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**Recruitment Agencies in Nurse Migration:
Constructing Vital Pipelines through Profitable Business**

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Abstract

In this paper, I analyze the important but as yet little studied role of private recruitment and placement agencies in the social organization of modern labor migration. Examining the case of Philippine nurse migration bound for the United States, I present data collected from 35 agencies that connect nurses with employers for profit. These commercial agencies can be found in both the sending and receiving countries and they represent a core of the formal migration industry—a key actor in many of today’s international migration movements. I contend that commercial agencies not only build bridges between places, but they also profoundly shape the structure and process of international migration, from immigrant selection to integration. In this capacity, commercial agencies play a key role in several important, though less talked about procedures of migration such as the selection of employers as well as workers, the disciplining of these two sets of clientele, and the creation of new migration opportunities.

Introduction

As Salt and Stein (1997) previously suggested, the organization and process of global migration have emerged as a profitable business, implicating a variety of actors, organizations, and institutions that gain from directing and maintaining movements. This migration industry, as a model for international business, is consistent with larger trends of market liberalization in the global economy (King 2002:95 as cited in Castles 2007). With growing demand among potential immigrants for entry into richer economies, it seems no surprise that international migration would be translated into a type of capitalist market relation. Despite growing empirical relevance, however, very little is known about the migration industry, including how it operates and how it is distinct from other social structures such as migrant networks (Goss and

Lindquist 1995; Hernández-León 2008). To the degree that migration has been viewed as a business, scholars have concentrated on the illicit transactions found in human trafficking and smuggling (see Salt and Stein 1997; Kyle and Koslowski 2001; Spener 2004).

To add to this important body of work, in this research, I analyze the formal segment of the migration industry. Using the Philippine-U.S. case of nurse migration,¹ I explain the role that organizations and institutions have in actively constructing pipelines of foreign-educated workers to labor markets abroad. In this study, relevant organizations and institutions include sending and receiving states, employer hospitals, educational and training institutions, and commercial recruitment and placement agencies. In one way or another, these distinct communities of organizations or organizational fields (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), as I frame them, profit either directly or indirectly from the continuity of migration. As I will demonstrate in this paper, the case of nurse migration from the Philippines to the U.S. is a useful one to study as it reveals the extent to which the migration industry has developed into a legitimate growth enterprise. The case also gives us a purview on how a migration system containing ordered, authorized movements might be organized and the specific methods used to achieve the migration process.

In this paper, I focus on private recruitment and placement agencies that mediate global labor market transactions and the migration opportunities these markets entail. The global movement of nurses has in recent years become vitally important as many countries around the world have reported severe labor shortages in the health related professions (Aiken et al. 2004;

¹ In this study, I examine the international migration of nurses. I use the term international rather than transnational migration since the current stream largely represents a unidirectional movement of nurses from the Philippines to the U.S. Nurses are assumed to permanently settle in the U.S. Indeed, foreign-educated nurses and their families receive employment-based immigrant visas for entry at this time. In making this distinction, I do not ignore any transnational aspects to the migration experience of nurses or to the business transactions of labor brokers. Certainly there is much evidence to support the transnational identities, experiences, and activities of immigrants and migration industry actors based upon my research and that found elsewhere. However, I give credence to the reality and complaint by critics that many labor migrants, including the nurses in this study, have become a human resource transfer from the Philippines (a developing country) to the U.S. (a developed country).

Brush, Sochalski, and Berger 2004). Selective recruitment of nurses and other healthcare workers from foreign countries is but one method employers in places such as the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia have used to alleviate demand pressures. Such recruitment is also embedded in debates over the role of highly-skilled workers in industrialized economies. Western countries, in particular, are reportedly vying for highly-skilled migrant workers across several occupational categories, including the high-tech professions, in order to maintain an edge in global competitiveness (Cornelius, Espenshade and Salehyan 2001).

The general increase in labor migration over the last few decades has also seen the rise of commercial agencies that broker migrant labor from across the skill spectrum, not just highly-skilled workers. Evidence shows that migration-related services have become more significant and expansive in both sending and receiving countries (Abella 2004). For example, the United Kingdom, a major receiving country, has seen a proliferation of immigrant placement services from 5,000 agency firms at the beginning of the 1980's to about 13,500 a decade later (Walwei as cited in Abella 2004). The major labor-exporting countries in Asia, including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand also have well established private sectors for the recruitment and placement of citizen workers abroad (Hugo and Stahl 2004). As in the Philippine case, public infrastructure in these countries supports and regulates emigration, including the participation of private business.

In this paper, I draw upon data from 35 in-depth interviews with commercial agencies based in the Philippines or U.S. The use of in-depth interviews is important for discovering how industry actors conceptualize their work, their relationship with clientele as well as with other relevant organizations. In line with previous research, I contend that the migration industry, as a

kind of social infrastructure, plays a crucial role in facilitating the movement and adaptation of immigrant workers (Hernández-León 2005, 2008; Garapich 2008). In addition to these usual functions, I find that the industry actively constructs the market for foreign labor through several other but less talked about processes: the selection of employers as well as workers; the disciplining of these two sets of clientele; and the identification or creation of new opportunities for further migration to occur. In this paper, I describe these processes in greater detail. In so doing, I argue that the migration industry not only builds bridges between places, but collectively, it also creates a context that profoundly shapes the opportunity, decision, means, and experience of migration.

While the work of recruitment and placement agencies is very important to the channeling of nurses abroad, the success of the legitimate migration industry is highly dependent upon the official policies of both sending and receiving countries. As Fawcett (1989: 676) points out, the important distinction here is that, “policies enable movement, while the provisions of migrant agencies usually induce migration.” Put another way: while public policy creates opportunities for exit and entry, migrant agencies provide the practical means for actualizing and exploiting those opportunities. In the Philippines, the wider private recruitment industry is regulated and supported by the state. Since 1974, the Philippine state has led an aggressive campaign for labor export under its ‘overseas employment program.’ The state-run program eventually reincorporated the private sector to conduct the bulk of marketing, recruitment and placement of workers.² While the U.S. government does not actively promote foreign labor recruitment, projected and actual demand among employers coupled with labor shortages serve as strong policy points for the official entry of employment based immigrants. Currently,

² Between 1974 and 1978, the Philippine state banned the involvement of private recruitment agencies that were previously informally organized. But by the end of the period, the state realized that it could not handle all the aspects of labor migration and reinstated the participation of the private sector under close regulation (Asis 1992).

immigrant and temporary work visas are in short supply, creating a barrier even for highly-skilled workers who already have employer sponsorship. Thus, in addition to analyzing the pro-activities of commercial agencies in the marketing and placement of Philippine-educated nurses in the U.S., I will briefly explore the ways in which public policy and the operations of agencies intersect and also how they react to one another.

Conceptualizing the Migration Industry

In this study, I define the migration industry as the aggregate of productive enterprises engaged in migration-related services for profit. The wider migration industry is comprised by a broad set of entrepreneurial actors, not just labor recruiters (Hernández-León 2008). These actors range from human smugglers to lawyers, remittance couriers to money lenders, travel agents to transportation providers, etc. Additionally, they can be found in origin, destination, as well as transit countries. Despite variation, the common function of migration industry actors is to provide services that ease movement and/or adaptation. This intervention can be done directly as in the case of human smugglers or indirectly as in the case of remittance couriers. Thus, the migration industry as a collectivity has a broad reach over migration processes at different stages.

Notwithstanding the widespread involvement of the migration industry in today's movements, its activities and impacts have received only marginal attention in the literature. While scholars have acknowledged various kinds of migration entrepreneurs at different points in time, they have tended to subsume such actors within other social structures, particularly co-ethnic migrant networks or enclaves (Hernández-León 2008). I contend that because scholars have yet to recognize the migration industry as a significant factor in the migration equation, the

potential effects of the industry remains under-theorized. In this project, I extend Hernández-León's (2008) original contention that the migration industry should be analyzed as a distinct social actor apart from other contributing actors in the migration process, including the state and migrant networks. I argue that by using an organizational fields approach borrowed from the economic sociology and organizational studies literature, we have the opportunity to examine various types of organizations and institutions, with the migration industry being one distinct group, in the structure and process of international migration. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 148), an organizational field is defined as “those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products.” This approach is useful as it points our attention to the “totality of relevant actors” in an institutionally defined area of social life, in this case, a labor migration system. As stated earlier, in this study, states, hospital employers, educational and training institutions, and recruitment and placement agencies each constitute distinct organizational fields. In this scenario, recruitment and placement agencies, which represent the core or first tier³ of the migration industry, is at the center of employment and migration activities.

Formal, Informal, and Hybrid Segments of the Migration Industry

While I focus on the formal segment of the migration industry, I recognize that the industry can take on a variety of configurations including formal, informal, or hybrid arrangements. The kind of informality⁴ referred to here points to the illicit and oftentimes illegal

³ See Ivan Light in this volume.

⁴ There is another sense of the formal vs. informal dichotomy which characterizes the process of international migration. This is in terms of formal organizations vs. informal social networks. Here, the question is not in terms of legitimacy of form or legality of activities as there may not be anything illegitimate or illegal about using

nature of certain business operations. Indeed, to the degree that scholars have studied the migration industry, they have tended to focus on human smuggling agents and cottage industry migration merchants in facilitating unauthorized movements (Salt and Stein 1997; Kyle and Koslowski 2001). In the U.S. for example, the *coyote* border-crossing agent from Mexico is considered to be the archetypal figure of the migration industry (Spener 2004). It is no surprise then that in his synthesis of immigration theory, Massey (1999: 44-45) characterizes the activities of entrepreneurial organizations and institutions as yielding “a black market in migration.”

While human traffickers and smugglers have attracted significant attention in academia as well as the media, as migration industry actors, they are not representative of the whole spectrum. Recent research has shown that the migration industry supports a viable business not just in the shadow economy, but importantly, in the formal sector as well. In the case of the Polish community in the United Kingdom, an emergent migration industry actually enabled immigrants to transition out of the grey economy and into the economic mainstream (Garapich 2008: 742). For a fee, “immigration advisors” assisted Polish immigrants with ambiguous status (i.e. tourist, illegal immigrants or visitors) to obtain legal standing with self-employment visas. Such visas were made available by EU enlargement policies enacted during the 1990’s. In Garapich’s view, the migration industry ultimately provided channels for the political activism and inclusion of Polish immigrants in the United Kingdom.

Apart from immigration advisors in the receiving country, migration institutions in the sending country have been found to be enormously influential in initiating and maintaining migratory circuits (Goss and Lindquist 1995). In fact, government agencies dedicated to

informal social networks to achieve the migration process. Rather, this sense refers to the level of social organization between broad based formal institutions on the one hand, and micro-level informal individual agency on the other. I will discuss this spectrum of informal to formal organization further in a forthcoming paper.

overseeing labor emigration have been a long time fixture in certain developing economies (IOM 2003). According to Hugo and Stahl (2004), state interest in promoting labor export from Asia has in many cases led to the incorporation of private recruiters that serve as brokering agents between workers and overseas employers. The coordinated arrangement between public and private institutions in labor export is apparent in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines and Thailand. When states relegate market transactions to the private sector, benefits accrue to the migration system on several levels. For example, in her research on Philippine recruitment agencies, Guevarra (2003) found that agencies worked to promote and transform Filipino labor as an “ideal” workforce to meet employer, state, and commercial interests.

I recognize that the distinction between formal and informal activities within the broad migration industry is not easy to demarcate. Salt and Stein (1997: 469) correctly point out in their research on human trafficking that the line between legitimate and illegitimate processes is not always distinguishable as some business operations contain elements of both. Hernández-León (2008: 226) captures the argument succinctly as he states that the involvement of the migration industry in international migration processes “overlaps the mainstream, ethnic, and immigrant economies and straddles formal and informal sectors of economic activity.” In this scenario, overlap in sectors essentially yields hybrid arrangements.

Nonetheless, I propose that it is an important endeavor to distinguish between formal and informal sectors of the migration industry. The theoretical and pragmatic benefits of conceptualizing the difference in an ideal-type manner are two-fold. First, understanding that the industry is segmented allows us to see if and when qualitative differences arise between informal types such as trafficking and human smuggling operations on the one hand and formal types such as corporate staffing firms on the other, in terms of the relations, processes, impacts, and roles

each type espouses. Developing this body of knowledge would yield a better understanding of the migration industry overall by examining the ways in which each segment influences the migration process and helps to construct migration systems more generally. Second, by studying different segments of the wider migration industry, we might be able to better conceptualize why certain parts of the industry find it necessary to straddle formal and informal sectors of economic activity as Hernández-León (2005; 2008) discusses. Thus, for example, we might be able to more systematically pinpoint when formal activities prove necessary for operations largely characterized by illicit traffickers and smugglers or in the same vein, when informal activities are needed by formal organizations to facilitate licit migration.

While constructing a full typology of the informal and formal migration industry is beyond the scope of this paper, in the following, I outline three propositions that future research could potentially investigate. First, the profitability of the human trafficking and smuggling network lies precisely in its ability to circumvent restrictive legal channels. For labor migrants, these networks often lead to opportunities in the informal economy. In contrast, the opportunity structure for legitimate migration businesses lies within official frameworks. Though the function of the migration industry may be to overcome barriers (i.e. credentialing and sponsorship requirements) as outlined in policy, the value of services lies in the legal entry or exit of migrants. In this study, the formal status of agencies allows them to work directly with government or other officially recognized institutions to expedite the highly bureaucratic process of nurse migration. Agencies are also effective in lobbying for more visas on behalf of their clientele so as to promote their own business. In this way, the migration industry could actually work to expand the access and rights of migrants to employment and entry.

Second and closely related to the first point, while the primary objective of traffickers and smugglers is to procure profits, another equally important goal is the survival and protection of the organization typically characterized by criminal activity. As such, the objective among traffickers and smugglers is to create processes that are extremely difficult for authorities to detect—so much so that migrants may have very limited knowledge and understanding of the operations that they themselves undergo (IOM 1996). For commercial firms, the economic survival of their organizations may include significant efforts at distancing themselves from the disrepute of human traffickers, smugglers, or other intermediaries who engage in overtly exploitative activities. The wider reputation of the migration industry as taking advantage of migrants can make it difficult for firms to promote their businesses as legitimate enterprises (ILO 1994). Thus, the objective of legitimate migration firms, particularly those included in this study is to be transparent in their operations. Agency firms would often make it clear to me in their interviews that they engage only in legal activities as outlined by the Philippine government.

Third, I argue that the actual process of smuggling, and to a lesser extent human trafficking,⁵ is driven more by immigrant demand rather than by demand from receiving entities such as employers, though employment may be the end result of smuggling or trafficking immigrants. Indeed, smuggled migrants and their families (not potential employers) are often the ones who shoulder great financial costs and endure real risks to their safety to complete the journey (but see Rosales in this volume). Typically, the contracted services of smugglers end once entry is obtained by the immigrant (see Kyle and Koslowski 2001). This attests to the determination of immigrants to escape their current circumstances even if economic incorporation in the host country is not fully guaranteed. For the particular migration stream of

⁵ Kyle and Dale (2001) discuss in greater detail “slave importing operations” that continue once trafficked migrants arrive at their destination. These operations are run by receiving entities long after initial journeys are made.

Filipino nurses described here, supply-side or origin country factors account for a great deal; however, employer demand as well as institutional support in the host country matter to an equal if not greater extent. What is apparent in this case is that both sending and receiving entities enlist the help of commercial intermediaries to ensure that a credentialed pipeline of nurses is effectively and efficiently built between them.

The Philippine-U.S. Nurse Migration System

While the Philippine-U.S. migration system⁶ traces its roots back to the colonial era (Choy 2003), more recent developments support the contention that migration continues apart from specific colonial ties. The Philippines is a key exporter of labor to over 194 destinations not just Western countries. Likewise, the U.S. remains the leading recipient of desirably defined workers across different occupations and origins.

Currently, the Philippines is the leading supplier of nurses in the world. Fluency in the English language and internationally recognized education defines the appeal of hiring Filipino nurses (Gamble 2002; Berg et al. 2004). Between the years 2000 and 2005, over 60,000 new nurse hires left the Philippines to fulfill temporary contracts (POEA 2007). The most popular destinations among such hires were: Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, Ireland, United Arab Emirates, Singapore, United States, Kuwait, Qatar, Taiwan, and Trinidad and Tobago. It should be noted that these contracts do not include permanent placements which characterize current arrangements in the U.S. At this time, employment-based (EB-3) immigrant visas are issued to RN's and their families in order to facilitate their entry and settlement in the U.S. Based on

⁶ In this study, a migration system is defined as, "two or more places linked by flows and counterflows of people," (Fawcett 1989: 671). Use of the migration system framework yields a broader perspective of migration processes, integrating the views from both sending and receiving countries and directing students' attention to both ends of the migration flow. This viewpoint is especially valid for examining the migration industry since one distinctive feature is its capacity to span borders (Hernández-León 2008).

available records at the U.S. Embassy in Manila, between 2000 and 2005, 14,406 EB-3 visas were issued to Philippine-educated healthcare workers, the majority of which went to registered nurses. According to the POEA (2007) in 2006, another 5,651 nurses were deployed to the U.S. on either a temporary or permanent contract basis.⁷

Recently, the United States has become the largest importer of foreign-educated nurses in the world, surpassing the United Kingdom in 2005. That year, an estimated 15,000 foreign-educated nurses passed the NCLEX-RN licensure exam (Aiken 2007). While no ideal source of data exists on nurse migration to the United States, based on 2000 U.S. Census and Department of Commerce data Linda Aiken (2007: 1300) estimates that 219,000 or 8 percent of the nation's RN stock is foreign-educated, with Philippine-educated nurses leading the group. Overall, close to one-third of foreign-educated nurses in the U.S. are from the Philippines (Aiken 2007:1306).

Apart from the sheer number of nurses migrating from the Philippines to the U.S, the level of institutionalization of the nurse migration pipeline also makes this case a particularly useful one to examine. Since 1974, the Philippine state has instituted policies aimed at promoting labor migration from across the skill spectrum. With the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the state's bureaucracy dedicated to regulating all aspects of migration, the country exports an average of 2,000 temporary contract workers each day. Popular occupations include construction, seafaring, engineering, domestic work, nursing, entertainment, among others. I argue that government infrastructure for migration combined with support from relevant organizations and institutions explain the country's comparative advantage in labor export over other sending countries.

⁷ I have verified with the POEA that this figure integrates their data of contract workers along with data from the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) which is charged of keeping track of Filipino emigration typically not having to do with temporary contract work arrangements.

Since World War II, foreign-educated nurses have been called upon to fulfill cyclical shortages in the U.S. workforce (Davis 2002). As a result of the ebb and flow of the nursing profession, provisions in U.S. immigration policy have been made to accommodate the profession as needed. For example, from 1989 until the mid 1990's, the government sponsored a temporary H-1A visa program in order facilitate the entry of foreign-educated RN's. In 1995, the Department of Labor (DOL) placed RN's on its list of Schedule A occupations as a result of reports of severe nursing shortages (Dikaya & Appelt 2004: 379). This designation pre-certifies the entire RN profession as "...a class where there are insufficient US workers able, willing, qualified and available to be employed in that profession and that the wages and working conditions of US workers similarly employed will not be adversely affected by the employment of foreign nurses," (Susser, 1995: n.p.). The significance of Schedule A status is that it allows the U.S. employer to petition a foreign worker for permanent residency without undergoing the labor certification process⁸—this development was intended to ease bureaucratic pressure on healthcare institutions sponsoring immigrant nurses.

While the burden of having to prove the need for foreign-educated nurses has been removed for some time now, recent retrogression or processing backlogs at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), has led respondents in this study to argue that sponsoring foreign-educated nurses for the U.S. market is still not easy. Recruitment is highly dependent upon generalized immigration laws where the number of visas available are typically inadequate to meet both employers' and nurses' demands. However, lobbying efforts have been successful in increasing the number of visas available for healthcare workers in recent years.

⁸ The labor certification process, typically undertaken by U.S. employers who want to import occupation specific workers, proves that native-born workers will not be displaced by the foreign worker being sponsored (see Dikaya & Appelt 2004; Susser 1995).

Considering the depth and magnitude of nurse migration coming to or from these countries, it is perhaps not surprising that the migration industry dealing with this movement is well established in each country, though this is not typically recognized in terms of the U.S. In April 2007, over 3,100 duly licensed land-based agencies were operating in the Philippines. Of that number, 120 had job orders for nurses for the U.S. In the U.S., it is much more difficult to gauge the actual size of the industry as no official database exists on companies doing international placements. According to lists compiled by the American Association of Foreign-Educated Nurses (a non-profit organization) at least 107 “international nurse recruiters” had offices throughout the U.S. (aafen.org, n.d.). The Coalition to Improve Health Staffing (CTIHS, n.d.), the industry’s lobbying arm in Washington D.C., listed 84 staffing and placement agencies as its members. This provides another measure of the depth of the migration industry dedicated to placing foreign-educated nurses in the U.S.

Formal Operations: Commercial Recruitment and Placement Agencies

Agencies and Their Functions

As the reach of capital and market relations expands, the need for labor to follow in a timely manner grows in tandem. Thus, commercial businesses in the form of labor market intermediaries have established a significant service niche in today’s global economy. This is not to imply that the role or existence of intermediaries is altogether new. In fact, the specific model of labor and job brokerage firms included in this study dates back to at least the industrial revolution when the elementary methods of channeling underemployed rural workers to urban workshops and factories were established (ILO 1994). However, modern intermediary agencies have since evolved to include not just simple brokerage arrangements in domestic labor markets,

but also work contracts, staff leasing arrangements as well as more complex services such as job training and skills upgrading across different regions around the world. Intermediary agencies take on many labels and specific forms including job-matching firms, headhunters, overseas employment agencies, staff leasing and temporary employment agencies to name a few (see ILO 1994; Benner, Leete and Pastor 2007). While some U.S. placement agencies in this study have adopted the staff leasing model wherein agencies employ nurses and contract them out to client hospitals, by and large the agencies included here are recruitment, job-matching firms. In the Philippines, intermediary agencies are overwhelmingly dedicated to overseas employment.

Like other types of recruiting organizations found historically or in the contemporary period, the agencies included in this project vary in scale and complexity (Prothero 1990: 222). Characteristics such as location, size, degree of capitalization, previous experience in recruitment and cultural understandings of the wider market, affect agencies' level of service and effectiveness in mediating labor market transactions. Thus, despite significant overlap in operations, Philippine-based recruitment agencies and U.S.-based placement agencies⁹ tended to be better equipped at handling distinct, but complementary activities at several stages of the migration process. Philippine agencies, for example, are critically important in the pre-migration phase which includes the direct recruitment and screening of nurse candidates and the management of hired nurses during the 18-24 month petitioning and credentialing process. U.S.

⁹ In this study, Philippine-based firms will be referred to as "recruitment agencies" whereas U.S.-based firms will be called "placement agencies." The main reason for this distinction is to account for the legal definition of a recruitment agency according to Philippine law. This law states that only those agencies that are majority Filipino owned and operated qualify for state-licensure and therefore they are the only agencies allowed to recruit Filipino labor directly. As such, I have chosen to call U.S. based companies "placement agencies" as it is also reflective of the actual role they play. Additionally, the particular designation I have chosen here is consistent with ILO definitions of such private employment agencies (see ILO 1994: 14). It is true, however, that some U.S. based companies have offices in the Philippines. Some of these offices have even qualified for and obtained their own state license for recruitment issued by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). Others, however, in compliance with Philippine regulations, work with local recruitment agencies to handle the actual recruitment and screening of candidates.

placement agencies, on the other hand, are particularly important for obtaining work contracts on-site, maintaining client-employer relations and receiving nurses upon arrival. To a great degree, they are also influential in lobbying efforts for more liberal immigration policy in the case of foreign-educated nurses (CTIHS 2008). The complementary nature of sending and receiving operations is especially apparent when Philippine agencies directly contract with U.S. agencies to complete job orders.

At base, however, both Philippine-based and U.S.-based agencies have at least two very important roles in common. First, they negotiate and secure job offers and immigrant-visa sponsorship with U.S. employers. Second, they act as socializing agents, equipping nurses with the appropriate capital (cultural and human) needed to be successful in the U.S. job market, as well as influencing employers in terms of their expectations of foreign-educated nurses during the hiring process. Taken together, the coordinated involvement of intermediary commercial agencies has contributed to a stable system of migration processes predicated upon institutionalized business transactions. Agencies find opportunities in existing frameworks (i.e. government rules and regulations concerning emigration and immigration), aid in integrative processes among migrant recruits, and importantly, they derive additional value by identifying and creating new markets and differentiated products (i.e. specified labor skills).

Agency Objectives

The stated purpose of the recruitment and placement agency is to act as an intermediary¹⁰ between local labor supply and employers in overseas markets. One general manager of a Philippine-based recruitment agency described his role in the business:

¹⁰ When agency respondents were asked whether they thought of themselves as labor brokers, they would often cringe at the characterization or be bewildered by it. Most agencies would describe themselves as merely helping

My main preoccupation is to make sure that our clients, in other words, the people who are hiring Filipinos from [our company] feel like they're getting the best qualified people within a very short period of time, on the fastest possible time. And that the Filipinos whom we deploy feel that they've been treated properly during the deployment process.

Since labor migration is their business, agencies are expected to be experts on both supply and demand as well as any institutional requirements that must be met in order for the two to connect. On the supply side, knowledge regarding Philippine nursing education, local licensing requirements, and labor recruitment and migration regulations are imperative. On the demand side, necessary knowledge includes U.S. credentialing requirements as well as immigration policy outlining the procedures and limitations of employer sponsorship of foreign-educated workers.

Due to the requisite level of qualifications for U.S. nursing as well as the complex institutions that need to be navigated to actualize migration, the pay-off to international recruitment and placement can be great. Of the agencies who reported their service fees to me, they indicated charging hospital clients anywhere from USD\$2,000 to over USD\$15,000 for each nurse deployed, depending on the specific arrangements. These fees were typically packaged to cover all expenses associated with recruiting a nurse and completing her transfer. For the U.S. market, however, the bulk of fees are not collected by agencies until a nurse is received by the employer. Therefore, during normal visa processing most fees are not obtained until 18 to 24 months after nurses are initially hired. The wait is often perceived as worthwhile for these firms since U.S. employers are willing to pay among the largest service fees for qualified, experienced workers. This can be a mutually beneficial situation for the agency as

nurses who are underpaid and not treated well in the Philippines to find better opportunities abroad. The same general manager quoted in the following sentence, picked up on the potential negative implications of being called a labor broker. He responded immediately by stating that they did not consider nurses or migrant workers more generally to be "tradable commodities" but rather "transferable assets."

well as for nurse since U.S. facilities offer the most competitive terms of contract.¹¹ In addition to salary, U.S. hospitals will typically finance costs associated with examination, migration, and initial settlement of nurses. To attract the most qualified nurses to their agency and by extension high paying client hospitals, Philippine recruitment agencies would typically waive placement fees to the nurse. This unusual situation leaves nurses with very little if anything to pay for their migration journey. By law, Philippine agencies are permitted to charge temporary contract workers up to one month's salary for job placement.

Generally, however, agencies viewed themselves as being much more than a profit-seeking enterprise. Recruitment and placement is seen by some agents in this study as a vocation and a service to the Filipino people who face limited opportunities. Many spoke of nurse migration as a kind of cause in which they are not only helping the individual migrant to advance in their careers, but also their families to achieve a higher standard of living. One co-owner of a Philippine-based agency explained to me:

The vision/mission of the agency is to help nurses find job opportunities in the States. This is a big help to the Philippines. You don't just help one nurse, you help the whole community. The nurse you help will help their families. In ten years, a Filipino nurse will earn P840,000 whereas in 1 year in the U.S. a nurse will earn P3 million.”

The agencies I met with spoke frankly about their business operations and their role in processing migrant workers. But clearly, they also had “vision/missions” that included goals that moved beyond the single objective of profit seeking and instead imbued a moral element to their work as recruitment agencies.

Selecting Employers and Nurses

¹¹ The permanent migration of nurses to the U.S. complicates this practice. In addition, in the U.S. it is not typical for placement agencies to charge workers placement fees.

Agencies not only act as mediators in connecting nurses with employers, but they also act as gatekeepers, limiting participation in the market. The gatekeeping techniques used by agencies in this study were not limited to the screening of nurses as one might expect, but they also included the selection of employers as well. For Philippine-based recruitment agencies, carefully selecting sponsoring employers is part of the mandate imposed by the Philippine government. Recruitment agencies are required to check the validity of potential employers and the opportunities they offer to Filipino workers. To this end, agencies must first accredit foreign principals (whether direct employers or foreign placement agencies) with the government before services can be rendered. In the Philippines, following the rules and regulation of recruitment according to government standards is meant to fulfill simultaneous objectives: to legitimize overseas employment, maintain an ordered system, and protect workers. Should problems arise from contracts, the recruitment agency is often looked at for potential liability. Agencies in this study often reported being acutely aware of this responsibility to screen clients in order to protect workers. One owner of a large, Philippine-based recruitment agency stated:

The most distressing thing for us is when workers complain. When workers complain, and they say that ‘our living quarters are no good’ and so on and so forth, that’s about the beginning of the end for our client. We usually talk things out with the client. And if things do not improve, we resign the workers from them.

In the U.S. market for nurses, the exceptional profitability and volume of job orders have in some cases enabled agencies to become more “choosy” with the clients they work with. The selection of employers illustrates some degree of discretionary power among agencies. This was especially evident at the time of my interviews as agencies often got more orders for nurses than they could realistically fulfill. In addition, long-standing agencies with a diversified roster of

labor contracts could afford to forego any one employer client. As a head recruiter of a large Philippine-based agency stated:

Our agency is very selective about clients. We get only those who can offer the best terms of contract for our nurses. Our agency has a long standing reputation and much of our clients are referred through word of mouth. We visit every client before entertaining contracts with them.

Once employer clients are decided upon and Philippine accreditation processes have been completed, the next task of identifying appropriate workers comes into play. The process of selecting or pre-screening nurse candidates to be presented to hospital clients is critical and at the heart of the labor recruitment and placement business. Making the match between employers' needs and available labor supply is the key to hiring, sponsorship, and continued business partnerships. To this end, assessment of nurses often occurs on several levels. One U.S.-based agency explains selecting nurses in terms of a two-part process. The team manager explains the first phase of screening:

We have a licensed partner who does the initial recruitment and selection. Then we have experts who qualify them further, test them for their nursing ability. We verify nursing education, training and all that. We have nursing educators, clinical professionals in the team who qualifies nurses.

In the same interview, the owner of the agency addresses the second part:

The second part of this program is the behavioral assessment. The first things that are really important in assessing the nurse other than the [technical] skills side will be communication skills. How effective is this nurse communicating? You may have all the technical skills, but you may not be able to communicate effectively. You need have to have strong critical thinking ability, to explain in a way which is logical and analytical. Learning skills, professional characteristics, leadership potential, motivation and vision—these are the domains that we check the nurse against.

Likelihood of passing exams, technical qualifications, soft skills, language ability, and other personal characteristics are all important considerations for agencies that must then turn

over candidates to employer clients for hiring. However, agencies must not only look for candidates who match employers' expectations, but also those who will stay the course during the lengthy pre- and post- migration phases. This can be very difficult to predict as one general manager said:

A lot of times you can see the nature of the nurse when you do the initial interviews: that lack of commitment during their process while they're in the Philippines. You can't always predict it because you also see a lot of very kind, seemingly kind and meek and timid nurses suddenly jump contract.

Careful selection of nurses is important for agencies to be able to recoup their initial investments in nursing staff as well as to protect their business reputation. Having a nurse on their roster means significant commitment on the part of the agency that spends time and money monitoring, reviewing, and training the nurse. Additionally, fringe benefits such as temporary housing or bonuses may also be paid up front by the agency to the nurse. A U.S. staffing executive explained:

Approximately it costs ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) to bring one nurse here, before we even start billing them to the hospitals. So, it's important we screen hard. Why are we doing this? We are a business. We're not doing this from the goodness of our heart. This is business.

Disciplining Clientele

Once job offers have been made and contracts are initiated, the next major challenge for agencies is to recalibrate the expectations of both sets of clients—nurses and employers—and to sensitize them to the realities of migration. On the part of nurses, this means taking direction from agencies that want to ensure their workplace integration and continuous employment. On the part of employers, this means trusting agencies during the lengthy screening and hiring process as well as being prepared to re-train foreign-educated nurses upon receipt. The

tempering by agencies of any unrealistic expectations not only helps to create smoother transitions and receptions for nurses, but ultimately it also helps to maintain business relations, agency reputations, and the legitimacy of recruitment and migration abroad. This is done by curtailing potential disappointment head-on in the recruitment or employment process.

In her ethnography of private recruitment agencies in the Philippines, Anna Guevarra (2003) also found agencies to engage in disciplinary tactics with the purpose of shaping the behavior of nurses and domestic workers to fulfill employers' needs. In my own study, commercial agencies on both sides of the Pacific consistently reported practices that reflected such a disciplinarian role. For example, one manager and part owner of a large recruitment agency in the Philippines reported his insistence to keep nurses working while they were still awaiting deployment in the Philippines. This may be contrary to the nurses' own plans. He said:

The minimum amount of experience is 6 months in order to be accepted into the pool of presentable candidates. This is okay since it will take another 12 months for their papers to be processed. We insist that the nurses continue their employment throughout the processing period. Some nurses think that once they get offers in the U.S. they don't have to work and can just wait for deployment. We make sure that their experience is continuous since that is what will prepare them for work in the U.S. The average amount of experience among our nurses is 2 years.

Apart from making sure that nurses have appropriate training and continuous experience according to employer needs, it is also incumbent upon agencies to make nurses aware of their contractual obligations towards their sponsoring employer. In line with this, agencies will often address the issue of nurses "jumping their contracts" upfront. When nurses jump contracts, they disappear on employers once their green cards have been issued. Unlike H-1 visas where entry and stay is conditional upon employment, employment-based immigrant visas are not as easily revoked in the same manner. Nonetheless, agencies will attempt to prevent nurses from jumping

contracts by explaining to nurses the actions they may take. A U.S.-based staffing executive explained:

Nurses are coming on employment-based green cards. And I stress this when I talk to them: You are sponsored by a US employer. We're telling the US government that there's a shortage area. We don't have enough American workers, so I need to bring a foreigner here. So, why am I petitioning you? I'm not doing this so you could get a green card and go on your own merry way. You have to perform what's based on your I-140. So if for example, you come in and you leave to go with your relatives in San Diego or in Louisiana or wherever, we have the right to notify the USCIS because you promised and you said that I'm coming here because of this job.

All of the agencies in this study have experienced at least one nurse jump their contract, though these incidents are few and far between. Nonetheless, the issue is very disconcerting for agencies who want to protect their and their clients' investments in the nurses they have sponsored. Naturally, any loss in investments adversely affects their business. Thus, in the absence of effective legal recourse to return their investment, some agencies reported that they instead appeal to the moral consciousness of nurses. Such practice is arguably rooted in Filipino cultural norms of *utang ng loob* or literally translated as "debt from the heart." As one owner of a U.S.-based placement agency said to me:

We know the employment industry in the U.S. is at will. We, however, ask the nurses to morally commit to stay with the hospital for two years. Effectively they can leave. It's at will in the U.S. But we say to them, "Commit morally because they sponsored your green card. You were able to take your family to the States because of them. So, just to stay with them for two years because it will take them two years to find someone like you. And they waited two years for you to arrive, so, in fairness to them you should stay."

Inclusive of Guevarra's notion of disciplinarian, I argue that the larger role of the commercial agency is to act as a socializing agent, shaping the behavior and expectations of *both* migrant *and* employer. To some degree, agencies are able to influence employers insofar as clients are made aware of not just the benefits of hiring Philippine-educated nurses, but also the

additional training investments they must make upon the nurses' arrival. One executive at a U.S. staffing agency stated to me that she had to "educate the hospital client" about the training gaps between the Philippine and U.S. contexts. In the same vein, a manager of a Philippine-based recruitment agency explained the importance for hospitals to conduct international orientations for Philippine-educated nurses:

In the first six months of nurses' tenure in the United States, a great deal of training and orientation must be done because their approach to nursing is fundamentally different in the Philippines than in the United States. And you know, the culture of the hospital is very different. The bureaucracy within the hospital is very different. Maybe the nurses from Asian Medical Center, St. Luke's, Makati Med, Cardinal Santos and other hospitals in other metropolises don't need as much training. Nevertheless, there's still the other components of training—cultural training, language training—that still needs to be addressed formally or informally.

In a more forceful manner, the President of a leading Philippine-based recruitment agency conveyed her frustration with U.S. hospital clients who may not understand the gaps in training. In her interview, she conveyed having to manage the expectations of clients who are accustomed to U.S. hospital standards:

Have you seen the state of our hospitals? We're a poor country, what do you expect? How many hospitals here in Manila would be so equipped? So truly, our nurses from here to America will find it a little difficult to adjust. Constantly, I get the comment [from clients], "Tell your nurses that you have to be this and that." I say to them, "You know precisely what the Philippines is all about. You know how poor we are. You know the state of our hospitals. We may have a lot of nurses, but not all of them are going to be properly trained to handle *your* set up."

I argue that socialization and disciplining of both sets of clientele, nurses and employers, are key components of the migration business. Associated activities helps to keep clients engaged in a process where an exceptional amount of time and money is invested by all stakeholders. Keeping clients aware of their obligations toward each other is intended to ease transition and to ensure that the connection between nurse and employer is sustained.

Creating Demand, Ensuring Migration Opportunities

As with other economic activities, this migration business continually undergoes rapid and complex transformation. Even for expert agencies, it is extremely difficult to predict shifts in labor demand or supply. To ensure that business continues despite shifts in particular market conditions, agencies will typically engage in several proactive techniques including aggressive marketing of services, monitoring of multiple labor markets, and maintaining a diversified labor portfolio.

Maintaining a diversified labor portfolio in terms of migrant occupations, origins, destinations, and employers is often a practiced method among agencies to protect themselves from the volatility of the market. Part of the success, I argue of the Philippine state in labor export, has been the extent to which it sends a variety of migrants across the occupational/skill spectrum to numerous countries around the globe. The value of this diversification is that it enables migration organizations and institutions to withstand economic and labor demand cycles by spreading its dependence on any occupation, skill category, employer or host country. Thus, it is common practice for agencies, even small ones, to do nurse placements in multiple countries or various occupational placements in single or multiple destinations. Some examples of this include construction workers to the Middle East, domestic helpers to other parts of Asia or even nurses to Saudi Arabia. U.S. placement agencies may also engage in native worker placements or international placements from other origin countries including for example India, the Caribbean, Canada, and the U.K. This tactic helps to spread uncertainty over visa processing queues across origin countries that may not have exhausted their visa limits.

Agencies who engage in multiple labor markets apart from the Philippine-U.S. nursing system demonstrate tremendous flexibility in terms of meeting new global demands, following changes in labor and immigration laws, and remaining competitive in the midst of other agencies inhabiting their markets. A number of U.S.-based placement agencies included in this study had in fact previously engaged in high-tech placements during the Silicon Valley boom. Once the labor market closed, these agencies transferred their skills and knowledge over to placing healthcare professionals, mainly registered nurses. The key, as one owner of a U.S.-based placement agency described, is identifying a strong business process:

My background is I.T. I started a software company that used to develop software for banks. We had been outsourcing [software development] from the U.S. to the Philippines. About 1999, I started thinking that with Y2K issues, we should look at other businesses and I saw nursing as a potential. The shortage of nurses in the U.S was beginning to become news again. And so I decided that from technology we could look into this as well. I really think that I can do any business because business is business. My weakness then, was that I was not a nurse. So what I had to do was find a nurse to form the skills side, to fill in my weakness. But, it is a business and as such I approach it as if it needed a process. We already had a strong process. I knew we'd find the people to match the process, and that we would be fine. And that's basically how we did it.

Agency Firms and the State

The operations of the migration industry, whether formal or informal, do not occur in a vacuum. Instead, the success of all types of intermediaries depends on the legal context that stipulates exit, entry, and documented status for migrants. As discussed earlier the formal migration industry identifies opportunity within legal frameworks, whereas the informal industry derives profits from circumventing those same frameworks. At this time, the greatest challenge for formal recruitment and placement agencies is navigating the recruitment regulations in the origin country and the immigration laws in the receiving country. Not surprisingly, in the current case, U.S. immigration law and visa processing is typically the larger obstacle between

the two. Consequently, the growth of the nurse migration industry is highly dependent on these policies for entry. Notwithstanding high demand for foreign-educated nurses in the U.S., the entry of nurses is ultimately viewed by the federal government as an immigration issue.

Therefore, the specific migration stream is subject to the same limitations as other employment based immigration at any given time.¹² In the following, I briefly explore the ways in which public policy and the operations of agencies intersect and also how they react to one another.

Philippine Labor Export Policy

On the Philippine side of operations, the relationship between the state and recruitment agencies can be conceived as a symbiotic one—despite tension or conflict between the two entities, they actually function to support one another to meet their mutual goal of generating and perpetuating profitable migration flows. For example, one specific issue concerning the potential marketability of Filipino nurses in the U.S. has been whether employers who have already engaged in such recruitment were satisfied or dissatisfied with any number of issues, including but not limited to: the quality of candidates they received once on the job, the experience they had in dealing with immigration processes including backlogs at the USCIS, and the timeframe in which they engaged in recruitment. Between the years 1999 and 2003 hospital employers were able to recruit nurses directly without contracting the services of state-licensed recruitment agencies. Because employment-based immigrant visas were a new mode of entry for nurses at the time, U.S. employers and local Filipinos thought that the intervention of recruitment agencies

¹² At certain times, foreign-educated registered nurses have been granted special visas for entry as the result of lobbying efforts conducted on behalf of U.S. employers and the placement/staffing industry. In 2005, for example, previously unused immigrant visas were recaptured and granted to RN's and other health-related professionals. Another previous example was the H-1A temporary visa program for RN's during the 1990's. Apart from these exceptions, nurse entry based on employment criteria depend upon the larger immigration context and regulations for entry as would normally be expected.

was not legally mandated since Philippine government regulations were seen as being limited to temporary contract workers and not inclusive of permanent emigrants. Thus, hospitals conducted open “cattle calls”¹³ of nurses at hiring events held in Philippine hotels. These informal practices eventually proved unsuccessful as human resources (HR) departments in U.S. hospitals lacked the resources necessary to keep track of hired nurses during the lengthy credentialing and immigration process. Once hospitals left the country, there was reportedly no one to keep track of new hires. This resulted in a situation where some important hospital systems were ‘burned’¹⁴ by the prospect of foreign recruitment. Since then, the Philippine government outlawed the direct recruitment of Filipino nurses as well as other workers within the country and now adamantly requires prospective employers to use the services of state-licensed recruitment agencies whether for temporary or permanent work contracts.

While the Philippine state concentrates on macro-issues of industry regulations, multilateral country relations, and standardized worker welfare and protections, private recruitment agencies focus on the business of labor migration and the actual activity of recruiting, matching and placing workers for jobs. At times, however, there is overlap in function between the two. In incorporating the private sector in the labor migration industry and duly accrediting such agencies along with their client firms, the networks for labor migration are formalized and legitimated and are instituted as a fundamental part of the Philippine economy, polity and society. The institutionalization of migration creates a favorable market situation in which the production and recruitment of Filipino labor is made transparent and subsequently

¹³ This was the term used by a co-owner of a U.S. based placement agency who was able to engage in this type of recruitment, not just in the Philippines, but also previously in India for high-tech workers. During these open calls, workers would reportedly come in droves to designated venues, typically hotels, to submit resumes, be pre-screened, interviewed, and/or hired on the spot. This allowed prospective employers to freely interact with hundreds of workers at a time.

¹⁴ This was a common term agencies used, whether in the U.S. or Philippines, when speaking about the experience of their clients during this time.

stabilized and maintained. Not surprisingly, the Philippine model for labor migration is one of the most successful in the world. This is evidenced by the fact that Filipino workers have the lion's share of occupations in the global labor market, not just nursing but also seafaring, domestic work and entertainment.

U.S. Immigration Policy: Opportunity for and Limitations on Entry

While the private recruitment sector and state institutions in the sending country create a market environment conducive to more efficient worker selection and emigration processes, the policies of the receiving country are critically important for the entry and reception of such workers (Hollifield 2004). At this time, the U.S. government does not actively promote foreign labor recruitment and has not since the 1950's with the *Bracero Program* (ibid).¹⁵ Instead, the U.S. favors a generalized immigration policy focused heavily on the admission of family reunification migrants but with important provisions for employment based entry. For employment related immigrants (ERI's), temporary (i.e. H-1 and H-2 visas) or permanent resident visas (i.e. green cards) may be distributed. The type of visa available to the migrant is dependent on the occupational category to which she or he belongs. Approved occupational categories vary historically and are based upon demand for foreign labor among U.S. employers along with evidence that equivalent native workers cannot be readily identified nor adversely

¹⁵ In the case of the *Bracero Program*, a bilateral agreement was negotiated by the U.S. and Mexican governments to establish a channel for agricultural labor transfer or exchange. While the U.S. government currently provides specific provisions in its immigration policy for employment based migration, I argue that these provisions, including the H-1 and H-2 visa programs, are relatively more passive approaches to labor recruitment. Essentially, the U.S. government permits employers to bring in workers if they can demonstrate need. Indeed, since 1952, the burden of proving that there is a shortage of equivalent workers and that foreign workers will not adversely affect the wages and conditions of native workers is placed on the would-be immigrant and sponsoring employer (Uzdansky and Espenshade 2001: 42). The U.S. government itself, however, does not have an official policy to recruit labor, only rules for employers to follow should they do so. Thus, while some proposals have emerged throughout the years, the U.S. government has not since the *Bracero Program* forged agreements with other countries to engage in guestworker or equivalent programs.

affected. Though it constitutes a smaller percentage of immigrants entering the country overall, over the years, employment based immigration has expanded and is one of the fastest growing visa categories (Yu 2008).

In recent years, the backlog of immigrant visa processing has limited the entry of all new immigrants including nurses. This phase of “retrogression” not only affects the expected entry of already petitioned nurses and their families, but it also slows the growth and profitability of the migration industry overall. These circumstances constrain the market for foreign-educated nurses irrespective of demand or supply. Notwithstanding these cyclical phases of visa processing, projected and actual demand for foreign labor among U.S. employers can serve as a strong lobbying point for those wanting to expand employment based immigration (for health related workers see CTIHS 2008). In 2005, for example, the Coalition to Improve Healthcare Staffing comprised of lawyers, placement agencies, and employers, in partnership with the American Hospital Association (AHA), were able to recapture 50,000 previously unused immigrant visas mainly for RN’s and their families. As recent as October 2008, the Coalition engaged in lobbying efforts for more visas. The most significant legislation emerging from those efforts was House Resolution (HR) 5924 which calls for 20,000 exempt visas (from EB-3 cap) annually for the next 3 years. Unlike the previous wave of visas, these were proposed to be exempt from annual caps on entry and are intended for RN’s only and not their dependents. For the migration industry, more visas mean more business.

At times of retrogression or backlogs, one alternative to nurse placements is identifying other staffing opportunities for workers who can still obtain visas. “Strategic immigration” as one law firm put it, is precisely this process of pitching certain types of workers to client firms based on the kinds of visas that are available. Thus, while RN’s are relegated to EB-3

sponsorship where visa backlogs are heavy at this time, other healthcare workers such physical therapists, occupational therapists, and pharmacists still have the opportunity to come to the U.S. on H1-B temporary work visas. Attempting to obtain contracts for such workers can be an alternative way to sustain business when conventional visas for nurse entry are either not available or in short supply in the immediate term and also when lobbying efforts are geared towards the longer term. This approach of “strategic immigration” fits in the wider rubric of diversifying the business’s portfolio. The shortage of visas for nurses since 2006 has hit many businesses hard. But, with so many nurses in the pipeline and demand among healthcare facilities still expected to rise,¹⁶ many agencies do not want to let go of their contracts. Instead, some agencies strategize to promote survival until the issue of nurse entry can be resolved.

Conclusion

When job matching takes place across countries, then the important role of intermediary agencies can be heightened as institutional conditions and accompanying processes become more complex. In the current case, the formal migration industry (of which recruitment and placement agencies are a part) is at the center of operations. Being at the center, the industry pulls from available opportunities and institutional resources to make the hiring, sponsoring, migration and integration of nurses happen. The coalescence of effective resource and opportunity management is at the heart of services and is one main reason why clientele, whether nurses or employers, either actively look or become willing to contract with intermediaries for assistance. The process of finding a job or finding workers is intensive in terms of time, money, and energy,

¹⁶ At the time of this writing, many hospital systems in California declared hiring freezes for nurses and some reportedly laid workers off. However, once economic conditions in the U.S. improve and the situation surrounding healthcare is addressed, agencies are expecting for nurses to be allowed entry into the country as staffing shortages at facilities across the country still poses real problems.

particularly when done internationally. Thus, employing the brokering services of intermediary organizations can be an effective and relatively more efficient means to achieve staffing or job acquisition objectives as compared to other alternatives, such as informal network referrals or taking on the task all on one's own.

Intermediary agencies and formal organizations exhibit a main mechanism through which ordered migration systems get enacted in today's global context. But, migration industry actors do more than simply facilitate connections between workers and employers within pre-existing opportunities. They also actively construct pipelines of migrant labor, mainly with the purpose of ensuring that their business continues. They do this through several direct means including identifying multiple markets for their services, lobbying governments, as well as educating employers and workers on the sponsorship and migration process. Through these activities, the migration industry serves to expand opportunities for migration that otherwise would not be available. This then has indirect affects on adjacent organizational fields, such as educational and training sites mentioned at the start of this paper. In the Philippines, students motivated by the prospect of employment abroad have demonstrated high demand for the nursing course and have consequently stimulated a growth industry in nursing education. Indeed, according to my research at the Commission of Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines, the number of nursing schools across the country increased from 182 in the year 2000 to 464 in 2005, representing a 155 percent growth rate in just a few short years. Thus, the reach or influence of the migration industry may be more than the sum of singular business transactions. Rather, the functions they perform along with other factors such as demand from abroad can actually help to stimulate the production of workers from one locale for transfer to another.

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