

CHAPTER

7

Intergenerational Intimacies and Mobilities in Transnational Families The Experiences of Japanese-Filipino Children

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Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the role of children growing up in transnational families, families that are formed through bi/international marriage, whose members are geographically separated and employ strategies to sustain households and relationships in two or more societies. These strategies reflect how families adapt to the rapidly changing world (Chakraborty and Thambiah 2018: 584). While the phenomena of international marriages and transnational families are nothing new, research on the relational lives of children born of such marriages and families remain limited (Findlay et al. 2015). Taking into account this lacuna, the present chapter interrogates how children in transnational families manage intergenerational intimacies and mobilities across space and time. It uses the empirical case of Japanese-Filipino children born to international marriage families whose childhood and family life experiences involve moving between the economic, social, and cultural contexts of Japan and the

Philippines. Some of these children are partly raised in the Philippines before moving to Japan by the age of eighteen to reunite with migrant parents, thereby developing bifocal understandings of childhood, familyhood, and kinship. While raised in a transnational family, they become exposed to ambivalences in family relationships resulting from shifting and unequal socioeconomic and cultural conditions between Japan and the Philippines. The different historical and structural characteristics in both societies influence their mobility and immobility as part of “doing” family across borders.

Before proceeding to the im/mobilities of Japanese-Filipinos, it is necessary to define mobility and immobility as utilized in this chapter. The concept of mobility is about “people’s movement as well as the connected flux of materialities, money, ideas, images, knowledge and technologies, and the way such diverse mobilities are restricted, facilitated or understood” (Groes and Fernandez 2018: 4). It pertains to the multiple forms of spatial or geographical migration intersecting with other types of movement (intimate, legal, and social) that bring about change in the meaning and practice (Salazar, Elliot and Norum 2017) of, in this case, nurturing intimate family ties. Intimate mobility occurs through relativizing (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002) or relational practices (Hordsworth 2013) in which families adjust the proximity and intensity of emotional connection with other members. Legal mobility, on the other hand, refers to changing one’s citizenship and/or to other kinds of legal status, while social mobility refers to upward or downward movement of one’s class position. In the context of this chapter, the interlocking spatial, intimate, legal, and social im/mobilities of Japanese-Filipinos are grounded in transnational family ties. The chapter focuses on Japanese-Filipinos’ mobile and immobile subjectivities, referring not only to the different im/mobility routes, experiences, and motives, but also to their politics of mobility (Cresswell 1999, 2010) which, arising from the entanglement of their im/mobilities and those of their Filipino migrant (and Japanese) parents and extended kin, engenders power relations and contradictory effects on intergenerational ties.

The chapter begins with briefly reviewing the literature on transnational families in Asia to situate the lived experiences of Japanese-Filipino children, followed by clarifying the theoretical concepts such as care, intergenerational reciprocity, and children in transnational families. Next, it presents the research methods employed to gather data on the profile of Japanese-Filipino children according to the types of migration and mobility that they experience alongside their parents and extended kin. Third, it juxtaposes their im/mobilities to those of their Filipino and Japanese parents and Filipino kin to underscore their care work through performing familial roles. Fourth, it discusses the impact of their care labor on their

understandings and views of intergenerational intimacies. The chapter ends with a discussion on the social impact of transnational migration and family arrangements in Japan and the Philippines, and the growing importance of children's perspectives on mobility and family migration research.

Japanese-Filipino Families as Transnational Families

Japanese-Filipinos are children born to Japanese and Filipino parents whose international marriage and transnational family formation peaked in Japan in the 1990s, following the inbound migration of thousands of women from the Philippines (Haines, Yamanaka, and Yamashita 2012; Jones and Shen 2008; Yamashita 2008). The Center for Japanese-Filipino Families (CJFF) records that about 340,000 Japanese-Filipino children who are now in their twenties have resided or are currently residing in either Japan or the Philippines, while the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) conservative estimate is somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000. These inconsistent statistics complicate issues that Japanese-Filipinos face with regard to familial and legal categorizations over the last two decades (Ito 2005; Suzuki 2010). In Japan, Japanese-Filipinos have multiple legal statuses. Some have Japanese citizenship, while others hold visas of either a child of a Japanese national or a child of a permanent resident. In the Philippines, on the other hand, they may be legally recognized as Filipino or dual national. Through Japanese citizenship as a resource for migration, more Japanese-Filipinos have been migrating to Japan in recent times. Regardless of how they are defined legally, Japanese-Filipinos' individual and family lives have been impacted by the historical, legal, sociocultural, and economic conditions in the two societies.

Normative ideals and expectations based on societal cultures influence how families carry out social reproductive activities such as child-rearing and socialization. In the Philippines, the family is a social institution in which family relationships—specifically those between spouses, as well as those between parents and children—are fundamental to the well-being of Filipinos (Asis 2000: 257). The pervasiveness of familism in the Philippines extols Filipinos' strong attachments to their extended families (Alampay 2014), and explains why both extended and nuclear families are considered as ideal family models. Interdependence between members occurs to carry out family practices and obligations across generations. As the postindustrial Filipino society transitions to a modern and diverse value system, however, the function of family has shifted toward prioritizing individual needs over collective welfare, and young people are increasingly making decisions on matters that directly affect them, such as education and relationships (Medina 2001: 276).

Meanwhile, integral to postwar Japan's rapid transformation into a modern industrialized democracy was its structural shift from traditional extended family to the nuclear, patriarchal system, dichotomizing the roles of fathers and mothers into breadwinners and caregivers, respectively (Holloway 2010: 196; Holloway and Nagase 2014: 62). Since the 1970s, Japan has also been a quarter of a century ahead of the rest of Asia in terms of fertility and population decline (Ochiai 1997), and these demographic challenges have had economic consequences for families across generations in general, and for women in particular. Despite the rising cost of sustaining a household, divorce, and a recent decline in the appeal of marriage, childcare and household production have remained in the hands of housewives/mothers (Holloway 2010: 96; Ochiai 2009: 74–75). Whether married or divorced, Filipino migrant mothers make no exception; they must deal with the costs of child care and the demands of family life in Japan.

Transnational living arrangement has become the strategy of Japanese-Filipino families to negotiate the prevailing ideals, expectations, and norms in the two societies. Thus, this chapter explores how Japanese-Filipinos navigate through normative conditions of family and kinship across borders. It looks into the relationship between their family life and multiple im/mobilities. The transnationality of Japanese-Filipinos, resulting from sporadic episodes of stay-behind childhood, parental absence, and temporal family reunions, can be classified into two major modes: split-to-reunited and circulating. The first of these, which is akin to the stay-behind family arrangement as an outcome of parental migration depicted in migration literature (Carling, Menjivar, and Schmalzbauer 2012; Parreñas 2005; Save the Children 2006; Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012), will be the focus of the chapter. It occurs when Japanese-Filipinos experience immobility as stay-behind children in the Philippines, co-reside with Filipino extended kin, and become physically separated from, but eventually reunite with, Filipino (and Japanese) parents working in Japan.

The transnational strategies among Japanese-Filipino families vary in terms of resources for parenting and raising a family. Filipino migrant women's "mobile motherhood" (Ogaya 2015) results from the inadequate financial and cultural capital for parenting, and the anticipated difficulty of managing work and family life in Japan. First-time Filipino mothers decide to give birth in the Philippines where they have greater familiarity with and access to maternity, infant care, and other kinds of support from natal family. Working in Japan enables them to support their stay-behind children raised by their Filipino relatives. Some Filipino (and Japanese) parents also perceive the social environment in the Philippines as more conducive

to their children's growth than that in Japan, where stories of children of immigrants experiencing bullying and discrimination abound.

Among divorced and/or single Filipino mothers, the difficulty of raising children alone forces those who cannot easily access social welfare provisions in Japan to send their children temporarily to the Philippines. Even dual-parent Japanese-Filipino families who neither live together nor establish familial bonds with Japanese extended kin struggle to access child-care support, and therefore choose to send their children to be raised in the Philippines. The period of separation from their children in the Philippines depends on the time Filipino women need to improve their socioeconomic situation in order to reunite with children in Japan.

The present study focuses on the transnational family relationships of Japanese-Filipino children that they maintain through multiple, intersecting im/mobilities. These intertwining spatial, legal, and social mobilities connect them to their Filipino and Japanese parents, as well as to extended kin who constitute their "circuits of intimacy and care" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997).

Conceptual Clarification: Care and Reciprocity among Children in Transnational Families

Transnational families are an outcome of global economic inequality, and reproduce new modes of dependence on a transnational division of labor (Schmalzbauer 2004: 1029; also in Yeoh, Huang, and Lam 2017: 312). Existing literature on transnational families in Asia can be summed up into three interrelated arguments (Lam et al. 2018; Yeoh et al. 2017; Yeoh et al. 2005). First, transnational families draw on ideological imaginaries of family, household, and kinship to sustain belonging despite physical absence. Second, they are realized through lived experiences, where varying degrees of intimacy are negotiated through new communication technologies and the time-structuring conditions, such as care work of existing migration regimes in Asia. Third, these families often assume transnational morphologies with the strategic intent, such as migrant parents overseas while children are stay-behind, or mobile children and stay-behind parents. Within this corpus of scholarship are three burgeoning strands that underscore children's social agency: children as educational migrants and family aspirational projects, children moving to counter marginal circumstances, and stay-behind children's role in negotiating parental migration and child-care arrangements. These trends indicate scholars' increasing attention to the "situated agency" (Choi, Yeoh, and Lam 2018) of children who are affected by migration processes

beyond borders. Children's agency includes their generational resources of power, such as age and family position, to "influence, organize, coordinate, and control events that take place in their changing family worlds" (Alanen 2001: 21).

The current chapter departs from the predominantly adult-centric perspective on family migration and practices, through considering the voice and situated agency of children in transnational families as they participate in the exchange of practical, moral, emotional, personal, accommodation/co-residence, and economic support (Finch 1989: 9, as cited in Baldassar and Merla 2014: 12) between their parents and extended kin to ensure the collective well-being of the family. The chapter also takes a life course approach in examining how Japanese-Filipinos manage intergenerational intimacies across spaces and through time. In doing so, it underscores the dynamic relationship between historical and social structures framing migrant life course and individual biographies (Wingens et al. 2011: 2-3), and the role of migration as a continuous process, rather than a single event, through which children contribute to the life narratives of transnational families. It also emphasizes both the capabilities as well as limitations (at times powerlessness) of their action as children in relation to their parents and extended kin. Japanese-Filipino children's interlocking mobilities of different directions and motives are aimed at simultaneously extending and nucleating familial bonds.

The nurturance of intergenerational relations is undergirded by *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), a Filipino emotional grammar that defines the function as well as the intensity of family connections. As a Filipino cultural logic of reciprocity and cooperation within families, it consists of two components: (1) the filial piety of children toward their parents, and (2) the "natural" duty of the family to care for its members (Asis et al. 1995: 159). Children's "ethic of reciprocity" in particular is evident in the ways they carry out filial duties and exhibit good behaviors toward their migrant parents (Alipio 2015, as cited in Menchavez 2018: 3) as means of repayment for the latter's upbringing and sacrifices. The emphasis of the current chapter is on the context upon which *utang na loob* informs, enables, and constrains Japanese-Filipinos' im/mobilities and care labor. The chapter further illustrates how the multiple im/mobilities of Japanese-Filipinos engender ideational shifts as they progress in their life course. Reflecting on the accumulated family experiences, memories, and emotions in relation to other members, they consciously regulate the nature and extent of *utang na loob* toward their caring kin in the Philippines and their parents in Japan. The next section discusses the methodology and profile of Japanese-Filipinos in this study.

Research Methods and Profile of Japanese-Filipino Families

Data for this paper is derived from semi-structured and in-depth interviews with seventy Japanese-Filipinos residing in Tokyo and Manila, from 2010 to the present, as part of my longitudinal study on intergenerational mobility of 1.5- and second-generation Japanese-Filipinos. I met them through personal and professional networks. I benefited most from interviewing Filipino mothers who then referred me to their children. Establishing rapport with Japanese-Filipino child respondents, I was introduced as “mom’s friend” or as an “older sister.” Apart from getting the consent of their mothers to participate in the study, interviews with children below eighteen years old were conducted in the presence of their mother, who would sometimes act as interpreter and/or fellow interviewer. Mothers took such interactions as opportunities to ask questions to their children. At the start of fieldwork in Tokyo, I also gained the trust of young interviewees easily by introducing myself as a PhD student at Waseda University, functioning as my symbolic capital because it is a reputable university.

Each interview lasted for about two to three hours using a mix of Filipino, English, and Japanese, depending on the participant’s language ability and preference. Interviews were recorded with the permission of the respondents, fully transcribed, and translated into English. The interview questions focused on birth, childhood, family life, and relations of Japanese-Filipinos. They were assigned pseudonyms to maintain the anonymity of data. Doing this multi-sited fieldwork that has included face-to-face as well as online conversations over the last ten years, I have accumulated numerous life narratives from Japanese-Filipino children who have transitioned from different levels of education, training and employment, and have moved between Japan and the Philippines at various points of their individual and family lives. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect the identity of both the children and their parents, and to maintain the confidentiality of the interview data.

The narratives featured in this chapter illustrate Japanese-Filipinos’ present emotions and reflexivity toward the intersecting im/mobilities in their relational lives. Their transnational migration can be analyzed by including their childhood and adolescent experiences from the vantage point of their current stage in their life course. Thirty-six of them were born in the Philippines, compared to thirty-three who were born in Japan, while only one was born in another country. This paper concentrates on the family experiences of thirty Japanese-Filipinos who moved from the Philippines to Japan.

The majority of my respondents belonged to the sixteen to twenty-five age bracket, and most of them were born in the 1990s. Japanese-Filipinos

in this study hold different national memberships, which likewise shape their capacity to move between the two countries frequently. Of the seventy respondents, thirty-two are Japanese citizens, eighteen are Filipino, and twenty hold both Filipino and Japanese citizenships. This chapter is based on the recollections and experiences of Japanese-Filipinos who were stay-behind children in the Philippines before reuniting with their working mothers who had become permanent residents in Japan. At the time of the interviews with the children, their Filipino mothers were either married (thirty-one), remarried (seven), or single parents (seventeen divorced, five unmarried, and six widows), which variously shaped the development of intergenerational relationships—mainly between them and their Filipino mothers, but also with their extended kin in the Philippines, and Japanese fathers to some extent.

When Children Care: Japanese-Filipinos’ Transnational Family Relations

This section examines the care labor of Japanese-Filipinos during the two phases of a split-to-reunited living arrangement of Japanese-Filipino families. It begins with the context of their spatial immobility as stay-behind children co-residing with Filipino extended kin, which entangles with the spatial and intimate im/mobilities of their Filipino and Japanese parents in the Philippines. Consequently, it details the entanglement between their multiple im/mobilities and the legal and social im/mobilities of their parents following a reunion in Japan.

First Phase: Multiple Immobilities of Children, Spatial Mobility of Extended Kin, Spatial and Intimate Im/mobilities of Parents

Children’s stay-behind status depends on their parents’ economic and legal status abroad, as well as the children’s life stage. In my sample, twenty-seven of Japanese-Filipino children went to a grade school in the Philippines (until twelve years old), while nineteen of them remained in the Philippines to attend high school (until sixteen years old). Another ten children moved from the Philippines to Japan in the middle of grade school, while nine were taken to the Philippines from Japan to continue primary school, suggesting disruptions in child socialization and schooling due to family circumstances and parents’ considerations of “conducive” environment for raising children properly.

As stay-behind children in the Philippines, Japanese-Filipinos go through childhood and socialization stages that require tremendous care exchange. Thus, in the first phase of their family arrangement, spatially immobile

Japanese-Filipinos “actively engage both in caring for and caring about family survival and maintenance” (Baldassar and Merla 2014: 12) through mediating transnational family relationships with their Japanese and Filipino parents, as well as Filipino extended kin in the Philippines.

Japanese-Filipino children deal with temporal, physical, and emotional distance (Bauzon 1999; Nuqui 2009; Satake 2004; Suzuki 2010) and presence of their Filipino (and Japanese) parents in their lives while growing up in the Philippines. Their Filipino mothers tend to take short vacation trips a few times a year, each lasting for several days or weeks, taking advantage of the homeland’s geographical proximity and cheap flights from Japan. Materializing family obligations, their mother’s visits include bringing *balik-bayan* (returning migrant’s) boxes and spending on excursion trips and homecoming parties. Through their hard-earned yen, Filipino mothers are able to rear an extended household in the Philippines due to the affordability of housing, education, and a middle-class lifestyle.

Japanese fathers, meanwhile—aside from visiting their child at the time of birth, and sending financial support and material goods—seldom come to the Philippines to spend time with children. For many Philippine-raised Japanese-Filipino children, having a Japanese father who resides and works in Japan for practically the entire year means dealing with his perennial absence and minimal involvement in child care. Japanese-Filipino children who neither see nor communicate with their Japanese father regularly due to the language barrier have the least intimacy. Irregular and minimal family visits have prevented them from establishing father-and-child bonds. Although the Filipino mother may mediate contact, some Japanese-Filipino children become frustrated over not attaining deep emotional closeness with their father.

Japanese-Filipino children’s pain of absent father-child relations is comparable to never knowing their fathers at all. Indeed, Japanese-Filipino families have a lot more fathering deficit than other migrant families in the Philippines. Of the seventy respondents interviewed in Tokyo and Manila, six had never met their father, while five of them had only seen their father once when they were between three and eight years old. Eighteen of them had parents who had divorced while growing up either with their mother in Japan, or their extended kin caregivers in the Philippines (Celero 2016). Due to the lack of joint custody rights in Japan, the ties between the “departing” father and the “abandoned” child gradually become disjointed over time. The spatial immobility, entangled with the legal and social immobilities, of many Japanese-Filipino children who grew up in the Philippines without a father due to either marital breakup or lack of paternal recognition (Nuqui 2009; Seiger 2014; Suzuki 2010) impacts the pursuit of legal and other mobilities in the latter stages of their lives.

Compensating for the limited or constrained intimacy with parents are the Filipino extended kin—commonly grandmothers and aunts caring as “the other mothers” and uncles as “the other fathers” for Japanese-Filipino children. Filling the parental void, they serve as authoritative figures and siblings, providing love, guidance, and protection for the children from the pain and trauma of family disintegration. Some Japanese-Filipino children, meanwhile, facilitate the spatial mobility of their extended kin through convincing their parents that they co-reside with their relatives so that the latter can save on housing costs while the former eases relativizing or building affinity with their kin.

There are desirable outcomes of co-residence for Japanese-Filipino children. First, it acculturates them to Filipino values and outlook on intergenerational relations. Living together with caring relatives for a considerable time enables them to flexibly rework familial ties, like other stay-behind children in the Philippines (Hoang et al. 2015). As a sense of extended family is inculcated in them, Japanese-Filipino children learn to show filial respect, love, and obedience not only toward their co-residing kin but also to their physically distant mothers (and fathers). Second, they develop *utang na loob* as they appreciate the parenting role of their caring kin, and their own parents’ hard work overseas through the remittances sent regularly. In turn, they manifest their “ethic of reciprocity” through displaying self-discipline and respect. Attributing power to their parents for their financial support, Yuki describes her mother as the “mother and father of the household,” and the most powerful head of their family, despite being physically absent in their everyday life.

Living with extended kin may, however, expose Japanese-Filipino children to the negative features of familial relations in the Philippines. For instance, prolonged reliance of their relatives on their physically distant parents, as in the case of Yuta, a stay-behind child in Manila until the age of sixteen:

My mom did not tell me to study hard. It grew on me because I witnessed everything in the Philippines ... all the poverty there. I realized I cannot help her if I do not finish school because I cannot get a good job. I will end up like my relatives. That is how it is in the Philippines. I picked that up as a kid.

Living in an extended household that two to three families share, some Japanese-Filipinos become aware of their relatives’ economic dependence on their working parents in Japan, because they neither work abroad nor fend for themselves. Their unemployment serves as an everyday reminder of poverty etched in their memory as children. The economic reliance of Yuta’s relatives on his mother made a lasting impression on him, motivating

him to persevere with his studies in order to one day alleviate his mother's financial burdens.

Comparing Japan and the Philippines in their imaginary of social mobility, they begin to associate immobility in the Philippines with poverty and dependence, while migration to Japan is linked with social mobility and autonomy, evident in how their migrant parents provide more for the transnational household. Experiences of physical separation from and longing for their parents yield contradictory feelings toward their extended kin (appreciation for their caring kin but disdain for dependent relatives), and manifest power through influencing the subsequent family movement (Dreby 2007: 1062). As a United Nations Report on Social Costs of Migration (2013) reveals, Filipino stay-behind children tend to have ambivalent feelings about prolonged parental absence, which intensifies the desire for family togetherness. While their mothers battle guilt for leaving their responsibilities behind, children easily convince them to finally reunite in Japan.

Second Phase: Multiple Im/mobilities of Japanese-Filipinos, Legal and Social Im/mobilities of Filipino Parents in Japan

Many stay-behind Japanese-Filipino children eventually overcome sedentariness in the Philippines and move to Japan to reunite with their parents. A child's age at the time of migration accounts for diverse family desires and obligations. In my sample, twenty Japanese-Filipino children born and raised in the Philippines moved to Japan before the age of twelve to either start or resume grade school. The educational, legal, and social mobilities for Japanese-Filipinos are frequently entangled as their educational and career aspirations overlap with reinvigorating intimacies, not only with their parents and/or siblings after years of separation, but also with Japan from which they claim rights as Japanese citizens (Celero 2016; Seiger 2014) and fulfill their nostalgia toward their "other" homeland (Hara 2011).

The legal mobility of Japanese-Filipinos is determined by the prevailing immigration and citizenship regimes that give priority to a nuclear family and blood-based relations in Japan. First, moving to Japan to claim Japanese citizenship is based on their biological relationship to a Japanese parent, according to Japan's Nationality Law.¹ Second, lacking access to Japanese citizenship due to denied paternal recognition, other Japanese-Filipinos secure rights to live and work in Japan by being a child of their long-term and permanent resident Filipino parents.² Third, through marriage or remarriage, undocumented or overstaying Filipinos may obtain a spouse visa to legalize status and lead a family in Japan. Seven children in my study benefited from their mothers upon the latter's re/marriage, and were even adopted by their Japanese stepfathers. The last two structural conditions

show that the change in the legal status of Filipino migrant mothers intertwines with the legal, intimate, and social mobilities of Japanese-Filipinos in Japan. Family intimacy shifts with their corporeal presence in the everyday life of their parents, who used to be physically distant from them. As they redefine their positions as a youth and sibling, their intimacy-building strategies of co-residence and breadwinning respond to the downward mobility of their parents.

The legal mobility of Japanese-Filipino children entangles with their intimate mobility desire to “nucleate” family relationships (Yeoh, Graham, and Boyle 2002). Factors such as their age at migration, and the period of separation, as well as their migrant parents’ family resources, complicate the simplistic goal of physical co-presence in Japan. Many parent-child reunions are prone to drama and conflict due to incompatible familial expectations; the younger the Japanese-Filipino child, the less their capability to bargain for the conditions of the reunion, and the more excruciating the nucleating bonds can be.

Rika was a newborn when her parents took her to the Philippines in 1991 to be raised by her grandmother, aunts, and *yaya* (babysitter). When she was eight years old, her mother remarried and decided to take her back to Tokyo to live with her. Rika recalled:

My mom took me back because she wanted us to become family. At first, I did not know I was going to move to Japan because they [grandmother and aunts] just sort of said, “Oh, you are going there for a long vacation. You have a newborn sister.” I felt deceived. It was heartbreaking because I [had] lived with them for years ... it was really sad for me to leave like that.

Adjusting to a different social, cultural, and economic context, Japanese-Filipino children are not free from distress caused by sudden physical separation from their Filipino kin with whom they have formed a stronger emotional attachment. Forming emotional closeness initially displaces “uprooted” Japanese-Filipino children from a newfound family. As first-borns, however, they tend to get caught in newfound roles, such as older sibling and stepchild. Rika observed the change in her mother upon her sister’s birth:

I think my mom started becoming a mother when my stepsister was born and when I came into the family picture, I was already eight years old. It was hard [for her] to switch (between) taking care of a baby and a kid. I did get jealous at the time; maybe [I felt] that I wanted to move back to the Philippines at some point because there I was treated more like a kid—but here, I became a big sister with a responsibility to take

care of my siblings, changing nappies ... (Rika, reunited with mother at eight years old in Tokyo)

Remarriage improves the social mobility of some Filipino mothers, making them capable of redesigning spousal and familial bonds favorable for them and their children. Despite failing to build an emotional connection with their Japanese father's other children, the majority of my Japanese-Filipino interviewees were able to expand their constellation of care and affection with the inclusion of their stepparents and siblings into their nuclear family imaginary. Such effort is influenced by their *utang na loob* toward their mother, who worked toward their reunion and integrating them into the newly formed family.

Amidst their effort of "normalizing" parent-child relations, however, Japanese-Filipino children do not sever their emotional ties with kin carers in the Philippines. They continue to adhere to *utang na loob*, showing affection through mobile communication, sending gifts, and even paying visits together with their mother and siblings during holidays. Continuous communication through phone calls, Facebook, Viber, and Skype complements reliance on the affective bonds once felt with their caring grandmothers, aunts and uncles. The nurturance of the extended ties alleviates physical isolation, and emotional and mental stress, as well as other hardships associated with adjusting to the new familial setup.

Other children interpret their efforts toward co-residence as ensuring their parents' emotional well-being. Securing a home in Japan can be costly, and many Filipino immigrant women must ensure a stable economic status to afford physical togetherness with their children. Filipino migrant mothers have occupied a spectrum of economic status in Japan over the years. Some have become business owners (e.g., ethnic food shops, bars, and aesthetic centers), full-time caregivers or assistant language teachers, while others are part-time workers still dabbling in menial jobs to complement government social provisions.

Consequently, the "contradictory class mobility" (Parreñas 2005) of the first-generation Filipino migrants is evident in how not all of them can provide sufficient economic and cultural resources for the sociocultural adaptation of newcomer Japanese-Filipino children in Japan. While some Japanese-Filipino children are supported by their middle-class families in transitioning to Japanese school, others in lower-class families are inclined to delay or stop schooling. Some Filipino mothers opt for inviting the older child first, who can adapt faster and eventually assist their younger siblings. Apart from being more resilient to learning a new language and culture, older Japanese-Filipino children also tend to be the first to recognize when the family is confronting economic challenges.

Breadwinning is another strategy of Japanese-Filipino children to care for their families. As a salient feature in many households in Asia (Selin 2014), breadwinning has become an alternative form of headship in which older children may share or gain power in the family (Asis 2000: 263). Coinciding desires to revitalize nuclear family bonds and claim Japanese nationality is the need for Japanese-Filipinos to take on a breadwinning role to contribute to the social class mobility of their respective families.

While studying at a university in Manila, Hiromi was told by her mother to come to Japan in 2008 to help support their stay-behind family. Being the eldest child, she, at eighteen years old, came to Tokyo ahead of her four siblings. Within the first month of her arrival, she began to work as a restaurant crew, a job introduced by her mother's friend. She recalled how her sudden move affected her:

My mom never told me I was going earlier [to Japan] ... I have always been the obedient child, 'yes Ma, yes Ma ...' When I arrived, I didn't like it, I wanted to go home. I honestly wanted to stay [in the Philippines] because seriously when you're eighteen, you just care about your studies and friends ... I cannot imagine being alone, living just with my mom. There, you will never experience working unless you're done with university. Here [in Japan], the youth start doing *arubaito* (part-time job) at a young age, right? Still, I couldn't accept that my mother asked me to work.

The inability to negotiate role expectations and youth life prior to migration often results in conflict between Japanese-Filipinos and their parents. Japanese-Filipinos would eventually learn that it is commonplace for the Japanese youth to engage in part-time work while studying, which is contrary to the typical experience of young Filipinos who are pre-occupied solely with studies. At the time of the interview (2014–15), of thirteen Japanese-Filipino respondents in Tokyo, eleven worked as part-time convenience store staff or restaurant crew, one as an office clerk, and one an academic tutor. While it serves as Japanese youth's initiation rite to paid work, doing a part-time job for Japanese-Filipinos, in particular, is to support their family financially. Takaya et al. (2015) reveal that some Japanese-Filipinos tend to grow up in a household where the Japanese father is a blue-collar worker and the Filipino mother is a housewife or is also a blue-collar worker (71). Compared to Japanese and other non-Japanese households, the ratio of Filipino single-mother households depending on living subsidies is significantly higher.

Although breadwinning is not instantaneously commensurate with power-sharing in the transnational household, it does reinforce the children's *utang na loob* through the conscious pursuit of harmonious relations. Hiromi

refused but eventually yielded to her mother after communicating with her aunt in Manila, with whom she has a closer relationship. Calling her almost every day during the first month, her aunt extended comfort and encouragement for her to be empathic toward her mother's situation as a single parent. Coming to terms with doing a part-time job (while studying) and adhering to the virtue of a "good child," Hiromi transitioned from being a full-time student in the Philippines to co-breadwinning in Japan in order to appease both her mother and her aunt.

There are also children who voluntarily embrace breadwinning roles. Such a decision can be influenced by a downward mobility of their parents owing to either sudden financial adversities or aging that has stifled their breadwinning capability. Others are driven to help their single mothers who have been struggling to make ends meet (Celero 2014; Yamagishi and Tolentino 2012). Familial love and sensitivity to the situation of one's parents are integral to Japanese-Filipinos' *utang na loob* that they learned while growing up in the Philippines. Ensuring the well-being of their parents by becoming a breadwinner may sometimes constrain them from prioritizing their personal goals. Satomi quit university and came to Japan at eighteen years old in 2009 in order to work and help her financially struggling father:

When I was in the Philippines, I wanted to open a business, like retail, like Uniqlo ... but when I came here [to Japan], it changed; I now wanted to be an employee in a company ... If I am there [in the Philippines], if I cannot find one [job], I cannot do anything [to help my family]. We need to focus on helping our father for now. After he is done paying all his debt, that's the time we can focus on our own aspirations.

Satomi's father was one of those hit hard by the Lehman brothers shock in 2008, which led to the closure of his printing business and incurred him debt. When economic downturns engulf families, "the children feel the pinch first" (MacLellan 2011: 6), compelling them, especially those from bigger families, to commit to family obligations. Satomi has five siblings. In 2010, her sister, Ayane, also quit college to work in Japan. Working together for five days a week from 9:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. in a factory that cuts glass used as screen covers for cellular phones, they earn 170,000 yen a month each. Satomi has another part-time job at a nearby *izakaya* (Japanese bar) three days a week in which she earns 900 yen per hour. They send half of their combined monthly income to their mother and three younger siblings still studying in the Philippines.

As lower-class Japanese-Filipino families face socioeconomic hardships, some Japanese-Filipino children opt to delay education and other personal aspirations in order to assist their parents financially. Analyzing the

relationship between the spatial segregation and social class location of immigrants in Japan, Fielding (2010: 105–8) reveals that Filipino migrants concentrated in the Kanto region can be identified in production and personal service sectors of Japan’s occupational structure. As delayed education results in stunted acculturation process, some Japanese-Filipinos moving to Japan at an older age may end up in the same occupational niche that subjects their migrant parents and other Filipinos to ethnic discrimination.

Other Japanese-Filipinos downplay, however, their parents’ loss of breadwinning capability, and perceive themselves to be better off than their unemployed kin and friends in the Philippines. Despite a sense of interdependence within the family, Japanese-Filipinos conceive of breadwinning as a family obligation of “dutiful children” (Oishi 2005: 115). Comparing the configurations of Japanese wife-Japanese husband, Japanese wife-Filipino husband, and Filipino wife-Filipino husband households, Takaya (2014) finds that Filipino wives married to Japanese husbands have the lowest rate of labor market participation. This trend suggests that dependence on a male breadwinner is the highest in dual-parent, nuclear families in Japan. Missing in this analysis, however, are the breadwinning contributions of Japanese-Filipinos of working age co-residing with their Filipino (and Japanese) parents. To augment the household income of their Filipino mothers (and Japanese fathers) taking on irregular and part-time jobs, Japanese-Filipino children share household expenses, and occasionally contribute to the remittances of their parents for the health-care needs of grandparents, education of stay-behind siblings or cousins, special occasions, and other necessities of close kin in the Philippines. While familial contingencies serve as opportunities for children to demonstrate a sense of responsibility (Orellana 2001), these also test the resilience of Japanese-Filipino children and their Filipino migrant parents in dealing with the long-term costs of keeping a transnational household.

Continuous breadwinning beyond borders has previously been known as an economic role for a Filipino migrant woman as head of a transnational family (Aguilar 2012; Yamagishi and Tolentino 2012; Faier 2008). Takahata’s (2012) study on 1.5-generation Japanese-Filipino children in Shizuoka reveals, meanwhile, the tendency of some low-skilled Japanese-Filipino children to be “trapped” in a financial responsibility just like their Filipino migrant parents. As much as breadwinning denotes adherence to *utang na loob*, it likewise obscures the line between dependence and interdependence, altruism and responsibility, with which both Japanese-Filipinos and their mothers struggle in order to achieve the right balance.

Discussion

The maintenance of intergenerational affinities illustrates the interconnect- edness of family obligations, individual desires, and negotiation of struc- tural conditions in the lives of Japanese-Filipinos. As they engage in multiple mobilities across space and time, their perspectives on transnational family relations mature, prompting them to re-examine the meanings of *utang na loob* in relation to the different members of their “circuits of intimacy and care” (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997).

Growing up while temporarily immobile in the Philippines facilitated the transmission of *utang na loob*, which positively benefited their Filipino (and Japanese) parents in Japan. Empathy toward their Filipino parents for their marginalized status in Japan also emerges from their own experiences of having precarious labor status as a part-timer, with meager income and limited social benefits. Others are sympathetic toward their parents whose health, job, or business had been severely affected by Japan’s decades of economic recession, as they recalled reductions in remittances, in visits to the Philippines, and in frequency (or loss) of contact.

In settling *utang na loob*, Japanese-Filipinos reflect on the accumulated caring experiences and expectations of their family members, as well as the availability and responsiveness or attentiveness of their parents and kin to their needs in the past (Feeney 1999). They also recall the “normalcy” of transnational family arrangement based on the frequency of exchange of care, contact, and co-presence of their parents and caring kin during child- hood. Due to physical abandonment, emotional and cultural dissonance, and lack of financial support from their Japanese father, it is no surprise that many Japanese-Filipino children expressed a mixture of anger, frustra- tion, and indifference over denied paternal bonds, and the exclusion of their father from their family life. Yet, it is interesting how some children articu- late *utang na loob* in terms of feelings of gratitude for their biological link to their Japanese father, captured by the statement, “I would not be Japanese without him.”

In reciprocating care toward extended kin, Japanese-Filipino children redefine the bounds of family, having witnessed the co-dependence of some relatives in the Philippines. They sustain communication and send mon- etary support only to their kin carers who reared them, and helped them adjust to life in Japan. Settling emotional and moral debts affirms that care was received in the past, formed intimacy remained in one’s memory, and is now being repaid.

With Japanese-Filipinos’ conscious effort to recompense care to their close kin in the Philippines and the sacrifices of their parents in Japan,

the chain of reciprocity between them may diminish but is less likely to end in the future. Depending on their economic status in Japan, some Filipino mothers interviewed may relieve Japanese-Filipino children of the obligation to extend support to their kin, while others are more likely to continue sending remittances through the contributions of their children. Some Japanese-Filipinos politicize reciprocity by confronting their Filipino parents when conditions such as economic abuse, prolonged dependence, and mismanaged transnational household violate or exploit *utang na loob*.

Although remittances promote interdependence among kin, Japanese-Filipinos realize over time that the conditions of *utang na loob* need to be redrawn through adjusting the intensity of connection toward parents and extended family. Many respondents in this study see their Filipino mother's migration as both a source of inspiration and a reminder of the economic failure of Filipino relatives as they sketch their own life aspirations.

While there is evidence suggesting shifts in ideational orientation among the current younger generation (Asis 2006: 261), as they increasingly become interested in their individualized ambitions over family life,³ such outlook is mainly contingent on the socioeconomic status of one's family. Similarly, many Japanese-Filipinos may aspire to balance personal and family goals. However, as the previous section has shown, they may be compelled to focus on supporting their family when migrant parents face sudden downward mobility in Japan. Consequently, they give greater attention to the social, economic, and emotional well-being of parents in Japan following the reunion, than that of their kin carers in the Philippines. Fewer than half of Japanese-Filipino respondents in Tokyo revealed that they were willing to invite grandparents and relatives for a short visit, and only eleven out of seventy mothers were able to invite family members to work in Japan. While some are willing to pay occasional visits to their close relatives or to attend family gatherings in the Philippines, others gradually have a lowered level of interest in such temporary reunions because it pressures them to build affinity with distant kin.

Moreover, ideational change is evident in how Japanese-Filipinos recognize the contradictory function of *utang na loob* in their intergenerational ties. Whilst it drives intimate and social mobilities, it also restrains them. It undermines their affective capacity to manage coexisting conflict and solidarity, intimacy and obligation, as well as dependence and interdependence resulting from simultaneously extending and nucleating family relationships. Transnational migration may either weaken or strengthen familial ties; it may, thus, either resuscitate or rupture family bonds over the long haul.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the transnationality of Japanese-Filipino families, focusing on the im/mobile subjectivities of Japanese-Filipino children to manage transnational household and intergenerational intimacies. To circumvent the challenges of organizing family life across borders, Japanese-Filipinos engender different kinds of im/mobility—spatial, legal, social, and intimate—that link their lives to those of their Filipino and Japanese parents, and Filipino extended kin. Their multiple im/mobilities of different routes, experiences, and motives may reinforce existing family norms and ideals, as well as divergent socioeconomic, cultural, and legal conditions between Japan and the Philippines.

The im/mobilities of Japanese-Filipinos entangling with those of their parents and extended kin denotes that these children actively participate in exchanging care and mutual support across borders. Their multiple immobilities facilitate Japanese-Filipinos' care labor, which engenders contradictory effects on intergenerational intimacies. In the Philippines, Japanese-Filipinos' immobilities interlock with im/mobilities of their kin carers and Filipino parents. Through co-residence, these children develop intimacy and positive behaviors toward their caring relatives as well as spatially distant parents. On the other hand, it also results in Japanese-Filipino children's exposure to the economic dependence of relatives. In Japan, Japanese-Filipinos' multiple mobilities are driven by their desire to nucleate family life through co-residence and breadwinning, which intertwine with the legal and social im/mobilities of Filipino migrant (and Japanese) parents. Co-residence may reinvigorate intimacy with parents, but it may also directly expose them to the "contradictory social mobility" and economic exclusion of Filipino migrants in Japanese society. Breadwinning may be a means for Japanese-Filipino children to contribute to the social mobility of transnational families, though it may also inhibit the pursuit of their own social mobility.

Japanese-Filipinos' family-maintenance strategies also bear social implications for both the Philippines and Japan as sending and receiving countries. As a host society, Japan still has ambivalent attitudes toward immigrant families, as its immigration, citizenship, and welfare regimes continue to be restrictive. Local government units, migrant support, and ethnic networks have taken the larger role of extending social and legal services to incorporate immigrant families into local communities (Celero 2018). As shown in the case of Japanese-Filipinos, the legal status may allow spatial mobility to Japan, but it does not always ensure upward social mobility. Meanwhile, the Philippines may have benefited from the remittance flows

over the years; however, the government has yet to secure the social welfare of stay-behind families stereotyped as “middle class,” or to enhance their capacity to support stay-behind children of Filipinos overseas. The case of Japanese-Filipino families suggests that prolonged economic dependence of the Filipino kin extends beyond the period of fostering Japanese-Filipino children.

Japanese-Filipinos contribute to the maintenance of intergenerational intimacies. At the same time, they consciously review their “circuits of intimacy and care” (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997). Their im/mobilities are fundamentally tangled because they are embedded in multiple affective and social ties that are structured according to gender, age/generation, citizenship, and class. Second, their mobilities often entangle with the shifting social norms, structural opportunities, and constraints found in Japan and the Philippines. Third, the dynamics of transnational family life are fluid and in flux, constantly putting migrant families’ resilience and agency to the test. While family relationships still matter in their lives, Japanese-Filipinos are often challenged on how to exchange intimacy and care with their aging Filipino (and Japanese) parents, as well as Filipino kin over time and across space. Analyzing their transnational family experiences from their voice and “situated agency” is integral to understanding the significance of intergenerational relations on their current and future life trajectories.

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NOTES

1. Since amending Article 3 in 2008, Japan has been granting Japanese citizenship to children born out of wedlock from a foreign national mother on the condition that the child secures Japanese paternal recognition. In 2015 alone, Japan recognized 5,695 fatherless child applicants as Japanese nationals (Ministry of Justice 2015).
2. As of 2020, the number of Filipinos with long-term resident status (those legally permitted to stay, based on having children with Japanese citizenship) has reached 54,141, while the number of permanent residents has soared to 134,272 (Ministry of

- Justice 2021). Many Filipino mothers interviewed in Tokyo were granted permanent and long-term residencies within five years after marriage and while they were on a spouse visa.
3. This result was based on the 2019 Deloitte Global Millennial Survey conducted with young adults aged 18–32 across forty-two countries, including Japan and the Philippines.

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