




LINGERING CAREGIVER-CHILD RELATIONS ACROSS BORDERS: FILIPINO MIGRANT YOUTHS IN EUROPE AND THEIR STAY-BEHIND CARERS IN THE PHILIPPINES


Relações duradouras para além de fronteiras: jovens filipinos migrantes na Europa e seus cuidadores que permaneceram nas Filipinas

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ABSTRACT

The Filipino parental migration results in many children "left behind" under the care of kin, but subsequent family reunification may trigger emotional adjustments in the child-caregiver dyad. Drawing from ethnographic fieldworks in France, Italy and the Philippines, this paper aims to shed light on these adjustments. Examining the case of 1.5-generation migrants in France and Italy and their stay-behind caregivers, this paper uncovers the mutable, flexible nature of child fosterage in Filipino transnational families and the interlinked emotional difficulties of caregivers, children and parents. Despite these, caregiver-child relation perdures across borders at the same time as 1.5-generation migrants acknowledge the efforts of their parents and caregivers.

KEYWORDS: Intergenerational relations. Caregivers. Migrant youths. Separation. Family reunification. Filipino transnational families.

RESUMO

A migração familiar filipina resulta em muitas crianças "deixadas para trás" aos cuidados de parentes, mas reunificações familiares subsequentes podem disparar ajustes emocionais na díade criança-cuidador(a). Partindo de trabalhos de campo etnográficos realizados na França, na Itália e nas Filipinas, este artigo visa lançar luz sobre essas mudanças. Examinando casos de migrantes da geração 1.5 na França e na Itália e seus parentes cuidadores que permaneceram nas Filipinas, este artigo descortina a natureza mutável e flexível dos cuidados infantis em famílias transnacionais filipinas e as dificuldades emocionais interligadas entre cuidadores, crianças e pais. A despeito destas, a relação cuidador(a)-criança perdura para além de fronteiras, ao mesmo tempo em que migrantes da geração 1.5 reconhecem os esforços de seus pais e cuidadores.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Relações intergeracionais. Cuidadores(as). Jovens migrantes. Separação. Reunificação familiar. Famílias filipinas transnacionais.

INTRODUCTION

Parent-child separation is one of the focal points of analysis in the literature on “transnational families” (BRYCESON, VUORELA, 2002), notably from the late 1990s to 2000s (e.g. DREBY, 2006; LAHAIE *et al.*, 2009; OLWIG, 1999; PARREÑAS, 2005; SAVE THE CHILDREN, 2006; SCHMALZBAUER, 2008). Although a few studies on family reunification also appeared during this period (BATTISTELLA, 1995; ROUSSEAU *et al.*, 2004; SUÁREZ-OROZCO, SUÁREZ-OROZCO, 2001; SUÁREZ-OROZCO *et al.*, 2002), the bulk of scholarly works on parent-child reunification in the context of migration start to burgeon since the early 2010s (e.g. BONIZZONI, 2012, 2015; FRESNOZA-FLOT, 2015A, 2015B; NAGASAKA, FRESNOZA-FLOT, 2015; NAGASAKA, 2016; SCHAPIRO *et al.*, 2013). This literature pays much attention to the impact of family reunification on children and/or their migrant parents, which echoes the conventional social view that such reunion ends transnational family separation. As a result of this tendency, little is known about how parent-child reunification affects migrant children’s caregiver(s). How do migrant children and caregivers experience separation? In what way do they maintain contacts with each other? How does their relationship influence parent-child relations?

To seek answers to these questions, the present paper draws from a collaborative study on 1.5-generation young people in Filipino transnational families. The term “1.5 generation” refers in migration studies to those who migrated to their parents’ receiving country at an early age, usually before the age of majority (BARTLEY, SPOONLEY, 2008; NAGASAKA, FRESNOZA-FLOT, 2015). Unlike “first-generation migrants” who grew up in their country of origin, 1.5-generation migrants only spent part of their childhood there and the rest of it in their receiving country. Contrary to the so-called “second generation” who were born and grew up in their parents’ receiving country, they experience living there. Their “mobile childhoods” (FRESNOZA-FLOT, NAGASAKA, 2015) are characterized with adjustments to different familial, social, and cultural contexts. For these young people, family separation does not end in reunion, as their reunification with their migrant parent(s) entails another separation, that is, with their caregiver(s) (NAGASAKA, 2016). Given that the latter took care of the former since they were very young and for a long time (see MORAN-TAYLOR, 2008; PANTEA, 2012), the emotional bond between them may be stronger than what links children to their migrant parent(s). Everyday interactions between caregiver(s) and the stay-behind children may result to an “attachment” similar to what Bowlby (2008) observes

in mother-child dyad during the first three years of the child's life. In this case, when children reunite abroad with their migrant parent(s), the impact of it may be considerable not only for the parents and for the children, but also for the latter and their stay-behind caregivers. Such impact may manifest themselves in the transnational practices linking children and caregiver as well as the quality of children's relations with their migrant parent(s).

Building on the literature on transnational families in the contexts of separation and reunification, this paper argues that the ramifications of transnational migration necessarily go beyond the Western notion of "nuclear family", and that it is therefore crucial for transnational family scholarship to pay attention to the multiple bonds formed among migrants, their children and the (former) caregivers of these children. As a case study, this paper investigates the experiences of 1.5-generation Filipinos in France and Italy, their relationship with their migrant parents and the situation of their caregivers in the Philippines.

In France, 1.5-generation migrants or *enfants déplacés* (AGENEAU-DUNIAU, 2000) are socially invisible. There are almost any official statistics available about them, and the general tendency in the French migration research is to focus on the situation of children of migrants born and grew up in France, notably from Maghreb (Northwest African countries such as Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco) and Southern European countries such as Spain and Portugal. Within the Filipino migrant population in this country, the migration experiences of 1.5 generation are underexplored, as most studies have focused on the migration trajectories of Filipino migrant women domestic workers (e.g. FRESNOZA-FLOT, 2009; MOZÈRE, 2005). The 1.5 generation is often referred to by many Filipino migrants as *laki doon* (i.e., those who grew up "there" in the Philippines) in contrast to *laki dito* (i.e., those who grew up "here" in France). The emphasis of these categories is the place of socialization and not the place of residence of the children of Filipino migrants. In Italy, while the number of students with immigrant background increased significantly after 2000 (VALTOLINA, 2013, p. 57), it is not very common that the distinction between the "second generation" and "1.5 generation" is emphasized in the literature on immigrants' children. Among Filipino immigrants in Italy, such distinctions are not pronounced either. This is partly because the number of the second-generation Filipinos who were studying in secondary school was not large compared to 1.5 generation. Taking into account the situations of Filipino migrants' children in France and Italy, 1.5-generation Filipinos are defined here as migrants who arrived in Europe before the age of 18 for family reunification and

experienced both the school systems in the Philippines and their receiving countries. There are two fundamental elements of this definition: first is the length of time this group of young people resided in the Philippines before moving to Europe, and second is their schooling experiences in two countries (NAGASAKA, FRESNOZA-FLOT, 2015).

The present paper starts with a review of the literature on family separation and reunification in transnational families. It also contextualizes its analysis by providing some information about child-fostering practice in the Philippines. After this, it describes the methodology of the study and the persons interviewed. The empirical part of the paper delves on the separation experiences of 1.5-generation Filipinos with their caregivers, notably the way their relationship affects that with their parent(s) and how they maintain contacts with them. The empirical part also looks at the future projects of 1.5 generation and their stay-behind caregivers. Finally, the paper concludes with some research tracks for the future study of transnational families.

SEPARATION AND REUNIFICATION IN TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES: CAREGIVERS AND MIGRANTS' CHILDREN

Since the early 2000s, migration scholars examine intergenerational relations in transnational families focusing on separation, reunification or both. The literature on this theme mainly deals with the case of migrant parents and their children, which results in the neglect of other voices and dyads in transnational family relationships.

In the context of family separation, the situation of stay-behind children has enormously attracted scholarly interests in migrants' countries of origin and destination for the last decades. Studies show that although men are capable of taking care of children and domestic tasks when a family member migrates (HOANG, YEOH, 2011; LUTZ, 2018; PINGOL, 2001), it is usually a woman from the extended family (grandmother, aunt, cousin) who becomes the primary child caregiver (AGUILAR, 2009; CARLING *et al.*, 2012; DREBY, 2010; PARREÑAS, 2005; SAVE THE CHILDREN, 2006). This woman is known in the literature by different names: "substitute caregivers" (SCHAPIRO, 2002), "other-mother" (SCHMALZBAUER, 2004), "middle-woman" (DREBY, 2010), "like a mother" (YARRIS, 2011) or "temporary mother" (FRESNOZA-FLOT, 2013). In many cases, she resides under the same roof with the children she is taking care of (PANTEA, 2012). Her caregiving role encompasses not only caring for the children but also doing household chores and managing the family budget (POEZE *et al.*, 2017; YARRIS, 2011). This role changes through time: practical and direct

caregiving appears indispensable when children are very young, whereas supervision of their behavior becomes central when they reach adolescence (PANTEA, 2012). Scholars observe that this supervision, such as restricting adolescents' spatial mobility, is gendered. Caregivers appear to control girls' mobility more than boys (PANTEA, 2012), not only because of the gendered norms in their country of residence but also because of the belief that stay-behind adolescents may engage in "deviant" activities if not adequately supervised (SMITH, 2006). This underlines the importance of caregiver in the lives of stay-behind children and the functioning of transnational families. As Lahaie and colleagues (2009) remark, stay-behind young people with caregivers are less prone to behavioral and academic problems than their counterparts who have no caregivers or adult at home.

Such observation suggests that parent-child separation due to migration does not automatically result in negative outcomes. Recent works on the impact of parental migration on stay-behind children depict a more nuanced picture than in early studies showing the negative consequences of parental migration (e.g. ASIS, 2006; BATTISTELLA, CONACO, 1998; DREBY, 2007; NAGASAKA, 2016). It is now understood that the stability and quality of care that children experience after their parents migrate strongly matter for children's wellbeing. For example, Mazuccato and colleagues (2015) find out that children in Ghana and Nigeria "who did not change their caregiver exhibited no difference in wellbeing compared with their counterparts living with both parents" (p. 222) in the same situation. They also observe the influence of social context: the wellbeing of children does not decrease in societies where child fostering has no stigma attached to it. Aside from this, they identify critical events in the family life course (divorce or conjugal separation) as destabilizing for children. Their findings bring nuances to our understanding of the implications of parental migration on stay-behind children, as well as the vital role of caregivers in transnational families.

Nonetheless, at the level of emotions, family reunification unveils the impact of separation on parent-child affective relation (FRESNOZA-FLOT, 2015A, 2015B; NAGASAKA, 2016). Such emotional toll most often goes unnoticed during parent-child separation. As Schmalzbauer (2008) observes in Honduran transnational families, "(a)lthough communication is consistent between parents and children, nurturing family intimacy" during separation, "children did not exhibit in-depth knowledge of their parents' daily realities" (p. 339). Migrant children often suffer from emotional and psychological distress following reunification with their parents (SCHAPIRO, 2002; NAGASAKA, 2016). In many cases, parent-child affective relations remain distant even

after years of family reunion (NAGASAKA, 2015). Like the corpus of works on family separation, this literature on family reunification focuses on migrant parents and their children (BOEHM, 2008; BONIZZONI, 2012; DREBY, 2010). While the scholarly attention paid to this dyad's emotional qualities has offered interesting insights into the study of transnational families, the narrow focus on issues associated with parent-child separation and reunification has resulted in the neglect of other voices and practices in transnational family relationships. This is the case of caregivers and their relations with the children they are taking care of.

Studies about them remain rare at this moment (e.g. DANKYI *et al.*, 2017; DUCU, 2020; HOANG, YEOH, 2011; LAHAIE *et al.*, 2009; PANTEA, 2012; PINGOL, 2001; POEZE *et al.*, 2017; YARRIS, 2011, 2012). These works show that caregiving obligations coupled with migrant parents' expectations engender caregivers' stressful situations, which subsequently affects their physical and emotional wellbeing (see also DREBY, 2010). For instance, caregiver-migrant parent relations can be strained for many reasons, including remittance management and taking care of children (CARLING *et al.*, 2012; NAGASAKA, 2009). This indicates that caregivers are caught in-between obligations towards the children under their care and expectations of migrant parents regarding what is the proper way of spending remittances and dealing with the children. When caregivers and the children they are taking care of become emotionally close to each other, their sudden separation (like when migrant parents take the children with them abroad) is a painful process for both of them (MORAN-TAYLOR, 2008; YARRIS, 2011). This process is mostly understudied as parent-child reunification is generally viewed as the end of family separation. It is not surprising that when caregivers' perspectives are asked in the study of the wellbeing of migrants' children (MAZZUCATO, SCHANS, 2011), their voices are often analysed as part of a larger study (DREBY, 2010). Likewise, although caregiver-child separation is often evoked in several studies (e.g. MORAN-TAYLOR, 2008; YARRIS, 2011), it is not the central focus of analysis.

Overall, it is evident that the case of caregivers and their relations with migrants' children are neglected in transnational family studies in the contexts of both family separation and reunification. The caregiver-child separation that results from parent-child reunification is not yet investigated as far as we know. Does caregiver-child separation lead to similar consequences as that of parent-child separation? How does it affect the wellbeing of children in their receiving country, the caregiver-child dyad and also parent-child relations? Building on transnational family scholarship, we explore

these questions in the case of Filipino caregivers stay behind in the Philippines and the children they raised who joined their parents in France and Italy.

CHILD-FOSTERING IN FILIPINO FAMILIES

Child-fostering is not new in the Philippines and has been existing even before Filipino migration becomes global. Such a practice in which children circulate within the larger kin networks is crucial in order to examine the caregiving arrangement in Filipino transnational families.

Child-fostering by close kin is a vernacular and widespread practice in the northern and central regions of the country (NAGASAKA, 1998; PARREÑAS, 2001; YU, LIU, 1980), as in other societies in Southeast Asia (CARSTEN, 1997; GEERTZ, 1961). Anthropologists who conducted fieldworks in northern Luzon during the 1950s reported that, among 64 children aged between one and ten at that time, ten were being brought up by foster parents (NYDEGGER, NYDEGGER 1966: 159). Young people are fostered to accompany older people, help them in household tasks or access material comfort and rewards (YU, LIU, 1980). There are instances that young girls and boys from economically deprived families live in the house of well-off relatives, and in return to their domestic labor are sent to school or are remunerated.

In a village in northern Luzon where one of the authors (IN) conducted fieldwork, child fosterage by close relatives, such as grandparents or siblings of biological parents, is quite common. Such fostering practices are usually initiated either due to biological parents' death, separation, migration or economic hardships, or due to foster parents' desire for living with small children and expectations for ensuring future caretakers. Many fostering practices start informally, usually as temporary care arrangements for the children (see NYDEGGER, NYDEGGER, 1966; YU, LIU, 1980). If children wish to live with foster parents, the temporary arrangement eventually develops into a more longstanding and stable child-fosterage. In this case, it is not uncommon for foster children to inherit part or all of the properties of foster parents, especially if the relationship between foster parent(s) and foster child(ren) is firmly consolidated through cohabitation, everyday interactions, and reciprocal exchanges of goods, labor and money. Since inheritance is not usually intended when the fostering arrangement starts, the foster parent-foster child relationship should be considered as highly mutable, depending on the time and efforts they spend together.

In the migration context, such arrangement changes: the parents of fostered children are the ones who compensate the person who receives the latter in his/her home (PERTIERRA, 2002). Stay-behind children of migrant parents are generally entrusted to women in the kinship network, notably in the maternal side (PARREÑAS, 2005). Not only children born in the Philippines are in this situation, as there are also young people born abroad who are sent to the country by their migrant parents to be raised there (NAGASAKA, 1998, 2015). Restrictive migration and labor policies in migrant-receiving countries influence this trend: for instance, labor contracts without family reunion clause impede migrants to get their children and/or spouse back home. Nowadays, child-fostering can be observed throughout the country, notably in the principal regions of origin of migrants such as Metro Manila and its adjacent Tagalog-speaking region (NSO, 2012). This “culture of relatedness” (AGUILAR, 2009; CARSTEN, 2000) in the Philippines has allowed Filipino transnational families to withstand the impact of separation due to migration.

DATA-GATHERING METHODS AND THE SAMPLE

The data presented in this paper originated from separate fieldworks in France, Italy and the Philippines. The authors adopted qualitative data-gathering methods for these fieldworks such as documentary research, interviews, observations and group discussions.

In France, one of the authors (AFF) conducted an ethnographic investigation in the Ile-de-France region between October 2009 and February 2013 adopting a snowball approach. To gain access to the 1.5-generation Filipinos, she relied on the assistance of three key informants: one from the Youth for Christ organization of the Filipino Catholic Church, another from a Filipino Protestant Church and the last one was a Filipino language teacher. Adopting Marcus’ fieldwork technique “to follow” the people, the things, the metaphors, the stories or allegories (1995), she went to the Philippines to investigate the depth and extent of the transnational networks maintained by some of the 1.5-generation migrants she had interviewed in France. From July to the beginning of August 2011, she visited four families: two in the Ilocos region (in the provinces of Abra and Ilocos Sur) in the north and another two in the Tagalog region (in Cavite and Oriental Mindoro) in the eastern part of the country. She conducted semi-structured interviews with four caregivers (all grandmothers) of 1.5-generation migrants and had informal conversations with seven of their other family members. She also met one of

the “1.5ers” she had already interviewed in France, who was spending holidays in the Philippines.

In the case of 1.5 generation in Italy, the other author (IN) adopted Marcus’s fieldwork technique “to follow” the people in the reverse direction. He has conducted his anthropological fieldwork in a rural village of the Ilocos region, the northwestern part of Luzon, since the late 1990s. Observing that the village had sent a sizable number of residents to Italy since the 1980s, he did research on relationships between migrants working in Italy and caregivers, most of whom were parents or siblings of those migrants. Those migrants from the village started to bring their school-age children to Italy after 2000 as their living conditions in Italy had become improved. Recognizing such trend, he then started his research on experiences of 1.5-generation migrants in Italy. Since then, he has also visited the rural village in Ilocos for several times and observed the behavior of 1.5 generations taking vacation in their homeland and their relationships with their former caregivers.

The above ethnographic fieldworks resulted in a total of 73 combined interviews of children and caregivers. In France, twenty-one 1.5-generation migrants interviewed were aged between 15 and 36 years old. They were all migrated to France at the age below 18. Five of them were born in France but later brought to the Philippines at a very young age (ranging from two months to four years). Despite being born in France, these respondents partly spent their childhood in the Philippines. They, therefore, considered themselves as *laki doon*, so did their Filipino peers in France. In terms of gender, ten respondents were men, and the rest were women. Among them, 14 had Filipino nationality, and seven had acquired French nationality. Concerning education, six were college graduates in France, 12 were still students, and three had finished high school in the Philippines and decided to work in France. Among the 12 students, many had part-time jobs in the service sector working as a vendor, waiter, baby sitter or house cleaner. The average length of stay in France of the respondents was eight years. Concerning the four grandmothers interviewed in the Philippines, the youngest was 69, and the oldest was 90 years old. Two were widows, and the other two lived with their husbands. Their number of children ranged from three to five. In the past, two were full-time housewives, one worked as a farmer with her husband, and the other one worked in a printing press. At the time of the interview, two grandmothers were entirely dependent on their children's remittances, while the two others maintained sideline jobs aside from receiving remittances from abroad.

In the case of 1.5-generation Filipinos in Italy, 22 interviews with children of Filipino immigrants were conducted between 2010 and 2014. Fourteen of them immigrated to Italy before the age of 18 for family reunification and experienced two school systems in the Philippines and Italy. Five of them were taken care of by their relatives in the Philippines and then immigrated to Italy but they did not study in Italy. The remaining two of them studied exclusively in Italy but they spent part of their early childhood in the Philippines. Among the fourteen 1.5-generation migrants, six were born in Italy and then sent back to the homeland to be taken care of by their close relatives, usually in their early childhoods. Of the fourteen 1.5-generation migrants, seven of them were still studying in secondary school at the time of interviews. Of the remaining seven, only one was studying at university after completing the technical school education, and majority of them could not complete the secondary school. After stopping studying or graduating from secondary school, they were working as babysitters, domestic workers, salespersons and building cleaners. Regarding the interviews of foster parents, the author (IN) conducted semi-structured interviews with 26 caregivers or caregiving couples who had cared for the children of migrants in Italy, during the research period between 1997 and 2001. He then has continued the participant observations on their relationships with former foster children when he returned to the field site.

CAREGIVER-CHILD RELATION BEFORE FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Parent-child separation occurs in two ways in Filipino transnational families in this study: when one or both parents migrate to Europe leaving their children in the Philippines, and when parents living with their children in Europe decide to bring the latter to the Philippines. The usual reason for these decisions is the desire of parents to work hard and earn enough to sustain the needs of their family. Since an overwhelming majority of the first-generation Filipino migrants were working or worked in the domestic service sector in both countries, another major reason is that few employers want to hire domestic workers with small children. In both cases, children are entrusted either to grandparents (notably to the grandmother) or other members of the extended family.

Among the 21 respondents in France, 17 lived in the house of their grandparents before their migration, two resided separately from them and another two shared a house with them even before their parents' migration. Among the 22 respondents in

Italy, eleven were born in Italy and the other eleven in the Philippines. Among the Philippine-born respondents, five had mothers who returned to the Philippines from Italy to give birth to them, whereas six had parent(s) working and living in the Philippines at the time of their birth. The living arrangement of this latter group can be described as follows: one resided with his grandparents before his mother's migration, two stayed in their parents' house but their grandparents were next-door neighbors, two dwelled in their parents' house built from earnings in other countries and one lived with her father after her mother left for Italy. Parental migration engendered these living arrangements, which in four situations bring together stay-behind children and their caregiver(s) in the same situation of separation: the former being separated from their parents and the latter from their adult children or partner. It is not surprising that children and caregivers share similar feelings about separation. For example, Lorie (19 years old) was born in Paris, but when she was three years old, her parents separated, and her mother went with her to the Philippines. After nine years of living together there, her mother decided to work again in France and left Lorie under the care of Pacita (71 years old), her maternal grandmother. Lorie did not understand the logic of her mother's migration and got angry at her:

It's just normal to feel like this because when you're a child, you don't really understand the importance of money, you don't understand why your mother just exchanges you for money.

Lorie's emotional difficulty also affected her grandmother: "my chest was painful because Lorie's mother left her". Such shared feelings facilitate smooth children-caregiver relations. Nonetheless, for a few respondents, the beginning of this relationship was complicated. Mario (16 years old) was only two years old when her mother migrated to France, and he recalled his difficulty to adjust with his grandparents: "It was difficult because your feelings towards your grandfather and grandmother are different, their love towards you is different". In such cases, stay-behind children need to confront double emotional challenges – to adjust to their parents' absence from home and to the caregiving arrangement they are subjected to.

Many respondents whose parents had already worked in Italy, France or other countries at the time of their birth were more bewildered by their parents' occasional visits to their houses in the Philippines than by their absence. This is because, for them, their biological parents were someone who needed to be introduced by their foster parents. The conversation below during interviews among two 1.5-generation migrants, whose parents had worked in Italy at the time of their birth and who had been taken

care of by their aunts until they moved to Italy at the age of 16 and 12 respectively, illustrates this well.

Respondent A: "I didn't know who was my mother. I didn't know them. You know, I called them 'aunt' and 'uncle!'"

Respondent B: "Yeah, me too! I thought my aunt was my mother!"

Most of the 1.5-generation respondents whose parents had worked abroad when they were born did not retain any memory of living with their biological parents. They explained that their relationship with their caregivers was closer than that with their parents. In the community in Ilocos, where child-fostering practices among kin had been traditionally widespread and where it was normal for relatives to take care of migrants' children, being "left behind" by migrant parents was not necessarily considered a stigma (NAGASAKA, 2016). In such a social context, it is not surprising that the respondents describe their experiences of family reunification in Italy as "separation from their family". Delia (21 years old), who was born in Italy and sent back to the homeland community under the care of her mother's single sister, shared her story:

[S]ince I arrived here, my heart had been always in the Philippines because I left many things there. They are my family that I grew up with. They are my aunt, grandfather, grandmother, cousins, niece, and relatives.

Concerning caregivers, many of them are "serial caregivers", that is, taking care of their migrant children's, nieces' and nephews' offspring for many years, one after the other or at the same time. Maria (76 years old) took care of her six grandchildren whose parents migrated to France, whereas Flora (69 years old) was looking after eight children, the youngest of whom was almost one year old. Similarly, Virginia and her husband in Ilocos had taken care of six grandchildren, whose parents (a son and two daughters of Virginia) were working in Italy when they were born or during their early childhood. These caregivers provide practical and emotional care to children. Pacita accompanied Lorie in every aspect of her life and always slept with her side-by-side in one bed, sharing the same blanket. Maria did the same with the six children she was taking care of until they became adolescents, during which she provided each of them with individual beds and own rooms. Caregivers also acted as an intermediary between migrant parents and their children. They most often talk to the migrant parents every time they called by phone to ask the whereabouts of their children. Aside from this, they manage the remittances they received from abroad and the real estate properties of the migrant parents.

As years passed by, an emotionally proximate relationship between caregivers and stay-behind children developed (as illustrated in the case of Delia above), not only because of shared everyday life together and of indirect, limited interaction with the migrant parents, but also because of omnipresence of child fostering practices as well as of flexible nature of family relationships in the local community (see AGUILAR, 2009; CARSTEN, 1997). The strength of this relationship is tested when migrant parents pursued family reunification in their receiving country. During this process, neither the young respondents nor, in many cases, their caregivers, were included in the decision-making process. The parents were the ones who decided that their children would migrate (when, how, why) and processed their travel papers. This situation suggests the power relations in Filipino transnational families: migration empowers migrant parent(s) not only economically but also in terms of decision-making in the realm of home. At that time, most of the 1.5-generation respondents in France and Italy had been separated from their parents during seven and ten years on average, respectively.

Nonetheless, not all of them were willing to go to Europe: five respondents in France hesitated at the beginning to migrate due to their comfortable life in the Philippines, their future projects there and their warm relations with their caregivers. As Mario explains: "When you grew up with your grandfather and grandmother, you'll feel strange to leave them behind". In the case of the young respondents in Italy, most of them were not involved in the decision-making process and their parents' decisions were made against their will. As Jacky (24 years old) shared below:

I didn't want to study here [Italy]. If you study here, relationships with your friends here would be very different. So you need to make adjustment. If I had studied there [Philippines], all of my schoolmates would know one another since all of us studied in the same elementary school.

Jacky's mother did not disclose to Jacky her plan to live with her in Italy before Jacky's departure to Italy; her mother told her that she would just visit Rome for her vacation.

Although they were not part of the decision-making process, many young people interviewed appreciated their parents' efforts to make them come to Europe. Likewise, a few caregivers were initially hesitant to let go of the children they were taking care of but later gave in to the decision of the migrant parents. A caregiver below shared the way she experienced and managed such separation emotionally:

I told to them (the stay-behind children), time would come that we would be separated from one another. Of course, their parents would

get them. I am only here to take care of them while they live here. When the time comes, they will leave, but their life would be better.

Many caregivers interviewed disclosed that they cried a lot when the children they were looking after for many years left. Hence, parent-child reunion preludes another separation with difficult emotional consequences to confront with.

CAREGIVER-CHILD RELATION ACROSS NATIONAL BORDERS

Parent-child reunification does not always mean the end of emotional difficulties for parents and children, as this is generally the moment when both of them realized the affective distance separating each other. The situation turns complex when children missed their caregivers back home and vice-versa.

Tina (20 years old) was five years old when her mother migrated to France and eight years old when her father followed her mother there. Her grandmother Maria raised her and her youngest sister. When Tina was diagnosed with heart disease, her parents decided to make her come to France to be medically treated there. She was 15 years old when she arrived in the country and found it hard to adjust to her new familial arrangement. She always had verbal conflicts with her mother, partly due to her attitude comparing her to her grandmother. The shock of separation with her caregiver made Tina resented all the time her mother, who was surprised by her attitude, saying “why you behave like that? You were so nice on the phone [in the Philippines]”. Fighting back orally to their parents when castigated or reproached appears to be the way some respondents like Tina in France adjusted to the caregiving styles of their parents and caregivers. Some female respondents adopted some “undesirable” behavior in the eyes of their parents: “When my mother discovered that I started smoking, she asked me, ‘why are you becoming like that? Did I do something wrong? Is the way I raised you bad?’”.

Respondents in Italy also shared their affective distance with their parents. Many 1.5-generation respondents related that their parents did not understand their characters (*ugali*). Delia, whose feeling about family reunification was cited above, explained her intimate relationship with her former caregiver as follows:

My feeling was not very close to my parents [when she was taken care of by her aunt]. Even now, we are not very close because I didn't grow up under their care. I could tell a joke with my aunt [former caregiver], but I cannot do it with my parents. When I go back to the Philippines, I am still able to tell a joke to my aunt though. But now I am getting used to [living with my parents].

She also related that her behavior such as drinking and smoking became a subject of criticism among relatives in Italy:

I want to stop [smoking] because smoking is costly and bad for health. Furthermore, I don't want my parents to become subjects of gossips because of me. My brother also smokes, but our aunts don't say anything about him.... I don't mind I was criticized as having a bad habit. But when I am thinking that my parents would become subjects of gossip [among kin in Rome], I feel sorry because they would be criticized as their way of upbringing was not right.

Her narrative reveals her mixed feelings towards her parents. It simultaneously suggests that patterns of the respondents' emotional difficulty are not only temporal but also gendered. In France and Italy, it is not uncommon that both Filipino male and female young migrants smoke and drink when they get together. However, as gender norms have been reproduced among the first-generation migrants through actual and virtual everyday interaction with their kin in the receiving and sending society, only girls' behavior or "vices" become a subject of gossip or criticism by parents and relatives (see *ESPIRITU*, 2001).

The respondents' parents also underwent difficulties to see and feel that their children were emotionally aloof from them and that they had a trustful relationship with their former caregiver back home as shown in the case of Tina in France. This situation reveals that their migration affected their relations with their children and that their emotional experiences are connected to those of their children. Emotional difficulties, in this case, are indeed intersubjective (*HORTON*, 2009).

Despite their busy life in their receiving country, the 1.5-generation respondents were able to maintain their close relationship with their caregivers through the following strategies. First, they regularly called them through the Internet or telephone and even sent photos to them. Second, they followed their caregiver's advice, such as not to fight back verbally when their parents castigated or disciplined them. Third, they paid visits to their former caregivers during vacations, generally every three to four years, depending on their parents' financial situation. Unlike their migrant parents who extended regular financial assistance to some kin members in the Philippines, few respondents sent financial help back home, mostly small amounts when they were solicited and in times of urgent needs. The probable reason for this is that most respondents were still students at the time of the interview and depended financially on their parents.

Concerning their caregivers stay behind, they too underwent emotional difficulties. For example, Flora took care of Julio who was born in Paris in two different periods: when the latter was two-month-old until three, and then from eight to eleven years old. In-between these two periods, Julio was in France with her parents. He was brought back to the Philippines due to the complicated life of his parents, who were irregular migrants at that time. The most challenging separation between Flora and Julio was when the latter was already grown up. They did not like to be separated, but they could not do anything. The decision of Julio's mother prevailed. Flora found a strategy to reduce the pain of separation: "I diverted my attention to my (other) grandchildren" whose mother was also working in France.

Like Flora, Lorie's grandmother Pacita confided her challenging experience: "I suffered during one month, particularly every time I saw her clothes and her books around". Despite the geographical distance and time zone difference that separated them from their grandchildren, the grandmothers of youth interviewed in France continued their caregiving role towards them by giving advice by phone, taking care of them during vacation as they used to do and in two cases, by visiting them in France. They also act as mediators when their grandchildren are in conflict with their parents. To keep the memories of their migrant grandchildren alive in their mind, they evoked in their daily conversations with family members their souvenirs of the infancy of their migrant grandchildren. They kept personal belongings and pictures. During the visit of one of the authors (AFF) to the home of one grandmother, she saw three pictures of this woman's migrant grandchild on top of the table in the living room. These photos remind her of their good memories together and keep her affection alive. In addition, three of the grandmothers interviewed said that computers had become part of their life. For example, in the house of one grandmother interviewed, a laptop was showcased in the living room. During conversations with video through the internet, grandmothers felt being near to their grandchildren. As Tina's grandmother Maria remarks: "we see her. It's like she's here. I'm happy about it".

FUTURE LIVES "HERE" AND/OR "THERE"

Migrant respondents and their caregivers alike look forward to the future while accepting that family separation and reunion would be part of their mobile lives. Their respective plans reflect their interconnectedness through time and space.

Asked how she foresees her future, Maria (grandmother of Tina) replied that “if I’m really asked, I would just stay here [Philippines], but my children like me to go there [abroad], so I accept”. The other caregivers of respondents in France would like to spend their old age in the Philippines, while continuously providing care to their other grandchildren who live with them as long as they feel strong. Grandmother’s caregiving role and emotional labor underline their position of power and fragility within the Filipino transnational family. They occupied a position of power, as they are the ones who are entrusted by their migrant children to take care of their stay-behind children, to take care of the family budget and most often to decide what is good for their children. Such power of caregivers “left behind” in the homeland community might be strengthened in the future, as the number of potential caregivers is decreasing as a result of the chain migration in the community and the aging of migrants’ close relatives. Acknowledging the actual and emotional contributions of these caregivers, many migrants have continued their financial support to the former caregivers of their children even after the care arrangements ended when children migrated to Europe.

However, caregivers hold a position of fragility because of their location in the family hierarchy of influence, as it is not them but the migrant parents who have the last say, as we observed in the decision-making process concerning family reunion. As Maria’s narratives above suggest, caregivers also have less power in deciding how to live their old age, as they are economically dependent on their children. The latter’s voices influence caregivers’ plan about their future: migrate to join their children and grandchildren in other country or stay in the Philippines.

On the contrary, the migrant respondents appear to have more liberty than their caregivers to decide for their future. In France, they imagine their lives between Europe and the Philippines. In the former, they would like to build their own nuclear family, establish their professional career and spend their retirement years there. At the same time, they intend to maintain their contacts with their kin members and felt the need to support their former caregivers economically (see also FRESNOZA-FLOT, 2015b). Julio (19-year-old migrant in France), for example, assured his grandmother and grandfather every time he calls them that “when I get a job, you will never get hungry”.

In Italy, respondents who had been taken care of since their early childhoods were concerned about keeping a close relationship with their former caregivers. Many respondents imagined their life with their partners either in the Philippines or countries

other than Italy¹, but they usually emphasized their emotional attachment to their former caregivers. Moreover, some respondents expressed their willingness to support not only their parents but also their former caregivers in the future, because their parents and former caregivers had “sacrificed themselves” for the future of their children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews.

In addition, many respondents treat their caregivers as their parents calling them for example “*nanay*” (mom) or “*inang*” (mom) and “*tatay*” (dad) or “*tatang*” (dad), while they call their biological parents with another commonly used terms of address for parents, namely “*mama*” and “*papa*”. Their usage of terms of address reminds us of the point made in the study of kinship in the central Philippines that child fostering does not forfeit the ties with biological parents but facilitates the establishment of multiple parenthoods (YU, LIU, 1980, p. 255-256). The respondents appeared to try to sustain their multiple linkages by addressing their former caregivers as “parents” and by subtly differentiating their biological parents from them. In the process, they have acknowledged and strengthened their filial relationships with biological parents, who were aware of emotional distance with their children. In this sense, we can say that not only their relationships with former caregivers but also with their filial relationships are being reconstructed through everyday interactions and mutual efforts. Migration scholars should therefore problematize more carefully such “emotional labor” (HOCHSCHILD, 1983) or “kin work” (DI LEONARDO, 1987) of migrants and non-migrants who are differently positioned in extended family networks at a particular time and location.

Nevertheless, the question of how and where caregivers would spend their old age, some respondents let their parent(s) be the one to discuss these matters with them. This brings us to the issue of filial piety and unequal relationships between generations in the Filipino migrant communities in Europe and their transnational families. In the Ilocos region where the respondents in Italy originated from, people are supposed to show their respect to those who belong to the preceding generations by using the appropriate terms of address. Likewise, many 1.5-generation respondents in France and Italy emphasized the significance of filial piety and respectful attitude towards the preceding generations. They embodied such values as they grew up within the Filipino migrant communities. In fact, the seniority norms, which are at odds with

¹ It is important to note that 1.5-generation respondents in Italy tend to imagine their future lives in another country. While this tendency appears to be related to their particular life experiences both in sending and receiving countries, this issue will be elaborated on in another paper.

the more equal filial and intergenerational relationships in Europe, have been reproduced and strengthened in these communities and have become in the process a source of the respondents' cultural identity.

While such unequal relationships within the migrant communities and transnational families appear to be reproduced in their everyday struggles in the receiving countries (see ESPIRITU, 2001), it is misleading to view such relationships as intact. As first-generation migrants have gradually gained power vis-à-vis their non-migrant parents and elders in their transnational families, the power relationships between first generation and 1.5 generation should be understood as mutable. For instance, the first generation in Italy have started to return to the Philippines after retiring, and their children, many of whom are members of the 1.5 generation, are becoming "left behind" in Italy. There are some cases in which the 1.5 generation supports their parents who now become non-migrants². In fact, one 1.5-generation migrant working in Italy not only provides occasional financial supports to his mother and former caregiver, who are siblings and who are now next-door neighbors, but also made an economic investment for their new beverage business in the village. Although it is still difficult to foresee the direction of changes in power relationships in their transnational families, this suggests the significance of memories of caregiving in transnational families as well as the need for a temporal perspective in order to achieve a nuanced picture of the mutable relationships between migrant children, their parents and caregivers.

CONCLUSIONS

The present paper investigated the impact of family reunification on caregiver-child dyad and the influence of the said dyad to parent-child relations. By doing so, this study uncovered the subtleties of child fosterage and shed light on the repercussions of family reunification not only on the parent-child dyad but also on the least visible caregiver-child relationship in Filipino transnational families.

The study illustrated the vernacular and widespread practices of child fostering among close kin in the Philippines. The striking feature of this fosterage is that the relationship between foster parents and children is highly mutable and flexible. Child fostering by close kin usually starts as a temporary arrangement of caregiving and may

² However, we need to be attentive of the fact that many members of the first generation are now receiving monthly pensions from Italy in the Philippines, which could be a source of power in the local communities.

develop into a more long-lasting and consolidated bond under the “culture of relatedness” (CARSTEN, 2000). While attention should be paid to conflicts and tensions among migrant parents, caregivers and migrant children (see CARLING *et al.*, 2012), it is crucial to take note that the mutable and flexible nature of vernacular child fosterage has facilitated the work (in many cases, domestic work, with small children) of many Filipino migrants in France and Italy. With such form of fosterage and omnipresence of migrants’ children under the care of relatives in the communities, migrants’ children (notably from the Ilocos region) do not necessarily become stigmatized for being “left behind” by migrant parents.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that the availability of vernacular practice of child fosterage does not always lessen the emotional hardships among transnational family members who are involved in the caregiving arrangements. Many migrant parents and their 1.5-generation children felt an affective distance between them after family reunification (see FRESNOZA-FLOT, 2015a; NAGASAKA, 2016; SCHAPIRO, 2002; SCHMALZBAUER, 2008). Migrants’ children compared this emotional distance to their affective proximity with their former caregivers. Emotional hardship is also gendered, with female respondents feeling estranged from their parents and missing their caregivers, as illustrated in the cases of Tina in France and Delia in Italy.

Despite the emotional impact of separation from their caregivers, many 1.5-generation respondents acknowledged the efforts and sacrifices of their parents and caregivers and understood the value of the cultural construction of filial piety. They expressed their gratitude to their former caregivers by emphasizing their willingness to financially support them in the future and by using terms of address intended for parents in the Philippines. They also kept regular contacts with them in many ways, including the use of online communication technologies. All these empirical findings suggest that paying specific attention to the multiple bonds in transnational family, their interconnections and the efforts of each family member to navigate various relationships helps provide a more nuanced picture of the dynamics of families on the move. As more and more 1.5-generation Filipinos are becoming young adults in France and Italy, it is time to look closely at how they socially incorporate themselves in these countries in terms of professional activities and choice of partners. As regards their caregivers and migrant parents, an in-depth study of their experience of aging across borders would offer fresh perspectives on intergenerational caregiving.

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NOTAS

TÍTULO DA OBRA

LINGERING CAREGIVER-CHILD RELATIONS ACROSS BORDERS: FILIPINO MIGRANT YOUTHS IN EUROPE AND THEIR STAY-BEHIND CARERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Relações duradouras para além de fronteiras: jovens filipinos migrantes na Europa e seus cuidadores que permaneceram nas Filipinas

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