

Transnational Imaginaries of Japanese Filipinos and their Quest for Flexible Citizenship

Shikainnah Glow Dalumpines MEÑOZA

Graduate Student

Graduate School for International Development and Cooperation
Division of Education Development and Cultural and Regional Studies
Hiroshima University

1-5-1 Kagamiyama, Higashi-Hiroshima 739-8529, Japan

Abstract

This article examines the formation of *flexible citizens* embodied by Japanese Filipinos who were born in the 1980s and 1990s. Using *flexible citizenship* (Ong, 1999) as the analytical tool, the author explores the lived experiences of Japanese Filipinos through their experiences of flexible mobility, individual freedom and self-enterprising within the contexts of migration policies, nationality laws, family values and the job market. Based on an ethnographic study, this paper suggests that the flexibility of middle-class and educated¹ Japanese Filipinos is embedded in the new possibilities and constraints created by the institutional structures of the Philippine and Japanese governments. They do not simply acquire the legal status to an imagined, developed Japan for higher social mobility, but rather their experiences are complex ways of acquiring legal status in one nation-state without completely cutting ties with another, while maintaining family and social group cultural values and accumulating different forms of skills within their constructed transnational arenas. This is the basis by which they then propel themselves into becoming *employable* in a globally competitive job market. Another form of mobility, in this case from Japan to the Philippines, is used by parents to impose disciplinary actions upon Japanese Filipinos. Flexible citizenship is thus a form of mobility for complex, sometimes contradicting, reasons constructed, negotiated and/or contested by Japanese Filipinos while continually transforming their subjectivity in the contemporary transnational context.

Key words: flexible citizenship, Japanese Filipinos, neoliberal values, transnationalism

1.1 Introduction

“Deciding which citizenship—Filipino or Japanese—is crucial but I don’t want my citizenship status to determine my life’s choices in the future. My [Japanese] dad will always tell me that we can live our normal lives even though I didn’t have the Japanese citizenship. And so, I have convinced myself that having a permanent resident visa [in Japan] is also an advantage because I can move from one country to another. I can still practice my profession while in the Philippines or even apply to other migrant countries like Australia.”

-Maya (28), a registered nurse in the Philippines, entered in Japan at the age of 18 with a spouse or child of a Japanese national visa; now a permanent-resident visa holder in Japan.

The above quote demonstrates a unique feature of a middle-class and educated Japanese Filipino creating simultaneous connections between the Philippines and Japan. Maya, a registered nurse in the Philippines and a permanent resident visa holder in Japan, revealed a dilemma in delaying her Japanese citizenship acquisition, specifically to keep her options open. This narrative reveals that meaning-making re. citizenship is, for her, not only a matter of asserting rights in a legal context, but also navigating her individual freedom and social positioning as translated into her everyday life. This paper aims to make known the practices and strategies engaged in and constructed by Japanese Filipinos that are shaped by various transnational structures. The term “Japanese Filipino”, which refers to the children of Japanese and Filipino parents, is used as a wide ranging concept in this paper. It allows the author to include into the analysis of flexible citizenship the Japanese Filipinos who were born and raised in Japan but later pursued education in the Philippines.

The growing number of children and youths born from international marriages and civil unions is evident in relation to the ever increasing transnational mobility of people. The influx of Filipino entertainers and brides to rural villages in 1980s Japan accounted for the rise in birth of children with both Japanese and Filipino descent. In 2018, 21,852 of the 586,481 marriages registered in Japan were between Japanese and foreign nationals, of which 3,676 marriages were between Japanese males and Filipino females and 269 marriages were between Japanese females and Filipino males. (Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, 2018). While divorce cases between Japanese men and non-Japanese wives saw a slight decrease from 2013, Filipino wives ranked second among the foreign wives of Japanese nationals next to Chinese wives. The population of children with Japanese and Filipino parents reached 100,000 from 1992 to 2012 wherein 98% were born from Japanese fathers and Filipino mothers (as based on the family registry in Japan (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 1992–2012)). However, these numbers exclude children who were born outside of marriage and who are not legally recognized by their Japanese fathers. Non-government organizations based in the Philippines estimated that there are a total of 100,000 to 200,000 children born from Japanese and Filipino parents.

The structure of Japanese Filipino transnational households does not follow a uniform pattern, but rather operates as interconnected set of varied social and cultural processes shaped by migration policies, nationality laws, gender, and class status. A number of studies noted that children between parents of Japanese and Filipinos possess varied characteristics in terms of their place of birth, residence, family structure, class, migration experiences, and legal citizenship. They may also possess various cultural and linguistic orientations depending on where they grew up. Their diverse identity formation and being labeled as contradictions i.e., as “hafu,” double or mixed children, have been a subject to various academic analyses (Da-anoy, 2016; Celero, 2015; Uchio, 2015; Ogaya, 2015; Hara, 2013; Ito, 2011). Meanwhile, there is an ongoing interest in their migratory experiences, their pursuit of Japanese citizenship, and mobility across time and space (Seiger, 2017; Suzuki, 2015: 2010; Takahata & Hara, 2015; De Dios, 2012). Another strand of literature suggests that their class status plays a vital role in the ways Japanese Filipinos in the Philippines identify themselves—depending on their positionality and the unique web of relations within their society (Ubalde, 2013). This finding is similarly observed in the group of Japanese Filipinos observed in this study.

A common finding in the literature pointed to the ways by which Filipino migrants and their children assert their rights of recognition and belongingness to Japan with the support of civil societies (Seiger, 2017; Suzuki, 2010). Among these is the employing of blood relatives as leverage by which to gain access to legal resources and thereby attain national belongingness (Seiger, 2017). But what happens when Japanese Filipinos continue to seek varied ways *other* than attaining legal status within Japan to construct different forms of imaginaries while also trying to maintain their social, cultural, and legal ties in/with the Philippines?

With regards to flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999), contemporary migration among Chinese immigrants has been described and analyzed through this lens for two decades. Such migration includes strategies often entail moving family members or financial resources to the United States while operating family businesses in Asia. Fong (2011) supports the discussion in describing the varied motivations, experiences, and imaginings of transnational Chinese students who belonged to the single-child generation of China and who studied at colleges, universities and language schools in developed countries such as the USA, Australia and Japan. However, the upward mobility brought about by being able to study abroad caused unexpected suffering among said students. Many of them struggled between keeping up with their studies while also doing low-skilled jobs to support themselves. Students were juggling between their study and low-paying part-time jobs. Due to their difficult situation, some either had to extend their period of study, or even give up before completing it. Those who have completed their degrees often found them to be unnecessary when they moved back to China.

Japanese Filipinos in this case experienced different forms of mobility² within their respective constructed transnational arena(s). The transnational arena referred to in this paper is the social field³ as constituted by the Japanese Filipino household *as a whole*, their parents and Japanese Filipinos themselves. The transnational imaginaries that they construct collectively, albeit not homogeneously, have helped produced this arena. They are influenced by various institutions i.e., the bilateral migration policies, the media, academic institutions, previous association to non-government organizations and family.

1.2 Flexible Citizenship as Theoretical Framework for Analysis

The author refers to the ways Japanese Filipinos navigate their experiences within their constructed transnational arena(s). The author uses the concept of flexible citizenship as discussed by Ong (1999) to analyze these practices and strategies used to construct different forms of imaginaries that are shaped by family relations and structures of power, and also how they respond to these conditions. Using the Foucauldian notion of “governmentality” wherein the *“regimes of truth and power produce disciplinary effects that condition our sense of self and everyday practices”* (Ong 1999,6), Ong traces the different regimes of state, family, and economic enterprises that *“shape and direct border crossings and transnational relations... conditioning their dynamism and scope*

but also giving structure to their patterning." (ibid.)

Moreover, as such subjects continue to accumulate capital and social prestige within the global arena, they "*emphasize, and are regulated by, practices favoring flexibility, mobility and repositioning in relation to markets, governments and cultural regimes*" (Ong, 1999, 6). These logics and practices are produced within the structures of meaning concerning family, gender, nationality, class mobility, and social power. This is pertinent since she critically merges cultural and political-economic analysis in discussions of the lives and negotiation(s) of migration(s), relocation, business networks and state-capital relations of Chinese global capitalists. While discussing the economic rationality and neoliberal tendencies which encourage family emigration, her concern centers upon the cultural logics that make these actions that Ong (1999) described as "*thinkable, practicable, and desirable*" that are embedded in the process(es) of capital accumulation.

This approach, however, fails to take filiation⁴ into account from among the narratives of migrants. For Japanese Filipinos, one significant variable that encourages migration is their filiation to both states. Filiation or blood relations among Japanese Filipinos is seen to be a significant factor in their (im)mobility and their quest for attaining flexible status. In the following sections, an outstanding case study provides insight on how such relationships can either be a drive for their flexible mobility, or serve as a constraint for obtaining citizenship status when filiation between the child and the parent (mostly, the Japanese fathers) is denied from the legal perspective. These constraining conditions are exemplified through the nationality laws of Japan. This has proved to be a burden for Japanese Filipinos who, at the time of birth, were in the Philippines and the Filipino mothers, oblivious of the conditions necessary to assure their children's Japanese citizenship status, are unable to meet the demands of Japan's nationality laws. Specifically, the author intends to explore how middle-class and educated Japanese Filipinos respond flexibly to changing nationality laws and migration policies, family relations, migration, and economic conditions. The author should add that flexible citizenship is utilized by parents of Japanese Filipino as a disciplining practice imposed upon their Japanese Filipino children. While flexible movement is possible, this does not necessarily equate to *freedom*, but rather an obstruction of their *preferred* mobility.

Moreover, not only do non-government organizations facilitate the migration of some respondents as they too set a kind of disciplining process upon family members—especially those who were able to acquire Japanese citizenship and eventually settle in Japan. For Japanese Filipinos who are no longer active in the organization—as a result of the *completion*⁵ of their case—NGO's have encouraged them to support other Japanese Filipino members of the organization whose cases are yet to be *completed*. This sense of a fellow-being that is shared with other people is fortified by the NGO's among its members even though they are no longer associated with the organization. Namely, they can still express their *inclusion* of the group in the form of monetary contributions and by offering of assistance to Japanese Filipinos who plan to come to Japan and settle there.

Within this framework, the spatial and temporal mobilities of Japanese Filipinos are shaped through various factors while simultaneously encountered with a sense of displacement both inside the Philippines and Japan. Flexible citizenship promises the potential for greater happiness and freedom afforded by transnational mobility, but such experiences bring unexpected suffering, ambivalence, and disappointment as they struggled to pursue their legal status application, balance their study and part-time jobs or were/are faced with complications surrounding love, unexpected pregnancy and marriage.

As the concerned Japanese Filipinos grow and mature, they are eventually able to actively join the society as professionals in an era of intensified market liberalization. According to Castles and Miller (2014), movements of commodities, capital and ideas always give rise to movements of people and vice versa. Global cultural interchange, facilitated by improved transport and proliferation of print and electronic media, can also increase migration aspirations (Castles and Miller, 2014, 7). Like their Filipino mothers who firstly sojourned to Japan to work as entertainers in Japan's nightlife industry or become brides in rural villages, Japanese Filipinos at present similarly sojourn either to Japan or Philippines but this time, with *different* motivations, views toward their receiving state, and transforming of their subjectivities. Mitchell (2016) presents a juxtaposition of neoliberal citizenship which includes the rise of liberalized markets and more flexible and financially based regimes of capital accumulation, the global flows and disarticulation of citizenship and national territory, and systems of governance involving the growth of entrepreneurialism and constitution of universal "free" subjects vis-à-vis the excluded population. In this manner, the author portrays a kind of flexible citizenship embodied by Japanese Filipinos that regards the neoliberal values of flexible mobility, individual freedom, and self-enterprising which simultaneously juxtaposes their flexibility and obstruction or limitation of their mobility within their entangled and complex realities.

1.3 Methodology

The author conducted a series of multi-sited fieldwork in the Philippines and Japan. In-depth interviews serve as the main method for data-gathering. The author met the respondents in the institutions run by the Japanese descendants' association⁶ in

Davao City in the Philippines and in Japan from 2015 to 2018. The interviews ran for one to two hours in each session and were performed with an audio-recorder. Prior to the interviews, semi-structured survey questionnaires were distributed to 31 Japanese Filipino respondents aged 15–30 years old in Davao, Manila, Hiroshima, Nagoya, Osaka and Tokyo to obtain their basic demographic profile. Respondents are then selected based on their educational history, employment and migration experiences. Additionally, the author completed a month-long internship with an NGO⁷ in Philippines. This NGO is one of the major organizations addressing the needs of distressed Filipino women migrants, especially those working in Japan and/or returnees and their Japanese Filipino children. The author conducted participant observations and interviews with selected Filipino mothers as well.

Concerning the main goal of this paper, the data gathered from 15 respondents are highlighted. Their basic profile is shown in Table 1. The author met them again on several occasions such as at a community gathering organized by a Filipino community. The author also conducted follow-up interviews through phone calls and communication via social networking sites. To obtain more ethnographic data, the author conducted participant observations in varied classes in Philippine Nikkei Jin Kai International School (basic education) and Mindanao International College (undergraduate study) which provide Japanese classes to the students. The author's affiliation with the college between 2009 and 2013 as a student provided her with in-depth knowledge for this study. Another form of methodology is undertaken through the gathering of secondary data such as literature on the changing nationality laws of Japan, migration policies and efforts of other non-government organizations in mediating the migration of the respondents.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Name* (Gender)	Year of Birth	Birthplace (A, B, C, D, E)**	Highest Academic Attainment (Private/Public School in PH or JP) (at the time of interview)	Occupation: Philippines/Japan	Passport/Other Documents to prove Legal Status	Parents' Occupation***: Mother/Father
Maya (F)	1990	Butuan, Philippines (B)	College Graduate (Private-PH)	Nurse at a private hospital/Part-time worker	Philippines/ Permanent Resident Visa in Japan	Entertainer/ Company employee
Sachi (F)	1996	Hiroshima, Japan (D)	College Graduate (Private-PH)	/Employee at a multinational corporation	Japan	Entertainer/ Bus driver
Riku (M)	1992	Davao, Philippines (E)	College Graduate (Private-PH)	Cruise ship supervisor/	Philippines	Entertainer/ Company employee
Eri (F)	1993	Davao, Philippines (C)	College Graduate (Private-PH)	/Part-time worker of a local factory (mother of 1)	Japan	Entertainer/ Company employee
Yuna (F)	1989	Aichi, Japan (D)	Vocational College Graduate (Private-PH) then (Private College- JP)	/Nagoya Education Board Teacher (mother of 3 children)	Japan/Certificate of Filipino Citizenship	Entertainer/ Factory worker
Ko (M)	1996	Davao, Philippines (B)	College Level (Private-PH)	/College student	Philippines/Spouse or Child of a Japanese National Visa	Entertainer/ Company employee
Hana (F)	1991	Davao, Philippines (C)	College Graduate (Private-PH)	/Full-time worker of a local factory	Japan	Entertainer/ Company employee
Mei (F)	1994	Pasay, Philippines (A)	College Graduate (Private-PH)	/Caregiver in a local facility	Philippines/ Designated Activities Visa	Entertainer/ Business owner - Yakaza member
Kaito (M)	1995	Davao, Philippines (D)	College Level (Private-PH)	/College student	Japan	Entertainer/ Company employee
Akie (F)	1994	Pasay, Philippines (A)	College Graduate (Private-PH)	/Caregiver in a local facility	Philippines/ Designated Activities Visa	Entertainer/ Business owner- Yakaza member
Mika (F)	1997	Panabo, Philippines (C)	College Graduate (Private-PH)	/Translator-interpreter in a multinational company	Philippines/Japan	Working in Manila/ Company employee
Ai (F)	1992	Davao, Philippines (C)	College Graduate (Private-PH)	/Part-time worker of a local factory (mother of 2)	Japan	Entertainer/ Company employee
Touma (M)	1991	Saitama, Japan (C)	College Level (Private-PH)	/Airport ramp agent	Philippines/ Japan	Entertainer/ Company employee
Akari (F)	1996	Misamis Oriental, Philippines (C)	College Graduate (Private-PH)	/Company employee	Japan	Working in Manila/ Company employee
Kana (F)	1994	Manila, Philippines (C)	College Level (National University-PH)	UP Diliman Student (BA)- Professional Ballet Dancer/	Philippines/Japan	Exchange student/ No work during the coup de'etat in 1980s

*The names are pseudonyms assigned to each respondent to protect their identity.

**Category of their mobility patterns.

***These are the occupation of the biological parents of the respondents at the time of their meeting. Presently, some of the parents are separated and the mothers either remarried or are in relationship to another Japanese/Filipino partner.

The respondents are grouped according to their mobility patterns throughout the analysis. Specifically:

- Japanese Filipinos who came to Japan through Japan's bilateral economic partnership agreement with the Philippines (Japan-Philippines EPA) and are working as caregivers in local facilities
- Japanese Filipinos who initially came to Japan bearing the "spouse or child of a Japanese national" visa for one year, then upon renewal, granted the "long-term resident" visa before obtaining the "permanent resident" status. Most of them work as part-timers in factories or other companies
- Japanese Filipinos who came to Japan through obtaining the legal status of Japanese citizens

- d. Japanese Filipinos—born and raised in Japan—who experienced both the educational systems of the Philippines and Japan
- e. Japanese Filipinos—born and raised in the Philippines—who do not fall in the above categories but have experienced continuous transnational mobility between the Philippines and Japan because of the nature of their work

1.4 Objectives of the Paper

In describing the flexible citizenship of Japanese Filipinos, the author explores the main questions:

- What transnational practices and strategic ways do Japanese Filipinos employ to maintain their transnational setting?
- What form of imaginaries do they construct that enable them to continue these practices and seek other ways?

The author would like to reveal in this study the varied mobility experiences, transnational strategies, imaginings as well as personal coping mechanisms employed by the Japanese Filipinos to meet the expectations of their families and the social groups to which they belong—in *becoming* and also *being* contemporary *flexible* citizen subjects.

Nevertheless, the author found that these experiences are met with ambivalence and disappointments during the process. Some were denied the status of “Japanese citizen” due to their age at the time of application; some had to struggle keeping up with their studies in the Philippines while doing low-skilled jobs in Japan; some had to stop for some time; others had to move to the Philippines forcibly by their parents to be disciplined by their maternal relatives; and, some found that the degrees they received in the Philippines were not utilized when they came to work in Japan.

The author considers Japanese Filipinos in two categories. The first category includes those who were born and raised in Japan and experienced the educational systems in the Philippines and Japan. This group of youths can be termed as the “1.5 generation” (Nagasaka and Fresnoza-Flot, 2015). The second category involves Japanese Filipinos who have now become adult migrants through various bureaucratic routes such as:

- 1) Japan’s bilateral economic partnership agreement scheme (Japan-Philippines EPA);
- 2) Permanent resident visa holders who work as part-timers in local factories;
- 3) Acquiring the legal status of a Japanese citizen.

In this way, the author explores what transnational practices and imaginaries a nomadic subject, in the words of Ong, employ that enable his/her geographical and positional flexibility. For middle-class Japanese Filipinos, citizenship is not only a matter of asserting rights in the legal context, but also navigating themselves in the context of family values, individual freedom and social positioning as these are translated in their everyday lives. This is evident in Maya’s case which is introduced in this paper.

The following sections revisit the institutional structures of the Philippines and Japan through which Japanese Filipinos’ transnational journeys and strategic pathways are shaped. Particularly, these structures are the Philippine labor policy, the economic partnership agreement between the Philippines and Japan, the restrictive Nationality Law of Japan, and Philippines’ recognition of dual citizenship. Through these structures can we observe their skills accumulation practices that are hoped to be utilized in their subsequent transnational mobility. The section, entitled “On becoming flexible citizens,” provides the case studies that are shaped by these institutional structures. This includes narratives on the micro-level of experiences of the respondents which in turn show their practices and strategies in their constructed transnational arena(s).

1.5 Philippines-Japan Relations

Philippine-Japan Migration Policies

Due to poor economic performance and political turmoil and in response to the structural constraints imposed on poorer countries of different arenas in the global capitalist system, the Philippine government encouraged and promoted thousands of Filipinos to seek employment abroad (Aguilar, 2014). The country later experienced an increase in temporary and permanent international emigration that resulted in the country’s greater dependence on the remittances from outward migrants (Rodriguez, 1996). Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are hailed as *bagong bayani* (or the new economic heroes) for the enormous remittances generated by them every year. In other words, the country’s GDP continued to depend to a great extent on its overseas workers’ remittances over the years. It is recorded that there are an estimated 2.2 million OFWs who worked abroad between April and September 2016 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2016). In 2008, there are approximately 800,000 out of 15 million Filipino households which have sent at least one member to work abroad as temporary migrant or contract worker (IMDI, 2008). According to the record, females comprised the higher percentage compared to their male counterparts, with the former comprising an approximate 53.6% of the total OFW population. The total OFW remittances reached 203 billion pesos as recorded recently by the PSA in 2016.

On the other hand, Japan is among many other receiving countries that received an influx of Filipino workers into its country. During the 1980s, the country attracted several foreign workers. While Japan imposed a strict immigration policy in receiving skilled laborers, the Filipino workers sought work in Japan, mainly in its entertainment industry. Remarkably gendered, in the 1980s, an increasing number of Filipino women left the Philippines to work in Japan under the entertainment visa. The Philippine government deployed an approximate 50,000 Overseas Performing Artists (OPAs) to Japan in 1992. In 2002, a total of 70,000 OPAs were hired in Japan (Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, 2008).

Another strand of gendered migration from the Philippines into Japan was the influx of Filipino brides to the rural villages of Japan during the 1980s. This is in response to the efforts of local governments to combat Japan's shrinking population. The highly gendered nature of this movement formed relationships mostly between Filipino women and Japanese men. These intimate encounters accounted for the birth of Japanese Filipinos. At present, Japan is a receiving country of thousands of Filipino residents. In 2018 survey, there were a total of 307,694 Filipino residents in Japan representing numerous legal statuses: permanent residents, long-term residents, spouses or children of Japanese nationals, students, trainees, and designated activity visa holders among others. The demographic changes of the country—such as its falling birth rate and graying i.e., aging, society—are seen to be the significant factors driving acceptance of foreign workers into its country.

Amendment of Japan's Nationality Law

There were no major changes in the Nationality Law of Japan from 1950 onwards. It was only altered in 1984, when the law was revised on the requirements needed to obtain Japanese nationality in the case of children born between a Japanese and a foreign national union. In the case of children of unmarried parents, until the Revised Nationality Law took effect in 2009, those children without recognition from their fathers were not entitled to claim Japanese nationality. But this condition was removed as a result of the petition of Filipino mothers bearing children with their unwed Japanese partners (see Suzuki, 2010). After 2008, paternal recognition became vital to proceed with the acquisition of Japanese status, regardless of the parental marriage. Furthermore, the 1984 Nationality Law Article 2-1 defined for an individual to become a Japanese national, it is necessary that *"when at the time of its birth, the father or the mother is a Japanese national."* However, a Japanese Filipino who is born outside marriage is not guaranteed his/her Japanese citizenship. The Civil Code Article 772 states that:

1. *A child conceived by a wife during marriage shall be presumed to be the child of her husband;*
2. *A child born after 200 days from the formation of marriage or within 300 days of the day of the dissolution or rescission of marriage shall be presumed to have been conceived during the marriage.*

For those who were born outside Japan, the parents should notify the Japanese embassy in that country of the child's birth to not lose his/her right to Japanese citizenship and may reconstitute their Japanese citizenship before s/he reaches the age of 20. Due to their young age, Japanese Filipinos who were born and raised in the Philippines were uprooted during their schooling age, and this resulted in having to adjust to another school system and fighting language barriers. These conditions are universally applied to all relationships, but these conditions are also important in deciding the citizenship of children of cross-national relationships and those who are born from unwed cross-national relationships⁸.

Take the case of Maya, whose narrative was introduced in the first section. Beth, Maya's mother, worked as a dancer in a local club in Japan which Ryota frequented as a customer in the 1980s. Ryota liked Beth and pursued her before they officially dated. Beth got pregnant two years after she came to Japan. Maya was born in 1990. They decided to get married a year later. Maya was left in the Philippines while Beth occasionally went back to Japan to work while Ryota had to stay in Japan and work. While Maya's birth was registered in the Philippines, her birth was not registered in Japan for the reason that Beth and Ryota were unable to apply for a reservation of their child's birth within three months after Maya was born. Even after not being able to reserve Maya's Japanese citizenship, according to the Nationality Law, she is able to reacquire her status until the age of 20. Oblivious of the conditions, Beth and Ryota did not follow up any documents to the Japanese embassy that will eventually help reacquire Maya's citizenship. Due to conflicting interests, Beth and Ryota eventually split up thereby terminating all their communication until Maya turned 18 years old. The split also indicated that they could have submitted necessary documents for Maya and her siblings to obtain the citizenship status in Japan. If only her parents knew, Maya could have applied for Japanese citizenship when she first came to Japan and at least live in Japan for six months. However, it was only when Maya turned 20 years old when they started to process her Japanese citizenship acquisition.

"I was 20 years old already when we started to process my citizenship. We went to houmu kyoku (Legal Affairs Bureau) and they asked us several requirements. They seemed to pass us from one department to another. There were questions pertaining to my legitimacy as a daughter of my father because it was found out that I was born before my parents got married. They questioned

whether I am a real daughter of my father, so they asked for evidences to prove that I am their daughter. So, my mom had to retrieve all the pictures they had together with my dad, their exchange of letters and call history before their marriage. The retrieval of these evidences was time consuming because it was already a long time ago. Everything was exhausting. We stopped pursuing the application because we got tired of the whole process. My dad was upset because even though we have enough evidence, they are still not convinced. Eventually, my parents gave up.”

-Maya (28), entered in Japan since the age of 18 with “spouse or child of a Japanese national” visa, now permanent-resident visa holder in Japan.

Unaware of the conditions, the time of the parents’ marriage, the subsequent split up of the parents and the timing for citizenship reacquisition have been very vital in deciding on whether or not Maya could get her Japanese citizenship. In this case, it can be observed that the affiliation between her Japanese father and Filipino mother was endowed to her even before she was born. This filiation has made Maya to construct a symbolic sense of belongingness between the Japan and the Philippines, and thereby imagining that such filiation was inherent to her sense of “self.” This filiation is then expected to incite her transnational mobility that becomes vital to pursue *flexible* citizenship. Nonetheless, her Japanese citizenship was determined by the Japanese government that resulted to her inability to reacquire her lost citizenship, ostensibly because her situation did not satisfy the conditions provided by the government.

Philippines’ Dual Citizenship

Regardless of the parental marriage, Japanese Filipinos are considered Philippine citizens by virtue of their blood. In response to the clamor of millions of OFWs, the Philippine government enacted the Dual Citizenship Act in 2003 that allows former natural-born Filipinos who are naturalized citizens of the other countries not to lose their Philippine citizenship. From the Philippine judicial perspective, Japanese Filipinos can have Filipino citizenship as natural-born citizens whether s/he was born from unmarried parents or s/he will not lose Philippine citizenship even if that person acquires other citizenship.

The complexity begins when those who are born in the Philippines and wishes to acquire Japanese citizenship. The children born to one or both Filipino parents are about 87,000 from 1998 to 2017 (MHLW, 2017; cf. Hara, 2018). Statistics exclude, however, the number of children who are born from unmarried parents. If the child is legally recognized by the Japanese father in accordance with the Revised Nationality Law in 2008, then the child’s name can be included in his father’s family registry. Some of the respondents’ transnational mobility in Japan is made possible through this amendment. It should be noted as well that Japanese government does not allow dual citizenship. According to the Nationality Law, by the age of 22 Japanese Filipinos shall give up other citizenship if they decide to choose Japanese citizenship.

By limiting the age of the children, marital status of the parents, and recognition of the Japanese fathers, the state imposes a kind of disciplining upon those who are able to be labeled as “Japanese.” It requires only those who are young and thus able to be trained to work and are recognized by the parents, to be the ones who shall be eligible to be called “Japanese.”

Transnational Imaginaries: Japan as a Developed State

Apart from the legal routes presented above, another important impetus that encouraged Japanese Filipinos who were born and raised in the Philippines to aspire to move to Japan is the constructed imagining of Japan, heavily shaped by their academic institution where they studied and learned Japanese language and culture, as well as non-government organizations and their family.

On challenging Appadurai’s cultural reproduction outside the nation-state and stable cultural landscapes, Ong questioned if imagination as social practice “*can be independent of national, transnational, and political-economic structures that enable, channel and control the flow of people, things, and ideas*” (Ong, 1999, 10–11). She suggested that imaginaries are brought together by the reconfiguration of global capitalism. Thus, these imaginaries are situated within the framework of which country is socio-economically preferred over another. In her study of transnational Chinese students who studied at colleges in developed countries, Fong found out that students are more likely to desire to belong to an imagined developed community due to the expanding globalized nature of media, language and educational pilgrimages (Fong, 2011, 6).

So far, on the basis of the data gathered from the respondents, the state, media, language schools, NGOs and family are the key institutions which helped to shape these transnational imaginaries. The bilateral agreement between the Philippines and Japan paved a way for an alternative route of Japanese Filipinos who are denied their Japanese citizenship due to the absence of Japanese parents, or because of the limit of age at the time of application.

At present, Japan remains the largest provider of official development assistance to the Philippines. Japan-Philippine relations strengthened through the years in the form of infrastructure aids, popularity of Japan’s popular culture and presence of *nikkei kigyou* or transnational companies in the Philippines that provide jobs to local Filipinos.

Philippine media also contributes to this influence when they show commercials or movies that portray the influence of the country. Social events such as cosplay competitions, and radio programs that offer basic Japanese language classes, continue to flourish. Language centers and academic institutions are not isolated by any means. During the author's participant observation of Japanese language and cultural classes at the two aforementioned academic institutions in the Philippines, she observed that the institutions envisioned students to be *globally competitive individuals* by learning the Japanese corporate business manner and Japanese language and culture to prepare students to work in multinational companies, or simply to work and/or migrate to Japan in the future. The author argues that educational practices and the construction of loyalty and mutual understanding between Japan and the Philippines becomes a crucial site in maintaining transnational ties for Japanese Filipinos. Such practices can either be deliberately imposed upon the students in the form of school guidelines, or can be incorporated in the curricular activities within the school premises. It is observed that these goals, in the form of school vision and mission statements of the school, are plastered on every corner of the room as an everyday reminder for the students.

Hana, a Japanese studies course graduate of the college, revealed her thoughts:

"I really wanted to see [sic] Japan. Of course, because I studied the country for years and then I thought, wow! Japan is really amazing. I think I wanted to meet my ancestors [sic]. Half of me is Japanese. But I can't feel that unless I won't step on its ground."
-Personal communication, March 2018

Similar to the findings of Fong, the author observed that media, language schools and educational visits to Japan also played a vital role in encouraging Japanese Filipinos to aspire to belong in the imagined developed state as they attended Japanese language schools and experienced educational visits to Japan at some point of their lives. Furthermore, the cultural lessons provided by non-government organizations also influenced the construction of imaginaries of Japan as a developed state. The author for one experienced this kind of construction process when she was given a task to teach a cultural lesson to young Japanese Filipinos during the internship in a non-government organization. She taught them how to fold a kimono using white paper and let them paint their kimonos in ways they wanted. The lesson did not only show them the rich culture of Japan. It also encouraged them to aspire to wear the traditional dress that might have worn by their Japanese forbearers, and the only way to do that would be when they come to Japan.

Family is the primary and key institution of these imaginaries. For almost all Philippine-born Japanese Filipinos, their Filipino mothers were the first persons to construct the imagination by sharing with them her migration experiences in Japan. Stories revolved around the beauty of the country, its cold weather as opposed to the hot climate in the Philippines. The fact that one of their parents is Japanese also helped them become more desirous of their hope to come and visit Japan one day.

The transnational imaginaries of Japan in contrast to the Philippines for Japanese Filipinos is constructed and strengthened via various mobility experiences, family relationships, educational backgrounds and bureaucratic routes. For one Japanese Filipino respondent who is a graduate of the said college, he received a degree in Japanese studies and gained a relatively high level of Japanese language proficiency which he thought would be of advantage. He found a job on a cruise ship after working as an online English teacher with Japanese students. For him, opting to work for a transnational company that provides convenient chances for traveling and encounters with different ethnic backgrounds enabled him to travel and enjoy his personal freedom and thus, become *cosmopolitan*.

Nevertheless, the process is not without tensions, disappointments and ambivalent feelings. For instance, the cruise ship company where this Japanese Filipino works as a supervisor is leaning toward the Chinese market, and his ability to speak Japanese language is becoming ineffectual due to this market change. Albeit holding a relative better position, he found his Japanese language skills to be inconvenient when talking to Chinese tourists. For others who sojourned to Japan, well-educated Japanese Filipinos have seen themselves forced to work in dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs.

1.6 On Becoming Flexible Citizens? Transnational Practices and Strategies of Japanese Filipinos (and Their Household)

This section presents the various ways of skill accumulation and utilization of strategic routes by the author's target population. This section situates their experiences within the macro-level and structures of power. In the first stage of data analysis, the author grouped the respondents according to their mobility patterns thusly:

- 1) Those who came to Japan through Japan's bilateral economic partnership agreement with the Philippines (Japan-Philippines EPA) and are working as caregivers in local facilities;
- 2) Those who are permanent-resident visa holders and work as part-timers in local factories;

- 3) Those who came to Japan through obtaining the legal status of a Japanese citizen;
- 4) Those who were born and raised in Japan experienced both educational systems, that of the Philippines as well as of Japan; and
- 5) Those who were born and raised in the Philippines experienced continuous transnational mobility between the Philippines and Japan because of the nature of their work.

Case of Sisters Mei and Akie

A number of respondents were denied Japanese citizenship because of complex reasons such as age at the time of application exceeding the age limit, or those who were unfortunate to receive their Japanese father's legal recognition. Another example is the case of sisters Mei and Akie. They were born in the Philippines between an unwed Filipino mother and a Japanese father. Ana, their Filipino mother, came to Japan to work as an entertainer in a local club owned by Taka who became the father of Mei and Akie. Taka was rumored to be a member of an organized crime syndicate or "Yakuza." The two fell in love and not too long afterwards, Ana got pregnant. She was diagnosed with leukemia when she delivered her daughters in the Philippines. Fearing that her daughters would be taken from her, she insisted on not marrying Taka despite his wedding proposal. Taka offered to take the children to Japan with him, but Ana did not want to entrust her children with anyone else, especially Taka because of his connection with the Yakuza, who she feared. Their births were supplemented with a paternal recognition. Even so, their names were not included in his family registry due to Ana's refusal of providing their birth certificates to Taka. She died six years later when Mei and Akie were barely in first grade. They were placed under the custody of their maternal grandmother in the Philippines. Several years later, Taka asked for the blessing of the grandmother to have his daughters to come to Japan and proceed with the necessary process to have their names included in his family registry in Japan. Despite his intention, the grandmother rejected the idea and did not allow Mei and Akie to leave for Japan at that time. Years later, Taka passed away.

Like Mei and Akie, other Japanese Filipinos who were able to complete their university-level education in the Philippines utilized other existing bureaucratic routes that are available for them. The Philippine-Japan economic partnership agreement (JPEPA) is a bilateral trade agreement between the Philippines and Japan outlining certain terms which facilitate trade relations and favorable trading terms. Although the agreement focuses mainly on tariff reductions, JPEPA also contained a very unique bilateral health migration regime. This was developed to facilitate the exchange and migration of Filipino nurses and other healthcare workers to work in Japan (cf. Yagi, et. al, 2014). The agreement was mutually signed in 2008 and Filipino nurses and healthcare workers have been recruited since 2009 should they pass rigorous language training courses. However, due to its low rate of examination passers, this poses a challenge to Filipino applicants. Two Japanese Filipinos who took their bachelor's degree in the aforementioned college specializing in social services in elderly caregiving underwent a series of applications and training after they graduated. This program seemed to provide them an alternative route to Japan since they could not obtain Japanese citizenship.

Another pattern of mobility is acquiring permanent residency status in Japan. This pattern is made possible by Japanese Filipinos whose initial visa status is a "spouse or child of a Japanese national" and by the time of acquiring citizenship, s/he have reached the maximum age of 20. Thus, they lost their eligibility to apply. Some of them are now permanent visa holders after renewing their status after years of living in Japan. If they wish to acquire Japanese citizenship, they can do so through the naturalization process.

Another pattern utilized is by obtaining Japanese citizenship through the facilitation of non-government organizations. A group of respondents sought help from an NGO at some point of their lives, which eventually facilitated their migration. The NGO located their Japanese father who had once abandoned them. When the Japanese father assisted the inclusion of the names of these Japanese Filipinos into his family registry, s/he is now able to proceed with the application.

Pressures from Home: A Quest to my Mother's Homeland, the Philippines

For Japanese Filipinos who were born and raised in Japan, they considered themselves as Japanese citizens (Japanese passport holders). However, due to family pressure or conflicts between them and their parents, they were sent to the Philippines where they spent a portion of their educational experiences while being cared for by their maternal relatives. Two cases in this study show the kind of mobility that is imposed by the parents and which mainly resulted from strained relationships within their families.

My stepdad is not my biological father. My (Filipino) mom found a new (Japanese) partner when she and my father got separated when I was a kid. I was sent here (Philippines) because my stepdad and my mom were always fighting since my brother and I were young. I didn't know the details really. But my mom decided that time that it was better for me to move here and continue my studies...At that point, I had already taken an entrance exam and I passed it. When she decided that I

moved, I hesitated first because I already made up my mind to enter that school (in Japan). I prepared a lot for that exam, you know. But I felt sorry for my mom that time because of her relationship with my stepdad.

-Sachi (20), moved to the Philippines at the age of 15, entered two years in high school then moved to college, currently a 4th year Japanese studies major student (personal communication, September 2016)

As a result of the changing school system and unfamiliar study environment, the respondents experienced homesickness toward Japan. As Sachi (20), a graduating student of Japanese studies course in the Philippines at the time, described her feelings in the interview while narrating her life story: *“I wanted to go home... I did not want to see people... I felt homesick, but I do not have any choice. I regret why I came here... at least at that time”* (personal communication, September 2016).

Yuna who was born and raised in Japan for 15 years was sent to her Filipino mother’s hometown in the Philippines where she spent her remaining years in high school, and then finished college.

“I and my mother often fought especially when I was in junior high school. I didn’t want to be with my mom anymore because I would rather spend time with my friends. I wanted to act pure Japanese [sic]. If my friends act in a Japanese way [sic], I also wanted to be like them... Then, I was sent to Cebu because of my father. Because my father thought I became so badlongon (hard-headed). It feels like I was deported back to the Philippines. That time, I didn’t have any choice. When I went to the Philippines, it was so hard for me. It was the first time to live there for a long time. I don’t know how to read, write or speak. I felt homesick and depressed. I also felt culture shock. I stayed in my grandmother’s house and my aunt, my mother’s sister, was taking care of me. She has a child, so we usually were together.”

-Yuna (29), Staff Nagoya Education Board, personal communication, May 2018

The mobility that adult Japanese Filipinos experienced resulted from the family decision. One reason may be a kind of protection from the strained relationship resulting from the newly structured family (step family) portrayed in the narratives of Sachi. Her agreement, although there was hesitation at first, to such decision suggests her helping her mother by moving to the Philippines. The second case presents a kind of mobility imposed by the father due to the strained relationship between the child and the mother.

“When I was young, I also felt I was having an identity crisis because I was in Japan until 15 years old. Until then, I thought of myself as pure Japanese. In elementary, I kind of realized that because my mother is Filipino. There were no experiences of bullying that ended into physical fight. It was more on salita (words). Words from my classmates and schoolmates. It’s not like normal. Why am I not a Japanese? Sort of like that. I talk to my mom in Japanese, but she does not really know Japanese. We often fought... so my father decided that I moved to Philippines...”

-Yuna, personal communication, May 2018

The cases presented here suggest that because of the presence of filiation or connection to the Philippines and the presence of maternal relatives, the parents tend to make use of this filiation as an extended source of parenting to their children especially those who were born and grew up in Japan. This form of flexibility is employed mainly by the parents of Japanese Filipinos as a form of disciplining action of the youths. In other words, the transnational movement in these cases does not necessarily imply the upward social mobility afforded by flexible citizenship. Japanese Filipinos do not merely construct and produce a kind of flexibility that is highly regarded in the neoliberal context, but they are also disciplined by the kind of flexibility that is available for them and which resulted in obstruction of their mobility that led to negative experiences.

Nevertheless, as the author traced the respondents back to Japan after they had graduated college in the Philippines, they were more likely to utilize such experiences advantageously: being able to communicate in their mother’s Filipino language (Tagalog, Cebuano); improved English ability; and, widened social networks resulting in their flexible mobility within the two countries. Approximately two months after getting a degree in the Philippines, the author met Sachi again in June 2017. They met at a coffee shop near her working place on a Friday afternoon during her day off. She works as a front desk staff in one of the largest hotel chains in Japan. The hotel was an approximately one-hour bus ride and a 20-minute tram ride from her parents’ house. The coffee shop was in front of her hotel. As they observed several passersby of different nationalities, she told the author that she was with other Japanese and American Japanese employees. As a contract employee, she had irregular shifts. It was a tiring schedule for her, but she convinced herself that to have been compensated sufficiently with a larger hourly rate compared to regular day shifts was worth it. She wears an orange handkerchief wrapped around her neck which accents her black blazer and skirt. She ties her hair in a neat bun and covers her face with a light make-up for her everyday look at work. Even though the job was different from being a flight attendant—which she initially wanted—she seemed to like her working uniform and the nature of her job. *“I like entertaining the local Japanese guests and foreign guests at peak seasons. There were times when I welcomed Filipino guests -Tagalog-*

speaking and Cebuano-speaking alike. I do not look like Filipino, so they did not have any idea that I understood what they were saying...” she recalled. Her language skills in English, Tagalog and Cebuano which she learned while in the Philippines were found to be useful in accommodating the requests of her foreign guests. Such as with Sachi, it can be observed that Japanese Filipinos did not merely accept such actions. They negotiated their way by utilizing their negative experiences as something to be learned from and to be used positively later on in their employment.

Disappointments and Ambivalence

The kind of mobility they experienced also generated different forms of ambivalence and disappointment. For instance, a Japanese Filipino who recently received her nursing license in the Philippines often comes to Japan during her vacation and works as a part-time worker in a factory. The status of having a nursing license in the Philippines turned out to be an inconvenience when working in Japan since working in the factory only requires a menial job. In another case, after obtaining the necessary skills in the Philippines to work as caregivers, two of the Japanese Filipinos came to Japan to work in a local hospital in Aichi prefecture attending to elderly patients while consistently experiencing a 16-hour *yakin* (night) shift that was described as *“exhausting... I was so stressed that I cried.”* Well-educated Japanese Filipinos do not only experience downward mobility in their professional status but they also share ambivalent feelings in making such decisions.

Positive Imaginaries to Transnational Nightmares

For Japanese Filipinos who migrated to Japan, they strategically utilize their economic gains while in Japan such as working and saving for the future. Nonetheless, they tend to maintain cultural and social ties in the Philippines, both serving to create a sense of continued belongingness. For instance, one of the sisters in the above-mentioned case, Akie, who is working in a nursing facility in Japan while holding a “designated activities” visa, mentioned in an interview when asked about her future plans: *“I want to get permanent residency in Japan. Maybe I can apply for that when I work here for several years... I want permanent residency so I don’t need to give up my Philippine passport and so I can still own assets in the country.”*

Some choose to retire in the Philippines even though they have acquired Japanese citizenship. Eri, who obtained her Japanese passport in 2012 and came to Japan in the same year, shared her thoughts: *“If I have the choice, I still want to hold a Philippine passport. Because I was brought up there [Philippines]. It’s difficult to let that go. I really have that... I still hope to go back home to the Philippines, grow old there because if you see the lives here, they are really good... the health services [are good] ...”*

For others, deciding citizenship status can limit the possibilities of mobility and work migration to a third country in the future. This is exemplified by the case of Maya. Others maintain permanent residency in Japan so as to own assets in the Philippines, while others will settle in the future to manage her husband’s family business, such as the case of Yuna. She was born and raised in Japan and holds a Japanese passport by birth. She was sent to the Philippines to continue her schooling as decided by her parents. *“When my husband and I turn 50 years old or after retirement, we are thinking of going back to Cebu to settle. My husband is the eldest in the family and they have a family business there. So, he needs to go back to manage the business. When my children have completed their school, we can go back to the Philippines...”* Yuna (29), born and raised in Japan, came to the Philippines at the age of 15, and moved back to Japan at the age of 21.

This section further discusses the disappointments they encounter after deciding to migrate to Japan in terms of the nature of their job regardless of their skilled status and different cultural values. The neoliberal value of skill accumulation to compete in the global market for Japanese Filipino youths is, in this sense, the cultural capital of Japanese language for Philippine-born Japanese Filipinos, English and Filipino languages for Japan-born Japanese Filipinos and their skills in caregiving, nursing and corporate business knowledge. This has impeded the kind of professional mobility of Japanese Filipinos when they discover that the professional status they received in the Philippines does not necessarily translate in Japan regardless of whether they learned the Japanese language or acquired corporate business manners and ethics. Moreover, the tensions they felt during the decision-making process within their family relationships continue to occur among their narratives. The author observed that tensions within the family are more present among the female respondents because their lives are complicated with issues surrounding love, unexpected pregnancy, and marriage.

The Filipino cultural value of *hiya* (which can be translated as shame or embarrassment) is present among narratives when Eri talked about her experiences when she got pregnant three months after she and her sister moved to Japan at the age of 21. At first, their Japanese father discouraged them from coming to Japan because he thought that they would end up working in a factory, which according to his father, was only a waste of time and money because he had invested money for their college educations. Eri insisted that she and her sister come, whether or not their father supported them.

“We argued a lot of times,” she recalled. *“Because he told us that once we completed our degree, he will no longer support*

us in the Philippines. We have a house to pay rent and our mother is not working. With the amount of the basic salary we receive in the Philippines, how are we supposed to survive? I told my father, well then, if you do not support us anymore, then we will go there so we can work and provide money for our mother.” -Eri (24), Japanese citizen, part-time factory worker

Her father eventually agreed provided that they should be looking for someone who will help them find a place to live and a place to work. So, Eri negotiated her way to come to Japan to work, regardless of receiving her father’s approval /non-approval. She reached out to her boyfriend who had already been staying in Japan for a year. She continued; “So, I told my father that I knew someone who can help us and that he should not worry.” Three months later, Eri got pregnant. When Hana, her sister, heard the news, she cried. She recalled, “I told her, what should we do now? How would daddy react to this?” “I was worried about that because I think our father did so much for us to acquire Japanese citizenship that enabled us to come here. We insisted even to come here. And then, this is how we repay him?”

The sense of preserving one’s shame or embarrassment and reciprocating the sense of indebtedness toward the parents is portrayed in this scenario. Eri’s portrayal of preserving one’s *hiya* can be traced back to the predominantly strong family ideals and gender ideologies found in Philippine society. A study by Enriquez (1994) describes that in the Filipino family, it is important that a member of the family behaves with respect to one’s self and the family’s sense of *hiya*. A child’s negative action or behavior that opposes one’s family ideals is reprimanded mainly by the parents. S/he is constantly reminded to protect her/his and parents’ *hiya*. Apart from *hiya*, sociologist Medina (2001) outlines how Filipino children are expected to obey parental authority and sacrifice individual interests to prioritize familial obligations. Although we can observe that these practices are now challenged within contemporary Philippine society, these cultural values may have not completely abolished. The Filipino cultural values are used together in this context and are interpreted by the Japanese Filipinos. Their quest for citizenship is complicated with family issues. For them, citizenship status is not merely a matter of a legal context, but also as a form of maintaining the cultural values of the family expected of them, especially toward/by their parents. Moreover, they feel that this kind of indebtedness should be reciprocated by showing good and stable lives in Japan.

Transnational Strategies

The ways of accumulating skills (caregiving, nursing, business manners) and foreign language proficiency during their college years, and mobility and displacement among Japanese Filipinos are translated through their decision-making and everyday lives. While Japanese Filipinos construct transnational imaginaries of Japan as an economically rich country in contrast to the Philippines, they tend to utilize a personal strategy of *singkamot* or *sikap* (*striving hard*) to overcome their personal nightmares in their quest for flexible citizenship. This notion of *pagsisikap/pagpaningkamot*, however, can be used in different contexts. Scholars Medina (1991) and Ventura (1991) suggest that in maintaining smooth interpersonal relationships, reciprocal obligations (which are termed as a sense of “indebtedness”) are reinforced primarily within the family. Parents are expected to strive hard to provide the emotional, material and educational needs of children who in turn, are expected to reciprocate them by respecting and obeying their parental authorities. The author adds that that not only respecting and obeying to parents, but these may also be represented in various ways such as doing the best they can, or by what they become.

The author observed that the notion of *striving hard*⁹ as both a personal and transnational strategy is common among the narratives of Japanese Filipinos during interviews. They vocalize the notion *singkamot* or *sikap* as their personal strategy in their efforts to protect one’s *hiya* and to enact that sense of indebtedness toward the parents. This process of achieving goals in migration is not without the absence of hardships. Japanese Filipinos, similar to other migrants in Japan or other countries, experienced a kind of process when working or living abroad. The experiences, however, may differ from one context to another. For instance, Sachi and Yuna who were sent to the Philippines forcibly by their parents to continue their education confided with the author that they “*really worked hard*” to be able to adjust to their new environment and eventually receive their college degrees. Sisters, Eri and Hana, revealed that being able to strive in every circumstance was pivotal in navigating their experiences within their familial relationship as well as social group. Other respondents narrated scenarios or struggles and difficulties which they later managed to overcome.

One respondent, who lost her Filipino mother at young age and eventually her Japanese father, revealed her experience of being able to come to Japan on her own terms to work as a caregiver: “*It was hard to live without your parents. I had to live independently at such a young age. Because I couldn’t rely on my relatives all the time...I worked hard to get my degree and eventually work here (Japan)... Pagpanignkamot lang gyud ni te. [I earned this by striving hard].*” Even without the presence of the parents, their transnational strategy of getting a degree in hopes of being able to use it in their future employment drove Japanese Filipinos to either find work in Japan or maintain their ties between the Philippines and Japan. Their experiences of

working hard or striving hard is articulated so as to reciprocate the care of the maternal relatives who took care of them after their parents passed. Occasional sending of remittances or souvenir boxes to the maternal relatives can be a way of reciprocating gratitude.

1.7 Conclusion

This paper presents case studies of Japanese Filipinos and their quest for flexible citizenship between Japan and the Philippines. To frame the life stories of Japanese Filipinos, the author employed the concept of flexible citizenship (Ong, 199). The theoretical framework, the author argues, has been useful in this case study in coming to understand the ways they navigate their (im-)mobility across transnational setting in the era of globalization through which the neoliberal values of flexible mobility, individual freedom, and self-enterprising are highly valued. This concept juxtaposes the advantages of embodying flexible citizenship vis-à-vis the immobility and costs entailed by such a quest. Through this analytical lens, the author hopes to present such a juxtaposition that emerges throughout their constructed transnational setting(s). While acknowledging Ong's critical analysis of the flexibility of Chinese mobilities and transnationalism, it is by maintaining such a frame of reference to a particular ethnic group that can limit our understanding on the plurality of experiences and variegated cultural practices under the umbrella of transnationalism. Furthermore, the dichotomy of East to West mobility of Chinese migrants is seen to be the major mobility phenomenon across flexible citizenship literature (Lin, 2012; Fong, 2011).

Meanwhile, such kinds of mobility are also significantly investigated in relation to middle-class Filipinos and their migration experiences (Seki, 2015:2012). However, it is the intention of this paper to examine such concepts as a form of individual and familial strategy and (im)mobility of Japanese Filipinos and their families that are heavily shaped by institutional structures created by the Philippine and Japanese governments. This mobility within the Asian region provides us insight as to the kind of flexible citizenship that is contextually tailored and produced within their transnationality.

Framed relative to middle-class and educated Japanese Filipinos, the author intends to present a group of transnational individuals whose economic and socio-cultural resources are available in supporting their simultaneous transnational movement and practices. It is observed that Japanese Filipinos embody a kind of flexible citizenship shaped by institutional structures that includes the migration policies and differential nationality laws between the Philippines and Japan, cultural values imposed by the family and social group, and their highly competitive global market.

Their transnational practices and strategic ways include professional skills, language abilities, knowledge of work ethics and symbolic accumulation such as acquiring legal statuses in the Philippines and Japan. They maintain cultural, social and legal ties in the Philippines as a sense of belongingness and future aspirations (for example, as a place for retirement). However, the skills that are expected of them to become competitive in their respective employment arenas are not necessarily translated to their receiving country since their professional status in the Philippines becomes inconvenient when they settle in Japan. This form of obstructed mobility is felt particularly strongly among professional Japanese Filipinos who had hoped to utilize their professional status in Japan.

In terms of flexible citizenship, the author wants to add that filiation to the two states is significant in the discussion in the case of Japanese Filipinos. As observed, obtaining legal status in both countries can be very advantageous. However, when we look into their micro-level experiences, the expected highest legal status, i.e., attaining Japanese citizenship, is not necessarily achieved. The hopes of being a flexible citizen by holding a much more powerful Japanese passport so as to acquire all benefits equal to Japanese citizens, are obstructed by various conditions in the Nationality Law of Japan. Although acquiring legal status in developed Japan can be mostly socio-economically beneficial for them, they are more likely to maintain transnational connections with the Philippines through which family values, a sense of belongingness and future aspirations are much more foreseeable than in Japan. Even so, they see both Japan and the Philippines not merely as host and sending countries, but as sites of filial connection where both are considered to be their homelands, or the land of their "ancestors." Their sense of belongingness is tied in both countries although differs in intensity. Moreover, flexible citizenship is utilized by the parents of Japanese Filipinos as a disciplining practice imposed upon their children. While flexible movement is possible among them, this does not necessarily equate freedom but rather an obstruction to their preferred mobility. Flexible citizenship is thus a form of mobility for complex, sometimes contradicting, reasons constructed, negotiated or contested by Japanese Filipinos while transforming their subjectivity in the contemporary transnational movement.

There are, however, limitations of this study that need to be addressed. First, the target population of this research does not present the general representation of Japanese Filipinos. It should be noted that respondents are selected according to their class status (to which the author preferred as the better access of their economic and social resources) that facilitate their flexible mobility. Secondly, the cultural values presented in this article require further discussion. Since the scope of this paper only

presents the transnational practices and strategies which they employed in their contemporary settings, selected cultural values (*singkamot/sikap* and *hiya*) are only included in the discussion. The author is fully aware that cultural values are an essential driver in their mobility. However, the ways in which these values are deeply contextualized in their experiences are out with of the scope of this paper. Additionally, extensive comparisons of migratory experiences of those who are born and raised in the Philippines and Japan are recommended for thorough analysis. A separate paper for discussion therein is therefore recommended.

Notes

- ¹ The author refers to middle-class as those who have the available economic resources and social network that support their transnational mobility. This means that their family has the ability to help maintain the simultaneity of these movements over time. The resources should be available both in the Philippines and Japan. Educated Japanese Filipinos are those who have attained at least the college level or on their way to finishing their undergraduate degree. As seen in the table, the respondents enrolled mostly in private colleges that require a relatively higher amount of tuition fees compared to that of public colleges.
- ² The “mobility” that is referred to this study comes in the form of either one or more contexts that are important in the study of migration. These contexts are the social, familial, political, cultural, symbolic, and material. Nagasaka and Fresnoza-Flot, in their study of children in the transnational family, discuss that migration, especially during family reunifications involves geographical movement, but also emotional, political, and familial changes, and therefore it is important to include various contexts in migration (Nagasaka & Fresnoza-Flot 2015).
- ³ The author defines social field as a space of transnational flow. Basch et al. (1994,6) initially defined transnationalism as *the “process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.”* Recent scholarship understands transnational migration as taking place within fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked through migrants’ simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society (Levit & Schiller, 2004)
- ⁴ Seiger (2017) suggests that *consanguinal* capital serves as a tool to make sense of the central role played by claims to consanguinity, often epitomized by the metaphor of “Japanese blood,” in the symbolic and political struggles by NGOs and a number of activist Japanese Filipinos advocating for the recognition of “JFC” as part of Japan’s history and thus responsibility. She added that *consanguinal* capital could be mobilized by individuals to take advantage of already existing structures allowing for the recognition of descent as legitimate ground for status or special treatment.
- ⁵ In the cases of Japanese Filipinos who were born in the Philippines and later abandoned by their Japanese father, Filipino mothers sought help from NGOs that cater the needs of disserted Filipino mothers and their Japanese Filipino children in locating their Japanese fathers in Japan for varied reasons. These reasons can be for legal recognition by the Japanese father, or for financial support. Completed cases refer to when the NGO successfully located the Japanese father in Japan with the help of local Japanese volunteers and/or the communication being renewed between the Japanese father and their children and their Filipina mother (fieldwork notes, January 2017).
- ⁶ After the war, the Japanese nationals who had non-Japanese wives or second generation who did not have Japanese citizenship remained in the Philippines and later formed organizations. The Philippine Nikkei Jin Kai Association (PNJK) in Davao established its basic educational institution in 1992. It began as a Japanese language school that was offered for Japanese descendants and local Filipinos in 1985. At present, the school offers both elementary and secondary education. Subsequently, the tertiary education was established.
- ⁷ The organization was established in late 1990s in the Philippines to cater the needs of Filipino women migrants in Japan and/or returnees and their children fathered by their Japanese partners.
- ⁸ Another group of children from other cross-national relationships are also investigated widely in academic literature. See their life stories and experiences in various legal and socio-cultural contexts in Ishii, 2012:2016; Tien-shi, 2012
- ⁹ Respondents used the terms *singkamot* or *sikap* as synonymous with *striving hard* in English or *ganbaru* in Japanese. The author acknowledges the concept of survival as an inherent human instinct. This notion is also widely used in various migration studies study as well as interpreted and analyzed in different socio-cultural contexts. This section hopes to present a particular scenario in the lives of Japanese Filipinos through which such meaning is personally interpreted and reenacted by them. Although a contested meaning, it can be observed that they tend to resurface various Filipino cultural values to make sense of their experiences. See Gripaldo, 2005; Medina, 2004, Enriquez, 1994 among others for Philippine sociology.

References

- Aguilar, F. (2014), *Migration revolution: Philippine nationhood and class relations in a globalized age*, NUS Press Singapore in association with Kyoto University Press.
- Castles, S. and Miller, M. (2014), *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, New York: Guildford Press.
- Celero, J. (2015), “Towards a shared future?” transnational identity and belonging of Japanese–Filipino families in Japan In Yuk Wah Chan, David Haines and Jonathan H. X. Lee (eds.), *The age of Asian migration: Continuity, diversity, and susceptibility Volume 2*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Da-anoy, M. A. (2016), The embodiment of Filipino-Japanese identity as plural Subjects: Everyday articulations of multicultural roots, *Journal of Nagoya Gakuin University*, Vol. 53(2). Pp. 163-182.
- De Dios, J. R. (2012), *An ambivalent homecoming: Case studies of Japanese-Filipino Youth in Japan*. A paper presented at the Japan Studies Conference, Ateneo de Manila University, January 25.
- Enriquez, V. (1994), *From colonial to liberation psychology: the Philippine experience*, Manila, De La Salle University Press.
- Fong, V. (2011), *Paradise redefined: transnational Chinese students and the quest for flexible citizenship in the developed world*, Stanford University Press.
- Hara, M. (2013), Mixed-heritage Japanese–Filipinos/ shinnikkeijin in charge of intimate labor, *Journal of Intimate and Public Spheres*, 2(1), Pp. 39-64.

- Hara, M. (2018), Rethinking nationality issues of Japanese-Filipinos from the perspective of NGOs and youth. In Zulueta, J. (ed.), *Thinking beyond the State*, De La Salle University Publishing House, Pp. 157-186.
- Institute for Migration and Development (IMDI) (2008), *The Philippine Migration and Development Statistical Almanac*. IMDI, Mandaluyong City, Philippines, December.
- Ito, S. (2011), A brief research note: Some issues on Japanese-Filipino Children, *Asian Social Science*. Vol. 7(9).
- Lin, W. (2012), Beyond flexible citizenship: Towards a study of many Chinese transnationalisms, *Geoforum* 43, Pp. 137-146
- Medina, B. (ed.) (1991), *The Filipino Family: A text with Selected Readings*. Quezon City, University of the Philippines Press.
- Medina B. (2001), *The Filipino family*. 2nd ed. University of the Philippines Press; Diliman.
- Mitchell, K. (2016), Neoliberalism and Citizenship. In Springer, S. et al. (eds.), *The Handbook of Neoliberalism*, Routledge Press.
- Nagasaka, I. and Fresnoza-Flot, A. (2015), *Mobile childhoods in Filipino transnational families: migrant children with similar roots in different routes*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ogaya, C. (2015), 日比ダブルの若者が語る家族とアイデンティティ：日本育ちの若者の語りから (Family and Identities for Filipino Japanese Youth: Narrative and Life Story Analysis). *Department Bulletin Paper*. Ferris Jogakuin University. Permalink: <http://id.nii.ac.jp/1404/00001858/>
- Ong, A. (1999), *Flexible Citizenship. The cultural logics of transnationality*, Duke University Press.
- Rodriguez, E. (1996), International Migrants' Remittances in the Philippines. *The Canadian Journal of Economics/ Revue Canadienne d'Economie*, 29(2). Pp. 427-432.
- Seiger, F. (2017), Consanguinity as capital in rights assertions: Japanese-Filipino children in the Philippines. *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 49(2). Pp. 207-225. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2017.1298291>
- Suzuki, N. (2015), Suspended mobilities: Japanese Filipino Children, family regimes, and postcolonial plurality, In I. Nagasaka and A. Fresnoza-Flot (eds.) *Mobile childhoods in Filipino transnational families: migrant children with similar Roots in different route*, Palgrave Macmillan, Pp. 222-246.
- Suzuki, N. (2010), Outlawed children: Japanese Filipino Children, legal defiance and ambivalent citizenships, *Pacific Affairs* 83, 1, Pp. 31-50.
- Seki, K. (2015), Identity construction of migrant children and representation of the family: the 1.5-generation Filipino youth in California, USA, In I. Nagasaka and A. Fresnoza-Flot (eds.) *Mobile Childhoods in Filipino Transnational Families: Migrant Children with Similar Roots in Different Routes*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, Pp. 151-178.
- Seki, K. (2012), Difference and Alliance in Transnational Social Fields: The Pendular Identity of the Filipino Middle Class, *Philippine Studies* Vol. 60(2). Pp. 187-222.
- Takahata, S. & Hara, M. (2015), Japan as a land of settlement or a stepping stone for 1.5 generation Filipinos, In I. Nagasaka and A. Fresnoza-Flot (eds.) *Mobile childhoods in Filipino transnational families: migrant children with similar Roots in different routes*, Palgrave Macmillan, Pp. 117-147.
- Uchio, T. (2015), Micro politics of Identity in a Multicultural Japan: the use of western colonial heritages among Japanese Filipino Children (JFC), *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology*. pp. 85-100. <http://doi.org/10.15021/00003796>
- Ubalde, M. (2013), Diverging narratives: lives and identities of Japanese-Filipino Children in the Philippines, *Asian Studies Journal*. Vol. 49(2). Pp. 76-115. University of the Philippines.
- Ventura, E. (1991), Child-Rearing in the Philippines. In Medina, B. (ed). *The Filipino Family: A text with Selected Readings*. Quezon City, University of the Philippines Press.
- Yagi, N. et al. (2014), Policy Review: Japanese-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA)- Analysis of a Failed Nurse migration policy, *International Journal of Nursing Studies* Vol. 51. Pp. 243-250.
- Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW). "Population Survey Yearly Report." 2012.
- Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW). "Population Survey Yearly Report: Annual Transition of the Number of Marriages between Couples with Different Nationalities". 2018. Accessed last December 10, 2019 from https://www.e-stat.go.jp/en/stat-search/files?page=1&layout=datalist&toukei=00450011&tstat=000001028897&cycle=7&year=20170&month=0&tclass1=000001053058&tclass2=000001053061&tclass3=000001053069&stat_infid=000031743479&result_back=1
- Portal Site of Official Statistics of Japan (2018). Distribution of Foreign Residents According to their Nationality and Residence Status, December 2018 Survey (国籍・地域別 在留資格(在留目的)別 総在留外国), Accessed from <https://www.e-stat.go.jp/stat-search/files?page=1&layout=datalist&toukei=00250012&tstat=000001018034&cycle=1&year=20180&month=24101212&tclass1=000001060399>
- Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (2008) Accessed from <http://www.poea.gov.ph/> on June 13, 2017
- Philippine Statistics Authority (2016). 2016 Survey on Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWS). Retrieved on June 17, 2019 from <https://psa.gov.ph/content/2016-survey-overseas-filipinos>