CLAIMING BIRTHRIGHT:

JAPANESE-FILIPINO CHILDREN AND THE MOBILIZATION OF DESCENT

Fiona-Katharina Seiger

(Magistra Phil., University of Vienna)

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

2014
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is my original work and it has been written by me in its entirety. I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been used in the thesis. This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in any university previously.

______________________________
Fiona-Katharina Seiger
Acknowledgments

Having arrived at the end of my dissertation-writing journey I look back with heart-felt gratitude at the many people who have supported me in walking this long, arduous, but fulfilling path. Firstly, I would like to thank Dr. Kelvin Low for his great patience, guidance, and kindness. Kelvin, I think you are the finest supervisor any student can wish for; you are dedicated, careful, sharp, hard-working, and someone I will always look up to. I am very grateful you accepted to supervise this thesis mid-way. I would also like to thank A/P Mika Toyota, my initial supervisor, who made it possible for me to pursue a PhD by accepting me as her student and recommending me for a scholarship at the Asia Research Institute. Although we have not been in touch lately, I hope our paths will cross again in the future. I am grateful also to A/P Tim Amos who has encouraged me while I was writing and has invited me to guest-lecture in his class on two occasions. Tim, your interest in my thesis topic has kept me motivated and I am very glad I was able to share parts of my research in your class! Finally I would like to thank Prof. Chua Beng Huat, the current Head of our Department of Sociology, a member of my Qualifying Exam committee, and the person who ran the graduate seminar through which I was able to develop a clearer idea of my research focus and conceptual contribution.

Family and friends too have played an important role in keeping me happy and well-rounded during my writing. First-off I would like to say thanks to Johan who has been a sounding-board for my ideas, who has helped me proof-read parts of my thesis (written in frustratingly German-ish English), and who has encouraged me whenever I felt stressed, demoralized, or lonely. Johan has become my home away from home, the person I could seek refuge in whenever the world seemed too big and overpowering. A big thanks also goes to the NUS Sociology graduate students, especially Dina, Shelley, Bubbles, Hu Shu, Yang Yi, Min Hye, Claire, Roop, and Manuel as well as Anjeline (from Geography) who are not only a fun bunch, but who have also made graduate student life more enjoyable. I am glad to have worked among supportive people like you! I would like to thank our administrative officers- Raja, Marina, Magdalene, Cecilia, Jameelah, Jane, Choon Lan, Jocelyn and Janice- for the support they provide us students with day after day.

I am indebted to all my respondents for allowing me to conduct my fieldwork, for opening up to me, and for including me in their activities. Last but not least, I would like to thank the NUS Asia Research Institute for having funded my PhD studies through their generous Research Scholarship, NUS FASS for having provided financial assistance for my fieldwork in the Philippines as well as for my conference trips, and The Japan Foundation, for having supported my fieldwork in Japan through their generous fellowship program.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. iii

Table of Contents .................................................................................................................. iv

Abstract ................................................................................................................................... viii

Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 1

Existing literature on Japanese-Filipino Children.................................................................8

Synopsis .................................................................................................................................... 12

Chapter 1: Contextualizing Nationality and Rights Claims....................................................... 16

Descendants of pre-war Japanese emigrants: the *Nikkeijin* ................................................. 17

Philippine Nikkeijin and the mobilization of *Japaneseness* ................................................. 20

“Ethnic returnees”: ethnicity contested ................................................................................ 27

Japanese-Filipino children ....................................................................................................... 33

‘Hafu’ in Japan: practicality and desirability of ethnic identifications ................................... 40

Chapter 2: Conceptual approach and framework .................................................................... 46

Citizenship in drawing nation-state boundaries ...................................................................... 47

Consanguinal Capital in symbolic struggles ........................................................................... 53

Ethnicity and ethnic identity .................................................................................................... 57

Constructing and mobilizing ethnicity .................................................................................... 60

Ethnicity and ‘blood’ in Japanese nationalism ....................................................................... 64
**Chapter 3: Methodology**

- Fieldwork and Data gathering Process ................................................................. 71
- The Data ....................................................................................................................... 73
- Analyzing discourse ..................................................................................................... 73
- Multi-sited ethnography............................................................................................... 78
- Repositioning myself: from former NGO volunteer to researcher ......................... 82
- Notes on Privacy and on the generation of pseudonyms ............................................ 83
- Difficulties and Limitations ......................................................................................... 84

**Chapter 4: From “prostitutes” to dedicated mothers: discursive shifts in NGO representations of Filipina migrants and returnees from Japan** ...................................................... 88

- Commercial sex, migration and transnational feminist activism in Japan and the Philippines .................................................................................................................................. 89
- Old ideas, new packaging: new abolitionism in the name of Women’s Rights ................................................................................................................................. 93
- Abolitionism and the Feminist Movements in the Philippines ................................. 99
- Deploying the ideal or the ‘normal family’ in representations of Filipina migrant returnees .............................................................................................................. 103
- The importance of blood-ties in discourses on the “normal” family ................. 116
- Depicting Filipina mothers ......................................................................................... 123
- Concluding remarks ..................................................................................................... 133
Chapter 5: Japanese-Filipino Children in NGO discourse .......................................................... 136

Utilizing Discourses on Childhood ......................................................................................... 142

“JFC’s needs” in the politics of recognition .............................................................................. 150

“Needs” become “rights” .......................................................................................................... 153

Politicising “identity” ................................................................................................................. 156

The construction of the “JFC” identity ..................................................................................... 161

‘Blood’, descent, ‘race’ and ‘culture’: mobilizing consanguinal capital ...................... 171

The CraneDog- scripting ‘race’ into staged stories ................................................................. 177

Concluding remarks .................................................................................................................. 181

Chapter 6: The Change of Japan’s Nationality Law and new opportunities for Japanese-Filipinos ................................................................. 184

Litigation for social change .................................................................................................... 187

Analysis of the June 4th Supreme Court judgment ............................................................... 193

The legal change and the intensification of discourses on identity and descent ................................................................................................................................. 205

Nationality and the “tie” to Japan ............................................................................................. 210

Citizenship and the population ................................................................................................. 214

Concluding remarks .................................................................................................................. 219

Chapter 7: Mobilizing Consanguinity as a form of Capital ....................................................... 223

Instilling Japaneseeness ............................................................................................................. 226
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessing socio-economic resource through Japanese-Filipino Children.</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal status, social status and the symbolic Japanese passport</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatism in Nationality Claims</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan as stepping-stone</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreigners in “the other homeland”</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing to the creation of a new migrant generation</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicting visions and ambitions</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding remarks</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptions of NGOs (The Batis Center for Women/ Batis YOGHI, DAWN,</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the CNJFC/Maligaya House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1: Japanese-Filipino Respondents</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2: Interviewed NGO workers and volunteers</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

This thesis examines the material dimensions of ethnic identity constructions and identity claims through the study of Japanese-Filipino children in the Philippines and of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) advocating on their behalf. Most Japanese-Filipino clients of NGOs in the Philippines were raised by their Filipino families with little knowledge of their Japanese fathers and no lived experience of Japan. Although these children and young adults are often called ‘multi-cultural’ by NGO workers, they grow up as Filipinos with no connection to Japan other than the awareness of their Japanese parentage and the availability of global Japanese cultural products equally accessible to most Filipinos.

In this study, I examine the construction of the “JFC”, the Japanese-Filipino Child, through NGO discourses as well as the utilization of Japanese-Filipino children’s Japanese descent in claims-making and in struggles over resources. I argue that filiation can be leveraged on to gain access to resources not only through the legal implications that are provided by biological relationships, but also through the symbolically salient claims for belonging to a nation or people, by virtue of descent. I employ the concept of consanguinal capital which I consider as a form of capital, drawing upon Bourdieusian arguments. Consanguinal capital should primarily be understood in politically symbolic terms, mobilized in processes of claims-making and based on notions of ‘blood’ and belonging and their frequent conflation with ethnicity.

In politicizing the issue, NGOs have endorsed essentialist ideas of ‘Japanese blood’ and framed their Japanese-Filipino clients as Japanese ex-patria, making claims for recognition from their ‘other homeland’. The abstraction of actual filiation between Japanese fathers and their children into politically symbolic ‘blood ties’ linking Japanese-Filipino children as a whole to the imagined community of Japanese, is part of the ideological work performed by NGOs to transform consanguinal capital into other forms of capital: economic, cultural and social.
Introduction

“I have doubts about being integrated into the society fully. I could probably hope just to be close to them, observe them, learn from them and integrate it with...you know, my Filipino side. I’m Filipino by citizenship, I have Japanese blood. But at some point I can neither be fully Filipino, I can never be fully Japanese.”

(Ken in Yasuo, A Geography of Memory)\(^1\)

Ken was born in the Philippines in the 1970s. His Japanese father was a businessman who had opened a shop in Manila where he also met Ken’s mother. Ken’s parents separated while he was still a toddler and Ken subsequently grew up in Manila in the absence of his father. Japanese-Filipinos, like Ken, are a consequence of over three decades of gendered cross-border mobility connecting people from Japan and the Philippines. In the 1970s, Ferdinand Marcos sought to attract foreign capital by promoting the Philippines both as a “holiday haven” and a business paradise, opening up the country to investments and tourism. Most businessmen and tourists were male and a considerable number came from Japan (Muroi & Sasaki 1997). In the late 1970s, as Japanese men had made the Philippines one of their favourite destinations for so called “holiday sex tours”, protests by activist groups severely curbed the systematized and often company-
sponsored sex-tourism to Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, these protests did not stop Japanese men from purchasing erotic entertainment. Instead, the migration flow reversed. Numerous Filipino women have since then entered Japan on so called “entertainer” visas to seek employment in Japan’s clubs, pubs and “snack bars”\(^2\).

Young Filipino women’s stay in Japan was initially thought to be temporary, but the flow of “entertainers” to Japan has firmly established Filipino women’s presence as part of the country’s social landscape: as the opportunities for encounters increased, Filipino women and Japanese men developed affective and sexual relationships from which children were born. By 1995, Filipino women were among the top three foreign nationalities Japanese men would get married to\(^3\) and in 2010 the number of registered Filipino nationals residing in Japan reached 210,181\(^4\).

Hitherto, numerous marriages ended in divorce\(^5\), a significant number of marriages concluded in the Philippines were not registered in Japan, and many relationships often did not lead to matrimony to begin with.\(^6\) Numerous women

---

\(^2\) A “snack bar” is a type of hostess bar where “entertainers” facilitate social intercourse.

\(^3\) According to statistics of Japan’s Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare, the number of Filipina spouses of Japanese men was first recorded in 1995. That year 7,188 Filipino women had married Japanese men, out of a total of 20,787 couples composed of a Japanese man and a foreign woman. (original table available at [http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hh/1-2.html](http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hh/1-2.html), cf. Table 1-37, access 30 September 2013)


\(^5\) According to calculations based on the statistics of Japan’s Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare, divorcing Filipina-Japanese couples made up 30% on average of the total number of divorces of Japanese men and foreign women between the years 2000-2011 (original table available at [http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hh/1-2.html](http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hh/1-2.html), cf. Table 1-42, access 30 September 2013)

\(^6\) According to the Citizens Network for Japanese-Filipino Children (CNJFC), an NGO providing legal support for Japanese-Filipinos claiming their Japanese nationality, numerous marriages concluded in the Philippines are not registered in Japan: “Without the notification
thus returned to the Philippines with their Japanese-Filipino children after separating from their Japanese partners, or did so to give birth to the children they had conceived with Japanese men. Others remained in Japan, often undocumented if they had neither married nor given birth to a Japanese national who would enable their residence visa. The highly gendered migration of Filipino women to Japan has thus produced both social and legal complications which affect Filipino women and their Japanese-Filipino children both in Japan and the Philippines till today. In reaction to the rising numbers of Japanese-Filipino children born to former “entertainers”, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the Philippines and in Japan have started shedding light on and speaking up against the consequences of Filipina migration to Japan. Points of contention were not merely questions of legal status of Japanese-Filipinos in Japan, but also matters of paternal acknowledgment, unpaid alimony as well as sentiments of injustice stemming from the relative ease with which Japanese fathers of Japanese-Filipino children could deny parental responsibilities.

Japanese-Filipino children and youths in the Philippines are, in most cases, non-migrants. In contrast to second generation migrants, these children and youths grow up as Filipinos with their Filipino mothers or maternal families. A letter, the marriage goes unrecorded in the Japanese husband’s family register. [...] Furthermore, the husband’s place of residence that is recorded in the Filipino marriage register is often wrong and attempting to locate him through his home address can often be very difficult, particularly if a long time has passed and he may have moved or been relocated elsewhere due to work.” (CNJFC [Citizen’s Network for Japanese-Filipino Children], 2005, p. 7)

Rhacel Parreñas (2011) points out that “long-term residency [of Filipino women in Japan] is conditional on marrying or giving birth to a Japanese citizen” (p. 179). The Japanese government has since 1996 extended residency rights to foreign custodians of Japanese citizens.
large number of Japanese-Filipinos are raised exclusively by their Filipino kin, in a cultural environment no different from that of other Filipino children and youths of similar socio-economic backgrounds. Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines are not a community preserving distinct cultural practices nor do they consider themselves part of a diasporic community. Like many of their Filipino countrymen and -women, numerous Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines foster desires to live and work abroad. Migration overseas has since the onset of the Philippine labour export policies become a common means for Filipinos to deal with financial shortage, un- or underemployment, as well as to achieve social upward mobility. Japanese-Filipino Children’s desires to migrate are often motivated by similar aspirations.

Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines present a case in migration studies insofar as Japanese-Filipinos’ efforts to cross borders to Japan are intertwined with issues of ethnic identity formation, rights-claims towards the Japanese state, and the migration histories of their mothers. Also, there has been little scholarly work done on these children of migration. Scholarship on migration and transnationalism has predominantly focused on mobile populations; emigrants, immigrants, transient and circular migrants. Studies with a focus on non-migrant populations yet directly affected by migration have tended to enquire about the social and economic consequences of prolonged absences on migrants’ home communities, their families, and on familial relationships (Al-Ali and Koser 2002, Horton 2008, Parreñas 2005). A large body of academic work has also looked at ‘second generation migrants’ who have not experienced migration first-hand but
remain associated with their parents’ relocation prior to their birth and are often discussed in relation to issues revolving around integration, assimilation, belonging, multiculturalism and social mobility (Levitt and Waters 2002, Pratt 2004, Soehl & Waldinger 2012). Numerous Japanese-Filipinos based in the Philippines however are would-be migrants and potential Japanese citizens who have yet to obtain Japanese passports and cross international borders. Nonetheless, numerous Japanese-Filipinos draw upon an imagined other ‘homeland’, upon the possibility of migration, and upon their mother’s or father’s migration histories to construct a sense of who they are with regards to their mixed-ethnic and cross-national parentage.

This study is concerned with the discursive construction of Japanese-Filipinos as “JFC” by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as well as by Japanese-Filipino activists in the process of claims-making. The construction of the “JFC” is part of a political and a symbolic struggle by individuals and NGOs which have established themselves as legitimate mouthpieces of the “JFC” and their Filipino mothers. As will be shown, NGOs have deployed various discursive resources in the processes of advocating for “JFC”, notably drawing on discourses of universal rights to challenge Japan’s politics of exclusion, on discourses on Japanese descent and ‘Japanese blood’, in addition to making use of the ideals of the “normal” family and of childhood. Most importantly, this dissertation

---

8 Japanese-Filipinos are potential Japanese citizens by virtue of having a Japanese father and Japan’s nationality law being based on the principle of jus sanguinis. Through circumstances further elaborated below, numerous Japanese-Filipinos have been unable to obtain Japanese citizenship at birth. But efforts by NGOs have paved the way for more Japanese-Filipinos to obtain Japanese nationality and citizenship.

9 “JFC” stands for Japanese-Filipino Children. It is an acronym coined by the NGOs included in this study.
examines processes of claims-making as a means to enhance one’s life chances, enabling cross-border mobility, and tied to the latter, fulfilling expectations of upward social mobility. This research also addresses the importance of citizenship as legal status: as a right to participate in particular labour markets and as a right of abode in particular countries within the context of global economic inequalities and selective migration regimes. It also addresses legally codified practices of exclusion, making some children of Japanese fathers ‘legitimate’ and others ‘illegitimate’ heirs of Japanese citizenship (and nationality).

I argue that processes of ethnic identity formation by Japanese-Filipinos raised and based in the Philippines are dependent, among others, on perceived opportunities in transnational contexts and remain in dialogue with practices of claims-making and rights assertion towards the Japanese State. The debate about ethnic identity ascription and ethnic identification thus needs to be placed within the context of global economic inequalities which afford greater privileges and rights to individuals with certain citizenships rather than others, and within the

10 “There is little doubt that securing membership status in a given state or region-with its specific level of wealth, degree of stability, and human rights record-is, even in the current age of increased globalization and privatization, a crucial factor in the determination of life chances”, write Shachar & Hirschl (2007, p.254). Citizenship is thus an important factor enabling (or disabling) access to opportunities and security. Moreover, the possession of citizenship is usually a pre-requisite for access to particular labour markets, thus determining income levels, impacting career chances and employment opportunities. For Japanese-Filipino children, the economic inequalities between Japan and the Philippines play out in form of potential opportunities to find paid employment in Japan and to earn a significantly higher income than they would in the Philippines. Moreover, “[t]ransnational labor migration is not just a means to manage politico-economic marginality. It is also about the imaginative dreams and pleasures that can be found abroad.” (Faier 2009, p. 82) Faier’s (2009) migrant Filipina respondents frequently mentioned that they had come to Japan expecting to live in a place “like America”, a “modern” (p.81) urban centre, which they dichotomously opposed to their experience of the Philippines. In this research I show that identifying as Japanese (or half-Japanese) is partly encouraged by the benefits associated with these rights. The process of claiming rights and privileges is intertwined with processes of ethnic identity construction and identity ascription.
context of ethnically and ‘racially’ stratified societies which tend to provide people with a claim to particular ethnic or ‘racial’ groups with greater prestige and sometimes with greater opportunities.

Hence, claims for Japanese nationality as well as the construction of Japanese or Japanese-Filipino ethnic identities by Philippine-based Japanese-Filipinos should be considered as part of strategies to accumulate capital and status. I employ the concept of consanguinal capital which I consider as a form of capital, drawing upon Bourdieusian arguments. I argue that filiation can be leveraged on to gain access to resources not only through the legal implications that are provided by biological relationships, but also through the symbolically salient claims for belonging to a nation or people, by virtue of descent\(^\text{11}\).

This does not mean that national or ethnic identities of Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines are exclusively strategic. But it means that they are more than mere affectionate bonds to Japan; the emotive bond to the imagined second ‘homeland’ arises within an understanding of Japan as technologically and economically advanced “First World” country, as well as within the knowledge of

\(^{11}\) Here I subscribe to Fortes’ (1959, p.207) differentiation of filiation and descent, writing that “whereas filiation is the relation that exists between a person and his parent only, descent refers to a relation mediated by a parent between himself and an ancestor, defined as an genealogical predecessor of the grandparental or earlier generation.” I would like to add that within the context of ethnic identity formation and ascription, the link to oneself and one’s ancestors can be perceived as a link to a larger ethnicity or a nation, wherein ethnicity and nation are largely conflated. Consanguinity, or blood relations, usually describes biological relationships acquired through, for instance, filiation. Consanguinity also implies social ties emerging from these biological relationships. Moreover, consanguinity can be perceived to derive from descent, meaning from the belief in common ancestors, ethnicity and/or nationality. Indeed, numerous laws guiding the acquisition of nationality are based on the principle of ‘blood’, jus sanguinis (i.e. Japan and the Philippines). When understood broadly, consanguinity can still be utilized as grounds for social or political ties as in the case of “ethnic returnees” having been extended special visas by countries like Japan, Korea, Germany and many others (cf. Tsuda 2010).
cross-border mobility as possible road to social upward mobility. In this research I also consider the changes in the legal codifications of the Japanese nationality law as an important step in NGO claims-making, indicating a change of perception with regards to dominant and institutionalized understandings of who ought to be Japanese and under what conditions.

**Existing literature on Japanese-Filipino Children**

The prevailing myth of ethnic homogeneity of Japanese society has provided a fascinating backdrop against which ethnic identity formations of children of “mixed” parentage could be studied. The focus of such studies usually centres upon the negotiation of personal ethnic identities given the narrow definitions of *Japaneseness* and on the disruptive effects of migration on these ethnic identities. The increasing number of so called “international marriages” since the 1980s has triggered questions of what it meant to be Japanese in an age of globalization, involving intensified cross-border human mobility and increasing numbers of cross-border affective and sexual relationships followed by childbirth. Japan’s myth of ethnic homogeneity has been tested by recent immigration (Douglass & Roberts (eds.), 2003; Weiner (ed.), 2009), rising numbers of children born to Japanese-foreign couples, and by Japan’s historical ethnic minorities demanding recognition as part of Japanese society, such as the Ainu as well as Korean special permanent residents and Japanese of Korean descent (Chung, 2009, 2010; Weiner & Chapman, 1997). However, constricted definitions of who ought to be Japanese remain, and therefore being ‘mixed’ in
Japan presents an intricate puzzle to be solved by the individuals and institutions concerned.

Processes of ethnic identity formation by Japanese-Filipinos have been observed with regards to the historical, economic and sociocultural circumstances under which these children and youth were born, grew up and learned to develop a sense of self (De Dios 2012). These circumstances include not merely Japanese society’s general unawareness of its ethnic minorities, but also the meanings associated with having a Japanese father in the Philippines following popular knowledge of the massive migration of Filipina “entertainers” into Japan’s sex-industry. De Dios (2012) concludes that the process of how Japanese-Filipino youth arrive at their ethnic identities is marked by the assertion of differences that set Japanese-Filipinos apart from ‘regular’ Japanese as well as from ‘regular’ Filipinos. These differences are cultural and linguistic when compared with the Japanese, but there are also perceived advantages associated with being of Japanese descent because of the opportunities of earning an income in Japan which sets Japanese-Filipinos apart from Filipinos (p.33). This observation is interesting as the distinction from other Filipinos is not cultural or linguistic in nature, but a matter of benefits provided by Japanese-Filipinos’ Japanese ancestry.

The question about how certain ethnic identities are constructed also involves the examination of why particular identities are claimed rather than others. As Lieberson & Waters argue, the development of an ethnic identity for

---

12 De Dios (2012) studied Japanese-Filipino youths who spent a significant time of their childhood in the Philippines and migrated to Japan in their mid- and late teens.
children of mixed-ethnic backgrounds “becomes a question and a decision” (in De Dios, p.26). Considering that there is an element of decision involved in constructing and determining one’s ethnic identity, we ought to also investigate the reasons behind particular choices as well as the people involved in them. Indeed, Japanese-Filipino children do not make these decisions all by themselves, but are embedded in a network of ‘significant others’ as well as located within socio-economic contexts and institutional frameworks which make certain ethnic identities more feasible and more desirable than others.

The ease with which Japanese-Filipinos can establish their ethnic identities has also been linked to their ability to obtain Japanese nationality (Suzuki 2010). Without it, these children and youths are said to suffer “the uncertainty of their citizenships, identities and future” (Suzuki, 2010, p. 36). Considering that a sizeable number of Japanese-Filipino children grow up in Japan as Japanese, yet without the legal status of a Japanese citizen, gaining that legal status is indeed central to secure their futures in their homeland. In this endeavour, NGOs have put forward the Human Rights framework to claim Japanese nationality for Japanese-Filipinos who are thus far excluded from acquiring it. Yet for Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines, obtaining Japanese

---

13 Here ‘significant others’ refer to people within a person’s immediate environment who are of importance in their development of a sense of self as defined by Cooley (1902).
14 The Human Rights framework as defined by the United Nations and as codified in numerous conventions signed by both Japan and the Philippines has provided NGOs with a symbolic resource to challenge national policies by referring to supra-national agreements. Due to its symbolic salience, the Human Rights framework has been utilized as a means for NGOs to gather support for their cause and challenge the Japanese state on moral grounds with reference to Japanese-Filipinos’ rights, and the failure of individual Japanese fathers as well as of the Japanese state to acknowledge and take responsibility for the injustice and the many difficulties faced by Japanese-Filipinos.
nationality is tied to reasons other than securing their right to remain in the country they have grown up in. In this thesis, I argue that assertions of ethnic identities as Japanese or half-Japanese by Japanese-Filipino children in the Philippines are not merely emotive but also linked to considerations of how this particular identity fares in the Philippine context. Furthermore, *Japoneseness* needs to be affirmed to substantiate claims, in particular the claim for Japanese nationality and citizenship\(^\text{15}\).

Another point I would like to address in this study is the vital role played by NGOs in shaping the identities of their Japanese-Filipino clients and in creating a meta-narrative about Japanese-Filipino children for purposes of advocacy. As Bourdieu (1989) argues, symbolic power influences the perceptions of the world and thus ‘makes’ the world. In their symbolic struggles, NGOs do not merely aim to redefining boundaries of who ought to be Japanese in the course of making claims, but also create categories, and a name, for and of the people they are speaking about. In this study, I am looking at the political and symbolic struggles\(^\text{16}\) engaged by four NGOs in particular: the Manila-based youth-group *Batis Youth Organization that gives Hope and Inspiration* (Batis

\(^{15}\)Nationality and Citizenship in Japan largely overlap. Japanese nationals are entitled to citizenship in Japan. Foreign nationals however cannot acquire formal citizenship. However, other residence titles may accord foreign nationals with privileges similar to those of citizens. Dual-nationality (or dual-citizenship) is not accepted under Japan’s nationality law.

\(^{16}\)These struggles include claims for recognition of Japanese-Filipino children as part of Japan’s history, responsibility, and by consequence of the Japanese nation. These claims include struggles over the ‘correct’ perception of the problems faced by many Japanese-Filipino children not as merely private issues, but as arising from economic inequalities existing between the two countries, and as aftermaths of policies formulated by the Japanese and the Philippine governments. Moreover, the framing of former Filipina entertainers as victims/survivors and good mothers, as well as efforts to highlight Japanese-Filipino children’s link to Japan are part of the overall process of claims-making. Lastly, the political struggles engaged in by NGOs have taken form in litigation.
YOGHI) and its parent-organization the *Batis Center for Women*, the *Development Action for Women Network* (DAWN), *Maligaya House* and its Tokyo office the *Citizen’s Network for Japanese-Filipino Children* (CNJFC)\(^{17}\) (cf. Appendix for further details about the NGOs).

**Synopsis**

In the following chapters I expound on NGOs’ discursive construction of their clients and on the shifts in such constructions, as well as on the change in Japan’s nationality law implemented in January 2009 following a court case against the Japanese state. In Chapter 1, I begin with describing in greater detail the historical circumstances from which Japanese-Filipino children were born, and how the latter became the subjects of NGO support and advocacy. This first chapter contextualizes current claims by and on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos against the backdrop of existing claims by people of Japanese descent similarly emphasizing *Japaneseness*, as well as Japan’s experiences with ethnic return migration. I argue that the malleability of ethnicity and the flexibility of ethnic boundaries may be discerned when political and economic changes occur. Certain ethnic identities can thus be more practical and more desirable than others at some times or under certain circumstances. *Nikkeijin*\(^ {18}\) in the Philippines, for instance, have adopted Filipino or Chinese-Filipino ethnic identities to escape discrimination following

\(^{17}\) Maligaya House and the CNJFC are the same group. They share publications, cases and management and will thus be treated as one NGO although they operate using two different names.

\(^{18}\) *Nikkeijin* (日系人; literally: person of Japanese lineage) designates foreigners of Japanese descent, as well as Japanese descendants who have acquired Japanese citizenship yet continue to identify as *Nikkeijin*. 

12
Japan’s defeat in World War Two. Today, on the other hand, numerous Nikkeijin in the Philippines claim a Japanese or Japanese-Filipino ethnic identity.

In chapter 2, I expound on the idea of consanguinal capital as a conceptual tool to grasp the strategic use of descent in endeavours to accumulate status and other forms of capital. In chapter 3 I provide details about my methodology and the research process.

I analyse the discursive shifts in NGO depictions of Filipino women migrant returnees from Japan in chapter 4. The depiction of Filipino women is crucial as the perceived legitimacy of claims for and on behalf of their children with Japanese men largely depends on distancing Filipino women migrant returnees from the negative image of the sex worker. Japanese-Filipino Children were born from the encounters that largely developed from what Parreñas (2011) terms “illicit flirtations”, but which have popularly been depicted in both Japan and the Philippines as commercial sex. The personal experiences of Japanese-Filipino children and youths, their legal struggles as well as the ways their problems are framed by non-governmental support organizations can thus neither be fully separated from the migration histories of their mothers, nor the global economic inequalities underlying their migration in the first place.

I analyse the discursive construction of Japanese-Filipino children by NGOs in chapter 5. I argue that NGOs have invested in a particular language and have drawn upon powerful discourses to frame their causes. The deployment of rights discourses, including the discourse on universal rights and the potent idea of
“birthright”, as well as discourses on the ideals of the “normal” family and childhood have lent themselves as widely recognized, salient ideological and semantic resources to understand as well as depict the issues and claims by and on behalf of Japanese-Filipino children. Moreover, the mobilization of Japanese-Filipinos’ Japanese descent and ‘Japanese blood’ in the discursive constructions of the “JFC” draws on widespread layman understandings of ethnicity and ‘race’ which often conflate culture with Japanese descent and therefore perpetuate essentialist ideas. Combined with the claims for their “birthright”, discursive constructions of the “JFC” resonate with the recurring conflations of nationality, ethnicity and culture as well as with ideas of Japanese uniqueness as popularized by writers of the *Nihonjinron*.

Eventually, rights-claims facilitated by NGOs have led to a class-action suit that was filed in 2005 and which concluded in June 2008. This law-suit has engendered an important change in Japan’s nationality law implemented in 2009 which is the focus of my discussion in chapter 6. The discursive shifts concerning ideas about what constitutes a family, and thus pertaining to the possible forms of this primary social unit responsible for the reproduction of future Japanese nationals, are of central importance for the outcome of the law-suit. Although the change in the law was chiefly based on the decision that, as is, the law was discriminatory, the ability of various non-nuclear family forms to raise *bona fide* Japanese was recognized. This change in law has increased the numbers of Japanese-Filipinos eligible to live and work in Japan. Chapter 7 is thus dedicated

---

to the various views by Japanese-Filipinos on NGO work, reflections on being Japanese-Filipino in the Philippines and most importantly their experiences in Japan upon migration. In conclusion, I revisit the process and the consequences of mobilizing of consanguinal capital in the particular case of Japanese-Filipino children in the Philippines.
Chapter 1: Contextualizing Nationality and Rights Claims

Processes of rights-assertion on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos born since the late 1970s are not the first instances of claims for recognition from the Japanese state. Since the early 1980s, descendants of pre-war Japanese settlers in the Philippines have demanded Japanese nationality and compensation for having been ‘abandoned’ at the dusk of World War Two. At about the same time, Japan initiated efforts to repatriate descendants of Japanese settlers in Manchuria who had been orphaned or left behind when their families fled back to Japan upon Japan’s defeat. Moreover, Japan implemented a special visa in 1991 enabling foreigners of Japanese descent, or Nikkeijin, to live and work in Japan. This visa attracted numerous Nikkeijin from Latin America, especially from Brazil. These developments which have brought together foreigners of Japanese descent with ‘mainland’ Japanese, have had an important influence on understandings of who ought to be ‘Japanese’. These “ethnic return” migrations also illustrate that ethnicity is malleable, strategic, and contextual. Furthermore, increasing numbers of children born to ‘international’ couples in Japan challenge the boundaries of national membership and citizenship based on shared ethnicity; “The clearest examples of ethnic nations are those in which certain ethnic requirements are written into the conception of citizenship.”(Poole 1999, p. 40) Nevertheless, the differentiation of ‘ethnic’ and ‘civic’ nationalism has been criticized for being too dichotomous (Jenkins 2008; Poole 1999) since “from the perspective of those who were excluded – Jews, Blacks, Gypsies – the most civic of nations always had an ‘ethnic’ side to them.” (Poole 1999, p. 41)
between Japanese and foreigners. In this chapter, I aim to illustrate that ethnicity can be part of the strategies of gaining status and entitlements, and that sometimes certain ethnic identities are more practical and advantageous than others. Also, Japan’s experiences with ‘ethnic returnees’ have simultaneously challenged widely held primordial assumptions equating lineage with ethno-cultural and linguistic abilities, and contributed to a narrowing conception of *Japanese*ness in Japan.\(^{21}\)

**Descendants of pre-war Japanese emigrants: the *Nikkeijin***

The migration endeavours of Japanese-Filipinos based in the Philippines as well as their claims for Japanese nationality resonate with other instances of desired return to an ‘ethnic homeland’, such as the ‘return’ of *Nikkeijin* or the repatriation of left-behind offspring of war-time Japanese settlers in Manchuria. These ‘return’ migrations were motivated and institutionally supported by beliefs in a ritual homecoming to a ‘true’ origin as well as by the assumed social assimilability\(^{22}\) of ethnic returnees into the nation and culture of ‘origin’. In Japan, the *Nikkeijin* have been the most prominent group of ‘ethnic returnees’.

_Nikkeijin_ are the descendants of Japanese emigrants who settled in the Americas, Hawai’i and in parts of Asia including the Philippines before and

---

\(^{21}\) Tsuda (2008, p.125) writes that Japanese lineage and cultural competence were commonly accepted as correlated which is a consequence of Japan’s ideology of ethnic homogeneity. But, when the culturally distinct *Nikkeijin* settled in Japan, behaviour, mannerism, and language became markers of difference superseding the commonality found in ‘blood’. Tsuda (pp. 127-128) writes that “although the ethnic encounter with the *Nikkeijin* de-essentializes Japanese ethnic identity by problematizing the assumption that shared racial descent is the fundamental determinant of who is Japanese, it may produce a more restrictive definition of Japanese identity based on increased cultural nationalism.”

\(^{22}\) Japanese lawmakers assumed that foreigners of Japanese descent would assimilate more quickly into Japanese society and would thus not pose a threat to Japan’s ostensible ethnic homogeneity (Tsuda, 2010).
during World War II. In the 1980s, Japan’s fast growing economy pushed the Japanese government to seek solutions which would satisfy the arising needs for cheap labour while avoiding the ethnic disruption usually associated with immigrants. Notably the Ministry of Justice, known to be conservative and strongly invested in the preservation of Japan’s ostensible ethnic homogeneity and cultural purity, was opposed to relaxing Japan’s ban on unskilled foreign workers for ethno-national reasons (Tsuda 2010). Allowing Nikkeijin to access the Japanese labour market thus appeared to be the most suitable option (ibid.). The revision of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in 1990 thus created special conditions easing the settlement and employment of foreigners of Japanese descent. The Ministry of Justice, also the chief authority in the formulation of immigration policies and citizenship laws, appeared content. Tsuda (2010, p.627) quotes a Justice bureaucrat who was involved in the immigration debate:

Kettoshugi [the principle of blood/lineage] and the privileging of foreigners with blood ties with Japanese was a fundamental concern of the Ministry of Justice from the very beginning when thinking about immigration policy because of concerns about preserving Japan’s ethnic

---

23 The revision of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in 1990 created the legal basis for Nikkeijin to live and work in Japan long-term. The category “long term resident” was created under the revised law which allowed third generation Nikkeijin as well as the spouses of second- and third- generation Nikkeijin to live and work in Japan without activity restrictions (Sellek 1997, p.189). Second generation Nikkeijin could apply for a “spouse or child of Japanese national” visa. The law revision allowed foreigners of Japanese descent up to the third generation to ‘return’ to Japan for up to 3 years, the visa being renewable.
homogeneity. So admitting the nikkeijin was not seen as a problem in this respect and they were the most acceptable out of all foreigners.

The preference for people of Japanese descent over other foreign workers not only reinforced the primacy of Japanese lineage but also “underpinned the naturalized assumption that bloodline equates with cultural competence.” (Mackie 2010, p.79). However, Nikkeijin were not given citizenship. Their primary role was to help Japan overcome its economic impasse. When the recent financial crisis hit in late 2008, the Japanese government attempted to ease its unemployment by offering out-of-job Nikkeijin a one-time payment\(^{24}\) in exchange for their return. Not possessing citizenship, Nikkeijin constitute an available labour force which can also be disposed of easily.

The creation of such privileges effectively institutionalized essentialist ideas of Japanese uniqueness and primordial\(^{25}\) understandings of belonging by conflating ‘Japanese blood’ with cultural and linguistic abilities as expectations of similarity and eased assimilation have shown. The Nikkeijin experience eventually challenged the idea that Japanese ‘blood’ guaranteed cultural similarity and quick assimilability. Due to their cultural differences, Nikkeijin had become the antithesis of Nihonjin (Japanese) (Cordova Quero 2008), reinforcing the boundaries between Japanese and non-Japanese rather than blurring them. Nikkeijin had challenged the “restrictive definitions of Japaneseness by causing the Japanese to

\(^{24}\) US$3000 for each Nikkeijin and 2000 US$ for each family member in Japan (Tabuchi, 2009)

\(^{25}\) Primordialism refers to “the idea that ethnicity is fixed, fundamental, and rooted in the unchangeable circumstances of birth” (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, p.48)
realize that cultural diversity exists among Japanese descendants.” (Tsuda 2008, p.119) This challenge has not led to a more inclusive definition of who ought to be ‘Japanese’, but on the contrary, to “a more restrictive cultural definition of Japanese identity based on an increased cultural nationalism.” (pp. 127-128) The cultural and linguistic differences between these ‘ethnic returnees’ and the Japanese resulted in a “boundary dissonance” (Efird 2010, p.231), rocking widely-held definitions of Japaneseness which blend cultural expectations with pseudo-biological notions of the Japanese ‘race’ (Sellek, 1997), and prompting questions of how to define a ‘Japanese’ if ‘blood’ was no longer sufficient.

Although Japanese descent remains an important factor in determining whether a person can be considered ‘duly Japanese’, Japanese lineage needs to be substantiated by cultural performance. Mackie (2010) notes that the assumption that bloodline is equated with cultural competence is found in many national cultures (p.79). Supposed ‘authenticity’ thus has to be performative, meaning that individuals need to convey the authenticity of their Japaneseness by demonstrating cultural competence through mannerism, language skills, and fluency in cultural norms. When the descendants of Japanese settlers in the Philippines started to claim their right to be recognized as Japanese and obtain Japanese nationality, their arguments would highlight their ethnic Japaneseness as well as their emotive bond to Japan.

**Philippine Nikkeijin and the mobilization of Japaneseness**

Today’s claims by the Philippine Nikkeijin are made by the children and grand-children of Japanese farmers and labourers who settled in the Philippines in
the latter 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{26}. These settlers had come to the Philippines following the industrial revolution in Japan which has led to a dramatic increase in population, and by consequence a deterioration of living conditions as well as food shortages (Yamato, 1931). Today’s Southeast Asia, referred to as \textit{nan’you} at the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, had attracted Japanese labourers and investors searching for better lives beyond Japanese shores (Jose, 1996).\textsuperscript{27} Contrary to emigration to Hawai’i, Peru, Brazil, Canada and the United States, migration to the Philippines was initially expected to be transient. Yet with a growing population of Japanese emigrants, the length of stay also increased. Soon, Japanese women joined the predominantly initial wave of male emigrants. Numerous Japanese men also intermarried with local Filipino women.

Demands made by Philippine \textit{Nikkeijin} for Japanese nationality are interesting to observe as they illustrate the malleable nature of ethnic identification and the strategic importance of citizenship. Prior to American-Japanese war, Japanese settlers in the Philippines faced numerous difficulties in establishing businesses and owning property due to discriminatory laws. Only Philippine and American citizens were allowed to possess arable land according to the Public Land Act of 1919, which caused serious disadvantages to Japanese citizens who had heavily invested in the production of Manila hemp and rubber. One way of overcoming the disadvantages stemming from discrimination based

\textsuperscript{26}Emigration of Japanese to the Philippines is said to have occurred as early as in the 12\textsuperscript{th} century, but people in the Philippines identifying as Japanese descendants today are largely offspring of pre-WWII Japanese settlers as well as the children of Japanese-Filipina relationships born since the late 1970s.

\textsuperscript{27}Between 1885 and 1924, the total number of Japanese emigrants in the Philippines amounted to 21,323 (Yamato, 1931).
on citizenship was to encourage the immigration to the Philippines of American-born Japanese who held U.S. citizenship. In practice though, a number of Japanese either employed locals to act as their ‘dummies’, masking de facto Japanese ownership, or the land was registered under the name of one’s local spouse. The naturalization of the second generation Japanese born in the Philippines was another option. Marriage to a local and naturalization of the second generation were two popular solutions against the State-imposed limitations of land ownership. However, to prevent local women from acquiring Japanese citizenship upon marriage and therefore lose the right to own arable land in the Philippines, their unions were often not registered in the Japanese koseki system. Children born from the union between Japanese settlers and their local Filipino wives were equally not registered as they too would become Japanese citizens. Thus, citizenship was carefully managed as it was instrumental in the efforts of Japanese settlers and their families to gain access to the same rights as Philippine and U.S. American citizens, and to own and do business.

Despite being Filipinos by citizenship, children of Japanese settlers were educated similarly to children in Japan. Assimilation with locals was considered undesirable as Issei emigrants had begun to pride themselves as ittou kokumin (first class nationals), situating Japan on the same plane as the United States in an international political hierarchy, versus Filipinos who were considered santou kokumin (third class nationals) (Ohno, 2007, p.246). The desire of Issei emigrants to preserve Japanese nationalism among the next generations prompted the

---

28 Family register in Japan.
establishment of Japanese elementary schools in Manila, Davao, and Baguio. The extensive contact with Filipino language and culture that these Japanese-Filipino ‘mixed’ children had experienced in the course of their upbringing urged Japanese school teachers to instil in their students *Yamato-damashii* (Japanese spirit), *shuushin* (morals), and loyalty to the Emperor. Also, the use of any Filipino language was prohibited at school in efforts to replicate and preserve the Japanese nation abroad. These Filipino-Japanese children were thus educated as Japanese and fashioned into subjects of the Emperor despite their exposure to the local culture, their connection to their Filipino families, and their de facto Philippine citizenship. A survey of 1939 shows that of about 2358 Filipino-Japanese below 20 years of age, 1618 were “citizens of the Commonwealth of the Philippines”, while only 740 were reported to be “citizens of Japan” (Ohno 2007). The absence of formal Japanese citizenship, which in itself was a pragmatic decision, did not dissuade educators from instilling the *Nisei* (second generation) with Japanese nationalism.

Thus, citizenship has been instrumental for capital accumulation long before the intensification of transnational migration after World War Two. In the early 20th century, Philippine citizenship was a precious status sought after by Japanese settlers who struggled for the necessary rights and privileges to build up their assets. However, with Japan’s rapid economic development after the war, economic difficulties in the Philippines, and the strong value of the yen, the income gap between the two countries widened and access to Japan’s labour market in turn became attractive. The (re-) gaining of Japanese citizenship, which
is tied to Japanese nationality, thus became increasingly interesting to Philippine
Nikkeijin. The generation who had initially functioned as anchors for their parents’
businesses and properties by virtue of their Philippine citizenship, began to claim
Japanese nationality in the early 1980s.

In their claims for Japanese nationality, Philippine Nikkeijin deployed
notably two discourses: the discourse on Japanese and the victim narrative.
The mobilization of Japanese meant that demands for Japanese nationality
were supported by conflations of Japanese descent with cultural competence as
well as character traits deemed ‘typical’ for Japanese. The victim narrative was
largely realized by linking the experiences of Philippine Nikkeijin to those of the
“orphans left behind” in Manchuria at the dusk of the war, thus deploying images
of the innocent child entitled to reparation from the parent who abandoned them,
the Japanese State.

The 1990s was a beneficial period for organized Philippine Nikkeijin as
the consequences of Japan’s imperialism slowly began to be discussed publicly in
Japan and other Asian countries. Demands for reparations for former “comfort
women” and compensation as well as recognition of the offspring of Japanese
left-behind in Japan’s former colonies surfaced throughout Asia. Philippine
Nikkeijin also began to identify themselves as victims of war after agreeing that
their problems were due to their Japanese ethnic background. Within this
narrative, Japan was pressured into assuming responsibility for its forgotten
‘children’. Soon, Philippine Nikkeijin labelled themselves as Firipin Zanryuu
Nihonjin (Japanese left behind in the Philippines) following the designation
Chuugoku Zanryuu Nihonjin-koji (Japanese orphans left behind in China) (Ohno, 2007). The Nikkeijin Kai meeting of 1992 identified several more concerns faced by Nikkeijin such as the lack of knowledge on the whereabouts of the Issei (first generation) father, unpaid pensions for Nisei veterans who had collaborated with Japanese forces, and the confiscation of property after the war.

It thus proved fruitful for the Philippine Nikkeijin to draw an association between themselves and Japanese orphans left behind in China and to position themselves as victims of war. In 1995, the year of the 50th commemoration of the end of the war, heightened media interest in Japan’s war legacies also placed the spotlight on Japan’s ‘left behind orphans’. The Japanese mass media widely reported on the unresolved after-effects of the war, including “returned” Nikkeijin in Japan who were referred to as Firipin Zanryuu-koji (orphans left behind in the Philippines) (Ohno, 2007). Gradually, Philippine Nikkeijin gained public sympathy as victims of war and soon Japanese government officials began changing their attitude towards them (p.252). In that year, the acceptance of an application by Takezawa Daisuke, a Nisei Filipino, to register his name in his father’s koseki marked an important step in the acknowledgment of Philippine Nikkeijin. Takezawa had spent three years collecting all necessary documents and preparing his trip to Japan where he eventually was allowed to add his name to the family register and thus “regain” Japanese nationality (ibid.). Many more Philippine Nikkeijin undertook the same procedure after his success. Interestingly, when documenting the demands for Japanese nationality, newspaper reports overemphasized the strong identification of claimants with the Japanese nation
and downplayed their desires to access Japan and its labour market (cf. Reuters 1995; Reuters News 1995; Kyodo News Int. 1995). In doing so, mass media reiterated the importance of blood ties and the emotional aspect of “ethnic return” while overlooking the more pragmatic intentions underlying claims for Japanese ethnic identity and by consequence claims for Japanese nationality. Yet, it was precisely this pragmatism which decades ago caused the non-registration of Philippine *Nikkeijin* in their father’s *koseki* and the non-registration of their parents’ marriages to preserve their Philippine citizenship to secure land ownership. A similarly practical judgment pushed *Nikkeijin* to hide their Japanese ancestry in the years that followed the end of World War Two. Then, as Japan rose to economic power and numerous Filipinos sought employment abroad, pragmatism still played a crucial role.

Indeed, the 1990s brought about one more significant change for Philippine *Nikkeijin*. The Ministry of Justice of Japan had revised its immigration control act in 1990 and had created a special visa for immigrants of Japanese descent to participate in the labour market for several years. This provided opportunities for the offspring of Philippine *Nikkeijin* to gain access to Japan and earn a better living, if their elderly, second-generation Japanese parent was able to obtain Japanese citizenship. Second generation Philippine *Nikkeijin* thus sought Japanese nationality in an effort to ‘upgrade’ their own and their offspring’s status (Ohno, 2007). Most *Nikkeijin* seeking Japanese nationality in the 1990s and early 2000s were already of mature age -many in their 70s or 80s- and therefore were unlikely to seek employment in Japan. However their offspring could benefit from
the privileges extended to foreigners of Japanese descent if they were able to secure Japanese nationality. *Nisei Nikkeijin’s* efforts to obtain Japanese nationality were thus geared at making it possible for their offspring to enter Japan as children of Japanese nationals and to take advantage of the change in Japan’s Immigration Control Act of 1990.

**“Ethnic returnees”: ethnicity contested**

In claims for Japanese nationality and their recognition as Japanese, *Nikkeijin* have emphasized their affective ties with Japan as well as their presumed ‘natural’ cultural dispositions. Also, the framing of Philippine *Nikkeijin* as ‘orphans left behind’ and as “war-displaced” people (Kyodo News Int. 1995) conceptually established their rightful link to Japan. Despite growing up in Filipino families and holding Philippine citizenship, the connection with Japan through the father remained strongly emphasized in *Nikkeijin’s* claims. At public appearances and during press conferences held in the Philippines and occasionally in Japan, Philippine *Nikkeijin* would reflect on their belonging to Japan and emphasize their descent by ‘blood’ usually by highlighting or performing their *Japaneseness*.

Leticia Daruca, 65, was born to two Japanese parents, but was orphaned at a young age. She said "I was raised by Filipino people but I've always felt that I am a Japanese. I hope my request (for the registration) will be accepted." (in Kyodo News, 2005). Another Nikkeijin stated that "It is really hard for us because we are torn between two races, the Filipino and the Japanese." He also said "I might have
been raised as a Filipino, but my heart remains Japanese." (The Daily Yomiuri 2008)

Some Nikkeijin attributed their Japaneseness to something that they had learned in the past. During a press-conference in 2008, one elderly woman sang the song "Aikoku Koshinkyoku" (Patriot March) which she learned at school (in Takanashi, 2008). Another Philippine Nikkeijin born in 1931 and who obtained Japanese nationality stated in Japanese:

Even after the war, I have continued to consider myself Japanese. I had been educated as Japanese by my father, and always educated in Japanese manner [at the Japanese elementary school]. I have never had a sense as Filipino. I had a conversation with my Bagobo mother in Japanese, and told her that I would remain Japanese forever. (in Ohno, 2007, p.251)

Instances of “feeling” Japanese despite being raised by a Filipino family, being “torn between races” and explaining one’s ‘natural’ dispositions as a genetic inheritance, are examples of how Japaneseness is substantiated by descent or ‘blood’. Displaying Japaneseness proved necessary to convince an audience, comprising both the public and Japanese lawmakers, of the rightful claim to formal membership of the Japanese nation and consequently, for legal pathways to (re-)gain nationality of that country.

The opportunity to live and work in Japan was an important motive for Philippine Nikkeijin (re)-claiming their Japanese nationality (Ohno, 2007). As
many second-generation *Nikkeijin* were too old to join the workforce in Japan upon obtaining their papers, claiming Japanese nationality would mainly benefit their children and grand-children as they could enter Japan under the category “child of a Japanese national” and under the preferential visa for *Nikkeijin* introduced in 1990. Ohno (2007, p.251) cites one second-generation *Nikkeijin* stating: “My grandchildren are also able to work in Japan after I got Japanese nationality”. This motive is reiterated by others; in a news report in 2008 one second-generation *Nikkeijin* states "If I acquire Japanese nationality, I want to make my children and grandchildren come to work in Japan" (Yasumoto, 2008 a).

Obtaining a Japanese passport however created a dissonance between self-identification and formal citizenship for Philippine *Nikkeijin* who were confronted with how others in Japanese society perceived them. Illustrating this point, Ohno (2007, p.255) cites another of his respondents, a third-generation Philippine *Nikkeijin* who had worked in Japan since 1998. He identifies himself primarily as Filipino, partly because he is not recognized as “fully” Japanese in Japan. He says:

Japanese employers regard me as Filipino and keep my wage amount lower than Japanese workers even after I became Japanese. My identity is Filipino. But, I wish to work in Japan until reaching the age of 60. I and my Filipino wife living with me make a remittance amounting around 100,000 yen to our relatives every month. It’s very difficult to find such amount job in the Philippines. I also want to give my children a chance to work in Japan in the future.
The rise of Japan’s economic power and the improvement of its image in the Philippines have encouraged Philippine Nikkeijin to “come out” and assert their Japaneseness. These Nikkei Japanese-Filipinos have thus gone from being painful and despised reminders of the Japanese occupation to being able to enjoy the privilege of cross-border mobility by virtue of that very same descent. Yet once in Japan, the espousal of Japaneseness was frequently challenged by much stricter definitions of who ought to be Japanese, basing Japaneseness not merely on descent but also on performance.

Nikkeijin’s claims for Japanese nationality, their framing as “orphans of war”, and their subsequent migration to Japan brought about another consequence. Meetings between “orphans left behind” and their relatives in Japan did not always turn out to be the teary reunions that widespread media reports have portrayed (Efird 2010, p.826). On the contrary, reunions have often been made difficult by “fears over inheritance, conflicts with other family members, and an understandable absence of affection between people who are family in biology and name only” (ibid.). Furthermore, Japanese returnees’ lacking cultural competence associated with being Japanese often disappointed assumptions of unity and cultural competence based on blood (Efird 2010). Thus, the pursuit of Japanese nationality by “orphans left behind”, which largely hinged on notions of shared lineage, Japaneseness and ‘blood’, resulted in disappointment in spite of blood relationships.
Following this experience, similar discourses attributing cultural sameness to diasporic Japanese are encountered with greater skepticism. As I will show in more detail in Chapter 6, Japanese descendants’ ability to develop and demonstrate a ‘tie’ to Japan has been an important matter in discussions pertaining to the right to acquire Japanese birthright citizenship and nationality. This does not mean that Japan has abandoned its notion of ethnic homogeneity, but understandings of who ought to be Japanese have tightened and now not only call for a biological tie to a Japanese national, but also require the proper performance of *Japaneseness* (including a specific mannerism, language skills, and fluency in ethno-cultural norms).

The belief in a Japanese ‘ethnic essence’ is largely based on popular discourses theorizing the alleged uniqueness of the Japanese. This discursive and literary genre is termed *Nihonjinron* and is commonly translated as ‘discussions of Japaneseness’ or ‘theories of Japanese’. Publications assigned to *Nihonjinron* contributed to the production of a new Japanese identity by coming to terms with the ordeals and successes Japan had undergone during the 20th century. These include Japan’s defeat and subsequent occupation after the Pacific war and its tremendous economic success since the 1960s. *Nihonjinron* has seen contributions by the Japanese and foreign academe, by journalists, and by the Japanese business elite, but *Nihonjinron* is also popular culture29. Most of it are expressions of non-...

---

29 Sugimoto (1999, p.81) writes that major bookshops in Japan have corners dedicated to *Nihonjinron*, accommodating the numerous “[b]ooks and articles which claim to identify the essence of ‘Japaneseness’ [which] have flooded the market with some selling millions of copies” Sugimoto estimates that about 1000 publications falling into the category “*Nihonjinron*” have been published between 1948 and 1999, and that about one quarter of
official popular nationalism heavily relying on “primordial sentiments inherent in the presumed ‘ethnic essence’ of the Japanese- blood, purity of race, language, mystique- which are the basic ‘stuff’ of Nihonjinron, pre- and post-war” (Befu in McVeigh, 2006, p. 193). Nihonjinron highlights what it perceives as Japanese uniqueness as well as ‘racial’, social and cultural homogeneity of Japanese society.

But being confronted with Nikkeijin immigration to Japan, the greatest challenge to Nihonjinron orthodoxy comes “from individuals and groups that are at once seemingly “Japanese” in appearance and kinship or descent terms, yet demonstrably “Other” in cultural terms (language, values, behavior, and so forth.)” (Efird, 2010, p.230). The ‘return’ of Japan’s so called “war orphans” and the immigration of large number of Nikkeijin were thus events which prompted the redrawing of boundaries between bona fide Japanese and Others.30

Claims for Japanese nationality made by and on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos are thus exacted against the backdrop of already occurring nationality claims by other groups of Japanese descendants and experiences of immigration of foreigners of Japanese descent to Japan. NGOs and Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines are therefore likely to encounter some reservation from their Japanese audiences and Japanese lawmakers stemming from the disappointed primordial assumptions of cultural and linguistic similarity. For advocacy to gain foothold,

the contemporary Japanese population have read one or more books of the genre, making Nihonjinron a sizeable and tenacious phenomenon (p. 82).

30 Tsuda (2008, p.119) observes a resurgence of cultural nationalism and of Nihonjinron discourses among ordinary Japanese citizens following increased immigration of culturally distinct Nikkeijin. Efird (2010, pp.828-829) states that Japan’s “war orphans” posed “a paradox for conventional Japanese definitions of Japanese-ness that rest upon an implicit (and often explicit) equivalency between biology and culture”, due to their Japanese descent yet their being culturally Chinese. Subsequently, these groups of ‘returnees’ were considered foreigners, rather than Japanese.
Japanese-Filipinos thus need to be framed not only as Japanese, but also as adaptive and willing to learn new things (an ability largely associated with children) including ‘things Japanese’, as offspring of Japanese who occupy a central role in the children’s lives, and as deprived of their claimed-for rights.

**Japanese-Filipino children**

Japanese-Filipino children born since the late 1970s are children of transnational migration: either one of their parents had to cross borders to meet the other. This border-crossing was facilitated by income inequalities bringing numerous Japanese tourists and investors to the Philippines, and driving thousands of Filipino women into employment in Japan’s red light districts as “entertainers”. From 1979 (the year termed *Japayuki gannen*) to 2005, the number of Filipino migrants to Japan on “entertainer” visas had steadily increased. The earliest available statistics by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) indicating the number of Filipinos bound for Japan as overseas performing artists (OPA) date from 1993. In that year, 41,408 performing artists left the country, out of which 39,426 were women. Ten years later, in 2003, the number had increased to 58,230 individuals, out of which 55,659 were female. Consequently, the growing feminization of the Philippine labour force bound overseas has provoked concern about women’s safety abroad.

---

31 Literally ‘Japayuki Year One’. It is said to have been the year when the number of migrant women bound for Japan’s night-clubs first exceeded 10,000 (Suzuki 2007). *Japayuki* literally means ‘Japan-bound’ and is a play on words based on the term *Karayuki* - ‘bound overseas’ - used to refer to often impoverished Japanese women deployed to brothels in Asia before and during World War Two.

32 The category ‘OPA’ includes following titles: ‘Performing Artists’, ‘Choreographers and Dancers’, ‘Composers, Musicians, and Singers’

and has sparked public concern about the decline of the Filipino family and the welfare of children who have been ‘left behind’. These panics were highly gendered and saturated with normative ideas about womanhood and femininity, mourning the breakup of the nuclear family (Horton 2008, Parreñas 2005) as well as displaying great anxiety over women’s sexualities (Parreñas 2011). Filipina migrants to Japan have particularly been affected by feminist activist discourses equating hostessing with prostitution and by their labelling as victims of human trafficking under the assumption of their “sexual exploitation” (ibid.). Despite the absence of a comprehensive study on the plight of “entertainers” in Japan, Filipina hostesses have been called the largest group of sex-trafficked persons in the world by the 2004 and 2005 U.S. Department of State’s Trafficking in Persons Reports (ibid.). This identification and Japan’s placement into the “Tier 2 Watch List” category within the said reports (The Japan Times online 2004), have led to a drastic curbing of the number of entrants on “entertainer” visas since 2005. Indeed, the number of “entertainers” entering Japan in 2004 was as high as 82,741. Two years later, it dropped to 8,607 (Parreñas 2011, p.4).

The high numbers of Filipino women migrating to Japan and working in the night business has also led to increasing instances of affective and sexual relationships between Filipino women and Japanese men. From these, numerous Japanese-Filipino children were born. In 1994, the Philippine Ambassador to Japan pointed out that the number of children born to Japanese-Filipina couples was on the rise, and that most of these children were born out of wedlock. Between 1991 and 1993 the embassy had recorded the births of 605 Japanese-
Filipino children, 60% of which were “illegitimate” (Kyodo News Int. 1994 a). In November 1994, then-President of the Philippines Fidel Ramos asked for Japan’s cooperation in helping to settle the issue of Japanese-Filipino children abandoned by their Japanese fathers, which would include the determining and legalization of their status in Japan. (Kyodo News Int. 1994 e). The request for cooperation emerged at around the same time as the case of “Baby Andrew”, an abandoned new-born child in Japan whose parents’ identities could not be determined and who thereby was stateless at birth. The issue of legal status of babies born out of wedlock to foreign women and Japanese men became increasingly pressing. Coincidentally, Japan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994, making the problems of out-of-wedlock births, children’s precarious legal status in Japan, and abandonment by Japanese fathers even more relevant. The exact number of Japanese-Filipino children residing in Japan and the Philippines remains unknown as neither of both countries register their population using ethnic or ‘racial’ categories. Estimates by NGOs range from 100,000 to 400,00034 Japanese-Filipino children born since the late 1970s (JFC Multisectoral Networking Project 2011). Japanese-Filipinos are diverse in age, residency, nationality, familial situation, socio-economic background, and educational attainment.

34 DAWN (2010) estimates 100,000 to 200,000 Japanese-Filipinos living in both Japan and the Philippines. In a statement given by Japanese-Filipino youth made in 2009, 300,000 Japanese-Filipino children were mentioned (United Japanese Filipino Children 2009). Batis (2009) counts 300,000 to 400,000 Japanese-Filipino children and youths currently living in the Philippines.
Detailed profiles of Japanese-Filipino children and their Filipino mothers are available only through data collected by NGOs catering to the said population. However NGO data collection excluded individuals not seeking their help, and thus may paint a more drastic picture of Japanese-Filipinos’ deprivation since individuals not considering themselves in need of support, or not wanting to associate with an NGO out of fear of being considered deprived, would not be featured in such data. With this limitation in mind, we may however look at the profiling of Japanese-Filipinos and their mothers carried out by DAWN and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). DAWN’s data is derived from respondents located in the Philippines, while the IOM has included Japanese-Filipinos in both Japan and the Philippines.

In 2007, DAWN conducted a Philippine-wide registration of Japanese-Filipino children coupled with two questionnaires, one to be answered by the Japanese-Filipino child the other by his/her mother. A total of 994 Filipino mothers and 1,173 Japanese-Filipino children registered (DAWN 2010). The nation-wide registration collected data on Japanese-Filipinos aged up to 33 years old. The mean age was 11 years, with 67% aged 0-12, 26% aged 13-19, and 7% aged 19 and above in 2007 (ibid.). According to DAWN, the registration was conducted to identify the needs and situations of Filipino mothers and their Japanese-Filipino children. The questionnaire thus enquired about the status of support received from Japanese fathers, communication sustained with the father, and whether the child had ever lived in Japan. Approximately 10% of all
respondents said that they had lived in Japan\textsuperscript{35}. A third of all Japanese-Filipino respondents indicated that they had never met their Japanese father. About a third had received or still receives financial support from their fathers, and about 20% maintain or used to maintain regular communication with their father.

The IOM is not regularly involved with the issue of Japanese-Filipino children, but has initiated a project targeted at identifying pathways of safe migration to Japan for Philippine based Japanese-Filipinos following the change in Japan’s nationality law. To do so, the IOM has conducted a study with the help of other NGOs, including the CNJFC, Batis, Batis YOGHI, and DAWN, aimed at identifying the general profile of Japanese-Filipinos in Japan and the Philippines, as well as their desires and concerns. According to the IOM’s findings, a little over 40 out of 106 Japanese-Filipinos residing in the Philippines are aged 11 to 15, while close to 50 are aged 16 to 20 (IOM 2009).\textsuperscript{36} Out of these 106, only around 10% speak Japanese, while all others speak Filipino and various Philippine dialects as well as English. Thirty-six percent were recognized by their Japanese fathers, while 39% were not, and 25% did not indicate. Only 16 respondents were registered in their father’s family registry, but only 10 were Japanese nationals. Sixty-five percent did not receive financial support, 17% indicated that they did. Fifty-six percent had no communication with their fathers (ibid.).

\textsuperscript{35}This does not mean that the rest has replied “no” to the question as some respondents may have left the answer field blank. DAWN does not provide the number of negative responses.

\textsuperscript{36}Some of the graphs featured in the IOM report do not provide exact numbers or percentages which makes an accurate reading difficult.
Similarly, out of 106 surveyed Japanese-Filipino based in Japan, most are aged between 15 and 21 years (ibid.). Of these, 83% indicated that their parents were married, and 83 respondents had Japanese passports. Thirty-eight percent indicated that they spoke only Japanese at home, while 47% indicated that they spoke Japanese and English, or Japanese and Filipino, or Japanese, English, and Filipino. Only 9% did not speak Japanese at home. 87% were registered in their father’s family registry, 52% received financial support from their fathers and 59% maintained regular communication with him (ibid.). The IOM’s data shows that Japanese-Filipinos in Japan face very different situation from their Philippine-based counterparts, notably so if they were born and raised in the country, for which Japanese spoken at home (38% sole language, 47% part of the languages spoken) would be a good indicator. They are more often in possession of Japanese passports and receive financial support from their fathers more frequently.

The expression “Japanese-Filipino children” refers to individuals in their mid-30s as well as babies. “Children” is thus not a reference to people in their childhood, but used in reference to offspring of Japanese-Filipina relationships. “JFC” (short for Japanese-Filipino Child) is the acronym coined by the NGOs included in this study. Although not the first group of Filipino of Japanese descent, a semantic difference was made between these offspring born since the late 1970s and the descendants of pre-war Japanese settlers. The latter called themselves Nikkeijin, with reference to the Japanese diaspora. Their claims and their appearance in mass-media occurred barely a decade before claims by and on
behalf of “JFC”. Post-war born Japanese-Filipinos have also been referred to as Shin-Nikkeijin, whereby the additive “shin” (new) again upholds the difference between Japanese-Filipinos born since the late 1970s and the descendants of Japanese emigrants who settled in the Philippines in the early 20th century. Both the acronym “JFC” and Shin-Nikkeijin were utilized by groups in the Philippines and Japan to popularize alternatives to the more demeaning labels such as Japino which bears a reference to children born to women associated with sex-work. More importantly though, the maintenance of a certain “correct” designation for Japanese-Filipinos are avowals of authority and expertise on issues pertaining to the said population, as well as of rightful representation.

Claims for Japanese nationality by and on behalf of “JFC” are, as illustrated above, not the first instance of claims-making by Japanese descendants. However, what their claims have in common with those by the other groups of Japanese descendants previously discussed is that demands for Japanese nationality by “JFC” similarly invoke the construction and endorsement of a Japanese ethnic identity. Moreover, as studies of Nikkeijin have shown, ethnic identification is contextual, strategic in nature and therefore malleable; an observation which may apply to “JFCs”’ ethnic identifications as well. The importance of social contexts in ethnic identity claims are further illustrated by studies on Japanese children of ‘mixed’ descent in Japan, showing how

---

widespread perceptions of certain ethnic groups in Japan effect on the ethnic identification of these children (Almonte-Acosta 2009; Ishii 2013).

‘Hafu’ in Japan: practicality and desirability of ethnic identifications

Challenging the boundaries between Japanese and foreigners, increasing numbers of children were born to Japanese-foreign couples within Japan since the 1980s. Japan’s ‘internationalization’ resulted in rising numbers of relationships, of marriages and of children born between Japanese and non-Japanese. The figures of ‘international marriages’ had starkly risen from 12,181 in 1985 to 41,481 in 2005. The children born from these relationships are usually referred to as “Hafu” (from the English word “half”), although a number of parents and activists have tried to popularize the term daburu (double) as an alternative term that would not suggest incompleteness. The term “Hafu” is most commonly understood to refer to offspring of Japanese and European descent although it actually indicates that a child has one Japanese parent and one non-Japanese parent.

The expression “Hafu” emerged in the 1970s. Earlier terms denoting children born from relations between Japanese and foreigners - usually American - were Konketsuji (mixed-blood) or the more demeaning label Ainoko (crossbreed). The fairly recent popularity of Eurasian looks has led to a number of Japanese-Caucasian Hafu being featured in popular media (notably on television and in women’s magazines). However the existence of Hafu not fitting into these

mainstream depictions has largely been ignored. “Visible Hafus are a minority of the minority” (Hafu- the film, 2013); the majority are the invisible ones who are born from the three largest groups of foreigners intermarrying with Japanese: Chinese, Filipinos and Koreans (ibid.). One reason why these ‘mixed’ roots Japanese are largely undetectable is that they are often hard to distinguish based merely on their looks. However a more important aspect is that many Asian ‘mixed’ roots Japanese also prefer to conceal their foreign parentage (Ishii, 2013). Japan’s ‘internationalization’ has thus not simply led to a diversification of its social fabric but to a stratified diversification within which the various ‘mixed’ roots are either perceived to be of advantage or to be a liability. More than merely countering the myth of ethnic homogeneity still prevalent in Japanese society, the narratives of different Hafu reveal how racial hierarchies within Japanese society have produced various ways of experiencing ‘being half’. Life experiences greatly diverge among ‘mixed blood’ Japanese in modern Japan (Fish, 2009). Moreover, ethnic identifications are carefully negotiated according to their perceived advantage and desirability in Japanese society as Ishii (2013) and Almonte-Acosta (2009) have observed.

For example, Ishii (2013) shows that ‘mixed-ethnic’ Japanese children negotiate their ethnic identity according to how they perceive possible identifications to fare in society; usually they choose the most beneficial identification and avoid assuming an ethnicity deemed “disadvantageous” (Ishii, 2013, p. 177). Ishii studied children born to Thai-Japanese couples and concluded that most of these children would identify as Japanese, unless they were brought
up by their Thai single-mothers, which would then complicate this sole identification. In some cases, children even feel sorry for their mothers for being Thai (ibid.). Internalizing the ‘race’-based hierarchies of their social environments, children born to a non-Caucasian parent would rather identify as Japanese while those born to Japanese and Caucasians tend to assume their “Western” identity, according to Ishii (2013, p. 178)\textsuperscript{39}.

The ‘race’-based hierarchies reflected by ‘mixed’ children’s choices of ethnic identification are also mirrored in societal perceptions of cross-border, inter-ethnic marriages. “In some dominant representations, writes Suzuki (2007, p.436), Japanese husbands of Filipinas have committed “bad” marriage. Their “badness” has been discussed in gender and racial-national terms: they have undermined their manhood and Japan’s global positionality.” While Suzuki (2007) states that marriages to women from the ‘Third World’ undermine Japan’s “hard-earned First World status in the postwar global order” (p 438), Mackie (1998, pp. 55-56) observes that marriages of Japanese men to Filipino women are “seen as natural if the gendered hierarchies match the racial hierarchies, but a relationship between a Japanese woman and a non-Japanese man from a country

\textsuperscript{39} The assumption of a “Western” identity by ‘mixed’ Japanese children rather than a Japanese one for reasons of beneficence is contextual. Fish (2009) writes that the situation of Hafu in Japan is actually very diverse; during the post-war period most Hafu were born to Japanese women and U.S. American military men stationed in Japan and largely considered a social issue, not least because they often lived in impoverished conditions. During those times, writes Singer (2000, p. 77) those Hafu ‘who could often tried to pass as full-blooded Japanese and denied their American heritage.” However today, most Hafu born to “Western”-Japanese couples are of higher social class and therefore do not face the same kind of discrimination. An exception to this may be Japan’s southern island of Okinawa were the U.S. continues to maintain a military base. Singer (2000) writes that because Caucasian-Japanese Hafu have increased in popularity as entertainers and are seen in TV and print commercials they are considered cool by their peers. Still, numerous children of ‘mixed’ heritage continue to be bullied in school due to their perceptible or known foreign heritage.
perceived as lower down the racial hierarchy is unthinkable, here.” Still, both authors agree that the children born from these unions “are the embodiment of hybridity” (Mackie 1998, p.56), “whose identities further blur the assumed line between the Japanese, the First World and “honorary white” and the Filipinos, the Third World and people of darker color. “ (Suzuki 2007, p.438).

Similarly identifying such ‘race’-based hierarchies, Almonte-Acosta (2009) demonstrates that Filipino-Japanese adolescents prefer to be identified as Japanese. Most of her respondents show very little interest in things Filipino and rather “...go out of their way, so as not to be identified as part of the [Filipino] minority group” (p.28). The knowledge of Tagalog or any other Philippine language is considered a source of embarrassment and therefore undesirable (ibid.). Almonte-Acosta concludes that Filipino-Japanese conceal their Filipino ancestry due to the pervasive myth of ethnic homogeneity, their desires to be part of the majority, as well as due to negative images associated with the Philippines and Filipino women in particular. ‘Race’-based discrimination in Japan therefore greatly impacts on how ‘mixed-blood’ Japanese negotiate their ethnic identities and on how ‘race’ can be an advantage or a liability. The extension of Japanese nationality to Japanese-Filipino children raised in Japan makes it possible for the latter to further conceal their non-Japanese parentage.

An interesting point thus arises from the comparison of Japan-born and -raised Japanese-Filipino adolescents’ assertion of a Japanese ethnic identity with Philippine Nikkeijin’s avowal of Japaneseness. Firstly, the comparison substantiates the strategic and social environment-conscious nature of ethnic
identification. Secondly, it shows that different discourses are employed to justify the same claim although by people in different locations and social contexts. Both groups espouse ethnic identities as Japanese, yet Japan-based Japanese-Filipinos justify their choice through their birth and socialization in Japan as Japanese (Almonte-Acosta, 2009, p. 23). Ethnic identity constructions by “mixed” Japanese children in Japan are contingent upon widely-held images of various ethnic and national groups within Japanese society.

Philippine Nikkeijin on the other hand draw on discourses of ‘blood’, kinship and on ideas of a Japanese ‘essence’ (Ohno, 2007) to support claims to be accepted as Japanese in absence of socialization in Japan. The competing discourses of “nature” versus “nurture” are therefore tactically chosen to support claims for a particular ethnic identity over another. Ethnic identification is thus also tied to matters of social status and pragmatic considerations including the access to privileges and rights. A similar divide arises among my respondents and from the texts produced by the NGOs speaking on their behalf. Although claims have been made on behalf of all Japanese-Filipinos, the individuals spoken for and spoken about are diverse in terms of familial situation, age, citizenship, and place of residence. An important difference exists among children and youth who grew up in the Philippines and those who were raised in Japan; the former were raised by their Filipino families, usually in absence of their Japanese parent, while the latter grew up as Japanese in Japan. Both groups differ culturally and linguistically, and one could argue that they are ethnically distinct as well due to their upbringing in different ethno-cultural environments. The individuals
interviewed for this dissertation, although based in either Japan or the Philippines at the time of the interview, were all raised in the Philippines at least until their early teens.

To recapitulate, “JFCs’” claims towards the Japanese government are not the first ones of their kind; Philippine Nikkeijin had started to demand Japanese nationality and the recognition of Japan’s responsibility towards them about a decade earlier. Also, studies on the ‘return’ of Nikkeijin and of Japanese descendant in Manchuria have highlighted the contextual and malleable nature of ethnic identification. Both occasions provide useful bases of comparison with current processes of claims-making by Japanese-Filipino children as both involve populations mobilizing ethnicity in their prospects of crossing borders into Japan.
Chapter 2: Conceptual approach and framework

The symbolic and political struggle for the recognition of Japanese-Filipinos as part of Japan’s history and of the Japanese nation-state largely consists of the latter’s construction as “JFC” through NGO discourses. Claims for Japanese nationality and citizenship made by and on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos challenge politics of exclusion which legally and ideologically demarcate the boundaries of the Japanese nation-state. Japan’s citizenship regime is an institutionalization of such exclusions aimed at controlling the population as well as fashioning it. Citizenship regimes are indeed sites of potentially conflicting visions over who belongs, enabling or disabling individuals’ access to rights and privileges. Citizenship regimes are institutionalized biopolitics. Foucault (1990; 2003) terms “biopolitics” the management and regulatory controls of the population as a political problem, including the regulation and control of its reproduction. By setting the rules of membership and the inheritance of membership, the state controls the boundaries of its population and the rules of becoming part of it. In this chapter I expound on the concept of consanguinal capital as a tool to analyze the efforts made to overcome institutionalized exclusions, and on the necessary conditions for consanguinal capital to be mobilized towards gaining economic capital associated with cross-border migration and employment.
Citizenship in drawing nation-state boundaries

As a form of membership, citizenship is internally inclusive as well as externally exclusive (Brubaker 1992, p.21). All modern states define their citizenry by formally recognizing some persons as members and all others as non-members. This recognition ideally enables citizens to participate in civil society and marks a legal status entitling citizens to rights, but also demanding the fulfilment of obligations. Moreover, as a form of membership, citizenship entails “a conceptually clear, legally consequential, and ideologically charged distinction between citizens and foreigners” (ibid.). The state, as an organization and as an association of citizens, is usually thought of as the politically sovereign embodiment of the nation. A bounded citizenry is thus “more cohesive than a mere aggregate of persons who happen legally to belong to the state” (ibid.). Citizenship can therefore be thought of as the institutionalized, legally codified expression of membership in the nation.

However, citizenship has changed in the face of globalization: “In an ever-shifting landscape configured by mobilities and positionalities, the idea of citizenship tied to the terrain and imagination of the nation-state is called into question” (Ong 2005, p. 697). Large-scale cross-border migrations have contributed to the de-linking of citizenship from the nation as migrants acquire political and social membership in their country of residence, while maintaining economic, political and social tied to their country of origin. Moreover, the acquisition of formal citizenship and other titles of residency have in many instances followed pragmatic decisions, dissociating citizenship from national and
cultural identities as well as from emotive ties (Ong 1999; 2005). Ong (1999; 2005) depicts how wealthy transnational Chinese business elites maintain their cultural identities despite often possessing numerous passports. Citizenship of particular states is acquired primarily for strategic purposes, to secure investments and grow assets, making citizenship largely instrumental. Indeed, the globalization of markets has subjected citizenship to economic calculations (Ong 1999, p.112). The possession of citizenship of a country on the right “side of the border of security and prosperity” (Shachar 2009 b, p.1) is thus also a sought-after status available to those who can afford it. Consanguinal capital, I argue, can be a means through which citizenship becomes affordable.

Converse to the de-linking of citizenship from the imagination of the nation-state, processes of globalization have also brought about the redrawing of the national and ‘racial’ boundaries of citizenship in some contexts. An example of such a development could be witnessed in the Republic of Ireland in 2003. The Supreme Court of the Republic of Ireland concluded that non-citizen parents of Irish citizen children could no longer claim residency in Ireland (Luibhéid 2004). Before the ruling, giving birth to a child on Irish territory was a more steadfast way for asylum seekers to gain legal residency, than filing for asylum (ibid.). 40 In the discussions preceding and finally leading to the Supreme Court Ruling migrant women, and more specifically their bodies, gained centre stage (ibid.).

40 Indeed, between 1999 to 2002, the number of people granted legal residence in Ireland based on being a parent of an Irish child almost doubled, climbing from 1428 persons in 1999 to 2879 in 2002 (Luibhéid 2004, p.338). These numbers also exceeded the numbers of asylum seekers whose asylum claims had been granted, making childbearing asylum-seekers a controversial issue among the public and the government (ibid.).
Women’s bodies have come under public scrutiny because of their reproductive abilities. Sexuality is at the heart of biopolitical concern as it constitutes the intimate link between the individual and the population through its reproductive function (Foucault 1990, pp.147-149; 2003, pp.251-252). Women are held accountable for the recreation of the ‘racial’, ethnic and national boundaries of communities, as well as for the transmission of cultures and values of the community (Luibhéid 2004, pp. 341-342). Thus, women’s sexuality, and the control thereof, “remains key to establishing and maintaining- but also potentially contesting and reworking- racial boundaries and racialized social orders” (p. 342). Women’s reproductive capacities are both threats to and enablers of biopolitical projects. The centrality of women’s sexuality in the reproduction of the nation and its boundaries is therefore institutionalized in social policy and law, notably in the legal framework guiding the acquisition of nationality and citizenship. As I will discuss in chapter 4, the importance of women’s sexualities in state biopolitics has contributed to the discursive re-imaging of former Filipino hostesses in Japan by NGOs for the purpose of claims-making.

Citizenship laws determine under what conditions women can pass down their nationality and citizenship, or acquire legal residency through their child. The legal codification of pathways to citizenship and residency thus also imply an understanding of which claims, conditions, and relationships are ‘legitimate’, and which merely serve to ‘exploit’ the system. The Republic of Ireland amended its

---

41 Luibhéid describes how asylum seekers in Ireland have been portrayed as "spongers, wasters, and conmen" (member of parliament Noel O’Flynn in Luibhéid 2004, p.339), living comfortably off Irish taxpayers money and engaging in childbearing as a means to exploit the
constitution in 2004, abandoned the *jus soli* principle, and replaced it with a combined principle of *jus domicili* and *jus sanguinis* (Harrington 2005, p.443) that hinged on the acquisition of Irish citizenship of a child onto the legal status of the parent, and his/her length of residence in Ireland. This legal change closed off the possibility for asylum seekers from giving birth to Irish citizens. In Japan, the acquisition of Japanese nationality and citizenship has been based on the principle of *jus sanguinis* since the drafting of the first nationality law in 1899. The ‘blood’ principle has been maintained up to this day, yet the law has also adapted to changes brought about by globalization. For instance, the acquisition of Japanese nationality has until 1985 been patrilineal (except in the case of unmarried Japanese women) but was changed in preparation for the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Although making the acquisition of Japanese nationality bilineal, the 1985 amendment also included new restrictions concerning dual-nationality as Japan’s lawmakers saw an endangerment of the “one person, one nationality” principle in the face of increasing migration and international marriages (Murazumi 2000). The law amendment indeed made it more difficult for children born to parents of different citizenships to acquire Japanese nationality and citizenship.

---

42 Children born in the Republic of Ireland of non-Irish parents could thus only become Irish citizens if at least one parent was a lawful resident for at least three out of the four years prior to the child’s birth. Time spent in Ireland as an asylum seeker or a student does not count (Harrington 2005, p.443).
The study of Japanese-Filipino children reveals a telling picture of the workings of the politics of exclusion which have made some offspring of Japanese-Filipina relations Japanese citizens, and others Philippine citizens. Japanese-Filipino children in the Philippines are born potential Japanese citizens, based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. Japanese nationality and citizenship are conferred primarily based on descent, but also remain dependent on other variables such as the sex of the Japanese parent, on whether a child was born in or outside Japan, on the timing of the child’s registration with Japanese authorities if born overseas, and until 2008, on the marital status of the child’s parents. Thus, an existing biological tie between parent and child does not necessarily equate to the child’s right to Japanese citizenship at birth. Notably, children with Japanese fathers and non-Japanese mothers are subjected to exclusionary practices based on whether they are deemed desirable and fit for Japanese citizenship and nationality depending on the circumstances of their birth as will be elaborated in more detail below.

These politics of exclusion have become a matter of contention for affected individuals and for the NGOs speaking on their behalf, not merely because, in principle, Japan extends citizenship based on *jus sanguinis*, but also because citizenship reflects membership of the Japanese nation and an acknowledgment as part of Japan’s history.
Immigration and citizenship regimes are institutions through which national communities are imagined and materially constructed (Vukov, 2003). The boundaries of the nation-state can expand and contract with changing conceptions of the terms of membership in the imagined community of the nation. The de-linking of citizenship from ethnic and national identities, as well as processes of re-nationalizing citizenship, are contradictory trends which redraw the boundaries of the nation-states simultaneously. Eased access and greater rights and entitlements are granted to wealthy and wealth-bearing foreigners in the pursuit of human capital (Ong 2006, p.2), while borders are tightened for immigrants considered ‘undesirable’ by highly managed immigration and citizenship regimes (Vukov 2003).

Indeed, not only individuals have learned to manoeuvre global politico-economic changes, but as suggested above, governments too have responded to the challenges arising from transnationalism (Ong 1999, 6-7). States have adjusted their immigration and citizenship regimes utilizing the global flow of economic and human capital in their favour. Successive Philippine governments,

---

43 Vukov (2003) writes about immigration regimes. However the same can be said about citizenship regimes.
44 Japan’s ‘undesired’ used to be low-skilled foreigners who were considered to jeopardize Japan’s supposed ethnic homogeneity, thus prompting the preferential treatment of Nikkeijin in the 1990s. With the economic tides turning and numerous Nikkeijin facing unemployment, Japan has recently adjusted its immigration policy to encourage Nikkeijin to return to their countries of citizenship, and has instead actively attracted the highly-skilled through a point system introduced in May 2012. The policy explicitly targets the highly skilled, as “foreign professionals are expected to contribute to economic growth and [the] creation of new demand and employment in Japan” (Ministry of Justice Japan 2012). The point system caters to the transnational elite of highly educated and highly paid workers and thus reinforces Japan’s long-standing official rejection of low-skilled migrant labour. It also broadens the gap among non-citizen residents in terms of the rights and privileges associated with the various titles of their visa.
for instance, have since the 1970s encouraged its overseas population to maintain economic, political, social, and emotive ties with their country of birth, reaping the benefits of large amounts of remittances flowing back into its economy every year. States on the migrant-receiving end have in turn fine-tuned their immigration and citizenship regimes in ways to gain the most from globally mobile talent and investments, while shutting out the ‘undesired’. Citizenship is thus an important status and set of rights which remains contested and subjected to processes of expansion or contraction for the purpose of letting in or shutting out certain groups or populations.

As numerous states have made efforts to attract highly skilled as well as wealth-bearing migrants, state borders have tightened for poorer economic migrants. To be able to cross international borders upheld by market-driven policies, migrants need to possess various forms of capital: economic capital, in the form of assets and investment, cultural capital, in the form of education, work experience and sought-after skills, or social capital, in the form of familial networks allowing them to obtain long-term visas or citizenship (as available through family reunification programs). For migrants unable to produce any of the above, another potential option remains: the mobilization of consanguinal capital.

**Consanguinal Capital in symbolic struggles**

I argue that descent can be mobilized and therefore is a form of capital, similarly to how Bourdieu (1986; 1989) described the working of cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital, “like aces in a game of cards, in the competition for the appropriation of scarce goods of which this social universe is the site”
(1989, p.17). I introduce the concept of *consanguinal capital* as a tool to make sense of the central role played by claims to consanguinity, often epitomized by the metaphor of ‘Japanese blood’, in the symbolic and political struggles by NGOs and a number of activist Japanese-Filipinos advocating for the recognition of “JFC” as part of Japan’s history and thus responsibility. Consanguinal capital can be mobilized by individuals to take advantage of already existing structures allowing for the recognition of descent as legitimate ground for status or special treatment. Various states, for instance Japan, Korea, Germany, Italy or China, have initiated policies of ethnic return. But when such opportunities do not exist, descent first has to be established as symbolic capital. In the increasingly exclusivist world of global, neoliberal governance defining the ideal citizen as *homo oeconomicus* (Ong, 2005), consanguinal capital may be mobilized to overcome the exclusions institutionalized by immigration and citizenship regimes by appealing to consanguinity (as actual biological descent or as ethnicity) as a criterion of inclusion.45

---

45 There are other cases in which ancestry has provided the necessary basis for people to migrate and search for jobs abroad. Such cases were documented in the early 2000s, following the financial crisis in Argentina. Argentineans of Italian descent were able to take advantage of Italy’s citizenship policies, allowing descendants of their early emigrants to ‘return’ and claim membership in the nation-states. In 2000 alone, the Italian Embassy in Buenos Aires gave more than 12,000 passports to Italian-origin Argentines (Hall, 2001). Although not through appeals to descent but to filiation, Vietnamese Amerasians able to provide proof of their U.S. American parentage were allowed to enter the United States as refugees (Bass, 1996). Claims to a particular ancestry can also play out in various ways in national contexts; in her most recent book, Hau (2014) observes that Chinese and Chinese *mestizos* in the Philippines have experienced a re-evaluation of their Chinese ethnic identity following China’s economic rise and increased geopolitical importance. Chinese mestizos and “pure Chinese” in the Philippines are now reclaiming their Chinese descent (which had been subsumed under a Filipino national identity) and put to work their *Chineseness* in order to establish and benefit from business alliances with mainland Chinese companies. TallBear (2013) shows how descent and lineage are constructed and reconstructed in politics over
For the longest time, the Japanese government has maintained that the socio-economic and legal situation of children born to Filipino women and Japanese men is a private matter. But NGOs have challenged this view. To do so, they have engaged in a struggle over “truth”, over visions of social reality which, if successful, ought to provide “JFC” with entitlements and privileges they have thus far not been able to obtain. The symbolic struggle by and on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos thus aims to legitimize consanguinal capital and eventually transform it into other forms of capital. Among these is also Japanese citizenship which, as a sought after resource akin to property, largely determines life chances, opportunities, and security (Shachar 2007, 2009). Moreover, the attribution of Japanese birthright citizenship to Japanese-Filipinos who thus far had been excluded from acquiring it, would also mark the legitimation of consanguinal capital by the Japanese state, and therefore the institutionalization of a new take on the responsibility of the Japanese state towards these offspring.

The mobilization of consanguinal capital is discursive and considerably performative. Consanguinal capital can be transformed into other forms of capital once it is recognized as legitimate, but in order for consanguinity, or ‘blood’ metaphors, to gain salience there need to be a number of conditions, values and dominant (and possibly institutionalized) perceptions of the social world in which consanguinity matters and engenders positive consequences. Before going into detail about these conditions, it is necessary to take a closer look at the idea of consanguinity as it is suggestive, not only of actual blood relationships between

tribal membership and in processes of disenrollment which are often related to issues of access to resources and monetary benefits.

55
two individuals, but also of kinship ties which can be extrapolated into imaginations of an ethnic group, a people, or a nation. In this section I will clarify the relationship between consanguinal capital, ethnicity, the nation, and the need for performance mentioned at the beginning.

Consanguinity has been utilized to denote a kin relationship based on descent from a common ancestor and usually denotes a blood relation, following its root word *sanguis* (blood). But social anthropologists have found that fictive kinship can be just as powerful as those relationships based on biological ties (Marshall 1998, p. 110). Indeed, communities are formed upon the premise of a common descent even if claims to sharing descent are questionable (Fenton 2010, p.3). Consanguinal capital does account for the importance of blood relationships in the popular imaginary with regards to familial as well as ethnic ties; however these blood relationships can be real or merely assumed. At an analytical level, consanguinal capital needs to be understood in political-symbolic terms, not only as a reference to actual biological ties or features. More important than actual blood ties are the meanings attributed to these (real or assumed) blood relationships, and the effects of knowing of these relationships on the ‘sense of self’, and by consequence, on claims. Actual blood ties gain importance only where there is a need for their traceability and documentation, such as in the attribution of nationality and citizenship based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. Yet, even in such cases existing blood ties may either not suffice, or blood ties may simply be presumed. Japan’s nationality law, for instance, provides for both scenarios. Although Japanese nationality and birthright citizenship are attributed
based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, further legal provisions exclude some children of Japanese nationals from acquiring it. Moreover, Japan’s nationality law is based on its family code, stating that children born within wedlock are automatically presumed to be the husband’s, notwithstanding the existence or inexistence of an actual blood tie between father and child (Suzuki, 2010). More important than actual blood ties in political and symbolic struggles, is the performative realization of these ties following popular conflations of biological descent with cultural descent. In such conflations, biological relationships are collapsed into ethnic and/or national belonging.

**Ethnicity and ethnic identity**

Ethnicity has been defined in various ways and is indeed an elusive concept (Poole 1999, p.38) which makes it difficult to work with. Broadly speaking, ethnicity is a way to conceptualize cultural differentiation and the tendency of social actors to identify groups, as well as identify themselves as part of a group, based on the opposition of “us” versus “them”. Max Weber describes ethnic groups as “…those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type, or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration” (*in* Cornell& Hartmann, p.16). What is interesting about this definition is that Weber foregrounds the subjective *belief* in common descent, whether or not such blood ties really exist.

---

46 This translation of Weber's work has been criticized. In his original German text Weber writes of “Habitus” which can be translated as “bearing”, “deportment”, or “outward appearance” (Raum 1995, p.77) The difference between translating “Habitus” as “physical type” instead of “outward appearance” or “deportment” is that “physical type” is more likely to be understood as inherited phenotypical traits linked to biological relations, while “deportment” or “outward appearance” are more likely to be read as references to learned behaviour, mannerism, or clothing.
Ethnicity is thus tied to how we see ourselves, rooting the basis for assumed common descent in physical resemblance, cultural practices, shared historical experience or any combination of these (p.17). Basing his conceptualization of ethnic groups on Weber’s definition, Richard A. Schermerhorn adds the criterion of self-consciousness, emphasizing that ethnic groups are populations that see themselves as distinct (p.19). Ethnic groups are also defined by making claims to kinship, to a common history, and to symbols that capture the core of the group’s identity. Whether they are actually culturally distinct from the larger society within which they form a collectivity is irrelevant (ibid.).

The problem with this definition is that it collapses the concept of ethnicity with the concept of culture. Indeed, the concept of ethnicity is problematic because it is elusive and too easily becomes a fill-in term for either the concept of culture, or for ‘race’. One reason for this is the centrality of descent in the group’s self-understanding, and the difficulty in defining what counts as common descent (Poole, 1999, p.37). Too often do understandings of a common descent conflate biological and cultural relations between present members and their predecessors (p.41). Poole argues that ethnicity can be defined broadly as “constituted not by lines of physical descent, but by the sense of continuity, shared memory and collective destiny” (A.Smith in Poole, 1999, p.39), or narrowly, as family or kinship group of which we become members via birth or rules of entry. Yet the former definition, so Poole, bears the risk of confounding
ethnicity with culture and overstretching the concept. The latter definition is fraught by the risk of conflating cultural with biological descent as “[c]ultural conceptions of transmission often make use of concepts of ‘family’, ‘blood’, ‘kin’, and the like, and it may not be clear- even to members of the cultural group- just how seriously these metaphors should be taken” (ibid.). Likewise, Efird (2010, p.806) points at the highly problematic use of ‘ethnicity’ both in everyday life and at an analytical level, as ethnicity’s ambiguity …also invites the very same associations with biology and behavior that made race so pernicious. Indeed, the confusions of cultural heritage and biological heritability that compose popular ideas of ethnicity often end up seeming all too similar to the “race” that they were meant to replace.

The difficulty with accounts of ethnicity, writes Poole, is the failure to recognize that ethnicity is not a ‘natural’ given or an ‘objective’ fact, but a cultural construct which is mediated in various ways. Ethnic groups appear and disappear; boundaries between ethnic and non-ethnic groups are shifting (p.39). The identification and construction of ethnic groups often has socio-economic and political dimensions, making ethnicity “not different from but a different kind of cultural identity” (ibid). Ethnicity of “JFC” is treated as innate, as an ‘objective’ fact in NGO discourses and by some of my respondents as well.

Poole (1999) argues that every significant cultural group or tradition is characterized by a sense of continuity, a shared memory and a collective destiny, so that even the Catholic Church or the Boy Scouts would qualify as ethnic groups when using the former as defining characteristics (p.39).
Constructing and mobilizing ethnicity

The ‘instrumentalist’ perspective on ethnicity has emphasized the plasticity of ethnic identification (Jenkins 2008, p.46). A main proponent of this perspective is Fredrik Barth who argued that ethnicity is largely defined situationally and is apt to change, meaning that “people (and peoples) can and do shift their ethnic ascriptions in the light of circumstance and environment. The pursuit of political advantage and/or material self-interest is the calculus which is typically held to inform such behaviour” (ibid.). The mobilization of Japaneseness by Philippine Nikkeijin, as elaborated above, provides an illustration of the instrumentalist perspective on ethnicity. Filipinos of Japanese descent had hidden their Japanese ancestry for decades after the war. Yet as Japan experienced its economic miracle while the Philippine economy dwindled, claiming Japanese lineage and ethnic identity became beneficial as means to qualify for entitlements (reparation, Japanese citizenship, or a Nikkeijin visa) extended by the Japanese state. Japanese lawmakers too have stretched the definition of ethnic Japanese in times of urgent need for affordable labour-force.

Despite being socially constructed and in flux, ethnic identities are often perceived as ‘natural’ by most actors in society. For that reason, ethnicity all too often becomes conflated with ‘race’, as Poole (1999) and Efird (2010) have noted, resulting in an amalgamation of physical markers with behavioural and cultural traits, a particular geographical ‘origin’, and a common history. This amalgamation may at times be endorsed by individuals, who rationalize certain behaviours and preferences as innate, and a particular geographical location as well as cultural environment as ‘natural habitat’ or ‘homeland’. As I will show in
this study, such tendencies have manifested in how a number of Japanese-
Filipinos talk about their being of Japanese ‘blood’. My notion of consanguinal
capital, which refers to real or assumed blood relations with a person or a people,
captures the tendencies to conflate ethnicity with biological relationships in
strategies of claims making since, as I will demonstrate, the mobilization of
consanguinal capital is both discursive and performative.

Having highlighted that ethnicity and ethnic identity are malleable and
instrumental aspects of one’s personal identity, it is also necessary to remember
that ethnic identity has affective and emotional dimensions. Ethnicity is an aspect
of the cognitive constitution of individuality, and becomes part of the perception
of self through socialization (Jenkins 2008, p.49). What importance ethnic
identity eventually gains for an individual differs in relation to the political, social
and cultural context in which she/he lives. Ethnic identity can also become more
or less significant throughout a lifetime. Ethnicity, the existence and means of
cultural differentiation, is taught and its salience and meaning are socially and
historically contingent. But despite ethnic groups and identities being flexible,
individuals do not always have the possibility to ‘choose’ who they are since
external categorizations limit their options.

Social collectivities, writes Jenkins, “are actually shaped, to greater or
lesser degrees, by a combination of group identification and social categorization.
Each is simultaneously implicated in the other; social identity is produced and
reproduced in the dialectic of internal and external definition.” (p.83) Group
identifications form in relation to an assumed audience and the awareness of a
“socially constructed cultural repertoire” (p. 82). External definitions may acknowledge group identification as is, or impose otherwise. Such external categorizations as well as the perception of how important ethnicity figures in a person’s individual identity are subject to change: “Ethnicity, or at least an awareness of it, is likely to figure in different ways, with different social costs and benefits (consequences) attached, in each place and at each time” (p. 49). Consequently, the meanings attached to ethnicity, and the various social consequences these meanings have in a particular setting, will influence how much ethnicity matters to the individual and to a larger group (ibid.). Thus, if the deployment of a particular ethnic identity engenders higher social status, access to resources, or cross-border mobility, then such benefits would make this particular ethnic identity more significant to the individuals who are able to claim it. But whether external categorizations make it possible for people to claim a particular ethnic identity, challenge widely held categorizations, or to resist the ascription of certain identities is a matter of politics and power, and a matter of symbolic struggles over perceptions of the social world. In the context of transnational, cross-border claims-making, the establishment of ethnic groups and the contestation of social categories have become more complicated because of the simultaneous involvement of (at least) two socio-cultural environments with differing definitions of ethnic categories, as well as of different audiences in relation to which ethnic groups and identities are produced.

The establishment of ethnic groups and the challenge of ethnic categories and their boundaries is part of the symbolic and political struggle by and on behalf
of Japanese-Filipinos. Social classifications, according to Bourdieu (1989, p.22), “organize the perception of the social world and, under certain conditions, can really organize the world itself.” Ethnicity is a means of social classification that operates primarily as binary opposition of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. When engaging in symbolic struggles aimed at contesting the boundaries of these categories, consanguinal capital is mobilized by NGOs and activist Japanese-Filipinos, and sought to be transformed into symbolic capital. This may indeed bring about institutional change, create new Japanese citizens, enable migration, attribute status, and enable access to resources for those who thus far had been excluded.

The symbolic struggle over divisions and classifications is a struggle over perceptions of the world; for this struggle over symbolic power, symbolic capital is the basis (Bourdieu 1989, p.23). Bourdieu’s works focus on the making of social classes, the establishment and perpetuation of social stratification through various forms of capital. But ethnicity and ethnic groups, as socially structuring forces, are also subject to occasionally conflicting processes of formation and classification. In processes of claims-making by and on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos, and in the discursive construction of the “JFC”, consanguinal capital is sought to be legitimized and recognized so that new classifications and groups can be asserted. NGOs and Japanese-Filipinos asserting of a different way of drawing ethnic boundaries (targeted at the inclusion of “JFC” as ethnic Japanese and as Japanese nationals) marks a challenge to current state biopolitics in Japan.

The efficacy of the symbolic struggle “…depends on the degree to which the vision proposed is founded in reality.” (Bourdieu 1989, p.23) As mentioned
earlier, consanguinal capital needs certain conditions to be mobilized and potentially acknowledged. The importance of blood relationships in the popular imaginary of familial and ethnic ties provides fertile ground for symbolic struggles capitalizing on blood discourses, on consanguinity. Moreover, for cross-border claims for citizenship and residency titles to gain symbolic credit based on consanguinal capital, citizenship and immigration regimes need to be premised upon an understanding of citizenship as nationality and of nationality as ethnicity, as well as on an understanding of immigration of ethnic ‘others’ as threatening. Thus, for ‘blood’ arguments to gain salience, citizenship needs to be underpinned by ethno-national conceptions and acquired based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. Consanguinal capital, in order to be mobilized, needs a legal and ideological environment in which citizenship, nationality, ethnicity, and biological descent are conflated to a great degree. Such an ideological environment is largely provided by Japanese nationalism.

**Ethnicity and ‘blood’ in Japanese nationalism**

There is no one Japanese nationalism, but different forms of nationalisms which have developed and changed over time and in response to various political events. Japan’s nationalism as we know it today has its roots in the Meiji period, war-time mobilization in the context of Japan’s imperial project, and Japan’s post-war search for a new place and identity as a nation, and in the world following Japan’s defeat. One aspect of Japan’s nationalism, which McVeigh (2006) terms “ethnos nationalism”, can be traced back to the Meiji period (1868-1912) during which the concept *kokutai*, which translates into “national polity”, “national
essence”, or “national entity”, gained ground as ideology against U.S. American and European influences and political power (p.43). *Kokutai* referred to the idea of a uniquely Japanese polity and implied Japan’s ‘immutable’ and ‘national character’ (ibid.). Moreover, discourses on *kokutai* came to be constituted by the idea of the nation as family writ large. Japan’s ethnos nationalism thus also “arose from linkages to an extended kinship at the national level with [the] Emperor as *paterfamilias*, an inherent connection to the “nation’s body” (*kokutai*), essentialist definitions of culture and race, and […] false consciousness.” (p.148)

These essentialist definitions of culture and race, and indeed the conflation of the two, continued to characterized Japanese nationalisms during and after the war. The most popular and comprehensive nationalism of the postwar period was “the belief in a particular type of nation-ness that vacillates between ethnocultural and ethnocracial definitions of identity. […] A theme of Japan’s postimperial ethnos nationalism is “homogeneity”, a myth so powerful that it informs the idiom of everyday discourse, media, journalism, and academic writings about Japan” (p.147) Despite being a myth, the unfounded associations and mistaken connections between ethnicity, race, culture, behaviour, or linguistic ability implied in ethnos nationalism, persist because most people think instinctively, habitually and unsystematically, leaving these links largely unquestioned (ibid.). One consequence of such habitual associations is, as McVeigh (2006, p.187) elaborates, the idea of “‘exclusive ownership” based on “ racially exclusive

---

48 Kazoku kokka, meaning the “Nation-state as family” was a concept popularized by law scholar Hozumi Yatsuka (1860-1912). (McVeigh 2006, p.44)
possession” of their [Japanese] culture, so that its acquisition by non-Japanese is considered relatively unusual and remarkable.”

Post-war Japanese nationalism is also marked by the search for a new identity. One expression of popular, non-official nationalism developing from this search was *Nihonjinron* (discourses on Japanese uniqueness, or theories of Japanese). Despite its popular roots, *Nihonjinron* has become an “intellectual hegemony” (Befu in McVeigh 2006, p.193) and as such has accompanied and supported official nationalism. *Nihonjinron* is insofar a continuation of wartime meditations on *Japaneseness* as it similarly relies on “primordial sentiments inherent in the presumed ‘ethnic essence’ of the Japanese- blood, purity of race, language, mystique- which are the basic ‘stuff’ of *Nihonjinron*, pre- and post-war” (ibid.).

Racialist thinking and nationalism in Japan have gone hand in hand. Racialism has legitimized the myth of Japan’s homogeneity, is supported by the belief among many Japanese that they belong to a distinct “racial group” due to their possession of “Japanese blood”, as well as by the denial or downplaying of ethnic minorities in Japan (Chinese, Koreans, Ainu) (p.211). The Japanese nation remains imagined by its members as kinship, symbolized by the metaphor of “Japanese blood”. Indeed, the idea of race is often expressed in terms of blood, as McVeigh (p.210) notes. Being a “pure Japanese” is often expressed in terms of

---

49 McVeigh (2006, p.194) also writes that the state has appropriated popular, non-official manifestations of nationalism for its own nationalist concerns by supporting *Nihonjinron* oriented research projects, financing the translation of *Nihonjinron* classics into English for an international audience, or by having corporate centers of power advocate principles from *Nihonjinron*. 
being “pure-blooded” (junketsu), whereas those who find themselves in between racial categorizations are referred to as konketsuji (literally, “mixed blood child”, but also understood as “half-breed”, “half-blood”) (ibid.). Moreover, the racialist ideology underpinning Japan’s nationalism is often “dressed up in euphemisms of exceptionalism and “cultural uniqueness.”” (p.211)

The racialized and ethnicized conceptions of the nation and of nation-ness are reflected in Japan’s nationality law, which despite numerous post-war revisions has remained based on the principle of jus sanguinis, while levels of naturalization have remained low when compared internationally (McVeigh 2006, p.212). The implications of racialism, meaning the habitual cognitive equation of “land=people=culture=language”, as well as an “implicit genetic determinism” (ibid.), are ideological bases enabling the mobilization of consanguinal capital. Consanguinal capital makes use of such habitual cognitive equations, of official and non-official forms of ethnos nationalism, as well as of the legal codifications guiding the acquisition of nationality and citizenship. Also, these habitual cognitive equations and an implicit genetic determinism are often also endorsed by the individuals or groups mobilizing consanguinal capital. The ideological scaffold provided by Japan’s nationalism as well as its institutionalization in Japan’s nationality law thus enable descendants of Japanese nationals to mobilize consanguinal capital in claims for membership in the nation-state.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In June 2008 I started my six month long internship at the Development Action for Women Network (DAWN) in Manila which laid the foundation for this study. On a daily basis I came to the office, helped out at the research department and ate lunch and meryenda (afternoon snack) with my colleagues. On Saturdays, I participated in activities involving NGO members or entertained the NGO’s children clients\textsuperscript{50} while their mothers’ attended workshops. My tasks included teaching DAWN’s Japanese-Filipino clients how to write hiragana, katakana and simple Japanese words whenever the volunteer teacher, a Japanese lady in her 80s, was absent. Sometimes I was asked to fold origami with the children. During lunch, the staff would congregate around the dining table in the Executive Director’s office while NGO-clients who were employed by DAWN’s livelihood project would eat in a different part of the office. NGO staff and NGO clients used different cutlery because the staff did not want to share their forks and spoons with the organization’s clients. After lunch, some of the clients would wash our plates.

I included a brief depiction of these daily lunch rituals since it was those moments of differentiation which raised my awareness about the potential

\textsuperscript{50} NGOs identify themselves as service-providers which explains why they refer to individuals seeking their help as “clients”. These services include help in locating the Japanese father of Japanese-Filipino children as well as legal and para-legal support in claims for recognition and/or alimony towards the father. These clients and their concerns constitute “cases”, in NGO lingo.
discrepancies between the day-to-day interactions of staff and clients and the public image cultivated by the organization, and which subsequently encouraged me to observe NGO discourses more critically. In the course of my internship, seeing clients quit the organization, I also realized the gap between ideals espoused by NGO staff and desires fostered by clients. The experience of conflicting ideals and desires moreover motivated me to compare NGO discourses with the narratives of the people they claim to represent. In doing so, I would not only be able to elaborate on the discursive strategies of claims-making employed by NGOs, but also on the meanings attached to these claims and the motivations for participating in the claims-making process as asserted by NGO clients. Nevertheless I do understand that firstly, not all NGOs choose the same approach in their advocacy, in supporting their clients, and in exercising and organizing leadership within the organization. Secondly, NGOs themselves face constraints; they need to appeal to potential funders to secure the necessary means to sustain their advocacy as well as the services they provide for their clients.

I initially embarked on this study because I was struck by how NGO workers seemed to believe that imparting knowledge about ‘Japanese culture’, and having their Japanese-Filipino clients practice things Japanese was nothing but the satisfaction of a ‘natural’ desire on the part of their clients. Most of these children and youths had never lived in Japan, many had never visited the country, and none of the children grew up with Japanese relatives. Their only connection to Japan was a biological relationship with a Japanese citizen. This connection to Japan through biological ties gained ideological weight over time, as children not
only learned of their parentage, but also learned to attribute meaning to it. This process is largely shaped by NGO workers and their own perception of what it means to be the child of a Japanese man and a Filipino woman in the Philippines. It is also shaped by societal perceptions as reflected in how Filipino mothers construe their children’s descent, in the children and youths interaction with friends and peers, as well as in how and when mass media reported about Japanese-Filipinos as “news”.

Moreover, NGOs in both Japan and the Philippines have become important actors and middle-men through their access to transnational networks, offering various support services to Japanese-Filipinos and mediating between them, a public audience in Japan and the Philippines as well as representatives of the Japanese State. NGOs furthermore provide their members with access to “imaginative resources” (Appadurai 1996) pertaining to Japan in absence of real experiences. These resources are knowledge about Japan and Japanese culture, Japanese language classes, and encounters with Japanese volunteers and visiting students. As such NGOs play a central role in framing Japanese-Filipinos and their various situations for political action and advocacy, while also actively engaging in producing the imaginative and ideological resources for their Japanese-Filipino clients to construct their ethnic identities and their identities as “JFC”.

Thus, to better understand what it means to be “JFC”, how being “JFC” has been constructed through and for NGO advocacy, and how these meanings relate to claims for recognition and Japanese nationality, I decided to analyse
NGO discourses relating to children born to Filipino mothers and Japanese men, to find out about the personal views and involvement with NGOs of the persons concerned, and observe the disputes around Japan’s nationality law, an institution which itself embodies discourses and beliefs of belonging, nation-ness, and what it means to be Japanese. In doing so I have focused on Japanese-Filipinos based in the Philippines, on NGOs based in the Philippines, and by consequence, I have concentrated on views, experiences, and on politics largely emanating from Philippine-based agents. I have chosen to do so because these claims are made across borders towards the Japanese government, yet on behalf of a population of de-facto non-citizens. My interest thus centred around the arguments through which belonging was expressed and justified, and through which responsibility and acknowledgment were demanded despite the lack of Japanese citizenship, and of social as well as cultural ties to Japan among most Philippine-based Japanese-Filipino members of NGOs.

**Fieldwork and Data gathering Process**

The bulk of my fieldwork took place from June to December 2008 as well as from October 2010 to December 2011. In September 2009 I joined the IOM-organized conference in Saitama, Japan which concluded their research project on Japanese-Filipino Children (JFC Multisectoral Networking Project, 2011). Between 2010 and early 2011, I conducted fieldwork in Tokyo and in Osaka for four months and in 2011 I travelled to the Philippines on multiple occasions for several weeks each time. In the Philippines, my research sites were Metro Manila and its vicinity.
I spent the first leg of my fieldwork in Japan. I was able to interview 20 respondents in Japan: 9 NGO workers, volunteers or individuals involved with NGOs through cooperation and 11 Japanese-Filipinos, three of who were in Japan at the time of the interview to file a lawsuit. I met most of my respondents through snowballing, starting with NGO workers and other individuals involved with Japanese-Filipino children who provided me with information about ongoing events where I could meet potential respondents.

During my fieldwork in the Philippines in 2011, I participated in a summer camp organized by Batis YOGHI which gave me the opportunity to spend five full days to participate in and observe the NGO’s activities as well as to get to know Japanese-Filipino camp participants. During my fieldwork in the Philippines I was also able to arrange interviews with 3 Japanese-Filipino NGO clients as well as 3 guardians (two mothers, one grand-mother) of Japanese-Filipino Children at Maligaya House who were introduced to me by the head of the organization. In addition to NGO clients I was able to conduct interviews with 5 NGO staff, 2 at DAWN, 2 at Maligaya House and 1 at Batis. I also repeatedly visited the Batis office located in Quezon City and attended their Christmas party in December 2011 where I engaged in numerous informal conversations with both staff and NGO members.

My reliance on NGOs as gate-keepers in the Philippines has resulted in a limitation concerning the type of respondents I could access. Since I met my Philippine-based respondents through NGOs they tended to be of less privileged socio-economic backgrounds. Japanese-Filipinos from more affluent families do
exist and most probably would have very different stories to tell, yet they do not join NGOs and are thus harder to find.

**The Data**

Table 1 in the Appendix provides an overview of my Japanese-Filipino respondents and their biographical data, such as age, nationality, country based in and whether they were or had been members of any of the NGOs featured in this study. In addition to my Japanese-Filipino respondents, I interviewed three mothers of Japanese-Filipinos children, one grand-mother and a total of 13 NGO workers, volunteers and persons who had been involved with Japanese-Filipino children and youth (cf. Table 2).

The large majority of my interviewees had only Philippine passports at the time of the interview, which due to my focus on claims-making on behalf of Japanese-Filipino Children based in the Philippines is not surprising. All my respondents were in their late teens to mid-twenties with only one in his thirties. Among my Japanese-Filipino respondents 11 are female and 13 are male.

**Analyzing discourse**

Discourse is the construction of knowledge through spoken and written texts, wherein texts can also take shape as cultural artefacts or visual representations. Discourse analysis presumes that discourses construct social objects; as such it is a methodology based on a constructivist epistemology (Hardy, 2001, pp. 26, 28). Critical discourse analysis mainly deals with texts, yet I would like to factor in practices (such as study tours, language classes, workshops, and theatre plays)
which also reflect a set of beliefs and social ‘truths’. To analyse the discursive construction of the “JFC” as well as processes of making claims by NGOs on behalf of Japanese-Filipino children, I collected newsletters and books published by the NGOs featured in this study, papers published in journals by NGOs workers, online publications (on web-sites, personal blogs and on social networking sites), copies of speeches by NGO workers and by Japanese-Filipinos as well as newspaper articles and television segments. Moreover, I included court statements by Japanese-Filipino plaintiffs read during trial on December 22nd, 2010, the text of the judgment by the Supreme Court of Japan of June 4th 2008 and the appended statements by the various judges involved to examine the arguments and the discussion surrounding the demands for the amendment of Japan’s nationality law.

The first four items are largely publications by NGOs or individuals involved with NGOs, while the newspaper articles and television segments are texts produced by mass media which I have included to help me further complete my analysis of NGO discourse. Interestingly, most newspaper articles derive their information from either one of the organizations studied and therefore perpetuate NGO discourse, while also affirming NGOs’ authority on issues pertaining to Japanese-Filipino children. Discourse is closely tied to the establishment of ‘truth’ which occurs when “certain forms of knowledge are rendered more valid than others, certain forms of knowledge are excluded from being considered as “true”.” (Mills, 1997, p. 19) This requires speakers who are considered knowledgeable and thus an authority, such as staff at Batis, Batis YOGHI,
DAWN, Maligaya House and the CNJFC who remain recognized authorities on the issue for journalists seeking information and interviews. The “general politics of truth” (Foucault in Mills, 1997, p.18) are not merely about what is being said, written or done, but also about how it is expressed and who does the expressing, meaning that whether we consider a statement true or false is also dependent on “the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.” (ibid.). Thus, discourse analysis involves looking into how knowledge is produced, what is being posited as knowledge, and who contributes to its production.

Discourses can never be found in their entirety but the methodological study of texts and practices contains evidence to particular discourses (Hardy, 2001, p. 26). Despite involving a selection process leading to the inclusion of certain texts and observations while excluding others, I have made an effort to gather a maximum number of publications by all the NGOs. While my data gathering of NGO publications was partly limited by what was available to me, I was able to collect 42 issues of DAWN’s newsletter Sinag including numbers published as early as 1996, the 10 issues of the CNJFC’s newsletter Maligaya on hand when I visited their office, as well as a total of 6 publications, three by DAWN (2003; 2004; 2010) and 3 by Batis (Batis Center for Women Inc., 2009; Batis YOGHI, 2009; Takeda& Erpelo, 2008) in addition to a journal article published by DAWN’s Executive Director (see Nuqui, 2008) and a book chapter published by two Batis staff (see Anolin & Javier, 2011). Batis had the least publications.
Looking at NGO publications allows me to analyze how NGOs frame their clients while at the same time producing themselves as discursive authorities, meaning as entities with expertise, knowledge, and therefore the right to speak. These newsletters are written by NGO staff and are sent out to their donors as well as subscribers located in Japan, the Philippines and other parts of the world. During my internship at DAWN I once assisted in getting the newsletters ready to be dispatched by pasting address stickers onto them. I noticed recipients at various United Nations offices, at Philippine government agencies as well as other overseas funding organizations. I furthermore screened as many newspaper articles as I could find written in English about Japanese-Filipino children since the late 1980s to gain a telling picture of when Japanese-Filipinos were a topic in mass-media, who was talking about Japanese-Filipinos, and what was being reported.

In my search I limited the dates of publication to the years 1980-2011. I started with 1980, one year after “Japayuki gannen” (Japayuki year one) (Suzuki, 2007), the year deemed the onset of Filipina migration to Japan, as this would have been the earliest possible date for Japanese-Filipino children born to Filipina migrants in Japan to become an issue attracting public attention. I realized that Japanese-Filipinos surfaced in media reports only when NGOs started to publicize their existence, 13 years after “Japayuki gannen”. The first article entitled “Program for Abandoned ‘Japinos’ Launched” appeared on June 29, 1992 and was published by Kyodo News citing Batis as its source of information. Batis had
announced the launch of special a program for the Japanese-Filipino children of their Filipina clients.

There are limitations to discourse analysis as a method. As mentioned earlier, there is always a concern over how much material can be accessed, collected and studied. Moreover, it is understood that “not all possible voices are expressed, nor are the voices that are present expressed on equal terms” (Hardy, 2001, p. 32), especially where NGOs dominate the production of discourse. To overcome this limitation, I generated ethnographic data from participant observation, field notes and interviews. These were used to further contextualize the texts I was analysing, and to gain insights into the experiences and thoughts of NGO clients and other involved individuals (such as NGO volunteers and members of other support organizations) whose opinions may find little representation in NGO constructions of the “JFC” if they derivate too much from dominant tenets.

I chose to include the four NGOs Batis (and Batis YOGHI), DAWN, Maligaya House and the CNJFC in my study because they have a long-standing history of supporting Japanese-Filipino children in the Philippines and in Japan. In the mid-2000s a number of newer NGOs mushroomed across the Philippines such as the *Shin Nikkeijin Network* (founded in 2006) and *Maganote* (established in 2009), equally utilizing the victimization discourse and painting life and work in Japan as Japanese-Filipino children’s ultimate dream. These organizations and foundations have no link to the above-mentioned and have been accused by the latter to be ‘false NGOs’ and ‘recruitment agents in disguise’,
earning an income from dispatching eligible Japanese-Filipinos and their mothers
to Japan for work, and burdening them with high debts. These allegations have
indeed been corroborated by two of my respondents, a social worker in Japan
involved with migrants from the Philippines and a Japanese-Filipino activist
conducting interviews with newly-arrived Filipino women and their Japanese-
Filipino children, sent by one of the two organizations. I have excluded these
organizations from my analysis because they have not significantly contributed to
the discursive construction of the “JFC” (the term “JFC” is not used by the latter
two organizations) which has mainly been a political enterprise. Rather, I focus on
those organizations which have brought the issue to public attention, liaised with
Philippine and Japanese lawmakers, and brought their advocacy to culminate in
litigation.

Multi-sited ethnography

The ethnographic component of my data collection took place in multiple
locations: in Metro Manila and Cavite in the Philippines as well as in Tokyo and
Osaka in Japan. Since I am dealing with transnational networks, transnational
claims-making and with migrants as well as migration aspirants, my ethnographic
method had to be multi-sited to grasp the various relationships linking various
stake-holders, as well as ongoing processes marking claims across national
borders. Multi-sited ethnography breaks with the tradition of conducting
fieldwork in one bounded site for a relatively long period of time and instead
acknowledges that networks, connections, communicative practices, associations,
and relationships span across geographical locations and often across state
borders. With the increasing importance of online communication and new media, these sites can also be located within the world-wide-web. Multi-sited ethnography “defines as its objective the study of social phenomena that cannot be accounted for by focusing on a single site.” (Falzon 2009, p.1).

For this study, I followed personal contacts, referrals and organizational connections linking actors in both countries to find the people and the sites where I would conduct interviews and observation. In addition to my experiences at DAWN I thus conducted fieldwork at the various sites I gained knowledge of and access to through my initial NGO contacts. These sites included the Batis office in Quezon City, the Batis YOGHI summer-camp which took place in Cavite in May 2011, DAWN’s office in Ermita, Maligaya House’s office in Quezon City as well as the CNJFC’s office in Tokyo, The Tokyo High Court where three of my Japanese-Filipino respondents claimed their Japanese nationality, the room near the Court building which was rented for the subsequent press statement, various Christmas parties organized by the NGOs in Manila (2011) as well as one in Tokyo (2010), and a number of restaurants and cafes where I had informal chats as well as tape-recorded in-depth interviews with my respondents.

My fieldwork had to cover multiple sites to trace and capture the networks and social fields of individuals located in both Japan and the Philippines, notably in Tokyo and Manila, who were largely connected by the common purpose of advocacy on behalf of Japanese-Filipino children and their Filipino mothers. Organizational networks intersected with the personal, familial networks of NGO clients who had migrated, returned, or made plans to shift location. Part of my
fieldwork also involved following people and interviewing them at the different locations they had travelled to. Following people and their connections did not only bring me to different geographical locations, but also enabled me to see how differing socio-cultural contexts impacted on how NGO advocacy was framed, what meanings were attached to having (only) one Japanese parent, and how the experience of migration and entering a new social context impacted on my respondent’s understanding of ‘being Japanese’.

In analysing processes of discursive constructions, the geographical location of the various stake-holders participating in discursive activities was important. Discourses pertaining to Japanese-Filipino Children were not uniform but varied, partly due to the respective situatedness of those who emitted statements as the geographical location contributes to the historical and social contexts within which discourses emanate. One example is the discussion on Japanese-Filipinos’ ‘identities’ which has taken on different meanings depending on whether ‘identity’ was utilized in Japan for Japan-based NGO clients or by Philippine-based NGOs. Furthermore, much of my data was located online and therefore accessible from virtually any location. The internet provided a site which allowed for cross-border interaction, sharing and organizing notably among Japanese-Filipino children and youth, NGO staff but also researchers like myself. Batis YOGHI for instance maintains a Facebook group geared at easing communication among its geographically spread-out members. Access to the group’s conversations is subject to approval by its administrators who make sure
only individuals who they themselves know and who meet Batis YOGHI’s membership criteria could join.51

I did not conduct an online ethnography52, but instead used online social networking sites on which I knew my respondents would be active as well as blogs maintained by my respondents to further gain insights into their thoughts, activities, as well as networks. The people they communicated with on sites like Facebook were largely individuals who I had met personally, or else people I had heard of through casual conversations, making it easier for me to situate their exchanges online. Moreover, blogs and sites like Facebook provided my respondents an alternative form of expression where videos or pictures could be posted along with their comments. These could be images of Japanese popular culture, such as popular manga (comic book) characters, or the re-post of an advertising campaign using ‘mixed blood’ Filipinos as its peg53, accompanied by critical reactions. Online platforms also enabled me to follow day-to-day postings by my respondents and other Japanese-Filipinos who I had connected with online, which often pertained to life outside the NGO. Facebook is by no means a complete depiction of a person’s daily routine or personal life, but the site helped

51 To become a member of Batis YOGHI one has to be Japanese-Filipino or a child of a current or former migrant worker.
52 Rotman et al., (2012, p. 208) write that “[o]nline ethnography adopts principles of ethnographic research formed in offline environments, and applies them to virtual environments, with the necessary adjustments (e.g. distant observation, extensive use of pre-formed textual artifacts). The strength of online ethnographies lies in providing comprehensive descriptions of structures, interactions and content, beyond the obvious traces that users and institutions leave through their online interaction, and in giving a voice to the various users.” For further discussion regarding ethnography in online environments also see Garcia, et al., (2009).
53 One of my respondents critiqued the advertising campaign by Bayo, a Filipino fashion brand, which in his opinion glorified persons of ‘mixed-race’ background and ignored that many children born to parents of different color could not live up to the image of the wealthy, well-bred offspring the advert was portraying.
me to keep track of developments in person’s lives and also revealed what people deem worth publishing.

**Repositioning myself: from former NGO volunteer to researcher**

Having volunteered for DAWN provided me with experience which I could use to position myself as someone who had some insight, some exposure to NGO work, and was familiar with the networks. However my association with DAWN also raised caution among some workers and clients of other NGOs. I noticed this when I had informal chats with women clients at Batis. Due to the organizational rift in the past involving DAWN, the women I talked to had developed scepticism as to the agenda of DAWN and its staff. One of the women I talked to had had the opportunity to join DAWN when it was first established, but had chosen to remain with Batis instead, because she felt that with DAWN’s Executive Director “we are always clients, never members”. My fieldwork thus also revealed the politics and dynamics among the different NGOs despite their dedication to similar issues and to Japanese-Filipino Children. I gained a sense of the complex relations between NGOs and witnessed ongoing tensions. Indeed, the NGOs studied were partners in fighting for a cause but at the same time they competed with each other over remaining relevant, gathering clients and over attracting funds. My having volunteered for a particular NGO thus already positioned me within the ongoing politics. Coming ‘from DAWN’ was suggestive of a particular approach to the issue of Filipino women returnees from Japan and

---

54 At least Batis and DAWN would aim for the same sources. Maligaya House had received a one-off funding by the Japanese government upon its establishment. Maligaya House and the CNJFC are otherwise largely funded by donations and membership fees paid by their supporters.
their Japanese-Filipino children, as well as of personal relationships and of loyalty to the organization’s long-standing Executive Director. At the very beginning, this affected my access to other NGOs, an effect I could mitigate over time by making my own position clear. This included dissociating myself from DAWN and repositioning myself as NGO-independent researcher.

Notes on Privacy and on the generation of pseudonyms

Because I deal with a tightly knit network of people, I recognized privacy to be of chief importance. Most of my respondents know each other and at times work with each other. Any ethnography that involves the following of networks and snowballing bears the risk of disclosing true identities of interviewees through just a few biographical details to readers who happen to be familiar with the networks studied. Thus, whenever I deemed it unnecessary, I refrained from providing too many details about my respondents. All the names of my Japanese-Filipino respondents are pseudonyms. However, to maintain the ethnic marker of any given name, I used Japanese names to replace Japanese names and non-Japanese names for all others. In doing so I could preserve a sense of how frequent parents (or Filipino mothers) chose or avoided Japanese names for their offspring. NGO workers and volunteers are referred to as [particular NGO] staff or volunteer and situated in either Japan or the Philippines if needed. For quotes from face-to-face interviews or private online chats, pseudonyms are used. When citing published material such as newsletters or newspaper articles, I remove the
name but retain the position of the person mentioned in the article, if the latter is indicated in the document cited.  

Quotes taken from publicized blogs or social networking sites are not linked to any of my respondents by name or pseudonym as this would jeopardize their privacy. Instead, they are attributed to “a respondent”. Providing the name or pseudonym of the author of a quote, even if it may be considered published, could trace him/her back to other statements and reveal his/her identity. However, any quote retrieved from private online chats is treated as regular interview quote. I have added slight corrections and punctuations to quotes taken from online chats without changing the meaning of the sentences so they would be more readable. In talking about Japanese-Filipinos in Japan, I do not mention in what city the interviewee was based at the time of the interview to ensure maximum privacy. However, all my respondents based in the Philippines are understood to be based in Metro Manila or in the city’s vicinity, as this is where the main part of my fieldwork was carried out.

**Difficulties and Limitations**

The data I could generate has certain limitations which mainly are due to issues of accessibility. Firstly, I was unable to conduct interviews with clients at DAWN as the NGO’s Executive Director opposed my request. Finding interviewees through Batis YOGHI and Maligaya House proved rather uncomplicated. However DAWN was much more restrictive with letting

---

55 For example, if I use a quote that had been attributed to the secretary general of the CNJFC in a newspaper article, I will refer to the secretary general as such but remove his/her name, in addition to citing the newspaper reference in which it had been published.
researchers interview their clients. Although DAWN staff was the one who knew me best as I had spent six months with the organization, I was never allowed to interview their clients allegedly because they were too traumatized from their experiences in Japan for that sort of dialogue. Considering that some of DAWN’s clients had been asked to talk about their lives when the NGO had an opportunity to receive publicity, such as through television segments or at workshops and conferences, there may have been another reason for this decision.

Having been disallowed from conducting interviews at DAWN, most data about the NGO stems interviews and NGO publications, all of which are proof-read by the Executive Director. There was an element of control and a desire to monitor what was being written about the organization, about its clients, and the issue in general. In my interview with the Executive Director I was asked about my sources of funding and warned about researchers who wrote things that were contrary to what, in her opinion, ‘really’ happened. I thus concluded that she was concerned with the representation of her clients and her organization following uncontrolled talks with the NGO’s clients, the people who guaranteed DAWN’s legitimacy and significance. Through dealing with DAWN I had realized that opposing my wish to conduct interviews with DAWN’s clients was both an expression of concern for their clients as well as a way to safeguard the NGO’s repute and preserving the organization’s discursive authority.

56 In 1999, Shin Yasuda directed a NHK endorsed documentary about Japanese-Filipino children. The main protagonist was a boy named Michael Suzuki who travelled to Japan with DAWN staff to meet his father (DAWN, 1999 b). Another report featuring two of DAWN’s clients was aired as part of the show “Draw the line” in 2008 (adobo queenjoy [Youtube username], 2008).
One of the most obvious limitations of this study is the non-inclusion of Japanese fathers of Japanese-Filipino Children. The latter were difficult to reach for several reasons. Firstly, respondents are often found if there is an organized space that pertains to aspects of their biographies such as NGOs, religious meeting places or schools. However, I do not know of any organization attracting Japanese fathers who had left behind their Japanese-Filipino Children in the Philippines, thus finding Japanese fathers of Japanese-Filipino children was a difficult task. Japanese fathers were as elusive to me as they often are to their own children. Although NGOs maintained a data-base of addresses of fathers they were able to locate, using these for research would have been a breach of privacy and may have jeopardized the willingness of Japanese fathers to further cooperate with the NGO and thus their children. Secondly, I figured that men with strained relationships with their children and ex-partners would be unlikely available for interviews. The only Japanese father I could talk to, the man I call Mr. Tanaka, was a supporter of the NGOs studied and a Human Rights activist. Mr. Tanaka was approving of my research on Japanese-Filipino Children and willing to be interviewed as he himself had a stake in the issue and had committed himself to fend for children of Japanese men in the Philippines.

The inclusion of the voices of Japanese fathers of Japanese-Filipino Children would have provided an additional angle from which their relationships with their children and their children’s mothers could be considered and contrasted with NGO depictions. Nevertheless, since I have focused on the discursive construction of Japanese-Filipino Children within the context of claims
making towards the Japanese State, mainly involving NGO staff, their clients and representatives of the Japanese state and government as featured in media reports, the data I have collected has been sufficient to answer the queries I had set out to look into.
Chapter 4: From “prostitutes” to dedicated mothers: discursive shifts in NGO representations of Filipina migrants and returnees from Japan

Advocacy and claims-making on behalf of Japanese-Filipino children has gone hand in hand with advocacy on behalf of women migrant returnees from Japan, most of who used to be employed as ‘entertainers’. Advocacy for Japanese-Filipino children developed out of DAWN and Batis’ initial objective as women’s organizations to support women migrant returnees and lobby against migration policies leading to what they had identified as sexual exploitation. DAWN and Batis trace their roots to feminist movements in the Philippines, while Maligaya House and the CNJFC have been established by Japanese feminist journalist and activist Yayori Matsui. The CNJFC (and Maligaya House) focus on supporting Japanese-Filipino children and their mothers in their legal battles, and participate less in advocacy related to migratory practices and policies. However, all organizations maintain that the birth of Japanese-Filipino children and the problems they face cannot be considered merely a personal issue, but is tied to income inequalities between Japan and the Philippines as well as migration policies implemented by both countries. The issues at stake for Japanese-Filipinos are thus interlinked with their mothers’ migration histories, which has made it necessary for these NGOs to consider migrant returnees as
mothers, not only as exploited former hostesses. While Filipina ‘entertainers’
could be generalized as victims of prostitution to oppose the deployment of
OPAs, in their role as mothers of Japanese-Filipino children their depiction had to
enable NGOs to assert their offspring’s right to paternal acknowledgment,
financial support, and eventually to Japanese nationality. For that purpose,
generalizations of Filipina ‘entertainers’ as prostitutes, common notably during
the 1980s, had to be reworked into still powerful yet also advocacy-friendly
depictions.

**Commercial sex, migration and transnational feminist activism in Japan and
the Philippines**

Transnational cooperation and activism by women’s groups in Japan and
the Philippines developed in response to the rise of commercial sex in East- and
Southeast Asia, emerging in tandem with the post-war development of the tourism
industry. This trend was also important in bringing together both feminists and
faith-based groups as they found common ground in their aim to protect women’s
bodies and sexualities. During the 1970s, the promotion of the Philippine islands
as a tourist destination had attracted a foremost male crowd, the majority of which
came from Japan (Muroi & Sasaki, 1997). Sex-tourism by Japanese men is said to
have started with Japan’s economic boom as well as with the travel liberalization
in 1964. Although overseas travel was costly and therefore initially reserved to
the wealthy, the creation and promotion of package-tours marketed by Japan
Airlines made overseas trips more affordable to lower income Japanese (ibid.).
Additionally, a number of companies started offering their male employees so
called “holiday sex tours” to Southeast Asia as part of their yearly bonuses (Matsui 1995). In Thailand and Korea, similar trends in the tourism industry could be observed. For instance, the development of Chejudo-island in Korea in the 1970s predominantly targeted male visitors, not least because of the availability of kisaeng (prostitution) houses (Muroi and Sasaki 1997). In just three years, the number of male Japanese visitors to Korea multiplied by ten, rising from 45,000 in 1970 to over 411,000 in 1973 (ibid.).

The increasing numbers of women engaging in sex-work in East and Southeast Asia had set off harsh critique among feminists in Korea, the Philippines, and in Japan. Among the first to organize protests against sex tourism was the Christian Women’s Federation of Korea. In 1972, the group drafted and published a declaration opposing these “holiday sex tours”. A year later, Korean university students organized a demonstration targeting Japanese male tourists at Kimpo airport. A similar demonstration was held at Haneda airport by Japanese women in 1974. In light of the protests, Japanese men shifted their travel destination from Korea to Southeast Asia. However, Korean and Japanese groups coordinated with activists in Southeast Asia and protests spread. As a result of mobilization against Japanese sex tourism, then-Japanese Prime Minister Suzuki met with massive demonstrations at the airports of every of his destinations during his visit of ASEAN countries in 1981 (Muroi and Sasaki 1997). Protests in Manila were coordinated among groups in the Philippines and Japan, such as the Asian Women’s Association, co-founded by Yayori Matsui, and the Japan Women’s Christian Temperance Union (JWCTU), a transnationally connected
organization also known as *Kyofukai*, with ample experience in activism. The JWCTU, or *Kyofukai*, played a key role in opposing the *karayuki*\(^5\) phenomenon following the *Meiji* restoration in the late 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries, as well as in the passage of anti-prostitution laws in Japan in the 1950s (Kaplan and Dubro 2003).

In response to the opposition by women’s groups, the number of tourists dropped in the 1980s but the migration flow also reversed. The growing economic divide between Japan and its Asian neighbours which had made “sex tours” so affordable for Japanese travellers, had also transformed Japan into an attractive place of employment for young women from Southeast Asia. Japan’s sex-industry was soon staffed with women from lower-income countries, notably from the Philippines, Thailand and from the 1990s onwards, with women from the ex-Soviet Union. Their employment as hostesses on “entertainer” visas coupled with reports on forced prostitution had brought feminist groups to generalize and denounce the employment of “entertainers” in pubs and night-clubs as a form of human trafficking.

However, generalizations of hostessing as prostitution and human trafficking often ignore that the individuals concerned may not interpret their migratory experiences as such. Among my respondents, Daisy, a 43-year-old mother of two Japanese-Filipino children, and Janice, a 40-year-old mother of

---

57 “The term *karayuki* is derived from two words: kara, an archaic term referring generally to mainland China, and yuki, meaning ‘going’ or ‘one who goes’. San is an honorific suffix attached to personal nouns or certain professions.” (Mihalopoulos 2001, 185) The term *karayuki* refers to young Japanese women, usually from impoverished farmer communities, going abroad to make a living from working in brothels in colonial Southeast Asia from the 1870s until early 1930s (ibid.).
four, had worked as “entertainers” in Japan each for over a decade. My other respondents had met the Japanese father of their children in the Philippines. Neither Daisy nor Janice had talked about their stints in Japan in negative terms, and had returned to Japan on several occasions. Daisy had started to work in Japan in 1991 and returned to the Philippines in 2005. When asked about her experiences in Japan, Daisy replied:”I have a lot of good memories. I enjoyed it, I enjoyed a lot when I was there. I enjoyed my job as an entertainer. I enjoyed talking to these people. I don’t have any bad experience.” Although Daisy may have faced challenges during her time in Japan which she prefers to leave unmentioned, it is telling that she made it a point not to reiterate dominant narratives of human trafficking and to deny having had any “bad experiences”. Daisy spent 14 years working as an “entertainer” in Japan.

Janice remains based in Japan. Janice returned to Japan to work as an entertainer 12 times, starting at age 17. Working a second time in Japan, she got to know a Japanese man to whom she got married in the Philippines. According to Janice, he supported her financially and wanted her to live with him in Japan as his wife. However, Janice had a change of heart in not wanting to live with a man she barely knew, and decided to return to Japan by herself, again as an “entertainer”. After several stints, she found it difficult to find jobs since her salary as an experienced “entertainer” had gotten too expensive. A friend then convinced her to lower her salary and to remain in Japan undocumented to be able to continue working. That was in 1992, after she gave birth to her first son in Manila and subsequently returned to Japan where she then overstayed for about a
decade, until she got pregnant again and gave birth in Japan to a Japanese citizen. Janice recounted her experiences in a cheerful tone, eager to share the details about how she managed to hide her first pregnancy and how she bantered with her previous employers. She also recounted that she received support from her *Mamasan*\(^{58}\) when she was pregnant a second time and needed her child to be recognized. Janice’s narrative reveals that, although her employment was contractual and did not guarantee her any long-term right to abode in Japan, she was able to rely on a network of friends and helpful employers who enabled her to effectively reside and work in Japan since age 17.

**Old ideas, new packaging: new abolitionism in the name of Women’s Rights**

Japan- and Philippine-based activist groups condemning the employment of foreign women “entertainers” typically equate hostessing with prostitution and have lobbied for the abolition of both. Bernstein (2008, 2010) terms these feminist groups “new abolitionist” with reference to efforts by feminists in North America and Europe in the late 19\(^{th}\) century to purge society of prostitution. The *Women’s Christian Temperance Union*, a prominent organization within the abolitionist movement, established a wing in Japan in 1886 where it remains active until this day. In claiming that prostitution constitutes social harm, contemporary feminists have become “strange bedfellows” of evangelical Christians (Bernstein 2010, p.47).

The 1990s especially were marked by increasing cooperation between feminists and conservative groups as they found common ground in framing

\(^{58}\) Female manager or person in charge at hostess clubs.
prostitution and pornography in terms of human rights violations. The application of the idea of human rights to female sexuality and women engaging in commercialized sex has divided feminists around the globe in essentially two camps: those supporting the legalization of sex-work and thus its regulation, and feminists opposing it in the name of women’s protection against sexual exploitation. Various narratives about prostitution have emerged from different feminist factions with liberal feminists emphasizing sex work as autonomous action, as opposed to radical feminists seeing prostitution as subordinated sex and Marxist feminists considering it as subordinated labour (Zatz 1997, p.282). Yayori Matsui, the co-founder of The Citizen’s Network for Japanese-Filipino Children (CNJFC) has unambiguously opposed the idea that prostitution could be justified as autonomous action. The feminist and journalist played a crucial role in the 1970s protests against Japanese sex-tourism and was later an advocate against the employment of foreign hostesses in Japan’s sex industry, a practice she considered tantamount to forced prostitution and sex trafficking. In an interview in 1996, she states her view on commercialized sex and her fear “that people will assume Western views on human rights are advanced, and will come to accept the European tendency to legalize prostitution as an advanced type of thinking.” (Matsui in AMPO: Japan Asia Quarterly Review , 1996, p. 46).

Many of the women’s groups engaging in activism against the supposed sexual exploitation of migrant women in Japan have not only endorsed anti-prostitution stances, but are very often organizationally linked to the original abolitionist movement. For instance, the women’s shelter HELP (Housing in
Emergency of Love and Peace) located in Tokyo has been established in 1986 by the JWCTU or Kyofukai. This Christian organization has a longstanding history of advocacy against commercial sex dating back to its establishment in Japan in the late 19th century. The designated goals of the Kyofukai upon its establishment were to advocate for monogamy, strengthen women’s position within the family and foremost, to control both women’s and men’s sexualities. However the union’s lobbying throughout the 19th century largely focused on the abolition of prostitution and as such, mainly targeted destitute Japanese women seeking employment in brothels abroad.

Today, the Kyofukai’s website describes the union’s past and present activities as part of their fight “for the acknowledgment and protection of both women and children’s basic human rights” (Kyofukai 2013). Yet the framing of the union as a warden of human rights ahead of its time is retrospectively biased and conveniently serves the purpose of rendering the organization’s precedent lobbying more relevant to contemporary social activism. The actual aim of the Kyofukai’s activism in the late 19th century placed great importance on the improvement of the moral character of the Japanese people and greatly contributed to the othering of poor women (Mihalopoulos 2011). Japanese Protestant Christians had considered themselves as bearers of the ‘worthiest instincts’ and had therefore lobbied to reform social and moral policies (ibid.). Yet, despite being driven by a philanthropic zeal, which in retrospect may seem akin to contemporary understandings of human rights, these policies’ “real function was to regulate the behaviour of the poor and to ensure the reproduction
of descendants by emphasizing the purity of blood and the necessity to prepare people for monogamous married life.” (p.80).

To assert their moral standards, the Kyofukai had instigated a sense of shame which resulted in the embarrassment of all those who could not or would not adhere to these standards: “The humanist shame touted by the Japanese Christians as the future of an enlightened Japan measured others by its values, which held that it was better to die than to live ignobly as a prostitute.” (p.81). On the other hand, the endorsement of a sense of shame had contributed to the constitution of the Japanese upper middle-class and to the political assertion of their authority through their abiding to a proper and superior sexuality they had themselves created and established as new moral code (ibid.).

Mihalopoulos’ argument on the role of the JWCTU, or Kyofukai, in the regulation of sex in Japan’s globalization is especially crucial here as the organization’s historical viewpoints remain relevant. The inherent class-bias of late 19th century efforts of surveillance and regulation of poor women’s sexuality is still pertinent among abolitionist feminists today, as is the idea of sex-work as a disgraceful and socially harmful profession. This bias becomes most obvious when NGOs employ a victimization discourse to reason their clients’ employment in the sex-industry, and in policies as implemented by one NGO observed in this study, cancelling its clients’ membership if they are found to be working in bars or night-clubs. This very same NGO also checks on and regulates its clients’ bodies by advising them on appropriate hair colour, dress and make-up. Such efforts to reintegrate former hostesses into ‘proper womanhood’ seem central for
all the NGOs studied. Firstly, because women choosing to work in the sex-
industry is incommensurate with these NGOs’ ideological stances, and secondly
because claims-making for alimony and paternal recognition of their Japanese-
Filipino Children is more persuasive if childbirth is framed as a consequence of
romantic love, not as that of a client-hostess relationship.

Women’s activism against sex-tourism in Asia and later against the
employment of Asian women on “entertainer” visas in Japan’s night-clubs have
framed the latter’s engagement in sex-work as a violation of women’s rights and
as an affront to their dignity. A victimization discourse thus has replaced the 19th
century induction of a sense of shame. Women’s employment in the sex-industry
is largely represented as an act of violence, as dominant ideals of womanhood and
femininity do not allow for the possibility of women opting for sex-work on a
voluntary basis. In Korea, where the protests against Japanese male sex-tourists
started, women engaged in sex-work have commonly been framed as “victims of
prostitution” (Cheng 2011). As Cheng (2011, p.495) demonstrates, the discourse
on prostitution in Korea has been brought under the control of new abolitionist
feminists who have popularized a paradigm of women’s human rights within
which

…women who demand a recognition of their right to work in prostitution
are persona non grata who blatantly defy the victim subject endorsed by
the women’s movement and the new laws [introduced in Korea].
Putatively attributing all claims of sex work by women in prostitution to
brothel-owners’ manipulation, Korean feminists like Cho\(^{59}\) eliminate the agency of all women to consent to sex work as well as to engage in public protests.

Likewise, NGOs in Japan and in the Philippines dealing with Filipina hostesses and returnees from Japan have generalized their employment as prostitution and labelled foreign female “entertainers” as victims of human trafficking. For many years, these NGOs have therefore lobbied for the discontinuation of the employment of Filipino women in Japan’s pubs and night-clubs. This goal had finally been achieved in 2005 when, in the name of the fight against human trafficking, Japan severely curbed the immigration of foreigners on “entertainer” visas.

Disproving generalizations about Filipina hostesses popularized by NGOs, Parreñas (2011) argues that her respondents have generally migrated to Japan of their own volition, knowing they would engage in what she terms “illicit flirtation”. Parreñas makes an even stronger statement when she concludes that numerous Filipina hostesses in Japan saw their employment as liberating and empowering (2011, p.273). Earning wages abroad has given these migrant women decision-making-power as they have become the breadwinners in their families. The partaking in “illicit flirtation” has furthermore sexually liberated them and has allowed them to challenge patriarchal boundaries of what is deemed as acceptable or unacceptable female sexuality (ibid.) Concluding her study, Parreñas defies new abolitionist feminists’ acclaim for the restrictions on the

---

\(^{59}\) Cheng is referring to Cho Young-sook, Secretary-General of the Korean Women’s Associations United from 2005 to 2009.
employment of foreign “entertainers” in place since 2005. Instead, she writes that, we should “lament the setback [forced return migration of hostesses to the Philippines] has posed to the empowerment of migrant women.” (2011, p.273).

Abolitionism and the Feminist Movements in the Philippines

In the Philippines, the movement against prostitution has similarly been driven by new-abolitionist women’s groups, often headed by middle- and upper-middle class women as well as clerics sensitive to women’s issues. The possibility that commercial sex could be a profession of choice has been unthinkable for the great majority of feminists in the country. The prevailing position has been that prostitution had to be seen as violence against women. To support this point, feminists have cited “the peculiar conditions of the Philippines as a developing country especially the acute continuing problems of poverty and unemployment, the historical presence of American bases, as well as the lack of social protection for families, as reasons for opposing the view that prostitution be legitimised as a profession (since in their perspective women’s choices were severely constrained)” (Roces 2009, p.271). These arguments also correspond to a global shift of the discussion of prostitution to the human-rights field, as it occurred in the 1990s (Bernstein, 2010). Feminists in the Philippines have therefore, in the name of human rights, made efforts to eradicate prostitution as well as domestic and cross-border human trafficking of women for sex.

To counter negative images of Filipino women who had been involved in commercialized sex, DAWN and Batis have invested in a discourse of victimization, representing women in prostitution as innocent and without choice,
while simultaneously investing in a narrative of activism, which depicted women potential as agents of change (a transformation for which NGOs usually take the credit). Roces\(^6\) (2009) argues that the victimization discourse was necessary to change attitudes towards women engaged in commercial sex and to pass the Anti-Trafficking Act of 2003 which effectively decriminalized prostitutes and instead held buyers and agents accountable. The same discourse, however, reinforced patriarchal cultural images of silently suffering women or women as “martyrs” (ibid.). To counter this unsolicited side-effect, activist-NGOs have thus invested in re-imaging former victims or “survivors” into activists. Roces’ analysis, which includes the study of DAWN, shows how these two seemingly contradictory discourses have worked together well in helping NGOs achieve their goals and at same time gain authority as experts on the issue through the “evidence” for their claims provided by affected women clients. Roces however falls short of noticing how both the victimization discourse and that of the activist woman correlate in leaving unquestioned patriarchal ideals of women’s attitudes towards sex; men remain sexual predators and women their prey. Discursive constructions of Filipina entertainers by DAWN and Batis suggest that the women engage in sexual relations voluntarily only out of love or within marriage. This in turn poses a challenge when NGOs need to accommodate the phenomenon of women repeatedly returning to Japan as entertainers where they allegedly work as

---

\(^6\) In her paper, Roces (2009) discusses narratives about Filipino women engaged in sex-work as disseminated by DAWN, as well as the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) Asia Pacific, and the Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women (TW-MAE-W). The CATW-Asia Pacific is a Manila-based branch of the international CATW. The TW-MAE-W was founded in 1980 by Good Shepherd nun Soledad Perpiñan in response to rising prostitution in Manila.
prostitutes. DAWN has explained this phenomenon by considering women as victims, even as they decide to migrate repeatedly:

Those who decide to return to Japan have become commodified, equating themselves to the money they are able to earn. In the struggle for survival, the women also go through a process of depersonalization. They forget their own needs and become sacrificial lambs for the benefit of their families... (Montañez et al. 2003, p.30)

The element of choice is omitted, not simply because ‘choice’ is considered an invalid dimension as it is believed to be inapplicable to Filipino women engaged in commercial sex (or commercial flirtations), but also because discussions of women’s sexuality diverging too far from Christian teachings remain unthinkable and morally untenable in the Philippine context. The tight association of many women’s groups with religious groups and clerics, along with the persisting centrality of Catholicism in Philippine society in general, has provided a narrowed frame within and through which women’s issues pertaining to sexuality could be discussed. Women’s sexuality and reproductive capacities remain the bedrock of Philippine gender ideology, with the Catholic Church playing a crucial role in its upholding, practice and even legal coding (Austria, 2004). These deep-seated anxieties and moral concerns over female sexuality have come to be expressed in terms of human rights violations and violence against women as international laws and global discourses provided the vocabulary to do so. The portrayals of prostituted women as either shameful criminals or innocent victims are thus two
sides of the same coin, locating “proper” sexuality within the confinements of relationships deemed legitimate. This is not to say that NGOs have not achieved tremendously important changes for many women engaged in commercial sex, notably by decriminalizing women in prostitution and shifting the blame to consumers. Yet the victimization discourse and the eradication of the possibility of choice have left little space for alternative views from sex-workers, both domestically and in migration, and have therefore failed to convincingly account for women repeatedly opting for employment as hostesses in Japan or for the protests of several thousand women in 1991 against the government ban restraining the overseas deployment of female entertainers (Roces 2009).

Daisy and Janice have returned to Japan repeatedly. In order to make sure she could continue working in Japan, Janice overstayed her visa upon re-entering Japan in 1992. Janice thus actively sought a way to carry on her employment as a hostess in Japan. Daisy had actively sought out placements as an “entertainer” in Japan several times between 1991 and 2005. In our conversation she emphasized her fond memories of Japan and that she had earned a lot of money. Yuzuki, one of my Japanese-Filipino respondents and a Japanese national since birth, had chosen to work as a hostess over her part-time job in a translation agency as it would provide her with a higher income. Janice, Daisy, and Yuzuki’s choices thus contradict NGO’s essentializing of women “entertainers” as mere victims.
Deploying the ideal or the ‘normal family’ in representations of Filipina migrant returnees

NGOs have framed Japanese-Filipino children and their mothers as “broken families”, abandoned by or separated from the Japanese father. Efforts undertaken to reunite the children with the fathers as well as the efforts to bring together Filipino women with their ex-partners (as undertaken in the early days of NGO support) reflect the idea that the mother, father and child form an entity which should not be disrupted. As an illustration in DAWN’s newsletter Sinag (cf. plate 1) shows, the “normal” family is a central point of reference and an ideal to which women’s relationships with Japanese men are gauged and made to fit in retrospect. The women’s narratives need to show that there has been a family set up deemed “normal” in the past or a desire for such a set up in the future. If none of the former applies, then Filipino women are usually framed as victims of broken promises, but never is any doubt cast over the propriety of their sexual behaviour.

Plate 1, “The family is the basic unit of a community” in (DAWN 1998 f, p.4) suggests how a family should look like: a father, a mother, and their children.
Early demands by NGOs\textsuperscript{61} were therefore made towards truant Japanese men as fathers in need to live up to their responsibility of caring for their families. However, the idea of the nuclear family frequently proved inapplicable in these appeals due to a variety of reasons. A significant number of fathers were already married and had families in Japan. Others were not aware of the existence of their offspring as they had believed their Filipina ex-partners had aborted their pregnancy as requested\textsuperscript{62}. In some cases, the Japanese fathers of Japanese-Filipino children had already passed away. But the family remained an important topic in NGO advocacy. Indeed, feminists in the Philippines have for a long time avoided criticism of the ideal of the ‘normal’ family despite its central importance in the perpetuation of patriarchy. The Filipino family is “[h]eld sacrosanct by revolutionaries and the popular mind, the family, perceived as the repository of all that is value in the Philippine life, has been exempted from critical scrutiny and interrogation” (Aguilar 1988, p.20). In doing so, feminists have also refrained

\textsuperscript{61}NGOs frequently demanded, and still demand, the paternal acknowledgment of Japanese-Filipino children by their Japanese fathers, and their financial support. The arrangement of meetings between father and child has also become part of NGO’s endeavours. In the article entitled “a fruitful year” (DAWN, 1997 b) DAWN celebrates their achievement of having enabled the reunion of one of their clients, Cherry Aquino, with the Japanese father of her youngest daughter. The article further states that DAWN has helped nine other women and children to return to the Philippines or to go back to Japan to be reunited with their families. Sinag also reports of a study tour to Japan, organized by DAWN in 1998 in order for some of their clients to meet with their Japanese "husbands/partners/relatives to discuss the recognition and support of their Japanese-Filipino children.” (DAWN, 1998 e) One of the motivations behind the formation of the JFC Lawyer’s Association and the CNJFC was to get Japanese men to acknowledge their children with Filipino women and/or to get them to support their children financially.

\textsuperscript{62}In Japan, abortion is largely considered morally permissible and often chosen over birthing a child out of wedlock. In the strongly Catholic society of the Philippines on the other hand, abortion is both legally and normatively out of bounds. I have often witnessed Filipino NGO workers and clients expressing shock and anger about Japanese men asking their Filipina partners to get an abortion upon learning of their pregnancy.
from openly challenging its main proponent, the Catholic Church. Rather, feminists have sought ways to strengthen women within the morally accepted boundaries, largely set by Christian teachings. The religious roots of women’s oppression in Philippine society have mainly been criticised in terms of women’s subjugation to men in private and public life, the defining power men had over women’s lives and the patriarchal constructions of femininity glorifying women’s martyrdom (Roces 2009). Nonetheless the supremacy of the “normal” family as ideal and patriarchal notions valuing women’s chastity and sexual passivity, have remained largely unchallenged.

In early 2001, DAWN’s newsletter Sinag featured a short article entitled *Women reclaim feminist principle* which reported on the organization’s participation in the International Women’s Month that year (DAWN 2001 b). The feminist gathering was organized by the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines and other religious groups. The get-together was held at St. Joseph’s College, featuring activities like the Holy Mass and an Ecumenical Solidarity celebration. The report on the event was illustrative of the tight interlacing of feminists with religious groups.

Clerical staff and other religiously trained persons are very much involved in the NGOs observed in this study as consultants and board members, or through their support in advocacy or in the design and implementation of trainings and workshops. The close association of these women’s groups with church groups or staff as well as the complex relationship of Philippine feminism with strongly engrained Christian beliefs in Philippine society have made ideals of the “normal”
family pivotal in claims towards fathers. Indeed, the ideal of the Filipino family, through its belief in patrilineal descent and the nuclear family, enforces the dependence on Japanese fatherhood as the determinant of the place of belonging of children. The negligent father is held responsible for women’s sufferings due to separation and children’s emotional struggles as a result from growing up with a single parent. With ideals of the nuclear family remaining largely unchallenged, many Japanese-Filipinos unable to live up to this ideal are being taught how to cope with their situation through workshops and sharing sessions, rather than to deconstruct “the family” and to welcome alternatives as just as normal. This sometimes reinforces the negative feelings associated with growing up in an “incomplete” or “broken” family, two expressions which have also been used by some of my Japanese-Filipino respondents.

DAWN’s Japanese-Filipino clients’ yearning for a ‘complete family’ is published in the NGO’s newsletter, highlighting how much their Japanese-Filipino wish to meet their Japanese fathers, and how important it is for them to have “normal” families:

Yuri dreams of going back to Japan to be with her father again. And she hopes that her father would visit the Philippines. She wants her family to be reunited. Since the trip, Yuri has changed for the better. (DAWN 1998, p.8)

All the children who managed to meet their Japanese fathers expressed joy at seeing their dream come true. One girl said that she became a whole
person when she met her father. Another has mixed feelings because of the complicated situation of her family. (DAWN 2000 a, p.7)

This fifth grader [a Japanese-Filipino client of DAWN] loves to act and is thrilled at the possibility of seeing her Japanese father. (DAWN 2000 b, p.5)

I am looking forward to seeing my father. I want to talk to him about what happened to his relationship with my mother. (Aissa Hatori in DAWN 2003 b, p.6)

The situation of Japanese-Filipino children yearning to meet their father is juxtaposed to that of those who have managed to do so, and who are featured as success-stories in the newsletter, so to confirm the importance of knowing one’s father. The NGO highlights the important change it has brought about in a child’s life, establishing the importance of Japanese fathers for their children, as well as validating the existence of the NGO itself as an enabler of the meeting between father and child and of the tremendous change that followed.

But the experience of growing up without one’s father was not always as distressing as suggested in DAWN’s newsletter. Hayate and Alina, both Japanese-Filipino young adults based in Japan, stated that they had no issues with not knowing their biological father. Alina also expressed her unhappiness with NGOs dwelling on the issue of the missing father:

“This is the funny thing. I never thought about it until I met them [NGO workers]. As a JFC I should have known, but I never thought about it until
I met them. […] I never thought about how bad it is for me that I don’t have my dad… my real dad.” (Alina)

Felix, one of my Japanese-Filipino respondents, told me that he was curious to meet his father and mother once he got the opportunity to travel to Japan. But otherwise he never felt lonely despite being without his biological parents:

“Anyways when I was young since all the people who took care of... even if my real parents were not there it felt that I have mothers everywhere, fathers everywhere, brothers and sisters so…it’s not that hard for me to accept that I’m alone. But of course I want to see my real parents and know what’s the feeling of having your mother in front of you, scolding you, teaching you stuff.” (Felix)

Thus, while some of my respondents have expressed their unhappiness for not having been able to grow up in a nuclear family, others such as Hayate, Alina and Felix contested the idea that growing up in a nuclear family and knowing one’s biological father were essential to their lives. On the contrary, Alina challenged NGOs’ assumption on the importance of knowing one’s biological father and expressed discontent with NGOs creating particular situations as problems in the first place. Coincidentally, those among my respondents who expressed the least grief about growing up without their biological fathers also had not been involved with NGOs to any substantial extent. Those who did often joined their respective organizations at an early age.
The family is central in DAWN’s concerns pertaining to their young clients in both rhetoric and practice. Events like the yearly “Family Day” celebrate the importance of the family, workshops organized for Japanese-Filipino children tackle the issue of family, the missing father, and identity (cf. DAWN 2007 c), and activities organized for women have included parenting workshops. In September 2008, a workshop focusing on “Understanding the Dynamics of the Filipino Family vis-à-vis Single Parenthood” (DAWN 2008 b) was organized by DAWN, including a sharing session about women’s feelings and experiences of not being able to live up to the nuclear family ideal. In setting up the session as such, single parenthood was already marked nonstandard and potentially problematic.

An NGO worker at Batis confirms: “Family in the Philippines is very important, that is why JFC often suffer from the missing father”. “My only dream is to see Japanese-Filipino children reunited with their fathers so that their families will be whole again”, declares Aira, one of DAWN’s clients (DAWN 1999 d, p.3). Similar desires for a “complete family” are expressed by some of DAWN’s women clients (cf. DAWN, 2007 a, p. 4). An episode of the television segment "Draw the Line" (cf. adobo queenjoy [Youtube username] 2008) aired on the popular Philippine television channel GMA Network in 2008, reiterated the importance of the father and the risk posed by single-parenthood to Japanese-Filipinos’ development. The episode explored the issues faced by Japanese-Filipino children in the Philippines and featured DAWN’s Executive Director and three of DAWN’s clients including Takeru, a Japanese-Filipino boy. Takeru’s
narrative was supplemented with a commentary by psychologist Prof. Michael de Vera:

**Narrator**: Takeru cannot help but feel resentment against his father. Because of him, Takeru does not really know who he is.

**Takeru**: Of course, as a son, it’s like…you feel empty. Because there is something lacking in your life, because you haven’t seen your father yet. I say to myself, I hope I see my father. Because, as I said, it’s very painful…

**Narrator**: In spite of the many years they have not seen each other, Takeru still strongly believes that he has rights to fight for.

**Takeru**: Like those…whatever can be done or whatever you can do that is beneficial, that you should have because it’s your right…it’s the right of the child to be supported by the father, but, since he is not here, I have come to accept that I cannot cling on any support…

**Narrator**: The problem is that the mother does not have any idea about the whereabouts of Takeru’s father. They are somewhat “suspended in the air”, and they are certain if they can still count on any support. The situation of Japanese-Filipino children and their mothers was the reason to establish the Development Action for Women Network, or DAWN.

[...]

**Narrator**: In the 13 years that DAWN has been providing help, they have helped more than 800 JFC’s and 500 mothers. According to Prof. Michael
de Vera, a psychologist, abandonment can have immense effect on the child.

**Prof. de Vera:** No one will set the goals in the house…number 2, the child’s foundation is weak, because let’s say that the mother is “soft” as compared to the father, who is the “tenacious” one. Number 3, if the child grows up with the mother, there is likelihood of mother-dependency, so the child may become effeminate, or what we call sex-role conflict…so basically he harbors a hatred toward the father, because in the first place, does he know why they were abandoned, where the father is? If the father is not around and only the mother takes care of the child, there is likelihood that the child becomes a brat…

[...]

The development of a ‘distorted’ gender identity, becoming a ‘brat’, and resentment may be the consequences of growing up with a single mother according to the psychologist. The absence of a nuclear family is thus depicted as highly problematic for a child growing up.

Messages about the family are additionally delivered through advocacy; “SANA...Isang Kuwento ng Pangarap”, DAWN’s first theatre play staged by Teatro Akebono in 1998 tells the tale of Yuki, a young Japanese-Filipino girl who dreams of meeting her Japanese father. “Everyday [sic], she waits for the postman to ask if there is a letter from him. But each day always ends in disappointment.” (DAWN 1998 c, p.4). Yuki is being discriminated against because of her absent father and the resulting allegations that she may be the product of her mother’s
sexual ‘indiscretions’. Both Yuki and her mother thus resort to hopes of living in Japan and reuniting with the girl’s Japanese father. “The play ends with a note of hope that Japanese fathers would finally realize their responsibilities to their Filipino families” (ibid.).

The ideal of the ‘normal’ family and the idea of a possible reunion of its nucleus - mother, father and child - were most notably deployed in the 1990s, to mitigate suspicions of promiscuity popularly associated with former entertainers in Japan, or “Japayuki”\textsuperscript{63}. The father was thought of as important to rectify “wrong impressions” and to redress the honour of both the child and his or her mother. The discourse on the family is thus not only central in depicting the situation of Japanese-Filipino children, but inevitably also a means for NGOs to consider women clients’ relationships with their partners and ex-partners. The nuclear family remains the norm; whoever fails to live up to it and most clients are unable to needs to learn how to cope with the ensuing ‘incompleteness’. Meanwhile, NGOs’ Japanese and Filipino audiences must be persuaded that these women did try their best; support groups thus cast the relationships entertained by Filipino women with Japanese men as ‘love relationships’ followed by disappointment. In 1997, Cherry Aquino, a mother of three, adorned the newsletter Sinag’s front page; the headline reported that Cherry is reunited with Mr. Shimizu, the father of her youngest daughter (DAWN, 1997 b, p. 1). Cherry and her children were deported from Japan after they had been caught overstaying. A photograph of the family taken in Japan, together with the

\textsuperscript{63} Literally means “Japan bound”. However mass media in the Philippines and in Japan as well as NGOs have often (wrongly) associated Japayuki with prostitution. (Suzuki 2004, p.483)
DAWN’s Executive Director and a Japanese NGO volunteer, accompanied the news.

Although Japanese fathers are taken to task by NGOs and urged to live up to their responsibilities, they are simultaneously endowed with significant power. The Japanese father is the person upon who depends not only his child’s legal status, but also the child’s identity and the child’s wealth and well-being. Given that they grow up without paternal recognition, NGOs maintain that Japanese-Filipino children develop an “identity crisis”. To mend this presumed crisis, and also to obtain financial support from the Japanese fathers for their clients, organizations have made efforts to arrange ‘reunions’ of children with their male parent. The yearly theatre tour of Teatro Akebono in Japan is an opportunity for children to meet their biological fathers. DAWN used to also organize theatre and study tours for its women clients in the early 1990s, but after an incident involving two of their clients splitting from the group to remain in Japan undocumented, DAWN has ceased bringing its women clients to Japan.

The centrality of these meetings to both children and NGO work is illustrated by their coverage in newsletters. The July-September 1998 issue of Sinag, preceding Teatro Akebono’s very first theatre tour to Japan, provides a list of names of children scheduled to meet their fathers, as well as the cities where the meetings are planned to take place (cf. DAWN, 1998e). The get-together of father and child is further dramatized after each theatre tour by articles reporting on one particular meet-up and narrating it at length with thickly laid on emotions.
For Yuri, her prayers were not for a new dress or an expensive toy, but only for her to finally meet the father she had always dreamed of hugging (DAWN, 1998b, p.1)

Lani had always dreamed of meeting and knowing her father. [...] Upon introduction to her father, Lani did not hesitate. She embraced and kissed her father with all the pent up love that she has been keeping in her heart for eleven years. (DAWN, 1999b, p. 9)

Tsuyoshi’s eyes kept darting around until they found his father seated in the third row with his grandparents. Imai and Tsuyoshi couldn’t take their eyes off each other. Similarly, Tsuyoshi’s grandfather couldn’t stop taking pictures of his grandson during the performance. (DAWN 1999b, p.5)

The above excerpts depict Japanese-Filipino children’s feelings and experiences from the NGO’s staff writer’s point of view. However, as mentioned above, not all Japanese-Filipinos find it important to know their biological fathers.

In a review of their own tour, a staff writer declares: “All the children who managed to meet their Japanese fathers expressed joy at seeing their dream come true. One girl said that she became a whole person when she met her father.” (DAWN 2000a, p.7). The arrangement of a meeting with the father is principal in determining the NGO’s “success” since the ideal of the ‘normal’ family takes such centrality in NGO discourses. The figure of the father is symbolically laden. The father stands for financial stability, the provision of private education, hopes
for a better, possibly even a transnational life and most importantly, recognition through formal paternal acknowledgment. The meeting of father and child is depicted as a happy event, marking an important juncture in the young person’s life both deemed to resolve financial difficulties as well as the question of “who am I?”. Yet, despite these meetings being celebrated as reunions, they are at times short-lived; the contact between children and fathers is not always sustained and sometimes finds an abrupt end when fathers change address or phone numbers without bothering to communicate the change to their children or the NGO (cf. DAWN 2002e, p.11). Nevertheless, a staff member at DAWN asserts that even a single meeting between father and child engenders an important transformation in the child which even manifests physically and mentally:

“Of course we’ve found a number of fathers. But some of them after meeting them [their children] once they communicate then they disappear again. But we can see the impact on the children. Like the children develop more confidence. They develop more and they grow faster, physically, mentally, emotionally. These are observations on the children who had a chance to meet their fathers. And then they try to study harder. Because they always say they want their fathers to be proud of them.”

(DAWN staff)

Although DAWN is not always able to facilitate sustained contact between fathers and children, let alone the rekindling of the parents’ relationship, this DAWN staff-member insists on the important positive change provoked in the children by their first- and often only- meeting with their biological fathers.
However, a Japan-based DAWN volunteer having dealt with a number of Japanese fathers notes that they may not always be the long-awaited resolution of ‘identity’ questions and financial struggles. Sometimes Japanese fathers decline meeting with their children as they already have a family and some fathers struggle with financial problems themselves. As the DAWN volunteer stated:

“…some fathers think that supporting the children financially is their responsibility as a parent and if they cannot help the children financially they feel ashamed to meet the children, I guess. They cannot meet their responsibility maybe.” (DAWN volunteer)

She also doubted whether meeting the fathers was always a good idea. According to her, many of the Japanese fathers are in a difficult situation and are sometimes mentally ill. The Japanese-Filipino children and youth might eagerly look forward to the first meeting as a turning point in their lives, but often that one meeting would remain just that one meeting.

**The importance of blood-ties in discourses on the “normal” family**

Men in Japan have since the 1990s come under public scrutiny for not spending enough time with their families and being largely absent- physically and emotionally- from their offspring’s upbringing (Nakatani 2006). Knowing Japanese men’s absence from family life in Japan despite shared living space as well as the realities of growing numbers of de facto single-parent families in the Philippines, the question arising here is about the nature of the advocated-for family ties that seem to be of such primacy in NGO discourses and endeavours.
Indeed, the primary concern materializes around blood-ties, the biological link between father and child rather than experienced parenthood: the father is reified as the provider of lineage and thus familial identity, as the authority of acknowledging a child as his, and thereby as part of the family. By investing their energies in securing paternal recognition and financial support, support-NGOs are reinforcing absentee fathers as bearers of these two masculine domains within the traditional family make-up.

The importance of blood-ties as a defining aspect of the ‘normal’ family is also inculcated into the children though practice; despite the absence of their biological fathers, numerous children have step-fathers and half-siblings who nevertheless remain excluded from most NGO organized activities and are largely absent from family-day celebrations which are only attended by NGO clients, staff and supporters (members of the board and volunteers for instance). The insistence on the ‘need’ for Japanese-Filipino children to meet their biological father is thus another manifestation of patriarchal ideas of family and kinship; the children can only know ‘who they are’ if they know the male lineage from which they descend.

The discourse on the ideal of the “normal family” serves as a blueprint against which Japanese-Filipino children are made to stand out. The use of the discourse on the family accentuates the importance of blood ties. Links are drawn between the biological relationship of father and child and the offspring’s sense of self. The ideal of the ‘normal family’, held dearly among Filipinos in a country in which legal divorce is non-existent, serves as a lynchpin of moral panics
whenever political and economic circumstances incite social change as will be shown in more detail below. It is thus not surprising that ‘family’ remains a pivotal matter in NGO discourses, and certainly an emotionally laden one. The importance of the ideal of the ‘normal family’ and of biological parent-child relationships translating into social ties furthermore serve to underpin the mobilization of consanguinal capital by adding a normative dimension to claims for recognition and belonging.

“Doing family” outside the boundaries of the “normal” is encountered with suspicion; NGO staff at DAWN monitor their clients’ private lives and relationships for fear the Japanese-Filipino children may suffer. An NGO worker of DAWN related to me the story of one of DAWN’s Filipina clients, G.:

“She married [a Filipino man] when she was very young and then they separated and she went to Japan. Now the daughter is 20 plus… maybe 22. And then her JFCs K. and N. and then now she has also another boy. But the two take care of the young. And the older one is working and she supports the two. But on the part of G. [Filipina client] we’re quite disappointed because she doesn’t take care of the other children, only this boy. [...] So the problem we’re identifying is with the mother and then of course the step-father. It’s like the step father wants the mother’s time and attention more. So it’s like he doesn’t care about the children, the other children. We were like thinking if the mother will get another partner she should make sure the partner would consider the other children. Then of course since the two JFCs are girls, K. will be fourth year high school and
N. will be in grade six. Of course there are times when we are worried about their safety. Because in the Philippines...their home is very small… then they’re in separate room but there are no locks. And if they have the stepfather there…it’s like… and then there are other relatives inside the house. So there are times when we, we feel worried about the safety in their own house. Because in the Philippines there are a lot of cases of abuses of children. Sometimes by the step father, by the relatives, by the grand-father…”

The patchwork family is considered potentially dangerous especially to young girls, as there is no blood-relationship with the step-father and other family members who would be prepared to protect ‘their own’. Although the risks of abuse may be real, harassment does occur among blood-relatives as well. One such case had been handled by DAWN itself; in the early 1990s, the NGO had a Filipina client who suffered from a mental illness. Subsequently, DAWN convinced her ex-partner to take care of their teenage daughter and have her live with him in Japan. After some time, the father started to sexually harass his child. The girl found a way out by marrying an American soldier stationed in Japan at the time.64 This case shocked the organization and shored up the potential risks involved in sending children to live with their fathers in Japan, fathers who often had little emotional bonds with their children. I learned of a similar case of sexual

64 This story was related to me by a DAWN volunteer based in Japan.
harassment during my fieldwork. Haru, a young woman who had grown up with her mother in the Philippines was able to live with her father in Japan and subsequently gained Japanese citizenship. Her father also financed her tertiary education in the country. However, during an overseas trip they undertook together, he sexually harassed her. According to Haru, her father also suffered from a mental illness which made him very difficult to live with. The young woman sought help from fellow Filipinos upon her return to Japan, gaining support from a local NGO and eventually finding shelter with an American-Filipino expatriate couple living near the American military bases. There, she worked in a restaurant and met her American husband-to-be. After the American-Filipino couple had returned to the U.S., the young woman was forced to move in again with her father. The last time I met her, she was secretly planning her escape from Japan, asking her friends and acquaintances to store some of her belongings in their homes until she had managed to move everything out of the house before sending it to her former hosts in the U.S. She also had a flight ticket booked and, with her Japanese passport, she could travel without worrying about the time-consuming process of applying for a U.S. visa.

Another of my respondents, Alina, recalled that as a young girl she had been physically abused by her own relatives. She grew up in the absence of both her parents. Her mother was working in Japan, sending remittances to support her two daughters and the rest of her family. However, according to my respondent, her relatives “hurt her” and she had no one but her older sister who would stand up for her. Upon knowing of the abuse her daughter had suffered from her own

---

65 The young woman in this account was not a member of any of the five NGOs in question.
kin, her mother banned her extended family from their home and cut them off her support, leaving her eldest daughter as well as house-helpers in charge of managing the household and taking care of her youngest.

Accounts like these put into question the assumption that the social practice of ‘doing family’ is most favourable if supported by actual biological relationships among family members. The above mentioned examples and other cases of Japanese fathers being mentally and/or financially unfit to take care of their Japanese-Filipino children contravene this idea.66

Nevertheless, the ideal of the “normal” family continues to be deployed by NGOs to sustain their claims and to reframe Filipina women’s involvement with Japanese men. NGOs portray the presence of the biological father to be vital in a child’s life. This insistence on the biological father’s presence and partaking in his child’s life is not only motivated by beliefs of what is morally “right” and in the child’s interest, but also necessary to direct political claims towards the Japanese government. Firstly, Japan is urged to acknowledge its accountability in having made possible the birth and abandonment of numerous Japanese-Filipino children. Secondly the government is blamed for having deprived many of these children of Japanese nationality. Thirdly the need of meeting one’s biological father and

---

66 Another DAWN volunteer based in Japan mentioned that Japanese fathers sometimes have psychological problems or are suffering from poverty. Yet NGO staff from the Philippines tends to believe that life in Japan remains the better option for Japanese-Filipino children as Japan and the Japanese are deemed to generally be wealthy. This impression may be brought about by Japan's self-depiction as socially homogenous, middle-class society.
getting to know one’s “other homeland” is mentioned as a reason why Japanese-Filipinos should be given Japanese nationality.\(^{67}\)

In its earlier days, DAWN believed in the reunion of “the family”: the Filipina mother, the Japanese father and their child(ren). In anticipation of more such ‘success’ stories as the one of Cherry and Mr. Shimizu mentioned earlier, theatre and study tours to Japan were also organized for women clients of the organization during its first years of existence. In 1998, three such tours were arranged, each time bringing a handful of clients to Japan in the hopes for them to meet with Japanese ex-partners and in-laws in Tokyo and to “discuss the recognition and support of their Japanese-Filipino children. “ (DAWN 1998 d, p.3) Another tour took place in 2000 (DAWN 2000 a). As briefly mentioned above, two women clients failed to show up at the airport when it was time to return to the Philippines after one of these tours. Instead, they remained in Japan undocumented. Realizing the lure of the yen, the NGO has since stopped bringing their women clients on trips overseas.

The news about this incident spread among other support groups, cautioning them against bringing adult women clients with them to Japan. Talking to one of the staff of Maligaya House, I was informed that they had decided to bring only one Filipino mother to accompany them to Tokyo during one of their

\(^{67}\) “Our support for JFCs and their issues and concerns dared to chip away at the prevailing notion that the issue of Japanese – Filipino children is a personal issue between Filipina mothers and Japanese fathers. We lobbied both the Japanese and Philippine governments to enact equitable policies that will recognize, respect and promote the rights and welfare of Japanese – Filipino children and helped raise awareness on the issue with the peoples of both countries as well. [...] Amendments to the Nationality Law needs [sic] to be taken steps further in order to remove legal impediments to the exercise of JFCs of their right to their cultural heritage, including their father's nationality or freedom of movement in their father's birthplace.” (The Batis Center for Women et al. 2008)
trips where “the rest are children as some women might stay in Japan and go to TNT.” This happened to DAWN before.” The incident went unmentioned in DAWN’s newsletter and one-sided depictions of women migrant returnees as victims of exploitation were sustained.

**Depicting Filipina mothers**

The victimization discourse used to frame Filipina “entertainers’” experiences in Japan and the deployment of the ideal of the ‘normal’ family has enabled NGOs to do two things. First, Filipina migrant returnees are depicted in ways that dissociate them from sex-work, from the image of the “cunning” prostitute (Suzuki 2008), and thus from notions of ‘immorality’; second, to draw a generalized picture of their Japanese-Filipino children as born, if not from marriage, then at least from love to legitimize their claims.

I met my Japanese partner in the club where I was working in during my last contract in Japan. […] He courted me after a few days. He was responsible and kind. He was pursuing me relentlessly until I also fell for him. I accepted him as my boyfriend on March 2, 1991. I got pregnant. He took care of me. He even introduced me to his parents. He would often call me in the club. He promised to marry me in the Philippines. […] June 30, 1991, it was my boyfriend’s birthday, he called up to ask how much we need to spend for our wedding. After that call, we already lost communication. (Cora in DAWN 2004 a, pp.170-171)

---

68 *Tago ng tago*, to go into hiding, which also means to become an undocumented migrant.
I met the father of my child in the club where I was working in. He was a regular customer there. He courted me and I didn’t have any second thought of accepting him because of the kindness he showed me. I was able to prove once how much he really loved me. I told him that I would go home to the Philippines after my contract. Nothing changed when I came back. He treated me like the way he used to. Until something unexpected happened. Before I was able to finish my contract, I got pregnant after going out on dohan with him for several times. (Rose in DAWN 2004 a, pp.188-189)

Although readers of DAWN’s newsletter Sinag, or of Batis’ publication “Behind the Drama of Filipino Entertainers in Japan” (Takeda and Erpelo 2008) are reminded of instances of forced prostitution and other forms of sexual violence, the simultaneous depiction of Filipino women as loving and caring mothers reinforces the juxtaposition of the victimized, sexually deviant “entertainer” and the transformed “survivor”.

The representations of Filipino mothers as victims yet survivors and as caring mothers, is central to claims on behalf of their children. Filipino women’s relationships need to first be shown to have been “legitimate” to validate claims on behalf of their children with Japanese men. The process of legitimizing entails

---

69 The narratives selected for Batis’ publication depict more violent scenarios, including forced prostitution, rape, and domestic violence, than those featured in DAWN’s book.

70 The depiction of former entertainers as victims and caring mothers is less important for individual cases than it is for the NGOs’ cause as a whole. The June 2008 decision to amend Japan’s nationality law following the CNJFC-supported lawsuit is linked to the recognition of Japanese-Filipino children being born into families, rather than from short-lived relationships.
the establishment of Filipinas’ relations with Japanese men as emotionally driven (or in some cases as a result of despair) and not motivated by ulterior motives such as a visa or a guarantee for financial support. When queried as to their relationship, Filipinas married to Japanese men would mention “love” to have been the reason for their legal union, as “love” cancels out the possibility of having married, as it is widely assumed, for purely instrumental motivations (Parreñas 2011, p.182). However, “making love for a visa” and other benefits corrupts the ideal of sexual relations taking place purely out of love (ibid.), and preferably within wedlock.

Suspicions of childbirth having resulted from the engagement in sexual relations for ulterior motives therefore need to be dissuaded; instead, accounts by Filipino women published in NGO newsletters and books read like tales of martyrdom, betrayed vows of love and broken promises of marriage. With childbirth established as the consequence of “love”, not as part of a plan for material gains, claims for paternal recognition, Japanese nationality and alimony are also deemed legitimate. The depiction of mother, father and child(ren) to have been a family in the past or desiring to be a family in the future, concludes and reifies the idea of a failed love-relationship while highlighting the importance of the Japanese father to live up to his responsibilities. Japanese-Filipino children are roped into this project of nullification of motives contrary to love by performing the role of the ever-loving child; DAWN occasionally publishes tender messages by its child clients addressed to their biological fathers, highlighting their affective bond with a man they often have never met.
Dear Papa, How are you? I am well here. Papa, we are going to come to Japan on October 16, 1998. Papa, I would like you to watch me and mama in Saitama on October 17, 1998. Papa, Hitomi and Nozomi miss you. Papa ai tai [I want to meet you] and I love you. Your loving daughter, Yuri

(DAWN 1998a, p.9)

To my Dearest Daddy, Daddy how are you? I hope you are always fine. Dad I miss you so much. Dad, I am already in Grade IV, and I am already 10 years old. I wish we’re a complete family, and I always pray that every night. I have watched on television that some places in Japan are flooded and I hope you are not affected in that flood. Dad, please call me up on our cellular phone number 0918-281-0335. May God bless you always! I love you very much! And please take care of yourself! Sayonara otoosan [Good bye, father]! Your loving son, Hirofumi S. Kataoka No.218 Military Cut-off, corner Hillside, Baguio City, PHILIPPINES. (ibid.)

Victimization discourses have for a long time been deployed by NGOs for political purposes, such as the passing of anti-Human Trafficking laws, as well


72 The Republic Act No.9208 was signed in May 2003 by then-Philippine-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. DAWN (2003, p.4) claims part of the success in getting the law signed
as to reframe former Filipina “entertainers” in Japan as ‘proper’ women. Filipino women’s prominence in Japan’s night clubs has left migrants and returnees burdened with a set of negative stereotypes: cunning, materialistic and promiscuous. Throughout the 1980s, the *Japayuki* has emerged as ‘immoral’ *Other* in Japanese mass media, with migrant women being depicted “as hostesses and whores choosing to work at night in order to achieve their own ends, with some even depicted as deceiving their clients and intentionally becoming pregnant to bear “Japanese” children” (Suzuki 2008, p.68). In the Philippines, on the other hand, “Filipinas’ flights to Japan are also portrayed as tantamount to a betrayal of their natal state and its gender ideology” (p. 76). These negative images are detrimental to gaining sympathy for the plight of many returnees in distress. Migrant women's decisions to leave the country, the nature of their employment and their relationships with Japanese men are thus vindicated differently by support groups; the women’s involvement with Japanese men are often cast as love relationships while their labour in the sex industry is attributed to a lack of choice. Filipino women are symbolically distanced from the sexualized image of the *Japayuki* through portrayals as either devout lovers or as passive, even reluctant participants in the sexual act.

---

in: “DAWN was one of the active supporters for the passage of this measure along with fellow advocates from the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women and the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women-Asia Pacific (CATW-AP).”

73 An unpublished study by Carolyn Medel Añonuevo (1990) found that dominant ideals of femininity in the Philippines are largely derived from Catholic teaching. These ideals established two types of women: “the virginal martyr and mother role of Mary or the evil women that the seductress Magdalene was portrayed to be” (Añonuevo, 1990 in Roces 2009, p.272). Ideal femininity also entailed virginity until married and fertility when married (ibid.).
Her lack of a proper working visa pushed Teresita to a live-in arrangement with Mr. Shimizu. On June 15, 1993, Teresita gave birth to Anna.

(DAWN 2001)

This above excerpt taken from Sinag leaves out any mentioning of a love relationship or of sexual involvement; Anna is born out of a live-in arrangement her mother was pushed into. The ensuing pregnancy is portrayed as a result of Mr. Shimizu having taken advantage of her mother’s forlorn situation.

Yayori Matsui (1999) tells about the stories of Japanese-Filipino children and their Filipino mothers that she had collected when visiting Luzon in January 1994. Recounting the narratives of the Filipino mothers she had met, she writes:

He hired her as a maid and then made her pregnant.

(p. 52 emphasis added)

In many cases, the mothers met the Japanese men who had made them pregnant while they were working in Japan. (p.54 emphasis added)

There, as part of a business relationship, they serve customers who show an interest in them. In doing so, the women become unable to distinguish between love and showing hospitality. (p.58 emphasis added)

In Matsui’s depictions, Filipino women have fallen prey to Japanese men as well as to their alleged incapability of differentiating between love and their job. By using the passive voice in narrating occurrences of sexual relations and pregnancies, Filipino women are portrayed as disempowered victims of overly potent Japanese men. The depiction of Japanese men as lustful and exploitative is
in tension with the importance attributed to them within discourses on the “normal family”. Moreover, contrary to these depictions Parreñas (2011) has shown that Filipina hostesses’ decision to engage in emotional and sexual relations usually was carefully thought through and not merely passively accepted.

Janice, one of my respondents, has two Japanese-Filipino sons; each boy was born from a relationship that started at the club where she worked as an ‘entertainer’. In her narrative, Janice portrayed herself as an adventurous as well as calculating person; she actively choose the father of her first child and used wit to hide her pregnancy from her employers.

**Interviewer:** How did you meet [your first son’s] father?

**Janice:** He’s my *tenchō* [branch manager, here the manager of the pub]. He’s the *tenchō* of the pub. Then that time I was really (laughs), I heard that in 2000-something the world was going to blow up like that, [I thought] oh my gosh, I don’t even know what’s the face of my [future] child… whatever happens I have to see my own baby even if it doesn’t have a father or what, but I just want my own baby. Then, that time he was engaged with someone, somebody, another talent. But that time I didn’t know he was going to marry someone. So I flirted with him: “Hey, you want me?” (laughs) That time I was still a virgin, but he won’t believe me that I’m still a virgin because I’m like that. [Janice mimics the conversation] “You want me?” “What?” “You want me?” “What are you talking about?” “I would like you to be the father of my child.” “What? Are you nuts?” “No I’m not” “Why I must be the one, or what?” “If you
don’t want it’s okay I’ll find someone. I’ll find someone, you’re not the only guy. Don’t worry, forget it, I told him, don’t worry forget it.” […]

Eventually Janice’s tenchō decided to date her, but they kept their relationship secret. Soon however, her co-workers at the pub started gossiping which attracted the attention of their superiors.

When I was still there [at the pub] the buchō [manager, superior to tenchō] and the sachō [manager, superior to buchō] noticed the tsismis [gossip], the tsismis blew up. [They said] “Oh we heard that you’re pregnant and you still have a relation with the tenchō do you know he’s married already?” [I replied] “Yeah I know, and he’s not my boyfriend we do not have a relationship, do you have proof? You are an official man, guy, so you don’t have to believe in the tsismis, ‘cause you’re a top guy who doesn’t believe in tsismis unless you saw it with your own eyes.” [They replied] “Okay for the best, let’s go to the doctor and have a check-up.”

They want me to have some [pregnancy] check. But I won’t allow them to bring me for a check. So I told them, I will go there, but you have to sign the papers here you, my promoter, buchō and sachō gojuman [fifty thousand], gojuman, gojuman, that’s 150 000 [yen]. [Janice continues to mimic the conversation] “You have to sign it that you’re going to pay me if you find out I am not pregnant.” “Why? It’s too takai [expensive], it’s too much, too expensive for just checking.” “Just checking? They’re gonna you know, they’re gonna do like that and then…for you guys it’s okay, but for me.” “Okay okay okay, no way.” “So if you want me to go
there but you first sign. If you want me to go okay, but I’m not pregnant. Why won’t you guys believe me I’m not pregnant. Okay we can go there, but sign that.” Until 6 months… but that time I was slim, so that time they really did not recognize it. […] After that at the airport when I finished my visa, my contract, then at Narita they gave me my 6-months’ salary. I waited there. After the promoter came to me: “Okay here is your salary, okay you go there”, etcetera, etcetera. [Janice mimics the conversation] “Wait, wait, wait!” “What?” “You know what? I’m pregnant!” (laughs) “I’m six months pregnant!” Ah no it’s 4 months… “You’re a naughty girl! You fooled us!” (laughs).

Despite understating the more difficult situations she may have faced during her time as a hostess in Japan, Janice did not once depict herself as a victim. But a story like Janice’s which deviates from ideals of female chastity and links child-birth to calculations would hardly garner support.

The deployment of the ideal of the “normal” family, to reiterate the theme of this section, is a discursive strategy by which NGOs hope to enable women to find their way back into accepted femininity. By highlighting the family and by emphasizing motherhood, women are discursively removed from the bar and placed back into a primarily domestic sphere as providers of care for their children. The role of women migrant returnees as mothers is played up in DAWN’s family day celebrations which are usually coupled with Mother’s Day:
Capping the celebration was a short program that was especially meant for DAWN women who have been fulfilling their important roles as mothers to their JFCs. In time for the May 12 celebration of Mother’s Day, women were given the chance to share their sentiments, thoughts and feelings to their children and to the DAWN family, making everyone teary-eyed that fine afternoon. (DAWN 2002 c, 2)

Single-motherhood74, rendering these women into both providers and carers, sculpt another popular female trait: that of the sacrificing mother. The “DAWN family” (cf. DAWN, 1999a; DAWN, 2002a; DAWN, 2002b; DAWN, 2002c) on the other hand provides material and financial support, guidance, knowledge and at times disciplines its members: “Simple tokens of love and appreciation were given to all the mothers present even to staff and volunteers including [the] Executive Director [...] who was described as the ‘Mother of the DAWN family.’” (DAWN 2002d, p.2, emphasis added) The organization jumps in to fulfil duties deemed masculine, filling in the gaps left by absentee fathers by being a source of financial support, providing guidance and exercising discipline. Simultaneously, the filling in for missing fathers reifies the organization’s authority, both in its clients’ lives but also discursively, as an important and legitimate source of knowledge on Filipina migrant returnees and their Japanese-Filipino Children, buttressed by their expertise in dealing with and supporting the latter and by acting as their mouthpiece.

74 Not all women members of support NGOs are de facto without a partner. “Single” seems to denote women who are separated from the Japanese father of their Japanese-Filipino child.
Concluding remarks

The insistence on the nuclear, ‘normal’ family is not surprising considering the strength and deep-rootedness of Christian values in Philippine society and by consequence within cause-oriented groups. Yet it is peculiar for organizations dealing with former migrant women to place emphasis on the missing father within a socio-economic context that has seen rising numbers of single-parent families due to persistent labour export; Japanese-Filipino children are not the only children growing up with one sole parent. This is not to say that the rise of de facto single-parent families, if one does not take into account members of the extended family providing support in child-rearing, has not led to concerns about the ‘Filipino family’. Notably the increasing numbers of women crossing borders over extended periods of time often leaving their children in the care of relatives has sparked “[p]owerful moral discourses saturated with normative ideas about gender and generation bewail[ing] the breakup of the nuclear family in labour-exporting regimes such as that of the Philippines” (Horton, 2008, p. 926). The targeting of women, rather than men, in moralistic discourses on the family illustrates how the responsibility for the quality of a child’s life is manifestly gendered. Women remain responsible for children’s emotional well-being while men need to provide the family with income and their children with status and identity.

Patrilineal inheritance of descent, name, status and property needs an assurance of paternity. Women are therefore subjected to greater surveillance; their sexual behaviour is controlled in order to guarantee the biological relation
between a child and the putative father. Women are expected to remain sexually
inexperienced until marriage and chaste within marriage, being sexually available
only to their husbands. Indeed, women’s reputation and ‘respectability’ is tied to
their sexualities. Sexuality thus becomes the locus of control that men hold
over women, tying women’s status, sexual reputation, and moral identity to
whether they conform to ideals of female sexuality (Chang and Groves 2000,
p.74). Women’s credibility and their entitlements to claim rights thus seem to be
conditioned upon their compliance to gendered norms of sexual behavior.

Former Filipina hostesses have transgressed Philippine gender ideals, and
have commonly been perceived as the “immoral other and as the antithesis of the
Japanese “good wife, wise mother”” (Suzuki 2004, p.483). Yet, the conforming of
Filipina NGO clients to dominant ideals of femininity is crucial in legitimizing
their claims. Widespread negative media representations of Filipina entertainers in
Japan as “gold digging hookers” (Suzuki 2000, p.183) and the conflation of
hostessing with prostitution make it difficult to persuade an audience of the
legitimacy of rights-claims involving former ‘entertainers’. The demands for
paternal recognition and financial support for Japanese-Filipino children largely
born from hostess-client relationships may be contested by assumptions about

75 In many European countries as well as in Japan a child born within wedlock is assumed to
be the husband’s, notwithstanding the existence of an actual biological relationship (cf.
Machado 2008; Suzuki 2010). This illustrates the legal codification of assumptions about
gendered sexuality and women’s chastity within marriage in particular.
76 As well as to their bodies, supposedly revealing indications of their sexual behaviour and
availability which is one reason why DAWN staff advises its women clients how to dress, not
to dye their hair, and not to wear excessive make-up.
77 It should not be forgotten that women perpetuate patriarchy as well by policing each other.
Also, middle class women often hold women of the lower social classes against their middle-
class ideals of femininity.
their mother’s sexual activities and the subsequent reliability of paternity claims. The re-imaging of former Filipina entertainers in Japan as victims, heart-broken lovers, and caring, dedicated mothers is thus an important step, not only to lobby against the Philippine labour export and the ‘entertainer’ visa, but also in establishing the legitimacy of NGO claims for paternal recognition and financial support on behalf of their Japanese-Filipino children.

While the effectiveness of this strategy on individual cases is difficult to measure, the decision to amend Japan’s nationality law taken in June 2008 was partly based on the rationale that children born into families other than traditional nuclear families should be given equal rights as long as their fathers acknowledged them. Underlying this decision is thus the recognition of Japanese-Filipinos’ parents’ relationships as familial and therefore legitimate, as opposed to casual or fleeting and therefore illegitimate. Moreover, the recognition of victimization discourses is revealed by the funding received through various donor organizations and agencies considering NGO’s projects to be valid and important causes as well as worth sponsoring.
A private Philippine organization helping women migrant workers launched a program Tuesday to help what are called “Japinos”—abandoned children of broken marriages between Japanese and Filipinas. [The] director of the Batis Center for Women, said the program will help children of Filipinas who have separated from their Japanese husbands or what she called “one-night babies” born of bar girls and Japanese visitors who have gone back to Japan.

(Kyodo News Int. 1992)

They are the products of summer flings and mostly out of wedlock relations between Japanese men and Filipino women entertainers. Slit-eyed and fair-skinned, these children or “Japinos” (a contraction of Japanese and Filipino) have been leading difficult lives just like the “Amerasians”, or “souvenir babies”, sired by American servicemen out of Filipino bar girls in areas surrounding the US military facilities here.“They’re the products of what has been referred to as ‘flower drain’”, says [the] executive director of Batis Center for Women, a non-governmental organizations (sic) (NGOs) assisting Filipino overseas’ contract workers (OCWs), who have become victims of abuses abroad. “Flower drain” refers to the present-day phenomenon of Filipino women
entertainers going to Japan or other parts of the world to earn foreign exchange. Filipino sociologists have coined this phrase in the absence of appropriate words to describe this migratory practice, where innocent-looking rural women go to other countries only to lose their virginity to earn.

(Amor 1992)

The above excerpts of two articles which appeared in the newspapers *Kyodo News* on June 29\(^{th}\), 1992 and *Manila Standard* on October 18\(^{th}\), 1992 respectively are an introduction to the emerging ‘problem’ of Japanese-Filipino children. What is notable about these reports is that they describe Japanese-Filipino children as the consequences of brief, uncommitted sexual encounters, as products of Filipino women’s engagement in the sex-industry, or as abandoned children of broken marriages. In the early 1990s, when the birth of Japanese-Filipino children first began to be considered an issue, “one night babies” was the phrase used by the then executive director of Batis, […], to denote Japanese-Filipino children of former Filipina “entertainers” (Kyodo News Int., 1992). Then, the aims of a dawning political struggle were not yet set. Batis, the first NGO to have been established to cater to Filipina migrant returnees from Japan, had only started to recognize child-birth as a significant consequence of Filipina employment in Japanese red-light establishments and Japanese presence in the Philippines. As the term “one night babies” suggests, many of these offspring
were first thought to have hailed from Filipina’s sexual escapades with Japanese men.

But the discursive construction of Japanese-Filipino children has shifted since 1992, as Batis and the organization’s supporters noticed increasing numbers of Filipina mothers of Japanese-Filipino children seeking support in locating their children’s fathers. NGOs in support of Japanese-Filipinos have, since the mid-1990s coined the acronym “JFC”, the short form for ‘Japanese-Filipino Child’ and have invested in its definition and establishment as the correct term to designate the said population. “Japinos” have thus become “JFC” and are, two decades later, defending their Rights of the Child\textsuperscript{78}, claiming Japanese nationality, and claiming their right to acquire their Japanese fathers’ culture. They are no longer depicted as the accidental babies of Filipino women who went abroad “to lose their virginity to earn”. Rather, they are portrayed as offspring who now assert the rights and privileges they had been deprived of when their fathers abandoned their families, and as offspring of Japanese men who defy the (legal) boundaries that exclude them from being accepted as part of Japan.

The subject of this chapter is the discursive construction of Japanese-Filipinos as “the JFC” in the process of claims-making and advocacy by NGOs. Common knowledge about “the JFC” did not emerge in a vacuum but, like any object, was constructed within its particular historical context and from a mesh of available discourses (Mills (1997) 2004, p.10). These established discourses are resources used to make sense of this particular social phenomenon and to frame it in a way that its representation resonates with popular images such as that of the

\textsuperscript{78} Based on the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.
innocent, helpless child and widely sanctioned ideas of universal rights and children’s welfare, attracting support in NGO-led politics of recognition and rights assertion. NGOs have utilized various discursive resources to craft particular representations of their Japanese-Filipino constituents. In addition to NGO workers, a handful of Japanese-Filipino young adults have since the 2000s engaged with significant fervour in politicizing “the JFC” as an issue worthy of public concern and, as such, have actively participated in the shaping of projects and the drafting of statements and opinions in the name of Japanese-Filipinos, whether they effectively hold a leading position within a group or not. The political and symbolic struggle by and on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos began with NGOs establishing Japanese-Filipino children as a population, as a group deserving special attention. Japanese-Filipino children’s births were perceived to be a consequence of the structural inequalities which brought together their parents and from which they too would suffer.

The use of particular discourses and the foregrounding of certain depictions over others have gone hand in hand with technological advancement (such as DNA testing), the popularization of global rights discourses by larger funding organizations, and with legal changes in Japan. Moreover, the discursive construction of Japanese-Filipinos has also resulted in the establishment of “the JFC” as a category, as an identity (Ogaya 2011, 2013). The “JFC” category has been institutionalized through NGOs’ discursive practices but remains contextual in its significance for Japanese-Filipino children’s identities, meaning that “being JFC” is not necessarily salient under all circumstances and in all interactions.
Discursive representations have not only taken shape in spoken or written form but have materialized as practices put into action by NGO workers, often involving the management and policing of their own clients. The performance of ascribed identities, which is central to the support organizations’ credibility and discursive authority, reproduces particular narratives sanctioned by the NGO while understating alternative experiences and views. Particular “truths” about Japanese-Filipino children become institutionalized through the organization and reified through NGO activities and workshops promoting a particular “JFC” identity for the purpose of advocacy.

The establishment of Batis’ program for Japanese-Filipino children marked the acknowledgment of childbirth from Japanese-Filipina relations as not merely a private matter, but also as a social issue expected to gain importance. Although in 1992 it sounded as if the blame for having out-of-wedlock children was primarily attributed to Filipino women’s casual sexual involvement with Japanese men, understandings of the children’s situation by activists and NGO workers rapidly changed in the subsequent years. In 1993, the issue of Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines was broached at a public forum at the University of the Philippines and taken up by human rights lawyer Kenshi Nishida who branded the situation as a “gross human rights violation” (Kyodo News International, Inc., 1993). No longer presented as accidental “one night babies”, Japanese-Filipinos were understood as victims of human rights abuses by Japanese fathers who neglected their parental responsibilities (ibid.), and by the Philippine government, showing a lack of concern for its citizens by participating in the sending of
Filipino women into precarious employment in Japan’s sex-industry (Kyodo News Int., 1994 b). In 1994 however, with growing support from civil society groups and lawmakers in Japan\(^{79}\), claims were also directed towards the Japanese government (Kyodo News Int. 1994 c; 1994 d). Japanese lawmakers Masako Owaki and Kimiko Kurihara agreed to pursue economic aid from Japan through its overseas development assistance as part of a plan of action to alleviate the situation of Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines. Meanwhile, Batis also asked the Japanese Embassy to provide educational and financial assistance to abandoned Japanese-Filipino children (Kyodo News International, Inc., 1994 d).

In the same year, the Philippine Ambassador to Japan pointed out that the number of children born to Japanese-Filipina couples was increasing, and that most of these children were born out of wedlock. Between 1991 and 1993 the embassy had recorded the births of 605 Japanese-Filipino children, 60% of which were “illegitimate” (Kyodo News Int. 1994 a). In November 1994, then-President of the Philippines Fidel Ramos asked for Japan’s cooperation in helping settle the issue of Japanese-Filipino children abandoned by their fathers, which would include the determining and legalization of their status in Japan (Kyodo News Int. 1994 e). The request for cooperation emerged at around the same time as the case of “Baby Andrew”, an abandoned new-born child in Japan who was stateless at

\(^{79}\)The 1990s were marked by discussions about children’s rights and welfare, partly due to the international signing of the United Nations Covenant on the Rights of the Child. A number of children’s rights organizations had sprung up in Japan, and the discourse about nurturing fathers gained ground. Japanese men were criticized for not spending sufficient time with their families, especially their children (Nakatani, 2006). The role of fathers and their responsibility towards their children thus garnered wider interest. At the same time, the 1990s were marked by Japan’s war-time legacies surfacing: claims by comfort women, the ‘homecoming’ of orphans left behind in Manchuria, as well as claims for Japanese nationality by Philippine Nikkeijin.
birth since his parents’ identities could not be determined (but whose mother was assumed to be Filipina). The issue of the legal status of babies born out of wedlock to foreign women and Japanese men became increasingly pressing. Coincidentally, Japan ratified the UN Convention in the Rights of the Child in 1994, making the problems of out-of-wedlock births, children’s precarious legal status in Japan, and abandonment by Japanese fathers even more relevant. Throughout the 1990s, the children’s situation was increasingly framed as rights infringement and concerns about the respect of their human rights were raised more frequently.

**Utilizing Discourses on Childhood**

In the 1990s, when Japanese-Filipino children first surfaced in NGO newsletters and in mass media reports, most children were minors. When Batis first initiated its special program for children of women migrant returnees from Japan, the eldest children were in their mid-teens. As of today, many Japanese-Filipinos are in their late teens or adults, some having families of their own. The terms ‘child’ or ‘children’ denote both young people at a developmental stage widely understood as “childhood” as well as a more age-neutral status of “offspring”. By talking about Japanese-Filipino offspring as ‘children’, NGOs obscure the large age-gaps separating various cohorts and benefit from the symbolic and emotional capital associated with representing a population deemed in need of protection.

With numerous babies born from Japanese-Filipina relations over the past three decades, the age-range of Japanese-Filipino NGO clients has increased as
compared to 1992. In 2011, DAWN’s youngest member was five years old, while their oldest was in his thirties. The research project on Japanese-Filipinos conducted by the IOM (2009) revealed that most respondents located in the Philippines were in their teens at the time of the survey. Japanese-Filipino members of Batis YOGHI today are in their mid-teens to mid-twenties. Japanese-Filipinos’ coming of age has been encountered with the institution of Batis YOGHI in 2000 and more recently with the establishment of *DAWN JFC for Change*, acknowledging their ability to organize and speak for themselves. Reaching adulthood, Japanese-Filipino offspring needed less catering to their needs, but could be co-opted as advocates instead.

DAWN’s theatre plays, for instance, have been part of the NGO’s advocacy to inform their audiences about the children’s human rights (DAWN 1998 b, p.3). In 2000, DAWN first reported about organizing a workshop to inform their clients of the Rights of the Child, enabling Japanese-Filipinos “to realize the concept of being human and having human dignity, and to get acquainted with basic the definition and understanding of human rights, particularly the Rights of the Child.” (DAWN 2000 d, p.5). In 2004, the Human Rights workshop is said to also help Japanese-Filipinos develop “self-confidence and their knowledge and skills as potential advocates of children’s rights”. (DAWN 2004 b, p.9) From merely being recipients of information, Japanese-Filipinos are depicted as potential future advocates in DAWN’s publications. This shift seems to have been accompanied by a discursive change, from emphasizing children’s rights to “an intact family and stable financial support” (DAWN 1999
e, p.11) as well as “these children’s right to a nurturing home, good education and the right to develop their utmost potential” (ibid.) to an emphasis on children’s rights to Japanese nationality (DAWN 2008c). This indicates a change of focus from demanding acknowledgment and support as it could be provided by their Japanese fathers, to recognition by the Japanese state, reinforcing the idea that the issue of numerous Japanese-Filipinos abandoned by their fathers was not merely a private one.

Despite their great disparity in age, NGO representations of Japanese-Filipino children draw on the widespread image of the child as innocent and in need of help and care. A flyer distributed by the Tokyo-based Citizen’s Network for Japanese-Filipino Children (CNJFC) gives the impression that most of their clients are small children. The flyer displays five photographs of toddlers, printed in shades of red and white, Japan’s national colours (cf. plate 2). The children in the photographs have troubled expressions which suggest that something is preventing them from being ‘happy’, as if the latter is a given condition of childhood. A short statement accompanies each photographed face, presumably uttered by the person in the picture that provides us with an explanation for the children’s bothered looks; “It is my dream to meet my father”, “When I grow up I want to become a pilot and go see my father”. One statement reads: “Papa said: “This is not my child””, suggesting cases of rejection and illustrating the battled injustice with statements suggesting strong emotions.

---

80 In 2000, an article in DAWN briefly mentioned a child’s right to a name and nationality (DAWN, 2000 a, p. 5) when enunciating other rights as stipulated by the UNCRC but does not further elaborate on the point.
In a video produced for Maligaya House (pinoyhub, 2008) and uploaded on the online video-sharing platform Youtube, the NGO introduces some of the children it supports in the Philippines. The video features small children and a girl in her teens expressing their desires to meet their biological father as well as their dreams for the future. All statements are subtitled in English and dubbed in Japanese by a female voice.

“Papa, I am JB, I like to see you. I hope my dream to become a pilot or a doctor will come true.”

“Papa, hello… I hope you can come here in the Philippines so we can meet. I miss you…”

The use of the word “Papa” suggests familiarity. The video then cuts to a scene of people standing in a hall or church, one with a guitar and five others singing for their audience seated across several rows of benches:

“Hey dad look at me/ Think back and talk to me/ Did I grow up according to plan?/ And do you think I'm wasting my time doing things I wanna do?/ But it hurts when you disapprove all along/ And now I try hard to make it/ I just/ want to make you proud/ I'm never gonna be good enough for you/ I
can't pretend that/ I'm alright/ And you can't change me/ 'Cuz we lost it all/
Nothing lasts forever/ I'm sorry/ I can't be perfect/ Now it's just too late
and /We can't go back/ I'm sorry / I can't be perfect”

While the rendition of the song continues, the audio track is laid over with medium close-ups and extreme close-ups of child-members of the NGO.

The message of the video is one of children’s needs for their biological father and the desire to know him. It is also one of absolution; the absence of the father is justified by his child(ren) not living up to his standard. By implying blame on Japanese fathers for having abandoned their Filipino children, the apologetic tone of the song nevertheless also signifies submission to the father as a powerful patriarch, to the extent that participating Japanese-Filipinos would seek reasons for the father’s wrong-doings in themselves. This submission to the patriarch is couched in ideals of the traditional nuclear family, while the self-abasing tone of the chosen song feeds into ideals of suffering. In our most recent conversation, Mifune, a Japanese-Filipino man in his 30s who had been very involved with NGOs for the past seven years, observed: “Well it's like this; since we [JFC] don't have any other capital, some of us think that suffering is some sort of capital, it's probably a catholic thing.” The depiction of “JFCs”’ submission to the father and their willingness to suffer is used to illustrate the children’s virtuous character. But at the same time, the submissive tone reflects the unequal

81 The song entitled “Perfect”, popularized by the Canadian band Simple Plan, was written by the band’s drummer Chuck Comeau and lead singer Pierre Bouvier. Comeau’s parents had been unsupportive of his plans to give up college and form a band instead. The lyrics are written from a son’s perspective. The son addresses his father after he had rebelled against parental expectations.
power relations in place which leave NGOs and Japanese-Filipinos with restricted capacities to enforce their demands.

The innocence, good-will and forgiving character of the children is reiterated in publications by DAWN. In earlier issues of Sinag, a section entitled “children’s corner” provided space for comments and letters by Japanese-Filipino Children. The “Editor’s Note” reads:

What would the children say to their fathers? Below are some of the children’s thoughts, wishes and feelings for their fathers. (DAWN 1998 a, p.9).

Most of these messages are filled with sentiments of gratitude towards the organization and with well-wishes for their fathers.

“To my dearest Daddy, How are you? I hope that you are fine. Daddy, if you will ask me, I am fine too. […] Daddy, I have a request, please come back to the Philippines […]” (DAWN 1998 a, p.9)

“To my Dearest Daddy, Daddy, how are you? I hope you are always fine. Dad I miss you so much. […]. May God bless you always! I love you very much! […]” (ibid.)

Japanese-Filipino children are generally depicted in a positive light, usually in line with adult expectations of filial piety, obedience, gratitude, childlike innocence, a zest for life and a hunger for knowledge. The reports on workshops and activities organized for Japanese-Filipino NGO clients provide a
platform to depict the children favourably. A staff writer describing the latest workshop comments in 2006: “They [JFC] were therefore very excited and eager to learn and participate in the activities. […] the JFC workshop participants were trained how to be responsible children. They were assigned cleaning duties and nobody complained […] They all expressed appreciation for helping enhance their talents.” (DAWN 2006, pp.6,8). Commenting on the plot of a new theatre play, the "JFC" depicted in the play appear resilient and optimistic: “Just like the other JFCs in the Philippines, they have their problems. But young as they are, they are strong and full of ambition.” (DAWN 2007 b, p. 7). Descriptions of the young cast-members of Teatro Akebono are another instance of the portrayal of the ‘good child’, the childlike child. All the participating children are introduced one by one, sometimes with their portrait and always with their full names, age and a summary of their candid likes.

“Eight year old Jemina is an only child. She is in Grade II at a public school. Her favourite subjects are Mathematics and English. Just like other children her age, she likes to play a lot. She likes to play computer games. Her favorite colors are red and pink. Jemina wants to become a nurse someday.” (DAWN, 2008, p. 7)

“Takeru is eleven years old. He just graduated from elementary school this March and will enrol in high school. Takeru is a very active boy. He loves music and sports. He is [sic] taekwondo player. When he grows up, Takeru says he wants to become a scientist.” (ibid.)
Their depiction in DAWN’s newsletters shows no trace of school-drop outs, youth involved in illegal activities, gang violence or teenage parenthood, which have occurred among clients of all four support groups. The Japanese-Filipino Child has to be innocent and ‘childlike’ to gain empathy but also to remain non-threatening in his/her potential to cross borders to Japan. Therefore, through their portrayal as ‘pure’ innocent children, Japanese-Filipinos are more likely to be considered deserving support: from their fathers, from the Japanese government, from funding organizations, as well as from private donors. Moreover, Japanese-Filipino children may be regarded ‘non-malicious’ recipients of help (who after all did not chose the be born into their specific circumstances), as opposed to their mothers, whose long-standing stereotyping as “gold digging hookers” (Suzuki 2000, p.183) may still cast doubts over their motives for having had children with Japanese men in the first place.

The image of an innocent, virtuous, well-behaved and knowledge-hungry “JFC” is constructed against the negative image of the “Japino”, a child whose existence is a reminder of his/her mother’s failed attempts to secure a ‘better life’ with or through a Japanese man. In doing so, NGOs discursively disconnect the

---

82 The newsletter Maligaya on the other hand provides rather detailed “case reports” in which school drop-outs and teenage pregnancies are mentioned (although usually justified by the child’s or the teenager’s familial circumstances). These reports are written in Japanese for the CNJFC’s Japanese-speaking supporters in order to inform them about the various cases their legal team is handling. Many of the CNJFC’s supporters are lawyers themselves, which may explain why so much attention is devoted to discussing the financial and educational situation of the child in question, his/her relationships with family members, and providing details about the communication of the NGO with the parties involved. It is noteworthy that the “JFC” remains the innocent party in these “case reports” (as opposed to his/her parents or other relatives).
children from the cunning, sexually ‘deviant’ Japayuki and generate a new pair: the woman victim-survivor and her “JFC”.

“JFC’s needs” in the politics of recognition

The recognition of the notion of ‘the child’ and ‘childhood’ as being discursively produced can be analyzed vis-à-vis Philippe Ariès’ ground-breaking work *Centuries of Childhood* (1962), in which he challenges childhood as a natural given and establishes how, not only ideas on childhood, but the concept itself has historically emerged. His famous assertion: “[I]n medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist” (p.125) epitomizes the gist of social constructionist approaches to the concept of childhood. Childhood as a state of immaturity can be agreed upon as a biological fact of life, “but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture” (Prout and James 1990, p.7). Similarly, what we consider to be children’s ‘needs’ varies across social and historical contexts (James and James 2004, p.18). In this light, what NGOs promote as the ‘needs’ of Japanese-Filipino children can be deconstructed and analysed with regards to dominant canons on childhood as well as with regards to NGOs’ goals. As Woodhead (1997) points out, the latent assumptions and judgments about children underlying the concept of ‘needs’ are telling about the cultural location and personal values of the user of the concept (p.63). Contrary to the depiction of ‘needs’ as natural, the stating of and attending to the ‘needs’ of “JFC” thus has a political dimension; here it provides the basis for making claims.
Based on this ‘need’ to know one’s father, Japanese-Filipino children are said to face a series of deficiencies following its non-fulfilment: lacking self-confidence, shyness and an apparent identity crisis. Contributing to these identified ‘deficiencies’ are bullying and discrimination, said to arise from prejudices associated with these children being “bi-racial” or “bi-cultural” and to be an experience widely shared by Japanese-Filipinos. Such examinations of attitudes displayed by children reaffirm the centrality of the ‘normal’ family ideal in NGO discourses. These depictions also serve, if not as a critique of a seemingly intolerant society, as means to gain empathy for their children clients. In an issue of Sinag published in 2007, the work performed by support groups is said to help their child members become ‘normal adults’: “These organizations [Home Lawyers, CNJFC and DAWN] hope that through their work, more JFCs would be given the necessary interventions that they need to grow and develop normally.” (DAWN 2007 a)

The mere fact that Japanese-Filipino children have ‘needs’ suggests them to be helpless and passive, which resonates with the victimization discourse popularly deployed by supporters to depict Japanese-Filipinos as well as their mothers. It is, of course, the very same discourse that simultaneously justifies the mere existence of support organizations as well as their discursive authority as their clients’ mouthpieces. Interestingly, the framing of both women and children as victims places them in a positive light for claims while simultaneously putting the children’s mothers in a weak position to satisfy these ‘needs’ thus leaving the
‘real’ power and the actual responsibility of catering to them with those addressed in NGO claims: the Japanese fathers and the Japanese government.

The deployment of ‘needs’ as language for claims has another important function for NGO advocacy and claims-making; ‘needs’ statements are not merely descriptive but “convey considerable emotive force, inducing a sense of responsibility, and even feelings of guilt if they are not heeded […] This combination of descriptive and imperative authority provides a persuasive basis for defining policy.” (Woodhead 1997, p.66). Grounding demands in Japanese-Filipino children’s ‘needs’ is a political means to instigate relevant change through normative claims. The deployment of discourses on the child and on the ‘ideal childhood’ thus not only informs the framing and discursive production of the “JFC”, but also enables NGOs to work with the emotive currency given to children, as well as to further their own subject positions as ‘custodians’ of the children’s welfare, as ‘experts’ and therefore as discursive authorities (cf. Hahn and Holzscheiter 2013, on NGOs and the use of victimization discourses).

Furthermore, having presented themselves as ‘experts’, the professional assessment of Japanese-Filipino children’s needs by NGOs serves to divert attention from the fact that the assessment is made by adults from an adult value-position (cf. Woodhead 1997, p.74). “Projected onto children themselves, writes Woodhead, they [professional judgements in terms of ‘children’s needs’] acquire

---

83 In his paper, Woodhead (1997) analyzed the concept of children's needs and contends that it “conceals in practice a complex of latent assumptions and judgments about children” (p.63). Expressing ideas and opinions of what children ought to have or ought to experience in terms of “needs” makes the latter seem timeless and universal, and by consequence attributes statements about children’s “needs” with significant authority. However, what we identify and frame as “needs” are socio-culturally located beliefs about childhood, norms, and values.
spurious objectivity. In this way, cultural prescriptions for childhood are presented as if they were intrinsic qualities of children’s own psychological make-up. “(ibid.) Supporter’s biases, as well as the fundamental role of these biases in the formulation of “JFC”’s needs are concealed as the latter are packaged as if they were the children’s property, ‘naturally’ arising from their situation.

“Needs” become “rights”

“JFC’s needs” are also the basis for rights claims. In making claims by and on behalf of Japanese-Filipino children, supporters heavily rely on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to buttress their assertions. As an international agreement on the protection of children, the UNCRC carries significant symbolic weight. NGOs benefit from this symbolic credence and its widespread, international claim to truth which has contributed to changes in the discursive construction of childhood around the world (James and James 2004).

The UNCRC sets normative standards on a supra-national level to which NGOs can refer when challenging national policies, such as Japan’s nationality law. Within court rooms, the utility of references to the UNCRC is relatively limited since the legal changes deemed necessary are usually made upon ratification of such conventions. However, calling to mind the Rights of the Child has great symbolic salience both within and outside court rooms. For NGOs located in the Philippines, such as Batis and DAWN, the Rights of the Child have thus become an important discursive tool especially in making cross-border claims towards a foreign government in the name of (mostly) non-citizens. The
UNCRC is evoked as normative standard to demand ‘adequate’ treatment of “JFC” by the Japanese state, notwithstanding “JFC’s” citizenship. Moreover, the bringing into play of the UNCRC has positioned the NGOs as safeguards of Children’s Rights.

The “rights” of children as stated in the Covenant are largely ‘needs’ based and as such “particularly susceptible to being defined, or at least moderated, by political and cultural considerations” (p.84). The UNCRC is thus a political tool, not only by its symbolic salience and its formulation as a statement of rights, but also by its contents and their specific utilization in claims making. The UNCRC itself is an outcome of the political processes and decisions. “The family” for instance is defined in no other way but through the heterosexual nucleus of mother and father caring for their own progeny (James & James, 2004).

In the 1990s there was a demand for the children’s “right to meet one’s fathers” (Kyodo News Int., 1994 c) as well as efforts to make Japanese men “owe up” to their fatherhood and to ensure “good fathering” (Kageyama, 1999) - ideas which coincided with the rising discourse on fathers’ involvement in family life as well as with the availability of paternity tests via DNA. In 1994, with the ongoing case of “Baby Andrew”, the Osaka based International Center for the Rights of the Child demanded the creation of a special visa for Japanese-Filipino children to be able to travel to Japan, look for their fathers and live as part of a family (Kyodo News Int., 1994 c). Undocumented children born in Japan should also be given protection, according to the Center.
On the verge of the new millennium however, voices demanding the recognition of Japanese-Filipino children as Japanese *citizens* became more audible. The calls for father’s involvement in child-rearing remained, yet complaints about institutional discrimination surfaced as well. In an interview published in 1999, a staff member of the *Citizen’s Network for Japanese Filipino Children* demanded for children born to foreign mothers out of wedlock to be treated equally to children born to married parents (Global Information Network, 1999). By the early 2000s, activist NGOs in support of Japanese-Filipino children wanted the issue of differential treatment to be resolved; the birth of Japanese-fathered children without access to citizenship was a considered social problem caused by the MOJ’s own policies. “At the very least”, the activist is quoted, “it was the Justice Ministry that had issued the visas to the women who eventually became the lovers of Japanese men, and then the mothers of their children” (ibid.).

The UNCRC has been particularly useful for activists, following the filing of a lawsuit against the Japanese government in 2005[^84] by 10 Japanese-Filipino children and their mothers, supported by the CNJFC and the JFC Lawyers Association. Articles 7 and 8 of the UNCRC stipulating children’s right to a nationality as well as the role and responsibility of the State in safeguarding children’s nationality and identity have entered the spotlight ever since the 2005 case. In efforts to push for legal changes, the above mentioned provisions have been given central attention by a handful of adult Japanese-Filipino activists

[^84]: This is the case which, after going through several instances, eventually led to the change in Japan's Nationality Law in 2008.
speaking on behalf of all “JFC”. Pushing for additional legal changes, demands for Japanese nationality have been linked to the ‘need’ for Japanese-Filipinos to consolidate their identity and their rights to “cultural heritage” (cf. United Japanese Filipino Children, 2009; Batis YOGHI, 2012).

**Politicising “identity”**

NGOs and leading figures among Japanese-Filipino youth have used “identity” as an important argumentative tool; Identity is essential and “identity” is linked to other ideas such as culture, descent, nationality, citizenship, and knowing one’s biological father. Furthermore, children’s identities have been codified as “rights” by the UNCRC. Considering “JFC” identities to be endangered by the existing socio-legal conditions, activists have established the need for action. Interestingly, “identity” as an important key-concept, has entered NGO discourse in 2005, simultaneously with the filing of the CNJFC-backed lawsuit against the Japanese government. Since then, the children’s “identity problems” have also been covered and reiterated by the mass media (cf. The Manila Bulletin 2008; The Manila Times 2008 a; Yasumoto 2008 b).

“‘The revision [of the Japanese Nationality Law] will mean a lot to the children, because (nationality) is part of their identity and will secure them a more stable status and future,’ said [the] secretary general of the Tokyo-

---

85 Donovan (2006) argues that the human genome project and the commercial availability of DNA testing since the 1990s contributed to a discourse on the importance of knowing one’s biological parents. The knowledge of one’s biological parents was initially linked to the purpose of checking one's proneness to inheritable illnesses, yet the discourse on the importance of knowing one's biological heritage developed to include ontological security, meaning a sense of identity and self-confidence derived from the knowledge of one's place, expressed in biological relationships, within society and history.

86 Cf. Article 8 and Article 29 (c) pertaining to cultural identity in education
based Citizens Network for Japanese-Filipino Children, which supports Filipino women and children in Japan who often live under permanent resident status.” (The Japan Times 2008)

The identity problems mentioned by CNJFC’s secretary general pertain to the need to reconcile citizenship with national identification to help Japanese-Filipino children who were born and raised in Japan to become full-fledged members of society. Concerns over “identity” have also been raised by NGOs based in the Philippines to advocate for their clients’ rights to Japanese nationality. Manila-based DAWN had sporadically made use of the term “identity” in relation to their Japanese-Filipino members’ ‘mixed’ heritage earlier (i.e. DAWN 2000 a p.7), yet the concept increasingly gained ground in claims for Japanese nationality, notably so after the change in Japan’s nationality law in 2008 which will be considered in more detail below. In statements made by Philippine-based groups, “identity” suggests ethnic identity.

In 2005, coincidentally the same year in which the lawsuit against the Japanese government was filed, Teatro Akebono87 premiered its play The Magic Ring, portraying “JFC who grow up trying to search for their identities” (DAWN 2010, p. 113). Previous plays88 had highlighted issues of discrimination against

---

87 Teatro Akebono is DAWN’s children’s theatre group. The group stages plays in Japan and the Philippines.
88 DAWN has organized theatre tours to Japan since 1998 (DAWN 2004-2011). The plays were conceived as part of the NGOs advocacy but also enabled DAWN and some of their Japanese-Filipino clients to travel to Japan. This made it possible for the NGO to organize reunions between Japanese fathers and some of the children. At such occasions, the NGO may also be able to secure the fathers’ promise to support their child financially, or receive cash allowances from Japanese fathers to hand over to their child in the Philippines. In an interview, DAWN’s Executive Director stated that the creation of a theatrical group “became necessary because the children could not obtain tourist visas without financial certificates.
Japanese-Filipino children at school and by their neighbours, children coping with the absence of their biological father, as well as their dreams of living with both their parents (cf. DAWN 2010, pp.109-112). Since the staging of The Magic Ring, the children’s link with Japan has increasingly taken centre stage in the plays; in The Gift, a parcel sent from Japan and received by the protagonist stands for the expectations and hopes associated with Japan by Japanese-Filipino children in the Philippines. JFC World sets “the JFC” apart from Filipino and Japanese children; they inhabit a world of their own and are endowed with super-powers. The latest play, entitled The Cranedog, makes a definite link between ‘race’, cross-border travel and identity. The play was shown at various locations in Japan in 2009 and 2010 following the news of Japan amending its Nationality law. The various plays are part of DAWNs advocacy and have served as vehicles to convey messages about the situation and plight of Japanese-Filipinos.

Discourses about “JFC”’s identities initially emerged during the litigation process that started in 2005. NGOs in the Philippines supporting clients who were “100% Filipino linguistically and culturally” (Yuusuke 2009) had to emphasize their clients’ Japaneseness and the significance of obtaining Japanese nationality to Japanese-Filipinos’ identities.

“We express our opposition to a law that justifies, through legal mandate, the failure of the State to protect and uphold the identity of interracial children who trace their roots to Japan.” (Batis YOGHI 2012).

Therefore, their only option was to enter Japan on professional entertainer’s visas.” (The Daily Yomiuri 2004). Moreover, the yearly theatre tours are a means for DAWN to sell the products manufactured through its livelihood program Sikhay.
“JFC get here [to Japan] through various means […] A few find contentment in never settling the Japanese identity question at all and look forward to living out their lives in the Philippines.” (United Japanese Filipino Children 2009)

The usage and definition of “identity” within the context of rights assertion has been arbitrated by efforts of recognition. The UNCRC mentions “identity” as a right of the child and thus provides convenient grounds upon which demands may be formulated, imbuing suitable meanings into this fuzzy and malleable concept.

“Identity” has been mobilized to give meaning to claims for Japanese nationality and cross-border mobility. The symbolic salience of “identity” lies in its personal importance and universal appeal; everyone has an identity and yet each identity is deeply personal and therefore defining of an individual. As such, depriving someone of the means to protect, uphold or settle one’s identity (identity in identity politics is often assumed to be fixed) becomes an infringement of one’s personhood. Being prohibited from obtaining Japanese nationality and from migrating to Japan are thus framed as encroachments on Japanese-Filipinos personhoods, human rights, their very being.

The ideal of the “normal” family has served to establish ongoing conditions as abnormal and unfair, while the discourse on the child has benefitted NGOs through the emotional currency associated with children thus confirming NGOs’ important role in taking care and advocating on behalf of Japanese-
Filipinos. Furthermore, the employment of the UN Covenant on the Rights of the Child in processes of rights assertion contributes to the construction of Japanese-Filipinos as children (in terms of age), whereas many individuals—notably politicized Japanese-Filipinos who actively engage in the production and maintenance of meaning for their constituents and possible supporters—are already past their childhood. The employment of the UNCRC also reveals a conflation of the two definitions of “child”, one denoting “offspring”, with the other defined by age as set out in the Covenant\(^{89}\). The “Rights of the Child” in claims-making thus seem to denote the “Right of the Offspring” or birthright; demands do not merely target legal change benefitting Filipino-Japanese minors and generations to come, but strongly imply requests towards the Japanese State and society to recognize the consequences of Japanese immigration policies and in doing so, to owe up to “their children”\(^{90}\), even if the latter are already adults. The idea that Japanese-Filipino children are “children of Japan” has been repeatedly mentioned by one of my respondents, Mifune, in our early interviews and in statements he conveyed through the online networking site Facebook.

“Well I always thought that the Japanese are a set of people who accept others, humble, polite, orderly, that they’re not going to discriminate against us because we are their children”, Mifune reflected on his first visit to Japan. His sentiments

\(^{89}\) “Article 1: For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” Online at: [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm) (access: 24.October 2012)
of disappointment grew and in one of our online conversations
he stated that Japan treated “JFCs” as bastards and never cared. A similar thought is affirmed in the title of DAWN’s (2010) publication *We are your Children, Too. Creative Journeys of DAWN's Japanese-Filipino Children members.*

**The construction of the “JFC” identity**

In processes of claim-making on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos, the latter’s “needs” and desires have inevitably been generalized. This generalization has rendered “the JFC” into a category-like identity, ready for Japanese-Filipino clients to espouse. At NGO premises and through NGO activities, Japanese-Filipinos are taught to identify as “JFC” and to produce narratives in line with dominant representations of Japanese-Filipinos by NGOs. Yet the acronym “JFC” is a term which needs to be problematized. Established as the ‘correct’ expression to designate children born to Japanese-Filipina couples by advocacy NGOs, “JFC” has been understood to refer to all Japanese-Filipino offspring born since the late 1970s. But the term has also come to imply that these Japanese-Filipinos hail from problem-ridden relationships, were often born out of wedlock, and were later abandoned. With the absence of the Japanese father come financial difficulties; the designation “JFC” thus also entails lowered socio-economic status. Thus, while the acronym seems to merely refer to children of ‘mixed’ –ethnic/-national/-racial relationships, it also contains generalizations pertaining to their familial and financial situation.

---

91 (17th May 2010)
As elaborated on above, NGO discourses tend to occlude differences among Japanese-Filipinos in terms of variables such as age, socio-economic status, legal residency as well as citizenship and familial situation by focussing on ‘problem-cases’. The generalizing manner in which Japanese-Filipinos are subsumed into “the JFC” has concealed this diversity in favour of highlighting commonality based on ‘mixed’ Japanese-Filipino heritage as well as assumed ‘common issues’. The “JFC” is usually portrayed to meet the standards of the innocent, lively child, yet having some ‘typical’ handicaps associated with his or her situation as a “JFC”: presumed identity issues, an absentee father, the desire to meet one’s father and the desire to experience Japan.

Ogaya (2011) demonstrates how Japanese-Filipino children become “JFC” upon joining an NGO; it is through NGO membership and participation in their activities that they are familiarized with the expression and learn to use it to refer to themselves. Prior to joining the organization, children usually just know that they are “children of Japanese” and get acquainted with the term only through their NGO membership (p.6). Indeed, Ogaya’s interviewees declare that “‘JFC’ is only for and at DAWN’s office” and “I don’t have this feeling at school. I’m just ‘half-Filipino, half-Japanese’ there. I don’t feel that I’m JFC when I’m at school.” (p.7). Another respondent states “I’m ‘normal’ at school. There is an aura in the office that makes me feel that I’m a ‘JFC’” (ibid.). Being “JFC” is thus highly contextual and usually confined to an identity within the NGO, which implies that

---

92 Ogaya writes about her experiences with DAWN in particular.
the “JFC” identity may be more important for NGOs than for Japanese-Filipinos who slip in and out of their roles as “JFC”.

Discourses on the “JFC” largely emanate from the relationships between Japanese-Filipinos and their mothers with NGOs, from the relationships of NGOs with potential funders, as well as of NGOs and Japanese-Filipinos with lawmakers in Japan. Drawing on Foucault’s conception of power as a productive force, I contend that NGOs’ engagement in symbolic and political struggles have produced the “JFC” and have influenced how Japanese-Filipinos are being thought and talked about, to the extent of creating identities espoused (and at times resisted) by their Japanese-Filipino clients. The “JFC” is constructed at the NGO; children are not only being taught the term, but the expression is given meaning through definition and practice. For instance, during a summer-camp organized by Batis YOGHI in May 2011, the NGO had planned a workshop aimed at tackling the meaning of ‘being a JFC’ through a problem-tree drawing session. All Japanese-Filipino participants were asked to split up into groups of five. Seated on the floor with a big, blank paper poster, markers and a manga93 published by Batis YOGHI, the group members were tasked to draw a problem tree to map out the root causes and current issues faced by “JFC”. The manga featuring three narratives deemed to be “typically” experienced by JFC, was handed to the participants as an inspirational guide while filling out the problem tree.

---

93 YOGHI Manga (2009), Quezon City: Batis Center for Women Inc. and Batis YOGHI
The group I had been assigned to initially did not know what to write into the blanks of the problem-tree in front of them. They discussed the *manga* story they had been assigned to and looked for the “right” answers. The most vocal participant, a girl in her early 20’s who led most of the discussion, eventually asked me if what they had written was correct and whether I had any more ideas. I replied that they should draw from their own experiences as Japanese-Filipinos to complete the activity. After further discussion, discrimination was mentioned several times as a typical “JFC” problem. When I asked the discussion-leading girl whether she had experienced discrimination before, she answered no. She had never had any bad experiences related to her being Japanese-Filipina.

The activity had prompted Japanese-Filipino participants to reiterate and reproduce common representations of the “JFC” notwithstanding whether these may actually be applicable to themselves. Activities like the one mentioned above reify the “JFC” as a category and seek to establish a shared identity defined by a set of ‘typical’ experiences, issues and desires. Ogaya (2013) points out that the length of one’s NGO involvement largely determines how much being a “JFC” is endorsed as an identity. Two of her interviewees who declared they were “proud” to be “JFC” had spent a significant part of their childhoods with NGO workers and joining NGO activities. These findings correlate with data I collected during my fieldwork. I interviewed several Japanese-Filipino youth in the Philippines during the Batis YOGHI summer camp and found that those who had been with the NGO for the longest time also had the most positive things to say about their membership and their being “JFC”.
I think that because we’re all JFC’s we have the same experiences in our lives. And I think that what unites us are our experiences, you know. Like here we have different personalities but we still, but we are still united because we have the same experiences, the same thoughts in our minds, like that. (Sachiko, NGO member since age six)

Before I thought that I was alone. But when I participated in the activities of Batis YOGHI we shared experiences and stories of our lives. They made us a more tighter, tightened the relationship. [...] it’s like a family in Batis YOGHI. And we just treat each other as brothers and sisters, like that. (Yoko, NGO member since age seven)

Before I thought I am the only one like this. But since I joined Batis and joined YOGHI and attend the summer camp I see many, many like this. That’s why I understand I’m not alone. I told myself I’m not alone. (Atsushi, NGO member since age six)

Their membership with Batis and Batis YOGHI had provided them with a social network and acquainted them with other children growing up with single-mothers. Being “JFC” had become a means for them to make sense of their situation as children of absent Japanese fathers, and taught to consider themselves as part of a larger group of people which has been viewed as a positive experience by my respondents above.

However, not all Japanese-Filipinos agreed that “JFC” were united by their experiences. Japanese-Filipinos are indeed more diverse than the acronym
“JFC” suggests. Japanese-Filipino children grow up in various family forms, including nuclear families, patchwork families, extended families, single-mother families, or transnational families in absence of both biological parents. Throughout Japanese-Filipinos’ childhood and youth, these family forms may change. For instance, Japanese-Filipinos may leave or join a relative or a family nucleus upon migration. They grow up in either Japan, or the Philippines, and in some cases, in a third country. They may shift residence with both or one of their parents from Japan to the Philippines and vice-versa, or be sent to be taken care of by relatives in the Philippines when their parents find themselves unable or unwilling to raise them in Japan.

Japanese-Filipino children also grow up in various socio-economic situations. Fifteen year old Toshiro and his siblings were raised in Manila by their Japanese expatriate father and their Filipina mother, a homemaker. All frequent the private Manila-based Japanese International School, are fluent in Japanese, and have visited their relatives in Japan on a regular basis. Alina, a Japanese-Filipina in her early twenties, frequented a private school in Manila as well before joining her step-father in Japan where she later enrolled in a private university. In the meanwhile, her mother, a former ‘entertainer’ turned business woman has relocated to Manila leaving Alina in the care of her Japanese step-father. The variety of “JFC” experiences shows that although Japanese-Filipino’s parents’ relationships are couched in similar structural inequalities, the diversity of these relationships goes beyond the dichotomy of the Filipina victim and the Japanese predator. Moreover, the heterogeneous familial configurations mentioned above
illustrate that the “JFC” is not uniform and that NGO advocacy has focused on a particular ‘type’ of Japanese-Filipino.

Within the context of NGO activism and claims making, the development of a “JFC” identity has a political purpose. For many NGO members, such as Sachiko, Yoko, and Atsushi, this shared narrative has taken on the form of a collective memory, “the active past that forms our identities” (Olick in Rocha, 2010, p. 80). Yet this collective memory underlying the “JFC” narrative is not shared by everyone. Toshiro, who joined an NGO upon his father’s suggestion, clearly stated that he did not share any of the experiences of other NGO members. Alina too has difficulties feeling adequately portrayed by NGO-endorsed representations of Japanese-Filipinos. In our interview she makes it a point to let me know of her privileged upbringing:

Alina: they don’t have maids? These moms?

Interviewer: These moms are not well-off moms

Alina: Oh they are living in the Philippines? Most of the half-Japanese in the area where I live in Manila are pretty ok- they don’t have problems with money. [My district is an] area quite good to live.

Interviewer: How come there is this enclave?

Alina: There are a few places for you to choose from if you are better off- this is one of the places. Others are parts of Las Piñas, Alabang, some parts of Parañaque… there are a lot of international schools. If there is a concentration of education, you will find a lot of Koreans, Japanese half…

167
but not pure Japanese. [...] I know a lot of people in Japan who are like me—people who are well-off back in the Philippines. Actually we have a totally different situation than the other ones.

Alina feels uncomfortable being associated with the lower social classes both in the Philippines and in Japan. To emphasize her distinct situation she mentions the friendships she fostered with Japanese returnees from the United States: “So I have these friends that are international, like from the States… they’re Japanese. I have people I can talk to, compared to these other JFCs.”

The representation of Japanese-Filipinos as a troubled population has served NGOs to justify their existence and the implementation of funded projects. Yet this has implicitly created an exclusive imagination and representation of the “JFC” with which only children and youth in particular circumstances are able to identify with. Others are led to distance themselves from both NGOs and activism pertaining to Japanese-Filipinos. Alina, who is involved in a Japan-based youth-group, makes it a point to dissociate herself from other ‘troubled’ youths who she is providing support for, mentioning two supposed experts who could vouch for her class difference: “If you are going to ask [a social worker] or [a Japanese Professor], they would say that I have a different situation than the others. Because I live in a totally different community back home.”

The problem with the category “JFC” is thus not that NGOs point out issues and difficulties faced by a great number of Japanese-Filipino children and youths, but that being Japanese-Filipino has come to be conflated with these
problems. The ascription of a “JFC” identity to Japanese-Filipinos by NGOs, based on generalizations of Japanese-Filipinos as abandoned and/or born out of wedlock facing financial and emotional difficulties, largely stems from two factors. First, the way “JFC” have come to be understood and framed by NGOs is largely based on the situation and experiences of individuals seeking the help of support groups. As DAWN’s and Batis’ publications show, numerous Filipina women and their Japanese-Filipino children have faced challenging situations. Second, the depiction of “JFC” as vulnerable, problem-ridden, and deserving of support is crucial to establishing Japanese-Filipinos’ existence as an issue and to politicizing it. Moreover, if “JFC” are considered to be in need of assistance, and NGOs situate themselves as supporters, then NGOs gain the legitimacy to apply for funding to finance their enterprise.

Thus, instead of being written off as “one night babies” or the accidental children of prostitutes as in the early 1990s, “JFC” have come to be depicted as victims in need of attention or even psychological treatment. DAWN’s newsletter Sinag mentions that some of the NGOs clients have been sent for psychological counselling and testing (DAWN, 2000 e; 2008 d). Moreover, articles featured in

---

94 Though, it should not be forgotten that such narratives are always selected and framed for the purpose of advocacy. As Ogaya (2013) has shown in her paper, some of DAWN’s clients resist the negative depictions of what it entails to be a hostess in Japan, as well as dominant interpretations of what it means to be the child of a former ‘entertainer’. Disagreements over such depictions have sometimes led to clients leaving the NGO, as in the case of Anna depicted in Ogaya’s paper. My fieldwork too has revealed that clients leave their NGOs when they feel NGO membership no longer serves a purpose, or when they find more lucrative alternatives. Two families who had been with DAWN when I first joined the NGO in 2008 had left the organization in the following years to join a different group. According to one DAWN staff they had hoped to be able to secure employment in Japan by joining that other organization. One family of four had indeed managed to secure Japanese citizenship for two of its members. The other family, a mother and her Japanese-Filipino son, still remains in Manila as they have been unable to locate the son’s Japanese father.
Sinag (e.g. Hara A.M., 1998; DAWN, 1996 a; DAWN, 1999 c; 2002 a; 2004) and DAWN’s web-site (DAWN, 2004-2011) have repeatedly highlighted DAWN’s activities as “therapeutic”, as a means to “heal”, and a way to get in touch with oneself, effectively pathologizing the NGO’s clients. Batis had taken a different approach by initiating Batis YOGHI and encouraging its Japanese-Filipino members to take matters into their own hands. Batis YOGHI promotes optimism and individual responsibility, but does not avoid endorsing the over-generalized “JFC” category, as well as considering “JFC” a priori troubled youths who the group seeks to empower.

The symbolic struggles engaged in by NGOs have given rise to the “JFC” as an alternative term to Japino, and as an identity defined by a dominant narrative which is reified through practice and repetition. Some Japanese-Filipinos themselves have endorsed being “JFC” as a political and an ethnic identity. The identification as “JFC” is a process, as Ogaya (2011) shows, and the significance of being “JFC” is contextual. Jenkins (2008, p.82) points out that “[s]ometimes ethnicity may take its place alongside the primary identities of humanness, gender and individual selfhood; in other local contexts it will matter less.” It seems that for many Japanese-Filipinos, being “JFC” matters most in relations to their involvement with their NGOs, including processes of claims-making towards the Japanese government.

Japanese-Filipino members of NGOs undergo a process of ethnicization via the ascription of a “JFC” identity, largely denoting Japanese-Filipino parentage, a common history, and a presumably shared set of ‘issues’. The “JFC”-identity is
constructed via the repetition of the ‘typical’ story depicting the supposed ‘origin’ of Japanese-Filipino children, via the provision of resources enabling Japanese-Filipinos to imagine Japan and get in touch with things Japanese, and via instilling a sense of difference separating ‘us, JFC’ from ‘them, regular Filipinos’. This process of ethnicization, of drawing ethnic boundaries, is part of the symbolic struggle on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos to gain recognition of “JFC” as Japanese and as part of Japan’s history, from the Japanese government.

‘Blood’, descent, ‘race’ and ‘culture’: mobilizing consanguinal capital

The construction of the “JFC” as distinct from ‘regular’ Filipinos by NGOs in the Philippines occurs by highlighting Japanese-Filipino’s *Japanese-ness* and by labelling them ‘children of Japan’. Japan becomes a substitute for the absent Japanese father by likening filiation to national ties. The deployment of discourses on the child and the ‘normal’ family have highlighted the importance of paternal recognition and as such established the father as provider of “identity”, presuming he would be the answer to the unsettling question “who am I?”. The father within the “normal”, patriarchal family setting is the source of status, name and lineage. “I really want to study the culture of Japan, because that is the root of my life”, says Atsushi about his interest in things Japanese, thereby reconfirming his father as source of identity and Japan as an extrapolation of that unknown Japanese man who, at least biologically, made Atsushi ‘who he is’. In this analogy Japan is conceived as the greater father of all Japanese-Filipinos and becomes a provider of identity. The importance of exploring Japan and ‘Japanese culture’ as a way of knowing one’s Japanese father by proxy is reiterated by Mifune:
“I mean it’s always tied to the whole Japanese, the whole Japan relationship thing is always tied to the way a child, or a JFC tried to resolve the father question. I think I agree with [my Japanese-Filipino friend]…[she] mentioned that she can’t know her father, so what she chose to do is study the whole culture of Japan, the whole breadth if it, experience it, experience the people, the people that the father belongs to so ultimately once you embrace the country it’s like embracing your own father. That’s the stance I also take. [...] So I’ve established a kind of dialogue with the whole culture, the whole country.”

Individual Japanese fathers are abstracted into the image of the Japan. Japan turns into the potential provider of both, Japanese citizenship and ‘cultural heritage’, notably for children and youth having grown up in the Philippines. Indeed, one becomes a member of a nation similarly to how one becomes part of a family: by birth (Delaney, 1995). In claims made by Japanese-Filipinos, this “birthright” does not merely include nationality and citizenship but also the right “to learn firsthand the ways of our fathers” (United Japanese Filipino Children 2009).

Beneath demands for national membership lays the generalization of kinship ties into an imagined community (Anderson 2006 (1983)) which also forms the core of the assumptions on having a “cultural heritage” to claim; the ‘blood’ metaphor is conflated with culture and reveals the essentializing suppositions implied in the argumentation. Indeed, its gist resonates with classic...
views on ‘one nation, one culture, one language, one state, one citizenship’ (Grillo 2007, p.993), which have largely been contested by intensified human cross-border mobility and transnationalism. It is therefore even more interesting to see NGOs invested in the support of rights assertion by children born from the very human mobility that challenged classic views of the nation, yet reviving it for their own purposes of claims-making, advocacy and inclusion of Japanese-Filipinos as Japanese nationals. The concepts of ‘race’, culture, citizenship, nationality and ‘blood’ have been deployed notably by Philippine-based NGOs without clear distinction and as such seem to reverberate with the cultural essentialism and the effective equation of state, nation and ethnicity purported by popular nationalist discourses including Nihonjinron⁹⁵ (cf. Lie, 2003 on Nihonjinron or McVeigh, 2006 on Nationalisms in Japan).

Culture and ‘race’ are two terms commonly used interchangeably in texts produced by support NGOs of Japanese-Filipinos. “The JFC” is often described to either hail from “inter-racial” unions or from “inter-cultural” ones. In describing the play The Ugly Duckling⁹⁶ performed by Teatro Akebono in 2001, the story is said to easily be one “of every Japanese-Filipino child, who soon finds that being born of two cultures means never fitting in any of them” (DAWN 2001 a, p.4). The statement assumes culture to be transmitted by birth, an assumption that becomes even clearer upon considering that the majority of Japanese-Filipinos spoken for by the NGO have never had significant contact with any of their

---

⁹⁵ A popular body of writings asserting Japan’s ethnic homogeneity as well as the Japanese people’s distinctiveness, produced notably after WWII and during Japan’s economic miracle.
⁹⁶ The play is based on the classic by Hans-Christian Andersen (DAWN, 2001 a), but the author of the play remains unmentioned.
Japanese relatives, nor any lived experience of Japan. Another statement reiterates the conflation of ‘culture’ with ‘race’: “[t]he children [...] have become more confident in expressing their identities as Japanese-Filipino children and now accept they belong to two different cultures.” (DAWN 2000 a, p.7). Japanese-Filipino members of DAWN restate the conflation:

“I think it is great to be a JFC because aside from being a product of two cultures, many people say that JFC are beautiful and talented.” (Mayumi, in DAWN, 2010, p.71)

“Inside us [JFC] there exists an empire with a monolithic culture and a colony with a boiling pot of influences.” (Philippine-based Japanese-Filipino Facebook user)

While Japanese-Filipinos are indeed offspring of parents born and raised in distinct societies, the latter’s socio-cultural knowledge does not naturally transfer onto the children simply by birth, rendering them bi-cultural as statements in NGO publications suggest. Most Japanese-Filipino children spoken for by Philippine-based NGOs are born and raised in the Philippines and learn about Japan mainly through mass-media, through the narratives of their mothers or NGO sponsored workshops and projects. Therefore, calling these individuals “bi-cultural” means equating descent with culture. Usually, it is support groups that provide Japanese-Filipinos with access to things Japanese and encourage their learning and practice. In short, NGOs acquaint the children with what is
considered ‘Japanese culture’. In doing so however, support groups contradict themselves by promoting bi-culturalism as an innate quality on the one hand, and a faculty in need of development on the other:

“Their [“JFC”’s] cultural exchange with the Japanese people and their sight-seeing activities are also expected to develop their pride and appreciation of their paternal roots.” (DAWN 2002 b, p.12)

“DAWN recognizes the JFCs rights to discover and understand their paternal roots. Part of which is learning basic Nihonggo words and writing especially for those going to Japan for the theatre tour.” (DAWN 2003 a, p.6)

“The activity is held annually to foster and promote better understanding and appreciation of other cultures, esp. Japanese culture considering that the JFCs are half-Japanese [...] The JFC participants performed in the musical play, had dialogues and interactions with local communities, schools and organizations in Japan, attended workshops and talks on Japanese culture, and experienced Japanese hospitality through homestay with Japanese families.” (DAWN 2009, p.6)

Batis-YOGHI, an organization of children of Filipino women migrant workers in/from Japan, is committed to [...] raise their [Japanese-Filipino
children’s] awareness on Japanese and Filipino culture. (Batis Center for Women 2009, p.20)

NGOs have invested time and resources to inculcate *Japaneseness* into their Japanese-Filipino members. The children and youth are given the opportunity to learn basic Japanese by participating in language classes organized by the NGOs (Batis YOGHI, DAWN and *Maligaya House* have provided Japanese language classes for Japanese-Filipinos). At DAWN, Japanese-Filipino members are involved in activities that expose them to things Japanese; *origami* folding, *onigiri* (rice-ball) making, the singing of Japanese children’s songs and even the performance of one of their theatre plays in Japanese.

The ‘culture’ argument is employed strategically to justify both the necessity for Filipino-Japanese children born and raised in Japan to remain in the country where they grew up, as well as the need for Japanese-Filipinos to migrate out of the Philippines to Japan. "We mothers don't need Japanese nationality. We want to go back to the Philippines when we become old, [...] But I can't bring my daughter to my country. She only speaks Japanese and only knows life in Japan. She'd have such a difficult time in the Philippines. She wants to live in Japan" (The Daily Yomiuri, 2005), declares Charlette, a Filipino mother of a Filipino-Japanese girl born and raised in Japan. Here, gaining Japanese nationality is deemed crucial to enable a Japanese-Filipino girl to remain in the country she learned to understand as her home, of which she speaks the language and where she is accustomed to daily life. In contrast to this statement are demands on
behalf of Philippine-based children and youth to take legal steps to further “...remove legal impediments to the exercise of JFCs of their right to their cultural heritage, including their father’s nationality or freedom of movement in their father’s birthplace.” (The Batis Center for Women, et al. 2008) The ‘culture’ argument is malleable and depends on who speaks; at times it is linked to ‘blood’ and descent, while at other times ‘culture’ is highlighted as a matter of socialization. In the case of NGO advocacy on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos based in the Philippines, biological descent becomes deployed as a reason to acquire certain cultural knowledge and experience, and thus migrate to Japan, while in claims on behalf of Japan-based Japanese-Filipinos, an already acquired cultural knowledge and habits become the primary reasons why they are deemed unable to live in the Philippines. The employment of different and indeed contradictory discourses shows that the mobilization of descent is strategic in claims on behalf of Philippine-based Japanese-Filipinos.

The CraneDog- scripting ‘race’ into staged stories

In 2009, Teatro Akebono’s The CraneDog was first staged. The play, written by a former Japanese-Filipina member of DAWN notably for audiences in Japan, picks up on issues of identity, culture and ‘race’. The CraneDog is the story of a baby born to a crane and a dog, a crossbreed of both animals. Wondering about his different looks and thus his identity, CraneDog learns that he had been fathered by a Crane. In search of his real father, CraneDog thus leaves his home to travel to Craneland. There, he manages to find his father and, with his help, learns the ways of the Cranes. However, CraneDog eventually
returns to his natal land and would visit his father from time to time (DAWN 2010, pp.115-116). The play was initially written to raise awareness of Japanese-Filipino children’s identity struggles. The play’s Japanese-Filipina author, a former client of DAWN herself, related to me through e-mail: “Crane dog started with an idea about a half-half person who's confused about his identity.” According to its author, the intended message of the play was to highlight the importance of knowing where one is from and to understand oneself. This message is in line with the recurring query of ‘identity’ and the question of “who am I?” in NGO discourses. The theatre play also conveys a number of implicit ‘truths’ endorsed by the author. For instance, by drawing parallels between Japanese-Filipinos and an animal made up of two different species, she suggests that the amalgamation of the two nationalities is inherently abnormal. Japanese-Filipino children, represented by a crossbreed born from the liaison of a crane with a dog, are depicted as an abnormality. The capacity to adapt to Craneland – symbolized by CraneDog’s ability to fly- is possible though his wings, a biologically inherited asset. Last but not least, the animals chosen to represent the Japanese and Filipino people convey an unequal power relation, possibly this was an unintended slippage. Cranes are often found in Japanese paintings and on textiles, symbolizing long life and good fortune. Dogs- chosen to represent the Filipinos-

---

97 This reflects DAWN’s opposition to labour migration. DAWN however encourages its clients to travel to Japan and acquaint themselves with ‘Japanese culture’.
98 The actual impact of the theatre tours as tools of advocacy is difficult to assess. In a conversation with one of DAWN’s staff in May 2011, she complained that discussions with Japanese audiences are usually tame. The typical questions would be “do you like Japan?” and the like as Japanese audiences would not breach any contentious issues.
are usually associated with loyalty, but also with submissiveness. The author of the play mentioned that the dog was not her first choice; to represent the Philippines she would have selected an eagle or a carabao, but the dog costumes would make the children look “cute” (E-mail from the play’s author, on 08.02.2012).

The purpose of the play was also to make Japanese-Filipino children seem more familiar to the Japanese audience through kabuki-inspired visuals. Ultimately, the author hoped to engage the audience “so that subconsciously they will know that these kids are not different from them but are actually one of them.” (ibid.) The idea of difference is reinforced when Japanese-Filipino children are contrasted with other ‘regular’ Filipinos while at the same time efforts are made to make them appear more similar to Japanese. By doing so, the stage-performers and the characters played are made culturally relevant to their Japanese audience. The use of things Japanese develops into a crucial act through which cultural proximity as well as familiarity is displayed. Plays like the CraneDog are part of DAWN’s activities aimed at producing Japanese, notably by highlighting ‘racial’ belonging to Japanese society as well as a ‘natural’ interest and inclination for things Japanese, and at convincing an audience of the rightful claim to certain rights by virtue of descent. The play was staged several times in different cities in Japan and in Manila. I happened to visit DAWN in early May 2011 as one Japanese-Filipino boy and one Filipina mother were rehearsing a scene from The Cranedog under the direction of one of DAWN’s staff members. DAWN had scheduled a performance to welcome the new Japanese Ambassador and his
friends to be held on May 26th. DAWN staff decided it would be better to perform the play in Japanese and so the two actors struggled to recite their lines in a language they barely spoke.

The implied message of the play has not been appreciated by all parties involved. A DAWN volunteer based in Japan has raised her doubts about the content of “the Cranedog” and about DAWN’s identity ascription in general:

I questioned if it is really good for children and how the organization’s staff is thinking. […] What did I think about Cranedog? At first I didn’t like the idea of a dog and a crane because it looks like we have two defined races, you know? […] I think identity is not something that someone decides, it’s not decided by someone else. But when I see DAWN’s activities it seems like sometimes DAWN staff sort of make their children’s identity to advocate their status maybe. I guess that’s inevitable as long as you’re an NGO and wanna say something in that field to public people, JFCs, Japanese-Filipino children. But if you do too much, I guess some children sort of internalize that identity and I wonder what will happen to these children once they grow up. As long as you belong to DAWN as a group, as a family I’m sure children get lots of influence from the other staff. So I just wonder how the staff thinks about their influence on the children in the process of making their identity.

(DAWN volunteer)

One is not born bi-cultural or a “JFC”, as often suggested in NGO publications, but one becomes a “JFC” through NGO membership and participation in NGO
activities. The “JFC” identity is based on generalizations largely made for the purpose of advocacy. It is contextual as well as instrumental. This is not to say that the acronym and the meanings invested in it by NGOs have not provided Japanese-Filipino individuals with the means to make sense of their situation and their knowledge of having parents hailing from two different nation-states. But it would be wrong to assume that all Japanese-Filipinos, simply based on the fact that their parents come from the Philippines and from Japan, attribute the same importance and meaning to their parentage.

The problem with the ascription of a “JFC” identity to all individuals of Japanese and Filipino parents born since the late 1970s is thus primarily one of an over-generalization of “JFCs”’ experiences and their assumed affectedness by their situation. Secondly, the ascription of the “JFC” identity may actually identify problems where they weren’t any in the first place, as Alina pointed out. Lastly, in establishing “JFC” as an identity and in stressing Japanese-Filipinos’ Japaneseness, NGOs feed into the idea that “JFC” are distinct from other Filipino children (even their own half-siblings) because of their Japanese ancestry, despite many other children and youth in the Philippines growing up with one or both parents working overseas, and facing similar challenges as “JFC” due to their socio-economic circumstances.

Concluding remarks

The concept of the “JFC” thus emerges amidst dominant discourses on the “normal” family, childhood, the universal rights of the child as well as ideas on ‘race’ and culture. Discourses on the “normal” family and childhood were
significant in the 1990s and the early 2000s. ‘Culture’ and ‘identity’ (as ethnic or mixed-racial identity) have surfaced only with more recent activist and litigation efforts employed to demand Japanese nationality. All the relevant discourses are interconnected and mutually reinforcing each other, notably through the metaphor of family-ties; blood relationships among individuals are transposed onto the symbolic level, depicting and reinforcing the nation as ‘family’ and establishing the State (notably that of Japan) as the ‘parent’, and therefore as bearer of responsibility, through claims of belonging by ‘blood’. “The JFC” has emerged through NGO and public discourses, but Japanese-Filipinos have started to speak on their own. Japanese-Filipinos identifying with the acronym “JFC” and making statements in its name very often use similar categories and vocabulary as do the NGOs they still are or were involved with. Nationalist discourses from Japan which potentially exclude Japanese-Filipinos from the Japanese nation are turned around and deployed in ways beneficial to Japanese-Filipinos’ and NGOs’ own political struggle by utilizing primordial ideas of Japanese-ness and highlighting Japanese’ blood’ as a binding element.

Discourses are indeed “tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy.” (Foucault 1990, pp.101-102). Japanese descent has been utilized to support claims for Japanese nationality, the “right to cultural heritage”, the need to explore one’s father’s land, and one’s own roots in the name of ‘identity’ (United Japanese Filipino Children
2009), as well as the importance of becoming acquainted with Japanese culture. These ideas have led to the implementation of projects teaching Japanese-Filipino children what they are imagined to know ‘naturally’: how to be Japanese.

But conflicts over the objectives and forms of support have surfaced among Japanese-Filipinos and the different NGOs. The assumed unity of Japanese-Filipinos, based on Japanese-Filipina parentage, has proven untenable. Japanese-Filipinos are too diverse to be lumped into one category and bestowed with one political identity. While numerous Japanese-Filipinos have expressed joy over the advantages gained through NGO membership, depictions of the “JFC” as poor and needy have also prompted a number of Japanese-Filipinos aware of ongoing NGO advocacy to distance themselves from such portrayals. Simultaneously, a large number of Japanese-Filipinos remain unaware of activism in their name. Among these are well-heeled offspring of ‘successful’ marriages between Japanese men and Filipino women in the Philippines, such as Toshiro and his siblings, and Filipino-Japanese in Japan who largely identify as Japanese and reject being considered Filipino or Filipino *hafu* (Almonte-Acosta, 2008).
Chapter 6: The Change of Japan’s Nationality Law and new opportunities for Japanese-Filipinos

On June 4, 2008 the Japanese Supreme Court decided that there was a need for an amendment in the Japanese Nationality Law. A clause that distinguished between children born within wedlock and children born to unmarried parents in granting Japanese nationality was deemed to be in conflict with Article 14 Paragraph 1 of the Japanese Constitution, stating “all of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin.” (The Supreme Court of Japan 2008a). After three years of trial against the Japanese government starting in April 2005, the final ruling was celebrated as a ‘landmark decision’ by the plaintiffs and their defendants (Kyodo News Int., 2008). For NGOs in support of Japanese-Filipino Children this ruling not only meant significant legal change, but it marked a symbolic breakthrough in NGO advocacy and activism. The individuals who have brought forward their legal complaint were nine Japanese-Filipino children and their mothers (JFC Network 2005, p.15)
who were represented by lawyers from the JFC Lawyers Association\textsuperscript{99} and supported by CNJFC staff.

Japanese citizenship and nationality have always been exclusive, discriminating along parental marital status, sex, and ethnicity. Until 1950, Japanese women had to give up their Japanese nationality upon marrying a foreign man. Before 1985, Japanese women married to foreign men were unable to pass down their nationality to their children. Korean and Taiwanese immigrants and their descendants were unilaterally stripped off their Japanese nationality at the end World War Two. Naturalization remained a difficult process and was long time conditioned upon assimilation, including the changing of one’s name into a Japanese name. This requirement has been cancelled in 1987, when the use of non-official characters was allowed when naturalizing and registering one’s name. Yet Japanese authorities continued to push many applicants to change their names, a practice which subsided only over the years (Weiner and Chapman 1997). Lastly, until 2008 Japanese men needed to be married to the foreign mothers of their children, or acknowledge their offspring before birth, in order for their children to acquire Japanese nationality at birth.

Many of these exclusions are based on the understanding of what makes a person ‘Japanese’. In Japan, nationality remains premised upon biological descent via the principle of \textit{jus sanguinis}, as well as upon cultural descent, as expressed

\textsuperscript{99} This group is sometimes also referred to as ‘Lawyers Association for JFC’. The group was formed in 1993 to provide an avenue of legal support for Filipino mothers of Japanese-Filipino children. However, the great number of cases made it difficult for the lawyers to handle them all, so a year later, in 1994, the CNJFC was set-up as an NGO to provide administrative and para-legal support.
through popular discourses on Japan’s ostensible ethnic homogeneity and implied, although less evidently, in Japan’s nationality law as I will illustrate in this chapter. Moreover, the right to Japanese nationality at birth remains tied to birth from relationships deemed ‘legitimate’, meaning from relationships considered to form a ‘family’ and able to produce and raise ‘proper’ Japanese nationals and citizens. By consequence, children born from relationships deemed ‘illegitimate’ remained barred from acquiring Japanese nationality at birth. However, the idea of what makes a family is not a natural given, but discursively produced and sanctioned or contested on political grounds. A broadening of the understanding of what makes a ‘family’ as the unit producing ‘legitimate’ Japanese thus means an inclusion of children of Japanese nationals who thus far had been unable to acquire Japanese nationality because they had been born from ‘illegitimate’ relationships.

The aim of this chapter is to examine in more detail the lawsuit against the Japanese government which had effected in the cancellation of the requirement of legitimation in the acquisition of Japanese nationality by children born to Japanese fathers and foreign mothers. The text of the final judgment and the judges’ individual opinions delivered in the conclusion of the trial are of particular interest as they reveal how changes in society with regards to what constitutes a family - and therefore what kind of family structure it takes to enable a child to develop a ‘tie’ to Japan - are perceived by the judges who handled the case. The opinions also include a discussion of the circumstances necessary to become a Japanese national, on top of descending from a Japanese parent.
Moreover, I will shed light on NGO reactions to the legal amendment and their handling of increasing cases of immigration to Japan and of rights-claims for those Japanese-Filipinos who were unable to benefit from the amended law due to various reasons. These reasons usually are age\textsuperscript{100}, non-registration with the Japanese authorities within the cut-off period of three months after birth if born abroad, and too little information on the Japanese father. Staff at the CNJFC has also criticized the many bureaucratic obstacles encountered by Japanese-Filipinos trying to obtain Japanese nationality after the legal amendment (JFC Network, 2010).

\textbf{Litigation for social change}

The issue of nationality for children born to foreign women surfaced in the Japanese media in the 1990s. Stateless “Baby Andrew” was not the only child confronted with institutional hurdles to obtain Japanese nationality. In the mid-1990s a Korean woman appealed for her child with a Japanese man to obtain Japanese nationality. Her case was complicated by the fact that she was still married to her previous Japanese husband when she gave birth to the child of another Japanese man. Two months after the child was born, she divorced her first husband. The now ex-husband confirmed the absence of any biological relationship with the child and subsequently, the child’s biological father recognized his offspring. Nationality was however denied as per law a child should acquire nationality at birth through its parent-child relationship at the time. After confirming the absence of filiation between the baby and the supposed

\textsuperscript{100} Applications to recover one’s Japanese nationality following the amendment need to be made before one’s 20\textsuperscript{th} birthday
father, the law determined that the child had no father at the time of birth. This problematic situation resulted from the Civil Code, stating that children born within wedlock are presumed to be the husband’s biological offspring. The Korean woman appealed in court and in 1997 the Supreme Court ruled in her favour. The final judgment was accompanied by individual judges’ opinions, one of them stating that the “time of birth” with regards to pre- or postnatal recognition should not be understood in strictly physiological terms (Suzuki 2010).

A similar case was brought before the Supreme Court in 2003. The court ruled in favour of the non-Japanese mother and her child with reference to the precedent ruling of 1997. The most decisive lawsuit foregoing the one initiated by the CNJFC was filed in 2002. The child of a Filipino mother and a Japanese father was denied Japanese nationality which prompted the parents to sue the Japanese government for discriminatory treatment over the differentiation made between children with foetal recognition versus those recognized after birth. The point of contention was the clause establishing a distinction according to the timing of paternal recognition. The appeal was rejected, but the judges offered their opinions in addition to the official verdict. They suggested that the distinctions created by the requirement of legitimacy, notably applying to children born to Japanese fathers and non-Japanese mothers, were problematic (ibid.). After scrutinizing the judges’ opinions on the latter case, the main argument of the lawsuit organized by the CNJFC in 2005 shifted from problematizing the
definition of “at the time of birth” to the requirement of parental marriage, a shift which eventually resulted in their victory in court.

Prior to the Supreme Court ruling of June 2008, the Japanese government had for the longest time maintained that issues pertaining to children born from Japanese-Filipina unions including the legal status of the children and their mothers in Japan were private matters. Filipino women in the Philippines seeking help from the Japanese embassy with matters regarding the Japanese fathers of their children have been directed by embassy staff to seek help from NGOs like Batis, Maligaya House or DAWN. While the government avoided recognizing the phenomenon of numerous Japanese-Filipino children being legally unacknowledged and financially neglected by their fathers as a socio-political issue, it did financially contribute to the establishment of Maligaya House and also financed the implementation of various projects by DAWN and Batis. In 2007, DAWN started the nation-wide registration of Japanese-Filipino children in the Philippines with the aim of drafting a basic socio-economic profile of these children and to gain a better sense of how many there might be. Kenji Endo, the then first secretary and chief consul of the Japanese Embassy in the Philippines expressed the Japanese government’s support of the registration for humanitarian reasons (Manila Standard 2007). He stated that the Japanese and Philippine governments had already discussed the issue and had “agreed to continue the program and find out what kind of assistance both governments can extend to these children” (ibid.). However he also added that an intervention from the Japanese government was not yet needed at that point in time, reinforcing the idea
that the problems faced by numerous Japanese-Filipino children remained considered private and not a matter needing government intervention.

Despite NGO’s attempts to render “JFC issues” a public concern, the stories of abandoned women and children were considered private misfortunes. In the 1990s, when the issue of children born to “entertainers” entered public discourse in Japan, journalists showed interest in the newly set-up Lawyer’s Association for JFC and in the creation of the CNJFC. However, as a staff member of the CNJFC stated, the problem was considered an individual problem not a social problem and a lot of people did not understand the necessity for NGOs. Despite the heightened publicity of the issue, the frequency of Japanese-Filipino children born to Filipino women and abandoned by their Japanese fathers was not recognized as a consequence of the Japanese governments’ complicity in funnelling young foreign women into the sex-industry.

While avoiding legal and social change, the Japanese government kept financing NGOs which would handle issues of paternal acknowledgment and payment of alimony on a case-by-case basis. In doing so, the government kept under control the pace and development of claims. The financial concessions made by the government could thus be considered “preemptive-concessions strategies” (Pharr in Chung, 2010) used by Japanese officials to remain in control over the potentially destabilizing effects of claims by civil-society groups. Thus, achieving legal change which by consequence would also mark social and political change was an important step in the overall goal of advocacy and activism on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos.
For a long time, the CNJFC and the Lawyer’s Association for JFC have concentrated on solving individual cases and have consequently struggled with substantial workload. If the CNJFC would have kept solving complaints case-by-case without targeting a vital stakeholder in the issue, the Japanese government, it probably would have “ran itself into the sands of litigation”, just as the Japanese environmental movement eventually did (Upham 1987, p.121). Indeed, movements like the environmental movement have been slowed down by having turned their political struggles into legal ones, dictated by the pace of the courts (ibid.). Yet, if used strategically and with a political purpose, litigation has shown to be an effective tool for significant change. Therefore, when stressing that problems related to Japanese-Filipina couples and their offspring were private issues, the Japanese government was making an effort to keep political action out of the courts and social change at slow pace. Yet, once the CNJFC recognized the opportunity to achieve legal and social change, the decision to challenge their greater opponent, the Japanese government, was taken.

Japan’s nationality law has been conceptualized to warrant ‘legitimate’ paternity by imposing parental marriage, or else foetal acknowledgment, as condition for offspring of Japanese men and foreign women to acquire Japanese nationality at birth. The requirement for legitimacy has also been understood to guarantee the development of significant affective and cultural ties to the Japanese parent and subsequently to Japanese society. However it could also be argued that the requirement for ‘legitimation’ in force until 2008 was a way to implement exclusionary practices in anticipation of potential claims to Japanese
nationality by children born from the relations between Japanese men and foreign women. Japan’s nationality law alongside the Japanese governments’ longstanding reluctance to take an active role in confronting and dealing with rising numbers of Japanese-Filipino babies lacking legal status in Japan, has sustained the exclusion of potential Japanese nationals born under circumstances deemed unsuitable to produce ‘proper’ Japanese.

The legal victory indeed challenged the power of the State in determining who ought to be a Japanese citizen. However, this would not have been possible without the judges’ acknowledgment of increased variety in family lifestyles and of the independence of those family lifestyles from whether a child develops a ‘tie’ to Japan or not. Media coverage of the problems related to children born to unmarried foreign women, the precedent legal cases, and the plaintiffs demonstrating a Japanese upbringing have certainly influenced the important decisions concerning the contemporary ‘sense of society’ and whether these children had developed ‘ties’ to Japanese society, despite being brought up by their Filipino mothers. The decision over whether Japan’s nationality law needed to be amended therefore lay in the hands of judges who, besides manoeuvring legal texts and interpretations, also brought their own subjective perception of society and social norms with them into the trial.

Whether the discursive construction of Japanese-Filipino children by NGOs directly influenced the judges’ decision is difficult to assess. What can be

---

101 The expression ‘sense of society’ is often referred to by judges in Japan to anchor their decisions in what they identify to be contemporary social trends and realities (West 2011).
said is that the understanding of Japanese-Filipinos as children born from familial relationships (as opposed to casual ones), and the plaintiffs’ fluency in things Japanese has helped pave the way for the legal amendment by demonstrating that despite their unmarried parents, they too could develop a ‘tie’ to Japan.

**Analysis of the June 4\(^{th}\) Supreme Court judgment\(^{102}\)**

The idea of filing a lawsuit against the Japanese state first materialized after a Filipino mother and her child submitted a notification for acquisition of Japanese nationality to the Ministry of Justice in 2003. The Japanese-Filipino child had been legally acknowledged by his/her\(^{103}\) Japanese father after birth but was denied Japanese nationality as his/her parents were not married. Encouraged by their efforts to claim nationality, the CNJFC decided to follow suit and contacted its clients, nine of whom were willing to join the proceedings (Suzuki 2010).

In order to obtain Japanese nationality at birth, several criteria need to be fulfilled. Japan operates according to the principle of *jus sanguinis*, meaning that nationality is conferred ‘by blood’. A child therefore needs to be the direct offspring of at least one Japanese national to obtain Japanese nationality. If the child is born to a Japanese woman, filiation is easily established and the child may obtain Japanese nationality, similarly to children born to Japanese couples, upon registration with the authorities. The conferment of Japanese nationality by

\(^{102}\) For the analysis of the final judgement, I rely on the English text of the judgement which is a translated version provided online by the Supreme Court (The Supreme Court of Japan, 2008a).

\(^{103}\) The judgment issued by the Supreme Court does not state whether the appellant was male or female.
women has been possible since the revision of the Japanese Nationality law in 1985 as part of Japan’s ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

However, before the implementation of the amended law in 2009, if a child was born to a Japanese father, the parents needed to be married for paternity to be determined\textsuperscript{104}. If born out of wedlock, the Japanese Nationality Law required foetal acknowledgement, which means that the father had to submit a formal acknowledgment before the birth of his child. Yet if acknowledged \textit{after} birth, children born to unmarried foreign women could only obtain Japanese nationality by undergoing the process of naturalization, which means that Japanese nationality was not their birthright but needed to be granted by the Minister of Justice upon assessing their case. This regulation established a differentiation between those who have the \textit{right} to Japanese nationality, and those who may or may not have the \textit{privilege} of becoming Japanese nationals at the discretion of the Minister of Justice.

The crux of the issue thus centred on the requirement of parental marriage in order to obtain Japanese nationality and on how this requirement, codified in Article 3 paragraph 1 of the Nationality Law, was a form of discrimination against children born out of wedlock to foreign women and Japanese men. On April 12,

\textsuperscript{104} Article 772 of the Civil Code maintains that children born within wedlock are presumed to have been fathered by the husband under assumption of the wife's chastity. According to the Civil Code, “a child conceived by a wife during marriage shall be presumed to be the child of her husband”. Furthermore, “a child born after 200 days from the formation of marriage or within 300 days of the day of the dissolution or rescission of marriage shall be presumed to have been conceived during marriage.” Marriage thus established the biological relationship, notwithstanding the possibility of the child being another man's offspring. (see Suzuki, 2010).
2005 the nation’s first ever class-action lawsuit\textsuperscript{105} over the issue was filed at the Tokyo District Court (The Daily Yomiuri 2005). The Tokyo District Court ruled in favour of the plaintiffs, yet the Japanese government appealed and the case was moved to the Tokyo High Court. The previous ruling was then overturned, but the plaintiffs appealed and their cases were brought before the Supreme Court of Japan where in June 2008 Article 3 paragraph 1 was ruled unconstitutional.

The final judgement delivered on June 4, 2008 as well as the individual judges’ opinions are interesting to look at in greater detail because, as West (2011) argues, the grounds for court decisions are never purely legal but always also contain nonfactual elements that divulge how the judges assess contemporary social trends, social reality, and based on that, take their decisions. The written opinions at the end of each trial reveal how “[c]onsciously or otherwise, subtly or otherwise, judges choose, eliminate, emphasize, and downplay facts to justify their decisions or perhaps to tell a dramatic, convincing, or familiar story filled with socially salient elements.” (p.11). The text of the final judgment by the Supreme Court exhibits the subjective perceptions of the judges of the trial about what makes a person Japanese, what family forms are acceptable and which family forms best guaranteed a child’s ties to Japan.

West (ibid.)\textsuperscript{106} points out how a particular perception of society always finds its way into legal judgements. He argues that society is “[o]ne of the particularly complicated players in this legal conversation [...]” Sometimes judges

\textsuperscript{105} A class-action lawsuit is a lawsuit wherein a large number of people with a common interest in a matter sue another party, or get sued.

\textsuperscript{106} West (2011) analyzed several legal cases in Japan to find out how the idea of ‘love’ has been featured in, deployed, understood, and dealt with by judges in criminal cases.
must interpret laws that they know were deeply contested at their passage or are the subject of shifting contemporary debate” (p.24) and at other times judges have to look at social trends to find answers to difficult questions often concerning the most private issues. In deciding on verdicts and in justifying opinions, judges have therefore reverted to the “sense of society”, a standard invented by courts and applied in many areas of Japanese law. The “sense of society” is “among the most frequently used phrases in Japanese judicial opinions. In judgment after judgment, Japanese judges invoke the ‘sense of society’ as a controlling source of value and standard for their decisions.” (Haley 1998, p.157)

The ‘sense of society’ is indeed mentioned twice, as shakai tsuunen (which can be translated as ‘conventional wisdom’ or as ‘social norms’), in the Japanese version of the final judgment drafted by the Supreme Court (see The Supreme Court Japan, 2008b, p. 6). In the English text provided online by the Supreme Court, shakai tsuunen is translated as “socially accepted views” (The Supreme Court of Japan 2008a). In addition to mentioning socially accepted views, both English and Japanese texts refer to “social circumstances” (shakai teki jyoukyou) to refer to the ‘sense of society’. The agreement upon a particular ‘sense of society’ has played an important role in the final decision of the

---

107 These include cases of divorce and marital disputes, religious freedom, property rights, and employee dismissal (West, 2011). In the judgement of the Supreme Court in June 2008 and in the opinions provided by the judges the idea of a “sense of society” was mainly used to assess what constituted a family and whether there had been substantial changes in how people practiced family to consider the parental marriage requirement of the Nationality Law out-dated.

108 West (2011) mentions shakai kannen (ideas about society, concept of society) shakai gainen (concept of society) or shakai tsuunen (conventional wisdom or social norms) as terms popularly employed by Japanese judges.
Supreme Court, especially with regards to the acknowledgment of greater variety of family lifestyles going beyond traditional marriage.

In the final statement and in their individual opinions, the judges discuss the three principles that determine Japanese nationality: *jus sanguinis*, the legal relationship between the Japanese parent and his/her child through acknowledgment, and the “tie to Japan”. The tie to Japan denotes an individual’s ‘significant’ attachment to Japanese society presumably formed through familial and social ties with Japanese family members. Interestingly, this tie is not defined in any more detail than by statements about how it is formed: through contact with the Japanese family or through residency in Japan, as proposed by one of the judges as a possible alternative to parental marriage. In the final texts, the close connection to Japan is never translated into “Japanese culture” or “heritage” per se, but rather suggested through the description of the conditions under which one grows up to be Japanese. The statements issued together with the judgment contain discussions of how to measure this “tie” to the national community and how such a measurement could be legally codified. Here, the judges’ opinions diverge, notably concerning the importance of parental marriage for a child born to a non-Japanese woman. The contested Article 3 paragraph 1 of Japan’s Nationality Law requiring parental marriage was considered a means to guarantee the development of a connection with Japanese society. The text of the final judgment states

“The primary reason that this provision was included in the Act can be construed as that in the case of a child acknowledged by a Japanese father
after birth, when the child has acquired the status of a child born in wedlock as a result of marriage of the parents, the child’s life is united with the life of the Japanese father and the child obtains a close tie with Japanese society though his/her family life, and therefore it is appropriate to grant Japanese nationality to such a child.” (The Supreme Court of Japan, 2008a)

The understanding of the clause of legitimacy as a means to guarantee a child’s connection with Japanese society assumes firstly, that marriage assures the child will be in touch with his/her Japanese father and secondly, that the Japanese father will take an active part in raising the child. Indeed, one of the judges in favour of the maintenance of the requirement of legitimation defended his position by stating that “when legitimation has occurred, the legal relationship between the father and the child becomes firm because the father obtains the parental authority over the child and is also given the rights and obligations to take custody of and take care of the child” (statement made together by Justices Yokoo, Tsuno and Furuta in The Supreme Court of Japan, 2008a, p. 37). The Japanese parent is thus mentioned as a key person to enable his offspring’s primary socialization into Japanese society. Based on this assumption, children of Japanese men born to married parents by consequence earn their right to be part of the Japanese nation.

In NGO discourses the father’s role is central too, but his role is not one of facilitating his child’s socialization into Japanese society as most fathers NGOs deal with have abdicated that role towards their children. For the CNJFC, Japanese fathers are primarily needed for the legal procedures of paternal
recognition, the filing for Japanese nationality where applicable, and negotiations pertaining to child support. However, the figure of the Japanese father is also depicted as an important person in children’s lives, although often displaying negative traits (womanizer, bigamist, fails to financially support child, violent, rejects child) and thus failing to play the role a father would be expected to play. In texts published by the CNJFC is it mostly the father’s wrongdoings (unwillingness to acknowledge the child, non-reporting of marriage and childbirth to Japanese authorities, missing of registration deadline of births abroad), in combination with the exclusions codified in Japan’s Nationality Law, which lead to some Japanese-Filipinos gaining Japanese citizenship, and others not. The law endows Japanese fathers with much decision power, having created possibilities for leaving their offspring unacknowledged, especially if the latter were born overseas. Removing the legitimation requirement was thus a means to lessen the fathers’ and the state’s power to exclude “unwanted” offspring.

The judges opposing the cancellation of the legitimation requirement however argue that this change would lead to foreigners without ties to Japan making claims for Japanese nationality. Two of the judges opposing the amendment of the nationality law state that the amendment would

“...lead to the consequence that even a person who has been living in a foreign state as a foreign national over many years without having any relations with Japanese society can acquire Japanese nationality just by making a notification if the person is a minor and has obtained acknowledgment, or in other words, acquisition of Japanese nationality
would be allowed even in cases where no close tie can be found between children and Japanese society.” (Justices Kanaika and Horigome in The Supreme Court of Japan, 2008a, p. 39)

However, the assumption that parental marriage would be a valid measure for a child’s tie to Japan proves problematic for a number of reasons. First, numerous children of Filipino women and Japanese men were born out of wedlock and yet were raised in Japan as Japanese, arguably establishing a tie with Japanese society. Simultaneously, many other Japanese-Filipinos were born within wedlock but did not develop significant connections to Japan as they had grown up in the Philippines, largely in the absence of their fathers. The parents’ marriage is indeed not only an unreliable indication of a child’s ties to Japan but rather an additional hurdle for offspring of Japanese men to acquire Japanese nationality (The Supreme Court of Japan 2008a). Thus, the judgment by the Supreme Court recognized the requirement as going “far beyond the bounds where reasonable relevance with such legislative purpose can be found... and as a result [the] said provision should be deemed to cause unreasonable discrimination.” (p.10).

Underlying the discussion about the requirement of parental marriage is the question of whether it was still “reasonable” with regards to the intention of the law of ensuring a child’s connection to Japan, or whether it may be outdated. Therefore, the idea of what constitutes a family and how family life was practiced becomes central to the argument against the provision. The idea is that alternative forms of family could also provide a child with a ‘tie’ to Japan. Indeed “the
family” is a discursive construct without ‘true’ form and is subject to change. The plaintiffs chosen to participate in the class-action suit supported by the CNJFC had all grown up with their Filipino mothers in Japan. They went to Japanese schools and spoke Japanese, despite their out-of-wedlock births.

Masami, one of the Japanese-Filipino plaintiffs, is introduced as someone who has lived in Japan all her life and who speaks only Japanese (cf. The Manila Bulletin, 2008; Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2008; Yasumoto, 2008 b). "I feel like I am Japanese just like other friends, but I'm not, am I, mom?,” Masami is quoted (Yasumoto, 2008 b). Her mother Rossana explains: "Every time we go to an immigration office to renew Masami's visa, we are reminded that she is not Japanese" (ibid.) implying that otherwise, Masami perfectly blends into Japanese society and is indeed part of it. During one of the hearings of the trial at the Tokyo District Court in 2005, the Japanese-Filipino plaintiffs were asked to give their testimonies. One of them was 11-year old Julie-Ann Chittum who also identified herself as Jurian Arashiro, which was her Japanese name

"My name in Japanese is Jurian Arashiro, but my passport bears Julie-Anne Chittum as my name," she said. "I made my name [in kanji] myself." She explained the three kanji that she picked to phonetically match her Japanese-pronounced first name, Ju-ri-an. (The Daily Yomiuri, 2005)

In an interview with a reporter after the hearing, Jurian’s mother stated: “She only speaks Japanese and only knows life in Japan.” (ibid.) The children giving their testimonies spoke fluently Japanese; some of them have been described by their mothers as speaking no other language but Japanese. The
Japanese-Filipino plaintiffs’ ability to perform *Japaneseness* played an important role in convincing the judges of the unfairness of the legitimation requirement, and more importantly, of the flawed connection between parental marriage and *Japaneseness*, upon which the requirement is based.

Here, the interpretation of social trends and of what could be considered “normal” had a major bearing on the outcome of the lawsuit. In the view of the majority of the judges involved,

“the changes in social and economic circumstances in Japan, including the desirable way of living together for husband and wife, as well as those regarding parent-child relationships have also varied, and today, the realities of family life and parent-child relationships have changed and become diverse, as seen by the fact that the percentage of children born out of wedlock in the total number of newborn children has been increasing.” (The Supreme Court of Japan 2008a, 8).

The changes in family life were therefore acknowledged by the judges as socially accepted alternatives to marriage. This acknowledgment resonates with discourses on the family ‘in transition’, ‘in crisis’, or simply on the changing family in Japan, manifesting since the 1990s (Rebick and Takenaka 2006). The lawsuit could thus also be considered as one institutional change, following the various significant changes undergone by the Japanese family in the context of
economic slowdown and demographic shifts\textsuperscript{109} (ibid.). The nuclear family is thus no longer the only form of legitimate cohabitation and site of childbirth.

To some extent, this contradicts the primacy of the nuclear family in NGO discourses. However, as illustrated above, the nuclear family had been a hard to achieve model, used to emphasize the victimization of Filipino women and their children by comparing their situation to the ‘ideal’. Moreover, NGOs have made efforts to depict scenarios in which affective and sexual relationships that deviate from the ideal are nonetheless deemed justifiable. In such scenarios women usually turn out to be the victims of broken promises of love and marriage, or of abandonment. NGOs’ women clients were discursively taken out of the stigmatized night business and placed into ‘proper’ relationships. In doing so, NGOs have created ‘legitimate’ circumstances of childbirth, in spite of non-marriage while holding malingering Japanese men accountable for the inability of NGO clients to live a “normal” family life. Having established that Japanese-Filipinos were not the outcome of brief affairs, and that the missing parental marriage was not the child’s fault, the CNJFC could claim that the exclusion of these children from acquiring Japanese citizenship at birth was discriminatory.

Prevalent discourses on the transformation of the Japanese family, including the increased frequency of children born from cross-border, international couples, aided their case. Indeed, the judges recognized changes in Japan’s social fabric as a result of increased diversity following immigration and rising numbers of international couples. As a result the situation of

\textsuperscript{109} Rebick and Takenaka (2006, p.3) mention falling marriage rates, later marriage, rising divorce rates, changing patterns of cohabitation of members of the family, and rapid ageing.
“...children whose parents are couples of Japanese citizens and foreign citizens, the realities of their family lifestyles (e.g. whether or not the child lives with a Japanese parent) as well as the views regarding legal marriage and the ideal form of parent-child relationship based thereon are more complicated and diverse than in the case of children whose parents are both Japanese citizens, and in the former case, it is impossible to measure the degree of closeness of the tie between children and Japan just by examining whether or not their parents are legally married.” (ibid.)

The judgment also proposed an international outlook and a comparison with the situation in other countries, notably with Western Europe, to buttress the change in norms concerning family life. As new forms of ‘doing’ family were accepted, the requirement of legitimacy to obtain Japanese nationality was considered discriminatory and therefore in conflict with Japan’s Constitution. Thus, the requirement had to be removed from the Nationality Act. Recognizing the timeliness of the lawsuit, a staff member of CNJFC comments:

“We also did not know if we could win. Because against the Japanese government, it is so difficult to change the Japanese law. But I feel, even though there is a small percentage of illegitimate children in Japan, I feel the Japanese people are changing. Changing, little by little. So some of them can accept illegitimate children, so they also know there is discrimination between legitimate and illegitimate children. Because, for instance, they cannot get Japanese nationality if their parents did not get married. That is why I think even the judges gave this decision. If the case
was… It was 2008, but if it was 1980s or 1990s or 2000, I think we could not win the case. So it was a good time to bring the case to the court, because it shows that people are also changing." (CNJFC staff, interview with author)

Although the CNJFC was not certain of the extent to which their argument about greater variety in family lifestyles would be recognized, the group knew of prior lawsuits upon which they could build their argumentative strategy. Precedent legal cases had functioned as points of references in the preparations for this recent lawsuit concluded in June 2008. These previous legal cases have furthermore attracted public attention in Japan to the issue of Japanese nationality for children born to non-Japanese mothers.

The legal change and the intensification of discourses on identity and descent

Following the legal victory in 2008, NGOs as well as activist Japanese-Filipinos have issued statements commenting on the outcomes of the court case. It is noticeable that in these reactions, the “tie to Japan” mentioned in the verdict has been understood as cultural ties and cultural competence. NGOs have thus highlighted the need for “JFC” to access and explore Japan so they could recover their “cultural heritage” and exercise their right “to [a] preservation of identity” (Batis YOGHI 2012). Indeed, even after the amendment in the nationality law in 2008, the numbers of applicants for nationality remained relatively low as
numerous children did not qualify\textsuperscript{110} or could not afford to remain in Japan for six months to fulfil the residency requirement. Since the ruling in June 2008, only about 130 children have submitted applications for citizenship ahead of the passage of the bill (Reuters News 2008). As of March 2009, merely a dozen children had been granted visas by the Japanese Embassy in the Philippines to enter Japan and initiate the procedures to obtain Japanese nationality (Suzuki 2010). With numerous Japanese-Filipinos still being excluded from the benefits of Japanese nationality, notably Philippine-based NGOs have utilized arguments based on Japanese lineage to emphasize Japan’s responsibility as ‘other homeland’ to provide its left-out children with their ‘proper’ identities (United Japanese Filipino Children, 2009; Batis YOGHI, 2012).

The idea of identity emerged in NGO discourses in 2005, as the CNJFC filed its first class-action lawsuit against the Japanese government. “Identity” has become a recurring theme throughout the duration of the suit as well as after the change in Japan’s Nationality law. CNJFC’s secretary general has been quoted saying that “the revision will mean a lot to the children, because (nationality) is part of their identity and will secure them a more stable status and future” (The Japan Times 2008) and that without Japanese nationality, the children in question would face an “identity crisis” come adulthood (Yasumoto, 2008 b; The Manila Bulletin, 2008; The Manila Times, 2008 a).

\textsuperscript{110} Some “JFC” have already passed the cut-off age of 20 by which children born to unmarried parents could claim their Japanese nationality since the amendment of the nationality law in 2008. Others cannot locate their Japanese fathers.
Although the idea of mending potential identity issues by securing nationality for children who grew up in Japan arose from the specific situation of the plaintiffs involved in the proceedings, NGOs in the Philippines supporting children who have never been to Japan followed suit and picked up on a similar discourse. “Identity” issues were now also at stake for “JFC” in the Philippines with regards to their right to acquire Japanese nationality. Philippine-based NGOs regarded these ‘identity’ issues as consequences of Japanese-Filipinos growing up without knowledge of the Japanese father and without having experienced Japan. Thus, while identity issues of “JFC” in Japan as identified by the CNJFC mainly concerned the securing of children’s legal status and the harmonization of their ethnic identity with nationality and by consequence citizenship, ‘identity issues’ ascribed to and/or experienced by “JFC” in the Philippines stemmed from having ‘Japanese blood’ but remaining excluded from the Japanese nation. Issues pertaining to the ‘identity’ of “JFC” raised and based in the Philippines are said to largely stem from having a Japanese parent but lacking first-hand experience in Japan. "We have two faces”, Ken is quoted, “If we only know the Filipino face, you don't feel you're complete. There is small enlightenment in knowing who you are" (The Mainichi Newspaper 2009).

In December 2010¹¹¹, the CNJFC and its team of lawyers thus supported a group of 27 Japanese-Filipino plaintiffs in another lawsuit against the Japanese government. This lawsuit was meant to enable offspring of Japanese-men to obtain Japanese citizenship if their parents were married when they were born, but

¹¹¹ The lawsuit was filed on 21st July, 2010. December 22nd, 2010 was the date of the first hearing.
had failed to register their births with the Japanese authorities on time. The lawsuit addressed Article 12 of the nationality law which states that a “Japanese national who was born in a foreign country and has acquired a foreign nationality by birth shall lose Japanese nationality retroactively as from the time of birth, unless the Japanese national clearly indicates his or her volition to reserve Japanese nationality according to the provisions of the Family Registration Law” (The Ministry of Justice n.d.). This clear indication of volition to reserve Japanese nationality has to be done by registering the newborn child with the Japanese embassy within three months after their birth. Otherwise the child foregoes his/her right to acquire Japanese nationality. The clause was added in 1985 as part of the amendment of the Nationality Act. It was introduced to “prevent individuals from holding dual nationality without a legitimate reason to claim Japanese nationality” (Judge Makoto Jozuka in Asahi Shimbun, 2012).

During the first hearing at the Tokyo District Court in December 2010, the plaintiffs took the witness stand one after the other to read out their statements. An interpreter translated their statements into Japanese as all of them, except one delivered by the Japanese father of a young girl, were either in English or Tagalog. As opposed to the plaintiffs winning the lawsuit in 2008, most plaintiffs who took the stand in 2011 had not grown up in Japan and the large majority did not express themselves in Japanese. While I sat in the court room listening to the testimonies, my seat-neighbour, a Post-Doctoral fellow at Tokyo University who had been following the CNJFC’s activities and their advocacy for ‘mixed’ children, turned to me and whispered: “I don’t think they will win this time. They
do not convince as Japanese.” Although merely an interpretation of the development of the case, he recognized that the lack of performance of *Japanese*ness may be a crucial factor influencing the final decision. Indeed, the claim was dismissed and Judge Jozuka who presided over the case, declared that “granting Japanese nationality to people whose links with Japan are thin would lead to a standstill in the execution of rights and in the performance of their duties as Japanese nationals.” (Judge Makoto Jozuka cited in Batis YOGHI, 2012). Since then, steps have been taken to bring this case before the High Court.

This recent court-case is not only of interest as the judges dismissed the plaintiffs’ claims based on a lack of “links with Japan”, but because of the content of the plaintiffs’ statements that indicated their understanding of what makes a person ‘Japanese’. Three of the claimants- Natumi, Mike and Yukari\(^{112}\) wrote the following (Statements delivered at the Tokyo District Court 2010):\(^{113}\)

> “It’s like I’m standing in between two countries and do not really know which is my nationality- that which defines my true identity. I know that society dictates that I am Filipino since I was born and brought up in the Philippines. However, personally, I do feel there’s something missing- that feeling of going back to my roots, to that Japanese blood that’s running

\(^{112}\) All names have been changed into pseudonyms. All statements have been read in court and received in written form by the author.

\(^{113}\) According to Natumi their statements have been composed based on their own experiences, yet they were guided by their attorneys who provided information regarding the nationality law. The testimonies were also edited by their attorneys to make them more poignant as each claimant was given only one minute to read his/her statement (correspondence via Facebook, March 29\(^{th}\), 2013)
through my veins [...] please give us a chance to prove ourselves that we belong in your country- our country, which is Japan.” (Natsumi)

“...I’m a Filipino citizen because my Japanese nationality is gone without my consent....When i [sic] was young I lose [sic] a lot of my opportunity to learn their tradition, Culture, Language. “ (Mike)

“I also have that Japanese blood running through my veins. Being a daughter of a Japanese national it is my right to acquire his nationality...”

(Yukari)

In their testimonies, the Japanese-Filipino claimants emphasized their Japanese descent as the primary reason for them to become Japanese citizens. Their understanding of what makes them 'Japanese' is primarily based on the 'Japanese blood' running through their veins (Natsumi, Yukari), which turns Japan into part of their roots (Natsumi), to a country to which they too belong by birthright (Natsumi). The quotes illustrate how the apparent disjuncture of ethnic identity and citizenship is challenged by mobilizing 'blood' and the idea of birthright. The outcome of the lawsuit however has demonstrated that being part of the Japanese nation-state requires more than blood-ties.

**Nationality and the “tie” to Japan**

The ‘tie’ to Japan binding offspring born to foreign women and Japanese fathers to Japan is given significant weight in the assessment of whether these children deserve to be Japanese nationals and by consequence, citizens. Also, in the name of warranting this “tie” and verifying the biological relationship
between parent and child, a number of regulations complicating the (re-)acquisition of Japanese nationality have been presented by lawmakers. For instance, a six months residency requirement in Japan was introduced. Furthermore, applicants need to produce an original copy of their father’s family registry containing the record of their births, and they could be asked to produce supplementary documents to verify the father-child relationship, such as the mother’s or father’s travel histories (Suzuki 2010). These requirements have made it difficult for many Japanese-Filipinos to submit an application, especially if they had lost contact with their father.

The “tie” to Japanese society can be interpreted as social, cultural or emotive connection. In the final verdict of 2008 and in the additional opinions delivered by the judges, this “tie” is not clearly defined except for it being understood as forming through significant contact with Japanese family members. Activists have interpreted the “tie” to Japan as cultural and as emotive. Japan is often referred to as Japanese-Filipino’s “other homeland” or as their “father’s land”, suggesting belonging and nostalgia while theatre plays like the CraneDog and the learning of things Japanese is utilized to demonstrate Philippine-based Japanese-Filipinos’ connection with Japan.

Lawmakers’ discussions following the verdict of 2008 have focused more on the authenticity of blood-relations and have revealed fears over false recognition. Right-winged lawmaker Takeo Hiranuma is quoted to have said: "If a law like this is misused, what will happen to the Japanese identity?" (Reuters News 2008). Momochi Akira, Law Professor at Nihon University reacted to the
verdict by commenting: "There are many Asian people who want to sneak into Japan. I can easily imagine they want to defraud the Japanese authorities (by using the revision)" (The Japan Times 2008). Statements like these are revealing of fears over the dilution of the ‘genuine Japanese’ notably by applicants without Japanese lineage who bypass, through fraud, Japan’s sovereignty in according nationality.

To guarantee the existence of father-child filiation, a number of lawmakers therefore suggested DNA tests to be made mandatory. These scientific tests however are not only costly but also problematic for a number of other reasons. First, DNA tests had so far been used only to force recognitions when the father was unwilling to acknowledge paternity. Thus, if DNA testing would be made mandatory to establish the blood relationship between children born to unwed foreign mothers and their Japanese fathers, the same should be done for children born within wedlock. Marriage, under the Civil Code, only *presumes* filiation but it does not prove it (Suzuki 2010). Second, adoption has traditionally been used by Japanese families to gain a male heir if needed; as such social filiation is not always linked to biological ties (ibid.). The relaxation of the rules governing the accordance of nationality to children with one foreign parent have thus sparked political panic over lineage and national identity, or as one journalist put it “[…] the issue of granting Japanese nationality is deeply embedded in protecting Japanese bloodlines and is the root issue of accepting children with foreign parents.” (Inter Press Service 2005)
The biopolitical importance of the nationality law has also transpired in some of the judges’ individual opinions presented in addition to the Supreme Court verdict. Heralding lawmakers’ stances, some judges have expressed concern over falsified paternity claims as well as proposed alternative measures to be introduced by Japanese lawmakers in order to guarantee a child’s “tie to Japan” (i.e. through residency requirements). Also of interest is that the amendment of the Nationality Law is feared to hinder the purpose of controlled exclusion performed through immigration control. In their statement, judges Kainaka and Horigome (The Supreme Court of Japan 2008a) asserted:

“[t]he procedure for granting nationality has a significant impact in various aspects with regard to immigration control and management of foreign nationals residing in Japan, and it should be noted that it is an issue that needs to be examined from a policy perspective by taking these matters into consideration.” (p.40)

The judges’ comment implies that the extension of full-fledged citizenship to offspring of single foreign women reduces the State’s power in defining the boundaries of its population. Considering Japan’s current move towards attracting the highly skilled through a point system and rewarding Nikkeijin for giving up their long-term visas and returning to their countries of citizenship, the judges’ comment can be interpreted as fearing the influx of nouveau-Japanese that do not match the presently sought-after sets of skills.
Lawmakers perceive the change in the nationality law as endangering Japan’s sovereignty in managing its population, notably its immigrant population. By becoming Japanese nationals, the state would not be able to exclude these "nouveau"-Japanese from its polity, no matter whether they are considered ‘desirable’ or ‘undesirable’ additions to Japan’s population. With the amendment, more offspring of Japanese men would gain rights in Japan notwithstanding their de facto foreignness through an upbringing in a foreign country and environment. Judges Kainaka and Horigome also stated that “the arrangement as suggested by the majority opinion is in effect the same as recognizing the child’s close tie with Japan just by reason of the child’s intention to seek Japanese nationality” (ibid.), anticipating the amendment to trigger nationality claims by the numerous offspring of Japanese men born and raised in foreign countries presumably without cultural, social and emotive relations to Japan.

Citizenship and the population

Citizenship is a means for the state to manage its population by establishing criteria of inclusion and exclusion. The control of who crosses Japan’s borders, who ought to obtain social or political rights in Japan, and on what terms, form part of the Japanese state’s responses to social issues, including perceived ‘threats’ to its population. Through its descent-based citizenship, Japanese nationality is linked to ethno-cultural identity (as discussions about the necessity of a “tie” to Japan have also demonstrated) and since “citizenship policies are […] based on deeply rooted understandings of nationhood, they reflect shared understandings of what the “nation” should look like, who is
worthy of membership, and who should be granted rights and privileges administered by the state.” (Chung 2010, 18)

Sexuality in general and women’s bodies in particular (Luibhéid 2004), have been central concerns to the nation-state. Women biologically reproduce the population. In doing so they are responsible for recreating boundaries of ethnic, racial, or national collectives. Moreover, women are usually being tasked with rearing the next generation and are therefore in charge of transmitting cultures, language, and values (p. 341). Thus, the control of women’s sexualities is of central importance in maintaining (or changing) racial, ethnic, or national boundaries (p.342). In mid-nineteenth century Japan, intermarriage and sexual relationships with (‘white’) Western women was considered a way to improve the Japanese ‘race’, and for a while the Japanese State indeed encouraged upper-class men to marry Western women for the purpose of producing “eugenically “superior” Japanese children” (Suzuki 2007, p.437). Intermarriage was part of the strategies to elevate the national status of Japan from that of a “barbaric” country to a “civilized” one (ibid.).

However in contemporary Japan where ethnic endogamy is favoured, foreign women (especially “Third World” women) may pose a ‘threat’ to the nation-state by blurring national, ethnic or racial boundaries when birthing the child of a Japanese national.

In supposedly ethnically homogeneous contemporary Japan, marital citizenship today favors ethnic endogamy, and sexual relationships with
women from the Third World are viewed as undermining Japan’s hard-
earned First World status in the postwar global order. [...] Their marriages
are then seen as engendering national-class downward mobility to rejoin
“backward” Asia, aggravating continuing Japanese continuing identity
insecurity of being “not-white, not-quite”. (Suzuki 2007, p. 438)

Filipino women are thus a potential ‘threat’ not merely because they are foreign,
but because their ‘kind’ of foreignness is considered to disrupt Japan’s “First
World” status. Filipino women have also been associated with sex-work and
prostitution thus violating the heteropatrichal imperative required to control
women’s childbearing (Luibhéid 2004, p.342). All these have made Filipino
migrant working as ‘entertainers’ in bars and pubs, potential ‘threats’ to the
Japanese nation.

In claims on behalf of Japanese-Filipino children, NGOs have sought to
reframe Filipina migrants and returnees in ways as to make them less
‘threatening’. As discussed in Chapter 4, Filipino women have been depicted as
women who sought a stable, ‘legitimate’ relationship, as caring mothers, and as
women who had children out of ‘love’ thus distancing these former ‘entertainers’
from the stigmatized night business. As shown throughout this chapter, the
‘legitimacy’ of relationships is crucial. Even in redefinitions of the family as not
necessarily nuclear, the relationship between the parents is understood to be

---

114 Suzuki (2007) argues that Japanese men having married Filipino women have been
"caricatured negatively, if not symbolically expelled from the national borders. Cross-ethnic,
cross-national marriages especially with women from the South have served as an indicator
of differences between men and between Japanese nationals, and Japanese men married to
Filipinas have been portrayed as either hyper- or de-masculinized men, being removed from
the center of Japanese manhood and nationhood" (p.448)
‘legitimate’, meaning as genuine, sincere, heterosexual, and monogamous. By investing in the discursive construction of former ‘entertainers’ as victims, as well as abandoned wives and lovers, NGOs make the women’s relationships with Japanese men and the children born from these socially more acceptable. Highlighting that their women clients wanted to get married and often were promised marriage (which in many cases however never materialized) reinserts them into the heteropatriarchal system and makes them victims, or losers, but not violators of the latter. Utilizing discourses on gender and sexuality, NGOs make their Filipino women clients fit for claims and less ‘threatening’ to Japan’s biopolitical project.

Having eliminated the legitimation requirement, the acquisition of Japanese nationality remains conditioned upon biological descent and ethnicity. The process leading to the amendment of Japan’s Nationality Law in 2008 as well as to the rejection of the latest class-action suit supported by the CNJFC, has indeed shown how various discourses on Japanese ‘blood’ and *Japaneseness* have played out. The importance of ‘Japanese blood’ remains codified in the *jus sanguinis* principle, but having a Japanese parent is not sufficient. As the discussions about the ‘tie’ to Japan have revealed, offspring of Japanese also need to display an *ethnic* habitus (cf. Bourdieu 1984; 1986; 1989) to qualify as Japanese nationals. The habitus is “that which we have hitherto known without *knowing about* […] the embodied and unreflexive everyday practical mastery of culture: unsystematic, the empire of habit, neither conscious nor unconscious. Nothing could be more basic and nothing more inextricably implicated in
ethnicity.” (Jenkins 2008, p.79) An individual’s ‘tie’ to Japan is performed through ethnic habitus, the unreflexive display of mannerisms deemed typically Japanese, of language proficiency and means of expression. Being Japanese in supposedly homogenous Japan is both premised upon biological descent and cultural performance, ensuring that the racial and ethnic boundaries of the nation are maintained.

The concepts of culture and blood-lineage have been used by Japanese lawmakers and NGOs to simultaneously buttress and challenge Japan’s biopolitics with regards to immigration control and the extension of nationality. Philippine-based NGOs, aware of the absence of substantial social and cultural ties binding their clients to Japan, have relied on arguments of blood-lineage to challenge the definition of the boundaries of the Japanese nation. Essentialist discourses linking Japanese ‘blood’ to identity issues, an affective longing for the other homeland, and to a desire of exploring one’s “cultural heritage” have intensified after the legal amendment in 2008. Conversely, Japanese lawmakers have made use of arguments relating to the same two concepts to justify exclusionist practices, as demands for DNA tests and fears of heightened immigration have shown. One staff member of the CNJFC explains politicians’ fears of false paternal recognition:

“This problem is not particular to JFCs. So they are in a way trying to protect Japan from these elements, the fake people. So the politicians in a way are trying to protect not to abuse the system. Being recognized means Japanese nationality so there will be a lot of cases like this.”
Her colleague added:

“Many Japanese politicians they don’t like too many foreigners to come to Japan. So they want to control who can enter Japan. So they want good citizens.”

Both express their awareness of the State’s interests to remain in control of Japan’s population, and over cross-border mobility towards Japan. Within the context of globalization, the regulation of migration is part of biopolitics and as Mackie (2010, p.72) notes, “biopower is also a matter which crosses national boundaries. ...While workers attempt to maximize their income through crossing national borders, nation states attempt to regulate these flows though border control.” The two lawsuits supported by the CNJFC aimed at eliminating exclusions preventing numerous Japanese-Filipinos from becoming Japanese citizens, thus enabling their legal stay in Japan. With the amendment of Japan’s nationality law and the rejection of the second class-action lawsuit, demands for Japanese nationality for all Japanese-Filipinos have become increasingly tied to issues of identity, destiny, Japan as another homeland, cultural heritage, and racial belonging, drawing upon symbolically salient discourses on Japaneseness to push for Japanese-Filipinos’ right to access their father’s land. Japanese ‘blood’ and its conflation with cultural and national identity has become a central argument in demanding Japanese nationality by and on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos.

**Concluding remarks**

In this chapter I have considered the recent conclusion of the CNJFC-supported lawsuit against the Japanese government with regards to content of the
final judgement and the opinions of the judges presiding over the case. Given the conservative grip the Japanese government has maintained over social change, the legal victory of 2008 indeed was a landmark decision. Yet the reactions by Japanese lawmakers have also shown that definitions of who ought to be Japanese remain ethno-cultural and that claims merely based on Japanese ‘blood’ had little bearing on the notions of who ought to be Japanese. As a comparison between the two lawsuits fought by the CNJFC indicates, Japaneseness has to be performative as well. In rights-claims for Japanese nationality, the mobilization of consanguinal capital thus needs to go with the exhibition of an ethnic habitus; the biological relationship with a Japanese national alone does not suffice.

With Japanese citizenship remaining tied to a particular conception of ‘Japanese culture’ and Japaneseness, have NGOs won their symbolic struggles? Have they challenged Japan’s biopolitics and broadened the definitions of who ought to be Japanese? Certainly, the riddance of one exclusive clause has brought about greater inclusion and enabled numerous offspring of Japanese to become Japanese nationals and citizens. However, the decision to remove the legitimation requirement was justified by parental marriage having no bearing on a person’s ‘tie’ to Japan. This means that who ought to be Japanese continues to be defined in ethno-cultural terms.

Moreover, the change in Japan’s nationality law has contributed to an intensification of discourses on ‘blood’ and descent with regards to “JFCs’” identities and their right to Japan, Japanese nationality, and citizenship. The change in the law has been welcomed as a step into the right direction by NGOs
and Japanese-Filipino activists, but with the legal framework still barring a great number of Japanese-Filipinos to become Japanese citizens, the legal change has also provided impetus for the discussion of consanguinity within the identity construction of the “JFC”.

Reactions to the amendment of Japan’s nationality law have shown that politicians are aware of the desire of many foreigners of Japanese descent to gain the right to live and work in Japan. Indeed, the claims for Japanese nationality have not been made by the relatively privileged Japanese offspring of North-American or Western-European parents, but instead by the underprivileged, by those threatened by deportation from Japan and those based in the “Global South”. There has therefore been a sense of urgency underlying the claims for Japanese nationality securing legal status in Japan that is related to more than issues of identity or matters of asserting rights. Desires to discover one’s “cultural heritage” or one’s “other homeland” are only part of the motivations behind nationality claims.

Yet, economic motives in claims for nationality (and citizenship) are in tension with notions of loyalty and identification with the nation implied in being or becoming a national of a particular country. Aware of this tension, NGOs have thus made efforts to remind their clients of the “proper” reasons for claiming Japanese nationality and have warned them from making rushed decisions based on desires to earn higher wages in Japan (The Japan Times 2008). Simultaneously, NGOs have chosen to foreground the emotive aspects and matters of justice involved in these claims when addressing their supporters and
audiences in Japan and the Philippines. Certainly, issues of identity (whether based on actual biological relationships with individual Japanese men or on imagined kinship ties to Japanese society as a whole epitomized using the ‘blood’ metaphor) are a consequence of the disjuncture of ethnic identification and citizenship. Yet, at the same time it remains understated how the positive image of Japan as a modern, technologically advanced, “First World” country also propels the appropriation of a Japanese ethnic identity in the first place, as will be shown in more detail in the following chapter.
Chapter 7: Mobilizing Consanguinity as a form of Capital

Symbolic struggles, writes Bourdieu (1989, p.20), entail labour to establish a group, its size and cohesiveness, entail “strategies of presentation of self” which are “designed to manipulate one’s self-image and […] the image of one’s position in social space”, and lastly, the struggle over words, over “schemata of classification […] which construct social reality”. In previous chapters I have shown how NGOs have ascertained Japanese-Filipinos born since the late 1970s as a population, as a group of significant size, and as an issue worthy of public attention. NGOs have also established the ‘correct’ term to refer to the population. I have shown that NGOs, through their activities and their publications, have made efforts to highlight “JFCs’” Japaneseness, their link to Japan, and therefore their rightful claim to Japanese nationality. In this chapter, I observe how Japanese-Filipinos’ social environment, meanings attached to being Japanese in the Philippines, and the historical context of Filipina migration to Japan, feed into their ‘sense of self’, and by consequence, on views pertaining to their entitlement to particular rights and privileges which are associated with being Japanese.

As Jenkins (2008) shows, ethnic identity forms through socialization and becomes an integral part of people’s identities. This chapter therefore investigates the role of Japanese-Filipino’s mothers as well as of their involvement with NGOs
in influencing how having a Japanese father is made sense of by my Japanese-Filipino respondents, and how Japanese ethnicity becomes part of Japanese-Filipinos’ identities. Ethnic identity is no ‘objective’ fact, but is constructed and is a process. Ethnic identity is thus malleable and may be instrumental.

Jenkins notes that the significance of ethnicity in a person’s identity depends on social and historical contexts. This chapter thus contextualizes the endorsement of a Japanese ethnic identity and the capitalizing on ideas of ‘Japanese blood’ considering the income differentials between Japan and the Philippines as well as the largely positive image of Japan in the Philippines. As will be shown in greater detail, the metaphor of ‘Japanese blood’ has been largely understood to denote a ‘Japanese race’ which has led some of my respondents to identify Japaneseeness in some of their supposedly innate qualities and behaviours which they thought set them apart from ‘regular’ Filipinos.

I contend that the choice made by some of my Japanese-Filipino respondents to identify as Japanese is closely tied to issues of social status as well as processes of capital accumulation, on top of being interlaced with the desire to connect with one’s father based on ideals of the “normal family” and the understanding of identity as patrilineal. Capital is, as Bourdieu (1986, p.241) writes, “what makes the game of society”. It is not a game of chance where people are endowed with equal opportunities but rather an intricate process of accumulation and transformation of assets that also come in forms other than money and material possessions. As it has been pointed out by Anthias (2012), individuals’ positions within social hierarchies, as well as their social identities,
are determined not merely by social class— the social, cultural, and economic capital they hold— but also by ethnicity and/or ‘race’. *Consanguinal capital* can thus be mobilized to gain social status in the Philippines via documental proof of belonging to the “First World” via Japanese citizenship, or to gain cross-border mobility and access to Japan’s labour market.

I begin by exploring the role that Japanese-Filipino’s immediate family members, especially their mothers, have played in encouraging their children to assert a particular ethnic identity over another. I then consider the role played by the broader context of income inequalities making Japan an attractive place to seek paid employment, the significance of having a claim to “foreignness” in the Philippines, and the opportunity to obtain a Japanese passport or a long-term visa in how Japanese-Filipino youths and young adults make sense of who they are and where they belong. I argue that the various expected gains associated with Japanese nationality and citizenship contribute to the readiness of Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines to embrace and accentuate their *Japaneseness*. These economic considerations are however in tension with NGO discourses which have largely highlighted emotive and moral reasons for nationality claims, as well as the ‘naturalness’ of Japanese-Filipinos’ interest in things Japanese. Finally, I explore the unintended consequences of capitalizing on Japanese ‘blood’, such as the creation of a new migrant working-class in Japan or the disappointments arising from not being recognized as Japanese once migrating to “the other homeland”. Japanese-Filipinos’ experiences upon migration to Japan show that
ethnic categories valid in one socio-cultural setting are not necessarily valid in another, demonstrating the contextual character of ethnic boundaries.

**Instilling Japaneseness**

“The funny thing is when we were all growing up our mothers would always say you will go to Japan some day, because that’s where you belong. There is that whole building of expectations so that suddenly you’re romanticizing it. It’s also some sort of like Shangri-la, or you know, some sort of mythological place…that expectation I think mythologizes Japan in such a way that it becomes some sort of paradise for JFC.” (Mifune)

Unlike many others, Mifune’s mother had not worked in Japan but had travelled there and gathered knowledge about Japan from her Japanese acquaintances which she recounted to her son. Mifune’s parents met in Manila when his mother was working in a restaurant where his father noticed her. He courted her and eventually they got married in the Philippines. Mifune’s parents lived as a couple in Manila. Mifune’s mother recounts that his father’s hobbies were playing golf, going out for drinks, and trying his luck at casinos. His father ran a business in the Philippines and frequently travelled to Japan. Mifune’s mother had the opportunity to travel to Japan with her husband. She showed me a picture of her trip in the late 1970s- a tall woman in a white sheer blouse posing in front of a restaurant in Ueno, Tokyo. “In this picture I was pregnant, did you see my stomach? It is big. I think I was five months pregnant”, she says. When
Mifune was three years old his parents separated. After that, Mifune and his father met only once, in Manila, when Mifune was in his teens. Mifune would however try to reconstruct his impression of his father from his mother’s stories, from things Japanese he found in the city (shops, restaurants) as well as by familiarizing himself with Japanese history, literature, and popular culture.

Mothers of Japanese-Filipino children play a crucial role in nurturing their offspring’s self-perception as children of Japanese fathers by calling attention to their lineage and establishing favourable associations with being Japanese. A number of interviewees shared that their mothers had introduced them to Japanese food, informed them about Japanese customs and had told them positive stories about their stay in Japan.

I don’t know if what my mother told me [is true] but Japanese give dolls to babies as gifts hoping to imbibe the characteristics of the doll in the child (Mifune)

[I got interested in things Japanese] by just watching Japanese channels. From my mother, she offered me, takes me to Japanese restaurants, things like that. [...] But before going there [to Japan] I’ll be studying …I want to enrol in a Japanese [class] before moving there, cause my mom told me that if you don’t know how to speak their language and you go there it will be very hard for you to live and socialize. Because Japanese are not that good in English that’s why you can’t just talk in English. (Kenta)
One mother of two Japanese-Filipino children who had lived in Japan for 14 years prior to returning to the Philippines also mentioned why she wanted her children to know about Japan.

I wish they (her children) could go there (to Japan)... In the future maybe. Just hoping... Yes they are [curious], they are. They’re always asking me about Japan, the culture, what kind of people... So how’s the food? What’s the climate? Because I told them about the experience that I have, that I get there... Then they are always asking, they ask about their father, what happened...Yes of course [it is important to know about Japan], they have to know more about Japan. Yeah, I don’t know...Right now I’m hoping one of these days or in the future maybe when they grew up, when they are in the right age to go there, so that they have some knowledge about Japan, what’s Japan, what’s in there, what kind of people are living there.” (Daisy, mother of two Japanese-Filipino Children)

Those among my Japanese-Filipino respondents who grew up in absence of both their parents often gained positive images of Japan through the comfortable life they were able to live via their mother’s remittances. Hayate and Amal, both in their early twenties at the time of the interview, have grown up in the Philippines while their Japan-based mothers supported them financially. Before relocating abroad, both had imagined Japan to be the high-tech place it is usually depicted in popular television programs, and a place where money could be easily earned. The impression that money was easily made in Japan very likely stems from
having had their comfortable lifestyles financed by their mothers. Neither Amal nor Hayate needed to work whilst living in the Philippines, but benefitted from steady financial support. Upon arriving in Japan, however, their initial impression of the country was altered.

I thought at first it’s easy to earn money. But when I realized, I experienced to work here oh it’s so hard. That’s the life. In the Philippines my mother gave me money. Now I realized that money is too hard to get. (Amal)

Oh I expected tall buildings. Yeah...to be honest I was expecting tall buildings but when I came here...damn...there were not buildings in our place! I thought all was high-tech, tall buildings, lights, but it’s boring. Like at 8 or 9 pm everything is dark, quiet. (Hayate)

In most cases, Japanese-Filipino children’s mothers are the first ones to let their children know about their Japanese lineage, and they are the first ones to create images of Japan for their children. These have also considerably contributed to Japanese-Filipinos’ identification as half-Japanese. Many of my

---

115 Some of my respondents did not learn of their Japanese father through their mothers. Felix’s mother for instance was not present during his childhood so he learned of his Japanese father through his relatives. Felix did not highlight any particular moment in his life in which his Japanese parentage was revealed to him, but stated that his relatives had freely talked about it so he grew up knowing about his Japanese father. In Sachiko’s case, her father was around during her childhood and visited her in the Philippines on a regular basis. Toshiro grew up with both his parents. Yuzuki was born in Japan and lived there for the first five years of her life until her father passed away and her mother sent her to be taken care of by her grand-mother in the Philippines.
respondents who had their mothers with them whilst growing up mentioned that their mothers would make them aware of their *Japaneseness*, whether by commenting on their looks or interpreting their behaviour.

For me it’s quite confusing because I was born and raised in the Philippines and even though I’m- I haven’t been to Japan when I was young, I still feel a bit Japanese like um, their- um, it’s just like what my mom always says that I am like a Japanese even though I have- I’m not with all these people and um, some of my interests are more Japanese than Filipino so um, it’s sort confusing, it’s a, a little bit of both Japanese and Filipino. (Yukari)

Natsumi and Fumiko who grew up in the Philippines shared that friends and acquaintances have also contributed to their self-perception as Japanese. For both young women, being identified as Japanese were positive experiences. Fumiko reports that she had received special treatment while Natsumi has embraced being identified as Japanese to the extent of considering herself a part of Japan.

[I see myself ] as a Japanese. Because most of people I was in the Philippines, they always said that I look like a Japanese even though they didn’t hear my name, like just in my face. They, they always said, “are you a Japanese?” So, yeah, that’s why I think I’m- I really belong here. (Natsumi)
Because it [being half Japanese] gives you a little privilege. Because when you are half Japanese some people… some person will treat you different. And others will treat you special. [...]Because being a Japanese you will have small eyes. People will notice you because of your eyes. Many people I met would…the first time we meet they would ask me the basic question “are you a Japanese?” like that. “ah that’s why”. When I say half Japanese…they would say “ah that’s why it’s your eyes…” (Fumiko)

By learning to associate their Japanese descent with particular behaviour and preferences, Japanese-Filipinos also internalize the essentialism underlying these conceptions of *Japaneseness* and Japanese ethnic identity. Japanese-Filipinos’ mothers and acquaintances are central in their self-perception as half-Japanese or Japanese. The mothers of Japanese-Filipino Children greatly contribute to the construction of their children’s ethnic identification through positive depictions of Japan but also through their presumed competence in identifying *Japaneseness*. One striking trend among Japanese-Filipino children is that the large majority has been given Japanese first names (but not all carry their father’s last names), presumably by their mothers who registered them with the Philippine authorities. A name is a crucial aspect of a person’s identity, suggesting familial as well as ethnic origin and belonging.

Because others usually name us, the act of naming has the potential to implicate infants in relations through which they become inserted into and, ultimately will act upon, a social matrix. Individual lives thus become
entangled—through the name—in the life histories of others. [...] The power of the name itself, which varies cross-culturally, often thus plays a critical role in social life. [...] names carry with them the capacity, not only to delineate the boundaries of social status, but also to bridge them. Names may reveal crucial information about gender, kinship, geographical origin, or religion. At the same time, they may also provide the vehicle for crossing boundaries between those very same categories [...] The potential for the name to become identical with the person creates the simultaneous potential to fix them as individuals and as members of recognized social groups. It is their detachability that renders names a powerful political tool for establishing or erasing formal identity, and gives them commodity-like value. (Bodenhorn and Vom Bruck 2006, 3-4)

Names as indicators of belonging to social groups have symbolic value. As ethnic markers, Japanese-Filipinos’ names symbolically establish their link to Japan. Indeed, Japanese-Filipinos’ Japanese names, and in some cases their physical appearance, have led the majority of my respondents to be identified as Japanese by their friends and classmates. These markers of Japanese ethnicity are complemented by NGOs who further contribute to the development of a Japanese ethnic identity by providing resources (Japanese language classes, visits by Japanese volunteers and guests, study tours and theatre tours to Japan, home-stays and school visits in Japan, presentations about Japan, origami folding, rice-ball making, the learning of Japanese songs, calligraphy) to substantiate the link to Japan and make it meaningful. Having learned that they were Japanese, Japanese-
Filipinos raised outside of Japan have to interpret this piece of information with the means available to them, such as stories told by their mothers and available global cultural products. By providing cultural resources to Japanese-Filipinos, NGOs not only reinforce the production of the “JFC” as an ethnic group, but also to the link drawn between culture and biological lineage.

**Accessing socio-economic resource through Japanese-Filipino Children**

My interview data has shown that Filipino mothers of Japanese-Filipinos do not merely contribute to their children’s ethnic identification as half-Japanese, but have also nurtured desires to live and work in Japan from early on. Mifune corroborates this with his own observations:

That’s how important Japan is to JFCs; it’s a fulfilment when you get there. [...] But really the valuation is passed down through the mothers. [...] I haven’t told you this but I hate some of what the mothers do to their children. The children are pushed to Japan because they become economic safeguards; they become OFWs [Overseas Filipino Workers] themselves sending yen home. It’s the Filipino colonial mentality. *I’m not sure how many kids can differentiate from their own desires over the desires of their mothers.* I believe that fathers do not want to relate to their kids believing they have been compromised by their mother’s materialistic mindset.

(Mifune)

Mifune’s opinion contrasts with NGO depictions of Filipino women as caring mothers who engage in claims for paternal recognition and financial support because they believe to act in the best interest of their children. In Mifune’s
opinion, some Filipino mothers make Japan look attractive in the hopes of achieving upward social mobility by leveraging on their offspring. Moreover, he believes that numerous Japanese-Filipinos’ interest in migrating to Japan to find employment had actually been manufactured by their mothers. Here, Japanese-Filipinos are manipulated and victimized by their mothers at the expense of their relationship with their fathers. This perspective is also in tension with NGO depictions of Filipino mothers as victims and Japanese fathers as plainly uncaring. A staff member at Maligaya House expresses a similar view when asked why Maligaya House, which offers legal assistance, attracted more new clients than other NGOs.

[Filipino mothers are looking for legal assistance] like the child support, support from the father. They still want to depend on the father. That’s some problem actually. But the mothers are still hoping for the support of the father […] They don’t work. They don’t want to work. That is why they are looking for support from the father. (Maligaya House staff)

NGO staff is indeed aware of numerous Philippine-based mothers of Japanese-Filipino Children fostering desires to return to Japan through their children (see DAWN, 2008 b; The Japan Times 2008). Dharma, a Japanese-Filipino long-time member of Batis YOGHI, observes that Japan remains a popular destination “because for the mothers there is an attachment to the country so it’s still a romantic idea to go back to Japan.”116 However their ability to legally live and work in Japan is premised upon their marriage to a resident of

---

116 This interestingly contradicts NGOs’ generalizations of labor migration to Japan as fraught by abuses and traumatizing experiences.
Japan\textsuperscript{117} or upon obtaining a visa as legal custodian of a Japanese citizen. Japanese-Filipinos’ legal status as citizens of Japan is therefore crucial in order for their mothers to be able to live and work in the country. Felix, who was able to obtain his Japanese nationality as a result of the 2008 amendment of Japan’s nationality law, has been actively involved in his mother’s struggles to secure her residency in Japan.

Yeah, hahahaha, I’ll sponsor her as for her visa, it will not be a long term visa, but "mother of a Japanese citizen" the duration and length of stay might be the same but the credibility is better since she now have a connection with a Japanese citizen. Well the problem is I’m so in a heat to go back the Philippines, I wonder will it (her desires to remain in Japan) hinder me [to go back]? (Felix, via online chat)

Felix finds himself in a bind as he knows of his importance to his mother’s legal status in Japan. Felix has spent three years in Japan and managed to obtain his nationality. He also worked there at a laundry service and in a fast-food chain to earn an income, but decided that he prefers living in the Philippines. His mother’s desire to remain in Japan and his ability as a Japanese citizen to provide her with a visa make it difficult for him to do as he pleases. The ability to claim Japanese citizenship has thus also come with changes in family dynamics linked to Japanese-Filipinos’ ability to migrate, earn a higher income than in the Philippines, and to sponsor their legal guardian’s visa.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{117}To a Japanese citizen or a permanent resident.}
As noted above, Mifune’s earlier comment contains a reflection on Filipino mothers’ role in souring relationships between father and child. Mifune’s distrust is based on both his own experience and on accounts of other Japanese-Filipinos he has encountered through his involvement with one NGO. Throughout our interviews, Mifune has repeatedly mentioned his awareness of being an important resource for his own mother in accessing financial support from his father. In his opinion, the children of Japanese-Filipina couples have too often become tokens in their mothers’ endeavours to live financially secure, prosperous lives. Their connection with Japan and with a Japanese citizen has thus also implied expectations of ‘a better life’ which have become attainable with the change of Japan’s nationality law. Numerous women have sought Japanese nationality for their children and have subsequently relocated to Japan (Agnote 2008; Kyodo News 2008 a; The Manila Times 2008a, 2008b).

Most respondents did not provide details on why they had lost touch with their fathers, as often they would not know. One of my respondents mentioned that her communication with her Japanese father had stopped because of “misunderstandings” between her parents. In some cases, the breakdown of communication was accompanied by a cessation of financial support. Fumiko narrates how her father stopped providing the family after her Filipino grandfather laid eyes on the financial support and badmouthed Fumiko’s mother:

Then it (the support) stopped because of my grandfather because he wanted that the support will be given to him, not to my mother. But it’s like he was saying some bad words, some bad words then to my mother.
Then he sent a letter to my father. So my father stopped because maybe he was confused. Maybe he was confused because who to believe. Because we also sent letters, and my grand-father also sent letters. He was confused. That’s why we lost contact with him. (Fumiko)

In some cases, Filipino women themselves are sometimes struggling with extended kin over their access to financial flows.

...Very close relatives. It happened but many of the relatives just cheated on my mom with money and everything. [My mother] didn’t just lose confidence but they left us. And, I don’t know, yeah they did, when I was younger. Yeah. They left us but they stayed and then yeah they cheated my mom for years and years...my sister put them away. She told them to get out when she had the confidence to tell them. From then on my sister has to do all the budgeting. (Alina)

Narratives of such conflicts are corroborated by accounts found in the case reports published in Maligaya (cf. JFC Network, 2002) and by the story narrated by Rose, a client of DAWN (DAWN 2004 a, p.190). Therefore, Japanese-Filipinos are not the only people seeking to benefit from claims-making, but so do their mothers and sometimes their extended families. Gaining Japanese citizenship and/or financial support for Japanese-Filipino children can indeed become a family
concern which also reflects in familial relationships. The children’s Japanese parentage thus becomes a form of capital, not only for Japanese-Filipinos, but also for their mothers and their extended families, which may benefit from migration-generated remittances, or by accessing the financial support from Japanese fathers.

During my fieldwork in Japan I met Tanaka, the Japanese father of a Japanese-Filipino girl in her late teens. Tanaka also had to deal with demands for payments from his ex in-laws. His daughter, Tomoko, was born in Japan from his marriage to a Filipino woman. But around the time his child turned three years old, her mother developed psychological problems according to Tanaka. This led to daily quarrels and eventually his wife left and, without his knowledge, took the child with her and the passbook to Tanaka’s bank account. At first, Tanaka did not know where they had gone, but later found out that his ex-wife had relocated from Osaka to Tokyo. However, before moving to Tokyo, she had brought Tomoko to the Philippines to be raised by her family. Tanaka tried to visit his daughter in the Philippines, but she was hidden from him by her family.

Almost 11 years I was separated from my daughter who lived either in Tokyo together with her mother or in Manila together with her mother’s relatives. Then I was able to meet her five times only. But every time, of course, if I wanted to meet her I had to bring a lot of money. That’s the condition. In the very beginning even if I brought the money they would say “okay you gave the money only but you are not allowed to meet”. And then I was extremely angry. But eventually I could meet her. But unfortunately because both my daughter’s mother and my relatives talk
about me very badly, my daughter believed that I was a very bad man. So my daughter was really cold to me and not friendly. So I was very much depressed. But even though I was depressed I tried to meet her over and over again. Five times only. (Tanaka)

According to Tanaka, his ex-wife had abducted their child and subsequently used her to extort money from him. Tomoko had thus become an important resource for both his ex-wife and her family. Eventually, Tanaka’s daughter was not longer a resource but a liability to her mother.

You know...now, I live with my daughter. For the past six months. What happened is, after a few years we divorced. That was 11 years ago. My ex-wife remarried another Japanese in Tokyo. Then one of the reasons why my daughter was sent to the Philippines was that she had remarried. So my daughter became a kind of burden for them. But the problem is [...] after the year 2008 it turned out that all the nearest relatives of my daughter, including her uncle and aunt and grand-father migrated to other countries. They moved to New Zealand. Because one of the brothers of my ex-wife got the New Zealand nationality, so it turned out no one could take care of my daughter in the Philippines. So she was sent back to Japan again when she became a second year junior high-school [student]. But the mother delivered two babies in just a few years. So they have to raise three children and my daughter has become very rebellious. So they had problems. One [problem] is financial and one is her rebelliousness. And of
course the step-father is not happy to live with my daughter because he has to shoulder the economic burden. So they decided to send my daughter back to me by force. (Tanaka)

According to Tanaka, his ex-wife and her new husband had changed Tomoko’s official address record\(^\text{118}\) and transferred her to another school despite her protests. Tomoko was thus left without choice but to move in with Tanaka. After having spent many years of her life being sent back and forth between the Philippines and Japan, Tanaka’s daughter was eventually ‘returned’ to her father when her mother deemed her to be a liability.

Although Tanaka’s story is rather exceptional insofar as he seemed more concerned about his daughter’s welfare than her mother, his experiences illustrate how Japanese-Filipino children and youth can find themselves confronted with their mothers’ desires for a “better life” and their central role in fulfilling this desire or getting in the way of it. Akira too was deserted by his mother when she settled in Japan. Akira was born in the Philippines in the 1980s. His parents were never married. Until he was two years old, he says, his father was around. But when his father ceased to be involved with Akira’s mother, she went to work in Japan and he was left in the care of his maternal grandmother. Today, he hardly communicates with his mother who seems reluctant to help him process the necessary paperwork to go to Japan. Akira suspects that her own documents may

\(^{118}\) In Japan, the municipal office keeps track of people’s change of address. Once someone moves, their address needs to be updated and the records are transferred to the respective municipal office in charge.
not be in order and that her Japanese husband may not know of his existence. These narrative contrast with NGO depictions of Filipino women as dedicated mothers, foregrounding the ‘best interest’ of their children. In reflecting about his own role in his mother’s relationship with his father, Ken contemplates:

“Sometimes I feel that maybe I was also [my mother’s] breadbasket in a way. I really hated that set-up that you need to have children in order to ensure your future with a Japanese husband. I really... It’s an ugly side of the whole thing but I think it does exist. It’s also bad on our side, on the Filipino side to think of the Jap... of the foreigners as keys for security you know. We have to do it for ourselves not just marry into convenience.”

(Ken in Yasuo. A Geography of Memory, 2012)

The awareness of being a source of income confronts children born to parents of economically disparate backgrounds with their instrumental role in securing livelihood. Individuals like Ken, who were born from these relationships, suspect not only their existence but their subsequent role to be nested in their mother’s aspirations for ‘a better life’. The latter challenges the ideal of the woman martyr, the self-sacrificing mother, markedly cherished in Philippine society (Roces 2009) and endorsed by NGOs. Just as a ‘marriage of convenience’ has been depicted as the opposite of ‘romantic love’, being one’s mother’s “breadbasket” seems to be in conflict with the ideal of a mother’s selfless love and care. But, just as love and pragmatism are not necessarily opposites (Bulloch & Fabinyi, 2009; Parreñas 2011), the relationships between Japanese-Filipinos
and their mothers are often too intricate to be labelled either ‘of convenience’ or ‘truly heartfelt’. As Ken states: “I think in my relationship with my mother there is a level of dysfunction and a level of grace” (in Yasuo. A Geography of Memory, 2012). He was able to understand his mother’s motivations and her concern for him, but at the same time felt that her dependency on her Japanese partner made him play an uncomfortably pivotal role in assuring the quality of their lifestyle.

It is also that dependence on the Japanese male, this largely felt absence, or the presence of absence of that Japanese male, the person...the person who brings the bounty home. When I was young I’ve been subjected to that sort of conversation almost on a daily basis. I mean, “if your father was here...” or “if your father loved you...” or “if your father was close to you...” or “if you only hugged your father when you met him he would love you”, something like that. All that conditional statement. So I think that’s also kind of the JFC...I think...I don’t know I don’t wanna make labels. But I think there’s a malaise, a JFC malaise. That feeling of not knowing what to do with one’s life or...because of lowered expectations, of the fear of disappointment or the heartbreak of it all. Disappointment.

(ibid.)

---

119 An article published in the newsletter *Sinag* (DAWN, 2008 a, p. 2) mentions that observers have argued Japanese-Filipino children were “anchor babies” for their mothers, enabling them to live in or return to Japan.
Ken realizes that his parents’ relationship is embedded in structural inequalities creating dependencies and power inequalities which his mother navigated through him. Her relationship with a “First World” Japanese man was one among the few options available to consolidate the discrepancies between the life she desired and the lifestyle she would be able to otherwise achieve without “the person who brings the bounty home”. Japanese-Filipino children learn not only of their Japanese lineage, but also of their essential role as financial safeguards or, as in Felix’s case, of their importance in supporting their guardian’s residence permit in Japan. Also, with Filipino mothers’ hopes “to ensure [their] future with a Japanese husband” (Ken) pinned on their Japanese-Filipino children, having a Japanese father gains another layer of meaning. Japanese descent comes to signify access to a “better life” or even the right to a “better life”. Yet when the Japanese father vanishes and with him the “better life”, the loss of these privileges confronts children of Japanese men with the dissonance between their actual social status and class, and the positionality expected based on their ethnic identification as Japanese. It is at this point, when the Japanese partner vanishes and the support stops, that Filipino mothers of Japanese-Filipino children usually join NGOs hoping to be able to reinstate their source of livelihood.

Japanese-Filipinos’ Japanese parentage however can also become a liability as I will show in the following section. Not only can the potential benefit derived from mobilizing consanguinal capital also cause tensions in familial relationships between Japanese-Filipinos, their mothers, their fathers, and their
extended families, but being of Japanese descent can under some circumstances also become a burden.

Legal status, social status and the symbolic Japanese passport

Japanese-Filipino children and youths raised in the Philippines derive meaning from having a Japanese father through beliefs and values prevalent in Philippine society. Such dominant perceptions are habituated by a range of popular discourses supporting particular meanings ascribed to ethnicity, ‘race’ and lineage, and sustaining dominant ideas of the family or ideals of childhood. Having a Japanese parent is commonly perceived to indicate affluence, given the wide-spread conflation of ethnicity with social class in the Philippines (Bulloch & Fabinyi, 2009). Moreover, many Japanese-Filipinos had been confronted with expectations of cultural and linguistic proficiency in Japanese based on widespread essentialist associations of ‘blood’ with cultural practices. Not having been able to live up to such expectations has left a number of my respondents with sentiments of inadequacy.

You know, of course when I was younger I’m a very conscious child. [...] it’s not that I was getting bullied but the other children were always acknowledging the fact that I have mixed blood. Okay. They sometimes, they even say that, they tease me because I’m Japanese. But Filipinos like humour so they like to find something funny and something different. So I think it was normal. But you know at some point they always insist on the foreignness. I never met anybody in my entire life for the first time who hasn’t asked me the question “do you speak Japanese?” It is always the
assumption that you must speak because you look Japanese. So there is that imposition already. And that made me very self-conscious at a very young age. (Mifune)

Mifune failed to live up to his acquaintances’ expectations of *Japaneseness*, but Sachiko was even challenged by one of her classmates who asked her to prove that she was Japanese by passing a test he had set.

Yes before, when I was in third year High School, I have…. This is just a simple thing but it affected me so much. My classmate told me if I were Japanese, what is my favourite Japanese band. And I told him “Arashi” like that. And then he told me that, who are the members of it. And then I only like know, I memorize one boy it’s Jun Matsumoto. And the four other boys which I forgot. Because that time I’m not really like, I’m studying and then he asked me that. And then he told me that, if you’re Japanese why do you only know one member. You should study, like that. He’s so mean in school, and also I’m hurt because it’s not really my fault if I don’t know any, a lot of things about it. (Sachiko)

Sachiko’s *Japaneseness* was assessed according to her classmate’s standards. The experience affected her a lot and she still remembers it. This shows how central the identification as (half-) Japanese is to her. Sachiko still feels bad about not having been able to perform accordingly when her classmate questioned her *Japaneseness*. 

245
Growing up, I experienced a lot of awkward and embarrassing situations whenever my classmates would ask me why I am a Filipino citizen and not Japanese. They asked me where my father is and why I am not in Japan. They asked me why we don’t observe Japanese practices at home. I was looked down upon and discriminated because being a Filipino, they thought I was an illegitimate child. Although it is true that my father left me and my mother, it happened for a reason different from what other people think. My mother tried to protect me from all the discrimination so she worked hard to show everyone that we all are well-provided for. She was so busy that I lost a lot of time to be with her and she now is sick from being overworked. (Yukari)\(^{120}\).

While Mifune and Sachiko have mainly experienced being challenged with regards to their knowledge of Japan and insufficient performance of Japaneseness, Yukari has been subjected to the upsetting assumptions that she must have been an unwanted child born from an ‘illegitimate’ relationship or possibly from her mother’s engagement in sex-work. These assumptions were largely based on her lack of wealth, of Japanese nationality, her limited knowledge and performance of ‘Japanese culture’, and on the general knowledge of Filipino women’s deployment as “entertainers” to Japan. The latter has been commonly understood to add up to prostitution, an idea which for many years has been fed by anti-human trafficking NGOs. Moreover, being raised by a single mother still remains

\(^{120}\) Excerpt of Yukari’s statement presented at the Tokyo District Court in 2011
a social stigma in a society where women with children ought to be married and “[w]omen with a ‘past’ or with children of an earlier marriage are sometimes viewed essentially as ‘damaged goods’ in the strict Catholic society of the Philippines” (Bulloch and Fabinyi 2009, p.136).

Yukari is not alone in having been scrutinized for not living up to common perceptions which associate foreign, “First World” lineage with living affluent lives. Atsushi, who grew up with his mother in a Philippine province was often questioned by his classmates about his absent father and why he was so poor, despite his father being Japanese. The lack of prosperity combined with single motherhood and foreign parentage result in speculations about the nature of the relationship from which Japanese-Filipinos, like Atsushi and Yukari, were born. Thus for numerous Japanese-Filipinos their father’s presence, physical or symbolic through financial support and/or a Japanese passport, becomes crucial. Obtaining a Japanese passport would legitimize Japanese-Filipinos as being part of Japan and as children of Japanese which is why obtaining the document has been repeatedly mentioned to be of importance by Japanese-Filipinos like Yukari.

Yukari has participated in one of the class action suits co-organized by the CNJFC. She describes her own desire for obtaining Japanese nationality as follows:

I wanted to have my nationality because, I want to somehow erase the prejudice that I, that was placed upon me when I was little (Yukari)
One NGO worker actively supporting the latest law-suit aimed at easing the acquisition of birthright citizenship for Japanese-Filipinos explains that for many claimants obtaining a Japanese passport was a means to establish *Japaneseness*.

Basically the children are confused, something lacking from themselves? Because mothers always tell them “your father is a Japanese, you have that blood of Japanese”, So, but they never saw the father, they never go to Japan, they never talk the Japanese language. But people are telling “they are Japanese”. But in reality, they are Filipino. So maybe they are confused. So the children, the nationality project, they believe that if they got a Japanese nationality, they could [recover] that lack. [...] Maybe they want to have something to show, to see or, they can’t see that they are Japanese and they are Filipino [because] now, they are just Filipino. They have the documents of the Filipino. They have the, there’s a mother, the Filipino mother. It’s very clear they are Filipino nationals but the, the Japan side, of the Japan side they don’t have any records in Japan. In the family registry of the father, their name is not registered. (NGO worker)

Gaining Japanese nationality can thus both be a matter of fulfilling other people’s expectations of cross-border mobility and social status associated with ‘being Japanese’, as well as of obtaining tangible documentation of ones link to Japan. The espousal of a Japanese ethnic identity makes obtaining proof of being officially recognized as Japanese all the more important, especially where general knowledge of Filipinas’ prominence in Japan’s sex-industry would otherwise suggest unfavourable family backgrounds. Moreover, being able to obtain
Japanese nationality is a status symbol, especially in the Philippines wherein cross-border mobility is seen as an achievement in itself (Kelly 2007, p.22). Bearing a Japanese passport affords legal status in Japan as well as social status in the Philippines. The geographical mobility associated with a Japanese passport and in particular the access to Japan’s labour market, provides its bearers with the documental proof of relative privilege that often is assumed once they are identified, or identify themselves, as Japanese.

As seen from the discussion thus far, Japanese parentage and descent can be beneficial, but also burdening. As Yukari and Atsushi’s stories have shown, the intersection of ethnicity with a lack of wealth, of mobility, and of cultural knowledge can also trigger upsetting assumptions about their family life and the circumstances of their birth. Japanese-Filipinos may thus gain advantages linked to their association with Japan under some circumstances, but simultaneously also suffer from it under others. In both cases, ‘being Japanese’ signifies difference.

Having ‘Japanese blood’ is at times considered an edge by Japanese-Filipinos; a few of my respondents positively emphasized their difference from other ‘regular’ Filipinos, a phenomenon also frequently found in narratives by Japanese-Filipinos reprinted in NGO publications.

**Yukari:** I think that being- that having Japanese blood is- has its um, advantages and having Filipino blood has its own advantages for having them both is like, um, having two good eggs at the same time.

**Interviewer:** Mmh, what advantages are-
Natsumi: We’re different, different to, to others.

Yukari: Yeah. We, we look different.

Natsumi: Yeah.

Yukari: And um.

Natsumi: The Filip...

Yukari: Yeah. And things like that.

Interviewer: Mmh.

Natsumi: And I think I the Japanese blood is more heavier (slightly laughed) in me than Filipino.

I think it’s cool to be a JFC. I feel different from other kids. But I am happy because other people accept me for who I am. (Heidi in DAWN, 2010, p. 56)

I think highly of myself because I am a JFC. I am different from other kids because I am a product of two cultures. When I was younger, some people used to tease me because of my Japanese blood. But now, people even ask me to teach them how to read and write Japanese. I feel that in my school, I am special. (JM in DAWN, 2010, p.58)

What is it to be a JFC? Before, I did not know what a JFC was. I just know that my father is Japanese and my mother is a Filipino. But when we
joined DAWN, I understood what it is to be a JFC. I am not alone. There are other children like me. (Kay Celine in DAWN, 2010, p.61)

I am proud to be a Japanese-Filipino child (JFC). A JFC is different from other children because a JFC has Japanese blood. Some JFC have Japanese names or have Japanese features. For me JFC are different from other children because they have the chance to find work in Japan when they grow up. (Jenny in DAWN, 2010, p.66)

Having ‘Japanese blood’ is considered a benefit because it enables its bearers to find employment in Japan, as Jenny mentions, and because it entails distinction. Here distinction is primarily based on the notion of ‘Japanese blood’ and thus defines boundaries separating “us” from “them” in ‘racial’ terms by exaggerating lineage. This essentialism has also led to an understanding of identity as something fixed, something mandated by Japanese descent and in need to be unearthed.

The notion of carrying a ‘hidden’ Japanese side inside oneself by way of ancestry is illustrated in the following statement by Mifune:

It’s probably something that called through it, you know. I don’t know if you believe that there is something like genetic psychology or what, it’s probably a fallacious thing, but sometimes I just feel like I might have some, some behaviours that people might think it’s Japanese, or I might
think it’s Japanese. It’s something that I can’t explain myself. Something that I struggle with, this unknown factor, this unknown variable. And so, yes, it’s something that others have called to by acknowledging the physical thing (his looks). But it’s none of the less present. Something that I tried to thresh up and discover. (Mifune)

Mifune’s statement illustrates how ethnic identities are formed in relation to ethnic categories and ascription. Yet Mifune interprets this ascription as the first step in the discovery of his ‘inborn’ Japanese side, rendering a constructed category into a ‘natural’ one. He describes the process of discovering his Japanese side as a process requiring a supposed hidden Japaneseness to be “threshed up”. He attempts to make sense of his Japanese parentage by entertaining the thought that his ‘Japanese genes’ may cause unintentional behaviours that originate from a ‘Japanese subconscience’. Mifune is not alone with the thought that Japaneseness bears symptoms which articulate as behaviour, or preferences. Yukari has mentioned that despite not having lived in Japan she does “still feel a bit Japanese [...] I am like a Japanese even though I have- I’m not with all these people” (Yukari). Natsumi also considers herself belonging to Japan since she finds that “Japanese blood is heavier in me than Filipino.”

Despite Japaneseness being described to surface ‘naturally’ by some of my respondents, the experiencing of ‘Japanese culture’ is recurrently mentioned to help an alleged ‘dormant Japanese side’ to materialize. Indeed, many of my respondents have brought up their interest in things Japanese, such as movies and
dramas, *manga, anime, cosplay*\(^{121}\), fashion, music and food. Most of the Japanese cultural products consumed by Japanese-Filipino youths can be categorized as popular culture rather than as the officially promoted ‘Japanese culture’. ‘Japanese culture’ is largely understood as ‘traditional’ Japanese arts and crafts (Goldstein-Gidoni 2005), such as *ikebana* (flower arrangement), calligraphy, tea ceremony, Japanese genres of theatre and poetry or martial arts. When NGOs offer workshops on ‘Japanese culture’ they usually do so with reference to representations of Japan as a place of tradition, familiarizing their members with simple calligraphy, *origami* folding, *onigiri* (rice-ball) making or the singing of Japanese children’s songs\(^{122}\). However, both popular culture and Japanese ‘traditional’ culture have in common that they are thought of as uniquely Japanese. Both have also been promoted as global products, available and consumed within and beyond Japan’s borders (cf. Goldstein-Gidoni, 2005; Otmazgin, 2008).

Using Appadurai’s (1996) concept of the imaginary as social practice I argue that Japanese-Filipinos are able to make sense of and give substance to their Japanese ancestry through the consumption of ‘Japanese culture’, a global cultural product and export, despite the lack of substantial social experiences in Japan. The availability of global cultural products makes it possible to imagine life in Japan and life as Japanese. The consumption and knowledge of things Japanese have also become means to perform *Japaneseness* in the Philippines.

\(^{121}\) Cosplay is short for “costume play” and denotes the wearing of costumes imitating popular *manga* or *anime* characters. Cosplay started in Japan in the 1990s and has since spread throughout the world. *Manga* and *anime* are Japanese graphic novels and animated movies respectively.

\(^{122}\) For instance at DAWN, Japanese-Filipino children were taught the song *Furusato* (homeland), a nursery rhyme pre-dating World War Two.
which makes it possible for Japanese-Filipinos to construct their identities as Japanese. The imagination as Japanese and as part of Japan further underpins claims-making for recognition and Japanese nationality.

Ken, the central character in the documentary *Yasuo. A Geography of memory* (2012), constructs his *Japaneseness* through sites he finds in his hometown Manila:

Part of my process as a JFC is I wander around and I look for something Japanese in the city, you know. I mean, my father... I mean, I don’t know about how to be a Japanese, what they feel like what they look like...how it is to be Japanese basically. So I take small trips, walks and I happened to discover this place [Little Tokyo]123. [...] See I really think this place is a refuge in a way. Also it’s kind of...it’s also a refuge and somewhat alienating at times because you see these Japanese products and stuff but you can’t afford them and you don’t know what they are. I think its’ pretty much like us I guess, you know, a piece of Japan in the Philippines and vice-versa. If we were in Japan we would also look for a little Philippines or a little Manila if there is such a thing and we would find solace in that too, if were in the country. [...] What I love about this place is you can go to a piece of Japan but it’s not so far away so you could not hear Tagalog. [...] *Manga* and *anime* role play a large ...In my opinion...play a large role in the socialization of JFC to Japanese culture. This one in particular,

---

123 Little Tokyo is a complex of Japanese restaurants and grocery stores in Makati, Manila.
Naruto\textsuperscript{124}. A lot of JFC love Naruto. Because that is also a route. It is one of the ways that we deal with... one of our (JFCs) main points of interaction [with Japanese culture] happens through anime.

Kenta and Atsushi have stated their interest in things Japanese similarly by relating it to their Japanese parentage. Both learned that they had Japanese fathers from their mothers. Kenta’s mother would tell him about Japan and about his father. Kenta mentions that, according to his mother, his father was a decent man who had fed him when he was a baby. Atsushi on the other hand has little information about his father. He knows his name, but not his age, he does not know where he lives, nor does he have any pictures of him. His mother was reluctant to elaborate about Atsushi’s father who she met at the bar in Japan where she used to work at as a singer. Kenta’s mother freely talked about Japan and Kenta’s father while Atsushi’s mother avoided the topic. Nevertheless both grew interested in Japan, relating the country to their personal identity.

I just want to explore the other part of me. And I want to explore their culture, their life-style. […]My Japanese part. (Kenta)

Given the chance yes [I would like to go to Japan]. Because I really want to study the culture of Japan, because that is the root of my life. (Atsushi)

\textsuperscript{124}Naruto is the main character and title of a popular Japanese \textit{manga} and \textit{anime} series. The story tells about Naruto, a young fighter, whose father had defeated a dangerous demon who had attacked their village. However, the demon could only be defeated by sealing it into Naruto’s body. After doing so, his father died. In fear of the demon, the village’s inhabitants avoided Naruto who thus grew up in loneliness.
Sachiko has made it her duty to accumulate knowledge on Japan, an endeavour for which her NGO membership was very helpful. Sachiko became an NGO member when she was a young child, together with her mother and older sister. Sachiko’s mother used to work in Japan as an entertainer where she met her father. According to Sachiko, her mother joined the NGO out of interest. Her father had lived with them in the Philippines for three years after Sachiko’s birth and later visited on a regular basis until he passed away when Sachiko was in her early teens. However Sachiko’s knowledge on Japan largely comes from books, not from knowledge imparted by her father during his short visits.

Yes… It started when I was eight years old. Because like in school, my classmates are asking questions about me, about Japan. [...] They are really interested because before Japan is really popular here in the Philippines. And then if I say that I’m Japanese-Filipino my classmates would ask a lot of questions about Japan and… because it’s really hard to answer them because I did not live there [in Japan]. I’m interested, since eight years old I read books about Japan. And after that, Batis sponsored a lot of seminars about Japan. So I was really happy about that. And then when I was in high-school if my classmates asked questions about me, I can answer them. Unlike before I don’t know anything about it. [...] Even though I’m here in the Philippines I do still have Japanese blood. So I think that it is also my responsibility to study the other culture, Japanese culture (Sachiko)
All these statements underpin a primordial understanding of ancestry which renders children of Japanese fathers a “piece of Japan” despite never having lived in the country. The primordial conception of Japanese ‘blood’ is deemed so central by Atsushi that it becomes the “root” of his life. Similarly, being the son of a Japanese national is considered to have implanted a “Japanese part” in Kenta which he now wants to explore. Sachiko was able to synchronize her ‘Japanese blood’ with expectations of cultural proficiency through the help of Batis. ‘Blood’ is a metaphor that seeks to make belonging to an imagined (national or/and racial) community more tangible. However the understanding of ‘blood’ also becomes linked to culture.

The consumption of global products of Japanese cultures (both popular culture and the more ‘traditional’ handicrafts) not only helps Japanese-Filipinos give substance to their imagined Japaneseness, but is also closely related to issues of social status. As discussed above, Japanese-Filipinos can also find themselves confronted with stigma and prejudice if they fail to live up to expectations of wealth, privilege, and fluency in things Japanese. At the same time, the positive image that Japan is enjoying in the Philippines, especially since its “economic miracle” in the 1970s and 1980s, has provided Japanese-Filipinos with the opportunity to be associated with certain cultural prestige by embracing a Japanese ethnic identity. Tsuda (2001, p.59) has observed similar patterns with regards to ethnic identification among Japanese-Brazilians in Brazil where

“being “Japanese” involves a positive contrast not only between First World Japan and Third World Brazil but also between Japanese and
Brazilian cultures. The prestige of being associated with Japan has encouraged the Japanese-Brazilians to embrace a transnational “Japanese” identity based on an ethnic identification with the Japanese nation while de-emphasizing their national consciousness as Brazilians.”

By constructing a “JFC identity” based on ‘Japanese culture’ as ‘traditional culture’ as well as on the trendiness of Japanese popular culture admired by young people, Japanese-Filipinos attempt to align themselves with a cultural identity deemed commendable. Kenta mentions in our interview that he likes what he identifies as Japanese nationalist pride in the practice of ‘Japanese culture’.

**Kenta:** They’re more nationalistic people.

**Interviewer:** Nationalistic people?

**Kenta:** Unlike Filipinos, we tend to, you know, observe the culture of other countries like the US.

**Interviewer:** You think Japanese don’t do that?

**Kenta:** Ahm, I think they are more on their own.

**Interviewer:** And you admire that?

**Kenta:** Yeah…that’s it.

Interesting about Kenta’s admiration for ‘Japanese culture’ which he largely knows from television programs is that the identification as Japanese provides a
desirable alternative to the identity as Filipino which he associates with excessive Americanization and a lack of national pride. His embrace of a transnational Japanese identity is thus underpinned by the positive image he has of the Japanese people, as well as by his desire to resist ‘Americanization’.

**Pragmatism in Nationality Claims**

Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines often cannot live up to widely held expectations of affluence, yet ethnicity, class, and wealth remain intertwined with their pursuit of Japanese nationality. Although the motives for pursuing claims for Japanese nationality as well as subsequent migration are complex and include desires for self-actualization, family reintegration and sentiments of ‘homeland’ nostalgia (Hara 2013, p.11), economic motivations behind obtaining a Japanese passport have been mentioned by the majority of my respondents.

After finishing my studies I will go to Japan and work there. But it’s not final. I’m still thinking about it. […] I still want to work here in the Philippines to apply my course. I just want to explore the other part of me. And I want to explore their culture, their life-style. (Kenta)

Because as his daughter, my father is Japanese, so I think I have the right to have his nationality as a Japanese. Then, ahm, for easy access to Japan. Then, if I decide to go there it will be easy [to be allowed into Japan]. (Mari)
I am hoping to have an opportunity in Japan. I am hoping I could have a job there when I finish my college.[...] I’m interested in jobs. Jobs. And then I want to see the place. Because it’s my second home to the Philippines because my father is from there. And I want to meet my father. (Fumiko)

Life in the Philippines is hard, jobs, there is a lot of unemployed people, that’s why, I think my citizen[ship] helped me to get here for work. Then I work then I send them money back. Because in the Philippines it’s hard to look for work and it’s hard to earn money because of a low salary and they, they need to, they need to have a college graduate, the qualification to work. (Yuzuki)

Because I really want to go to Japan. [...] Because I want to work, even if not in Japan, even if other country that giving me a chance to work. Because in the Philippines I didn’t find a very good work. (Atsushi)

Moreover, working in Japan is frequently linked to the idea of asserting one’s birthright when Japanese-Filipinos state that having a Japanese father gave them the right to a Japanese passport and consequently to work in Japan. In that sense, earning higher incomes coalesces with the concept of “rights” which is also closely tied to concerns over social status in the Philippines. Japanese-Filipinos’ pragmatic motivations for obtaining Japanese nationality have remained
disproportionally understated in NGO publications as they do not make for ‘noble’ reasons to express interest for membership in a nation-state.

The claim for Japanese nationality has largely been framed by NGOs and Philippine-based, politically active Japanese-Filipinos as an assertion of one’s birthright to explore Japanese culture, an opportunity to meet one’s father and generally as *ethnic return*. While these themes have also surfaced in my conversations, most of the respondents for this study sought Japanese nationality primarily for the purpose of employment in Japan. Also, a small number of respondents, such as Atsushi, considered Japan only one among many other possible migration destinations. As will be elaborated later, Japan sometimes is not the final stop but a stepping stone despite its alleged importance as “second home”. A Japanese passport may thus merely be a stepping stone in Japanese-Filipinos’ migration endeavours.

Politically active Japanese-Filipinos such as Dharma and Mifune as well as NGO workers have demanded the recognition of all Japanese-Filipinos as Japanese nationals both by deploying the “rights” discourse and by underscoring emotive grounds for nationality claims, such as the desire to be acknowledged by Japan as well as to experience life in Japan. These arguments are crucial for demanding the Japanese State to acknowledge all Filipinos with Japanese fathers as equals to other offspring having received Japanese nationality at birth. Yet at the same time, the foregrounding of non-economic motives to claim Japanese nationality conveniently diverts attention from the problematic link between
citizenship and money, considering that the supposed “true” value of citizenship hinges on political rights, not on economic considerations (Hau, 2000, p. 138).

In my interviews, economic motives and practicality have been mentioned alongside emotive reasons for acquiring Japanese citizenship. Yet, the former two have remained marginalized in NGO publications. Official statements by NGOs and activist Japanese-Filipinos have highlighted the ideal reasons for seeking Japanese citizenship and nationality: “identification with the country, its people, history, culture, and way of life” (The Batis Center for Women et al., 2008), Japanese-Filipinos’ aspirations to “contribute to the wealth of [Japan] through sheer hard work exemplified by the pure Japanese”, as well as to claim their “birthright: to learn firsthand the ways of our fathers” (United Japanese Filipino Children, 2009). The demand for Japanese nationality is also made on the premise that living in Japan would help Japanese-Filipinos “to find themselves [...] Though the modern age gives easy access to information, nothing quite matches witnessing firsthand the wonders of Japanese culture. The major hindrance for the full realization of a JFC’s identity is the issue of Nationality.” (ibid.) To play down economic pragmatism, NGOs and activist Japanese-Filipinos resort to

\[125\] Hau (2000, p.138) writes about the Chinese in the Philippines who were construed mainly as “... objects of distrust and censure because they supposedly pervert the “true” value of citizenship by hitching their desire to acquire citizenship to their desire to protect or enhance their business interests, thereby contaminating political rights with economic considerations.” Dominant discourses still tie citizenship and nationality to exigencies of loyalty to the Nation-State as concerns over the allegiance of transnational migrants and dual citizens have shown. Thus, in the case of Japanese-Filipinos, claims made for mere economic reasons are considered as running counter to the fundamental meaning of citizenship and nationality. Although citizenship has been sought after as well as extended for strategic reasons (Ong, 1999), these ideals remain symbolically salient and can therefore not be blatantly linked to money.
popular conflations of culture and ‘blood’, framing the claim for Japanese nationality as *ethnic return* and homeland nostalgia.

While arguing that Japanese nationality and access to Japan are part of Japanese-Filipinos’ rights, NGOs also urge their clients to carefully consider their decision with regards to migration (see DAWN, 2008 c; The Batis Center for Women et al., 2008). The YOGHI *Manga* (Batis YOGHI 2009), a Japanese style graphic novel published by Batis YOGHI, serves as a reminder of how precarious employment in Japan can be. This reflects NGOs’ discomfort with their clients’ rush to claim Japanese passports in efforts to find jobs in Japan. According to a Japan-based NGO volunteer, the change in Japan’s nationality law, eliminating the legitimation requirement for children born to foreign mothers, had created the impression that all Japanese-Filipino Children *had* to claim their right, without giving much thought to whether it made sense for them to be carrying a Japanese passport:

> Maybe it’s the children’s right but before that, you know, even if you have a right to get Japanese nationality, that doesn’t mean you should get Japanese nationality. If you want to exercise your right, it’s okay but not, not all the people have to exercise the right to get Japanese nationality. So it seems like the children have to get Japanese nationality if you have a right. But I don’t agree with that. (NGO volunteer)

The NGO volunteer points out that the opportunity to acquire Japanese citizenship has come to be understood as a requirement despite the option of foregoing a Japanese passport and remaining a Filipino citizen. However,
considering that “securing membership status in a given state or region-with its specific level of wealth, degree of stability, and human rights record-is, even in the current age of increased globalization and privatization, a crucial factor in the determination of life chances” (Shachar and Hirschl 2007, p.254), not to acquire Japanese citizenship would mean to knowingly let pass opportunities and life chances associated with being a member of the Japanese state.

With rising numbers of Japanese-Filipinos qualifying for Japanese nationality after 2008, NGOs celebrated the change as a political victory, but at the same time had to recognize that obtaining a Japanese passport was often motivated by desires to seek employment in Japan. Migration has been sharply criticized and at times opposed by Philippine-based NGOs since their beginnings. Labour migration in particular has been criticized for playing a major role in the break-up of families and for exposing workers to exploitation and abuse abroad. Ironically, by promoting Japanese-Filipinos’ ethnic identification as Japanese or half-Japanese, by having nourished their desires to see Japan, as well as through their lobbying and active legal and para-legal support, NGOs have inadvertently made possible the overseas employment of another generation of OFWs.

**Japan as stepping-stone**

The leveraging on consanguinal capital, has allowed many Japanese-Filipinos to gain formal recognition as Japanese. But Japanese-Filipinos have benefitted from their Japanese nationality in ways other than by merely finding employment in Japan.
Jun, in his early twenties at the time of our interview, came to Japan at age 17 together with his mother. Jun grew up in a middle class, business owning family with several employees and had never joined any NGO prior to getting involved with the CNJFC who helped him to process his application for Japanese nationality in Japan. When his mother first broached the idea of applying for his Japanese nationality, Jun replied that he already had a Filipino passport. Jun also indicated that he had no desire to migrate, nor had he been interested in Japan prior to resettling to the country. However, his mother saw an opportunity in obtaining a Japanese passport for her son and so they went ahead with the process. Upon obtaining his Japanese passport, Jun worked several jobs in Japan. He started as cleaning staff in a hotel and saved his income to then return to the Philippines to enrol in a culinary arts course. After graduation, he sought another job in Japan and started cooking in a restaurant while still working as a part-time cleaner in a hotel. His earnings went into buying a condominium in Metro Manila, several DSLR cameras and travels to the United States, to Korea, Singapore and Australia. Eventually Jun relocated to Australia, where he found life to be more laid back. He made use of his Japanese nationality to gain a “working holiday” visa which is initially valid for up to one year which can be extended.\textsuperscript{126} By securing a job through his “working holiday” visa, Jun had the chance to find potential employers to sponsor a long term working visa. For Jun, having a Japanese father had little importance except for economic gains and the opportunity to gain eased access to a third country.

\textsuperscript{126} For details concerning the Australian “working holiday” visa please see \url{http://www.immi.gov.au}
Similarly regarding Japan as a stepping stone, Haru first moved to Tokyo to join her father. As I have discussed the case of Haru earlier, she had maintained contact with her father throughout her childhood and youth and thus had no issues with acquiring Japanese nationality. Possessing Japanese nationality eventually proved very useful when she made plans to leave Tokyo for the United States to join her U.S. American boyfriend, but more importantly to escape from her father who had sexually harassed her. Her Japanese passport made it possible for her to leave Japan for the U.S. in a relatively short time-span. Should Haru have applied for a U.S. visa using her Filipino passport, she would have waited for a very long time.

Still in Metro Manila but having recently obtained his Japanese passport, Kenta envisages resettling to Japan, “then after Japan, Canada. Because my mom plans to go there. My mom told me that if you have your Japanese citizenship you don’t need a visa to go to other countries. Just a ticket and a passport” (Kenta).

Indeed, a Japanese passport increases mobility and migrants as well as would-be migrants are highly aware of it. In her anthropological study of Filipino women married to Japanese men in rural Japan, Lieba Faier (2009) confirms this ‘passport consciousness’. A frequent topic of conversation between her respondents and her were the colours of their passports and on what visa they were staying in Japan. When compared with Faier’s (2009, p.95) U.S. citizenship, Philippine passports “evoked immigration gates tightly shut; they were barriers to an outward world and obstacles standing in the way of where these women
wanted to go.” Wanting to gain Japanese nationality is thus not necessarily contingent with wanting to settle in Japan despite activist Japanese-Filipinos framing migration to Japan as a return to one’s “other homeland”. Rather, a Japanese passport denotes heightened cross-border mobility, whether one’s route leads to Japan or elsewhere: Jun decided to live in Australia, Haru moved to the United States, and Kenta contends moving to Canada someday.

Apart from mobility per se, Japanese citizenship also establishes a symbolic connection to a “First World”, technologically advanced country widely admired for its supposedly unique culture. Japanese-Filipinos thus gain the privilege of cross-border mobility numerous Filipinos in the Philippines seek, while at the same time obtaining documental evidence for Japaneseness which individuals like Sachiko, Natsumi, Yukari and Mifune ‘feel’ and try to perform. The distinction achieved through the mobilization of consanguinal capital, or what De Dios (2012, p.30) refers to as the manipulation of ethnicity for economic advantage, plays a part in Japanese-Filipinos’ development of a sense of self. As De Dios (2012, p.31) has pointed out

Being the child of Filipino and Japanese parents confirms in their (Japanese-Filipino youths’) minds their belongingness to the Philippines and Japan. Although their primary socialisation took place in the former which resulted in having a greater connection to that country and culture, their sense of connection to the latter would tend to surface when they

\[127\] As mentioned above, Japan markets its cultural exports- both ‘traditional’ Japanese culture and popular culture- as ‘uniquely’ Japanese. This premise has not been questioned neither by NGOs nor by my Japanese-Filipino respondents.
differentiated themselves from their Filipino peers in terms of ancestry and nationality. This was particularly evident when they stressed that those who have Japanese ancestry and nationality can easily come to Japan and find work.

Cross-border mobility as a form of access to resources is resonant of ‘racial’ and class privilege (Faier 2009, p.98), a privilege implicitly demanded by NGOs and activist Japanese-Filipinos through the amalgamation of essentialist discourses with the insistence on their constituents’ “birthright” to Japanese nationality.

Faier (2009, p.99) writes, migration is “at once a metaphor for, and a route to, privilege, choice, and self-actualization- not only a form of mobility, but also an end in itself.” By going to Japan, Japanese-Filipino Children not only transform their consanguinal capital into material gain but also accumulate ‘worldliness’ frequently displayed on Facebook through pictures of branded clothes and electronic gadgets, symbols of global consumption and modernity. This ‘worldliness’ moreover entails the experience of a different environment and the acquisition of some degree of sophistication through the accumulation of knowledge in a place deemed ‘advanced’. Bulloch & Fabinyi (2009) have argued that the accumulation of ‘worldliness’ through migration abroad involves the achievement of high status identity. Gaining Japanese citizenship thus entails higher status identity through the privileges the legal status provides, and through the symbolic associations it suggests.

Even without crossing the border to Japan, a passport as formal confirmation of Japaneseeness provides Japanese-Filipinos with a marker of
distinction. As Bulloch & Fabinyi (2009, p.138) argue, one does not need to migrate to attain the “high status identity of the balikbayan”, the migrant returnee. The authors refer to successful transnational marriages of Filipino women as a way of gaining prestige notably “due to their connections abroad and the fact that they have the option of living overseas” (ibid.). Likewise, obtaining a Japanese passport provides not only the opportunity to migrate but also a formalized association with modern, cosmopolitan Japan. In a country in which migration is considered a marker of middle-class success (Faier, 2009) yet which is contained by the limitations imposed by carrying a Philippine passport, a “First World” travel document offers privilege and status. The Japanese passport is thus a mobility enabling document, but also a symbolic association with cosmopolitan Japan.

**Foreigners in “the other homeland”**

Upon arrival in Japan, Felix, Hayate, Jun and Dharma realized that they were not considered Japanese but foreigners. Dharma had had the chance to travel to Japan on a few occasions before taking up employment in one of its urban centres. After one of her initial trips she commented that she felt like a foreigner among the hustle and bustle of Japanese day-to-day life. That feeling only grew upon staying in Japan for an extended period of time, having been warned to closely stick to the etiquettes of politeness and having repeatedly experienced being singled out as non-Japanese.
Jun narrates his experience of being treated unfairly at work by his employer who, according to Jun, thought she could take advantage of her foreign staff whom she presumed to be ill-informed about Japanese labour laws.

**Jun:** She’s not giving the full amount for our salary every month. Like… the first month is okay but the second month is… Then after second month, give everything, give the full amount. The third month is another, is another month not giving the full amount of salary. And after that I quit. […] All the staffs are foreigners, different nationalities. From Thailand, Europe […] except me. I’m the only Japanese

**Interviewer:** So you think she did that because you were foreigners?

**Jun:** Yes she thinks I’m Filipino. She doesn’t think I’m Japanese.

**Interviewer:** So that’s why she paid less and tried to get away with it? So what did you do?

**Jun:** I threatened her. I will call the labour union, I will do this and do that…

**Interviewer:** And then?

**Jun:** And then she gave me my salary. The full amount. Then I quit…. “I will report you to the labour that you’re doing this… I will report everything”. She was afraid. But the restaurant is really nice. The foods are expensive, so expensive.
Felix and Hayate also stated that they were treated as foreigners. Hayate recounts that he would not only be identified as foreigner, but he would also be treated differently.

So we order like burger and drinks. But there is not straw. Where is the straw? Then the second time you go there no straw again. But the others have straws. It’s because you’re a gaijin. Sometimes the orders are wrong. You order a cheeseburger but he gives you an ordinary burger. Why is that? Then sometimes you go to a store, but they entertain Japanese customers first. But you came there first! Why entertain the Japanese guy who came later than you... than I? Why is that? Because I look like a gaijin? (Hayate)

Amal notes that the feeling of being discriminated against is one of the reasons why migrant youth from the Philippines form gangs: “That’s how the gangsterism starts. Filipinos make a group. Some Japanese harass us. ‘Hey you Filipinos look like fools!’ Who looks like a fool right now? We’re going to bang them right?”

Mifune’s travels to Japan had great impact on how he thought about the place of Japanese-Filipinos within Japanese society. Making use of imagery reminiscent of Japan, Mifune states his first trip to the land of the rising sun:

It should have been an experience that pleased me or made me very happy or enlightened me, it did enlighten me but it did so by removing those rose

---

128 Gaijin is a short form of gaikokujin (foreigner), and in its short form often used as a derogatory word for 'foreigner'.
covered petals or *sakura* or petals from my eyes. [...] Well I always thought that the Japanese are a set of people who accept others, humble, polite, orderly, that they’re not going to discriminate against us because we are their children. But no, that’s not the case. They always put a stick. They always touch us with a stick. There is always a measure of distance.

Those Japanese-Filipinos who had constructed an ethnic identification as half-Japanese whilst growing up in the Philippines were confronted with altered criteria of what makes a person ‘Japanese’ upon travelling to Japan. Mifune certainly had to reconcile his initially imagined *Japaneseness* with experiences that led him to put into question his belief in acceptance based on being one of Japan’s “children”. Defying the discrimination he experienced, Mifune continues:

Ah I think being a mixed, being mixed blooded is also an improvement on their race. I mean I’m an improvement, I don’t care if they think I am…I am what, almost Japanese. I don’t care about that. But looking at the bigger picture I don’t think the Japanese are really prepared to accept the JFCs, or the *Nikkeijins*. (Mifune)

As Hara (2013) notes, numerous Japanese-Filipinos relocating to Japan experience an “unstable identity” (p.22), a dissonance between the ethnic identity as half-Japanese or as “JFC” they had formed whilst in the Philippines and the foreignness ascribed to them in Japan. Similar processes of ethnic identity

---

129 Mifune expresses his disappointment with having not been welcomed as Japanese but treated with distrust and some level of contempt by the Japanese organizers of his trip. Mifune believes these were related to racism, his being half-Filipino and a Filipino national.
reconfiguration upon migration to Japan have been identified among Philippine *Nikkeijin* (Ohno 2007) and Brazilian *Nikkeijin* (Tsuda, 2001; 2008). Ethnicity is malleable, flexible, and contextual as noted earlier. Ethnic categories and ethnic groups thus also differ in various socio-cultural contexts, not only over time, but also geographically. Individuals who identify and are identified as Japanese in the Philippines are not necessarily accepted as such in Japan. Ethnicity, the tendency of social actors to identify groups and to identify themselves as part of a group based on the opposition of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ draws its boundaries along perceived sameness and difference. Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines identifying as Japanese (or half-Japanese) compare themselves to other ‘regular’ Filipinos by asserting difference with reference to their Japanese ancestry or in terms of the privileges afforded by their Japanese nationality. But once in Japan, migrant Japanese-Filipinos’ differing ethnic habitus often bars them from being considered Japanese, or ‘truly’ Japanese. Thus ethnic identifications constructed in the Philippines are not entirely translatable into the context of Japan leading to disappointed migratory experiences in one’s “father’s homeland”.

**Contributing to the creation of a new migrant generation**

Increased opportunities to migrate to Japan have not only put into question Japanese-Filipinos’ identifications as half-Japanese, but also contributed to the creation of a new generation of low-paid workers in dead-end jobs. Prior to the change in Japan’s nationality law, Japanese-Filipinos and Filipino youth have relocated to Japan upon being petitioned by their Japan-based mothers. Migration to Japan has affected Japanese-Filipinos in various ways, at times working to their
benefit, at times impairing their education and career choices, and increasingly leading to employment under exploitative circumstances (see Hara 2013)\textsuperscript{130}. Among my 24 Japanese-Filipino respondents, 7 individuals expressed bitter-sweet feelings about their relationship with their mothers as a result of conflictual experiences related to strategies of upward social mobility and capital accumulation. In most cases, stories of tensions revolve around Philippine-based Japanese-Filipinos being pressured by their migrant mothers to join them in Japan. Numerous Japanese-Filipinos grow up, not only in the absence of their fathers but also in absence of their mothers who have sought employment overseas (usually returning to Japan). As their children grow older, Japan-based Filipina mothers capable of petitioning their offspring to Japan often do so. They are usually motivated by wanting to offer their children the opportunity to make a living in Japan, to cease supporting them in the Philippines through remittances, or to have them contribute to the family income. Being petitioned to Japan has often been accompanied by sentiments of a lack of choice and of being at one’s mother’s will. Alina for instance grew up in the Philippines whilst her mother and Japanese stepfather worked in Japan. Throughout her childhood, Alina remembers how she had yearned to live with her parents, but they refused. Growing older, she had no more longing to join them yet was forced to relocate to Japan after graduating from high-school.

\textsuperscript{130} A number of Japanese-Filipinos and their mothers have been deployed as care-givers to homes for the elderly in Japan. According to activists, these migrant workers are paid the legal minimum wage, but are saddled with high debts payable to the Philippine-based organization that sent them to Japan, and forced to work 16 hours straight with only short breaks.
It was my 16th birthday, it was so dramatic okay. [...] And, I had a boyfriend back home, and we were going out for a long time and so that actually brought me to shits and so I didn’t really want to come here since my life in the Philippines was perfect. And on the other hand my life here [in Japan] was...just nothing. I started back to zero. [...] So I was actually torturing myself when I came here. *Emo* (laughs). Yes, I didn’t eat for four days, yes and I fainted. Because…it was a hunger strike I just did not want to stay here. I was doing all these excuses for them to bring me back to the Philippines and it never worked. Because my parents are really strong-hearted. Honestly I am not sure about their reasons. They want to control me, next is, well...they wanna look after me, after all these years... (laughs) and then they decided to look after me and they want me to learn Japanese. And they want me... I don’t know. Maybe they wanted me to stay here, maybe that’s the whole point. (Alina)

Hayate and Amal were both petitioned\textsuperscript{131} to Japan by their mothers whilst in their teens. Both had grown up with their maternal grand-mothers before joining their mothers. Both described their lives in the Philippines as easy-going and stress-free, stating that they had no desires to migrate to Japan.

**Interviewer**: How was your life in the Philippines before?

\textsuperscript{131} This is a process whereby their mothers or their mothers’ husbands in Japan sponsor their long-term visas.
Hayate: Happy go lucky. Everything fine. Hey mom, I want money!

Never think about...

Amal: A privileged life

Hayate: Never think about money is hard to earn here. Never think about that. Hey I need to pay this bill, hey mom I need some load for my prepaid, hey mom I need some clothes...I need a new cell-phone...I need this, I need that.

Amal: Hey I need a CP [cell-phone]...

Hayate: Go studying, go home and it’s either you sleep or go to your friends and drink some beer. Or go hang out outside and go to the club. That’s our life back in the Philippines! Here...

Amal: work

[...]

Interviewer: Did you want to come to Japan?

Amal: No. I had to because my mother said come here. No choice.

Hayate: Some of the kids here want to come here. But in my opinion, in 100 kids Filipino or half Japanese-Filipinos, I think in 100 of them it’s like 80 or 75 of those kids don’t want to come here. They want to stay in the Philippines.

People like Hayate and Amal, as well as Alina, did enjoy a financially comfortable upbringing and therefore experienced migration as an undesirable
change. The desire or need to mobilize consanguinal capital may thus also depend on one’s wealth in other forms of capital. Alina, Amal and Hayate were content with their lifestyles in the Philippines because they were well taken care of financially. Most of my Philippine-based respondents however associate cross-border mobility with a ‘better life’ and thus thought of migration favourably. Moreover, since Hayate and Amal’s mothers- and in Alina’s case her step-father-lived in Japan, all three had the social capital necessary to enable their migration.

Hayate makes an interesting point when he states that not all Filipinos and Japanese-Filipinos petitioned by their mothers actually desire to migrate. Numerous migrant youths face difficulties when moving in with their mothers and their mothers’ new partners, both of whom they frequently are unfamiliar with. Another difficulty migrant youths from the Philippines find themselves confronted with in Japan are academic challenges. Tanaka describes that his daughter faced severe difficulties in school due to her shuttling between two countries following her parents’ separation and her mother’s remarriage. Nathan, a Filipino social worker in Tokyo, has witnessed numerous migrants youths from the Philippines failing in school or being prevented from furthering their education in favour of seeking employment.\footnote{This trend is exacerbated by the lack of an adequate support system for primary and secondary-school students with poor Japanese language skills.}

Nathan: They usually come here at the age of 12, between ages 12 and 16.

Interviewer: And they go to a Japanese school?
Nathan: Yes that’s the biggest problem. They were uprooted in the school in the Philippines and they are here to study in Japanese schools so their personal growth is almost kind of stopped. [...] There are so many stories actually. So if you hear how their hearts cry. They want to study but their mothers want them to work because they cannot live. That’s one sad story of them. So there are those who have opportunities to study but they aren’t interested. And there are those who are really wishing to study but they don’t have the opportunity. Education is something kind of, not taken so seriously by the mothers and the children. If you will look at the demographics of the mothers, only 20% of them were able to go to college. So there is a big number of elementary and high-school graduates that, they don’t have so much appreciation for education. (Nathan, missionary and social worker)

Concurring with Nathan’s observations, none of my respondents petitioned to Japan by their mothers were able to complete college education. Hayate interrupted college to join his mother in Japan. So did Yuzuki, in her early twenties at the time of the interview, who now works as a hostess in a night-club, the job her mother used to do when she first came to Japan. Felix and Amal were petitioned to Japan before they were able to start college. Amal had not yet graduated from high-school. Alina’s situation is exceptional in comparison with that of most of my other respondents. Alina had the privilege of attending a private university in Japan yet still had put her studies on hold for unknown
reasons at the time of our interview. Also, with the change in Japan’s nationality law, numerous Filipino mothers have sought to return to Japan as custodians of their underage children notwithstanding the interruption caused to their children’s studies. According to one of my respondents, a group of three Japanese-Filipino children in their early teens had recently relocated to Japan together with their mothers. While their mothers are at work, the children attend public school. Yet due to their lacking proficiency in Japanese, they face severe academic challenges. The interruption of Japanese-Filipinos’ academic careers due to migration coupled with linguistic difficulties contributes to their funnelling into low-skill, dead-end jobs. Japanese-Filipino migrant youth in Japan thus become part of a working class\textsuperscript{133}.

Many Filipina mothers who have nurtured their Japanese-Filipino children’s identification as Japanese as well as their desires to live in Japan have done so with the thought of returning to Japan or having their children seek employment there. Their children with Japanese men often are keys to return to Japan, or potential future migrant workers who may find it easier to access the country and find employment due to their Japanese ancestry. Certainly not all Philippine-based mothers of Japanese-Filipino Children make migration seem an attractive option to their offspring. However, none of my interviewees had mentioned their mothers opposing their desires to migrate. On the contrary, a

\textsuperscript{133} Alina is one exception; she managed to find an office job at a telecommunication company despite stopping her college education. Also, Jun’s case is an exception. Jun, who came to Japan with his mother to acquire Japanese citizenship, made use of his access to the Japanese labour market to save for his education. He returned to the Philippines for his studies, foregoing a potential income, to then seek higher paying jobs in Japan with his recently earned degree in culinary arts.
number of interviewees whose mothers were already based in Japan have been pushed to relocate against their will, underestimating or notwithstanding the academic challenges their children would face.

Filipino mothers who would like to see their children live and work in Japan usually justify their plans for their children through their concern for them and their wish to provide them with an opportunity to live a ‘good life’. Daisy and Linda, both mothers of Japanese-Filipino Children describe their motivations for applying for their children’s Japanese nationalities:

Right now I’m hoping one of these days or in the future maybe when they (my children) grow up, when they are in the right age to go there [to Japan], so that they can have some knowledge about Japan, what’s Japan, what’s in there, what kind of people are living there. For me I want them to go there to stay there for good. That’s my plan. Because it’s different when they stay here, than stay there. It’s different. And it’s very hard to raise children here in the Philippines. Because I’m not a rich kind of person. I’m not...we don’t come from a rich family. So I cannot support, I cannot give the full support they need. [...] I want them in the future, if they have their passports, they can go there without any hindrances. [...] If in the future my children want to go to Japan and stay there for good it’s okay for me. As long as they have a good life there, they finish their studies and have a good life. That’s important. (Daisy, mother of two Japanese-Filipino children)
Because I was hoping that nationality, applying for my daughter’s nationality. Maybe for the future someday [...] Then, she wants to go to Japan someday, or maybe she wants to meet any relatives of her father. (Linda, mother of one Japanese-Filipino child)

Janice, the mother of two Japanese-Filipino children, one of them born and raised in the Philippines, explains why she petitioned her son to live with her and her new partner in Japan:

Because for now I have a new family, so I think he’s old enough to manage it himself so I called him to get there [to Japan] for his own future. And I notice my son so maybe I think there is something he looks like me, like something tsuyoi (strong), adventurous: “I want to do that for experience, I can manage that...” I think he gets that from me. (Janice, mother of two Japanese-Filipino children)

In our interview, Daisy highlights that she does not have much money. Daisy, who had worked in Japan for over 14 years and then found employment as a call-center agent in Manila is not part of the poorest of the poor, but rather of the lower middle-classes who opted for Japan not “to make money but to make more money, not for their daily bread but for the finer things in life.” (Ventura 1992, p.125, emphasis in original), she hopes for her children to have a “good life there”, not because the family is stricken by poverty but because life as imagined through
global images of ‘ideal childhood’ (Horton 2008) as well as the globalized imaginary of middle class lifestyles seem unattainable through employment in the Philippines.

When Daisy mentioned that life in the Philippines was hard and that she was not from a rich family, she also alluded to the grave income divides between rich and poor as well as to virtual class immobility, to which only emigration could provide a way out. Indeed, when Filipino women first sought employment overseas, one of their motivations was to be able to afford a ‘better life’ for them and their family. In one of the first studies conducted on Filipina entertainers in Japan Ballescas finds (1992, p.24):

The desire to improve the daily lives of their families- husbands, children, parents, brothers and sisters- is a recurring theme echoed by almost every Filipino entertainer we interviewed and surveyed for this report. [...] They wish for their young children a more stable today and a more secure tomorrow: regular meals and stable financial support to the see them through school, through college, if possible.\(^{134}\)

Although numerous Filipina settlers in Japan have managed to provide financial support to their families in the Philippines, my data has shown that this support, though frequently used to finance primary and secondary education in private schools, has usually not been translated into investments in college

\(^{134}\) These sentiments are of course not unique to Filipino migrant women, but commonly shared among labour migrants.
education. The initial goal of achieving a ‘better life’ by enabling their children to go to college has often been supplanted by quicker methods of capital generation; rather than transforming economic capital into college degrees and the opportunity of securing a white collar job in the Philippines, numerous Japan-based Filipino mothers have petitioned their children to Japan to work. Ultimately this tendency to prioritize employment over tertiary education often negatively affects chances for upward social mobility in the longer term. This trend however also needs to be understood in relation to the constraints and demands imposed on migrant women and their migrant children by obligations to support familial networks in the Philippines

Today, Japanese-Filipino youth and adults as well as non-Japanese Filipinos petitioned by their Japan-based mothers are channelled into factory work, care-giving, maintenance work or follow their mothers’ footsteps by taking up employment as hosts and hostesses. Janice’s son initially found part-time employment in the kitchen of a fast-food restaurant, and then worked in a factory producing sponges. According to Nathan, many of the Filipina migrants who entered Japan since the 1980s had to forego tertiary, sometimes even secondary education. Although investing in education may have been a goal in their early days as migrant workers when their return to the Philippines was still part of a foreseeable future, their ideas of a “better life” have over time translated into earning wages and not earning a degree. As Nathan adds “...what they are telling to their children once the children say they want to study in college, is ’guess what it’s the same, you will earn, especially here in Japan.’” This way, migrant youths
and young adults often become part of a migrant working class in Japan. Nonetheless, incomes earned from such occupations remain comparably higher than incomes earned from similar or even some white-collar jobs in the Philippines.

Filipino migrant women as well as their working offspring may be located at the lower ends of the social, occupational and income ladder in Japan, yet their wages permit them to afford upper middle-class lifestyles in the Philippines. Thus, while Filipino migrant youths in Japan are frequently found in the lower echelons of social and occupational classes, Filipino migrants often inhabit two different class positions simultaneously (Kelly 2007). Writing about Filipino transnationalism, Kelly (2007, p.28) points out that “the frame of reference for class positioning is shifted through transnational linkages and comparisons”. As Kelly further observes, “[w]hile occupational markers of class may indicate a downward movement, the consumption markers of class provide something of a compensating countermovement.” (p.22)

Money not invested in the purchase or refurbishing of homes, in small businesses or vehicles in the Philippines does not remain invisible; the online networking site Facebook has provided a new stage for class performance reaching audiences globally and most importantly, ‘back home’. Part of that class performance is achieved through the participation in global capitalism, through the consumption of goods of recognizable symbolic value. A perusal of migrant Japanese-Filipinos’ Facebook profiles reveals a conspicuous display of branded clothes, collections of baseball caps, and branded sneakers. These are interspersed
with self-portraits, usually shot against a mirror reflecting the indispensable *Iphone*. The more distinguished *Facebook*-users take mirror-shots with their DSLR cameras. Photographs of meat dishes eaten at restaurants, *yakiniku*, sizzling steak or *shabu-shabu*, become evidence for outings and leisure. Photographic memories of snowboarding trips, pictures of coloured, spiky hair typically among Japanese youth, and uploads of *purikura*\(^{135}\) remind viewers of the overseas location of their *Facebook*-friend.

Social networking sites have supplemented Sunday mass where, back in the 1990s, Ventura (1992, p.80) observed Filipino migrants displaying their “gold chains, bracelets, rings, leather jackets, signature clothes both real and fake”. Although the site of class performance may have experienced a shift into the virtual world, the “enthusiastic embrace of the dreams and desires generated by the global capitalist imaginary and projected through global mass media, entertainment and consumer industries” (Hau 2004, p.248) remains unchanged. Interestingly, status symbols and consumed goods are frequently American. Fashion brands recurrently found in *Facebook* pictures include Fubu, Converse, the *Iphone*, sneakers of various American brands in addition to photographs taken of baseball caps, Starbucks paper coffee cups, or taken in front of a McDonalds outlet.

In their symbolic and political struggles, NGOs have managed to mobilize their Japanese-Filipino plaintiffs’ consanguinal capital to challenge an exclusivist

---

\(^{135}\)*purikura* (プリクラ) are photo-sticker booths popular among youngsters in Japan. The booth can be used by several people at the same time, who would then pose for a set number of exposures. The desired pictures can be selected and customized using a touch screen or a pen-sensitive screen.
clause in Japan’s nationality law, and have thereby enabled many more Japanese-Filipinos to gain Japanese citizenship. However, one of the unintended consequences of these struggles was the expansion of opportunities for an already existing population of migrant youth from the Philippines to enter Japan in order to take up lowly paid work. The change in the law has thus inadvertently led to a new generation of labour migrants. Activist Japanese-Filipinos, like Dharma and Mifune, have grappled with these developments and made efforts to organize migrant Japanese-Filipinos in Japan as well as to politicize their marginality. Mifune regards their consumption as a way to cope with marginalization in Japan and Dharma is said to be upset about Japanese-Filipino migrant youths’ unquestioned participation in the capitalist system that funnelled them into low-paid work in the first place. Most migrant Japanese-Filipinos however show little interest in partaking in such advocacy efforts and rather focus on earning and income.

You have to understand JFY\textsuperscript{136} and JFC have very different concerns. You probably know that already. Very different life-styles also. I mean, I have seen that the JFY, they’re… they use… I don’t know, one of their coping mechanisms is to apply the Japanese commercialist attitude. Like you know, when they get there what do they do? Buy the gadgets, dye their hair, you know those physical adjustments. But at some point their still

\textsuperscript{136} The acronym JFY is commonly used among NGO workers and Japanese-Filipino members of NGOs to refer to Japanese-Filipino as well as non-Japanese Filipino migrant youth in Japan. While the acronym “JFC” largely grew out of NGOs in the Philippines, the term “JFY” developed within the context of Nathan’s faith-based fellowship for migrant youth in Japan. Both terms stuck with the different groups and have become indicators for their bearers’ geographical location. Unlike “JFC”, whose ages greatly vary, “JFY” tends to be used for migrants in their teens and twenties.
not...ah... adjusting well enough to the society because they don’t have, they don’t have that level of Nihongo [Japanese language] needed to actually, to part the veil, right? So I don’t know, I think, I don’t wanna say it’s, I don’t know it’s, at worst I see some sort of defence mechanism. This materialism I am seeing in the JFCs abroad. (Mifune)

That’s what [Dharma] is so frustrated about: their [JFCs in Japan] materialism. They are centered with their situation without questioning the broader situation.” (NGO worker)

Mifune and Dharma both have university degrees. They are also the only two among my respondents who have entered Japan on an academic fellowship and as an office worker respectively. Equipped with cultural capital unavailable to the large majority of migrant Japanese-Filipinos, Mifune and Dharma are confronted with the discrepancies between their own class-biased visions for the ‘imagined community’ (in Benedict Anderson’s terms) of Japanese-Filipinos and the reality of little political engagement as well as of consumption as class performance which, as Mifune puts it, is a way for migrant Japanese-Filipinos to cope with their disadvantaged situation in Japan.

Migration remains an important means to achieve upward social mobility for the lower middle classes in the Philippines. Japanese-Filipinos with Japanese passports or with the necessary social networks to relocate to Japan do not need to
accumulate cultural capital in the form of degrees to qualify for overseas employment. Education for the purpose of finding overseas employment thus becomes redundant if migration is achieved without it. Furthermore, education does not guarantee upward social mobility. As Kelly (2007) points out “In the Philippines, there is [a] strong sense of immobility - a stickiness in the class structure, such that those in lower class positions can never aspire to exceed their particular strata in Philippine society, even if educational achievements would imply otherwise.” (p.18)

The predominance of migrant youth from the Philippines\textsuperscript{137} in low-pay, low-skill employment in Japan is not solely a consequence of lacking cultural capital, but also an outcome of the social networks they rely upon. If not funnelled into low-paid work through an agency, migrant youths from the Philippines are dependent on their social contacts to secure a job upon arrival in Japan. Hayate, for instance worked for his step-father in their family-run recycling business. Felix found a job at a fast-food chain with the help of his mother. Yuzuki found her first job in Japan at the same factory where her mother used to work. The type of employment secured is often determined by the knowledge of the Japanese job-market available to the individuals approached for help. The latter often tend to be employed low-paid jobs themselves. Thus, by resorting to their mothers or to Filipino friends for assistance in finding work, the marginality of migrant youth in the labour market is perpetuated (cf. Kelly 2007, p.16).

\textsuperscript{137} These include petitioned Japanese-Filipinos and Filipinos as well as migrant Japanese-Filipinos with Japanese passports.
Conflicting visions and ambitions

Throughout the period of data collection, I observed a rise of disagreements over the ‘appropriate’ measures to support Japanese-Filipinos both in the Philippines and Japan. The change in Japan’s nationality law which had created new possible mobilities for Japanese-Filipinos and their mothers had also intensified divides among NGO staff, actively involved Japanese-Filipinos, and NGO members in general. Moreover, the legal change was ensued by a project initiated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which foresaw a significant inflow of new, young migrants from the Philippines. Through this project, Japanese-Filipino NGO members based in the Philippines and organized Japanese-Filipino migrant youths from Japan, who previously had not been significantly in touch with each other, met and worked together for the first time. The meeting between the two groups was momentous as both parties realized that, despite having imagined themselves as a community of “JFC”, their problems, needs and desires diverged greatly. Mifune and Dharma were surprised at Japan-based Japanese-Filipino’s preference of consumption over political engagement. On the other hand, Alina considered the politicizing of claims for Japanese nationality as pretence to gain access to Japan’s labour market:

Because they’re not having a good life in the Philippines…I don’t know why…Some have a good life. They actually, well they pretend to have a good life, like these JFCs I’ve met in Saitama. These kids like they said that they did not want to come to Japan and live here, but they said that they want to have that Japanese nationality because it’s their right. And I
know –I didn’t tell them of course, I did not want to be rude and say “of course not- that’s not what you’re thinking” but I know what they’re thinking is that someday they might want it, since even if you’re a nurse, even if you’re working in the Philippines they are planning to work abroad anyway, it’s not gonna be enough for the rest for their lives. And I know they want it since they wanted it since they were kids and they have experienced hardship…I know…the way they say it, it’s something…Cause I met many JFCs. (Alina)

Despite these divides, members of both groups seemed to have found agreement over one issue: the aspiration to form a support group for Japanese-Filipinos independent from existing NGOs. Indeed, following a conference in Saitama, Japan in 2009 initiated by the IOM, a handful of individuals decided to form the United Japanese-Filipino Children (UJFC), a primarily online-based group connecting Japanese-Filipinos from Japan and the Philippines.

Alina: But the point of making the United JFC is that we just want to, instead of NGOs doing stuff for us, it would be better if we would do stuff for ourselves. Activities and, you know. It would be better.

Interviewer: And was NGO staff present when you decided that?

Alina: Yes, and they weren’t happy. I was really strong about how I said it. [...]I almost said: ”so we don’t have to ask for the help of the NGOs”. Honestly I do not like so many NGOs, you know, controlling. Because
they are making money out of us. I almost said it- I was really, really close. And I know that they know that I said that. They were: “oh yes, and that’s true” and everything. [...] Yeah, we were talking when we were drinking in Saitama and we were talking about we should get out of these NGOs and we would have this hidden agenda (laughs). It’s just that we… we cannot do it by just ourselves, you know. These kids have already loved NGOs and stuff probably. And some are...it’s Filipino, Filipino culture that when you are trying to actually fix something and somebody wouldn’t like it, it would tatatatata go to these bigger people and then we’re all like “okay”…then they know it. So it’s really difficult.

However the UJFC did not take off. This was partly due to the busy schedules of the group’s initiators and members, and due to diverging visions of what the group should provide.

**Interviewer:** And on Facebook before you formed this group UJFC…is that alive?

**Mifune:** No, not anymore. Sadly the distance and the schedules of the people involved… And some disagreements we had with some other projects kind of, kind of split, split us actually. You have to understand JFY and JFC have very different concerns.
Yet the idea of a fresh organization led by Japanese-Filipinos for Japanese-Filipinos still remains. Akira, who had participated in activities and projects by two different groups, Batis YOGHI and the UJFC, had approached me for advice in setting up his own group as he had gotten frustrated over politics in NGO leadership.

I think I already mentioned to you this, well to be honest I hate politics [...] so here's the thing I observed how the NGOs controls the other groups and how the members worked to each other and I hate it so much in a way I observed they are too competitive each other and everything and so on... (Akira)

Alina too has developed a particular distaste for Philippine-based NGOs which she blames for both creating problems artificially and perpetuating them.

It’s weird…I just hate them [NGO workers] talking about so much about this stuff that you cannot really do something about. You’re just gonna tire yourself thinking about it plus you gonna get depressed. Because that’s what the NGOs taught them [JFC] to do: think about it. [...] You know what. This is the funny thing. I never thought about it until I met them [NGO workers]. As a JFC I should have known, but I never thought about it until I met them. I would have never thought that: “hey, what if I have Japanese Nationality”. No I never thought about it and I never thought about how bad it is for me that I don’t have my dad… my real dad. And I
never thought about how bad it is for me not to know the Japanese culture and way of living before. Maybe they [Japanese-Filipino NGO members] would not have felt that without them [NGOs]. ‘Cause they would just move on. But because they give them false hope, they still fight for it… It’s too bad. That’s what is maybe my opinion you know. But, some have hope but they cannot say it straight to those who don’t have hope anymore. They just keep them hanging. (Alina)

Such divergences and conflicts illustrate that not all Japanese-Filipinos claimed to be represented by DAWN, Batis YOGHI, Maligaya House or the CNJFC actually feel spoken for. While a number of respondents expressed positive feelings about their involvement in NGOs, Mifune complains about differing visions and the abundance of egos involved in activism for and by Japanese-Filipinos while Akira and Alina doubt the effectiveness of NGO support. Alina has developed a very critical stance towards stereotypical depictions of “JFCs” by NGOs. Moreover, her awareness of the importance of Japanese-Filipino Children to NGOs’ survival has made her suspicious of whether the various groups were truly interested in solving “JFC issues”. Alina's distrust of NGOs raises the point that keeping "JFC issues" ongoing is also a way for NGOs to utilize consanguinal capital at an institutional level in order to continue financing their operations by keeping their services relevant and thus attracting funding\(^\text{138}\).

\(^{138}\) Funds have come from various sources: the CNJFC has received a one-off donation by the Japanese government sponsoring its Manila office and office equipment. Moreover, the NGO
Conflicting discourses on “JFC” demonstrate that ascribed identities as well as proposed remedies for assumed issues also encounter opposition. Long-time members of Philippine-based NGOs tend to endorse dominant discourses on “JFC” as well as a “JFC” identity, however newer members such as Toshiro, or individuals like Felix and Jun who were only briefly involved with the CNJFC (which handled their acquisition of Japanese nationality) and who have otherwise not joined any “JFC” youth-groups, tend to neither identify as “JFC” nor to endorse discourses on *Japaneseness* as propagated by NGOs. Nevertheless, Felix and Jun still mobilize consanguinal capital through individual practices of ethnicity. For example, Felix's endeavour to seek a career in entertainment is largely built upon playing up his Japanese descent by using his Japanese name and communicating with his fans in Japanese on social media sites. Jun's Japanese passport allowed him to work in Japan and save up for an education in culinary arts and later advance his career as a chef in Australia.

The change in Japan’s nationality law and the subsequent increase of opportunities to migrate to Japan have also shown more clearly the discrepancy between members’ desires and NGOs opposing migration. DAWN has recently witnessed a decline in new members as one of its staff members explains:

---

finances itself through its (largely Japanese) members and their contributions, as well as through donations. DAWN has received funds through Japanese Official Development Aid (ODA), from the Japan Foundation, and from *Jichiro* – the all-Japan Prefectural and Municipal Workers Union (online conversation with DAWN staff, October 1st 2013). Batis has also received funds through Japanese ODA. The Batis YOGHI summer-camp 2011 was generously sponsored by a Japanese expatriate living in Manila, and in 2012 the camp was allowed to take place at the dormitories and training center of *Komatsu* (a Japanese company) located South of Metro Manila.
Currently I think, current members we’re handling...ah... 70 plus women I think or 90 plus. But they are not all new. Since after 2005, you know, the number of women [migrating to Japan] has diminished, it has significantly dropped. And somehow we’re already feeling it. Because in the past, even 2 years ago we were still getting 20, 20+ calls or referrals to DAWN but this time around in a month we get about 5, 6 calls unlike before. And we think that a lot of them maybe they don’t...perhaps a lot of them would rather go back to Japan and work. (DAWN staff)

The number of DAWN members also dwindled because some of its old members left the organization to join another group, Maganote, instead. Maganote was set up in 2009 as an organization which specializes in handling the necessary paperwork to then deploy their Japanese-Filipino applicants as workers to Japan. The organization, which also makes use of the “rights” language to frame its work, has sent several former DAWN members to Japan over the last

---

139 2005 was the year when Japan amended its Immigration Control Act and implemented tighter identity checks on applicants for “entertainer visas”. The total number of “entertainer” visas issued by Japanese authorities subsequently dropped from 100,633 in 2005 to 49,631 in 2006 (source: http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/i_crime/people/pamphlet.pdf, access 1st July, 2013)

140 As of 2009, Maganote was located along Leon Guinto Street in Malate, Manila. Maganote has no other web-presence except its Facebook profile page. Here the organization describes itself as follows:

“About
An NGO that supports the abandoned Japanese-Filipino Children in retrieving their Japanese Citizenship.
Simple Japanese Lessons will be posted regularly for those who want to learn Japanese.
[...]
Mission
1. To provide Japanese-Filipino Children opportunities to exercise their rights as Japanese Citizens, acquire language skills, education and jobs in Japan.
three years. The clients who left DAWN in favour of Maganote did so to find employment in Japan. This development is significant as it shows that NGO clients are not necessarily persuaded by NGOs’ ideological stances, such as DAWN’s disapproval of migration and its emphasis on training as well as the need for psychological interventions, despite long-time membership.

Yet, not all NGOs have experienced a decrease in clients. Staff at Maligaya House, focussing on solving legal issues with the help of Japan-based lawyers, reported that phone enquiries and accepted cases increased after the change in Japan’s nationality law in 2008. Only the recent decreases in inquiries were largely due to the March 2011 earthquake that hit Japan since, as one staff member mentioned, many Filipino mothers must have given up on the hopes of going to Japan believing the Japanese father of their children had died and that the economic situation was bad. Before the earthquake however, inquiries were abundant.

Prior to the change in Japan's nationality law, DAWN, Batis, the CNJFC and Maligaya House were among the few avenues available for Filipino mothers and their Japanese-Filipino children to locate and negotiate with their Japanese

---
2. To help restore, build and empower the Japanese – Filipino Children to become productive and responsible, with new perspective and meaning in life. 
Company Overview 
Magonote Philippines is a non-stock non-profit organization that aims to support the abandoned Japanese-Filipino children as well as their mothers. 
Magonote Philippines started December 05, of 2009 and our main goal is to retrieve the citizenship of Japanese-Filipino Children and send them back to Japan where they rightfully belong to exercise their right to education and normal living. The man behind this dream which has now turned to reality is no other than MR. HIDEKAZU KOYASHI. “ (source: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Magonote-Philippines-Inc/137758706273066?id=137758706273066&sk=info, accessed on 30th June 2013)
fathers. The legal change has made it possible for Japanese-Filipinos to obtain nationality and citizenship from the Japanese state by going through the Japanese embassy, rather than through family courts in Japan. This has to some extent facilitated the transformation of consanguinal capital into citizenship and thus into economic capital or status. Nevertheless, Maligaya House and the CNJFC remain crucial as they provide legal expertise and support in the numerous cases where Japanese-Filipinos have not yet been formally recognized by their fathers.

The law change has also led to the establishment of organizations like Maganote which specialize in the deployment of new migrants to Japan, thus providing Japanese-Filipinos with an alternative avenue to DAWN, Batis, and the CNJFC/Maligaya House in their efforts to mobilize consanguinal capital. In turn, NGOs that have been opposing labour migration, such as DAWN and Batis, have seen their memberships dwindling as numerous clients now have the choice to pursue overseas employment without being subjected to the requirements of participating in the ideologically and morally infused activities of such NGOs. Thus ensuing developments since the change in Japan’s nationality law have ironically posed new problems to its original proponents. Moreover, DAWN, Batis and Maligaya House have expressed great concern over numerous Japanese-Filipinos and their mothers being subjected to exploitative working conditions and to indentured labour in Japan. A number of newly established organizations, catering to Japanese-Filipinos and their mothers, act as Philippine-based recruiters deploying eligible workers to Japan-based employers. Individuals migrating through these channels often find themselves saddled with high debts.
Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have critically evaluated individuals’ perception of self, based upon available discourses on ‘race’, class, ‘Japanese culture’ and the social realities of prejudice and deprivation which a number of respondents are confronted with. Intertwined with the significance of emotional struggles, pain and frustration felt by some of my respondents and many Japanese-Filipinos in similar circumstances, the claim for Japanese nationality, the identification as half-Japanese, and the performance of Japaneseess are contingent upon strategies of capital accumulation and access to resources. As Jenkins (2008) writes, ethnicity is strategic and instrumental, but “calculations and emotions are not alternatives” (p. 48).

With ‘race’ and ‘culture’ being largely conflated and individual family ties being used interchangeably with ‘blood’ ties to a nation, descent can be mobilized as a form of capital. Consanguinal capital is a form of capital which Japanese-Filipinos based in the Philippines can fall back on in the event of lacking cultural (sought after skills and accredited training), social (family ties enabling visa sponsorship) and economic capital (assets enabling residency or citizenship by investment) to cross borders. Consanguinal capital is utilized in anticipation of a comparatively higher income and the access to amenities associated with a "modern" lifestyle via overseas employment while it is also a means to gain prestige via association with an esteemed national and cultural identity. However, numerous Japanese-Filipinos are being funnelled into low-status and low-income occupations upon migrating to Japan.
In the course of claims-making, the ‘blood’ ties linking Japanese fathers to their children have been conflated with behaviour, culture, as well as with a belonging to an imagined Japanese ‘race’ by expanding actual filiation into a ‘blood’ metaphor and thereby positioning “JFC” as “children of Japan”. Furthermore, the highlighting of ‘homeland nostalgia’ and cultural reasons in claims for Japanese nationality has unintentionally reaffirmed primordial and essentialist ideas which undermine efforts of broadening the conception of Japaneseness. Moreover, the amended Japanese nationality law has made it more conducive for potential migrants to cross-borders which has led to the establishment of new organizations participating in the deployment of migrant labourers to Japan.
Conclusion

Ethnic phenomena are still widespread as ethnicity, in political discourse as well as in the everyday social experience, remains “a, if not the, dominant paradigm for interpreting, ordering and marking difference in the world.” (Fox & Jones 2013, p. 391) The power of imagined ethnic communities can be clearly seen in instances of political mobilization, wherein ethnic identities are constructed and ascribed for purposes of claims-making (p.387). In this dissertation I have analysed the discursive construction of Japanese-Filipino children and their mothers by NGOs, the strategic use of Japanese descent in claims towards the Japanese state, and the construction of a “JFC” identity which emphasizes the importance of Japaneseness in Japanese-Filipinos’ ethnic identities. I have thus considered consanguinal capital as a pivotal element in claims for resources, and in this case for Japanese nationality and citizenship in particular.

This study therefore ties in with debates about the constitution and reproduction of social hierarchies, the formation of social identities, and the access to resources, recognizing the intersectionality of various social categories in the structuring of societies. In this thesis I have focused on ethnicity

---

141 Anthias (2012, p.126) defines intersectionality as a conceptual approach which “posits that different social divisions interrelate in terms of the production of social relations and in terms of people’s lives and they are seen as ‘mutually constitutive’ in terms of experience and practice.”
and citizenship as important factors constituting social hierarchies, identities and providing or denying access to resources. The various forms of capital as discussed by Bourdieu (1986) are important factors in the constitution and reproduction of social class, social hierarchies, and social identities. But ethnicity (and gender for that matter) as well as citizenship are also significant factors influencing individuals’ and groups’ access to resources and their place in the social hierarchy. Bourdieu’s approach to class has largely left unmentioned the structuring effects of ethnicity and citizenship. Moreover, Bourdieu’s analysis remained centred on a presumably bound social space demarcated by national borders.

By utilizing consanguinal capital as a conceptual tool, I observed the strategic endorsement of a Japanese descent in claiming resources. Moreover, I showed that expectations of higher income and greater social status have underpinned the construction of a Japanese ethnic identity among “JFC”. As Anthias (2012, p.132) points out, claims for various resources are pivotal in social relations, but we also need to look beyond economic, social, and cultural capital to see “how class relates to mobilizations around ethnic resources, for example.”

In the particular case observed in this study, I have analysed the discursive mobilization of ‘Japanese blood’ in the construction of a “JFC” identity by NGOs and by a number of Japanese-Filipino individuals in claims for Japanese citizenship. I have argued that not only potential migrants availing of sufficient social, cultural or economic capital could cross national borders and make citizenship claims, but that consanguinal capital was equally a resource under the
condition that ‘blood’ remains symbolically salient and thus recognized as valid basis for claims.

Fox and Jones (2013) point out that ethnicity has been employed as a powerful tool for claims-making utilized by political entrepreneurs and grassroots activists alike. Ethnic difference and imagined ethnic communities have grown out of conflict and out of political opportunities. The case of Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines illustrates how ethnic identification has become an important politically strategic tool in claims-making toward a foreign government, and indeed a means employed in hopes of ensuing material gain. The performance of *Japaneseness* suggests Japanese ethnic identity and thus supports claims for recognition and belonging. Community is often constructed around the idea of a common culture and/or a common descent, even if these may be questionable (Fenton 2010), thus linking ethnic performance to consanguinity (real or assumed). Therefore, the performance of Japaneseness has not merely served the purpose of familiarizing Japanese-Filipinos with things Japanese, supposedly to satisfy their curiosity, but also made them more relevant to a Japanese audience that has to be convinced of Japanese-Filipinos’ rightful claims and membership in Japanese society.

By virtue of their direct blood-tie with a Japanese national, Japanese-Filipinos also have the potential of acquiring a “First World” passport if they succeed to either fulfil or challenge the additional criteria set by Japanese law that limit access to citizenship. While this does not mean that nationality claims have had solely the purpose of enabling upward social mobility, I argued that the
affective dimensions of identity claims articulate with economic concerns. I thus considered claims for Japanese nationality primarily within the context of economic and income inequalities between Japan and the Philippines, as well as highly managed borders and labour markets. In doing so, I have not only linked citizenship claims to efforts of gaining cross-border and material mobility, but I also related ethnic identity formations to political and material concerns. I thus concur with Fenton (2010, p.2) when he writes “...a theory of ethnicity has to be a theory of the contexts under which it is situationally relevant.”

Acquiring a Japanese passport has increased its bearers’ cross-border mobility and enabled them to find higher paid employment in Japan than in the Philippines. However the material ascent experienced by Japanese-Filipino youth by way of migration to Japan has also been coupled with experiences of discrimination, labour in precarious, dead-end jobs, and in some cases, with high debts occurred in obtaining these jobs. Lastly, for a number of Japanese-Filipinos, the experience of migrating to Japan meant leaving behind a well-provided for life in the Philippines and forgoing tertiary education. It is thus questionable to what extent migrating to Japan led to the achievement of the “better life” envisaged by many migrant youth and their mothers, given that the “Japanese dream” has also entailed a rude awakening for numerous Japanese-Filipinos.

The amendment in Japan’s Nationality law has opened doors, even if merely ajar\textsuperscript{142}, to Japanese nationality for numerous children born to Japanese

\textsuperscript{142} The exact numbers of successful Japanese-Filipino applicants for Japanese nationality and citizenship is unknown. According to Suzuki (2010) there were only a dozen children
fathers and foreign mothers. This change had rekindled hopes for many Japanese-Filipinos and their Philippine-based mothers to find a way (back) to Japan. Following the news of the Supreme Court decision, numerous press reports told of Japanese-Filipinos leaving for Japan, many in tow with their mothers. This legal change could only have occurred because of precedent cases already problematizing Japan’s nationality law prior to its amendment, because of the recognition of increasing variety in family forms in Japan, and due to the Japanese-Filipino plaintiffs’ accomplished *Japanese*ness convincing the judges that parental marriage was no longer required to guarantee the “tie to Japan” expected from the next generation of nationals and citizens. A general shift in norms and values pertaining to family ideals as well as the successful performance of *Japanese*ness during court hearings were thus crucial elements contributing to the legal amendment.

But have NGOs actually won their symbolic and political struggles against institutionalized exclusions? On the one hand, the use of litigation has lowered the barriers to obtaining Japanese citizenship and nationality at birth, and has enabled numerous Japanese-Filipinos to become Japanese nationals and citizens retroactively. However, Japan’s nationality law remains premised on ethnocultural definitions of a child’s ‘tie’ to Japan. Dominant perceptions of who can

---

granted visas by the Japanese embassy in Manila as of March 16th, 2009. Suzuki does not clarify what kind of visas these were. The new nationality law requires eligible applicants for Japanese nationality and citizenship to reside in Japan for a six-month period before being able to obtain Japanese nationality and citizenship. It is likely that Suzuki refers to visas obtained for that purpose. According to numbers provided by the Japanese Ministry of Justice (2012) 3,849 individuals have submitted notices of acquisition of nationality, of whom 3,505 have been issued certificates of acquisition of nationality since January 1st 2009 (Hara 2013, p.12). However, it is not certain which nationality these applicants initially held since the Ministry of Justice does not list the nationality of the applicants (ibid.).
be acknowledged as ethnically Japanese in Japan have therefore not changed. NGOs and activist Japanese-Filipinos have not been able to broaden the definition of who ought to be Japanese in cultural and linguistic terms. On the contrary, the need to develop and exhibit a ‘tie’ to Japan remains a central rationale for not further relaxing the requirements to acquire birthright citizenship.

Consequently, the arrival in one’s ‘father’s homeland’ has turned out to be a disappointing experience for some of my respondents. The difficulties of communicating and of being identified as a foreigner, not as Japanese, have complicated ethnic identifications held prior to migration. Consanguinal capital may have enabled a number of individuals to access to Japan, but once in the country, Japanese-Filipinos’ sense of being Japanese is met by more stringent definitions of who ought to be Japanese thereby contributing to bitter disappointment. Ethnic identity ascriptions emphasizing *Japaneseness* as those promoted by NGOs and communicated by a number of Filipino mothers of Japanese-Filipinos, inadvertently added to such disappointments. Indeed, ethnic categories are flexible and contextual, requiring individual Japanese-Filipinos to rethink what it means to be “JFC” once they arrive and settle in Japan.

Consanguinal capital cannot always be translated into other forms of capital across socio-cultural borders. This is because ethnicity is contextual and ethnic categories as well as ethnic groups differ in various socio-cultural contexts. The identification as Japanese in the Philippines entails a different set of meanings and expectations than in Japan. In the Philippines, consanguinal capital can be mobilized through the performance of *Japaneseness* with reference to
globally circulating images of Japan: through knowledge of the Japanese language, familiarity with popular or ‘traditional’ culture or actual travel experience of Japan. Moreover, holding a Japanese travel document and bearing a Japanese name in contrast to other, ‘regular’ Filipinos, establish a symbolic connection which may entail heightened social status. However in Japan the norms of comparison differ. Migrant youth from the Philippines do not exhibit the *ethnic* habitus commonly expected from Japanese in Japan. The rules of recognition of consanguinal capital fluctuate in various socio-cultural and socio-economic \(^{143}\) contexts.

As exemplified through the experiences of Japanese-Filipinos, ethnicity is contextual, malleable and its boundaries change over time and space. What it means to be “JFC” and what it takes to be Japanese changes depending on whether one is in or outside Japan. The transformability of consanguinal capital thus has its limitations as consanguinity is only recognized as a valid claim and as a potential source of privilege in certain contexts. Japanese-Filipino children may have gained the right to obtain Japanese passports, yet citizenship alone neither shields them from discrimination, nor does it guarantee a secure and affluent life. Certainly, citizenship does contribute to different prospects for the well-being, safety and freedom of individuals (Shachar 2009a, p.8), but important stratifications persist within societies, dividing people along lines of class, gender, ethnicity and ‘race’.

\(^{143}\) Tsuda (2010) shows that economic pragmatism generated an inclusive discourse when Japan recruited affordable, manual labour among its diaspora, which developed into an exclusive discourse following Japan’s economic recession.
In Japan, foreigners have been slotted into ‘racial’ hierarchies. Migrant Japanese-Filipinos thus experience contradictory processes of gaining status in the Philippines through their association with cosmopolitan Japan, their increased cross-border mobility provided by their Japanese passports, and their increased ability to consume, while losing status in Japan by entering a migrant working class. Having ‘Japanese blood’ and carrying a Japanese passport have not prevented migrant Japanese-Filipinos from being treated as foreigners in the country of their fathers. Ethnicity thus articulates with class and produces contradictory outcomes in differing social contexts.

Migrants’ experiences of inhabiting contradictory class positions within different social hierarchies have been explored among others by Aguilar (1999), Kelly (2007; 2012), Parreñas (2001), and Pinches (2001). These explorations largely relate to the processes of “deprofessionalization, deskilling, and downward class mobility” (Kelly 2012, p.154) which frequently accompany cross-border migrations of people of the ‘Global South’ seeking employment in the ‘Global North’. While migrants are often relegated to low-pay, low-status jobs, they enjoy heightened status within the family and the larger community through the monetary contributions they could afford through their overseas employment (Aguilar 1999). Parreñas’ (2001) well-educated Filipina respondents deal with “the pain of contradictory class mobility” by “performing servitude

144 A.Shipper (2002) has observed the ‘racial’ hierarchies organizing foreign labour in Japan. He writes that “[j]obs are organized hierarchically by race and nationality such that those of “superior” origins (nikkeijin i.e., or foreign-born Japanese) are at the high end, obtain better jobs, enjoy legal rights, and are subjected to less direct surveillance by immigration and police officials. “Inferior” workers, such as “darker” South Asians, are at the low end and have casual jobs, poor pay, and few benefits; they are also subject to more coercion by police and yakuza (organized crime).” (p.42)
under the fantasy of reversal, in other words, the fantasy of eventually returning to the Philippines to be served by their own domestic workers” and by “downplaying servitude by emphasizing the higher racial status that employers accord them than their black and Latina counterparts” (p.153). Ethnic identity also plays a part in Pinches’ (2001) study; to endure and resist the class degradation whilst in migration Filipino workers invoke and celebrate their ethnic and national identities as Filipinos. Japanese-Filipinos experience contradictory class mobility as well as incongruities with regards to their ethnic identities.

The NGOs which have largely contributed to the construction of the “JFC” identity- and by doing so, to the endorsement of a Japanese ethnic identity among many Japanese-Filipinos- face constraints and challenges related to sustaining their work, justifying their existence, and surviving financially. This has required NGOs to emphasize stories of victimization, injustice, and helplessness. The need for accounts of hardship and suffering has engendered a selection and framing of clients’ stories for the purpose of publication. The discursive construction of the “JFC” thus relies on generalizations at the expense of the narratives of individuals who do not feel disadvantaged due to their Japanese-Filipino parentage, and of individuals opposing some aspects and methods of NGO-led claims-making. This has led to discord and resistance among some of my respondents.

Conversely, the prevailing narrative of the “JFC” has also produced situations wherein clients themselves readily adjust their stories to the desired
frames. Mifune recently related to me his reaction to an NGO-organized sharing session:

“So when I realized how we were like performing stories I kind of really felt bad, as in I couldn't breathe and I got a little teary eyed. Well it’s like this, since we don't have any other capital, some of us think that suffering is some sort of capital. It's probably a catholic thing [...] So I kind of got disgusted and walked out while trying to maintain sympathy for the person [who told his/her story]. But really, my days of doing drama camp are over. Yes, there is no graduation mechanism in JFC organizations. So you see a lot of the kids still portraying that sort of [victimization] discourse even if they're old. It stunts [sic] the children. It got to me also. [...] this is really about the capitalization of other people's tears.”

NGOs have played a crucial role in organizing the objection against Japanese-Filipinos being treated as second rate offspring both by their Japanese fathers and under Japan’s nationality law. At the same time, the mobilization of consanginal capital has also benefitted NGOs insofar as Japanese-Filipinos have been made relevant to Japanese funders and thus qualified NGOs for financial support. These funds have been utilized by NGOs to finance projects and programs which have been positively received by many of their Japanese-Filipino members and clients. Others, as mentioned above, have welcomed these interventions with less enthusiasm.

I have examined the various discourses utilized by NGOs involved in the issue, showing that Japanese-Filipinos’ “mixedness” has prompted NGOs to
engage in discourses on ‘Japanese blood’ and the importance of knowing and experiencing Japan. NGO workers, leaders, as well as a number of Japanese-Filipinos endorse essentialist understandings of ‘blood’ and ‘mixedness’ and therefore support the provision of imaginary resources to acquaint Japanese-Filipinos with things Japanese. This essentialism remains largely unchallenged because it resonates with popular conflations of ‘race’ and culture pertinent in society and as such, also with NGO’s target audiences in Japan and the Philippines. Moreover, essentialist ideas prove very useful in politicizing Japanese-Filipinos’ Japanese descent and appeal to audiences and potential funders.

The identities ascribed to their clients by NGOs have however been challenged. Some of my respondents have expressed dissatisfaction with how NGOs have dealt (or failed to deal) with the issues faced by Japanese-Filipinos, and have criticized what they consider NGOs making money and fuelling their PR machinery on the backs of Japanese-Filipinos’ fates. Other expressions of discontent have taken form of clients leaving their NGO. Since the change in Japan’s nationality law concluded in mid-2008, DAWN has for instance witnessed a number of its clients quitting the NGO and instead joining other groups in the hopes of migrating to Japan. Also, earlier experiences of clients remaining in Japan undocumented following a study tour have reminded NGO staff of the appeal of the country and the popularity of overseas migration to achieve social upward mobility. Such developments put into question the
homogenous depiction of Filipina migrant returnees as victims and “survivors” of migration to Japan, having renounced the draw of the yen.

Despite knowing the lure of the yen, the NGOs included in this study have for the longest time opposed the idea of migration as part of their protest against labour export policies as national economic strategy. Migration to Japan has largely been portrayed as fraught with the danger of exploitation and even violence, a depiction used to support the victimization discourse on Filipina migrant returnees. At the same time Japan has been elevated to the status of the ‘other homeland’, vital in Japanese-Filipino Children’s development and growth. Japan has thus become a place of ambivalence, a country to which Japanese-Filipinos should foster closer bonds, but also a country having attracted thousands of young Filipino women to work in its red-light district, a place which is now luring numerous Japanese-Filipinos to work in factories, in homes for the elderly, or once more in its red-light districts.

With numerous Japanese-Filipinos reaching adulthood and thus the capacity and the right to cross borders by themselves, the depiction of Japan for Japanese-Filipinos has also become more nuanced. Although understandable as a legacy of NGOs’ ideological stand-points, discouraging Japanese-Filipinos and their mothers from seeking blue-collar jobs in Japan has inadvertently led NGO-clients to search for opportunities and information in the wrong places. Newly established organizations in the Philippines operating under the banner of NGOs, Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs), or foundations have found new sources of revenue by acting as agents recruiting eligible Japanese-Filipinos and their
mothers and by matching them with employers in Japan for a substantial fee. Lacking the social and cultural capital to secure white-collar employment, Japanese-Filipinos form a new migrant working-class in Japan who, despite possessing Japanese passports remains treated as foreign and often is short of information, resources, and language ability to fully take advantage of their rights as citizens.

Global migration has complicated ethnic and national identities beyond the definitions set by the nation-state. Increasing numbers of children born from ‘international’ relationships challenge us to think not only about the current location of the socio-cultural borders of the nation, but also about who defines the latter, especially when the nation is tackled from outside its supposed boundaries. Ethnicity and ethnic identity have been symbolically salient ideological tools in process of establishing membership and recognition. Ethnicity remains a crucial fact of everyday social practice and political mobilization, but this does not mean that we should take ethnicity for granted since ethnicities appear, disappear, and boundaries of ethnic groups and identities vary over time and space. Fox & Jones (2013, p.393) remind us that “[e]thnicity is the phenomenon to be explained, not to do the explaining with”, and so this study of Philippine-based Japanese Filipinos and NGO advocacy has aimed at explaining ethnicity, the construction of the ”JFC” identity, in the context of political mobilization and claims-making.
Bibliography


Balik Kokuseki Recovery Center, Inc., n.d. [Online].


Cordova Quero, H., 2008. ""To be Nikkeijin or...Not to Be?": Identity Formation Dilemmas Among Brazilians of Japanese Ancestry Migrating to Japan, Kyoto: Japan Consortium for Area Studies and the Center for Integrated Area Studies, Kyoto University.


DAWN, 1997 b. a fruitful year. *Sinag*, October-December, p. 1;3.


DAWN, 1998 f. Teatro Akebono presents "SANA... Isang Kuwento ng Pangarap". *Sinag*, July-September, p. 4.


DAWN, 2001 a. Teatro Akebono play likens JFC to "Ugly Ducklings". *SINAG*, April-June, p. 4.


DAWN, 2003b. JFCs who will conquer the stage. *Sinag*, July-September, pp. 6-7.


Available at:


[Accessed 1 12 2013].


[Accessed 14 February 2013].


Available at:
[Accessed 23 February 2013].


Ogaya, C., 2011. Transnational citizenships of Japanese-Filipino Children: Dynamics of the construction of their identities and the role of the support NGO. Seoul National University, s.n.


Available at:

http://rorotoko.com/interview/20090828_shachar_ayelet_birthright_lottery


*Statements delivered at the Tokyo District Court (2010)* Special copy.


Available at: http://www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/information/tnl-01.html
[Accessed 29 March 2013].

The Supreme Court of Japan, 2008 a. Courts in Japan English version. [Online]
Available at: http://www.courts.go.jp/english/judgments/text/2008.06.04-2006.-Gyo-Tsu-No..135-111255.html
[Accessed 16 January 2013].

The Supreme Court of Japan, 2008 b. Courts in Japan. [Online]
Available at: http://www.courts.go.jp/hanrei/pdf/20080604174246.pdf
[Accessed 19 March 2013].


Singapore: Seiger, Fiona.


Appendix

Descriptions of NGOs (The Batis Center for Women/ Batis YOGHI, DAWN, and the CNJFC/Maligaya House)

The Batis Center for Women and Batis YOGHI

Established: 1988 in Ermita, Manila and later moved to Quezon City (Batis Center for Women); 2002 (Batis YOGHI)

The Batis Center for Women (Batis) was founded as a joint initiative between the Division of Family Ministries of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) and the House in the Emergency of Love and Peace (HELP) Asian Women's Shelter of the Japan Women's Christian Temperance Union as a non-profit, non-governmental organization in Manila in 1988. Batis’ set-up also coincided with the surfacing of the notorious “Lapin” case145, an event which shed light on practices of forced prostitution by club owners in Japan employing Southeast Asian women on “entertainer” visas (Matsui 1995, p.311). The event has received intense media coverage and, along with the mysterious death of the Filipina entertainer Maricris Sioson in 1991, has exposed the potential vulnerabilities of foreign women “entertainers” in Japan, but has also stirred overgeneralizations of hostessing as forced prostitution.

The goal of Batis’ establishment was to address the needs and concerns of returned Filipina migrants from Japan as well as other countries. Services provided by Batis include training (sewing, candle-making, small-scale entrepreneurship), educational assistance, medical assistance as well as counselling. Batis has also facilitated the organization of a women’s group in 1996, Batis AWARE, through which Filipina members were encouraged to organize and advocate for themselves. In 2000, Batis YOGHI was formed as an independent organization led by and for Japanese-Filipino youth. As numbers of new members dwindled following the change in Japan’s Immigration act in 2005, Batis made its services available to women migrant returnees from the Middle East and from Southeast Asia. Batis used to publish a newsletter, but had to discontinue the printing for lack of funds. Batis’ web-presence is limited to its Facebook page after websites maintained in the past have expired. Batis is the oldest NGO catering to Japanese-Filipino children and their Filipino mothers via the provision of counselling services and training.

145 The Lapin case involved four Filipino women aged 21 to 26 forced into prostitution by the owner of the snack-bar they worked at. They were locked in, beaten and one of the women was raped by employees of the club (Matsui, 1990).

347
Batis YOGHI emerged from a special program created by Batis for children and youth in 1992. The additional program was offered upon noticing some of their Filipino women clients having had children with Japanese men. Despite catering to the relatively small number of only six children at the time, NGO staff believed they were just the tip of the iceberg. The then-director of the Batis Center stated in an interview: “...we only have to look for them, I’m sure we’ll have more” (Kyodo News Int., 1992). Many of the group’s programs tackle issues faced by young people, rather than specifically by children born out of ethnically ‘mixed’ relationships. Batis YOGHI provides, among others, sex education, information about Japan, workshops on presentation skills, and small-scale entrepreneurship. Batis YOGHI organizes occasional study tours to Japan for some of its members, a yearly summer camp. Batis YOGHI also provides information sessions and orientations for students from Japan on their study tours and fieldtrips to the Philippines. The organization’s leading voices became more perceptible notably after the 2008 amendment in Japan’s Nationality Law and throughout a project exploring safe migration to Japan for Japanese-Filipinos, led by the IOM in 2009.

The Development Action for Women Network (DAWN)

Established: 1996 in Ermita, Manila

A few years into its existence, Batis experienced organization-internal conflicts resulting in a split and the launch of The Development Action for Women Network (DAWN) in 1996. The newly established organization picked up with a similar vision, mission and client base, making it the second organization catering to Filipino migrant returnees from Japan and their Japanese-Filipino children in the Philippines. DAWN offers similar services as Batis, including training and psycho-social interventions. DAWN engages its clients through workshops, trainings, psychological and counselling. Recently, the organization has made efforts to establish a women’s cooperative and a children’s group, DAWN JFCs for Change.

DAWN is supported by a group of volunteers based in Japan (commonly referred to as DAWN Japan) who assist the organization with locating Japanese fathers and in organizing its yearly theatre tours to Japan. DAWN publishes the quarterly newsletter SINAG since 1996. DAWN has also published four books, and has been featured in television segments in both Japan and the Philippines146. Among all four NGOs, DAWN

146 In 1999, DAWN was featured in three television shows: “Sa Bayan” and “Balikatan” on RPN-9 as well as in “Usapang Business” on ABS-CBN. All these segments focused on DAWN’s contributions to uplifting the status of Filipino women and improving their situation (DAWN, 1999 b). DAWN staff and six members were featured in the talk show “Pilipinas Online: Bantay OCW” on May 4th, 2006 (Barcelona, 2006). DAWN and two of its clients were featured in a report for the TV format “Draw the line” aired on GMA Network throughout the years 2008-2009 (cf. http://youtu.be/JLM2-X-IzPI, accessed on 19 November, 2013). DAWN was
has been the most active in publishing, networking, and displaying its networks through its publications. DAWN is part of a wider network of transnational organizations involved in issues pertaining to migration as well as human trafficking.

### The Citizen’s Network for Japanese-Filipino Children (CNJFC) and Maligaya House

Established: 1994 in Tokyo (CNJFC); 1998 in Quezon City, Metro Manila (Maligaya House)

The most prominent Japan-based organization supporting Japanese-Filipino children, the CNJFC, was created following a symposium organized by the International Children’s Rights Centre. The CNJFC differs from DAWN and Batis in its capacity to provide legal aid; the organization’s association with lawyers in Japan (the JFC Lawyers Association) enables it to effectively file court cases against Japanese fathers unwilling to acknowledge paternity, handle matters of child support on behalf of their clients, as well as to legally support their clients’ claims for Japanese nationality. The securing the child’s Japanese citizenship has become a primary concern, not only to solve individual legal dilemmas but also to push for the acknowledgment of Japan’s changing society.

The organization was initiated by members of Japanese society who had shown great concern over the adverse effects of Japan’s post-war economic expansion into its Asian neighbour countries. One such effect was the surge of sex-tourism by Japanese men since the 1970s, and another that of the funnelling of Southeast Asian women into Japan’s sex-industry. The concern over Filipino women working as “entertainers” in Japan has thus been shared by groups in Japan and in the Philippines and has produced continuing transnational cooperation among NGOs in both countries. The support of Japanese-Filipino children, resulting from relationships brought about by migration, was one way of reinstating justice for people considered victims of Japan’s immigration policies, poverty abroad and the irresponsible behaviour of Japanese men. Supporters in Japan and the Philippines have made it their purpose to mend the wrongs that have stricken children of Japanese-Filipino unions in both countries. In 1998, the CNJFC established its Manila-branch, Maligaya House (happy house). The Tokyo-based organization had previously cooperated with both Batis and DAWN but with its establishment, Maligaya House became the only avenue for Philippine-based clients to gain support by the CNJFC. The formation of DAWN Japan was DAWN’s response to

---

also featured in the NHK documentary "I Wish to See My father" by Shin Yasuda which focuses on Teatro Akebono’s theatre tour to Japan in 1999 (DAWN, 1999 e).

147 The section “Events! Visitors! Events!” later titled “DAWN Visitors” or “People, Places, Events” within SINAG is a collection of photographs displaying the Executive Director at meetings or workshops, with visitors of political rank or importance, or with visitors from Japan.

349
the loss of their Japan-based partner.

Maligaya House fully relies on the funds provided by the CNJFC. With these, Maligaya House is able to support some of their clients through scholarships, distributed to students with good grades who do not receive any support from their Japanese fathers. Maligaya House rarely holds any other workshops or trainings unlike DAWN, Batis YOGHI and Batis. The organization organizes monthly information sessions to be attended by their clients and from time to time arranges short talks given by visitors about various topics. One of their visitors from Taiwan talked about the Taiwanese and Chinese minorities in Japan, while another visitor from Germany gave a presentation on the relationship between Japan and Germany during World War Two. Although such sessions were meant to broaden Japanese-Filipinos’ horizons beyond their knowledge of the Philippines and Japan, both presentations covered aspects of Japanese history.

Yayori Matsui, an activist feminist and journalist, was one of the initial founders of the CNJFC. The establishment of the NGO was meant to confront Japanese men with the legal consequences of their behaviour. Japanese men, according to Matsui, “treat Filipino women as they please, taking advantage of the vast gap in economic power between Japan and the Philippines... [and view] Filipino women as mere sex objects.” (Matsui 1999, p.58) Matsui’s activism has notably been driven by her discontent with the Japanese government’s attitude towards the atrocities committed by the Japanese army during World War II, as well as towards the aftermath of its rapid economic development. Her standpoint was shared by others, notably by late Reverend Toshifumi Aso who was also part of the initial organizers of the CNJFC. Reverend Aso was born to Japanese parents in 1940 in Japanese occupied Korea. At the dusk of the war, his family fled the country, returning to Japan impoverished, striving to make a living of selling candy and sweet potatoes. Both Aso and Matsui, who were children during World War II, experienced poverty which later on made them more sensible to situations of poverty in Asia (Yamane, 2008; United Japanese Filipino Children, 2010). Aso became a pastor in the 1960s, a period of turmoil and historical changes in Japan; in 1964 the country hosted the Olympic Games, four years later students protested against the Vietnam War and Japan’s support of the U.S. forces (United Japanese Filipino Children 2010). He also travelled through Southeast Asia to countries affected by World War Two. These trips brought him to the Philippines. In an interview he recounts:

“The first time I visited the Philippines was in 1971. [...] I didn’t have any interests in the Philippines but I was very concerned with the situation in the Asian countries particularly those connected to the Japanese. In the history of Japanese Imperialism and the war, Japan had made a lot of mistakes. We need to apologize to the Asian people, 20 million people endured this period of war. [...] Its [sic!] our responsibility to see the realities of the people, the poor people oppressed by Japanese money. That’s my way and my criticism of Japanese policies. Then a friend mentioned about mothers of JFCs asking for lawyers. That’s when I started the CNJFC network and Maligaya House.” (United Japanese Filipino Children, 2010)
Table 1: Japanese-Filipino Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age at time of the latest interview</th>
<th>Nationality at time of latest interview</th>
<th>Country based in at time of latest interview</th>
<th>Client or former client of any of the NGOs studied (Batis YOGHI, DAWN, Maligaya House, CNJFC)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yukari (F)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natsumi (F)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike (M)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alina (F)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharma (F)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayate (M)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amal (M)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachiko (F)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoko (F)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fumiko (F)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mari (F)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenta (M)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mifune (M)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akira (M)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atsushi (M)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommy (M)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaori (F)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shingo (M)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisuke (M)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun (M)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>JP</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuzuki (F)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>JP</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Birthplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Felix (M)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>JP</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Haru (F)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>JP</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Toshiro (M)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>JP</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Interviewed NGO workers and volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>DAWN/DAWN Japan</th>
<th>Batis/YOGHI</th>
<th>Maligaya House</th>
<th>CNJFC</th>
<th>Human Rights Osaka</th>
<th>Center for Japanese-Filipino Families</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of interviewees (workers and volunteers at support organizations)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>