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Ethnic Identity, Culture, and Race: Japanese and Nikkei at Home and Abroad[1]

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Today, three million people of Japanese descent are citizens of almost every nation in the world. In contrast to other transplanted peoples—like African, Irish, Chinese, Jewish, or Mexican migrants —the individual stories of Japanese transnational migrants and *Nikkei* (people of Japanese descent who were born and grew up abroad) have received little scholarly attention. Discussions of Japanese transnational migrants and Nikkei have focused on social and political issues, such as racial discrimination or the internment camps of the United States and Canada during World War II, "returnee" Nikkei, and *dekasegi* (temporary migrant workers) in Japan.

Japanese-Latin Americans en route to US internment camps in World War II

Issues of individual and community struggles for cultural and economic survival have yet to be examined in a global context. Little, too, has been written on Japanese nationals living abroad, an important group whose numbers have been increasing rapidly in recent decades. These people are inexorably involved in the social, cultural, economic, and political environments of both their resident and ancestral-home societies. All migrants, of course, find distinct differences between their original societies and those in which they currently reside. And while they live in new nations, many retain connections to their old home.

Images of "home" however often are reconstructed in the minds of transnational migrants in special ways because they lack direct daily interactions with people from the ancestral country. Images of home often become exaggerated. For example, migrants from the same country tend to associate with each other in their new societies where they confront daily struggles. By coming together in activities and organized events, the group reforms images of the homeland and, through these images, individuals construct and reform their sense of "self" and "other."

The host nation's public view of the migrants' home country also shapes their self image. People of the host nation call the immigrants' culture "ethnic," as seen in everyday discourse when referring to things like "ethnic food," "ethnic music," or "ethnic heritage." This mainstream characterization is used without thought or malice, even though the migrants themselves might be uncomfortable, say, to find their standard cooking ingredients in the "ethnic food" aisle of the grocery store. The migrants, then, become "ethnic minorities" both because they are referred to as such, but also because that is how they come to see themselves.

It is widely believed that the concept of ethnicity has long been with us. However, it is actually a very new notion. The term "ethnicity," together with terms like "ethnic community," "ethnic group," "ethnic minorities," and "ethnic identity," has been used habitually only since the 1960s. The more such terms have been used, the more scholars have started asking: What are the differences between "ethnicity" and already existing terms, such as social class and race? For example, in 1967 in his book *Race Relations*, Michael Banton stated that ethnicity was formed by the members of the minority groups themselves and race was a public classification of those minorities by those outside the group. However, this claim has many exceptions. For instance, ethnicity is also used for public actions like "ethnic cleansing" in Yugoslavia, and a "race" categorization—black identity—has been used to foster solidarity among those of African heritage. Regardless of scholarly consensus or debate, race and ethnicity have remained two of the most ambiguous and contested terms in the social sciences.

When race and ethnicity are discussed, Japanese are not typically the first group of people to come to mind. However, the Japanese actually *are* an interesting case meriting study. For example, although Japanese have been categorized as "Asian," "Yellow," "Pacific Islander," or "Oriental" in North America, in South Africa Japanese were labeled as "Honorary Whites" or "Honorary Europeans" during the apartheid period in the 1960s (Kawasaki 2001: 54). Since the 1980s, Japanese, as well as some other Asians, were also called "Honorary Whites" even in North America, often because of their "model minority" status. These attributions are related to the definitions of both terms—race and ethnicity—and are not only based on physical characteristics or national heritage but also on economics, politics and culture.

Furthermore, in modern history, the Japanese have also tried to separate themselves from other Asians or East Asians, regarding themselves as equal to, or equivalent to, Westerners and superior to many of their Asian neighbors. These feelings fueled Japanese nationalism and provided one rationale for the invasion and colonization of Asian nations in the years 1895-1945 (e.g., Beasley 1991; Guelgher 2006; Kang 2005; Ohno 2006). Even today it is often said that Japanese treat Asians more harshly than white people—whether they are casual visitors or long-term residents such as second, third and fourth generation Koreans in Japan (e.g., Ryang 2005). While the Japanese are keen to separate themselves from other Asians, some Nikkei also try to separate themselves from Japanese (e.g., Creighton 2010: 133-162).

Why do Nikkei try to see themselves as different from Japanese from Japan? "What is Japanese?" "What is Nikkei?" "What is race?" "What is ethnicity?"

What Is Ethnicity and Race?

The American Anthropological Association, in its seminal 1998 statement on race, says:

> In the United States both scholars and the general public have been conditioned to viewing human races as natural

> and separate divisions within the human species based on visible physical differences…Physical variations in any given trait tend to occur gradually rather than abruptly over geographic areas.[2]

For the general public, especially in the West, these "visible physical differences" are customarily reduced to skin color. Why is skin color used as the basis for racial classification? Living in societies that do this, people believe it is obvious and logical, because skin color is one of the most visible human characteristics, and it is easy to tell someone's geographic "home" by using it. Of course, this is just custom and has no basis in reality. Such visible criteria could easily be replaced by something else.[3] For example, when first seeing people from Europe and North America, Japanese called them a variety of things, including *aoi me no hito* (blue-eyed people), *ke-tō* (hairy Chinese),[4] and *hana no takai-hito* (big-nosed people). For the Japanese, the physical characteristics they noticed most were not based on skin color. It is true that skin-color-based terms do exist among the Japanese—for example, *hakujin* (white people)—but these were originally used by Japanese migrants to North America after they arrived there, or were based on Western categorizations.

Japanese painting of Admiral Perry and two officers, 1854 (Fitzwilliam Museum)

Many people believe that a black-and-white dichotomy is a natural classification of the human mind, and argue that this as a basis for racial classification (Banton 1987: xii–xiv). In this conception, the human mind is naturally structured to see the world in binary oppositions (Levi-Strauss 1967). But even if the concept of binary oppositions is a natural structure of the human mind, why is skin color selected? We could still categorize people by other criteria, like hairy versus non-hairy. For example, I mentioned that Japanese used terms like *ke-tō* (Westerner, "hairy Chinese") and *kara-bito* (foreigner, "Chinese person") to label outsiders. The word "ke" literally means "hair" and the words "tō" and "kara" mean Chinese. Thus, the literal meaning of ke-tō is "hairy Chinese." The fact that this term could be extended to all outsiders is derived from the idea that Chinese (tō) were outsiders or foreigners in the eyes of Japanese throughout the country's history (and often the only outsiders they saw for long periods of time). When the Japanese first saw Westerners, they were struck by their hairy bodies. As a result, they called these new foreigners "hairy foreigners" to distinguish them from other "non-hairy foreigners" like Chinese and Koreans.

Japanese saw chest hair and hairy arms in relation to animal's fur. They saw Western people as in the process of evolving, so Westerners were closer to monkeys and apes, thus more "primitive." On the other hand, kara-bito, the non-hairy foreigners, were at a higher stage of human evolution. Just as black and white became racial synonyms for inferior and superior in the Euro-American lexicon, "hairy" and "non-hairy" took on the same connotations. People are prone to categorize others in relation to characteristics they feel they have that are superior. Thus, ke-tō became a derogatory word in Japanese like the "N" word in English.

The American Anthropological Association's 1998 report clearly states that skin-color-based racial categorization is not founded on any scientific evidence, but is a product of historical and contemporary social, economic, educational, and political circumstances. In contrast to ethnicity, race and race-related words have a written past going back almost two hundred years. Wade (1997) and others (e.g., Banton 1987) argue that the significance of the term "race" has changed in many important ways in the course of history.

Smedley (2007) observes that in the nineteenth century "science"—using techniques of measuring various aspects of the human body—sought to affirm the differences between blacks and whites so as to justify the retention of phenotypically based separate human groups. In the twentieth century, race scientists turned to IQ tests—which were heavily influenced by European and European American morals, culture, education, and values—to supposedly measure differences in human intelligence. In the twenty-first century, race scientists persist in promoting these alleged heritable race-based characteristics to differentiate peoples. As a result, even today many find it very difficult not to evaluate human beings on the basis of skin color, or to judge their moral, physical, and intellectual abilities independent of race.

But, as the world globalizes, such attitudes are becoming harder to maintain. These days there is more and more miscegenation—to use the archaic term. It is hard to categorize the children of such mixed unions. Historically, in the United States, conventions like the "one-drop rule" prevented people of mixed race from being classified as "white" whatever the color of their skin. Under this convention, a person with any African ancestry at all would be classified as "black" for legal purposes. Remnants of this still linger. The best contemporary example is Barack Obama. This child of a European American mother and an African father is called the "First Black President." By contrast, in Brazil there are many different skin-color-based classifications of people and terms for them (e.g., Harris 1964; Hasenbalg 1991). Some say there are upwards of two hundred such words in Brazilian Portuguese. What is the significance of these different categorizations? Are there really inherent biological differences between the races? Apparently not. Again, in the 1998 statement of the American Anthropological Association on race, we see that:

> Evidence from the analysis of genetics (e.g., DNA) indicates that most physical variation, about 94%, lies within so-called racial groups. Conventional geographic "racial" groupings differ from one another only in about 6% of their genes. This means that there is greater variation within "racial" groups than between them. In neighboring populations there is much overlapping of genes and their phenotypic (physical) expressions.[5]

Many people, and most anthropologists, then, recognize that skin-color-based races do not exist as biologically identifiable entities. However, as social categories, such fictions persist, and for all practical purposes are ontologically real, as any person of any "minority" can attest. But what about non-skin-color-based racial differences? Can races be defined using other biological features, such as molecular genetics? Though some believe so, there has yet to be any evidence to support it. Nonetheless, some people believe that other non-skin-color-based genetic differences exist between the races. The prototypical example is Nazi discrimination against the Jews.

What Are the Differences Between Race and Ethnicity?

Many researchers use ethnicity to mean an insider's view and race to mean an outsider's view. Seen in this way, ethnicity carries a positive categorization and race a negative one. Pyong Gap Min (1999: 16) wrote, "Researchers have used interchangeably the

terms ethnicity, ethnic identity, ethnic attachment, ethnic cohesion, ethnic solidarity, and ethnic mobilization … The term ethnic attachment seems best to capture this meaning … although many researchers use ethnic solidarity to indicate ethnic attachment as well." Kim's description of ethnicity here is positive, but Kim is really referring not to how minorities categorize themselves, but instead to their strategy to create solidarity and power for social mobilization. Race, on the other hand, as the categorization of the phenotypical outsider's view, is applied to certain groups who are socially stigmatized. Furthermore, the category of race is often used as a strategy for ranking people in order to foster control. Conversely using ethnicity is often deployed as a strategy of grassroots resistance in order to foster group solidarity.

The question, however, is how—or can—we separate race from ethnicity? For example, in July 2009 President Obama visited Ghana for the first time as president of the United States. Local people were ecstatic about the visit. The following dialogue about Obama's reception by Ghanaians was reported by NBC News:

> Local Ghanaian: "Welcome home, welcome to Africa, welcome to home, to Ghana."
>
> News Reporter (background narration): "Ghanaians are welcoming Obama, like a native son…it makes no difference that President Obama's family is from an entirely different country."
>
> News Reporter (to interviewee): "Barack Obama is Kenyan but Ghanaians are still proud of him.
>
> Local Ghanaian (to reporter): "Yah…because he is African, you know? Part of him."[6]

For Ghanaians, the continent of Africa—which is beyond nation and indigenous groups—is home to Obama. But President Obama, who grew up without having his Kenyan father around from the time he was two years old, identifies more subtly: "I have the blood of Africa within me."[7]

Welcome home, Obama

Home and associated geographic areas can be defined and redefined to form solidarity as needed. Ghanaians were excited about having the first "black" president of a powerful nation visit them and expanded their space to include all of Africa so they could be there to welcome him at his "homecoming." Africa for them at that time, then, was something beyond national geographic divisions. But does this geographic spacing derive from race or ethnicity? Are they forming their relationship to Obama through that of race or ethnicity? Obama and Ghanaians share physical affinity in the sense that Obama expressed when he referred to his "African blood." Ghanaians used blood and home to foster connections between themselves and Obama, between Africa and the United States. If we are to use race as a classification of physical affinity, and ethnicity as the group member's views in relation to home, then Ghanaians created their ties to Obama through ethnicity, while Obama did so through racial identity. But if we focus on race as a negative concept and ethnicity as a positive one, we could then say that both Ghanaians and Obama created their connections through ethnicity. It is ambiguous. If we say both Obama and the Ghanaians used elements of race to create their relationships, then race would not be a negative framing in this case. Not only wouldn't it be negative, but Ghanaians even used the often "negative" factor of physical classification to create strong social solidarity.

In the Japanese case, things are similarly complicated. Perhaps because of postwar economic growth, Japanese have often been categorized as "white" by others in deference to their relative affluence (as seen, for example, in South Africa under the old apartheid regulations). Also, in the contemporary United States, Japanese—as other East Asians, too, for that matter—sometimes seem to occupy a middle-ground between often contentious Black-White dichotomies. However, consider how Japanese view themselves. They do not think of themselves simply as "Yellow" in the way that European Americans, say, think of themselves as "White." Japanese tend rather to distinguish themselves from other East Asians, such as Chinese or Koreans. Again, clearly the phenotypical/biological is being conflated with the ethnic/cultural.

What Is the Essence of Ethnicity?

There are two major theories of ethnicity in the social sciences today. Those are the primordial perspective and the social mobilization perspective. The primordial perspective emphasizes primordial group ties associated with physical affinity, common language, common religion, and other cultural and historical commonalities as the basis of ethnicity. On the other hand, the social mobilization perspective sees ethnicity as an emergent concept in which ethnic connections are created and re-created in the context of adjustment in the host society (cf. Min and Kim 1999: 17).

I suggest that ethnicity is the product of social relationships, which are based on common socio-cultural values. For example, I studied the changes of ethnic identity of Valéria, a third generation Japanese Brazilian living in a Japanese-Brazilian commune (Adachi 2010). She had been identified as *Nihonjin* (Japanese) by some members of the commune when she came to live there. However, after divorcing her commune-born husband, leaving the commune, and taking their children with her, she came to be identified as a *gaijin* (foreigner). According to the *Issei* (first generation Japanese transnational migrants) commune members I talked to, she could be regarded as a third-generation Japanese in Brazil, but she had revealed gaijin (i.e., non-Japanese-Brazilian) cultural values when she pursued her personal happiness instead of her children's and family's happiness. In other words, they had initially categorized her as Nihonjin because of her physical appearance and, on that basis, presumed that she would accept communal life. But when she transgressed the community's philosophy, they realized that it was not her race that mattered, it was that she was enculturated as a Brazilian and held different cultural values. Thus, they referred to her as a foreigner even though she looks Japanese. Her ethnicity, then, was based on her relationship with the community.

Reyes-Ruiz (2010) also argues that ethnicity not only emerges through relationships, but such relationships are made through constructed, created, or imagined cultural values. When the economies in Brazil and Peru declined in the 1980s and 1990s, many Nikkei from those nations migrated to Japan as temporary laborers (e.g., Tsuda, 2004). Many are still working there today. Because Japan was suffering a labor shortage, the Japanese government issued special work permits to Nikkei people, whom they felt would fit into national culture more easily than other migrant workers. The government naively believed that despite the fact that these

workers had never been to Japan, since they were Nihonjin, there would be no cultural or social barriers between them and the Japanese in Japan. However, these "returnee" Japanese-Brazilian dekasegi workers experienced social, cultural, economic, and political discrimination as great as that experienced by migrant workers from other countries (if not more).

Although each Latin American nation and culture has different foods and ingredients, in Japan these products are more likely found at a Latin American grocery store than a Japanese one. Such stores became meeting places for these workers from abroad. Also, these returnee Japanese-Brazilian dekasegi—and other Latin American dekasegi—workers gathered at a Catholic church, even though some were Protestants and Buddhists. They did not always share a common language. Not all of them spoke Japanese, but Portuguese and Spanish are similar enough that a new blending of the two languages—which Reyes-Ruiz (2010: 172, 175) says is called Portuñol—developed as a means of communication.

In the early 1980s Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983:1) showed that traditions are invented, constructed, and formally instituted rather than just appearing ad hoc or ahistorically. "Invented tradition" is taken to mean a set of practices—normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules, and of a ritual or symbolic nature—that seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by reception. I have suggested (Adachi 2010) that in drawing on native Japanese belief—respect for nature and farming—the leaders of a group of Japanese migrants in Brazil re-created Japan, Brazilian style, when they established the Kubo Commune in São Paulo. Drawing on principles of *Nōhon-shugi* (agriculture first), they created what they believed to be a traditional Japanese lifestyle, but it was one that probably never existed in Japan. The Nōhon-shugi philosophy was reformulated by the founding leader of Kubo in order to unite the members facing multiple crises in their new lives in Brazil.

Reyes-Ruiz (2010) reports that a sense of Pan–Latin American ethnicity is formed through creating the "same" Latin American culture in Japan. Under this emergent ethnicity, these Latin Americans strengthen their social relationships in a new foreign nation through shared social positions and contemporary experiences. Reyes-Ruiz's and my studies point to the need to reconsider how ethnicity emerges depending on social circumstances.

The Complexity of Human Feelings

Eriksen (1993) states that race and ethnicity are not types, but human relations; that is, the idea of a shared ethnicity emerges in people's interactions among themselves and others. Although both race and ethnicity are relations that emerge in people's interactions—and both can be used for diverse purposes including discrimination, identity, solidarity, and cohesion—they are not the same kinds of relations. Race emerges in people's interactions when they perceive a physical affinity. Ethnicity emerges in social relations where people experience cultural or historical similarities. These similarities are acquired through birth and upbringing (including language, cultural values, and historical memories). Such similarities may be imaginary or invented. As mentioned, currently Latin American transnational migrants to Japan are attempting to form a Pan-Latin American ethnicity through "shared cultural elements", even though they do not eat the same food or speak a common language. And people's relationships are in flux; depending on social circumstances, they change. In other words, ethnicity is not static but dynamic.

People become categorized as members of minorities through social, cultural, economic, and political environments. People in such situations also create relationships of "us" versus "them" in an attempt to obtain power, particularly in environments in which they experience marginalization or oppression. Both race and ethnicity are influenced by economic and political conditions. Before extending our discussion of ethnicity and ethnic identity, consider the differences between ethnicity and social class.

Race, Social Class, Ethnicity, and Transnational Migrant Workers

Transnational immigrants of the same ethnic background on arrival in host nations often are seen as belonging to the same social class. For example, when large scale Japanese migration occurred in the early 1900s in North America, in both the United States and Canada the migrants were widely perceived as poor working-class menial laborers desperately seeking jobs, despite the fact that their numbers included students and diplomats (Stanlaw 2006). However, the general public is not the only group to form social and ethnic stereotypes. Members of the ethnic group itself also do so. They consider themselves distinctively different from other groups in the host nation and may consider themselves inferior or superior, depending on how they are ranked in the social hierarchy. Interestingly, among the migrant group, there may also be perceived uniformity. For example, even though immigrants from disparate social and economic backgrounds in Japan came to Brazil—including agricultural laborers, independent farmers, shop workers, shop owners, school-teachers, dentists, and politicians—Japanese Brazilians, then and now, have tended to see themselves as members of the middle class.

Regardless of self-images eliding distinctions between social class and ethnic group, ethnicity and social class are indeed different. As Eriksen (1993: 7) argues, social class analysis requires delineating factors "including income, education and political influence." People tend to share time and space with those who have common educational background and work experience. By sharing time and space, incipient social networks are formed. Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu and Passeron 1973) claims that upper-class social networks tend to maintain and differentiate cultural and social positions and to pass them on to the next generation.

But transnational migrant social networks may in part form differently. Regardless of differences in education, jobs and income, being away from their homeland, transnational migrants, facing common difficulties, tend to rally together to provide security in an unfamiliar and sometimes hostile environment. This often takes the form of attempting to preserve certain values, customs, foodways, language and other cultural traditions. But as Eriksen (1993: 7) notes, "theories of social class always refer to systems of social ranking and distribution of power. Ethnicity, on the other hand, does not necessarily refer to rank." Incipient social networks of new migrants therefore may be less based on social stratification and emphasize social connections that provide group comfort or nostalgia and even help resist economic and political exploitation of the group as a whole. Field (2003: 1) calls such social networks "social capital." He argues that "people connect through a series of networks and they tend to share common values with other members of these networks; to the extent that these networks constitute a resource, they can be seen as forming a kind of capital" (Field 2003: 1).

Japanese transnational migrants have made connections with various social networks and groups of people—both in the host nation and beyond, and within and among ethnic groups. But, at the same time, they tend to form strong social networks—especially for financial assistance—with people of the same ethnicity. In many places, from the late nineteenth century to the start of World War II, Japanese migrants helped each other by organizing *tanomoshikō*, mutual financial assistance associations, in the new host nations. As I have shown previously (Adachi 2004), membership in a tanomoshikō required being Japanese; if he or she was not, it was not possible to become a member. Once accepted, members pooled savings with others and lent this capital out to other members who needed loans. The borrowers had to return their loan within a certain period. While some took money out, others kept banking their money in the pool. In this way, savings grew and the tanomoshikō became a self-help organization.

When Japanese began migrating to Brazil in 1908, the majority became coffee plantation farmhands, living in slave-like conditions. However, with the help of these ethnic-oriented mutual assistance associations, by 1932 some ten thousand Japanese households were listed as landowners, collectively possessing 370,000 hectares of farmland in the state of São Paulo alone. By 1940, the number of Japanese landowners increased to 193,364, which amounted to more than 90 percent of the Japanese population in the

farming areas of São Paulo state (Uchiyama and Tajiri 1991: 113; Adachi 2004). This ethnic social network was formed through trust predicated on common social and cultural values and a common language.

The notion of "*my* homeland," then, could end up helping to support immigrants climbing up the economic ladder, and help to alleviate social stratification and exploitation. However, the idea of "*your* national origin" could serve as a basis for discriminating against migrants. For example, Japanese and Nikkei in North America and some Latin American nations became the target of discrimination during World War II, and many were stripped of their land and personal property (Hirabayashi and Kikumura-Yano 2006). In this case, ethnicity was used to make judgments about the social qualifications of immigrants and citizens of a particular national heritage. The core concept of ethnicity, then—an imaginary home and origin—may function less as a direct result of social ranking (like education and income), and may be used to classify entire ethnic minorities as an imaginary social class.

Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity in a Global World

"Global" Identity

Some South American Nikkei and other Latin American transnational migrant workers are creating a new sense of ethnic identity by claiming to be simply Latin American, aligning themselves alongside non-Japanese Latin Americans. This seems a somewhat surprising development since non-Japanese Latin Americans had often resisted Japanese immigration, and Japanese Latin Americans often resisted assimilation (see Adachi 2010; Reyes-Ruiz 2010). Today, boundaries of ethnic groups have become more fluid through advances in technology and transportation that facilitate the flow of peoples and long-distance communication. People can create multiple homes and origins. For this reason, some sociologists have come to characterize the world as "stateless." However, as the now-mobile world also provides increased opportunities to create relationships with different people, perhaps a better term might be "beyond-the-state." The more people move around—connecting with people from various "homes"—the more multi-faceted the concept of ethnicity becomes.

Creighton (2010) shows how new senses of ethnic identity develop in unique ways. She argues that, in Latin America, Nikkei ethnic-identity formation encompasses much more than making connections to Japan or Japanese people.

Japanese-Brazilian children

According to her, some Nikkei in North and South America wish to establish a Pan-Nikkei ethnicity with Nikkei people all over the world, and which excludes Japanese in Japan. This is because, first, differences in Nikkei experiences—like those of Japanese Americans, Japanese Brazilians, or Japanese Canadians—are quite different from those of Japanese in Japan. For example, the majority of Nikkei are children of Japanese migrants who came to the New World before World War II. Second, since the late 1980s many Nikkei went to Japan as dekasegi workers, and found they were not welcomed as either long lost relatives or new immigrants making a fresh start. Instead, the presence of these "foreign"-Japanese in their midst created a kind of cognitive dissonance among many local Japanese who were at a loss at how to interact with them. Needless to say, Nikkei dekasegi workers have faced much well-documented discrimination while living in Japanese society (e.g., Tsuda 2004, Yamamoto 2010).

In North America, prewar Issei and their Nikkei children developed strong relationships, having shared common experiences in the internment camps and fought together for redress in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Growing up outside Japan in diverse socio-cultural, linguistic and political environments, Nikkei cultural values differ in certain ways from those of non-immigrant Japanese. Furthermore, American Nikkei believe that they worked hard to achieve their current social position in the United States after the hardships of demonization and internment during World War II. However, some Japanese in Japan casually suggest that the current success and high social status held by most American Nikkei is due to Japan's postwar economic success. The result in some instances is a deep divide between Japanese and Japanese-Americans, even in situations that contain none of the inherent conflicts involving Japanese and Latin American Nikkei.

Springwood (2010) also reports on differences between Japanese and Nikkei Americans. He examines the ethnic conflicts of a Japanese American woman, Cathy, who, after being chosen to take over the family business back in Japan, experiences difficulty in learning the Japanese language and becoming at home culturally in Japan. Cathy succeeded in taking control of her grandmother's *kitsuke* kimono shops and beauty salons in Japan. When it was time for marriage, however, she could not follow her family's wishes that she marry a Japanese man in the interest of furthering the family business. She married a Nikkei instead. Springwood holds that, despite sharing a common heritage, Cathy's values are those of an American Nikkei and that they differ in fundamentals from mainstream Japanese values and conceptual differences.

For example, mainstream family values differ such that there is a different division of labor and conceptions about work and home. If a child is sick in the United States, for example, most parents would not think twice about taking time off from work regardless of possible economic or career consequences. In Japan, however, it is improbable that a husband would take a day off to take his child to the hospital. If he did, it could compromise his future in the company, as his primary loyalty would be seen as being directed to his family rather than to the company.

Dissimilar experiences and historical memories have created also different social values between Nikkei and Japanese in the eyes of many Nikkei. Some Latin American Nikkei nevertheless have had a strong sense of nostalgia about an imaginary home—one largely created in their own minds—in an imaginary Japan. This Japan is the one they grew up hearing about from their parents or grandparents. However, dekasegi Nikkei workers often have a rude awakening on arrival in Japan. This is particularly true of those who were highly educated in Latin America, holding positions of prestige and responsibility who find themselves in Japan bereft of respect and social perks. For Latin American Nikkei, then, Japan is no longer a place of nostalgia, but a place of foreign-ness and isolation.

Creighton (2010) points out that today Nikkei from different nations are creating new Nikkei ethnic identities using the images of their own host nations. By holding conferences, the Pan American Nikkei Association (PANA) entertains Nikkei from other nations, organizes local sightseeing tours, serves local food, and presents local music and cultural events. Thus, Latin American-ness, and not just Japanese-ness, is stressed.

Stanlaw (2010) holds that current globalization is not forming ethnic identity at the national level, but is a very local and contingent

phenomenon. This is because people create relationships with others through their everyday experiences and communication in a particular location or space. Consider, for example, the different experiences and outlooks of pre-World War II and post-World War II Japanese transnational migrants and their children, groups that scarcely associate with each other. These two groups have different ethnic associations. The former created relationships based on their original migration as well as their wartime experiences and the redress movement. But many of the latter group of Japanese transnationals have radically different economic and social class origins, and radically different experiences than those of prewar migrants. Stanlaw (2010) notes that the majority of postwar Japanese migrants are either *chūzai'in* (Japanese salaried men who are sent abroad by their corporations), students, or wives of Americans. Their relations to and perceptions of both Japan and the United States frequently differ in fundamentals as a result of their different experiences and future prospects.

Stanlaw (2010) further points out that even local ethnic identities are multifaceted. Some local transnational migrants hide behind more representative or "typical" Japanese. For example, there are two different kinds of chūzai'in working for a local automaker in a mid-western town in the United States. The first are in management. Usually married, they were sent to the United States along with their wives and children. The second group comprises subordinate technicians, generally single. These two groups have different social and economic backgrounds and different social and economic environments in the United States. As a result, each forms quite different associations with local people. Managers are encouraged to find housing all over town among local residents. Many speak good English and they strive to establish good relationships with local people by organizing events and activities that include them. They also develop social networks with other local Japanese through their children's Japanese language-school activities. By contrast, companies typically house single technicians in apartments in the same building. Because of the nature of their work, they have little direct contact with other U.S. workers on the job. On their days off, the technicians typically play golf together, go sightseeing in a larger city, shop at a local Japanese grocery store, or drink at a local Japanese bar with other single Japanese friends. They have completely different relationships and experiences with the local people than do the management chūzai'in, even though both are in the same geographical area and work for the same company.

Ethnic identity is not only a product of individual social circumstances such as class, but also of gender. Yamamoto (2010) reports on the activities of female dekasegi workers in Japan, including those with unpaid jobs in family businesses, assembly line workers and entertainers. Regardless of their position in the labor force and family in Japan, most continue to perform according to their expected roles in Japan. This is not because migrant Nikkei women remain imbued with, and practice, Japanese social values while men fail to do so (thereby earning Japanese disapproval). It is because of the similarity of female gender roles at home and in Japan—child care, domestic responsibilities, elder care, and the like—which creates at least surface-level appearances of solidarity.

As a result, their relationships with local people are often more accommodating and interactive than those of men, while their ethnic image is hidden beneath the public's image of Nikkei men. Work roles and gender affect relationships with local people in host nations, and such experiences affect their lives even after they return home. In contemporary global society, different social status and circumstances, life stages, and gender all contribute to the myriad ways in which local relationships are constructed and created.

Institutionalization of Local Identities

How does local ethnic identity connect to global ethnic identity? Okamura (2010) explores this question by looking at how concepts of ethnic identity are developed by Nikkei children in Düsseldorf, Germany. The parents of these German-born children are often Japanese who migrated to Germany for work for Japanese companies, and then stayed on after their terms of employment ended. As a result, between a large number of Japanese nationals working in the city and a stable Japanese resident alien population, the number of people of Japanese ancestry in Düsseldorf is substantial.

Okamura argues that improved information and transportation technologies have changed our sense of social distance. As a result, the essential element of ethnic identity is no longer based on nationality or home or origin, but is based on the concept of "we-ness"—the idea that group identities are produced through people's relationships by way of interpersonal communication. Ethnic identity, in her view, then, is not based on geography but on language efficiency. Communication skills of the children of Japanese transnational migrants are closely monitored as they go through the German educational system. Thinking of their children's future, parents send them to supplementary schools to study the Japanese language and other subjects. This is because many Japanese who live abroad wish their children to master Japanese—some even hope that their children will attend Japanese high school and university—enabling them to become skilled bilinguals who can function successfully internationally at work and in society. The subjects taught are based on the Japanese national curriculum and many instructors are sent from Japan by Japanese agencies. In other words, even though ethnic identity is defined and created locally, efforts are made to keep up with the standards of the Japanese Ministry of Education.

Locally based ethnic identities not only connect to broader universal ethnic identities through education, they also do so via the economy and media. In the 1990s, several hundred people in Seville, Spain, whose surnames are Japón, discovered their connection to seventeenth-century samurai who were sent to Europe on a secret mission by a powerful Japanese warlord (see Abraham and Serradilla-Avery 2010). While traveling abroad, changing political conditions made it impossible for them to return to Japan. Four hundred years later, in 1989, news of the discovery of the descendants of this mission was announced in Japan. Since then, Japanese tourists and the media have been coming to Seville in droves. Descendants of these "hidden" samurai are now developing a sense of Japaneseness through new personal contacts and Japanese media events. Although their cultural values are Spanish and their physical appearance is not especially Asian, some have developed a nostalgia for the times of the samurai and created their own historical romance of an exotic past. Global tourism, the intertwined economies, and the international media are now influencing how people relate to one another such that consciousness of Japaneseness may exist beyond time and space.

The contemporary Japanese economy is also influencing lifestyle choices for Japanese women. For example, Thang, Goda, and MacLachlan (2006) describe Japanese women going abroad as a new type of transnational migrant. These days Japanese women do not go overseas because of economic hardship. Instead, many go abroad to study English, to take long-term tours or trips, or to look for job opportunities not available to women in Japan. Some meet their future husbands overseas. Yoshida (2010) studied the cultural and ethnic identity of Japanese women who marry Indonesian men. Some of the women met their husbands in Japan while they were studying or working there, and their primary language of communication usually continues to be Japanese. Others met in North America while both were studying English or other subjects. These couples typically communicate with each other in English or alternate between Japanese and English, the latter being the language they used since they met. Rarely is Indonesian used. However, regardless of the languages used between husband and wife, the wives have had to learn another new language to communicate with their in-laws, relatives and other contacts in Indonesia, such as Javanese or Chinese, as well as the corresponding customs and culture.

Yoshida believes many Japanese women eventually become adept and flexible in dealing with Indonesian religion, cuisine, and languages. However, regarding their children's education, both Okamura and Yoshida report that Japanese transnational migrants remain wedded to the idea of securing a Japanese education for their children. Regardless of country or economic opportunity, there are few first-generation transnational Japanese who do not wish their children to learn Japanese language and maintain connections to Japan.

But we can see, also, how things have changed. For example, while Japanese transnational migrants to Brazil in the early 1900s wanted their children to maintain their Japanese language (Adachi 2010), today Japanese migrants expect their children to become bi-cultural in order to survive and gain an edge in an increasingly global society. Concerns for the language abilities of children of transnational migrants do not just focus on gaining local acceptance or maintaining connections to home. Today many Japanese settlers are concerned about how their children will adapt to the global economy. Thus fluency in the local language is a must, as is knowledge of another language, preferably English or Japanese.

Eriksen (1993: 9) says that "Instead of viewing 'societies' or even 'cultures' as more or less isolated, static and homogeneous units as the early structural-functionalists tended to do, many anthropologists now try to depict flux and process, ambiguity and complexity, in their analyses of social worlds. In this context, ethnicity has proven a highly useful concept, since it suggests a dynamic situation of variable contact and mutual accommodation between groups."

Japanese Brazilians

"Ethnicity," then, is like "society" and "culture" in that the notion is itself dynamic—continuously developing in the context of circumstance and discourse. The boundaries of ethnicity have become blurred and are created through people's relationships. Ethnic boundaries are being constructed and reconstructed in diverse social environment. By taking a close look at diverse cases of creation and recreation of identities by Japanese transnational migrants, we can gain deeper insights into ethnicity and ethnic identity in the current global context. We discover that, depending on circumstances and conditions, ethnic boundaries are continually in flux. As with race, the significance of ethnicity is evolving over time.

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Notes

[1] An earlier version of this article appeared as the introduction to *Japanese and Nikkei at Home and Abroad: Negotiating Identities in a Global World*, edited by Nobuko Adachi (New York: Cambria Press, 2010).

[2] See this link.

[3] While some new evidence suggests that skin-based color-discrimination might have some basis in biology—see Bronson and Merryman (2009: 53-60) for a popular account of this research—this is still extremely tentative and, as yet, unconfirmed.

[4] Technically, the term "Westerner" was derived from "hairy Chinese." This will be explained in more detail further below.

[5] See this link.

[6] See this link.

[7] *Pantagraph*, July 12, 2009.