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## **Student-Parent attitudes towards Filipino migrant teachers in Indonesia<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

Using ethnographic data gleaned from a foreign managed Christian school in Indonesia, this article situates the ethnic prejudices of Indonesian Chinese parents and students towards Filipino teachers within the organizational and cultural politics of private schooling. It is argued that the commoditization of education *as* a form of market consumption alongside the masculinized international curriculum help shape the feminization of teachers from the Philippines. Catering to the aspirations of the country's minority ethnic Chinese, privately managed schools actively recruit trained teachers from the Philippines, many of whom are female and are perceived by students and their parents as exhibiting negative symbolic capital. In the process of their employment, they encounter occasional moments of less than complete success and challenges in their jobs. This article situates this prejudice within the cultural politics of masculinized Chinese schooling in Indonesia, while seeking to shed light on the role of Filipino work migrancy in Indonesia's formal employment sector.

### **Keywords**

Indonesia, Chinese, international schools, femininity, middle-class, Philippines, teacher migration

### **Introduction**

The contemporary Indonesian archipelago is home to around 250 million people. Of these, around 1.2 per cent of the population is ethnic Chinese (Ananta et al, 2015). Yet paradoxically, as a small ethnic group, they are dominant in the country's economic sphere. In Indonesia's urban metropolises, the Chinese were historically educated in vernacular Chinese language schools. In the current era, the Chinese prefer to educate their progenies in privately-managed schools, many of which offer Chinese as a second language and adopt an internationally accredited curriculum. These are commonly known as 'international' or privately-managed schools. Over the past few years, these schools have depended on expatriate teachers from the Philippines with a good command of English to fulfill the educational and career aspirations of the country's Chinese middle-class. Within the wider context of global education, parents sending their children to private schools engage in a form

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<sup>1</sup> We would like to express our thanks to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments.

of *consumption* based on their economic ability; it is an ascription of class intertwined with the aim of maintaining the existing middle-class' privileges and status (Waters, 2006; 2008). As consumers, ambitious ethnic Chinese minorities anxious to reinforce the middle-class status of their progenies, place high expectations upon school administrators and teachers. In the words of Hoon (2011: 1), private Christian schools with a large number of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese are "important sites for transmitting Chinese culture and maintaining Chinese identity." These private schools which charge high tuition fees are preferred for the preservation of their Chinese culture for they also function as a well-cocooned space to comfortably secure the reproduction of their class status and culture as minorities. Importantly, they are diaspora spaces (Brah, 1996: 208), wherein 'multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed, or disavowed; where the permitted and prohibited perpetually interrogate.'. We begin by stating that we do not presume all Chinese in Indonesia are wealthy. Although there are considerable numbers of poorer Chinese in rural Indonesia, the Chinese in urban cities such as Jakarta are generally better off than the majority of city dwellers (Dawis, 2009: 89). With the majority of Indonesian Chinese students in urban schools identifying as Christian, they are effectively 'double-minorities' in a predominantly Muslim country (Hoon, 2013).

Within the wider field of migration studies, our interest in the intersectionality between gender, masculinity, femininity and ethnicity or national origin seeks to explore the repertoire between identity categories, subjectivities and identifications as an initial step towards challenging hegemonic conceptualizations of migrant identity. Contemporary research shares an incisive self-reflexivity that attempts to transcend the strictures of established migration/diaspora research rationalities, which rigidly represent the lives of transnational migrant subjects. It is important to disturb such rationalities, and in effect challenge 'settled' epistemological positions that permeate approaches to migration studies. Studies from within an international perspective carry a danger of re-inscribing a common-sense view of non-western societies simply reproducing western models of global late modern identity politics, or simply producing a dichotomised account of east-west difference. Thus,

we must take care to avoid ‘cultural essentialism’ (Narayan, 1998, Ong, 2006). We do this by recognizing that: ‘a set of beliefs and issues and verbal formulas and tropes and binaries become fixed as the only terms in which talk on a particular subject make sense to speakers’ (Gullette, 1997: 98). Moreover, the cultural essentialisms fundamental to such binaries are also used strategically (by both the subordinate and superordinate) to either bypass or acknowledge difference (Spivak, 2005: 477). Thus, an understanding of how avowals and disavowals of migrant teachers are marshaled resonates with wider frames of understanding how subaltern groups seek to find a voice (Guha, 1982; Spivak 2005). The complexity of this process therefore demands a departure from established representations of minorities or migrants like, for example, skilled Filipino teachers working overseas to improve the living conditions of their ‘left-behind’ families. Currently, what remains unexplored are the ways in which foreign-managed schools in Indonesia are increasingly dependent on skilled educators from the Philippines, the cultural politics of working in Indonesia as an expatriate teacher, the breadwinning roles of Filipina teachers, as well as the ways in which such schools simultaneously reinforce Chinese identities that ‘speak’ gender, Christianity and class.

Empirical and theoretical work on masculinities, femininities, sexuality and education in Western countries remain well developed with critiques that connect education with social democratic frameworks of education, alongside wider theoretical debates detailing the impact of globally-inflected social change on gender (Haywood and Mac an Ghail, 2013). However, the masculinities and femininities organic to Southeast Asian societies remain under-theorized (Nilan, 2009; Nilan et al 2011; Lin and Mac an Ghail, 2013; Lowe et al, forthcoming). Our work hopes to address this hiatus in the literature by providing a Southeast Asian perspective on the migrancy of Filipina expatriate teachers in Indonesia with an emphasis on the ways in which they are subordinate to the *masculinized* technocratic outlooks of students and parents that, in turn, are responsible for feminizing Filipina teachers as a migrant workforce.

Within the wider literature, there is much scholarly attention devoted to the role of female work migrants from the Philippines (Asis, 2008), the agency of Filipinas in resisting

structures of oppression (Johnson, 2011), the gendered paradoxes produced by breadwinning mothers performing 'transnational mothering' (Parreñas, 2005) as well as the social effects it has on the welfare of their left-behind children and family members (Asis 2002; Asis and Ruiz-Marave, 2013). In contributing to the existing literature on Filipino work migration and the educational preferences of Indonesia's Chinese community, the focus of this article dovetails with debates in the international arena about the processes of late-modernity that are redefining nation states and precipitating new possibilities of fantasies, fears and desires that are in turn, recasting definitions of what it means to be a man or woman at both global and local levels (Mac an Ghail and Haywood, 2007: 195). The point of departure in this research intervention is that Filipino teachers in Indonesia, being skilled migrant workers in the formal sector, may not always fit within the dominant binaries of the 'superordinate' versus the 'subordinate' but need to be represented as capable of being both (rather than either/or) the dominant and subjugated. Using a gender lens, this article investigates the centrality of the 'hidden' curriculum and cultural production of masculinity in shaping student-parental attitudes towards Filipino/a teachers.

### **The socio-legal context of schooling in Indonesia**

Internationally, there is much salience attributed to the role of education in class reproduction. In multicultural Indonesia, there are no exceptions. In Tanu's (2014) ethnography in a highly sought after international school that previously catered exclusively to expatriates, she examined how a globally accredited educational system delivered in the English language served to reinforce the elite economic standing of Indonesia's upper / middle-upper elite as well as cultivate a cosmopolitan worldview. Useem and Downie (1976) introduced the term 'third culture kids' to represent the products of educational tracks synonymous with cultural capital and a cosmopolitan outlook. Whilst, such students are purported to exemplify the much-vaunted virtues of tolerance and competence in multicultural settings (Hayden et al, 2000), the competing demands for cultural capital and a cosmopolitan openness amongst Indonesians has its own ironies. The not so cosmopolitan result of such schools insulating

students from the ‘temptations’ of the world, as Hoon (2010) notes, is the reinforcement of class inequalities and the failure of students to relate to their national ‘others’ from different backgrounds. Even as the taste a person displays in the purchase of goods, including education, is an indicator of his or her social class in a commodity-oriented (i.e. consumption) culture (Featherstone, 1991: 88), the taken for granted role of teachers in elite education has frequently been elided in educational research and class reproduction. There are currently rapid socio-economic changes unfolding that are punctuated by the government’s sudden regulation of the country’s international schooling industry. Such moves are emblematic of state-sponsored policies to promote economic nationalism and resonate with discourses of localism blaming globalization and Westerners for moral decadence and the collapse of communal structures, anti-cosmopolitan and anti-American sentiments amongst Indonesia’s indigenous population or *Pribumi* are certainly common (Watson, 2010), even as Caucasian expatriates in Indonesia have reported feeling ‘racially marked’ (Fechter, 2005). Within this context, we are only beginning to understand the complex articulation of schooling and wider learning networks, and ethnic subjectivities in Indonesia produced by the country’s ethnic Chinese. 2014 marked a watershed year in Indonesia’s private schooling industry following the election of President Jokowi Widodo and allegations that teachers and janitors at the Australian-managed Jakarta International School were found guilty of raping students. The newly elected Indonesian government swiftly legislated a raft of measures to regulate the country’s ‘international’ schools<sup>2</sup> Such measures were really designed to *nationalize* all schools that admitted Indonesians citizens. First and foremost, only schools associated by embassies that accepted foreign nationals of a particular nationality (embassy schools) would be allowed the use of the word ‘international.’ Thus, well-established existing international schools attended by Indonesian students were prohibited from retaining the word ‘international’ in their name. Additionally, there would be reduced quotas for expatriate teachers and psychological tests for visa applications to ‘weed out’ foreign teachers with a likelihood to commit sexual offences. Schools were also required to jettison their established

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<sup>2</sup> For an in-depth description of the changes required, please refer to ‘Change of Direction for International Schools and National Education System,’ *Indonesian Law Digest*, Issue 365, July 2014.

practices of i) charging school fees in other currencies (the US or Singapore dollar) and ii) remunerating expatriate teachers in currencies other than the Indonesian Rupiah. The school concerned was re-designated as a *Satu Pendidikan Kerjasama (SPK)* or a 'Joint Cooperation' school that, in essence, was allowed to enroll Indonesian citizens and retain its internationally accredited curriculum. In sum, SPK schools are required to teach Indonesian culture, language, moral education and citizenship. Foreign teacher quotas are also in place to ensure that at least 30 per cent of teachers and 80 per cent of support staff are Indonesians. Additionally, expatriate teachers intending to renew their work permits were also required to pass Indonesian language tests. It is therefore timely to examine if the unfolding trajectory of these straitjacketed curbs on privately managed schools are currently creating marked feelings of anxieties, risks and feared dislocations amongst parents, teachers and students. Where expatriate Filipino teachers are concerned, the latest rulings imply that their work experiences in Indonesia are most likely to approximate closer to *circular* migration that can be broadly understood as temporary migration (Wickramasekara, 2014: 52). This because the teachers' eventual return to the Philippines will be necessitated by their lack of settlement rights in Indonesia.

### **Research design**

The empirical material presented here is part of a broader research project that examines the multifaceted aspects into the migration and structural-agential conditions affecting the work conditions of Filipino expatriate teachers in Indonesia's privately-managed schools. Currently, there is an absence of ethnographic research on Filipino work migration within Southeast Asia's formal sectors. Thus, this article draws upon ethnographic work carried out by one of the authors over the period of one year between July 2014 and June 2015. The pseudonym for this school will be 'The True Vine School'. Research methods used included participant observation, as well as informal interviews and conversations with a total of 26 students in the tenth year of their education as well as teachers ( $n=20$ ) entirely in the English language. Being a member of the school community and participant observer was

particularly advantageous in allowing for the researcher to understand the multilayered experiences accessible only to an insider (Zinn, 1979, 2001) within the school's domain. In addition to participant observer ethnographies in the school's canteen, playground, assemblies and other open spaces, student behavior in mandatory subjects such as Geography, English and History were carefully observed. The researcher would arrive at the school daily before 7 am and leave after 4pm each working day. Thus, it was also possible for the researcher to directly observe the socializations of students and teachers before and after school as well as in class amongst themselves and their teachers. Additionally, the researcher was also able to approach parents on certain occasions. Prior to eliciting responses, the author would present interviewees with 'vignettes' in the form of media reports pertaining to international schooling in Indonesia and ask them to first comment. Questions asked sought to encompass the following points i) the adaptation of Filipino teachers to teaching in the Indonesian school; ii) the subject and schooling selection of students and parents; iii) why students were attracted to a school that shadowed the Singaporean educational system and iv) how they viewed the role of teachers in helping them achieve their aspirations

As a small-scale exploratory study, the research participants do not provide a representative sample of the *mélange* of masculinities, femininities and schooling that may be found in other schools in Indonesia that offer an international curriculum. Nevertheless, before this study was conducted, the author was cognizant of the fact that, as an ethnographer adopting a cultural studies approach, the minutiae of conditions surrounding the cultural production of femininities (and masculinities) that relate to the wider society at large were of critical importance, (Marcus and Clifford, 1986; Willis and Trondman, 2000). Logical inferences rather than statistical inferences would therefore help address, methodologically and theoretically, the relationship between structures and agential activity in gender and identity. Following Burawoy et al's extended case study method, it is not possible to include every piece of data in this article as the importance of each individual case featured rests in what it has to tell us about the wider societal structures and discourses as a whole rather than the population of other similar cases (1991: 281). This approach was directed by reflexivity



and an ethical awareness in understanding the cultural specificity of the Indonesian nuances.

Therefore, it was the exploration of our respondents' gendered experiences imbricated with ethnicity and class within the various schooling milieus they traversed that was a key objective of the research design.

Carrying out this research did present major theoretical and methodological issues to ensure the researcher did not homogenize responses but would succeed in eliciting candid responses that capture the repertoire of gendered *differences* expressed by Filipino/a expatriate teachers. This is of particular salience as the accommodation of pre-given containment categories that do not assign any pre-given epistemological status can inadvertently be susceptible to essentializing and homogenizing differences (Mac an Ghail and Haywood, 2003: 399). Importantly, the research process was designed to allow research participants an alternative representational platform to express insightful narratives about the challenges of teaching in Indonesia. The datasets were subject to theory-led analyses and subsequently taken back to the individuals themselves not simply as a form of 'face validity' but as a way of asking them for their insights into the practical implications of the findings. All interviews throughout the study were anonymized and *all* names quoted in interview data are pseudonyms to ensure their confidentiality.

### **Filipino teachers and the cultural politics of schooling in Indonesia**

In Indonesia, the demand for skilled migrant teachers from the Philippines stems from a sense of disenchantment with the state schooling system. The predilection of parents to educate their children in schools offering a curriculum validated by renowned educational boards is primarily due to anxiety as ethnic minorities and desire to pursue cosmopolitan ambitions. It is noteworthy to point out a report in *The Economist* (2014) which highlighted deficiencies in Indonesia's national school system; it is lagging behind some of the country's poorer neighboring countries in the region, such as Vietnam with a GDP three-fifths its own, while the average 15 year-old in an Indonesian national school would be around four years behind the average Singaporean. The possession of an internationally recognized secondary

certificate of education from a fee-paying foreign- managed school is a typical form of social capital and cosmopolitan asset that secures transnational social mobility in the form of admission to universities of international standing. It is also essential for Indonesians who desire a passport or right of abode in countries such as Singapore, the USA, Canada, Australia and other Western democracies. Filipino teachers who accept job offers to teach in such schools are certainly instrumental in helping the ethnic Chinese accumulate social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1977) that will widen the egregious levels of economic inequalities between the Chinese and indigenous Indonesians.

In True Vine School, parents were attracted to its Christian ethos (although being a Christian was not a prerequisite for teachers) and the fact it shadowed the curriculum of Singaporean state schools with accreditation from the Cambridge International Examinations Board. Around 65 per cent of its expatriate teachers were from the Philippines whilst only around 10 per cent were Singaporeans. The remaining expatriate teachers came from India and Malaysia. With very few isolated exceptions, students in this school were entirely of ethnic Chinese ancestry or the result of intermarriages with indigenous Indonesians. Students were predominantly Roman Catholic or Protestant Christians with smaller numbers of Buddhists. Only a few children of Indonesian teachers studying in the school were Muslim. Over the course of interacting with parents during the academic year, parental disappointments with the school's failure to retain Singaporean teachers were communicated to the author. Moreover, it was widely known that Singaporean teachers were preferred by parents. Jovana, a 53 year-old Indian teacher spoke candidly of this bias against Filipino teachers:

- Jovana: Very hard to say. It depends. Some years back, this man said to me "Ms. Jovana, this school is not a Singapore school anymore, it is now a Filipino school. I think parents have more confidence in Singaporean teachers.
- Author: Why are there less Singaporean teachers now?
- Jovana: Most who left didn't really like Jakarta and the lifestyle here. Filipinos are usually cheaper to employ since their asking salaries will be much lower than what Singaporeans and Malaysians ask for.

In this Singaporean-managed school, the highly visible presence of female teachers from the Philippines was, in the eyes of demanding and consumer-oriented parents, an aberration they were quick to point out to the school's management. Norma, a Filipino primary teacher in her 40s, also mentioned her disappointment with parents who would question her teaching credentials by openly telling her that they wanted Singaporean trained educators to teach their children.

- Author: What is it like in this school?  
Norma: Parents here are known to be very demanding. They're mostly Medanese Chinese, very fussy and calculating just because they pay a lot of money. In other schools I worked for in Surabaya, they're demanding, quite arrogant but not so horrible like the ones here. When I first started work here, they would complain to the school management about the smallest things.
- Author: What do they complain about?  
Norma: They always ask why I don't give enough worksheets, why I don't cover all the workbook activities, they are never satisfied with what I do. They blame you for teaching the kids poorly. I tell them I prefer not to waste time with questions in the workbook that are not good. They then question my opinion. If the kids don't get the marks they expect, they will ask a lot of annoying questions and call me at night.
- Author: Like what?  
Norma: They like to ask how many years I've taught before coming here. Three years ago, this couple met me and asked me where I studied, if Philippine universities are good and actually said they wanted Singaporean teachers to teach their children since this was a Singapore school. Not nice really. But then after a few years, they were better to me and gave me presents after their son's grades improved. To win their acceptance, you must call them and give them updates every week.

In addition to prejudice from parents, students expressed their disappointment towards more experienced, outgoing Singaporean teachers being replaced with Filipinos they perceived as dilettantes, lacking a sense of familiarity with the subject matter and syllabus. On several occasions, the author found year 10 boys he taught mimicking the Filipino accent of the male Vice-Principal in their English language classes. When asked why they were habitually pronouncing words in a Filipino accent, the boys were clearly forthright in stating that it sounded 'funny' or 'weird':

- Author: Why do some of you like pronouncing words that way? Is that how I taught you to speak?

J. Lowe; X. Lin & Mac an Ghail, M.

- David: No, Sir. It's funny, you know the way we always hear Mr. Bella speak at assembly, very weird right – so different from how you speak?
- Shawn: Yeah, sometimes also, when we hear him talking to other Filipino teachers in Tagalog when we are around, we don't really like it .....it's not a nice way of speaking.
- Author: What's wrong with that? If you meet another Indonesian in France, can I tell you that you must only speak English or French?
- Andy: That's different, Sir. This is an international school. The Philippines is a poor country, none of us are interested in going there. We want to go to the USA or Australia to study so we should not have to listen to their language that is only spoken in the Philippines, otherwise we will go deaf.

In view of these observations, it is noteworthy to point out, as Bourdieu and Wacquant argue, that linguistic relations are evidently “relations of power” (1992: 142), “what goes in verbal communication, even the content of the message itself, remains unintelligible in so far as one does not take into account the totality of the structure of the power positions that is present, yet invisible, in the exchange” (1992: 146). Even as linguistic capital was certainly something the students considered lacking amongst Filipinos, Filipino teachers were benighted of the fact that each time they spoke Tagalog in front of students, some students would *invert* the power relations underpinning the teacher-student relationship on the grounds of the Philippines being a Third World country and the language sounding ‘weird.’ The Filipino accent and Tagalog commonly heard was typically disidentified with by students who would associate it with the atavistic. For them, the Filipino teachers’ linguistic capital carried little purchase in the technocratic social spheres of the highly masculine countries they aspired to live in the near future. The students were ascribing Filipino nationality and Tagalog with negative symbolic capital – that is, the capital prestige or honor of the country and language (Bourdieu, 1977, 1994). Singaporean teachers, on the other hand, were valorized as imparters of prestige and access to the economic and symbolic capital they so desired to cement their class status and cosmopolitan ambitions.

The hitherto student and parent responses indicate that the desire for symbolic capital results in their rather masculinized ‘investments’ or preferences for Singaporean teachers that project a gaze upon Filipino teachers that is feminized. More recently, theorists of

masculinities and femininities have examined the formation of such gendered subjectivities by analyzing the socio-cultural and psychic as well as the material structures through which different *curricular* subjects make sense of their gendered identities (Redman, 2008). Current discourses that shape subject positions, according to Holloway (1984), include the concept of ‘investment’ to theorize processes of making the self and why an individual may invest in one rather than another way of being male or female. Holloway suggests that investments undergird affiliations with gendered subject positions as antecedents to rewards. Such investments may nevertheless remain subliminal and beyond the reach of rationality. Thus, the desire to distance one’s self from the ‘weaker’ masculinities of Filipino teachers on the basis of their lack of symbolic capital would most likely stem, at least in part, from the unconscious (Fanon, 1970; Mercer, 1992a, b). Individuals from Indonesia’s ethnic Chinese minority are most likely to have complex social and subconscious investments in dominant gendered discourses at a time when they remain excluded and unwanted in post-Suharto Indonesia’s cultural fabric (Budianta, 2000: 119; Hoon, 2006). In such a context the repudiation of certain subject positions or disidentifications, according to Judith Butler (1993), commonly occurs in order for one to reinforce his or her preferred particular subject position. She maintains that identifications are complicated processes designed to assuage certain fears and satisfy unfulfilled desires. By repudiating certain identities, an individual forms his or her own identity. For her, “identifications, then, can ward off certain desires or act as vehicles for desire; in order to facilitate certain desires it may be necessary to ward off others; identification is the site at which this ambivalent prohibition and production of desire occurs” (1993: 100). The contradictory elements in this “logic of repudiation” are reconciled: the construction of identity requires some awareness of “not being” as a “significant sign of being.” Within the Indonesian nation-state, the amplification of particular masculine traits allow the minority ethnic individual to nullify identification with other elements they disdain. Most of these emanate from their poorer and under-achieving *Pribumi* Indonesian counterparts. Investing in the Singaporean school system in Indonesia provides a form of ‘cultural ballast’ to compensate for their own marginalized ethnic identity. Singapore, in

essence, is aggrandized as technocratic, economically prosperous and the only nation in Southeast Asia with an ethnic Chinese majority (Tong, 2010: 57). It is a city-state that presents moneymaking opportunities for Indonesia's Chinese who – despite being the smallest ethnic group in Indonesia – are economic vanguards. Identifications with the Singaporean educational system, recognized as one of the best in Asia and the world, are therefore simultaneous projections of a masculine identity they do not want attenuated by a preponderance of teachers from the Philippines, a 'Third World' nation. This identification by parents and students alongside their bias against Filipinos are exemplifications of that which Bowen et al. (2005: 25) aptly describe as "the appropriate economic, social, and cultural capital to 'decode' school systems and organizations." The totality of the school's organizational structure and curriculum in conjunction with wider management hierarchies that aggrandize an international education are culpable for shaping parent-student prejudice towards Filipino teachers. The next section segues to situate the prejudiced gaze towards Filipino teachers within the school's masculinized international curriculum.

### **Elucidating the intersectionality of curricular demands with student-parent bias**

At the institutional level of the school, student identities and gendered subjectivities were shaped by categories and dichotomies specific to the school's organization of its formal curriculum. The academic / vocational and arts / science divisions of the formal school curriculum, according to Mac an Ghail (1994, 2000: 97), have a history of being gendered, wherein the humanities and arts subjects are traditionally considered 'soft / feminine' as opposed to the 'hard' vocational, scientific and mathematical options deemed more masculine and 'tickets' to industry related careers. More specifically, Connell (1989: 295) has also argued that differentiations of student masculinities occur relative to a school's curriculum that organizes knowledge and stratifies students into an academic hierarchy; masculinity is organized around social power granting access to higher education and elite professions. Thus, for students in our research, their subject preferences and tertiary study

options in conjunction with the school's requirement for all students to study Mandarin Chinese "spoke" both gender and ethnicity. The perceived value of speaking Mandarin and completing a business or industry related degree to successfully manage family owned businesses was well articulated by boys as evinced by this example:

- Author: What plans do you have after your IGCSE<sup>3</sup>s this year?  
Eric: My father is sending me to do a bridging pre-university course for engineering in Australia.
- Author: What do you hope to do after university?  
Eric: My father wants me to be an engineer before he allows me to manage his company. He thinks I must have work experience first.
- Author: Do you really need a degree to run your family business?  
Eric: No, not really, but my father thinks a good degree from a famous university, work experience and speaking Chinese is necessary otherwise Chinese clients won't come to us.
- Author: Your younger brother Joseph is in Year 8, what are his plans?  
Eric: Yes, he's trying to get a scholarship to finish school in Singapore next year and my father doesn't care what he does. I'm the eldest so he wants me to study in Australia and work first so I can be in charge of the business.

In the above conversation, the school leaver displays a belief in the quantifiable 'vocational' subject of engineering to develop the requisite technical skills and work experience desired by his father. The career choices and patrimonial practice underpinning these choices displaces itself into middle-class production and Chinese ethnicity through forms of entrepreneurial masculinity. In this context, normative middle-classness and technocracy become fused and projected onto the masculine, male Indonesian Chinese entrepreneur who would 'otherize,' disidentify with and disparage the feminine. For example, whilst invigilating a Year 10 art exam, the author observed that there were only three boys out of seventeen art candidates. When a male art student was later asked why other boys would rather do business studies instead of art, the pupil seemed somewhat nonplussed with the author's question and replied with the following response:

Don't you know? Most boys here don't have the hands to do art. I do it because I think economics is enough, I don't wish to do economics since it's close to business studies .

(Henry, student)

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<sup>3</sup> International General Certificate of Secondary Education

Subsequently, when the author informally asked the art teacher, the prevailing tenuous sway of art on boys was reiterated:

Of course there have always been very few boys who do art. Before they confirm their subject options in Year 8, parents always ask what they can do with an IGCSE credit in art or which universities will accept an A or distinction in art.

In view of these responses that the idea of boys doing art was less acceptable or recognized than the more 'respected' and vocational business studies subject option, it is worth pointing out an irony. The school's only two art teachers were male Indonesians but educators responsible for heading the technocratic, mathematical, scientific and business subjects were mostly Filipinas. Males who could succeed in mathematics and science would not want to identify themselves with the aesthetics they perceived as feminine and a subject that best suited the dexterous hands of girls. However, in contrast to the boys, school-leaving girls commonly reported that their parents allowed them the liberty to pursue their individual options in the humanities and arts:

Author: What are your plans after your IGCSEs this year?  
Emily: I enjoy art and design most, so I hope to study design in a US college to see if architecture is for me.  
Author: Do your parents expect you and two sisters to take over their family business?  
Emily: No. I don't have any brothers, so they plan to just sell their business when they retire.

It can be inferred in these boys' and girls' accounts that in the patriarchal context of Indonesia's Chinese communities, femininity is ascribed, whilst masculinity and manhood need to be earned by engaging with structural conditions in the form of acquiring work experience and learning a 'hard' science with reference to being worthy to inherit a business (Connell, 1995). In sum, here the gendered ways of being can be seen as a crucial intersectional point marked by different forms of power, stratification, desire and subjective identity. The school's official and hidden curriculum overemphasize the importance of certain subjects over others and regulates a repertoire of embodied masculinities that encourages boys to disregard the superordinate status of female teachers from the Philippines as subject



specialists in the masculine / 'hard' sciences, such as physics, chemistry, mathematics and biology.

The convergence of prejudice exhibited by parents and students with the masculinized character of the international school's curriculum in Indonesia is of salience and demands further research. In encounters with parents and teachers, Filipino teachers in charge of high status subjects, such as additional mathematics, physics and biology felt undermined and marginalized in the ways parents would question their competence and subject knowledge. In the case of Bernadine, a 42 year-old physics teacher, she reported that despite alluding indirectly to her professional experience in a highly masculinized occupation – engineering – in the Philippines, most Year 9 boys would not do their homework and persisted in questioning the necessity of having to work on the type of questions she would set.

- Author: How do you feel when the boys don't do homework?  
Bernadine: They're not obedient. Although I am now harsh and stricter with them and tell them not to ask why they need to be responsible by doing what I tell them to do, there will be some who won't do it.
- Author: What do you do about it?  
Bernadine: I tell their parents. I informed the parents of Gunther and Gabriel more than once that these boys are very lazy in class and don't organize their folders properly.....so many missing worksheets. I told them many times that they must know the basic concepts otherwise they will struggle next year.....I tell them I used to be an engineer in the Philippines before and they must have the proper grounding. This boy Adrian has a father who is an engineer and he was so annoying....asked me why I'm not giving them more preparation for Paper 4. I told him I need to first build their foundation for physics so I will do it with them next year before they sit the IGCSE exams. They are anxious and like to interfere too much. So annoying and terrible you know.
- Author: Was the father surprised to learn that you would be their new physics teacher after Mr. Lin returned to Singapore?  
Bernadine: Yes. They told me that they were expecting Mr. Lin to teach them, rather than me, someone they already know. In the second week of the last school year when I first came, I was called up by the Vice-Principal who told me she had met the parents of one student, she refused to tell me who it was that wasn't happy with how I taught them. The question the parents asked was if I was capable of teaching physics.
- Author: Was it because you're a woman or because they think you don't know the subject matter?  
Bernadine: Yes. I am quite sure the parents and students prefer a man to teach physics. When the parents of Gabriel met me the first time to discuss his results, I could tell they seemed confused when they looked at me

– they were trying to size me up so I was very assertive with them and did my best to give examples of his weaknesses in the exam.

Bernadine's anticipation of questions and allusional tactics surrounding her professional competence and impression management tactics may be indicative of strategies women seeking success and validation in a masculinized or male-dominated field of work need to develop (Hatmaker, 2013). Moreover, by being 'harsh' with students, she was forced to cultivate a masculine teaching persona in maintaining student discipline to ensure that the miscreant boys would complete their homework. This measure, however was not entirely successful in winning over the 'trust' of the students. In a dialogue with a few of her male students the author also taught, they displayed a reluctance to accept her instructions if she was forceful or harsh with them:

- Author: Why do you have to make life so hard for Ms. Bernadine?  
Gabriel: No, we are not making life hard for her sir.  
Author: She said sometimes you are still not doing your homework.  
Adrian: Yeah, you know sometimes she will scold us for half an hour and tell us that it will be harder for us to pass next year if we fail this year. But then, you know her teaching style is so different from Mr. Lin who taught us science last year. Sometimes when we ask questions she will scold us and tell us we were not listening.  
Author: Well then, why weren't you paying attention?  
Gabriel: You know, it's the way she scolds, very fierce and harsh, so we don't want to listen to her anymore or do her homework. She doesn't know how to make us like her.  
Steven: Yeah, you know, her physics class is very boring.

Taking for granted that normality or 'alignment' (Goffman, 1990: 129) is the reparative aim for an individual from a group that has been essentialized with negative traits, the admissions of Steven and Gabriel suggest that Bernadine's projections of a more masculine trait to enforce student discipline was aimed at fashioning some semblance of normality over her identity. It was, however, counterproductive. In other words, she was punished by students for her 'counter-stereotypical' behaviour of projecting a more masculinized self (Eagly and Carli, 2007) that obstructed student motivation and interest in the subject. Despite her feminine traits being less valued, the reluctance of students to accept her subordinate status as a physics teacher could be attributed, at least in part, to her failure to carefully attune her interpersonal skills at performing both masculine and feminine practices (Brannan and Priola, 2012). This

dialogue is elucidating in revealing how the exercise of individual agency does not passively react to hierarchical top-down power relations (from a teacher to a student), but rather, is imbricated laterally (amongst students) whenever the technocratic and masculinized curriculum is responsible for reconfiguring power relations. Subsequently, the teacher's dominance and authority is fragmented by the biased gaze of parents and students that feminizes the teacher as an 'other' in Indonesia, who is treated as the mere *means* to an end product.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Implicit in the ethnographic data discussed above is a need to understand more deeply and acknowledge the pivotal and misrecognized contributions of Filipino teachers' involvement in the reproduction of the Indonesian Chinese community's middle-class status. Filipino teachers are nevertheless situated precariously in the nexus between the class reproduction of their 'clients' and the highly masculinized international curriculum they are tasked to deliver. On the one hand, they are 'needed' to meet a skilled labor shortage created by the economic prosperity of Indonesia's smallest ethnic group, yet on the other hand, they remain not quite 'wanted' and encounter challenges in winning parents' and students' acceptance and trust. Power and powerlessness, therefore, exist simultaneously. Female teachers from the Philippines embody superordinate positions as subject experts but are nevertheless subordinated by how parents dehumanize migrant teachers as mere digits to reduce the purchase cost of a commodity appropriated as a form of consumption, commercialization, inter-generational mobility, class segregation and distinction. Amongst Indonesia's ethnic Chinese community, the prevalence of patriarchy might certainly be responsible for the inequalities reinforced by the ubiquity of 'pariah capitalism' (Chun, 1989) practised by Southeast Asia's Chinese diaspora which masculinizes and makes a fetish out of an internationally recognized curriculum. At the same time, it raises questions about 'why' Filipino trained teachers, females in particular, from the Third World should be even considered suitable educators.

The transnational mobilities and experiences of skilled individuals escaping poverty or lack of opportunities by moving from one developing country (i.e., the Philippines) to a neighboring developing nation (i.e., Indonesia) for employment remain under-theorized. This case study, therefore, obscures and complicates the traditional division of labor between the economic and political systems of developed and developing countries reinforced by late capitalism and European imperialism. In ethnic, racial and postcolonial studies, the master-slave/colonizer-colonized dialectic is typically invoked to explain the lower social standing of colonial or minority ethnic groups in their 'host countries' that is not applicable to this case study. Thus, if we situate the prejudiced gazes of Indonesian Chinese teachers and students within a postcolonial frame, it would be apparent that power structures occupied by Indonesia's *avant garde* ethnic Chinese provide them with the economic and symbolic capital to subordinate and *classify* Filipinos as inferior subjects conjured by the "Third World Country = Third World People" couplet. As Natter and Jones (1997) maintain, such couplets are evocative of traditional understandings of identity that reinforce assumptions about one's origins in the atavistic zones of 'non-being.' Bearing in mind that the Dutch privileged the Chinese as intermediaries to European commerce in colonial times by ranking them above *Pribumi* indigenous Indonesians within their racial taxonomy and legislated measures that prevented alliances between both groups (Koning, 2007: 134; Lan, 2012: 375), the continuities of Dutch coloniality in the present continue to define and consolidate the social standing of Indonesia's Chinese. The degrees of ethnocentric prejudice towards Filipinos in Indonesia's Chinese and Christian-dominated schools may be incommensurable only in part to the hostilities levelled towards colonial subjects in European societies. Nevertheless, the negative symbolic power coterminous with their nationality and origins continue to be perpetrated by the global 'coloniality of power' (Grosfoguel, 2004: 332) in the aftermath of the demise of Dutch imperialism in Indonesia.

We suggest that an intersectional postcolonial approach to dissecting the power geometries articulated through patriarchal norms that feminizes 'others' in conjunction with the school curriculum is productive in providing alternative understandings. In contemporary

studies of migration, there seems to be a relative failure to frame the intersectionality of migration and demography involving diverse forms of ethnic and cultural discrimination (Grosfoguel et al., 2014). It is hoped that this paper will contribute to future inquiries into the migrancy of skilled Filipino teachers in Indonesia to adopt intersectional frameworks which include colonialism, ethnicity, gender and class as modalities in conjunction with Indonesian ethnic Chinese ethnicity. We suggest that social categories do not simply articulate *with* one another, rather they also articulate *as* one another; the aim is not to think about the ways social categories accumulate, but how they speak each other at the same moment (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2013). Therefore, the argument here is not to reify ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ in a reductionist manner or to disregard other social categories, but to return to sites of gendered experience and theorize them, as “situated knowledge” within their spatial and temporal conditions (including the postcolonial). In the words of Anthias (2012: 128-9), categories in the real world already feed from each other and are “...contesting and splintering off in the forms they take (linked to the broader landscapes of power including political and economic practices and interests that are not reducible to the working of the categories themselves) but within time and space specifications.” In the educational arena, it is widely acknowledged that, as a latent by-product of emerging adulthood, gendered relations are in a state of flux at both the structural and agential levels (Davies, 1993; Haywood, 2008; Mirza, 2009). As a result, categories such as ‘Chinese’ or ‘Indonesian Chinese’ are conceptualized as processes of *becoming*, characterized by fluidity, oppositions and alliances between particular narrative positions, wherein both students and teachers are located across different points in time.

In contemporary Indonesia, the contours of Indonesia’s Chinese ethnic minority remain heterogeneous. Thus, research on the cultural reproduction of this group’s entrepreneurial masculinities and its relation to ethnicity and gender remains in an embryonic stage that is nevertheless marked by theoretical and conceptual excitement. The small case study presented in this article has mapped out how ideas shaping male student identities in a Singaporean-managed school are informed by the school’s curriculum and management

culture. Male and female students legitimize and demarcate zones of performing masculinity that boys, in particular, are encouraged to inhabit. These zones of being male are nevertheless not inert but shape how they project a feminized gaze upon foreign teachers they consider 'other'. However, despite the stereotypical economic tropes typically used by Indonesia's Muslim majority to racialize Indonesia's Chinese, the latter may not always fit within the dominant binaries of the 'superordinate' versus the 'subordinate' but, like the Filipino teachers, need to be represented as capable of being both (rather than either/or) the dominant and subjugated. Indonesia's Chinese continue to face social exclusion and occasional hostility on the basis of their economic dominance and continue to be racialized as 'pariah capitalists' that, in essence, is a colonial legacy and reason why the educational arena is evidently a source which purports to speak about women which remains silent about them (Khanna, 2001). In closing, it is hoped that this paper's emphasis on the nexus between student-parent prejudice towards Filipina teachers and the schooling masculinities of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese middle-class will encourage scholars in Indonesia and beyond to further our discussion with a view to developing theoretically grounded accounts of the cultural politics of schooling in Indonesia. Amongst other things, the intersectional dynamics of economic primacy, the allure of skilled teaching jobs in Indonesia and work migration as a form of 'transnational feminism,' as well as the ways in which Filipino teachers hope to appropriate their experiences in Indonesia for global migration remain possible sites for future research interventions. Reading local perspectives provides a more complex picture of how inequalities and stratification are played out within the international education sector in Indonesia. The reference to the history of colonization and migration, as well as regional economic integration has enabled us to address the interplay of the complex power relations at local (national) and global levels, informing a more nuanced understanding of 'skilled' transnational educators within a globally-inflected late modern condition (Nonini, 2015).

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