

Session 3 Transnational Class

Presentation 3

Negotiating Belonging in One's Own Home:  
Japanese Muslim Youth Born to Japanese Mothers and Pakistani Fathers

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Abstract

This paper explores the ways in which young Japanese Muslims who are born to Japanese mothers and Pakistani fathers negotiate their belonging in their homeland. This type of mixed marriages increased during the 1990s, following the influx of Pakistani labor migrants to Japan in the late 1980s. While the majority of the children of these bi-national unions were born in Japan, they were raised in Japan, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and other countries. Preliminary findings from in-depth interviews I conducted in Japan and abroad suggest that while they do hold citizenship in Japan, they often feel alienated and “other-ized” not only abroad but in their own homeland as well. As they reach adulthood, the ways in which they respond to the experiences of exclusion and marginalization change. More importantly, some of them attempt to empower themselves and negotiate their positions within Japan by sharing their experiences and feelings with others who have grown up in similar circumstances. This paper highlights the case of a young Muslim male, Sohail, whose life reflects the ways in which nationality, religion, generation, and other factors intersect. By doing so, I present the complex ways border-crossing youth negotiate their belonging and create their own social worlds.