

The Reintegration of *Kikokushijo* :
Reflections on Culture and Identity

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I. Introduction

As society becomes more globalized, the number of *kikokushijos* is increasing remarkably. While early academic studies have examined challenges encountered by *kikokushijos* (Hirano, 1995; Ichikawa, 2004; Kanno, 2003; Kidder, 1992; Macdonald, 1995/2011; Miyaji, 1985; Osawa, 1986; Pollock, D. et al. 2001/2009), very few have examined the dynamics of a successful reentry or the emotional factors these children experience when they transfer between schools with different cultural backgrounds during their developmental years. The purpose of this study is first, to examine the emotional factors that affect *kikokushijos* when they transfer between schools in different cultural settings during their developmental years and second, to discover how various experiences abroad influence the identities of *kikokushijos*. Finally, a review of the literature reveals that less attention has been afforded to the *kikokushijos*' emotional factors upon their reentry as well as to the issues that Japanese teachers in charge of the returnees faced. This study seeks to fill this gap and explore practical implications of training programs for teachers of *kikokushijos* at the governmental, regional, and the local level. It is important to understand the process and outcomes of *kikokushijos*' adaptation and identity-

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building in order to facilitate their well-being, as well as providing insight into the Japanese education system. Accordingly, the three research questions considered in this paper are as follows :

1. What types of challenges do kikokushijo experience after returning to Japan ?
2. How do the processes of adjustment of today's kikokushijos compare with those of previous generations ?
3. What strategies have kikokushijos employed in order to adapt successfully to Japanese society ?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

To better understand the issues of kikokushijo [returnees] living in Japan, an overview of the acculturation process in general will be presented. Next, the term kikokushijo will be defined and the literature on previous studies of returnees, which has been categorized into three main periods by many researchers, will be examined.

2.2 Theories on the Adjustment of Individuals in Intercultural Contexts

Berry's acculturation model¹⁾ (Berry, 2005) explains the processes by which an individual either goes through cultural and psychological changes in an intercultural setting or actively resists such change. These processes are categorized into four dimensions : marginalization, separation, assimilation, and integration (See figure 1). Marginalization refers to an individual who has little interest in either keeping their

1) In this thesis, culture is referred to as shared meanings, beliefs, and traditions that arise in a group who have a common history and experience (Berry, 2005/2009). Acculturation theory facilitates the understanding of how kikokushijos in Japan adjust the process of acculturating to Japan. Acculturation has been researched extensively over the last four decades. Berry's (2009) theory is said to be the most prominent in the field.

Assimilation	Integration
Marginalization	Separation

Figure 1 Model of Berry's Acculturation (2005)

original culture or learning the other culture. Separation means to hold on to one's original cultural identity. Assimilation means absorb the other culture without retaining one's original cultural identity. Lastly, integration means maintaining one's original cultural identity and at the same time interacting with the other culture. Berry (2005) explains that the integration strategy will result in better mental health than other strategies. However, it is important to realize that examining an individual's adaptation process is a complex matter, since it can change within social settings. Thus, it is crucial to unfold each layer.

2.3 Previous Studies on the Adjustment of Kikokushijos

Numerous studies have investigated the social and cultural adjustment of kikokushijos. These studies often examined kikokushijos over three main time periods. Sueda (2012) labeled these periods as Exploration (1970 to 1984), Expansion (1985 to 1989), and Integration (after 1990). This chapter will review the literature on kikokushijos in English as well as in Japanese mainly from the 1970's onwards. Sueda's (*ibid*) categorization will be used in order to explain the history of returnees in chronological order.

2.3.1 Prior to the 1960's

Due to their small number, little research on kikokushijos had been undertaken

in Japan prior to the 1960's. However, Podalsky (2003) reported that the presence of kikokushijos was gradually becoming more conspicuous to the Japanese government. The Japanese government adopted two strategies in order to address these concerns. One was to establish a system to assist in the reentry of kikokushijos. Another was to support the *kaigaishijos* by building Japanese schools in areas where parents requested them. However, the impact of these ministerial decisions was not felt immediate by the general public or the kikokushijo's parents.

2.3.2 Exploration period (1970 to 1984)

This was a period when the public image of kikokushijos was rather negative in general. Much of the literature focused on the harsh reentry of kikokushijos and the discrimination they faced upon their return to Japan. Since expectations of cultural homogeneity and conforming with mainstream thought and behavior are strong in Japanese schools, the Westernized or multicultural communication patterns of kikokushijos have been misunderstood or considered too straightforward, triggering bullying and harassment from their peers in school settings.

2.3.3 Expansion period (1985 to 1989)

Owing to the rapid expansion of the Japanese economy during the mid-1980s to the late 1980s, many corporations started to open branches overseas (Hirano, 1995; Kanno, 2003; Osawa, 1986; White, 1988). Accordingly, the number of expatriated Japanese businessmen increased and these businessmen took their children and families overseas (Kanno, 2003; Kidder, 1992; Kobayashi, 1991; Osawa, 1986; White, 1988). Ironically, these economic trends contributed to the construction of a stereotypical image of kikokushijos by the mass-media (Hirano, 1995; Ichikawa, 2004; Macdonald, 1995/2011; Miyaji, 1985; Oikawa, 2016; Osawa, 1986; Pollock, D. et al. 2001/2009). The public perception of kikokushijos

shifted from ‘problem children’ to ‘symbols of internationalization’ (Goodman, 1990 ; Ichikawa, 2004 ; Macdonald, 1995/2011 ; Miyaji, 1985 ; Oikawa, 2016 ; Osawa, 1986 ; Pollock, D. et al. 2001/2009). On the other hand, the stereotypical images of kikokushijos constructed by the mass media created prejudice among Japanese teachers and students and worked as a barrier between the kikokushijos and the non-kikokushijos. The returnees’ teachers and peers expected to see kikokushijos to be arrogant and have a low level of Japanese language proficiency (Ichikawa, 2004 ; Macdonald, 1995/2011 ; Miyaji, 1985). Therefore, kikokushijos could not avoid being confronted with the image of them held by their peers. During the mid-1980s and early 1990s kikokushijos can at times be looked down upon as ‘outsiders’, while at other times they are considered as role models to follow.

2.3.4 ‘Integration’ (from 1990 onwards)

‘Integration’ (after 1990) is the period when studies of kikokushijos gradually decreased. The focus was more on various factors that differentiated kikokushijos from their Japanese counterparts. Pollack (2001) and Kanno (2003) point out that returnees’ multicultural identities may lead them to behaving in a completely different manner from that of their peers. Furthermore, the literature during this period showed that the way returnees identified themselves differed from person to person.

2.3.5 Present

During the past several years, studies of adult kikokushijos have been undertaken by many researchers. One main characteristic of this group is that they tend to become ‘hidden returnees’ in their business settings. For example, Sueda (2012) reported that in her interviews of adult returnees, one participant reported

that he hid his English ability because he did not want to let others take advantage of his skill in English in his workplace. In this way, he avoided having to take all responsibility for English assignments in his workplace, and he was able to avoid situations in which others would lose face if they could not speak English as well as he did.

2.3.6 Purpose of This Study

Studies of Japanese returnees have been conducted for over forty years, and yet the stereotypical image of the *kikokushijos* hasn't drastically changed. If non-*kikokushijo* peers and teachers get to know their adaptation and identity building process they will see their commonalities as well as differences as cultural differences instead of considering them to be personality flaws.

Considering the studies of *kikokushijos* that have been carried out to date, there seems to be room for further investigation regarding how to help Japanese teachers and students gain access to the skill sets and frameworks necessary to deal with students with cultural backgrounds different from their own. To promote improvements in attitude and behavior within educational settings, we need a training program designed to enhance intercultural sensitivity and competence. Understanding the process and outcomes of *kikokushijos*' adaptation and identity-building is important for facilitating their well-being, as well as for providing insight into the Japanese education system.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study employed qualitative research to explore the adjustment process of *kikokushijos* in terms of identity and acculturation. In order to ensure the

credibility required in qualitative research, the procedures for participant recruitment, data collection, and analysis followed the guidelines established by Nagano (2005). The study ensures transferability of results (Nagano, 2005) by outlining implications applicable to other *kikokushijos*.

3.2 Participants

Participants were recruited via the school the researcher graduated from, namely Katsushika Elementary School²⁾, located in Chiba Prefecture. This school was one of the first returnee-accepting public elementary schools designated by the Japanese government during the 1970s and has approximately 80 returnees³⁾. Forty *kikokushijos* were recruited as participants for this study from this school. Questionnaires were filled out anonymously to protect the students' personal information⁴⁾. The participants' average age was 10.07 years old. The average duration of their overseas experiences was approximately four years. The number and percentage of the participants' gender was 18 (45%) female and 22 (55%) male. All participants answered the questionnaire in Japanese. Most of the *kikokushijos* had the ability to express themselves in written Japanese at the daily use level. Some participants answered in Japanese with the help of their teachers and parents. The number and percentage of participants who were based in each country are shown in figure 2.

2) Since this public school is located near Tokyo, it is surrounded by many of the housing facilities belonging to major trading companies, megabanks, global manufacturers, as well as housing facilities for government workers from departments such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

3) Among which some of them are also mixed race students.

4) Many scholars regularly contact Katsushika Elementary School to survey the students for their studies; however, these students proved more difficult to recruit than anticipated. This is because privacy protection for elementary schools has recently become more strict. Nevertheless, the researcher was given a special opportunity to conduct this study with the cooperation of both Katsushika Elementary School and Matsuyama University Graduate School of Language and Communication.

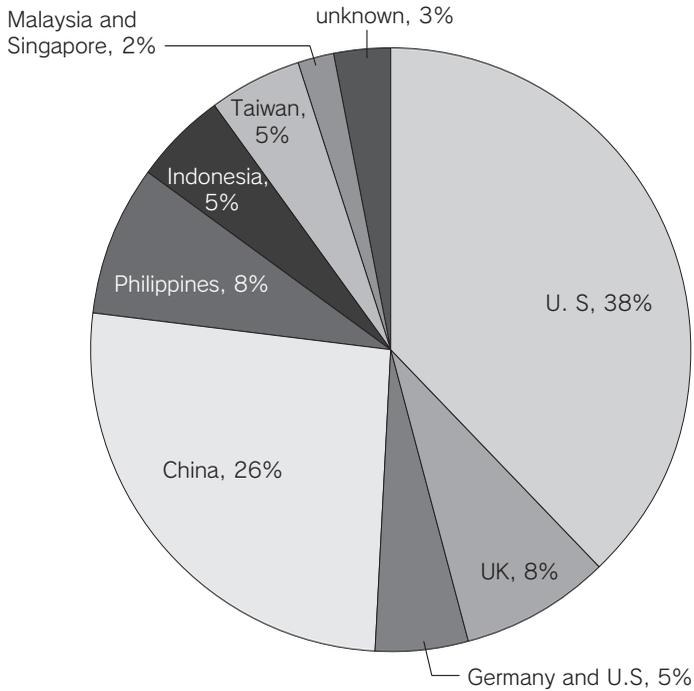


Figure 2 Percentage of participants by country of overseas residence

3.3 Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed in November and December of 2016. This study employed a semi-structured style which enabled participants to partially provide narrative data to ensure their freedom to express their feelings or views on their own terms. The data collection procedure⁵⁾ is outlined below. In regard to the kikokushijos adaptation, the returnee participants were asked the following 15 questions :

5) The Katsushika Elementary School principal and the Matsuyama University officials each signed a research confidentiality form.

- (1) Are the Japanese school rules strict compared to the ones overseas ?
- (2) Have you ever thought that you don't fit into Japanese society ?
- (3) Do you contact your old friends living overseas ?
- (4) Which are you good at, English, Japanese or both ?
- (5) What language did you use at home when you lived abroad ?
- (6) What were the things you got scolded for by your Japanese teachers (and not by your foreign teachers) ?
- (7) Did you find friends easily here in Japan ?
- (8) Did you find differences in lifestyle here, compared to that of the place you used to live overseas ?
- (9) Do you have a place to speak English besides class after your repatriation to Japan ?
- (10) Were you conscious of cultural gaps when you first went overseas ?
- (11) Have you had any difficulties living in Japan ? If so, what kind of difficulties were they ?
- (12) Were you teased at school either in Japan or at school overseas ?
- (13) Did you try to learn the language of the surrounding culture when you went overseas ?
- (14) Do you tell your friends that you are a returnee ?
- (15) How much did you know about Japan before you repatriated, and what was the source of your information ? For example, the internet, YouTube, SNS, *etc* ?

3.4 Analysis

Grounded Theory Approach (Kinoshita, 2003) was employed for this survey. The researcher used an open coding strategy to code the data, and selected codes relevant to the research questions and removed codes which were not related. A diagram was made in order to show the relationships between the categories and the category groups (See Table 2).

Table 1 Participant information

No.	Gender	Age they went overseas	Grade	Current Age	Years after their repatriation	Countries they lived	Years they stayed overseas	The types of schools they went overseas	The language they used overseas
1	M	0-7y	2	8	over 1	China	7	both	Chinese, Japanese, English
2	F	2-6y	5	10	over 2	Hong Kong	4	local school	Japanese, English
3	M	6-9y	6	12	over 2	Taiwan	3	Japanese school	Japanese, English
4	F	5-8y	4	10	over 2	China	3	Japanese school	Japanese, English
5	M	3-4y	1	7	over 2	Thai	1	—	Japanese
6	F	0-4y	4	10	over 2	Philippines	4	Japanese school	Japanese, English
7	M	5-7y	3	8	over 1	China	2	Japanese school	Chinese, Japanese, English
8	M	3-8y	5	11	over 2	Malaysia, Singapore	5	local school	Japanese, English
9	M	0-8y	4	10	—	Indonesia	8	both	Indonesian, Japanese, English
10	M	0-9y	—	9	over 2	China	8	local school	Japanese
11	M	1-5y	2	7	over 2	China	4	—	Chinese, Japanese, English
12	M	0-9y	6	11	—	China	9	local school	Japanese
13	M	2y	—	8	within 2	—	—	Japanese school	Japanese
14	M	—	1	7	within 1	China	—	local school	Chinese, Japanese, English
15	F	very small	6	12	over 2	China	2	—	Japanese, English
16	F	0-1y	4	9	—	Philippines	—	—	Japanese, English
17	F	0-1y/2-7y	6	12	over 2	Taiwan	6	Japanese school	Chinese, Japanese, English
18	F	6-10y	6	12	4	Indonesia	4	both	Japanese, English
19	M	2-8y	5	11	over 2	Philippines	6	Japanese school	English
20	M	0-7	2	8	over 1	China	7	both	Chinese, Japanese, English
21	F	0-2y	4	9	over 2	U. S	2	—	Japanese
22	M	0-7y	5	12	over 2	U. S	7	both	Japanese, English
23	F	1-7y	4	9	over 2	U. S/Germany	7	Japanese school	Japanese
24	M	4-8y	6	12	over 2	U. S	4	both	Japanese
25	M	Several months after birth	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
26	M	2-9y	5	11	over 2	England	7	both	Japanese, English
27	F	1-7y	4	10	within 2	U. S (Michigan)	6	both	English
28	M	0-5y	4	9	over 2	England	5	local school	English
29	F	0-5y	4	10	over 2	U. S	5	local school	Japanese, English
30	F	0-5y	5	11	over 2	U. S	5	local school	Japanese
31	M	—	5	11	over 2	England	2	—	Japanese
32	F	2-3y	—	9	1	U. S (N. Y)	1	—	Japanese
33	M	0-1y	3	9	1	U. S (Seattle)	1	—	Japanese
34	F	0-5y	6	12	over 2	U. S	5	both	Japanese
35	F	0-5y	4	10	over 2	U. S	5	local school	Japanese, English
36	F	4-6y	3	9	over 2	U. S	2	local school	Japanese
37	F	7-9y	6	12	over 2	U. S	2	local school	Japanese
38	F	0-3y	4	10	over 2	U. S (Houston)	3	local school	Japanese
39	M	3-7y	5	11	over 2	U. S	4	both	Chinese, Japanese, English
40	M	1-9y	6	12	over 2	U. S/Germany	8	Japanese school	Japanese, English, German

Table 2 Categories of *Kikokushijos*' Adjustments

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Sub-categories</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>
Reentry Stress ⁶⁾	① <i>Confusion about the External Environment,</i> ② <i>Confusion about the Strict School Rules,</i> ③ <i>Confusion about Lifestyles and Practices,</i> ④ <i>Confusion about their Japanese peers</i> ⑤ <i>Frustration Towards Oneself</i>	Various sorts of frustrations or difficulties <i>kikokushijos</i> experience, especially upon their repatriation. One of the most basic reasons for reentry stress relates to the unconscious expectations of "sameness".	(<i>W</i>) = 12 (<i>E</i>) = 12
Efforts to Adjust	① <i>Improving Language Skills</i> ② <i>Maintaining Ties to Their Friends Overseas.</i>	Various active acts to blend in with their peers both inside and outside of school.	(<i>W</i>) = 9 (<i>E</i>) = 4 (<i>W</i>) = 5 (<i>E</i>) = 7
Readjusting to Living in Japan	① <i>Adjustment to Lifestyle and Practices</i> ② <i>Blending in With Local Friends.</i>	<i>Kikokushijos</i> are well adjusted in terms of lifestyle and customs. They are also well adjusted to school rules and mannerisms, but not always successful.	(<i>W</i>) = 2 (<i>E</i>) = 2 (<i>W</i>) = 4 (<i>E</i>) = 3
Acquired Fluidity in Shifting Identities	① <i>Balance Between Two Identities</i>	<i>Kikokushijos</i> are very well adjusted to Japan and school settings and feel little frustration.	(<i>W</i>) = 1 (<i>E</i>) = 1

Note : (*W*) indicates the number of participants who are from Western countries. (*E*) is the number of participants from Asian countries. The names of the categories will be underlined.

4. Results of the survey

4.1 Introduction

Categories related to *kikokushijos* adjustment are shown in Table 2. *Kikokushijos* experienced an extensive range of levels of frustration at school upon their repatriation to Japan. Research questions asked *kikokushijos*' whether they had experienced an extensive range of levels of difficulties during the

6) Pollack and Recken (2006) defines Reentry Stress as "the grief of losing a world they have come to love, the discomfort of being out of cultural balance once more, and the struggle to start to find a place of belonging in a new place with new people."

acculturation period. Some were education-oriented, others were culture-oriented. This section will describe each category groups in turns.

As for the results of the questionnaire with particular comments, the researcher will describe in detail separately in the following section. The results are categorized into four categories as shown in Table 3.

4.2 Reentry Stress - Confusion Towards the External Environment

Many of the kikokushijos involved in this study mentioned that they are satisfied with their life after repatriating to Japan. Nevertheless, many participants stated that they experienced teasing, bullying, and challenges to a certain degree, especially in the early stages of their repatriation in school settings.

4.2.1 Confusion Towards the School rules

Most stressors are attributed to their lack of Japanese language ability and cultural differences at the school setting. For example, one fifth grade returnee boy from England claimed :

“There are too many rules in Japanese schools.”

Many of them reported that lunch time mannerisms and etiquette seemed strict for them to follow compared to the ones overseas. Some of them recall that they were surprised to know that Japanese schools have so many things for them to bring to class (i. e., chopsticks, napkins, things needed for club activities, *etc.*). A few of them stated that at first, they were surprised to be scolded by their teachers when they forgot to bring them. Also, one fifth grade returnee boy from England stated :

“Recess between class is too short to go outside and play.”

Fourth grader returnee boy from Michigan in the U. S also recalled :

“We were able to bring our own lunch and eat whatever we liked. I was also a bit surprised at first that students clean the classrooms by themselves.”

Another fourth-grade boy from Indonesia mentioned :

“Being kept in after school (detention) was hard for me.”

As the above comment suggests, even though the Japanese teacher’s intention was to make up for the class he missed, he might have felt that he was being punished. In addition, many of the returnees commented that compared to the schools overseas, there is too much homework and they don’t have much time to finish their assignments during class in Japanese schools. Therefore, teachers are recommended to verbalize and explain the reason to the *kikokushijos* in these kinds of situations.

Moreover, the age *kikokushijos* went overseas and the timing they encounter a different culture also seem to be important factors. This is exemplified in the following quote. A third grade girl who lived in the U. S from birth to 3 years old wrote :

“We had ‘snack time’ at school, but we don’t have it here”

She also mentioned that *aisatsu-ga-hagu-janai* meaning, greetings aren’t hugs in Japan.

In this study, it was interesting to know that most of the returnees from Western countries seemed to have frustration regarding mannerism during lunch and

cleaning the classroom. Most stressors related to this problem seems to be attributed to cultural differences.

“I think the school rules are strict because we are not allowed to bring money to school.”

In addition, a sixth grade boy who repatriated from China answered :

“I was scolded by my teacher for my bad handwriting.”

Approximately half of the participants involved in this study mentioned that Japanese school rules are strict compared to the ones they went in a foreign country. Only 8% of the participants stated that the school rules weren't strict for them at all.

4.2.2 Confusion about Lifestyles and Practices

Many returnees answered that they were surprised in the beginning to experience Japan's smaller housing space. Especially for those who lived in Western countries seemed to feel a sense of loss due to the different surrounding environment. Furthermore, many of them stated they were surprised by the difference in the commuting styles. In Japan they need to walk by themselves to school, instead of taking school busses or their parents' cars in the United States. One boy from the US recalled :

“In the beginning, I missed the green and wild animals, like deer and rabbits.”

A fifth grade girl who returned to Japan from Hong Kong mentioned :

“The classroom was larger and my apartment had a swimming pool.”

A third grade girl recalled :

“At first, I was surprised that the bathroom and toilet were separated.”

4.2.3 Confusion About their Japanese Peers

Many *kikokushijos* indicated that they sometimes felt isolated and missed their friends and relatives overseas. Specifically, some expressed that they did not feel a sense of belonging and felt uneasy in Japan when they had just moved back. A boy who returned from China stated that he was worried if he could blend in with his classmates. One girl was teased that her skin color was darker than the others. Another fourth grade girl who had been in Huston, Texas also claimed :

“In the beginning, my peers called me ‘ki-mo-i’⁷⁾”

They were hurt by behaviors their Japanese teachers and peers showed them in those kinds of situations.

4.2.4 Frustration Towards Oneself

This category is related to expressions of frustration which the participants directed at themselves, in regard to their language competency. A fifth grade boy who came back from the Philippines was hit by one of his peers. When the researcher surveyed him the following question “why do you think it’s difficult for you to make friends in Japan ?” His sentiments are exemplified in the following :

7) “*Kimoi*” is an abbreviation form for the Japanese word = “*kimochiwarui*” meaning, weird or odd looking.

“My Japanese is not perfect, I often misunderstand what my peers are saying to me. One time, I was suddenly hit by one of my peers. Maybe it’s because I’m not brave enough to start a conversation with them.”

Even if kikokushijo can read and write and may even talk to their family or close friends in Japanese they may never communicate a word in Japanese to their peers until they are completely confident in themselves. Teachers are recommended to explain these matters to the non-kikokushijos when these situations occur. In the meantime, kikokushijos will be better at communicating. Thus it is expected that the Japanese peers in turn are requested to be patient with kikokushijos that some of them need time to express themselves in Japanese⁸⁾. Being treated as an outsider in Japan can be hurtful for many kikokushijos. A couple of participants also reported that when they had just come back to Japan, it was hard to blend in with their peers as some of them rejected kikokushijos outright for their exotic appearances⁹⁾ such as their dark skin color. Another girl stated that :

“I miss my old friends and relatives in China, I call them nearly every day.”¹⁰⁾

Moreover, it made some kikokushijos upset that even they were able to make a smooth reentry, when they step out of bounds of the Japanese culture, they were labeled as an outsider or kikokushijos by their teachers and peers. One participant of this survey mentioned that he feels he exists in between Japan and China. He stated that ;

8) Silent period

9) Many of the kikokushijos these days also fall into the category of mix-raced children.

10) Reverse culture shock.

“I’m not able to make friends here in Japan, but I’m not comfortable communicating with my old friends anymore.”

He didn’t belong to the country he lived in overseas anymore, yet declared that he had completely adjusted to Japan. This kind of feeling can be classified as ‘*cultural marginality*’¹¹⁾ in which an individual is caught between the two different cultures. They may feel ‘passive betweenness’ and do not perceive themselves as belonging to either one of the two cultures. Since identity is a fluid entity and not a fix state, this boy could change as he grows older.

4.3 Efforts to Adjust

4.3.1 Improving Language Skills

This category grouped subcategories indicating efforts made especially in the early stage of their repatriation. Many *kikokushijos* mentioned in this category that relearning the Japanese language and adopting to Japanese culture were top priorities for their smooth reentry. One boy stated :

“I studied Japanese really hard with my mom after I came back to Japan (in order to catch up and blend into the class).”

Some of the participants commented that they proactively studied Japanese language and culture through media, books, and Japanese friends during their stays overseas in order to retain their Japanese language skills. They felt that the above proactive measurement was necessary for their smooth reentry.

11) Janet Bennett (1993) coined the term *cultural marginality* as having two outcomes : *encapsulated marginality* and *constructive marginality*. According to Bennett, *Encapsulated marginality* is indicative of a loneliness, alienation, self-segregation, and internal distress.

4.3.2 Maintaining Ties to Their Friends Overseas

Many of the returnees kept ties with their friends overseas as shown in figure 5. The result shows that in this category, 27 participants (67%) are maintaining ties with old friends overseas, while 13 of the participants (33%) don't have ties with their old friends overseas. When they had issues, some of them who had a hard time making friends in Japan recall they turned to their old friends living outside of Japan as a result, maintaining ties to their old friends facilitated their re-adaptation to the Japanese culture. This result suggests that relationships with their overseas friends and relatives are also very important to them since it would strongly affect building their identities as an intercultural person.

4.4 Readjusting to Japan

4.4.1 Adjustment to Lifestyle and Practices

This category involved sentiments which suggest that kikokushijos are currently readjusted and feeling comfortable living in their home country. While for some of the students, especially for those who came back from Asian countries implied that they are more easily adapted and seem to be comfortable living in Japan. For example, a fourth grade girl explained that when she was riding in a car with her family in the Philippines, many people surrounded her car and begged for money. She stated that she was astonished that there are no beggars in Japan. Another boy mentioned he was surprised that there are so many trains in Japan. Several other students were astounded to see that there are so many vending machines and convenience stores in Japan. A sixth grade boy who returned to Japan from China also seemed to be relieved and commented :

“The air isn't polluted here, there was much more traffic in China too.”

Another 6th grade boy who also returned to Japan from China also stated :

“The city was much more dirty in China. At first I was also surprised to see that the Japanese school had rabbits for pets !”

Readjusting to typical living standards of Japan seems very important for many of the *kikokushijos*. Some of them stated they are now getting used to following Japan’s strict rules.

4. 4. 2 Blending in with Local Friends

Many *kikokushijos* reported that when they had a hard time at school, they would turn to their parents and friends outside of school¹²⁾, especially ones who spoke English and had a similar background to them. One returnee girl’s quote illustrates this notion well :

“I made many *kikokushijo* friends outside of school. Now I’m happy playing with them after school.”

Having local friends with similar backgrounds may be one of the good ways to help their smooth reentry.

4. 5 Acquiring Fluidity In Shifting Identities

There are two similar but different ways in which the participants reached a sense of balance between their identities. One type can be called, ‘being your original self’, which is valued in the Western societies and in school settings.

12) Going to JOES (cram school for *kikokushijos*) or local church, accelerated their adaptation.

“*Being your original self*” refers to individuals who feel comfortable being themselves than conforming with others after they repatriated to Japan. The second type, can be called, a “*balance between two identities*” which is, an individual may develop allegiance to multiple cultures simultaneously. Two participants in this study mentioned the later type of “*balance between two identities*” in this study.

4.5.1 “Balance between Two Identities”

One sixth grade boy claims :

“I’m a (typical) Japanese but I feel I’m Chinese when I’m talking to my friends and relatives on Skype every day.”

Another boy noted :

“(I have many Japanese friends here) I’m Skyping and keeping in touch with my friends overseas too. I want to maintain links with them because I’m afraid to be left behind from them after being immersed in Japan for a long time.”

The two participants seemed to be comfortable and readapted to Japanese society. They are Japanese while also holding onto their multicultural identity. The participants thus seem to be able to switch their cultural identity¹³⁾ with an unconscious flexibility.

13) Bennett (1993) termed this type of individual, the *constructive marginal* and is said to move or shift effortlessly between cultural identities.

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This research explored how kikokushijos navigate their transition into Japanese school systems and Japanese culture. This study revealed that their identities were built and strengthened through multilayered processes, such as coping with their confusion and conflicts with their peers. In order to support the kikokushijos to overcome these issues, this research suggests the kinds of help which would be helpful for Japanese teachers who deal with such students. This research strongly suggests measures to be taken to support the kikokushijos emotional needs at the community, prefectural and governmental level should be discussed as well. This chapter discusses the following issues one by one.

5.2 The first research question

The first research question was related to those confusions the kikokushijos experienced when they re-entered Japan. This section asks what type of challenges kikokushijos experienced after reentering to Japan from overseas. According to the research above, more than seventy-five percent of the kikokushijos in this study confirmed that they experienced challenges to a certain degree when they repatriated. Through the author's own experience and comments from current kikokushijos, there seemed to be a positive prejudice among Japanese society for those who repatriated from Western countries such as the U.S the U.K and other European countries. Even though some were treated as outsiders, some were looked upon by their peers for their language ability and their experiences overseas. For the students who came back from Asian countries, such as China Singapore and Thailand, many of them in the survey were satisfied to live in Japan because of its safeness and cleanliness compared to other Asian countries. However, they seemed

to face discriminations from some of their peers and also from their teachers, even though they are the ones who should be providing support to their re-adaptation.

5.3 The second research question

The second research question was whether today's kikokushijos are more well-adjusted than those of previous generations. This study found out that even in our present globalized society, some of the kikokushijos were hurt by the attitudes their Japanese teachers and peers showed them due to their appearances or their lack of language abilities. This research also found that recent social networking platforms available such as email, LINE and Skype provided one of the main factors that have supported the current kikokushijos' smooth re-entry. By utilizing these communicational methods, kikokushijos were able to maintain links with their friends and relatives overseas which made it easier to turn to them during their hardships. These modern platforms or technologies such as LINE and Skype have also helped to differentiate them from the previous generations of returnees. Most importantly, the above factors helped kikokushijos to nurture a healthy multicultural identity.

5.4 The third research question

The third research question was about how kikokushijos have successfully adjusted to Japanese society. What became clear in this study is that the support of their parents, teachers, peers, and their own efforts to blend into their class were vital factors that contributed to their successful adaptation to the school, lifestyle and customs of Japan. In order to enhance the Japanese teachers awareness on multiculturalism and help them develop the necessary skillsets to teach diverse students in Japan, this research would like to suggest a practical training program to improve the quality of education towards the kikokushijos. The author suggests that

these kinds of training programs should be provided either at the community level or the prefecture level.

6. Conclusion

This study clarified kikokushijos' problems they faced upon their reentry to Japan and their adaptation process by examining the author's diary data and the current kikokushijos' comments. Kikokushijos who repatriated to Japan experienced a variety of troubles and confusion about their new environment. However, they were making various efforts to fit into their school and the Japanese society. This finding should apply not only to kikokushijos, but also to many of those with diverse cultural backgrounds. Another finding was that besides their own efforts, influential others, such as family members, teachers and friends played vital roles in their adjustment to Japan. Lastly, this study found out that two current kikokushijo participants became able to shift their identities flexibly. The author believes this stage seems to be the ideal stage for anyone who has resided in a culture besides their own. Finally, the author feels that Japanese society needs to be more open to diversity. The society needs to support Japanese teachers to gain access to training programs and guide books to deal with children with different cultural backgrounds to enhance intercultural competence. If Japanese society become more multicultural and opened to accepting various ways of thinking and behaviors, it would be much easier for kikokushijos and other students with diverse cultural backgrounds to live in this country.

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