Emerging typologies of young Filipinos waiting for employment known as "Istambays" (on Standbys)[1]

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the life course data of selected Filipinos born in the 1970s who experienced a phenomenon of "waiting for employment," popularly known in the Philippines as "istambays" (on-standbys) during their growing-up years. It focuses on istambay typologies emerging from the analyses of life course data from three interrelated research projects: (1) Social Investigation on the Lives of Istambays in the Philippines

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(SILIP); (2) Istambays' Social Indicators and Patterns (ISIP), and (3) Keys to Istambays' Livelihood, Opportunities, and Success (KILOS) from four research sites. Research findings direct attention to emerging istambay typologies that are shaped and influenced by the salience of vulnerability and gendered expectations working along the education-employment nexus in the country. These elements serve as sociological conceptual points in shaping negotiated types of istambay experiences. This paper ends by highlighting how "waithood" in the context of the istambay phenomenon in the Philippines appears to be similarly negotiated, shared, and experienced by young people in the Global South.

Keywords: Filipino, istambay, vulnerability, gender, young adults.

1. Study Context

The research impetus that enthused the writing of this paper roots from preliminary studies focusing on the notion of "istambay" as a conceptual problematique (Batan, 2009; 2012). Correspondingly, this research directs attention to the problem of unemployment — particularly youth unemployment — as a social issue which remains to be pervasive worldwide (International Labour Organization 2009; 2013; Population Reference Bureau 2013; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA] 2012; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2010; UNESCO-Bangkok 2012), especially in the Global South such as the Philippines. The problem of the search for and the lack of work seems to produce a more complex degree of precariousness that negatively impact the Filipino youth's transition to adulthood. A fascinating manifestation of such unemployment in the Philippines is a phenomenon locally known as "istambays" (on-standbys) that represents a loosely organized sector of relatively young Filipinos who are "waiting for employment." Although the concept of istambay is negatively-laden as an individualized problem, the istambay phenomenon straddles between the personal and the social (Batan 2012), which points to how popularly perceived individual-based negative stereotypes

coalesce with significant social contexts of varying istambay lives. Two recent publications (Batan 2016; Batan and Lomahan 2016) direct attention to an alternative and in-depth investigation of studying the istambay phenomenon using narratives and local films to describe historical and politicized conceptualizations of work and employment in the Philippines.

This paper is a modest attempt to contribute to the further conceptualization of "istambay" through an interrogation of life course data of a select Filipino cohort born in the 1970s who reported having experienced being an istambay in at least one point in their lives. This academic undertaking is reflective, reflexive, and creative. It intends to unearth insightful corollary-conceptual discoveries about the istambay phenomenon. On the one hand, it is reflective as it employs an interpretative-social constructionist mode (Berger and Luckmann 1966) geared toward identifying conceptual patterns and contrasts. On the other, it generates empirical insights in a reflexive process (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) that enables a conceptual framing of the istambay phenomenon through "typologies." "Creativity" is an additional dimension of this conceptualization process as I utilize an imaginary visual, illustrative metaphor of "a flock of birds standing by tree branches" to help conceptualize the istambay phenomenon as a social experience.

This paper primarily argues that emerging istambay typologies shaped and influenced by the salience of vulnerabilities and gendered expectations working along the education-employment nexus in the country serve as sociological conceptual points in shaping the negotiated types of istambay experiences. These istambay typologies unravel a view of "waithood" that provides a better understanding of social mechanisms at work among marginalized sectors, particularly those youth experiencing problems in accessing education and employment opportunities.

2. Istambay Research and Life Course

Historically, istambay research roots from my twenty years of ethnographic research in a marginalized fishing village in Talim Island, Binangonan, Rizal (since 1994 to present) and an urban poor settlement in Manila (since 2005 to present) where it became

apparent that examining the problems and complex processes of youth transitions in the Philippines require a rethinking of social structures and issues, and necessarily a more sensitive, critical use and development of research tools. Since 2010 up to the present, research efforts to continue this project were carried out through three interrelated projects namely: (1) Social Investigation on the Lives of Istambays in the Philippines (SIL-IP); (2) Istambays' Social Indicators and Patterns (ISIP); and (3) Keys to Istambays' Livelihood, Opportunities, and Success (KILOS). Interestingly enough, the acronyms of these projects are terms meaningful to Filipinos. *Silip* means "to glance"; *isip* refers to "mind"; and *kilos* represents "action."

This research examines the life course of a sample of Filipino cohort born during 1970-1979 focusing on their istambay experiences. This Filipino cohort grew up during historical years when the Philippines experienced a series of political, economic, environmental, and global crises which arguably have impacted the lives of these istambays. Thus, directing attention to the significance of "time" and "timing" in studying a specific form of youth vulnerability along life courses and trajectories, which in this case focuses on Filipino istambay experiences.

The general research design of this study is mixed methods (Axinn and Pearce 2006; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Lieber 2009) oriented along the life course approach (Elder 1997; Heinz 2001; Shanahan and Macmillan 2008). The study utilizes a combination of data sources from a secondary analysis of available national statistics on education and employment in the Philippines to primary data opinions and life histories of sample istambays belonging to a 1970s Filipino cohort (FC1970s) from selected research sites. Sample primary data were gathered from four selected areas in Luzon namely: (1) Talim Island in Binangonan, Rizal, (2) Tondo in Manila, and (3) Bay and (4) Calamba in Laguna. These samples were determined based on the systematic analyses of education and labor statistics data of youth unemployment in the country, primarily focusing on regions in the island of Luzon. This selection criteria was necessary in determining the regions in Luzon that experienced high rates of istambay phenomenon in the country.

Three survey instruments were utilized: (1) a family questionnaire (FQ) focusing on the familial background of istambay respondents; (2) a life domains questionnaire (LDQ)

documenting the respondents' personal opinions on selected life domains; and (3) a life history calendar (LHC) probing life events and stories of respondents through in-depth interviews. The project formally started on April 2012. Data gathering procedures using FQ and LDQ were conducted from December 2013 to June 2014. LHC was also intermittently employed in research sites with selected respondents throughout the months of 2014. FQ, LDQ, and LHC were subjected to various data analyses from 2015 until the present.

Table 1 below provides an overview of the distribution of istambay data according to the tool employed and the site where data were gathered. A total of 519 istambays were surveyed using the family questionnaire, 609 across various life domains, and 102 for the life history calendar. All three tools were empirically linked to provide a more logical and substantive data on familial background, various life domains, and life events and histories.

The current paper utilizes most data and insights from LHC respondents as combined survey and interview data provide more details for reflection and reflexivity.

Tools/Area	Tondo	Talim	Bay	Calamba	Total
Family questionnaire	151	118	111	139	519
Life domains questionnaire	180	161	124	144	609
Life history calendar	27	25	25	25	102

Table 1. Distribution of Istambay Data by Tools and Research Sites

3. Research Focus

The conceptual thrust of this paper is twofold: first is to continue exploring and describing istambay experiences and second, to identify istambay typologies emerging from data analyses. The paper is guided by the following questions:

1. *What working conceptual typologies may be derived from the analyses of experiences of selected self-reported istambay respondents?;* and
2. *What do these emerging istambay typologies direct attention to in the wider context of youth transition and marginalization discourses?*

4. Literature Review

This section documents researches on working indicators such as (1) family characteristics; (2) vulnerability, risks, and well-being; (3) educational and employment contexts; and (4) future aspirations and expectations to demonstrate how these may relate to the istambay phenomenon.

4.1. Familial Characteristics

Studies reviewed in this paper on family characteristics suggest that the impact on individual life domains vary. For instance, Duyan (2005) and Mullis, Brailsford, and Mullis (2003) show how sociodemographic characteristics of families and family relations influence the identity formation of young people such as street children. On the other hand, Osmond and Grigg (1978) reveal a correspondence between the gender of family household head and degrees of poverty experienced by families. Other studies direct attention on how traditional indicators such as gender, race and social class explain labor market segregation (Flippen 2013; Purtell and McLoyd 2013). In a recent study from the Netherlands, Scholte and Van der Ploeg (2013) argue that although the family is important in the development of a child, the improvement of one's quality of life is also governed by other factors.

As Filipinos are traditionally known to be family-centered and close-knit (Medina 2001), istambay research expects to see evidences of these familial dispositions even among the respondents. A particular interest here is to identify how, despite being unemployed and "waiting for employment," families of these istambays remain supportive or even to a certain degree, protective in revealing the nature of fascinating relations among them.

4.2. Vulnerability, Risks, and Well-being

In Western studies, the concept of "vulnerability" appears to coalesce with risks and topics of well-being. Zarowsky, Haddad, and Nguyen (2013) suggest that vulnerability is "both a condition and a process," and that there are three key dimensions to understanding this concept as a process: (1) the initial level of well-being, (2) the degree of

exposure to risk, and (3) the capacity to manage risk effectively. Although there are some researches that equate vulnerability with risk factors, disregarding the well-being of the individual (Lin and Chang 2013; Wall and Olofsson 2008), correspondence between these two concepts are evident in some studies that relates an individual's vulnerability to risky behaviors (see Pauwels *et al*. 2011).

It is tempting to study the istambay phenomenon in the Philippines in the context of vulnerability, risks, and well-being, as representations of istambays along with their stereotypes (Batan, 2010, 2012) seem to correspond to these concepts.

4.3. Educational and Employment Contexts

Literature on youth transition see the problem of unemployment as a risk to delaying and/or haltering a smooth transition to adulthood (Côté and Allahar 1996, 2006, 2007). However, as observed worldwide, the phenomenon of youth unemployment and its other forms such as inactivity (International Labour Office 2004) has been persistent (Population Reference Bureau 2013; UNDESA 2012) and has been attributed to problems of education-labor skills mismatch (Amante 2003; Lowe 2001; Morada and Manzala 2001; Santa Maria 2002). In this paper, I seek to unravel how the education and employment nexus coalesce with educational and work experiences and how these impact the transitional life decisions of istambays.

4.4. Future Aspirations and Expectations

Western studies on young people's future expectations are found to be related to one's educational status/attainment (see McWhirter and McWhirter 2008; Shvets and Ilyina 2002; Sletten 2011). Social class remains as a significant predictor such as in Norway (see Sletten 2011). Example recent ethnographies (see Lowe 2001; Lowe and Krahn 2000; MacLeod 1987) continue to reflect social reproductive mechanisms such that young people having low academic achievement and a poor family tend to have lower expectations, expecting less happiness in the future, despite the equal access to services (and necessities) by the government. Interestingly, gender as a social predictor of future expectations is found significant in Chile (see McWhirter and McWhirter 2008) as well as in Russia (see Shvets and Ilyina 2002). Shvets and Ilyina (2002) documented the dif-

ferences in future expectations by gender: girls describe such expectations in great detail while boys were more general in their description; both nonetheless underscore thematic views of Russian society such as (a) optimism, (b) pessimism, and (c) pessimistic but hopeful for a better life abroad. Such gendered observations appear to be related to understanding the istambay phenomenon.

5. Results and Discussion

This section narrates the conceptualization of istambay typologies emerging from the istambay research stories in the past years through an analysis of life course data. The results are introduced using a metaphor of a flock of birds standing by/resting on tree branches as representing istambay experiences. Serving as a narrative trope, the findings begin by describing the stereotypical typologies that closely capture the istambay phenomenon in earlier studies. This is followed by a description of selected sociodemographic characteristics and life domains of LHC interview respondents as sources for the empirical conceptualizations of istambay typologies. It directs attention to two typification dimensions of istambay life course data: (1) salience of vulnerabilities and (2) gendered expectations analyzed along the education-employment nexus. This reflects two varied ways of typifying istambay experiences in which I argue are able to unravel the nature and dynamics of these negotiated istambay experiences. Using these emerging istambay typologies as sociological conceptual points of inquiry, the section hopes to further conceptually describe marginality in istambays' apparent unproductive status and their survival in the context of shared collective experiences.

5.1. Narrative Trope of Istambay Research: Why Typologies?

Imagine seeing a flock of birds congregating as a collective on trees. Imagine these trees serving as their social space where the communal lives of these birds transpire. On the branches of these trees, birds move back and forth, as they fly in and out to keep up with the demands of basic survival. Yet amidst these actions, birds also make use of these tree branches to settle and rest and to possibly gather energies to face the next day's challenges.

Similar to this imaginary of a flock of birds seen standing by tree branches, one can imagine the istambay phenomenon in the Philippines. Istambays belong to a flock, their families and communities – their very own collectives. Their lives follow a natural life course of being born in a nest of a family, growing up amidst challenges and contingencies, and becoming adults fully prepared and independent, able to fly on their own to naturally find and nurture their newfound trees. However, while it is ideal to think that birds are naturally gifted to fly to find food and survive, they too rest to recuperate from hard work. When satisfied, birds rest usually standing by chirping on restful tree branches. One may never know, are these birds we see standing by really resting? This is the conceptual conundrum that this metaphor intends to interrogate.

Like birds, when we grow up as adults we are expected to work in order to survive. But what if there is no work available? What happens when unemployed/inactive citizens standing by are hungry? Such is the story of often misunderstood, misinterpreted birds standing by trees; such is the istambay phenomenon in the Philippines. Metaphorically, I think that unlike birds standing by chirping, the state of waiting/waithood among istambays seems more like about "wailing" that maybe likened to a relative state of social suffering intermittently experienced by a steady number of Filipinos over these years (and in the future) yet taken-for-granted, silently seeping through the tree of Philippine social life.

Thus, in what sociological ways can one imagine istambay experiences? Given the substantial life course data gathered over the past five years, I shall attempt to trace, reflect, and examine the ways by which I make sense of the istambay conceptually using a heuristic rubric of Weber's (1978/1922) ideal types. This refers to the practice of useful imagination of "pure or ideal forms." This provides a way of understanding how the natural and social world operates «by investigating how far reality diverges from the pure models» (Turner 2006, 143). While it is tempting to use as ideal forms the indicators of "full adulthood" such as financial independence, secured job, and successful careers as in the context of youth transition discourse (see Arnett 2005; Galaway and Hudson 1996; Heinz 1996; Kerckhoff 1990; Lowe 2001; MacDonald 2011; Wyn and White 1997), I argue that there is something enigmatic about understanding istambay experiences. Istambay as a concept is charged with negatively-laden, stereotypical de-

scriptors typically referring to laziness, male-centered unproductivity (and even abuse) coalescing with its superficial use to refer to either a place or state of collectivity and belongingness as part of the «10 weird phenomena that perfectly sum up today's Filipino culture» (Vaflor 2016). Thus, I find this exercise of constructing a conceptual typology as a way to further make sense of, if not sharpen, the sociological understanding of istambay as a social phenomenon and its underlying structural dynamics. Perhaps there is a better way to grasp the chirping sounds of birds standing by tree branches after all.

5.2. Life Course Data of Istambays: Who and What are They?

For this conceptual exercise, data used are from 102 life history calendar (LHC) interview respondents from four research sites (see Table 2 below.) Binangonan, Rizal and Bay, Laguna are municipalities while Tondo, Manila and Calamba, Laguna are cities nestled in highly urbanized areas. Despite these geographical differences, interview respondents belong to relatively economically disadvantaged families living in marginalized barangays (villages) along fishing communities of Laguna Bay such as Binangonan and Bay, and urban poor settlements such as Tondo and Calamba. All respondents are self-reported istambays whose familial and life domains data are also available but are not reported here due to limited space. To qualify as a respondent in this research, participants must have been born in the 1970s and have experienced being an istambay. This means that these LHC respondents are not necessarily istambays during the time of the interview.

Table 2 indicates that there are relatively more females than males among the respondents. Since they belong to the 1970s cohort, the mean age of respondents at the time of interview is 39 years old in 2014. Four out of every five respondents are married and reported being Catholic. Nine of the LHC respondents reported working abroad as an overseas contract worker (OCW) or overseas Filipino worker (OFW). The educational characteristics of LHC respondents in Table 3 are more telling of their negotiations to complete formal education. About one-fifth of the respondents reported completing primary education, almost one-half completed secondary education, and one-third finished tertiary education. When non-completers were asked about reasons that hindered

the completion of formal education, they identified the "lack of financial aid and work-related problems/issues" as the topmost reason.

	Frequency	Percent
Area	N	%
Binangonan, Rizal	25	25
Bay, Laguna	25	25
Tondo, Manila	27	26
Calamba, Laguna	25	25
Total	102	100
Gender	N	%
Male	43	42
Female	59	58
Total	102	100
Mean Age of Istambay LHC	*Mean*	*n*
Istambay Respondents	39 years old	102
Marital Status	N	%
Single	12	12
Married/living together	84	83
Separated	5	5
No response	1	1
Total	102	100
Religious Affiliation	N	%
None	2	2
Catholic	90	88
Other Christian denominations	10	10
Total	102	100
Has the LHC respondent ever been an OCW/OWF?	N	%
Yes	9	9
No	93	91
Total	102	100

Table 2. Sociodemographic Profile of LHC Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Highest Educational Attainment	N	%
Elementary	24	24
Secondary/vocational	45	46
College	30	30
Total	99	100
Reason for Not Finishing Education	N	%
Financial aid and work-related problems and/issues	53	63
Personal and family-related problems/issues	24	29
School-related problems/issues	5	6
Others	2	2
Total	84	100

Table 3. Educational Characteristics of LHC Respondents

In Table 4, on the work and employment life realm, about two-thirds of LHC respondents reported having their first jobs in mainly elementary-, industry-, and service-related occupations which were sought from mainly private households/establishments. When asked about having a job in the last 12 months, seven out of every ten LHC respondents indicated having been employed. What appears to be interesting is that reported job types and work spaces of LHC respondents are not significantly different from the reported first jobs. This indicates a consistent engagement in manual jobs over their life course usually associated with relatively low and/or average years of completed formal education.

	Frequency	Percent
First Job of LHC Respondent	N	%
Elementary occupations	41	41
Industry-and service-related occupations	33	33
Professionals, associate professionals, and related occupations	18	18
Farmers, forestry workers, and fisherfolk	7	7
Total	99	100
Class of Work During First Job	N	%
Worked for private household/establishment	68	70
Self-employed	21	22
Worked for government/public establishment	8	8
Total	97	100
Had a job in the last 12 months?	n	%
Yes	75	74
No	27	26
Total	102	100
Job During the Last 12 Months	N	%
Elementary occupations	37	50
Industry- and service-related occupations	20	27
Professionals, associate professionals, and related occupations	9	12
Farmers, forestry workers, and fisherfolk	5	7
Others	3	4
Total	74	100
Class of Work During Job Last 12 months	N	%
Worked for private household/establishment	23	31
Worked for government/public establishment	11	15
Self-employed	38	51
Other	2	3
Total	102	100

Table 4. Employment Characteristics of LHC Respondents

The sociodemographic data indicate that LHC respondents generally belong to an economically disadvantaged background. The marginality in the LHC respondents' educational and employment trajectories manufacture their istambay experiences that cut across varied structural dimensions. Understanding these structural dimensions is what this conceptual typification exercise intends to accomplish which will be explained in the following section.

5.3. Emerging Istambay Types: What Seems to Matter?

The problem with studying a taken-for-granted phenomenon such as the istambay in a developing country is that it degrades a valid social issue into a personal trouble. Unfortunately, this lack of sociological imagination (Mills 1959) mutes the underlying structural constraints and even the voices especially of those experiencing varying level of marginalizations. But arguing about marginality would only catch attention when probing does not only reproduce old ways of seeing but rather produce relatively new ways of seeing the same phenomenon.

Beyond plainly observing a flock of birds on tree branches, this conceptual exercise requires taking an interest in looking closely at the life and dynamics of these birds' standby behaviors. In so doing, one can see the fuller meaning of what may be occurring in a seemingly unproductive/inactive state of standing by. In the context of the istambay phenomenon, one fruitful way of employing the sociological imagination is to identify contrasts and patterns found in istambay data using typologies. In the next section, I shall narrate how these istambay types emerge from empirical data as major conceptual findings of this paper.

5.3.1. Earlier Typologies: Idle and Youth Inactivity

In earlier istambay studies, I pointed out the highly stereotypical typification of what may be considered "istambay" in the Philippines as "idle" youth (Batan 2009). In 2003, the National Statistics Office (NSO), now known as the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), first introduced in youth statistics the "neither in school nor working" category (Ericta 2003). To date, in my view, this is the first attempt by a state agency to recognize what may be considered a "hidden population" in reported statistics of those young Filipinos not engaged in schooling or employment. I insinuated that this "neither in

school nor working" group more likely represented the istambays in the country. Comparatively, this may be similar to the North American study of "disconnected youth" (see Edelman, Holzer, and Offner 2006) characterized as "idle" because they seem to be disengaged and unproductive. This initial idea allowed me to further investigate the notion of "idleness" into "youth inactivity." While I was aware of the epistemological requirements in operationalizing both of these concepts, I focused on exploring the latter concept due to a specific variable I found in a reliable youth data set from the project, Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study (YAFSS) of the University of the Philippines Population Institute. The question, *"What was your main activity in the last three months?"* was enough for me to explore empirically who among these YAFSS respondents may be considered istambays. The result of this exploration was reported in my dissertation (Batan 2010) where I engendered a more complex conceptual view of istambays.

5.3.2. Typifying Istambay Experiences

To give a glimpse of varying istambay experiences, the following descriptive statistics from the life course data of LHC respondents are presented. Data direct attention to some fundamental indicators that may allow characterization and/or categorizations of these istambay experiences.

In Table 5, the reported mean of estimated length of istambay experiences over the course of their lives by LHC respondents is 48 months or four years. Interview data reveal that being istambay is experienced intermittently over their life course. This suggests a relative substantial number of years of "waithood" among these respondents.

From the multiple response inquiry of the reasons for being istambay, data reflect varied and telling structural constraints that shape these experiences. Salient reasons point to (a) gendered expectations, (b) limited access to formal education, and (c) being economically disadvantaged or poverty as the three topmost precursors of the istambay experience.

Mean of Estimated Length of Istambay Experience	Mean 48 months	n 98
	Frequency	Percent
Reasons for Being Istambay	n	%
Marriage/housekeeping	28	20
Lack of education	27	19
Financial problem	22	19
Looking/awaiting result of previous job application	19	16
Waiting for rehire/recall	16	13
Overqualified	5	11
Disability/temporary illness	5	4
Waiting for bar/board/licensure exam	5	4
Believed no work available (discouraged)	4	4
Bad weather	4	3
Lack of transportation	3	3
Just finished schooling	3	22
Total	141	100

Table 5. Istambay Experiences of Respondents

These findings challenge the earlier observation about istambays as male-centered. During the course of data gathering, the research team discovered that more female respondents reported having experienced what they consider as a general istambay experience. Topmost among the "reasons for being istambay" in this multi-response inquiry reveals "marriage/housekeeping" as one salient indicator of waithood.

This directs attention unto how a different dimension of gendered relations is configured into the istambay process, specifically reflecting on the one hand, the perceived economic expectation for "homemakers" to also contribute to household expenses, and on the other, the devaluation of "homemaking" with no labor valuation, particularly experienced – and to a certain extent, a subject of complaints –by these women respondents.

Another dimension (refer to Tab. 5) often identified as contributory to the istambay experience is the lack of access to formal education. This roots from the common expectation that the completion of formal education – particularly of college, tertiary, professional degrees – averts leading to an istambay status. Most of the LHC respondents

attribute this lack of formal education to what they consider a "financial problem" which generally pertains to their situation of poverty.

These three topmost reasons for being an istambay reflect an interesting dynamic of how gender, education, and social class (as indicated by poverty) are able to unravel negotiated types of istambays. One emerging typology is directly related to what I will call the "salience of vulnerabilities," meaning the extent to which respondents are exposed to conditions that make them susceptible to the istambay experience. Another is the observed "gendered expectations" that appear to shape another type of negotiated istambay experience of women respondents.

Both of these typologies are nestled and occur in two institutional determinants, influencers, or shapers of life trajectories particularly salient during the growing-up years. This is what I call as the "education-employment nexus" which, I argued in earlier studies, offers a more meaningful analytical life context when studying istambays.

5.3.3. Typology 1: Salience of Vulnerabilities

As can be surmised in Table 6 below, when LHC respondents were asked about what they felt when they were experiencing an istambay status, data hint on the indicators of their vulnerabilities. Data show that the istambay experience is both social and individualized, directing attention to the salience of "education" in their lives. Here I am drawing an interesting social dynamic of how istambay roots from and possibly is entrenched in the prevailing education-economic inequalities in the Philippines (UNESCO-Bangkok 2012; UNESCO 2010). As with the extended narratives of LHC respondents, being an istambay primarily means being interrupted in the process of schooling, which then leads to more individualized reactions of discouragement, depression, feeling sick, stowing away, and (very few) suicidal ideation. Yet what is most revealing is the reported feeling of "education being a waste" and the "thought of returning to school" as reflecting differing degrees of vulnerabilities. The former refers to "educated istambays" who work under the belief that their formal education should have protected them from becoming istambays, and the latter, are the "education-ideal istambays" who were not fortunate enough to return to formal schooling yet continue to imagine that their respective lives would have been better only if they were able to complete their studies.

Dispositions	Responses	%
Felt that education was just a waste	71	17
Felt discouraged	66	16
Felt depressed	66	16
Thought of returning to school	58	14
Felt relaxed	47	11
Felt sick	36	8
Felt like a burden to the family	29	7
Felt good to have time with barkada	25	6
Thought of stowing away	19	4
Thought of committing suicide	8	2
Total	*425*	*100*

Table 6. Dispositions During Istambay Experiences of Respondents

A sample qualitative data matrix in a recent publication (Batan 2016) that utilized the same LHC data set best illustrates this point. Although there are exceptions, the istambay typology based on the "vulnerability scale" below in Table 7 shows how selected LHC respondents may be grouped according to how education as a factor shaped and negotiated their istambay experiences. Here, "educated istambays" are situated along least and meso-vulnerable scales while the "istambay education-idealists" I consider as the most vulnerable. What I find interesting in this typology is that in both the educated and education-ideal circumstances, education seems to have an altering effect on their life trajectories.

The educated istambays appear to be experiencing a "symbolic violence" (Pierre Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990/1977) due to the non-translation of their acquired institutionalized capital into employment. Meanwhile the most vulnerable istambay education-idealists appear to have experienced a reversed imagined symbolic violence working along the belief that non-completion of formal education structured the limited job opportunities available to the least educated like them drawn out from the symbolic promise of education. These negotiated istambay experiences therefore question the salience of varying forms of vulnerabilities engendered by educational institutions relative to employment expectations.

Typology	Name	Education	Mother's Education
Least vulnerable	Rey	College graduate	Elementary undergraduate
	Gilda	College (ongoing)	College undergraduate
	Love	High school graduate	Elementary graduate
Meso-vulnerable	Camille	College graduate	Elementary graduate
	Coy	College graduate	Elementary graduate
	Rex	College graduate	High school graduate
	Siza	College graduate	College graduate
Most vulnerable	Mon	Vocational undergraduate	College undergraduate
	Jepoy	Vocational undergraduate	High school graduate
	Araw	College undergraduate	Elementary graduate
	Emong	Elementary undergraduate	Deceased
	Jemma	High school undergraduate	High school under graduate

Table 7. Sample Istambay Typology by Vulnerability Scale (Batan 2016)

5.3.4. Typology 2: Gendered Expectations

Another important emerging typology relates to how gender (and its shifting expectations) is configured into the reported istambay experiences. In this section, I shall focus on reporting the LHC women respondents in one of the research sites, Talim Island, as a case in point. Following the Typology 1, these women respondents may be classified as belonging to the least vulnerable educated istambays category. These women completed collegiate education degrees and their vulnerability roots from their inability to pass the required Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). As women, having completed their teacher education would have leveled up their respective economic status in the household combined with their homemaking responsibilities. As teacher education in the Philippines is state controlled and regulated, failing the LET disables educated women to enter into teacher employment. For years, these women have been observed to have failed attempts in successfully passing the LET which relates to their reported istambay experiences.

As may be gleaned from Table 8 below, all, except for one, are married with two to four children per family. This indicates the respondents' natural and socially-woven homemaking responsibilities amidst their hope to pass the LET. Their educational indicators in Table 9 are evidences of their credentials pointing to some who have preferred other courses than being a teacher. Also, Table 9 reveals the investments of the families of these women to study in private schools which are more expensive than public schools despite belonging to marginalized fishing villages.

Name	Age at the Time of Interview (2013)	Area of Residence	Marital Status	Number of Children
Corina	47	Bombong	Married	4
Marife	41	Bombong	Married	3
Donnabelle	39	Bombong	Married	3
Sharon	34	Bombong	Married	2
Maricris	34	Kasile	Married	3
Leslie	34	Bombong	Married	2
Janice	32	Bombong	Married	3
Lady	32	Bombong	Married	0
Lilibeth	30	Kasile	Married	2
Rhea	30	Bombong	Married	4
Karen	28	Bombong	Married	3
Melissa	22	Kasile	Single	0

Table 8. Sociodemographic Profile of 12 Talim Women Cases

Most telling on this life course data relative to LET experiences are found in Table 10. This table reveals the number of years these women experience having no teacher licenses and the number of failed LET attempts that range from one to as many as 15 counts to having "lost count" of taking LET.

Identified reasons for failing LET exam reflect the need for a more apparent educational intervention to "review," which critically questions the quality of their collegiate training. There is no question about the practical and financial benefits a teacher's license would bring to these women respondents and their families.

Name	School Type: Elementary School	School Type: High School	School Type: College	Education Degree as Personal Course Preference? (Preferred Course/ Profession)	Graduated College from	BS Education, Major	Year Completed College
Corina	Private	Private	Private	No (Policewoman)	Tomas Claudio Memorial College	Elementary Education	1993
Marife	Private	Private	Private	Yes	Tomas Claudio Memorial College	Elementary Education	1994
Donnabelle	Public	Public	Private	Yes	Tomas Claudio Memorial College	Elementary Education	1996
Sharon	Public	Private	Public	No (Nurse)	Rizal Polytechnic College	Elementary Education	2001
Maricris	Public	Private	Public	No (Computer related or Engineering)	University of Rizal System	Secondary Education, Chemistry	2003
Leslie	Private	Private	Private	Yes	Tomas Claudio Memorial College	Elementary Education	2003
Janice	Public	Private	Public	Yes	University of Rizal System	Elementary Education	2003
Lady	Public	Private	Public	No (Computer related)	University of Rizal System	Elementary Education	2004
Lilibeth	Public	Private	Public	No (Office/Bank Related)	University of Rizal System	Secondary Education, Science	2004
Rhea	Public	Public	Public	No (Nurse)	University of Rizal System	Elementary Education	2005
Karen	Public	Public	Public	No (Nurse)	University of Rizal System	Elementary Education	2007
Melissa	Public	Private	Public	No (Criminology)	University of Rizal System	Secondary Education, Biological Sciences	2013

Table 9. Selected Education Indicators of 12 Talim Women Cases

Name	Year of College Completion	Number of Years Without Teaching License (2014 base year)	Number of LET Attempts	Reasons to Failing LET	Reasons for Wanting to Pass LET
Corina	1993	21	Lost count	*Old curriculum *Lack of or no review	*Better self-esteem / self-regard as a deserving licensed teacher *Financial / practical reasons
Marife	1994	20	15	*Lack of or no review *No focus	*Practical reasons *To send children to college
Donnabelle	1996	18	8	*Lack of or no review	*Practical reasons *For her child *To be able to provide *To have quality life with the family *To be a legitimate teacher
Sharon	2001	13	11	*Lack of or no review	*Provision of good benefits *Teach in elementary public schools
Maricris	2003	11	5	*Lack of or no review *Outdated/old curriculum *Did not learn well during college	*Practical reasons
Leslie	2003	11	Lost count	*Lack of or no review	*Financial reasons *Assist in family expenses
Janice	2003	11	18	*Lack of or no review	*Provision of good benefits *Financial reasons *For children's education *To build a house
Lady	2004	10	6	*Lack of or no review *No focus	*Teach in public school *Already bored at home
Lilibeth	2004	10	3	*Lack of or no review *No focus	*To be able to help
Rhea	2005	9	13	*Lack of or no review *Tired of traveling from island to mainland	*For practical reasons *Teach in public school *To fulfill dreams for children
Karen	2007	6	10	*Lack of or no review	*For financial reasons *To send children to

					school
Melissa	2013	1	1	*Lack of or no review *Unprepared	*For practical reasons *Teach in public school

Table 10. Selected LET -related Experiences of 12 Talim Women Cases

Yet, this requirement of teacher legitimacy places the lives of these women to a halt. Such required educational life event of passing the LET then becomes critical to how these women negotiated their istambay experiences. I argue that what makes the istambay experiences of these women more pronounced is not only the symbolic violence the non-legitimation of their teacher education have brought them. Rather, the failed LET experience, entrenched the gendered social suffering these women shared with their families as complicated by their homemaking responsibilities. Here, I am suggesting a critical look at how educated women such as the case of these teachers, experience a muted form of the istambay experience drowned by the often more noisy representations of male istambays. The narrative experiences of these Talim women also draw more critical attention to how they are both subjected to the demands of seeking paid employment and at the same time fulfilling the undervalued unpaid homemaking responsibilities.

Such istambay negotiations of these observed women istambays counter the male-centered istambay assertions observed in earlier studies. Thus, it is meaningfully appropriate to critically situate an istambay phenomenon analysis using a typology of gender. This view requires uncovering the observed gendered blind spots found in the LET life course data. For instance, beyond the case of LET, in general, there are life events that direct attention to gender-based expectations that socially pauses life trajectories relative to labor output expectations such as childbearing, childcare, and various forms of caregiving where women are naturally and socially expected to take charge of. All these in my view, may be considered as istambay experiences that are worthy of further academic investigation.

Thus, in a metaphorical sense, when one looks into how birds on tree branches converge, this conceptual exercise suggests being fascinated with how they could be collectively understood. At one point, one can see these standing-by birds as part of a social

environment that reveals vulnerable realms such as the forces of wind and weather, strength of the tree branches, and even competitions for space. This makes the vulnerable typology relevant.

Another dimension is by looking at how these standing-by birds function as collectives to actually decipher the undervalued roles some unnoticed birds are accomplishing to protect the flock. Such may be the value that the typology of gender may engender.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to how these two typologies may be of good use as comparative points to understand equally the fascinating phenomenon of "waithood" found in studies conducted in South America (see Auyero 2011), South Africa (see Honwana 2014; Ralph 2008) and "Los Ninis" (see Prieto and Parra 2013) in Mexico. What makes this interesting for me is the Global South gradient of these select studies relative to, and may be qualitatively different from the conceptual descriptions of mainly Global North inactive/unemployed youth worldwide known as "NEET" or "Not in Employment, Education and Training" (Bynner and Parsons 2002; Furlong 2006), "status zero" (Williamson 1997; 2004), and the "hikikomori" (Furlong 2008; Kaneko 2006). In my view, such comparative conceptual analysis remains both wanting and salient to fully grasp how marginalized life course experiences are socially, culturally, and historically shaped by differing and often contradictory contexts and conditions, having both individualized and social implications. Metaphorically, this means a continuous and cautious interrogation of the experience whenever one sees chirping birds standing by tree branches. In the Philippine context, this implies being continuously curious and critical in studying istambays along the educational and employment life trajectories. The understanding of such a phenomenon, hopefully, will be anchored on the possibility that these istambays, too, will find their own strong wings to make flying towards quality life, possible and livable.

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