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# The Embodiment of Filipino-Japanese Identity as Plural Subjects:

Everyday Articulations of Multicultural Roots

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## Abstract

In the last three decades since the 1990s through 2010, extensive studies focused on the skewed gender migration pattern of Filipino women to Japan. In recent years, studies focus on Filipino-Japanese descendants, including those referred to as *hafu*—i.e., offspring of intermarried couples. Among intermarried couples, births by Filipino mothers alone rose in the last two decades, from 5,488 in 1995 to 84,345 in 2014. This is significant on account of the total 268,806 births by all foreign mothers (Ministry of Labor and Welfare, E-Stat. 2014) and has considerable impact on a fast-aging society that attempts to avert the effects of low birth rate. Hence, there has been a growing public and academic interests in the discourse. The article presents findings of an exploratory, ethnographic study focusing on the embodiment of the identity of these offspring as diverse subjects. In particular, the paper highlights three points: a view of the de/construction of the pejoratives and fixities that embody the *hafu* metaphor (Nitta 1989), the subjects' identity consciousness, and the subjects' evolvement through dynamic appropriation of tangible and intangible social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1972).

**Keywords:** Social, *hafu* metaphor, identity consciousness, plural subjects, embodiment

多元的主体フィリピーノ・ジャパニーズにおける

アイデンティティの具現化

——多文化的ルーツの日常的明瞭化——

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*Self-aware of being a “hafu” [half-breed], one not only learns of the racialized structured disadvantages, but nurtures one’s organic endowments embedded in multicultural roots that potentially alter the social positioning of a fluid, plural, reflective subjects.*

In the last three decades since the 1990s through 2010, extensive studies focused on the skewed gender migration of Filipino women to Japan (Ballescás 1992; De Dios 1992; Matsui 1991; Satake 2000; Ishii 2005; Yamanaka 2006: 97–119; Tsuda 2006; Satake and Da-anoy 2006). In recent years, a number of research focus on descendants of Filipino-Japanese. Constructions and contradictions in categorical labeling of mixed-race children of interracial marriages have been a subject of public and academic discourse (Satake and Da-anoy 2006: 165; Taichi 2008). Also, there has been an on-going interest in migrants’ ethnicity, their families and offspring as well as on diverse identity constructions about them in other parts of the world (Parks and Askins 2015: 75–91; Seki 2015: 151–178; Nagasaka 2015: 87–116; Pertierra 179–204; Ogaya 2015: 205–223; Hara 2013; Takahata 2015; Takahata and Hara 2015).

A common finding in the literature has pointed to the dynamism of identity that cannot be confined in singularity, rather in its plurality. Among the many identity constructions of offspring of migrants is the *hafu*. Dubbed either as “hafu” (half-breed), double (double-breed), or cross-cultural [mixed-breed] children, they now comprise the growing population of migrant-offspring in Japanese society. Based on the latest statistics released by the Ministry of Labor and Welfare (E-Stat 2016), there’s a total of 84,345 births by Filipino mothers from 1990–2014. This is the highest figure of the total number of births (i.e., 268,806, including 1987 and 1990 data) by all foreign mothers in Japan in the same period (Ibid).

There is no denying that some of the so-called *hafu* are at ease with this social construct associated with celebrities, and sports personalities of Japanese-foreign-descent. I had a rare encounter with some of them in July 2015 in a conference. Judo representative of the Philippines in the 2012 London Olympic, Hoshina Tomohiko, and a female professional wrestler, Syuri, spoke of themselves as Filipino-Japanese (The 20<sup>th</sup> Young Scholars’ Conference on Philippine Studies in Japan, July 4–5, 2016). Another prominent name is a professional top-division wrestler, Matsunoyama (Takahata 2015: 97). The latest is the silver medalist, table tennis olympian, Yoshimura Maharu, (Maharu or Mahal, meaning love in Filipino language) in the Rio 2016 Olympics.

In lieu of this celebrity status of a handful of Filipino-Japanese descendants of plural backgrounds, it is not unusual to exude a *hafu*, more so, marvel at their physiognomic features in cases where one possesses the Caucasian parent’s features, especially among those with distinct “meztisa/mestizo”

(mix-blood) Spanish features. Beneath the celebrity status of some of them, reality presents itself in vivid pictures of incongruence as diversity in experience affirms the fluidity and dynamism of identity, constantly changing in relation with time-space contexts. Evidently, we are looking at diverse subjects—e.g., some of them with high esteem, some in denial of their roots, while some braving the odds, contesting their pejorative category, *hafu*. This term has long been an epithet of exclusion, as well as differentiation in diverse social settings.

As the etymology of the word and the contextual nuances suggest, the *hafu* metaphor is not always celebrated as intermarriage's procreation achievement. This holds true even among the offspring of Japanese-Caucasian couples (Nitta 1989). Within the Japanese social context, being a *hafu* does not guarantee social inclusion despite the growing popularity and frequent usage of the term in colloquial speech. The positive change attributable to the celebrity status of some *hafu* remains fluid and fleeting. To some extent, it has created passive acceptance of the *hafu* and has silenced criticisms about them.

Contrarily, the silence about their presence makes a resounding noise of the bleak days of the early 1990s associated with the abusive conditions experienced by a number of Japayuki (Ballescás 1992; Da-anoy and Satake 2006). As a result, the children borne of intermarriage between Japanese and former Filipino entertainers, rural and urban brides of the 1980s through mid-2000, bear the marked stereotypes of their mother. Hence, the obvious structured disadvantages claim their bitter share in racializing the *hafu* identity mostly during the stage of primary identity formation. Recent studies have focused on the extent of meanings ascribed to the identity of these offspring, not only in Japan, but in other countries as well (Tsuda 2007; Takahata 2015; Takahata and Hara 2015; Fresnoza-Flot 2015; Nagasaka 2015; Pertierra 2015; Suzuki; and Ogaya 2015; Suzuki 2015).

Table 1 below shows the number of births in Japan (E-Stat 2016, Ministry of Labor and Welfare, 2016). The total number of births by foreign mothers is 268,806 from 1987, 1990, 1995–2014. Evidently, the number of births by a Filipino mother and a Japanese father outnumbered the births by other foreign mothers. Between 1995–2014, there are 84,345 births by Filipino mothers. The Filipino mothers rank the highest among all foreign mothers who gave birth to a child in the said period. Second in rank are Chinese mothers, 70,851 births in 1987, 1990, and 1995–2014. The third are Korean mothers with a total of 60,780 births between 1987, 1990, 1995–2014 (Ibid). The empirical data affirm claims in previous research (Da-anoy and Satake 2006), and in the literature (Takahata 2015: 122; Komai 2001) that Filipino women migrants are changing society and have a significant impact in population growth over the last two decades since 1990. In addition, the said report also reveals the total number of births fathered by Filipino men, mothered by Japanese women is lower—i.e., 2,186 from 1995–2014 (Ibid). Further noted in the literature is the recognition of foreign migrants' demographic contribution, a factor impacting population growth in Japan (Korekawa 2015: 43). Hence, the figure alone urges a deeper interest in the subject.

**Table 1:** Births in Japan by Japanese and Foreign Migrants, 1987–2014, Population Survey 2014, Ministry of Labor and Welfare, E-Stat Japan, Downloaded July 9, 2016.

Year	Total births in Japan	Both parents Japanese	One parent foreign	Foreign mother/ Japanese father	Japanese mother/ Foreign father	Korean mother, Japanese father	Chinese mother, Japanese father	Filipino mother/ Japanese Father
1987	1346658	1336636	10022	5538	4484	2850	803	—
1990	1221585	1207899	13686	8695	4991	3184	1264	—
1995	1187064	1166810	20254	13371	6883	3519	2244	5488
1996	1206555	1185491	21064	13752	7312	3550	2376	5551
1997	1191665	1170140	21525	13580	7945	3440	2667	5203
1998	1203147	1181126	22021	13635	8386	3389	2734	5137
1999	1177669	1156205	21464	13004	8460	3208	2850	4645
2000	1190547	1168210	22337	13396	8941	3345	3040	4705
2001	1170662	1148486	22176	13177	8999	3204	3056	4586
2002	1153855	1131604	22251	13294	8957	3141	3338	4539
2003	1123610	1102088	21522	12690	8832	2911	3133	4309
2004	1110721	1088548	22173	13198	8975	2749	3510	4558
2005	1062530	1040657	21873	12872	9001	2583	3478	4441
2006	1092674	1069211	23463	14040	9423	2593	3925	4998
2007	1089818	1065641	24177	14474	9703	2530	4271	5140
2008	1091156	1067200	23956	13782	10174	2439	4203	4623
2009	1070035	1047524	22511	12707	9804	2285	4209	3815
2010	1071304	1049338	21966	11990	9976	2129	4109	3364
2011	1050806	1030495	20311	10922	9389	2005	3796	2820
2012	1037231	1016695	20536	10825	9711	2057	4041	2474
2013	1029816	1010284	19532	10019	9513	1850	3872	2138
2014	1003539	983892	19647	9845	9802	1819	3932	1861
Sum	23,812,647	24,424,180	458,467	268,806	189,661	60,780	70,851	84,345

Briefly in retrospect, among the pioneer work focused on children born of Japanese father and American mother (Nitta 1989). In his dissertation, Nitta (1989) documents these children's experiences in their early life stages as “bicultural children” whose distinctive Caucasian physiognomic features such as lighter hair color and blue eyes, make them susceptible to school bullying (Ibid 1989: 219). Nitta (1989: 202) calls this the “gaijin business” –i.e., referring to circumstances, mostly unpleasant experiences of the offspring closely tied to being viewed as non-Japanese or simply as foreigners. Also noted, in their own words, Japanese-American children call such exclusionary experiences, “the gaijin hassle” and “the gaijin stuff” that they have to deal with throughout the various stages of life in Japan (Ibid).

Tsuda (2007), a clinical psychologist and Filipino-Japanese herself whose Filipino mother is among

the pioneer migrants in Japan in the early 1980s prior to the phenomenal entry of entertainers in the 1990s that gave rise to the pejorative, “Japayuki san” (entertainer) wrote a thesis about “hafu” and her own experience being one. Tsuda’s thesis is affirmed in this study. The findings of her study reveal that the Japanese-Filipino youth are conscious of the pejorative stereotypes of the Filipino women in Japan that resulted from a skewed gender-specific migration in the 1980s through the 1990s. Her thesis also explicates the subject’s assimilation and dissimilation on a daily basis, the extent of which differs in the depth of ethnicity consciousness as well as in phases of transition overtime (Ibid 2007: 38–41).

## **Research Background**

In 2014, this study commenced an part of a collaborative research. The collaborative research includes migrant families of Korean, Filipino, Chinese background. The overall research aimed at documenting and understanding diverse conditions surrounding intermarriages of various cultural backgrounds, including conditions surrounding their offspring. The overall goal is also to determine the range of support for multicultural families through policy implications and recommendations.

## **Objectives and Framework of Analyses**

This study is a result of both personal and academic pursuit to know and understand the peculiarities and commonalities in the experience of children borne of Filipino-Japanese couples as well as their plural identity, in particular—i.e., a category of youth or offspring of intermarried couples described by Takahata and Hara (2015: 117–147) as Type B 1.5 Filipino youth descendants, differentiating them from Type A or those adopted children, fathered by Filipinos and reunited with their Filipino mother in Japan, and Type C, the Nikkeijin, those descendants of Japanese migrants in the Philippines (Also see Takahata 2015: 97–122). The 1.5 generation migrants are those of Philippine and Japanese roots. They were born in Japan, raised in the Philippines, and reunited with their Filipino mother in their teens. Some of them are children of Filipino women in their previous marriage with a Japanese or a Filipino (Takahata 2015: 101; also see Fresnoza-Flot 2015: 2–3). I have three children of my own belonging to category B, hence, my deep interest in the discourse.

The complex trajectories in cross-cultural families are covered in migration literature to a large extent as earlier-mentioned, and in the past decade, attention has been given to a growing population of young adult descendants of such intermarriages. Using empirical data, this study also attempts to provide a wider-spectrum of their self-portrayal and their otherness—i.e., how other people perceive them. The study also explicates the fluidity of their identity. Furthermore, it aims to delineate and contribute to the complex identity discourses of young subjects with peculiar as well as similar characteristics, ascribed and/or acquired with reference to identity theories and social capital theories

(Bourdieu 1972).

### **Definition of Terms: *Hafu* and 1.5 Generation**

The term *hafu* is a metaphorical social construct that generally applies to children borne of intermarriages in Japan. Initially, I was apprehensive to use the term, *hafu* just as I was apprehensive with the term 1.5 generation to refer to Filipino-Japanese descendants. In the course of the study, I found that many subjects use the term *hafu* to identify themselves with ease and high esteem. Thus, in this paper, I will refer to the descendants borne of intermarriage as *hafu* or as children of Filipino-Japanese intermarried couple, and expound on the extent of meanings given to it by the subjects themselves and by other people.

For several decades since the conception of the term *hafu*, it has been used as a pejorative reference to differentiate them from “full-blooded” Japanese in most cases including Caucasian-Japanese children (Nitta 1989). In some studies, they are referred to as cross-cultural kids, bi/multicultural children, or simply children of immigrants (Pollack and Van Reken 2009: 27–39). The children borne of Filipino-Japanese intermarriage between the late 1980s, peaking in the 1990s and through the present are also labeled as such by the “other”. Contrarily, in recent years, and in fact evident in the study, the *hafu* has become a portrait of an esteemed identity, consciously tailored by the subjects themselves. Moreover, in this study, the term identity is used to refer to the multilayered aspects of both primary identities shaped in the early stages of life and secondary identities—i.e., those that are shaped by one’s achievements impacting one’s status, social and occupational roles, and social positioning (Giddens 2009: 255–258).

Some studies have contested the use of the term *hafu* against double or mix-breed descendants (Da-anoy and Satake 2006; Nitta 1980). Nitta (1980) noted that the mix-blood or double-blood metaphor is a positive construction of self that resonates the orientation of parents and the latter’s influence on their offspring, contrasting the negativity implied in the half-breed metaphor. As this study shows, the conscious as well as unconscious practices of parents, particularly the mother, in imparting cultural practices to their offspring, substantiate the contention that maternal role-modeling impacts ethnicity consciousness and enhances the self-appraisal of identity (Also see Takahata and Hara 2015: 120).

### **Subjects of the Study**

The research subjects are offspring of Filipino and Japanese couples, the youths in particular, between the age of 18–25, those who have entered college or have acquired relatively higher education than most of their parents. Of the 20 subjects included in the study, 14 are female and 6 are male. A thorough documentation was undertaken which includes the subjects’ narratives of daily life practices, varied experiences, and goals as well as socialization process that contribute to identity

formation and shaping of values. Except for television and sports personalities, all the names of persons in this study are pseudonyms. Other information included were presented and analyzed in its authentic form—e.g., narratives of the subjects and self-identification as *hafu*, double, Japino, or mixed. The narratives written/spoken in Filipino and other languages were also used in their original form, some were translated to English. The analysis is based on empirical data gathered between 2014–2016. Over the three-year-course of the research, 15 of the subjects have graduated from college and are working. Five of the subjects are currently in college.

### Methodology

Ethnographic narratives of twenty Filipino-Japanese youth were documented during separate encounters using semi-structured interviews. The subjects hailed from Saitama, Shizuoka, Aichi, Miyagi, and Gifu (See Table 2). Follow-up in-depth interviews were also conducted with ten of the subjects, including three Filipino mothers. Benefiting from personal network among Filipino-Japanese couples, the study was made possible. I employed snowball sampling in the course of the study.

The variables included in the analyses are: social capital—i.e., personal attributes linguistic, and cultural skills; social network; and a consciousness of identity.

**Table 2:** Residence of Respondents, 2016.

Prefecture	Count/20	%
1. Aichi	13	65
2. Shizuoka	3	15
3. Miyagi	2	10
4. Gifu	1	5
5. Saitama	1	5
Total	20	100

### Findings of the Study

This study highlights the following noteworthy findings: social and cultural skills; social network; and a consciousness of identity.

#### 1. Social and Cultural Skills

Social capital (Bourdieu 1972) includes tangible and intangible attributes—e.g., education, language skills, cultural attributes, and social network. Becker (1962) refers to this as human capital (Also see Gupta 1973). The study reveals that these attributes have impacted the construction and re/

construction of the *hafu* identity. Some studies have affirmed this finding (Takahata and Hara 2015: 142–143; and Fresnoza-Flot 2015: 59–86), implying that language proficiency (particularly in English) has generated a sense of leverage, access to resources and a wider range of options for the subjects, over average Japanese. A similar finding holds true among Filipino descendants in France (Fresnoza-Flot 2015). Human capital is considered a source of confidence build-up in their life. (Ibid)

Similarly, Korekawa (2015: 4–5) points out the importance of education in the labor market playout of migrant subjects, without a clear reference to the acquisition of English language as an added human capital, while stressing the reexamination of migrant incorporation and their impact in the labor market (Ibid). The commonalities of findings on the importance of education and English proficiency among children born of Filipino migrants evidently strengthen the contention that human capital is a correlate of offspring’s tangible success in society.

Furthermore, as Table 3 shows, most subjects are inclined to pursue career paths in the field of international studies, English language education, and international relations. Voluntarism and international networking are among the common features of Filipino-Japanese subjects. Evidently, this implies their common interest in international issues, strongly influenced by their Filipino mother. Their experience in local and international volunteer activities and study abroad experience impacted their esteem. In addition, their aspirations to work in companies as well as organizations with international linkages have altogether reinforced a wide-spectrum of interest in the world. This reflects their dynamism as potential new role-models for modern Japan. The narratives support the contention that subjects have a close affinity with the Philippines and are responsive to situations such as natural disasters through voluntarism as the case below shows:

**Table 3:** Universities Attended and Courses Taken by Respondents, 2014–2016.

University	Course
1. Nagoya Gakuin University (11)	English (6), Foreign Studies (5)
2. Aichi Prefectural University (1)	International Relations
3. Shizuoka University (1)	International Relations
4. Bunkyo Gakuin College (1)	Foreign Studies
5. Nagoya Gaidai (1)	Japan Studies
6. Nanzan University (1)	Humanities
7. Seiwa Gakuin, Sendai (1)	Education
8. Mode Gakuin (1)	Fashion Design
9. Tohoku Gakuin College (1)	Economics & Finance
10. Nagoya Culinary Arts School (1)	Culinary Arts



In one university, three Filipino-Japanese students joined a fund-raising drive to support the devastated province of Leyte after Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013. Initially, a Filipino-Japanese student approached her mentor from the Faculty of Foreign Studies, to help her organize a fund-raising drive. The professor then coordinated with his colleagues along with the pastor of the university and formalized a three-month university campaign that culminated February of 2014. The raised funds were donated through a non-government organization, ICAN (International Children's Action Network, Nagoya), an NPO actively involved in the Philippines and in Leyte at that period. The three Filipino-Japanese students are among those with an esteemed *hafu* identity. They belong to the proud-unique-confident type of *hafu* (see Table 5). The narratives below further illustrate the above contention.

**Case 1:** Victoria, a third year university student, Faculty of Foreign Studies, English major, tells:

*I sponsored a girl in Ecuador. It is a project of World Vision. I am doing this to support her education. I am active in church and volunteer activities. Being a Christian, I feel it is important to share oneself to others and being a hafu, I think it is natural to act with compassion for the needy in my mother's country and in Japan. I also participated in the university's fund-raising drive for Haiyan relief efforts along with my fellow Filipino-Japanese in this university.*

**Case 2:** Nona, a fourth year university student, Faculty of Foreign Studies, English major, narrates:

*I usually join the volunteer activities and international events in Hamamatsu. I also participate in community earthquake or disaster drills, community cleaning, and play the piano on Sundays at church. My mother volunteers for the newcomer-Nikkeijin (Filipino-Japanese) as a translator. I get to see them at church, so I feel encouraged to engage in volunteer activities and to develop English proficiency for self-enhancement and to be of help to others, too.*

**Case 3:** Ricardo, university graduate, Foreign Studies.

*When I entered college, I got involved in NGO activities and attended lectures on Philippines and Southeast Asia. I was very impressed and became proud of being a Japino (Japanese-Filipino). I also became more engaged in supporting troubled Filipinos and other foreigners in Japan.*

*Madalas akong manood ng teleserye sa telebisyon, sa TFC (The Filipino Chanel). Lagi si mama nanonood ng teleserye, kaya dyan ako nagkahilig at natutong mag Tagalog. Pareho kaming updated sa mga nangyayari sa Pilipinas. (I often watch soap drama on television, in the TFC. My mother often watches drama, so that's when I developed the interest and also in learning Tagalog. We're both updated on what's going on in the Philippines.*

**Case 4:** Yuri, second year student in Miyagi, Economics major.

*When the unexpected calamity happened in March 11, 2011 in Tohoku, especially in our place which was totally devastated, I thought I should help develop our hometown again. I helped in the reconstruction activities through volunteer at the Sendai Disaster Center and Shichirigahama. I also participate in international group activities. In the future, I want to work as a public servant to help in the reconstruction of Sendai.*

Furthermore, contrary to assumptions that they are a highly marginalized, prejudiced subjects throughout their lifetime, the narratives of these young adults argue otherwise. At present, almost all of the twenty diverse subjects embrace an esteemed *hafu* identity. Table 5 below shows the confidence level of the subjects of their own identity. This level of confidence correlates with enhanced social capital—i.e., the acquisition of college education and linguistic skills (See Table 4). Some cases below further substantiate this contention.

**Case 1:** Victoria, (earlier-mentioned) says:

*Pinahahalaghan ko ang identiy ko as a Filipino-Japanese sa pamamagitan ng pagiging proud of both my home countries kung saan lumaki ako at naging ako ngayon. At ginagamit ko ang wikang Pilipino at Hapon upang hindi ko makalimutan at para magamit ko rin ito sa pagtulong sa ibang tao sa pamamagitan ng pag-ta-translate.*

*(I value my identity as a Filipino-Japanese by being proud of both my home countries that made me who I am now. I also use Filipino and Japanese so that I will not forget and so I could help other people through translation.)*

**Case 5:** Mika, a fourth year college student in Tokyo, taking up foreign studies, speaking in Tagalog and English, narrates:

*Para sa akin, mahalaga yong pagiging Japino ko, kasi compare sa other students, mas maraming advantages tulad ng pagsasalita ng iba't ibang languages. Yong mga kaibigan kong Hapon ang tawag nila sa akin, walking dictionary kasi alam ko lahat ng English. Sa Pilipinas naman they recognize me bilang Filipina kasi magsalita daw ako Tagalog. I treat myself as very different from other students. Gagawin ko lahat para ma-value ang sarili ko. Tapos gagamitin ko ang mga skills ko sa lahat ng bagay for example sa Japanese-English translation, note-taking, tutoring sa mga batang tulad ko.*

*(For me, being a Japino is valuable because compared to other students, there are a lot of advantages like being able to speak many languages. My Japanese friends refer to me as a walking dictionary because they said I know everything in English. In the Philippines, they refer to me as a Filipina because they said I speak Tagalog. I treat myself as very different from other students. I will do everything to value myself. Then, I will use my skills in all things as for example in Japanese-English translation, note-taking, and tutoring children like me.)*

**Case 6:** Luz, a fourth year college student in Aichi, taking up fashion design, in her own words, says:

*Coming from two cultural backgrounds is good. I've learned different languages and cultures. There are many advantages being a "hafu" and I'm really confident about it. There are many Japino who tend to be insecure of themselves, but most of them are actually smart, so I'm thinking of being a good example to them that a Japino can also finish school and achieve a dream. I myself had several experiences of bullying in Junior high school that bruised my esteem, but I never gave up on my dream. I hope I can inspire Filipino-Japanese by achieving my goals in life.*

The subjects have shown a relative degree of confidence and pride for their multicultural, social attributes. Thus, have appropriated themselves into the circle of young, modern Japanese adept in global issues given a highly valued capital: proficiency in two or more languages—e.g., Filipino languages, English, Japanese, and more (See Table 4).

The study also found, there are more bilingual speakers (6) among the subjects, and even more trilingual and multilingual speakers combined (10). Only a few (4) are monolingual, but have taken interest in learning Filipino and/or English when they entered college. The latter monolingual youths were raised by parents who encourage their children to use one language at home—i.e., Japanese. On the one hand, such parents think that their children can avoid the pangs of prejudice in any given social context, especially at school by speaking only Japanese. This sprung from an assumption that the *hafu are* inadequate in Japanese language i.e., a notion embraced even by some intermarried couples themselves. On the other hand, parents who encourage their children to speak another language like Filipino or English, the children tend to develop a sense of high esteem as they age. They also take a wider interest in the world.

In sum, the secondary identity is enhanced in the achievement of college education or in the acquisition of degrees in specialized international fields, as well as by such attributes as bilingualism and multilingualism (Table 3 and 4). However, the individual subject's positioning into the larger

**Table 4:** Language Abilities and Language Spoken by Respondents, 2016.

Language Abilities	Count/20	%
1. Monolingual [Japanese Only]	4	20
2. Bilingual [Filipino and Japanese]	6	30
3. Trilingual [Filipino, Japanese, English]	5	25
4. Multilingual [Filipino, English, Japanese, Spanish, Korean, Italian, Portuguese]	5	25
Total	20	100

\* Multilingual respondents reported they speak at least four languages.

social context poses another question. How are the subjects positioned within the society given their ascribed and acquired cultural and social capital? This is one limitation of the study. The answers to this question require further inquiry of the structural and social forces and the contextual situation.

## 2. A Consciousness of Identity

The identity of Filipino-Japanese offspring is plural and diverse in terms of physiognomic attributes, intangible attributes, as well as character. Table 5 shows the subjects' self-ascription in terms of esteem and projection of themselves to others. One finds that most subjects are esteemed, belonging to the following categories: Modest-confident type (6) and Proud-unique-confident type (5), and the Vocal-confident type (3). The above-mentioned two categories have outnumbered the Shy-Japanese type (2). Yet, there are a few Unmindful-cool-evolving type (4). The latter type is the evolving type. They tend to be adaptable to the contextual and spatial conditions at a given time. For them, it is a consolation to exist without being noticed as a *hafu*. At other times, they embrace the convenience of being viewed as Japanese due to their physiognomic Japanese features.

**Table 5:** Self-Identification and Self-Projection Patterns of Respondents, 2016.

Identity Type	Count/20	%
1. Modest-Confident Type	6	30
2. Proud-Unique-Confident Type	5	25
3. Unmindful-Cool-Evolving Type	4	20
4. Vocal-Confident Type	3	15
5. Shy-Japanese Type	2	10
Total	20	100

Table 6 shows the identity ascriptions by others around them. The combined figures of those labelled as *hafu* (8) and as mixed (2) outnumbered the other labels such as: Japanese (4), and foreigner (3). Interestingly, some are labelled with reference to spatial context—i.e., as Filipinos when they are in Japan, Japanese when they are abroad (3). Similar findings are found in other studies earlier-mentioned.

Inferring from their accounts, the experiences of prejudice associated with their primary identities early in life tend to diminish with age. This is due to the growing consciousness and understanding of their multiple backgrounds as offspring of intermarriage. Most of them disclosed a past experience of bullying and prejudice in the elementary school years, some until junior high school. However, such an experience had no lasting negative influence on their esteem as young adults. Below are narratives that support this claim:

**Table 6:** The Ascribed Labels of Respondents by Others, 2016.

Common Identity Ascriptions	Count/20	%
1. Half [hafu]	8	40
2. Mixed [Japino/Japanese-Filipino]	2	10
3. Japanese	4	20
4. Foreigner [Gaijin/Filipino]	3	15
5. Filipino in Japan, Japanese abroad	3	15
Total	20	100

**Case 7:** Monalisa, third year college student, Intercultural Studies mayor.

*When I was a child, I was a little bit ashamed of being a child of a foreigner, but now as an adult, I am proud of it. I used to hide my identity because there were few Filipino-Japanese in school. I hardly open up about my identity to new friends. After I entered university, I met those of similar background, my fellow hafu. I changed the way I see myself and learned more of different cultures. I also want to learn more and improve my language skills to help Filipino children seriously in need, and when I graduate, I want to teach Japanese to foreign children in Japan.*

In spring 2015, Monalisa went to volunteer in Payatas, a garbage dump site in Manila that has an impoverished population. She spent a few weeks observing life there and interacting with people under the supervision of ICAN (an organization that conducts support activities in the Philippines). Upon her return to Japan, she felt enriched and motivated by the new experience. In the university she goes to, she shared experiences among her peers to encourage them to understand other cultures and use their skills to volunteer. She had no recollection of an experience of bullying as a child. But, tells that the only reason she tried to hide her identity was because of the strong stereotyping of Filipino women in Japan which did not spare her mother. As a grown up, she developed confidence and no longer felt embarrassed of her identity as Filipino-Japanese.

Another case below shows the reality of the *hafu* as a child and how the subject changed notions of self over time:

**Case 8:** Jenelline, third year college student, Faculty of Foreign Studies, English major.

*I encountered people tell me, “go back to your country” when I was young. I used to hide my identity because I felt it was shameful. When I am asked of my background, I instantly respond, “I’m Japanese”. I was in denial and afraid to be excluded. However, when I entered college, people are envious of me being a hafu. My features make me look more Japanese, so many people treat me as Japanese while Filipinos treat me as Filipino. I understand better the relationship between Filipinos and Japanese and I think my*

*identity is valuable. I have both countries' cultures and I think I could bridge the gap between these two cultures. Also, one reason I go to college is to change the notion that Filipinos are poor and uneducated. I don't want people to treat Filipinos as such, so I want to finish college and get a good job.*

**Case 9:** Hiro, second year college, Aichi, International Relations major.

*Some of my friends see me as a child of a foreigner, but I am mostly viewed as a Japanese because of my features. I have a middle name and it sounds different for Japanese. So, when I talk on the phone with a Japanese, I often avoid saying my Filipino name. I just my Japanese name. I actually feel lucky to be a Filipino-Japanese because I am able to know the culture of both countries. I feel good because I have a different identity from ordinary Japanese. This is valuable and my friends admire me for that. I've never been ashamed of myself and I never hide my identity. Sometimes, I just feel it's troublesome explaining myself over the phone especially with regards to my Filipino name which includes my mother's maiden name. My parents did this so that I grow up feeling conscious of my roots. Yes, I used to ask a lot about my name when I was younger and have done a lot of explaining, too. But sometimes, it is troublesome. Japanese often have a hard time getting my name at once when I say it. In high school, my friends call me by my middle name and they think it's cool to associate with me because I am different, a hafu. As I get older, it just gets better. I became more proud of myself.*

*It becomes natural to ask about one's identity. I guess this is how it is to be a hafu. I'm interested in other cultures and international issues. Last year, I joined the university study tour in Cambodia and volunteered in a mangrove reforestation program there. It was a worthwhile experience. It made me think of going to the Philippines to join in similar activities. I wanted to master English and Filipino language too, including Spanish. I think these are skills that could enable me to do more for other people.*

Moreover, most of the subjects expressed a strong desire to explore outside Japan, finding life in the country less challenging and lacking competitiveness. A few have thought farther and beyond. As one subject says, "To think only of living in Japan is limiting one's potentials and choices". Like Nona (earlier-mentioned) who desires to work in Dubai where her Filipino cousin works. In another case, Ricardo (earlier-mentioned) applied in a Japanese real estate company in the Philippines. Finally, there's one who has been working in Italy since 2014, who wants to live there as her third country.

In addition, the subjects display a great deal of reflectiveness. Socially conscious and critical, one subject, Luz, expounds on her view regarding how Japan is sometimes dulled by the notion of uniformity and unanimity in daily life. She had stayed in the Philippines for three years to finish high school, then returned to Japan to enter college. She said, "Everyone seems to want to be like everyone else or do as everyone does." This statement clearly reflects the plurality and multiplicity of cultural background of the subjects. The conscious ownership of a diverse, multicultural

backgrounds is cited as a factor most influential in shaping their meaningful world-view.

Inferring from Table 6, one finds that the subjects are categorized by others in various categories as: half-breeds, double or mix-breeds, a foreigner, as Japanese, or as neither belonging to any. For most subjects, such labels are devoid of negative impact in their total well-being as young adults. In fact, the disparaging experiences had a positive impact on some of them as the cases in the following sections show. Instead, the subjective meanings of such labels connote a concrete positive shift of world-view and self-appraisal. The deepening awareness of their roots has equipped them with better understanding of themselves in relation to the “other” —i.e., those around them.

### 3. Maternal Influence and Others

The study further found the significant role of the Filipino mother on their offspring. The subjects' aspirations and goals also reflect their upbringing and value-orientation which point to the influence of their parents, particularly the Filipino mother. The subjects were asked who influenced them the most in pursuing college education. The common response points to the mother as the most influential, followed by the father, and high school teacher, peers, and siblings, respectively.

Before delving into the subjects who view their mother as their role-model, let's look at two subjects who divulged not having a role model in the family. One of the two subjects, Mika, (earlier-mentioned) tells a divergent narrative:

*I don't have a role model in the family. My father passed away when I was seven years old. There's no bond between us. So, he is not significant to me. As of the moment, my college teacher is my guardian and role-model. She knows everything about me. I tell her everything, all my problems and issues. I don't want my mother to worry about anything, and she doesn't give me advise anyway. My teacher doesn't really say anything. She just listens to me. I think I need someone to listen to me, not to tell me what to do with my life.*

*I studied in the Philippines from grade one up to second year high school, then returned to Japan. I struggled hard in school. My self-esteem was torn apart. But, I think being “makezurai” (one who does not give up) is a trait that runs in my family, so I did everything to learn Japanese and make sense of my life in Japan. I met this best teacher in college and she encourages me to do all I can to help myself and other people.*

Another one, Luz (earlier mentioned) tells:

*I don't have a role model. No one other than myself. My mother has a strong personality. I got my strong personality from her. As for my father, I can ask him about necessary things and he gives practical, helpful advice. I believe each one has a life to live. I have my own life to live, so I often decide mostly on*

*my own. I think this is my parents' influence on me. They encouraged me think for myself and decide on my own. What influenced me most are my experiences in life. I had hard times in my childhood and in my teen, but I never gave up on my dreams. I went to the Philippines finish high school. I am glad I made the right choice to return to Japan and enter college. Now, I am graduating.*

Those who said their mother is their role-model have the following common response pointing to the characteristics of mothers: hardworking; nurturing; sacrificing; worthy of respect; persevering; understanding; and a good motivator. The cases below substantiate this normative narrative:

Hiro (earlier-mentioned) tells:

*I look up to my mother a lot. She volunteers for Filipino migrants. I just can't help but be proud of her. However, as for my education, I think both my parents influenced me in my decision to go to college, including my high school teachers and peers. My friends study a lot and we encourage each other even until now that we have gone to different colleges.*

Ricardo (earlier-mentioned), speaking in Tagalog and English also narrates:

*My mother is my role model. Siya po ang pinaka nag influence sa akin. Alam nya ang tungkol sa akin, parang kaibigan. (She is the most influential person for me. She knows everything about me). She knows Japanese and Tagalog. She always takes care of me, at tsaka masipag sya sa trabaho (also, she is hardworking). My mom guides me as I approach life step by step until I can achieve a good future. My friends are also influential to me. We share a lot about ourselves and our families.*

Two of the subjects said their role model is the father describing him as strong, dependable, and knowledgeable about life in Japan. While most subjects said the mother or the father are influential in their life, many of them also mentioned their high school teacher as the third most influential person. Their common response points to the characteristics of the teacher as being kind, motivating them to pursue higher education, and as good listeners especially in matters pertaining to their school life and future. Monalisa (earlier mentioned) tells:

*When I have problems, I approach my father. He tells me things that matter in life. My father teaches me how to live. I have also found pieces of me that are similar to my parents. For my goals and dreams, I have my college friends to talk to. Having different friends inside and outside the country and participating in events motivated me to work hard and inspired me to study. As for my mother, she's in a sense a model of my life as a good woman. But, my model of how to live life is influenced more by my*



*father.*

Jenelline (earlier mentioned) has two siblings. Her family is financially struggling after his father retired and since then, has been on welfare. Yet, he managed to send her and her twin to college. Accordingly, she and her siblings respect their father, saying:

*My father is Japanese. I think he practically knows life in Japan better. He raises our family and also scolds us when we did something wrong. I get all the advice I need from him especially on how to live in Japan and he advises me about my future. My mother has been troubled by her concerns in the Philippines. Well, that cannot be avoided. Life is hard there, that's another reason I want to finish college and help my parents. I want to buy a house for my parents someday.*

Despite a few cases deviating from the norm, consistently, most subjects regard their Filipino mother as a role-model crucial in value-formation and as their total life-support. This finding is also affirmed in Takahata and Hara's (2015) study. Furthermore, the study also affirmed the literature's findings that parental factor and subjective experiences substantiate the "double metaphor" in a positive light against the negativity embedded in the *hafu* metaphor (Nitta 1980: 238). The role of parents in instilling to their offspring the value of having a multicultural background as enriching, rather than diminishing, has impacted the core values and positive appraisal of their own multilayered identity. The current positive experiences of the subjects combined with the changing social and migration contexts have substantiated the meaningful embodiment of *hafu* identity. In addition, policy changes impact the *hafu* identity perceptions. Some policy changes include the ban of entertainers in 2005 that drastically lowered their number and the entry of Filipino nurses and care workers in 2009 contributed to the shifts. Hence, at present, most subjects shrug off at the negativity attached to the *hafu* metaphor. Evidently, the subjects themselves are aware that one's identity is more than just a label or a category.

These findings reveal the considerable attributes that embody the identity of Filipino-Japanese youth. The diverse world-views and notions of their subjectivities is a rainbow over the dark cloud that was once shrouded by pejoratives and the disparaging experiences of most Filipino mothers. The latter, a consequence of a skewed gender migration of women to Japan in the 1980s through the 1990s as entertainers, or rural as well as urban brides (Da-anoy and Satake 2006).

## **Conclusion and Policy Implications**

The study concludes that the *hafu* identity embodies the pejoratives as well as appraisals by both the subject and those around them. The *hafu* identity is articulated in daily life by a plural,

fluid subjects with diverse cultural and racial backgrounds embodied in it. Such embodiment is transcendent over time-space factors that operate within and beyond cultural boundaries. It is weaved by diverse experiences at home and outside (in the private-public spheres). It is enhanced by conscious acquisition of social capital traversing in progression, at times in regression. It is constructed and reconstructed, constantly evolving from the primary period throughout the period of secondary identity formation. Altogether, these factors embody the multilayered identities of Filipino-Japanese descendants that contradicts the constraining pejoratives and binary constructions.

Komai (2001) contends in his study that “the foreigners will change Japanese society”, referring to the potential mutual cultural enrichment process in multiculturalism that could stimulate changes and flexibilities in Japanese world-view and values (Ibid: 141-156). Further taking into account the demographic factor—i.e., the growing youth population from the 84,345 offspring mothered by Filipino women between 1995-2014, the study concludes that the contribution of migrant families can no longer be undermined. As Korekawa (2015: 43) noted, the children of immigrants can stall population decline. However, in a comparative study of the fertility contribution of foreign women, it was concluded that the overall fertility contribution of these migrant women has little impact in preventing population decline in Japan (Ibid: 3-43). Still, the fact remains that migrant children have demographic impact.

Despite of contradicting claims on demographic contribution of migrants and their offspring, a policy implication of the study points to the potential of Filipino-Japanese descendants to influence changes in Japanese society, concretely through the utilization of human capital—e.g., by volunteering in communities or as professionals, as skilled members of private or government institutions in local and international fields including international sports competitions and academic fields. Hence, the government could review, improve and expand its educational support system to enable more descendants of intermarriages to avail of better opportunities for higher education in order for them to realize their aspirations given their organic endowments. Another policy implication points to a call for bilingual education. Finally, though in some cases, Filipino-Japanese descendants are viewed as having poor language skills by learning and speaking two languages at the same time, a notable finding reveals that they are also envied and looked up to by their peers for their bilingual or multilingual abilities. Hence, their presence encourages their peers to learn another language. Such could accelerate the trend for bilingual education in globalizing Japan. The latter may also eventually impact the labor market contribution of the younger population to society.

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