

Chapter 15

Social Relatedness and Forenaming in ‘Mixed’ Families: Valuing Children of Filipino-Belgian Couples

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Abstract

The literature on ‘mixed’ families (in which members are socially viewed as ‘different’ due to their varying ethnicities and/or nationalities) identifies several stakes of mixedness. One of them arises from childbirth, after which parents need to give name(s) to their offspring. How does the parent–child dyad understand the giving of names in their mixed family? What does naming children unveil regarding interpersonal interactions and the value of children within this social unit? The chapter delves into these questions through a case study of forenaming children in Filipino-Belgian families in Belgium. Interview data analysis reveals two modes of forenaming in these families: individualisation through single forenames and reinforcement of collective affiliation through compound forenames. Through the analytical framework of social relatedness, this chapter uncovers the way the act of naming a child bridges families based on biological and social ties, generations, and parents’ nations of belonging in their transnational spaces. The complex process of naming reflects the power dynamics not only within the parental couple but also within the wider set of social relations. Although the use of forename(s) in everyday life and in legal terms differ, the value of children in the mixed families studied lies in their symbolic role as social bridges linking generations and non-biological relationships, the then and now, and the here and there.

Keywords: Social relatedness; forenaming; ‘mixed’ families; value of children; individualisation; collective affiliation; Filipino-Belgian couples; Belgium

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Introduction

The studies on transnational families in which the members keep cross-national border social relations (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002) has increasingly brought to the fore children's experiences and points of view (e.g., Dreby, 2010; Nagasaka & Fresnoza-Flot, 2015; Ní Laoire et al., 2011; Parreñas, 2005). In this growing literature, the situation of children of 'mixed' couples – a social unit in which the partners have socially viewed differing nationalities and/or ethnicities (Collet, 2012; de Hart, 2019; de Hart et al., 2013) – is most often overlooked. In many cases, these young people are generally considered as part of the so-called 'second generation'. In studies on mixed couples/families, their experiences are also underexplored despite the growing interest in the stakes involved in mixed family lives. One of these stakes concerns the giving of forename(s) and surname(s) to children born of mixed relationships.

In this chapter, I aim to address this overlooked dimension of naming children in mixed families by considering the voices of both parents and children. How does the parent-child dyad understand the giving of names in their mixed family? What does naming children unveil regarding interpersonal interactions and the value of children within this social unit? Inscribed in the phenomenological tradition (see Zahavi, 2001), my study adopts the analytical lens of social relatedness – linkages encompassing beyond-biological interpersonal, intertemporal, and interspatial relations that individuals deem and feel important to their lives. This lens draws from the term 'relatedness' (Carsten, 2004), which means 'the ways in which people create similarity or difference between themselves and others' (p. 82). Although 'relatedness' when used 'in a more general sense' can lose its analytical effectiveness, it has the potential to capture 'other kinds of social relations' (Carsten, 2000, p. 5). Framing the dynamics of naming children through the optic of social relatedness can reveal not only the myriad ties parents or other kin members maintain, reinforce, and value but also the interpersonal links they (un)intentionally overlook or set aside. It can unveil the place children occupy and the role they are expected to play within a wider set of social relations. Besides, names can indicate an individual's social class belonging (de Singly, 2012) and other social affiliations.

As a case study, I analyse in this chapter the perspectives of parents and children in Filipino-Belgian families in Belgium. 'Filipino' and 'Belgian' refer here to persons born and brought up in the Philippines and Belgium, respectively. The choice of this case study is rooted in the fact that many Filipino migrants, notably women, are in couple with Belgian men – a phenomenon that became massive starting in the 1990s, during which Filipino women formed part of the dynamic feminised migration inflows to Belgium. Their case appears empirically interesting as they generally share the same Christian background and affiliation as their Belgian partners. Having this point in common, giving their children names may be straightforward unlike in the case of mixed interreligious couples (e.g., Cerchiaro, 2019; Odasso, 2016; Puzenat, 2008). Nonetheless, given that the Filipino migrants and their Belgian partners come from two socio-cultural contexts, their decision-making surrounding name-giving may involve a series of interpersonal negotiations, which may lead to individualisation

(Bühler-Niederberger, 2013; Elias, 1991) or reinforcement of collective affiliations (Cerchiaro, 2019; Edwards & Caballero, 2008).

To find out the realities of these suppositions, I examine my interview data from 60 individuals of 16 Filipino-Belgian families: 28 offspring, 12 fathers (10 Belgians and 2 Filipinos), and 16 mothers (14 Filipinos and 2 Belgians). I only included in this chapter the families in which I interviewed one or both parents and their child(ren). What I excluded here are the data from one family with a child born from the mother's previous partner and two families in which I did not interview their children because of their very young ages. It is important to take note that drawing from a larger study not centred on the naming dynamics in mixed families, this chapter mainly mobilises data on the awareness of children and their parents' stories regarding the origin and signification of their forenames. I met my informants through snowballing, and I adopted Bushin's 'children-in-families' approach (2009) – interviewing all members of the family if possible. As I explained elsewhere (Fresnoza-Flot, 2018a; Gonzalez Alvarez & Fresnoza-Flot, 2020), the interviewed children of Filipino-Belgian couples were aged between 9 and 27 years, and most of them possessed single (Belgian) nationality. Their parents were mostly in educational homogamy – having the same educational background. Although it is possible to use the mother's surname or both parents' surnames in Belgium, Filipino-Belgian couples opt for the father's surname for their children. Considering this similarity, my chapter specifically focuses on the forenames of Filipino-Belgian couples' children. I used pseudonyms close to the real forenames of all the study informants: for example, replacing Spanish forenames with other Spanish forenames.

In the following sections, I revisit the literature on mixed families in the context of migration to understand how children are viewed in this corpus of works. I then review the body of works on naming children to highlight the originality of my study, examine the place of children in the literature on families in which one parent is Filipino and the other non-Filipino (i.e., a person born and grown up in a foreign country), and provide a short background about the politics of naming in Belgium and the Philippines. The main sections of this chapter delve into the dynamics of naming in Filipino-Belgian families and focus on the following aspects: individualisation of forenames, the emphasis on collective affiliations in forename-giving, and the children's making use of their forename(s). I end my chapter by turning back to my initial questions and suppositions.

Children in Mixed Family Scholarship

The literature on the progeny of mixed families is continuously burgeoning in the last decades (e.g., Edwards et al., 2012; Haritaworn, 2016; King-O'Riain et al., 2014; Rocha & Fozdar, 2017; Song, 2015; Törngren et al., 2021). One part of this literature concentrates on the context of migration, which mainly focuses on the migrant partners in mixed couples (e.g., Cole, 2014; Constable, 2003; Fresnoza-Flot & Ricordeau, 2017; Ishii, 2016). When children are tackled, the views of parents are generally highlighted in the qualitative and/or quantitative analysis (e.g., Dumănescu, 2015; Gaspar, 2012; Le Gall & Meintel, 2015; Varro, 1995). In recent

years, scholars have been progressively departing from this tendency by including or exclusively focusing on the perspectives of mixed couples' children.

In the literature on these individuals, 'children' can refer to one of the following categories: first, the progeny of mixed couples encompassing all age groups: minors, young adults, and adults (e.g., [Unterreiner, 2015](#)); second, the minor and young adult children of these couples (e.g., [Celeró, 2022](#); [Fresnoza-Flot, 2019](#); [Rodríguez-García et al., 2018](#); [Seiger, 2019](#)); third, the couples' children aged below 18 (e.g., [Kalmijn, 2015](#); [Kamada, 2010](#); [Slany & Strzemecka, 2017](#)), and fourth, the couples' adult children (e.g., [Zulueta, 2012](#)). In most cases, scholars combine two or all age groups in their studies, allowing them to present heterogenous accounts of mixedness. Interestingly, many studies have been conducted in Europe and Asia where marriage migrations have been largely documented in recent years. Works on mixed couples' children also appear to be more qualitative than quantitative or mixed, which stems from the specific themes explored in the field.

One of these themes includes the identity construction of mixed-parentage children. For example, [Seiger \(2019\)](#) shows that Japanese-Filipino individuals in Japan use several labels for themselves – '*haafu*, "mixed roots," Filipino, and *Firipin-jin*' – to adapt to Japanese multiculturalism that recognises 'diversity while maintaining ethnic and racial boundaries' (p. 404). The experiences of these individuals of Japanese and Filipino parentage are also analysed in other studies ([Celeró, 2022](#); [Suzuki, 2015](#)). These works reveal the salient impact of national context in which mixed-parentage people live and the effect of migration as many of them spent their early childhood in their migrant mothers' country of origin. Similarly, Thai-Belgian young people adopt multiple self-positioning strategies in Belgium and Thailand, where they are socially treated as racialised 'others' ([Fresnoza-Flot, 2019](#)). Considering the social 'othering' of mixed-parentage people, it is not surprising that they embrace non-homogamous identities. In Europe, for instance, [Unterreiner \(2015\)](#) observes that mixed-parentage individuals in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom adopt one of the following identities: heir identity (*identité d'héritier*) with equal identity imprints from parents, rooted identity (*identité d'enraciné*) with orientation to the country of residence, foreigner identity (*identité d'étranger*) with an orientation towards a country outside of the residence country, and beyond-nation identity (*identité au-delà du national*) encompassing the identities non-anchored to national origins. Exceptionally, [Slany and Strzemecka \(2017\)](#) remark in Norway that children of Polish-Norwegian couples 'rarely have trouble with identifying their national belonging' – that is, to Norway – compared to the offspring of Polish-Polish couples.

Considering the above few studies on mixed couples' children in migration context, it is time to valorise children's points of view in the analysis. The chapter contributes to this valorisation by underlining the standpoints of parents and children regarding name-giving.

Researching Name Giving in Mixed Families

Since 'names are a core marker of an individual' ([Finch, 2008](#)), scholars interrogate the dynamics of naming children in mixed families, notably in

migrant-receiving countries in Europe and beyond. Their studies mostly examine the socio-cultural dimension of naming, encompassing issues on intergenerational transmission and parental strategies.

In Europe, studies abound on naming children in mixed couples. Analysing the significations of forenames for parents of individuals with different racial, ethnic, and faith backgrounds in the United Kingdom, [Edwards and Caballero \(2008\)](#) observe that although parents give forenames that they liked to their children, ‘draw on popular culture, or adapt or construct names in an idiosyncratic fashion, they also wanted names that symbolized their children’s heritages’ (p. 55). Other studies show that these children’s heritages are at the core of naming dynamics within mixed couples and an indicator of their identity. As [Odasso \(2016\)](#) remarks among mixed couples with an Arab partner in Alsace (France) and Veneto (Italy), forenames are one of the main identity markers of these couples’ children. They suggest how mixed couples come to terms with their differences and residence country. For instance, compared to a few cases in which the children have Islamic forenames, most French-Maghrebin couples in Puzenat’s study (2008) choose mixed forenames that would allow the ‘best possible’ social acceptance of their children’s ethnic origins in France (p. 122). [Streff-Fénart \(1989\)](#) previously observed this ‘neutralisation’ among French-Maghrebin couples in the same country. More recently, in Belgium and the United Kingdom, [Ducu and Hossu \(2016\)](#) noticed the neutral approach among binational couples with a Romanian partner in forenaming their children, that is, ‘in function of the country in which they are born and not the country of origins of their parents’ (p. 141). Another neutral approach is choosing international names for children ([Slany & Strzemecka, 2017](#)).

There are other parental strategies for forenaming children, reflecting other realities of mixed couple’s lives. For example, in her studies in France of mixed couples in which a partner is a Muslim Arab migrant or descendant of a migrant from Turkey, from a Maghreb country, or from a country in Sahelian Africa, [Collet \(2019\)](#) argues that children’s forenames stem from parental intercultural adjustment strategies: highlighting the majority culture of the residence country, emphasising the minority culture, or promoting mixed family culture (see p. 159). Likewise, [Cerchiaro \(2019\)](#) identifies three parental strategies to confront family pluralism among mixed couples in Italy in which the male partner originates from ‘majority-Muslim countries’ (p. 52): giving double names as a “‘pact of equity” between the partners’ cultural heritages’ (p. 56), alternating names reflecting ‘the couple’s “mutual migration” over time’ (p. 59), and passing the father’s name to children to transmit ‘minority ethnic and religious identity’ (p. 61). Likewise, there are Christian-Muslim couples in Greece in [Papadopouou’s](#) research (2016) that give double names to their children for ‘choice, flexibility and adaptation in identity management’ (p. 159). Other mixed couples in Greece and Turkey prefer names for their children ‘consistent with the local traditions and acceptable for the ethnic majority’ ([Nazarska & Hajdinjak, 2011](#), p. 219).

Outside of Europe, [Le Gall and Meintel \(2014\)](#) investigate in Quebec (Canada) the cultural and identity transmission of three groups of mixed couples: Quebec-immigrant, immigrant-immigrant with varying origin countries, and partners with migrant parents of different countries. They observe that these

couples opt for plural forenames and surnames for their children to give them the choice of how to deal with their multiple origins later in life. In Japan, examining the legal dimension of surnaming children, [Mori Want \(2013\)](#) points out that children of mixed couples ‘cannot claim their ethnic/racial heritage of both parents in their names’ (p. 6). When children choose their non-Japanese parent’s surname, they will have a family register separate from their Japanese parent’s register. To pass their surnames to their daughter, a Filipino-Japanese couple challenged this law before the court and succeeded ([Mori Want, 2013](#)).

The above literature reveals the multiple parental strategies of naming children; their religious, ethnic and gender dimensions; and the impact of social context (notably if the residence society negatively views the mixed couples in question or if its law favours only one parental heritage). It also unveils that naming children is part and parcel of parents’ larger strategies of incorporation into their residence country on the one hand and interpersonal adjustment within their ethnically and socio-culturally mixed family lives on the other hand. Given that migration factors and mixedness intersect in intricate ways in the everyday lives of mixed families, drawing the border line between parental strategies of adjustment to migration context and those to a mixed family setting seems difficult to carry out. What is evident is that at present interreligious couple-focused and adult-centric analyses appear to be the mainstream tendency. There is only one study so far that focuses on the perspectives of mothers and their children in a mixed and mobile family setting as regards forenames – that of [Balode and Lulle \(2018\)](#). In this study, the authors notably bring to light children’s perspectives: for instance, protesting about their forenames or correcting their peers in pronouncing their forenames. They ‘encourage other researchers to engage with name investigations in different migration contexts’ (p. 83), which the chapter follows by focusing on the case of ethnically mixed, single-faith families including their children.

Children in Filipino–Non-Filipino Families

In the context of migration, studies on mixed couples and families involving Filipinos and non-Filipinos notably from economically developed countries abound (e.g., [Constable, 2003](#); [Kim, 2008](#); [Piper & Roces, 2003](#); [Suzuki, 2003](#)). These works focus either on the individual partners (specifically, Filipino women) or on the couples. Compared to their counterparts growing up in Filipino migrant or transnational families (e.g., [Nagasaka & Fresnoza-Flot, 2015](#); [Parreñas, 2005](#)), children born and growing or grown up in Filipino–non-Filipino unions are rarely studied.

Most of the works about them can be found in Japan where a dynamic Filipino immigration has been taking place since the 1980s. For instance, Filipino-Japanese children’s biological ties with a Japanese citizen (i.e., mostly the father) can open possibilities to them and to their Filipino parent to immigrate, stay and work in Japan ([Celero, 2022](#); [Seiger, 2019](#); [Suzuki, 2015](#)). Their ‘consanguinity as capital’ ([Seiger, 2017](#)) that most often opens socio-economic mobilities for their family members

highlights their important place in their nuclear family. Nonetheless, some children underwent difficulties in Japan when their Filipino mothers ‘act counter to the moral ideals of motherhood’ (Suzuki, 2017, p. 122) and when they experience social discrimination (Suzuki, 2015). In other countries, the children of Filipino–non-Filipino unions encounter difficulties for overlapping reasons including the limited economic resources of their parents (e.g., Stickmon, 2014) and the separation or divorce of their parents (Fresnoza-Flot, 2021). In Belgium, recent studies examine the transmission of languages, nationality, and food practices from Filipino–Belgian parents to their children (Fresnoza-Flot, 2018a, 2018b; Gonzalez Alvarez & Fresnoza-Flot, 2020). They suggest how children are valued in the family as preserver of selected socio-cultural traditions from one or both of their parental lineage.

The above studies indicate how the national contexts in which the children of Filipino–non-Filipino couples live and how parents view and treat their offspring shape the latter’s experiences. There are no studies yet analysing the practice of giving forenames to these children, which may further illuminate the place they occupy in their respective nuclear families and/or larger kin networks.

The Politics of Naming in Belgium and the Philippines

In the two countries where Filipino–Belgian families are enmeshed, we can find a diversity of forenames and surnames. This diversity stems from their historical pasts and laws regulating name-giving.

Before 1987, the Napoleonic law of 1 April 1803 (*11 Germinal an XI*) was the basis of name-giving in Belgium. This law only permitted forenames that appeared in calendars (Saints’ names) and those of known persons of ancient history. The law on 15 May 1987 ended this rule and allowed parents to give forename(s) of their choice to their children. Since the 1st of June 2014, the surnames children acquired at birth are no longer automatically those of their fathers. Children can acquire the surname of one of their parents, the co-parent of their parent(s), or those of both parents. They can also have one or more forenames.

In the Philippines, no legal system of surnames existed before the colonial period. Surname-giving only started in 1849 when Narciso Clavería (Spanish governor of the country) introduced a decree (*decreto de cambio de apellidos*) proposing 60,662 Spanish surnames to Filipinos (Talaván, 1997). On the other hand, the use of a middle name can be traced back to the colonial rule of the United States of America from 1898 to 1946. Nowadays, Filipino names are written starting with the forename(s), middle name/initial (the mother’s surname), and surname of the father. There is no legal rule so far regarding what forename(s) – foreign-sounding or not – should be given to children.

The above specificities of Belgian and Philippine contexts as regards name-giving may influence Filipino–Belgian parents’ choice of names for their children. This influence may also interact with factors at the individual level, such as gender and social class background of parents.

Individualisation in Naming Children: The Value of a Single Forename

Asuncion: Your name is Julian?

Julian: Yes.

Asuncion: Do you know the meaning of 'Julian'? Why 'Julian'?

Julian: Because my father wanted a name that would equally be accepted in the Philippines and Belgium.

Asuncion: That is why it is 'Julian'. You do not have a second forename?

Julian: No.

Among the 28 interviewed children of Filipino-Belgian couples, 12 have single forenames like Julian in the above vignette. Practicality, child's birth order/place, and specific affective relation overlappingly shape Filipino-Belgian parents' choice of their children's forenames.

Filipino-Belgian parents mostly choose an international forename they came across through films or television programs. For example, the eldest child of one couple interviewed suggested the forename 'Frank' for his newly born brother, the name of the leading actor in a Hollywood film their family watched. Likewise, the eldest child in another family interviewed came up with a name for his sibling, the name of the leading actor in a famous television series. The Filipino mother of this family remarked: 'At that time, there was an American (television) series, action, (there was an actor) half French, half Asian and half American, I think. His name was Nathan Rumbaut'. As [Slany and Strzemecka \(2017\)](#) observe in their study of Polish-Norwegian couples in Norway, these couples prefer international names as a neutral approach to naming children.

The two families in which their eldest child influenced the parental choice of forename for subsequent sibling highlight the key role of proximate nuclear family members in naming children. Two siblings interviewed mentioned the influence of their Belgian grandparents on her Filipino mother's choice of forenames for them:

[...] my mother wanted to call us not Anthony and Dirk; she wanted [...] English name(s). But then, my grandparents told her that Anthony and Dirk (are) better because you can tell (them) in English, Dutch.

In a separate interview, the mother of these children evoked the practical aspect of a single forename. She imagined the complication of long names if her family went to the Philippines, where the mother's maiden name is included in naming children: 'when it is necessary to put my name, then it is already very long. Anthony (her son's forename) Rosales (her maiden name) van Limbergen (her husband's surname)'. This narrative suggests that when a family name (i.e., that of the husband) is particularly long, some parents turn to easy-to-write forenames for their children.

Interestingly, among the young people interviewed with single forenames, three were born in the Philippines: two have forenames in Tagalog (Amihan and Mayumi) and only one in Spanish (Roberto). The other interviewed children of Filipino-Belgian couples born in Belgium have Belgian French, Belgian Dutch, or international sounding forenames. This birthplace effect may intersect with other factors in naming children. For instance, when asked about the story behind her forename, Amihan replied, ‘a woman helped my father when he was sick, and her name was Amihan’. Amihan’s Filipino father confirmed it during a separate interview: ‘When I was working in an association in the (rural) area, I met a woman named Amihan. I got sick in that area, and she took care of me’. The Belgian mother accepted the name ‘Amihan’, saying that ‘it was a name that can also be pronounced here (in Belgium). (. . .) if you make a very difficult name, then it’s going to have a connotation here’. Like Amihan and her parents, many young informants in the present study only received basic information about their forenames from their parents. The vivid details and stories behind their forenames remain in their parents’ memories.

The case of Amihan also indicates that the birthplace effect intersects with parents’ intention to remember an important person in their lives. This latter factor appears salient in two families. A Filipino mother explained that she and her Belgian husband passed the forename of the latter’s mother to their daughter. An adolescent interviewed unveiled the meaning of her forename: ‘the first name of my grandmother in Belgium was Emilia, and the first name of my grandmother in (the) Philippines was Marie, so they call me Emilie’. It is evident that daughters usually take the name of the female members of their extended family, notably the forename of their grandmother, maternal, paternal, or both. This gender dimension suggests the essential place of these women in the larger family circle.

In terms of decision-making, giving one forename to children has both ethnic and gender dimensions. Ethnically speaking, it reflects the widely adopted approach of single forenaming in the Philippines, which suggests, on the one hand, the consideration of the Filipino partner’s natal country in name-giving and, on the other hand, the convergence of parents towards a more neutral mode of forenaming. Regarding gender, both parents of half of the informants with single forenames decided together how to name their children. Among the rest of the informants, it is mostly the fathers (three Belgian, one Filipino) who chose the forename of their children, notably that of their son and first child. This tendency is probably a remnant of the traditional Catholic-fashioned patriarchal societies of Belgium and the Philippines. The minority case of the four fathers above unravels how valuable the figure of the male first child is for the father in the mixed families studied, which can be attributed to ‘the historically symbolic role of sons continuing kin lines’ (Balode & Lulle, 2018, p. 75). Such a practice is usually the case of interreligious (Cerchiaro, 2019) or Muslim mixed couples (Nazarska & Hajdinjak, 2011).

Collective Affiliation as Reflected in Compound Forenames

In Belgium, we often have three forenames. Me, I also have three. [...] because the first forename [...] it is the one we received from birth. The second (forename), it is that of the godfather, and the third (forename), (is) normally that of the godmother. (Claude, Belgian father of one)

The impact of the above traditional way of naming in Belgium can be observed among 16 interviewed children of Filipino-Belgian couples. Seven of them have three names, six have four names, and three have two names. These compound names of Filipino-Belgian children can indicate their parents' interpersonal/spatial ties, religious belonging, and social class background.

Fig. 1 illustrates the social ties that are considered in naming children in Filipino-Belgian families. Generational connections (notably with grandparents) and social relationships beyond biological (specifically with godparents and friends) are highly valued. This social relatedness is spatially situated within the transnational spaces of the families linking Belgium and the Philippines. Interviewed children of Filipino-Belgian couples are mostly aware of this aspect of their compound forenames, as the vignette below illustrates:

Jesusa, it is a little girl that my mother knows in the Philippines [...]. It is the name of a little girl: Jesusa. Solange, it is my father who liked it well. [...] Sarah, it's the name of my godmother (in Belgium).

Despite the awareness of the informant as regards the origin of her name, she could not give vivid details about it, unlike her mother in a separate interview:

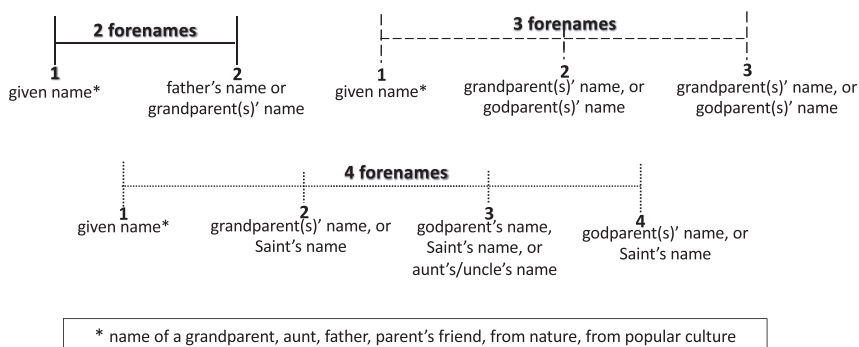


Fig. 1. Social Relatedness in Forename-Giving.

[...] my brother who passed away, he was a driver of a little girl named Jesusa. [...] (If) I would have a daughter, I would call her Jesusa, and because Jesusa, it is also Jesus [...]. That is why I said ‘okay, we will call her Jesusa’.

The Christian religious background of Filipino-Belgian parents generally makes naming children a tension-free process, as parents could easily agree on choosing a Saint’s name in the Catholic calendar. One Filipino mother remarked:

Cécile Marie, it was really me who chose this forename. I told him (husband). We did not have any problems. [...] why Cécile? It is because I like Saint Cécile. Why Marie? It is because of Virgin Mary. What I like for my children are forenames of Saints.

Nonetheless, when this mother gave birth to another child, her Belgian husband did not like what she proposed as Saints’ forenames for their offspring’s first and second forenames. Her Belgian husband chose different Catholic forenames and accepted her suggestions instead as their child’s third and fourth forenames. In this case, the child’s four forenames are the outcome of parents’ negotiations and positioning vis-à-vis each other. It is akin to a neutral approach to naming (Ducu & Hossu, 2016; Slany & Strzemecka, 2017; Streiff-Fénart, 1989), as another case below illustrates in which the father opted for three German names ‘Jürgen Hans Tobias’ for his son:

I can’t give a Flemish name to a half Filipino. I can’t give a Filipino name because (my child is) half Belgian. So, I give German names... maybe crazy, I understand. Of course, she (Filipino spouse) doesn’t complain about the names because we were just married. Lucky for me. But always, what I like (about) the names, they were really special.

In one case, parents constructed compound names not only by merging two or more forenames but also mixing up some letters extracted from two individual forenames. Their daughter has two forenames – Elise Joana. the first one is the forename of the Belgian father’s mother, whereas the second one is a chimeric forename as the Filipino mother explained below.

The second forename (of my daughter) is the half of (my husband’s forename) ‘Johnny’ and the other half of (the forename of her grandmother in the Philippines. Since my mother’s name is Mariana, we took ‘ana’ from it. Like this, she becomes Joana.

All the young people interviewed with four forenames belong to either an upper-middle-class family (two cases) or a strong Catholic believer family (one case). The parents in upper-middle-class families are either entrepreneurs or have a socially valorised profession. The forenames of their children reflect their valued

familial relationships in the Philippines and Belgium (maternal/paternal grandmothers and godparents), which resembles the interviewed families in which the children have three forenames. In the second case, the parents (specifically the Filipino mother) are practising Catholics, and the forenames of their son came from the Saints' forenames.

Regarding decision-making, although both Filipino-Belgian parents had mostly a voice in the name-giving process, the Belgian father gave their children the first forename in half of the 16 cases of young informants with compound forenames. Only four Filipino mothers were the ones who provided the first forename of their children. Compared to their husbands, whose impact on name giving is evident in the 16 cases examined (as the initiator of the first forename or as a collaborator of their spouses in finding forenames), the interviewed mothers' influence in the choice of forenames is completely absent in five cases.

Such gender inequality in naming children in Filipino-Belgian families occurs alongside inequalities between the natal families and countries of parents as well as between their social circles. In most cases, the forenames of proximate family members accorded to children are those from the Belgian father's natal families who reside in Belgium. Likewise, the forenames from godparents, who are usually the couple's friends in Belgium, are mainly Belgian-French or Belgian-Flemish sounding forenames. Inequalities in forenaming can be partly attributed to Filipino mothers' long-term projects regarding their children's well-being and security. As I explained elsewhere (Fresnoza-Flot, 2018b), most of them opted for Belgian nationality for their children as a 'mothering technique', aiming 'to protect' them 'as much as possible [...] from experiencing the social insecurities they knew were present' in the Philippines (p. 286). Letting their husbands decide the naming of their children appears inscribed in this mothering technique.

Children Making Use of Their Forename(s)

Regardless of the number of forenames (single or collective) they have, the interviewed children of Filipino-Belgian couples generally utilise one forename in their daily life. In the case of those with collective forenames, they mostly use their first forename, that is the one they uttered when I asked their name at the start of my interview. The majority of these informants like their forename(s), notably what they can convey to other people.

Asuncion: Do you like your forename?

Elise: Elise, yes. It is nice and what I also like is my second forename, Joana. It is also a bit exotic. It is not really a Belgian forename. (But) it reminds (me) a bit of both sides (paternal and maternal) so often.

Asuncion: So, there is a dash in the middle (of the two names)?

Elise: No, there is nothing on my identity card but when I present myself to somebody, I say often the two forenames. [...] Like this, it also brings a bit of originality. It is not only Elise, but there is also Joana.

The above informant's narratives suggest how she acts through her compound names as a bridge linking her paternal and maternal sides. Likewise, the awareness of the origin of one's forenames and the very act of uttering each forename accentuates and valorises the informants' biological and affective ties to the persons represented in their forenames, as illustrated in my interview with an informant below.

- Asuncion: What is your full name?
Peter: Peter Arnaud Junior Jean.
Asuncion: Ah there's a third name (Junior)?
Peter: Because my father is Peter too.
Asuncion: Peter the second. So, you're Peter the 3rd?
Peter: ah twice, Peter the second.
Asuncion: And the Jean is what?
Peter: Because it's, it's part of the name of my mother, Jeanne.

Among the informants, only two appear exceptionally not liking their forename(s). The first one is the informant with three German names that his Belgian father gave him. When I asked him about his German forenames, he appeared uncomfortable about them, notably regarding his first forename: 'French people and English people, I prefer them to call me James because I hate my name when they pronounce (it) in different way'. Using a forename of his choice without his parents' knowledge, this informant came to terms with his first forename. His chosen unofficial forename underlines his individuality or the 'I in Elias' sense (1991). His case is an exception from the other informants with compound names who did not express their dislike of their first forename. The second exceptional case is that of Jesusa Solange Sarah who likes her two first forenames but not her third forename: 'unfortunately, I did not like (the name "Sarah") but it was her (godmother's) name'. Like other informants, this young woman only uses her first forename in her daily life.

Whereas complete forename(s) appear in official documents no matter how long they are, only the first forename is usually used in everyday life. Both interviewed parents and their children in the present study follow this norm, which suggest their pragmatic, individualised approach to forename(s). This practice may sometimes lead to forgetting of the silenced forenames. For instance, an interviewed adolescent did not remember any more the exact number of his forenames and what are his unused forenames: 'I think that I have three or four forenames, but I cannot say the others (except his first and second forenames)'.

Discussion and Conclusion

The chapter demonstrates that parents and children in Filipino-Belgian families in Belgium have a relatively similar understanding as regards the stories behind forename-giving in their respective families. Children's forenames (single or

compound) suggest which interpersonal interactions are privileged and how children are valued within these families.

Through the prism of social relatedness, this chapter unveils that forenaming a child in Filipino-Belgian families bridges individuals and families based on biological and social ties, generations, and parents' nations of belonging in their transnational spaces. The 'social' in this plural form of relatedness points to interpersonal, intertemporal, and transnational aspects. In short, the value of children in the mixed families studied lies in their role as social bridges linking generations and non-biological relationships, the then and now, and the here and there. Indeed, through name-giving, parents anticipate the 'investments' they wish to realise in their children (de Singly, 2012, p. 30).

Interestingly, the complex process of naming children reflects the power dynamics not only within the parental couple but also within the wider set of social relations. Within the couple, gender inequality in forenaming children exists in a minority of families. In these cases, the father took the lead in naming children, reflecting the traditional gender ideology in Belgium and the Philippines, where the father fulfils the breadwinning role, and the mother accomplishes a reproductive role. Within the wider social relations of the couple, inequalities are observed between natal families, countries, and friends. In the case of compound forenames, the forenames of the Belgian parent's kin and friends in Belgium are considered more often than those of the Filipino parent's social ties in the Philippines. Inscribed in their mothering technique of facilitating the full incorporation of their children in the Belgian nation (Fresnoza-Flot, 2018b), most mothers appear to take a secondary or minor role in giving forenames to their children. As Edwards and Caballero (2008) argue, children's forenames 'symbolize parents' hopes and aspirations for who' these young people 'are and will be, to whom and what they are connected, as well sometimes as what they hope will be left aside' (p. 56).

Coming from two socio-cultural contexts, Filipino-Belgian partners did discuss and negotiate with each other in choosing forenames for their children like other mixed couples, as their naming process is not completely free from disagreements. The contexts which the interviewed families inhabit shape their choice of forenames, such as the single forenaming and middle naming traditions in the Philippines, the giving of compound forenames to children in Belgium, and choosing from a repertoire of Saints' and kin's forenames in both countries. Their social class belonging also influences forenaming, with upper-middle-class or Catholic practising families giving many forenames to their children compared to other families.

The fact that most interviewed families opted for compound forenames attests to their conformity to the Belgian tradition of naming and their individuality by choosing non-classical forenames from popular culture. On the children's side, only one seems uncomfortable with his first forename, whereas another one does not like her third forename. While the usage of full forenames remains in vigour in legal terms, in practice, interviewed parents and children alike use only one forename in daily life. Nonetheless, all of them except one are aware of and keep in their memories the significations of their forenames linking them to different

people, generations, and places. Hence, individualisation (Bühler-Niederberger, 2013; Elias, 1991) and collective affiliation (Cerchiaro, 2019; Edwards & Caballero, 2008) appear occurring side by side not only in the forenaming process of Filipino-Belgian families but also in their everyday lives.

What is specific in the families studied is that their forenaming is more straightforward or less problematic than that observed among mixed interreligious couples, which stems from the fact that they share a common religious background. Hence, the initial suppositions of the chapter are verified, enriching the understanding of the naming dynamics in mixed families. Future studies can further explore this aspect by investigating how adult children of mixed families name their children. Would there be a perpetuation of their families' naming tradition? How would they strategise to pursue individuality and/or collective affiliations?

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