

The Significance of Appointing Filipinas as Ambassadors in the Foreign Service

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Abstract: The study's overall purpose is to emphasize the significance of appointing Filipinas as Ambassadors in the Foreign Service. In doing so, the study sought to answer what are the approaches of Filipina Ambassadors and how they utilize those approaches to effect change in the Service; hence, making their appointment significant. The researchers conducted interviews with Filipino Ambassadors (a man and a woman) and key participants with background in diplomacy. The conducted interviews were utilized with gathered secondary sources, enabling the study to determine that the appointment of Filipinas as Ambassadors is significant in the Foreign Service through the development of themes which satisfyingly answered the study's problems. Most importantly, the study was able to manifest as well that gender is not a qualification in the field of Foreign Service because both genders can do what other can and they both have something to contribute in different aspects which make them complementary and effective.

Keywords: Ambassadors, appointment, Filipinas, Foreign Service, gender, qualifications.

I. INTRODUCTION

Importance of masculinity in conducting state-to-state relations became a factor as to why the field of diplomacy was considered once a domain reserved for men, but not until 1920s when the United States permitted women to partake in the Foreign Service and the Philippines in 1950s opened its doors also for women to participate in the Philippine Foreign Service (US State Department report, 2006; Dayang, 2011). Several literatures suggest that women also possess skills needed in advancing the best interest of a state. In other words, with the participation of both genders, this can bring in efficiency and effectivity in the Service, making them complementary to each other.

Despite the discrimination women had faced, the Philippines took the lead among Asian countries to let women engage in the Service. With that, this demonstrated a progression in women's participation in diplomacy.

Several studies expressed the overrepresentation of men in diplomacy, and there haven't been enough studies pertaining to the involvement of Filipina Ambassadors in the Service. Hence, the objective of this study is to (1) highlight the competency of Filipina Ambassadors in exercising their function in the Service; (2) underline the importance of appointing and including more Filipina in the Service; and (3) thus manifest that gender is not a qualification in the conduct of diplomacy.

II. DISCUSSION

Statement of the Problem

The study sought to answer the following questions intended to feature distinctive attributes of Filipina Ambassadors making them significant in the appointment to Foreign Service.

- What are the distinct approaches of Filipinas in Foreign Service as women and as ambassadors?
- How can Filipina Ambassadors effect change in the Foreign Service?
- Why is the appointment of Filipinas as Ambassadors in the Foreign Service significant?

Conceptual Framework

The above figure presents the systematic method in conducting the study to bring about proper and well-grounded answers to the problem statements defined in this paper. Women's inclusivity in the Foreign Service was a concept not completely accepted before; hence, diplomacy had been a struggle for women and been gendered. Related academic literature which sufficiently discussed about these aforesaid propositions and those which covered the participation and accomplishments made by Filipinas in the Foreign Service will be assessed together with other pertinent data gathered through various reading materials and interviews. The result will determine and eventually substantiate why Filipinas' appointment as ambassadors in the Service is significant.

Theoretical Framework

Cynthia Enloe in 1990, as per Towns and Niklasson's article (2016), argued on how men were presumed as diplomats because of the skills and resources they had. Harold Nicolson in his book *Diplomacy* had the same assumption. He, as per Berridge, Keens-Soper and Otte (2001), articulated the portrait of the ideal diplomatist namely "truth, accuracy, calm, patience, good temper, modesty and loyalty," to which he further referred to as 'gentlemanly qualities.' However, he had neglected women's capability saying that they are vulnerable to qualities of zeal, sympathy and intuition "which unless kept under firmest control, are dangerous qualities in international affairs" (Rahman-Figueroa, 2012). Analyzing this theory gives highlight on what gender norms are and how they affect the functions of both genders. Thus, in proving women's capabilities, the Feminist Theory in International Relations (IR) is utilized to recognize and challenge the assumptions about gender norms. It is incorrect, however, to believe that a feminist theory is exclusively for women and their superiority towards men. As for Lascuarín and Villafuerte (2016), it is through this theory where one may acquire a more realistic understanding on how the construction of genders in IR works. The Feminist Theory will then challenge the assumption presented by Nicolson's to that of women, and would then support the argument presented in this paper.

Methodology

Research Design

The researchers utilized a case study which enabled the conclusion of key themes and results by describing the experiences of selected participants.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study are Filipino Ambassadors (a man and a woman) and key participants with background in diplomacy.

Sampling Technique

The researchers made use of a purposive sampling technique.

Research Instrument

The researchers prepared interview questions validated by the thesis adviser and panellists.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers gathered data through in-depth oral interviews and secondary sources.

Data Analysis

The researchers analyzed the study's findings through an inductive approach.

Results and Discussion

The Filipina Way

It is common for the community of the Philippine Foreign Service to describe directly Filipina Ambassadors as motherly and family centric because they are believed to approach their work with empathy and human touch. They are characterized as multitaskers with initiative, flexibility and peripheral vision.

The commonly description of Filipina Ambassadors' characteristics and approaches in the Service have been effective because they have greatly represented the Philippines as a whole by staying consistent with the promotion of its national interests and most importantly, in the service of the Filipino people abroad. Additionally, Filipina Ambassadors have effectively proven that they can balance personal and work life.

Filipina Ambassadors make use of their approaches – those that were deemed to be dangerous in international affairs (Rahman-Figueroa, 2012), to efficiently serve the Filipino community and represent the Philippines abroad and that's what makes them distinctly effective in the Service. Most importantly, they effect change that “help promote to institutionalize inclusiveness in terms of, and to create awareness of gender sensitivity that it becomes a deeply ingrained culture and institution.” Hence, the Filipina Way of approaching the Foreign Service is a distinct contribution for the greater good of the society.

Filipinas as Ambassadors

Filipina Ambassadors have continuously shown resiliency and tenacity manifested by their eagerness and enthusiasm to reach and help people with their predicaments abroad. The Dean of National College of Public Administration and Governance (NCPAG) corresponds to it by saying how women could actually foster a more humane approach to work. Furthermore, their perseverance is also proven by their undeterred service – that despite being stationed in a hardship post, they could exceptionally handle themselves well to carry through their mission. Filipinas have gone far beyond expectations, and international communities acknowledge this. They are also known and praised for their innovations and initiatives. These Filipinas know no limits and have maximize their capabilities to preserve and protect not only the Career Service but also the welfare of the Filipino people. Also, they were able to break the discriminatory practice the Department of Foreign Affairs once had for them in terms of marriage to a foreign national. To Ambassador Cabatculan, he sees this as a great accomplishment done by women.

Despite of the growing consciousness in gender equality and sensitivity, Filipina Ambassadors' appointment in Philippine Missions abroad should be a careful process for despite that Filipinas can be anywhere they wanted to be, the consent to perform diplomatic and consular duties depends on the receiving country/countries. This cultural and/or religious milieu may definitely restrain them to fully maximize their presence, but what must be done is to accept, respect and work with it to not disrupt anything.

This is where the importance of Filipinas' appointment as ambassadors in the Foreign Service lies and is grounded; however, this does not turn a blind eye to men nor discriminate against them. It is still on the character, competence, performance and other qualifications considered important and necessary that make one's appointment significant in the Service. This should not be on the basis of gender.

Genders in the Foreign Service

Differences between genders can lead to a competition, yet this competition creates a healthy dynamics which pushes both genders to aim for excellence and maximize their potentials. Despite those differences they were able to complement with each other through demonstrating their different approaches in achieving their goals.

The data gathered from the interviews also expressed that gender should not be a qualification but it is through merit and competence, capabilities and expertise, and the orientation of a person one should be qualified. A person that demonstrates excellence, provided that he/she is grounded with substance, can effectively exercise its function in the Service. In addition to that, following the core values of 3C's (Competence, Character, and Commitment) while being driven by RILE (responsibility, integrity, loyalty, and excellence), one can be able to perform well and represent its people while advancing the best interest of its state.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study sought to highlight Filipina ambassadors' competency in the Foreign Service, underline the importance of their inclusion and appointment, and manifest why gender is not a qualification in the conduct of diplomacy. Filipina Ambassadors have proven that, in their own way, they can work and serve in the Foreign Service efficiently. Even though there are cultural and religious limitations, gender would not still be a qualification in the appointment of ambassadors. Additionally, the DFA has been gender responsive for they have been breaking down gender barriers by acknowledging the competency of Filipinas passing the Foreign Service Officer Examinations.

Filipina ambassadors approach their work with zeal, sympathy and intuition which, according to Nicolson's theory, were dangerous qualities in international relations (Rahman-Figueroa, 2012). However, these said “dangerous” qualities were efficiently used by Filipina Ambassadors in fulfilling their duties, proving that it is more than welcome and safe in the field of Foreign Service. Hence, Nicolson’s notion that the qualities of an ideal diplomat can only be found in men is incorrect.

Filipina Ambassadors have excellently demonstrated their potentials in the Foreign Service both as women and as ambassadors. They serve as good models to the international community that they can function with their own distinct characteristics and make it effective. Therefore, the appointment of Filipinas as Ambassadors is significant in the Foreign Service.

Recommendation

Advancement of the Foreign Service through the Philippine Government

The researchers recommend to the Philippine government to strongly make an effort in educating the people to be gender responsive and gender sensitive. This will then create an environment that is welcoming to all people with different sexual orientations. People should also learn how to unlearn the norms and practices that discourages, not just women but all genders from participating in the Service, as per Ms. Encinas-Franco had suggested. What’s more is that, Officer-in-Charge De Vega suggested that the government should also extend the effort to the LGBTQ community through the Gender and Development (GAD) that encourages all genders to participate, without hesitance, in the Service and discourages discrimination against them; thus, the researchers believe that this will lead to a gender equal Foreign Service. In addition to that, it is through disruption and education that enables us to see even the gradual changes in our society in pursuit of a positive change at the end. Provided that Filipina Ambassadors are being assigned to various posts, if given the opportunity, these women should also be encouraged to be assigned in difficult posting, such as in the Middle East, to serve as a training ground for them to maximize their potentials and explore more areas that had been limited to women. Another suggested course of action is for the government to provide seminars, activities, conferences, and etc., in and outside the office, targeting young aspiring diplomats and Filipinas, to provide clarification of a gender equal Foreign Service and encourage them to be ambassadors in the future, and to contribute in the pursuit of a gender equal Foreign Service while manifesting the significance of Filipina Ambassadors in the Service.

Clarification of student’s misconceptions

With this study, students taking interest in the course/program of Foreign Service or IR will be supplemented with knowledge and clarification to avoid having prejudices towards genders in the Foreign Service. This study may serve as an encouragement and inspiration for the students aspiring to be ambassadors in the future; thus, it is recommended for the students to engage themselves in seminars and activities that would instil wider knowledge related to the subject. Researchers also suggest that academic institutions should utilize studies related to women in diplomacy and/or genders in diplomacy and illuminate the minds of the students of how the differences between genders make them complementary to each other and that women have something to contribute in the Service just like men, and both can do what the other can. Furthermore, it is recommended for the future researchers to expand the knowledge the researchers had concerning women in diplomacy and provide additional information of what more can women bring in the Service.

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