

IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY: HAFUS IN JAPAN

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A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Communication

May 2016

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Alessandra Von Burg for her continued support and her precious help during the writing process of my thesis. This thesis would not have reached the quality level that it has now without her advice. I would like to thank Dr. Michael Hyde for the true inspiration that he has been to me as he has allowed me to express myself and opened my mind to many new topics. It is also the paper that I wrote for his class of Rhetorical Criticism that transformed into this thesis. Finally, I wish to thank Dr. Gavin Whitelaw for encouraging me and following my progress from my undergraduate years until today. Lastly, I would like to thank my close friends for their support during the writing process, and of course my family for always being here for me despite the distance.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to analyze the status of mixed-race Japanese, commonly called “hafu.” Hafus are a minority in Japan who often face discrimination as they try to identify to the Japanese community and to this day, there is still little literature on this topic. I argue that the Japanese majority should rethink the Japanese identity to be more inclusive of hafus, as many are often stopped to do so because of hafus’ foreign looks. Hafus should also rethink their identity by challenging the label “hafu” itself that carries many negative connotations. Through the use of theories such as W.E.B. Du Bois’ concept of double consciousness and Kenneth Burke’s theory on symbols as terministic screens and identification, I analyze the controversy of Miss Japan 2015. Ultimately, this thesis attempts to understand what it means to be human through the search of identity.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Introduction**

“Where are you from?” might probably be the most difficult question one could ever ask me. I was born in France from a French father and a Japanese mother, but moved to Japan at the age of thirteen and have lived there ever since. French and Japanese are both my mother tongues, though I am much more comfortable speaking French as it is the language I have used during the majority of my school years. When speaking other languages such as English, I display a strong French accent. As for my looks, I am most of the time identified as having Western looks.

The problem arises when I attempt to tell people where I come from: whenever telling someone that I am from Japan, people look at me quizzically. Listening to me talking and looking at my facial features, how could I possibly be Japanese? I must each time explain my entire story in order for my origins to make sense. It is not a situation that bothers me too much when it happens in the United States, where I am currently studying. However, it is much more uncomfortable and hurtful when Japanese people react with surprise when I claim that I am Japanese, from Japan. I wish to be part of this Japanese identity because I rightfully feel that I am Japanese too; it is simply more difficult when I am seen as a foreigner within my own country. In some cases, Japanese people talk to me in English as I am seen as a foreigner. In other cases, people will recognize my Japanese side and ask “what’s your other half?” But this only reinforces the fact that I cannot be a hundred percent Japanese.

Japan appears to be an ethnically homogeneous country. It is said, “the Japanese today are the most thoroughly unified and culturally homogeneous large bloc of people in the world” (Lie 1). Former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro announced words that have strongly resonated and still do today: “Japan has one ethnicity, one state, and one language” (Lie 1).

In 2013, however, Japan had 28.7 million foreigners legally entering the country, and counted 2 million foreign permanent residents in the country, according to the Statistics Bureau of the Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications). Immigration to Japan also means a mingling with the local Japanese people: in 2013, one in eighteen marriages was an international marriage and out of some of these unions were born “biracial” children. In 2013, one in forty nine children was “biracial,” reaching approximately a number of 20,000 children a year (Nishikura).

It is not always easy for foreigners to adapt to the country that is Japan: integration can often be challenging, starting off with the language barrier. Cultural differences, religious views, and moral values differ. Indeed, even ethnic differences can cause identity problems as Japan has had significant difficulty accepting local ethnic groups such as the Ainu, the Okinawans, the Burakumin, or the Koreans as part of the Japanese population. Ainu, living in the North of Japan, are considered as being racially different; so are Burakumin, descendants of Tokugawa-era outcastes, resulting in discriminations in employment or marriage (Lie 4). This situation clearly implies that integration is not made any easier for foreigners, especially Western or African foreigners who physically, drastically stand out from the crowd.

What happens then to children born from international marriages? As stated earlier, about 20,000 children are born from those international unions. “International,” “bi-ethnic,” or “bi-racial” children are becoming more common in Japan than a decade ago. Therefore, a term has emerged to qualify those who have one Japanese parent and one foreign parent. They are commonly called *hafu*, which is the term that I refer to throughout this thesis. *Hafu* is a Japanese term that accounts for the Japanese pronunciation of “half” in English. It is a term widely used by the Japanese and by the *hafus* themselves. As an example, when introducing themselves or being asked where one comes from, *hafus* will tend to state: “I am *hafu*.”

However, one problem arises when asking where does this term “*hafu*” come from. Just as the popular idiom asks if the glass is half full or half empty, why would *hafus* not be double? Because of the diminishing aspect that the word *hafu* (half) connotes, it seems to signify that it has not been the *hafus* themselves who have willingly chosen to call themselves that. While “half” can mean the other equal part “that together make up a whole” (“half,” Cambridge), it can also be a synonym of adjectives such as: partly, incompletely, partially, insufficiently and an antonym for whole or full (“half,” Oxford). On the contrary, it was either imposed on them or chosen in order to match the constraints of assertiveness.

*Hafus* have a need for recognition in a country that largely appears mono-ethnic at first sight. This notion of purity and this image of the “stereotypical” Japanese majority does not truly exist in the Japanese society; the majority made of “pure” Japanese people perceive it more as a strong sense of togetherness. Yet, *hafus* are conscious of their minority status. For *hafus*, the feeling of not fitting in and of not being “pure” Japanese is

real. “Hafu” is a term given by the Japanese majority to this minority group and hafus have appropriated this term to refer to themselves. In this thesis, I argue that there is a need in Japan to formulate a new discourse of identity that should embrace the multiplicity of minorities in Japan, through an understanding of the discourse around the creation of identity. Hafus experience a form of double consciousness and the Japanese majority should attempt to recognize and accept hafus' Japaneseness despite their "half" foreign background. Furthermore, I argue that in order for hafus to reconcile their two "halves" of their identity, hafus should define their own identity and therefore reexamine and reevaluate the symbol of “hafu” because it was appointed to them and not by them.

Hafus are exposed to two different experiences: their life experience as Japanese, and their life experience in their other nationality - American, French, German, Brazilian, Chinese, and so on. These experiences vary depending on how close hafus interact with their “foreign” culture. Those experiences are influenced by how present and how represented the two cultures are at home and in their daily life. Did hafus live mostly in a Japanese environment or did they live in an environment that was more representative of their other culture? Which languages do they speak at home? What kind of school system do they attend? Have they lived in both countries, or do they travel back and forth between their two countries of origin? Have the hafus exclusively spent their lives in Japan? Those questions come to matter for more and more Japanese individuals as the statistics show that more multiracial babies are born each year.

Generally speaking, many hafus end up falling in the middle of their cultural spectrum. Because Japan is an island country and does not have an immigration history as rich as the United States or countries in Europe, similar problems that foreigners encounter in Japan apply to hafus as well: one's appearance as a hafu stands out of the crowd and for some, their language skills in Japanese do not reach the native level. As a consequence, hafus are not fully accepted as Japanese. As my arguments and examples are partly based on hafus' appearance, I would like to point out that in this thesis, I will focus on hafus whose appearance stand out of the crowd such as Ariana Miyamoto, and whose foreign origins are not Asian. Though Korean and Japanese hafus are many in Japan, their background is different from the foreign-looking hafus as it is also strongly shaped by the history between Japan and Korea, making their search for identity different and complex.

Indeed, there are some success stories of hafu celebrities (such as Becky, Anna Tsuchiya, Christel Takigawa), but in most cases it is difficult to deal with this double identity. As the number of hafu increases, there is yet very little literature surrounding the issue. Few movies, journal articles, or books have covered the topic of hafus. Still, some hafus raise their voices to speak out about the challenge that it is for them to find their own identity and to be accepted for who they truly are, full of their two cultures.

For this reason, my thesis does not only attempt to enrich this literature, but it also brings a rhetorical approach to the construction of identity, with a connection with W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of double consciousness and Kenneth Burke's notion of symbols and identification.

In this introduction, I present my theoretical framework, followed by a review of relevant literature and finally a preview of the other chapters. Ultimately, this thesis connects to the notion of ontology: the word hafu directly relates to one's identity, and identity relates to one's existence and being. The problem that is caused by the use of the word hafu is that it diminishes one's identity as it implies that the hafu individual is "half," and not "whole" or "double." The hafu remains incomplete. The use of the term hafu makes a statement that the hafu individual is not perfect and it makes us question again what identity is and therefore what it means to be human.

### **The Importance of Double Consciousness and Identity in Understanding Hafus**

#### *Double Consciousness*

Hafus bear what I qualify as a double identity within themselves. While embracing both of their different cultures, hafus are immersed in a Japanese environment and are therefore perceived by Japanese people through the lens of Japanese culture. In other words, hafus in Japan are seen through the lens of Japanese values. The Japanese society is a group-oriented society and it is often not well perceived to stand out from the group, which is what hafus involuntarily do. Hafus are looked at through the eyes of the Japanese majority as a minority that stands out. This sparks the connection that exists between hafus and the concept of double consciousness.

This experience of being perceived through the eyes of others is not exclusive to hafus. W.E.B. Du Bois introduced the notion of "double-consciousness" through one of his most famous work *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in 1903. In his first chapter "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," Du Bois introduces "double-consciousness." Du Bois uses it in a

particular context: the identity of the “Negro” (as Du Bois writes; “African American” to be up to date). Double consciousness is a “peculiar sensation,” because it makes the African American individual look at himself “through the eyes of the others, of measuring [his] soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Du Bois 8). In other words, African Americans’ own identity is created through the eyes of White Americans. The “Negro” is born “gifted with second-sight” (Du Bois 8), while living in this American land. This duality, this two-ness, this double consciousness gathers “two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body” (Du Bois 8). Double consciousness is about two different souls within one body that strive for different and not easily reconcilable goals. The African American “simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American” (Du Bois 9), a simple wish yet seemingly unattainable as the African American is often mistreated by the society where he lives. It is even more difficult as one cannot be fully involved in both sides of his identity and the African American ends up only putting “half a heart in either cause” (Du Bois 9). To illustrate this example, Du Bois gives the example of a “Negro” who occupies a higher position and the struggle that he faces: “by the poverty and ignorance of his people, the Negro minister or doctor was tempted toward quackery and demagoguery; and by the criticism of the other world, toward ideals that made him ashamed of his lowly tasks” (9). The African American “Negro” is made socially “handicapped” (Du Bois 12) and still seeks freedom.

Though the words themselves and the combination that makes this term “double consciousness” are not of Du Bois’ creation (McPhail 11), the association of double consciousness to the problems of race, and particularly in the United States, is primarily

owed to Du Bois. He has “first coined the phrase in relation to racial identity and difference” (McPhail 11), which likely explains the very strong attachment of this concept to African-American rhetoric. For this reason, I adopt this “Du Boisian notion of ‘double consciousness’” (Eze 877) in this thesis.

About half a century after Du Bois’ publication of *The Souls of Black Folk*, French writer Frantz Fanon published his work *Black Skin, White Masks* in 1952. Du Boisian double consciousness applies to a specific people in a specific place; African Americans in the United States. It is possible though to feel a similar experience of double consciousness as what Du Bois describes: hafus do go through similar experiences of being discriminated, of attempting to reconcile their two identities. How is it possible for this Du Boisian double consciousness to be felt by hafus who have never experienced conditions as harsh and as severe as those of African Americans?

Born in Martinique and of an Afro-Caribbean ethnicity, Fanon was able to witness the consequences of the French colonial empire, after it had imposed its power on African countries and islands. Furthermore, the fifties in France saw the uprising of Algerians against the oppression from the motherland. Fanon picked up on Du Bois’ ideas of double-consciousness and in *Black Skin, White Masks*, argued that, though originally Du Boisian, people all over the world can perceive double consciousness, despite the background differences that exist.

Despite the ocean that separates France from the United States of America, the issues related to skin color are similar and this can be felt when reading through Fanon’s writings. Fanon points out the same issues as Du Bois does: “black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect”

(Fanon 12). Fanon shows how black men are perceived through the eyes of the white men because his objective is to “demonstrate that what is often called the black soul is a white man’s artifact” (Fanon 16), just as Du Bois writes that the African American “simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American” (Du Bois 9). The notable difference is Du Bois’ use of the term “double consciousness” to name the issue, which Fanon does not do.

Fanon has broadened the notion of double-consciousness by writing about the colonized people and people of color in France. Double consciousness is experienced by black people, not only in the United States, but in Europe as well. Fanon goes beyond the notion of skin color, as he writes the following: “Every colonized people - in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality - finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country” (Fanon 18).

In fact, double consciousness can be experienced by any person who perceives his culture to be made inferior to the dominant culture of the place he resides in and who has to submit to it. Fanon’s work complements Du Bois’ work very well and reinforces the foundations of double consciousness. The concept of double consciousness, however, it is still not concretely applied to other ethnicities other than “Black people.”

Double consciousness is a concept that is loaded with history. The violence and racism that was imposed on African-Americans can never be compared to other people; it is pain that cannot be understood by outsiders. Though double consciousness is originally a Du Boisian concept, more people can identify to it today, especially when looking at some of the broad lines of what makes up for double consciousness. Often times, in the

definition that Du Bois gives of double consciousness, the word “Negro” could be replaced by other terms and it does work with “hafu.” Hafus in Japan also experience a peculiar sensation as they look at themselves through the eyes of the Japanese majority. Hafus are also born with second-sight, they are born in this dual environment and grow bearing within themselves two unreconciled strivings in a body physically that stands out from the Japanese crowd. Just like the Du Boisian double consciousness, hafus experience this double consciousness both mentally and physically. Finally, just as much as the Negro wishes to peacefully be both African American and American, the hafu wishes to peacefully embrace both his Japanese and foreign background.

Looking at the issue of hafus through the lens of double consciousness gives a new approach to it that has not been taken before. It gives a name to what hafus experience: double consciousness. Therefore, it allows me to understand what hafus go through, and base my reflection and analysis of case studies on a solid theoretical basis.

### *On Symbols and Identification*

Hafus bear their own unique identities, mixing their foreign and Japanese background. Living in Japan, hafus attempt to identify with the Japanese majority to be a part of this group while holding on to their own hafu background. Interestingly enough, this phenomenon of double consciousness relates to the concept of identification that Burke explains in his book *On Symbols and Society*. A is different from B. However, even if A is not identical with B, “insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B” (Burke, "Symbols and Society," 180). In other words, Burke explains that A is its own

unique being but in being identified with B, a person other than himself, A becomes both “joined and separate,” both a “distinct substance and consubstantial with another.”

This explains the notion of double consciousness, where the hafu is his own, individual being with his foreign background, yet also identifies as a Japanese. Therefore, the hafu is both a distinct and consubstantial being with the Japanese identity.

Burke’s theory on symbols is an essential key in understanding the “identity crisis” that hafus experience. Biracial people in Japan refer to themselves as hafus because it is the symbol that has been assigned to them. “Hafu” is the symbol that has been assigned to the symbolized – the Japanese biracial people – in order to make sense of this complexity. Burke covers the notion of the symbol and the symbolized, which is important to understand prior to the notion of identification. Before being able to identify an object, a concept or a person with another entity, we must be able to name, identify, and give a symbol to this object, concept or person.

The appeal of the symbol is that it allows us to interpret an object or even a situation or a concept that is presented to us. As Burke explains, a symbol “gives simplicity and order to an otherwise unclarified complexity [...] it provides a terminology of thoughts, actions emotions, attitudes, for certifying a pattern of experience” (Burke, "Symbols and Society," 110). In other words, as we give a symbol to a certain thing or a certain situation, it helps us freeze a certain meaning to that complexity and therefore reducing this uncertainty and making it uniformly understood by all. By assigning a symbol, we come to an agreement that what we are talking about means and represents

something in particular and that on the other hand, there are actions and meanings that do not apply.

Another aspect to symbolizing is that it helps us make sense of the symbolized as it negates all of the things that this object or concept is not. Of course, it is much simpler to assign a symbol to fixed objects such as a tree or a chair, because those are material objects that are little affected by change. Trees only require a few characteristics to be assigned the symbol of tree: leaves, trunk, roots. If this natural object has petals, it will probably be a flower. Similarly, a chair has to fulfill certain characteristics; it must have four legs, a support for the back, and be designed for one person. If this object can hold more than one person, the symbol used will probably be “bench.” If those objects are much simpler to define, it is much less obvious to define and attribute a symbol to concepts because of the abstractness of it. It can be difficult to define what *is* the concept but it can be easier to define what is *not* the concept. Inevitably, some elements will be left out of what the symbol symbolizes, but “even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality” (Burke, "Symbols and Society," 115). Therefore, when we attribute a symbol, a terminology, to a thing, we are selecting according to our perception what is and what is not the thing. Some elements will become part of what makes the symbol while some other elements will be left out of it.

Burke explains the weight that symbols have when it comes to understanding one's identity. His theory proves how a simple word such as “hafu” can mean a lot more than it sounds: the term “hafu” allows to draw a line around what a hafu is and what a hafu is not. Hafu defines a certain aspect of the biracial people living in Japan. In a way,

it helps reducing the uncertainty or confusion that is created by the existence of those people who are Japanese, but not entirely. As I have explained earlier, hafu comes from the English “half” to indicate one’s foreignness. Reading along the lines of Burke, it implies that therefore, if one is “half,” one cannot be “whole;” the definition of half is intrinsically excluding the idea that one can be truly whole.

### **Multiculturality and Hafus: Literature Thus Far**

The notion of double consciousness has received a lot of attention and seems to have been revived lately, especially in the United States as Barack Obama was elected President and first assumed office in January of 2009. Americans celebrated their first African-American President and consequently for the first time, the African-American population was represented in American politics in ways it had not been represented before. An article such as Simon Gikandi’s “Obama as Text: The Crisis of Double-Consciousness,” raises awareness about the complexity of double consciousness and how President Obama ambiguously belongs to both African American and White American groups. Gikandi is able to demonstrate through the case of President Obama that double consciousness is not as “black and white” as it was when introduced by Du Bois and Fanon. He answers the question, "how does a man who appears to be culturally white function as a black American?" (Gikandi 214). This is a question that takes double consciousness into consideration, applied in an American context. But it is a question that can easily apply to hafu as well: how does a person who has a part foreign background function as a Japanese?

Active discussions around multiculturalism are increasing in countries other than Japan. Many articles show the complexity, diversity, and versatility of double consciousness, which could build a possible ground for a discussion about the issue of hafus. Glenys Lobban's article "The Immigrant Analyst: A Journey from Double Consciousness Toward Hybridity" shows the wider variety of literature and awareness of double consciousness available in the United States. This is a stark contrast with Japan where there is not much literature on double consciousness, which is almost a taboo topic. Through case studies, Lobban demonstrates how double consciousness shapes the person's view. Double consciousness makes the concerned person see the world according to the oppression that he goes through, which eventually creates a barrier for seeing a situation accurately; it can influence one's perspective even if this person is the one experiencing double consciousness. In other words, double consciousness is not a one-way oppression from the "White" to the "people of color." This article gives insight on the complexity of double consciousness, especially in a country such as the United States, where backgrounds and ethnicities are as various as they are numerous. Furthermore, this article proves that people in this case have been able to grasp a sense of double consciousness and what it feels like to be a minority and to not have a true self-consciousness. This article proves that it is a necessary step for understanding the other and his true identity: this is needed as well for Japanese to accept hafus and their identity.

Other fields such as counseling and psychology also cover issues of multicultural individuals. For example, multicultural psychology has gained attention and popularity, especially in a country such as the United States, where "the flourishing diversity of the American population has made it impossible for clinicians to ignore the demands

presented by their increasingly multicultural clientele” (Murphy-Shigematsu 3). Murphy-Shigematsu’s book *Multicultural Encounters: Case Narratives from a Counseling Practice* focuses on case studies with his clients. It is a helpful book for counselors to understand how to integrate culture in their assessments and therapies. Murphy-Shigematsu gives advice to counselors on how to achieve counselor’s development by presenting several discourses of multicultural counseling. It also attempts to share stories about clients’ healing who are not necessarily hafus, proving that people with a biracial or international background can come to an understanding within themselves. If multicultural individuals are able to come at peace with their identities as psychological studies show, then hafus can too find an identity that corresponds to who they truly are; not just "half" human beings.

### *Third Culture Kids*

Perhaps one of the most well-known term that has been developed on the theme of double consciousness today is the term “third culture kids” (TCK). Though hafus present some differences with TCK, Hafus do qualify as TCKs. TCKs are most often children living in expatriated communities abroad, but both TCKs and hafus’ experiences converge. One notable characteristic that brings together hafus and TCKs is their “distinct differences,” as often these individuals are raised where they are “physically different from those around them,” (Pollock and Van Reken 22). This difference becomes a major aspect of their identity. Hafus, with their mixed ethnic backgrounds, often look physically different than Japanese people, similarly to how often TCKs’ appearance stands out from the people of the country where they live. The most important

commonality shared between TCKs and hafus is how both have a “substantially different perspective on the world from their peers” (Pollock and Van Reken 22).

Third culture was originally a term introduced by Ruth Useem in the 1950s, but David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken developed it in more depth in their book *Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds*. According to Pollock and Van Reken, a Third Culture Kid or TCK can be defined as:

A person who has spent significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background. (Pollock and Van Reken 19)

Mostly, TCKs categorize the children whose parents have been working as expatriates in a foreign country and the authors’ conversation often focuses on the benefits of the expatriate life. Examples of TCKs would be the children of U.S. military members living in a military base abroad, or the children of diplomats or expatriates working for a company in a foreign country. Therefore, the concept of TCK also touches topics such as “repatriation,” which makes this concept much different than double consciousness.

However, Pollock and Van Reken’s notion of TCK relates to double consciousness in the way that TCKs are raised in a culture in which they cannot fully belong to: “Third Culture Kids (TCKs) are raised in a neither/nor world. It is neither fully the world of their parents’ culture (or cultures) nor fully the world of the other culture (or cultures) in which they were raised” (6). Remembering Du Bois’ words, the one who experiences double consciousness has “half a heart in either cause” (9) and is made

socially handicapped; he is also raised in a culture in which he cannot fully belong to. The notion of TCK corresponds to double consciousness as TCKs are raised in a cross-cultural world and are affected by mobility. Furthermore, the difficulty to integrate the culture is heightened as TCKs tend to stay in small circles with other TCKs and members of their small foreign community.

Though Pollock and Van Reken's concept is appealing, it quickly becomes obvious that "third culture" encompasses many cases, many stories, many individuals of very different backgrounds. As Pollock and Van Reken specify, TCKs are not a new phenomenon, but interest has grown on this topic due to the increase in number of TCKs, as their public voice and significance have become louder (6). Because of this general increase, there is a need to "refine" this notion of TCKs or to find more accurate "subcategories" that can qualify and embrace certain types of TCKs, which is what the word "hafu" does. In particular, it defines the third culture individual who experiences double consciousness in Japan, raised in a culturally mixed Japanese and Western (for example) family.

#### *Research in Communication on Hafus*

The literature around the topic of hafu can be qualified as almost nonexistent. Kimie Oshima's article on the "Perception of Hafu or Mixed-race People in Japan" is one of the rare research articles on the topic. According to Oshima, "research on minority groups focusing on how minority individuals perceive their changing positions in Japanese society" is completely absent (Oshima 22). As explained previously, issues concerning identities and ethnicity are common in other countries, with the United States as a great

example. However, it is not the case in Japan. Not only are foreigners “openly viewed as the minority” (Oshima 22), but even hafus are “still viewed as foreigners” (Oshima 23).

Oshima interviews hafus in order to understand how they perceive their identities in Japan. In her interviews, Oshima asks her participants about their life experience from their childhood until their life as university students. When their experience clearly qualifies as a form of double consciousness, no name, no symbol is attributed to this “hafu experience.” Many scholarly articles (such as Lobban's *The Immigrant Analyst: A Journey From Double Consciousness Towards Hybridity*, Wasserman, Clair and Platt's *The "Homeless Problem" and the Double Consciousness*, Gikandi's *Obama as Text: The Crisis of Double-Consciousness*) explain, apply, and challenge the concept of double consciousness in America for example, along with attempts to question and solve the existing ethnic problems. However, there is still a long way to go when it comes to double consciousness in Japan. The mere use of the word hafu is a good example. Oshima makes a suggestion that the term “daburu,” the Japanese pronunciation of “double,” could be a possible substitute to hafu as it would be the contrary of the idea of being “half.” When “hafu” points out that one is neither entirely Japanese nor fully foreign, the term “daburu” would fully embrace both Japaneseness and foreignness. In the end, the term *daburu* is not used for the simple reason that “most mixed-race Japanese are more comfortable with the term *hafu* because *daburu* sounds too ‘self-assertive’” (Oshima 25).

Oshima’s journal article presents an analytical approach to the topic through interviews, but it does not link the notion of hafu to rhetorical theories. Connecting the topic of hafus to rhetorical theories brings a brand new perspective on this issue and gives

explanations to questions such as “why hafu and not daburu?” My thesis builds on existing research and contributes to the understanding of the meaning of the hafu identity to reconcile it with the Japanese majority.

### *Hafu, the Film*

Oshima’s article gives an interesting insight in the lives of hafus, as she allowed them to speak out on how they feel everyday. Oshima’s study appears to be similar to most of the rare work that has already been done: it appears as a compilation of hafus’ stories. Oshima’s work resembles the movie *Hafu: The Mixed Race Experience in Japan*, released in 2013. The film gathers stories of hafus living in Japan, from very different backgrounds. *Hafu* is at the forefront on this topic: Not only has it been directed and written by hafus, but it is the first time that a documentary talks with such depth about this issue. Furthermore, the movie was well advertised and was screened internationally (numerous states in America, Canada, many European countries, Australia and New Zealand, and of course all over Japan) bringing a worldwide awareness on hafus.

The hafus featured in this movie are Japanese and Australian, Japanese and Ghanaian, or Japanese and Mexican. The movie also features a Japanese and Korean woman, yet I choose not to discuss her story as I focus on hafus whose appearances exclude them from the crowd. Furthermore, Korean hafus (also known as *zainichi*) have a much heavier historical background with Japan that makes their relation to the Japanese society different and more complex. In the case of Zainichis, their appearance is not a

problem but their historical past and origins raise controversy that cannot always be compared to the foreign looking hafus.

Each of the featured hafu explains his or her difficulties living in a society where he/she can never fully adapt. Through the use of storytelling, the director shows how the featured hafus experience double consciousness. Director Megumi Nishikura points out how hafus are perceived through the eyes of Japanese society as being different, without putting a name on it.

This movie has done a remarkable job at raising awareness; it has helped to start the conversation, and for hafus to start accepting themselves. The movie attempts to answer questions such as “what does it mean to be hafu?”, “what does it mean to be Japanese?” or also “what does all of this mean for Japan?” but it does so by guiding the viewers through “a myriad of hafu experiences that are influenced by upbringing, family relationships, education, and even physical appearance” (Hafu The Film). In the end, it remains a collection of “five unique life stories” (Hafu The Film).

The movie has received some attention from the media and short articles have been published in news sites such as CNN (Krieger), Japan Times (Kosaka) or Asahi Shimbun (Hosomi) but not so surprisingly, those articles were written in English, implying that they target a more international audience; not the Japanese minority.

My thesis gives a name to this unnamed experience as well as a theoretical background to it. Associating this topic with theories, this thesis provides a solid understanding of the deeper issues that surround the hafu problem. Through my analysis of the case-study of Miss Japan Ariana Miyamoto, I suggest more meaningful

explanations to what hafus experience and hopefully present possible solutions to this issue.

### **Miss Japan: Bringing the Hafu Problem to a New Level**

The movie *Hafu* has brought a considerable amount of attention to the case of hafus, but it mainly informed people about the "existence" of hafus and documented their struggle. More recently, the story around the election of Miss Japan created a major controversy about hafus and their place in Japan, with an important international media coverage from major newspapers. This "Miss Japan controversy" has brought much more attention nationally and internationally to hafus and has strongly emphasized the discussion about hafus and how they are perceived in Japan.

For this reason, I have selected the case-study of Miss Japan Ariana Miyamoto. It makes hafus' search of identity move forward. Ariana Miyamoto is a "hafu" born from an African-American father and a Japanese mother. Ariana has spent most of her life in Japan, in the prefecture of Nagasaki, where she won the title of Miss Nagasaki. In March 2015, Ariana was successfully crowned Miss Universe Japan 2015. This is when the controversy started, since Ariana is the first multiethnic or hafu to represent Miss Universe Japan. Many comments were made on social media, concerning her appearance being not "Japanese enough." This criticism opened the conversation on what defines the Japanese identity.

In the following chapter, I present Ariana's story and discuss the controversy. Through Ariana's story, I argue that influences such as education have a strong impact on shaping a hafu's identity. Furthermore, I argue that electing Ariana for such an important

and representative title brings up the discomfort that there is around the evolution of the Japanese identity. I explain it by tying it to the strong feeling of belonging to a nation such as Japan, which is not very acceptant to change from outside elements.

In my third chapter, I explain Ariana Miyamoto's case through Burke's concept of identity in order to make sense of the situation. By analyzing the label hafu, I argue that this term carries negative connotations, emphasizes hierarchical differences and that these connotations to the word hafu reinforce the feeling of double consciousness that hafus experience.

Finally, in my conclusion, I present possible ways in which the hafu issue can evolve, and how this topic matters as well as how it matters at a larger scale.

This topic on hafus appears to be very specific and still relatively unexplored, but it is for this reason that it needs more attention. There is a necessity to face the cultural issue on this identity divide. The lack of literature is one thing, but facing the issue that surrounds hafus and hafus' identity could lead to much broader results, as it relates to notions of identity and what it means to be a human being. This thesis matters as it attempts to help hafus, including myself, in building their own identity and reconcile ourselves with the Japanese majority, in hope for an impact on the broader topic of multiculturalism.

## CHAPTER 2

Identity is not something that one thinks about constantly, yet for hafus and minorities, being accepted for who we are as human beings affects us deeply in our connections to the environment and the people that surround us. In Japan, hafus are not always accepted for who they are. The combination of two cultural backgrounds in one identity is not often well accepted amongst Japanese, which is perceived by hafus. This influences one's identity and position within the society. Hafus have trouble fitting into the Japanese society and have even greater trouble being recognized as Japanese by the Japanese society, which is what Ariana Miyamoto's story reveals. In this chapter, I first introduce Ariana's detailed story and how her time and education within the Japanese system shaped her identity. I talk about the notion of nationality and how it is perceived in Japan. This leads me to explain how the compact unity of the Japanese society can create a barrier for minorities' integration even though a person such as Ariana explicitly chooses Japaneseness over her foreign identity. Then, I argue that Ariana's status as a representation of Japanese beauty raises controversy because there is an inevitable contrast between the traditional image of Japanese beauty and its modern representation. There is also a conflict between her appearance and her personality, as one is visible and open to judgment, while the other is hidden and invisible from everyone who does not know her.

## **Ariana Minamoto's Story**

Minorities are by definition subordinated to a majority and therefore do not have a way to affirm themselves in relation to this outnumbering majority ("minority"). With the hafu minority in Japan, it is much more difficult to speak out about who we are. Ariana Miyamoto is one of the many hafus who live in Japan, but she happens to have been elected as Miss Japan. Through her gain in popularity and with the controversy that surrounded her, she was able to attract general attention to the issue of hafus. As a hafu myself, I saw Ariana's story as one that spoke out about the problems encountered by the hafu minority. Ariana was reproached for "not being Japanese" enough, which is something that I experienced too. For example, I once got rejected from a scholarship application as I was told that my French background made me not dedicated enough towards my Japanese background and that this scholarship was given to students who were more committed to Japan than I was. There was no way for me to express this feeling of injustice, but Ariana was able to speak out through her own experience, which I describe and analyze below.

Ariana's mother, who is Japanese, met her father, an African American sailor, in the U.S. Navy. He was stationed in the naval base of Sasebo, near the city of Nagasaki, in the South of Japan. Ariana was born from this union the 12th of May, 1994, in Nagasaki. Ariana grew up like many other Japanese babies: she spoke Japanese with her friends and watched the same Japanese cartoons as any other children. She went to Japanese schools until middle school, wore the same school uniforms as her classmates, and followed the same educational curriculum as any Japanese child would.

In an interview with Al Jazeera (Saber), Ariana shares that despite the good memories that she has from her school years, she also used to be bullied and called names such as "kuronbo," the Japanese equivalent of the "n" word. Her experience is similar to other examples from the movie *Hafu: The Mixed-Race Experience in Japan*: One of the young child who is interviewed confesses that he had been bullied every day and would be told: "you are not Japanese, you are 'Eigo-jin' (English-boy)" by his classmates (*Hafu*). The director of the movie, Megumi Nishikura, also wishes she did not have to be singled out by her teacher for being able to speak English while she attended Japanese elementary school. In all those cases, bullying isolates hafu children from the majority as their foreign aspect and their "non-conformity" is pointed out. Even though these examples are about situations of younger hafus, this echoes to the older hafus who experience subtler forms of discrimination.

Ariana lived in Japan most of her life, but spent two years during high school in the United States with her dad, in Jacksonville, Arkansas. Except for those two years in the United States, Ariana's life was not particularly uncommon from her friends'. Her education in the Japanese system perfected her native Japanese language, like any other Japanese student. Not all hafus have benefited of a complete Japanese education; some receive an education from their other country while some are schooled in international school systems where the main language used is English. As a result, their level of Japanese can differ greatly in terms of speaking, listening, reading and writing. While Ariana speaks a native Japanese, I could not say the same for myself. Having been schooled in the French system during my entire education, I have more difficulty in reading and writing kanjis (Japanese symbols) and sometimes lack vocabulary depending

on the field. In some other cases, hafus who have lived an extended period of time abroad are unable to speak Japanese except at a conversational level. The simple fact of not being able to communicate through language with Japanese people can also become a difficulty for hafus to integrate themselves and to feel Japanese.

Each hafu has a different connection to the Japanese culture because hafus' experiences and backgrounds are diverse. For a hafu, identifying to his or her two cultures is rarely a perfect and stable fifty-fifty. Some might identify more with the foreign culture. Personally, having always grown up surrounded by a French environment, I tend to identify more strongly to the French culture at times. The issue is, no matter how much or how little a hafu identifies with the Japanese culture, it is much more difficult to be accepted as a Japanese, which is what Ariana's example proves. Ariana does not have this problem of feeling Japanese or identifying to the Japanese culture; she has difficulty in making the majority understand it. She tells the journalist from the New York Times that she is Japanese, she only wished "winning Miss Universe Japan would [have made] them notice that" (Fackler).

Though on a day to day basis, it is much more difficult to deal with the non-acceptance of our foreignness with discriminations that range from staring to bullying, being hafu can be a great advantage on a broader spectrum: one can often speak different languages and get to appreciate different cultures. This international background is also something that is appreciated by companies who attempt to develop their international business. It is often a quality that I put forward in resumes and interviews as it makes me stand out of the crowd. Hafus can also be praised for their unique physical looks, which is also what made Ariana stand out from other Miss Japan competitors. It can be seen in the

media where a few hafus make it to a celebrity status: Rola, a mixed Pakistani-Japanese, or Becky, a mixed British-Japanese, both being celebrities who are often featured in various television shows and advertisement. All of these advantages that make us hafus stand out of the crowd can also be used to our benefit, and Ariana has done so by using in positive ways her unique looks to compete in pageant contests and to speak up about discriminations that were addressed towards her.

Ariana also possesses a unique look that allowed her to compete in pageant competitions. In November of 2014, Ariana successfully won the pageant competition of her region, winning the title of Miss Nagasaki, leading her to the national Miss Japan pageant competition. In March 2015, Ariana won the national competition and earned the title of Miss Japan, which allowed her to compete for the title of Miss Universe 2015, ending in the top ten. However, her victory as the new miss Japan was not received positively by some Japanese people who expressed their shock and dissatisfaction through Twitter posts. Ariana entered the pageant world "looking for a way to speak out" (Saberi) and indeed, it worked. Her new status of Miss Japan raised controversy because her "hafu beauty" does not match the expected beauty that a Miss Japan should represent. I develop this point with more depth later in this chapter.

### **The Controversy that Surrounded Miss Japan**

Ariana Miyamoto was crowned Miss Japan on the 12th of March, 2015, but her victory was not well received by many Japanese people. Though her winning of the Nagasaki pageant did not cause much debate, her national title as Miss Japan provoked mixed reactions. This controversy caught the attention of the media and opened

discussion on hafus in Japan. In order to discuss the Miss Japan controversy, I have chosen five articles published by foreign and Japanese news websites: New York Times' *Biracial Beauty Queen Challenges Japan's Self-Image*; BBC's *The Beauty Contest Winner Making Japan Look at Itself*; Al'Jazeera's *Being 'Hafu' in Japan*; Washington Post's *Japan's Half-Black Miss Universe Says Discrimination Gives Her Extra-Motivation*; and Mainichi Shimbun's *"If I am not Japanese, what am I?" Winner of Miss Universe Japan, Ariana Miyamoto*. These five selected articles give a coverage of the case of Ariana Miyamoto: they present the controversy, include interviews with Ariana, who shares her reaction and reflection upon the issue and the Tweets that started this controversy. Negative comments about Ariana's victory were first released on Twitter during the few weeks that followed her victory. The articles I selected address the most representative Tweets that were shared on this social media platform. Japanese media sources did not cover the election of Miss Japan or the controversy as much as the foreign media did, which is why out of the five articles, four articles are from foreign news websites. All cover all sides' opinions; Ariana's view and the opponents' view. The Mainichi Shimbun's article has been one of the major Japanese news website to have covered the issue in Japanese. It is bringing some insight in how, despite negative comments that were posted by Japanese people, Japanese people are actively thinking about the Japanese identity in this current controversial context.

## Twitter Comments at the Heart of the Controversy

Out of the five news articles that I have selected, BBC and Al Jazeera share several Twitter comments in their articles that were translated from Japanese to English.<sup>1</sup> Those Tweets represent the overall negative reactions, as Japanese Twitter users express the surprise and shock over Ariana's win. Though many Japanese people congratulated Ariana on her win through Twitter, many others expressed their shock and dissatisfaction. The comments all address the discomfort to have Ariana representing Japan in this beauty contest. The Twitter comments that were published in the articles I selected were released approximately within the few weeks that followed the 12th of March, 2015. Though Twitter comments were much more numerous on this issue, these four were the ones that the writers of those news articles selected and judged as most representative of the dissatisfaction.

“Is it okay to select a hafu as Miss Japan?” (Wingfield-Hayes)

“It makes me uncomfortable to think she is representing Japan.” (Wingfield-Hayes)

“I don't mean to discriminate, but I wonder how a hafu can represent Japan.” (Saber)

“I didn't know Miss Japan doesn't have to be pure Japanese... What a shock!” (Saber)

Out of those four comments, two main themes emerge: the first theme is uncertainty and the second is the notion of "Japaneseness." Use of words and expressions such as “is it okay to,” “it makes me uncomfortable,” “I don't mean to discriminate but,”

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<sup>1</sup> The other three articles talk about the controversy without sharing Twitter comments

or “what a shock,” reveal a sense of uncertainty about what is currently unfolding with the election of Miss Japan. Electing an ethnically mixed person has never happened in the past and this sudden change is seen through the hesitant and uncertain tone of the tweets. The formulations "is it okay to," "I don't mean to" and "I didn't know" show that the authors of the tweets are indeed challenging what has happened and are expressing their dissatisfaction in a mild tone. This reveals their uncertainty and confusion about the outcome of the Miss Japan election.

The second theme that arises from all of these comments is the idea of what it means to be a "true" Japanese. There is not truly a perfect Japanese but some criteria are often required in order to be Japanese, such as language, culture and history that are common enough to all Japanese in order to create this feeling of togetherness. The notion of Japaneseness seemed solidly anchored until Ariana Miyamoto was named Miss Japan. Analyzing the tweets quoted above, Japaneseness is presented as fixed and unchangeable as words such as "pure Japanese" is used and how the idea of change makes the Twitter authors uncomfortable. Change implies a modification in the original stage and an active effort must be made to adapt to this alteration. While it is not uncommon for minorities to be discriminated against and for them to adapt to the larger population, in this situation it is the majority that has to adapt by making their identity more comprehensive of minorities such as hafus. More people must reshape their understanding, which requires more effort.

Though these comments can be perceived as of mild violence when it comes to discrimination, they negatively affect hafus who are attempting to be a part of the larger

group. Those comments position hafus as foreign and separate from the Japanese majority, who makes them other through their comments.

The two themes that emerge from the comments do not just express the negative reactions from Japanese people towards Ariana's victory; they show that many Japanese people are afraid of the change in the Japanese identity. The comments also show that many believe in a fixed, "pure" Japanese identity. It is true that the Japanese people is a homogeneous people, but there are still many minorities in Japan that make up for the diversity of the population. As BBC's Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, author of *The Beauty Contest Winner Making Japan Look at Itself* says, "Japan still has a narrow definition of what it means to be Japanese," and it does not include nor Ariana, neither hafus. Japan is a multicultural country and the six principal minorities are composed by Ainus, Chinese, Koreans, burakumin and nikkeijin (Japanese return migrants and their descendants). However, they represent a very low percentage of the total Japanese population; approximately 1.5% when all minorities are combined. Though Asian minorities in Japan suffer discriminations, their physical traits do not make them excessively stand out of the crowd. Because of this homogeneity and the Asian background of these minorities, Westerners, Africans, or Middle-Eastern people strikingly stand out of the crowd. Winfield-Hayes writes that in many foreign countries, one's look does not define one's identity anymore, as "there are white, black, Asian and Chinese Britons, just as there are any number of different sorts of Americans" (Wingfield-Hayes).

So why did Ariana Miyamoto's election as Miss Japan shake the idea of Japanese identity so much? Hafus are not new to this generation and Ariana is by far not the first hafu to suffer discrimination. Researches, especially in counseling related research

(Murphy-Shigematsu, *When Half Is Whole*), movies (*Yuki & Nina*) and documentaries (*Hafu: The Mixed-Race Experience in Japan*) have looked at hafus' status as a minority and its impact on hafus themselves. However, Ariana Miyamoto's case has been put under the spotlight unlike no other incident. Though this case generated a controversy in Japan, it sparked a much bigger reaction from people abroad and from many foreign media, much more than the Japanese media. Ariana herself noticed a difference when walking in the street:

“I feel that I have more attention from outside of Japan,” she says.

"I have more interviews with non-Japanese media compared to Japanese media. When I am walking down the street, no Japanese will come up to me, but I get lots of congratulations from non-Japanese tourists." (Fackler)

This difference between the foreign reactions and the Japanese reactions creates a contrast that draws the attention of the general audience on two issues. First, it points out how the issue of identity remains a more or less taboo topic in Japan. Then, it also points out the lack of exploration of the relationship between minorities and the Japanese majority.

The Japanese article published by Mainichi attempts to inform the Japanese public of the controversy. It does so by putting a strong emphasis on Ariana's daily life occupations that are just like any other Japanese person's. Ariana's Japanese grandmother always cooks her traditional Japanese food and Ariana enjoys going to the hot springs as many other Japanese people do (Mainichi Shimbun). Through such examples, Mainichi takes the approach of familiarity and common aspects to show its readers that Ariana is just as Japanese as everyone else even though her appearance is not.

## **Can Nationality Have a Role to Play?**

Physical appearance is a criterion that matters when belonging to a group and Ariana's appearance is mostly rejected by that group she attempts to belong to. But each group also has other require other criteria that members of this group share in common. For example, each country has a main culture, a main language (or sometimes several) and people who believe in similar values in general. They feel united through certain common aspects that they share: the appurtenance to a specific group. Hafus challenge the preconceived Japanese identity, but what is this anchored Japanese identity? And why the “reject” or denial of multicultural people in Japan?

Ariana's example shows that it can be difficult for members of one group to conceive that someone could embrace both values from two different groups. Ariana carries with her Japanese and American values, which are very different from one another. They are different not only in terms of appearance but in terms of culture, morals and beliefs. Despite her many years spent in Japan, Ariana still embraces American value of individualism over collectivism and other Western characteristics. However, by accepting the title of Miss Japan, Ariana voluntarily chooses to represent the Japanese values over the American values (though it does not mean that she completely abandons her American background).

Nationality is inherited and learned in the process of growing up within the nation. Shared culture, language and religion (Miller 1) gathers people under the same nation. Often born from ethnic communities (Miller 19), nations are exclusive and to this extent and members of the nation can recognize according to those values those who

belong to the nation and share those values and those who are excluded. Not only has Ariana inherited this Japanese values but she also willingly chooses them. Even with her foreign background this conscious choice does not make her less Japanese but the opposite: it reinforces her Japaneseness. Unlike mere inheritance, choice is an act that is based on will and desire to do something.

Japanese people form a nation with little ethnic diversity and with territorial delimitation, which explains why hafus encounter trouble to be accepted in Japan. Any outsider stands out of the Japanese crowd. As a concrete example, Japan does not recognize dual citizenship and children born with both citizenships must abandon the other citizenship at the majority in order to be Japanese. Legal laws on citizenship are very strict and do reflect this unity that is very much present at a national level. Inevitably, a law that does not allow citizens to own a dual citizenship does not embrace the cross-cultural changes that are happening both in Japan and in the world.

Nationality contains an element of history and continuity that needs to be perpetuated (Miller 35) which can also be an element that contributes to the doubtfulness of accepting novelty and foreignness, especially in such a homogeneous country. Ariana is Japanese, but does not conform to the usual Japanese characteristics dictated by nationality, and involuntarily bears different cultural, religious and moral values from two different nations within herself. With these differences, the majority cannot perceive Ariana as perpetuating this nationality but instead breaking this continuity.

As the Miss of her country, Ariana Miyamoto has become a symbol at a national level. For example, Miss France 2015 Camille Cerf says that a Miss France is like being a modern Marianne; Marianne being one of the most well known national symbols of

France (Tésorière). The Miss of a country becomes a national emblem, which explains the expectations for conformity and the lack of tolerance for diversity for such a title. This goes back to what I have stated earlier on representing the Japanese beauty as a Miss. Ariana's personal beliefs might conform to the Japanese beliefs and values but it is a part of herself that cannot be seen by the majority and only her appearance that is judged as foreign is taken into account by a majority of Japanese people. Therefore, hafus must redefine and affirm their identity in a way that the community accepts their whole self: both their physical image and inner personality. By reaffirming their identity, hafus will also broaden the conception of Japanese identity by opening it more to the multicultural aspect of Japan.

### **What It Means to Be Miss Japan**

The impact of the election is understandable: the victory of a “non-Japanese looking” woman for the title of Miss Japan raises uncertainty within the Japanese community because of the extent of the title that Miss Japan represents. Even though this contest may seem a simple beauty pageant, it holds meaning because the person elected has the responsibility to represent Japan at a national and international level. This is the new responsibility that Ariana carries on her shoulders, a representation of Japan but also a representation of Japan in terms of Japanese beauty. As Ariana's new representation of Japanese beauty stirred many positive and negative reactions in the Japanese community, it has triggered some changes in the way Japanese people perceive Japanese identity as some might be hesitant or scared of showing such a multicultural facade to the world.

Ariana's new status as Miss Japan and the new perception of Japanese beauty that comes along, create an event that can shake the grounds for hafus and their identity.

As a celebrity, Ariana Miyamoto represents her country in terms of beauty criteria and she sets the standard of Japanese beauty to the world. Physical appearance contributes to the stereotypical image of a Japanese person, which explains its importance. Miss Japan holds a title that has a powerful impact as she takes her part in dictating beauty ideals to young Japanese women. Beauty standards are often in the middle of controversies for often dictating to women an unattainable model of perfection. Ariana Miyamoto does not just set an unattainable goal as a beautiful, tall and slender model, but she sets a standard to which the majority of women cannot relate to.

Because Miss Japan is supposed to represent the most beautiful woman in Japan, the Japanese community in general and the Miss Japan audience expect that she represents the majority of the Japanese women, which implies that Miss Japan should possess certain physical characteristics such as a very fair skin, black straight hair, and dark slanted eyes. Ariana should confirm the general features of the “average” Japanese woman. However, with her African-American father, her features are much different. Ariana has a darker skin color, which is the most noticeable characteristic. Her other features, such as height or hair and eye shape, give Ariana a look that is qualified by Japanese people as more “Western” than Japanese or “Asian.” Her looks, though beautiful, are unfamiliar for many Japanese people.

Though Ariana might not look exactly like a typical Asian woman, if the contest of Miss Japan disregarded looks and only took into account personalities, Ariana’s persona would definitely respond to what one would consider Japanese. As I have

explained earlier in this chapter, Ariana feels Japanese but has difficulty showing it to Japanese people. "I had hoped winning Miss Universe Japan would make them notice that," she confides in her interview with NY Times journalist Martin Fackler. A title that officially certifies Ariana as Japanese is not enough to make the majority accept hafus as part of the Japanese identity and instead, this newly earned title started a controversy over her Japaneseness. The controversy over beauty and Ariana's looks shows that there is a distinction between physical appearance and personality. Looks that do not conform to the stereotypical Japanese appearance create a barrier to a hafu's personality, as a veil that hides away the Japaneseness in the hafu's personality. Ariana considers herself as Japanese, but people such as authors of the Twitter comments mentioned above cannot go beyond her appearance to see her "Japaneseness." Ariana says that she is often asked by interviewers, Japanese but also foreign, "what part of you is most like a Japanese?" to which she always reply "But I am Japanese" (Fackler). While her interviewers ask about her Japaneseness by considering Ariana as part foreign, it is a question that she has trouble replying to because she *is* Japanese.

Japan should be more acceptant of them and loosen its traditional idea of identity to include hafus (and others) in this Japanese identity in order to present this face of Japan to the world without any discomfort or indignity. Though scarce, a newspaper such as Mainichi Shimbun does face this discomfort that Ariana's identity brings forward by addressing the problem directly in its title: if some people claim that she is not Japanese or not Japanese enough, then what is she?

Ariana must look at herself through the eyes of the majority who cannot accept her as Japanese enough. Her inner or hidden identity cannot be seen by the majority who

simply does not know Ariana on a personal level. This Japanese majority can therefore only rely on the physical aspect that Ariana presents to the public, and that are reinforced through her participation to the Miss Japan contest. Therefore, despite her appearance that others do not consider to be Japanese, her personality and unseen identity remain Japanese. As Ariana looks at herself through the eyes of others to make sense of her identity, she is experiencing double consciousness through criticism on social media, but it can simply be about being treated differently, such as being stared at or not being talked to. I will go with more depth in this analysis of double consciousness in the third chapter of my thesis.

### **On the Other Side of the Veil**

I have shown through this chapter that Ariana has been heavily judged on her appearance by many Japanese people. Her appearance, her hair, her skin color, and her height are what the majority sees, as her looks are the most visible aspects of Ariana, unlike her personality and background. Her identity is based upon her appearance, which does not correspond or represent Japanese stereotypes. A news website such as the Mainichi Shimbun goes against these hasty conclusions and take interest into Ariana's double consciousness as she is imposed a foreign identity from many Japanese while inside, she legitimately feels Japanese. This chapter has shown that many Japanese are still feeling uncomfortable accepting people with foreign backgrounds into their notion of identity. Ariana's looks become a façade that many Japanese people rely onto and have difficulty to see her Japaneseness through it. This perception of identity through the eyes of others is the double consciousness that Ariana experiences.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Being Hafu**

“In Japan, you need it [the word hafu] to explain who you are” (Saberi)

“Ariana is what is known in Japan as a "hafu", taken from the English word "half". To me the word sounds derogatory. But when I ask her Ariana surprises me by defending the term, even embracing it.” (Wingfield-Hayes)

When in Japan, a hafu such as Ariana stands out from the crowd and is not fully (or not at all) perceived as Japanese. For hafus who introduce themselves to others in Japan, the term “hafu” comes in handy. Questions such as “where are you from?” and “are you Japanese?” may easily be solved by this one word: hafu, because to say “I am hafu” encompasses many aspects. Being hafu justifies the foreign aspect of the hafu; it justifies the aspect of “not looking very Japanese for a supposedly Japanese person.” Instead of saying that one is Japanese, which is more difficult to make people believe without being questioned, saying that one is hafu is easily accepted. It seems to be an instant explanation of one's identity.

Saying that one is a hafu also correlates to one's language abilities. As a personal example of being French and Japanese, and more Western looking than Japanese looking, I have been complimented many times on my Japanese language abilities by Japanese people, who were surprised at how native-like my Japanese sounded. The reason behind my abilities of speaking Japanese is that I have spoken Japanese with my mother since I have started speaking as a baby, as any other child would do with his or her parents.

However, I perceive being complimented on my Japanese skills as if I was a foreigner who had worked hard to learn how to speak Japanese from a later age, or as if I was being told “your Japanese is pretty good for someone like you.”

Megumi Nishikura also relates a related experience in her TEDx Talk (Nishikura). She is not seen as a Japanese at all, but instead is often fully considered as a foreigner from India, Mexico, Italy, Kyrgyzstan and is often faced to the surprised looks when she reveals that she is indeed Japanese. In other cases, people ask her whether her Japanese family name is because she is married to a Japanese man, to which she replies that her family name is Japanese because it is her father's name. However, Nishikura confesses in her talk that what she would truly like to reply is that her name is Japanese because *she* is Japanese. Through her anecdotes, Nishikura shows that she must adapt her answers to the perception of the Japanese people who ask her these questions about her identity. She does not say that she is Japanese, she justifies her Japaneseness through her Japanese father in order for her interlocutors to make sense of her Japaneseness, despite her foreign looks. As she replies in ways that adapt to the Japanese majority's point of view, Nishikura sees her identity through their eyes. By being asked questions that assume Nishikura is a foreigner, Nishikura sees herself as not Japanese enough.

Whether it is about looks, language or name, saying that one is hafu helps justify one's identity: justifying the Japaneseness in this foreign looking person. Ariana Miyamoto makes an important point by saying that there is a need for a word to define who we are as hafus in order to identify ourselves. In this chapter, I argue that there is indeed a need for a term that hafus can identify with, but the label "hafu" is a pejorative term and therefore hafus should rethink it properly and carefully. I first introduce the

negative connotations associated to the word hafu. Then, I analyze the word hafu by focusing on the hierarchical aspect of that label, which allows me to show how the word itself reinforces double consciousness as naming has the power of creating meaning. Then, I analyze this label through Burke's concept of identification and symbols.

### **Half, not Double**

Until this chapter, I have used the term hafu to designate mixed Japanese people, discussed about their interaction with the Japanese society, but I have not analyzed the actual label itself. The word itself matters when addressing the controversy of Miss Japan and the issue of hafus and identity. Hafu is a word that Miss Japan Ariana Miyamoto claims to need in order to define who she is. Not so surprisingly, in the interview that Ariana delivers to Al Jazeera, her interviewer, journalist Roxana Saberi is surprised by Ariana's affection towards the term hafu. What surprises Roxana is not the fact that Ariana needs a word to help define her identity, but she is surprised by the choice of the word "hafu," which she thought of as pejorative. As I have stated in the previous chapter, the term hafu is preferred by hafus themselves over the term daburu (from the English double), which sounds too self-assertive (Oshima 25). Japanese people also use hafu, making it by far the most used label since it emerged in the 1970s (Hafu The Film). On the other hand, daburu is a label that is hardly ever employed by hafus, and never by Japanese. While I challenge this term, some hafus embrace it, as Ariana Miyamoto does. This difference of opinion on the word hafu shows that the perception of how hafu means is slowly changing.

The label hafu then simply emerged as not too assertive, and became a convenient way to define oneself. However, is it common for us to consider ourselves as a unit of one hundred and divide ourselves into percentages that quantify hafus' Japanese and foreign origins? As human beings, we have a tendency to see ourselves as one body that counts as one unit. For minorities or people with multicultural backgrounds, this single body can be composed of several identities; the body becomes the home for "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings," to borrow W.E.B. Du Bois' expression. This explains why hafus and Japanese people perceive hafus as "half."

This idea of two souls within one body is not an uncommon notion. In Western culture, the Harry Potter movie series is a perfect metaphor of this notion of "half." In this fictional world, J.K. Rowling created three main "categories" of human beings: the Muggles (a Muggle being the fictional label used for humans who do not possess any magical powers), the Wizards, and the Half-Bloods, which designate those who have one Muggle parent and one Wizard parent. In the very first movie *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, one of the character named Seamus Finnigan, born from a Muggle father and a Witch mother, tells his friends: "I'm half and half! Dad's a Muggle, Mom's a Witch" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*).

Though fictional, this very popular movie shows that even in Western culture we seem to be referring to ourselves as being "half" in the case when our parents are from different origins. It appears that our body is compared to a recipient that we fill up with our origins. As a personal example, my mother is one hundred percent Japanese and my father is French, which makes me fifty percent Japanese and fifty percent French. All of this adds up to one hundred percent and makes the whole of me. The body serves as one

unit, which is why the term "daburu" or double technically does not coincide: we cannot be double because we are contained in one body. With this view point, double would mean that I would be French, and then I would also be Japanese as if I had a double identity, two different and incompatible personalities within myself.

By willingly choosing the word hafu, Ariana confirms the fact that hafus' identity are made of two souls. As Du Bois' concept explains that double consciousness is looking at oneself through the eyes of the other, the use of the word hafu emphasizes the "foreign half" within the hafu that is perceived as not being Japanese by the majority. When younger, Ariana would not worry about her identity when she would be at home with her family. Ariana would eat traditional Japanese food such as miso soup and rice, or even drink Japanese liquor known as sake. She also would enjoy hot springs and visits to the local areas around her hometown, as the Mainichi Shimbun tells its readers. Yet when she was younger, as she would go to school other children would stay away from her by fear that her skin color would rub off on them. Ariana would live two very different experiences of being Japanese depending on whether she would be at home or at school. She could not be able to see herself the same way depending on the environment she would be in. These two different experiences are a proof of Ariana's double consciousness, but the naming of it fixes in a symbolic way the presence of two souls, two experiences and two identities within one body.

Here, a problem arises: how should hafus consider their identity in relation to themselves? Should they consider themselves as "halves" and never fully fulfill their Japaneseness, or should they consider themselves as "doubles" and having to interchange their identity without being able to mix them? When defining hafus' identity, is it as

simple as thinking quantitatively about how much of each ethnicity a hafu represents? Being human is much more complex and as humans we create our identity through much more complex ways, such as the accumulation of experiences or from social influences. Humans are infinitely complex, which is why a hafu could not be reduced to a diminutive adjective such as "half."

### **Halfness Emphasizes Double Consciousness**

The label half is diminishing because it focused on the halfness of the person. In this section, I argue that the half foreignness underlined in the symbol hafu emphasizes the double consciousness of the hafu. As human beings who constantly use symbols to make sense of our reality, naming gives an identity to people.

The word half clearly puts a focus on the presence of two parts within one body and as hafus, this label constantly reminds us that our being is divided in two; the Japanese and foreign origins that make up for the one unit that our body represents. Hafus are defined by many Japanese people as being half foreign and not Japanese enough as the Twitter comments have shown in the previous chapter. The majority expects the hafus to fit in one mold, the majority's mold. Therefore, this new mold of "two halves" that make up for one whole identity does not fit in neither the Japanese nor the foreign mold. This perception by the majority of an identity as one fixed mold that people who do not fit in are excluded reinforces the feeling of double consciousness. By being called "half," hafus are implicitly reminded by the meaning of the word itself that they cannot fit the identity that is dictated by the majority. Hafus must look at themselves through the eyes of the majority and are perceived as being "not good enough." As a personal example, I

have always felt caught between my two cultures, Japan and France, never knowing which one I identified more to. With the high expectations from both countries to perform both of my identities I have felt as if I never performed well enough. I am currently applying to jobs in Japan and I often receive comments from my interviewers concerning my level in Japanese. My interviewers are either impressed by my level of Japanese or address their concerns about my proficiency in this language. Either way I am reminded about my foreignness by either speaking a quite good Japanese for a half-foreign person or for not speaking a Japanese that is good enough in order to be fully accepted. Ariana Miyamoto shares the poignant story of one of her hafu friend who committed suicide. Ariana's friend was Japanese and White American. Both in his American and Japanese environment, he was expected to perform as an American due to his foreign looks, but with his low level in English he felt as he could not match people's expectations of him.

I and other hafus experience double consciousness because we perceive ourselves through the eyes of the majority, who does not see us as fully performing our Japaneseness or our other culture. In Japan, many of my friends are foreign, hafu, or with an international background. It allows me to act without worrying about being Japanese enough. I can for example speak in languages other than Japanese or sometimes even code switch. I can use different types of nonverbal communication such as hugging instead of bowing when greeting someone. In conversations, I do not feel like I have to put on a mask to perform my Japaneseness and do not have to perform certain behaviors that are expected of me when I speak with Japanese people. For example, face saving behaviors are extremely valued in the Japanese society, such as the performing of *enryo*,

a behavior that is described as the "empathic orientation and hesitation of self expression by minimizing frank expression" (Tao 120). Though very commonly used in Japanese conversations, I am not expected to use this behavior when spending time with my foreign friends.

In the movie *Hafu*, the mother of the young boy from the Oi family says that her son realized "that he didn't have to try to become someone that everybody else expects him to be" as he started to see more hafus like him. Hafus want to attain self-consciousness instead of being seen through the eyes of the majority and perform accordingly. Japan is changing, but hafus are still not fully integrated in the Japanese identity. Hafus' self-awareness of their condition allows people such as Ariana Miyamoto, Megumi Nishikura or myself to speak up on this double consciousness in order to raise more awareness within Japanese people. Because double consciousness is about the majority imposing their view of identity on the minority, this reconciliation must also come from the Japanese majority. For hafus, being able to create a hafu identity without feeling oppressed by the majority would allow them to fully express themselves and embrace both of their identity without having to conform to or to perform one or both of their identity.

### **The Label Hafu and the Hierarchical Connotation**

Though "hafu" is a label that allows hafus to define themselves, I believe that it is far from being a "neutral" term and that it carries more than the simple indication of half-foreignness. In this section, I argue that the word hafu creates a disconnection from and inferiority towards the majority, as it emphasizes hierarchy. Ariana Miyamoto and other

hafus are indeed different from other Japanese people, yet their difference should not mean that they should be unequal or unworthy to be Japanese as well. Hafu, or half, is undeniably a pejorative word that puts emphasis on inequality more than on the difference.

When asked, hafus often feel Japanese but feel disconnected from this country. One of the interviewee in the movie *Hafu: The Mixed-Raced Experience in Japan* says an important comment: "I feel disconnected from Japan" (*Hafu*) says Edward. Another interviewee, Sophia, says that especially when young, one wants to feel connected, "you don't want to be different, you want to be like everybody else." Where does this disconnection come from? As I have explained in the previous chapter, this disconnection comes from hafus' appearance, hafus' language abilities, but also from the rejection of foreignness by some Japanese people. However, the label "hafu" itself has an impact on this disconnection.

A third interviewee in the *Hafu* movie, Fusae, confesses: "I really believed I was Japanese" (*Hafu*). This is also an interesting point because Fusae says that she thought she was Japanese until she realized she was not. Indeed, she is not because she is considered as a hafu, and not as a Japanese. Whether a hafu presents his or herself as a hafu, he will be considered as a hafu instead of as a Japanese, and this is where the disconnection happens. The word itself creates a separation from the Japanese because not only does it underline the halfness, but it particularly emphasizes the half-foreignness. Except for the Japanese pronunciation of the word "half", the connotation of "Japanese" is well-hidden in the word hafu.

In Harry Potter, J.K. Rowling establishes this metaphor of race through her creation of Muggles, Half-Bloods (also called Mudbloods in the Harry Potter series) and Wizards (also called Pure Bloods). Though the interpretations on the issue of race have been varied, it is undeniable that the Harry Potter series are "deeply invested in teaching [...] how to confront eradicate, and ameliorate racism through its depiction of the racism that underlies Voldemort's campaign against Mudbloods" (Horne 1). Racism is present through the extremist group of Pure Bloods led by the sorcerer Voldemort who wish to exterminate Half-Bloods (and eventually the non-magical Muggles).

The choice of the label "Half-Blood" and "Pure Blood" goes back to this idea of the human body as a container that I have mentioned earlier in this chapter. It is an idea that can be explained by Burke's concept of the container and the thing contained (Burke, "Grammar of Motives," 3) where Burke explains the relation between the scene and the act; the scene being the background and the act the action. This relation of scene and act explain that the action "should be consistent with the nature of the scene" (Burke, "Grammar of Motives," 3). Therefore in my example, the action of dividing origins into percentages makes sense as it is consistent with the scene - the body - that represents one unit. In this Harry Potter metaphor, the human being (the scene) can either be of a hundred percent of wizard blood or a fifty-fifty of wizard and human blood (the act).

This Harry Potter metaphor also suggests another matter, as this distinction between Half-Bloods and Pure-Bloods creates a hierarchy: the purer the blood the better and the higher in the hierarchy one is. Though in the case of hafus and Japanese, the word "pure Japanese" is not as explicitly used as in the Harry potter metaphor of race, it is strongly implied. In the previous chapter, I had presented a Twitter comment where the

author was saying "I didn't know Miss Japan doesn't have to be pure Japanese" (Saberi). Other articles addressing the controversy around Miss Japan mention the word "pure" several times, such as in the Al Jazeera article *Being 'hafu' in Japan*, or in the Washington Post article *Japan's half-black Miss Universe says discrimination gives her 'extra motivation'* that quotes an interview that Ariana gave to the AFP, saying that "in 100-200 years there will be very few pure Japanese left" (Holley).

Through this selection of words of "half" and "pure," the imbalance leads to inequality, which leads to hierarchy. This choice of words in Harry Potter is important because it shows that words shape our reality, and therefore so does the word "hafu." As Burke says, humans are "symbol-using animals" ("Symbols and Society," 56). This way of using language allows us to convey our attitudes: language is a symbolic action that serves us as "terministic screens" (Burke, "Symbols and Society," 114). In other words, once the symbol is finally selected, it serves us as a screen to see the world because the symbol was created by fixing in a permanent way either a reflection, selection or deflection of reality (Burke, "Symbols and Society," 115). The man is also "goaded by the spirit of hierarchy" (Burke, "Symbols and Society," 69) because man is drawn to order and status. Symbols allow division and it is this differentiation between one symbol and another that results into hierarchy. The existence of the two words "Japanese" and "hafu" allow for differentiation between people and the meaning assigned to hafu creates this hierarchy.

The English word half means that something being incomplete, which is why the label hafu encompasses the notion of being incomplete. The interesting fact is that when talking about origins and backgrounds, the label hafu is put in contrast -not with its

antonym "whole"- but with the word pure. The Oxford Reference Dictionary defines "pure" as an adjective that qualify things as "unadulterated, uncontaminated, unmixed, undiluted, unblended, refined, 100%; flawless, perfect, genuine, real" and is an antonym of "adulterated" or "polluted" ("pure").

As human beings, we consider pureness as being better than halfness and as pureness to be the high standard. The Harry Potter metaphor of race proves that this is how often times, we perceive these notions of race, pureness and halfness. Voldemort, a Pure-Blood, judges Half-Bloods to be impure and unworthy in comparison of the Pure-Bloods who set the norm. To use Burke's words, man is "rotten with perfection" ("Symbols and Society," 70), a constant search for purity. This search for perfection is much more radical in Harry Potter, as the villain attempts to eliminate imperfect Half-Bloods as it is a fictional eugenic process. In the case of hafus, the search for perfection is still present through the distinction made between purity and halfness.

Though a fictional example, the portrayal of race in Harry Potter is comparable to hafus who are unequal to the "pure" Japanese people. In hafus' case, "pure Japaneseness" is the norm to which hafus are unequal to because they only fulfill half of that norm. Japaneseness is considered as the high standard in Japan. Hafus have a prevalent foreign background within themselves and cannot be considered as the norm and as fully Japanese. Therefore, they are considered as halves and as not fulfilling their entire Japaneseness. They are unequal to other Japanese people and for this reason, Ariana Miyamoto's election was controversial as she was not representing the norm at one hundred percent. She could not represent Japan entirely.

Ariana's difference is based on race yet she still shares the same culture as Japanese people. Alistair Bonnett shares meaningful words in his book *Anti-Racism* that illustrate well this situation: "different does not mean unequal" (Bonnett 13). Ariana does look different from the typical Japanese woman but it does not mean that she is unequal to Japanese people, especially when she shares the same culture as them.

### **If not Hafu, then What?**

I have so far argued that hafu is a pejorative word. In this section, I explore the fact that despite the common use of the label hafu, hafus themselves should rethink this label. On a day to day basis, it is for this reason that I present myself as French *and* Japanese in order to avoid using the label hafu. I do not use the word hafu to describe myself out of a conscious choice, as I feel as if I was diminishing myself. I find it rather surprising that Ariana praises the word hafu as a label that is needed for us mixed-race Japanese. Though I do understand the need for a unique symbol to define ourselves, hafu bears a too negative connotation to it. But if I condemn the word hafu, then what is there instead to replace it? Choosing the right word to define someone matters because it helps define one's identity.

Hafus have a need for identification but as I have argued until now, the label hafu is not an appropriate label. Therefore, I believe that as hafus, we should name ourselves through a symbol that rightfully represents this identification. As Burke says, humans are "symbol-using animals" ("Symbols and Society," 56). This way of using language allows us to convey our attitudes: language is a symbolic action that serves us as "terministic screens" (Burke, "Symbols and Society," 114). In other words, once the symbol is finally

selected, it serves us as a screen to see the world because the symbol was created by fixing in a permanent way either a reflection, selection or deflection of reality (Burke, "Symbols and Society," 115). The label hafu takes away from hafus' identity as it embeds the status inferiority of inferiority in comparison to purity. Yet at the same time, the label "hafu" allows hafus to identify to it and therefore create meaning around it. This word supports their identity as hafus have a name that they can refer to and use to explain who they are. This label becomes an oxymoron as hafus are defined *by* it and at the same define themselves *with* it. It is comparable to a "perfect storm" (Hyde 243) as the label diminishes hafus through hierarchy yet at the same time allows them to reach perfection through the act of naming themselves.

The word hafu appears as a *selection* of reality because it only emphasizes the half foreign side of the hafu. Following the same logic, the term daburu could be seen as a deflection of reality because one cannot be double within one body. It is particularly understandable when keeping in mind the Duboisian notion of double consciousness, where the individual has his or her perception of the self but also a perception that is based on the majority other that are difficultly reconcilable.

Ariana and I are both hafus yet we have had very different experiences as hafus. Ariana has lived in Japan most of her life and has been schooled in the Japanese school system. As for me, I have spent my time equally in France and Japan and have been schooled in the French school system. Ariana often says in her interviews that she feels Japanese, however when speaking for myself, I tend to feel more French. Ariana and I are two cases within the hundreds of thousands of other hafus and it is very unlikely that we

all share same levels of identification with our Japanese side and our foreign side, yet most of us relate to this identity named "hafu."

## **Conclusion**

As hafus, we must look again at what we perceive and how we can translate it most accurately through language. So, if not hafu, then what? In the final chapter, I look more in depth at this question by reflecting on what could be done by hafus in order to stand up for their identity. So far, I have analyzed the label hafu and its impact but I reflect on the possibility of creating a replacement for this label in the next and last chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### **A Conclusion**

As a hafu myself, I have focused this thesis on hafus in Japan and their search for identity. I have started with the observation that hafus were often excluded from the narrow definition of Japanese identity, which was observable in a case like Ariana Miyamoto's election as Miss Japan as she received negative comments on her winning through Twitter. Many hafus struggle to find who they are between their foreign and their Japanese identity as they face discrimination within the Japanese community.

Hafus are a minority in Japan. I have argued that they are discriminated against and often secluded in the understanding of Japanese identity because of their foreign background. Therefore, the Japanese community and hafus should put into question the notion of Japanese identity. While a majority of Japanese people should reconsider what it means to be Japanese by taking into account minorities such as hafus, hafus should also rethink their identity as mixed-race people in Japan. Many Japanese people are doubtful about hafus' Japaneseness and hafus experience a form of double consciousness as they see themselves through this perspective of doubtfulness. For this reason, I have argued that hafus should reflect upon the label hafu itself in order to rethink their identity. I come to the following conclusions: the Japanese majority still has difficulty accepting hafus as part of the Japanese identity yet some change is perceived as a controversy such as Ariana's was picked up by Japanese media. More hafus such as Ariana Miyamoto attempts to raise more awareness on hafus and their identity and in order to create a shared identity between Japanese people and hafus, there is an urgent need to overcome

assumptions made on physical appearances. A second conclusion is that the label hafu is problematic because of the negative meanings that it holds. The label is in itself a paradox because despite its connotations to hierarchy and incompleteness, the label itself (the label as a container) is much needed for hafus to claim their identity.

My first chapter presented this main argument along as the main theoretical backgrounds that I have used to support my arguments. These have consisted of W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of double consciousness and Kenneth Burke's concepts of symbols, terministic screens, and identification.

In the second chapter of this thesis, I have introduced the case of Ariana Miyamoto, a Japanese and American hafu who recently won the title of Miss Japan. Her victory attracted both positive and negative reactions from the Japanese audience and started a controversy around hafus and their Japanese identity. Ariana's election has become an important change for this notion of identity because she shows a new image of Japan, both at the national and international level. As she shakes the traditional image of Japanese beauty of pale skin and straight hair, she shows to the Japanese community that being Japanese goes beyond appearances. Hafus' foreign looks are often a barrier for acceptance by the Japanese majority, but Ariana challenged this preconceived idea. In chapter 2, I have also made a connection to the concept of nationality in order to explain this seemingly unmovable Japanese identity and its exclusive aspect.

In my third chapter, I have analyzed in detail the label "hafu" by taking into consideration Burke's concept of symbols and language as terministic screen and Du Bois' concept of double consciousness. First, I have argued that the term hafu has a negative connotation that shapes the way both hafus and Japanese people perceive hafus.

As symbols have the ability to shape our perception of the world, hafu (which means half) has a negative and inferior connotation, especially as it is put in contrast with the notion of purity; pure Japanese referring to people who are "a hundred percent Japanese." This imbalance between purity and halfness creates a hierarchical status as the "pure" majority is seen as superior. Furthermore, I have also argued that as the label "hafu" emphasizes the half foreign part of the individual, hafus are not seen as fully representing Japaneseness. Hafus experience double consciousness as they see themselves through this label "hafu" that encompasses many negative perceptions of hafus.

Research on hafus is limited, as I explained in my first chapter. Awareness on hafus and their identity is rising. The controversy around Ariana Miyamoto's and the documentary *Hafu: the Mixed-Race Experience in Japan* make the entire Japanese community, both majority and minorities, think more about hafus' place in Japan. With this thesis, I have attempted to give to this issue a theoretical background and explanation. My analysis has allowed me to interrogate what hafus and the Japanese majority may be experiencing when it comes to identity. Altogether, there is a need to enlarge this sense of togetherness that makes people feel Japanese.

Yet, there is more to explore and say about this issue. The label hafu appears to me as a major obstacle for hafus to find their identity. It has been the most used term over the past decades to designate mixed-race Japanese; much more used than a term such as "dabururu." I have argued against the term hafu and I myself use other terms to present myself. An issue that would be worth examining from here would be a possible alternative for hafu. So, if not hafu, then what? Keeping in mind Burke's concept of symbols and of the container and the contained, hafus should reevaluate and rethink this

label at its core. What do hafus perceive in their environment and how do they perceive themselves at their core? It could be fluency in language, competency in cultures, awareness of two cultures, or desire of identification and belonging to both communities. It is also important to take into consideration the division they identify to: would it be race, ethnicity, or culture? Should it be a term that could only apply to hafus and their experience? These would be questions to look at when thinking of a new label. Mixed-raced Japanese, mixed-ethnicity, blend, bicultural, biracial, bi-ethnic, multiethnic, French and Japanese, Frenpanese, double, full, whole; the possibilities are limitless as long as the contained matches the container.

However, how could such a label get adopted by an entire community, both by hafus themselves and Japanese people? If a small group decides to change the way they are called, it will undeniably take time and effort to propagate the new label, with a risk that many will not know about it or simply disregard it. In this case, should hafus simply keep the label hafu? Some hafus like Ariana already embrace this label. Though hafu may connote many negative aspects, there is an actual separation between the word and what it means. In fact, it is very similar to the case of the label "queer," which was perceived as an insult when the label first emerged. Nowadays, it is a word that people use much more commonly without any shame. Words evolve and change meaning over time and a word such as "gay" as evolved from "happy" to "homosexual person," as Paul Katz says in a Huffington Post article. While some bisexual people used to understand the word queer as being synonym to "strange," "odd," or "questionable in nature," Paul Katz confesses that adopting the label queer has become a "show of empowerment or a full embrace of 'being unusual'" (Katz). As a person such as Ariana Miyamoto stands for

the word "hafu" despite its negative connotations, accepting this label is also a way for hafus to find their identity and express empowerment by adopting it.

This thesis has focused on the particular and specific topic of hafus in Japan and their search of identity. My thesis contributes to the research around hafus, even if the topic still remains rather scarce, showing that hafus are in need of identity just as much as the Japanese majority. Hafus are human beings just like the majority and have the right to bear a label that does not downgrade or alienate them as a minority. These beliefs that I apply here are very much applicable to other cases as I have briefly explained with the example of the queer label. This has much broader relations to other mixed-race people who experience double consciousness as they see their identity defined through the eyes of the majority. As examples, I first have in mind mixed-race Americans who have one White parent and one African-American parent. They are often caught in between those two American identities, being considered "too White" by African-Americans and "too African-American" by White Americans. There is also much more that could be said about zainichis who experience a double consciousness that has differences with that of hafus'. Their appearance blends in but their Korean origin is a true barrier to be accepted in the Japanese society.

People of mixed background are present all over the world. The news website Al Jazeera reports that the population in the United States is becoming increasingly multiracial, which suggests that minorities are becoming the new majority. As mixed race people become more common, the need to identify and to belong becomes more important as it is what we look for as human beings. We need to define ourselves through symbols for example and to identify to others, but we should do so in ways where each

group is treated in equal, fair and respectful ways. Majority or minority is a quantitative approach to populations while identity brings a qualitative value to populations and it is what brings out the value of human beings: identifying as an inclusive group that share diverse values. Furthermore, the oppression is much more felt by the oppressed than by the oppressor, which makes the minority perceive this exclusion from the majority more than the majority perceives itself as the majority. Therefore, these conceptions of majority versus minority and purity of blood should not become a barrier to develop the richness and complexity of identity.

As humans, we are rotten with perfection; it is what we strive for. This search of identity, symbols and hierarchy is part of us, as Burke would argue. Yet, as human beings we look for perfection but we also look for truth and understanding and self-consciousness when surrounded by otherness (Hyde 74). Then, why not find a more perfect term for *hafus*? As symbol-using animals reaching for perfection, we ought to call each thing with its right name.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

### **Claire-Kaoru Royer**

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#### **Education**

*Wake Forest University*, Winston-Salem, NC, May 2016

Master of Arts in Communication

Thesis: “In Search of Identity: Hafus in Japan”

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Alessandra Von Burg

GPA: 3.8

*International Christian University*, Tokyo, Japan, June 2014

Bachelor of Arts in Media, Communication and Culture

Thesis: “Coffee Culture in Japan”

GPA: 3.20

*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*, Chapel Hill, NC, August 2012 - May 2013

Study Abroad Program

#### **Research Interests**

- Intercultural communication
- Minorities and identity
- Interpersonal communication and cultural influences

#### **Research Experience**

*Intern*, Delegation of the European Union to Japan, May 2015 – August 2015

Supervisor: Gergely Sulyok

- In-depth research on Japanese railway and automotive industries
- Researched in Japanese and English background on Japanese railway companies and on each company's financial status
- Attended seminars on innovations in railway industry

#### **Other Experience**

*Teaching Assistant*, Department of Communication, Wake Forest University, Fall 2014 – Present

- Teach 40 students each semester in relational communication through weekly labs
- Design and teach weekly lab activities to apply in interactive ways concepts introduced in class lectures
- Assist in preparation and grading of mid-term and final examinations

*Tutor*, Student-Athlete Center, Wake Forest University, Spring 2008 – Spring 2011

- Tutored students individually in Communication classes: Public Speaking, Journalism, Film classes

*Market Research Analyst and Translator*, Discover 21, Tokyo, Japan, January - March 2014

- Marketed Japanese books to France to develop international section for the company
- Translated book passages from Japanese to French, wrote book summaries in French
- Worked with team to present selected books and to identify passages to be appealing to French audience

*Volunteer*, Autism Society of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, September 2012-May 2013

- Helped organize outdoors and indoors activities for holiday camp for children with autism spectrum disorder, including supervision and guidance of autistic campers.

*Volunteer*, Autism Outreach UNC, Chapel Hill, NC, September 2012-May 2013

- Helped in organizing various holiday events for children with autism spectrum and their families.
- Participated in fundraisings by selling baking supplies and collaborating with area restaurants.

### **Computer Skills**

Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint; Photoshop; Final Cut Pro

### **Selected Honors, Awards, and Fellowships**

Master Student Full Tuition Scholarship, Wake Forest University, 2014 – 2016  
JASSO Scholarship, International Christian University, 2012

### **References**

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