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Consanguinity as capital in rights assertions: Japanese-Filipino children in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the material dimensions of ethnic identity claims by Japanese-Filipino children in the Philippines and 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 little or no lived experience of Japan. Although these children and young adults are often called “multi-cultural” by NGO workers, they frequently grow up with no connection to Japan other than an awareness of their Japanese parentage and Japanese cultural products equally accessible to most Filipinos. I argue that filiation can be leveraged to gain access to resources not only through the legal implications that are provided by biological relationships, but also through symbolically salient claims for belonging to a nation or people by virtue of descent. This consanguineal 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.

KEYWORDS

Ethnic identity; capital; discourse; Japanese-Filipino children; Philippines

Introduction

This paper examines the discursive construction of Japanese-Filipino children as “JFC”¹ by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Japanese-Filipino activists in the process of claims-making against the Japanese state.² These NGOs have drawn upon discourses of Japanese descent, universal rights, the “normal” family, and childhood to challenge the Japanese government’s politics of exclusion.

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¹“JFC” stands for Japanese-Filipino Children. It is an acronym coined by the NGOs included in this study.

²The three oldest NGOs in the Philippines catering to migrant returnees from Japan and their children are the Batis Center for Women, The Development Action for Women Network (DAWN), and Maligaya House (“Happy House”). These organizations strongly differentiate themselves from the many newer organizations competing for Japanese-Filipino clients since a change in Japan’s Nationality Law opened new opportunities for migration to Japan. These three older NGOs take a critical stance towards labor migration, especially towards migration into lowly paid, menial work abroad. Moreover, they cite their long advocacy on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos as evidence of their knowledge of the issues and commitment to their clients (cf. Batis Center for Women, DAWN and Maligaya House 2009). The newer organizations that were established in the Philippines’ urban centers within the past decade usually promote employment opportunities in Japan and often act as labor brokers.

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I argue that these claims for recognition by the Japanese State as well as processes of ethnic identity formation by Japanese-Filipinos who have been raised in the Philippines mesh with perceived opportunities in transnational contexts. Debates about ethnic identity ascription and identification thus need to be placed within the context of global economic inequalities³ which afford greater privileges and rights to individuals with certain citizenship rather than others, and within the context of ethnically and racially stratified societies which grant members of particular ethnic or racial groups a greater prestige and sometimes greater opportunities.

I initially embarked on this study after having completed a six-month internship in 2008 at DAWN, an NGO located in Manila. My sojourn in Manila allowed me to participate in and observe the day-to-day workings of the organization. Soon, the importance that NGO workers accorded to the imparting of “Japanese culture” to their Japanese-Filipino clients piqued my interest. One NGO worker explained to me that Japanese language training, learning Japanese children’s songs, and various other activities provided by the NGO to JFC were meant to satisfy a “natural” interest in things Japanese. Most of the children and youths I met at this NGO had never lived in Japan, most had never visited the country, and only a few had ever met their Japanese relatives.

After having completed my internship, the bulk of my fieldwork took place from October 2010 to December 2011 at various research sites in Metro Manila and its vicinity, Tokyo, and Osaka. In September 2009, I joined a conference in Saitama, which concluded a research project on JFC.⁴ During my fieldwork in the Philippines in 2011, I participated in a summer camp organized by the youth organization Batis Youth Organization that Gives Hope and Inspiration (YOGHI) which gave me the opportunity to spend five days observing this organization’s activities.

One important caveat should be noted. Because I met my respondents through NGOs they tended to be of less privileged socio-economic backgrounds. Japanese-Filipinos from more affluent families (who do not need the assistance of NGOs) have different stories to tell.⁵

Japanese-Filipinos born since the late 1970s are a consequence of over three decades of gendered cross-border mobility connecting people from Japan and the Philippines. In the 1970s, Filipino President Ferdinand Marcos sought to attract foreign capital by promoting the Philippines as a holiday haven and a business paradise, opening up the country to foreign investment and tourism. Most businessmen and tourists were male and a considerable number came from Japan.⁶ By the late 1970s, the Philippines had become a favored destination for Japanese men on “holiday sex tours” leading to protests by activist groups. But while the growth in the number of male sex tourists slowed down in the 1980s, these protests

³Citizenship is usually a pre-requisite for access to particular labor markets, thus determining income levels, career chances, and employment opportunities. For Japanese-Filipino children, the economic inequalities between Japan and the Philippines play out in forms of potential opportunities to find paid employment in Japan. Moreover, as Faier (2009) has noted, “[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.” (82) Her migrant Filipina respondents frequently mentioned that they had come to Japan expecting to live in a place “like America,” in a “modern” urban center, which they contrasted to their experience of the Philippines.

⁴The JFC Multisectoral Networking Project, 2011.

⁵cf. Ubalde 2013.

⁶During the 1970s the number of Japanese tourists in the Philippines rapidly increased. In 1970, only 7,204 Japanese tourists visited. By 1973, this number had jumped to 30,072. By 1979, the number of Japanese tourists visiting the Philippines had increased to 190,637. Male visitors made up the large majority (83.7 percent) of Japanese tourists that year. See Muroi and Sasaki 1997, 185.

did not stop Japanese men from purchasing erotic entertainment. By institutionalizing the export of Philippine workers in 1974, the Philippine government had created a channel for Filipinos to seek employment abroad. This provided hostess-bar and night-club owners in Japan with an affordable alternative source of labor from the dwindling pool of Japanese women willing to perform hostess work. This has led to a flow of Filipino women to Japan since the late 1970s on “entertainer” visas to work in clubs, pubs, and “snack bars.”⁷

Although this flow was initially thought to be temporary, Filipino women’s presence as part of the country’s social landscape has become firmly established. As the opportunities for personal encounters increased, Filipino women and Japanese men developed relationships from which children were born. By 1995, approximately one-third of bi-national marriages in Japan were between Filipino women and Japanese men.⁸ By 2014 the number of Filipino nationals residing in Japan reached 217,585, seventy-six percent of whom were women.⁹

Many of these marriages have ended in divorce, a significant number of marriages concluded in the Philippines were not registered in Japan, and some relationships often did not lead to matrimony.¹⁰ Many Filipinas have returned to the Philippines with their JFC after separating from their Japanese partners. Others have remained in Japan, sometimes undocumented.¹¹ The highly gendered migration of Filipinos to Japan has thus produced both social and legal complications which affect many Filipinas and their JFC.

Consequently, Japanese-Filipino familial situations are very diverse, as are their migratory experiences. JFC in the Philippines are frequently non-migrants. More often than not, my respondents were born and raised in the Philippines. Moreover, most of my respondents had never been to Japan except for a few who had visited the country through NGO-organized tours. Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines usually grow up as Filipinos; they are raised exclusively by their Filipino kin, in a cultural environment no different from that of other Filipino children and youth of similar socio-economic backgrounds. Like many of their Filipino compatriots, these Japanese-Filipino young adults and their mothers often desire to live and work abroad. Migration overseas has, since the onset of labor export policies under Marcos, become the primary means for upward mobility. Numerous Japanese-Filipinos based in the Philippines are would-be migrants and potential Japanese citizens who have yet to obtain Japanese passports and cross international borders.¹²

⁷A snack bar is a type of hostess bar.

⁸According to statistics of Japan’s Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare, 7,188 of 20,787 marriages between Japanese men and foreign women in 1995 were with Filipina spouses. See: <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hh/1-2.html>.

⁹See: <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/1431-02.htm>.

¹⁰According to Japan’s Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, Filipina-Japanese couples made up thirty percent of bi-national divorces between 2000 and 2011. See <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hh/1-2.html>, accessed September 30, 2013. According to the Citizens Network for Japanese-Filipino Children (CNJFC), an NGO providing legal support for Japanese-Filipinos seeking Japanese nationality, numerous marriages concluded in the Philippines are not registered in Japan:

Without the notification 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 2005, 7)

¹¹Parreñas (2011) points out that “long-term residency [of Filipino women in Japan] is conditional on marrying or giving birth to a Japanese citizen” (179). The Japanese government has since 1996 extended residency rights to foreign custodians of Japanese citizens.

¹²Japanese-Filipinos are potential Japanese citizens by virtue of having a Japanese father. 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.

This study of JFC reveals a telling picture of the workings of the politics of exclusion which have made some offspring of Japanese men and Filipino women Japanese citizens, and others Filipino citizens. Japanese nationality and citizenship are conferred primarily based on descent, but also on variables such as the sex of the Japanese parent, where the child was born, and the timing of the child's registration with Japanese authorities. Children with Japanese fathers and non-Japanese mothers are also 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. Until 2008, the martial status of the child's parents also was a factor. Thus, an existing biological tie between parent and child does not necessarily guarantee a child's right to Japanese citizenship.

These politics of exclusion have become the bone of contention for affected individuals and the NGOs fighting on their behalf, not merely because, in principle, Japan extends citizenship based on *jus sanguinis*, but also because citizenship reflects membership in the Japanese nation and acknowledges that these JFC are part of Japan's history. The deployment of a discourse of "Japanese blood" by activists in the Philippines is of particular interest as it reverberates with the powerful and pervasive discourse of blood in Japan which remains crucial in the definition of who is considered to be Japanese.

Descent as capital

In their claims for recognition by the Japanese State, Japanese-Filipinos and NGOs that advocate on their behalf have frequently used the idea of "Japanese blood" to establish their links to the Japanese nation and thus their rights to Japanese nationality. In doing so, they have challenged boundaries of the nation implemented through Japan's nationality law. However, these demands for formal inclusion in the Japanese nation are not only driven by efforts to overcome exclusions. The acquisition of a Japanese passport also has the more pragmatic objective of enabling cross-border migration, to Japan or elsewhere. Furthermore, claiming to be Japanese has symbolic implications, since *mestizone* in the Philippines has always been as much about gaining access to an outside world which remains out of reach for most Filipinos as it has been about differences within the Philippines.¹³

Hence, claims of Japanese nationality as well as the construction of Japanese or Japanese-Filipino ethnic identities by Philippine-based Japanese-Filipinos are strategies to accumulate capital and status. Descent can be mobilized and turned into a form of capital, similarly to cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capital, working "like aces in a game of cards, in the competition for the appropriation of scarce goods of which this social universe is the site."¹⁴ I argue that filiation can be leveraged for access to resources not only legally, but also through the symbolically salient claims of belonging to a nation or people, by virtue of descent.¹⁵

¹³Rafael 2000.

¹⁴Bourdieu 1989, 17.

¹⁵Here I subscribe to Fortes (1959) differentiation between filiation and descent: "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" (207). 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

This does not mean that national or ethnic identifications of Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines are *exclusively* strategic. Indeed, numerous Japanese-Filipinos who grew up without their Japanese fathers hope traveling to Japan will help them find a missing piece in their personal histories. However, claims to Japanese culture and descent are more than mere claims to affectionate bonds with Japan; the emotive bond to the imagined second homeland also arises within an understanding of Japan as a technologically and economically “First World” country, as well as within the understanding of cross-border mobility as a road to social upward mobility.

Over the past years, an increasing number of scholars have paid attention to groups of newly arrived young migrants from the Philippines in Japan. The discussion thus far has covered matters related to the creation of categories designating Japanese-Filipino descendants in the context of advocacy,¹⁶ to Japanese-Filipinos’ ethnic identification(s),¹⁷ as well as their migratory experiences in Japan.¹⁸

Hara (2013) discusses the different terminology referring to children of Japanese-Filipina couples as it is used by NGOs as well as it appeared in mass-media over the past decade.¹⁹ She juxtaposes these choices to those made by Japanese-Filipinos themselves and describes how one and the other do not always overlap. Ogaya (2011, 2013) shows how the acronym “JFC” commonly used by NGOs and rights-activists is a category-like designation which is often learned by Japanese-Filipinos once they become members of NGOs. Her young respondents admit that they use the term “JFC” to refer to themselves mostly in the context of NGO activities, but not necessarily in their daily lives or in school.²⁰ Ubalde (2013) demonstrates the importance of context in Japanese-Filipinos’ choices of self-designation as she discusses the experiences of Japanese-Filipinos from yet another angle. Ubalde’s focus lies on those children of Japanese men who enjoyed a privileged upbringing in the Philippines.²¹ Ubalde’s respondents strongly reject the acronym, considering “JFC” to apply only to people in need of help due to abandonment, poverty, and a failed parental relationship. Familial and socio-economic background, as well as the historical and political contexts out of which various terms referring to Japanese descendants have developed, play an important role in how Ubalde’s respondents choose to describe their Japanese-Filipino parentage. Ubalde thus shows that status consciousness plays into Japanese-Filipinos’ choices of how and who they identify with.

Uchio (2015) notes a similar concern with status motivating his Japanese-Filipino respondents to mobilize their European (mostly Spanish) ancestry as well as their English language abilities in their interactions with Japanese. Japanese-Filipinos, he argues, do so “in order to cope with the prevailing prejudice against Filipinos in Japanese society.”²² This also shows that having a Japanese father does not necessarily result in

biological relationships. Moreover, consanguinity can be perceived to derive from descent, meaning from the belief in common ancestors, ethnicity and/or nationality. Indeed, in numerous countries, nationality laws are based on the principle of “blood,” *jus sanguinis*. 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, and Germany. See for example Tsuda 2010.

¹⁶Hara 2013; Ogaya 2011, 2013; Ubalde 2013.

¹⁷De Dios 2012; Uchio 2015.

¹⁸Suzuki 2015; Takahata and Hara 2015.

¹⁹Hara 2013.

²⁰Ogaya 2011, 2013.

²¹Ubalde 2013.

²²Uchio 2015.

being accepted as Japanese. Similarly, De Dios (2012) states that how Japanese-Filipino youth arrive at their ethnic identities is marked by the assertion of differences that set Japanese-Filipinos apart from both “regular” Japanese and “regular” Filipinos. But there are also perceived advantages associated with being of Japanese descent because of opportunities for working in Japan which set Japanese-Filipinos apart from Filipinos.²³

Takahata and Hara (2015) discuss the various factors influencing how migrant youth from the Philippines fare in Japan’s education system. The authors point out the importance of familial and financial situations as well as institutional frameworks and show that Japan is not always the final migratory destination, but may just be a stepping stone in their respondents’ cross-border (and social) mobility.²⁴ Suzuki provides a grimmer depiction of the experiences of migrant youth, contrasting her respondents’ experiences to those of a much smaller group of Japanese-Filipinos who have achieved success in Japan. She shows that migrant Japanese-Filipino youths often become pawns in their mothers’ survival strategies, impeding their academic careers and leading to emotional hardship. Catholic-influenced gender and family ideals, argues Suzuki, make it difficult for JFCs to come to terms with their family situations and often very complicated, challenging relationships with their mothers, once reunited with them in Japan.²⁵

The construction of JFC identity

In the early 1990s, news outlets in the Philippines introduced the emerging “problem” of JFC, whom they labeled “Japinos.” In speaking of support efforts for these children, the then-director of the Batis Center for Women²⁶ 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.”²⁷ When JFC first began to be discussed in the media, they were depicted as abandoned children of broken marriages or the consequences of brief, uncommitted sexual encounters:

... 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 with 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.²⁸

But the portrayal of JFC has shifted since 1992, as Batis and its supporters have assisted increasing numbers of Filipina mothers of JFC who seek help in locating their children’s

²³De Dios 2012, 33.

²⁴Takahata and Hara 2015.

²⁵Suzuki 2015

²⁶The Batis Center for Women (Batis) was founded as a non-profit, NGO in Manila in 1988 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. This coincided with the notorious “Lapin” case, an event which shed light on practices of forced prostitution by club owners in Japan employing Southeast Asian women on “entertainer” visas (See Matsui 1995, 311). Later, the organization moved to Quezon City.

²⁷Kyodo News International 1992.

²⁸Amor 1992.

fathers. As a result, these children are no longer referred to as the accidental babies of Filipino women who went abroad “to lose their virginity to earn,” as one journalist wrote in 1992.²⁹ Rather, they are portrayed as defying the legal boundaries that exclude them from being accepted as Japanese.

However, the term “JFC” still implies that these Japanese-Filipinos hail from problem-ridden relationships, were often born out of wedlock, and were later abandoned. Because of financial difficulties associated with absent Japanese fathers, the moniker also implies lower socio-economic status.³⁰ In addition, it does not necessarily refer to children but can refer to adults as well as toddlers. Therefore, while the acronym seems to merely refer to children of “mixed” parentage, it also connotes generalizations about familial and financial situations and thereby encodes class assumptions alongside assumptions of failed sexual unions.

NGOs tend to occlude age, socio-economic, citizenship, and gender differences among Japanese-Filipinos focusing on problematic cases. Left out are the many families and children who do not join NGOs for various reasons, including their financial situation and family relationships. As Ubalde (2013) argues, these cases reflect the realities of only one part of the Japanese-Filipino population in the Philippines. The generalizing manner in which Japanese-Filipinos are subsumed into “the JFC” has concealed this diversity by highlighting commonalities based on Japanese-Filipino heritage and assumed common issues. The JFC is usually portrayed as an innocent, lively child, albeit with typical handicaps associated with her situation: presumed identity issues, an absentee father, the desire to meet her father, and a desire to experience Japan.

In her observations of DAWN, Ogaya (2011) demonstrates how through participation in groups such as this JFC are familiarized with the JFC label and learn to use it to refer to themselves. Prior to their involvement, children usually just know that they are “children of Japanese.” 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.” Another respondent stated, “I’m ‘normal’ at school. There is an aura in the office that makes me feel that I’m a JFC.”³¹ Identifying as JFC is thus highly contextual and usually confined to within an NGO, which implies that the identity marker may be more important to NGOs than to Japanese-Filipinos.

For instance, during a summer camp organized by the Batis YOGHI in May 2011, the NGO held 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 paper poster, markers, and a *manga* published by Batis YOGHI, group members were asked to draw a problem tree to map out the root causes and current issues faced by JFC. The *manga*, which described three “typical” JFC

²⁹ Amor 1992.

³⁰ The acronym “JFC” is utilized by groups in the Philippines and Japan to popularize alternatives to more demeaning labels such as *Japino* which implies children born to women associated with sex work. “JFC” continues to imply a difficult childhood and failed parental relationships. Moreover, it should be noted that the offspring referred to as “JFC” or *Japino* are not the first group of Japanese descendants in the Philippines. Nevertheless, a semantic difference is made between Japanese-Filipinos born since the late 1970s and the descendants of pre-war Japanese settlers. The latter called themselves *Nikkeijin* (people of Japanese descent), 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.” 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.

³¹ Ogaya 2011, 6–7.

narratives, was supposed to be an inspirational guide. The group I observed did not know what to write. They discussed the *manga* story assigned to them and debated the “right” answers. The most vocal participant, a girl in her early twenties, eventually asked me if what they had written was correct and whether I had any more ideas. She may have asked for my advice since I was older, acquainted with NGO staff, and was there as a researcher. I replied that they should use 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 being Japanese-Filipina.

Rather than prompting Japanese-Filipino participants to discuss personal experiences, the exercise led them to reproduce common representations of the JFC, whether or not these were applicable to themselves. Activities such as this reify JFC as a category, as the goal is to establish a shared identity defined by a set of “typical” experiences, issues, and desires. These experiences and issues are presumed to include discrimination and bullying in school, a lack of self-confidence, and the desire for a “complete” family. Ogaya³² points out that the length of NGO involvement largely determines how much a person embraces “JFC” as an aspect of their identity. Two of her interviewees who declared they were “proud” to be JFC had spent a significant part of their childhood with NGO workers and had joined NGO activities on numerous occasions. These findings correlate with data I collected during my fieldwork. I interviewed several Japanese-Filipino youth (aged sixteen and older) in the Philippines during the Batis YOGHI summer camp and found that those who had been members for the longest time also identified most strongly as JFC. According to Sachiko, who had been a member since aged six:

I think that because we’re all JFC’s we have the same experiences in our lives. And I think that what unite 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.

Yoko, who had joined Batis at aged seven, added:

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 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.

Their participation 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 them to consider themselves part of a larger group of people.

However, not all Japanese-Filipinos agreed that they were united by shared experiences. Japanese-Filipinos are indeed more diverse than the acronym JFC suggests. JFC grow up in various family forms, including nuclear families, patchwork families, extended families, single-mother families, and transnational families. Moreover, these family forms may change. For instance, Japanese-Filipinos may join a relative who has migrated. They may grow up in Japan, the Philippines, and in some cases, a third country. They may

³²Ogaya 2013.

shift residence with both or one of their parents from Japan to the Philippines and vice-versa, or be sent back to the Philippines to be taken care of by relatives when their parents find themselves unable or unwilling to raise them in Japan.

JFC 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 study at a Manila-based Japanese International School, are fluent in Japanese, and visit their relatives in Japan on a regular basis. Alina, a Japanese-Filipina in her early twenties, attended a private school in Manila 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, 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 counters popular assumptions of the Filipina victim and the Japanese predator.

Within the context of NGO activism and claims-making, the development of a JFC identity can have a political purpose. For Japanese-Filipinos such as Sachiko, Yoko, and Atsushi, this shared narrative has taken on the form of a collective memory. Yet this collective memory is not shared by everyone. Toshiro, who joined an NGO at his father’s suggestion, clearly stated that he did not share any of the experiences of other NGO members. Nor did Alina, who had grown up in an affluent household, believe she was adequately portrayed by NGO representations of Japanese-Filipinos. In our interview she made it a point to let me know of her privileged upbringing. “Most of the half-Japanese in the area where I live in Manila are pretty ok – they don’t have problems with money,” she explained. “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.” To emphasize her distinct situation she mentioned her friendships 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 problem with the category “JFC” is not that NGOs identify issues and difficulties faced by a great number of JFC and youth, but that being Japanese-Filipino in the Philippines has come to be conflated with specific problems. The ascription of a JFC identity to Japanese-Filipinos by NGOs, based on generalizations of Japanese-Filipinos as abandoned, born out of wedlock, and facing financial and emotional difficulties, largely stems from two factors. First, how “JFC” as a category is understood and framed by NGOs is largely based on the situation and experiences of individuals seeking the help of support groups. These are usually women who have lost contact with the Japanese fathers of their children, and consequently no longer receive financial support.³³ Second, the depiction of JFC as vulnerable, problem-ridden, and deserving of support is

³³Such narratives are always selected and framed for the purpose of advocacy. As Ogaya (2013) has shown, some of DAWN’s clients resist negative depictions of hostess work 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 breaking with DAWN. Clients leave when they feel membership no longer serves a purpose, or when the NGO is unable to deliver what the client hoped for. Four families who had been affiliated with DAWN when I began my research in 2008 left the organization in the following years to join a different group. According to one DAWN staff member, these families had hoped to be able to secure employment in Japan by joining a rival organization. Three of these families managed to secure Japanese citizenship for the children. The other, a mother and her Japanese-Filipino son, still remains in Manila as they have been unable to locate the son’s Japanese father.

crucial to establishing Japanese-Filipinos' existence as a legitimate political issue. Finally, 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.

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 set of shared issues. JFC identity is constructed by the use of stories that describe the supposed origins of JFC, the provision of resources enabling Japanese-Filipinos to imagine and learn about Japan, and the instilling of a sense of difference separating JFCs and "regular" Filipinos. This process of ethnicization is part of the symbolic struggle on behalf of Japanese-Filipinos to gain recognition of as Japanese from the Japanese government.

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

NGOs characterize the "JFC" as distinct from "regular" Filipinos by highlighting Japanese-Filipino's Japanese-ness and by labeling them "children of Japan." Japan thus becomes a substitute for absent Japanese fathers by likening filiation to national ties. The deployment of global discourses about the child and the family vernacularized into the Philippine context have highlighted the importance of paternal recognition and as such established the father as provider of personal identity, and answer to the unsettling question "Who am I?" "I really want to study the culture of Japan, because that is the root of my life," said Atsushi about his interest in things Japanese, thereby reconfirming his father as source of his identity and Japan as an extrapolation of that unknown Japanese man who, at least biologically, made Atsushi "who he is." Mifune reiterated the importance of exploring Japan and Japanese culture as a way of knowing his Japanese father by proxy:

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 Japan which is seen as the provider of both Japanese citizenship and heritage, notably for children and youth having grown up in the Philippines. In these claims made by Japanese-Filipinos, "birthright" does not merely include nationality and citizenship but also the right "to learn firsthand the ways of our fathers."³⁴

Beneath demands for national membership lays the generalization of kinship ties into an imagined community which forms the core of cultural heritage claims. Indeed, its gist resonates with classic views of one nation, one culture, one language, one state, and one citizenry which have been complicated by intensified cross-border mobility and transnationalism.³⁵ These NGOs support rights assertions by children born from the human mobility that challenges classic views of the (homogeneous) nation, reviving these for

³⁴United Japanese-Filipino Children 2009.

³⁵Grillo 2007, 993.

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 by Philippine-based NGOs without clear distinction and as such reverberate with the cultural essentialism and the effective equation of state, nation, and ethnicity purported by popular nationalist discourses including *Nihonjinron*.³⁶

“Culture” and “race” are commonly used interchangeably in texts produced by Japanese-Filipino NGOs. “The JFC” are often described to either hail from “inter-racial” or from “inter-cultural” unions. For example, in describing the play *The Ugly Duckling* performed by Teatro Akebono in 2001, DAWN said this story could easily be that “of every Japanese-Filipino child, who soon finds that being born of two cultures means never fitting in any of them.”³⁷ This claim assumes that culture is biological, 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 Japanese relatives, nor any lived experience of Japan. In another statement, DAWN reiterated its conflation of culture and 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.”³⁸ Japanese-Filipino members of DAWN also accept this view. Thus Mayumi is quoted as saying, “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.”³⁹

Most JFC spoken for by Philippine-based NGOs are born and raised in the Philippines and learn about Japan mainly through domestic mass-media, stories told by their mothers, and NGO 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 children with what is considered “Japanese culture.” In doing so, support groups contradict themselves by promoting bi-culturalism as an innate quality that can be developed.⁴⁰

Legal status, social status, and the symbolic Japanese passport

JFC and youths raised in the Philippines derive a sense of Japanese identity through images of Japan as well as 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 widespread conflation of ethnicity and social class in the Philippines.⁴¹ Moreover, many Japanese-Filipinos have been confronted with expectations of cultural and linguistic proficiency in Japanese based on widespread essentialist associations of

³⁶A popular collection of writings asserting Japan’s ethnic homogeneity as well as the Japanese people’s distinctiveness, produced notably after World War II and during Japan’s economic recovery. cf. Lie 2003 on *Nihonjinron* and McVeigh 2006 on Japanese nationalism.

³⁷DAWN 2001, 4.

³⁸DAWN 2000, 7.

³⁹DAWN 2010, 71.

⁴⁰DAWN 2002, 12, 2003, 6, 2009, 6.

⁴¹Bulloch and Fabinyi 2009; Satake and Da-anoy 2006.

lineage with cultural practices. Not having been able to live up to such expectations left a number of my respondents feeling inadequate, as illustrated by Mifune:

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 humor 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.

While Mifune failed to live up to his acquaintances' racial expectations, Sachiko was challenged by a classmate who asked her to prove that she was Japanese by passing a test:

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 favorite 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's experience hints at the importance of *mestizone* in Philippine society, where fair skin and *chinito* (East-Asian) facial features are prized. *Mestizone* may inspire envy as it suggests access to a world beyond the reach of most Filipinos who then demand evidence of mastery of cultural and linguistic codes. Sachiko still feels bad about not having been able to demonstrate her Japanese-ness.

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.⁴²

The discrimination Yukari experienced stems from Catholic morality and is not directed at her Japanese lineage per se. However, in combination with her lack of wealth and Japanese nationality, her limited knowledge about Japanese culture, and social perceptions about Filipina "entertainers" in Japan, Yukari's Japanese parentage (reflected in her name and appearance) is stigmatic. Not only is women's work as "entertainers" in Japan largely equated with prostitution, being raised by a single mother still remains a social embarrassment 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'."⁴³

⁴²Excerpt of Yukari's statement presented at the Tokyo District Court in 2011. Yukari is a Japanese-Filipina in her early twenties who participated in a court-case regarding her Japanese nationality supported by the Tokyo-based CNJFC.

⁴³Bulloch and Fabinyi 2009, 136.

Atsushi similarly experienced being questioned by his classmates about why he was so poor, despite his father being Japanese. A lack of prosperity combined with single motherhood and foreign parentage result in speculation 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 can legitimize Japanese-Filipinos as children of Japanese and thus as members of the Japanese nation.

One NGO worker actively supporting a lawsuit aimed at easing the acquisition of citizenship for Japanese-Filipinos explains that for many claimants obtaining a Japanese passport is a means to establish Japanese-ness:

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.

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 personal links with 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 an unfavorable family background. Moreover, being able to obtain Japanese nationality is a status symbol, especially in the Philippines, where cross-border mobility is seen as an achievement in itself.⁴⁴ The geographical mobility associated with a Japanese passport and in particular access to Japan's labor market, provides its bearers with proof of their relative privilege that often is assumed once they are identified, or identify themselves, as Japanese.

A few of my respondents positively emphasized their difference from "regular" Filipinos, a phenomenon also frequently found in narratives by Japanese-Filipinos reprinted in NGO publications. Yukari explained, "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." This view is echoed by others:

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.⁴⁵

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

⁴⁴Kelly 2007, 22.

⁴⁵DAWN 2010, 58.

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 behaviors that people might think are 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'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. Mifune is not alone in believing that his "Japanese genes" shape his behavior or preferences. Yukari 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." According to Natsumi, "Japanese blood is heavier in me than Filipino."

While some of my respondents described how their Japanese-ness could "naturally" surface, they also evoked culture as the key to the materialization of their alleged dormant Japanese side. For example, many brought up their interest in Japanese movies and dramas, *manga*, *anime*, *cosplay*, fashion, music, and food.

Japanese-Filipinos are able to make sense of and give substance to their Japanese ancestry through the consumption of Japanese culture little social experience in Japan. The consumption and knowledge of things Japanese is for them a means of performing Japanese-ness in the Philippines.

Pragmatism in nationality claims

Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines often cannot live up to widely held expectations of affluence, yet ethnicity, class, and wealth are intertwined with the pursuit of Japanese nationality. Although motives for pursuing a claim to Japanese nationality as well as subsequent migration are complex and include desires for self-actualization, family reintegration, and homeland nostalgia,⁴⁶ economic motivations appear to be a key reason. According to Mari, one of my interviewees, "Because as his daughter, my father is Japanese, so I think I have the right to have his nationality as a Japanese. Then, for easy access to Japan. Then, if I decide to go there it will be easy." Yuzuki explained, "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." Atsushi explained that his motives were primarily economical:

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.

Working in Japan is frequently linked to the idea of asserting one's birthright. 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. These pragmatic motivations for obtaining Japanese nationality have remained disproportionately understated in NGO publications as they do not make for "noble" reasons to express interest in membership within a nation-state.

⁴⁶Hara 2013, 11.

Claims of Japanese nationality have been framed by NGOs and politically active Japanese-Filipinos as an assertion of their birthright to explore Japanese culture, an opportunity to meet their fathers, and an ethnic right of return. While these themes also surfaced in my conversations, most of my respondents 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 possible migration destinations. For some of my respondents, Japan is but a stepping stone despite its alleged importance as “second home.”

Leveraging consanguineal 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, moved to Japan at seventeen with his mother. Jun grew up in a middle-class business family and had never joined a NGO prior to getting involved with the CNJFC, which helped him to process his application for Japanese nationality. When his mother first broached the idea of applying for Japanese citizenship, 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 to obtain 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 a cleaner in a hotel, saved money, and returned to the Philippines to enroll in a culinary arts course. After graduating, he returned to Japan and started cooking in a restaurant while still working as a part-time cleaner in a hotel. He used his earnings to buy a condominium in Metro Manila and several DSLR cameras, as well as to travel to the United States, South Korea, Singapore, and Australia. Eventually Jun relocated to Australia, where he found life to be more relaxed. He was able to use his Japanese citizenship to obtain a work visa initially valid for up to one year. For Jun, having a Japanese father had little importance except for economic and travel opportunities.

In a similar case, Haru first moved to Tokyo to join her father. Haru had maintained contact with her father throughout her childhood 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 American boyfriend. Her Japanese passport made it possible for her to leave Japan for the United States in a relatively short time-span, without having to wait for the issuance of a visa.

Still in Metro Manila but having recently obtained his Japanese passport, Kenta envisages resettling in Japan before moving to Canada because, he explained, “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.”

Indeed, a Japanese passport increases mobility, something migrants and would-be migrants are highly aware of. Wanting to gain Japanese nationality is 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.”

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 a Japanese sensibility which individuals like Sachiko, Natsumi, Yukari, and Mifune “feel” and try to perform. The distinction achieved through the mobilization of consanguinal capital plays a part in Japanese-Filipinos’ development of a sense of self. As De Dios 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 socialization 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 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.⁴⁷

Cross-border mobility as means of access to resources is resonant of class privilege.⁴⁸ This privilege is implicitly demanded by NGOs and activist Japanese-Filipinos through an insistence on their constituents’ birthright to Japanese nationality.

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.”⁴⁹ By going to Japan, Japanese-Filipinos not only transform their consanguineal capital into material gain but also accumulate a “worldliness” frequently displayed on *Facebook* through pictures of branded clothes and electronic gadgets, symbols of global consumption and modernity. This worldliness entails their experience of a different environment and acquisition of some degree of sophistication through the accumulation of knowledge in a place deemed advanced. The accumulation of worldliness through migration abroad involves the achievement of high status identity.⁵⁰ 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 Japanese-ness provides Japanese-Filipinos with a marker of distinction. As Bulloch and Fabinyi argue, a Filipino does not need to migrate to attain the “high status identity of the *balikbayan*,” the migrant returnee.⁵¹ Obtaining a Japanese passport provides not only an opportunity to migrate but also a formalized association with modern, “First World” Japan. In a country in which migration is considered a marker of middle-class success yet which is restricted by the limitations imposed by a Philippine passport, a “First World” travel document offers privilege and status. The Japanese passport is thus both a mobility enabling document and a symbolic marker.

Conclusion

The concept of the “JFC” has emerged through NGO and public discourses, as well as through the activism of Japanese-Filipinos who have started to speak on their own behalf. Japanese-Filipinos identifying with the acronym “JFC” and speaking in its name often use similar categories and vocabulary as the NGOs they still are or were involved

⁴⁷De Dios 2012, 31.

⁴⁸Faier 2009, 98.

⁴⁹Ibid., 99.

⁵⁰Bulloch and Fabinyi 2009.

⁵¹Ibid. 138.

with. Nationalist discourses from Japan which potentially exclude Japanese-Filipinos from the Japanese nation are repurposed in ways beneficial to Japanese-Filipinos' and NGOs' own political struggle by utilizing primordial ideas of what it means to be Japanese by highlighting Japanese "blood" as a binding element. JFCs have utilized Japanese descent to support their claims for Japanese nationality, a right to Japanese cultural heritage, a need to explore the land of their fathers.⁵² These ideas underpin NGO projects that teach JFC things Japanese.

The case of Japanese-Filipinos in the Philippines illustrates how ethnic identity can be a political tool in claims-making against a foreign government. The performance of being or becoming Japanese supports claims for recognition and belonging. Community is often constructed around the idea of a common culture and descent, even if these may be questionable,⁵³ thus linking ethnic performance to consanguinity (real or assumed). Therefore, the performance of Japanese-ness 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.

NGOs have endorsed essentialist ideas of "Japanese blood" and framed their Japanese-Filipino clients as Japanese ex-patria, supporting their demand for recognition by their "other homeland." The abstraction of actual filiation between Japanese fathers and their children into politically symbolic blood ties linking JFC as a whole to the imagined community of Japan is part of the ideological work performed by NGOs to mobilize their clients' consanguineal capital.

The Japanese-Filipinos I encountered frequently hoped to transform their consanguineal capital into economic capital via new opportunities for migration to Japan. Indeed, Japanese-Filipinos may potentially acquire a "First World" passport if they successfully fulfill the criteria set by Japanese law that determines citizenship. While this does *not* mean that nationality claims have had *solely* the purpose of enabling upward social mobility, the affective dimensions of identity claims articulate with economic concerns. Cradled in highly managed borders and labor markets as well as within the important economic and income inequalities between Japan and the Philippines, claims of Japanese nationality by Japanese-Filipinos (or by their mothers on their behalf) are intimately linked to their efforts of gaining cross-border mobility as well as to political and material considerations.

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⁵²United Japanese-Filipino Children 2009.

⁵³Fenton 2010.

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