# “Workers, Wives, Mothers, Community Builders: Exploring Patterns of Gendered Transnationalism and Social Integration in Asia”

Jocelyn Celero1, Dukin Lim2, Jie Zhang1, Megha Wadhwa3

1) Waseda University, Tokyo, JAPAN

2) University of Tokyo, Tokyo, JAPAN

3) Sophia University, Tokyo, JAPAN

**Panel Description:**

The feminization of migration in the Asia-Pacific region is a salient characteristic that reflects the global trends of population movement, but also the persisting economic and demographic disparities that condition flows of Asian women particularly within the region. Over the last three decades, the increasing number and types of migrant women have depicted significant socio-structural transformation both in receiving and sending societies. While literature tends to focus on the labor migration and transnational activism of female migrant workers (Piper and Yamanaka 2003), this interdisciplinary panel accounts for various social roles that migrant women fulfill, mainly in Japan as the host society while engaging in social, cultural and economic practices in their homelands.

This panel looks into the complimenting (rather than contrasting) significance of transnationalism and integration in the lives of immigrant women through the following cases: Filipino migrant mothers’ shifting aspirations and ideals of social mobility between Japan and the Philippines, newcomer Korean marriage migrants’ (lack of) participation in and belonging to either Japanese or Korean community, newcomer Chinese women migrants’ life trajectories in comparison to their lives in mainland China, and Indian women’s efforts to negotiation of socio-cultural differences between Japan and India.

Using transnational perspectives, the four papers in this panel draw on life histories, interviews and mixed methods to reaffirm the significance of gender in analyzing the views and experiences of these women about themselves in relation to “others” in the inseparable private-public spheres of the economic, social and cultural systems in home and host societies. Whereas their experiences denote their vulnerabilities attributed to conditions of social distance, ethnic diversity, political invisibility as well as migrancy, these papers underscore the active agency of women as a gendered subject – whether in the creation of identities, or in the performance of their social roles as family and community member, or worker.

**This Panel will consist of the following Papers:**

# Pillars of the Home there, Light of Hope here: Examining Flows of Filipino Migrant Mothers’ Social Remittances

# Newcomer Korean Marriage Migrants in Urban Japan: An Analysis of Community Involvement

# Looking for Better Lives: Social Standing and Subjective Well-Being of Chinese Female Immigrants in Japan

# Redefining Indian Traditions and Creating New Spaces –Migrant Women of Indian Origin in Tokyo, Japan

# Pillars of the Home there, Light of Hope here: Examining Flows of Filipino Migrant Mothers’ Social Remittances

Jocelyn O. Celero

Waseda University, Tokyo, JAPAN

**Abstract:**

Filipino immigrant mothers comprise one of the four largest groups of migrants in Japan, whose temporary labor migration in the 1980s to Japan was largely to fill the demand in Japan’s entertainment and sex industries. The last 30 years saw Filipinas’ continuing struggle to expand their socio-economic participation by engaging in business/trade, services and educational sectors, while raising a Japanese-Filipino family in Japan. They are, in certain life stages, simultaneously leading their own family in Japan and natal family in the Philippines.

This qualitative research mainly draws on (70) in-depth interviews with Filipino migrant women residing in Tokyo to map out flows of social remittances in the form of normative structures (Levitt 1998, 2007), that is, a set of beliefs and values on familial obligation and aspirations for social mobility. Through identifying Filipino mother’s social remittances, this paper aims to explain to what degree the first generation’s attainment of “better” status influences the second generation Japanese-Filipino Children’s (JFC) aspirations for social mobility, which is a combination of and in constant negotiation for individual and familial goals between Japan and the Philippines.

Moreover, the case of Filipino migrant mothers provides a micro-level, generational context for understanding how transnationalism reconfigures culturally-informed ways of what constitutes “success” and what a better social position means for themselves and their family in home and host societies. This process embedded in their family life underscores Filipinas’ simultaneous fulfillment of roles as “pillars of strength” for their natal family and “light of hope” for the second generation JFC.

# Newcomer Korean Marriage Migrants in Japan:

# An Analysis of Community Involvement

# 

Dukin Lim

University of Tokyo, Tokyo, JAPAN

**Abstract:**

Marriage statistics show a significant rise in international marriage in Asia in recent years. Foreign wives, originating mainly from China, South Korea, and the Philippines, face significant lifestyle challenges related to their marriages. This qualitative study seeks to understand the challenges faced by married Korean migrants when participating in the Korean and Japanese communities, and the influence of these communities on the women’s lives.

This paper utilizes a ‘snowball sampling’ method, with introductions from personal contacts and the online community. This study focuses on the following issues: the ways in which immigrant women are involved in society, why they choose to become involved or not involved in the communities from their own perspectives, and what community involvement means for them.

Women who choose to participate in the Japanese community rather than the Korean community tends to do so in order to avoid prejudice, facilitate integration into Japanese society, and gain useful information about raising children in Japan. On the other hand, there are some women who are not involved in either community. These women face difficulties in integrating into both the Korean and Japanese communities, because within the Korean community they are treated as special cases that have chosen to live away from their country, friends, and family.

# Looking for Better Lives: Social Standing and Subjective Well-Being of Chinese Female Immigrants in Japan

Jie Zhang

Waseda University, Tokyo, JAPAN

**Abstract:**

During recent decades, Chinese women among newcomers in Japan tend to pursue higher quality life and social status independently rather than old comers. This study aims to examine the level of social standing among Chinese female immigrants in Japan, and discuss the predictors of subjective well-being by compare with the situation in China. This study addresses the central question, “how does social standing affect Chinese women’s subjective well-being in Japan and China?”, and tests the location of Chinese female immigrants’ references groups. This research also investigates the relevance of social comparison theory and theories of life satisfaction.

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Using quantitative method, it will examine the level of status among Chinese female immigrants by comparing with other six immigrant groups in Japan, and test the predictors of their life satisfaction. Moreover, qualitative method is utilized to discuss whether Chinese female immigrants’ social standing in the host country is more strongly related to their subjective well-being than in home country. Interviews are focused on their consciousness of social comparisons, and evaluation of their migrant lives in Japan and China, including life satisfaction, perceived discrimination and anxiety.

This study gives nuanced understanding on how Chinese female immigrants in Japan compare themselves through making social comparisons, shows the different outcomes under chosen reference groups, and analyzes how these choices impact on their subjective well-being and assimilation trajectories in Japan.

**Redefining Indian Traditions and Creating New Spaces –Migrant Women of Indian Origin in Tokyo, Japan**

Megha Wadhwa

Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan

Most Indian women who immigrate to Japan do so as dependents of male immigrants, and besides, there is a small percentage of those who move to Japan on their own, either to study, work, or motivated by some other factor. As per official statistics the number of Indians in Japan in 2014 was 23,411, of which about 70 percent were male and 30 percent female. Those women, who urged on by brighter career prospects travel on their own to Tokyo, have certainly to encounter challenges. Yet at the same time they enjoy a greater measure of freedom. Women coming to Tokyo after marriage also enjoy this freedom, but they concurrently play a role in creating new spaces while continuing to abide by their Indian traditions, redefining them to suit their individual circumstances and requirements. There are also women who seek to rid themselves of certain traditions they view as impractical or inconvenient. As a respondent mentioned ‘My mother-in-law back home in India keeps insisting to follow all the traditions but she has to understand that in a foreign land it is not possible, particularly fasting. Here we don't get any help at home and you can’t expect me to stay hungry and do all the work as well.’

Re-locating to a completely new and different environment not just in terms of language and culture but also food and housing, they have their share of struggles as much as they have the advantage of living in a safe environment. Some had stable jobs in India but on moving to Japan (after marriage) job hunting proved to be a nightmare. There is indeed possibility for those qualified in English but here again there are issues that serve as a stumbling block. While most find Japan convenient but they miss the comfort, they appreciate the peaceful environment but it also makes them lonely.

In this paper, which is based on qualitative interviewing and secondary data analysis, I seek to address the lives of migrant women of Indian origin in Tokyo who cope with a diversity of situations, while at the same time maintaining and negotiating with their Indian identities. This paper also focuses on the advantages and differences of life in Tokyo in comparison to life in India.