

EXPLORING FILIPINO SEAFARERS' MASCULINITY ONBOARD AND AT HOME THROUGH LINGUISTIC DISCOURSES

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ABSTRACT

Drawing from Filipino seafarers' narratives regarding their firsthand experiences of gossip or gossiping onboard international ocean-going vessels, this paper analyzes the masculinities expressed by Filipino seafarers while they are on board and at home through linguistic discourses of gossip and spousal arguments or compromise. The data is supplemented by the interviews of seafarers' wives regarding masculinities while the seafarers are at home. The ship as a workplace dominated by men reinforces masculine traits and behavior where different masculinities are displayed and expressed. Gossip is prevalent among Filipino seafarers as part of their cultural make-up and is used both as a socialization tool and a strategy to accumulate onboard social capital. Onboard gossip exposes the seafarer's agentic flaws – his incompetence, unacceptable work attitudes, and work ethics. For Filipino seafarers, this topic stresses how they capitalize on their workplace reputation, which is crucial in the continuance of their careers. Also, onboard gossip exposes biases against management styles and targets queer seafarers. Masculinities at home are expressed through compromises and arguments on sustaining the "good provider/good father/good son" roles of the seafarer despite the temporary loss of income to reinstate the seafarer's relevance in the family.

Keywords: seafarer, gossip, compromise, argument, masculinity, Filipino

INTRODUCTION

The maritime industry has undergone changes brought about by its emphasis on the human element and its attempt to neutralize the workplace. However, despite the differences, seafaring remains a male-dominated industry. The occupational culture of seafaring often reflects masculine norms and values (Cars and Österman 2014; Kitada 2013). For Filipino seafarers who make up one-third of the global seafaring supply (Grøn and Richter 2013), and manning different international vessels, masculinity has been expressed and enacted through linguistic discourses onboard and at home through the more utilized forms of gossip and spousal arguments/ compromise.

A sailing ship is essentially a place of work, no different from any other workplace. Its labor force included those who manage – the ship officers and those who work – the ratings. Hence senior officers have additional training and certifications to comply with compared to the junior officers and ratings as their shipboard functions differ. There is a dearth of research exploring seamen’s definition of their masculine identities and the impact of gendered divisions between men in the shipboard homosocial environment. A gendered approach to a maritime study consists of many key concepts: how power is culturally defined among ship officers and ratings, among the seafarers themselves, and how they understand themselves as workers and members of their larger society. Gender is a term that refers to social or cultural distinctions associated with being male or female. Gender identity is the extent to which one identifies as either masculine or feminine (Diamond 2002; Little 2016).

The ship as a workplace possesses structures that typically reflect or reinforce masculine discourses in complex ways. It has become a site for reproducing man’s power and masculinities as seafaring has become a model of hegemonic masculinity. It leans toward heterosexual qualities – competitive, homosocial, and able to dominate women and other men. Drawing from the narratives and interviews of Filipino seafarers regarding their firsthand experiences of gossip or gossiping onboard international ocean-going vessels, this paper analyzes the masculinities expressed by Filipino seafarers while they are on board and at home through linguistic discourses of gossip and spousal arguments. These linguistic discourses often manifest Filipino cultural discourses reflected in certain traits

Filipino men consider valuable when they aim to maintain male-group solidarity and within the topics they typically gossiped on and argue about with their spouses. This paper reflects how these linguistic discourses as Filipino seafarers' subscribed strategies can become a forum where multiple masculinities of Filipino seafarers are expressed.

The role that gossips plays in an organization or workplace is under-researched. Noon and Delbridge (1993) explicitly state that gossip is a phenomenon worthy of serious studying and analysis as its pervasiveness and perpetuation are vital to the organization's life. Though negative gossip in the workplace has been discussed, it is usually focused on the individual (Gluckman 1968; Ellwardt et al. 2012) and organizational causes (Noon and Delbridge 1993) (Baumeister et al. 2004). In his study, Benwell (2001) claims that men's gossip seems to avoid topics that cover private and personal experiences; hence only issues that are of public knowledge are tackled; they invest no private or emotional energy in gossiping. It appears that alternative topics discussed by men are about men who 'do not fit' the desired mold of masculinity like gays and "new men".

This paper aims to contribute to the dearth of research that analyzes how masculinities are expressed in gossip perpetuated in organizations and workplaces. How do men use gossip to communicate and enforce their masculinities? Gossip and masculinity were studied by Cameron (1997). She discovered that men's gossip openly shows heterosexuality in stories where they discuss the body and appearance of the person subject of the gossip and how his appearance appears gay to them (Kiesling 2007). At the same time, Milne-Smith (2009) discussed men's involvement in gossiping as an acceptable regular activity of elite men of London. Gossiping is considered a ritual of privileged communication. She monitored elite men's experiences and placed them in their world: in gentlemen's clubs, as popular centers of men's gossip. In participating and sharing gossip inside the clubs, the members create and strengthen social and gender boundaries. By telling stories, the club members cooperate in fortifying the identity of selected men of London, both in their community and in general society. Gossip showed privilege to access information, stories and jokes that separate women from the middle class. When and where you shared those stories, confirm one's knowledge of gentlemanly behavior and discretion. Talking in a men's club clarifies how gender and identity are closely related (Milne-Smith 2009, 87).

SEAFARING AS AN EXAMPLE OF MASCULINITY

The Filipino men, in expressing their masculinity, take jobs that require strength like a builder or a laborer (Valledor-Luke 2012). Seafaring is considered one of the most demanding and most dangerous jobs. In many instances, a seafarer represents what Connell (1995) describes as “exemplars of masculinity”: heterosexual, competitive, homo-social and tend to dominate women and even other men. However, Connell (1987) argues that hegemonic masculinity is formed with three different forms of masculinity: complicit masculinity, which is derived from the general advantage of men from women; subordinate masculinity – the opposite of hegemonic heterosexual ideal – associated with homosexuality and femininity; and marginalized masculinity, representing differences based on race and class such as the masculinity of Blacks and working-class (McKay 2007, 619).

In seafaring, the Philippines can be considered one with the highest numbers of exportation of workers in the global maritime industry. The Philippines is a leading supplier of ‘ratings’ and comes in second as a ship officer supplier. Approximately one-third of the worldwide supply of seafarers is Filipinos. The seafaring profession is exposed to dangers and risks given that the ship is possessed with particular characteristics that are incomparable to typical land-based workplaces. It can be an isolating job, separating the seafarers from mainstream society as they work onboard for six to nine months before they go home to their families. The culture of onboard gossip has become a pastime, especially more prevalent in ships manned by a full-Filipino crew. It is interesting to explore how seafaring masculinity is reflected in onboard gossip and analyze the topics they usually dwell on while gossiping during work and recreation. Though there are more women seafarers than in previous years, seafaring remains dominated by seafaring men (Schuler 2020).

Due to the ship’s inherent characteristics and seafarers’ tendency to meet regularly in the crew mess hall or the recreation room, gossip circulates fast, and each person’s actions are under their crewmates’ scrutiny. Contrary to a regular workplace where gossip can result in employees’ early resignation (De Gouveia et al. 2005) or conflict, the ship inhibits the seafarer to terminate his contract. As a workplace confined by its mobility and temporality, many considerations are assessed before one resigns or decides to terminate his contract. Though gossip is a normal social act, it remains under-

explored by academic researchers. With the negative connotations associated with gossip, no person wants to be labeled as a gossip. However, gossip is inevitable, especially if two or more persons meet (Hartung and Renner 2013).

Acejo (2009) posits that the lack of other things to do besides work made onboard gossip inescapable. The limited activities and the repetitive nature of work triggered the need to alleviate boredom through participation in gossips. Topics ranged from unfair treatment at work to the particular lifestyle on the ship. Gossip functioned as a form of social control under the inevitable conditions of being subjected to acute attention to all sorts of working and non-working behavior on the ship. As to Tebbutt and Marchington (1997), gossip thrives in insecure workplaces. For Filipino seafarers, their job security remains fragile as they are not regularized by the companies they work for. Seafarers need to sign a contract every time they are deployed, which means they feel that their career is always in jeopardy.

UNDERSTANDING GOSSIP

Gossip is a natural part of social organizations, and that certain conditions can encourage socially redeeming gossip (Kniffin and Wilson 2010). In the broader domain of academic discourse, authors agree that gossip refers to a conversation that is done critically, whether positive or negative, about a person who is absent from the group (Hartung and Renner 2013). James C. Scott argues that gossip is a story with no recognized authors but with many retellers (Milne-Smith 2009). Traditionally associated with femininity, gossip in a broader interpretation strengthens group solidarity and serves as an unofficial channel of information. Gossip is a form of conversation where the participants create bonds while discovering similar normative analyses about relevant cultural domains on behavior and attitude. Gossip strengthens beliefs that the group agrees upon, which unites gossipers in an imagined community that fortifies social groups' solidarity (Benwell 2001).

Though with negative connotations, gossip plays a positive role in communication. It is a form of sharing and broadening of one's knowledge, gaining influence, venting resentment, enriching one's social circle, and critiquing others. Gossip can also be used for self-improvement, establishing, and protecting one's self. But it is also associated with malice, envy, and falsehood. Gossip is also often conjured as negative, judgmental, superficial speculative, and defamatory (Eckhaus and Ben-Hador 2019).

The term gossip or *tsismis* in Filipino has no indigenous or native term. The word *tsismis* (*chismes*) is of Spanish origin. Still, this etymology does not warrant a conclusion that the Filipino culture of gossiping was inherited from the Spanish people, notwithstanding the 333 years of being a former colony of Spain (Tan 2016).

The term *tsismis* can be interchanged with the following Filipino terms: *sitsit, satsat, yapyap, satsatan, salitaan, balita, bulungan, istorya, sali-salitaan, sabi-sabi, paninira, at alingasngas* (Brillon 2016, 28). Research on gossip was first recognized in its role to the individual and group regarding social comparison, identity, and reputation. Aside from its relation to other disciplines, gossip establishes a connection to some theoretical perspectives such as the theory of social exchange (Rosnow 2001), theory of attribution (Heider 1958), theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), theory of uncertainty reduction (Berger and Calabrese 1975), and theory of established-outsiders (Elias and Scotson 1994) which could explain and establish why people engage in gossiping and why they participate in its internal conflict (Michelson et al. 2010).

Gossip is historically and stereotypically seen as a derogatory women's talk (Waddington and Michelson 2007); hence initial discourses often discuss women and gossip. Despite stereotypes, "there is little empirical evidence that women gossip more frequently than men," and if there be differences between the sexes, they are minimal (Foster 2004, 79). Robbins and Karan (2020) also dispel some existing stereotypes on gossip. Lakoff (1973) argues that the linguistic difference between men and women is due to women's subordinate position in society. Her work was recognized because of her attention to class, power, social justice, and gender difference. However, Tannen (1990) argues that the misunderstanding between men and women brought about by miscommunication is a by-product of cross-cultural communication since men and women are brought up and socialized in different subcultures (McHugh and Hambaugh 2010). The anthropologist and psychologist Robin Dunbar (1996) researched the origins of gossip as a mechanism of solidarity of social groups and became an instrument of social order and unity. As social groups grew bigger, language has inevitably evolved to maintain the alliance, and social grooming management has proved insufficient (Scalise-Sugiyama 2016).

Utilizing Pierre Bourdieu's terminologies and concepts, seafaring professional field is a field of power where seafarers compete for various capitals. Social actors positioned in a hierarchically structured field – the maritime field, with more or less power- resort to strategies to counter everyday struggles (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Their

strategies are heavily conditioned by the power and resources, consolidating existing positions and seeking future growth avenues. Subordinate actors, lesser players within fields, lacking the full complement of critical resources, pursue subversive strategies to undermine dominant actors' positions and actively create new positions within markets and fields (Harvey et al. 2020).

The struggle in a field is a struggle to impose a definition of legitimate recognition, in which victory leads to more or less monopolistic control of the meaning of the forms of legitimacy prevailing in the field. The history of the field is the history of the internal and external struggles that animate it, the history of the distribution of the specific capital, and its variation. The field is temporalized along with them (Hilgers and Mangez 2014).

MASCULINITY IN GOSSIP

Before the end of the twentieth century, linguists began to study how speakers use language to do social things such as expressing power, solidarity, and identity. Within this research, one of the most fruitful and contentious areas has been investigating how people utilize language to express gender, how a person's gender affects their choices in how they speak, and how their talk is received. Almost every language area is connected with gender, from the smallest segments of sound up to broadly characterized discourse strategies (Kiesling 2007, 653). Perpetrators have used gossip as a "tool" of workplace bullying and mobbing. Gossip is used in: 1) oppressing and social dominance; 2) expressing envy and social undermining; 3) humiliating subordinates, and 4) a psychological attempt to close or widen the power gap (Pheko 2018).

Connell (1995) paved the way in discussing masculinity in academic forums and broader society. Her concept of "hegemonic" masculinity is her most remarkable work. This concept promotes the current definition of being a nobleman. A normative stand presents masculinity standards, which outrightly positions women as subordinates (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Connell (1987, 1995) argues that each society has its concept of masculinity that is dominant, and this she refers to as hegemonic masculinity – the type of masculinity men desire. Hegemonic masculinity is an important term because it recognizes that there are multiple masculinities. Still, at the same time, it acknowledges that one, or a small subset of them, is dominant (Kiesling 2007). Hegemonic masculinity is a pattern of practice (things done, not just a set of role expectations or identity)

that allowed men's dominance over women to continue (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832). As for Kiesling (2007), this term is difficult to use in understanding and explaining men's linguistic practices. As an alternative, he argues that there are "cultural discourses of masculinity" that comprise hegemonic masculinity in every society. These refer to cultural discourses that describe qualities and practices that people value, desire, and strive for, and it is the combination of these cultural discourses that yield hegemonic masculinity (657).

According to Kurland and Pelled (2000), organizational gossip is an informal and critical conversation in an organization, usually among a few individuals about a member who is not present in the said group (429). Noon and Delbridge (1993) discovered that gossip circulating in an organization is negative, but there is positive news. Noon and Delbridge agree with Gluckman (1968), who claims that gossip serves three collective functions: 1) to create group morale, establishing and vindicating group norms and values; 2) to exert social control over newcomers and dissidents, and 3) to regulate conflicts with rival groups. From this perspective, organizational gossip may be regarded as organizationally beneficial. Gossip can also help to reveal and alter existing power inequalities and help release emotional tensions. Further, it may well reduce uncertainty and facilitate sensemaking and problem solving (Van Iterson and Clegg 2008, 1120–1121). In Levin and Arluke (1985), the results of their study indicated that the gossip of men and women contained similarities and differences. Women spent more time gossiping than men, and the former were much more likely than the latter to gossip about close friends and family members. There were no significant sex differences regarding the derogatory tone of gossip, and men and women were found to gossip about many of the same topics.

METHODOLOGY

This research involved Filipino seafarers (see Table 1) who belong to the ethnic group called *Ilonggos* and speak the *Hiligaynon* language. Ilonggo people are inhabitants of the western Visayan islands in the Philippines' central part (Minahan 2012). Studies conducted about Filipino seafarers often cite *Ilonggo* seafarers in their research (Alimen et al. 2013; Swift 2011; Lamvik 2002). These seafarers have been working as international crew, assigned in various vessels, for more than five years. The interviews were conducted in the province of Iloilo. The researcher utilized narrative inquiry as the primary data

collection method and was complemented with semi-structured interviews with the seafarers' wives and online discussions with seafarers who are members of the LGBT community. Respondents were chosen through a convenience sampling and a snowball method. Out of the 25 Ilonggo seafarers interviewed, 13 are ship officers, while 12 are ratings; 17 are married while eight are single.

Table 1. Respondents' profile

Respondent seafarer's pseudonym	Age	Civil status (M-Married/S-Single)	Position and category (R-Ratings/O-Officer)	Place and date of interview (P-Philippines/O-Online)
1. Nonoy	49	M	Bosun / R	P / November 21, 2019
2. Ramon	58	M	Captain / O	P / December 21, 2019
3. Joel	44	M	Helmsman / R	P / December 23, 2019
4. Roger	43	M	Electrician / O	P / January 3, 2020
5. Dan	50	M	Electrician / R	P / January 21, 2020
6. Rodel	36	M	Able-Bodied Seaman / R	P / January 28, 2020
7. Brad	43	M	Engine Repairman / R	P / February 10, 2020
8. Niel	45	M	Cabin Steward / R	P / February 19, 2020
9. Matt	36	M	Second Engineer / O	P / February 20, 2020
10. Janus	52	M	Engine Fitter / R	P / February 21, 2020
11. Owen	57	M	Captain / O	P / March 13, 2020
12. Lando	38	M	Second Officer / O	P / May 21, 2020
13. Art	40	M	Second Engineer / O	P / June 1, 2020
14. Chad	27	S	Oiler / R	P / June 19, 2020
15. Jet	28	S	Oiler / R	P / July 22, 2020
16. Angga	32	M	Second Mate / O	P / July 24, 2020
17. Lee	37	S	Second Mate / O	P / July 24, 2020
18. Tisoy	29	S	Third Engineer / O	P / July 25, 2020
19. Dennis	53	M	Second Engineer / O	P / July 26, 2020
20. Rey	27	M	Oiler / R	P / July 27, 2020
21. Jerry	34	M	Oiler / R	P / July 27, 2020
22. Vicente	55	S	Captain / O	P / August 19, 2020
23. Manuel	27	S (LGBT)	Second Engineer / O	O / October 19, 2020
24. John	27	S (LGBT)	Third Officer / O	O / October 19, 2020
25. Shamcey	27	S (LGBT)	Second Engineer / O	O / October 20, 2020

Seven women with seafaring husbands participated in the said study. Four of the seven respondents maintain a patrilocal residence, two in a matrilocality residence, and one in an ambilocality residence. Three of the respondents are working while four are full-time housekeepers; these women used to work before but gave up their careers to attend to the children; six of the respondents have kids; five of them with two kids, while one is with three kids. The interviews were conducted from November 2019 to October 2020.

DISCUSSION

From the narratives of twenty-five Filipino seafarers who have participated and have been subjected to onboard gossip, themes were tracked. Recurring themes of gossip among Filipino seafarers oscillate between work attitudes, work ethics, and competencies seafarers possess or lack, hierarchical structures and management style of ship officers, and sexual identities of fellow seafarers. When seafarers return home, masculinities are expressed through the linguistic discourse of compromise and arguments regarding the household or family decision-making.

Bourdieu states that linguistic exchanges can express relations of power; portrays everyday linguistic conversations as situated encounters between agents endowed with socially structured resources and competencies, in such a way that every linguistic interaction, however, personal and insignificant it may seem, bears the traces of the social structure that it both expresses and helps to reproduce (Bourdieu 1991).

The following sections discuss the empirical portion of this study and establish how gossip, compromise, and argument as linguistic discourses manifest and express Filipino seafarers' masculinities.

ONBOARD GOSSIP EXPOSES ONE'S (IN)COMPETENCE, WORK ATTITUDES AND WORK ETHICS

Generally, Filipino seafarers' responses suggest that gossip onboard usually thrive on topics of a seafarer's competence or incompetence, work attitude, and ethics, praising those with remarkable work skillset and undermining those who fail to live up to Filipino seafarers' expectations. For the Filipino mariners, to become a seafarer is to be committed to everything that comes with the profession. According to Ransley (2005), maritime activity has long been portrayed as a masculine endeavor, and seafaring requires physical strength,

endurance, adventure, and danger. The ocean is vast, unpredictable, and unforgiving; seafaring is coupled with risks and elements that challenge one's patience and determination.

One cultural discourse related to Filipino seafarers' masculinity is their skill or the ability they possess in doing their jobs. The respondents unanimously agree that their pride as Filipino seafarers relies on how they commit to their work. With the length and breadth of the Filipino maritime tradition, it is not surprising that they have become "desirable" compared to other nationalities in the global industry. And because of their reputation as seafarers, their skillset has become an example of their masculinity, and whoever deviates from this discourse will be treated differently and looked down on by fellow Filipino seafarers.

A seafarer who fails to possess standard competencies required for a regular seaman is most likely to be the subject of onboard gossip among Filipino seafarers. According to Kiesling (1997), power can come from institutional and structural hierarchy, body strength, wealth, knowledge, and skill. Men have tasks that allow them to be powerful and be masculine in so many ways. In underestimating a crewmate's ability, some men exude more power than other men. Gossip and reputation are intertwined with power and status. Gossip manifests subversive power, an attempt by the weak to use the power of knowledge independently of those who wield a more conventional power (Farley 2019).

Another frequent gossip topic is about work ethics, like trying to do the easy things while working in a group. This means there is an intention to deceive crewmates by deliberately 'disappearing' while work is ongoing. This often becomes a topic in the engine department. As a daily routine, before everyone starts working, the Chief Engineer, though sometimes delegated to the Second Engineer, conducts a toolbox meeting where tasks are laid down, analyzed as to posed dangers and risks, and assessed how these risks may be avoided. The Second Engineer may address his crew for suggestions and ends up subscribing to the most tenable one. This means to say, at the start of the day, everyone knows what would be his task and role to accomplish the goals for the day. It is a structured and a calculated daily routine for seafarers, mainly to avoid delays, accidents, and deaths. And if there is someone who fails to be in accord with the group's goal, he will irk his crewmates and become the subject of gossip after work. This angle of masculinity points to the discourses of male solidarity (Kiesling 2007) or having concern and fellowship and virtuosity, traits that Filipino men value (Valledor-Lukey 2012).

CAPITALIZING ON GOOD REPUTATION: THE FRAMEWORK OF CONTINUOUS WORK FOR FILIPINO SEAFARERS

In observing seafarers on board Danish ships, Grøn and Richter (2013) found out that Filipino seafarers are too concerned about their reputation and avoid being labeled a “bad seaman.” The risk of the specific social sanctioning of getting a bad reputation is in play among crews – although increasing mobility and internationalization arguably weakens the effect (Grøn and Svendsen 2013). In cruise lines for example, where Filipino crews are dominant, industry insiders repeatedly cite and ideologically frame Filipino seafarers as docile and compliant yet industrious and inexpensive crew (Terry 2013). This perception is in contrast with how Filipino workers are labeled back home. In Paderon and O’Donnell (1995), Filipino workers in their home country are described as demotivated workers; contrary to the extant literature, they possess an excellent reputation as migrant workers. Be they nurses and doctors in the United States, teachers in Africa, engineers in the Middle East, and even as domestic helpers in Europe, Filipinos become model workers who are hard-working, industrious, frugal, savings-oriented, and highly sought by employers (Paderon and O’Donnell 1995, 135). As the authors suggest, this turnaround in the Filipinos’ work behavior is influenced by the conditions of space, as Gallagher illustrates in his book, “The Power of Place: How Our Surroundings Shape Our Thoughts, Emotions, and Actions” (Gallagher 1993). The economic environment can be liberating to unleash productive energies and can be oppressive to stifle entrepreneurial initiatives (Paderon and O’Donnell 1995). These are some of what Filipino seafarers have to say with how they regard their reputation and quality:

A Filipino seaman finishes his job, even if he has to extend his hours of work. He makes sure that his work boasts of quality workmanship. Everyone tries to preserve the integrity of a Filipino seafarer. I don’t want to be called out by anybody that my work is poor. We know if a ship is taken care of by Filipinos or if it is manned by Chinese or Indians or other nationalities. There are a lot of physical signs. Most are dilapidated ships, those we refer to as ugly, like the ship is full of rust, not painted well, not swept well, we can tell that most of the crew of that ship are Chinese or Indians. People from different races do not really value their work, and their workplace. Filipinos try to give dignity to their work and to their place of work by taking care of it as if it is their home. Most of white people are conscious

of their time when they work. But for me and other Filipinos, we don't want to be embarrassed by peers and crew mates on how and the outcome of our work. I can say, based on my experience that Filipino seafarers are well-disciplined and display a remarkable work ethics when onboard seagoing vessels. I knew of a Filipino seafarer who took in a Russian as a mentee when this Russian obviously did not know how to do his job and strategize to learn the craft while he is under this Filipino mentor. As I have heard from crewmates, every payday, the Russian gives 100 USD to this Filipino seafarer as a payment for teaching him the trade. (Dan, 50, Electrician)

One thing about Filipino seafarers is that they are really hard-working. The officers like the Swedish and the Croatians usually delegate their tasks to the Filipino seafarers and the Pinoys often just accept the tasks even if these are not their designated tasks. (Brad, 43, Engine Repairman)

What is good about the Filipino seamen is that even though work is hard, they go ahead and do the job. And the moment you give them the job order, unlike the Westerners who complain a lot, Filipinos also complain but they perform the task. Although they are tired, they still manage to laugh. Most Westerners like working with Filipinos. First, they are hardworking, even if you order only one Filipino seafarer to do the job, he surely can do it. For other nationalities, they are likely to ask help, especially the Indians. What one Filipino can do; four Indians will do the same job. And of course, Filipino knows to strategize (diskarte). Filipinos are resourceful even those working on land. Like for jobs on higher places, Filipinos don't complain, they do the job swiftly... The Indians, they are more in talking. Onboard, the Filipinos work the most polished among different nationalities. (Angga, 32, Second Mate)

De Guzman and Teng-Calleja's (2018) survey results from The Boston Consulting Group state that employees are now emphasizing "softer" actors or intrinsic rewards and less on compensation. These soft factors include appreciation for work, the quality of workplace relationships, and work-life balance. Employees also maintain the relevance of tangible work attributes such as opportunities for learning and career development. Respondent seafarers suggest that it is essential to maintain good behavior on board as the ship's Captain and Chief Engineer regularly evaluate them. Upon their disembarkation, this evaluation report must be submitted to the manning agency to promote them to the next higher position. They need at least three

successive good evaluation reports for the principal to promote them. Bad evaluation translates to being dropped off by a manning agency as the written evaluation functions as a tool to exercise power over the seafarer's future. This emphasis on reputation silences the Filipino seafarers. They would rather not complain as the act of complaining might be construed as unpleasant by the ship officers and reflect it on their evaluation. Hence, they are less likely to risk their reputation by speaking up, demanding their rights, and contradicting their superiors (Grøn and Richter 2013). The dominant, discursive formation positions Filipinos as hardworking, loyal, friendly, and submissive workers (Terry 2013). Farley (2019) argues that gossip is a highly efficient and impactful mechanism by which reputations are created, maintained, and altered. Respondent seafarers narrated that upon returning to the home country, their first stop must be to report to their respective manning agencies, where they are interviewed about their onboard experience and the onboard relations with fellow Filipino seafarers. This interview becomes an avenue for the seafarers to report misbehaving fellow crewmates. Suppose a crew member's name is often reported as initiating conflict onboard or is not easy to be around with. In that case, the company will sanction him by not giving him a new contract right away or by totally dropping him off the company.

Even during their pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS), facilitators advise seafarers to conduct themselves accordingly to bring pride and not shame to the home country and not tarnish the Filipino seafarers' good reputation. Attendance to PDOS is mandatory, and it is part of the process of applying for clearance to leave the Philippines as a migrant worker. The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) administers PDOS for workers. As a "labor brokerage" state, the Philippine neocolonial state plays a vital role in producing Filipino labor (Rodriguez 2016), and with the \$7 billion seafarer remittances in 2019, they have sustained the Philippine economy (Romulo 2020). The Philippines prides itself with a moniker "Home of the Great Filipino Worker," made by a neoliberal and market-driven state to emphasize the added value of their migrant workers (Guevarra 2016).

For the Filipino crew, as substantiated by Swift (2011), being submissive implies that they observe the hierarchies onboard in conformity with Filipino values, as respect for seniority and age and fictive kinship, and also avoidance of possible causes of onboard conflict. According to Acejo (2012), the Filipino concept of conformity is indicative of their level of sociability and the extent to which they could abide by norms and behavioral precepts while on the ship.

The Filipino seafarer had to show that he was worthy of inclusion (Acejo 2012). Respondent seafarers who entered their respective manning agencies through their “backers” are more pressured to prove to their kin who vouched for their character to display constant good behavior onboard otherwise they will not only be destroying their own reputation, but also that of their “backers.” Their observance of good behavior onboard is a form of repayment to the “debt of goodwill” incurred as recipients of recommendations and referrals for their onboard experience.

In Zinko et al. (2017), gossip serves a more significant role in developing personal reputation than more formal methods of communication. Organizations and individuals attempt to develop and capitalize on the effects of individuals’ reputations, and findings suggest that gossip contributes to organizational identity. It reinforces groups’ social norms, and that gossip serves as an essential enabler of reputational development (Zinko et al. 2017).

ONBOARD GOSSIP DISCLOSES BIASES TO MANAGEMENT STYLES

Power may be the most prominent feature of masculinity, but a man does not feel powerful all the time (Kiesling 2007). This is true with gossip about seafarers who graduated from the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) and Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP), leading maritime educational institutions in the Philippines. The PMMA is the pioneer institution which was originally named “Escuela Nautica de Manila,” created by a Spanish Royal decree issued on January 1, 1820. It was initially located in Intramuros, Manila, until 1863. It was renamed the Philippine Nautical School (PNS) during the American occupation. It was converted to what it is now by Republic Act 3680, enacted in 1963 (Philippine Merchant Marine Academy 2020).

On the other hand, the MAAP was established by Capt. Gregorio Oca, the President of Associated Marine Officer’s and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP), on January 14, 1998. It was designed to be a world-class maritime academy, equipped with state-of-the-art facilities in compliance with the requirements set forth by the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) (MAAP 2020). Graduates of both universities enter as scholars and are assured of employment aboard commercial ships and aim for the top positions in the onboard hierarchy. Due to their quasi-military or semi-regimented training experience, PMMA and MAAP ship officers are often perceived as rigid and meticulous in the way they expect job performance from their crew.

From their demanding attitudes, respondent seafarers suggest that they are often being gossiped about, perceived as working for the shipowners rather than with the crew. Viewed as overzealous superiors, the crew finds them unsympathetic and overbearing. Seafarers view PMMA and MAAP officers negatively as they set clear boundaries from those below the hierarchy. They lack concern for their fellow seafarers. They are *sipsip* (obsequious) towards ship owners or charterers; arrogant, and they are not interested in maintaining male solidarity onboard. These are just some of the negative characteristics of the gender-based behavior of Filipinos (Valledor-Lukey 2012). As suggested in Tebbutt and Marchington (1997), the higher the employer's expectations (herein represented by the ship officers), the more the employees are likely to feel that the trust has been betrayed.

In interviewing the respondents, they would instead work under a foreigner's command than with their nationals. Some Filipino traits affect the everyday interaction among Filipinos, and it is difficult to plot a general Filipino behavior, given the ethnic divisions in the Philippines. Nevertheless, the following traits seem to be present along different Filipino cultural boundaries and cause tensions between the officers and the crew. Filipinos are known to be *maram-damin* (sensitive), *sumpungin* (moody), *pikon* (with low tolerance to teasing), and *matigas ang ulo* (stubborn) (Church and Katigbak 2000). According to Cameron (1997, 58), this indicates that men are not pleased with an extreme form of hierarchy and competition.

PMMA and MAAP ship officers' frequent involvement as subjects of gossip is a form of charting consensus from crewmates whether they share the same impressions or observations about them. For individuals with the same perceptions, this is a collaboration system that fosters in-group dynamics (Cameron 1997). Those I interviewed coming from MAAP acknowledged the biases of fellow seafarers against them. Having started seafaring as a Cadet then, Manuel (27), a Second Engineer, intentionally did not disclose to his superiors then that he came from MAAP for this will be cited to humiliate him. True to his assumptions, when the Third Engineer he is working with at that time dug up his records and found out he is a product of MAAP, it was made a point of reference to ridicule him. This was what was said to him:

Third Engineer: "Start the operation of the freshwater generator." (crewmate of respondent)

Manuel: "Sir, I don't know how to do that yet. But I know that is a freshwater generator, but I do not know how to start that,

stop, operate, maintain, I still don't know, sir." (Manuel, 27, Second Engineer)

Third Engineer: "You don't know that, and you come from MAAP!" (crewmate of respondent)

Much is expected of Filipino mariners who came from PMMA and MAAP regarding their competencies and abilities. Manuel joined the gossipers, and he heard this as part of the subjects of gossip. He decided not to disclose his being a MAAP student though eventually it became known as the educational background is compounded in gossip about leadership and job performance. This gossip about PMMA and MAAP seafarers indicates that those who gossiped about them manifested their marginalized masculinity. They celebrate their abilities and experience and challenge the typical hegemonic masculinity, gained through formal education and knowledge from books (McKay 2007). Since PMMA and MAAP mariners underwent quasi-military or semi-regimental training (Ching 2017), they are encapsulated under hegemonic masculinity.

Gossiping about PMMA and MAAP seafarers meant that Filipino masculinity is expressed in a polarizing manner. In one way, they were disgusted by their leadership and management but simultaneously acknowledging their abilities and intelligence based on how the gossipers described these group of seafarers. Vicente (55), a Captain and a graduate of PMMA, who is very much aware of the gossip about the PMMAers' management style, explains that seafarers do not like their leadership as they do not like to be disciplined. They tend to give more respect and acknowledgement to foreign officers as Filipinos in general, look up to white people more than their fellowmen, evidence of a postcolonial mentality. This behavior further reflects the marginal position of Filipino seafarers in the world maritime market. Though they occupy significant numbers as ratings and officers, some still display their marginal masculinity.

ONBOARD GOSSIP TARGETS QUEER SEAFARERS

Though the Philippines is considered a gay-friendly country, the cultural and societal behavior towards the LGBTQIA community remains complicated, albeit there were signs of acceptance, especially from the youth (Mis 2014; Pew Research Center 2013). As gay men venturing into seafaring increasingly grows, they also become a favorite topic of crewmates, not only scrutinizing their work but even their relationships. Three of the seafarer respondents openly admitted they belong to the gay community. They narrated how their sexual orientation interested other people and how this was

enough to become a consistent topic of gossip onboard. Seafarers claim that work onboard is a man's domain. Hence, body strength is an issue enclosed in the cultural discourse of heterosexism. Kiesling (2007) considered it a significant cultural discourse in the United States, which other cultures may replicate, like the Philippines.

John (27), a Third Officer onboard a bulk container, sees that he will not be discredited for being a gay seafarer. He does not ask for preferential treatment and does what other seafarers do, just like a real man. Manuel, on his first onboard experience as an Engine Cadet, tried to hide his sexuality for three months to avoid being made fun of. However, a circumstance happened onboard where he admitted to his immediate superior, the Third Engineer, that he is gay. He was not only exposed to gossips and ridicule, but subjected to many kinds of teasing, insults, and harassment that he almost quit being a seaman. He cried when he remembered what made him survive the six-month-long contract with his crewmates, whom he refers to as "bullies." He remembers crying every night as he was ostracized by and was forced to eat in his cabin to avoid fellow seafarers' insults. Though still overwhelmed with tears, he thinks that he was made fun of because there was no internet onboard then and that the three-month-long voyage made the crew very bored and pushed them to create a nuisance or entertainment at his expense. Now, he is a Second Engineer and has been a seafarer for six years, making him knowledgeable on how to react to gossip.

Rodel (36), an Able-Bodied Seaman (AB) narrated how gay seafarers are often made gossip subjects. He did not hold back in verbalizing his disgust with the growing number of gay seafarers and how they destroy seafaring men's identity and reputation to other nationals. This kind of discourse is discussed by McKay (2007) and Ostreng (2001) where they affirm Filipino seafarers as weak, effeminate, neglectful, and irresponsible. "The Norwegians' view of the Filipinos was contradictory to the criteria of being 'a good sailor', stereotyped as being physically weak, feminine, negligent and irresponsible. The fact that Norwegians are bigger than Filipinos is for example regarded as a sign of better working abilities and a key to be a better seaman. This has also to do with masculinity, as Filipinos are regarded as feminine and quite often labelled as homosexual." (Ostreng 2001, 7; also cited in McKay 2007)

This research sees a similar pattern to that of Kiesling (2007) and Cameron (1997). A prominent display of heterosexuality is present in gossip about sexual relations with women on board and at the port and gossip about who sleeps with women crewmates.

Officers are often accused of having sexual relations with women seafarers since they possess more power and capital than the ratings. The officers' power is that they have a broader knowledge and occupy high workplace hierarchy positions (Kiesling 2007). In this kind of linguistic discourse, society's double standard of morality becomes manifest. For example, in extramarital relationships, the woman is often scorned and looked down on by her workmates, while the man seems to benefit from it and inflate his masculinity. When asked if they would allow or recommend their female peers or family members to seafaring, respondents answered negatively as women in ships are prone to be played with by seafaring men. These are some of what they said:

"Women in ships are treated as sexual objects by men they work with." (Rodel, 36, Able-Bodied Seaman)

"On their first time to board the ship, they all look so timid. A few months after, they are pregnant." (Joel, 44, Helmsman)

"We just heard that she is in a relationship with the Captain." (Brad, 43, Engine Repairman)

Another example of open display of heterosexuality and gender difference is gossip that tackles or underestimates gay and women seafarers' physical capabilities. This type of gossip describes complicit masculinity, which refers to men's general superiority over women (Connell 1995). There are types of vessels that demand more physical labor than other ships, and men complain how women and gay crewmates become more of a burden than a help. It is in gossiping where men vent out their frustrations about having female and gay crew members. Since they can also feel that they become subjects of gossip, female and gay seafarers try hard to prove that they can do whatever others do and that they are willing to help the group achieve its daily tasks. John (27), a gay seafarer, has this to say: "Not all men are physically strong, so whatever they can do, I can do it also." Even the two other LGBT seafarers agree that they have proven that they can work alongside and as equals of men in their several years as seafarers.

From the different topics seafarers tend to gossip on board, it is clear that different kinds of masculinity in which hegemonic masculinity is embedded are manifested. The Filipino seafarers' masculinity is a complex feature. It denotes the existence of power and refers to the absence of power, which tends to challenge the ideal hegemonic masculinity.

COMPROMISES AND ARGUMENTS ARE WAYS TO BARGAIN AND REINSTATE MASCULINITIES AT HOME

Studies of migrant men suggest that migratory work can provide the material and cultural capital to enact exemplary forms of masculinity upon a migrant's return home through noticeable consumption, tales of adventure, and the ability to fulfill the social obligations of a high-status male. Filipino seafarers, when at home, asserts a "breadwinner masculinity" or perform a "good provider" role (McKay and Lucero-Prisno 2012). However, these roles are more emphasized when they are on board than when they are home as allotments are mandatorily sent back home.

Yabiku et al. (2010) discussed the separation of migrants from the family unit as posing profound implications for family organization and individual family members. They examined the relationship between men's labor migration and the decision-making autonomy of women who stay behind. Results showed that men's cumulative migration history and current migration status are positively associated with women's autonomy. These suggest that the impact of men's labor migration on women's autonomy may persist even after the man's return.

In dyadic interactions, compromise usually happens among a female-male dyad or between two females. In contrast, the tendency to compromise decreases in a male-male dyad. Males try to sustain their masculinity when among other men. Men try to dichotomize and avert from behaviors typical for females (Nikolova and Lamberton 2016). Dunbar's Dyadic Power Theory (DPT) acknowledges power and dominance as vital concepts in studying human relationships, particularly intimate romantic relationships. It governs the partners' dynamics and how they arrive at decisions. Dunbar and Abra (2010) affirm DPT's argument of a non-linear relationship between dominance and power. Their study shows that those who feel relatively equal to their partners display the most dominance. In Bevan's (2010) study, she contends that romantic and family relationships may be characterized more by positive, rather than negative, serial argument motivations. Rather than focusing on the power differences in their relationships, individuals in serial argument episodes may realize their interdependence means that causing harm to their partners via conflict strategy usage or pursuit of opposing goals would have implications for themselves as well.

Filipino seafarers spend six to nine months working on board and go home for vacation for three to four months; the family left behind had already adjusted to the seafarers' cyclical or circulatory

pattern of work and thus adopted a household routine and delegation of responsibilities among the members. Respondent seafarers' spouses shared that the seafarer's return may also mean disruption of the routine and tasks among the members of the family, and is especially true for wives who are also career women. The number one concern of the spouses is how the children are being disciplined and are being pampered with gifts when the father is at home. The father assumes the domestic chores at home when it is previously assigned to the children. This re-assumption of roles manifests that the father wants to reinstate his relevance and role as a "good father" even only through the mundane daily chores. The father tends to disrupt the children's daily schedule by bringing them to the grandparents' house during weekdays or by bringing them to the malls for short strolls. As guilty spoilers, once confronted by their spouses, the seafaring husbands agree to compromise in not disrupting children's school days. Although assuming the chores at home like cleaning the house, washing the dishes, doing the laundry, and other domestic chores tend to make everyone's lives easier, the children have had a rough time adjusting to the time the father returns to work again.

Respondent seafarers' spouses suggest that when it comes to spending or budgeting the finances, Ilonggo seafarers seldom argue with how the wives handle the family's finances. Most of the respondent seafarers trusted their wives when it comes to managing the finances than themselves. When at home, seafarers are tempted to drink with their buddies, participate in cockfighting derbies, treat their friends and family to restaurants, which means spending while they are not earning. Most of the respondent seafarers who spent more than ten years onboard have established small businesses. Most commonly established micro-businesses are small grocery stores, hardware stores, piggery, poultry businesses, animal clinics, boarding houses, or rental spaces to earn even while they are on vacation. Providership bolsters the seafarers' masculinity by combining the agency gained through the command of significant resources with a reaffirmation of men's patriarchal status (McKay and Lucero-Prisno 2012). The emergence of conflict between spouses arising from rearing or behaving towards children is in line with the results of Papp et al. (2009), where it shows that the couples deal with problems about children more frequently than disagreement with money.

Respondent spouses and their seafaring husbands also compromise when it comes to supporting the extended family or the seafarer's family of orientation. Ilonggo seafarers support their parents even in old age. Filipino families are bi-lineal, and there is a strong

tendency toward economic cooperation among both nuclear and extended family members. The generalized exchange of support – financial, instrumental, or otherwise – is a normative expectation among Filipino families (Blair 2014). Seafarers are also prone to economic abuse by their families, and somehow the spouses have to compromise up to what extent financial support should be given to the extended family. Financial abuse among Filipino migrant workers is public knowledge. While the researcher was attending mass last March 20, 2020, the priest's homily focused on how those who are left behind were distracted by material gains and forget the hardship of the migrant workers, especially that of the seafarers. The priest said that some of the seafarer's dependents behave rudely towards the seafarer. They would demand material things from the seafarer instead of praying for their safety (especially for those traversing Somalia and other pirate-infested waters). He mentioned that when allottees receive their allotment, they go directly to the malls and shop and that these hardworking seafarers yearn for care and concern from their loved ones, and instead of showing them love, those who are left behind are more likely to abuse them.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to the stereotype that gossip is a female activity, men like Filipino seafarers gossip more frequently when they are on board. Gossip among seafarers pervades for many reasons. It is a way to solicit information through an informal channel, especially needed by new entrants in the organization. Gossip served as a recreation activity to temporarily ease them from their boredom and worries while onboard and away from their families. Moreover, it is a way to establish solidarity among the crew. However, on the negative side, gossip also causes conflict among seafarers and can be a way for other mariners to feel like outsiders. Whatever result gossip may lead to is an essential aspect of life, especially in an organization or workplace.

Although confronted by the lack of academic literature, this paper referred to gossip as an ordinary task that is indicative of different types of masculinity, based on the cultural discourses of the Filipino seafarers. I considered the ship's specific characteristics as a workplace because its structure, like the hierarchy on board, strengthens seafarers' power and masculinity. I agree with McKay's position that being a seafarer is considered as an exemplar of masculinity because of specific characteristics seamen possess and enact

towards attaining hegemonic masculinity. As seafaring entails manual labor that requires physical strength, its nature as a masculine job persists; only those who are adventurous and fearless are fit for the job – characteristics that refer to hegemonic masculinity.

From Filipino seafarers' narratives, considering differences in age, gender, place of origin, position onboard, and ethnicity, gossip circulating onboard cover topics related to different types of masculinity as described by Connell in his book "Masculinities." From these discussions, character traits valued by Filipino men manifest. In gossip, the prevailing discourse points to men's expression of their power or dominance, which they have accessed through their superior knowledge, top positions in the onboard hierarchy, and having the skills desired by other men.

As a workplace, onboard gossip is usually about the skills seafarers possess or lack, work ethics or work attitudes, gender differences, and the implications of hierarchy surrounding the ship operation and management. Gossip can have a positive effect, such as strengthening solidarity among crew members, but it can also define boundaries with crewmates, especially those who became gossip subjects. Filipino seafarers' leadership and management style from the prestigious Philippine maritime academies created tensions between officers and crew. Gossip about them reflected the Filipino seafarers' complicated masculinities. Onboard gossip also enveloped the seafarers' sexual behavior, their sexual affairs with women on board, despite their marital status, reflecting how they see women as sexual objects.

Similarly, women were portrayed by seafaring men as lustful and disgusting. Seafarers who deviate from the masculine norm, such as the gay seafarers, were also made fun of, bullied, and ostracized. They not only challenged but resisted the ideal hegemonic masculinity.

On the other end, masculinity at home suggests that seafarers use compromise and argument with their spouses to reinstate or renegotiate their masculinities. Their masculinity has diminished visibility because of their cyclical absence brought about by their seafaring profession. In both compromise and argument, there is a manifestation to reestablish their masculine role as the family's provider, 'man of the house,' and perform the roles of "good son" and "good provider."

It would be interesting to have more in-depth studies about men's interaction, language, and masculinity. These are still under-researched, especially those on board ships that were not easily visible to ordinary men. It would have been more intensive research

if interactions onboard are observed, though the pandemic made the vessels more inaccessible than before. Hence, further research is encouraged. More valuable data would have been gained if one could observe the exchange of talk among gossip participants. Their actions, facial expressions, tone while providing information or reacting to it are equally relevant with the verbal cues. A researcher can even note their varying positions while gossiping and identify spaces on board that serve as the gossip avenues.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research was supported by Eotvos Lorand University research development grant EFOP-3.6.3-VEKOP-16-2017-00007 "From Talent to Young Researcher."

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