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Authorizing Illicit Intimacies: Filipina–GI Interracial Relations in the Postwar Philippines

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Authorizing Illicit Intimacies Filipina–GI Interracial Relations in the Postwar Philippines

Intimate relations between American servicemen (GIs) and Filipina women increased visibly following the Second World War in the Philippines. As interactions became routine, women who developed close interpersonal relationships with GIs became associated with vice and loose morals. This article analyzes the multiple forces that maintained such associations, including the US military and local government's interconnected forms of intimate management and Philippine cultural productions' contradictory depictions of Filipino–American intimacies. It argues that the "bar system," which arose from businesses exploiting sexual labor, the legal system combating prostitution, and health initiatives seeking to eradicate venereal disease, effectively authorized illicit intimacies.

KEYWORDS: US MILITARY · GENDER RELATIONS · RACE RELATIONS · SEXUAL LABOR · PHILIPPINE CULTURE

As the Second World War came to a close in the Philippines, the sight of Filipinas riding in jeeps with American GIs caused quite a stir.¹ In a letter to the United States Army regarding the issue of prostitution in Manila, a concerned civilian named Teodoro K. Molo (1945) insisted that something be done about “the female species” riding in jeeps.² Molo (*ibid.*) believed that Filipinas had found “loopholes” to “enjoy their dirty elicit business” by using military vehicles and urged the US Army to ban the practice. During this time, the “jeep girl” had become a controversial figure in local newspapers and magazines as well.³ She was associated with the phrase “one kiss, one canned good” (*isang halik, isang de lata*), a saying that invoked the life of a destitute prostitute.⁴ Less reproachful observers perceived her as a liberated woman who expertly took advantage of the opportunity to ride in a jeep. More often than not, the image of “jeeps loaded with giggling feminine cargoes” aroused suspicion (N.T.C. *Polestar* 1945a, 4). The presence of the jeep girl, for both Philippine and US military officials, deepened existing anxieties about interracial liaisons and the social and moral problems they were believed to incite.

The “jeep girl” archetype emerged from a discourse of interracial intimacies that, together with the actions of US military and local government officials, managed the everyday lives of local women and American servicemen in the postwar Philippines.⁵ This article analyzes this discourse, as well as the efforts of officials in regulating venereal disease (VD), prostitution, and other interpersonal interactions. I argue that US military and local actors were allies in managing relations they considered socially problematic, doing so in ways that narrowly defined diverse forms of interracial intimacies as sexually illicit. The influx of American military personnel in the Philippines after the Second World War allowed for the development of a variety of relationships between US military personnel and locals, not only sexual and romantic, but also relations based on friendship, business, and community. Yet, official and unofficial policies and practices that attempted to regulate such relations assumed that most interactions between local women and US servicemen were morally questionable. As the “jeep girl” issue illustrates, US military officials and Philippine actors on the ground began to see even platonic and routine relations as potentially illicit, thus linking heterogeneous interracial relations to the sexual.⁶

Two important social developments during the postwar period help to contextualize the emergence of this discursive linkage. Firstly, the racial

climate in the US as well as in the postwar Philippines affirmed the need to protect the color line. US military policies of intimate management worked to segregate local women from white servicemen in particular, a move that reflected fears of an Asian invasion within US domestic space (cf. Shah 2001), threats to white respectability, and the normalized sexualization of black troops. In this way, US military officials figured all interracial relations that might potentially involve a white serviceman as deviant. Secondly, through the efforts of US military officials and their Philippine allies in controlling VD and morality, the selling of sex paradoxically thrived in locally operated bars and clubs that routinely regulated local women’s bodies. The outcome of a variety of actions intended to manage interracial intimacies, these spaces of sexual regulation and exploitation—which I call the “bar system”—grew in the extended postwar era (1946–1960) and intensified in the late 1960s and 1970s with the increase in American military presence in the Philippines due to Cold War conflicts in Asia (Moselina 1979; Miralao 1990; Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992). The bar system gave sexual reputations to base towns such as Olongapo City in Zambales and Angeles City in Pampanga, and its visibility generated public discussions of morality and women’s sexual decency. Locally, this discourse of morality figured intimacies between Filipinas and American servicemen as inauthentic, diseased, and symbolic of national dependency on the US, on the one hand, yet as economically valuable, on the other, particularly if the serviceman was white.

Although it was not until the postwar transition that diverse mixed-race intimacies had become so clearly associated with vice, intimate management was not new to the postwar period.⁷ In fact, debates surrounding the regulation of prostitution, concubinage, and the “querida” system resurfaced several times during the Spanish and American colonial eras (Pivar 1981; De Bevoise 1995; Abalahin 2003; Kramer 2006; Hau 2013). The issue of prostitution during the Philippine Revolution and the Philippine–American War, moments wherein foreign soldiers occupied military camps throughout the Philippines, generated public concern over interracial sex and the spread of VD (Kramer 2006). Moreover, US officials in the early colonial period attempted to manage romantic relations between American soldiers and Filipinas in ways they believed would benefit the colonial project (Winkelmann 2017).⁸

While scholars have made important contributions to the history of intimacies and empire in the Philippines, especially of the early twentieth

century (Camagay 1995; Dery 2001; Abalahin 2003; Kramer 2006), historical studies generally have focused on prostitution separately from other forms of intimate management. Contributing to this literature, this article aims to bridge histories of sexual labor with those of Filipina–GI relations more broadly, given that these connections existed within the postwar discourse. A broad conceptualization of the category of “intimacies” as interpersonal relationships is therefore necessary to explore the ways in which certain bodies had become tied to the sexually illicit despite their dissociation with the sex industry.⁹ This approach also requires the study of sources beyond the official records of the US military and the Philippine government. The analysis of local culture through Tagalog literature and films in this article, and especially the discussion of Philippine racial ideologies, contributes another means to assess intimate management alongside an examination of official policies.

The sections that follow explore the interconnected forces that ultimately reinforced the notion of Filipina–GI relations as illicit affairs. The next section begins by analyzing the racialization of Filipinas and African American soldiers within the US Army and Navy’s campaigns against VD. It provides the context necessary to interpret the subsequent discussion of alliances between the US military and Philippine actors in their efforts to enforce antiprostitution laws. The final section analyzes race relations within Philippine literature and films and evaluates the context within which stigmas of interracial intimacies were maintained in popular culture.

“Questionable Moral Character”: Race and Sexuality in the Anti-VD Campaign

The postwar boom in the sex industry due to the large US military presence in the Philippines led to heightened concern surrounding the spread of VD.¹⁰ For US military officials, VD was not exclusively a moral problem but one that affected the “efficiency” of the military institution and threatened the army’s reputation (Witsell 1946). The infection of large numbers of men weakened a unit’s ability to perform its expected duties and had the potential to cause public scandal. As newspapers in the US sensationalized the problem of diseased Filipinas, arousing public anxieties about “exotic” sexual illnesses that could potentially infect American homes, US military officials embarked on aggressive campaigns throughout the Philippines—as well as US-occupied Asia—to eradicate VD and control prostitution

(*Atlanta Constitution* 1945; *Afro-American* 1945; *Los Angeles Times* 1945; *Chicago Daily Tribune* 1945; *Washington Post* 1945). These news reports cited “promiscuous girls and women” (*Washington Post* 1945, 6) as the main contaminants, while also associating the spread of sexual illnesses with Filipino living conditions. As shown in this section, their efforts were rooted in racial and sexual prejudices that assumed local women to be sources of disease and figured black servicemen as oversexed and naturally prone to infection.

As US Army records indicate, US forces began to meticulously document cases of VD and gather intelligence to direct their campaigns in areas where there were large numbers of army and navy personnel such as Manila, Angeles City, and Olongapo City. Although US officials requested that enlisted men voluntarily provide lists of their sexual “contacts,” there was no efficient way of locating women who were potentially VD infected. Officials therefore relied on army statistics that indicated VD-infected regions and then targeted women in those areas. Military police followed orders that “suspicious” women or those with “questionable moral character” should be blocked from communicating with American military personnel (Fitch 1945; Frazier 1949). Filipinas were profiled as prostitutes based on physical appearance and proximity to suspected areas of vice. As the writings of US military officials demonstrate, the norm within the anti-VD campaign racialized Filipinas in general as carriers of disease, leaving any Filipina on the street subject to potential investigation by military police.

The general practice of the US Army was to require suspicious women, as well as women who worked in establishments close to the army’s identified problem areas, to undergo medical examinations and treatment (Pennington 1947). US Army and Bureau of Health medical records reveal that 53,903 Filipinas were examined for VD all over the archipelago in 1946 and that over 100,000 were inspected the following year (Manuel 1955, 34–35). Local women had little option but to comply with the US military’s invasive health management approaches, particularly if they were stopped on the street or required to comply by their employer. For US military officials, the urgency of the VD problem in this postwar climate justified forced examinations. In fact, even while military officials debated their approaches, their concerns focused on the efficiency of anti-VD procedures, not on the ethical issues surrounding VD management. Officials such as Army Chief Surgeon Guy Denit (1945) argued that examinations of local women were a “worthless” measure of VD incidence and a waste of military time and resources. He

believed there was no point in attempting to treat a population that would always be diseased.¹¹

US Navy officials often debated how to resolve the public health issue, with some suggesting that women simply be shipped away to another part of the country. In a letter to the Pacific Fleet, Adm. Lynde McCormick (1946, 3, italics added) of the US Navy underlined this approach: “venereal disease can be reduced only by continuous coordinated effort to *remove from the community* all those who are known to practice prostitution.” McCormick made it clear that he referred specifically to *women* who sold sex, rather than to brokers or soldiers who engaged in the practice by purchasing. McCormick’s suggestion echoed those of US Army and Navy officials before him who, in the early twentieth century, embarked on anti-VD missions that shipped local women to Davao and other far off, less inhabited areas of the archipelago (cf. Terami-Wada 1986). While it is unclear in US Navy correspondence if these extreme measures were actually carried out, McCormick’s orders indicated that the question of whether or not Filipina bodies were beyond treatment was up for debate.

The writings of US military officials illustrated the assumptions they held about the source of VD, often leading to the unequal treatment of men and women for their sexual behaviors. For instance, US military policies prohibited forced medical examinations of enlisted men as well as any kind of punishment such as pay deductions for time lost to VD recovery (Porter 1946; Cooley 1946). While VD was considered “in line of duty” or an illness just like any other that a serviceman might contract while serving (Witsell 1946), military culture normalized prostitution and the contraction of VD. As Laura Briggs (2002, 24) has noted, historically the contraction of VD has enhanced a serviceman’s masculinity, allowing him to gain social status from a well-established sexual practice in the military.

By the late 1940s, US military culture continued to normalize the contraction of VD, which took on a negative racial connotation when military officials felt the issue had gotten out of control. During this time VD became associated with black servicemen in the Philippines, a correlation US military officials claimed in their correspondence and documentation of VD rates. As Stuart M. Alley (1947) wrote to the Commanding General of the Ryukyus Command, “the increase in the Command is largely attributed to the doubling of the rate among the colored personnel.” US military studies for October 1947 showed that among 630 “negro” troops there were

nine VD cases while among 3,501 “other” troops there were eight VD cases (Hindle 1947). Earlier that year, the VD council at Camp Angeles had noted the “high venereal rate . . . especially among Negro troops” (VDCC 1947, 3). Military officials were quick to cite records that highlighted racial differences in terms of VD contraction, yet did not consider the racial prejudices in reporting as well as other factors that generated such distinctions. A racialized language colored the council’s analysis of VD, despite evidence that the increase in VD rates coincided with the transfer of “fresh troops” from Japan and other places in the Pacific (Connor 1948, 3). In spite of their knowledge of other factors contributing to the spread of VD in the Philippines, military officials continued to view race as the ultimate factor in determining the problem. The VD councils’ conclusion in late 1947 was that black troops were more inclined to be infected compared with those of other racial backgrounds.

In much the same way that the US military’s racialization of Filipinas as diseased influenced their targeting of local women, their association of black men with VD also affected their approaches to VD control, but with a twist. Although black men were perceived as more sexually problematic and less curable than white men, the efforts of US officials on reducing VD rates focused particularly on white units. Visual materials such as posters and films, for instance, which military personnel specifically made to affect troop behavior, only featured white servicemen. The VD poster “Remember” (see figure on p. 492), which circulated throughout US Army and Navy units in Japan, Korea, and the Philippines after the war, reminded soldiers of three simple things: the faithful, white girl waiting at home; the costs of the war; and that sleeping with a local woman (and inevitably contracting VD) was not worth the one night of pleasure. A *white* man’s true happiness awaited him at home, and in order to protect that future and remain loyal to his country he needed to either abstain or obtain a prophylactic kit.

VD posters such as “Remember” targeted specific servicemen, using cultural cues to influence their behavior. The US Army’s VD Control Council (VDCC) spent hours discussing and crafting their poster designs, ensuring that their posters not only displayed relevant information but also told a narrative about race and sexuality that enlisted men could believe. Within this narrative, white women were constructed as innocent, trustworthy, and normal in contrast to the VD-infected, cunning, and exotic Asian woman.



The anti-VD poster "Remember" racialized Asian women as diseased

Source: US NARA n.d.

As Maj. John F. Harris (1947), VD control officer of PHILRYCOM, noted in his report on 7 July 1947, there were no posters that featured black soldiers or black women in the Philippines. Harris (*ibid.*) argued that visual materials “with a Negro soldier on it or in a group of other American soldiers” would improve VD control measures. In his detailed report, Harris claimed that the poster designs were racially exclusive, and that a poster featuring African Americans was necessary in order to make them feel they were “a part of the military organization” (*ibid.*). At this point US Army officials were convinced that black servicemen were responsible for the rise of VD rates in the Philippines, yet they did not attempt to remedy this situation by creating more effective posters earlier. The lack of anti-VD posters appealing to black servicemen was also not considered in VD control council discussions as a possible explanation for what their records showed as the high rate of VD among black units. Rather, US officials’ logic reflected the mainstream American racial discourse of black males as unclean and sexually threatening (cf. Muhammad 2010).

The emphasis on white women’s sexual innocence in the army’s anti-VD films and posters—constructed against the hypersexuality of women of color—further explains the absence of black men and women in anti-VD visuals. Historically, constructions of white female purity in the US context have aligned with the logic of rape—long defined as taking away a woman’s “virtue”—to deny women of color protection against sexual violence.¹² Because women of color have been racialized as non-innocent and promiscuous, white men have been able to seize feminized black and brown bodies without malice or without having “raped” them (*ibid.*). The absence of black men and women on US Army anti-VD posters and in anti-VD films reflected this racial logic, wherein the need to protect black female purity was irrelevant.

As the anti-VD campaign continued throughout the first decade following the Second World War, bodies marked by race in these complex ways became a primary means by which US military officials distinguished between unclean and clean and attempted to combat threats to military efficiency and order. These methods of intimate management supported the popular notion both in US and Philippine culture that interracial affairs were tied to sexual immorality.

“Being Run” by the US Military: Fragile Alliances in the Anti-VD Campaign

The notion of Filipinas as sexually aggressive fomented the US military’s anti-VD strategy of targeting local women, from those who roamed the streets to those who worked at local bars, restaurants, massage clinics, and other establishments. Military officials sought to distance themselves from appearing to “regulate” prostitution, but in fact they relied on alliances and agreements with municipal officials and local agencies, even though they did not always see eye to eye.¹³ On the ground, however, Filipino responses to the anti-VD campaign greatly varied. Economic assistance in the postwar moment at times necessitated acceptance of US military policies, yet it also raised the question of Philippine sovereignty, thereby complicating negotiations.

US military policies forced local communities to confront the ways in which Filipina–GI intimacies affected their daily lives resulting in fragile alliances. Even as US military officials threatened to mark entire spaces as “unclean” to diminish the moral reputation and economic prosperity of local business communities, Filipinos debated whether or not to defend people, spaces, and even the nation—topics well beyond the private sphere.

Some alliances were more harmonious than others. Philippine health conditions in the aftermath of the Second World War made acquiring supplies and rehabilitative support a necessity, and alliances with the US government to achieve these ends required participation in the US military’s anti-VD campaign. On 17 July 1946, a joint cooperative agreement was signed between the US Public Health Services and the Department of Health and Public Welfare in the Philippines (Cruz 1950). According to this agreement, US funds were to be transferred to the Philippine health department, yet were to be earmarked for seven groups of public health services, one of which specifically focused on the control of VD (Dayrit et al. 2002, 67).¹⁴ Intimate management in this way was subsumed within broader plans to improve public health.

Within these agreements US military officials and healthcare administrators on the municipal level exchanged material goods for cooperation in anti-VD efforts. On 12 July 1945 Ray Thussel (1945), the medical chief of the Manila health department’s VD division, agreed to guide US Military Police (MP) into houses of prostitution in exchange for vehicles. Thussel’s communication with the MPs detailed a procedure for

a complex raid of three houses that was to occur that week. The women were to be arrested and immediately taken to social hygiene clinics for examination and confinement for health “education.” Raids were to “continue until the approximately 600 houses of prostitution in the city [were] closed” (*ibid.*, [4–5]).

A month later, José Locsin (1945), the Philippine secretary of health and public welfare, corresponded with the commanding officer of the US MP regarding their agreement to “cooperate” in a roundup of women. Their understanding was that Locsin would provide contact information so that the MPs could locate 200 “sick women” and have them housed within the Correctional Institution for Women (*ibid.*, 1). Locsin agreed to make these arrangements, and received medical supplies for his hospital through this alliance (*ibid.*, [1–2]).

Locally coordinated raids and roundups continued alongside other efforts that were more aggressive. US military officials decided that they would focus on documenting and examining all women who worked in local establishments near US military spaces (Cantrell 1947). These workplaces included all types of businesses and organizations that catered to soldiers such as restaurants, bars, hotels, movie theaters, beauty parlors, and so on (Pennington 1947). Toward this goal, the Far East Command created an official VD control council in 1947 made up of representatives from several army and navy units. Appointed officers met several times a month to discuss the progress of MP raids and rounds, the status of local cooperation, troop VD statistics, and various other control strategies that would enforce the policing of these spaces (VDCC 1947). The stakes had become so high that, according to one military official, “every suspected woman and woman of every bar in Manila” needed to be investigated (VDCC 1948a, 2).

The US military’s more invasive strategies made intimacies problematic for local businesses that were unaffiliated with the sex industry, forcing owners and their employees to consider the effects of intimate management on their livelihood. This issue also impacted the broader community, as local officials were compelled to position themselves within the debate and work to alleviate the growing sexual reputation of base towns. On 31 January 1947 the VD control council noted: “we are not getting complete cooperation from the Mayor and Chief of Police of the town of Angeles”; the council also concluded that if businesses did not cooperate soon the entire city would be “placed off-limits to military personnel” (VDCC 1947, 3). Establishments

that were “off-limits” were not only affected financially due to the loss of American customers, but were also marked publicly as morally questionable due to their association with the image of sexual indecency. Meanwhile, local officials continued to protest the US military’s policies and procedures on the ground, leaving some local business owners in the insecure position of having to choose between defending their places’ reputation and suffering economic loss, or participating in a controversial anti-VD campaign.

By July 1948 the situation had improved slightly from the perspective of military officials, as more and more businesses in Angeles cooperated with MPs. VD council reports noted that those few businesses that resisted “were mostly small *panciterias* which refused to have their waitresses checked at the social hygiene clinic” because they felt they were “being run” by the US military (VDCC 1948b).¹⁵ With pride, the report argued that greater local cooperation came from a “change in attitude” due to American tutelage. One official noted, “through education by the army and civil authorities, the local populace now realize that [cooperation] is for their own good” (*ibid.*). US military reports stated that, as a result of this cooperation, “an estimated 200 unemployed girls, the majority having previous venereal disease records, [were] removed from Angeles” (*ibid.*). The reports did not explain how the “200 unemployed girls” were confirmed to have had “previous venereal disease records” or where outside of Angeles they were relocated.

As the anti-VD campaign continued throughout the 1950s, intimate management on the ground forced locals to consider the issue of sovereignty and what it meant to be an independent nation with a strong US military presence. According to Angeles lawyer and author Renato Tayag (1956), conflicts between Angeles police and American servicemen generated “hot feelings” between local officials such as Mayor Manuel Abad Santos and officers at Clark Air Base. At one point, a US airman assaulted an Angeles police officer after the latter intervened in a dispute between the airman and a “barmaid” (*ibid.*). The authorities at Clark sided with the airman, as they often did in cases such as this, while Abad Santos defended the Angeles police. In the end, the conflict triggered the issue of where the Philippine government stood in relation to the US military. As this example shows, a common dispute involving a serviceman and a local woman could easily spark a broader discussion regarding the nation.

The fragile alliances that continued throughout the US military’s anti-VD campaign provoked debates that were about much more than managing

disease. As US military strategies of intimate management brought the wider public to contemplate the effects on businesses, the moral reputation of local places, and the extent of the nation’s power to intervene, interracial intimacies brought greater social problems into focus. Yet, despite these controversies, US military and local officials shared a vision that assumed sexual criminality in local women based on their proximity and contact with US servicemen. The resulting structures created to alleviate these public anxieties, including surveillance and forced treatment methods, gave credence to the idea that interracial sex in military spaces was indeed a social problem.

The Bar System: Managing Women’s Bodies and the Sale of Sexual Labor

Paradoxically, the gendered and racialized practices of the US military and local officials to restrict the movements of “suspicious” women supported institutions that encouraged illicit interracial intimacies in militarized spaces. Whether intentional or not, their efforts were part of a tripartite operation—which I refer to as the bar system—in which the sale of sexual labor could thrive in local bars, nightclubs, and other establishments. As this section argues, the bar system emerged after the Second World War as the unintentional product of three main institutional processes: (a) the operation of local businesses that sought to exploit female employees for their sexual labor, (b) the legal system that was meant to combat prostitution, and (c) the creation of health institutions that resulted from US military and local officials’ attempts to police morality and eradicate VD.¹⁶ As discussed below, even in moments when concerned citizens attempted to organize against vice and immorality, these local actors tended to reinforce aspects of this tripartite system, effectively authorizing illicit intimacies and contributing to the sexual reputation of base towns.¹⁷

In “bar fine prostitution,” which was prevalent throughout the 1970s and perhaps earlier in the Philippines, local businesses that catered to US military clients depended on the sales of “lady drinks” as well as “bar fines” (CWR 1994, 2000). A “lady drink” was one in which a client paid for a female employee to have a drink and sit with him while in the bar or nightclub. “Bar fines” paid for a female employee’s “time” (long or short) in order to take her outside of the establishment. The owner of the establishment would hire women to work as waitresses, hostesses, or some other euphemism and require her to entertain male customers in these two

main ways. Because men paid for a woman's "time" through lady drinks or bar fines, owners could claim that any sexual relation that ensued occurred legally between two mutually consenting adults even while sexual services were an expectation of the job.

Although more research needs to be done to verify how bar fines were organized in the immediate postwar era (within the decade following the Second World War), we can imagine a similar type of process existed because we do know that employers hired local women as "hostesses" to perform sexual services in local establishments (Manuel 1955, 17; Nickerson 1954). By legally hiring female employees to entertain male clients, owners were able to control a woman's sexual earnings. Female workers were mostly poor girls recruited from the provinces who were subject to the working conditions and expectations of their employers (Manuel 1955, 32). First-hand accounts of women who worked in the bars in the 1940s and 1950s are lacking; however, we can consider the experiences of those in similar social positions in later time periods. Alma Bulawan (2003, 99), a former bargirl in the 1980s and now the president of Buklod Babae, a local organization that supports women in prostitution in Olongapo, explains the economic situation that women like her faced: "In our experience and studies, it is impossible to save. How can you? The bar fine is P3000, the girl only gets P1000. If you complain you lose your job automatically . . . You strip, dance, and you earn P200 for dancing for six hours." In such situations local businesses profited from women who were dependent on meager earnings to survive.

Laws that existed in the postwar Philippines worked in favor of local businesses that exploited women's sexual labor, adding to the structures that fueled the bar system. Originally created in the US colonial period, these laws were meant to eradicate prostitution, but instead they pushed the selling of sex underground. Prostitution was a legal, regulated industry very briefly under the Spanish *reglamento* (regulations) of 1897, but was quickly banned following a series of public scandals in the US that aroused morality campaigns and progressivist reforms (Abalahin 2003). In 1917 prostitution, defined as a "willful act of a woman" selling sex to men for money, became officially illegal in the Philippines following the establishment of the administrative code, section 2242 (*ibid.*; Rivera 1956). All existing brothels were effectively shut down in 1918 (Abalahin 2003, 350).¹⁸ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, campaigns emerged advocating for the reestablishment of the Spanish *reglamento*, although these were ultimately unsuccessful (*ibid.*).

Instead, antiprostitution and vagrancy laws were upheld and enforced on the municipal level in ways that targeted streetwalkers, thereby pushing women who sold sexual labor into working at the bars and clubs.¹⁹

According to the administrative code, municipal councils were required "to provide for the punishment and suppression of vagrancy and the punishment of any person found within the town without legitimate business or visible means of support" (Rivera 1956, 45). When local officials collaborated with the US military, women who roamed the streets—and especially those who rode in US jeeps—were primary targets to be stopped by local or US military police. This practice empowered US servicemen at times to become violent with the women they encountered. "Several Filipinos said the Marines had clipped [the women's] hair," journalists reported after interviewing civilians on recent incidents at Subic Bay (*New York Times* 1946, 51). "Some said they had been slapped or hoisted off the floor by their tied hands while being questioned on suspicion of such offenses as vagrancy, loitering and prostitution" (*ibid.*). Women who sold sexual labor might have had greater control over their work and earnings on the streets, but local laws as well as official and unofficial enforcement methods greatly reduced this option. Considering that streetwalkers drove away profits from the bar system, employers greatly benefited from practices that allowed men to subject local women to violent harassment on the streets.

To further enforce the administrative code's antiprostitution and vagrancy law, municipal codes after the Second World War established ordinances that regulated female laborers within bars and clubs. According to Manila Ordinance 2919, "no person shall engage in the occupation of waitress or hostess in bars, hotels, restaurants and cafes without first securing a license from the City treasurer" (Manuel 1955, 14). The only establishments that were exempt were *carinderias* (local roadside food stalls) and cafeterias (*ibid.*). In order to obtain a license to work, "women" were required to obtain a health certificate after passing a VD check and paying a fee of P1 (*ibid.*, 16). This local practice of requiring women to register as "hostesses" ensured that women who potentially sold sex were accounted for, reinforcing the organization of a system wherein the selling of sex could thrive.

Moreover, the establishment of US health institutions following the war provided structures that further ensured the smooth operation of the bar system. The anti-VD campaigns that emerged, as previously discussed, introduced the Division of Social Hygiene (DSH) and the Venereal Disease

health clinic that were run jointly by the US and Philippine governments (*ibid.*, 69). The presence of social hygiene clinics and the requirement that women who worked in bars and other establishments undergo routine health checks provided regulatory mechanisms that could identify and keep clean the bodies of women who sold sex in spaces that US military personnel frequented. While providing the appearance of challenging prostitution, these institutions resembled the structures established in the nineteenth-century *reglamento*, the Spanish system of legalized prostitution.

Public concern over women's sexuality and morality during the postwar period supported the bar system as well. In the early 1950s the National Federation of Women's clubs aroused national concern over the issue of "white slavery" by holding women's rallies in Manila to promulgate local efforts to combat sex crimes (*Manila Bulletin* 1952a, 1). In 1952 the public became increasingly concerned about "white slavery" following sensationalized reports in major Manila newspapers describing the abduction of teenage girls, mainly from the provinces, who were forced to work in the sex trade by foreign men (often described as Chinese) (cf. *Manila Chronicle* 1952a, 1952b; *Manila Bulletin* 1952a). As a response to the public, the Philippine government authorized the creation of a central coordinating committee to address this issue; several of the committee's representatives gave public speeches detailing their strategies (*Manila Bulletin* 1952b, 1). According to Asunción Perez, the committee commissioner, the central issue at hand was supply and demand. Conflating sex trafficking with sex work, the committee promised to attack white slavery by focusing on upholding laws against prostitution and vagrancy and creating local ordinances to "[punish] heavily all violators of these laws" (*ibid.*, 12). In addition to focusing on vagrancy, which tightened surveillance of women on the street thus benefitting bar owners, committee members unanimously felt that educating young women was one of their major responsibilities (*ibid.*). In the committee's mind, women's behavior was the primary cause of their fall from grace.

On the whole, Philippine laws, US military actions, as well as local campaigns against sex crimes contributed, intentionally or unintentionally, to the oppression of poor women on the streets and women who sold sex. These local actions corresponded with US military concerns and policies to improve military efficiency and order. Rooted in middle-class values of respectability and a misogynist concern for morality that was characteristic of this period, these various efforts were ultimately beneficial for bar owners

who wanted to keep the selling of sex within their establishments. The expansion of such a system, while based on the profiling of women in base towns, further stigmatized relationships between Filipinas and American servicemen.

"*Hanggang Piyer Ka Lang*": Filipina–GI Relations in Philippine Culture

In postwar Philippine literature and films, the Filipina–GI romance was almost always a temporary affair that eventually ended in heartache. A product of the sexism of the time, women who interacted with servicemen were depicted as unfaithful, immoral, and ambitious, and the GIs themselves as insincere but fun lovers. Yet even while interracial intimacies were ridiculed in this way, the local discourse recognized that relations with US soldiers potentially increased one's social status. Often through the misogynist metaphor of prostitution, popular literature and films explored the practicality of Filipino desires. The hope of escaping a difficult economic situation provided a reasonable explanation, if not a justification, for those who pursued romantic relations with US servicemen. Moreover, there was a clear racial hierarchy that favored white GIs, contradicting the efforts of US military officials in discouraging white–Filipina liaisons.²⁰ However shameful, coupling with a GI—especially a white American—was also considered socially permissible for those with little other opportunity.

The Tagalog phrase *hanggang piyer*, which appeared in postwar literature and films, exemplifies the paradoxical lens of approval and disapproval through which GI–Filipina relationships were predominately represented. In Mateo Cruz Cornelio's (1946, 49) novel, a respectable girl who seeks out a romantic relationship with an American overhears her neighbors gossiping about her.²¹ When one of the neighbors screams, "*hanggang piyer lamang kayo*" (you're only up to the pier), the situation escalates into hair-pulling incidents in the streets. In the late 1940s, and even today, "*hanggang pier*" was used to describe a local woman left behind by a sailor-lover or otherwise devalued and not taken seriously in the relationship. The phrase implied that her worth was tied to being accepted by the American. Evoking notions of sexual immorality, women who were "left behind" were assumed to be bar girls, prostitutes, or otherwise exploited to satisfy the physical needs of US servicemen. At the same time, while used to shame women for being foolish and worthless, the phrase also contained the assumption that if a woman

were ever taken beyond the pier—outside of the Philippines and into a better life—she would succeed in obtaining the social capital to mitigate her shame. This single phrase, in other words, epitomized the way in which GI–Filipina relations were, on the one hand, stigmatized yet, on the other hand, recognized for their potential for social mobility.

A common motif within postwar films, novels, and short stories depicting this “hanggang piyer” paradigm was the love triangle between a Filipina, her Filipino boyfriend, and her new American soldier-lover. In the novel *Hanggang Pier* (Cornelio 1946) the female protagonist, Leonor, begins to date a white American who she had been flirting with, Capt. Robert Moore Smith of the US Navy, shortly after finding out that her boyfriend, Delfín Santos, died in battle. Leonor falls in love with Smith and is heartbroken the day she finds out that he is to be shipped off to Tokyo. Alongside dozens of other women left behind crying, she says her goodbye at the navy pier, and Smith promises to return to visit her. Just as his ship begins to slowly sail away, her Filipino boyfriend Delfín, miraculously alive and well, arrives on the scene. As though no time had passed, Leonor falls into Delfín’s arms and realizes that he was always her true love. Smith watches the whole exchange from afar and eventually accepts that the feelings he felt could never compete with the true love between Leonor and Delfín.

The novel *Hanggang Pier*—alongside other Filipino love-triangle dramas of the era, such as Carlos Alerizco’s (1945) short story “Sayang na Sayang” and the movie *Victory Joe!* (1946)—tells a story in which romances with Americans are never meant to be.²² The Filipina betrays her Filipino boyfriend and falls in love too quickly with a white American, only to find out that her new lover did not imagine a real future with her. This typical, sexist narrative victimizes the Filipino—portrayed as a strong patriot—and serves as a critique of young Filipinas with emotional weakness and conditional love of country. Yet, as the Filipina is forgiven in the end (Delfín takes Leonor back into his arms in Cornelio’s novel and the female protagonist in *Victory Joe!* is also pardoned by her Filipino boyfriend), these stories offer a means to sympathize with her situation. In the wartime moment, when poverty and destruction were everywhere, the white savior provided an easy solution to one’s problems. Drawing on nationalist discourses, such love-triangle dramas perpetuated the notion that relations with white Americans could be beneficial but also came at a personal cost.

In contrast to the depictions of white servicemen, black servicemen were represented not as saviors but as swindlers who made women crazy for not repaying their debts. In the dramatic final scene of Cruz’s *Hanggang Pier* (1946, 65), a black sailor emerges to provide comic relief. Five women fight each other and chase a short black American (“maliit na Amerikanong negro”) to the edge of the pier, mimicking the droves of women chasing their white sailor-lovers. Yet these five women fought after him not because they were in love with him, but because he owed them money: “limang babae ang nag-aaway-away sa isang maliit na Amerikanong negro. Ang mga babaing nagkakagulo sa kanya, ay mga labandera niya at siya’y sinisingil sa kanyang malaking utang sa kanila” (Five women were fighting over a tiny black American man. The women who were causing the disturbance were his washerwomen, as they came to collect the large debt that he owed them). “Shorty,” the black sailor, would find a new washerwoman (*labandera*) each week and avoided paying each of them. Unlike Smith, Leonor’s well-respected, wealthy white American love interest, Shorty is a scheming, poor black man who is also characterized as physically unattractive.

Itsay, the one Filipina who did catch feelings for Shorty, clearly vocalizes her disgust in falling for him once she finds out he is actually poor. “Walang hiya kang negro ka!” (You shameless negro!), Itsay yells to Shorty after she witnesses his exchange with the labanderas. Shorty responds in English, “But I got no money, Itsy! When I coma [sic] back, I give you much dough!” (ibid., 65). Itsay, in disbelief, expresses that she will settle for the nice native boy (named Porong) who has been courting her, “Oh! Yeah . . . at namaywang si Itsay.—Mabuti pang di hamak sa iyo si Porong. Ako’y babalik na sa kanya ngayon din” (Oh! Yeah . . . and Itsay put her hands on her hips—good thing Porong isn’t as vile as you. I’m going back to him now) (ibid.). Just like Leonor, Itsay also chooses not to hold out hope for her American lover and to return to a man at home. Even while both women in this narrative were better off forgetting their sailor men, there was a clear hierarchy of choices. The white soldier, Smith, was undoubtedly depicted as the most respectable and acceptable option.

Representations of intimacies within local newspapers reflected these same dynamics, particularly the shame that a relation with an American aroused. The National Teachers’ College newspaper accused local women who hung around GIs of straying from the ideal Maria Clara image.²³ According to the article, such a woman had become “so much Americanized

. . . that no longer does she think much of a kiss, not as before—and even if it is a kiss flavored with gin" (N.T.C. *Polestar* 1945a, 4). An editorial in the University of the Philippines's student newspaper argued that the return of the Americans corrupted the "simple *dalaga*" (young lady) who "found it more lucrative to entertain the lonely GI than to go to office or attend diligently to studies" (Lansang 1946, 11). GIs themselves were represented as uncivilized, critiqued for their drinking and sexuality, and insulted for the use of slang, which was considered "the speech of low educated society" (N.T.C. *Polestar* 1945b, 9).²⁴

While newspapers blamed GIs in general for corrupting Philippine society, black servicemen were represented as especially troubling. The National Teachers' College Newspaper cited specific examples of failed relationships between black GIs and women in US military towns in Australia. Those who married black men and moved to the US purportedly did not feel accepted by their husband's community. "I felt like I was an outcast all the time I was in America," stated Mrs. Betty Schultz, explaining that the other women made military wives like her feel that they had "pinched their men" (*ibid.*). In addition to anecdotes discouraging marriages with black servicemen, mainstream newspapers such as the *Manila Times* emphasized the race of black GIs who allegedly committed sexual crimes, reinforcing the notion of black men as criminal and sexual threats.²⁵

Public concerns about GI babies further implied that Filipina–GI romances were social problems. Babies left behind by their American fathers had become living proof of Filipinas' "hanggang pier" status. Kerima Polotan (1948, 7), a popular Filipina author in the postwar period, wrote an article describing the plight of 6,000 abandoned GI babies, calling on the public to address the issue. According to Polotan, the people should be responsible for ensuring the welfare of these children 50 percent of whom were suffering from malnutrition and various skin diseases due to their state of extreme poverty. The majority of the mothers, according to Polotan, came from "menial" backgrounds, were uneducated, and did not have the opportunities to provide for themselves, let alone their children. Less than 1 percent of the 6,000 abandoned children were born "legitimate" or of married parents. And of these 6,000 abandoned children, Polotan emphasizes that 25 percent were born of a Filipina mother and a "colored GI" while the rest of the fathers were white.

Even though a high percentage of women were left behind by white servicemen, the Filipino social preference for white skin perpetuated the

notion that white–Filipina mixtures were more valuable. The economic opportunities afforded only to Amerasian children of white fathers later in life, especially in the media industries, only reaffirmed this widespread belief. Actresses such as Anita Linda and Hilda Koronel owe their widespread fame in part to having been sought after and later discovered for their "mestiza" looks (PDI 2005). The potential for social success to emerge from relations generally considered shameful depended on this notion of white skin as valuable and on the high status of "mestizos" in Philippine society (Rafael 2000, 165).

Few publications attempted to challenge the stereotypical image of GI–Filipina relationships, and those that did defended relationships between white servicemen and Filipinas (cf. Relova 1956). In opposition to those US servicemen and local women whose personal feelings transcended social norms, the dominant discourse drew on the metaphor of prostitution through the simple phrase "hanggang pier" to taint all interracial relations. Indeed, this pervasive phrase combined both shame and opportunity to mean that those who sought out relations with American servicemen lacked morals but also possessed the ambition to raise their social standing.

Conclusion

Throughout the postwar campaigns to manage VD, prostitution and military spaces, interracial intimacies were often reduced to narrow categories. Arousing suspicion, they were judged as immoral and temporary with only few exceptions. Despite the variety of interpersonal relations that existed between US servicemen and Filipinas, the policies, procedures, and culture of the military associated interracial intimacies with the sexual, with the threat of being used or fooled by a cunning Filipina, and of course with the problem of VD. Similar ways of perceiving such intimacies emerged within local cultural productions, with major distinctions between how black and white soldiers were perceived.

These narrow categories continued to define how intimacies were understood into the next era. By the late 1960s and 1970s, the height of the US bases period, these same issues continued to be heavily debated. Yet during this time the problems that GI–Filipina relations aroused became a means to also critique the US and the military's role in generating vice around base towns. Philippine feminists and anti-base activists often drew on discourses of intimacies to critique US imperialism, capitalism, as well

as gender inequality (Enloe 1990; CWR 1994; Baker 2004; Roces 2009). Meanwhile, the Philippine government's US alliances grew stronger. President Marcos, in favor of the US military presence in the Philippines, even promoted sexual tourism by moving to officially recognize women who worked in bars as "hostesses" nationwide, making prostitution appear wholesome and clean to international audiences (Enloe 1990, 39; Chant and McIlwaine 1995). In these ways, the discourse of intimacies often worked to support political positions and agendas.

Whether deliberately or not, officials in the postwar era and beyond *authorized* the affairs that they considered illicit. Their actions were informed by the notion of protection, not of local women but of institutions, reputations, efficiency, and order. For Filipino and Filipina feminists today the question remains: how to overcome the historically fraught narratives and social stigma that negatively impact the lives of Filipinas. Can we see a Filipina dating a white man without wondering, "*whore or wife?*" Yet, how can we balance this move to challenge stereotypes with the need to address the realities of exploitation and violence that far too often confront the most disempowered of women?²⁶ Promoting laws that protect rather than criminalize the most vulnerable in the context of sexual labor and invalidating harmful representations of race, skin color, and intimacy in Philippine media would play a powerful role in shifting the current discourse away from historical patterns of violence.

List of Abbreviations

CWR	Center for Women's Resources, Quezon City
GI	"Government Issue," referring to US servicemen
RG	Record Group
US NARA	US National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD
VD	venereal disease
VDCC	Venereal Disease Control Council
WEDPRO	Women's Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organization, Quezon City

Notes

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- 1 I use the terms "American" and "US" interchangeably to avoid repetition while acknowledging that "American" refers to people and places beyond the United States in other contexts.
- 2 A lawyer, Teodoro Molo assisted in the US military's antiprostitution efforts. He served as a Philippine senator in the 1960s.
- 3 "Local" in this article refers to people and communities in the Philippines. It is not meant as a racial or national term.
- 4 For references to the "jeep girl" see *N.T.C. Polestar* 1945a; Trinidad 1946; Ambrosio 1946; and the 1946 LVN film *Victory Joe!*. In the film, the female protagonist Rosie is caught riding in a jeep with a white American, Bob, and the neighbors gossip about her.
- 5 "Discourse" refers to a body of social knowledge created through official and unofficial institutions. On the relationship between discourse and power in the history of sexuality, see Foucault 1978.
- 6 This article focuses on heterosexual relations and acknowledges that more research needs to be done on the US military's policing of same-sex relations in the postwar Philippines. Recent scholarship has made important contributions to the history of sexuality in the US (Canaday 2009) and sexuality and empire in the early twentieth century (Mendoza 2015).
- 7 Relations between US servicemen of Filipino heritage and Filipinas were not policed in the same way. US military policies after the Second World War made it easier for US servicemen of Filipino descent to marry Filipinas, allowing them to bypass the waiting period of six months to apply for a marriage certificate (on this policy, see Miller 1955). Such relations are nearly invisible in local cultural productions despite their prevalence.
- 8 The broader literature on empire and interracial intimacies is quite extensive. Ann Stoler's (2002) influential work argues that intimate management in the Dutch context was central to producing and maintaining colonial categories such as colonizer and colonized, thus facilitating imperial conquest. Cf. Wexler 2000; Levine 2003; Shah 2011.
- 9 Some scholars have argued for alternative ways of rethinking the connection between intimacies and "empire." Paul Kramer (2006) moves toward an analysis of "gender" so as not to conflate categories of the domestic, the familial, and the sexual, while Lisa Lowe (2015) uses the category of "intimacies" to illuminate the deep, global connections of geographies in seemingly unrelated contexts.
- 10 Concern about the spread of VD existed in all places where US military personnel were stationed after the Second World War, but was seen as especially problematic in places like the Philippines where "over 800,000 American military personnel" were stationed in 1945, assisting in projects of national security and development (Friedman 2001, 129).

- 11 Notions of Philippine native bodies as diseased are part of a long history extending back to the US colonial period (Anderson 2006).
- 12 The historiography on white supremacy, power, and violence against black women in the US context is extensive. Cf., e.g., Davis 1983; Higginbotham 1989; Rosen 1991; Gilmore 1996; McGuire 2010.
- 13 Although the question of regulating prostitution was debated in earlier periods (Kramer 2006; Abalahin 2003; Dery 2001), antiregulation was already a standard to follow in the postwar period. See Ulio 1945 for an official statement on this policy.
- 14 The other groups of public health services were general sanitation, maternal-child health, nutrition, health education and public health training centers, public health laboratories, and quarantine services (Dayrit et al. 2002, 67).
- 15 A *panciteria* is a place that sells *pancit* (noodles).
- 16 The selling of sex existed in a variety of forms. For an outline of the history of prostitution in the Philippines, see CWR 2000.
- 17 Historical literature on sex work in the postwar Philippines is underdeveloped, as scholarship has focused mainly on the early twentieth century. Feminist literature on the 1960s–1990s is more abundant. Cf., e.g., Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992; Moselina 1979; Miralao 1990; Chant and McIlwaine 1995; CWR 2000; Ralston and Keeble 2009.
- 18 According to Andrew Abalahin (2013), the context of prohibition in the US, including the Mann Act of 1910 and the banning of liquor sales to US soldiers in uniform, led to increased attention to moral issues during the colonial period and the need to address the issue of sexual labor in the Philippines.
- 19 Few argued in favor of regulation. In his editorial published in the *Liberator*, Martiniano Vivo (1945) expressed the unpopular view that prostitution in Manila needed to be regulated for the health and safety of military personnel.
- 20 Representations of American GIs of Filipino or Latino descent were much less frequent in postwar cultural productions, despite their presence in the Philippines during and after the Second World War. See Gavilan (2012) on Filipinos in the US Navy and Reyes (1995) for a discussion of Filipina war brides who married US servicemen of Filipino descent.
- 21 The phrase "hanggang pier," which became a common way of referring to such intimacies, was likely popularized by the *Palaris* film, *Hanggang Pier*, produced and shown throughout Manila and neighboring places between 1946 and 1947.
- 22 Other films reflecting similar themes include *G.I. Fever: Ay Kano!* (1947) and *Hanggang Pier* (1946). Movie posters of these films can be found at the Lopez Memorial Museum and Library's digital collection; the actual films, however, are not archived and have yet to be located by film historians.
- 23 Maria Clara was a character in José Rizal's (1887) *Noli me tàngere*; by the 1930s Maria Clara represented idealized Filipina femininity in Philippine society. Cf. Cruz 2012; Nakpil 1963.
- 24 This association between GI–Filipina relations and sexual immorality was prevalent in local publications. Cf. Litonjua 1946; Molano 1952; David 1946, 19, 21.
- 25 See related news reports of crime and sexual violence in *Manila Times* 1946a; *Manila Times* 1946b; *Manila Chronicle* 1946. The language in these articles, which drew connections between race and criminality, is part of a long history of Philippine newspapers (Marasigan 2010, 485). By the postwar period, these racial perceptions led the US military and Philippine government to reduce the numbers of African American servicemen in the Philippines from 40 percent in 1946 to 10 percent in 1948, citing VD and crime statistics as the main justification (Friedman 2001, 130).
- 26 These are relevant questions that Filipina novelist Marivi Soliven (2013) provokes in her award-winning fiction that explores contemporary women's issues in the Philippines and the diaspora.

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