



The Transcultural Identity of Japanese-Filipino Children in Tokyo, Japan

Dindo Palce Cafe

Department of Behavioral Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines Manila, Padre Faura, Ermita, Manila, Philippines

Email: dpcafe@up.edu.ph

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Abstract

This ethnography is an inquiry on the transcultural identity of Japanese-Filipino Children (JFC) who are situated in a multi-cultural context in the city of Tokyo, Japan. In theoretical sense, the analysis centers on culturally nomadic individuals who are active agents in the formation of their cultural identities, rather than being passive repository of social and cultural influences. The cultural identities of JFC are navigated within a transcultural milieu that is perpetuated by Japanese and Filipino cultural background of their parents. The salient cultural identities of JFC include being religious, sociable, hospitable, respectful to elders, patient, hopeful, humble, resilient, hardworking, innovative and resourceful, contented and happy, multilingual, and preference for Filipino food. These cultural identities are unique in contrast to pure Japanese children and correspondingly distinguish them as JFC in Tokyo. Myriad of social forces impinge on the process of cultural formation among JFC however; family, school, and church have played vital role in honing their cultural identities in a transcultural milieu.

Keywords: *Transcultural Identity; Japanese-Filipino Children*

Introduction//Background of the Study

The onslaught of globalization marks the dissipation of global territorial boundaries and intensifies the pattern of migration around the world. Moreover, social, economic, and cultural demarcation become porous as globalization forges constant social interactions and connectedness among diverse peoples from different corners of the world. According to Wade (2004), the core idea is that growing social, economic, and cultural interconnectedness epitomized by the concept of “globalization” has facilitated migration in ever greater numbers between an increasingly diverse and geographically distant array of destination and origin countries.

Under other condition, millions of people from developing countries are compelled to cross international borders in search for better economic and educational opportunities, and quality of life in industrialized countries. Wade (2004) argues that other factors that seem to explain surging migration are increasing international and domestic inequalities, the persistent demand for high- and low-skilled migrant labor in the segmented labor markets of wealthy societies, and the lack of opportunities, population growth, oppression, and violent conflict in developing countries.

The Philippines for instance, has its share of the worldwide migration. Today, more than 10 million Filipinos - or about 10 percent of the population - are working and/or living abroad (Asis, 2017) out of 100,981,437 total population of the Philippines (NSO, 2015). Many of these migrants work as domestic helpers, nurses, care givers, and entertainers in the United States of America, Europe and other Asian countries.

According to the UN Migration International Report (2017) the Philippines net emigration is approximately 130,000. This number places the Philippines as 7th highest net emigration of countries comparable to Indonesia (167,000), Pakistan (236,000), China (340,000), Bangladesh (505,000), India (516,000), and Syrian Arab Republic (832,000). This trend in migration implies that Philippines is among the countries of origin with the largest diaspora population. In fact, Filipinos are considered to be “all over the map.” Based on the UN Migration International Report (2015) Japan is one of the major destinations of Filipinos, which accounts to approximately 377,233 migrants. This is comparable to the Filipino migrants in Qatar (379,432), United Arab Emirates (537,393), Malaysia (620,043), Canada (662,600), Saudi Arabia (1,075,148) and United States of America (3,176,208).

This diaspora of Filipinos in Japan implies that there are some of them who are married and have families in Japan. The Japanese-Filipino couples are engaged in the process of family formation that constantly navigates within transnational context. The socio-cultural plane that hones Japanese-Filipino families, locates the children in a peculiar course of identity formation. The Japanese-Filipino children are continuously active agents in the process of re-negotiating; re-imagining, and re-reconstruction of their cultural identities.

The concept of Japanese-Filipino Children or JFC in this paper is used to capture the synergy of syncretic cultural identities founded on Japanese and Filipino origins. Generally, this paper seeks to examine the flexibility of JFC as nomadic individuals who are active agents in the formation of their cultural identities. This focus capitalizes on the theoretical argument that individuals are not passive repository of structural influences but rather active agents in the formation of cultural identities. Specifically, this paper purports to describe the salient cultural identities of Japanese-Filipino in Tokyo, Japan; know the processes of their cultural formation; identify the forces that impinge on the process of their cultural identity formation; and analyze the structural and theoretical implications of the processes of their cultural identity formation.

A Glimpse of the Filipino Migration to Japan

In the 1970s, the Philippines suffered from employment and foreign exchange problems that prompted its government to promote the deployment of Filipino workers abroad. While OFWs have found employment in the United States and Middle East, Japan has been the biggest employer of Filipinos. During the same period, Japan experienced the Izanagi economic boom and labor shortages between 1965 and 1970, and became the major destination for a growing number of Filipino workers in 1976. Filipino women entertainers started to work in Japan in the mid-1970s comprising 30% of all OFWs, and their number increased exponentially (Mori, 1997 in Anderson, 1998).

The deployment of women OFWs dramatically increased as the Philippines experienced political and economic instability in the 1980s. Over this period, there was significant increase number of Filipino women entering Japan as entertainers, either through legal deployment channels using an entertainer's visa, or as workers in irregular migration situation using tourist or spouse visa (Erpeló & Takeda, 2008). Between 1980 and 1993, especially during the Heisei economic boom (1986-1991), Filipinos accounted for 14% (147,471) of the 1,059,645 net inflow of documented foreign workers in Japan (Mori, 1997 in Anderson, 1998). Approximately 50% of 50,000 Filipinos entering Japan annually between 1980 and 1990 were on entertainer visas. Others included engineers, teachers, scientists, government officials, businessmen, and students (Matsui, 1998 in Ito, 2011).

Based on the study of Anderson (1998), the number of Filipino workers who migrated to Japan under visa categories increased remarkably from 37,878 in 1982 to 65,567 in 1985; and to 108,292 in 1990. The “entertainers” which is the largest visa category surged from 3% of the total workers worldwide in 1975 to 19% in 1990. The number of Filipinos holding entertainer visa was estimated at around 400,000 between 1985 and 1996, with the majority being women (Matsui, 1998 in Ito, 2011). Documented Filipino entertainers in Japan was pegged at 8,505 in 1980; and constantly increased to 17,861 in 1985; 26,029 in 1986; 36,039 in 1987 (42% of all OFWs); 41,423 in 1988 (48% of all OFWs) (Office of the Labor Attache, Philippine Embassy, 1991 in Anderson 1998). Further increase on their number was registered at 42,867 in 1990; 56,851 in 1991; and 51,252 in 1992 (Ministry of Justice, Office of the Immigration in Anderson, 1998). Filipino women incessantly sought better economic opportunities in Japan, where demand was high for entertainers such as singers or vocalists, cultural dancers, hostesses and other workers in nightclubs called *firipin pabu* (Philippine Pub) or *firipin kurabu* (Philippine club) and bars.

A rapid decline in the number of Filipino entertainers working in Japan was recorded in 1995 (23,434) and 1996 (18,487) (Japanese Immigration Annual Report, 1998 in Anderson, 1998). The noticeable reduction of the Filipino entertainers who entered Japan was a repercussion of the new regulations imposed by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) including increased minimum age to 23 years. In 1997, the POEA reduced the minimum age of Filipino entertainers to 21, which resulted to increased entrants to Japan totaling to 31,774 (Japanese Immigration Annual Report, 1998 in Anderson, 1998). The number of Filipino entertainers deployed to Japan continuously increased until it reached the peak of 70,628 in 2004. However, another drastic change in the number of Filipino deployments was recorded in 2005 and 2006 at 38,533 and 6,672 respectively. This decline was a result of the amendments on the immigration laws of Japan pertaining to deployment of foreign entertainers (Erpelo & Takeda, 2008).

The nearly three decades of deployment of Filipinos produced approximately 500,000 Filipino entertainers in Japan (Erpelo & Takeda, 2008). The significant number of Filipino entertainers in Japan resulted to rapid increase in marriages between Filipino women and Japanese men, reaching a figure of 6,645 in 1996 (Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2000 in Ito, 2011). According to Matsui (1998 in Ito, 2011) the number of couples who are officially married in Japan is very small compared to those married in the Philippines. Since there are reported cases of bigamy among married Japanese males, a realistic estimate of Japanese-Filipino couples can possibly be more than 100,000. These marriages resulted to birth of an estimated tens of thousands Japanese-Filipino children (JFC). Although, the exact number of JFC remains unknown, NGOs and advocates concurred that they range from 100,000 to 200,000. Some of the JFC are living in Japan together with their Japanese fathers. Most of the JFC born to Japanese-Filipino couples were abandoned by their Japanese fathers (Matsui, 1998), and were deprived of financial and emotional support.

Ethnography as Research Approach

This research is qualitative in nature and utilized ethnography as an approach. Generally, the ethnography focused on the cultural identity of JFC who are residents of Tokyo City, Japan. This approach was instrumental in distilling broad and textured descriptions of who the JFC are and how did they navigate themselves within multi-cultural setting as they actively hone their cultural identity. Particularly, ethnographic fieldworks to elicit exhaustive ethnographic accounts that were relevant to the problematique pursued by this study.

The process of going through the rigor of ethnography in a highly urbanized city of Tokyo is methodologically challenging. Where and with whom to begin the inquiry was of primary concern during the initial stage of the ethnographic research implementation. The JFC are scattered all over the city of Tokyo and hence, it was difficult to locate a physical community where they are densely concentrated.

Also, social networks that can provide linkages with JFC in Tokyo were inaccessible. Moreover, the data gathering was all the more challenging due to the fast pace lifestyle of the people in Tokyo, as they live within the first world ethos of Japanese society. In order to pursue this ethnographic project, grassroots approach was applied to pinpoint research sites and identify research participants. Crucial to this approach was to identify key persons, mostly mothers of JFC who served as lead in establishing rapport with the prospect participants.

The Use of Mixed Qualitative Research Methods in Data Gathering

The ethnography employed mixed qualitative methods in gathering ethnographic accounts among JFC in Tokyo, Japan. This research design purports to elicit exhaustive data that will be significant in describing holistically the cultural identity of the participants. Per set of data gathered through specific research method is intended to corroborate other data sets collected using other methods.

One research method used was review of documents regarding JFC. Access to archival literatures regarding JFC has been challenging since there was scant published resources in the Philippines. Non-governmental organizations based in the Philippines and working for the welfare of JFC and their Filipino mothers were tapped as sources of literatures. There were at least two NGOs contacted including Batis Center for Women in Quezon City and Development Action for Women Network in Manila for their documented studies on JFC. These literatures include the demographic and historical background of the JFC in the Philippines, narratives of their legal battle for recognition of their Japanese fathers, testimonies of their cultural and social integration to Japanese society, and program interventions designed to attain better quality of life and family.

Also, in-depth interview was utilized to gather ethnographic accounts on identity and identity formation process of JFC in Tokyo, Japan. The key-informants were churchgoers, and selected through snowball strategy. Some of them have been referred for interview by their Filipino mothers and co-JFC. Most of the interviews were conducted in churches and convents after holy masses and catechisms. Other interviews were done in the residences upon the consent of the participants and their parents. Specifically, the sensitizing frames of the questions include the core cultural identity of JFC, the social and cultural forces that impinge on their cultural identity, and the processes they undergo in honing their identity.

Observations among the JFC were conducted in order to contextualize further their cultural identity. The data gathered through observation were significantly needed to substantiate ethnographic accounts initially gathered through in-depth interviews. Observations were conducted in churches during and after holy masses, during catechisms, during social gatherings of Filipino communities in Tokyo, Japan, and in the houses of some participants. The observations focused more on the salient features of cultural identities such as beliefs, values, traditions, language, lifestyle, fashion, food and others among JFC.

The Research as Multi-sited Ethnography

The JFC are dispersed in different places, not only within the City of Tokyo but all over Japan. This nature of geospatial dispersion among JFC requires multi-sited ethnography that traces the participants in specific geographical locations. Also, the temporal aspect of data gathering was considered in doing this ethnography since Tokyo is a highly urbanized city, and thus people considered time as valuable. There was difficulty in scheduling interviews and observations because the participants were busy during regular days.

Methodically, the key to address the spatial and temporal issues of conducting ethnography was to identify places where JFC meet in a specific day and time. Corresponding to this consideration, the Catholic churches were identified as practical research sites since Filipino residents and Overseas Filipino

Workers in Tokyo were among the regular churchgoers every Sunday. Filipino community in Catholic churches in Tokyo is very much alive and visible as they actively serve as choir members, readers, commentators, lay persons etcetera during holy masses. After the holy masses, the church became a locus of socialization through informal conversations and exchanges of contact numbers among Filipino churchgoers. In some churches, Filipinos gathered as a community sharing Filipino foods and delicacies prepared and brought by them. Also, the JFC, especially those who are below 15 years old attend catechism classes conducted in the parish every Sunday.

The ethnography was conducted in different Roman Catholic churches all over the city of Tokyo. The first church identified for ethnography was introduced by Filipino student scholars of the University of Tokyo. The earlier part of my ethnography was conducted in the church of Our Lady of Assumption Parish otherwise known as Akabane Catholic Church located in Akabane, Kita-ku, Tokyo. The succeeding ethnographic data were gathered in other churches that I discovered through continuous inquiry among Filipino churchgoers. These churches include Saint Anselm Parish or Meguro Catholic Church in Kamiosaki, Shinagawa-ku; Franciscan Chapel Center or the Roppongi Catholic Church in Roppongi, Minato-ku; Saint Boniface Parish, also known as Koiwa Catholic Church at Nishi-Koiwa, Edogawa-ku; and Saint Ignatius of Loyola Parish or the Kōjimachi Catholic Church in Kōjimachi, Chiyoda-ku.

Also, there were interviews and observations conducted in the residences of JFC. The appointments for fieldwork were negotiated with the parents and JFC after holy masses during Sundays. Oftentimes in a week, I conducted English language tutorial to some of my research participants as requested by some Filipino mothers, so I had a constant interaction with some the JFC in their residences. These residences were located in Nishitokyo, Tokyo near Hibarigaoka Seibu railway station; Edogawa, Tokyo that is proximate to Chuo-Sobu Line railway station; and Bunkyo, Tokyo within close range of the Hon-komagome station of Tokyo Metro Namboku Line.

The Japanese-Filipino Children as Research Participants

The research participants for this study were children with Filipino mothers and Japanese fathers who are living in the city of Tokyo, Japan. All interviewees were JFC, whom I met in different catholic churches all over Tokyo. The key-informants interviewed in this study were selected through snowball and purposive sampling. The first key-informant interviewed was recommended by her Filipino mother who was an acquaintance in one of the churches that I visited during fieldwork. The succeeding key-informants were identified through recommendation of their Filipino mothers and friends who were catholic churchgoers.

A total of 11 key-informants composed of 6 males and 5 females were interviewed in this study. The age of the key-informants ranges from 14 to 22 years old. Seven key-informants were individually distributed per age order from 14 to 19 and 21 years old. Two key-informants were 20 years old and another 2 interviewees were 22 years old. There were 3 key-informants who were in Junior High School and also 3 key-informants who finished Senior High School but did not pursue college studies. Two of the key-informants were in college and taking up Science Engineering in Tokyo Denki University and Bachelor Degree in Economics in Tokyo Keizai University. Also, 2 of the research participants were newly graduate from college. Two among the key-informants were working in restaurants as helpers.

Contextualizing the Concept of JFC

The concept of Japanese-Filipino Children or JFC has been promoted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and advocates for cultural relativism as alternative to a colloquial term Japinos or Japinoys, which is commonly used in mass and social media. This concept is simply an amalgamation of the words Japanese and Filipino that traces the race and country of origin of the research interlocutors.

The use of JFC in scientific papers and mass media propagates representations that are “politically correct” and therefore addresses issues related to discrimination and marginalization against the subjects. Through this, JFC are accorded with respect and freed from the impacts of negative social labels and stereotypes being associated with Filipina mothers who are negatively tagged as “Japayuki” or sex workers in Japan.

Technically, the JFC are born in Japan and Philippines to Japanese and Filipino parents who are living in the Philippines, Japan and other parts of the world. Interracial marriages between Filipino and Japanese become apparent in the 1980s due to rapid economic growth in Japan that pulled Filipino women to migrate and work as factory laborers, domestic helpers, and entertainers. According to Nuqui, (2007) of the Development Action for Women Network (DAWN) the crude estimate for the number of JFC ranges from 100,000 to 200,000.

The concept of JFC as a social category has reference to the temporal aspect of our history. Among Japanese, there is a clear conceptual delineation among their descendants in other countries born during pre-war and post-war. During the pre-war, there were Japanese-Filipino relationships as a result of Japanese diaspora. The interracial marriages produced Japanese offspring known as Nikkeijin, a term that refers to Japanese emigrants and their descendants. In the post-war era, the economic prosperity of Japan brought economic inequality among neighbor countries and attracted migrant workers, especially the Filipinos. This migration pattern resulted to Japanese-Filipino marriages that produced another generation of Japanese descendants called as Shin-Nikkeijin. The prefix “Shin” means new that highlights the difference between the “old descendants” of Japanese emigrants during pre-war and those “new descendants” during post-war, in the 1970s. Literally, the term Shin-Nikkeijin (new people of Japanese descent) as a special category separates post-war born Japanese-Filipinos from Nikkeijin. The term is commonly used for out-of-wedlock born children of Filipina entertainers and Japanese men and therefore deemed demeaning by many NGO workers and Japanese-Filipinos themselves (Suzuki, 2010). Both the acronym “JFC” and Shin-Nikkeijin were utilized by groups in the Philippines and Japan to popularize alternatives to the more demeaning labels such as Japino which bears a reference to children born to women associated with sex-work. More importantly though, the maintenance of a certain “correct” designation for Japanese-Filipinos are avowals of authority and expertise on issues pertaining to the said population, as well as of rightful representation (Seiger, 2014).

The onslaught of globalization in Japan paved the way to interracial or international marriages. This phenomenon brought about an increasing number of children called “Hafu” born to Japanese-foreign parents. The term “Hafu” that emerged in the 1970s is derived from the English word “half” and commonly understood as offspring of Japanese and European descent although it actually indicates a child with Japanese and non-Japanese parents. However, there are activists and parents who popularized the term “Daburo” that means “double,” as an alternative term to “Hafu” that averts the connotation of incompleteness. The earlier terms used to denote children born from relations between Japanese and foreigners - usually American - were “Konketsuji” that means “mixed-blood” and a more demeaning label “Ainoko,” which means “crossbreed” (Seiger, 2014).

The number of JFC residents in the Philippines is also unaccounted. However, initiatives of local NGOs like Center for Japanese-Filipino Children’s Assistance (CJFCA) and Development Action for Women Network (DAWN) have been conducted to track down Japanese-Filipino Children who are residing in our country. In 2007, CJFCA and DAWN in partnership with government agencies such as the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Commission on Human Rights (CHR), Department of Foreign Affairs, and Embassy of Japan in Manila conducted a registration and survey of JFC in the Philippines. In the said collaborative project, there were 1,173 JFC registered. Out of this number, fifty-five percent are male and 45% are female. The ages of JFC ranges from 0-33 years old, with a mean age of 11 years old. About 67% belong to 0-12 years old range and 26% comprise 13-18 years old. There are 687 (41%) JFC who are enrolled in school of

which 11% are in pre-school, 47% are in elementary, 31% are in high school, 11% are in college, and the rest of them are taking vocational or technical courses (Nuqui & Arboleda, 2010).

Moreover, the results of the survey showed that the experiences of JFC are diverse. Only a tenth of the JFC in the Philippines remembered ever living in Japan. Only 20% of them said they have or had regular communications with their Japanese fathers. A significant number of about one third among JFC have not actually met their Japanese parents. However, same number (a third) of the JFC disclosed that they have received financial support from their Japanese fathers. Also, a third of the JFC in the Philippines stated that they would like to live with their Japanese fathers in Japan (Nuqui & Arboleda, 2010).

At present, the situation of the JFC varies depending on the legal recognition and financial support from their Japanese fathers, and the accessibility of family and social support. Some JFC in the Philippines struggle for legal recognition since they are not legally acknowledged by their Japanese fathers, and they are considered illegitimate simply because their parents (Japanese fathers and Filipino mothers) are not legally married. This situation of the JFC resulted to lack of resources since they do not receive financial support from their Japanese fathers. Many of the JFC have stopped studying because they cannot afford the expenses. Some of them are working to help their mothers in their daily expenses. Many of them have feeling of being marginalized in school and in the community for being JFC. Imperatively, there is a need for legal, educational, and financial support system among JFC (JFC Multisectoral Networking Project, 2016).

Many of the JFC who were legally recognized by their Japanese fathers and currently living in Japan but grew in the Philippines also experience difficulty in the integration process to Japanese society. These JFC put premium on Japanese language proficiency and communication as essential tools in the adaptation to the way of life in Japan, such as in school and workplace. Also, some JFC encounter relational issues with their mothers and stepmothers. Moreover, there are alarming reports from NGOs that some of the JFC in the Philippines were lured into exploitative jobs and eventually became victims of human trafficking. According to the NGOs advocating for the welfare and rights of the JFC many of these children were caught in difficult situations and have no access to formal organizational and institutional supports from relevant organizations and agencies both in the Philippines and Japan. In order to address this circumstance, there are NGOs in the Philippines and Japan that extend relentless efforts to assist the JFC in different facets of their existence in Japan. However, there is a pressing need to further strengthen cooperation, coordination, and collaboration among NGOs, government organizations (GOs), and private organizations (Pos) in the formulation and implementation of means and strategies that will address the needs, issues, and concerns of the JFC (JFC Multisectoral Networking Project, 2016).

Recently, a historical constitutional amendment with regard to the recognition of Japanese nationality was instituted in Japan. This revision changes the legal provision that illegitimate JFC can attain Japanese nationality only through the acknowledgement of Japanese fathers when they were still fetus or in the womb of their mothers. In 2005, the district court of Tokyo repelled the prejudicial constitutional provision that illegitimate JFC who were acknowledged by their Japanese fathers only after birth cannot be accorded Japanese nationality. Just a year (2006), there was a group case pursued by Filipino single mothers and their JFC that appealed for legal recognition of their Japanese nationality of JFC living in Japan. The case was won at the regional court, but rejected at the Tokyo High Court. The group case was re-appealed at the proper court and eventually, in 2008, the Japanese Supreme Court ruled that the requirement of marriage in obtaining Japanese nationality as stipulated in Article 3 of the Nationality Law is discriminative and unconstitutional. This court decision is considered a monumental change in the direction of the legal battle among JFC who are fighting for the recognition of their Japanese nationality. As of 2014, the JFC who applied for Japanese nationality comprised 62.3% (3,548) of the total applications (Takahata, 2016 in Ogaya, 2017).

Transcultural Identities of JFC in Tokyo

In general, the JFC in Tokyo consider themselves as transcultural individuals. They actively navigate themselves in two distinctive cultures at once, and thus engage in a complex process of cultural formation. The JFC are widely conscious that their cultural identities are amalgamation of Filipino and Japanese cultural traits. According to Eiko, “*Ako ay mayroong dalawang kultura, ang kulturang pinoy at kulturang hapon. Ito ay halong kultura dahil sa pag-aasawa ng nanay kong Filipina sa tatay kong Hapon. I have two cultures, the Filipino and Japanese culture. This is a mixed culture due to marriage of my Filipina mother with my Japanese father.*”

Based on these accounts, the JFC explicitly recognize the role of interracial marriage in the formation of amalgamated cultural identities. The union of two individuals with unique cultural orientation is a precursor to a transcultural identity among their children. In theoretical sense, Suarez-Orozco (2015) argued that, “these youth must creatively fuse aspects of two or more cultures – the parental tradition and the new culture or cultures. In so doing, they synthesize an identity that does not require them to choose between cultures but incorporates traits of both cultures.” The theoretical explanation highlights two relevant points as to the process of cultural identity formation among JFC. First, it recognizes that these children are exposed to tradition and new culture; and the second it argues that cultural formation is a process of integration of two distinct cultures.

In the context of JFC, the concept of parental tradition stems specifically from the perspective of Filipina migrants who are married to Japanese men considered to exhibit new culture to them. The exposure of JFC to Filipino tradition is not only through their interpersonal interaction with their Filipino mothers, but by way of their actual exposure to Filipino culture in times they are on vacation in the Philippines. Other JFC stayed longer in the Philippines when they were left behind by their Filipina mothers for schooling, mostly during their kindergarten and elementary years. Also, with the proliferation of modern technology, mass and social media serve as constant mediation among JFC with Filipino culture. Many JFC rely on different social media platforms to stay connected with Filipino relatives and friends, and other sources (i.e., Filipino artists, show business personalities, athletes, religious and spiritual leaders, political leaders, etc.) of Filipino cultural influence.

The amalgamated nature of JFC in Tokyo is not only confined to the transcultural identities but transcends even to their physical appearance. Similar to the mixed cultural identity of JFC, their physical features are fusion of Japanese and Filipino. According to Naohisa, “*Ang mukha namin may magandang hugis dahil ito ay halong Filipino at Hapon. Hindi masyadong singkit ang mga mata at hindi masyadong maputi ang balat katulad ng purong Hapon. We have a beautiful face shape because it is mixed Filipino and Japanese. We are not that slant-eyed and white-skinned compared to pure Japanese.*” This racial mixture results to distinctive physical characteristics that are considered to be more aesthetically pleasing by JFC themselves.

Salient Cultural Identities of JFC in Tokyo

The Philippines is a predominantly Roman Catholic country in Asia, and Filipinos are among the major believers in the world. On this account, Filipinos are known for their religiosity not only in the Philippines, but all over the world including Japan. According to Lemay (2019), “Filipinos living in Japan (now its third largest ethnic group) identify heavily as Roman Catholic, for which they use existing church structures to teach their children about being Filipino.” The aforesaid claim is supported by the JFC who participated in this study. All of them acknowledged their religiosity and faith in Roman Catholicism. Raizo states, “*Ako ay ipinganak na Romano Katoliko. Naniniwala ako sa Diyos sa ngalan ni Hesukristo bilang tagapaglikha ng tao at lubos na makapangyarihang Panginoon sa lahat. I was born as a Roman Catholic. I believe in God in the name of Jesus Christ as creator of humans and the most powerful God of all.*” Another key-informant shares the significant role of Roman Catholic in shaping the

personality of JFC in Tokyo. Reiji affirms, “*Ang aking pagkatao ay hinuhubog ng simbahang Romano Katoliko sa pamamagitan ng mga paniniwala at aral nito.* My personality is shaped by the Roman Catholic church through its beliefs and teachings.”

The faith of JFC in a Holy God is visibly expressed in different representations. They believe in the mystery of consecration, in which the bread and wine offered during the Eucharist are transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ. Yahiko reveals, “*Bilang Romano Katoliko ako ay naniniwala sa mga ritwal. Ang tinapay ay katawan at ang wine ay dugo ni Kristo.* As Roman Catholic, I believe in rituals. The bread and wine are body and blood of Christ.” The JFC believe that the reception of bread and wine during holy communion is a union of one’s body with Jesus Christ, and with the larger community of churchgoers in general.

On a more personal level, the JFC believe that Holy God has a significant role in their lives. They recognize that life on earth can be anomic without faith in Holy God who teaches moral human actions. The JFC affirmed that one of the functions of God and religion in broader sense, is to provide moral guidance to its devotees. Reichi shares, “*Ang Panginoon ay nagsisilbing gabay sa atin para sa tamang pakikitungo sa kapwa at sa Kanya. Siya rin ay nagiging gabay sa tamang pag-uugali at kilos.* God serves as guide for virtuous personal relationship with other people and to Him. Also, He serves as guide for righteous attitude and behavior.”

Also, the JFC considered Holy God as a source of strength in times of perplexity. Ryoka expresses, “*Matibay kami sa pagharap sa mga pagsubok sa buhay dahil nandiyan ang Panginoon na umaalalay. Sa mga panahon ng mga problema, kami ay kumakapit sa Diyos na tumutulong sa amin na maging matatag.* We are resilient in facing trials of life because God is there to succor us. In times of problems, we hold on to God who keeps us strong.” Among JFC, God goes beyond his spiritual purpose. The faith of JFC in God has created psychological impact on the way they deal with their day-to-day problems. Succinctly, resiliency in dealing with the challenges and difficulties emanates from their faith in God.

The religiosity of JFC is very evident as they actively participate in different religious activities. The JFC are very visible in churches during holy masses since they take substantial roles such as readers, commentators, altar knights, servers, choir members, prayer leaders, and choir members. In similar fashion, they join incessantly various religious activities other than holy mass; such as catechism, holy rosary, bible study, holy retreat among others.

Moreover, the religiosity of JFC is demonstrated through family prayer at home. They ardently pray the holy rosary to meditate on the mysteries of joy, of sorrow and the glory of Jesus and His mother, Mary. Commonly, the prayer is intended for Mary’s intercession with Jesus, her son to grant the intentions and prayers of the family. Individually, JFC pray orally and silently before leaving home to ask for God’s protection from any harm while they are away from their parents. Moreover, they pray before and after sleeping to express gratitude to all the blessings (especially their lives) given to them and seek after God for His love and care.

Just like Roman Catholics in other parts of the world, the JFC join the yearly celebration of Christmas, which is the birth of Jesus Christ commemorated every 25th of December. Their houses are decorated with Christmas trees, lightings, Santa Claus, Christmas Belen (manger of Jesus), and other Christmas embellishments. They also attend the midnight mass (“*Simbang Gabi*”) for 9 consecutive nights with a culminating mass called “*Misa de Gallo*” on Christmas Eve. After “*Misa de Gallo*” variety of Filipino foods are shared for traditional family midnight meal or “*Noche Buena.*” Gift giving among friends and relatives is also practiced by JFC during Christmas season.

Religious images and symbols are visibly embedded in the houses of JFC. This unique feature of their houses in Tokyo resembles the typical Filipino tradition in the Philippines. The images of Jesus Christ, Mama Mary, and Saints and symbols like crucifix, cross, sacred heart, holy rosary among others are commonly displayed in the houses of JFC. The images and symbols are usually placed in mini altar located in the living room. However, these religious objects are also visible in different parts of their houses, such as bedrooms, kitchen and even in comfort rooms.

Generally, Filipinos are well known around the world as exceptionally sociable persons. This cultural trait is also noticeable among JFC in Tokyo especially in establishing social relation with other individuals. They can manage to build rapport and forge social ties with Japanese and other races amidst a more impersonal Japanese society. According to Raizo, “*Ang mga Japinoy ay magaling makitungo at makipagkapwa sa ibang tao.*” The Japinoys (fusion of Japanese and Pilipino words) are great in dealing and relating with other people.”

Being sociable can be associated with other positive qualities of JFC that equip them culturally as they maneuver themselves within a highly modern and egocentric society of Tokyo. Reichi claims that, “*Mas accommodating kami at mas bukas sa pakikipag-usap sa ibang tao.* We are more accommodating and open to talk with other people.” Being accommodating and conversational of the JFC showcase the hospitality of Filipinos in their day-to-day social interaction. These manifestations of being hospitable are amplified by other cultural traits of JFC. According to Eiko, “*Kami ay bukas sa pagtulong sa ibang tao, lalong lalo na ang mga nangangailangan.* We are open to help other people, especially those who are in need.” Moreover, there are other cultural traits that are significantly related to hospitality. According to Cheiko, “*Bukas ang aming isipan. Malawak ang aming pag-unawa sa ibang tao.* We are open-minded. We broadly understand other people.” These cultural characteristics of JFC imply that hospitality extends beyond the behavioral aspect, as it also perceptible at the cognitive level. In broader context, this epitomizes the correspondence between behavioral and cognitive component in the formation process of cultural identity.

Filipinos like other Asians including Japanese are respectful to elders through actions and words. In the Philippines, younger people will show their politeness by addressing elders by using words like *po* and *opo*. This show of respect to elders is practiced by JFC in Tokyo. According to Ayumi, “*Ginagamit namin sa bahay ang po at opo bilang tanda ng respeto sa aming Nanay.* We practice *po* and *opo* at home to show respect to our mothers.” In Filipino context, *po* is used in conversation by younger people as an adjunct word of their answers to the basic what, who, when, why, and how questions. Adding *po* to one’s answer or statement when talking to the elders is considered being respectful. *Opo* on the other hand is usually used as adjunct word to answer questions that have something to do with behavior. Similarly, being younger than someone and responding to questions without adding *opo* is deemed rude behavior to elders.

Gestures of respect can be observed in different manners of JFC. One among these is *pagmamano* wherein a younger person bows and presses his/her forehead on elder’s right hand. Raizo expresses, “*Iginagalang po namin ang mga nakatatanda sa amin. Bilang pagpapakita ng galang kami ay nagmamano po sa mga nakatatanda.* We pay respect to elders. As a way to a show our respect we practice “*mano po*” to elders.” The act of *pagmamano* is usually practiced upon meeting the elders in homes, churches, and other places. Customarily, the younger initiates the gesture by saying “*mano po*” to elders as a way to show their respect.

Another act of respect to elders practiced by JFC is *pagpaparaya* and *pagpapaubaya* which are loosely translated in English as letting-be and letting-go respectively. Eiko affirms that, “*Kailangan magparaya sa nakatatanda, maging ito man ay sa sasakyan o sa upuan sa bahay at simbahan. Kahit sa paglalakad, kailangan paunahin ang nakatatanda bilang pagpapakita ng respeto sa kanila. Sa lahat ng pagkakataon ay kailangan magpaubaya sa nakatatanda.* Letting-be should be practiced to elders, be it in

cars or sitting on chairs at home and church. Even while walking, elders should go first as a way to show respect to them. Letting-go to elders at all times is necessary.” Conventionally, Filipinos are similarly guided by this cultural value. This is considered significant not only in dealing with elders but also with other people. Through this, other values are developed such as *pagtitiyaga* or patience, *pag-asa* or hope, and *pagpapakumbaba* or humility that are viewed as key values in engaging social relations.

The lives of JFC just like others, are not spared from various problems. However, it is noteworthy that they can manage to hold on their strength to vanquish their predicaments. According to Ayumi, “*Ako ay positibo palagi, masaya kahit nahihirapan, at kahit hindi kaya sige lang*. I always feel positive, happy despite the difficulties, and persevere even if it is not bearable.” This characteristic of resiliency is traceable from the experiences of Filipinos being affected by numerous natural calamities such as super typhoons, earthquakes, landslides, and volcanic eruptions. Amidst these disasters, they are able to surmount their ordeals. In fact, disasters to some provide opportunities to reinvent themselves creatively and make them more resilient individuals. In the same vein, JFC perceive their life problems as source of strength and stability. In short, through their personal tribulations they develop certain degree of resiliency that makes them withstand difficult circumstances. Ryoka contends, “*Kung mayroon malaking problema, iniisip ko na lang na hindi pa ito ang katapusan ng mundo. Hindi ko hinahayaan na bumagsak ang sarili ko, babangon at babangon ako ano man ang mangyari*. If there is a serious problem, I just keep in mind that it is not yet the end of the world. I do not allow myself to fall, I will positively rise whatever happens.”

On another account, the resiliency of JFC is also developed along with their life experiences encountered as transcultural beings in Tokyo. They have a peculiar situation compared to Japanese as they continuously struggle in different aspects of their lives due to their being JFC. Eiko argues, “*Matatag kami kasi mahirap ang pinagdadaan namin habang lumalaki, dahil iba kami sa mga batang purong Hapon. Hindi magaan ang buhay para sa aming mga Japinos*. We are strong due to difficult experiences as we grow, because we are different from pure Japanese. Life is not easy for us Japinos.”

The JFC recognize that their lives are not comparable to pure Japanese because various challenges confronted them as they integrate themselves with Japanese society. Some of the them have problems with paternal acknowledgement of their Japanese fathers and they are compelled to go through the tedious process of legal battle. Still more, they face challenges with social, economic, and cultural integration in a highly urbanized and modern society of Tokyo that affect them psychologically. However, they were able to cope vigorously with these predicaments and become more resilient in facing other problems in their lives.

The resiliency of JFC can also be associated to a more caring and close family that they have. The Family is considered by JFC as a support system during challenging moments of their lives. Also, the church is crucial in developing resiliency among JFC. They will always seek for guidance and divine intervention of Christ every time there are adversities in their lives. According to Rumi, “*Ako ay pumupunta sa simbahan sa panahon ng mga problema upang humingi ng tulong ng Diyos. Alam ko hindi Niya ako pababayaang. Magdasal ka lang at iiyak mo ang iyong mga problema at ito ay mawawala*. I go to church when I have problems to ask for God’s help. I know that He will not forsake me. You just pray and cry over your problems away and these will vanish.” This testimony corroborates with the religiosity of JFC that was discussed earlier in a preceding paragraph. Just like Filipinos, they will always look for God’s refuge during distressful times. Due to their religiosity, they can adapt with hard situations, and accordingly they become resilient.

Filipinos are also known to be hardworking. Despite the economic crises experienced commonly by Filipinos who are economically challenged, they remain ingenious to ferret out for means to overcome their situation. The Overseas Filipino Workers or OFWs who tirelessly work and take personal sacrifices are commonly appreciated as hardworking by their employers all over the world. Comparably, the JFC in

Tokyo are hardworking. According to Eiko, “*Kami ay gumagawa ng mahihirap na bagay. Marunong kami gumawa ng mga gawaing bahay tulad ng pagluluto ng pagkain at paglilinis ng bahay.* We do hard things. We know how to do the house chores such as cooking food and house cleaning.”

Other JFC are working in part time jobs to earn income for their personal expenses. This shows that aside from being hardworking, some JFC have sense of independence. Rumi shares, “*Ako ay tumatayo sa aking sariling mga paa. Hindi lang ako umaasa sa aking mga magulang. Gumagawa ako nga paraan para matustusan ang aking mga pangangailangan at tulungan ang aking pamilya.* I stand on my own feet. I do not depend on my parents. I make ways to meet my needs and help my family.” The act of creating means to attain certain end displays being resourceful. Ryoka affirms this by saying, “*Ako ay hindi kailangan utusan pa para gumawa. Ako ay kusang kumikilos at may sariling ideya kung papaano gagawain ang mga gawain.* I do not wait for the command to work. I willfully act and have my I own idea on how to do the tasks.” The cultural traits of independence and resourcefulness among JFC are also noteworthy in school. Some of my key-informants narrated, that they are focused on their studies. They consider themselves workaholic and resourceful in doing school works like researches, projects, assignments, and examinations.

The Philippines is known as a third world country where significant number of the people are living below poverty line in informal settlements and far-flung areas. However, Filipinos are seemingly contented with what they have in their daily lives. In my interviews there are JFC who articulated that they are contented with their lives. According to Ryoka, “*Ako ay kontento sa aming buhay bilang pamilya, kahit na hindi gaano kagaan ang buhay. Masaya kami kung anuman mayroon at nagpapasalamat kami dito.* I am contented with our lives as a family, even if life is not easy. We are happy with whatever we have and we are thankful for these.”

Another laudable cultural trait that is related to contentment is giving less priority to material things. Tokyo is a highly modern and capitalist society; thus, it is expected that Japanese are preempted with consumerism and high regard for material possessions. However, JFC prefer to be simple and value things that they actually need. According to Cheiko, “*Hindi ako materialistic. Hindi ko binibigyan halaga ang mga materiyal na bagay na karaniwan mayroon ang iba. Binibili ko lang kung ano ang kailangan ko at mahalaga sa akin.* I am not materialistic. I do not give importance to material things usually possessed by others. I just bought what I needed and what is important to me.” Filipinos are known to have simple living and being deprived of material belongings, but they remain even more fulfilled than affluent people in other parts of the world. Ayumi states, “*Kami ay simple lang. Kahit sa pananamit simple lang kami, hindi masyadong maganda ang damit. Pero, masaya at kontento kami doon.* We are simple. Even in clothing we are simple, not quite well-dressed. However, we are happy and satisfied with it.”

Also, contentment is associated to being a happy person. Filipinos are known as happy people around the world. In fact, tourists in the Philippines usually cite this cultural trait as one of the compelling reasons in visiting the country. Likewise, JFC considered themselves as happy individuals. According to Reichi, “*Kami ay masaya lagi, kahit saan, kahit sino ang kasama. Kami ay marunong mag-entertain.* We are happy all the time, whoever is along with us. We know how to entertain.” Based on this narrative, JFC are not only happy persons, but they are flexible who can mingle with different people.

Moreover, contentment results to positive thinking among Filipinos who are known to struggle with the problems of life and produce something good out of their experiences. In the same manner, JFC claim that they are positive thinkers in dealing with life. Reiko shares, “*Kami ay positive thinker. Lagi namin iniisip ang maganda sa anumang pagkakataon. Ang aming mga problema ay pinanghuhugutan namin ng lakas at aral para lalong maging mas matibay sa pagharap sa buhay.* We are positive thinkers. We always think of positive all the time. We pulled out our strength and lessons from problems so we become stronger to face life.” All key-informants articulated that their experiences have been instrumental in changing their perspective in life. The JFC recognize the blessings and opportunities they have in

Tokyo as part of the reasons to have positive outlook, especially when they look back at their economically challenged relatives in the Philippines.

The JFC in Tokyo are known to be multilingual. Their Filipino mothers will usually teach them major languages and sometimes dialect that they usually use back in the Philippines. Usually, they are well-versed in speaking Filipino and English aside from their dialect for those who came from the provinces outside Manila. According to Naohisa, “*Madalas ginagamit namin ang Tagalog sa bahay. Tinuturuan kami ng aming nanay sa salitang Tagalog. Itinuturo din niya sa amin ang kanilang salitang Cebuano. Oftentimes we use Tagalog at home. Our mother teaches us Tagalog. She also teaches us her Cebuano dialect.*” In another interview, Raizo shares, “*Madali akong natuto sa English lalo na ang pronunciation dahil tinuturuan ako ng nanay ko. Magaling ang nanay ko magsalita ng Ingles kaya mabilis lang din ako natuto. It was easy for me to learn English especially the pronunciation because my mother teaches me. My mother is fluent in English that is why I quickly learned the language.*” The Filipino mothers are fluent in Filipino and English because these languages have been institutionalized by the Philippine government as medium of instruction in schools from basic to college education. Through the influences of Filipino mothers, the JFC imbibed Filipino and English within their linguistic repertoire. Commonly, the JFC can communicate using at least 2 languages aside from Japanese which is their mother tongue.

Food is an integral of our lives and culture. Just like other people, Filipinos love food. They love eating food together with friends and relatives in their homes and restaurants. The Filipino cuisine that has been influenced by other foreign cultures like Spaniards, Americans, Chinese, including Japanese among others has played significant role in the propagation of Filipino cultural identities among JFC. The JFC have been exposed by their mothers to Filipino and Japanese food and resulted into heterogenous food preferences. According to Yahiko, “*Kumakain kami ng pagkaing Filipino kasama sa pagkaing Hapon. Kumakain kami ng adobong manok at baboy, sinigang na baboy at isda, pansit, pinakbet na gulay, dinuguan, tuyo at iba pa. We eat Filipino food together with Japanese food. We eat pork and chicken adobo, stewed pork and fish, pancit, vegetable pinakbet, pork blood stew, dried fish etcetera.*”

In a separate interview accounts Rumi expresses that, “*Kami ay sanay kumain ng mga pagkaing may halong sibuyas, bawang, luya, at kamatis. Masarap ang mga pagkaing Pinoy tulad ng itlog na may sibuyas at kamatis, at longganisang baboy na may halong bawang. We are used to eat food with onion, garlic, ginger, and tomato. Filipino foods are delicious like egg mixed with onions and tomatoes and sweet pork sausage mixed with garlic.*” The influence of Filipino culture among JFC is not only limited to their food preference. It is also observable even in their table manners. Some JFC prefer to eat their meals with their bare hands which is common to Filipinos, instead of using chopsticks.

Social Forces that Shape the Cultural Identities of JFC in Tokyo

The formation of cultural identities does not happen in a vacuum. The process of cultural formation commences from the moment a child develops consciousness of the environment. Myriad of social forces may impinge on the process of cultural formation. However, in the context of this study, the focus is limited to family, school, and church as central social institutions that are crucial in the process of honing the cultural identities of JFC. The succeeding subchapters of this paper contain discussions that center on the aforesaid social forces.

Family Milieu and Cultural Identities of JFC in Tokyo

Diversity of cultures and people is an immanent sociological fact; however, everyone shares a universal sense of family. The family is considered as fundamental social institution and primary agent of our social development in the context of socialization. In the same vein, family is considered central in the process of cultural identity formation. Primarily, parents inculcate among children the elements of

culture that include language and symbols, norms, values, and beliefs among others that can be utilized in deciphering what is moral and deviant within the structure of the family and society in a larger context. Therefore, family plays as crucial role in cultural formation as Goode (1982) argued that it is within the family that the child is first socialized to serve the needs of the society and not only its own needs.

Seemingly, the family serves as a strong basis of identity for children like JFC who exist within a transcultural setting. The family serves as a locus for cultural exposure of these children to amalgamated Japanese and Filipino cultural backgrounds of their parents. Although, the JFC are living in Japan together with their Japanese fathers, there are noticeable Filipino cultural traits of their family. One of these is the strong family ties that refers to the values of keeping the family together. According to Naohisa, “*Malapit ang pamilya namin. Nagsisimba ang buong pamilya tuwing Linggo. Namamasyal rin kami at kumakain sa labas tuwing may mga okasyon tulad ng birthday at anniversary. We are closely knitted in the family. The whole family attends the holy mass every Sunday. Also, we stroll around and eat outside during occasions like birthdays and anniversaries.*” The sense of togetherness among its members of the family is noteworthy among JFC in Tokyo. This value of oneness through familial activities such as attending the holy mass and eating together during occasions can be traced to its Filipino background. Among Filipinos, family is so central among its members, and their lives are preoccupied by it.

In another context close family ties among JFC can be more than spending time together as a family on events and occasions. Some of the JFC consider this as living together with parents and siblings even after marriage. Raizo shares, “*Kakaiba ang pamilya namin. Malaki man at may asawa na kami ay anak pa rin ang turing ng mga magulang namin. Hindi namin kailangan bumukod sa mga magulang. Our family is peculiar. We are still considered by our parents as their children even if we are already grown up and married. We do not need to live apart from our parents.*” This structure is unique in Japanese society since family type is commonly nuclear. A typical Japanese family is composed of mother, father, and children. When children are grown up, they have to live on their own and live apart from their parents.

Family serves as a foundation in the formation of value system. The values of the family are inculcated among children and used as moral compass in their social relationships. The children systematically learn the moral system of the family through direct exposure to their family. Children in the family spontaneously associate themselves with their parents and siblings, using them as models for proper attitude and behavior. The significant role of family in value formation has been attested by JFC in Tokyo. Raizo affirms that, “*Natutunan namin sa pamilya ang mga values. Tinuturuan kami ng aming mga magulang na magmahalan bilang magkakapatid. Sila ay nagbibigay payo sa amin tuwing nag-aaway kami. We learn values in our family. Our parents teach us to love as siblings. They give us advice every time we fight each other.*” The statement highlights the value of love, care, and conflict resolution among siblings in the family. These cultural traits are related to the values of respect for relatives and elders in the family that JFC learned through their families. Just like Filipinos, their parents teach them to give importance not only to the immediate members of the family but also the relatives and elders. Yahiko recounts that, “*Sinasabi parati ng aming mga magulang na pahalagahan ang mga kamag-anak. Dapat igalang namin ang mga matatanda. Our parents always advise us to value our family relatives. We should respect the elders.*” The family values of love, care, conflict resolution among siblings; and giving high regard to relatives and elders are cultural traits of close family ties that is observable among JFC.

Mothers play a great role in Japanese-Filipino family since most of them are full time housewives. Most of the time they take sole responsibility of parenting as their husbands are busy with their jobs. The JFC acknowledge that their mothers have different parenting style that is more permissive. Reiji affirms, “*Ang nanay ko ay open at hindi sobrang istrikto. Siya ay nanay at kaibigan din na pwede mong pagsabihan ng aking mga problema and nararamdaman. My mother is open and not so strict. She is a mother and at the same time a friend, whom I can confide my problems and sentiments.*” Based on

these accounts, JFC prefer parents who are responsive but not strict. They have a positive perception on lenient mothers being considered as caring and loving.

Filipino mothers are also influential to JFC in terms of exposure to Filipino communities. Through this social interaction, they are able to assimilate the language and culture of Filipinos. Ayumi narrates, "*Isinasama at ipinakikilala ako ng nanay ko sa mga Filipino community. Isinasama din ako sa simbahan na may maraming Filipinong nagsisimba. Dahil dito nagiging mas malalim ang pagkatuto ko sa wika at kultura ng mga Filipino.*" My mother takes and introduces me to the Filipino communities. She also takes me to church where many Filipinos attend the mass. I learn deeper the language and culture of Filipinos because of this." The exposure of JFC to Filipino language and culture seems usual since Filipino mothers have established strong social network with different Filipino communities in Tokyo. Filipino communities are very much visible in churches during holy masses and in different occasions like birthdays and Filipino civic affairs.

School and Cultural Identities of JFC in Tokyo

School together with other social institutions is also crucial in the process of socialization. Children are attending school not only for the technical aspect of education or the manifest function, but also because of its more informal function. Another purpose of schooling is the latent function that socializes children with cultural skills needed to adapt with their society. Briefly, schooling prepares children to function properly both in economic sense through their technical expertise and culturally by internalization of societal norms and values.

The JFC cited the prevalent cultural functions of schooling. Being in school that is predominantly Japanese serves as an avenue for them to be learn Japanese culture. Ayumi recounts, "*Ang mga Japanese ay seryoso sa pag-aaral. Sila ay masisipag mag-aral, puro aral lang sila.*" The Japanese are serious in schooling. They are diligent in their studies; they are always study hard." This characteristic cited by JFC depicts the discipline of the people of Japan in general when it comes to work ethics. Japan is known for the culture of meritocracy that considers achievement over social connections in assessing the performance. In school, this culture that is based on merits and outcomes breeds healthy competition among students. The JFC learn how to cope with the highly competitive environment of the school. Reichi expresses, "*Mataas ang kompetisyon sa eskwelahan. Kailangan mong mag-aaral ng mabuti para makasabay sa mga kaklase mong Hapon.*" There is high competition in school. I need to study hard to be at par with my Japanese classmates." This exposure to Japanese culture of being competitive prepares the JFC to be active players who produce significant contributions in various fields. The JFC are pressured to succeed in school and in the society in general. Ryoka recounts, "*Umaasa ang aking mga magulang na matatapos ko ang aking pag-aaral at magkakaroon ng magandang trabaho. Sobra ang pressure sa akin na maging successful sa pag-aaral at trabaho.*" My parents are expecting that I can finish my studies and have a good job. There is so much pressure on me to be successful in my studies and work."

Also, school exposes other positive cultural traits of Japanese to JFC. Based on my interviews, Japanese students are perceived by JFC to be kind, respectful, and treasure harmonious life. According to Cheiko, "*Ang mga Hapon ay mababait. Nagbibigay respeto sila sa iba at umiiwas sila sa gulo. Mahalaga sa kanila ang tahimik at maayos na buhay.*" The Japanese are kind. They give respect to others and avoid conflict. They value quiet and harmonious life." These cultural traits are manifested at a larger scale in Japanese society that is characterized by peace and order. Japanese in general are peaceful and very harmonious in dealing with others. In fact, they are considered to be non-confrontational. Rumi shares, "*Ang mga Japanese ay hindi naglalabas ng galit at sama ng loob sa iba. Itinatago nalang nila ito sa sarili.*" The Japanese do not bring out their anger and bad feelings to others. They just keep it to themselves."

Also, there are characteristics of Japanese students that are related to those mentioned above. Japanese are known to have discipline and follow rules that are also among the features of a society with peace and order. Naohisa discloses that, “*Ang mga Hapon ay may disiplina. Hindi sila basta-basta nagtatapon ng basura at sila ay hindi makikipag-agawan sa mga pila. Sila ay marunong sumunod sa mga rules. The Japanese have discipline. They do not just throw garbage at they do not compete in queues or lines. They know how to follow rules.*” The exposure of JFC to Philippine society is instrumental in their conscientization how reforms are badly needed by Filipinos on these cultural aspects. They would assert that Filipino society will become better if these Japanese cultural behaviors will be emulated.

Religion and Cultural Identities of JFC in Tokyo

Religion is an important aspect of our society. The set of beliefs and worldviews that constitute the spiritual life is a significant guide in dealing with other people. Also, religion as a social institution plays a pivotal role as agent of socialization among children. It serves as moral compass among children, and used as reference in navigating themselves within the spiritual context. Cultural values are greatly influenced by constant socialization with religious people in the church.

Among JFC, exposure to Roman Catholic through their Filipino mothers is interpreted in different ways. Religion introduces to them faith in one God who is powerful and serves as guide of their lives. According to Ryoka, “*Mahalaga ang relihiyon para sa akin. Ito ang nagturo sa akin na maniwala sa Diyos na makapangyarihan na gumagabay ng ating buhay. Religion is essential to me. It teaches me to have faith in a powerful God, who guides our lives.*” Religion also shapes perspective to which JFC anchor their world view in making sense of everything. The meaning system attach to things, situations and experiences is greatly related to one’s religious beliefs. Rumi shares, “*Ang lahat ng bagay ay gawa ng Diyos. Siya ay makapangyarihan at nagtatakda sa mga lahat ng mga pangyayari sa mundo. All things are created by God. He is powerful and dictates all the phenomena in the world.*” The religious nuances in the interpretation of everything is noticeable among JFC. To them, all things in the world are attributed to God and interpreted within the purview of religiosity.

Although the church is considered by JFC as instrumental in shaping their religiosity, it also teaches other things like morality and proper behavior. Eiko shares, “*Mahalaga ang simbahan sa paghubog hindi lang ng ispiritwal na buhay kundi pati na rin ang aking buong pagkatao. Ang simbahan ang nagtuturo sa akin ng mga values, tamang pakikitungo, at kilos. The church is significant not only in the formation of my spiritual life and but also as a whole person. The church teaches me values, proper relationship with others, and behavior.*” The values and attitudes that they learn from the church become part of their cultural identities, which is collective. These aspects of their lives are significant in dealing socially and culturally with other people in a larger society.

Moreover, religion promotes resiliency and positive attitude towards adversities among JFC. Faith is instrumental in interpreting difficulties of life in a more positive and religious way. This kind of consciousness helps the JFC in coping with their problematic experiences. According to Yahiko, “*Ang mga problema sa buhay ay pagsubok lamang ng Panginoon. Ito ay pansamantala lamang at kayang malagpasan. Sa pamamagitan ng mga problema ay tumitibay ang iyong loob. Mahalaga ang relihiyon sa panahon nitong mga problema. The problems in life are only trials of God. These are temporary and can be surpassed. Through problems, you attain inner strength. Religion is important during these problems.*” Evidently, religion provides spiritual support in times of difficulties among JFC. Furthermore, religion as social institution is also a source emotional support that is coming from the members of the community. Reiji claims, “*Madali lang nalulutas ang mga pagsubok dahil nandiyan ang simbahan na aalalay sa iyo. Iiyak mo lang ang mga problema. Tutulongan ka ng Panginoon at iyong mga kasamahan sa simbahan. The trials are easily resolved because the church is there to help you. You just cry over your problems. The Lord and your churchmates will help you.*” Based on these accounts, socialization process through religion is influential to JFC. However, religious socialization among them is functional because of their

active participation in church activities during masses, baptisms, weddings, among others. The JFC hone their beliefs, values, attitudes, and behavior through their passionate involvement in religious gatherings and activities.

Conclusion

The transcultural identity of JFC in Tokyo, Japan operates within multicultural plain orchestrated by the Japanese and Filipino cultural background of their parents. The formation of syncretic cultural identity among them is concomitant to interracial marriage between Japanese men and Filipino women. The salient cultural identities of JFC include being religious, sociable persons, hospitable, respectful to elders, patient, hopeful, humble, resilient, hardworking, resourceful, contented and happy, multilingual, and preference for Filipino food. These set of cultural identities establishes their uniqueness vis-à-vis pure Japanese, and therefore identify themselves as JFC in Tokyo, Japan.

In the process of cultural formation, the JFC are active actants that constantly interact with their family and larger society of Tokyo. The oscillation of cultural identity from Japanese to Filipino and vice versa is evident among JFC as they navigate their identity within transcultural context. Myriad of social forces impinge on the process of cultural formation among JFC however; family, school, and church have played vital role in shaping their cultural identity. The transcultural identity among JFC operates within mixed Japanese and Filipino cultural milieus.

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