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"Who's Pitiful Now?": Othering and Identity Shifts of Japanese Youth From California to Tokyo

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how intraethnic relationships and identities are understood, negotiated, and repositioned among Japanese students at Pearl High School (pseudonym) in California, within a transnational context. I utilize a 2-year multisite ethnography and discourse analysis of follow-up interviews collected over the past 10 years. By focusing on their practices of intraethnic Othering using labels in association to social places, I show the multivocality and multilocality of their identity negotiation as follows: (a) Groups of seemingly homogeneous Japanese students differentiate each other by using labels (e.g. "Jap," "FOB" (fresh off the boat), "wannabe") and making territories within their school. (b) The Japanese university admission policy for returnees (*kikoku*) situates these students on their return to Japan to renegotiate their identity in between culturally *kikoku* and institutionally *kikoku*. (c) The transnational transition into *kikoku*, while reproducing the underlying ideologies, twists the participants' relationship and identity positioning, and influences their social, academic, and career paths in Japan.

America-born or foreign-born, Asian students in the United States, regardless of nationality or length of stay, are often racialized as a homogeneous group haunted with a "model minority" image that they are academically and economically successful. In the past few decades, global mobility from, to, and within Asia is on the rise at a fast rate. According to the U.S. Census (2010), "Asian" is the fastest-growing population compared to the other racially categorized groups. Partly due to the general image of model minority and statistics showing high performance on standardized tests by Asian students, many scholars in Asian American Studies (e.g., Lee, 1996; Liu, 2017) point out that the struggles by and voices of Asian American and Asian students regarding their social identities and relationships with their peers at school tend to be overlooked. Moreover, given the transnational mobility of many of these Asian students and families, it is important to investigate the influence of the educational environment and systems overseas on these students' academic choices and social lives.

Among the Asian population in the United States, Japanese are one of the oldest comers and largest groups. Since the late 1960s, under the high-growth economy in Japan, Japanese companies started to send their workers to stay overseas to develop their international market. Among these Japanese nationals, the largest population, 37%, resides in the United States (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan [MFAJ], 2016). Among Japanese residents in California, which hosts a quarter of the total Japanese population in the United States, 65% are classified as long-term visitors (MFAJ, 2016), which include Japanese nationals with student or work visas, Japanese-U.S. dual citizens (under 20), and permanent residents. More than half of these long-term visitors work at private companies such as Toyota, Japan Airlines, and Panasonic (MFAJ, 2016). Unlike children of Japanese American and

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Human subjects in this study were treated in accordance with standard ethical guidelines.

settled immigrant populations, children of these families commonly expect to stay in the country for a few years, and then relocate to Japan or to another country.

Because the number of Japanese students with overseas experience returning to Japan increased in the 1970s, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology-Japan (MEXT) stipulated public universities in Japan to accommodate returnee students (*kikoku*, also known as *kikokushijo*) in their admission policies by offering alternative evaluation procedures that "an exam should be exempted . . . an essay, an interview, scores of special qualifications, or other appropriate materials accepted by a university should be integrated in the evaluation, instead" (p. 4), whereas regular students must generally take three to five subject exams. With the support by the government, 90[1] public (MEXT, 2017) and 391 private (Knowledge Station, 2017) universities reportedly offer the *kikoku* admission with various quota as of 2016. This system is meant to support returnee students, who are expected to have adapted to life overseas and received a different education from the one in Japan, to have an accessible gateway to the Japanese college system.

The complexity of identity crafting by *kikoku* students is illustrated in the existing literature on *kikokushijo* (e.g., Kanno, 2003; Shibuya, 2004), and the shift in the characteristics of this population over the past few decades has also been analyzed (e.g., Goodman, 2012; Sato, 2005). In fact, the definition of a returnee is not clear; many universities define a returnee as someone who spent more than 2 years overseas and currently has lived in Japan for less than a year. In other words, even if a student spent 16 years overseas, if she or he has been in Japan for over a year before taking a university entrance exam, she or he is no longer eligible to take a returnee exam. Many scholars point out that this returnee entrance policy in Japan has a great impact on the ways in which Japanese high school students overseas select their academic career (e.g., Sato, 2005; Shibano, 2016). Some claim that Japanese universities have institutionalized special admission privileges for foreign-educated Japanese-national returnee high school students (Goodman, 2012). These perspectives do shed light on some of the recurring issues surrounding returnee students' educational experience and identity negotiation. However, little literature unveils the various and changing voices of these Japanese returnees within and across multiple contexts, locales, and countries over time.

This ethnographic study fills the gap in the literature by examining how intraethnic relationships and identities are understood, negotiated, and repositioned among Japanese[2] high school students at Pearl High School (pseudonym) in California, within a transnational context. I utilize a 2-year multisite ethnography and discourse analysis of follow-up interviews collected over the past 10 years. By focusing on the participants' labeling practices associated with social spaces, I show how participants form coethnic groups and shape their identities at an American high school, and how they transition after their return to Japan. This study helps to break homogenous images of such model minority, Asian, Japanese, or *kikoku* students, by exploring voices of complex intraethnic social identity negotiations in transnational places, educational environments, and time.

Multivocality and multilocality: identity negotiations of the others

Individuals in the continuous and simultaneous process of social, economic, and political involvement in multiple nations, known as transnationalism (e.g., Portes, 2001), continue to negotiate their identities and social places across national boundaries (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995). Indeed, identity is not what people are born with, but it interactionally happens and is continuously negotiated in relation to others across time and place (Bucholtz, 2003; Hall, 1997; Waters, 1990; Shao-Kobayashi, 2013). Particularly, the concept of multivocality suggests how different individuals have different voices and an individual's voice can be emergent and multidimensional depending on

[1]The exact number of returnee students accepted is not publicized by every university, but their guidelines for applicants show that the allocation varies (e.g., some departments may accept only two students from the returnee admission, and others may receive dozens).

[2]In this paper, I indicate participants as "Japanese" based on their own assumptions as being Japanese, regardless of their actual nationalities.

a situation (e.g., Appadurai, 1988). Many ethnographic studies, for example, use narratives by multiple informants, which demonstrate a dimension of multivocality within the target group. Another dimension is to look at a narrative or other speech as a discourse constituted of layers of interaction (Wortham, 2000). Social identity is locally situated and "a product of where we are and who we are with, both in interactional and story worlds" (Schiffrin, 1996, p. 198). Indeed, not only do different individuals have different voices or ways of understanding reality, but voice or reality is interactionally constructed, and it may alter depending on context and time.

Polyphonic voices by and within participants are, as Rodman (1992) points out, often recognized and represented in anthropological research; however, the multilocality of places tends to be overlooked by simply treating those as essentially locales. A place, which may be physically, imaginatively, or virtually organized, may be variously experienced and interpreted due to the multivocality of individuals. Previous studies discuss the ways in which people construct a physical space into a meaningful place like a territory (e.g., Delaney, 2002; Thomas, 2005), or how people think of a place like their hometown as they contrast it to their current locale (e.g., Guerrero & Tinkler, 2010; Liu, 2017). Moreover, when individuals are or feel physically or socially close to certain groups, they perceive them elaborately, while they tend to simplify differences among and within those groups when they are physically or socially distanced from those groups (Gurwitsch, 1966). Considering the complexity of a place in social identification practices, multilocality, a reflexive and practical way of experiencing places that is essentially multidimensional and contingent, is a crucial concept to consider along with multivocality.

In understanding multivocality and multilocality in identity negotiation, it is necessary to focus on linguistic interactions (Eckert, 1989; Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982), particularly social categories and labels. They enable us to see the continuous nature of group makeup by showing the insider–outsider dichotomization through either resisting to or confirming one's group membership (Barth, 1998; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). This membership negotiation is often influenced by an ideology of dominant and subordinate group relationships in a society, which consequently impacts on the differentiation between and among marginalized groups by producing conflicts and feelings of rivalry (Tajfel, 1982). In understanding this phenomenon, it is useful to utilize the concept *Othering of coethnics*, a practice of internalizing a dominant ideology by accepting a marginalized identity (Osajima, 1993). Pyke and Dang (2003) state that "because intraethnic othering involves the ridicule and isolation of some coethnics—usually the more ethnically-identified, by other coethnics, usually the more assimilated—it can generate resentment and resistance within the ethnic group" (p. 152). This Othering practice becomes apparent and symbolic when specific labels are acknowledged, shared, and used among individuals. Individuals tend to assume more homogeneity of the Others, which is accelerated by the use of labels (Bucholtz, 2007; Irvine & Gal, 2000) and the notion of social and physical proximity.

By investigating Othering practices among the marginalized "Others," this study highlights the complex layers of the multivocality and multilocality in social identity negotiation. In the analysis below, I show how seemingly homogeneous group members engage in Othering of coethnics by using labels to negotiate their social position among Japanese at a high school in the United States, and as *kikoku* in Japan.

Setting, participants, and methodology

Pearl High School is in an area of California where large numbers of Japanese long-term visitors reside. These Japanese students are usually viewed as "good students," who behave well, study hard, and do not cause serious problems at school—that is, behaving like a model minority. Most participants grew up in Japan and came to the United States because of their parents' jobs. The length of their stay in the United States varied from less than a year to over seven years. The fathers of these adolescents generally earned more than the average U.S. household, and most mothers stayed home to take care of the children. Parents typically hired a private tutor for their children or

sent them to a *juku*, a type of private, after-school program exclusively for Japanese children (also known as cram school). In contrast to Japanese Saturday/Sunday schools, which are funded by MEXT and aimed at maintaining Japanese school curriculum and Japanese language proficiency, at the *juku*, in addition to getting academic support for mathematics and English, the students learn test-taking skills to increase success on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and essay writing in Japanese, which are necessary for *kikoku* entrance exams in Japan.

I conducted an ethnography at Pearl High School in 2004–2006 and met, through daily observations of English Language Development (ELD) classes research, participants of a variety of ages, genders, language backgrounds, social classes, and academic histories. An ethnographic research helps to explore participants' habitual and local knowledge (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Spradley, 1980), as "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) enable researchers to contextualize their labeling and spatial practices. Moreover, a longitudinal and multisite approach allows a researcher to observe shifts in the process of participants' social identity negotiation across different places and times. I selected 25 key participants in different social groups that were interested to talk with me as we built rapport in our daily interactions. I spent time with participants individually and in groups inside and outside of the ELD classrooms, after school, on the Web, and in Japan. Formal interviews and informal conversations took place via face-to-face interactions, text messages, phone calls, and online chat rooms. Moreover, I collected mental maps drawn based on participants' cognitive image of their social community (Tuan, 1975). Follow-up interviews were conducted after they returned to Japan, yearly or biyearly, depending on each participant.

In the analysis, I triangulated approaches to data (Table 1). First, I explored patterns and rules of participants' use of labels and associated linguistic and spatial practices in various contexts through the content analysis of ethnographic data. Second, as recurring practices were identified, I investigated how each participant acknowledged meaning of those labels in interviews, narratives, and mental maps. Third, I examined participants' habitual use of those labels and places in daily interactions. I note that follow-up data does not include participants' habitual use of physical space because participants no longer shared daily space in Japan.

Overall, data includes over 200 pages of field notes, 70 hours of audio-recordings and videotapes of in-person interactions, and 200 pages of text messages and online chat records. The audio-video recordings were transcribed into content-based and conversation-analytic convention (Jefferson, 2004) to understand the data from different points of views, while the conversation-analytic transcript is not presented in this paper due to space limitation. The Japanese transcripts and online messages were translated into English by author. All italicized utterances in transcripts are a translation from the Japanese language.

While it will not be the central focus of the analysis in this paper, I acknowledge the importance of taking the researcher's presence into consideration in the data collection process, because participants were extremely aware of their and others' Japanese-ness, Americanized-ness, or *kikoku*-ness. My status, first as a then-graduate student in the United States, and now as a faculty member at a Japanese University, was likely to affect participants' representation of selves and others examined in this study.

Shifting social places and labels in a transnational context

The following analyses demonstrate the multivocality and multilocality of Japanese returnee students' identity negotiation by focusing on their Othering practices, using labels in association to social places in three phases: First, seemingly homogeneous Japanese students create multiple groups and Other each other by using labels such as "Jap," a well-known derogatory term for Japanese people, "FOB" (fresh off the boat), and "wannabe," and making territories within their high school. Second, participants' Othering practices above are associated with the aforementioned university admission policy for *kikoku*, which consequently situated those same students on their return to

Japan as "culturally not *kikoku* enough but institutionally *kikoku*" students for the Jap and FOB students, and as "culturally *kikoku* but not institutionally *kikoku*" for the rest. Third, the (absence of) transnational transition into the institutionalized category of *kikoku* impacts on the negotiation of participants' *kikoku*-ness, and their social, academic, and career paths in Japan. Overall, the analyses depict the multidimensionality of participants' identity negotiation and the reproduction of the underlying ideologies within and across transnational contexts over time.

"Japs," "FOBs," "wannabes": Positioning among "Japanese" at high school

As described in Figure 1 and Table 2 above, Japanese students formed several cliques and each had a separate lunchtime territory, style of speech, and fashion, as is normative for cliques (Eckert & Rickford, 2001). The Othering of the other cliques is represented by the way they were differently labeled by others and themselves. The BB (Bad Boys) members considered themselves and were considered by others as "bad," often in a cool way. Being seniors, BB members were permitted to go outside of campus during lunchtime. They imitated the hip-hop style fashion and its symbolic expressions such as "fuck" and "man" in Japanese conversation. The Bilinguals, senior girls claiming to be Americanized and bilingual, were idealized by some of the freshman girls in the cafeteria, as they usually performed bilingual-ness by speaking English or mixing English phrases in Japanese conversation. The Bilinguals sat in between classroom buildings with other Asian students, and were usually seen as "goody-two-shoes" in teachers' eyes. In the cafeteria, the Entertainment boys and the Cafeteria Girls occupied tables near the ELD classroom. The Entertainment boys often played football and mimicked comedian skits. The Cafeteria Girls included several subgroups (Table 2), which usually stayed away from each other. Although a few members in the cafeteria were born and raised in the United States and their primary language was English, both cliques rarely used English and intentionally pronounced English vocabularies with a Japanese accent. The Eyeglasses members, who were mostly in the beginner ELD, identified themselves and were identified by others as "nerdy" and "eyeglasses/four-eyes" because not all but most members wore eyeglasses. They only spoke in Japanese, and their speech usually contained difficult, polite, and grammatically correct Japanese. The members enjoyed cultivating a high level of expertise in anime, manga, and study at *juku*. They always sat in the far end of the schoolyard, away from everyone.

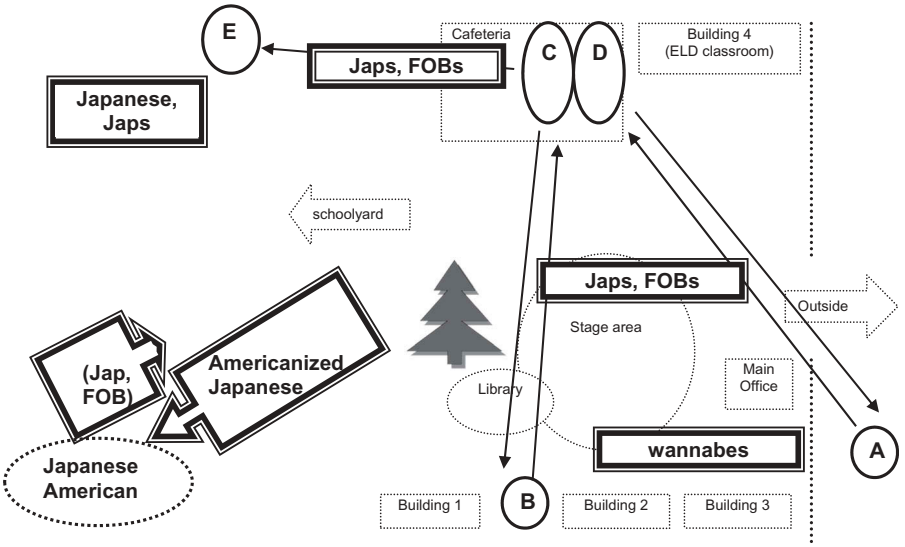

Figure 1. Territories and labeling of groups of transnational Japanese students at school.

Table 1. Triangulation of Data Analysis.

		Types of Data		
			On labels	On space
Angles of vision	Researcher's observation		Field notes	Field notes
	Participants' behavior	Field notes	1. Daily conversations 2. Audio recordings: 3. Content-based transcripts 4. CA Transcripts	Daily movement - Video recordings - Field notes
	Participants to Researcher	Field notes	Interviews & Narratives - Audio recordings 1. Content-based transcripts 2. CA Transcripts - Online chat & texting records	Mental maps

Table 2. Characteristics of Groups Among Transnational Japanese Students.

	Lunch space	Gender	Grade level	*ELD classes	*Juku*	Advanced in Japan
Group A Bad Boys	Outside	Boys	- - - 12	Post-/ Non-ELD	None in fall/ 3 yes in winter	Yes (4)/ No (1)
Group B Bilinguals	Bench	Girls	- - - 12	Post-/ Non-ELD	None	No (4)
Group C Entertainment	Cafeteria	Boys	-–10/11 - - - - 12	ELD 3 Post-/ Non-ELD	Yes	Yes (10)
Group D Cafeteria Girls		Girls	9/10 - - -–10/11 - -–10/11 - - - 11/12	ELD 1, 2 ELD 3 Post-/ Non-ELD Post-/ Non-ELD	Yes	Yes (12)/ No (1)
Group E Eyeglasses	Schoolyard	Boys	9/10 - -	ELD 1, 2	Yes	Yes (5)

Notes. *ELD1 = beginner, ELD2 = intermediate, ELD3 = advanced.

Both the BB and the Bilinguals Othered the cafeteria occupants as Jap/FOB, and the Entertainment and the Cafeteria Girls labeled the Eyeglasses as Jap/FOB, while the Eyeglasses interestingly identified themselves as Jap. In fact, these labels were commonly used by Japanese American students ("Americanized Japanese" in Japanese students' eyes) against Japanese students to indicate one being too ethnic. And with or without a direct experience of being labeled as such, Japanese students further reinterpreted and shared Jap and FOB as "someone who cannot speak English well and only hangs out with the same kind." Moreover, the Entertainment and the Cafeteria Girls labeled the BB and the Bilinguals as "wannabes," who tried to act as if they were "Americanized" by trying to speak English. In contrast, the Eyeglasses talked little about other Japanese students; as Yuji says, "*We don't know about the others as we are physically separated from them*" (interview, April 2005).

Othering jap among japanese

Taichi was a senior in an advanced ELD class and was a teaching assistant of an intermediate class. In October 2005, it had been three years since Taichi came to the United States from Japan. He usually hung out with other senior boys, who were identified as "Bad Boys (BB)" in area A (Figure 1) by other Japanese students. Taichi always sat by the window, and did not interact with the ELD students except when the teachers told him to do so. One day, Taichi looked outside of the window behind me, and then he said to himself:

"*Huh . . . he dyed his hair.*"

I turned around and saw a boy with dyed hair talking with a couple of Asian students in front of the cafeteria. It was Arata, a senior student of the Entertainment clique.

Satoko: *Oh, that's Arata, right?*
Taichi: *Um, I don't know. 'Cause I'm not interested in Jap.*

Even though Taichi clearly voiced unfamiliarity with Arata, the fact that Taichi labeled him as "Jap" showed he not only knew about Arata, but also his characteristics as Jap. Taichi positioned himself away from Arata by Othering him as Jap regardless of the demographic categorization that they were both Japanese. In addition to the categorical differentiation in discourse, Taichi avoided physically entering the cafeteria, where large numbers of Japanese students, including Arata, territorialized during lunchtime.

Relative representation of ideologies in labeling

Whether it was Jap, FOB, or wannabe, the underlying ideology consistently involved English proficiency and friendship with Americans. In the following excerpt from an interview (December 2004) with Yu in the BB and Mizuki in the Cafeteria Girls, who became friends at *juku*, they explain how the Bilingual clique is not bilingual or Americanized as the members claim, but "wannabes."

Yu: *Those wannabes* [giggles].
Mizuki: *People like Shiho and Yumi* *[in the Bilingual] *speak English. That's why they eat with, like, Chinese girls elsewhere.*
Satoko: *So, who counts as people who can speak English?*
Mizuki *It's just they want to speak English. Everyone in the cafeteria can speak it too because they've been in the U.S. long enough.*
Satoko: *So, is it about whether they want to speak English or not?*
Yu: *Or, because they don't like to be in the cafeteria.*
Mizuki: *Japanese. They hate a place with full of Japanese.*

Regardless of the fact that Yu was in the BB, which was occasionally acknowledged as wannabes like the Bilinguals, in this exchange, both he and Mizuki Othered the Bilinguals as "wannabes," who want to speak English and stay out of the cafeteria to avoid Japanese students. While the labeler's position to the labeled is different, this criterion is linked with that of Jap or FOB—someone who cannot speak English well and only hangs out with the same kind. Moreover, although Mizuki, who came to the United States less than a year ago and barely understood English, claimed "*everyone in the cafeteria*" can speak English, most students there expressed their lack of English proficiency as they usually compared it with that of local students. Indeed, one's positioning is relative and not definitive, and a fact can be interpreted differently depending on whose voice is presented from which perspective in a local context.

Factors of group making

Each participant had a different subjective view of his or her own group and others'; however, everyone shared at least four major characteristics in the ways they described groups (Table 2). First, groups were clearly divided by gender. Second, each group socially structured physical space within the school by carving it into "territorial preserves" (Goffman, 1971) that were patrolled and defended insofar as students treated them as having implications for the construction and management of identities, and shaped their discourse and movements accordingly. Third, ELD students were divided into levels. As previous research has found (e.g., McKay & Wong, 1996; Miller, 2004; Olivo, 2003; Peirce, 1995), students in English learning programs commonly had little chance to make friends outside of their classrooms, and their territoriality is influenced by ELD curriculum as well as ethnic groups (e.g., Olsen, 1997). Takeo, a sophomore in the Entertainment clique, explained why he thought Japanese students had few non-Japanese friends during a face-to-face conversation in May 2005:

When you are in ELD, they put you in the class with a bunch of Asians. So, you rarely see, like, pure white people . . . like, those who speak only English, have only American friends, and hair is not black.

Participants shared a notion that the school personnel intentionally assigned ELD students in mainstream classes with many Asian students, and thus they rarely came across "*pure whites*," a symbolic representation of America in their mind. Indeed, the three years of the ELD program functioned not only as a curriculum but also as the first social place for the newcomer English-learning students to interact with peers. With little chance to befriend non-ELD students, they met coethnics sharing the same primary language a few hours every day, and they started to socialize in and out of the ELD classroom.

Lastly, the attendance of *juku*: all but the BB and Bilinguals attended a *juku*, and three out of five members in the BB started to attend one in the final months of their senior year to prepare for the *kikoku* entrance exams. At *juku*s, everything is taught in Japanese by Japanese teachers, which many participants described as enjoyable and "*almost like a school in Japan*." Most participants studied at *juku* after school daily. Consequently, which *juku* one attended influenced the group formulation at school, and which group they belonged to influenced their choice of *juku* as well.

These groups were not something definite, but the members changed based on various factors, such as entry of new students, conflicts over friendships, or personality differences. It was remarkable, however, that the participants shared an idea about the group boundaries, labels, and ideologies attached to those—English proficiency and friendship with Americans. As discussed above, the ways in which students positioned their own group were different from others' perceptions, and they variously performed Othering by interpreting their environment and engaging in the making of and maintenance of cliques. Interestingly, their attempt to differentiate themselves from the other Japanese paradoxically strengthened the notion that they are all part of the Japanese student circle.

"Kikoku" or "not *kikoku"*: transitioning from high school to college

The major reason for most Japanese students to return to Japan for college is the aforementioned *kikoku* entrance exam. An advertisement for *juku* X notes, "*With kikoku admission, you can enter a prestigious university that is two to three ranks higher than taking a general entrance exam.*" Yuji from the Eyeglasses clique said in an interview (April 2005), "*I want to go to a prestigious university rather than a community college around here. I believe everyone thinks that way. It's impossible here* (to enter a reputable American university)." Even after these Japanese students completed the ELD program, they had much to catch up in mainstream classes. Both the students and their parents acknowledged that they would be at a great disadvantage if they were to pursue higher education in the.United States. In most cases, their choice was limited to community colleges. Finishing general education at community college and transferring to a four-year university is an economical and common path in the United States; however, it is not generally customary in Japan. Given the difference in education system and culture in the two countries, Japanese students and parents tended to ignore the option in the United States. Participants resonated: "*Academic counselors assume we would just go back to Japan. They don't encourage us to go to the U.S. universities*" (Takeo, June 2005). Consequently, only 6 out of 38 Japanese students in different cliques, including ones that were not key participants of this study, advanced to college or university in the United States between 2004 and 2008.

Not kikoku *enough*

Generally, *Kikoku* are no longer racialized as a minority after their return to Japan, yet literature shows that *kikoku* are often considered unable to adapt well to life in Japan and are stigmatized by society due to their cultural foreignness, while in another context they are expected to speak English (even though many returned from Asia) and are admired for that ability (Sato, 1999; Shibuya, 2004). Contrary to these images, the students in this study usually hung out with Japanese students and spoke Japanese in the United States; thus, they found few difficulties in adjusting to a life in Japan.

After returning to Japan, participants initially believed they became "normal Japanese," and expected their lives in Japan would be as enjoyable as those at *juku*. Even labels such as Jap, FOB, and wannabe were erased and they began to renegotiate their identity around a uniformly assigned institutional label, *kikoku*. Taichi in the BB said, "*It's easy to date kikoku because of the common value*" (interview, August 2006). However, most then-Jap or FOB students started to struggle with the expectation for *kikoku* regarding English proficiency and cultural foreignness—the exact reason for which participants were constrained in the United States. The lack of these qualities profoundly influenced most participants to perceive themselves as not culturally *kikoku* enough. At the same time, they could strategically take advantage of their *kikoku* status at their convenience, for example, when applying for a part-time job. Below is part of a narrative by Takeo of the Entertainment clique during a follow-up interview in August 2006.

> *When I applied for a job at a cool pizzeria in Shinjuku, they instantly welcomed me, as my resume said I was in the U.S. (for four years). They were, like, "Oh you are* kikokushijo*! You are smart! We have many foreign customers, and now with you, we can serve them in English!" I got worried as I can't speak English, but I thought I could improve it if I can work there. So I just went along with it.*

As illustrated above, most then-Jap and FOB participants felt distanced either from "normal Japanese" or *kikoku*, but they began seeking to acquire the essence of *kikoku*-ness by, for example, studying English and befriending international students, especially white English speakers. Consequently, participants strengthened their position as *kikoku* by reemphasizing the categorical criteria and social ideologies in Japan, and Othering their past selves in the United States.

Kikoku-*but-not*-kikoku

Against the major trend to take the *kikoku* exams among Japanese students, the BB and the Bilingual members who saw themselves and were seen by the others as wannabes, and who preferred to speak more English and act Americanized, clearly distanced themselves from Jap and FOB. Shiho of the Bilingual clique said, "It's not like they have a choice like us. *Right?* We can speak both English and Japanese, but they can't. So, they can't go to college here even if they want to. *I pity them*" (follow-up interview, January 2005). As described here, Shiho resisted the choice to return to Japan in order to show that she is different from and superior to the others based on her English proficiency.

The few students who advanced to the U.S. colleges successfully finished their two years and some completed even a four-year university degree. The major issue most students faced after graduation was finding a job. Whether it was due to the lack of qualifications for a job or due to the bad economy then, eventually, all but one student decided to go back to Japan for further career opportunities. Upon returning to Japan, these graduates also started to identify themselves as *kikoku*. Certainly, they were culturally *kikoku*, more so than the other students who took the *kikoku* exam; however, they were not technically *kikoku* because no institution recognized them as such. Indeed, *kikoku* is both an institutional category and social label, of which participants constantly worked hard to be a legitimate member.

"Who's pitiful now?": twisted positioning over a decade

As years went by after those culturally-not-*kikoku*-enough students came back to Japan, they reflected on the early years of university lives and repositioned themselves as *kikoku*-enough. Below is an excerpt of a follow-up interview with the Entertainment members in November 2012.

Seiji: *Really, Japanese people don't understand English at all* [giggles].
Shinya: *I know* [giggles]. *I realized my English is not bad.*
Seiji: *Yeah. I made quite a few international friends and started hanging out with them, like going for a drink and all.*

These students recognized themselves and were recognized by others as someone who "lacks English proficiency" in the United States; however, as illustrated above, they highlighted their *kikoku*-ness by Othering the locals, stating their English was comparably better than the locals, and claiming that they have international friends. Consequently, then-Jap-or-FOB students internalized and reproduced an image of *kikoku* through molding themselves into one over their period of stay in Japan.

Aside from the social aspect of *kikoku*, its institutional characteristics played a significant role in the participants' career path. As in other countries, a degree from prestigious universities puts students at an advantage in finding higher-paying jobs in Japan. Moreover, the *kikoku* title on a resume makes the application even more attractive for large corporations with a global market in sight. In a follow-up interview, Kenta from the Eyeglasses clique excitedly expressed how he landed a new job in a worldwide transport industry. "*It was my dream to be in this company. I am planning to apply for working at an overseas office for several years*" (October 2015).

On the other hand, the majority of culturally-*kikoku*-but-not-institutionally-*kikoku* students appeared to have missed an essential step that opened paths to different career opportunities. With an associate degree from the U.S. two-year college, some students were not able to find a stable job in Japan, and the jobs they found tended to require little of either skills or English proficiency. Shiho from the Bilingual clique completed her associate degree in the United States and professional school in a garment industry in Japan, worked at a few different companies in the industry as a part-time for a few years, and has now become a stay-at-home mother. Shiho expresses her situation as below in the follow-up interview (February 2015):

Shiho: *I always thought I'd marry a kikoku like all my ex-es, but I married a regular Japanese who doesn't speak English.* But he is willing to learn English, so I talk to him in English *sometimes at home. But other than that,* I don't use English much.
Satoko: *Do you plan to work again in the future?*
Shiho: *Many people tell me it's a waste of ability,* and I do like the industry. . . . I don't know. If I have a chance, I want to.

The excerpt shows how she Others her husband as "regular Japanese" who does not speak English, different from her and her ex-boyfriends who were all *kikoku*, at least culturally. At the time of this interview, Shiho was happy about her marriage, yet as her unclear answers demonstrate, she saw her current situation to be different from what she imagined it to be like a few years ago. The other "*kikoku*-but-not-*kikoku*" were not eloquent about job situations for themselves or of being "not-*kikoku*-enough" either.

The situation of these BB and Bilinguals appeared a surprise for then-Jap or FOB participants. Rinko, from the Cafeteria Girls, who admired the Bilinguals during her high school years, works in the global health industry. She mentioned about Shiho in a follow-up interview (February 2015): "*It's hard to say, but it's a pity to know where Shiho is.*" Takeo in the Entertainment also stated as follows:

> *I kind of felt behind those* [wannabes/Americanized] *people before, and felt they looked down on us. . . . But, who's pitiful now? Well, I couldn't get into my university if I took a regular exam though* [laughs]. (follow-up interview, July 2009)

As illustrated here, the BB and the Bilinguals who were considered and considered themselves as somewhat superior to Jap or FOB at the U.S. high school became considered "pitiful" after 10 years. Indeed, participants' continuous practice of intraethnic Othering across multiple locations, educational institutions, and transnational contexts surely twisted participants' social position over time, while continuously reproduced their underlying ideologies.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper illustrated the case of multivocality and multilocality in social identity negotiations among Japanese students at a high school in California, and after their return to Japan, focusing

on their intraethnic Othering practices in using labels in association to places. Certainly, the scale of this study is limited and different patterns can be observed depending on environment and resources available to students in a similar status; yet, by illuminating a broad range of practices among participants, this longitudinal study highlighted paradoxical processes that have not received much attention: the effects of perpetuating a cycle of asymmetrical opportunities influenced over a lengthy period of time by education systems of different countries under globalization.

At a glance, Japanese students at Pearl High school might have appeared "naturally" gathering at a corner of the cafeteria and the school field, speaking their own language with their own kinds of people, much like other racialized minority groups in the United States (Tatum, 1997; Thomas, 2005). In a similar manner, *kikoku* may be homogeneously perceived as a Westernized English-speaking people in Japan. By following participants' identity practice in a transnational context, the paper depicted the continuity between these often-separated images, which was usually missing from the existing literature.

The analysis revealed the following: (a) Participants formed groups based on factors such as ELD levels, gender, and *juku* attendance; they performed Othering of each other by using labels such as Jap, FOB, and wannabe, and carving their daily places into territories at the high school. (b) Participants started to renegotiate their identity around the uniformly adapted label *kikoku*, which impacted the university admission system in the United States and Japan; Jap and FOB students turned into culturally-not-*kikoku*-enough-but-institutionally-*kikoku*, and the acculturated ones who advanced to college in the United States turned into culturally-*kikoku*-but-not-institutionally-*kikoku*. (c) The transnational transition twisted participants' identity positioning; then-Jap or FOB students strategically used their institutional status to climb up the social, academic, and career ladder as *kikoku* in Japan, and mold themselves into a general *kikoku* image; while then-more-acculturated peers without institutionally *kikoku* status eventually missed on gaining social capital as elites in Japan. Moreover, this identity positioning continuously reproduced and maintained the underlying ideology regarding English proficiency and cultural foreignness, inducing friendship with Americans and other foreigners.

In this rapidly globalizing world, students' social identities, relationships, and ideologies continue to become more complicated by involving multiple places and different education systems across countries. Therefore, current educational environments and systems withholding ever-changing student populations need further examining. In the case of the *kikoku* admission policy, certainly, its initial intention was to aide returnee students to have a different gateway to access university education, in expectation that these students would or should contribute to the internationalization of the institution as well as of the Japanese society as a whole. However, as discussed throughout this paper, this entrance exam system has become a mere shell of another entrance exam template, disregarding the actual situation many Japanese students overseas and those who returned to Japan may find themselves in today. This paper revealed also the necessity of reevaluating the *kikoku* admission system.

In a future study, I will further investigate how intraethnic relationships and identities of Japanese returnee students are interpreted and shaped by a variety of people involved, including teachers and school counselors in the U.S. schools, parents, *juku* teachers, and peers. This would be helpful in understanding even more complex aspects of multivocality and multilocality involved in social identity negotiation among marginalized and often overlooked Others beyond institutional and demographic categories.

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