

**Doctoral Thesis 2024**

# **Boundary-Making of Mixedness in an Ethno-Nationalist Society**

**Causes and Consequences of *Hāfu* Categorisation in Japan**

**(Summary)**

**Graduate School of Human Relations**

**Keio University**

**Yuna Sato**

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## Summary of Chapter 1: Introduction

With the increasing presence of individuals of mixed heritage globally, scholarly and societal attention to these people has grown. Japan, a society often perceived as valuing ethnic homogeneity, is no exception. Japan is often characterised as an ethno-nationalist society (Kashiwazaki 2018; Liu-Farrer 2020), where race, ethnicity, nation, and culture are often conflated within the idea of Japaneseness (Kowner and Befu 2015; Sugimoto 1999; Yoshino 1997). This self-portrayal has created a dichotomy between Japanese and foreigners (Kashiwazaki 2009). However, in recent decades, the presence of people born to both a Japanese and a foreigner, often referred to as *hāfu*, has been both increasing and becoming more visible, sparking debates over what it means to be Japanese.

Consequently, there has been a rise in research focusing on the experiences and identities of individuals of mixed heritage. While some studies indicate that mixed people are arbitrarily categorised as either Japanese or foreigners (Shimoji 2018), others suggest that in casual situations, the traditional dichotomy of Japanese and foreigners is being replaced by a trichotomy of Japanese, *hāfu*, and foreigners (Osanami Törngren and Sato 2021). If the trichotomy truly replaces the dichotomy, the puzzle lies in what this signifies. In a country that upholds the myth of ethnic homogeneity (Befu 2001; Kashiwazaki 2018; Liu-Farrer 2020), why has mixed categorisation become more prominent? Does this categorisation challenge or reinforce the boundaries of Japaneseness? However, the meaning of the significance of *hāfu* categorisation in Japan has not been sufficiently explored, as previous research has primarily treated *hāfu* as a group rather than a category. While research has examined the experiences and identities of mixed individuals, it has often taken the boundary of mixedness for granted, assuming that people are primarily born mixed. Thus, although the diversity within this bounded group has been studied, there has been insufficient focus on how and why this boundary is drawn through categorisation.

In contrast to previous research, this thesis focuses on the practices of categorising individuals as *hāfu*, rather than examining *hāfu* as a distinct group. The aim of this research is to explore both the reasons behind, and the consequences of, mixed categorisation in ethno-nationalist Japan, particularly in relation to the concept of Japaneseness. Specifically, the study examines the motivations and contexts driving this categorisation, as well as its consequences for the categorised individuals and for society at large. In doing so, the investigation emphasises the

processes of boundary-making and boundary-unmaking regarding mixedness and Japaneseness within the Japanese context, focusing on how and why individuals are categorised as mixed and Japanese by themselves and others. By examining the categorisation of individuals as mixed, this study illuminates both the persistence of, and the challenges to, the boundaries of Japaneseness. It also contributes to the global discussion of mixedness by reconceptualising boundaries of mixedness as ever-changing and unstable, with a focus on Japan, an ethno-nationalist country that upholds the myth of ethnic homogeneity (Befu 2001; Kashiwazaki 2018; Liu-Farrer 2020). In the thesis, the following research questions are addressed:

- How do people categorise others/themselves as (non-)mixed and/or (non-)Japanese?
- Why do people categorise others/themselves as (non-)mixed and/or (non-)Japanese? Specifically, what are the individual motivations and social contexts behind this categorisation?
- What are the consequences of such categorisation and self-identification for society? Does categorising someone as mixed challenge the notion of Japaneseness?

To address these questions, this thesis is underpinned by a cognitive approach to race, ethnicity, and nation (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004, trans. 2016). According to this approach, race, ethnicity and nation are not groups, but rather cognitive perspectives (Brubaker et al. 2004, trans. 2016). Grounded in this perspective, the thesis focuses on individuals who occupy the border areas of *hāfu* definitions—sometimes categorised as *hāfu* and at other times as non-*hāfu*: (1) Group 1—individuals who are seen as *hāfu* by their phenotype but categorised as non-*hāfu* by their ‘bloodline’ (i.e., someone born to Japanese parents but who are often misrecognised as *hāfu*) and (2) Group 2—individuals who are classified as *hāfu* by their ‘bloodline’ but seen as non-*hāfu* by their phenotype (i.e., someone born to both a Japanese and an Asian parent and who are able to pass as Japanese by their appearance). By examining people who are considered *hāfu* by one indicator while seen as non-*hāfu* by another, the boundary making process and practices of mixedness become clearer.

## Summary of Chapter 2: Theories and Tools

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical frameworks used in this study. To analyse boundary-making and unmaking of mixedness and Japaneseness, broadly, there are two frameworks employed: (1)

theories on ethnicity and race, and (2) theories on identity. By reviewing the theories in existing research, I clarify how race and ethnicity are conceptualised and which epistemological perspectives and theoretical tools are employed in this thesis.

As for the conceptualisation of race and ethnicity, I interpret race and ethnicity as separate yet equal theoretical categories. Race denotes erroneously assumed biological and genetic categories among humans (Brubaker 2009:25; Rizova and Stone 2010:1; Roth, van Stee, and Regla-Vargas 2023:3), often associated with physical appearance and the metaphor of ‘blood’. On the other hand, ethnicity refers to differences among humans based on shared or assumed ancestry, associated cultural practices and symbols, and shared history (Brubaker 2009:25; Cornell and Hartmann 2006:36; Rizova and Stone 2010:2). While ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ are treated as theoretical concepts, concepts such as ‘*nihonjin*’ (Japanese) and ‘*hāfu*’ are seen in this thesis as objects of analysis rather than as tools of analysis (Brubaker 2013:6).

In terms of epistemological frameworks, I utilise constructivist and cognitive approaches to ethnicity/race. According to constructivist perspectives, the boundaries of ethnicity and race are shaped in the interaction between ‘categories of ascription’ and ‘identification by the actors themselves’ (Barth 1969; Jenkins 2008). The cognitive approach, an extension of constructivism, posits that ethnicity and race are not ‘things in the world’ but ‘perspectives on the world’ (Brubaker et al. 2004, trans. 2016:237). In this thesis, these approaches are applied to comprehend mixedness: mixedness is not treated as a group but is regarded as a perspective constructed through identification and categorisation. While there is collective self-identification as mixed(-race), such identifications should be viewed as ‘groupness’, a changing variable, rather than as a ‘group’, a stable entity (Brubaker 2002:167–68). Based on the cognitive approach, I view ‘*nihonjin*’ or ‘*hāfu*’ as perspectives on the world, rather than concrete entities within it. This conceptualisation of ‘*nihonjin*’ and ‘*hāfu*’ enables the study to focus on the ever-changing boundaries of these categories and their significance.

Guided by this epistemological standpoint, this thesis employs five sets of analytical tools. The first set focuses on the various aspects of boundaries and boundary negotiations. The analysis distinguishes between social boundaries—the prominent distinctions in society—and symbolic boundaries—conceptual distinctions made by individuals that may not be widely recognised in society (Knipprath 2023; Lamont and Molnár 2002). Furthermore, the thesis utilises the classification of changes in existing social boundaries, along with individual

negotiations. Specifically, this typology includes (a) boundary shift, (b) normative inversion, (c) positional moves, and (d) blurring (Wimmer 2008a:1031, 2008b:987, 2013:50). Within the ‘boundary shift’, there exist expanding and contracting (Wimmer 2008a:1031, 2008b:987, 2013:50). The second set of analytical tools involves distinguishing between categorisation by others (or reflected appraisal) and self-identification (Barth 1969; Jenkins 2008), which contribute to the formation of social and symbolic boundaries. Self-identification is further categorised into internal self-identification—how people internally identify—and external self-identification—how they externally identify themselves (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Roth 2016). By eliminating the assumption that categorisation by others and internal and external self-identification are always consistent, it becomes possible to avoid treating mixedness as a fixed entity. Moreover, by emphasising the interaction between the two, boundary making and unmaking processes of mixedness become clearer. The third analytical tool is the distinction between labels and contents (Jenkins 2008; Sloodman 2018). A label refers to the name of a category while content refers to the meaning that individuals attach to the category. Such differentiation allows us to analyse what *hāfu* or mixedness means for different individuals, clarifying that mixedness is a perspective rather than a fixed group. While individuals have some degree of freedom in choosing their ethnic self-identifications, it is essential to recognise that they are not entirely unconstrained in making these choices. Considering this point, the fourth tools are criteria and cues (Brubaker et al. 2006:218; Horowitz 1975:119–20). While the former determines ethnic membership, the latter indicates it in interactions. This distinction is used in Chapter 5, which analyses how the participants think others categorise them. The fifth analytical tool is ethnic options (Waters 1990), meaning the ability to choose or assert a certain identity (Osanami Törngren 2018:750). In this thesis, I use the term ‘identity option’ instead of ‘ethnic option’ to encompass racial, ethnic, and national choices, as these concepts are often conflated in the Japanese context. Passing, covering, and accenting (Goffman 1963/2014; Khanna and Johnson 2010) can be conceptualised as types of identity option (Osanami Törngren 2018). Understanding who can choose which ethnic and racial self-identification, or in other words, who possesses which identity options, becomes a crucial question. At the same time, identity options highlight the individual agency in asserting ethnicity/race. Thus, the interplay between structural aspects and individual agency in the process of boundary making and unmaking of mixedness becomes evident.

## Summary of Chapter 3: Methodology

In Chapter 3, I explain the methodology of this study. I first clarify that the qualitative method was selected for this study as it is suitable for the primary focus of this study, which is to explore the diversity and complexity of everyday meanings, experiences, and processes of categorisation of mixedness in Japan. Two main qualitative methods were chosen. Firstly, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 33 participants, divided into two groups, as explained in Chapter 1. Secondly, I conducted participant observation at various events and symposiums concerning *hāfu* and mixed identity in Japan. Data collected through participant observation will be used complementarily in the analysis.

I then explain the method and validity of the analysis. The data collected through the interviews and participant observation was coded using MAXQDA, a qualitative research analysis software, following the method of ‘flexible coding’ suggested by Deterding and Waters (2021), an approach well suited for analysing large-scale qualitative data in the 21st century (Deterding and Waters 2021). Based on this approach, I created codes from both inductive and deductive approaches and created attribute, in vivo, index, and analytic codes. The analysis was validated through triangulation, peer debriefing, and reflecting on positionality (Creswell and Creswell Báez 2021).

Finally, to identify potential biases in the analysis and to ensure validity (Creswell and Creswell Báez 2021), I reflect on my positionality and how it shaped my research process. I clarify that my positionality as a person born to a Japanese father and a Newcomer South Korean mother, and who self-identifies as neither Japanese, Korean, nor *hāfu*, shaped the research design, participant recruitment, and analysis in this thesis.

## Summary of Chapter 4: The Social Boundaries of Japaneseness and Mixedness in Japan

Based on the distinction made in Chapter 2 between social boundaries and symbolic boundaries, Chapter 4 provides a broad picture of the shifting social boundaries of Japaneseness and mixedness by reviewing the histories and contemporary debates in Japanese society. The chapter also aims to uncover the social dynamics behind the significant categorisation of individuals as

mixed in contemporary Japan. What is the social context behind the practice of categorising someone as mixed in contemporary Japan, an ethno-nationalist country?

The delineation of the histories of Japaneseness and mixedness reveals that the social boundaries of Japanese and mixed have constantly changed throughout Japan's history. When Japan began colonising other Asian countries in earnest, the prevailing view was that Japanese people are historically mixed and have assimilated many different ethnic or racial groups in its history (混合民族, *kon'gō minzoku*) (Oguma 1995). Although the distinction and social and legal hierarchy between the Japanese *minzoku* and other Asians was significant, former colonial subjects were considered Japanese under Japanese colonisation. Post-World War II, the boundaries of Japaneseness underwent transformation, excluding former colonial subjects (Kashiwazaki 2009). This is a general social process of 'boundary contracting' (Wimmer 2008a, 2008b, 2013)—an attempt to make the boundary more exclusive. With this change, in post-war Japan, Japaneseness has been policed by ethno-cultural, national, and racial boundaries, creating an equation of these boundaries (Kowner and Befu 2015; Sugimoto 1999; Yoshino 1997). These boundaries have been maintained despite the presence of ethnic minority populations in Japanese society. These minority groups were labelled as 'others', 'impure', or 'fully assimilated'. Thus, the notion of Japaneseness excluded these minority groups, and by excluding them, the notion of Japaneseness was maintained. The categorisation of some individuals as mixed was one such practice. Historically, social boundaries of mixedness were delineated between ethnically defined Japanese and non-Japanese. Therefore, as the boundaries of Japaneseness transformed, the boundaries of mixedness have also constantly changed. Moreover, as the 'significant Other' (Kawai 2020:61, 81, 106) for Japan changes, which 'difference' becomes visible and who is represented as 'mixed' has also transformed.

In recent debates, individuals who self-identify as mixed have become more visible in Japanese society, contesting ethno-racial social boundaries in various ways. In casual interactions, the *hāfu* categorisation is gaining more significance, shifting the significant dichotomy between Japanese and foreigners to a trichotomy of Japanese, *hāfu*, and foreigners (Mahieu 2022:71; Osanami Törngren and Sato 2021). *Hāfu*-ness constitutes a middle ground between Japaneseness and foreignness. In other words, the social process of 'boundary contracting' (Wimmer 2008a, 2008b, 2013) has occurred once again to contract the categories of Japanese and foreigners. Simultaneously, however, activism insists on including *hāfu* in the

Japanese category, which can be interpreted as an attempt at ‘boundary expanding’ (Wimmer 2008a, 2008b, 2013). In this social climate, a counter-reaction (Wimmer 2008a:1040, 2013:60; Zolberg and Woon 1999:9) against the inclusion of *hāfu* in the Japanese category has also occurred: a contraction of Japanese into ‘authentic Japanese’ and ‘inauthentic Japanese’. It is argued that the practice of categorising individuals who partially but not entirely meet the criteria of Japaneseness as *hāfu* is a method of distinguishing between ‘authentic Japanese’ and ‘inauthentic Japanese’. This differentiation can be perceived as an endeavour to sustain the notion of Japaneseness by establishing sub-categories within the Japanese identity. In other words, ‘boundary contracting’ and ‘boundary expanding’ are occurring simultaneously.

## **Summary of Chapter 5: Understanding Others’ Differences Through Mixedness**

Chapters 5 through 7 analyse interview data and investigate how the participants in this study negotiate social boundaries and draw symbolic boundaries in daily interactions. As discussed in Chapter 2, boundaries are constructed through categorisation by others and self-identification (Barth 1969; Jenkins 2008). To explore the everyday boundary-making and unmaking of mixedness in Japan, both aspects need to be examined. Chapter 5 investigates how Group 1 and Group 2 participants think others categorise them, i.e., reflected appraisal (Roth 2016).

The analysis first focuses on the categories participants believe others categorise them in. Some existing studies highlight the dichotomy between Japanese and foreigners (Kashiwazaki 2009; Shimoji 2018), while others suggest the salience of a trichotomy: Japanese, foreigner, and *hāfu* (Mahieu 2022; Osanami Törngren and Sato 2021). This study supports the latter. While participants mentioned various regional and ethno-cultural categories, the three categories—Japanese, foreigner, and *hāfu*—emerged as the most significant ethno-cultural and racial categories. Not only was the distinction between Japanese and *hāfu*/foreigner observed, but the difference between *hāfu* and foreigner was also significant. Thus, *hāfu*-ness signals a middle ground between Japaneseness and foreignness.

The analysis then turns to how the three categories of Japanese, *hāfu*, and foreigner are used as frameworks for understanding sameness and difference, illustrating that they are ‘perspectives on the world’ rather than ‘things in the world’ (Brubaker et al. 2004, trans. 2016).

The notion of Japaneseness serves as a tacit framework of sameness. Since Japaneseness is considered a standard and unmarked norm (Matsuo 2010; Shiobara 2012), categorising someone as Japanese occurs naturally and does not necessarily invoke an ethnic framework. Because Japaneseness is seen as holistic, if a person is initially categorised as Japanese by one criterion, the framework of sameness tends to extend to other dimensions. Thus, once people categorise someone as Japanese, even if another aspect is later perceived as different, they sometimes fail to interpret the difference from an ethnic perspective. By contrast, *hāfu* or foreigner are marked categories that establish frameworks of difference. Individuals categorise others as foreign to make sense of differences from the norm of Japaneseness. Alternatively, they categorise others as *hāfu*, attempting to make sense of the individuals' partial differences from the idea of Japaneseness. However, by categorising the other individual as *hāfu* or foreign, they simultaneously create or imagine ethno-racial difference. This occurs because when one aspect is perceived as ethnically different, other aspects are also viewed through an ethnic lens, creating an ethnic framework of differences.

The discussion is followed by an analysis on the cues and criteria of categorisation. When categorising someone as *hāfu* or foreign, different cues and criteria are employed at different stages of interaction. Individuals use both contextual and individual factors as cues and criteria. Contextual factors include location (where the participants are), companionship (who accompanies the participants), and temporal context (when the categorisation occurs). The findings indicate that in diverse settings, the practice of distinguishing between who is Japanese and who is not, and identifying who is similar and who is different, becomes prevalent. Individual factors include physical characteristics, names, language, blood, self-identification, fashion, (past) place of residence, educational history, behaviour and way of thinking, cultural practices, nationality, and overseas family. Different cues and criteria are employed at different interaction phases (Brubaker et al. 2006:218; Horowitz 1975:119–20). Some of these markers of difference are used in the early stages of interaction as cues for categorising someone as *hāfu* or foreign, while other factors are more 'invisible' but are used as criteria for determining membership in the Japanese, *hāfu*, or foreigner categories. People are more likely to recognise visible factors as ethnic differences, while invisible factors may not be considered as such and are often perceived as individual differences.

External self-identification is another important invisible indicator of categorisation. When the categorisation of *hāfu* is denied through self-identification, individuals attempt to understand ‘differences’ by introducing other ethnic (such as Okinawan) and non-ethnic categories and frameworks (such as *hāfu*-face make-up style). Conversely, self-identification as *hāfu* can trigger the ethnic framework. However, this does not always change others’ initial categorisation. The gap between their self-identification and their (non-)Japanese-like traits sometimes confuses others, who then resist changing their initial categorisation.

Overall, the chapter highlights that the categorisation of someone as Japanese or *hāfu* can shift over the course of interaction, but it sometimes remains fixed when others adhere to their initial categorisation. People categorise other individuals as *hāfu* when they *partially*, but not entirely, meet the various criteria of Japaneseness, especially when the differences from Japaneseness are visible, in order to make sense of those differences.

## **Summary of Chapter 6: Making Sense of Own Differences Through Mixedness**

To examine the boundary-making and unmaking of *hāfu* and Japanese, Chapters 6 and 7 explore self-identification, divided into internal and external aspects: how individuals internally understand themselves and how they externally self-represent. Chapter 6 focuses on how both Group 1 and Group 2 internally identify themselves. The result indicate that the choices and constraints of internal identification among participants from both groups were diverse, both within and between the groups. However, the processes by which they identify in certain ways were similar. Both Group 1 and Group 2 participants, when encountering their own differences from others in interactions, attempt to understand these differences from both ethno-racial and non-ethno-racial perspectives, shaping their differential internal identifications.

The majority of Group 1 participants did not identify as mixed based on a primordial understanding of mixedness, which considers being *hāfu* as determined by birth. However, they recognise their differences through others’ constant categorisation of them as *hāfu*, which sometimes constrains their ability to identify as Japanese. They attempt to understand these recognised differences through various identity categories. Sometimes, they identify as members of a marginalised group within the category of Japanese, such as Okinawan, *kikokushijo*, or

Ainu. This understanding of their differences sometimes allows them to maintain their identity as Japanese. When this option is unavailable, they question their exclusive genetic Japanese genealogy and identify as mixed. Alternatively, they may attempt to understand their differences as individuals, choosing to identify as those who do not fit into any established categories aligned with social boundaries. While differences lead to categorisation, categorisation also creates differences, causing some participants to identify with self-descriptions and as *hāfu* based on the differences that emerge through others' categorisation of them as *hāfu*.

On the other hand, Group 2 individuals identify as *hāfu* based on a primordial understanding of 'blood', which constrains their ability to identify as Japanese. However, the invisibility of this criterion grants them the option to identify as Japanese and constrains their ability to identify as mixed (Osanami Törngren and Sato 2021). This sometimes leads to identification as individuals. When differences that make them aware of their 'blood' arise in comparison with others, participants understand these differences by identifying as mixed. However, not all individuals have the option to identify as *hāfu*, as the category has become more prominent in recent decades and carries connotations of having white heritage, being physically visible, and being 'half' something and 'half' Japanese. When they feel they do not fit this definition, they choose to identify with other labels that connote mixedness. Some also identify as individuals to contest stereotypes associated with being *hāfu* and Japanese, emphasising individual differences instead of ethno-racial differences.

Both Group 1 and Group 2 participants, when they do not fit into established categories, may experience 'ontological insecurity' (Giddens 1991), leading to an identity crisis and efforts to conform to established categories that align with social boundaries in Japanese society to alleviate feelings of anxiety.

Together, these findings illustrate the interpretive process in identifying as mixed or unmixed, linking identity choices with the individual and contextual factors identified in previous studies on mixedness (Guy 2018; Ifekwunigwe 2004; Morning 2000, 2014; Osanami Törngren 2022; Osanami Törngren, Irastorza, and Rodríguez-García 2021:770; Rocha 2018; Song 2021a). 'Differences' emerge relationally through interaction with others and societal discourses. These differences are understood as regional, personal, or other frameworks. Even if participants perceive their differences as ethno-racial, they do not necessarily identify themselves as mixed. Individuals interpret the definitions of mixedness differently, shaping their choices

regarding whether to identify as mixed. Thus, the category of *hāfu* is used to make sense of their own *partial* differences from the notions of Japaneseness, but only when they believe they fit the definitions of the category.

## **Summary of Chapter 7: Expressing and Explaining Differences Through Mixedness**

Chapter 7 continues the exploration of self-identification, focusing on its external aspect to examine the boundary-making and unmaking of *hāfu*. The chapter investigates how and why Group 1 and Group 2 participants in this study choose to present themselves in relation to others' categorisation of them as *hāfu*/non-*hāfu*. The analysis also discusses the participants' differential identity options, meaning the ability to choose or assert a certain identity (Osanami Törngren 2018:750).

Group 1 participants typically attempt to persuade those who categorise them as *hāfu* or foreign that they are neither, by claiming their ('authentic') Japanese identity, highlighting various aspects of Japaneseness, or providing alternative explanations for their 'non-Japanese-like' features. They do this because they believe they do not fit the primordial definition of *hāfu* or foreign, and passing as such causes a sense of guilt and identity mismatch. However, at times, participants choose to pass as mixed or foreign. They may passively accept others' categorisation by not denying being mixed or foreign, or alternatively, they may actively assert that they are mixed, such as by introducing themselves as *kuōtā* (quarter Japanese), or highlight differences from Japaneseness. They do this because passing as mixed/foreign is easier than changing others' perceptions, can be beneficial, or because they enjoy controlling how others categorise them.

Group 2 participants, on the other hand, sometimes actively pass as Japanese by hiding their non-Japanese background and emphasising Japaneseness while downplaying differences. They do this because they want others to perceive them as the same or to avoid negative images associated with certain non-Japanese Asian countries and people. Typically, however, they passively pass as Japanese, neither hiding their mixed heritage nor emphasising their non-Japanese background. They do not hide their mixed heritage because they perceive no negative images attached to their non-Japanese heritage, and they do not wish to deny their internal

identification. At the same time, they do not emphasise their mixed heritage because passing as Japanese is beneficial, they believe others do not recognise their mixed background, or they want to challenge the idea that *hāfu* is something special or different. It is also customary in Japan not to express ethnic identity explicitly. To balance their self-identification as mixed with societal norms, some participants intentionally avoid emphasising their Japaneseness when passively pass as Japanese. However, some participants choose to highlight their mixedness, introducing themselves as mixed, choosing names that make their difference visible, or otherwise emphasising their mixed identity by other means. They do this to address the mismatch between others' categorisation of them as Japanese and their internal identification as mixed, because others' categorisation of them as mixed is beneficial, or to contest a Japanese society that renders them invisible. When expressing their mixed heritage, some participants avoid using the label *hāfu* to escape the various connotations associated with the category, which do not align with their individual traits.

Together, the findings indicate that participants present themselves in various ways to balance their internal identifications, others' categorisation, and the context they are in. Individuals choose to externally identify as *hāfu* to explain and express their 'differences' from the notion of Japaneseness. Since *hāfu* is a category associated with differences, individuals may also emphasise their differences from Japaneseness to lead others to categorise them as *hāfu*.

The available options for external identification varied both between and within the two groups. Different factors influenced identity options. Due to their physical appearance, it was easier for Group 1 participants to pass as mixed/foreign, while it was easier for Group 2 participants to pass as Japanese, despite their heritage suggesting otherwise. However, based on the primordial understanding of *hāfu*, Group 1 participants had the option to deny being *hāfu* without experiencing a psychological dilemma, though this could be validated or invalidated by others. Group 2 participants sometimes felt guilt when actively passing as Japanese by hiding their mixed heritage and covering their differences. The availability of alternative frameworks and categories to explain their differences also influenced their ability to assert a Japanese identity in both groups. Turning to mixed identity, in ethno-nationalist society where homogeneity is assumed, individuals are not expected to share their non-Japanese background when differences from Japaneseness are invisible. This prevents some Group 2 participants from externally identifying as mixed.

The participants' choices both reinforce and challenge Japan's homogeneous self-portrayal. Group 1 participants' denial of being *hāfu* and Group 2 participants' assertion of being *hāfu* or mixed challenge the homogeneous notion of Japaneseness by exposing a gap between their claims and the traits associated with, or dissociated from, Japaneseness. On the other hand, whether they deny being *hāfu* or pass as *hāfu*, they maintain and even reinforce the social boundaries between *hāfu* and 'authentic' Japanese by highlighting different aspects of Japaneseness and differences.

## Summary of Chapter 8: Conclusion

In Chapter 8, the results are summarised and discussed comprehensively to deepen the understanding of the motivations and backgrounds driving *hāfu* categorisation, as well as its consequences for the categorised individuals and society at large.

Firstly, insights on the boundary making and unmaking of *hāfu* and Japanese are provided, answering how the categorisation of someone as mixed occurs. This study adds to the discussion on ethnic boundaries by showing the interpretive process that bridges the objectivism and subjectivism of race and ethnicity. People recognise certain individual traits as different from the notion of Japaneseness. However, even if there is a mismatch between individual traits and Japaneseness, if these traits do not become visible in interaction, they are not perceived as differences in the first place. In such cases, symbolic boundaries are not drawn. Factors that lead to the recognition of differences serve as cues for various categorisations. When these cues are mobilised and certain individual traits are recognised as different, people attempt to make sense of these differences through different interpretative frameworks, such as ethnic, racial, national, cultural, regional, familial, individual, or a combination between these. Different frameworks are expressed through categorisations, including foreigner, *hāfu*, Ainu, Okinawan, *kikokushijo*, Kyūshū, *hāfu-gao*, or other categories connotating mixedness. Individuals perceived as different in many aspects of Japaneseness are categorised as foreigners, while those perceived as partially different are categorised as *hāfu*. When these categorisations are unacknowledged by those categorised or do not fit societal criteria, other categories are mobilised to make sense of the differences. As a result of these interactions, symbolic boundaries are made and remade in the cognitions of both those categorising and those categorised, which may or may not align with

each other. Some of these boundaries align with more dominant social boundaries, while others are less prominent in Japanese society.

Secondly, empirical implications are discussed, attempting to answer why and how the categorisation of individuals as mixed occurs in Japan. The results indicate that in contemporary Japan, people, especially younger generations, consider mixedness as a middle ground situated between Japaneseness and foreignness. The targets of *hāfu* categorisation are usually individuals who *partially* but *not entirely* meet the definition of Japaneseness. On the other hand, due to the framework of sameness imposed on individuals categorised as Japanese, when difference is unrecognised or invisible, the categorisation and identification as *hāfu* do not occur and may even be suppressed. To understand, express, and explain *partial* differences from the narrow notion of Japaneseness, individuals categorise others and themselves as *hāfu* in Japan. To lead others to categorise them as *hāfu*, they emphasise *partial* differences from the notion of Japaneseness. This practice distinguishes between Japanese and non-Japanese, as well as between ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ Japanese. In an ethno-nationalist society where diversity is both increasing and becoming visible, yet sameness still holds significant social importance, the categorisation of someone as mixed occurs to maintain the boundaries of Japaneseness. Even though the definition of Japanese may expand to include *hāfu*, the core idea of Japaneseness is sustained by dividing Japanese into ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’. The case of Japan exemplifies a typical ethno-nationalist society, highlighting the critical need to explore mixed identities beyond racial boundaries.

Finally, the implications of exploring mixedness through the cognitive approach to race and ethnicity are discussed. The cognitive approach enabled the analysis of boundary-making and unmaking of mixedness, rather than focusing on groups themselves. This shift in focus aligns with the political stance of researchers studying mixedness, by mitigating the risk of reinforcing distinctions between ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ races. The cognitive approach also reflects the reality of ordinary individuals by emphasising mixedness as a framework of cognition and as a category used in daily communication. Adopting the cognitive approach in studying mixedness also has methodological implications. Focusing on categorisation enables the analysis of people on the boundaries of mixedness. The findings also show that the categories researchers use in study designs significantly influence interview recruitment and results. Additionally, this study contributes to the cognitive approach itself. The findings show that individuals make sense of

differences not only through ethno-racial frameworks, but also cultural, regional, familial, and individual ones. The results suggest that when empirically analysing ethnicity, race, and nation, we need to be open to other theoretical frameworks for understanding differences and similarities.

This chapter concludes the thesis by arguing that boundaries of mixedness are neither a self-evident nor a fixed group; they are constantly negotiated and contested through processes of categorisation. Therefore, researchers cannot uncritically accept who counts as mixed and who does not (Song 2021b). However, conceptualising mixedness as an unstable and ever-changing category does not imply that individuals freely choose mixed identities. Rather, it is shaped and constrained by social contexts, and in the Japanese case, by ethno-nationalism.

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