CHAPTER

4

Tangled Intergenerational Mobilities
Maternal Migration and Japanese-Filipino Children in Japan

Fiona-Katharina Seiger

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the tangledness of Filipino women's migration projects with their Japanese-Filipino children's experiences of migrating to Japan. Born to Filipino mothers and Japanese fathers, the children spoken about in this chapter were primarily raised in the Philippines, before moving to Japan. In most cases, they were raised by their mothers and maternal families, in the absence of their biological fathers. Frequently, they never met their fathers before arriving in Japan, and even upon migration, in-person meetings remain scarce or never occur. Having partly grown up in the Philippines, these children are part of a larger population of 1.5-generation migrants from the Philippines in Japan. However, they move together with their mothers instead of following their parent to the destination country with some delay, as is the case for numerous other migrant Filipino and Japanese-Filipino minors (see Takahata and Hara 2015; Suzuki 2015). Also, they are part of a recent cohort of migrants from the Philippines who enter Japan to either launch the

process of (re)claiming Japanese nationality or, in some cases, making use of their Japanese passports.

Yet, the mothers' migration is geared toward the labor market. It is recruiters and labor brokers who enable this spatial mobility by selecting, training and dispatching the mothers to companies in Japan. While the type of job depends on the broker and their networks, owners of Japan-based caregiving facilities for the elderly have shown the greatest interest in employing foreign workers. All the migrant mothers interviewed were indeed deployed to Japan as caregivers. In the process, they accumulated debts, which they had to pay off over the period of their contract, usually lasting three years.

This creates a system of brokerage relying on laws geared at family unification to enable migration for work, exclusively for women with young children of Japanese fathers. Most of these women, who were called "entertainers" or "talents," have a prior history of migration to Japan, where they had first met the fathers of their children. The current in-tandem migration of Filipino women and their Japanese-Filipino children to Japan is thus a continuation of the mothers' first travels to the country, and, as previously, the women are directed to highly feminized, ill-paid jobs.

Philippine-based brokers have tapped into discourses of human rights and charity to market their support in securing employment in Japan for adult applicants, in addition to Japanese nationality for children of Japanese fathers. However, these services are only available to those mother-and-child families who can provide clear evidence of the child's biological relationship with a Japanese national. The more complicated cases are not considered commercially viable, and are therefore frequently refuted.

This more recent migration to Japan started when Japan's nationality law amendment came into force in January 2009. For a decade now, an increasing number of mothers and their children have shown interest in acquiring Japanese citizenship and migrating overseas. The mothers usually enter Japan with a long-term residence visa, which remains dependent on their children's legal status in Japan. As their legal guardians, the mothers receive such "guardian of a Japanese national" visas if their children are Japanese citizens or if the children have long-term residency rights as offspring of a Japanese citizen.

The case of Japanese-Filipino children and their mothers presents an intriguing instance of family migration, as the resettlement from the Philippines to Japan is conditioned upon the children's Japanese descent and their young age. Often thrust into mobility against their will, migrant Japanese-Filipino children and youth are faced with important changes affecting familial relationships and care arrangements, their schooling and plans for academic pursuits, as well as the challenge of building relationships with peers in a new cultural and linguistic environment.

As the editors write in the introductory chapter, tangled im/mobilities exist alongside or result in interacting or overlapping forms of stasis and movement. In this chapter, I show how Japanese-Filipino children's routes to Japan remain tied to their mother's past migratory projects, and are embedded in regimes of mobility that require their displacement to enable their mother's current migratory endeavors. This tangled intergenerational mobility frequently leads to emotional hardships, including sentiments of loss and sacrifice for a "better life," which in the literature have largely been explored in the context of long-distance mothering. While the case of migrant Japanese-Filipino children highlights the salience of unequal power relations within the family in migration decision-making processes (see Celero in this volume), the disruptive experiences of migration are come to terms with through the prisms of "good motherhood" and notions of "good childhoods."

Migrant Motherhoods and Childhoods

Literature theorizing the nexus of migration and mother-child relationships has furthered nuanced understanding of how women in migration con-test, negotiate, reproduce, and expand narratives of "good mother-hood." Mainly focusing on migrant mothers away from home, this body of research has highlighted structural constraints, such as gender norms and regimes of mobility, as scaffolds within which experiences of trans-national mothering unfold (Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Horton 2009; Parreñas 2005). Contextually specific gendered expectations of "good motherhood" provide the normative frame through which transnational practices of mothering are gauged and come to terms with. In the Philippine context, notions of "good mothering" are couched in the ideal of the Filipino family, denoting a heterosexual married couple with their biological chil-dren. Lived realities of prolonged spatial separation following overseas migration, especially where the mother is physically absent, have made it difficult for family members to conform to this ideal. Notably, moth-ers away from home have frequently taken on both breadwinning and nurturing roles, feeling the pressure to live up to being a "good mother" (see Fresnoza-Flot 2009). Parreñas (2005) points out the central and often detrimental role played by patriarchal family norms for mothers in migration and their "left-behind" children in coping with prolonged sep-aration. Horton (2009), however, warns of observing the intersections of migration, mothering, and "global childhood" merely through the prism of gender constructs and ideologies, as this too often reduces the distress experienced by children to "a reactionary response to mothers' troubling

of the patriarchal gender norms that structure the family" (31). Global inequalities and rigid immigration policies create many of the constraints leading to long-term, long-distance parenting, and coproduce the various forms of coping with it. Indeed, research has shown that mobility regimes[1] and legal status bear upon mothering practices. Based on the research of Filipino migrants in France, Fresnoza-Flot (2009) explores how migration status influences transnational mothering practices, whereby prolonged separation due to a lack of documentation and the ensuing immobility are offset by more intense communication and gift-giving practices. Similarly, Horton (2009) draws attention to the importance of gift-giving in the absence of co-presence, as these gifts become proxies for parental love, reassuring the children of the continuity of parental care but also justifying parental absence. The ubiquitous connectivity of "polymedia environments" has enabled mothers away from home and their children to live in ambient co-presence with both positive and negative emotional consequences (Madianou 2016). Parent-child separation, Horton (2009) concludes, is a "symptom of the injustice of the global division of labor" (22), and highlights the embeddedness of individual emotional hardship in structures that engender the "sociopolitical inequality [that] shapes individual affect and produces specific patterns of social suffering" (37). "Regimes of mobility" (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013) give shape to mothering practices where physical proximity is not an option, demonstrating how (im)mobility across borders is tangled with intimate practices. An understanding of practices of mothering and emotional tensions in mother-child relationships following migration must therefore be explored not only with regard to culturally contextual norms of "good motherhood," but also against the backdrop of social, economic, and political inequalities and structures producing both mobility and stillness.

Migration and (im)mobility shape childhoods too. In their edited volume *Mobile Childhoods in Filipino Transnational Families*, Nagasaka and Fresnoza-Flot (2015) present a collection of essays that analyze how spatial mobility has shaped the lives of 1.5-generation Filipino migrants in different contexts. The chapters of the volume clearly show that children are not the passive bystanders they are often assumed to be. Indeed, the study of children's geographies has aimed to destabilize the imaginary of children as adults in-the-making, implicitly denying their agency as social beings (Holt and Holloway 2006). Children in transnational migration are important social actors too, who are "involved in the construction of their own social lives, the lives of those around them, and of the societies in which they live" (Prout and James 1997: 8).

The case of Japanese-Filipino children arriving in Japan together with their mothers provides the opportunity to look into how children deal with leaving behind their friends, extended family, and in some cases their siblings, to transition into a new sociocultural environment. In the process, their mobility is tangled with that of their mothers, and embedded in legal structures that make this in-tandem migration both possible and necessary. Mothering practices develop around a situation wherein mothers become de facto single parents (as they leave behind their extended social network) who need to balance child care and full-time work in a country where single mothers and their children are at a high risk of plummeting into poverty.[2] Moreover, as indicated above, some women have to leave behind their non-Japanese children,[3] placing upon them the challenges of simultaneous physical co-presence and remote mothering, and bearing the potential for ruptures, guilt, and jealousy among siblings. A central question following the disruption of leaving behind family, friends, and familiar environments is thus how mothers and children come to terms with apparent contradictions of resettlement for a "better life" and the distress it causes. Considering that ideals of motherhood place the responsibility for delivering emotional care upon the female parent, how do migrant mothers justify their decisions to migrate when faced with the emotional strain their children experience? How do their children respond? In what follows, I explore the emotional, generational, material, and legal tangledness of this in-tandem migration of Filipino mothers and their Japanese-Filipino children to Japan.

Methodology

This chapter is based on fieldwork conducted in 2015 and 2016 in the Kansai area of Japan. I formally interviewed two dozen Japanese-Filipino beneficiaries of educational support initiatives, who were aged between nine and twenty-one at the time. I initially concentrated on conducting participant observation before complementing my observations and informal chats with in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with Japanese-Filipino children and their mothers. The data presented here focuses on the stories told by a group of five mothers and thirteen children and teenagers who arrived in the same area of the Kansai region within the span of a few years, starting in 2010. Many had been recruited through the same broker in the Philippines and had ended up living and working in close proximity of one another. I met my participants through volunteering for an educational support group organized by a schoolteacher and members of the local Catholic Church. While the data collected and the

ensuing analysis contribute to stitching the larger picture of mother-child relationships and migration-decision negotiations in the case of recent migration from the Philippines to Japan, the situatedness of the data and the specific networks of support available to this group of people make a generalization difficult. Nevertheless, because these migrant women and children share conditions with other migrant families, this chapter contributes to a nuanced picture of the different outcomes that similar structural constraints can produce.

Reasons for Returning to Japan

As earlier studies (Asis 2002; Horton 2009) have shown, the desire to financially and materially provide for the family often features prominently in decision-making processes regarding labor mobility. Globally traveling media images of middle-class lifestyles, too, have fed into parents' endeavors to provide their offspring with such "good childhoods" via overseas employment (Horton 2008). Migrant mothers who arrived in Japan together with their Japanese-Filipino children commonly assert that they decided to migrate to secure both their and their children's livelihood and to provide the children with an education. Adult respondents often underline the necessity of their move—namely, to escape low-paid and precarious employment that made it hard for them and their children to live a "better life" if they remained in the Philippines. The women I spoke to all had different jobs with low or unpredictable income before emigrating from their hometowns. Two had been members of a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Manila, where one had found work as a beautician via the NGO's livelihood project, another worked in a restaurant at a shopping mall, another owned a small *sari-sari* store,[4] another was as a massage therapist before departing for Japan, and another was a health worker at her *barangay* (district). The following are answers given by migrant mothers when asked how they felt about their current situation, compared to the early days after their arrival.

> Cheryl: For me it's okay. If I were still in the Philippines, I probably wouldn't have a comfortable life. We probably wouldn't have anything to eat because I wouldn't have any other job. Where would I get a job if I didn't even finish studying? How will I get a decent job? I'd probably be a laundry woman. That's what I also told my children. If we were in the Philippines, we probably wouldn't have this life. But of course, our situation is still difficult because our children grew up seeing our difficulties.
> Sara: She's right.

> Amy: We don't have a choice. We need to survive it. We need to survive it for the future of our children, and of course, we also have families in the Philippines.
> Sara: Especially in my case, because I'm the only one earning in my family. My older sister died, my older brother died, and our youngest. They left their children with my mom and dad. They're the ones taking care of them. I'm the one who …
> Interviewer: Supports?
> Sara: Yes. My younger sibling can't. He has this thing here [he is sick].
> Interviewer: Do you think that [it] would have been impossible or less likely in the Philippines [for the children to have a good future, get their citizenship, and finish their studies]?
> Amy: Yes, it's hard in the Philippines. It's impossible because we don't have a permanent job. Even if it's difficult here, even if work is hard, by the end of every month, we have our salary. We'll be able to support their needs.
> Interviewer: So, when you think of the decision to come to Japan, when you think about it now, [would] you take the same decision again?
> Amy: Yes. We'd still take the risk because we have no choice. But if there was a better job in the Philippines, we probably wouldn't have left.
> Maricris: We don't have a choice, right? We really don't.

These women underlined the urgency of having had to seek employment overseas, culminating into a justification of their move as the only real option. Economic vulnerability features prominently in decisions to work abroad (Asis 2002), as do the material and symbolic gains that international migration and overseas employment engender (Aguilar 2014: 75). Read against the backdrop of what Kelly (2007) has described as a sense of "stickiness in the class structure" (17), decisions to leave are also expressions of frustration with the limited social mobility and the futility of aspirations to move up in the class strata. Suffering from tangled social and spatial immobilities, their desires to cross borders are thus intertwined with desires to evade stuckness. Overseas employment is perceived as an opportunity to introduce movement and change into one's life. These sentiments, often expressed, of wanting a "better life" for oneself and one's family, are widely shared by those embarking on journeys to labor overseas (see Kelly 2007; Aguilar 2014; Asis 2002; Parreñas 2005).[5]

Unemployment or underemployment, socioeconomic inequality, and immobility have fueled the Philippine labor export industry with workers. Organized and mobilized across borders by the state and placement agencies, labor migration follows gendered morals of who ought to be recruited into what kinds of jobs (Fresnoza-Flot and Shinozaki 2017: 868), with women often performing reproductive work as nurses, caregivers, domestic

helpers, nannies, or hostesses (Suzuki 2000). If the choice to seek one's fulfillment of middle-class aspirations overseas (or mere sustenance) is embedded in structural inequalities, so are the ramifications of these choices, including the configuration and reconfiguration of families.

Indeed, the current migration of women and children follows from an earlier migration of Filipina women into Japan's nightlife industry. Most migrant mothers entering Japan as caregivers today had previously worked in Japan as "talents," where they had met the fathers of their children. Their short-term visas did not allow for an extended stay in Japan. Thus, despite their pregnancies, most women opted to return and give birth in their home countries, where their children were then raised. With the births of the children remaining unrecognized by their fathers, and thereby unregistered with the Japanese authorities, neither women nor children gained access to legal status in Japan. The biological fathers frequently absented themselves—personally, emotionally, and financially—from raising their offspring. Consequently, numerous mothers of Japanese-Filipino children decided to take the opportunity of earning an income in Japan, and entrusting brokers with the task of securing their children's Japanese citizenship.

The latter is a promise made to prospective migrant workers by organizations registered as foundations of non-profits in the Philippines, specializing on the brokerage of people of Japanese descent. Having set up recruitment programs specifically for mothers of Japanese-Filipinos, these organizations cater to the mothers' desires to secure their children's formal citizenship in Japan, thereby facilitating the mothers' own rights to abode and engage in paid employment in the country. This "passport consciousness" (Faier 2009) expresses the mothers' knowledge of cross-border mobility as a marker of privilege and a means to gain greater agency in a world where immigration regimes constrain the lives and prospects of those immobilized across borders by their documents. Japanese immigration and residency policies, in particular, have rendered Filipino migrant women's pathways to long-term residency dependent on marrying or giving birth to a Japanese citizen (Parreñas 2011: 179).[6]

Reconfigurations of Family Life

Arriving in Japan, mothers and children leave behind their network of support provided by extended family and friends. Cheryl, a mother of two, describes her youngest son's loneliness when they first arrived:

> My youngest was just twelve years old when we arrived. Our house was bare. Just like they said, it didn't have anything. No radio, no

TV. ... Monday to Sunday, I wasn't home. My kid was left alone at home for one to two weeks. He didn't have anyone to talk to because he was alone. He just waited. He was crying when I got home. "Mama, I want to go home to the Philippines." I felt sorry for him. I told him, let's go to 7-eleven. Let's buy *oden* [Japanese winter dish]. The first one he ate was an egg oden. So, every day when I got home, he says "Mama, let's go to 7-eleven. Let's buy *oden*." I felt like crying. He said "Mama, we don't even have a computer to talk to them [the family]." ... I was crying while he was sleeping. I said to myself, "Lord, we can do this. I know we can do this." Then when he started going to school, that was the time he was kind of okay.

Hiromi, aged fourteen, recounts that she felt scared when she first had to stay home all by herself during her mother's nightshift:

At first, I wasn't used to the arrangement, because [in the Philippines] I lived with my cousins ... That's why when I got here, it was so quiet. Very unlike our home in the Philippines, which was always noisy. Here, it was just my mother and me. I'm a Mama's girl. I'm not used to my Mom being away all the time. That's why if she has *shigoto* [work]; if she has work or something, I have the house to myself. It gets scary sometimes. ... Around fifth grade. That's why, uhm, there's a night shift. They leave at 4 PM, they get back at 9 AM the next day. That's why ... good thing our neighbor is also a Filipino. She let me stay at her place. But still, it was very difficult. Eventually, I got used to it. I can sleep alone now.

Upon resettlement into Japan, migrant children need to get used to new caregiving arrangements. Although all the mothers interviewed had been working in the Philippines before their migration, they had mostly worked during daytime and had had the support of extended family. Once in Japan, the women cope with the demands of their jobs by sharing child-care duties. This situation is in part engineered by brokers who "market" their female labor force to prospective employers as one that relies on the community to both do the job and take care of the children. During a visit I made to one foundation based in the south of Metro Manila, the managing director related to me that they recommended employers to arrange for housing and work shifts in a way that enables the women to take turns in watching over each other's children, especially so during night shifts.

Employers rely on and exploit their female workers' social capital in recruitment and staffing processes. The brokers' interest in Filipino women as workers, not mothers, is moreover exemplified by the limitations placed upon bringing all their children with them, including those from

relationships with non-Japanese partners. Sachi, a Japanese-Filipino girl who had resettled to Japan only a few months before our interview, had two younger siblings of a different father who had to remain in the care of their grandparents in the southern Philippines: "My Mom wanted [my siblings] to come here. … When we went to the airport and said our good-byes, my mommy cried because we'll miss them." Similarly, a mother of two relates her feelings of guilt for having had to leave her non-Japanese child behind:

> Amy: I was supposed to come here with my other child, my second child; we both have visas. All three of us were supposed to [come] here to Japan.
> Interviewer: You were supposed to [come] here all together?
> Amy: But the agency told us it wasn't allowed. My second child didn't make it to the school cutoff;[7] that's why he wasn't allowed. I told them even if he didn't make it to the (cut)off, it's okay because he has a visa, so I can bring him with me. They told me I couldn't. I would have to feed him. I told them I was the one who was going to feed him. I was the one who was going to pay for it. They said, "No." Then I said, "I'll tell our boss." They said, "Even if you tell the boss, we still won't allow it." Why wouldn't they allow me? I left the Philippines feeling bad because they didn't allow my other child.

These instances illustrate a highly practical approach to labor recruitment into caregiving facilities for the elderly, whereby "useful" children are included in the migratory process while others are considered potential burdens whose presence might become a financial strain. In this migration process, Japanese-Filipino children's legal status in Japan (as citizens or long-term residents) allows their mothers to gain legal status as their primary carers, and to thereby qualify as documented migrant workers for brokers and employers. It is considered that children of non-Japanese fathers, however, are less likely to be "useful" to Japan in the long-term but may instead burden their mothers financially and with increased caring duties. Ironically, the organizations involved in facilitating the migration of Japanese-Filipinos and their mothers to Japan are frequently registered as foundations and non-profits, tapping into discourses of charity and rights. As with migrant women separated from all of their children, this system takes advantage of the political, social, and economic inequalities that render some families more vulnerable to structural violence than others.

The tangled intergenerational cross-border migration of Filipino mothers and their Japanese-Filipino children is coproduced by desires for better lives, and the laws governing immigration and settlement, as well as intermediary organizations brokering employment and mobility.

Concerns over Being a "Good Mother"

> Maricris: When we first arrived, my child said, "Mama, are we going to live here?" Yes. "How come we only have a bed and a pillow?" Let's put up with it for now. "How come we don't have things?" That's what she said when we got here. She said, "How come it's different in the Philippines?" [I said,] "Just be patient, it's just our first time here." We really didn't have anything.

Tied to their employer by debt and the hope of obtaining Japanese citizenship for their children, the families have little choice but to make do with their poor working and living conditions. Upon arrival, the initial arranged-for quarters in Kansai area proved disillusioning. In recounting these events, the women sound apologetic and guilty for having failed to fulfill their promises to their children of a comfortable life.

> Amy: [My son] really didn't want to [come to Japan]. Especially when we just arrived. The house was so bare. The only thing that was in our house was used diaper. When you open the cabinet, it was there. That was the only thing in our house. When we arrived, I didn't sleep for one night. I just cleaned the house. I cleaned up a small bit then I let the kid sleep. Then I cleaned the entire room. When we arrived, we didn't have food. They just gave us *onigiri* [rice ball]. My son didn't know what that was. He said "Mama, I thought [when] we went to Japan, we'd have a better life?" They just gave us …
> Cheryl: Bread.
> Amy: One *onigiri*. What bread? No, *onigiri*! My son wasn't familiar with it. We also didn't have anything to drink. One member of the staff told our boss to buy us drinks, but he said, "No. Drink from the faucet." We didn't have a choice. We were walking at 11 pm. We were a big group that arrived, and we all went to 7-eleven since it was the nearest. We bought food for the kids.

Recounting the emotional impact of their initial arrival in Kansai on them and their children, the women's narratives show the tanglement of mobility, decision-making power, and the negotiation of responsibility, guilt, and sacrifice. The sentiments of deferral of happiness and the acceptance of hardship and pain resound dominant Catholic cultural mores that produce particular subjectivities of *migranthood* and motherhood. In the Philippines, the journeys of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are celebrated as heroic acts, whereby these "modern-day heroes" are "transnational economic agents trained to internalize and deploy modes of ethical docility toward what is promoted as the martyric pursuit of both spiritual and economic

ends" (Bautista 2015: 426). This migrant "hero-martyr" overlaps with ideals of motherhood in the centrality of their sacrificial nature. In the predominantly Catholic Philippines, cultural conceptualizations of "mothering" draw from a strong devotion to the Virgin Mary that set expectations of women for "qualities such as kindness, piety, obedience, care, and virtue—essentially a sacrificial being who puts God's will above her own needs" (Soriano, Lim, and Rivera-Sanchez 2015: 4). In their moral presentation of self, migrant mothers thus often feel the need to aspire to the qualities of the Marian persona (ibid.: 5).

The suspension of happiness and the acceptance of hardship are thus part of a cultural repertoire of available strategies for coming to terms with the unplanned for, the emotional strain, and the challenges engendered by overseas migration. Migrant aspirations and the coming to terms with the consequences of spatial mobility thus need to be understood against the backdrop of the Philippine political-economy, discourses of sacrifice and martyrdom defining ideals of motherhood and migranthood, and the personal migratory and familial histories that precede the ongoing cross-border mobility of Filipino women and their Japanese-Filipino children.

The decision to take up overseas employment is frequently juxtaposed with the pain of material deprivation to justify the unsettling consequences of migration as necessary for survival. Having thrust their children into cross-border mobility—often against their will—mothers deal with their sense of guilt by reasserting the initial reason why they left the Philippines to reconcile their choices with ideals of "good motherhood." Public narratives of "good mothering" do not always mesh well with parenting practices in mobility (Åkesson, Carling, and Drotbohm 2012: 238). Ideal motherhood often implies a range of duties, including the prioritization of their children's emotional and educational needs, whereby the "intensive mothering" ideal of the late twentieth century places tremendous emotional demands and financial pressures on women, who are expected to put their children's needs above their own (Soriano et al. 2015). As a consequence, women working full time—whether migrants or not, poor mothers, or women otherwise unable to fulfill these responsibilities—often feel guilt for what they perceive as failures as a parent. Carling, Menjívar, and Schmalzbauer (2012) write that "[home-away] mothers often express feelings of hopelessness, distress and guilt about 'abandoning' their children ... even if their migration was prompted by a sense of obligation to provide their children with education, food, clothing and a lifestyle they could not otherwise have afforded" (194).

Asis (2002) writes that notions of the "good mother" (92) are redefined by women migrants away from home as they reposition themselves from being primarily nurturers to being providers. However, in this case of physically co-present mothering in single-parent families, migrant mothers attempt

to fulfill both roles. Asked how they managed to balance work and their duties as a parent, my respondents describe particular mothering activities, all of which emphasized their abilities to provide material and emotional well-being, despite their intense work schedules and their tiredness.

> Cheryl: When I'm working at night, I always call my kids. I check on them. How are you? Did you eat? Do you have food? They're grown up, so I know they can manage. When I arrive home, since they're boys, they didn't do the laundry. When I come from work, I see heaps of laundry. They're boys, so they don't know how to clean. They don't want to clean. So even if I'm tired, as a mother, I'll do it. Even if I lecture them, nothing. That's the role of a parent. So, the moment you go to bed, you immediately fall asleep. Then when it's *yasumi* [off-day], we have time to get together and chat.

> Maricris: When I have money, I go out with my kid to bond. But my daughter doesn't want to. … But when I'm home, I cook for her, and then we bond. We talk. Then when I'm trying to be sweet to her, she doesn't like it. I try to be the sweet parent because she's the grouchy type. She says "Mama, don't hug me." Then I tell her someday she'll crave my hugs. If I don't hug her, she's the one who hugs me. I tell her, look, now you're the one who wants to hug. When she hugs me, I hug her back. We chat too. I ask her about school. Then when she's on the cell phone, I ask what are you doing? Then she tells me.

> Amy: Until now I still feed him by hand, even [though] he's grown up. If we're having fish, I take out the bones and I feed him by hand. He's the youngest. He's sweet. So even [now] he's all grown up, he tells me "Mama, carry me on your lap." No, I can't. I don't think I can because you're too big now. It should be you carrying me.

These statements illustrate their efforts to conform to the image of a "good mother"—taking the time to be physically present to provide food, to make sure their children are clothed, and to give emotional support—are efforts to fulfill expectations of traditional mothering (Uy-Tioco 2007: 255). Not being able to do so results in "a sense of loss and the guilt of not being a 'good' mother" (ibid). Reflecting upon how their past and present migrations have affected their children, my respondents continue to elaborate on their concern:

> Cheryl: We always think about the discrimination experienced by our children. It's okay with us parents if we're discriminated against. We can take it. But we always think about what our children experience. That's what we're worried about. It's nice that they're able to interact with a lot of people, but discrimination can't be avoided.

> Maricris: If we had gone back to Japan to get a different kind of work, if we worked in the clubs, our children would get bullied. [Our boss said that] it's also hard to take care of a child when you're drunk. It's better to be a caregiver instead.

The latter statement can be read as a response to the "disciplining discourses within their host society," slotting Filipino women into one of the two "wife or whore" categories (Suzuki 2000: 432). The statement follows a retrospective account of their previous jobs as "talents," which are described as comparatively easy and better paid. By forgoing such an opportunity, Cheryl and Maricris show that they are keeping their children's best interests at heart,[8] while still demonstrating an awareness of local ideals of appropriate femininity.

While these accounts strengthen the idea that gendered ideals of parenthood shape mothering practices as well as performances of motherhood, they need to be contrasted with the broader research conducted among groups of Filipino migrant mothers and their children, children who have grown up in Japan, or children who joined their parent in Japan after years of separation. As mentioned above, my participants' accounts contribute to a larger body of studies on how mothers and their children experience and deal with migration from the Philippines to Japan. Suzuki (2015), for instance, demonstrates that migrant Japanese-Filipino youth often suffer emotionally from their mothers' indifference toward them and their exploitation as additional sources of labor and income upon arriving in Japan (223). Also, the data I collected from interviews with Japanese-Filipinos and their mothers during my doctoral research reveals instances of conflict that provide further nuances to the accounts above.[9]

Migrant Children Coming to Terms with Moving to a New Place

In November 2015, I attended a multicultural festival in the Kansai area, where a group of Japanese-Filipino migrant children gave a dance performance. Having assembled in front of the stage after the festival, we strolled from the park where the event was being held to the nearest Starbucks, together with a friend and fellow researcher. While walking, the group of six children—five girls and one boy, aged eleven to fifteen—engaged in excited conversation, switching between Japanese and Tagalog as they spoke. At Starbucks, the children got Frappuccinos as their reward for their performance at the festival. One of the girls, Hiromi, told me this was the only drink her mother allowed her to have because of its low coffee content.

As we sat, we spoke about the differences they had noticed between life in Japan and that in the Philippines. One girl mentioned that she had been excited about the prospect of seeing snow at first, but this had worn off quickly as she got annoyed with the cold. The others nodded and expressed agreement. Hideo, the only boy in the group, told me he would prefer returning to the Philippines. Two of the girls, Hiromi and Yuki, concurred. They believed life was more fun in the Philippines, and mentioned that schools organized a "prom" night after grade four, whereas no such thing existed in Japan. Yuki reiterated this sentiment during a later interview in which she described the school in Japan as "haggard." They expressed envy of their friends in the Philippines, but their friends envied them too; according to Hiromi and Yuki, their friends would say, "Wow, you're in Japan, that's so cool!" But they would reply, "No, it's not like that."

As our conversation continued, they asked me if I wanted to return to Europe, to which I replied that I was still undecided. Yuki then advised me to remain in Japan. As I pointed out the contradiction between her fondness of the Philippines on the one hand and her insistence on Japan being the better choice on the other, she replied: "It is better to stay in Japan, for work and for the future." Hiromi then further explained: "My mother said, what do you want to do in the Philippines? There is nothing you can do there. Japan is better for the future." During a focus group discussion a few months after our first meeting, the same two girls reiterated why they needed to resettle in Japan:

> Hiromi: If I stay in the Philippines, I'll have nothing to eat. If I [come] here, I can eat, but I'm alone. I'm happy when I'm in the Philippines, but I'll get hungry.
> Yuki: It's hard to find work in the Philippines.

Both girls accepted the plans their mothers had made for them, and believed that suspending their wishes was in their best interest, relying on their mothers' knowledge of the "adult world." Despite having had to resettle in Japan to enable their mothers' employment there, most of the Japanese-Filipino children and youths (ages nine to twenty-one) I spoke to had not wanted to leave the Philippines. A volunteer, while introducing me to the educational support group they were running, told me that most children they worked with had not wanted to leave their homes in the Philippines. "The parents don't care about the children's opinions. The children tell me so," she says. "But luckily, many of them end up making friends here." This illustrates that in these decision-making processes "children rarely appear to be consulted and are often excluded. … It is generally the adult family members who take the decision for the children to migrate and who organize their travel documents, which reflects the unbalanced

'power-geometry' in many migrant families" (Nagasaka and Fresnoza-Flot 2015: 25).

It is thus noteworthy that, in their narratives, the young migrants I spoke to did not paint their mothers as indifferent to their wishes but instead tried to rationalize their mothers' decisions and their roles in the entire migration project. Migrating for the sake of the family "runs through the script of migrants, men and women alike" (Asis 2002: 74). Considering that their mothers migrated to Japan not only to improve their economic situation but also often that of their other children who had to remain in the Philippines, as well as their extended family, it is unsurprising that the children, too, see migration as the "natural thing to do" (ibid.: 77), and their role in it as a necessary sacrifice.

In her study of undocumented Salvadorian migrant women in the United States and their families, Horton (2009) observes that children separated from their migrant mothers frequently offer to shoulder the adult burden in an attempt to reunify the family in one place, and challenge their mothers' rational explanations for their departure ("to provide for the family") by offering to contribute to the family income as well. My young respondents, too, seem to try taking the weight off of their mothers' shoulders, albeit not by challenging the decision to migrate, but by accepting and reiterating their justifications for resettling in Japan.

Repeated conversations over the period of a year showed that the children spoke inconsistently about their experiences of having to leave family and friends to live elsewhere. During our group interview, the children trivialized their move by declaring they were indifferent about leaving the Philippines, with one girl even being excited and exclaiming she had expected to see real *anime* figures running around Japan's streets: "If our Mom says so, we'll do it," Hiromi declared. Yet, when I asked for a description of their initial experiences in Japan, one of my respondents teared up, and another one expressed continued sadness over living apart from her grandparents and siblings. Akiko and Sarah, two young women aged twenty and twenty-one whom I met and spoke to during a gathering, told me about their involuntary move to Japan four years earlier. Akiko's sister had had to quit college to work in a factory in Japan, and Sarah said she felt "taken out of her structure" when she had to leave her hometown in the Philippines. Both seemed resigned about the possibilities that migration to Japan opened: "For us here it's not so much about what we want to do, but what we can do," said Sarah, reiterating her lack of decision-making power.

Francisco-Menchavez (2018) warns against casting children affected by parental migration into emotional stasis, as they too are able to develop "an emotional grammar during sustained separation" (9), or as in this case, in migration. The children's feelings about being in Japan may thus seem

contradictory at times, but as such reflect a process of coming to terms with the many conflicting feelings the experience indeed involves, including their willingness to recognize their mothers' good intentions. "Children deeply understand what is at stake for their migrant mothers abroad. They sympathize with the sacrifice their mothers make as they work their fingers to the bone, staying abroad for an indefinite amount of time" (ibid.). This sentiment of sympathy and understanding frequently leads to labor of care in the form of reciprocation that Francisco-Menchavez coins "*sukli*," a concept "deeply linked to the Filipino cultural value of '*utang ng loob*,' [which] can be loosely translated to 'reciprocation' in the context of family obligation" (ibid.: 1; also see Celero in this volume).

Hideo's mother, Amy, recounts her joy over earning her son's recognition for her hard work:

> When he was in junior high school, they had this thing wherein they will work for two days in the place where we work. He saw other helpers like us working. When I arrived home, he told me, "Mama, your work is really hard. Why don't you stop and look for an easier work?" He saw for himself, so he was the one who told his older brother. Of course, I don't mention things like that when we talk to relatives in the Philippines. I always call my son [the one left in the Philippines]. It's difficult because he's a guy. I don't want him to hang out with the wrong crowd. Even if my sister's there in the Philippines, it's different when I'm the one taking care of him. My son [in Japan] tells him, "This is Mom's work here."

By acknowledging his mother's hard work and showing concern over her well-being, Hideo engages in emotional labor. His mother Amy subsequently expresses her desire for her second son, who had to remain in the Philippines, to do the same by not hanging out "with the wrong crowd." The acknowledgment of their mother's sacrifices, and the readiness to endorse her decisions, are a way of caring that children develop as they resettle and live with their mothers in Japan.

Conclusion

The spatial mobilities of Filipino mothers and their Japanese-Filipino children are tangled on numerous levels: emotional, structural, temporal, generational, and material. Their case shows that both the mothers' and children's ways of coming to terms with the emotional dimensions of their migration are interconnected with wider economic, social, and political structures and processes. The mothers' and the children's mobilities are

codependent processes, whereby the children enable their mothers' migration without having any real decision-making power. Remaining dependent on their mothers as caregivers throughout the process, the latter expressed feelings of guilt for having put their children through emotional distress.

Spatial mobility entailed profound changes in family structure and in overseas employment, and, at least in the beginning, failed to deliver on its promise for "better lives." The affective responses to these emotional hardships entailed by cross-border mobility are frequently expressed through powerful ideals of motherhood and the trope of the migrant martyr-hero. Similarly informed by notions of sacrifice and debt, children and youth who are recruited into these migratory enterprises, despite their wishes, rationalize the decisions taken for them and often support their mothers' decisions.

The motives and routes to migration are manifold and entangled; the mothers are effectively labor migrants, while the children are crossing borders as Japanese citizens or to claim their Japanese citizenship. Both migration for work and migration for rights are motivated by aspirations to better lives and greater opportunities. Intermediary actors facilitate the entrance into Japan by exploiting these desires, the demands of the Japanese labor market, and migration regimes that hamper the mobility of those with the least capital—social, cultural, or financial.

The mothers' migration to Japan for work, which outside of my group of respondents also occurs among Japanese-Filipinos of working age, bears striking parallels to the migration of Filipino women into Japan's adult entertainment industry decades ago. Recruited to work for Japanese clubs, pubs, and bars, Filipino migrant "entertainers" were saddled with debt and found themselves performing reproductive and care labor, as many do today in their roles as caregivers. Similar brokerage practices linger, as do notions that Filipino workers require monitoring.[10] Here, present spatial mobilities tangle with past ones, and result in the continuity of exploitative practices.

This temporal tangledness is accompanied by legal and material tangledness. Women and children depend on intermediaries' and employers' support in securing the family's legal status (where children are not yet Japanese citizens) and their subsistence in Japan via employment. Employers and brokers are dependent on the migrant workers fulfilling their tasks. Brokers work for profit, and employers require affordable labor. Bringing these families to Japan on visas that are not employment bound bears the risk of "losing" workers, should they find more attractive work opportunities. Thus, the support of local managers in securing the children's Japanese citizenship is tied to their mothers' compliance to their employer.

The recent migration of Japanese-Filipino children with their mothers to Japan feeds off similar social, economic, and gendered inequalities, as did the initial arrival of young Filipino "entertainers" in the past (Ogaya 2020).

It thus remains to be seen whether this form of tangled spatial mobility will lead yet again to the reproduction of such inequalities, or whether the families' aspirations for upward social mobility will come to fruition in their country of destination.

Fiona-Katharina Seiger is a migration expert who has worked with women, children, and youth in Japan and the Philippines. Her intellectual project centers on the politics of belonging in a world in flux, to which she now adds a burgeoning interest in urban spaces and in qualitative research involving "the digital." Her education and research career have taken her to Vienna, Paris, Kyoto, Tokyo, Manila, Singapore, and Antwerp, and she is now with Erasmus University, Rotterdam (EUR). Prior to embarking on her PhD, she worked for a nongovernmental organization based in Manila catering to migrant returnees from Japan and their children; this experience laid the groundwork for her ensuing research projects. She holds a PhD in Sociology (National University of Singapore, 2014) with a thesis on Japanese–Filipino children born from migration between the two countries. At the center of her doctoral research stood an exploration of the material dimensions of ethnic identity constructions and identity claims. Her post-doctoral research (Kyoto University CSEAS, 2015–16) builds upon her doctoral work by exploring how identity constructions and claims change in migration, as people cross into different sociocultural and political contexts. Fiona-Katharina joined the Department of Public Policy and Sociology at EUR in September 2019, where she is exploring narratives of Europe from outside the continent, as part of the H2020 project PERCEPTIONS. She is also always looking for different ways of publishing research; since March 2020, Fiona-Katharina produces "The Migration Podcast."

NOTES

1. Mobility regimes denote "a constellation of policies, cultural norms and networks that condition, constrain or facilitate migration" (Xiang 2007: 3).
2. Single-mother households in Japan, or "fatherless families" as they are called in the Surveys by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, are especially vulnerable to poverty, as over 50 percent of all single-parent (mostly single-mother) families in Japan live with an income that sets them below the poverty line (http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/11/07/business/no-relief-sight-japans-poor-single-parent-families/, last accessed 31 January 2022). On average, the salaries reportedly earned by my respondents were between 150,000 and 180,000 yen a month (70,000–85,000 PhP or 1,300–1,600 USD) before deductions, for rent, utilities, the payback of their debt, and money remitted home. After all deductions, the women

I talked to were left with only about 20,000–70,000 yen (approx. 170–600 USD) a month for their and their children's needs.

3. Meaning, their children with non-Japanese partners. Only the offspring of a Japanese parent qualify for either a long-term visa and/or Japanese citizenship.

4. A small neighborhood shop where one can buy a variety of products for everyday use. *Sari-sari* means "variety."

5. Migration is also regarded as a "rite of passage" (Aguilar 2014), showing the interconnectedness of geographical and social mobility, as well as personhood, in the process.

6. A small number of caregivers and prospective nurses have reached Japan under the Japan–Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA). More recently, the Japanese government under Prime Minister Abe decided to allow the recruitment of domestic helpers from abroad, but limited to Tokyo and Osaka, two "special zones" (Venzon and Suruga 2017).

7. Amy refers to age fifteen, when compulsory education ends and when entry examination for senior high school needs to be taken.

8. The group of people I worked with are not representative in this respect, as Filipino migrant women in Japan frequently go back to work in nightclubs. But nightclubs do not guarantee a steady income. A volunteer at a support group tells me that many women were laid off when the economy was bad as fewer customers were spending their money on these types of entertainment. Caregivers on the other hand are always very much in demand in this hyper aging society.

9. One such story revolved around Felix. Now in his mid-twenties, his resident mother petitioned Felix to Japan when he was seventeen to increase the family income by finding a job. Several verbal fights with his mother led the then-teenager to move in with friends instead, and chart out his own livelihood project over time, resulting in circular migration between the greater Tokyo metropolitan area and Metro Manila. Over the years, our communication often touched upon Felix's feelings of alienation from his mother and his disagreements with her priorities and lifestyle—notably, her addiction to gambling and her and her husband's alleged physical violence toward Felix's younger half-siblings.

10. Ogaya (2020: 8) writes that owners and managers of care facilities are mostly men who remember Filipino women as entertainers who are exploitable and who need to be monitored. She quotes one of her respondents claiming that women who used to work as entertainers had to be under managerial control, as they have the habit of deceiving their customers.

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