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**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

*Online Hapu Japanese Communities:*

*The Uses of Social Networking Services and Their Impact on  
Identity Formation*

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Sociology of the London  
School of Economics for the degree of Master of Philosophy,  
London, February 2010

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## **Declaration**

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## Abstract

This study examines how Social Networking Services (SNS) are used to form ethnic communities among *hafu* (Half Japanese) and the impact they have on identity formation. *Hafu* is the most common term in Japanese used to refer to people who have two different ethnic backgrounds. The term originated from the name of a popular celebrity group called *Goruden Hafu* (Golden Half) which emerged in the 1970s. Although there has been *hafu* in Japan for many years, *hafu* communities are a new phenomenon and it has only been within about the past five years that *hafu* have begun to form their own unique ethnic communities. The emergence of such communities is strongly linked to the development of the SNS, which has enabled people with similar interests and backgrounds to meet freely through the Internet. It is argued in this thesis that the Internet and new technologies are not only contributing to the formation of new relationships but are also radically transforming the ways in which the meanings and identities of ethnicities are produced. The fast growing mixi SNS service was used as a case study, with qualitative research on *hafu* communities being conducted over a period of one year. The aim of this thesis is to investigate the reasons why *hafu* form online ethnic communities despite the fact that the members have different ethnic backgrounds and do not share the same ethnic history, language, or culture. This study explores the interests *hafu* have in other *hafu* and investigates the motivations *hafu* have in participating in both online and offline events. Through an exploration of the cultural activities engaged in by *hafu* communities, this study address the issues of racial and ethnic discrimination and stereotypes experienced by *hafu* in Japan, as well as issues related to their sense of identity and belonging.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Suki Ali, who always gave me stimulating feedback and supported me during my studies. Her insightful suggestions and patience helped open up to new ideas for me and allowed me to explore my research topic from different angles. The various discussions we had helped to broaden my intellectual horizons, and the skills and the knowledge I have acquired will continue to be useful to me in the future.

I am also grateful to the participants who warmly welcomed me and extended their hospitality to me during my visits to conduct participant observation and interviews. This thesis could not have been written without the enthusiastic cooperation and understanding of my research on the part of those who participated. Regretfully I cannot list the names of all the people who made significant contributions to my research here, but I especially want to thank Jamie Belton and Edward Sumoto, both of whom helped me to gain access to the field and spent long hours assisting me with my project. It was very encouraging to share common goals with them and to know that my research on *hafu* in Internet communities may make a beneficial contribution to our future society. I also appreciate the friendship I have gained, which extends far beyond the research itself.

Special thanks go to Hao Lei, a friend and classmate who is working on a similar topic, and who provided me with support and many stimulating discussions. Because of him, I could enjoy my school life and stay motivated to continue this project to the very end.

Above all, I would like to express my thanks to my family, who supported me both financially and emotionally throughout the study. If it were not my father, I would probably not have studied further at graduate school abroad in the UK. I appreciate him for teaching me how important learning is in life and for encouraging me to pursue what

I really want to do, even though the road may be long and hard. I also want to express a lifetime of thanks to my mother and three brothers, who gave me loving support and understanding.

# **Online *Hafu* Japanese Communities: The Uses of Social Networking Service and Their Impact on Identity Formation**

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1. Research Topic

This study examines the impact that the Internet and new technologies, particularly Social Networking Services (SNS), have had on the ways in which identities and the meanings of *hafu* are constructed through cultural practices. As Back and Solomos (2000) argue, it is important to question meanings attached to race and ethnicity in contemporary social contexts in order to understand the diversity of subject positions available today. While many studies of people with mixed heritage have been conducted recently, little is known about the current specific situation of *hafu* in Japan. Only a handful of studies exist at present. In addition, little has been written about the impact of the Internet and new technologies on the construction of mixed-heritage communities and identities. The Internet has apparently altered the ways in which people communicate, meet others, and understand themselves. Gane (2005) investigates the importance of ‘the information age’ for understanding social relationships, by asking

...whether online interaction simply *adds on* to existing social relationships or in fact transforms them. I would argue the latter. It would seem to me that internet-related technologies *have* directly altered the patterning of everyday life, including the way we work, access and exchange information, shop, meet people, and maintain and organise existing social ties. These technologies have done more than ‘add on’ to existing social arrangements; they have radically altered the three main spheres of social life, the spheres of production, consumption and communication. This is why it is possible to talk of a qualitatively new field of sociological analysis that might be called ‘the information age’. (475, emphasis in the original)

How the Internet transforms the experience and understanding of ethnicities and identities can also be considered within this framework. This intersection between the new media and ethnicity is an emerging area of research which should not be underestimated.

In order to understand the impact that the new media and technologies have on ethnic identities, the specific contexts in which meanings and identities are constructed must also be investigated. It is often assumed that the self can be regarded as coherent, unified, and fixed, but as Song (2003) points out, ethnic identities are contextual, negotiated, and subject to change within certain constraints. The research undertaken in this thesis adopts a social constructionist approach, seeing identities as products which are produced in specific historical and social contexts, and which are, therefore, diverse and not fixed entities. Writing from a social constructionist perspective, Hall (1996a) stresses the importance of culture as a resource for the construction of identities:

Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of using the resources of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation. (4)

Hall's theory will be utilised as a framework for the research presented in this thesis. Specifically the thesis will look at how cultural resources are used to construct the meanings and identities of *hafu* by conducting a qualitative study of both online and offline communities. Hall's theory provides a useful means for capturing the present and future of identities which are ever changing. This thesis will correspondingly focus on the 'becoming' rather than the 'being' aspects of *hafu* in Japan, or on what Gilroy

(1993) calls the 'routes' rather than the 'roots' of ethnic identities. While this perspective is but one of many that could be adopted, it is useful in opening up options for how individuals represent themselves and how they might live their lives both today and in the future.

## **1.2. The Emergence of SNS and *Hafu* Communities**

In spite of the fact that the Internet is a relatively new form of media and tool for communication, it has been widely accepted and many people have quickly adopted the new services it provides. The impact of the new media has been massive, leading many to speculate on how society might change as a result. One of the striking new services which has emerged on the Internet are SNS. SNS are web services designed to build online communities and facilitate communication among friends, acquaintances, and people who share similar interests and/or activities. SNS are transnational in nature and includes users from all over the world. The first SNS sites, such as 'Classmates.com' (1995) and 'SixDegrees.com' (1997), were developed in the mid-1990s. With the appearance of 'MySpace' in 2003 and 'Facebook' in 2004, SNS sites have become even more popular and widely known. According to their websites, MySpace has 200 million active users and Facebook has 130 million.

Although SNS has expanded globally, there remains the problem of how to adapt such sites to local areas. For example, MySpace entered the Japanese market in 2006 but it has not been as successful in Japan as in Western countries, and has, therefore, not been able to become part of the mainstream in Japan. Although SNS have the potential to reach a large number of global users, language barriers prevent many people from utilizing such sites. Cultural differences in how people communicate also impede the formation of global networks.

On the other hand, mixi is a Japanese SNS which is used by the majority of people in Japan and has not expanded its operations significantly outside of Japan. According to a survey conducted by the Internet research service, Dimsdrive, 90% of SNS users in Japan use mixi, with the percentage rising to 96.7% of people in their twenties (Dimsdrive 2007). mixi started its service in February 2004, and despite the fact that membership is only available by invitation,<sup>1</sup> the number of members reached 16.30 million by the end of 2008 (mixi 2008), which suggests that about 1 out of 8 people are using this service in Japan. The users are highly concentrated among young people, with over 50% of people in their twenties using SNS (Dimsdrive 2007).

In addition to technological innovation on the Internet, how these new technologies and services are being used is of great interest. Surveys have been conducted to understand what purposes such sites are being used for in Japan (Dimsdrive 2007). When users are asked what they are doing with SNS, multiple answers are given: reading people's diaries (84.7%), writing diaries (73.8%), writing one's own profile (72.0%), writing comments about other people's diaries (69.2%), looking at footsteps or leaving footsteps (67.9%), sending/receiving messages (60.1%), organising communities/joining communities (50.8%), finding/making friends and acquaintances (43.5%), posting pictures (37.2%), inviting friends/acquaintances to SNS (34.7%), writing introduction profiles for friends (30.5%), reading news (25.1%), posting/reading reviews (14.8%), attending events and offline meetings (12.3%), using calendar/schedule functions (5.9%), and others (1.0%) (Dimsdrive 2007). As can be seen from these statistics, as the number of SNS functions increases, people begin to communicate and socialise with different kinds of people in different ways. For example, while the percentage people using SNS to attend events and offline meetings

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<sup>1</sup> Mixi has announced that the invitation system will be changed to an open membership in near future.

is relatively low at 12.3%, it is significant that people are using SNS to make connections between the virtual and real worlds.

While the above statistics offer a general picture of how SNS are being used, a deeper understanding of the more specific uses of SNS can be revealed through qualitative studies. The main concern of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of how *hafu* (half-Japanese) use SNS and what impact they have on their lives. The approach adopted in this thesis is constructionist in that it aims to investigate how the meaning of the term *hafu* is actively constructed in locally situated contexts by people participating in SNS sites.

*Hafu* is a popular Japanese term which is generally used to refer to people who have one parent who is Japanese and one parent who is non-Japanese. Despite the fact that *hafu* constitute a very small minority in Japan, media representations of them have been increasing. Such representations are mostly limited, however, to attractive, exotic, young females with white ancestry; the lives of other “ordinary” *hafu* remain for the most part unknown. Moreover, the representation of *hafu* in the media is overwhelmingly visual, so that *hafu* become objects to be seen rather than people to be heard and understood. Recently, however, with the emergence of the Internet and particularly SNS, how *hafu* are represented seems to be undergoing a drastic change. The Internet is a relatively cheap<sup>2</sup> and democratic tool, meaning that almost anyone who has access to the Internet can participate in different forms of communication, make new relationships, build communities, and, most relevant to the concerns of this thesis, construct alternative representations of and identities for themselves.

There are over 100 communities specifically related to *hafu*<sup>3</sup> on mixi in Japan. *Hafu* communities emerged and developed in parallel with the rise of SNS sites. Each community is unique and was created to meet different needs and interests. The larger

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<sup>2</sup> mixi and most other SNS can be used at no cost to the user.

<sup>3</sup> This research examined 108 communities on mixi related to *hafu* in Japan.

communities have close to 5,000 members, consisting entirely of people with mixed heritage. How active a community is depends on the community, and communities themselves become more or less active at different periods of time. New communities are constantly being created, and the cultural activities of these communities are fluid, resulting in a high turnover of members. Communities reflect people's interests and there are wide variations in the types of communities which exist. *Hafu* communities may be formed on the basis of, for example, sharing the same language, ethnic background, or appearance. Other communities may be based on common interests, such as art, sports, academic endeavours, and social networking. The existence of such a wide variety of groups may appear anarchic and full of contradictions at first glance. One of the aims of this paper, however, will be to better understand the cultural activities which take place in online communities and to show how ethnicity and the new media interact with each other in the everyday lives of *hafu* in Japan.

### 1.3. Research Questions

Research questions for this thesis were specifically designed to investigate the intersection between the Internet/SNS and the ethnic identities of *hafu* in Japan. The first set of questions concerns the range of cultural activities which *hafu* communities are involved in both online and offline and attempts to discover how and why people become involved in such communities. What the term *hafu* means to *hafu* people is examined from the perspective of how *hafu* relate to each other. The second set of questions considers how *hafu* are represented, particularly in the mainstream media, since the media continues to play a large role in defining popular images of *hafu*. Differences between the dominant modes of representation and the self-representations of *hafu* themselves are then interrogated. The third set of questions focuses on the

problems and needs of *hafu*, and considers how these are being dealt with at present or might be dealt with in the future. Although social science primarily concerns itself with analysing data and developing theories, it must also be capable of suggesting possible solutions to real problems if it is to maintain its social relevance and not remain isolated in academia.

The research questions for this thesis can be specifically articulated as follows:

- 1) What cultural activities take place both online and offline in *hafu* communities?
  - a. What are the reasons why people join these communities?
  - b. How do the participants use SNS?
  - c. How do multiethnic people relate to each other through these activities?
  - d. In what ways do multiethnic people see themselves as being similar to, or different from, other multiethnic people? Do they feel a sense of affinity and closeness, or not?
- 2) What is the role of representation in constructing identities and a sense of belonging among *hafu* people?
  - a. What is the influence of the mainstream media and public images of *hafu* on *hafu* identities? How do *hafu* people themselves accept, negotiate, or resist these images?
  - b. How do *hafu* people self-represent themselves and their own experiences as *hafu*?
- 3) What are the main issues and problems that *hafu* encounter, and what actions are being taken to bring about change and improvements?

- a. How much and what kind of interest do *hafu* people have in the fact that they are *hafu*?
- b. What needs and desires do *hafu* people have as *hafu*?
- c. What kind of communities are being formed and what actions are being taken to address problems faced by *hafu* and to bring about change?

#### 1.4. Motivations for Conducting this Research

The motivation for conducting this research arose out of the shock I experienced as a result of my first encounter with a *hafu* community. In 2004 I was invited by my friend to join mixi, which I did, but I did not pay much attention to it at the time because I was using another SNS. As many of my friends began moving to mixi, however, I decided to shift to mixi as well, mainly to maintain relationships with high school and university friends. Although I have an American father and a Japanese mother, and consider myself a *hafu*, I did not have any interest in other *hafu* then and, moreover, was not interested in communicating with people I did not know. However, this situation changed when I happened to find a *hafu* community on mixi. I do not remember how and why I found this community but I remember that I was surprised to learn that such a community existed, and I was even more surprised to find out that there were so many *hafu* people in Japan and that many of them wanted to become members of mixi communities. After joining a mixi group, I was astonished by the heated and active discussions that were taking place among the members.

Later I became curious about what attracted so many *hafu* people to such groups and wondered what the members might have in common with each other, since the only commonality they seemed to share was the fact that they were half-Japanese and half-something else. There were half-British, half-Korean, half-Peruvian, half-Filipino, and

other half-somethings from all over the world communicating with each other. My original understanding of the term *hafu* was that it referred to a category rather than an identity, which made sense in specific contexts, such as referring to someone who was half-British and half-Japanese. However, I discovered that many *hafu* people are interested in other *hafu* people and that they were asking questions, and sharing their experiences and thoughts with each other. This phenomenon caught my attention and stimulated my interest in investigating *hafu* communities in greater detail.

I soon realised that other *hafu* people joining such communities shared my curiosity. Foreigners represent only 1-2% of the population of Japan and it is very rare for *hafu* persons to encounter other *hafu* unless they go to an international school or belong to a parent's foreign network. For many participants in online communities communicating with and understanding their fellow *hafu* is a new and exciting experience. Because of my educational background, I have had a handful of *hafu* friends throughout my life but we never really talked about our experiences or backgrounds with each other. Definitely I had never previously encountered such a large number of *hafu* as I did when I got involved with a *hafu* community in Japan. The experience was fresh and invigorating for me.

The situation in Japan is quite the different from the situation in England, where foreigners can be found everywhere. I am currently doing my research in London and people often ask me what is so special about doing research on this particular topic, saying 'Everyone here must be a mixture of something. Why bother?' I find it difficult to explain the particular situation in Japan with regard to racial and ethnic matters. In some ways it is important to actually *experience* what it is like to be a member of a particular minority if we really want to understand them. It is hoped, however, that this thesis can contribute in some small way to a better understanding of the recently emerging phenomenon of *hafu* communities in Japan.

## 1.5. Aims and Objectives of the study

This study aims to contribute to the academic literature on alternative understandings of multiethnic identities in Japan. The first aim of this study is to advance knowledge about multiethnic identities in Japan using a non-European/non-North American model (Kamada 2005) and move away from the black-white paradigm prevalent in the US (Oikawa & Yoshida 2007). In addition, this study aims to research the multiethnic identities of *hafu* in Japan by looking at how the media and technology influence the construction of such identities and also at how *hafu* people communicate with each other. Often studies of *hafu* in Japan consider the relations mixed-race people have with the dominant society, i.e., with how minorities relate to majorities. This model ignores the relations minority people have with other minority people and overlooks the conditions by which a minority becomes a minority. This study challenges the tendency to understand *hafu* through the framework of an unconscious national identity.

Another aim of this research is to identify real problems faced by *hafu* in Japan and to propose solutions for these problems. In the process of conducting this research it became apparent that many of the problems faced by *hafu* in Japan today are the result of stereotypes and standardised images coming from the mainstream media. By perpetuating particular images of *hafu* in order to meet the demands of a consumer society, the media occupies a hegemonic position in the social construction of *hafu* identities. The lack of alternative representations adds to the dominance of representations in which *hafu* are idealised. As a result, *hafu* people are under constant pressure to meet the criteria of ‘*hafu*-ness’ created by the media—for example, being bilingual (which often means being able to speak English), and possessing attractive and exotic racial features. Such expectations can affect the education and careers of *hafu*

people. *Hafu* people may be encouraged to study English or international relations, for example, and to seek employment at international companies or in the fashion and entertainment industries. While it is perfectly acceptable for those who want to study such subjects and pursue such careers to do so, others may feel that their options are being constrained because of social expectations. That is, if *hafu* people are identified as belonging to a specific race/ethnicity and culture, and if they do not conform to the social expectations of how people from that race/ethnicity and culture are supposed to act, they run the risk either of being branded a 'failure' or of denying their own race/ethnicity and culture. Of course, there are various ways in which *hafu* respond to such social expectations and many strategies for dealing with them. Some *hafu* do not experience any difficulties whatsoever, while others are troubled about how to deal with their 'mixedness'. Such problems may, however, be more the result of social pressures than of personal failings.

Several suggestions can be made for how the present situation might be changed. First, the process of how the relatively new concept of *hafu* was born and developed, and how it affects people who are labelled by it, needs to be made clear. Second, the under-represented voices and experiences of those who do not fit the stereotyped image of *hafu* need to be given greater prominence. Recognising that *hafu* people have diverse values and experiences will contribute to the realisation that the concept of *hafu* is a social construct, i.e., that ethnic attributes are not 'natural', that such attributes constantly change over time, and that they can be changed on the basis of people's needs. Being exposed to diverse experiences might also help people to affirm their differences and accept others just as they are. However, it is not being suggested that such issues can be dealt with entirely by individuals. Even though it is important for people in general, and minorities in particular, to develop strategies for dealing with their everyday lives, what individuals can accomplish on their own is often constrained

by social forces. Given the fact that social structures constrain individual action, collective dialogue is needed to create new structures which enable minorities to be fully accepted in society.

One potential negative effect of this approach is that it might challenge people's present beliefs, as well as their sense of identity. Having an ethnic heritage is something that many people take pride in; it makes them feel 'special'. In the same way that families often feel united on the basis of kinship ties, members of ethnic minorities may feel united on the basis of the bonds they have with others in their group. Many people wish to maintain some kind of connectivity to their ethnic roots and do not want their ethnic backgrounds to be either denied or undermined. Social constructionism (Longhurst, et al. 2008) challenges such beliefs by suggesting that ethnicity and race are fictional, vulnerable, and even dubious at times. Offering options for how ethnicity and race can be understood may threaten people's stability, certainty, and security, depending on their particular needs. The dilemma can be articulated as a conflict between 'freedom from identity' and 'freedom for identity'. Because the concept of *hafu* is not a private construct, but rather a social and a public one, ways need to be found to address these opposing needs. One ethical issue concerns how the views of those who want to change or dismantle the ideas of ethnicity and race on the one hand, and those who want to maintain an essentialist view of ethnicity and race on the other, can both be accommodated. At first glance, these two positions seem to be opposite and in conflict, but perhaps it would be possible to consider the importance of both freedom and boundaries, and to reconcile these two perspectives with each other.

Ito (2007) suggests that sociology has a unique position in the social sciences. He argues that it is better to understand sociology as having a close relationship with the humanities, with cross-referencing taking place between sociology and fields such as literature and philosophy. In other words, sociology goes beyond empirical analysis and

must also deal with ethical concerns related to human life and death, happiness and suffering, whether in a direct or an indirect manner. Thus, while sociology professes to be an empirical science, it must also address issues which have traditionally been thought to lie beyond its scope.

What Ito stresses is the importance of listening carefully to the voices of those who are being researched. As researchers come to understand the ‘pain’, ‘suffering’, and ‘joy’ of the people they are studying, researchers can share those people’s emotions and sentiments, and thus find themselves directly confronting questions regarding what human happiness is and what human life is all about. Ito refers to Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of ‘symbolic violence’ to criticise researchers who make no attempt to listen sincerely to voices which contradict their own political or social opinions, or who try to understand those voices only through the lens of their own convictions. What is needed is the ability on the part of researchers to reconstitute their own selves and be open to the ‘other’, to accept their own vulnerability, and to take the risk of being criticised and hurt themselves.

Trying to listen to and understand everyone’s perspective is indeed an impossible task, but one final aim of this project is to be as inclusive as possible in presenting the views of those whose voices have been underrepresented in the past. As a researcher, I personally have tried to be reflexive about how the present research might have been shaped by own needs and interests, and to acknowledge that they have undoubtedly had some impact on how the research was ultimately conducted. However, I hope that the research presented here also goes beyond my personal interests and becomes a starting point for negotiating differences in opinions and building more open and democratic ways of utilising ethnic resources and dealing with ethnic problems.

## **1.6. On the Use of the Term *Hafu***

The term *hafu* is derived from the English word *half*, and is an example of how English words are adopted with different meanings into the Japanese language (such usages of English in Japanese are referred to as *Japlish*). The term is of recent origin, having been coined and made popular in the late 1960s by a musical group called *Goruden Hafu* (Golden Half), which consisted of five mainly European-Japanese women and was actively promoted in the mainstream media. Ever since the appearance of this group, the term *hafu* has been used to refer to people of two ethnic origins in Japan. The word generally refers to people whose parents come from any two different ethnic backgrounds, but is often used to refer more exclusively to mixtures of Japanese and whites, rather than to mixtures of Japanese and other East Asian nationalities. Depending on the situation and context in which it is used, however, the term can also be used in a way which includes mixtures of all races, ethnicities, cultures, and nationalities. A belief in the homogeneity and uniformity of Japan resulted in a failure in Japan to make clear distinctions among these concepts, as was the case in Western countries.

In their own research on mixed-race people in Japan Oikawa and Yoshida (2007) decided to avoid using the terms *hafu* (half) and *daburu* (double), a less common term mostly promoted by parents of *hafu* who try to emphasise the double heritage of their children, preferring to use the terms *biethnic* and *biracial* on the grounds that they are more neutral and less controversial. Kamada (2005) went through a lengthy process of eliminating problematic terms such as *hybrid* and *hybridity* because of their unfamiliarity in Japan and also because of their unpleasant non-human connotations (i.e., their usage in plant breeding). She also found that the terms *bicultural* and *bilingual* did not apply to her research subjects since they refer to aspects of cultural acquisition, which is a separate issue from the issue of ethnicity. Finally, Kamada rejected the terms *biracial* and *race* because of their connections to the Western historical context and a

black-white model associated with 'white superiority', which does not fit the racialisation and marginalisation of 'whites' in Japan. She prefers the term *multi-ethnic*, with the intention of overcoming the binary categories implicit in the terms *biethnic* and *biracial*.

The reason for using the term *hafu* in this thesis is not because it conveys a positive image of multiethnicity, but rather because I also went through a lengthy process of consideration, which resulted in conclusions opposite to those arrived at by Oikawa and Yoshida, on the one hand, and Kamada, on the other. A distinction should be made between political correctness (what ethnic people should be called) and how names and categories are actually used, and what meanings are attached to them. Simply replacing one label with another which is supposedly more 'neutral' can mask problems faced by the group being labelled and artificially detach meanings that a specific label signifies. Since one of the themes of this thesis is to understand how different meanings of *hafu* are constructed through particular representations, it will be necessary to continue using this term for that purpose.

To develop this general point in more detail, there are four specific reasons why the term *hafu* has been retained in this research. First, the research does not proceed by starting with particular concepts, such as *multiethnicity* or *mixed race*, and then looking for people who may fit these categories. Rather the research seeks to understand cultures and communities to respect their own self-representations and uses of terminology. Many of the communities studied in this thesis use the term *hafu* either as part of their community name or for the purpose of describing their community. Since *hafu* is the term most commonly used by the actual participants studied, I decided it would be best to use this term in the thesis itself, both because it would be easier to understand by members of the communities studied and also because it would be ethically problematic to use other terms which may misrepresent how the participants

understand themselves. Representation is one of the key issues which will be discussed throughout this thesis.

The second reason for using the term *hafu* is that it fits the regional and national context of Japan. Hundreds of terms are used to categorise people who have more than one ethnicity and there is no consensus on which terms should be used in which specific cases. Proper names, whether they are used to refer to individuals or to groups, are one of the few types of words which are almost ever translated from one language into another. For example, if an English person is named *John*, it is likely that he will be called *John* in Japan and any other countries he visits, although there may be variations in spelling and pronunciation. Similarly, some words and concepts are not translated from Japanese to English, with writers instead trying to preserve the originals by spelling them the way they are pronounced in Japanese (such as *hafu*) and putting them in brackets (e.g., Kamada 2005). Others prefer to translate words which are popular in the US (such as *biethnic*) into Japanese or to use English terms which are close to the meaning of Japanese terms (such as '*halfs*') and placing them in footnotes (e.g., Oikawa & Yoshida 2007). However, while such strategies may give a sense of familiarity to readers, it eliminates the unfamiliarity of the regional context and assumes that the two terms mean the same thing, even though each has a different nuance.

The third reason for using the term *hafu* is that it is the term which is most widely used in the contemporary context. The names given to multiethnic people change over time. It is common for terms which are popular at one period of time to be replaced by different terms in a later period. In Japan terms for multiethnicity have shifted from *ainoko* (a derogatory term originally meaning 'mixed-blood' or 'in-between' people who do not belong to either group), to *konketsuji* (mixed-blood children), to *konketsu* (mixed-blood), to *hafu* (half), the term which is most widely used today. It is quite rare to hear people using any of the first three terms at present.

However, other terms, such as *daburu* (double), *mikusu* (mixed), and *hapa* (a Hawaiian term meaning mixed-blood), are also increasing in popularity, making it difficult to use the term *hafu* exclusively, especially since these terms are often used interchangeably by members of the communities being studied. In this thesis the term *hafu* will be used primarily, but other terms may be used if the occasion calls for it.

The final reason for using the term *hafu* is that it includes specific symbolic images which are not attached to other terms for multiethnicity. Murphy-Shigematsu (2002) points out that the current image of *hafu* in Japan is that they are trendy, sophisticated, cosmopolitan, and fluent in English, and that they also have attractive bodies and possess knowledge which is useful in international situations. If a term for a particular form of multiethnicity changes, the images people have will also change. All such images are historically and socially constructed. One significant question to ask is how *hafu* connect their identity as *hafu* to their specific ethnic identities, e.g., as a British-Japanese or a Korean-Japanese. Are their ethnic identities understood in the same way as their identities as *hafu*? What commonalities and differences might there be between the two? Highlighting the plurality and complexity of such identities can lead to a reconceptualisation of ethnicity and overcome simplistic understandings of ethnic categories.

However, it can be conceded that not everyone will be happy with the term *hafu*. It should be noted that other terms for multiethnicity may be preferred. Some may wish to be thought of simply as Japanese, while others may more strongly identify themselves with the non-Japanese side of their family heritage. Some may prefer to think of themselves simply as human beings. Others may not think about the matter much at all or may have no preferences about how they are called. All of these positions need to be both acknowledged and respected.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1. Mixed-race and multiracial identities in UK and US contexts

It is agreed by most researchers today that *race* is a problematic term which should be understood as a social construct rather than as scientific knowledge. In general, the idea that humans are divided into different kinds of biological groups on the basis of 'race' has been discredited (Bruce and Yearley 2006). Many social scientists argue that the concept of 'race' should be abandoned, not only because of its lack of scientific support but also because of the damage it causes to society (Zack 1993, 2002; Appiah 1996; Montagu 1997; Blum 2002). While various biological theories of 'race', such as monogenism, polygenism, and evolutionism, have been set forth, social scientists have also developed theories of 'race' on the basis of class, culture, ethnicity, and nation (Spencer 2006). At times the term *race* is used in a way which has overlapping meanings with other terms, such as *ethnicity* (Goldberg 1992). The term *ethnicity* has generally been the preferred term for designating a collective cultural identity, however, which allows people who claim to share that identity the space to self-define it (Spencer 2006).

It is useful to briefly introduce ideas about racial mixing in other parts of the world before discussing the Japanese context. Davis (1991) suggests that multiracial identities can be categorised into seven types. For example, South Africa is a multiracial country in which people who are classified as 'coloureds' have an in-between status and receive privileges over other blacks. On the other hand, the US has been strongly influenced by the 'one drop rule'. Christian (2000) argues that this difference is due to

the fact that since whites constitute the majority of the population in the US and the UK, there was no need for a sophisticated racial system to be developed in those countries.

Mahtani and Moreno (2001) are critical of the dominant discourse on mixed-race people, pointing out that there are majority and minority camps within these discourses, which mixed-race people who have neither white nor black backgrounds are often excluded from. In the Japanese context the opposite is true, since persons with black and white mixed backgrounds are not part of the discussion. For the same reason they are also critical of the tendency to mainly focus on people who have mixed black and white backgrounds, since it leads to other mixed-race people being considered not as mixed-race, but only as multiethnic (e.g., Mexican-Chinese).

With respect to the 'one drop rule', Spickard (1992) argues that it is no longer absolute, although it is still powerful in the US. People have begun to choose and construct their own identities since the 1970s, and particularly during the 1980s. This trend has led to the growth of pressure groups and related organisations which demand the government to recognise multiracial people as constituting a separate category (Christian 2000). On the other hand, a boom in biracial biographies occurred in the 1990s (Spickard 2001). Daniel (1999) offers the following explanation for this phenomenon: 'Most single racial identities are given. For multiracial people, you live your racial narrative by creating it' (Daniel, cited in Spickard 2001: 93). According to Steedman (1997), 'we are all of us now living and writing under the autobiographical injunction' (Steedman, cited in Ali 2003: 29).

Thus, the current trend can be characterised as weakening strict dualistic racial boundaries and, instead, recognising the possibilities of mixed-race people as constituting a viable social category in itself (Parker and Song 2001) and increasing their choice of cultures:

Rather than having to assimilate (a word which means to be absorbed, swallowed up) to one dominant culture there would be individual freedom to experiment and choose whatever cultural style one felt was most meaningful. The cultural practices within such a state would develop organically from the mixture and interaction amongst myriad cultural forms; this holistic vision would mean that new synthetic forms might emerge over time. (Bramann 1999: 5)

Moreover, a shift has also occurred away from pathologising multiracials (e.g., Park 1928; Dover 1937; Stonequist 1961; Clark 1967) towards a celebration of their differences and experiences in some academic discourses (Christian 2000; Parker and Song 2001).

However, there are other types of literature which neither pathologize nor celebrate mixed-race and multiracial people. Mixed categories are often included in census forms and other questionnaires which permit people to mark mixed or multiple categories (Owen 2001). Interest in mixed-race and multiracial people on the part of government and society produces mixed-race and multiracial categories, and can lead to census data and statistical information being used both for policy-making and for social control: 'Statistics are not neutral. They both reflect and contribute to important dimensions of difference and power in society, and they are firmly located in the aims and tensions of the society that produces them' (Owen 2001:134).

## **2.2. Racial Discourse in Japan**

Weiner (1997) warns that the temptation to offer a global definition of 'race' should be avoided because it runs the risk of ignoring the historical and national context in which the concept developed. For instance, he argues that while minorities in Japan, such as Koreans, Chinese, Burakumin, Ryukuan/Okinawan, and Ainu, have been defined as different races in Japan in the past, such categorisations do not follow colour-

lines as they do in the West. This argument is further supported by Sato (1997: 119), who gives the example of *dobun doshu* ('same language, same race'), an expression that was commonly used in the past to refer to 'the shared ethnic and intellectual heritage of Japan and China while emphasising the differences between East and West'. However, as Japan attempted to expand its territory in the early twentieth century, a discourse which saw Chinese and Koreans as separate and inferior races from the Japanese was constructed (Sato 1997). On the other hand, Weiner (1997) also notes that there are similarities and continuities in the notion of 'race' since 'race', along with ethnicity and culture, has served as essentialised identity which separates other populations from Japanese, resulting in exclusion and discrimination. Mixed-race people in Japan are no exception.

Although the idea of *othering* (differentiating) has a long history in Japan, racial thinking was introduced during Japan's period of modernization around the late nineteenth century. Weiner (1997) points out that there were two distinct forces which brought social Darwinism to Japan: (1) foreign academics employed by the Meiji state, and (2) Japanese diplomats and scholars who had been positioned overseas.

At Tokyo Imperial University, many *Oyatoi Gaikokujin* (hired foreign scholars) were employed to introduce Western knowledge to Japan. One was Edward Morse, who introduced the Darwinian theory of natural selection in 1877. Morse was a founding member of the Tokyo Anthropological Society and also the first to introduce the study of zoology to Tokyo Imperial University. The works of other theorists, such as Thomas Huxley, Ernst Haeckel, Chevalier de Lamarck, and Herbert Spencer, were also available in Japan. Indeed, the Japanese translation of Spencer's work gained so much popularity that not only was his work on evolutionary theory translated in 1884, but thirty translations of his other works also appeared. This shows how much impact Spencer had on Japan at that time.

In addition, the nationalities of the *Oyatoi* reflected the power and influence of various countries in Japan. Muramatsu (1995) writes that of the 36 most influential *Oyatoi* in Japan, 14 were English, 8 were American, 5 were German, 4 were French, 3 were Italian, and 2 were Dutch. These figures show not only the relative power of these states but also represent the relationships between power and the distribution of knowledge.

According to Muramatsu (1995), the number of *Oyatoi* in Japan peaked at 530 between 1874 and 1875, with another 850 foreigners working in the private sector. The role of the *Oyatoi* was to introduce Western knowledge and also to educate and train teachers so that they could reproduce knowledge by themselves. Thus, as Japanese scholars acquired more knowledge, their dependence on the *Oyatoi* decreased. By 1894, the number of *Oyatoi* in Japan had declined to less than 100 people (Muramatsu 1995).

*Oyatoi* were not only active in the anthropological and biological fields, which produced racial discourses, but were also involved in virtually every subject area. The influence of the *Oyatoi* on Japanese education was immense, changing not only the subjects which were studied, but also institutional structures, teaching methods, textbooks, and even the Japanese perception of the world. As an example, Sato (1997) refers to one of the Western textbooks used in Japan, the *Wilson Readers*, which influenced Japan's perception and understanding of the world and race. The textbook explains that the world is divided into five continents and that people are divided into three races: white, yellow, and black (Sato 1997). Such textbooks functioned as a canonical force to legitimise the idea of geographical and racial divisions as truth, and also drew Japanese into the racial discourse of the West.

On the other hand, Japanese diplomats and academics also learned racial hierarchy by visiting European states and the United States, which contributed to the dissemination of social Darwinism. Weiner (1997) notes that the Japanese uncritically

learned the prejudice and discrimination shown by Americans and Europeans, resulting in the emergence of negative images of 'blacks' in Japan. One example was Kenzaburo Yanagawa, a member of the Iwakura mission of 1871-1873, who absorbed the idea from his American hosts that blacks were inherently stupid and inferior (Leupp 1995).

### **2.3. Attitudes towards Racial Mixing**

Social Darwinism was the dominant ideology in Japan immediately after the Meiji Restoration and influenced ideas about the mixing of races. For instance, in *Nihon Jinshu Kairyoron (Improvement of the Japanese Race)*, published in 1883, Yoshio Takahashi argued that intermarriage with Westerners should be encouraged in order to improve the physical and intellectual stature of the Japanese race (Ishii, cited in Weiner 1997). Four years later Hiroyuki Kato supported the same idea in a book entitled *Nihon Jinshu Kairyo no Ben (A Justification for the Improvement of the Japanese Race)* (Yun, cited in Weiner 1997). Thus, the mixing of Japanese blood and Western blood was perceived as something positive, which could overcome the Japanese being understood as an inferior race.

However, other opinions suggested that mixing the Japanese race with the Western race was harmful. Prime Minister Hirobumi Ito borrowed Herbert Spencer's opinion that 'hybridization between disparate "races" would, as in Latin America, produce disastrous consequences for both' (Stephen, cited in Weiner 1997). These opposing opinions show that Japan did not have a clear and fixed idea of what the mixing of races meant to them. Since the mixing of races was not common in that era, there were few actual cases to test this hypothesis. Moreover, judgements about mixing races, as in the argument given by Ito, could only be supported by referring to other geographical areas, such as Latin America. Ito attempted to generalise a theory that

racial mixing produces 'inferior people' on the basis of his judgement that racial mixing in the specific case of Latin America had been 'disastrous'.

Initially Westerners were perceived by the Japanese to be superior in every way. Whether with respect to knowledge, culture, or race, Japan understood itself to be inferior to the West, leading to the self-perception of Japan as an uncivilised nation. However, as Japan made great efforts to 'civilise' itself after the Meiji Restoration, its perception of itself gradually changed, which also had an impact on how mixed-race people were perceived.

One significant change occurred as a result of interactions Japanese had with non-Japanese ethnic groups both in Japan itself and in Japan's colonial territories. First were the interactions the Japanese had with the indigenous Ainu population living in northern Japan. As Japan expanded its territory into Hokkaido, they encountered the Ainu, who had been inhabitants of the island for a long time. According to Siddle (1997), the Ainu were portrayed in Japanese scholarly discourse as ignorant, primitive, savage barbarians. As a result, the Japanese began to perceive themselves as being civilised, progressive, and modern when compared with the Ainu. While some Japanese were opposed to seeing the Ainu as an 'inferior race', arguing that their supposed inferiority simply reflected a lack of educational opportunity, many others believed that the Ainu were inherently inferior. Siddle (1997) writes about a test which was given to demonstrate that Japanese children performed the best, while mixed-race children and the Ainu performed the worst. A report of the results of the test made the following reference to the mixing of blood:

Mental ability clearly displays a racial [*jinshuteki*] difference, and this difference is reduced by the mixing of blood. Through mixing of blood, superior ability is lowered, while inferior ability is raised....If our race [*waga minzoku*] has no choice but to mix blood, we should choose a race

[*shuzoku*] that has a mental ability not inferior to ours, or at least a race possessing some special mental characteristics. (Ishibashi, cited in Siddle 1997:144)

A similar argument had been made by Yoshio Takahashi and Hiroyuki Kato, which stressed the point that the mixing of blood had an effect on people's ability depending on whether the mixing had occurred with a 'superior race' or an 'inferior race', the implication being that if Japanese mixed with other races, it should be with Europeans and not with Ainu. The discovery of the Ainu made it possible for the Japanese to position themselves as constituting a 'superior race'.

However, while such ideas gained power, government policy regarding distinctions between Ainu and Japanese remained ambiguous, especially with regard to mixed-race people. In 1898, during committee deliberations, a question was raised concerning whether *ainoko* ('half-breeds') should be regarded as Ainu or Japanese (Siddle 1997). A government spokesperson answered that an *ainoko* would be identified as Ainu if Ainu ancestry could be established. If the ancestry was not known, however, then the person would be judged according to his or her phenotypical characteristics; only those who clearly looked like Ainu would be treated as Ainu (House of Representatives, cited in Siddle 1997). This reply reveals that race was only understood subjectively at the time, in accordance with a person's physical characteristics. There was a high possibility that those individuals who did not have clear characteristics, mainly mixed-race people, could pass as Japanese if they did not clearly look like Ainu. In addition, individuals who were a mixture of Ainu and Japanese were identified as 'mixed-blood Ainu' but never as 'mixed-blood *Wajin* (Japanese)', implying that identity was essentially determined in accordance with the idea that the Ainu were an 'inferior race', as opposed to the Japanese (Siddle 1997).

The notion of Japanese racial superiority contributed to the widespread impression that the Ainu were a 'dying race' (Siddle 1997). Mixing between Ainu and

Japanese was thought to contribute to the extermination of Ainu race—despite the fact that mixed-blood Ainu and Japanese continued to be identified as ‘mixed-blood Ainu’, such mixing was thought to contribute to the dilution of Ainu blood in the general population. The head of a group called Docho Social, Shiro Okabe, wrote the following about the Ainu as a ‘dying race’:

Year by year, through the mixing of blood between the two parties, integration [*yuwa*] is taking place, and we are unaware that it is forming the superior Yamato race of which we are so proud. Even if, for instance, the pure Ainu race dies out, should we feel sadness at the extinction of a race? Ah, what is the meaning of racial preservation? In the present century the policies in Nazi Germany for the preservation of the blood of the pure German race are moving racial problems forward into a new area.... (Okabe quoted in Siddle 1997: 150)

This comment indicates that Japanese racial policies were influenced by Nazi Germany and that the Nazis could even be praised for their efforts to maintain racial purity. The difference between the policies of Nazi Germany and the policies of Japan was that while Nazi Germany tried to achieve racial purity through the Holocaust, Japan made an effort to reach the same goal through racial mixing. For leaders in both countries, the extinction of one race was not only unproblematic but also conceived as progress. In Japan racial purity could be achieved through the mixing of two races, resulting in the extermination of the ‘inferior’ Ainu race by the ‘superior’ Japanese race.

## **2.4. Studies of Multiethnic and Mixed-Race Identities in Japan**

Earlier studies of multiethnic people in Japan initially focused on the marginality of *konketsuji* in Japanese society. For instance, Burkhardt (1983) utilised Park and Stonequist’s theory of the marginal man to understand how Amerasians adopted to

institutional barriers and discrimination in Japanese society. He positioned Amerasians as one of the oppressed minorities in Japan, along with *Burakumin* (outcastes based on Japan's premodern social hierarchy), Korean residents, *Ainu* (indigenous minorities in Hokkaido), and *Ryukuan* (indigenous minorities in Okinawa). Burkhardt (1983) contends that Anglo-Indians, the Burgher-Eurasians of Ceylon, and Indonesian Eurasians were not culturally marginal, but rather socially marginal. He writes that each group developed its own marginal subculture and communities in order to deal with their respective problems and also to enhance their collective identity.

However, in other situations, such as the case of Amerasians in Japan and Eurasians in the Malay Peninsula, subcultures to deal with social oppression and to develop a sense of belonging and identity do not appear to have arisen. According to Starr and Roberts (1979), the failure of Eurasians in the Malay Peninsula to develop such subcultures is thought to be partly due to the fact that their population was small and scattered, constituting only one-tenth of one percent of the total population, a situation which resembles the case of mixed-race people in Japan. However, the absence of such subcultures is questionable today, given the ability of geographically dispersed minorities to utilise the Internet for the purpose of constructing ethnic communities. In discussing the politics behind such ethnic allegiances, Ali (2003: 9) notes, 'It is these, the group constructions of belonging and not-belonging, of being included and excluded, that are most relevant to the analysis of inter-ethnic, "mixed-race", inter-national identities, not because they *facilitate* ethnic belonging but precisely because they are *problematic* in their centralisation of communities, groups and boundaries'.

Most contemporary studies of multiethnic people in Japan focus primarily on Amerasians in Okinawa. There are two main concerns in these studies. One is the problematisation of society's negative perception of Amerasians, which attempts to link Amerasians with memories of war and with US military bases (Uezato 1998; Noiri

2001; Seiya 2001; Terumoto 2001; Murphy-Shigematsu 2002). Amerasians are still strongly associated with these two images, especially in Okinawa, since Okinawa was the only place in Japan where land battles were fought between Japanese and Americans, and since over 80% of all US military bases in Japan are located there.

The second interest is in movements that are actively constructing communities in which Amerasians are able to identify themselves as *daburu* (double). Masae Yonemine and Midori Seiya, mothers of Amerasians, helped to establish the AmerAsian<sup>4</sup> School in Okinawa (AASO), together with Kazumi Uezato. This school was built by five mothers who believed that Amerasians should be able to foster double identities by learning two languages and cultures in school (Seiya 2001). Uezato argues that such schools are the best places for Amerasians to develop a double identity and combat discrimination, so that they will not be seen by society as *shima-hafu* (Islander *hafu*)<sup>5</sup>. Thus, Terumoto (2001) highly evaluates the role of AASO in providing a space in which children can feel safe and comfortable, despite worries that learning two languages and two cultures may be an additional burden for the children. While many practical benefits can undoubtedly be gained by attending Amerasian schools, it cannot be denied that, ironically, many parents of Amerasians impose the identity of *daburu* from the top-down, giving little space for their children to determine their own identities. In fact, Murphy-Shigematsu (2002) points out that many Amerasians actually refuse to use the term *daburu*, preferring to use the term *hafu* instead. One explanation for this phenomenon is that many Amerasians see the term *daburu* as being exaggerated and unnatural, whereas the word *hafu* sounds more contemporary and trendy.

## 2.5. Deterritorialisation and shifting identities in the Internet

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<sup>4</sup> At this school the term *AmerAsian* is sometimes spelled by capitalising both *Amer-* and *Asian* in order to emphasise both nationalities equally.

<sup>5</sup> *Shima-hafu* is a discriminatory term used to refer to Amerasians who can speak only Japanese, implying that these children were abandoned by their fathers.

The term identity along with culture, race and nation-state, is connected to the legacy of colonialism. Nishikawa (2001) problematises the concept of identity by pointing out that not only is the concept of culture a relatively new concept which reflects Western values and perspectives, but that identity is also a Western concept which is even newer than culture in its origin and development. Indeed, whereas the word culture was translated into Japanese as *bunka*, the term *identity* could not be translated into Japanese and was simply transliterated into Japanese sound symbols (*katakana*), a device which clearly indicates that it is a term of foreign origin. Nishikawa notes that he was surprised to see how a psychological term first developed to refer to individuals by Freud and later by Erikson in the 1950s became a political term which referred to collective and national identities when it spread around the world in the 1960s. The term *identity* is less used at present to refer to individual identities but rather to draw similarities and differences among people in order to establish collective identities. The identity of ethnic minorities is an issue which is not unique to Japan but rather one which is common at the global level.

Multiethnic identities are entering a new phase of deterritorialisation, leading to the construction of newer identities in the context of increasing globalisation and technological change. New theoretical frameworks can be useful for understanding emerging deterritorialised *hafu* identities which transcend racial and ethnic boundaries. Spencer argues that:

...globalisation does not necessarily entail homogenisation or integration—it means greater connectedness and deterritorialisation, a term that implies that ethnicity is increasingly removed from its traditional base and becomes a floating signifier divorced from connection to a homeland, which is replaced by diaspora space leading to an increase in ethnic pluralism detached from a specific territory. (2006: 219)

Hall (1992) also suggests that one result of globalisation is the creolisation of ethnic groups, in which synthesis and translation occur. From a technological perspective, Morley (1995) maintains that collective identities are changing and being reshaped by a fluid communications environment. Notions of 'place' are being replaced by the idea of 'space', while the older concepts of nation, culture, and ethnicity are beginning to be transformed.

Although these older boundaries may still be relatively powerful, the influence of the Internet cannot be ignored in the construction of identity and community. The literature on the relationship between 'race' and the Internet is noteworthy. While Stone (1995) and Nakamura (2000) introduce studies of how Internet users experiment with different 'races' and identities, Zickmund's study of Internet communities suggests that the Internet is not only virtual, utopian, and liberating, but can also be harmful, using the example of how the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi-based organisations use their websites to propagate racial hatred. Parker and Song's (2007) work, which has been used to construct the main framework of this thesis, provides an outstanding example of how British-born Chinese have utilised websites since 2000 to gain a voice and visibility, and how this has helped to facilitate their self-expression and collective identity, as well as contributing to political and social action with respect to their life in Britain. The Internet has certainly also had an impact on how racial and ethnic ideas and identities are formed in a Japanese context.

As Gane (2005) suggested, the new technologies are radically altering the three main spheres of social life: production, consumption, and communication. The Internet as well can be seen as widening and transforming both cultural identities and social meanings. Rheingold defines a virtual community as a 'social aggregation that emerges from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships' (Rheingold, cited in

Baym 1998: 36). However, virtual communities need not be restricted entirely to an online environment; they are also able to enhance the formation of communities in offline geographical contexts, allowing people to move back and forth between online and face-to-face interactions (Baym 1998; Doheny-Farina 1996; Schuler 1996). To exemplify the significance of the Internet, Gabrial (1998), in his article, 'Assyrians: 3000 Years of History, Yet the Internet is Our Only Home', points out that Assyrians are scattered throughout the world, making the Internet the only space in which they can share their history and enhance their cultural identities.

The situation may be the same for *hafu* in Japan, who have used the Internet to create ethnic communities, a task which was impossible for them to accomplish in the past. This pattern is the opposite from Miller and Slater's (2000) case study, which rejected an identity based on the Internet and instead saw identities in cyberspace as being continuous with identities held in 'real' life. However, *hafu* may be better understood the other way around: the absence of identity (and meaning) in 'real' life motivates them to participate in cyberspace in order to construct those identities (and meanings) collectively.

Baudrillard's (1994; 2001) concepts of *simulacra* and *hyperreality* may be useful for understanding the identities of multiethnic people in Japan, since *hafu* is a newly coined word promoted by the media to lump together different kinds of multiethnic people as a single group. Therefore, it is arguably the case that highly decontextualised and mediated images of *hafu* create an identity for multiethnic people which is more 'real' than the 'real'. Furthermore, the embodiment of such a hyperreal identity can be the basis for the emergence of a third type of category which, as Mengel (2001) notes, transgresses the boundaries of race and shared ancestry by creating identities based on multiplicity and mixedness itself. He suggests that this phenomenon is little known and requires further research, and the aim of my own research is to

contribute to filling in this gap. The decline of 'natural' communities can be linked to Hall's (1996) theory that identities are not natural but socially constructed within discourse, and through the active use of representation.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction: Qualitative Research

Chapter Three presents the methodology used to conduct this research, including how interviewees were selected, how access was gained to the communities studied, how data was collected, and how ethical issues related to the research were dealt with. This study primarily involves qualitative research which seeks to understand the relationships between *hafu* people and the meanings that they construct together about themselves. The research is based on the following assumption provided by Silverman: ‘The methods used by qualitative researchers exemplify a common belief that they can provide a “deeper” understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from a purely quantitative methodology’ (2006: 56). Silverman also points out, however, that there is no agreed-upon doctrine which applies to all qualitative social research. Compared to quantitative research, qualitative research is more flexible and covers a wider range of methods. Hammersley (1992) offers the following list of characteristics which are typical of qualitative research: analysing words and images rather than numbers; showing a preference for naturally occurring data such as observation and unstructured interviews rather than experiments and structured interviews; focusing on meanings rather than on behaviour in order to ‘document the world from the point of view of the people studied’; rejecting natural science as the only model; and generating hypotheses rather than testing them (Hammersley 1992: 160-72).

Having carefully compared the strengths and weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative research, it was concluded that qualitative research provides a more appropriate method for achieving the aims of this study as set forth in the previous chapter. The strengths of qualitative research are particularly suitable for understanding

the phenomenon of *hafu* networks and what these networks mean for *hafu* people. The overall goal of this research is not to make generalisations about the entire population of *hafu* living in Japan but rather to investigate specific *hafu* communities which are emerging on the Internet and in large cities.

Nevertheless, one negative feature of qualitative research is that it often faces the problem of ‘anecdotalism’ (Silverman 2006). Bryman writes in this regard:

There is a tendency towards an anecdotal approach to the use of data in relation to conclusions or explanations in qualitative research. Brief conversations, snippets from unstructured interviews...are used to provide evidence of a particular contention. There are grounds for disquiet in that the representativeness or generality of these fragments is rarely addressed. (Bryman 1988: 77)

This criticism was taken seriously throughout the course of conducting the present research, and an attempt was made to be aware of what conclusions might (and might not) be reached through an analysis of the data. Ideally, a triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative research methods could compensate for the advantages and disadvantages of each. Given that this is an MPhil thesis, however, there were practical issues related to finances and time which made it more appropriate to utilise qualitative research methods exclusively for the present research.

### **3.2. Choosing a Research Site**

Two decisions needed to be made regarding my research site. One concerned which SNS (space) I was going to use and the other which place I was going to conduct my fieldwork in. mixi seemed to be the only SNS which had large *hafu* communities, so the decision to use mixi was made fairly quickly. I had considered the possibility of

using other SNS, such as GREE or Facebook, but none of these seemed to have many users or activities for *hafu*.

As for choosing a place to do fieldwork, I ultimately decided to spend one year doing research in Tokyo. Tokyo is not only the city I grew up in and lived most of my life, it is also the place where most of the activities which I wished to investigate were occurring. Although some activities were taking place in London and also in Kansai (the central area of Japan which includes the cities of Osaka, Kyoto, and Kobe), at the time the research was initiated there were fewer activities in these areas than in Tokyo, making Tokyo an obvious place to conduct fieldwork. I also wished to spend a relatively long period of time with the groups I was investigating so that I could immerse myself in them as an ethnographer and also do participant-observation. Simply conducting interviews and collecting documents online could have shortened the time spent doing fieldwork, but I found that research of this kind would be insufficient to enable me to understand what is going on with *hafu* communities. Therefore, I opted to spend a year doing fieldwork in Tokyo.

I nonetheless planned to do some fieldwork in the Kansai area as well, depending on how much data I could gather from Tokyo and how active the *hafu* community in Kansai was. I found that while Tokyo had several groups engaged in different types of activities, Kansai had mainly one community with fewer participants and fewer events. For this reason I had to be careful in deciding how much time to actually spend in Kansai. As it turned out, the fieldwork in Tokyo went very well, meaning that I did not need to spend as much time in Kansai. Ultimately I made only two one-week visits to Kansai in September 2007 and September 2008, and spent the rest of the time from August 2007 to September 2008 doing fieldwork in Tokyo.

Initially I was not sure what to focus on and how to put reasonable limits on the research I wished to conduct. This problem was eventually resolved, however, by

deciding to conduct interviews and do participant observation in the geographical areas of Tokyo and Kansai, while remaining open to activities being conducted on the Internet through global networks. My interest was limited neither to Internet communities nor to 'real' communities. Rather I wished to look at the interactions between the two in order to discover what kind of impact new technologies and the media were having on the formation of ethnic identities, and vice versa. A discussion of how I gained access to the communities I studied and descriptions of the communities themselves are presented in Section 3.4.

### **3.3. Reflexivity: Considering the Impact of My Own Background**

It is important to state the influence of my personal background on this research. My background of having an American father and a Japanese mother allowed me to join *hafu* communities and also made it easier for me to recruit participants for interviews. On the other hand, this background also produced situated and partial knowledge (Hill Collins 1990; Haraway 1991; Harding 1991, 2004; Ali 2006). Another limitation of the research is that most of the participants in the *hafu* communities which I studied were young people between the ages of 18 to 35. Most of these participants also had a white background, despite the fact that the majority of *hafu* in Japan have an Asian background. The gap between the backgrounds of the participants and the actual demography has had an impact on this research.

While my background may have helped me to gain access to *hafu* groups and individuals, it would be an illusion to think that simply sharing the same ethnic background with other *hafu* automatically means that they would be more willing to cooperate with my research and fully express themselves to me as a researcher. While it is certain that my *hafu* background allowed me to have relatively smooth and easy

access to the communities I investigated, being able to gain deeper access to the extent that I could (for example, attending informal meetings and recruiting interviewees) required the development of personal skills and relationships which are not simply a matter of having a certain ethnic background. It cannot simply be assumed that people from the same ethnic group will always trust and be open to each other. Since my aim was to understand relationships among *hafu* people, I made a special effort not to expect special favours from anyone I met. The term *hafu* only refers to people who have the racial and/or ethnic background of being half-Japanese and half-something else; it makes no reference whatsoever to other important differences between *hafu* themselves, such as where they grew up and how they were educated.

Having a white, English-speaking background and being well-educated may be factors which create friction between researchers and those whom they are researching. Murphy-Shigematsu (2002) writes that he was shocked by and unprepared for the experience he had with Amerasians in Okinawa. Being an Amerasian himself, he expected that people from Okinawa would welcome him into their communities as an equal. He discovered, however, that his background as an English-speaker who had lived in the US and obtained a Ph.D. in psychology at Harvard University actually made it more difficult for him to fit in with Amerasians who were poor, less educated, and did not speak English. Race, ethnicity, gender, class, education, age, and other differences cannot be overlooked when trying to understand the different experiences and positionalities of *hafu*. Although my own personal experiences, feelings, and values inevitably had an influence on my research, I tried, to the extent possible, not to remain caught up in them. Since my goal was not to promote my own personal interests but rather to find a way to respect diversity and resolve various problems, I constantly needed to reflect on my own personal assumptions and values, and to engage in endless negotiations both with external reality and with myself.

### 3.4. Access

Gaining access to the communities studied in this research took place in several stages and involved using different strategies. First, I needed to join as many online *hafu* communities on mixi as possible to get a general idea of the types of communities which existed and the range of their activities. Fortunately I had already belonged to several *hafu* communities prior to beginning this research, so I already knew a little about some of the communities. For ethical reasons (see Section 3.6 on “Ethical Considerations” below) I decided not to even try to join any communities which would not allow me to join. I also decided not to try to join *hafu* communities intended exclusively for women and *hafu* communities not directly related to my own ethnic heritage (for example, Korean-Japanese and Peruvian-Japanese). I did, however, join every community that allowed *hafu* in general to join, as well as communities directly related to my own ethnic heritage (which includes the US, Bulgaria, Poland, the UK, Germany, France, and Japan). Some communities were open to the public while others required the approval of community organisers. Fortunately, I was able to join all the mixi communities that I intended to join and was able to observe what was going on in these communities.

In order to gain approval to join their communities, some organisers insisted that prospective members offer an ethnic profile of themselves and also post a picture of their faces on a profile page. Applicants were often required to include a message concerning what kind of *hafu* they were on their profiles. The profile would then be looked at by the community organiser to determine if the applicant was a ‘real’ *hafu* or not. As for myself, on the one hand, I did not want to do covert research, but on the other, I felt that it would be inappropriate to simply tell everyone that my sole purpose for joining a group was to conduct research. While I did mention in my profiles that I

was doing research on *hafu* communities so that anyone who looked at my page would know that fact, I also tried to engage in impression management by working with 'fronts' (Goffman 1959) and trying convey impressions which were appropriate to specific situations (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). I did not want to appear too serious, as it would make me look suspicious, and I also needed to maintain the impression that I was a decent person. Since I had already had a Mixi account for a long time, the connections I had with various friends helped me to avoid giving people the impression that I 'came from nowhere'. Before and during my fieldwork I worked on building a balanced profile of who I was and what I was doing so that I could mix my personal life with my fieldwork. I believe that this helped me to make better connections with participants during the actual research, and that the participants themselves were able to accept me both as an individual and as a researcher.

After gaining access to the communities I wished to join and building my profile, my second step was to contact community organisers. There were two reasons for making such contact. The first was to ask for the organisers' approval to use information from the community as data for my research. This was especially important in the case of communities that kept information private. The second reason for contacting organisers was to ask if I could meet them and set up an interview with them in the future. This stage in the process of gaining access to the communities I wished to study was crucial since rejection on either of these two points could have put a quick end to my proposed research. It was also important for me to establish good relationships with the gatekeepers of various communities, since the gatekeepers could often introduce people to me and since access to the community organisers is often controlled by them (Silverman 2006).

Fortunately, all of the community organizers whom I contacted agreed to allow their communities to be used for research. However, it was much more difficult for me

to meet the organisers themselves. While some were very cooperative and enthusiastic about my research, others were not interested in the project. A few did not reply to my inquiries at all. There was a clear tendency for the organisers of communities which were isolated and not so active to be less cooperative. Many such organisers said that there was no point for them to meet me since not much was going on in their communities and the organisers themselves did not have much to say. Another impression I had is that women were less willing to meet with me than men, presumably because they wanted to avoid meeting strangers, particularly male strangers. The larger and more active communities were all run by men and it was easier for me to gain access to these communities. In some cases the organisers wanted to recruit more members, while in other cases they were interested in gaining publicity or felt it was their duty to support research which involved the communities they organised.

My first pilot participant observation was conducted in London in November 2006 with the group, Half-Japanese UK (HJUK). Over twenty people attended this event, and the response I received made me confident that the research I wanted to do on *hafu* communities was both worthwhile and possible. The first *hafu* community activity I joined in Japan was a beach event held at Enoshima (near Yokohama) by the group Hapa Japan in August 2007. Since I did not know anyone at this event, I thought it would be easier to make initial contact by bringing two of my younger brothers (who are also, of course, *hafu*) with me. This event was crucial in helping me to establish a network with *hafu* people in Japan. Not only did I have the opportunity to meet many members of the Hapa Japan group itself, but I was also able to establish contacts at this event, which led to doing fieldwork with a group called HArts in Tokyo and later with a group called Mix Roots in Kansai. Any worries I may have had about whether people would accept me or whether I could actually conduct my fieldwork in Japan disappeared once I experienced the warm hospitality of the members of Hapa Japan. I

also explained my research briefly to the members at that event and many of them expressed an interest in it. This experience reminded me of the importance of having what Silverman (2006) refers to as ‘bottom-up’ access, which means not only gaining access to the organisers of a community but also building strong relationships with the general members. Most of the people I conducted interviews with were recruited through events such as the one just described.

### **3.5. Data collection and Analysis**

Multiple methods were used for the present research, mainly combining participant observation, interviews, and the collection of online documents. These approaches were used not only because the data collected through methodological triangulation corroborate each other (Mason 1996), but also because the different kinds of data collected through these methods is helpful for understanding the intersection between online social life and ‘real’ social life. However, as Hammersley and Atkinson point out, simply collecting more data does not necessarily mean that we will obtain the whole picture: ‘One should not adopt a naively “optimistic” view that the aggregation of data from different sources will unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture’ (1983: 199). Silverman also writes about the strengths and weaknesses of using multiple methods: ‘Such triangulation of data seeks to overcome the context-boundedness of our materials at the cost of analysing their sense in context’ (2006: 121). Silverman warns that multiple methods cannot appeal to a single ‘phenomenon’ since social reality is constructed in different ways in different contexts.

The reality I am trying to understand also cannot be reduced to one single phenomenon nor can the data accumulated from different sources simply be added up to form a better ‘truth’. The data presented in this study are different types of data

collected in different contexts. Nonetheless, these different types of data should not be looked at in isolation from each other; taken collectively they may be useful in understanding how different realities intersect and connect with each other.

### 3.5.1. Participant Observation

Participant observation is a key research method for ethnography, which helped me to make connections with members of *hafu* communities and also served as a means for collecting field notes. In a general sense, participant observation is fundamental to social research. Atkinson and Hammersley write,

In a sense, *all* social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being part of it. From this point of view, participant observation is not a particular research technique but a mode of being-in-the-world characteristic of researchers.  
(1994: 249)

Participant observation makes it possible for the researcher to see the world through the eyes of the people being studied and is particularly useful as a tool for studying naturally occurring phenomena. Participant observation involves both participation and observation but the balance between the two depends on the strategy of the researcher. In my own case, I felt it best to place more emphasis on participation than on observation, since observing people from a distance would have seemed inappropriate and made me stand out. Since most of the events I participated in were for socialisation, I tried to take part in the events to the extent possible. Nonetheless, I also made it clear to people who asked me that I was doing research on *hafu* communities. While this strategy enabled me to be an observant of the people I was studying, it also made the interviewees more willing to respond to the questions I wanted to ask later on. In the

process of conducting my fieldwork, I believed that it was necessary to maintain a balance between myself as an individual and myself as a researcher. On the one hand, being too impersonal would not have provided me with sufficient access to the people I wanted to study and could possibly have prevented them from expressing themselves more openly to me as a researcher. On the other hand, as is well-known, getting too close to one's subjects can lead to a researcher's loss of objectivity.

Notices for most of the events I attended were posted on mixi. Community organisers also utilised these postings to recruit members and to attract new faces to events. Since mixi is a tool for communication, it allows participants to see the details of the events being held and to get information about such items as how many people are planning to attend, who is attending, and so on. Moreover, participants can communicate with each other by accessing a discussion board beforehand, which enables them to ask questions and greet each other so that it is easier when they later meet face-to-face. The discussion board also allows people to meet each other in small groups before joining the main event. The information I gathered from participant observation was thus supplemented by data made available directly by the Internet community. A list of the events I have attended in connection with my research is given in Appendix A. Although it would be better to describe each event in detail, since space is limited I will only describe the three most significant communities I was involved with. These three communities were chosen because they were the only ones that held events frequently. References to specific events and to other communities not described in detail below will appear in the data analysis presented later in this thesis.

#### **3.5.1.1. Hapa Japan**

Hapa Japan is the largest and one of the oldest *hafu* communities in Japan, intended to help *hafu* make 'real' friends with each other. *Hapa* means 'mixed-blood' in Hawaiian and this term is also commonly used in the US to refer to people of Asian heritage. Hapa Japan was founded in October 2004 by Sam Baron, who is half-Japanese and half-American. The group is dedicated to organising 'real' social events rather than simply engaging in online activities. The group states that since its second year of existence it has been hosting at least one event each month. Typical events include parties and seasonal events, such as Bonenkai (parties held in Japan towards the end of the year to 'forget the old year') and Shinenkai (parties held near the beginning of the year to welcome the new year), Hanami (cherry-blossom viewing parties), beach and barbeque parties, and any other activities which the members want to engage in. Hapa Japan portrays itself as a group in which the members are very friendly and it is easy for newcomers to make friends. The community has been very active and has grown rapidly as a result. The following notice for an event planned to celebrate Hapa Japan's fourth anniversary conveys something of the nature of the group:

#### HJ4A: Hapa Japan 4th Anniversary

The largest social club for hapas/haafus/doubles/mixed race individuals presents HJ4A to celebrate their 4th Anniversary. Over the past four years Hapa Japan has grown to represent over 1300 members to create the largest club of its kind with regular monthly events. Members are typically in their mid-20s and represent a variety of fields from entertainment, art, finance, academics, IT and much more. Come and enjoy an "international school" atmosphere with haafus from all walks of life representing all continents of the world against a backdrop of club/house music. DJs: Sasama Shinichiro, Taro Maruyama, DJ TOKI, Rex Smith. (Taken from Hapa Japan's community front page 3/1/2008)

The organiser, Sam Baron, is from an international school, and many of the members are bilingual and tend to like Western-style parties and clubbing. Members are typically in their 20s and working, although students over the age of 18 also constitute an important part of the group's membership.

Despite the fact that 74.9% of all international marriages in Japan are between Japanese and other Asians, with Chinese representing 33.0%, Filipinos representing 21.6%, and Koreans representing 20.3% (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare 2007), there are very few mixed-Asians participating in Hapa Japan and the other *hafu* communities I investigated. My speculation is that *hafu* who look visibly different from Japanese are more likely to embody a *hafu* identity and also to have interest in other *hafu*. This is consistent with society's perception that *hafu* are mainly people with a Japanese and white background. Although international marriages between Japanese and people from Western countries is relatively small, with Americans representing 4.2% and British representing 1% of the total (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2007), the majority of participants in Hapa Japan and other *hafu* communities have a Western background. As it is quite typical for *hafu* who have parents from Western countries to go to international school and be educated in English, the idea of creating a group which has an 'international school atmosphere', as mentioned in the notice quoted above, is understandable. The fact that *hafu* Asians are underrepresented in the group, however, says something about issues of race in *hafu* communities and also about the type of people who are likely to join *hafu* communities and see themselves as *hafu*. This tendency was not apparent in online communities since it is often difficult to discern what kind of ethnic background the participants have simply by interacting with them online. It cannot be concluded, therefore, that online space is dominated by *hafu* with Western backgrounds. A demographic survey of online *hafu* communities would be interesting to conduct, but it was outside of the scope of the present research.

In the interview I conducted with Sam Baron, I was told that the reason he started Hapa Japan was to meet people who are similar to himself and who also went to international school. After graduating from high school, many of his friends from international school went overseas for university and he missed these people after becoming more integrated into Japanese society. In the past it had not been necessary for him to make a community to meet other *hafu*, but after most of his personal friends and acquaintances left Japan, he decided to make a small community so that those who remained could get together again and also welcome new people to join them. Baron wanted to create a friendly environment in which people who were similar to each other could get together informally, without having to perform duties or follow troublesome customs in which older and younger group members are treated differently, as is common in Japanese groups. It is a Japanese custom for *senpai* (seniors) to patronise *kohai* (juniors) but the group provided a space to escape from such customs. Initially Hapa Japan consisted mainly of *hafu* who shared the same background of having gone to international school. Gradually, however, the community expanded and began to welcome anyone who is *hafu*. Baron said that many of the first members of the group are now gone and that the community has dramatically changed; it is now much larger and more diverse than when it first started.

I found Hapa Japan to be a very stimulating community, with a diverse range of activities. I was moved when I first saw over hundred *hafu* in a room together having a party. It also seems to be a shocking and moving event for other *hafu* to find themselves together with so many people who are ethnically similar to themselves, unless they have previously had the experience of going to international school.

### **3.5.1.2. HArts**

HArts is the second community which I worked closely with. HArts is an artists' group for *hafu* who are interested in painting, music, poetry, sculpture, architecture, film, design, and other arts. The group was established in April 2006 and now has over 250 members. The name *HArts* was coined by Jamie Belton, a professional artist himself, by combining the words *Half (Hafu)* and *Arts*, with the idea of representing both the multiple identities of the participants and their artistic interests; the name is also a homonym of 'hearts'. In addition to organising HArts, Belton is a member of Hapa Japan. Prior to starting HArts, Belton noticed that there were many members of Hapa Japan who were interested in art, and he thought that it would be worthwhile to collaborate with each other and do something together as a group. Belton also wanted to succeed as a professional artist, and one of his motives for starting this group was to create an environment in which he himself could be constantly producing and exhibiting his artwork. After a period of not painting, Belton decided to invest his energy and time in HArts, meaning that the group is not simply a hobby for him or something he does in his free time.

Belton believes that *hafu* have a unique artistic sensitivity. He was raised by an English father and a Japanese mother, and lived in London when he was young. After Belton began painting, he found himself being constantly told by Japanese that his art looked 'foreign' and by non-Japanese that his art looked 'Japanese'. He concluded that his art was in fact unique since it combined different styles and also had an original blend of influences as a result of his background. Other members of HArts shared Belton's convictions, and combining different aspects of their ethnic identities has been a theme of their art as well. The goal of many members of the group is to express their two cultures in a way which can be found neither in Japan nor in a foreign country. They aim to establish their artwork as a 'brand' which is recognised by the public. One of the group's main activities is holding exhibitions where members can exhibit their

work. Since many *hafu* are treated as ‘foreigners’ in Japan, HArts also values social and cultural exchanges in which people can meet and share their differences, and open up to each other in a more ‘international’ way.

In 2008 the group initiated a new art exhibition series called ‘Hartism’. The name was chosen to reconfirm the members’ identity as *hafu* artists, with the idea that the art they created would be recognised as a school of art or a historical movement (as with Impressionism, for example). As of January 2009 the group had held three ‘Hartism’ exhibitions. A one-day event held on September 2008 attracted around 500 people and also received publicity from national and local newspapers and radio stations. Since it is impossible to evaluate the artistic merit of the group’s art in a research project such as this, no critique of their work is included. Those who have seen the group’s work can judge for themselves whether the art is ‘good’ and the extent to which it represents a unique *hafu* sensibility. For the present research, my main interest was to determine what the participants in the group were actually trying to do with their art. For example, how does art help them to express and represent their identities? What does working together with fellow *hafu* artists mean to everyone involved? In other words, while the art itself could not be examined in the present research, the social process of how it was created could be.

### **3.5.1.3. Mix Roots Kansai**

Mix Roots Kansai is a unique group which is trying to achieve many goals at the same time. The group is located in Kansai and is virtually the only ‘mixed’ community that holds events and engages in activities in that area. Although Mix Roots Kansai, with 280 members, is quite small compared to Hapa Japan, it has been active in organising a wide range of activities. In the past the group has sponsored Halloween

parties, beach barbeques, art exhibitions, lectures and discussions, concerts, and many other events. The community was founded in February 2006 by Edward Sumoto as a local branch of Hapa Japan. However, the group later changed its name to Mix Roots Kansai so that it could include a wider range of people with a variety of different cultural and racial roots. 'Roots', for Sumoto, indicates the basis for one's identity at the present time. The community expanded their membership to include not only *hafu*, but also 'quarters', *Nikkei* (foreigners of Japanese descent), and other people with multiple heritages. Sumoto felt that since the problems faced by such people are similar, it would be more beneficial if Mix Roots Kansai did not limit itself only to *hafu*, but instead tried to expand itself and create a larger movement.

Another unique characteristic of Mix Roots Kansai is that it tries to organise events aimed at a wider range of age groups. For instance, the group sponsors family events at which the parents of *hafu* can bring small children, although other events are planned only for adult *hafu*. Sumoto wanted to promote dialogue between *hafu* and their parents, and also to bring *hafu* grown-ups together so that they could potentially present themselves as role models for younger *hafu*. The idea was to provide a place where parents could discuss issues of child-raising with other parents and *hafu* themselves could share their childhood experiences. Mix Roots Kansai has an element of being a self-help group in that it tries to promote better social welfare and to strengthen the local community by promoting both diversity and mutual understanding. The group has sponsored charity events in the past in connection with UNICEF and their local community centre. Mix Roots Kansai has also collaborated on several occasions with HArts and the two groups continue to work closely together on joint art exhibitions.

Moreover, Mix Roots Kansai is planning to become an NPO at some point in the future to expand their activities. The systematic organisation, solid goals, and enthusiasm for charity of Mix Roots Kansai is perhaps related to the fact that the

organiser is employed by the United Nations. Sumoto is more dedicated to education and social dialogue than to simply planning events for fun. While he tries to organise events which are entertaining and attract a large number of people, he is also keen to organise study groups and promote social services which not so many people may be involved with. The activities of Mix Roots Kansai have been reported on in many newspapers and magazines, as well as on television, both domestically and internationally. Sumoto was honoured by his local government as the young person from that area who had contributed the most to society. Mixed Roots Kansai has been expanding its activities beyond the Kansai area by organising events in Tokyo, broadcasting its own radio programme, and sending out news and information via mailing lists and websites.

Because I was only able to be in Kansai for one week in September 2007 and one week in September 2008, I did not have a chance to do much participant observation with the Mix Roots Kansai group. However, I was able to participate in a concert and exhibition, and a charity event held in connection with UNICEF during my first visit to Kansai in September 2007; I also attended a hip-hop charity event held in Kawasaki, near Tokyo, in June 2008. In addition to the formal interviews I conducted with him, Edward Sumoto and I have often exchanged opinions and information with each other. As a result I was able to build a strong personal relationship with him, which enabled me to understand the work of Mix Roots Kansai better, despite the fact that less data was collected for this group through participant observation.

### **3.5.2. Interviews**

After doing participant observation on a number of occasions with the groups described above, I then began to set up interviews with selected people. Interviewees

were mainly recruited from the people I had met while doing participant observation, although in a few cases I set up interviews with people I had established contact with on the Internet but who did not participate in events. I chose to do semi-structured interviews since this type of interview allowed me to ask questions which were directly related to my research questions and also because it provided space for interviewees to address their own concerns in their own language. According to Noaks and Wincup (2004), conducting semi-structured interviews requires the skills of probing for more information, establishing rapport with interviewees, and keeping in mind the overall aims of one's project. I tried to provide a comfortable and friendly environment for the interviewees, but I also made sure that I could go through all of the questions that I wanted to ask. Although I prepared many questions, the interviews often turned out to be closer to open-ended interviews, in which my purpose became one of acquiring 'rich data' through 'active listening' (Noaks and Wincup 2004). There were at least three points I needed to pay attention to when the interview style shifted from a semi-structured to an open-ended interview. Fontana and Frey summarise these points as follows:

1. deciding how to present yourself, e.g. as a student, as a researcher, as woman to woman or simply as a humble learner
2. gaining and maintaining trust, especially where one has to ask sensitive questions
3. establishing rapport with respondents, i.e. attempting to see the world from their viewpoint without 'going native' (2000: 655)

In the case of my own interviews, I adopted these points in the following manner: I decided to present myself as both a researcher and a *hafu* who shared similar interests and concerns with the interviewees; I attempted to establish a good relationship with the interviewees during the participant observation period and to maintain a good

relationship with them throughout the interview process, assuring them that anything they told me would remain confidential; and I tried to understand and sympathise with the values and interests of the interviewees, although I occasionally allowed myself to challenge these values and interests so that I would not simply become a passive advocate for the interviewee.

Except for the initial pilot interview, all of the interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and stored on an iTunes device, which were later transcribed and used for ethnographic analysis. Since the interviews were mainly conducted in the Japanese language, the transcripts were then translated by the author from Japanese into English. The interviews were typically conducted at cafés, although other locations were utilised when it was more convenient for interviewees, including eating dinner with interviewees after work and going with them to a pub. The standard time for one interview was approximately two hours, but in some cases the time was extended to three or four hours. I attempted to interview community organisers first so that I could find out more about their communities while simultaneously asking about their personal motives for being involved with these communities. Later I began to conduct interviews with community members, keeping in mind the need to maintain ethnic diversity and gender balance in order to avoid bias. In a few cases I intentionally set up interviews with *hafu* who did not participate in *hafu* communities so that I could gain some insight into which kinds of people were more likely to participate in *hafu* communities and which were not. The interviews proved to be particularly useful in providing information which could not be gained through participant observation. Often it was not clear from participant observation alone why individuals were motivated to participate in *hafu* communities. The interviews also allowed me to obtain a deeper understanding of what these individuals thought about the communities they belonged to and their activities. A list of the people interviewed is provided in Appendix B.

Although many people belonged to more than one community, the name of the community where I encountered them is given in parentheses after the country of origin. Where appropriate, the role of the person within the group is also given in parentheses. The date the interview was conducted is given last. A single asterisk indicates interviews with non-*hafu* people who are nonetheless involved with *hafu* activities and who are significant figures. A double asterisk indicates material recorded at events other than interviews, but which nonetheless provided opportunities to engage in more informal conversations with *hafu*.

### **3.5.3. Online Documents**

Online documents formed an important part of the data collected for the present research because they provided an understanding of how *hafu* communities use the Internet both as a means for organising social events and as a tool for *hafu* people to communicate with each other. For the purposes of this research, it was crucial to simultaneously examine both online and offline activities in order to understand the contexts in which the Internet is being used (Mackay 2005). Internet communities do not exist solely online but also often involve face-to-face interactions which occur offline (Baym 1998; Doheny-Farina 1996; Schuler 1996). In recent years, it has been acknowledged that the Internet not only serves as a methodological tool for social research but is also a legitimate ethnographic field site, which gives Internet communication the status of being a 'culture' (Hine 2005). Qualitative research which makes use of the Internet is widely conducted at present, including ethnographic research (Hine 2000).

I collected a wide range of data from a variety of Internet communities, including data from discussion boards, top-page introductions, events posting boards,

and online surveys. All the online data from mixi was stored in Microsoft Office OneNote. A list of the relevant Internet communities was prepared and, for purposes of convenience, organised in accordance with the following eight categories: (1) 'General'; (2) 'Socialising'; (3) 'Art'; (4) 'Image'; (5) 'Roots'; (6) 'Regional'; (7) 'Appearance/Language'; and (8) 'Other'. It should be noted that some communities could be placed in more than one category. The quantity of online documents amounts to more than 1,000 pages in total. The list appears in Appendix C.

### 3.5.4. Other Data Collected

Other data was collected in conjunction with this research in addition to the data collected from participant observation, interviews, and online documents. E-mails were an important source of data, which helped me to keep track of what I had done and provided a record of the groups I had succeeded or failed in gaining access to. E-mails also show how my relationship with the participants developed over time. I have not used data from e-mails for the data analysis section of this thesis since I have not gained permission from the relevant persons to use this data, although I did keep this data for my records. I decided, however, to use information from specific mailing lists for the data analysis section since the persons who sent me this information approved of its use for this purpose. Additional data was collected from websites and other Social Network Services. The larger and more active *hafu* communities often had websites and multiple SNS, such as Facebook and GREE, as a way to diversify their means of communication. Although the amount of information gathered from websites and SNS was not large, it was helpful for understanding the strategies *hafu* communities use to communicate with each other, expand their groups, and target potential members in different ways and in different languages. Finally supplementary data was obtained in the form of written

documents, including a few essays given to me directly by *hafu* members; I also often received brochures at events which I attended. These documents often contained valuable information, which was ultimately used in the data analysis for this thesis.

### **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

Fortunately, I did not encounter any severe ethical problems such as those sometimes faced by other social researchers. Since my aim was to understand *hafu* networks and communities, most of the research involved public rather than private matters. However, occasionally during interviews, interviewees would reveal personal information which needed to be handled with special care. Such revelations were often unexpected since they were not specifically prompted by the questions I had asked but seemed instead to arise out of a need on the part of some participants to address personal issues in their own lives. The anonymity of these interviewees has been maintained and their identities have been protected throughout the course of this research.

Another ethical issue was deciding whether permission was needed to use information obtained from a given source on the Internet. Ethical aspects of online research are often debated in the context of what is to be regarded as private and what is to be regarded as public (Rutter and Smith 2005). As mentioned above, I obtained approval to use data from those communities which regard the information on their sites as private, but I did not obtain permission to use data from those communities which regard the information on their sites as public. There is a need to respect how the community organisers themselves wish their information to be regarded, i.e., whether they wish information to be thought of as public or private. There has been confusion on the Internet on this issue. Since it is not known how the producers of content define the

status of the information they provide, it has commonly been thought that it is up to consumers (and researchers) to make such judgements. However, technological changes have allowed some producers to self-define the status of the information they provide. Moreover, as Rutter and Smith (2005: 89) argue, 'Just because talk takes place in public it does not mean that that talk *is* public'. The dilemma here is that it would be impractical to try to obtain permission from the author of each posting, but, at the same time, it should not simply be thought that it is ethical to treat every posting as public. My approach to this problem was not to treat information mechanically as private or public but rather to be sensitive with regard to specific topics and contexts (Rutter and Smith 2005).

A final ethical concern is related not to the procedural problem of how to deal with participants, but rather to the issue of the overall purpose of this research. As Ali and Kelly (2004) point out, ethics involves more than prescriptive codes of practice since it deals with much wider issues in all areas of knowledge production. Although I was ultimately the one who performed the data collection and analysis, I wanted the participants in my research to take an active role in deciding how this project should be shaped, specifically by discussing the project design with them and allowing them a voice in determining what should be included (or excluded) and in deciding how the work should be presented. This approach was based on the thought that one of the key goals of my project is to investigate the self-representations of multiethnic people, which often involves resisting oppressive representations prevalent in society. I believe that my role as a researcher should not be to reproduce such oppressive representations (Ali *et al.* 2004), but rather to contribute to change and to promote the well-being of the participants and those with whom they interact.

## Chapter 4: Popular Images of *Hafu* and How They Are Consumed

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the various reactions *hafu* have towards popular images of themselves, especially in the media. According to Hall (1980), television programmes (and by implication other forms of text) should be understood as meaningful discourse involving a complex cycle of production and reception. In what is now regarded as the beginning of audience studies, Hall used the concepts of encoding and decoding to suggest that meanings are not simply produced top-down by broadcasters who encode messages but are also actively produced by audiences who decode those messages. Hall identified at least three different ways in which the meanings of a text might be read: ‘dominant-hegemonic’, ‘oppositional’, and ‘negotiated’ (1980: 136-8). These analytic tools can be used to understand the unstable and changing meanings of the term *hafu*, while also focusing attention on the diverse positionalities of those who use this term and on the complex struggle between how *hafu* are represented and how they see their own identities. The relationship between representation and identity should be further understood in the context of a broader interrelated process, referred to by Hall (1997) as the ‘circuit of culture’, in which production, consumption, regulation, representation, and identity mutually influence each other. Identity is one of the domains in which social meanings are constructed, but ‘culture’ and broader social contexts must also be taken into account in order to understand this process.

Most of the literature on *hafu* looks at meanings which are produced between *hafu* (as individuals) and society (i.e., Japanese society) (Kamada 2005; Lise 2008; Oikawa & Yoshida 2007). The danger of this approach is that it repetitively produces similar types of discourse (e.g., ethnic ‘othering’), which results in broad generalisations and overlooks other forms of discourse produced in different local contexts, such as in online environments and *hafu* communities. Focusing attention instead on a model of the circulation of meanings shifts the question from ‘What is *hafu*?’ to the question ‘How are various discourses of *hafu* constructed in different local contexts?’ There is not just one answer to this latter question, but rather a plurality of possible answers, depending on which aspect of the phenomenon (production, consumption, regulation, representation, or identity) is being focused on. Considering how *hafu* in online communities react to popular images of themselves provides a rich understanding since online communities provide *hafu* with an opportunity to actively engage in forming discourses on *hafu* by exchanging views and opinions through writing. This process results in an ongoing dialogue among *hafu* people about what the term *hafu* means to them. While many of the participants in online communities are aware of the images of *hafu* portrayed in the mainstream media, they also have an opportunity to construct alternative images of themselves in an online environment by communicating with each other. In this chapter, naturally occurring data taken from the voices of *hafu* on online discussion boards are used for data analysis, supplemented by data from interviews, both of which is useful for understanding how *hafu* respond to popular images of themselves in the media.

## **4.2. How Images of *Hafu* Are Produced and Consumed**

Before considering how *hafu* respond to popular images of themselves, the cultural context in which such images are produced needs to be mapped out. It is important from the very start to understand why and how popular images of *hafu* are produced and consumed. Many people may be bewildered and wonder why images of *hafu* have flooded Japanese society, given the facts that *hafu* constitute a very small minority in Japan and that many Japanese may have never actually met a *hafu* in person before. In attempting to answer this question, the current ways in which images of *hafu* are used as a commodities and brands in the market, as well as how these images are consumed by the general public, need to be explained.

The manner in which images of *hafu* are produced and consumed in contemporary Japan is strongly related to the legacy of Enlightenment values which became prevalent during the post-war Americanisation of Japan. Even earlier, starting with Japan's modernisation in 1868, there had been conflicting views about 'Western superiority' and 'Japanese superiority'. Which discourse prevailed was constantly changing and depended on the circumstances at any given time. As Nishikawa (2001) points out, Japan has experienced recurring cycles of Westernisation. Post-war Japan was highly influenced by a wave of American culture and values. Not only did Japan embrace democracy, freedom, and human rights, but it also enthusiastically accepted American culture. Fast food, film, drama, music, fashion, and other consumer goods were imported into Japan and influenced the country's own cultural industries. As Japan rapidly rebuilt itself in the post-war period and eventually became one of the world's largest consumer societies, attention was given to localised forms of 'global' foreign culture which were regarded as more acceptable than local forms of Japanese culture. This strategy continues to be employed by transnational corporations under the rubric of 'glocalisation' (Robertson 1995).

Mixing Western and Japanese culture became so popular in Japan that it soon became normal to hear both Japanese and English lyrics in songs with Western-style music. Mixing cultural and racial backgrounds began to be favoured by the entertainment industry in Japan, not only with respect to the cultural products being created but also with respect to the people creating it. As mentioned in the first chapter, the term *hafu* was coined in the late 1960s by a music group called *Goruden Hafu* (Golden Half) as a replacement for the older, derogatory term *Konketsuji* (mixed-blood children). The intention was to discard the negative image of mixed-race people as war victims and replace it with an image which portrayed mixed-race people as cool and attractive celebrities. This shift in how mixed-race people were perceived paralleled a shift that had taken place earlier: whereas Westerners had been portrayed as beasts and animals during the Second World War, they were regarded in the post-war period as the representatives of highly developed and civilised countries. Demand for images of *hafu* arose from the need to localise Western culture, with hybridity, multiculturalism, creolisation, transnationalism, internationalism, cosmopolitanism, and related concepts which refer to the mixing, multiplicity, and reworking of boundaries being seen in a positive light as creative and desired future-oriented characteristics. It can be argued, however, that the old categories did not disappear and that value is still attached to pure forms of culture which have not been mixed with other forms of culture. In other words, a new category such as *hafu* adds to the existing repertoire of categories to be consumed as yet one more brand or genre, which can be seen as a continuation of the hegemonic power of white Western culture.

What all of the foregoing adds up to is a boom in the consumption of images of mixed-race people. This phenomenon has occurred not only in Japan with respect to *hafu*, but can also be seen in other parts of the world. DaCosta points out, for example,

that the consumption of multiraciality in the market has a strong influence on racial formation in the US:

Even before the Census 2000 reported multirace statistics, images of multiracials were used to sell things. While certainly not ubiquitous, depictions of multiracials as *such* began to appear with some regularity during the 1990s. Advertisements for items like jeans, sneakers, laundry detergent, and pain relievers depicted mixed race people both well-known and anonymous. Multiraciality itself is becoming a branding tool. Unlike target marketing, in which a message or product is created to appeal to a particular demographic, this kind of marketing uses multiracialism to appeal to a mass audience. By definition, such images created before there were statistics and industry research reports on multiracials, rely on stereotypes, clichés, and dominant ideas of racial mixedness. (2007:163)

The uses of mixed-race images in Japan is similar in that the target market for such images is a mass audience which is attracted to the mixture of white and Asian features in *hafu*. The creators of these images do not want them to be too exotic, however, so that audiences can still feel familiarity and racial closeness. Japan has a long history of using mixed-race images but the quantity of these images has definitely increased since the year 2000, to the extent that the phenomenon can now be regarded as a boom. Such images, as noted by DaCosta in the above quote, are typically stereotyped, providing a standardised image of a particular type of *hafu*. As a result, such portrayals have contributed to the image of *hafu* as attractive, cool, and exotic mixed-white ‘bodies’ who are fluent in English and in some way ‘international’ (Murphy-Shigematsu 2002). Despite the fact that the term *hafu* cannot be equated with mixed-race white bodies or with cultural attributes such as the ability to speak English, the production of *hafu* images attempts to fix this image in order to create a specific brand.

Initially the term *hafu* was used only in connection with popular images of mixed-race people. Later, however, the meaning of the term gradually expanded until it

was used to refer to anyone who is half-Japanese. In fact, one study shows that the definition of *hafu* as half-Japanese (i.e., in the sense of being mixed-blood) did not appear in a major Japanese dictionary until the Sanseido Publishing Company published the *Kojirin* dictionary in 1973 (Die Kreuzungsstelle 2007). It is also significant that this dictionary used the term *hafu* in a way which suggested that the term refers specifically to mixed-blood women. This gendered definition of *hafu* reflected the general perception in Japanese society that the term refers mainly to attractive, mixed-race women with a white background. This trend continues into the present, as evidenced by the fact that a majority of *hafu* models are woman.

Many half-Japanese use the term *hafu* to describe themselves even though they may not fit the stereotyped images of *hafu* found in the popular media or the definitions given of them in dictionaries. Some *hafu* see this as part of a struggle to be properly recognised, given the fact that those who do not conform to mainstream media images of *hafu* may be marginalised or treated as exceptions, even failures, because they do not meet the ‘standards’ required to qualify as *hafu*. In other words, for marginalised *hafu* a gap exists between how they are popularly represented and how they perceive their own identity. Even *hafu* who do not feel marginalised may feel that the superficial images of *hafu* found in society do not provide a basis for relating to themselves and constructing their own identities. This struggle and resistance is quite apparent among those *hafu* who engage in online discussions to express their thoughts and feelings about the issue. Other *hafu* may be indifferent to the topic, however, while still others may be favourably disposed to popular images of *hafu*, which typically cast *hafu* in a positive light, since such portrayals may make them feel ‘superior’ in some way. These different reactions on the part of *hafu* to how *hafu* are portrayed in the media fit Hall’s (1980) theory of the diverse ways in which media texts are received, which sees texts as being interpreted in accordance with various positionalities and meanings, and as being

actively constructed by audiences. The following section will present a data analysis of how popular images of *hafu* are read by and communicated among *hafu* themselves.

#### 4.3. *Hafu* Models and Celebrities in the Media

The previous section discussed the role of *hafu* in the popular media in Japan. In the present section the specific case of *hafu* models and celebrities in the media will be considered. Not only are mass audiences in Japan interested in *hafu* models and celebrities, but *hafu* themselves are also interested in this topic, to the extent that it frequently appears in discussions among online *hafu* communities. In one such discussion a new article on the current trend of using female *hafu* as models and *tarento* ('talent'—the term is used in Japanese to refer generally to well-known media figures) was posted, with participants being asked to give their reactions. The article itself appeared on the Mixi news site; such articles are frequently used as source material for discussion topics, particularly when an article refers to something new going on among *hafu*. The Japanese title of the article can be translated into English as follows: 'Show Business Today: Beautiful *Hafu* Women Who Are about to Burst onto the Scene' (Gendai-Net 17 March 2007). The article begins by introducing some of the new young *hafu* women who, it is predicted, will become the next stars in the media. What makes the article especially interesting is its analysis of why beautiful *hafu* women are popular. According to the article, it is harder to find models and *tarento* who are 'pure' Japanese, which accounts for why there are so many opportunities for *hafu* to become models and *tarento* now. In the past there was no boom in *hafu* models and *tarento* as there is now, although famous media figures such as a *Goruden Hafu* and Linda Yamamoto, a singer and *tarento*, have appeared in the media. Furthermore, while *hafu* previously could not

be found in the field of journalism, this situation has also been rapidly changing.

Kitagawa offers the following analysis:

In the past, *hafu tarento* have been seen through the eyes of discrimination, since some of their fathers were part of the US occupying army; however, recently such prejudices have disappeared and *hafu tarento* are more accepted by the public. At present *hafu tarento* are regarded as idols because of their good looks and ability to speak foreign languages. It is useful for TV stations to use *hafu tarento* since they attract attention....Perhaps Japanese people have complex feelings towards Western society in their hearts. They are longing for Western culture but at the same time, they have pride and do not want to surrender their own culture completely. Beautiful *hafu* women are tickling the complicated psychology of Japanese men. (Gendai-Net 17 March 2007; translated from Japanese to English by the author)

Kitagawa's analysis sharply grasps the rapid change in society's perception of *hafu* and the media's need to use *hafu* instead of 'pure' white models. According to Kitagawa, Japanese are willing to accept Western culture but since such acceptance might lead to a surrender of Japanese culture, it must be modified and negotiated in ways which are not too threatening. *Hafu* are used in the media to represent such negotiated forms of Western cultural acceptance. Moreover, Kitagawa suggests that the impetus to create such negotiated forms of acceptance is coming mainly from Japanese males. This explanation is questionable, however, since only a few *hafu tarento*, such as Leah Dizon and Anna Tsuchiya, are widely known by Japanese males, while the majority of *hafu* fashion models are known only to women, given the fact that they mostly appear in women's fashion magazines. If such is the case, then the 'complicated psychology' mentioned by Kitagawa should also be applied to women. Gendai-Net's article goes on to suggest that in order to achieve a negotiated image of Western culture, *hafu* who look more Japanese will be popular while *hafu* who look more Western (white) will be unpopular. The article ends by predicting that more half-Chinese and

half-Filipino models and *tarento* will appear in the future, indicating that the media business is one step ahead in terms of ‘internationalisation’. An increase in the number of Asian *hafu* appearing in the media suggests the potential for greater plurality and a breaking of the white-*hafu* dominated model industry.

#### 4.4. Oppositional and Negotiated Readings of Popular Images

The next section examines how *hafu* responded to Gendai-Net’s article in online discussions. Respondents’ comments are given first, followed by an analysis.

*Respondent 1:* I was really upset reading this article and I decided to make this community immediately. ^^: [http://mixi.jp/view\\_community.pl?id=1975997](http://mixi.jp/view_community.pl?id=1975997).

*Hafu* are treated as if they are commodities and I really hate people who envy them but do not understand anything....I’m *hafu* (Egyptian and Japanese) and look completely foreign. Therefore, I’m never treated as a Japanese in Japan and I’m also treated as foreigner in Egypt because I look foreign there, too. I’m tired of being treated as foreigner anywhere I go.

But it really makes me sad and angry being told that being *hafu* is like a tool to look cool when I’m accepting myself as *hafu* and trying hard! Really, what are people thinking? (*Hafu*, Quarter, Nikkei, Mixed Blood 07:44:21 March 2007; translated from Japanese to English by the author)

In this comment, the female respondent expresses her rage towards the article. She feels that the Japanese public does not understand anything about what it means to be *hafu*.

Instead, people only envy *hafu* from a superficial point of view because of their ‘looks’ and supposed abilities (e.g., being able to speak a foreign language). She then goes on to discuss her personal background, and her experiences of looking completely foreign and being treated as a foreigner. There is an obvious dissonance between the article’s idealised view of *hafu*, which corresponds to how *hafu* are popularly portrayed by the media, and the respondent’s own perception of herself. Her personal struggle to overcome the ethnic ‘othering’ of *hafu* (Kamada 2005; Lise 2008) is mentioned, while she also complains about the tendency of the Japanese public to be ignorant about and indifferent towards *hafu* except as commodities. She shifts attention away from images of *hafu* in the media towards the experience of what it is like to be *hafu* in everyday life, attempting to bring a fuller understanding of *hafu* which is not based on how attractive a person is but rather on the extent to which that person is accepted by society.

This alienation and lack of acceptance suggests the limited role that *hafu* have been expected to play in Japanese society. In Pearson’s words,

The only haafu role models I can recall were figures in entertainment or sports, rife with associations of sexuality and virility. You won’t find us haafu in the hallowed halls of political power or the boardrooms of major corporations reserved for the ‘truly’ Japanese. As a haafu friend once put it, ‘you never get full admission to the club’. (2005:3)

In the same way, the respondent to Kitagawa’s article indicates that such perceptions actually prevent her from being accepted into society, as well as from being able to build her own identity as *hafu*. The angry tone of her comment provides an example of an oppositional reading of the discourse that *hafu* should be seen primarily as attractive models. The dissemination of such images of *hafu* by the mainstream media is regarded as dehumanising by the respondent, since *hafu* are simply commodified and not provided an opportunity to enter into other realms of society.

It is also significant that this respondent took action by making a new community of her own in order to express her feelings and thoughts about Kitagawa's article with others. The original discussion of Kitagawa's article took place in a very large community called '*Hafu*, Quarter, Nikkei, Mixed Blood', which has over 5,000 members at present, but the respondent decided to create a separate community specifically for those who are aware of and interested in this topic. The respondent posted a link to her new community and developed a space where people could further discuss stereotypes of how *hafu* are envied in Japanese society and share their opinions about this topic. The community is named 'Don't Say It's Nice to Be *Hafu*!' and currently has over 300 members. The top page of the community's site lists many of the stereotypes *hafu* repeatedly hear in their everyday lives:

- I'm envious of *hafu*.
- *Hafu* are nice because they are pretty and cool.
- It is best because *hafu* have good qualities from both countries!
- I wish I had been born as a *hafu*.
- *Hafu* are beneficial.
- It is cool to have foreign blood inside oneself.
- You are *hafu*! Of course, you are bilingual?
- Please say something (in a foreign language)
- Which parent is a foreigner?
- Which do you like better: Japan or your foreign country?
- Do you go back to your country during the summer vacation?
- Can you speak Japanese?
- You should be a model!
- Being *hafu* really has advantages!
- I want to marry a foreigner and have *hafu* children!

- *Hafu* are fashionable
- *Hafu* are cool; they all stand out
- I want to go out with *hafu* because I can brag about it
- I feel good just being next to a *hafu*
- Being *hafu* is not fair ('Don't Say It's Nice to Be *Hafu*!' March 2009; translated from Japanese to English by the author)

This list provides examples of comments frequently heard by *hafu* people which are intended to be positive but which in fact may make *hafu* feel unhappy or uncomfortable.

In Hall's (1996) terminology, it is the simplification of representation rather than a lack of representation that these *hafu* are against. Hall, referring to the situation of blacks in the UK, writes,

These [political and cultural practices] formed the conditions of existence of a cultural politics designed to challenge, resist and, where possible, to transform the dominant regimes of representation—first in music and style, later in literary, visual and cinematic forms. In these spaces blacks have typically been the objects, but rarely the subjects, of the practices of representation. The struggle to come into representation was predicated on a critique of the degree of fetishization, objectification and negative figuration which are so much a feature of the representation of the black subject. There was a concern not simply with the absence or marginality of the black experience but with its simplification and its stereotypical character. (1996: 442)

A similar cultural politics of resistance with respect to dominant representations is also practiced by *hafu* communities, although it is mainly engaged in to challenge positive images of *hafu*. *Hafu* are objectified rather than treated as subjects, and images of *hafu* are distorted in ways that allow them to be more easily consumed by the public.

Community formation occurs as a result of actions taken to engage in resistance.

*Hafu* respond to comments which annoy them by creating communities in which they can share opinions with others who have had similar experiences and attempt to change the attitudes of those who envy them or make insensitive comments about them by promoting a better understanding of *hafu* themselves. Such communities also provide a space in which *hafu* can utilise their collective voices in order to engage in a wider dialogue with society in an attempt to eliminate both positive and negative images of themselves, since their dialogue is open and available to the public.

Researching such communities is a very helpful way to understand how popular images of *hafu* are received by *hafu* themselves. Care must be taken, however, not to conclude that the opinions expressed in such communities represent the views of all *hafu*, or even a majority of *hafu*, given the fact that most of the people who join these communities are already opposed to how *hafu* are popularly portrayed in the media. Negative and critical comments are more likely to appear on such spaces, a fact which can affect research outcomes and which should be noted by researchers investigating mixed-race or *hafu* communities, particularly if they have a tendency to privilege such dissident voices. In the case of the present research, while several other communities of *hafu* who were clearly opposed to popular media images of *hafu* could be found, no communities were found in which the members were in favour of such images. Of course, this does not mean that there are no *hafu* who are in favour of popular media images, but may merely indicate that those who are opposed to popular images of *hafu* are people who tend to assume more power and take more initiative within *hafu* communities. Nonetheless, the kind of discourse found in *hafu* communities about popular media images is directly opposite to the kind of discourse found in the Japanese public, where *hafu* are mainly seen as constituting a certain 'brand image'. In my own experience, having observed many online discussion boards, it is apparent that anyone

expressing a favourable view of popular media images would be subjected to a barrage of counterarguments (and in some cases ‘bashing’), which would naturally tend to inhibit those holding favourable views of popular media images from expressing them online. The result is an atmosphere in which some opinions may be silenced or expressed in modified form rather than stated explicitly on discussion boards.

Instead of seeing dissident voices as expressing the unanimous opinion of a community, it would be better to see *hafu* communities as forming a movement in which *hafu* who share similar political goals can construct loose alliances with each other. A simplistic framework which sees, on the one side, the Japanese public constructing stereotypes of *hafu* and, on the other side, *hafu* communities fighting against those stereotypes cannot be assumed. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note how it is possible for *hafu* to make such loose alliances. Although members of *hafu* communities may not share the same ethnic or racial background, they may still be united as *hafu*. Once again Hall provides an insightful analysis, using the example of a ‘black’ identity:

What these communities have in common, which they represent through taking on the ‘black’ identity, is not that they are culturally, ethnically, linguistically or even physically the same, but that they are seen and treated as “the same” (i.e., non-white, “other”) by the dominant culture.  
(Hall et al 1992: 308)

The same can be said about *hafu*: it is not that *hafu* are culturally, ethnically, and physically similar to each other but rather that society treats them as ‘the same’ (i.e., as *hafu*). This implies, however, that if society did not treat *hafu* as ‘the same’, there might not be a *hafu* community. It is interesting to note that the emergence of *hafu* communities occurred at the same time during the past ten years as the so-called ‘*hafu* boom,’ when popular representations of *hafu* began to dominate the mainstream media. It can be arguably concluded that one of the factors leading to the creation of *hafu*

communities was the homogeneous treatment *hafu* received from society, i.e., the communities were created as a reaction to this treatment.

The next comment is also a reaction to the Gendai-Net's article referred to previously.

*Respondent 2:* I feel 'ke' [an expletive in Japan expressing disgust] rather than anger about this article. I feel sick that such low-level articles can be published in magazines. I feel that *hafu* are fixed in a too easygoing way and portrayed in a too fashion-like manner. If the media wants to give attention to *hafu*, I want them to dig down to the marrow about cultural matters and take this up as a topic.

I'm an Asian *hafu*, so I feel I'm on the lucky side in that I'm not pointed at by people and told 'You are Foreigner!' in Asian countries. But as soon as I speak my other mother language, I feel very sad [when people say] 'Korean women are...' and begin shifting the conversation to sex talk.

I have a good feeling when people start to have an interest in a person's cultural background, like in food and language, but especially for women, these *hafu* gravure [a term used in Japanese-English to refer to glossy magazine photographs] idols don't have any connection with one's cultural background?? I get sick when such images are used in these kinds of places. (*Hafu*, Quarter, Nikkei, Mixed Blood 10:51 22 March 2007; translated from Japanese to English by the author)

The comments of this respondent provide an example of an oppositional reading of popular images of *hafu* from a different point of view. The respondent is not angry about how *hafu* are represented, but rather sad and depressed about the publication of such an article. She specifically dislikes images of *hafu* being ‘fixed in a too easygoing way’ and consumed for fashion purposes, but she thinks it would be legitimate and desirable if the media took an interest in the cultural aspects of being *hafu*, for example, in matters of food and language. The respondent’s privileging of ‘culture’ over ‘appearance’ implies that in order to be truly understood, *hafu* need to be understood from the ‘inside’ (e.g., in terms of customs) rather than superficially from the ‘outside’ (e.g., in terms of appearance). Her proposal for producing an alternative discourse can be analysed as a negotiated way of reading *hafu* representations. The respondent is clearly against the dominant mode of representation but is not against the idea of representation itself. She manages to make a distinction between ‘right’ representations and ‘wrong’ representations by making a division between ‘culture’ and ‘body’, and privileging the former.

The way that the body is consumed is perceived as a form of sexual exploitation. Through her use of the expletive *ke* and the word *sick* several times, the respondent expresses her disgust towards the article’s depiction of women. This strategy is similar to one reported in another study, in which an adolescent *hafu* girl responds to unwelcome comments from a boy by reversing the power relationship between them. Kamada describes the strategy as follows: ‘She positions his actions as “stupid” and “sickening” as she turns the situation around to marginalize him instead of allowing herself to be marginalized’ (2005: 167).

Respondent 2 draws on her own experience of others talking about Korean women in a negative way when they find out that she is half-Korean. The fact that the people talking to her shift to ‘sex talk’ indicates that ethnic foreignness signifies

sexuality for these people and that the respondent has become the object of a sexual conversation. The respondent draws a parallel between her experience of how women are sexually consumed and how the media portrays *hafu*, clearly rejecting both with disgust.

In the case of Respondent 2, her background as a half-Korean may have influenced her to question representations of *hafu* made on the basis of appearance. She writes that she is relatively lucky because she is never recognised as a foreigner and does not receive negative remarks unless she speaks Korean. It can be seen that for this respondent ethnic identity is not experienced on the basis of her appearance but rather on the basis of language and culture, which is significantly different from the experience of those *hafu* who look visibly different from Japanese. Here the discourse of *hafu* as people who look 'foreign' is challenged by the respondent's understanding of *hafu* as a category which goes beyond 'race'. Thus, for this respondent, *hafu* are constituted on the basis of ethnicity rather than on the basis of being mixed-race.

#### **4.5. Reading Popular Images as Empowerment**

While there are clear oppositional voices to popular images of *hafu*, as illustrated in the previous section, there are also voices which support popular images of *hafu*. A study of Japanese-Caucasian *hafu* adolescent girls in Japan shows that many of them cope with ethnic 'othering' by relocating discourses which go against them and repositioning themselves as 'privileged' insiders (Kamada 2005). Kamada states:

Within a discourse of diversity, ethnic difference is constituted as 'good difference'. This is contrasted with 'bad difference' within a discourse of homogeneity and a discourse of conformity....While socialized in Japanese mores and customs, and attending Japanese schools, these girls do not want to stand out and be constituted as different within the frame of *bad*

*difference*. However, dilemmatically, at other times, for some of them in particular, the constitution of difference as *good* is constructed by them as a very important aspect of their identity which they performatively enact.

During certain discursive moments some of the girls foreground their Japaneseness as they minimize their non-Japanese ethnic attributes in their subject positioning. At other times (and for others of them), they proudly proclaim their ethnic diversity, interculturality and ethnic attractiveness. (Kamada 2005: 171)

Based on this study it can be seen that the kind of cultural resources individuals use to form their identities depends on the kind of discourse which is in power at a given time. For example, within the discourse of homogeneity and conformity, ethnic differences may be minimised so that the individual can fit into the dominant perception. At other times, however, there can be a completely different positioning of the self within a discourse of diversity, which celebrates differences in culture, appearance, and even attractiveness. These two opposing discourses suggest that *hafu* are required to select their ethnic positioning according to which discourse is in power in a particular situation. This requirement is reflected in the contradictory desires of many *hafu* both to be fully accepted as Japanese and also to be allowed to be different without becoming the ‘other’ in society. While popular images can function as representations which oppress *hafu*, they can also become a powerful form of empowerment which boosts ethnic pride and self-esteem.

The following comments by Respondent 3 were made in response to a different topic posted by the community ‘Don’t Say It’s Nice to Be *Hafu*!’ from those discussed above, namely the question of whether the emergence of *hafu* models and *tarento* has had a positive or negative effect on *hafu* themselves.

*Respondent 3:* It is a minus to misunderstand people by emphasising their ethnicity. Although a person's ability may be given to them by birth, it is wrong to say [that someone has a certain attribute simply because they are *hafu*] – like because you are black you have a good ear for music and because you are Latin you like dancing.

But Japan has become a multiethnic state and the number of people with different thoughts, cultures, and racial backgrounds has increased. In this sense, it is a plus to avoid misunderstandings and friction between people who are different.

I sincerely hope that more people with various skin colours, eye colours, and ways of thinking could be represented, not just the type of people that Japanese like, so that they could stop hiding people who exist in actual society. ('Don't Say It's Nice to Be *Hafu*!' 23:25; 22 March 2007; translated from Japanese to English by the author)

In the first part of these comments the respondent expresses the opinion that popular images are negative if they emphasise ethnicity in a way which leads to essentialism, i.e., the assumption that people from a given ethnic background will have certain talents and abilities. The respondent clearly wants to point out that it not a person's ethnicity but rather a person's own individual gifts and efforts which result in that person having a particular ability. Stereotypes, such as blacks having a good ear for music or Latins being good dancers, are regarded in purely negative terms and rejected by the respondent. However, the respondent goes on to suggest that it can be positive and empowering if Japan is increasingly represented as a multiethnic state. To avoid

misunderstandings and stereotypes, the respondent feels that the best way to make progress is not to withdraw from the process of constructing representations, but rather to increase their diversity. Respondent 3 feels that many minorities living in ordinary society are 'hidden' and excluded from representation in the media. If the media could expand the different types of people who are represented, it would also empower ordinary *hafu* and create a better society.

The next comment continues the discussion of whether the emergence of *hafu* models and *tarento* has had a positive or negative effect on *hafu* themselves.

*Respondent 4:* I think there are two sides!!! By increasing the number of *hafu* idols, it opened up opportunities for people who want to go to same path? In other words, there are more chances! I think that is a good thing and I'm very happy that people from the same background as myself are taking an active part!!!

But I'm irritated when *hafu* are treated like a brand. The bad point is, despite the idols' prettiness, there is prejudice and discrimination towards ordinary *hafu*. I often used to be told sad things, such as that OO is OO, but is OO the same as *hafu*? [It is not entirely clear what 'OO' refers to, but probably an assumed characteristic of *hafu*.] Actually, countries are different, so we are not all the same....

Because the notoriety of pretty *hafu* have risen too much, [has the image of *hafu* become an] odd fixed idea?? Like *hafu*=OO?? Such ideas have been spurting out tremendously recently, which is very sad and painful! And, [I'm worried that]

prejudice towards Asians, Arabs, and Africans, which is still deeply ingrained, will increase.

We adults know now how to deal with and how to be courageous to fight against, prejudice, and discrimination, but I'm worried about children who don't know that yet. I also had the hardest time during my childhood....Maybe it is an experience that everybody will go through, but if it is possible, I would not want [my children to] experience it. ('Don't Say It's Nice to Be *Hafu*!' 23:51; 21 March 2007; translated from Japanese to English by the author)

This respondent also feels that popular images of *hafu* can be regarded as both positive and negative. She feels happy when a person who is from a similar background as her is successful. While some may hold individual idols responsible for perpetuating prejudice and discrimination, the respondent frames the problem not as a matter of personal responsibility but rather as an issue related to the narrow way in which *hafu* are represented. Therefore, it is desirable for 'pretty' *hafu* to be represented in the media as long as 'ordinary' *hafu* are represented as well. Because there is no balance in the media at present, the result is that fixed ideas, such as *hafu*=OO are constructed. As noted, it is unclear from the discussion what OO refers to, but presumably it indicates some trait which all *hafu* are expected to have.

The empathy this respondent has toward individual *hafu* idols expresses a slightly different attitude from that held by the respondents discussed previously, who tend to think of *hafu* more as a group of people rather than as individuals (*cf.* Respondent 3's notion of a 'multiethnic state'). *Hafu* idols are treated not as objects but as subjects by Respondent 4, and it is considered legitimate and understandable for *hafu* to pursue careers as idols and models. While some of Respondent 4's comments are

critical of how *hafu* are represented in the media and popular culture, she also casts idols and models in a different light by seeing them as successful individuals who are potentially empowering because they open up opportunities for others who may also wish to enter the entertainment and fashion industries. This opinion is opposite from the opinion expressed by Respondent 2, who regards popular images of *hafu* as ‘sickening’ and as involving the sexual exploitation of women. When similar issues are being discussed elsewhere by *hafu* communities, there is often a split in opinion between those who see *hafu* who are models or even those involved with pornography as being the victims of sexual exploitation and those who see them as pursuing ordinary careers and self-achievement. In observing the discussion boards, this difference in viewpoint often seems to influence a commentator’s attitude towards *hafu* idols and models.

Although Respondent 4 supports individual *hafu* idols and models, she is also concerned with the negative effects of prejudice. She is particularly concerned about children, who are often the most vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination, and indicates that her own childhood experience was difficult. Personally it had been painful for her to be compared with other *hafu*. Although she regarded herself as *hafu*, whether or not she was an ‘authentic’ *hafu* was sometimes questioned by other people. When these people compared her with other *hafu*, she was judged as being different from what the people expected *hafu* to be like. Respondent 4 does not indicate exactly what these expectations were, but her past personal experiences make her think that children today might also suffer from similar forms of prejudice and discrimination.

The next comment is a continuation of the previous discussion.

*Respondent 5:* I think it is both! [beneficial and disadvantageous] and For example, I feel that after Wentz became famous, the number of wrong impressions such as, ‘*hafu*=can speak English’ has decreased. But when I see

Wentz being laughed at – ‘you have this face and cannot speak English’ – it seems that there is still a long way to go. There are many times I feel sorry for Wentz. Sweat.

I’ve also had the experience of seeing on some TV programme Crystal Kay being pointed out by a Korean singer and told, ‘You are strange because you cannot speak Korean even though you have Korean blood’. If I were Crystal Kay, I would get upset and say, ‘It’s none of your business!!’ Definitely. lol [laugh out loud]

Mixed-blood people stand out in various ways but it must be even harder for them to work in show business where they stand out even more. But frankly speaking, I’m actually happy that my fellows are being successful. v [victory]

But it is a fact that the more the number of *hafu* models and entertainers increases, the more people say ‘I envy *hafu*!’...(;) ▪ \_\_\_\_ ▪ ). (‘Don’t Say It’s Nice to Be *Hafu*!’ 00:18; 22 March 2007; translated from Japanese to English by the author)

Wentz is a *hafu* with a German-American father and a Japanese mother who is one of the most well-known TV *tarento* in Japan today. He is famous for not being able to speak English, even though everyone in his family can speak English, including his brother. While many *hafu tarento* are bilingual and play the role of being ‘international’, Wentz plays the role of being a funny and cute *hafu* who acts like a Japanese, despite having a slightly different foreign appearance. Respondent 5 has a positive evaluation of Wentz, believing that he has helped to challenge the stereotype that all *hafu* are

bilingual. At the same time, the respondent feels sorry for Wentz when he is laughed at because of his lack of English ability. Wentz is seen as a 'failure' when he does not meet this expectation, which is one of the things that makes him funny to general audiences but something that the respondent does not find funny because it rather appears to be a form of discrimination.

Crystal Kay, a *hafu* R&B singer with a mixed African, Korean, and Japanese heritage, is also sometimes criticised for not being able to speak Korean. Being able to speak one's other 'native' language in addition to Japanese is often used as a means to 'authenticate' a *hafu*'s ethnic identity in the eyes of the general public, with bilingualism being the accepted norm. The idea is that if someone is a *hafu*, they need to embrace two cultures equally. Respondent 5 rejects this expectation, however, saying that if the respondent were Crystal Kay and the respondent was criticised for not being able to speak the respondent's other 'native' language, the respondent would reply, 'It's not your business!!'. Respondent 5 expresses empathy for *hafu* idols and *tarento*, remarking that it is not an easy world for them either, since even success in the entertainment industry does not mean that *hafu* are free from discrimination.

Expressions of support for Wentz and other *hafu* models and *tarento* can be frequently found in various groups on mixi. One of the most striking examples is a community called 'Thank you Wentz!!'. This community has over 150 members, who express appreciation to Wentz as a role model for telling the public that not all *hafu* can speak a foreign language. Although Wentz is occasionally made fun of because of his lack of English ability, the community perceives Wentz as empowering *hafu* who are not bilingual and raising their status in society. Wentz is regarded as a person who is breaking the language stereotype and consequently producing an alternative discourse for *hafu*.

What the above analysis suggests is that language is often one of the most crucial characteristics for securing one's identity. Murphy-Shigematsu offers the following example from an Okinawan context:

English ability is a problem which has been constantly pointed out as a specific problem for Amerasians. Almost all Amerasians wish to be able to speak English, and according to my research, nearly half of them thought that English is an important subject for one's life. Japanese young people have a very strong desire to learn English, but in the case of Amerasians, this motive is more intrinsic and imminent. One of the reasons is because they are often thought of as Americans, and are therefore expected to respond in English when they are spoken to. If they fail to answer, this not only disappoints the person speaking to them, but also results in them being negatively evaluated as *shima-haafu*. Another reason is because English is what connects them to their father and their father's homeland. (2002: 180; translated from Japanese to English by the author)

Not only Amerasians in Okinawa, but *haifu* in general experience such problems. The ability to speak English or other foreign languages may not be regarded simply as a tool for communication, but rather as a criterion for evaluating *haifu* negatively or positively. Both the general public and *haifu* themselves may believe that language ability is what connects *haifu* to their non-Japanese parents and the non-Japanese side of their heritage and, correspondingly, that a lack of language ability results in disconnecting *haifu* from the non-Japanese side of their identity. Wentz's television appearances are beginning to open up an alternative to this model, namely that one can still claim to be a *haifu* and hold a *haifu* identity without being pressured to learn a foreign language.

## 4.6. Conclusion

This chapter began by looking at how the concept of *hafu* arose in the context of the post-war Americanisation of Japanese culture. Representations of *hafu* have been a convenient way to meet the demand in Japan for localised forms of Western culture which are at the same time not too threatening for Japanese since Japanese can still feel a degree of closeness between *hafu* and themselves. While popular images of *hafu* have been produced for and consumed by mass audiences, *hafu* themselves have begun to question the objectification of *hafu* in the media and the biased fixed representations of *hafu* as attractive white bilingual models and *tarento*. Online communities have provided a medium of communication, as well as space, for *hafu* to share their ideas and opinions with each other and also to create new communities to collectively deal with cultural politics. These *hafu* communities are beginning to play a role in constructing discourses which provide an alternative to the dominant one. As has been demonstrated in this chapter, there is no single way of reading popular images of *hafu* and no single manner in which they are responded to by *hafu*. Rather, people perceive and understand these images in different ways, connecting them to their own personal experience, gender, and race. There can also be collective movements which result in the formation of communities comprised of people who share similar concerns and values. All of the communities discussed in this chapter illustrate the politics involved in determining what it means to be *hafu* and raise questions about how *hafu* should be represented in the future. The various comments of the respondents analysed in this chapter are full of ideas and suggestions which *hafu* may want to take into consideration when thinking about how to move forward. What is fortunate is that the kind of dialogue examined in this chapter is beginning to be engaged in by a much larger number of people today.

## Chapter 5: Moving from Virtual to Real: How Meeting *Hafu*

### People Offline Happens

#### 5.1. Introduction

*Hafu* communities are a new phenomenon. Many people are surprised when they find out that I am doing research on *hafu* communities because such communities are not widely known in society except among those who belong to them. *Hafu* communities became prominent mainly after 2004 when the first online *hafu* community was created on mixi. Other smaller communities existed prior to that date, but they may not have been self-consciously *hafu* or referred to their communities as such. Therefore, while it would be untrue to say that *hafu* people did not meet with each other before 2004, the *hafu* community created on mixi in 2004 is the first such community created on an SNS.

This chapter examines how SNS is used to help *hafu* meet with each other and form communities. The chapter will deal with the complex relationship between online and offline forms of interaction and with how new technologies and media are being used to construct *hafu* communities and identities. These new technologies and media seem to have altered how ethnic identities are constructed. The impact of the Internet on the formation of communities is a common theme in sociology (Slevin 2000; Castells 2001; Flew 2005; Cavanagh 2007). The development of various Internet services designed to facilitate community activities, such as SNS, have given ethnic groups the opportunity to produce new types of communities, which in turn has led individuals to discover others who are ethnically similar to themselves and to ‘imagine’ them in new ways, ultimately resulting in the development of new types of social identities.

However, the Internet is not the first media to play a role in identity formation.

Anderson (1991) has argued that origin of nationalism and the formation of national identities was strongly influenced by the capitalist print media, which enabled the nation itself to be 'imagined' and for people to feel that they were living in an 'imagined community'. Anderson writes, 'It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (6-7). The nation still constitutes the most powerful base for identity formation, and the same can be said of *hafu* communities, since the concept of *hafu* is often developed by utilising images of particular nations.

On the other hand, national images are often limited to the dominant race, with minority races being excluded. Gilroy criticises Anderson for overemphasising the significance of 'race':

Anderson's theory claims that racism is essentially antithetical to nationalism because nations are made possible in and through print languages rather than notions of biological difference and kinship. Thus, he argues that anyone can in theory learn the language of the nation they seek to join and through the process of naturalization become a citizen enjoying formal equality under its laws. (44-45)

This criticism also applies to the current situation in Japan. Oguma (1995) traces the history of the mono-ethnic myth in Japan, i.e., the belief that Japan is a homogeneous nation constituted by only one ethnic group, noting that this tradition only became dominant after World War II. During the imperial era which preceded World War II, the dominant understanding was that Japan was in fact a multi-ethnic nation, with both the government and scholars recognising the presence of colonised people and other ethnic minorities in Japan.

The current social structure in Japan either marginalises *hafu* as non-Japanese or partially recognises them as half-Japanese, thus signifying their ‘impurity’, although *hafu* are also increasingly being accepted as ‘ordinary’ Japanese. The diversity of social perceptions and attitudes towards *hafu* lead to inconsistencies, which in turn lead to inconsistencies in how *hafu* perceive themselves. The mono-ethnic myth of Japan is beginning to break down, meaning that there can no longer be a single ‘imagined Japanese’ or a single ‘imagined *hafu*’. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to dismiss the imagined as ‘not real’ or ‘not important’. Although identity formation occurs partly as a result of imagination, how people are imagined does have a real impact on their lives.

Similarly, the distinction between the ‘virtual’ and the ‘real’ seems to be increasingly outdated. Cavanagh (2007) suggests that it is more useful to understand online communities as existing neither solely in space nor solely in a virtual world, but rather as constituting emerging social ties. At an earlier stage of its development, the Internet was conceived as an ‘information superhighway’ (Sloukka 1995; Chandler 1996; Calcutt 1999), an image which focuses on the flow of information. The metaphor of the Internet as ‘space’ was also developed (Morley 1995), with the term *cyberspace* being used to suggest a division between real space and virtual space. Sociology has traditionally characterised the Internet in such terms, although alternative views have challenged the dualism between online and offline spaces. Wellman and Gulia (1999) see online communities as being part of ‘a technologically supported continuation of a long term shift to communities organised by shared interests rather than shared place or shared ancestry’ (172). Castells (2001), on the other hand, understands the Internet as simply being a part of everyday life rather than constituting some exceptional space. Miller and Slater (2000) emphasise the importance of understanding that online and offline spaces have a strong relationship with, and mutually influence, each other. It has

been further argued by Cavanagh, referring to Poster, that interactions conducted on the Internet can bring about important changes in identity:

Moreover, in the new era people are argued to develop themselves online through interaction with each other, not in relation to a monolithic media-generated 'prêt-à-porter' identity. The distinction for Poster is that whereas mass communication interpellates the subject as a mass, a generalized audience, who can be addressed through generalized discursive forms, the internet is a more individualised media, where messages are directly addressed to the subject....Thus the crux of Poster's position is that the second media age is characterised by identity formation through social interaction, and this interactivity is of a different order to that of the first media age. (Cavanagh 2007: 74-75)

In the same way, identity formation in *hafu* communities involves complex interactions both online and offline. Participation in such communities often begins online (although there are exceptions, such as the case of people who join offline activities first through a friend's connections), leading to some individuals joining offline activities while others continue to participate solely online. The term *offline* can be used to refer either to the whole external world which exists outside of the online world or, more narrowly, to the specific activities which are organized in the external world through online communities. This chapter will use the term *offline* in the second sense to refer to those offline activities which are specifically organised by online communities. It is common today for ordinary people to find out about social activities online and to meet people through various sites. Nonetheless, the image prevails in Japan that the primary reason for meeting people through the Internet is to engage in online dating, and that such encounters are risky and perhaps even dangerous. Although it is true that meeting offline involves risks, numerous safe and ordinary activities are in fact organised by SNS communities through their websites. Now that SNS has become a part of everyday life, it is not unusual any more for ordinary persons to join in offline

events, even in Japan. Offline meetings are referred to in Japanese by the term *ofukai* (off-meeting) and mixi even provides technological support for communities which would like to hold offline events.

This chapter explores how and why *hafu* communities are evolving by examining the particular interactions which people who belong to online communities have offline. It also investigates the interests which both community leaders and general users have in these communities and in other *hafu* people. The aims are to consider how such communities attempt to meet the needs of *hafu* people and to gain a deeper understanding of various social problems related to race and ethnicity which emerged while conducting the fieldwork for this thesis.

## **5.2. Previous Attempts to Socialise Using Magazines and Websites**

Before discussing the creation of various *hafu* communities on mixi, it would be helpful to look at previous attempts on the part of *hafu* to socialise with each other. Through contacts made during my fieldwork, I was able to uncover two activities which had tried to bring *hafu* people together before mixi began service.

### **5.2.1. Case Study 1: Mariko Mizutani**

Years before *hafu* communities existed on mixi, Mariko Mizutani, who lives in Kyoto, attempted to locate other *hafu* people by using newspaper advertisements. When Mariko was younger, she had no contact with other *hafu*, but she was eventually able to make one Finnish-Japanese female *hafu* friend through a network in her neighbourhood. Mariko and her friend wanted to make a group for *hafu*, but after searching on the Internet for a year-and-a-half to two years they could not find any such groups. Since

Mixi did not exist at that time, they decided to place an advertisement in magazines to recruit members for a group they intended to start on their own. The only response they got, however, was from Japanese people who were interested in learning English. This result illustrates how difficult it is to form a group in the absence of useful social networking tools.

Mariko's motive to connect with other *hafu* was strongly linked to her childhood experience. She grew up in Osaka and experienced severe bullying at elementary school because she did not look like other Japanese. Although she felt she looked Japanese, she was constantly called *gaijin* [a derogatory word for *foreigner*] by the other students. Having a white British ethnic background, she searched for people who were similar to herself but who looked different from other Japanese, and who could understand and share the same kind of experiences she had gone through. She was unable to find any such people, however, and felt extremely lonely. Her parents were also divorced, and Mariko did not want her classmates to ask too many questions about them, such as where her parents came from, because this triggered painful memories for her.

Mariko's experience at school changed dramatically, however, once she entered junior high school. Students who had previously looked down on her and told her 'Go back to your country!' and 'You American!' suddenly began to say things such as 'You look cool!' and 'I envy you!'. These positive remarks did not make Mariko happy, however, and made her feel even more distrustful of her classmates. Mariko felt that she had always been the same person and could not understand why the students started to treat her so differently. At the same time, these remarks made her realise that the suffering she had experienced was based on absurd reasoning and prejudice.

This story resembles many other stories that I have directly heard from *hafu*, and it can be said that it represents one of the typical experiences *hafu* go through during their adolescence. The negative attitudes encountered by *hafu* in elementary school

suddenly turn 180 degrees to positive attitudes, especially for *hafu* who have white ethnic backgrounds. This transition in how *hafu* are perceived suggests that Japanese elementary school children see *hafu* simply as being ‘different’ and regard them as *gaijin* [foreigners]. When they become adolescents, however, Japanese absorb the media discourse of *hafu* as ‘pretty’ (see Chapter 4 for an account of how *hafu* are typically represented in the Japanese media) and construct a completely new image of *hafu*. It is also at this moment that when the bodies of *hafu* are sexualised and physical attractiveness becomes an important factor in how *hafu* are seen. Dilemmas arise at this stage over whether one should feel happy or unconcerned with such perceptions, on the one hand, or uncomfortable, on the other, even though the perceptions are ‘positive’.

In Mariko’s case, she felt the latter, believing that others did not understand the harm that even positive remarks could have on *hafu*. She thought it was difficult for people around her to realise the suffering and isolation that she herself had experienced. In an interview I conducted with her, Mariko said that she started to be involved in a group that helped foreign students socialise outside of school:

*Mariko:* There is a group called *Zengaikkyo*, which has an annual meeting for foreign students in Japan.

*Elia:* I see.

*Mariko:* It’s a group for teachers who are members of a union and who have an awareness of the problems involved [i.e., problems related to foreign students in Japan].

*Elia:* Oh, it’s a group for teachers.

*Mariko:* Yeah, they bring all the [foreign] students together somewhere once a year to give them the opportunity to socialise. I found out about them recently through other activities I have been involved with. I was very

surprised and felt ‘wow’ since this was the 28<sup>th</sup> time they have held the event. I felt like, ‘Why didn’t they tell me about it before?’ I was suffering so much, so it’s like a joke. I was surprised. I called the president and began to be involved. And this time I participated in the gathering.

*Elia:* The 28<sup>th</sup> time means that they have been holding this event for 28 years?

*Mariko:* Yes. I participated this time for two days. This time the national meeting was held in Kyoto. I spoke to the president and teachers about a lot of different things. They were even using the term *daburu* [double] regularly, so I spoke at the sectional meeting to pose a problem from my own perspective as a person involved. I told them, ‘I’m a person who has had these experiences. Are you aware of the problems we face?’ The teachers were surprised and said, ‘Haa [an expression similar to the gesture of opening one’s mouth]. We never heard about them.’

(Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

Even though Mariko felt a need to meet other *hafu* and minority students, she did not find out about a group which could provide this kind of experience until recently. At the event, she wanted her experiences and opinions to be heard, so she took an active role in the meeting. Issues of representation were raised. Mariko was dissatisfied with the teachers using the term *daburu* [double], even though they did not have bad intentions and probably thought of their use of the term as positive. The fact that the teachers responded by saying ‘Haa’ illustrates that it was an eye-opening experience for them to hear about Mariko’s experiences and problems for the first time. Although *Zengai-kyo* has been dealing with the problems of minority students in Japan for nearly thirty years, it is surprising that this was the first time for the teachers to hear about the

experiences of students such as Mariko, given that her experiences are quite typical among *hafu*. In a way, this incident proves that issues involving *hafu* are not well-understood by society. Even among experts there is a gap between what they think the needs of *hafu* are and what *hafu* themselves think:

*Mariko:* In the evening, we went out for a drink and I asked the teachers I'd spoken to during the daytime, 'Why didn't you invite me [to the previous meetings]?' This was because I had grown up in Osaka, where there were many enthusiastic activities for liberating *Burakumin*.<sup>6</sup> In this sense Osaka is really progressive. I grew up in an area where people were enthusiastic about human rights education. At school we had classes taught in ethnic languages for ethnic minorities, for instance. It was normal to have ethnic classes for Korean residents, and there was special care for Japanese orphans from China<sup>7</sup> who had come back to Japan and were raising their children. The children also had their own classes. I was at this kind of school. I was troubled being a *hafu* and also bullied because of it by kids from other classes telling me different things. These problems were obvious for people around me but I felt like 'Why did you ignore me?'

*Elia:* Did [the teachers] know?

*Mariko:* They should have known. I asked them why they didn't introduce me to this kind of programme before. The first *hafu* Finnish friend I made was from the school just next to mine. If the school had been more conscious of my situation, they should have been able to introduce me to the

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<sup>6</sup> Burakumin were outcasts in Japan's premodern hierarchical society and now live mainly in the western part of Japan around Osaka. They are not an ethnic minority but have continued to be discriminated against even though they were fully recognised as Japanese citizens by law in 1871.

<sup>7</sup> Many Japanese were left in northeastern part of China towards the end of World War II when the Soviet Union invaded the area.

programme when I was still in elementary school. If they had done so, I wouldn't have had to worry so much and maybe I could even have solved my problems. I thought this was the purpose of the meetings in the first place. [From their perspective] it is hard for Korean residents and Vietnamese refugees, for example, to be alone, so their idea was to connect them up with kids from other schools or who lived nearby. I can only see my own situation as having been ignored because they could have known about *hafu*, too, but they didn't see us.

*Elia:* You mean you weren't like other Asians?

*Mariko:* Yeah, I wasn't like other Asians. I asked the teachers why and they all said 'We're sorry' and 'We're sorry we lacked the understanding'. All they said was 'We were wrong' but they didn't really get it. So I went to speak to them later again and they started to speak after they'd had a lot of drinks, saying, 'We didn't know that white *hafu* had worries. We thought that such people were envied and also felt that it was nice and cool [to be *hafu*]. Since *hafu* are envied, we didn't think that they had problems with their identity or any other problems. We're sorry.' Now I got it. It was only about three years ago that people with a white background joined *Zengaikyo*. They already had black *hafu*, however, since there is already an understanding that blacks are discriminated against.

*Elia:* Black *hafu* are invited [to the meeting]?

*Mariko:* Yeah. But the teachers are wrong. If the teachers accurately understood the worries *hafu* have about their identities, they would also understand that it is the same problem for all people who have roots outside of Japan.

(Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

Mariko's frustration concerns the incorrect perception that *hafu* with white ethnic backgrounds have no worries or difficulties at school. Many Japanese have the perception that only blacks and non-Japanese Asians are discriminated against in Japan, similar to the situation in the US. This view might also be influenced by media images of *hafu* in the dominant culture, which fail to convey the power dynamics of school children who are different from each other. Consequently, Mariko had no opportunity to meet up with other minorities who lived nearby, although she could have if the teachers have had a deeper understanding of her needs.

What is interesting is the importance Mariko attaches to meeting other *hafu* (not necessarily those who have the same ethnic background as herself) as a way to resolve identity issues. In addition to her feelings of loneliness and experience of having been bullied, being different from others and having a different identity seem to be major issues for her. Throughout the interview, she repeatedly used the phrase 'establishing an identity'. Her desire is to construct an identity rather than to simply question or discard it. Identity in Mariko's understanding is something that ought to be established socially, not individually. In other words, an identity can be constructed and achieved through interactions with other *hafu* who share similar problems and meanings: 'Identity is a work in progress, a negotiated space between ourselves and others; constantly being re-appraised and very much linked to the circulation of cultural meaning in a society' (Taylor and Spencer 2004: 4).

Furthermore, Mariko sees identity construction as an issue which is faced by all minorities with roots outside of Japan. Her view is that the identity of minorities, who are in a vulnerable position in Japanese society, is under threat, while the identity of the Japanese majority is something which is naturally given. Although it may be an exaggeration to assume that all minorities in Japan have a strong need to establish an

identity and that identity is never an issue for the Japanese majority, Mariko's attitude reveals one motive for why many *hafu* may wish to establish contact with other *hafu*. *Hafu* often have little connection with other *hafu*, and may be curious about how they live and cope with similar problems. By meeting to understand each other and share their experiences, *hafu* use such occasions, both consciously and unconsciously, as an opportunity to think about the ambiguities of 'self' in an age that regards the search for identity almost as an obligation. As Furedi writes,

The private search for identity should be seen above all as an attempt to find meaning in a world where the self relation to wider communities and networks is already tenuous. The ambiguous and fluid relationship of the self to external points of reference is the outcome of the individualising imperative of late modernity, [an imperative which] legitimises the estrangement of people from each other. 'Be yourself' has become both a cultural obligation and a desired state of self enlightenment. (2004: 146)

### **5.2.2. Case 2: Die Kreuzungsstelle**

Die Kreuzungsstelle is a name of a website, which is also perhaps the oldest website devoted to *hafu*. The site was started in 2002 by Nikolaus (a handle name for the website), a *hafu* with a German and Japanese heritage. Nikolaus started the website because he was questioning his own identity and wanted to exchange opinions with others about race, ethnicity, and nationality. He also intended the website to be a place where people who were having difficulties with such issues could share their concerns with each other. Recently the aim of the website has changed somewhat. Since discrimination against *hafu* in Japan has declined somewhat since 2002, the website is more positive rather than negative in orientation. The website now has the purpose of collecting a variety of views from the *hafu* community, given that the mainstream media

often portrays *hafu* with extreme images, i.e., either as being talented, bilingual, and attractive or as being unhappy, discriminated against, and bullied. Nikolaus believes that while some of these images may portray the actual situation of some *hafu*, there is a wider and richer range of experiences which are not represented in the mainstream media. The name of website is taken from the German word for *crossroads*. Nikolaus chose this name to convey the idea that the site would be a place where people could freely come and go, without necessarily committing themselves to becoming part of a 'community'. Nikolaus was not interested in making a *hafu* group as such, but rather a place where people who were interested could intersect with each other for a moment in their lives.

Similarly, the purpose of the offline meetings publicized on the website was not to help *hafu* form a community, but instead to give *hafu* an opportunity to discuss their various interests with each other on a deeper level. Nikolaus saw the people who attended these meetings as constituting a self-help group, in which those who continued to have issues to discuss could do so, while those who had reached a satisfactory conclusion for their own particular issues could drop out. Given the orientation of the meetings, attendance was limited to a small number of people. Events were held in both the Tokyo and Kansai areas, and included activities such as dining together in a quiet place, visiting temples, and attending outside events together. The first event was held in July 2003 and attended by people whom Nikolaus had contacted through the website. This was probably the first *hafu* gathering to be organised in Japan through the Internet. In January 2004 Nikolaus began to organise events on a regular basis, posting information about them on Die Kreuzungsstelle. By April 2006 fifteen events had been held, at which time Nikolaus stopped organising events. Although the events themselves had been successful, the organiser began to feel that there was a gap between what he himself wanted to accomplish and the diverse needs of the participants. Some of the

participants simply wanted to socialise rather than to engage in deeper discussions.

Nikolaus also felt uncomfortable about the fact that people at the events did not regard each other as individuals but only as *hafu*.

In the interview I conducted with him, Nikolaus emphasised the danger of some *hafu* having excessively high expectations of other *hafu*. Often there is the feeling that, in Nikolaus's words, '*hafu* can understand other *hafu*, with some people having a tendency to construct a sense of we-ness by assuming that all *hafu* think and feel the same'. Such biases, which are produced by *hafu* themselves, not only spread stereotypes but can also be oppressive to other *hafu*. Throughout my own fieldwork I constantly heard other *hafu* tell me things such as, 'We are similar, like brothers or family' or 'I don't really have to explain everything to you because I know you understand me and feel the same as I do'. Such remarks were often intended to convey hospitality and friendship, but they also made it more difficult for me to express my own opinions when I disagreed with the people making them, and occasionally felt oppressive. This tendency was more prevalent among members of *hafu* communities who attended events regularly. Perhaps the expectation of a sense of 'we-ness' is one factor which brings *hafu* people together. Although Nikolaus and I both shared the goals of wanting to bring about equality and eliminate discrimination through our research activities, which themselves were aimed at promoting diversity by introducing the voices of *hafu* and freeing *hafu* from the expectations and stereotypes society has of them, we had different feelings about the *hafu* community on mixi. In my case, I felt comfortable being inside the community. Nikolaus, however, offered reasons for having an interest in other *hafu* which were quite different from the perspectives of most other *hafu* whom I met through mixi communities:

*Nikolaus:* [Meeting other] *hafu* is a way for me to satisfy my own interests and curiosity. I'm not seeking peace of mind at such meetings because I already have that with friends near my home. At home is where I feel at ease. I used to have the feeling that I was different from others, but I don't feel that way anymore since I'm part of a group of friends who graduated from the same school. Being *hafu* doesn't matter. That [group of friends from the same school] is where I feel comfortable. But I don't feel comfortable attending meetings with *hafu*. Differences in experience and ways of thinking [matter], and small expressions frustrate me, such as when people use the word *gaijin* [slang for foreigner] regularly. I want to tell such people, 'You also must have suffered when people used the term *gaijin* [to refer to you]'. This [discriminatory remark] makes me even more upset [when it is said by *hafu* than when it is said by ordinary Japanese]. I use the name *Nikolaus* on the Internet but my real name everywhere else. I feel this is easier for me.

*Elia:* I might have asked the same question before but the reason you don't want to use your real name [online] is because you want to [create a different identity for yourself]?

*Nikolaus:* I'm producing a separate personality by using the name *Nikolaus*. I put my extracted experience as a *hafu* on the Internet and gave myself a new name...I don't want to put all my experience in a single word *hafu*. [I prefer to separate] my experience as *hafu* from the other sides of myself. That's why I don't use my real name online. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

Nikolaus's reason for meeting with other *hafu* is completely different from Mariko's. Whereas Mariko's goal was to make friends, be part of a community, and establish her identity, Nikolaus's goal was to have a better understanding of the experiences of *hafu* and to use these experiences as resources for other *hafu* who needed them. In other words, Nikolaus's position is similar to that of professionals who do not want to be too personally involved with others and who prefer to keep their private selves hidden. Therefore, it was not clear from the interview what Nikolaus's activities meant to him personally, besides satisfying his own interests and desire to help people. Also, it was unclear what roles other group members actually played since I did not have access to them. As is often pointed out, online communication makes anonymity possible to a certain extent and provides a way for people to disguise their true identities. By doing so, people can share deep thoughts and experiences which they would not speak of otherwise. For Turkle (1995), the Web is a place where subjects can adopt different positions and personalities, and see the self as fluid and multiply constructed. Nikolaus also feels the need to make a distinction between his online and offline selves. Although Nikolaus may want to connect with other *hafu* online, ethnicity is not important for the relationships he has offline with local friends who share similar interests and values. While a *hafu* identity can possibly serve as a basis for solidarity among those who share it, others may see the relationships they have with other *hafu* as being only momentary – a meeting at the crossroads, to use Nikolaus's term. Of course, there are others who have no interest whatsoever in *hafu* activities. Although Nikolaus has discontinued organising offline meetings, his website, Die Kreuzungsstelle, continues to be a place for serious discussion about *hafu* in relation to race, ethnicity, and nationality, and to provide a valuable opportunity for *hafu* to share their voices with each other.

### 5.3. Hapa Japan: An Online Community Dedicated to ‘Real’ Group

#### Activities

The start of the social networking service, mixi, in 2004 made it much easier for general Internet users to create communities and to reach people they could not have easily communicated with in the past. Another SNS named GREE started operations around the same time as a competitor to mixi, but mixi has become the most popular and standard SNS, with over 17 million users at present.<sup>8</sup> It can be said that the creation of mixi marked the beginning of a rapid transition period, which transformed how people establish connections and communicate with others, not only among people who already know each other, but also among those who seek to establish new voluntary ties based on shared interests.

Thus community moves from the more or less involuntary connections between people to the solely voluntary relations into which we enter as free individuals. This in turn then means that the conceptual space covered by the term ‘community’ can more validly be represented by other terms, lifestyle or subculture being two leading contenders. In these terms community appears only as a resource for the individual in the construction of self-identity. The idea of community as a compelling moral force, as this appears in Durkheim and Tönnies, sheered away. (Cavanagh 2007:104-105)

With the emergence of SNS, people can freely join and leave multiple communities whenever they wish, according to their own lifestyles and interests. Communities can be based on schools, locations, hobbies, or any other keyword that users would like to type in. Anybody can make one’s own community and be an organiser at no cost. As soon as SNS started, many communities which had been previously based on websites moved to

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<sup>8</sup> This data was retrieved from mixi on 30 June 2009 .

SNS because they provide an interactive tool which is both cheap and convenient, and which anybody can use.

### 5.3.1. How Hapa Japan Started

Hapa Japan started as a website-based group in March 2004 but moved to mixi in October 2004. The group previously used their website and mailing lists to recruit members and communicate with people. Similar websites were started (such as <http://www.halvsie.com> and <http://www.eurasiannation.com>), which were mainly English-language websites for half-Japanese who lived overseas or who had gone to international schools where English was the language of instruction. Hapa Japan was also started mainly as a group for English-speakers who lived in Japan.

Sam, who is an American-Japanese *hafu* and the organiser of Hapa Japan, decided to make the group when he was in a graduate school. Sam went to international schools through high school and had many *hafu* friends, although his friends dispersed after graduation, many of them moving overseas. Not having the opportunity to meet with other *hafu* for several years, Sam missed the international school atmosphere he had experienced when he was younger. Unlike Mariko and Nikolaus, who had had little contact with *hafu* and therefore began trying to make connections with other *hafu* out of curiosity, Sam was accustomed to being together with other *hafu* and found it natural, since it was something that he had grown up with during his school life. Sam originally considered joining other *hafu* groups which had existed in the 1990s, but he found that many of them were no longer active and so he decided to make his own community.

The main purpose of the community was to revive the kind of atmosphere which Sam had experienced in his high school days, although in a more mature form since he was already around thirty years old when he started the group. Sam intended the group

to be mainly organised around social activities, such as going out for drinks together, rather than to be concerned with issues of identity, since he believed that people his age had already gone through adolescence and found answers to most of their personal problems. Using an English mailing list to publicise the group, the first members were mainly American-Japanese *hafu* who were fluent in English. It was only when the community moved to mixi that speakers of Japanese and *hafu* from other nationalities began to join the group. Since mixi is used mostly by Japanese-speakers, Hapa Japan adapted to the new environment by using Japanese as the main language and providing supplements in English for those who could not use Japanese well. The number of members more than doubled from 300-400 members on the original mailing list to over a 1,200 members when the group moved to mixi. Today Hapa Japan is the largest *hafu* community which organises events. The group specialises in ‘real’ community events and does not use the term *ofukai* [off-meeting], since *ofukai* implies that group exists mainly online and that offline activities are simply an offshoot of the group’s online base. To the contrary, Hapa Japan exists primarily as an offline group, using mixi simply as a way to recruit members and organise events.

### **5.3.2. What Makes Hapa Japan Successful**

Hapa Japan organises events once a month and has been quite successful and active, with some events attracting more than 200 people. It is indeed remarkable that the group has been able to continuously gather a large number of people together over a long period of time. Attracting more people does not necessarily mean that the group is better than other groups, but Hapa Japan nonetheless remains a popular group which serves the needs of a majority of its members. Those who research Internet communities have an interest in finding out why communities stay together or fall apart, how group

solidarity is created, and what kind of governance takes place in such communities.

Thus, it is worthwhile to attempt to analyse why Hapa Japan has survived for as long as it has while hundreds of other *hafu*-related communities on mixi have become inactive or closed. Unlike Die Kreuzungsstelle, described previously, Hapa Japan emphasises developing a community which provides a friendly and safe environment for *hafu* who want to meet other *hafu*. There is no preset agenda or topics for discussion. Whatever conversation is engaged in at the meetings is freely chosen by the participants. The casual atmosphere of Hapa Japan and the fact that it allows participants to join the group for diverse purposes are factors which seem to have contributed to the group's ability to attract so many members.

The popularity of Hapa Japan can be also be attributed to the fact it is easy for new members to understand the group's purpose and to find about events, since these are clearly stated on the top page of its mixi site.

In order to gain and keep an audience, individuals have in some sense to engage in or orientate to marketing strategies for their own sites, and identity is a core principle of this. In order to attract an audience, or to act as a seed of community, the self we present online must be intelligible to this audience, and this requires a certain coherence. In essence, in order to achieve online visibility we must produce ourselves as an easily recognizable 'brand' of person. (Cavanagh 2007: 122)

Hapa Japan was able to make clear who they are by adopting the Hawaiian term *hapa* to refer to people with a mixed background and *Japan* to refer to people who lived in Japan. In this regard, Stone (1996) argues that group membership is more symbolic than physical and that collective symbols play an important role in online communities. Besides the name, Hapa Japan has its own logo, a sign with *Hapa Japan* written on it, which sits atop a building with flashing lights, clearly a parody of Twentieth Century

Fox. Symbols are not limited to the name and logos. Acronyms which are specific to the community can also have symbolic power (Baym 1998). For example, Hapa Japan uses group-specific terms such as HJ (Hapa Japan) and *Hapami* (Hapa and *hanami* put together to mean cherry-blossom viewing). These group-specific terms and annual events, such as *Hapami*, Hapa *Bounenkai* [year-end party], and a party for celebrating the anniversary of their founding, gives Hapa Japan a sense of uniqueness and establishes its image as a stable and reliable community.

Most of all, the community is dependent on the time and energy that Sam puts in to organising activities for the group. In other words, having an active community leader is important to keep the community going. It is notable that inactive groups commonly lack such a leader. Communities whose organisers do not participate in planning activities tend to have no events or postings on their discussion boards. The personality of the organiser matters too, since groups with leaders who have extreme personalities or who are highly opinionated tend to lose members and inhibit new members from joining. The qualities which seem to attract many members can be found in those leaders who do not express their personal feelings but who still take responsibility for leadership and who manage problems fairly and transparently. This conclusion links to the work of Lazarsfeld (1968), who stresses the importance of community leaders and the role of hierarchies in maintaining a group. It is apparent through observation that communities without effective leaders or established rules encounter severe problems, such as losing members. Often members do not want to be involved anymore because of fears about the group or a desire to avoid trouble. Having clear rules and a minimal amount of control is necessary to maintain a peaceful and safe online environment. Furthermore, Erbe (1962) suggests that medium-sized communities which meet regularly are the most effective in developing their communities. Having a manageable number of participants, holding frequent events, and maintaining a balance

between regular and new participants are factors which seem to have contributed to the development of Hapa Japan so far.

### **5.3.3. General Participants**

Have looked at the details of how *hafu* communities are organised and the role that community leaders play in them, the meaning that general members derive from meeting other *hafu* will be examined next. To understand the nature of a given community, it is not enough to analyze the structure of a group or the intentions of its leader; an understanding of the majority of members who actually participate is also required. The process of investigating the actual members of *hafu* groups is obviously difficult, given that there are a large number of people who participate and that they participate for a variety of reasons. While it is impossible to arrive at clear conclusions, it is nonetheless worthwhile to see if there are certain patterns which are shared by *hafu* groups and important issues which are commonly faced by the members of these groups. The following interviews with Max and Yoshihiro illustrate the typical situation of a participant who regularly joined events held by Hapa Japan.

### **5.3.4. Hapa Japan Member: Max**

Max is twenty-one years old and only started to participate in Hapa Japan events recently. He is a university student with a German-Japanese background. He joins most of the *hafu* communities that he is permitted to join, including Hapa Japan. About a year ago Max became curious about whether there were other German *hafu* who, like him, could not speak German, so he searched on mixi and discovered communities for

German-Japanese *hafu* who could not speak German. He then eventually found Hapa Japan while searching for other *hafu* communities.

*Elia:* What kind of people did you want to meet? What was your purpose?

*Max:* At first, I wanted to meet German *hafu* who have the same background as myself, because they are the closest to me and I wondered if there were any. Whenever I found people like that [on mixi], I sent them messages.

*Elia:* I see. You not only wanted to look for them but also to actually get to know them.

*Max:* Yes. Especially with those who could not speak [German]. I expected that they might have the same sense of closeness and state of mind as myself.

*Elia:* Was there something specific you wanted to talk about? For example, about language?

*Max:* Let me see.... I wanted to know why they couldn't speak [German] and how they grew up.

*Elia:* Like where they grew up.

*Max:* Whether they only spoke Japanese at home. I only knew my own life as a *hafu*, so I wanted to find out what kind of lives other German *hafu* had.

*Elia:* So you wanted to compare yourself to them?

*Max:* Yeah. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

Max was particularly interest in *hafu* who shared the same German ethnic background. Before he joined Hapa Japan, he was looking for German *hafu* who could not speak German. 'Language' was his major interest and he wanted to understand what it meant to not be able to speak German while simultaneously being a German *hafu*. He needed others who were similar to himself and who could, therefore, understand his own

situation. However, Max's purpose for seeking out *hafu* like himself was not only to understand his own identity, but also to find companions. Even before meeting a particular person, he felt an affinity towards German *hafu* who did not speak German.

On the other hand, he has moments when he feels alienated and attacked for lacking an 'authentic' German-ness.

*Max:* If you are a German *hafu* and cannot speak German, you are made fun of by Japanese.

*Elia:* By Japanese?

*Max:* Yeah. When I am asked 'Are you *hafu*?' and I say, 'Yes', they ask me, 'Which country?' and I say, 'Germany'. Then they ask me, 'Can you speak the German?' and I say, 'No, I can't speak German'. Then they look at me with a disappointed face. They don't understand that I can't help it because my life is not like that.

*Elia:* They imagine that you can speak German.

*Max:* Yeah, they imagine it by themselves and then they treat me that way.

*Elia:* It is kind of like they think you are born with the ability to speak German.

*Max:* That is impossible. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

He experienced a lack of understanding from Japanese people who believe that all *hafu* are bilingual. Such people do not understand that language is acquired through one's environment and that people who have grown up in a Japanese environment may only be able to speak Japanese. As a German-Japanese *hafu*, this expectation on the part of society became a burden for Max. This case provides a classic example of one of the two main stereotypes that Japanese society has about *hafu*: that *hafu* as bilingual (the other is that *hafu* are attractive).

*Max:* In Hapa there are many kinds of people. There are people who lived overseas and came to Japan later, and people who were born and grew up here. [Meeting such people] widens my worldview. I don't feel like staying only in Japan for the rest of my life.

*Elia:* You feel like you want to have more experience?

*Max:* Yeah. I want to see the outside world.

*Elia:* You've already given me one example, but can you tell me how you changed or were influenced by others after joining Hapa Japan?

*Max:* There are actually many people who cannot speak their other language. And there are people who are the opposite: people who grew up overseas and came here later [and can't speak Japanese]. I now understand that there are *hafu* who have different kinds of life. I'm just one German-Japanese *hafu* among many. When you go to regular school in Japan, there are only Japanese around you and *hafu* are rare.

*Elia:* I understand.

*Max:* When I'm with a group of Japanese, it's like I'm there all alone because I have a strong personality. But in the case of Hapa, everybody is strong, so I'm just simply one of them. I can become familiar with them. If I'm inside a Japanese group, I stand out. It's kind of like that.

*Elia:* Mm. Is it comfortable for you to be part of Hapa Japan then?

*Max:* Yes, it is. It was good from the first time I joined an event.

*Elia:* You felt you wanted to go again, not just once?

*Max:* Yeah. Since I enjoyed the first event so much, I wanted to know quickly when the next event would be held, so I checked the Internet almost every day. I

attended as often as possible if I was free. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

After participating in Hapa Japan events many times, Max learned that the experiences of *hafu* are diverse and that persons with experiences similar to his own are quite normal. It was his first time to experience being ‘one among many’ instead of feeling that he was constantly standing out. Becoming aware of the diversity that exists among *hafu* not only reduces the pressure Max feels about not being bilingual, but it also makes him feel more comfortable.

*Elia:* What attracts you to the group so much?

*Max:* It’s kind of like my home, so when I attend events it’s like I’ve come back and feel comfortable. The friends I made when I first attended the events also come to events regularly. I’ve also become familiar with more people, so I feel like I’m back when I see them.

*Elia:* Like coming back?

*Max:* Relationships are still very short, but that’s how I feel.

*Elia:* You want to see the people you already know?

*Max:* Yeah, and I also want to get to know more new people, too. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

Even though Max joined the group only recently, he seemed to be quickly blending in and making many friends. He is eager to meet new people and still curious about *hafu*, even after finding out about the experiences they have had. What seems to attract him the most, however, is not curiosity but the comfortable feeling he has about the group,

which he describes as ‘kind of like my home’. Indeed, Cavanagh evaluates the role of communities as follows:

Communities...exist to address specific social problems, either the lack of other spaces for political action, or the lack of affective spaces within offline communities. They are modelled as serving fundamental needs which are pre-constituted, such as a need for participation or a need for acceptance or companionship. (2007: 116)

### 5.3.5. Hapa Japan Member: Yoshihiro Harada

Yoshihiro is thirty-three years old, with a Korean-Japanese background, and works at a trading company. He has been attending Hapa Japan for a long time and is a regular member. Yoshihiro is also a member of HArts, where he contributes poetry and gives traditional Korean dance and performances. Yoshihiro has been thinking about his own identity for a long time and could not find an answer in the Korean groups in Japan he had been involved with. Later he started to shift his interest towards *hafu* and to try to understand their point of view:

*Me:* What kind of interests did you have?

*Yoshihiro:* I have met different kinds of *zainichi* Koreans [Korean residents in Japan] before [meeting *hafu*], but I felt they were different from me in many ways and that there were conflicts in our ways of thinking, which were painful in my mind at the time. Well then, I felt what others were thinking—for example, not Koreans—and looked on the Internet and found Nikolaus’s website and discovered that there were many things written there. My starting point was that I wanted to know different points of view.

*Me:* Whose point of view did you want to know?

*Yoshihiro:* I especially wanted to know what way of thinking *hafu* had. It could be a person who was *hafu*-American or a person who was *hafu*-Chinese.

(Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

Before Yoshihiro joined Hapa Japan and got involved with the Die Kreuzungsstelle website, he was involved in Korean minority groups in Japan. He said that it was not appropriate to discuss something deep, such as identity, in these groups, and when he tried to talk about issues of ethnicity, he often got into fights with the group because of differences in opinion. Yoshihiro said that he has been questioning ‘what kind of Japanese I can be’. He has a sense of identity as a Japanese but he also realises the differences he has because of his background and that he needs to negotiate these differences. The worries he had could not be shared with either the majority-Japanese or Korean groups he belonged to, but he expected that they could be shared with other *hafu*, such as American *hafu* and Chinese *hafu*, who did not share the same ethnic background as himself.

*Elia:* After understanding different people’s way of thinking, what interested you especially? You must have seen various aspects of different people. For example, I think there are different points about culture, about language, and about history. Which part [interested you]?

*Yoshihiro:* At that time, what was regarded as most important on Niko’s website was the state of identity and it was discussed seriously. How can I put it, what I was impressed about is that the home page [Die Kreuzungsstelle] included what *hafu* people and other kinds of mixed-blood were saying on a variety of topics. I was surprised to find out that what they were

thinking was basically the same as what I was thinking, and this was fresh to me.

*Elia:* Was everyone [facing] similar problems and [sharing] similar thoughts?

*Yoshihiro:* What people fundamentally had were the same. I myself, after all, had times when I worried about things such as ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Where is my society to live in?’ And I was interested in other *hafu*’s ways of thinking because I wanted to compare my worries and problems with theirs. Although the cultural and historical background [of each *hafu*] may be different, after speaking about various things [with *hafu* people, I realised] that our worries are basically the same. When I thought like this, it was fresh to begin to think that my own problems were not so much to worry about. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

After meeting different kinds of *hafu*, Yoshihiro discovered that many of the worries and problems he faced were similar to other *hafu*, regardless of their particular ethnic backgrounds. He personally had times when he questioned who he was and where he belonged, but he experienced a moment when his own worries and problems did not matter to him so much anymore. What is significant is that the worries and problems themselves are not solved, but rather that they are accepted as being relatively unimportant by sharing them with the *hafu* people Yoshihiro met. His burden is reduced by changing the nature of problem away from something personal towards something social, which goes beyond his own responsibility. What can be understood by examining the case of Yoshihiro Harada is that one major benefit of belonging to a community is that it produces relief for the individual—the individual no longer has to take things too personally and can understand the social structure in which the

individual is placed. This function does not necessarily have to be performed by communities, and it can probably also be produced through the media or education. Individuals need to feel that they are not alone, and they also need role models and examples to face help them face practical problems. What is more important, however, is the fact that even if there are no solutions, the opportunity to share similar problems produces a kind of relief which may be enough to help individuals get over their problems.

## 5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined how SNS are used to help *hafu* people meet other *hafu*. The chapter examined various attempts to form *hafu* communities and the role that offline activities played in the formation of these communities. Through the interviews conducted, it became clear that every participant had an interest in other *hafu*. However, the motives for participation varied among the participants. While some wanted to make friends and have close relationships, others regarded the communities more as objects of curiosity. Often the members of the communities examined faced problems connected with discrimination and stereotypes, and they wanted to find a space they could escape to and feel comfortable. They also wanted to share their experiences with each other, as well as their thoughts and opinions. It also became clear through the interviews that the events sponsored by *hafu* communities not only provided opportunities to socialise and have fun, but also played a role in helping *hafu* to deal with deep social problems related to ethnicity and identity.

The problems faced by *hafu* in Japan appear to be very similar, regardless of other differences they may have with respect to their racial and ethnic backgrounds. How *hafu* respond to these problems and try to deal with them varies from person to

person, however. Needless to say, reactions among *hafu* to *hafu* communities vary. While Max's case illustrates a rather strong positive response, an opposite negative response can be found in the case of Nikolaus, who did not feel entirely comfortable associating with others in a *hafu* community. While the voices of all *hafu* cannot be represented here, the attitudes of the majority will probably lie somewhere on a continuum between these two poles. Based on his observations over a long period of time, Sam, the organiser of Hapa Japan, said that members are typically surprised and enthusiastic when they first join the events. They eventually make close friends within the group and start to meet with them outside of Hapa Japan; after that they only come to major events. Whether a member stays in the group depends on whether the person can make close relationships with others, once the initial curiosity and excitement of meeting other *hafu* eventually wears off. No matter what response or opinion people have about events sponsored by *hafu* communities, they can still serve as 'reflexive projects' (Giddens 1991), in which *hafu* look to other *hafu* as roles models and compare themselves in an attempt to understand themselves better.

## Chapter 6: Negotiating What It Means to Be *Hafu*: Art, Representation and the Politics of Community Activities

### 6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter examined some of the reasons *hafu* have for establishing and participating in *hafu* communities, using 'Hapa Japan' as a typical example. It became evident that each person has different interests in *hafu* communities that motives for participation are diverse although curiosity about other *hafu* and opportunities to enhance friendships through such communities are two popular reasons. Marginalisation and issues related to identity and self-positioning within Japanese society appeared as important common themes no matter what specific ethnic background the participants had. This chapter will further explore the core theme of this thesis, i.e., how *hafu* negotiate their identities.

Having discussed the problems of how *hafu* are represented in the mainstream media and excluded from the dominant society in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively, as well as the technological infrastructure which makes it possible for audiences to share opinions online and to achieve physical proximity through offline gatherings, attention can now be focused on those movements which actually try to change the situation and make a difference. The central theme of this chapter concerns how *hafu* themselves actively utilise cultural resources to construct their own versions of their identities. As Hall (1996a) states, representation is the key to defining cultural identity and the same is true with respect to the cultural identities of *hafu*. Constructing one's identity is not about discovering the 'true' self. Rather, the forefront of identity politics involves taking up the daily struggle of inclusion and exclusion, acceptance and recognition by

actively engaging in public discourse. Correspondingly, dialogue between *hafu* communities and the wider society they are part of will be the focus of this chapter.

This chapter will examine HArts and Mix Roots Kansai, two communities which are active in creatively representing *hafu* through art and which can be considered as representing a new kind of movement. Both of these communities were offshoots of Hapa Japan. Through his case study of R.A.T.S., a large soap opera community, Baym (1997) points out that online communities eventually become specialised and fragmented. HArts and Mix Roots Kansai are also examples of communities which are specialised and fragmented. Although both HArts and Mix Roots Kansai have a strong interest on art, they each have different aims and purposes and a strong interest in art. As will be discussed further below, both groups are devoted to exploring the intersection between art and the ethnic identities of their members. The communities have experienced with finding ways to express their ethnic identities and engage in activism which brings issues related to *hafu* to the attention of the public. Such activities can be seen as constructing a step forward for *hafu* communities. Rather than simply joining communities for personal reasons, such as having the opportunity to meet other individual *hafu*, the members of HArts and Mixed Roots Kansai have the collective purpose of engaging in public dialogue and effecting social change through art. Nonetheless, there are differences between the two groups in terms of how they define and seek to achieve these goals, which make it interesting to compare and contrast HArts and Mix Roots Kansai.

Most of the key persons in both groups were connected with each other and formed a network, regardless of what other communities they may have been based in. In other words, *hafu* who are active in the arts tend to know each other. The metaphor of an Internet network, in which there is a structure of interdependence and interconnection (Castells 2000) can be appropriately applied to *hafu* artistic

communities in Japan. The artists often cooperated with each other in advertising events and helped to recruit new members. Thus, it was relatively easy for a researcher such as myself to be introduced to key persons in both groups once I became acquainted with someone in the community. It is difficult to say that HArts and Mix Roots Kansai constitute separate communities since the participants mostly overlap; it is absurd to make a distinction about who belongs to which community since many people belong to multiple communities at the same time. The most noticeable difference between the two groups was that HArts is mainly in Tokyo while Mix Roots Kansai was based in Kansai. Whenever the groups engaged in activities outside of their local areas, however, they often collaborated with each other. Community organisers took the initiative in preparing events and setting goals for their respective groups. However, neither of the communities were organised hierarchically or bureaucratically. Both communities were based on loose networks of core members. Virtually anyone could start a project or plan an event and expect sufficient support from the group. As it is the case with most online communities, participation is voluntary and not forced participation but a matter of choice (Cavanaugh 2007).

Probing why some communities are successful and survive while others are inactive and disappear is an important task since the environment on the Internet is fluid and in a state of rapid change. Hapa Japan inspired the creation of many new *hafu* communities on the Internet and it seems that some people wanted to ‘own’ their own communities even if they are almost the same as Hapa Japan. Many communities were made on mixi which use the word *hafu*, often with unique and humorous names, but those which lack a clear purpose, originality, and strong initiative on the part of organisers and members typically attract fewer members and become inactive or virtually inoperative. Communities continue to appear on the SNS unless they are officially closed, but it is obvious that people are not using many of these communities.

Lazarsfeld (1968) argues that leaders must play a significant role in maintaining communities and that strong ties among members are necessary for them to survive (see also Haythornwaite 2002). Although not completely necessary, offline relationships can help to build such ties. Hapa Japan, HArts and Mix Roots Kansai have developed strong ties among their respective members by placing more emphasis on offline rather than online activities. Erbe (1962) discovers that information flow works best in medium-sized groups which are intimate and meet on a regular basis. Sam, the organiser of Hapa Japan, also pointed out in the interview I conducted with him that members of Hapa Japan often form smaller groups within the community and start to meet on their own, but return to the main group whenever there is a major event.

A final point to consider is the issue of power. The reason for attempting to create cultural identity for *hafu* is because they live in a social environment which requires them to form such an identity. Whether they create an authenticated version of themselves in terms of 'who we are' and 'where we came from' or a future-oriented version in terms of 'what we might become', the issues of inequality and of who has and does not have the power to represent *hafu* must be addressed. On a technological level, the rhizomatic model of networks on the Internet affirms equality and denies hierarchy. 'Any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order' (Deleuze, and Guattari 1988: 7). Dreyfus (2001) specifically applies this model to a hyperlinked culture in his arguments for a new heterogeneous order. However, equality in online environments may not correspond to the situation in real life. Rather than think exclusively about 'freedom for identity', the issue of 'freedom from identity' must also be spotlighted since people who resist the idea of identity are often invisible in online environment.

How do *hafu* struggle to find their position within Japanese society? How they acquire and exercise the power of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991) in constructing their own identities is an important question which must be answered in order to understand how *hafu* make sense of themselves in an era of identity politics. The next section will examine HArts as a case study for understanding how *hafu* communities deal with this issue.

## **6.2. HArts: Original Art Produced through Two Cultures?**

### **6.2.1. The Beginning of HArts and the Concept of Art**

HArts was founded in 2006 on mixi as art community by Jamie Belton, who is an artist with a UK-Japan background. The group accepts all genres of art including painting, music, architecture, photography, fashion, and film. Their aim is to provide a new worldview which does not yet exist in Japan or any foreign country. The name HArts was coined by Jamie by combining the words *half* (*Hapa*), *art*, and *hearts*. *Half* (or *Hapa*) means *hafu*, and hearts, according to Jamie, stands for the two spirits which *hafu* have. HArts has designed a logo for itself in which the letters *H* and *A* are capitalised and personified and closely connected with each other. The group's name and logo represents its vision of how art and ethnicity should intersect. HArts has the objective of cultivating an original artistic sensibility which reflects the influence of two cultures, i.e., the cultures which reflect the two backgrounds of *hafu* artists. The idea for starting the group came to Jamie as a result of his desire to establish himself as a professional artist:

*Jamie:* I wanted to start HArts from a different point of view. The strongest reason was for myself. I had a dream when I was a child to become an artist. I liked painting all along and went to art school, and found out that it was not design or illustration that I wanted to do, but I wanted to express myself through art. However, in reality, I could not feed myself as an artist, so I did translation and design as a job, and gradually lost my passion for art....Because I had a job in design, people around me told me things like, 'You use colours which Japanese cannot use!' And they looked at my oil paintings and said, 'This definitely could not have been painted by a Japanese!' But foreigners said, 'This painting looks Japanese!' and 'These paintings look like manga!' I felt this was interesting. Then, I got to know Hapa [Japan] and as I met many *hafu*, I was told things like, 'You are doing art? I like art too!' I thought this was interesting. I started to think that I wanted to make a movement that could be recognised by establishing a new art. Also, by starting this as group and organising events, it inevitably puts me in an environment that forces me to paint. I felt I could come back to the art world again no matter how hard it is. This is how I started HArts. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

As indicated in the interview, the art which Jamie produced could not be categorised as either Western or Japanese. His work looked 'other' to both his Japanese and Western audiences and could not be positioned in either culture. However, Jamie says that reactions to his work was not negative but positive and people praised his originality. After receiving similar remarks for a long period of time, he was convinced that he

could establish an new genre of art which was a mixture of two cultures. Being *hafu*, to Jamie, makes it possible to mix two cultures and for originality to be born.

In a sense it is remarkable that the interest here has shifted away from the physical appearance of *hafu* towards how *hafu* express themselves through art. The danger of stereotyping remains, however, since the role of culture is still emphasised and it is assumed that *hafu* embody two cultures. The claim, 'This definitely could not have been painted by Japanese!' also indicates that ownership of this 'new art' is limited to a person who has two ethnic backgrounds, while further assuming that a person with a single ethnic background could not produce such work as a matter of cultural training. One can still be apprehensive about the link between biology and culture. 'In its non-biological interpretation, then, race stands for historically specific forms of cultural connectedness and solidarity' (Goldberg 1993: 59).

However, there are different views on where the originality of such art comes from. Kenbou (a handle name) participated in HArts from the beginning and is in the position of vice-organiser now. He has a Pakistan-Japan background and works as an architect, trying to contribute to art through architecture. His interest in *hafu* is not directed so much towards the cultures of the countries which *hafu* are from, but rather towards the kind of life and experience *hafu* have:

*Kenbou:* There are *hafu* who have a balance between two cultures but I think the commonality of *hafu* is...[silence]. There are many pure Japanese in Japan because Japan closed its borders for a long time. There are many *hafu* if you go to foreign countries, but *hafu* are especially rare in Japan.

*Elia:* Yeah, especially in Japan.

*Kenbou:* I think there are some identical experiences that *hafu* have gone through because of the attribute of being a *hafu*. Because we have taken similar

paths, I think we can understand each other faster. If we were not in Japan but in another country, probably everything would be different. Very different.

*Elia:* So is having similar experiences [more important] than having a similar culture?

*Kenbou:* I think that's the reason for feeling sympathy. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

As can be seen, Kenbou places more emphasis on commonality in experience rather than on culture. In other words, he thinks that the kind of everyday encounters *hafu* experience in Japan might be similar no matter what background they have, implying that Kenbou's Pakistani background is of less importance to him. For example, being treated differently by society and thinking about his own complex ethnic background could be counted as similar experiences. He speculates that this phenomenon is probably peculiar to Japan, where there is a very small number of *hafu* compared with other countries, suggesting that a sense of commonality and sympathy would not be experienced by *hafu* who are surrounded by a large number of other ethnically mixed people.

Kenbou's interest in his own experience is also reflected in his interest in art:

*Kenbou:* I'm interested in sensitivity. It's quite interesting to know what kind of sensitivity *hafu* have. Because they are living in-between, their perspective is interesting. It makes me realise, 'Oh, this is what they are interested in and this is how they are seeing things.' That kind of new perspective and way of thinking is most interesting. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

Kenbou is less interested in the art itself but rather more inspired by the new perspective and new approach which comes from the unique experiences of *hafu*. In the interview, he said he has met many people who are appealing because of their sensitivity and that this has inspired him. It is difficult to determine whether intangible qualities such as experience, sensitivity, and perspective are directly related to the fact that a person is *hafu*, and certainly impossible to separate and specify such qualities from all the other influences which a person has had in life. Thus, Jamie's version of the relationship between art and being *hafu* is located within the framework of culture, but Kenbou's version goes beyond simply mixing cultures since it is coming from something which cannot be objectively understood but is rather subjective. This interview made me realise that art is something which each person subjectively experiences. Because it is impossible for me to determine the influence the experience of being of *hafu* has on art itself, it became necessary for me to try to understand the intentions of the artists rather than and focusing on the works they produce.

### **6.2.2. Events as the Main Field of Expression for *Hafu* Artists**

The main field of expression for the *hafu* artists I contacted has been through real offline events. mixi communities are used to recruit members, communicate and share ideas, and post announcements but most of the activities engaged in by *hafu* artists are conducted offline. Events are a particularly important activity since they offer an opportunity for artists to present their work to the public. The first event organised by HArts was held in December 2006, when eight members borrowed a small booth at a design festival to exhibit their works. The number of members increased gradually after that and now HArts has over 300 people in its mixi community.

The first HArts event I participated in was held in Tokyo in September 2007 which continued throughout the month. The event was named *Pangaea: Children of the Sky* held in collaboration with the artist group from Mix Roots Kansai. The exhibition was also an official charity event and some of the proceeds were donated to UNICEF. Pangaea is a term first used in 1920 by Alfred Wegener to describe the fact that all the continents of the world were used to be connected as one before they separated from each other. This keyword was chosen as the name of the event to represent the split that *hafu* are experiencing at the moment and to suggest that the split is connected to the past. On the first day of the event in Tokyo, Jamie gave a live performance of him painting a representation of Pangaea. This painting connected to a second painting, which Jamie again painted live on the last day of the event. It was clear that the second painting, which was placed above the first painting, represented Children of the Sky. Putting the two paintings together made it possible to see the children as representing *hafu*, with the idea that there are no boundaries in the sky even when the earth is split. A large painting of Pangaea which represented the complex positioning of *hafu* in the beginning was later changed by drawing an angel in the sky to convey a positive message. The metaphor of 'being split' parallels the conceptualisation of *hafu* as half, but not whole. In addition to Jamie's paintings, there were other works such as a poem which expressed how *hafu* confront issues of identity and which provided the participants with an opportunity to learn and reflect on their own concerns. Wenger's (1998) perspective is useful in understanding the relationship between learning and identity: Because learning transforms who people are and what they can do, it is an experience of identity. Learning is not just the accumulation of skills and information, but also a process of becoming—to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person (215).

Although the last day of Pangaea was a success, attracting over 300 people and being reported on by the mainstream media both domestically and internationally, the members of HArts were facing serious problems about how they were going to organise events in the future. First, the group did not get enough revenue from Pangaea and was in debt. Second, the time and energy spent on the event was enormous and the group was not certain if they could continue holding events since all of the members had jobs and other obligations. In addition to these issues, the fundamental problem was that the group was dependent on members of Hapa Japan joining the events and could not attract as many people as they wanted from outside of the community.

*Kenbou:* I want people from outside the community to understand. We are now inviting people from the outside to HArts events, but I think they are not interesting for outsiders if the artists don't give an explanation or comments because the outsiders won't see what is behind the art and just look at the work which is displayed. I think it's more effective for the artists to give a presentation, since it's a valuable opportunity for them.

*Elia:* So you want to link discussion and art work?

*Kenbou:* I think people can have more imagination by doing so. Take any famous artist, like Picasso, for example. People would think 'Oh it's a painting by a famous artist' if only the paintings were displayed without any explanation. But it is better to know what is behind the paintings, what is behind that era and what intentions the artists had. I think many people enjoy knowing those things, especially those who really look at the paintings. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

In order to be understood and recognised by society for who they are, Kenbou thinks that the art itself is not enough as means of communication; artwork is most effective when it is linked to a narrative. Narrative is important in understanding how meanings are made and it is, moreover, an ongoing process:

A fundamental philosophical assumption behind narrative inquiry is that human beings experience their lives and identities in narrative form. Separate events and actions become meaningful only in the context of a plot of which they are a part....What attracts me about a narrative view of identity above all is that it allows us to think of identity as a *movement* (Kanno 2003: 9-10).

By giving a narrative to one's own life and art, it is possible for *hafu* identities to be communicated and understood. Art is only meaningful when there is sufficient communication between the artists, the artwork, and the audience. No correct or fixed version of identity is produced here. Rather, as Kanno argues, identity should be understood as a 'movement', i.e., as something that is unfinished and in process.

### **6.2.3. Branding *Hafu* Art**

In the spring of 2008, the members of HArts met frequently to discuss their plans and direction. They agreed that they needed to exhibit their art more to people outside of the *hafu* community and came up with the strategy of having a theme for each event. Jamie called the new series of events 'Hartism' and tried to further establish the group's art as a brand. They tried to use the scarce and new image of *hafu*'s art as a new brand and movement:

*Jamie:* I really want to spread this as one kind of movement in each country of the world. For example, the term ‘Hartism’ ....and the kind of artists who paint this art is a ‘Hartist’. I want these terms to be in the dictionary. I want to make a movement which will make people say things like, ‘Oh, that was the era of Hartism’ in the same way as, ‘Oh, that’s the era of the Baroque’ or ‘Oh, that’s the era of the Renaissance’. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

Jamie’s ambition is to make people recognise *hafu* art as a new movement. Drawing on examples from the Baroque and the Renaissance, Jamie wants to demonstrate that we are living in an era in which two cultures can merge to make new forms of art, symbolising the movement as ‘Hartism’. While Jamie has been successful in attracting audiences to ‘Hartism’ exhibitions, there are nonetheless many members of HArts who do not have the full influence of two cultures, meaning that this brand image could give them pressure and make it seem as if it is a requirement for *hafu* to articulate their art through two cultures:

*Elia:* What is a *hafu* brand?

*Kenbou:* Ah—that is—I think it is something that I cannot do. I think it is good for a person like Jamie who can be seen in his paintings but I think there are many people who are not like him.

*Elia:* Is culture of *hafu* influencing the art style?

*Kenbou:* If we accept this definition, I think I don’t qualify. In that sense, I think I don’t fully belong to this brand yet. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

Brand here is understood as something that one belongs to and there are two possible outcomes: one either belongs and does not belong to the brand. As a result there is inequality and hierarchy with respect to who possesses this cultural capital and who does not. Often this cultural capital is dependent on the kind of environment one grew up, such as the experience of living overseas, the language used in one's family, and the education one has at school. Such experiences enable or prevent *hafu* from expressing *hafu* identities through art.

HArts has organised four Hartism events through 2009 each having a different theme; 'starting point', 'door', 'earth' and 'people' respectively. Each subsequent event attracted more people, with some events having over 500 people in attendance on a single night, a figure which surpasses the attendance records at events sponsored by Hapa Japan. HArts also conveyed a clearer message compared to the message conveyed at PANGAEA in 2007, with new artworks being produced to fit the theme of each event. HArts obtained the services of a producer who wanted to help the group and who contributed ideas about HArts branding and marketing strategy, and also helped HArts find new ways of collaborating with other groups. HArts has also organised smaller events, such as live music performances and poetry readings. Although using ethnic resources is problematic in itself, the people I observed participating in these events looked happy and enjoying themselves immensely, which made me feel that HArts' greatest creative contribution is its ability to produce events which satisfies people and brings them together. Each time I attended HArts events, there were good opportunities to make friends. HArts enables people to enjoy art and to develop their community at the same time.

### **6.3. Mix Roots Kansai: Accepting 'Mix Roots' through Social Dialogue**

*Like any other sense of community this one seemed to derive from reciprocal acts of recognition and confirmation. The individual may himself derive a sense of community by observing that others are like himself in that their cares and quandaries are like his own. His sense of membership is enormously strengthened, however, if in addition, he experiences himself as seen by others in the same way. (Erikson 1968: 174)*

### **6.3.1. How Mix Roots Kansai Started**

As with HArts, Mix Roots Kansai first started in 2006 on mixi. Initially the group was a branch of Hapa Japan and formed because Hapa Japan could only hold events in the Tokyo area and Mix Roots Kansai wanted to hold events in Kansai, which is the second largest metropolitan area in Japan. As an offshoot of Hapa Japan, Mix Roots Kansai has been holding events for socialising purposes, similar to those held by Hapa Japan. However, the range of events held by Mix Roots Kansai and its interests are quite diverse. Although the number of participants is much smaller than the number participating in Hapa Japan and HArts in Tokyo, Mix Roots Kansai has events such as picnics, trips to the beach, guest lectures, and film nights, all intended to further an understanding of *hafu* and people with multiple roots. Moreover, Mix Roots Kansai maintains close ties with HArts. The two groups have collaborated on holding events several times in the past and both also emphasise the importance of art. Mix Roots Kansai uses different names for different occasions. For example, Mischlingroove is the name of their artists group and the name Mix Roots Japan is used when the group conducts activities outside of their local community in Kansai. The name Mix Roots Kansai itself has been used to attract a wide range of people with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The organiser, Edward, who has a Venezuela-Japan, felt that people with multiple roots share common issues of identity and thought it was important

to accept not only *hafu*, but also *nikkei* (overseas Japanese), *kuotaa* (quarter foreigners), and other mixed people with non-Japanese cultural or ethnic roots into the group. Edward believed that the best label to describe such person is *mix roots* and he started to use this term as an alternative to *hafu*.

Another unique feature of Mix Roots Kansai is that they actively invite the parents of *hafu* to join their activities. Whereas many *hafu* communities are open exclusively to *hafu* people, Edward believes that it is beneficial for the parents and young children to be part of the community as well. For educational purposes parents can learn from other parents and also from grown-up *hafu* to think about how to raise their children and deal with issues such as what language to use at home and what kind of education to provide for their children. Because of its emphasis on community service, Mix Roots Kansai seems to have difficulty attracting large numbers of ordinary young *hafu* who simply want to have fun with other *hafu*, something which Hapa Japan and HArts are relatively good at. However, Mix Roots Kansai is making progress by organising various kinds of events, such as events only for adults, and by trying to attract different generations and different types of people for various events.

The purpose and aim of Mix Roots Kansai is strongly connected with the organiser's own background. Whereas the organiser of HArts is an artist whose primary interest is in art, the organiser of Mix Roots Kansai works at United Nations and is more interested in using art as a means to achieve respect and recognition for people with multiple roots and to build a multicultural society in Japan (further objectives of the group can be found in the Appendix D). As the organiser of Mix Roots Kansai, Edward has plans to develop the group into a non-profit organisation in the near future in order to make the group's purpose clear and also to contribute to charity. In addition, Mix Roots Kansai works with local community centres, such as the Takatori Community Centre to widen their activities and specifically deal with problems faced by various

minorities living in Japan. The overall concern of Mix Roots Kansai is to help people who feel anxious about having a certain kind of identity imposed on them because of a lack of understanding of and respect for their ethnic roots. Thus, since Mix Roots Kansai was first established it has valued the participation of both people with mixed roots and ordinary Japanese in order to foster dialogue aimed at mutual understanding and respect.

### **6.3.2. A Multicultural Model and Shake Forward!**

The model of *hafu* adopted by Mix Roots Kansai is close to a multicultural model in that it tries to incorporate each of the two identities of *hafu* and to celebrate difference (Barker 2004). Whereas HArts understands *hafu* in terms of creating hybrid identities which are different from specific national identities, Mix Roots Kansai tries to change society so that people with various identities can be accepted and recognised at both the individual and social levels. While multiculturalism can be criticised for relying on essentialist views of ethnic cultures and identities, Taylor (1994) argues that the politics of recognition is an important theme in multiculturalism. This emphasis on recognition and mutual respect can be connected to Cooley's (1902) concept of a 'looking glass self'. Cooley suggests that individuals do not construct their identities by themselves but rather through the interactions they have with other people and the perceptions others have of them. Therefore, as long as mixed roots people are neither recognised nor respected in society, political and cultural interaction is needed to remedy the situation.

Edward has been keen to organise both local community events for mixed-roots people and larger events which promote social dialogue towards the creation of a future multicultural society. One of the main events organised by Mixed Roots Kansai is

Shake Forward! a series of hip-hop music events. Two Shake Forward! events were held in Osaka and Kawasaki in 2008, and two in Kobe and Tokyo in 2009. This series had the intention of helping people to feel and experience the voices and forms of expression of minorities, and as the name suggests to 'shake' and dance as a way to move 'forward' to the future. The events have taken place at large concert halls and clubs, with professional artists as performers, and have attracted thousands of people. Edward found and contacted the artists, who have a wide range of backgrounds (for example, Brazil, Peru, Ainu, Korea and Vietnam) himself. The hip-hop music they create is influenced by their ethnic roots, as reflected in their lyrics, language, and music style (such as Reggaeton).

I was able to participate in the Shake Forward! event held in Kawasaki in 2008. Many Hapa Japan and HArts members served as volunteers for this event, holding exhibitions, and selling goods to raise money for charities, and promoting an understanding of the cultures of ethnic minorities outside the main hall. Inside the hall, hip-hop artists performed songs which also expressed their roots. An impressive performance was given by a musician called J-Nam MC, a twenty-year-old Vietnamese refugee who sang about how he was brought to Japan by boat and is now living his life negotiating the two cultures of Vietnam and Japan. The performance gave the audience an opportunity to think about Vietnamese refugees living in Japan, something the majority may not have thought about it if they had not attended this event. Certainly the performance involved more than simply coming to know about J-Nam MC's life since the audience could be moved through the experience of the music as well. Edward's strategy in organising this event was to use entertainment and art as a means to promote dialogue. The venue as well provided people with an opportunity to connect with others and foster a sense of community. In recognition of the contribution Edward made to his local community through Shake Forward! and other activities, he received a significant

amount of media attention and at the age of twenty-five was awarded a prize as Young Person of the Year by the governor of Hyogo prefecture.

NHK, the national broadcasting system of Japan (equivalent to the BBC in the UK), later featured a documentary of this event entitled 'Mix Roots: Pride in Heart with Hip-Hop' (English translation) on their television programme, *Nippon no Genba*, in July 2008. The documentary not only reported on Shake Forward! but also raised the issue of minorities living in Japan and discussed their identities and cultures. It is significant that NHK used the new term *mix roots* to refer to people with two ethnic backgrounds instead of the word *hafu*, which is more widely known in Japanese society. This was the first time that the term *mix roots* was used in mainstream society and it became a significant moment for Mix Roots Kansai since their own self-definition had been recognised by NHK.

It is also notable that Mix Roots Kansai conducts a wide range media activities. The group made a home page and also used mixi to report on their activities and the media coverage they began to receive as they became more famous. They also posted their videos on YouTube to make these resources available to anyone at anytime. Later the group also made a Mix Roots Kansai community on Facebook. Other *hafu* communities, such as Hapa Japan, have also formed communities on Facebook, it is now a prevalent trend. At present Hapa Japan recruits more people for events through Facebook than it does through mixi. Other communities also use multiple SNSs and media to develop their communities. Today it is difficult to find communities that use only one SNS or homepage since Internet users have become more diversified.

Another recent initiative of Mix Roots Kansai is that they have started a local FM radio station in Kobe. The radio station was launched after the disastrous Kobe earthquake occurred in 1995 to remedy the problem that many minorities who did not understand Japanese could not get sufficient information after the earthquake. The radio

station has programmes in various foreign languages and is intended as a means to communicate with society and to promote a better understanding of *mix roots* people. The first programme introduced the Vietnamese hip-hop artist from Shake Forward!, mentioned previously, who talked about his life and recent activities, such as giving lectures at schools.

### 6.3.3. Being Japanese and Mix Roots at the Same Time

*Hafu* people living in Japan tend to focus on their non-Japanese ethnic background and often do not think so much about their Japanese side. One reason is that *hafu* are usually more conscious of their other ethnic background because it stands out more in Japanese society and their Japanese side is seen as something that is either taken for granted or invisible. Since Mix Roots Kansai believes it is important to respect the multiple roots of *hafu*, the group is also interested in promoting the Japanese roots of *hafu*. Edward, the organiser, sees this emphasis as being important for Mix Roots Kansai's future activities:

*Edward:* Since many newcomers are joining the group, the number of different types of minorities is increasing. There are many *nikkei*, people who had to leave Japan and now want to come back. Anyway, probably a new Japan is starting to be made. If this happens—like somebody said, Ainu and Koreans are starting to come out— eventually there might be a time in the future when we can use terms such as *Ainu-Japanese*, *Brazilian-Japanese*, *Thai-Japanese*, and *Korean-Japanese*, like they say *Asian-American* in other countries. If the situation changes in this way, there will be a complete new demographics. If this happens—how can I say

it—there is the image that an assimilation policy is imposed upon minorities by the majority but when the minorities start to become the majority, the present majority will be the ones who need to assimilate. Such complicated matters are only discussed by a small number of people in the group. Even now discussion in my own community has made little progress, and actually when I look around at other communities, there is little discussion of these issues.

*Elia:* Yeah, it's like that in most communities.

*Edward:* I think, in a sense, everybody is maybe tired of it.

*Elia:* Tired?

*Edward:* Yeah, tired of it. They have spoken all that they can in the past two or three years. I don't know if this is possible, but maybe society is actually changing a lot. Saying this, what I think recently is, I'm a *mix roots* and I have respect for my Japanese roots. When we are not treated as foreigners anymore in Japanese society, as a person who has Japanese roots I want to value my Japanese roots and culture, too. Therefore, ten years from now, if [the community] continues, part of its activities will be teaching Japanese culture to their own children. (Translated from Japanese to English by the author)

What Edward is anticipating is that the position of *hafu* in Japanese society will change in the future. Currently, according to his understanding, *hafu* are often positioned as foreigners in Japan and their Japanese side is not recognised or accepted. However, eventually as more foreigners come to Japan, Japan will become more like the US. People will start to claim that they have ethnic roots outside of Japan but that they are also Japanese at the same time, e.g., Brazilian-Japanese. According to the current way

of thinking in Japan, it is impossible to be a minority and a Japanese at the same time since the notion of 'Japaneseness' is based on ideas of racial purity (Murphy-Shigematsu 2000). Edward believes, however, that this belief will change in the near future so that different types of Japanese can be accepted. What will happen then is that *mix roots* people will not have to rely so much on the 'other' side of their ethnic roots and will be naturally assimilated into Japanese society. Edward believes that respecting one's Japanese identity and learning Japanese culture will be important to *mix roots* people in the future. Indeed, the expression of identity by most the *hafu* communities at the moment is limited to an interest in the 'other' side of their ethnic roots, while little attention is given to their Japanese side, which is taken for granted. Edward also stresses that learning Japanese culture is an issue not only for *hafu* but for Japanese in general. His view, then, is based on an understanding of traditional culture which fears that culture is something that can be lost and that, therefore, needs to be taught. Mix Roots Kansai's hope is that individuals can feel comfortable with who they are and be mutually supportive, so that the negotiation of ethnic identities is not a lonely process but an enriching process which can be engaged in through community activities.

## 6.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined two prominent communities which emphasise the connection between art and the representation of *hafu* identities. It became clear that the art and culture they are creating are strongly related to issues of identity, belonging, and positionality in Japanese society. Whereas HArts understands *hafu* as a project of creating hybridity and a 'brand', Mix Roots Kansai sees *hafu* as incorporating multiple ethnic roots. Obviously, these two tendencies do not represent all the ways in which *hafu* can be understood, since it is presumed that each *hafu* individual will construct his

or her own sense of identity which is unique to themselves. However, the attempt by *hafu* communities to create a collective identity is a recent trend which is popular among the younger generation of *hafu*. It is important to understand why *hafu* are interested in getting together and creating their own art and culture. Needless to say, a broader understanding of Japanese society is essential for comprehending the current situation of *hafu*. It is unclear whether ethnic boundaries and Japanese views of race and identity will change in the near future as Edward, the organiser of Mix Roots Kansai, has anticipated, but it is clear that there are small groups of people who are attempting to change the meaning of *hafu* to fit idealised versions of their own identities. It is hoped that the voices of *hafu* presented in this chapter can be heard and understood in the broader context of Japanese and global society in a way which avoids filtering through the researcher's own perceptions and values. In practice it is impossible to understand each individual in the same way that they understand themselves. Nonetheless, attempting to understand *hafu* on their own terms can help to start a process of dialogue and further research which is not simply a reproduction of existing stereotypes and prejudices. Such efforts could provide an opportunity to think about how to make life more creative and meaningful for individual *hafu* without misunderstanding and misrepresenting them.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### 7.1. Introduction

In this final chapter the results of the research presented this thesis will be reviewed, including a consideration of the contributions and limitations of the present study and some suggestions for future work on multiethnic studies in Japan. Before conducting the research for this thesis it became clear that studies of *hafu* in Japan are quite different from studies of mixed-race people in the UK and the US, in that ‘race’ is less focused among *hafu* in Japan than it is among mixed-race people in other countries. Nonetheless, *race* is still a keyword for understanding the situation of *hafu* in Japan, although *hafu* themselves mobilise a variety of different concepts in addition to race, such as ethnicity, nationality, and culture, to define themselves. The term *hafu* is itself a relatively new word, given that it has been in use for less than forty years, and its meaning has changed during that period. Originally the term was used primarily to refer to mixed-race females with a white-Japanese background, but it is now used to refer to mixed-raced people of both genders coming from a variety of backgrounds. The dominant forms of representation of *hafu* in Japanese society continue to promote narrow stereotypes, however, e.g., the idea that *hafu* are young and attractive mixed-race females who are fluent in English. Only a very small number of *hafu* fit this description, of course. Still, as noted, the connotations of the term *hafu* are changing, and part of the motivation for the present research was to contrast how *hafu* are represented in the mainstream media with how *hafu* see themselves. Whereas Japanese society tends to view *hafu* as constituting a homogenous group, there is in fact a great deal of diversity among *hafu* in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, and experience which is often not represented in the media. One clearly identified social

problem for *hafu* is that they need to negotiate the gap between the perceptions and expectations society has of them and who they actually are.

The main purpose of this thesis has been to consider how such issues might be dealt with. Some possible solutions to the problems typically faced by *hafu* will be presented later in this chapter. First, however, a very basic point must be emphasised again: although the term *hafu* seems to designate a single homogenous group, *hafu* themselves are in fact quite diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, and experience. For example, it is natural that some *hafu* speak only one language and possess only one culture, even though they have two races and ethnic backgrounds. It is important not to confuse race and ethnic background with culture. Culture is acquired through education and experience, not through 'blood'. The 'monoethnic myth' needs to be criticised (*cf.* Yoshino 1992; Oguma 1995; Lie 2001), particularly in Japan where race and culture are often linked and racial 'purity' is highly valued. Unless race, ethnicity, culture, and nationality are understood as being different from each other, there is the danger not only that *hafu* will continue to be understood in stereotypic ways in Japan but also that they will be treated as 'non-Japanese' and marginalised.

Two strategies were adopted in this thesis to tackle the problem of stereotypes. One was to make clear how the term *hafu* has developed historically. Understanding this process enables us to see that the meaning of the term is not fixed, but rather multiple and fluid. How the term *hafu* is understood has changed in the past and will continue to change in the future. A second strategy was to present examples of people actually participating in this process of meaning-making. With the development of the Internet and SNS, individuals have increased opportunities and power to organise activities and communities as a way both to represent themselves and to communicate with others in social dialogue. Participation is a keyword in this research and the intention has been to see how *hafu* communities encourage such participation.

Another motivation that emerged during the course of conducting this research was the discovery that the culture and social relationships produced in *hafu* communities are rich and valuable in themselves. *Hafu* communities and activities should not be seen simply as tools for dealing with social problems faced by *hafu* in Japan. The participants themselves do not see their communities simply as places where issues such as identity and racism can be dealt with. Cultural studies links political and social problems together with culture as it is experienced in everyday life, and provides a bridge between theory and activism (Mouri 2000). Nonetheless, politicising culture can often compromise the value and attractiveness of culture itself. Particularly in the present Japanese context the politicisation of culture is regarded as ‘uncool’. It is important not to overanalyse culture to the point that it can no longer be enjoyed and appreciated on its own terms.

## 7.2. Review of the Present Research

While some research has been produced on both Social Network Services and multiethnicity in Japan, I believe that the present research is the first to explore the link between the two. It is also the first to investigate how the specific term *hafu* is commonly used in Japan. In this thesis I have shown how Internet communities are used by *hafu* people and what influence these communities have on identity formation. When I started this research, no literature could be found specifically on the subject of *hafu*, although I was gradually able to collect studies which are indirectly related to *hafu*, such as literature on ‘biethnic’ people (Yoshida 2007), ‘multi-ethnic’ people (Kamada 2005), and ‘Amerasians’ (Murphy-Shigematsu 2000, 2002). Although these studies are insightful, I became aware of the problem of how to translate the meaning of the term *hafu* into English. It is obvious that even the terms *biethnic* and *multi-ethnic* do not have

the same meaning, and the term *hafu* cannot be accurately translated into English in a way which fully comprehends the historical and social meanings of the term and how it is understood in Japan. I think that this point became clear throughout the research.

This research offered three examples of how Internet communities are used by *hafu*. The first example was presented in Chapter 4, which considered how popular images of *hafu* are perceived and discussed in online communities. According to Negoro (2006), online discussion boards belong to the first generation of the Internet. One characteristic of the first generation is the development of a virtual world which stands in opposition to the real world. Thus, the type of relationships discussed in Chapter 4 was mainly virtual and most of participants did not actually know or meet with each other. Since participation on discussion boards is relatively anonymous and the relationships are virtual, it is often easier for participants to express their opinions openly. Chapter 4 also introduced the homogenous representations of *hafu* in the mainstream media as young and attractive white mixed-persons who are fluent in English, and how these representations differ from the diverse images *hafu* have of themselves. When *hafu* discuss and share opinions among themselves, the readings they have of these diverse images may be positive, negative, or negotiated. Online discussion boards provide a valuable place for *hafu* to learn from each other and to share information and opinions. The participants in online discussion boards are not passive about how they are represented, but rather take an active role in voicing their own views and contribute ideas for how to solve their own problems.

The second example of how Internet communities are used by *hafu* was presented in Chapter 5, which looked at how virtual relationships lead to real relationships and vice versa, specifically focusing on offline activities engaged in by *hafu* communities. This aspect of SNS is characterised as constituting the second generation of the Internet (Web 2.0), in which the virtual and real are merged (Negoro

2006). SNS includes both the virtual and the virtual, and the virtual and the real. In the second generation the Internet is used not only as cyberspace but also as an extension of communication in everyday life. The motivations for participating in offline activities for *hafu* are diverse but several patterns could be identified. One common point is that *hafu* have an interest in meeting other *hafu*. For many *hafu*, particularly those who did not attend international schools, offline activities organised by *hafu* communities provided an opportunity to socialise with other *hafu* for the first time. The purpose of such activities was similar to the purpose of online discussion boards, namely they provided a place where *hafu* could share their thoughts and opinions with each other. Unlike online discussion boards, however, the activities also provided a place where *hafu* could make friends with other *hafu* and enjoy their time together. The fact that many *hafu* continued to participate in such activities resulted in the formation of 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998), i.e., communities in which there is a good mix of people who already know each other, as well as a steady stream of participants flowing in and out. Initially many of the people who participated in *hafu* communities did so because they were curious about other *hafu*. This motivation would eventually disappear, however, when the participants came to know each other better and would then continue to participate because of the friendships they had made. It was observed that regarding oneself as *hafu* can provide a common ground for the formation of *hafu* communities despite the fact that the participants themselves did not share the same ethnic backgrounds.

The third example of how Internet communities are used by *hafu* was presented in Chapter 6, which examined several groups which split off from Hapa Japan in order to pursue art and other specialised activities. Internet communities are often initially formed as large general communities, which then split into smaller groups that are oriented to more specific interests. In other words, Internet communities are subject to

specialisation and fragmentation (Baym 1997; Cavanagh 2006; Negoro 2006). Hapa Japan was also initially organised as a general network for *hafu*, but later divided into several more narrowly focused communities. Chapter 6 introduced two of these groups, HArts and Mix Roots Kansai, each of which had their unique understanding of *hafu* and which tried to represent and express themselves through art and other activities. Both of these groups are better understood as ‘activist’ communities in the sense that they did not meet exclusively for social purposes but also to convey a strong message to society. It became clear through the activities examined and interviews collected during the fieldwork for this thesis that HArts and Mix Roots Kansai both have a need to be recognised in Japanese society and to be understood in a way which is different from how the majority of people currently perceive them. The fact that the term *mix roots* was eventually adopted by NHK, the government-funded radio and television network in Japan, showed that the participants of *hafu* communities could play an active role in changing how *hafu* are represented in the media and, moreover, gain attention for the problems faced by *hafu* and have an impact on the wider society. HArts and Mix Roots Kansai may not yet have achieved all of their goals, but during my fieldwork it was evident that both groups making significant progress and growing larger.

On the basis of the examples just summarised, this study has focused on how and why *hafu* use the Internet as a tool for gathering both online and offline. As such, the research makes a contribution to understanding the specific relationships *hafu* form with other *hafu*. Whereas previous studies have focused on the relationship between *hafu* and the larger Japanese society (Oikawa 2007; Lise 2008) and on the experience of *hafu* in the Okinawa region (Murphy-Shigematsu 2000, 2002), in international schools (Bostwick 1999, 2001), in immersion schools (Greer 2001, 2003), and in Japanese schools (Kamada 2005), this study has specifically explored how *hafu* form their own groups. I was both surprised and confused when I first encountered so many *hafu*

communities on mixi and my initial goal was simply to understand what this phenomenon was all about. As my research continued, the project evolved into the larger one of attempting to link the formation of *hafu* communities on the Internet to broader issues related to the representation, identities, and marginalisation of *hafu* in Japan. My research has provided me with a better understanding of the historical and social contexts in which the concept of *hafu* has developed and also of how *hafu* experience their lives at present. Despite the fact that *hafu* have a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds and are also different in terms of gender, age, education, and culture, Japan is presently in an era in which the term *hafu* can be used to define both an identity and a social category.

The limitations of the present study should also be clearly stated in order to give an idea of the extent to which the findings may or may not be useful, and also to indicate some directions for future research. It is my regret I could not use most of the data gathered for this study and that I needed to be highly selective in deciding which data to incorporate into the final thesis. Since this study is based on qualitative research, it was impossible to collect data from a large number of people, meaning that the results cannot be generalised to apply to a wider population. However, the purpose of the study was not to collect objective data of the sort provided by quantitative research because my aim was to obtain a deeper understanding of how *hafu* are actually forming networks and communities. A second limitation is that the study is limited to those *hafu* who participate in *hafu* communities on mixi, which undoubtedly constitutes a smaller percentage of the total *hafu* population in Japan since it can be presumed that there are many *hafu* who do not use mixi. Nonetheless, communities such as Hapa Japan have over 1,000 members, with more than 200 members participating in the group's events. The number of people participating in both online and offline activities for *hafu* is

significant and cannot be regarded as 'small'. It is important to understand that *hafu* communities are voluntary that only those who want to participate join them.

There are other limitations to this study. Participation on the Internet is free and open to everyone, no matter where they live, but offline activities for *hafu* are limited mainly to the Tokyo and Kansai regions of Japan. As a result, the data collected reflects the characteristics of *hafu* living in urban areas. The data is also biased towards *hafu* who are roughly between the ages of 18 and 35, since it is people in this age group are the main participants in events organised by *hafu* communities. Furthermore, it is questionable whether those who participate in *hafu* communities reflect the general population of *hafu* in Japan. According to statistics on the number of international marriages in Japan, *hafu* with Asian backgrounds, such as Chinese, Korean, and Filipino, should constitute the majority of *hafu* in Japan, but the participants in *hafu* communities have predominantly white and Western backgrounds. This fact is interesting in itself, however, since it suggests that people who look different from Japanese and who fit the stereotypic image of *hafu* are more likely to embrace a *hafu* identity. This possibility is something which could be further explored in future research.

Finally, it would be good if future studies of *hafu* could have more of an impact on education and policy-making, two areas where practical changes could be made immediately. As an activist community Mix Roots Kansai has already begun to address these issues by respectively providing a forum for parents who are raising *hafu* to discuss the education of their children and by starting a radio station which provides information and services for minorities not provided in the mainstream media. In addition, it would be helpful if researchers could support the work of community centres, such as the Takatori Community Centre, and address the needs of minorities living in local regions. Moreover, many schools in Japan are still neither aware of, nor prepared to deal, with problems faced by *hafu* students, such as bullying and

marginalisation. Most Japanese schools are also not prepared at present to educate children who do not speak Japanese or who need multilingual education. For many *hafu* children the only alternatives are to attend international schools or schools related to a specific nationality (such as American schools), which are often expensive, however, and which are often intended for students who have, or wish to have, some connection with Western countries. One constructive suggestion is that researchers could work more closely together with policy-makers and educators in the future.

### **7.3. Beyond the Multicultural and Marginal Paradigms**

Next, I would like to move on to a discussion of the various positions *hafu* might occupy in Japanese society in the future. At present multiculturalism is widely regarded in favourable terms while being marginal is regarded in negative terms and as something that should be avoided. Murphy-Shigematsu, writing about the situation of Amerasians in Japan, points out that the ideas of multiculturalism and marginalisation are in fact intrinsically related to each other:

Viewing Amerasians through the lens of marginality, we see that it is a great disadvantage to be a biracial/bicultural person. Being on the edge or in-between groups robs one of the security of a sense of belonging and community....If Amerasians are viewed as multicultural and interracial then we see the advantage of being cosmopolitan, versatile, and adaptable. The multicultural and interracial person enjoys the benefits of both cultures. He or she has the "best of both worlds." These persons accept the duality of their racial and cultural background and synthesize it in new forms of identity. (Murphy-Shigematsu 2000:159)

At present being multicultural is often taken as an ideal in Japanese society. As discussed previously in Chapter 1, the parents of many *hafu* in Japan are in favour of

using the term *daburu* (double) instead of *hafu* to refer to their children. Indeed, it may be useful for parents to use the term *daburu* in order to help their children feel that they are connected to both of their parents and also to provide self-esteem and pride for their children so that they feel that being mixed-race is actually an advantage and a benefit. Nonetheless, the reason for exerting a great deal of energy to position *hafu* as multicultural may, ironically, be because being multicultural is simply the other side of the coin of being marginal. In other words, multiculturalism may simply be used to compensate for and disguise marginality.

Kamada (2005) also sees multiculturalism as a way to overcome marginality:

This study also clarified how these girls [*hafu* in Japan] negotiated their identities in terms of their managed control over their *difference* when constituted as ‘bad difference’; some of them created ‘good difference’ for themselves by constituting themselves as *different* in a *good* sense within discourses of diversity and interculturality....This unique positioning gives these girls a means to take control of ‘othering’ and to create privileged cultural, symbolic and social capital for themselves on the basis of their two dominant ethnicities....Even though many of the participants are not particularly proficient in English, they nevertheless position themselves as privileged in possessing the cultural and linguistic capital of English proficiency and its attendant high-status position and take up the opportunity to demonstrate their English abilities when given the opportunity among their other multi-ethnic peers. (Kamada 2005: 260-262)

Here the strategy is the same: difference is perceived as ‘bad difference’ by society but an attempt is made to regard it as a ‘good difference’ by utilising the discourse of diversity and multiculturalism. The girls studied by Kamada can become ‘multicultural’ by utilising their English ability, even if it is rather limited. Kamada states that the ability to speak English is part of the girls’ privileged cultural, symbolic, and social capital, which they use to maintain their security and self-esteem.

I think there is clearly a problem with this positioning. First, it is understandable that some people need to utilise the discourse of diversity and multiculturalism in order to survive and to maintain their security and self-esteem. However, there are several further issues which must be considered. First, it is important to question why *hafu* need to position themselves as being multicultural. The fact of being multicultural is perhaps less important than the sense of identity which it confers. As seen with Kamada's case study of adolescent girls, their difference is marked as a 'bad difference' by society and it is for this reason the girls need to change it into a 'good difference'. The very fact that they feel the need to do so, however, illustrates that Japan is still a discriminatory society with respect to difference and foreignness. However, if differences were not ordered hierarchically and if discrimination were eliminated, there would be no need for *hafu* to position themselves as being multicultural. Positioning English as a form of privileged cultural capital is also problematic, since it creates reverse discrimination and can act as a manifestation of Western superiority. In other words, those who adopt a multicultural position run the risk of looking down on people who have only one culture. Moreover, emphasising one's Western cultural capital may simply escalate conflict and is, therefore, not a solution.

Being multicultural is more a matter of positioning and cultural identity than it is about having the ability to speak two languages or function in two cultures. If one is truly multicultural, being able to 'enjoy the benefits of both cultures' simply means that a person can blend into either society without having to openly express the fact that he or she is 'multicultural':

The perspective of life that multicultural persons offer is universal in the sense of not trying to eliminate cultural differences but wanting to preserve what is most valid and significant and valuable in each culture as a way of enriching and helping to form the whole. They are less

concerned with preserving cultural traditions and more concerned with recognizing that it is these cultural traditions which preserve them (Hampton 1984). (Murphy-Shigematsu 2000: 161)

Thus, being multicultural is not important in itself. Rather, it is more important for *hafu* to demonstrate their cultural ability in order for them to be recognised and accepted in society for who they are. It is clear that recognition and acceptance by society is not simply a cultural issue, however, since differences in physical appearance can still marginalise *hafu* no matter how assimilated they are into Japanese culture. Perhaps a multicultural positioning is utilised by some *hafu* to emphasise that they are different in a 'positive' way when an assimilation strategy is not available to them.

In reality, it is very difficult for *hafu* to be multicultural persons who have complete access to both cultures and societies. Becoming a multicultural person requires access to various forms of cultural, symbolic, and social capital, as suggested by Kamada. Monocultural environments prevent *hafu* from becoming multicultural, which is perhaps one reason why the parents of *hafu* often adopt the agenda of trying to create an environment which allows their children to acquire capital from two cultures. Two major sites for implementing such an agenda are the home and school. Socioeconomic inequality is also a factor which affects whether *hafu* are able to adopt a multicultural identity. In an Okinawan context, for example, *hafu* who cannot speak English and who speak only Japanese are discriminated against as *shima-hafu* (island *hafu*). Since such *hafu* lack multicultural ability, it is assumed that their parents are divorced and that their families do not have enough money to send their children to expensive international schools. Other parts of Japan are not as rigid as Okinawa but socioeconomic inequality is may in fact be a major reason why some *hafu* are able to become multicultural while others are not. There are, nonetheless, many parents who are not caught up in the ideology of being multicultural. Such parents may speak Japanese at home and send their children to regular Japanese schools so that they can

become 'ordinary' Japanese, even if the parents have ability to raise their children in a more multicultural way. Striving for multicultural ability, of course, can be engaged in by *hafu* themselves, without any influence from parents. Many members of *hafu* communities are worried about not being able to speak their other foreign language, and consequently study hard by themselves, with some of them even going abroad for this purpose. Despite the fact that they have neither the need nor the occasion to use their other language, they may feel as if an essential part of themselves is missing if they fail to learn it. Moreover, monocultural *hafu* may be disappointed with how they are treated in Japanese society, so becoming multicultural may be seen as providing a way for them to escape from their marginality and establish a more privileged position for themselves.

What this analysis makes clear is that the multicultural paradigm needs to be revised so that *hafu* do feel obliged to conform to an ideal which is simply imposed on them by their parents and wider society. Being monocultural and assimilating oneself to the dominant society should be more widely accepted as viable options for *hafu* in Japan. As discussed in Chapter 6, HArts promotes the formation of hybrid identities through the mixing of two cultures, while Mix Roots Kansai encourages *hafu* to accept both of their ethnicities as a way to establish multicultural identities. I have no disagreement with what either of these groups are doing and hope that they will be able to achieve their goals. Nonetheless, what still seems to be missing are other alternatives which are not specifically based on the creation of *hafu* identities. Learning about both sides of one's ethnic roots is not the only way to be creative. Life itself can be creative no matter how *hafu* adapt themselves to the dominant society and position themselves. Current identity politics overemphasises the role of cultural identity to the extent that *hafu* may feel compelled to adopt a particular identity or to act in certain ways which serve to 'legitimate' their existence. A more flexible alternative would be to see neither assimilating as Japanese or becoming multicultural as ideals, but rather to use both

perspectives as strategies for survival. At first glance this formulation may seem to differ little from current perspectives on identity politics, but in fact it frees *hafu* from the compulsion to feel that they must be either Japanese, like others around them, or multicultural, as society often expects them to be. Acquiring academic knowledge about these issues may demystify the joy and passion that people who strongly identify with a specific ethnicity often feel, but, on the positive side, it can also help them to gain more control over their own lives.

#### **7.4. The Future of *Hafu*: Why Do People Seek Identities and Boundaries?**

The question of why people seek identities and boundaries came up constantly during the course of this research. This question may be more philosophical than sociological, but it is nonetheless an interesting question to think about. One curious finding of this research is that no one I encountered denied the need to be connected to some form of society. Each person felt it was important to be recognised and accepted as part of a larger group. What differed was *whom* people wished to be connected with and *how* they were connected. The kinds of relationships people build with others in society are diverse, but no one can live in isolation. The politics of *hafu* is also based on the fundamental premise that people do not want to suffer from being unrecognised by or excluded from groups which they wish to be a part of. Establishing a given identity provides proof of membership in a specific group, while constructing boundaries between oneself and others can be a source of stability and security. At the same time, humans can also experience pleasure and happiness in ways which permit them to go beyond what they already have. This energy can express itself as creativity in art, the deconstruction of existing social structures, and plotting the future of *hafu*.

Bataille (1986) argues that we are living in a paradox in which we seek both continuity and discontinuity. Being connected with others as 'one' ultimately means the death of the self, but becoming a true individual produces loneliness and is also unbearable. Only humans make rules and boundaries but it is also only humans who try to transgress those boundaries. Transgressing boundaries is different from destroying them, since transgression keeps the boundaries intact while simply violating them. The politics of ethnic identities also involves the reworking of boundaries. There is a constant process in which boundaries are made on the one hand and transgressed on the other. In other words, people are living in the contradiction of wanting to be protected and free at the same time. It is interesting to note that the majority of people I met while conducting my fieldwork did not try to discard the *hafu* label. Even those who argued that the term *hafu* should be abandoned seemed to rely on alternative categories and did not deny the importance of making categories itself. However, I am also aware that there are people who argue for no boundaries whatsoever and who say that we should achieve true equality so that everyone is connected and no one is excluded. This idea sounds nice in words but it would probably cause terrible consequences if actually put into practice. A world with no boundaries would be so flat that it would have no meaning whatsoever, and for this reason alone is unlikely to occur in the future. For many people boundaries which clearly define the nations, local communities, families, friends, and relationships one belongs to are important. It is not desirable in practice to have only one global society. Different kinds of relationships create different kinds of groups and societies, and we belong to multiple groups at the same time. The critical question, then, is the extent to which we can accept inclusion and exclusion, and in what circumstances. In addition, we must ask how we can avoid being misrepresented by others and how we can achieve better ways of representing ourselves.

Such considerations bring us back to the problem of power again. Certainly we need to overcome the legacy of colonialism, in which rulers impose representations of racial inferiority on those whom they rule (Fanon 1965; 1970). We should reject dichotomies which see the Orient as standing opposite to the West (Said 1985). Correspondingly we should also alter Japan's monoethnic myth and its discourse of racial purity (Oguma 1995). Furthermore, we need to continue to thinking about the issue of who holds the power to represent and who does not (Spivak 1988). When relationships between people are unequal, the powerful have the ability to control how minorities are represented, which reproduces unequal relationships in the future. This thesis has discussed the role that the Internet may be able to play in changing the unequal power relations which determine how *hafu* are represented. Undeniably the meaning of the term *hafu* is becoming more fluid and diversified with the emergence of the Internet.

*Hafu* can be seen as a kind of public resource which no one has ownership over. The future of the term *hafu* can be compared to how Wikipedia operates: Nobody exclusively owns the meaning of a word but each person has the right to write and rewrite the meaning whenever they wish. There is no longer any hierarchy between author, editor, and reader. For many *hafu* ethnicity might not be an important part of their lives. Family, friends, partners, local communities, gender, age, schools, occupations, and hobbies may be accorded more importance, to the extent that some *hafu* may want to free themselves from their ethnicity and avoid being represented as *hafu*. Others, however, may regard their ethnicity as an important part of their lives, to the extent that they may want to develop a specifically *hafu* identity and use that as a basis for forming communities with others who share the same identity. Given that *hafu* is not an individual identity but a social one, my hope is that the two camps can find a way to respect each of these differing goals.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: List of Events

Field notes were taken of the following events held by *hafu* communities and saved in Microsoft OneNote software. (The name of the sponsoring community is given in parentheses, although some events were jointly sponsored by different communities. An asterisk indicates an informal event which was not posted online).

1. London drinks - Friday 3rd November (HJUK) 3/11/2006
2. Nomikai this Saturday (HJUK) 3/3/2007
3. \*Roj Film Shooting 13/8/2007
4. Naomi Presents Enoshima Beach Party (Hapa Japan) 18/8/2007
5. Mix Roots Charity Art Month Mischlingroove III (Mix Roots) 1/9/2007
6. Naomi Presents Clubbing (Hapa Japan) 16/9/2007
7. 9/21 Gathering at 'Mado' (HArts) 21/9/2007
8. \*Dinner with Seiji and Friends (Hapa Japan) 25/9/2007
9. One World, One People (HArts) 30/9/2007
10. 10/20 Returning Meeting & HArts Closing Party (Hapa Japan) 20/10/2007
11. \*Light Your HArts Meeting (HArts) 3/11/2007
12. 33/3 Birthday Party of the President (Hapa Japan) 24/11/2007
13. \*Seiji's Birthday Party (Hapa Japan) 30/11/2007
14. 2007 Hapa Bonenkai Party (Hapa Japan) 8/12/2007
15. Light Your HArts (HArts) 15/12/2007
16. 'Kotoba Mick' (HArts) 26/1/2008
17. \*HArts Meeting for Making Articles (HArts) 3/2/2008

18. Birthday Party! (Hapa Japan) 3/2/2008
19. \*HArts Meeting for Making Articles (HArts) 8/2/2008
20. \*HArts Making Articles (HArts) 17/2/2008
21. \*HArts General Meeting (HArts) 23/2/2008
22. Invited as a Speaker from Museum of Travel Held at a Gallery, (THE NAME IS NOT CLEAR) 'Complexifying Identities: Cultural Practices Which Go Beyond *Hafu/Daburu*' (Half Japanese) 2/3/2008
23. \*Workshop with School Trip Students (HArts) 16/3/2008
24. Second Off Meeting at Yokohama (JAPMERICAN 22/3/2008)
25. 'World's Yamachan,' I Like *Hafu* Face, Tokyo Off Meeting (I Like *Hafu* Face) 25/5/2008
26. Hartism Vol.1 Open!!! (HArts) 31/5/2008
27. \*Workshop on 'Representing Our Feelings in Songs' (Mix Roots Kansai) 7/6/2008
28. Mix Root Hip Hop Charity Event 「Shake Forward! 2008」 (Mix Roots Kansai) 8/6/2008
29. Cooking Event of Own Country's Food (Hapa Japan) 28/6/2008
30. 7/12 Meat and Miso Stir Fry Party (7/12 Meat and Miso Stir Fry Party) 12/7/2008

## Appendix B: List of Interviews

The name of the person is given first, although in some cases individuals preferred to not use their family name or to remain anonymous. The name of the interviewee is following by the person's country of origin (in addition to Japan).

1. Niko: Germany (Die Kreuzungsstelle: Representative) 4/9/2007
2. Edward Sumoto: Venezuela (Mix Root Kansai: Representative) 5/9/2007
3. Mariko Mizutani: UK (Mix Root Kansai) 6/9/2007
4. Isao Fujioka: Ireland (Mix Root Kansai) 6/9/2007
5. \*Kai Go (Half Japanese) 9/12/2007
6. Anonymous: US ( Half Japanese) 11/12/2007
7. Megumi: US (Hapa Japan) 12/12/2007
8. Max: Germany (Hapa Japan) 13/12/2007
9. Max Yamada: Peru (Mix Real Club / Mix Japanese / HJLB: Representative)  
14/12/2007
10. Yoshihiro Harada: South Korea (HArts) 16/12/2007
11. Kenta Kawahara: Pakistan (HArts : Vice Representative) 27/1/2008
12. Jamie Belton: UK (HArts: Representative) 17/2/2008
13. Jamie Belton (2): UK (HArts: Representative) 27/2/2008
14. \*Susami Yabuki (not a member of communities) 29/2/2008
15. \*\*Invited as a Speaker from Museum of Travel, 'Complexifying Identities: Cultural Practices Which Go Beyond *Hafu/Daburu*' (Half Japanese) 2/3/2008
16. Yuri Witt: Germany (not a member of communities) 15/3/2008

17. Sam Baron: US (Hapa Japan: Representative) 18/3/2008
18. \*Toshiya Asada (HArts) 23/3/2008
19. Naomi Ann Sato: UK (Hapa Japan) 25/3/2008
20. \*Juri Kanahashi (HArts) 26/3/2008
21. Iriya: Russia (HArts) 28/3/2008
22. \*\*Workshop with School Trip Students (HArts) 16/4/2008
23. Kazuho Beck: Sweden (not a member of communities) 12/5/2008
24. \*Damaris: Peru (not a member of communities) 6/6/2008
25. \*\*Hip Hop Workshop (Mix Root Kansai) 7/6/2008
26. \*\*Shake Forward (Mix Root Kansai) 8/6/2008
27. Anonymous: Singapore (not a member of communities) 14/6/2008
28. Yui Takida: South Korea (HArts) 15/6/2008
29. Hitomi Yoda: Sweden (HJUK) 19/6/2008
30. Mina Delawari: Afghanistan (HArts) 25/6/2008
31. Alisa: Australia (Hapa Japan) 10/7/2008
32. So: China (HArts) 13/7/2008
33. Momoko: Germany (Hapa Japan) 22/7/2008
34. \*Toruko (I Like *Hafu* Face: Event Organiser) 25/7/2008
35. Anna: Portugal (Hapa Japan) 27/8/2008
36. Nancy: Philippines (Hapa Japan) 30/8/2008
37. Mark: US (Environmental Problems to Deal as *Hafu* / JAPAMERICAN: Representative) 31/7/2008
38. Stephaney: Poland (Hapa Japan) 5/8/2008

- 39. Naima: Germany (Hapa Japan) 6/8/2008
- 40. Flavia: Brazil (Mix Root Kansai) 7/8/2008
- 41. Sandra: Germany (Hapa Japan) 15/8/2008
- 42. Niko (2): Germany (Die Kreuzungsstelle: Representative) 2/9/2008
- 43. Edward Sumoto (2): Venezuela (Mix Root Kansai : Representative) 3/9/2008

## Appendix C: List of *Hafu* Communities

In the list of Internet communities which follows, the name of the community is given first, with the number of members as of August 2008 given in parentheses. The communities are ordered from larger to smaller and the list is available below.

**General;** ‘*Hafu*, Quarter, Nikkei, Mixed Blood’ (5,173), ‘Half Japanese’ (2,967), ‘Mixed Blood People’ (1,962), ‘Half & Half’ (948), ‘*Hafu* Mixed Blood’ (344), ‘*Hafu* & Quarter (Mix Blood Children)’ (342), ‘Die Kreuzungsstelle auf mixi’ (225), ‘Foreign *Hafu*’ (200), ‘Half & *Hafu*’ (125), ‘A Place for *Hafu* to Assemble’ (103), ‘*Hafu*, Half, Hapa, etc...’ (70), ‘*Hafu* & Quarter All Gather!!’ (56), ‘mixi *Hafu* Alliance’ (21).

**Socialising;** ‘Hapa Japan’ (1,115), ‘Mix Real Club’ (247), ‘Socialising Association of *Hafu*’s Parents and *Hafu*’ (205), ‘Mix Japanese’ (135), ‘Hapa Girls’ (105), ‘HJLB’ (85), ‘Mix Real FC’ (24), ‘Halvsie’ (7), ‘Outdoor Club for Mix Companions’ (6),

**Art;** ‘HArts’ (193), ‘Shake Forward! Mix Root Hip Hop!’ (74), ‘Inside HArts’ (50), ‘Shake Forward! Implementation Committee’ (39), ‘Mischlingroove Mix Root Artist Group’ (27), ‘Hapa Movie: Film Making Association for *Hafu*’ (23), ‘Inside Light Your HArts’ (19), ‘Shake Forward! Core Group’ (15), ‘One World, One People 2007’ (13), ‘Members’ Community Until the Band Name is Decided’ (12), ‘Tears of Pearls’ (5).

**Image;** ‘I Like *Hafu* Faces’ (19,361), ‘I Like *Hafu* and Quarter’ (9,948), ‘I Wanted to Be Born as *Hafu*’ (2,856), ‘I Like *Hafu* Models’ (2,023), ‘Foreign Faces and *Hafu* Faces Come Together’ (1,599), ‘I’m *Hafu*!’ (1,164), ‘Quarter Than *Hafu*’ (635), ‘*Hafu* Face’ (579), ‘I Like People Who Are Like *Hafu* Very Much’ (524), ‘Because I like *Hafu*’

(480), 'Theory of *Hafu* Being the Strongest' (355), '*Hafu*' (286), '*Hafu* is Erotic!' (193), 'Just Look Like *Hafu* Face!' (180), 'Alliance of *Hafu* Entertainment Celebrity' (168), 'I Love *Hafu* Who Look More Like Japanese' (64), 'I Want to Be Friends with *Hafu*' (13).

**Roots;** 'The Philippines and Japanese *Hafu*' (990), 'Japan and Taiwan Mixed Blood' (950), 'Half American' (221), 'Friends of Japanese and Korean *Hafu*' (182), 'We Are Black Mixed!' (168), 'Latin and Japanese Mixed Blood' (160), 'JAPAMERICAN' (137), 'My Mother is a Foreigner' (141), 'Franco-Japonais Japanese and French Mixed Blood' (112), 'Iran and Japan' (87), 'Mixed Blood from Spanish Speaking Territories' (81), 'Deutsch-Japanisch Japanese and German Mixed Blood' (73), 'Brazilian *Hafu* and Quarter' (70), 'Japanese and Korean Mixed!' (66), 'Japanese Polish *Hafu*' (55), 'Middle East and Japanese Mixed Blood' (57), '*Hafu* Thai' (41), 'Japan and Peru Hybrids Club' (37), 'Finish *Hafu*' (35), 'Japanese and European CocktailZ' (32), 'Singapore and Japanese *Hafu*' (35), 'Taiwan and Japan *Hafu*' (33), 'New Zealand and Japan' (18), 'Venezuela and Japan' (15), 'Japan and Korean *Hafu* in Korea' (13), 'Association of Japanese and Thai *Hafu*' (13), 'German *Hafu* Who Can Only Say "Ja"' (10), 'HG' (8).

**Regional;** '*Hafu* and Foreigners Living in Japan' (626), 'Mix Root Kansai' (269), 'HJUK' (125), 'Mix Modern' (75), 'Mix Blood Residents in Okinawa' (39), 'Association of *Hafu* in Saitama and Gunma' (33), 'Socialising Association of Mix Root Japan' (26), '*Hafu* in New York' (24), 'Nagomix' (23), 'Mix and the City in Hokkaido' (17), 'Hapa Japan ICU Branch' (8), 'Hapa Hawaii' (6), 'Dosanko Hapa' (6).

**Appearance/Language;** 'I'm *Hafu* but I Cannot Speak' (457), 'Although I'm *Hafu*, People Don't Notice' (444), 'The Unpopular *Hafu* Alliance' (335), 'Don't Say It's Nice to Be *Hafu*!' (325), '*Hafu* Who Went to Japanese School' (222), 'Thank You Wentz!!'

(156), 'Image of White *Hafu*' (71), 'I Hate *Hafu* Mania (Radical Group)' (32), 'Failure *Hafu*' (21), 'Unworthy *Hafu*' (17), 'In Spite of This, I'm *Hafu*' (17).

**Other;** '*Hafu* Quarter (Gay Only)' (278), 'Mix Blood Japanese Patriotic Union' (114), 'Mother & Father Who Is *Hafu* Mix' (85), 'Mischling Who Is Not *Hafu*' (49), 'Thinking about "*Hafu*"' (35), '*Hafu* + Foreigners (Only Woman)' (30), 'Environmental Problems to Deal as *Hafu*' (28), 'Association of Old *Hafu*' (23), 'I'm Mixed Blood' (20), '*Hafu* Community from Thirty Years Old' (19), '*Hafu* Couple' (16), 'Worried *Hafu*' (14), 'Double(*Hafu*) Earthling' (14), '*Hafu*'s Entrepreneur Indy Forum' (11), '*Hafu* Only Child, Single Mother (Single Father) Family' (10), 'Mix Administrator's Liaison Association' (8), 'Do Not Care about *Hafu*' (6), 'Adult Stairs for *Hafu* to Climb' (5), '*Hafu* & Harf Marriage'(1).

## **Appendix D: Six Goals and Principles by Mix Roots Kansai**

Mix Roots Kansai has adopted the following six goals as its priorities:

1. To provide an environment in which people can respect and understand their own mixed roots.
2. To use dialogue as a way to encourage society in general to respect and understand people with mixed roots.
3. To create an environment in which mixed-roots identities can be naturally accepted,  
  
both by oneself and also by society in general, in order to avoid negative perceptions, as well as to learn from the history and past experiences of mixed-roots people.
4. To spread mixed-roots culture in the world, and to foster world peace, respect for human rights, and support for international exchange.
5. To provide an environment in which mixed-roots children and their parents can accept a mixed-roots identity naturally with the help of senior members.
6. To eradicate discrimination and prejudice based on differences in race, birthplace, skin  
  
colour, and culture in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (Mix Roots Japan 2009 <http://www.mixroots.jp/about.htm>; translated from Japanese to English by the author)