacular modern hero/slave script thereby polarises experiences of migrant labour into a reductive binary, and at the same time presents this binary as a given (Parry-Davies, 2020 p.68)."

6.3.1. Heroism through Remittances and Family

The heroism of the Overseas Filipino Worker is often tied to them being one of the highest contributors to the growth of the country's economy. To this, the state constantly heralds the OFW as the *Bagong Bayani* or the modern-day heroes of the nation. I argue that the institutionalization of this heroized subjectivity contributes to the coloniality and unfreedom of OFWs; it imposes colonial values of obedience and being uncomplaining as representatives of Filipino sacrifice. It capitalizes on having Filipinos identify heroism with sacrifice and remitting money to the Philippines. With the government's push of heroizing OFWs, Filipinos have internalized this and adopted the subjectivity of "national heroes". The rhetoric has since become a nationalist ideology that celebrates the OFW as "*important to the Philippine economy and national imaginary*" (Rodriguez, 2002).

When I asked OFWs in Vancouver whether they resonate with the concept of *Bagong Bayani* or if they considered themselves as such, they had varied answers; each with different reasons as to what made them take on/reject this subjectivity. One common thing is that almost all of them were familiar with what the *Bagong Bayani* is. Answering whether she knew about the subjectivity, one participant said,

> *"Yes, that's what they say because you know we remit a lot of money and our remittance. That's what they say. But also because of the economy of the Philippines, because of what we send there. So that's why they call us the modern-day heroes… We send a lot of money there and that's good for the economy of the Philippines." -Participant 6*

The Philippine government has advanced this idea throughout history since the inception of the *Bagong Bayani*. It has established the imagery of the subjectivity as a source of economic change for the Philippines; that not only are they modern-day heroes, but that they are economic heroes, whose continuous labour and remittances are a collective good for the development of all Filipinos (Manalo, 2022). In sending their remittances, the source of an OFWs status as a modern-day hero is not just because of their voluntary labour migration, but also because of the economic development they bring to the home country (Manalo, 2022).

Participants who are parents were particular in how their heroism was attached to the children:

> *"They provide so much that they're considered as heroes… Like it's most people who have OFW families. Like the reason why they are OFW is because they want to for their children. So in a way they are the heroes for their children." -Participant 12*

Mothers and fathers are heroized uniquely within Filipino families. It is a common Filipino saying that fathers are the "*pader ng tahanan*", meaning the foundation of the homes, and mothers being the "*ilaw ng tahanan*", meaning the light of the homes (Parreñas, 2006). These cultural expressions greatly shape the Filipino imaginary of the gendered roles and expectations of the parents in the family, effectively assigning boundaries of cultural parenthood.

Parreñas (2006) further conceptualizes this gendered dynamic through the figure of the martyr mother, whose martyrdom and suffering confirms her being a "good provider" and "light" to her children; thus, fulfilling perceived maternal duties transnationally. Maternal heroism here is produced through demonstrated difficulties at work. Whereas, migrant fathers need not display suffering in their labour migration, as children already see them as "ultimate breadwinners", which confirms their fulfillment of their role as the "haligi" or bedrock of the family (Parreñas, 2006). Heroism within the family is deeply gendered as the filial expectations are culturally grounded and vary while placing heavier burden on the justification for diasporic work on the mother.

It can be said that all OFWs remit money to the Philippines either directly or indirectly through gifts and spending, which contributes to the narrative that their labour positively affects fellow Filipinos. And for those who do not have children, their remittances were directed to their extended families—kamag-anaks;

> *"I help the economy of the Philippines through my remittances that I send money there. That's a big help for the economy of the Philippines, right? And sometimes I have friends who are in need as well; and of course, it's not that big what I earn but sometimes I also help as much as I can." -Participant 7*

Another participant added,

> *"I don't have a child. Not really. But I mean in a sense. I'm doing sometimes I give to my grandparents. So in a way I can partially consider myself, but not really. I don't know if that makes sense. Yeah. It's like heroism. It's attached to helping out." -Participant 12*

Filial ties and obligations extend beyond just the nuclear family. These financial obligations also reach their kamag-anaks. OFWs stretch their earnings not just through blood ties but also through friendships and kinships. This positions them as figures of help and assistance to the socio-economic needs of the country. This extension of help weaves the language of heroism beyond the primary family and considerations of them being heroes enter the perception to their web of social ties. Filial obligations interpellate OFWs into the identifications of the Bagong Bayani.

While the country touts them as saviors of the nation, the OFWs do not frame the nation in their consideration as to how their heroism is formed. Interestingly, when I asked whether they felt that they were a Bagong Bayani, they answered differently. One participant replied,

> *"For me not really. I think not; because although I remit money, it's like, I don't think of myself as a hero. I'm normal worker. Although through the remittance we have, you know, contributions. But for me not; because it's like, it's like normal, right? Although it is our livelihood and for our family, it's just, it helps them a lot." -Participant 6*

Their answer shows that, despite the institutionalization of this subjectivity, they only perform its ideals and demands, but do not really identify with it. Instead, sending remittances was seen not as a heroic act but as something normal. It was a standard for all OFWs to do for their family. They saw themselves not as revered heroes but as normal labourers who support family members back home. Their heroism subjectivities did not so much coalesce in relation to the government's institutionalization of heroism through their remittances. Instead, the performance of filial duty and love for their families composed the heroism that they identify with.

In exploring how Greater Vancouver's OFWs relate with the dominant identification of heroism, it is also the fabric of the family which holds significant sway in the making of the modern-day hero.

> *"It's true that OFWs are this hero. And then they keep working for their families, sending money back in the Philippines. I don't have good savings because of that; because I care about my family. I send money every month for my family. Even though it's not, it's not our obligations. It's not our responsibility to send money for our parents. But you know, it's kind of gesture. It's kind of a gesture and love for your family When you do these things." -Participant 4*

Notions of heroism for them are not heavily attached with the financial aspect of its character, instead they identify heroism more with their sacrifice. Here, it is not just the state that institutionalizes the subjectivity of the Bagong Bayani, but it is also the family members themselves. The sources of them embodying the modern-day hero come more from their families.

Despite fulfilling the remittance-sending characteristic of the modern-day hero, the OFWs do not embody and self-identify as one. The focus was more on their families. Rafael (as cited in Collantes, 2018) argues that the Philippine government has sought to contain the anxieties recognized with migrant labour, especially the emotional distress over the separation of families. I frame the answers of the OFWs of sending remittances to be part of the consequent separation from their families. Their remittances foregrounds their survival and persistence against the temporalities of the labour migrant experience. As the above passage suggests, the decision to send money regularly, even though it is not their responsibility nor obligation, attests to their continuing persistence and agency amidst their experiences of separation and overseas labour. The same participant continued,

> *"Yeah, I'm a hero for my family, but not for the whole country, you know. So doing these things make you feel like a hero for your family. Like sacrifice and sending family money as gestures and working. So things that make you feel like a hero for your family is being alone here and sending money to them…you're here because of the purpose, right? You're gonna work for your family. And it's a beautiful feeling. You know, it's worth it. You sacrifice a lot here. But that sacrifices seeing your family that they're OK. It feels like it gives me so much energy, like to work harder. Because family is family. Like you can't just ignore them. Once they're happy, I am more than happy because I am a family-oriented person. Like I love to spend my life, money for my parents... I'm willing to sacrifice just for them. I'm willing to give everything just for them. That's me." -Participant 4*

Her agency and intent in foregrounding the beauty in the feeling of providing for the family reflects how heroism for the OFW is rooted in the love for family. Remittances are only the conduit through which they fulfill their self-empowerment and purpose-driven overseas labour. As remittances from OFWs, migrant mothers especially, often include not just the nuclear family but the extended family and clan as well; feelings and identification with the Bagong Bayani extends the greater web who receive OFWs' remittances. These expressions of filial support and wider 'mothering' display the complexities with which the state's institutionalization of the Bagong Bayani operates in the intimacies of the OFWs. It

permeates to their everyday performance of heroism through labour, through remittances, and through the persistence in daily life abroad.

6.3.2. Heroism: Separation and Religious Sacrifice

Miralao (1997) concurs with Benitez and argues that for Filipinos, religion plays such a pivotal role in our social reality, and it is intimately connected with our culture and identities, that "*it can never be truly separated from the national consciousness - or for that matter, the body politic*" (p. 210). In my time around the Filipino community, it is often emphasized how the dislocation from the family and the motherland and being labour migrants in Canada are acts of sacrifice. This notion of transnational labourial sacrifice has been institutionalized by the government since its inception of heroizing the OFWs (Encinas-Franco, 2013; Parry-Davies, 2020). In her 1988 speech, late Philippines president Cory Aquino began,

> "You, the Filipino workers abroad who endured loneliness and sacrificed being far from your loved ones, greatly helped to sustain and lift our country when we were still under the dictatorship. Today, these sacrifices continue to contribute to the rebuilding of our nation." (Aquino, 1988).

This rhetoric has taken root in our history, and the administrations that succeeded have followed suit. The terms 'OFW' and 'sacrifice' have become inextricably linked, cemented into the Filipino psyche and vocabulary, reflecting the deep bond between migrant work and personal sacrifice. Most recently, on his July 2024 State of the Nation Address the president Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. reaffirmed the OFWs sacrifice and gave special mention to them,

> "That's why we are not only offering thanks but also honouring all our OFWs. Your sacrifices are deeply felt here in our country." (Marcos, 2024).

This ideology of sacrificial heroism is expressed in state narratives, as they also endorse a rhetorical equivalency between heroism and martyrdom in toiling for the nation. This rhetoric also idiomizes oneself with nationalist figures like Jose Rizal and Christ-like martyrdom (Bautista, 2015). Such religio-political institutionalization creates a uniquely Filipino version of a migrant hero-martyr. These dominant tropes on heroism are reflected in the experience of OFWs, as illustrated by one participant who stated,

> *"OFW is like you have a lot of sacrifices, especially you're far from your family, especially if you have children, right? It's really a lot of sacrifices. Like you have to be strong. What choices you may think if it's difficult or easy, of course you have to be ready for all these things. Because for me important is you always pray to God. And if you have faith in him, he will not leave you. He will take care of you if you have faith in him and you know they also say that heroes are not only the people who take care of the needy. Also as an OFW, as a hero I know that they're also helping other people." -Participant 7*

Here, the participant clings to religion to cope with the everyday sacrifice of being a labour migrant. They highlight how religious endurance plays a pivotal role in them continuing work and surviving in Canada despite the multitudes of sacrifices that entails. Participant 7's narrative of being an OFW as an extended period consisting of multiple sacrificial choices you have to make speaks about Berculant's "slow death"; that their life in Canada is an ongoing struggle, a series of sacrifices that one needs to power through; that these sacrifices are expected and natural with migrant work. The state renders these structural violences as necessary.

This state-endorsed promotion of the hero OFW is what Bautista (2015) calls the production of OFWs as *export quality martyrs* (p. 426). It is the institutionalization of transnational economic agents, whom the state conditions to internalize "ethical docility" in their "*martyric pursuit of both spiritual and economic ends*" (p. 426). To this he adds how Roman Catholicism is considered not only as an institution but a labour migrant practice that coalesces with the "*ethos of hero-martyrism*" (p. 426) . A participant added,

> *"It's just I think it's God's will why I am here." -Participant 8*

This also highlights the role of how colonial religiosity influences migrant narratives of their temporalities in Canada. It is also important to note how religion was a colonial tool Spain embedded in the Filipino reality that re/produces legacies of colonial inequalities and structures. The state's heroization also downplays the historicity of neo/colonialism and how that plays a role in creating socio-economic-religious structures that allow exploitative temporary migration programs. Cordero Jr. et al. (2021) draw on the words of Popes Benedict XVI and Paul VI to argue that religiosity plays a significant role in emplacing moral responsibility upon OFWs. Pope Benedict XVI (as cited in Cordero Jr. et al., 2021, p. 157) describes this as a kind of "*spirituality in the culture of the lowly*," while Pope Paul VI (as cited in Cordero Jr. et al., 2021, p.127) emphasizes that such religiosity cultivates an attitude to "*forget oneself for the sake of others*." In this framing, religion humanizes

and personalizes migrant sacrifice. Religion masks the underlying structures of neo/colonialism and neoliberalism that exploits migrant labour. It reinforces the colonial cycle of exploiting labourers from the Global South rather than challenging it. These institutionalizations desensitize us to the status quo of "martyring" labour migrants, which only furthers capitalism's violence against OFWs in its insistence.

The institutionalization of hero-martyrdom becomes infused with the philosophy of religion. By encoding the structural violence of labour migranthood with religion, the state effectively masks its role in the neo-liberal and neocolonial streams of migrant exploitation. I focus here on how the rhetorics of hero-martyrdom obscures the exploitative nature of Canada's temporary migration worker programs and denial of equal rights and protective measures to temporary workers, especially the denial of warranted family reunification. Such rhetoric makes the exploitation and sacrifice experienced to be unquestionable and inevitable in the run of being an OFW.

Parry-Davids (2020) argues that such terms that simultaneously venerate and victimize workers "spectacularize" their temporalities, obscuring their lived experiences, agency, and expertise in surviving through it. Such discourses deemphasize the state's promulgation of neoliberal exploitation and the role that coloniality plays in the systems that allow migrant exploitation. Another participant adds,

> *"I can say that they're hero because you don't know the people here, right? ... You don't know the behavior of them here and their attitude. But you really use yourself as the capital just so you could get out of poverty just so you could get a job... Filipinos are heroes because they conquered life away from the family for how many years. Like me. I've been away for how many years? 5 years. Three years that I haven't seen my children. Then I came back here again to work. It's very difficult because being far from them is not easy. And you have to be lucky to have a good employer." - Participant 11*

Her accounts of working in Canada traces the prolonged separation from her children, while recognizing how her body has become a form of capital. This means that her physical labour and the sacrifices she experiences are commodified for economic gain. Pointing out the luck that is necessary to survive in Canada proves the anxieties and the uncertain nature that OFWs face in Canada's labour migration program. OFWs shouldn't have to be lucky to live and work well as migrant labourers in Canada. With this, I wish to

redirect this narrative back to the two governments and their responsibilities to remedy the sacrifices that OFWs have to make.

6.3.3. Reclaiming Heroism

Scholars have theorized how this heroization of OFWs as *Bagong Bayani* functions to offset and shroud the realities of mistreatment of OFWs and how it makes socially acceptable the exploitation present in the labour migration system (Collantes, 2018; Manalo, 2022.; Parry-Davies, 2020). I aim to retheorize the *Bagong Bayani* as to how it was appropriated by some OFWs in Vancouver; instead of passively claiming it and accepting its imposition upon them by the governments, the OFWs resist. They refashion and reclaim the term for themselves to highlight how they are not being treated as such. They leverage the state endorsed heroism to criticize the government for their maltreatment, challenging the disparity between how heroes should be treated and their actual conditions. In active resistance, a participant disagreed with the heroism,

> *I'm confused. Why are they? Why are they calling us OFWs as a bayani? Because of remittances? So if that's the reason, through remittances, that you call us by Bayanis, then why do they make us suffer. The people who come here, there's so many requirements. Even though you take vacations (to the Philippines), you have to take so many documents and sometimes the office of the Philippine Consulate is closed. Also, here (in Canada) they're not open on Saturday and Sunday. So if you're going to the Philippines, you are Bayani, so supposed to be there should be no hassle for you, right? I want them to abolish the (Overseas Employment Certificate) OEC[5] because they are calling us heroes, right?. Why do they make us suffer for these requirements? I experienced that when I was in Hong Kong; my mother passed away and without my mind, I didn't get the OEC document…. I was really disappointed with them. Is this what they say that OFWs are heroes, but they make us suffer." -Participant 9*

She continues,

> *"I feel like no. I feel like no because for me: a Bayani, it's like they give you worth, right? But it's like I don't. Because if you don't just work for yourself, then it's nothing…Because for me, a hero, I interpret it differently. Because you're a hero. It's like they will also help you right. That the government will also support you. Although maybe they do. They also help other OFWs. But it's especially in the Middle East they help a lot in issues in*

[5] See Embassy of the Philippines "All departing OFWs, whether new hires or Balik Manggagawa are required to secure an Overseas Employment Certificates (OECs) which shall serve as exit clearance and as exemption from payment of travel tax and airport terminal fee." https://philippine-embassy.de/overseas-employment-certificate-oec/

> *discrimination there. But for me, it's like for me. It's like I just only support myself, right. No one is helping me. -Participant 9*

While the state-promoted rhetorics casts her as a hero, the pedagogical framing of her heroism does not align with the embodied practice. The way OFWs are celebrated differs sharply with the realities of their experience. Their stories evoke an experience that is intimate, remote, and yet connected largely to the political and economic arrangements of their status as an OFW. Their narrative is a critique and a call to the government to stand up to the heroism that they idealize OFWs to be. They use their heroic spectacularization and point the gaze back to the hegemonic institutionalizing state. *Bayanis* should be treated as *Bayanis*! Rhetorics should be aligned with action. They stress how assistance and improved social services are due for migrant labourers in Canada. The interview, then, became a critique to the state in its shortcomings to attend to its heroes' everyday sacrifices and the normalized in/visible inequalities. Migrant organizations in BC also echo the OFWs in criticizing the heroization discourse, as it becomes problematic with the treatment of Filipinos. MigranteBC (n.d.), for example, finds the use of the *Bagong Bayani* as a coverup for the harsh socio-economic situation in the Philippines and the state's lack of policies to provide Filipinos with livable wages in the country.

The former prime minister, Justin Trudeau, during the 2024 Philippines Independence Day declared,

> "Canada and the Philippines have a relationship driven by a shared commitment to making life better for both our peoples… We recognize the invaluable contributions that Filipino-Canadians make to our communities…Their leadership and their dedication to Canada makes our country fairer and more prosperous… Together, we will keep advancing the friendship between our two nations and build a fairer and more diverse world for Canadians and Filipinos alike" (Trudeau, 2024).

While these words are admirable, it mirrors the spectacularization and heroization of Filipino labourers. Trudeau frames Filipinos as valuable contributors to Canada, arguably approximating them to heroes. In a way, he is producing national knowledge about Filipinos through the narrative of just their invaluable contributions, framing them with their utility to the state. As an executive force in the Canadian state his speech is state subject-production that strategically makes, constructs, and frames Filipinos onto Canadian consciousness. These recognitions often remain on a linguistic and rhetorical level; there should be reforms on the regimes of migrant governmentality on the institutional and

structural level. We should be critical of this “representational heroism”, where leaders honour migrant workers but fail to provide them with platforms to exercise their agency and share their struggles. In turn, the representation silences them instead. The praise, merely recognizing their “*invaluable contributions”,* reinforces their marginalization instead. The Canadian state should address the systems that regulate and control temporary migrant labourers. I echo the call of the participant and demand that if *“they are calling us heroes, right? Why do they make us suffer?”*. The systemic inequalities that disproportionately affect the OFWs and other migrant labourers must be addressed if Canada stands on its words of advancing the transnational relationship with the Philippines. Canada should live up to its promise in Trudeau’s words, to *“build a fairer world”.*

6.4. All Three: The Ideal OFW Hero

The OFWs are interpellated into these three scripts of the Filipino citizen, the ideal migrant, and the *Bagong Bayani*. OFWs in Vancouver are situated in a position where they negotiate between these three institutionalized scripts. From their interviews, I found there is a constant negotiation and refashioning of these three as they are experienced from growing up in the Philippines to living and working in Canada. These scripts are not bound by spatial and chronological measures. Instead, they can overlap and operate simultaneously. The OFWs in Vancouver navigate the overlapping of the Filipino citizen, the ideal migrant, and the *Bagong Bayani*. I argue that in the negotiation and presentation of these subjectivities, they are interwoven and become co-operating interpellations that create a combined script of the **ideal OFW hero**, that carries and presents all the discourses, challenges, and expectations associated with the three. These subjectivities are not mutually exclusive and therefore compound in their social and cultural expectations and experiences for the OFW. Instead of being defined primarily with one, the three are interpellated continuously into the OFW subjectivities throughout the life cycle, thus they are also performed simultaneously. Navigating the tensions between these subjectivities, one script may be more apparent to the OFW. Nevertheless, the institutionalization of the 3 remains constant and ever-looming to the Filipinos.

Chapter 7.

OFW Resistance and Bayanihan

> "Beneath these protests and strikes is a web of transnational relations among migrant workers that destabilize citizenship, sabotage omnipresent state-capital power, and defy notions of belonging intended to constrain their lives and labour mobility in the region. As Aimee Bahng highlights, such migrant networks of existence and resistance "extend networks of care beyond national narratives of 'risky subjects' and the calculations of global financialization" (Walia, 2021 p.187)

7.1. Expertise and Agency as Resistance

I have discussed the ways in which the institutionalization of the three subjectivities, of the Filipino citizen, ideal migrant, and *Bagong Bayani*, interpellate OFWs into the exploitative neo/colonial migration stream between the Philippines and Canada. In this chapter, I revisit their experiences and highlight their agency and their expertise in their everyday temporalities as labour migrants in Canada. How do they subvert and refashion these subjectivities and perform the resilience Filipinos are known for? My analysis moves from neoliberalism, the states' governmentalities, and the employers to the Filipinos themselves and their communities. In this acknowledgement, I also disclose the rich ways in which OFWs confront the neocolonial violence of the hegemonic system through formative alliances and communities. What does decolonial resistance look like in the OFW context in Vancouver? How do they practice embodied expertise in the living and working conditions they have?

Finding ways to reunite broken families and bringing loved ones from the Philippines to Canada is a goal shared by many participants. This was often stated by parents who wished to bring their children, or for single workers to bring immediate family members. One participant shared,

> *"We're creating a small family here. And my sister-in-law is here and we just submitted the permanent residence so we can sponsor my brother and my niece in the Philippines." -Participant 4*

Another shared,

> *"I feel at home because you know I am surrounded by good friends. I feel like home here." -Participant 7*

The achievement of reunification and homing can be seen as an act of resistance against the neocolonial structures of the state, as it goes against their systems of intentional separation between the labourer and their families. These labour systems keep OFWs in precarious positions that make reunification financially and bureaucratically impossible. This is coupled with the difficult visa restrictions to the Philippines, and temporary migration policies that effectively bar OFWs' children to be processed under their parents' reunification program. This was explained by some participants,

> *"[My plan is] to bring my children here. … I want to bring the children here. If I'm able to bring them here. But my child is already beyond the age limit this December. I'm not sure if he will be granted." -Participant 6*

Another participant added,

> *"I chose Canada because here in Canada there are opportunities for me to bring my only child. So I decided to come to Canada because I know the government of Canada is like they are good, especially with the medical. They have a clean government. My real purpose is really to bring my family here." -Participant 7*

In seeking and also being successful in reuniting and founding new families, OFWs resist and challenge the neocolonial systems that reify them. These embodied acts of fighting for reunification and creating new homes oppose the systems that oppress and dehumanize them. I see reunification and homing as acts of protest against the restrictions of the state that structurally impose exploitation and isolation. Borges (2018) argues how homebuilding is a strategy and an act of resistance against "displacement, isolation, marginalization, and exclusion as migrants"; that homebuilding is a resistance that is "*personal and inward which reclaims the home as a place of survival*" (p. 70). One participant shares,

> *"Living here in Canada, it's tough. Like you don't have your own family. You have to survive. Like basically I came here; it was just my sister who was here. I don't have like family to count on." -Participant 4*

While Borges' analysis of homebuilding in the diaspora is founded on queer survival, I extend their framework with the relational experiences of OFWs who are under similar conditions of border and exclusion. While OFW families sometimes align with heteropatriarchal formulas and may not be queer, their modes of homing as survival also

generate “found families”, non-biological kin formed through similar experiences, who are improvised and non-ideal. Especially for OFWs who never get to experience reunification due to Canada’s labour regime imposition of structural isolation. This focus of homebuilding is on the conditions that produce these “new” homes and new families in the diaspora. Isolation is one of the state’s biopower that organizes their life as migrant workers. And, it is this daily survival and the creation of filial love through found families that demonstrate their collective resilience against their isolation. It is a reclamation of oneself from a colonial labour system that has quite literally killed OFWs. Participants have often mentioned the case of Flor Contemplacion[6] as an example of a Filipina who died alone while working overseas. Reunification and homebuilding are their means of protest and daily agentic practice of pushing back.

Other participants also shared how it was a strategic decision for them to come to Canada and choose to become an OFW here because of the benefits that it offered to them. They noted that these benefits were important to them and their kids who they plan to bring to Canada as well.

> *“In here there’s many opportunities. It’s unlimited opportunities here for jobs, unlimited job opportunities and then good health benefits as well. And also the good education system. I don’t think that would apply to other countries, but in Canada I can say.” -Participant 10*

Another participant added,

> *“If there’s a chance to stay here then it’s better because there’s more benefits here. And this is better in kind of the especially in medical because medical is expensive for us. Your money will be gone if you do it there.” -Participant 6*

Choosing Canada as the site of labour for its perceived opportunities is a powerful expression of the agency of OFWs. It highlights their strategic action and taking control of their circumstances. While the participants emphasized these individual benefits, their decision to come to Vancouver is also largely influenced by the city’s established Filipino community, as argued in Chapter 6.1.2 where their families who are already in Vancouver guide them to work here. These choices also show that their decision of working here is informed and prioritizes their future wellbeing. OFWs display their awareness of the better

[6] See BBCNEWS. Flor Contemplacion, a Filipina domestic worker, was executed in Singapore in 1995 for the alleged murder of fellow domestic worker Delia Maga and a Singaporean four-year-old child. https://wspartners.bbc.com/episode/w3ct4x9k

social systems and work benefits present in Canada that are not of the same level in the Philippines. This practice of agency disrupts the narrative that OFWs are passive subjects of the migration streams of the neocolonial labour system. Instead, it recenters their agency and highlights their proactive perspective on improving their future conditions.

Another unique example of this is the participants' acknowledging that their choice to work in Canada is influenced by the visa politics that favored Canadian visa holders. This global visa political system ranks the Canadian passport as one of the world's most powerful passports, granting visa-free entry to most states. As this visa politics disadvantages Philippine passport holders, multiple participants valued having the opportunity to receive the favorable Canadian passport;

> *"The reason why I wanna do Canadian citizenship is because of the passport. To be honest, because once you're a Canadian citizen you can travel wherever you want with a visa. Like if you wanna go to London, if you wanna go to Spain, you don't need a visa if you're Canadian. So that that part is worth it. It was really good one. But it's your choice at the end of the day. It's your, you know, it's your decision, whether you like it to be Canadian citizen or to just stay as permanent resident" -Participant 4*

> *"I chose the PR so I could stay here and become a citizen one day. But I'm not saying that I'm not going back to the Philippines; I'm saying that I'm gonna stay here for how many years and then if I decide so I could go to two different places in my life. That's my line of thought. That you have the freedom to go overseas if you are in the Philippines and you have the freedom to go to the Philippines if you're in Canada. So it's like you have two ways. It's a two-way path. That's what I can say. And the hopes to be a citizen one day and have the world citizenship so I could be Canadian and Filipino citizen." -Participant 10*

> *"So, you just better be a (Canadian) citizen. Also, so that if you want to do something like maybe if you have money and you have extra money and you want to go to the US, then you can travel to other places. At least if you're Canadian citizen, it's not difficult. You just show your visa. You don't have to pay anymore… That's why I want to be a citizen. Visa free." -Participant 11*

> *"First of all, because I can travel anywhere. Second, I think it's. I think it's good. But yes, it is because like the opportunities, especially for a job. If you ask to move somewhere, then it would be an easier process." -Participant 12*

By strategically choosing their site of labour and emphasizing their goal of international freedom and mobility, OFWs navigate and game these systems of control that are set in place to immobilize Filipinos. These goals are reflections of their expertise and agentic

ways of overcoming the global visa regime that disprioritizes the Global South and controls who is able to move freely. These choices are their active resistance against neocolonial power structures, especially against the labour markets that often confine and immobilize OFWs in precarious and strict temporary labour contracts. This expertise and desire for freedom and world citizenship is an assertion for the right to mobility and international autonomy. OFWs highlight their knowledge in these systems as they utilize the logics of empire and colonial power to their favor, by utilizing Canadian labour experience as a steppingstone for global mobility and becoming new citizens of the Global North. For those who have gained citizenship or PR, they noticed the big decrease in bureaucratic restrictions when having the Canadian identification cards. Interestingly, one participant concluded this part of the interview and claimed that the papers did not change her identity and still answers that she is Filipino when people ask her;

> *"I'm still Filipino, despite that I'm Canadian citizen." -Participant 8*

Another added,

> *"Legally I'm Canadian, but by heart I am Filipino." -Participant 13*

7.2. Bayanihan: Neo/Colonial Resistance and Decolonial Love

Due to the OFWs in Canada being separated from their families in the Philippines, migrant networks and Filipino communities become their new support systems in Canada. These new social groups provide the emotional, social, and informational assistance needed to survive in Canada. These networks play a crucial role in resisting the isolation and inequalities they experience as labour migrants. Manifesting collective action and feminist resistance, one participant narrates,

> *"Fellow Filipinos are like assisting each other, and you know especially during Christmas. It's like they really as a Filipino, they're very helpful. We're very helpful and happy that we know even though we are having problems, we can see the smiles of your fellow Filipinos. And with my friends as well. Even though they have problems, there's still the laughter, especially when we have a day off. And our bonding. Even just small things, we're already happy. You really have this spirit of the Filipino culture." -Participant 7*

Being structurally disempowered by state institutions is not just an individual struggle, but one that affects a whole community. *Bayanihan* is a Filipino traditional value deeply embedded in the Filipino reality, which means collective care, communal unity and community support. Back in the rural Tagalog region of the Philippines, it started as a tradition wherein the neighbors of one small town would help a family relocate their home. In the spirit of community and volunteerism, they would literally lift a whole house with bamboo poles and work together to rehome a family. After the relocation, the family hosts a small fiesta as gratitude.

Figure 2. **Bayanihan: Filipinos carrying a house (Ranieljosecastaneda, 2020).** Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayanihan_Spirit_of_the_Philippines.jpg

The *bayanihan* spirit embodies Filipinos' willingness to share their unique strengths, skills, and knowledge for the benefit of the community, especially crucial during challenging times (Bersamira & Macaraeg, 2022). In the case of OFWs in Vancouver, bayanihan is solidarity and collective mobilization. Despite having problems and having just little things, OFWs find themselves with each other, helping each other without expecting any in return. It is solidarity and mutual aid. It is coming together during Christmas and celebrating together and each other as fellow OFWs. Bayanihan is also rooted from the word *bayan*,

meaning nation, town, or community. A participant shared stories of OFWs coming together and forming communities of care,

> *"There's one Filipino that's sick and may tell she doesn't have family. So it's like. We helped her. We assist her in small funds. Because if we're together and happy and helping each other, even just small things, I know it helps a lot. Especially our Filipinos in the hospital that don't have families here of course. Some of them lost their jobs." -Participant 7*

In my Filipino imaginary of *bayan* and community, in a way, your bayan is also your family. In rethinking bayanihan, community building also denotes family building. It extends to a collective sense of responsibility, care, and celebration not just for the nuclear family but also through chosen OFW families. One can fully understand the essence and power of bayanihan when one experiences its solidarity firsthand. I borrow from postcolonial and transnational feminist Chandra Mohanty (2003) and echo that practicing solidarity is mutuality and accountability. Instead of presuming a shared experience of oppression, the practice of solidarity highlights communities of individuals who have actively chosen to join and fight together.

In theorizing *bayanihan* as a decolonial practice, I think of the Filipino gatherings as mutual aid and supporting each other within the Filipino working-class milieu. It is a practice of decolonial love. Bayanihan emerges as a rehumanizing practice of community and reclamation against colonial processes. Decolonial love is about mending the love for one's community and for collective ways of being, knowing and acting (Atallah et al., 2022). The emergence of *bayanihan* practices in OFW communities are decolonial loving ways of reclaiming agency and power. It is new diasporic Filipino ways of being, existing, and rebelling within neocolonial institutions. Here, members are embraced and welcomed, as together they employ *bayanihan* to transform the situations they are emplaced in. For decolonization to happen, it must involve the production of counternarratives, counter-knowledges, and counter-practices that disrupt the oppressive modes of coloniality (Atallah et al., 2022). Together, Filipinos engender new relationships of support that seek to defy the labour systems that impose narratives of isolation and precarious living. It is active withdrawal and resistance against structures of capitalistic domination that reifies migrant bodies only as economic subjects. As the participant narrates, such is the Filipino spirit; we come together, we help each other, we persevere, and we love. Rooted from our traditions in the deep rural provinces of the Philippines, Bayanihan is our Indigenous

resistance. In redoing *Bayanihan*, OFWs in Vancouver may not lift houses but they uplift each other.

7.3. *Marites* to Movements: *Tsikahan* as Feminist De-colonization

OFWs practice the *bayanihan* spirit of community cooperation informally through celebrations and also through formal collective resistance. I have seen OFWs participate in community-based groups that assist each other, especially new arrivals. I have encountered Filipinos being part of the Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers' and Caregivers' Rights (CDWCR). Founded by OFW care workers in 1992, for more than 30 years, they are a community-based, non-profit organization that have focused on assisting care workers through providing information and networking activities, and also advocating for better employment conditions and immigration status. Not only have they gathered in solidarity, but they have also lobbied through rallies, speeches, and knowledge mobilization events for its members. Evidence of this was the Vancouver Migrant Spring rally I attended in March of 2024[7] in which CDWCR members volunteered to organize. They also gave speeches and gathered signatures in demanding the government of Canada for labour justice, equity, and status for all. This was their most recent event that I attended and joined in solidarity.

For the past 3 decades, these groups of OFW women have rallied with each other in the political struggle for migrant justice, especially for migrant care workers. In CDWCR, *Bayanihan* is collective action and mobilizing each other and allied communities in engaging with the state. Their mobilization events are bayanihan manifested as a social movement and identity reformation as OFWs attempt to exercise their individual and collective power. I argue that the women invoke bayanihan in their grassroots-based activities of uplifting fellow care workers.

One of the regular events that CDWCR hosts is the *Tsikahan*, which I am honoured to have attended in the summer of 2024. *Chikahan* or *Tsikahan* come from the Filipino word *chika/tsika* which literally means “to gossip”. For CDWCR, *Tsikahan* is more than just

[7] See coverage of the Vancouver Migrant Spring rally in CityNews Vancouver. (2024, March 17). *Migrant workers rally in Vancouver calling for status for all.* https://vancouver.citynews.ca/2024/03/17/vancouver-migrant-workers-rally/

chitchat. In their personal invitations, *Tsikahan* is for "*sharing food and experiences, exercising for health and wellness, connecting with others and meeting new friends, and learning from one another*." *Tsikahan* is an "*informal conversation to talk about anything under the sun*" (CDWCR, 2024).

Marites is a recent popular culture figure in the Philippines of someone who engages in gossip and story-telling and actively circulates the information to the community. "To *Marites*" has also come to function as a verb meaning to gossip. *Marites* as a figure is gendered and traditionally imagined as a curious middle-aged woman from a place of poverty and shares acquired information or gossip to other *Marites*. While popularized as a humorous figure, I retheorize embodying or practicing *Marites* as method, where OFWs relay "gossip" not only as trivial talk but as survival. She is social practice embedded in Filipino culture that OFWs use for relationship-building and grassroots knowledge production in the diaspora. To the OFWs, the information relayed to each other is not merely gossip, but tactics for survival, social commentary, and expertise as labour migrants. Marites emerges as a counter-power against the systems who keep OFWs uninformed and confused of the ever-changing temporary labour programs and the labyrinthine navigation of Canadian bureaucratic processes. She is community knowledge that allows isolated OFWs access to information to her experience: for example, with success in reuniting her family in Canada, finding better employment opportunities, and with seeking redress against labour violations.

Through the method of "gossiping", the women come and provide each other a safe space to share their experiences, grievances, and expertise in dealing with the oppressive temporary labour migration programs. In these CDWCR events, gossip becomes more than just casual talk; *tsikahan* becomes the seedlings of a powerful platform for bayanihan, collective empowerment, and resistance. *Marites* becomes a movement. One interview participant shared how she sees gossip as a Filipino value; she sees it in the workplace as well,

> *"We still have that, you know, the gossiping and chit chatting with each other. Chickahan. Yeah, sometimes you can also add to it. What's really good with the Filipino is you have to helping each other, the value of helping each other. Bayanihan." -Participant 11*

Through informal, safe space gatherings, migrant workers strategize on how to resist and fight back against the systemic barriers on labour migrations. These women reframe the

gossip into tools of survival and integration into the community. In one *Tsikahan* that I attended, one member voiced a powerful sentiment that inspired me of the spirit of bayanihan and resistance of Filipinos:

> *"If we want others to fight for us, we should fight for ourselves. We should not be afraid."*

This statement captured the essence of solidarity and self-advocacy of these *Tsikahan* sessions. They reinforced to the OFW women their own agency and their power to stand up for their rights. The *Tsikahan* proved to form the foundations of OFW resistance. Eadalma (2012) writes that *Bayanihan* efforts are not just self-help projects, but they can also be a force to challenge institutions like the government to respect fundamental human rights. I see these OFW *Tsikahan* gatherings to be a feminist decolonizing project. It is an active political struggle where they voice their grievances and critique the injustices of Canada's migrant labour policies that prioritize profit over them and their families' well-being.

I am inspired by Mohanty's (2003) writings on solidarity and decolonization. Citing Fanon, she argues that a successful decolonization involves "*profound transformations of self, community, and governance structures*"; that it involves *"engaging in active withdrawals of consent and resistance to psychic and social domination";* that its end result will be *"creations of new self-governance and "the creation of new men and women"* (p. 7). The CDWCR's active engagement in empowering its members and reinforcing the value of active resistance and collective action aligns with Mohanty's definition of a feminist decolonizing project. CDWCR's *Tsikahan* highlights self-reflection and Mohanty's (2003) *"transformation of the self"* as a critical element of their decolonial political mobilization.

This non-hegemonic collective practice embedded in gossip reminds me of another root word of *Bayanihan—Bayani*. By encouraging its members to take active roles in constructing their own identities and destinies, CDWCR's *Tsikahan* is, in essence, heroizing OFWs. They remind the members of their feminist selves and rethink the power they have in "emancipatory collective practice" (Mohanty, 2003) against the colonial state. Another example of this which a participant shared is the OFW community rallying together to prevent a deportation of a Filipino nurse:

> *"He did not declare that he had a wife. So he would be deported because the immigration said that he lied... And after that people made petitions,*

> *because he worked at health care in the hospital. I think in Toronto. And they did signing, and a lot of people helped them… So they made that campaign and he was not deported on the day that he was going to be deported. There was a miracle. It didn't happen because of the signatures of the Filipinos. They also pleaded that because he's not a bad person. And he did service in Canada. He contributed in Canada as a nurse during the pandemic." -Participant 6*

In another perspective, they are constructing the heroes from the women; that they should not be passive in the struggles of migration and labour issues. The participants are transformed into active agents of the labour migrant structures that envelop them. Instead of being passive participants in their struggles, heroes are constructed amongst their ranks. It emphasizes a form of heroism that recognizes their own power and that they should not wait for external help; that the fight for better rights begins with themselves. *Tsikahan* encourages them to take ownership of their experience and struggles and that they are the heroes of their stories and the heroes for their fellow labour migrants. This embodies the spirit of Bayanihan's personal empowerment and collective action.

Chapter 8.

Conclusion

This thesis examined the lived experiences of Overseas Filipino Workers in Greater Vancouver through the lens of three interconnected subjectivities of the Filipino citizen, the ideal migrant, and the *Bagong Bayani*. Drawing on critical Filipino studies, institutionalization, and Foucauldian biopolitics, the findings show how these subjectivities are embedded in the Philippine and Canadian state systems, structured through the historicity of colonialism, socio-economic set-up, and neoliberal migration policies. The subjectivities normalize exploitation, precarity, and sacrifice. However, the lived experiences of OFWs also show resilience, agency, and resistance as they navigate and refashion these institutionalized subjectivities.

The Filipino citizen is instrumentalized by both the Philippines and Canadian states to sustain labour migration. Poverty, filial obligations, and aspirations for upwards social mobility push Filipinos to seek opportunities abroad while framing the labour migration as a national duty and path to economic survival. This subjectivity can be traced to colonial legacies that institutionalizes poverty while positioning the Philippines as a labour-exporting state, perpetuating cycles of dependency and inequality. Participants shared how poverty and kinship ties become internalized as motivators for migration.

Upon arrival in Canada, OFWs confront the experience of being institutionalized to be the ideal migrant, as they share narratives of border controls, over working, and precarious temporariness. They also share the biopolitical techniques the state employs, such as medical exams, language tests, and prolonged temporariness, to manage OFWs. These mechanisms ensure that labour migrants are productive, docile (like the carabao), and remain fearful of the state.

The *Bagong Bayani* discourse glorifies OFWs as self-sacrificing heroes, masking the systemic violence of labour migration. While the state advocates that labour migration and remittances are patriotic, participants often rejected this narrative and viewed their remittances as family-oriented and not towards the nation-state. At the same time, they critique the heroism as it does not reflect their experiences of the state's lack of support.

Despite the institutionalization of the three subjectivities, OFWs in Vancouver resist and demonstrate their agency and expertise. They reclaim the narratives of heroism and practice decolonial loving resistance, expertise-sharing, and every day modes of care. *Bayanihan* and *Tsikahan* became key decolonial strategies OFWs employed to foster mutual aid and political mobilization. By reuniting families, leveraging visa politics, and participating in grassroots organizations, OFWs challenge the neocolonial structures that seek to manage them. These findings support the central argument that Canada and the Philippines biopolitically institutionalized OFWs as a "perfect workforce" in their neocolonial labour arrangement. But, this thesis highlights the OFWs expertise and resistance as knowledge-holders and offers a decolonial reading of their migrant labour experience.

I conclude this thesis with the same epitaph with which we began:

> *"Diri sa Canada lawas jud imong kapital"*

Here in Canada, you are the capital. This line resonates deeply with me as it is a common sentiment among OFWs. Despite the difficulties of migrant labour and the years of family separation to the long working hours of essential labour that is often undervalued, migrant work often paves the way for OFWs' children to survive and complete university in the Philippines. In one way, being a migrant worker built their homes and nourished their families. In another, migrant work emplaced them in vulnerable situations in Canada through persistent precarious work. The line emphasizes how migrants' bodies and physical labour are commodified and exploited.

In this thesis I wanted to emphasize the complexity of the OFW experience and of the institutionalization of diasporic nationalism, especially with how these systems create situations/spaces that emplace OFWs in what Foucault (1986) calls "heterotopias". I see the OFW experience in Vancouver to be a heterotopic one. Their life in Canada is nuanced, inhabited by layers of institutionalizations and resistances that are discursive, complicated, and sometimes contradictory. This perspective views the OFW body and experience as a conglomerate of overlapping processes and axes. In inhabiting the hegemonic systems of neocolonialism and neoliberalism and by being a migrant worker, they are both empowered and marginalized, both high-earning and low-earning, both visible and invisible, and both liberated and constrained. OFWs have come to occupy "ambiguous positions"; they are neither outside nor inside the nation-states; they hover on

the edges and render its boundaries flexible with their dollar remittances (Collantes, 2018; Rafael, 1997). The OFW body becomes a metaphysical heterotopic space of contradictions and negotiations. They may be empowered by the ability to support their kamag-anaks back home, yet they are here sacrificing, marginalized by systemic exploitation and the precarity of migrant labour. OFWs are at this intersection of a complex socio-political situation with their work and the tensions existing between these narratives.

Their experience calls for a critical analysis to understand these overlapping systems and highlight Filipino resilience; that despite these neocolonial constructions, we resist. We gather; we struggle together and empower fellow migrant workers. We practice decolonial love and solidarity. The Filipino value of *Bayanihan* has been our power, enabling us to resist oppression and mobilize against the violence of the states' capitalistic accumulation. Finally, I align with the work of migrant rights networks, allies, and fellow scholars and shift the lens back to the state for its responsibility in producing and perpetuating these conditions. We must hold the west and systems of neocolonialism accountable for the violence they continue to inflict upon us. No longer should OFWs and migrant workers feel that they are merely capital in Canada. These oppressive systems must be dismantled, and it is our collective duty to resist. *Laban Pinay!*

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Appendix A.

Interview Guide

Rincy Dominic C. Calamba, MA Sociology Student
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Simon Fraser University

Ethics Application No: #30001086
Title: The Transnational Institutionalization of the Ideal Filipino-Hero-Migrant of Overseas Filipino Workers(OFWs) in Vancouver, Canada

English

Hello, thank you for talking with me today, my name is Rincy Calamba, and I am hoping to speak with you today about your experiences as an OFW. This conversation should only take about 1 hour of your time. I wanted to remind you than you can choose to skip any questions that I ask and that you can ask to stop the interview at anytime with no consequences.

Have you received and read the consent form?

Did you have any questions about anything regarding the consent form?

Do you agree to participate in this research?

And, are you okay with me audio-recording this conversation?

1. Do you remember your life before you became an OFW?
2. What stories did you hear about OFWs before you became one?
3. What influenced you to become an OFW?
4. Why did you choose Canada? Why did you choose Vancouver?
5. Do you remember your first time coming to Canada?
6. What was the labour migration process like?
7. What was your experience like when you first interacted with the Canadian Government? Has this changed? How?
8. Do you think your experience was different because of your Filipino citizenship?
9. Are you familiar with the term “Bagong Bayani” (OFWs as modern day heroes)? Can you tell me more about it?
10. Do you feel like a Bagong Bayani? What makes you feel like one?
11. Can you tell me about a time you felt like a Bagong Bayani in Canada?
12. Do you recall any news in Canada related to OFWs?
13. Do you have any difficulties as an OFW in Vancouver?
14. How do you make yourself feel at home in Canada?
15. How do you cope with the difficulties of OFW life?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. Just a final reminder that you can contact me via phone or email if you have any questions about today, have any information that you forgot to add and want to share, or have anything you want me to remove from my notes that you said.

Taglish

Hello po, thank you po for talking with me today, my name is Rincy Calamba, and I am hoping po to speak with you today about sa experiences ninyo as an OFW. Mga 1 hour po ang interview natin. Pwede niyo din po hindi eanswer lahat ng questions and estop ang interview anytime with no consequences.

Nareceived niyo po at nabasa ang consent form?

May questions po kayo about anything regarding the consent form?

Do you agree po to participate in this research?

Okay lang po e-audio-record ang interview?

1. Do you remember your life before you became an OFW?
2. Ano po ang stories naaalala ninyo about OFWs before you became one?
3. What influenced you to become an OFW?
4. Paano niyo po napili ang Canada? Why did you choose Vancouver?
5. Naaalala niyo po ang first time coming to Canada?
6. Kumusta po yung labour migration process?
7. Kumusta po yung experience Ninyo when you first interacted with the Canadian Government? Has this changed? How?
8. Do you think your experience po was different because you are a Filipino citizen?
9. Are you familiar with the term "*Bagong Bayani*" (OFWs as modern day heroes)? Can you tell me more about it?
10. Do you feel like a *Bagong Bayani*? What makes you feel like one?
11. Can you tell me about a time you felt like a *Bagong Bayani* in Canada?
12. May naaalala po ba kayong news in Canada related to OFWs?
13. Do you have any difficulties as an OFW in Vancouver?
14. Paano niyo po you make yourself feel at home in Canada?
15. How do you cope with the difficulties of OFW life?

Thank you so much po for taking the time for this interview. Just a final reminder that you can contact me via phone or email if you have any questions about today, or pag may nakalimutan po kayo and gusto niyo e-add share, or have anything you want me to remove from my notes that you said.

Salamat po.

Appendix B.

Consent Form

Version 4: Consent Form for migrant workers
2022-06-30
Ethics Application No: #30001086

Department or Faculty: Sociology and Anthropology
Student Investigator: Rincy Dominic C. Calamba,
Study Title: The Transnational Institutionalization of the Ideal Filipino-Hero-Migrant of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Vancouver, Canada

You are invited to participate in an interview to help further understand the relationship between Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) and the Filipino and Canadian states. I am interested in knowing what it has been like as an OFW, from your migration process in the Philippines to your current life conditions in Metro Vancouver. Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this interview.

HOW THE INTERVIEW WILL HAPPEN

- I will ask you questions about your experiences as an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) in Canada.
- This interview will take approximately 60 minutes. I will write notes and audio-record this interview.

RISKS and BENEFITS

- There are no foreseeable risks to you in participating in this study. Please let me know if you have any concerns.
- In taking part in this interview, you may learn more about how your Filipino identity has influenced your experiences as a migrant labourer.
- After the study, I will be creating a pamphlet with the research findings that will be available to you via WhatsApp.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I plan to utilize the research for my MA thesis, publish in key sociological journals, and present my findings in inter/national research conferences.

We will be using dummy names throughout the whole study. No real names or signatures will be collected, recorded, or transcribed. My recording or notes that may determine identifiability will be stored safely in confidentiality and will only be accessible by me. The

data will be kept in a password protected folder and computer and will be deleted after 5 years.

This interview will be face to face or through phone calls, as per your preference; We will abide by the latest provincial health guidelines in relation to the COVID19 pandemic.

During this process we will be using WhatsApp, a US company, and as such, any data you provide may be transmitted and stored in countries outside of Canada, as well as in Canada. It is important to remember that privacy laws vary in different countries and may not be the same as in Canada.

CONTACT FOR COMPLAINTS OR CONCERNS

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact the Office of Research Ethics.

You may also contact my supervisors:

Cindy Patton
Evelyn Encalada Grez

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you may still choose to withdraw at any time before the paper is submitted to my department. You can withdraw involvement by messaging me through WhatsApp without giving a reason and without any negative impact.

- I will be recording your dummy name and record your oral consent to participate prior to the beginning of the interview.
- You do not waive any of your legal rights by participating in this study.

For questions about the study, you may contact me, and/or my supervisors.

Date: _____