3.4 Negotiating the Boundaries Within: An Anthropologist at Home in a Multiethnic Neighborhood in Urban Japan

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In this chapter, I revisit my field experience of living in a multiethnic neighborhood in urban Japan, where people of different historical, sociocultural, and political backgrounds reside, taking an *autoethnographic* approach. I take this perspective to re-examine my research findings to add another layer of analysis to understand the role of interpretation throughout my ethnographic study, which was constructed by an anthropologist studying one's own culture.

Autoethnography is defined by Deborah Reed-Danahay (1997) as "a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context" (p. 9). It reflects a changing conception of the self and society in the postmodern condition of the late twentieth century by addressing the following questions: the question of identity and selfhood—such as the auto-/ethnographer as a boundary crosser and as a dual identity, foregrounding the multiple nature of selfhood; the question of voice and authenticity—who represents whose life, and whether *autoethnography* is more "authentic" than other ethnographies, calling into question the insider–outsider dichotomy, and lastly, the question of cultural displacement or situation of exile, the fact that a *native anthropologist* cannot completely be "at home" due to the breakdown of the dualisms of identity (self and society) and of insider–outsider status caused by rapid sociocultural change, globalization, etc. (pp. 3–4). In this chapter, I take an *autoethnographic* approach to my study to shed light on the experience of a *native anthropologist* or an *anthropologist* "at home."

Although anthropology has traditionally studied cultural "others" in distant places, anthropological notions and theories developed in the past few decades, such as the epistemological questions regarding anthropological self and objectivity/subjectivity, have redressed this tradition (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford

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and Marcus 1986). Anthropologists' inherent hybridity also adds another layer of complexity to this discussion (Narayan 1993). Narayan (1993) argues that an anthropologist merely studying the culture that they are from does not necessarily make him/her a *native anthropologist*. Anthropologists' ascriptive backgrounds determine the relationships with the people they study. Even though a *native anthropologist* may feel "at home," the community who are the object of their study may not feel that way. All scholars, including *native* ones, strive to negotiate legitimacy to gain trust in the field. By sharing the language and cultural rules, however, *native anthropologists* may negotiate this legitimacy in different ways (Jacobs-Huey 2002).

Born and raised in Japan, I conducted research as a "native" or an "insider" of the society. While my background in education and sociology made my research subjects a natural choice, I later realized that my research would invite questions regarding the objectivity of my study, as speaking as a "*native*" *anthropologist*, or being an "insider," which was a controversial topic in anthropology. However, as I explain below, I was also an "outsider" to the communities I studied. As a positioned subject, an ethnographer "occupies a position or structural location and observes with a particular angle of vision," and any ethnographic findings are "subjective" in addition to being "*partial*" (Rosaldo 1993; Clifford 1986; Kondo 1986). Thus, multiple levels of contextualization are required to examine my positioning towards each community in the neighborhood (my field site), which also helps destabilize the boundary between "insider" and "outsider." I take an *autoethnographic* approach to my field experience and findings in order to contextualize my study from various perspectives. What does being a "native" mean, in particular, in ethnographic research in education? How does the environment that appears "at home" shape the interactions of ethnographers and the communities they study "at home"? How does being a "*native*" *anthropologist* "at home" influence the processes of interpretation in educational research?

Since the neighborhood I studied was a *minority* community due to multiple factors (historical origin, social class, ethnic backgrounds, legal citizenship, etc.), the space of my field site has been formed by the historical and sociocultural forces of modernizing Japan. By first contextualizing each group's structural location in Japanese society, I will present the multiple contexts that existed in my field site. Second, I will add and describe my main field site, the public elementary school, into this picture, and third, I will analyze the implication of my encounters with teachers, children, and community members to discuss the influence of these multiple contexts on my interpretation of ethnographic data and the role of interpretation in this study. By situating myself in an ethnographic description and by analyzing my interaction with the people I met, I revisit my field experience to examine my *positionality* in this study. The purpose of these steps and procedures is to consider the role of interpretation in this study, taking an *autoethnographic* approach to my *fieldwork* and research outcomes. At the end, I hope to examine the contribution that a "*native*" *anthropologist* or an anthropologist "at home" can make towards a *national anthropology* (of Japan), through the analysis of multiple contexts and my *positionality* in my study as well.

Research Report

Research Trajectory

I have been conducting research on educational policy and practice for *minority* and *immigrant* children in Osaka, Japan, since the mid-1990s. During my initial *fieldwork*, from 1998 to 2000, I examined the educational program and practice for recently arrived *immigrant* children in a multiethnic neighborhood. I chose this neighborhood as my field site due to the fact that (1) it was multiethnic, with a history of bottom-up empowerment and that (2) the communities worked together with the school. For these two reasons, I thought the school was a good place to examine how the newly arrived *immigrant* children were being accommodated and "integrated." The focus of my research has broadened since then, from understanding the actual practices in school and community to examining the configuration of Japan's emerging "*multiculturalism*."

The goal of conducting an ethnographic study of a particular school in a neighborhood was to find out how new *immigrants* are incorporated in a multiethnic neighborhood in a relatively homogeneous Japan. I started from the school because documents, both published and unpublished, were available and because the school was one of the meeting points for the people of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the neighborhood. In the broader space outside of the educational arena, I wanted to examine the incorporation or integration patterns of Japanese society, which was slowly becoming more mixed. I asked questions such as: What kind of incorporation occurs? How does the cultural and ethnic homogeneity in Japan affect educational practices for incorporating new *immigrants*? How do other social groups (ethnic groups, social classes, social actors) understand the whole experience of developing a *multicultural* education program in Japan? Later on I asked, how do former informants/children remember these experiences?

As a Japanese national trained and working in the USA, bringing certain "international" traits to Japanese educational communities, I was treated as a "somewhat" different researcher in my home country. This might have been because of my affiliation with an institution outside Japan (most of the time I was affiliated with a university in the USA, but for 2 years with a university in Singapore); however, it may have been due to my being a researcher and anthropologist, studying my own culture by means of observing the interactions of people and everyday life and by interviewing them. In order to examine the cultural implications of what I observed, I sometimes had to ask questions that a nonnative researcher would not have asked. As the Japanese language is context dependent, it allows listeners to interpret the meaning according to the situation where the conversation takes place. Questioning, even for clarification, is not regarded positively, for this puts the communicators as equals, which disturbs the hierarchy between the two when there is clear status or age difference between the two. Due to my training in anthropology, or due to my exposure to the American culture, at the teachers' meeting in my field site I found myself clarifying the

meaning of each phrase or word more than other participants. For example, when a teacher in charge of the education of foreign residents in my field site spoke about the educational philosophy behind the education, he used the phrase, "the education that nurtures ethnic identity of foreign children," I had to clarify this by asking, "What do you mean by ethnic identity?" "It means an ethnic background," he said. I continued, "Then, is it similar to the education that cherishes ethnic identity of foreign children?" "Yes, it is." "What specifically do you mean by 'cherishing one's ethnic identity?" I asked again. And the teacher would say, "When Ms. Okubo is participating, our meeting is disturbed. The discussion does not move forward." My interpretation of this communication was as follows: If I were a researcher with a non-Japanese cultural background, the Japanese participants that I interacted with would not take me as somewhat different, but due to my role as a researcher doing anthropology of the culture that was regarded as my own, some thought I was strange or annoying, for I was someone who paused during the conversation or raised questions that would interrupt the fluidity of conversations.

On the other hand, as I was also studying *minority* and *immigrant* communities, or children of mixed cultures, I was following linguistic and cultural "others" as well. To these communities, I was also a cultural "other." There was more space for me to ask questions or pause. The traits that I exhibited via my ethnographic inquiry did not invite much suspicion, for there was a larger divide between our cultures. Despite taking the interactions with me as being asked annoying questions, the participants would conclude that this was because I was Japanese, or because I have not been living in Japan. When I conducted an ethnographic study in the USA, I was allowed to ask questions more freely as a "non-American" researcher.

In light of these experiences, I discuss the impact of a *native anthropologist* doing research on multiethnic communities in this paper. What does it mean to conduct research as a native *anthropologist*, to negotiate the boundaries within a multiethnic neighborhood as both an *insider and outsider* to the cultures? How does this experience of negotiation affect the processes of the interpretation of ethnographic data and research outcomes?

Field Site: Miyako Neighborhood Seen Through an "Objective" Lens

Miyako, my field site, is a multiethnic neighborhood in urban Japan. It is located in Osaka Prefecture, which is in the midwest region of Japan. Almost half of the residents in Miyako are regarded as members of a former outcaste people (Burakumin), whose status goes back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Japanese society went through a process of modernization and transformation in the last century, but discrimination against Burakumin still continues in employment and marriages, even after their civil rights movement in the mid-1960s (Davis 2000). Since successful members of the Buraku have been moving out of the

community, in 2000, only 30 % of the residents in Miyako were members of that community, while the rest were non-Buraku(min) who had moved into the community for economic reasons. As a result, less than half of the residents, including those who moved into the community for economic reasons, shared a consciousness of being members of the Buraku community. But residents who had been living there for generations were attached to Miyako, and some of those who had left the community in their early 20s were returning to Miyako after experiencing the outside world. Some returned for economic reasons, while others came back to seek the comfort of living with their families. Those who moved into Miyako in the 1970s and 1980s were referred to as "in-migrants" (*ryūnyūsha*). In a sense, Miyako Buraku was closed to outsiders, although there was no physical barrier between the community and the outside world.

Ten percent of the residents (about 300) of Miyako Buraku had a Korean background. Some were North or South Korean nationals with special permanent residency status. Some were legalized Japanese citizens, and others were Japanese by virtue of having been born after 1985 and of having one Japanese parent. Their ancestors migrated (and some were even forced to migrate) some time between 1910 and 1945 to Japan during the annexation of the Korean peninsula. The Koreans I met in my field site were second-generation Koreans, who had actually heard of their parents' hardships after migrating to Japan; third-generation Koreans, who shared a memory of Japan's colonial past through talking with their parents and grandparents; and fourth-generation Koreans, who did not necessarily have a personal connection with Korea, besides the fact that it was their ancestors' homeland.

Adding another layer of complexity to this were Vietnamese refugees, who began residing in this neighborhood in the late 1980s. Many of them were refugees and their family members. The refugees, most of them from South Vietnam, had left Vietnam after the fall of Saigon in 1975 and arrived in Japan after spending a few years in refugee camps in Southeast Asian countries. Their family members joined them through the ODP (Orderly Departure Program, a family reunification immigration program) between 1980 and 2003. Some of them have legally naturalized and become Japanese nationals, and their children were born in Japan.

Chinese *immigrants* were children and grandchildren of the Japanese who had migrated in the prewar years to Manchuria, the northeast part of China that was under Japan's control. They began returning to Japan, due to their Japanese ancestry, mainly after the normalization of Japan–China relations in 1972. Although they were regarded as Chinese, in terms of biological ancestry, they were either Japanese, half-Japanese (children), or quarter-Japanese (grandchildren). However, only a few families were naturalized Japanese citizens, and most of them had permanent resident status (different from Korean residents) and kept their Chinese nationality at the time of my research in 2000.

Miyako, with its Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese populations, thus has been created by the global flow of people under the influence of geopolitical effects and globalization. Children in the neighborhood attended Miyako Elementary School, a public elementary school which was founded in the mid-1970s as an outcome of the Buraku movement. Since I was conducting an ethnographic study of their school

life, I met their parents through them at school, which was one of my main field sites. Most of the teachers at Miyako were Japanese, commuting from outside the neighborhood. Two third-generation resident Koreans were working as teachers at school, and other resident Koreans were working as instructors at the Korean education center in the neighborhood. Some of the instructors working for the Community Youth Center were from Miyako Burku in the neighborhood or from other Buraku. My *fieldwork* unfolded within this space created by people of different structural locations in Japanese society.

Autoethnographic Description of My Positionality

Miyako Elementary School: Main Field Site

Unlike many scholars who visited Miyako Elementary School knowing that it was a Buraku school, I only discovered this fact after I selected my field site. I visited Miyako during my preliminary research in 1997 because I had heard that so-called "newcomer" Vietnamese children were studying at Miyako. Unless you were from the area or studying about *minority* education/education for the Buraku, the fact that the neighborhood was a Buraku community was not obvious. Since the school had an office for the teachers' association for the education for resident foreigners in the prefecture, I visited the office to inquire about the current situation of *immigrant* children and to ask them if they knew of any possible schools that could accept me as a field researcher. The office suggested that I ask Miyako, and I then had meetings with the principal and a headteacher of the school. The headteacher told me, "I heard you would be doing research at our school next year. As you know, this school is assigned as a special school for promoting Dowa education (education for the Buraku), so I hope you will understand this and cooperate with us." I did not fully understand what he meant. What did he want me to "understand" and what kind of "cooperation" was he asking for? (Okubo 2005), this was my initial reaction. Gradually I came to realize the implications of his words after I started my *fieldwork* in Miyako the following year, and I had to readjust my research project from a study of recently arriving *immigrant* children in urban Japan to a study of *immigrant* children in a "Buraku" neighborhood. Despite human rights education and other enlightenment efforts, some Japanese tried to avoid any association with them. This was exemplified by a Japanese senior scholar's advice, during my *fieldwork*, not to emphasize the Buraku in my study, for I would be referred to as a researcher of a particular type. Under these circumstances, I later realized that the "cooperation" he mentioned had more meaning than I was initially able to absorb.

In addition, being a Buraku school, Miyako was also used to having guests and even researchers for a day or a short period of time. Guests and researchers were there to learn the school's programs and activities as part of Dowa education, i.e., the education for the Buraku community, as it was one of the two Buraku schools in

the city. The education for resident Koreans and *immigrant* children and the education for physically and mentally challenged children were added to Dowa education, under the framework of *multicultural* education based on "human rights" education, which was another name for the Buraku education. Being a Buraku neighborhood was a decisive factor that differentiated the experiences of these *immigrant* children from those living in other parts of Japan.

Since Miyako was a school for promoting *minority* education, teachers at Miyako Elementary School were divided into two categories—a smaller number of teachers who had been active in promoting and developing education for the Buraku and foreign residents (resident Koreans), and a larger number of teachers who were reluctantly teaching there as a result of regular transfers that happen every 5–10 years. Among the former group, some of the teachers had taken the positions out of an ambition to become a vice principal or principal in the future, rather than out of their concern and passion for these children's education. Thus, for the teachers working at Miyako, the school was a site of contested meanings. The school was also a site of another contestation—on the one hand, the school functioned as Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser 1971) and produced Japanese national subjects (Balibar 1991), and on the other hand, the school institutionalized (with some distortion) a localized idea of *minority* education that originated in grassroots educational activities for *minority* children. Moreover, the teachers had personal lives and beliefs that influenced their decision-making regarding their support and participation in community events, such as the Vietnamese New Year's Festival, organized by an outside school association in the neighborhood.

My Encounter with the People/Research Participants

Since my point of entry in my field site was Miyako Elementary School, my encounter with community members, neighbors, and teachers was mainly through the school and its teachers. On the first day of my *fieldwork*, I was introduced to the teachers at Miyako at a teachers' meeting as a graduate student of a Japanese university who had studied abroad in the USA and was doing research on Vietnamese children and their education. Not knowing that the number of Chinese children was increasing in Miyako, I had addressed only Vietnamese and their after-school educational activities at school in my initial research proposal. Although I have rarely visited the university in Japan where I finished my master's, teachers in Miyako thought of me as a graduate student studying in Japan, rather than in the USA. This perception continued throughout my *fieldwork*, and even held currency when I went back to Miyako after my *fieldwork*. This might have been because teachers were more familiar with my university in Japan, or it might have been because they could not imagine that I was doing research for my dissertation for a US school. Whenever I was introduced to other people, I added that my research at Miyako was for my dissertation research for Berkeley, and not for my Japanese university.

Compared with foreign researchers who did not share the language or cultural rules of Japan, I was an "insider" (native) of the society at Miyako Elementary School, but I was not completely one of them. In addition, being a graduate student

did not have any professional implication in the Japanese context. Thus, being a "young," "female" (graduate) "student," it was difficult for me to establish a professional relationship with some teachers. One teacher even suggested that I should not live in the neighborhood due to my middle-class background. All these events made me question the meaning of the *fieldwork*, and by the end of my 18 months of *fieldwork* I had come to realize that, in contrast to their initial openness, they actually did not want anyone in school for more than one semester (3–4 months). The more I tried to engage with them as a researcher, the more I felt as if I was being alienated. The teachers were not used to long-term *fieldwork*, either, although they had frequent visitors to the school. In accepting visitors, the school and teachers expected the researchers to give positive reviews and feedback of their educational programs. This is probably because of the nature of teachers working with *minority* students; in a larger educational system, these teachers were doing extra work that other teachers would not have volunteered to do. I was aware of this fact as well; however, as a researcher, I gave my opinions and feedback based on the interpretation of my ethnographic data and experience.

To the children at Miyako, I was introduced by the principal as a "trainee," but the students were told to refer to me as a "teacher." In order to separate myself from teachers and to keep my position as a researcher in school, I told the teachers that I would prefer not to be called a "teacher"; however, they said that it would be awkward if an adult who was not a teacher was present in the school site on a daily basis. Thus, I had to accept my title as a "teacher" (*sensei*) from teachers and children at Miyako, but the children looked at me slightly differently from other teachers, because I was not teaching. There were a few other teachers who did not teach in regular classrooms in Miyako, such as teachers in charge of the Japanese language classes for new *immigrants*, teachers in the school infirmary, teachers taking care of children in the after-school daycare center in school, and teachers/helpers in charge of mentally challenged children.

My *positionality* of being an "insider–outsider" was further complicated outside school—in the neighborhood, when meeting neighbors who had different social locations, languages, discourse styles, and cultural rules. Japanese nationals who had lived in Japan throughout their lives have experienced the same complications of their positionalities in interacting with communities; however, the fact that I was not closely affiliated with a Japanese institution made me appear to be not rooted in Japan. Although the sense of self is constructed and shaped interactively with society in Japan as in many other societies, I would say that belonging to or being a member of organizations is one of the larger factors that constitutes one's social identity in Japan, as many anthropologists have discussed (Nakane 1970; Rosenberger 1994).

Before I conducted my research in Miyako, a researcher who had been studying the Buraku in another area for several decades said that it would usually take 5–10 years to "understand" the community. The difficulty of entering the Buraku community was known to the scholars doing research among them. The second day of my field work, the vice principal of Miyako took me to the Community Youth Center and the Community Center. The close relationship between the school and the community was a unique feature of Miyako as a Buraku school. With the

assistance of the principal, I was able to live in one of the apartment complexes for the Buraku. When I visited the community leader with the principal regarding this, the community leader accepted my request to move into one of the community apartment complexes, saying, "We have many young men in our neighborhood. You should consider marrying one." Whether it was a test or a challenge to me as a member of the dominant group entering their community, I am not sure. But from his words, I realized that I was entering their territory. Although the Buraku were marginalized in the larger society, the Buraku community had a certain power within Miyako, the neighborhood; however, by phrasing it that way, I may be undermining the discrimination against the Buraku in contemporary Japan.

While I was doing my *fieldwork*, the Buraku community was facing the abolishment of special measures for the community which had been in effect since 1969. Facing this change, each community was trying to educate community members with the goal of "self-help" so that the community as a whole could be self-sufficient. However, it turned out that Miyako was regarded as a failure case for this Buraku reform. When I told other scholars familiar with the Buraku issue that I conducted research in Miyako, their responses were that my experience must have been tough. The more "successful" Buraku communities, according to the scholars familiar with the Buraku communities in Osaka, seemed to have had a more positive and collaborative relationship with schools, teachers, and researchers. If Miyako's efforts towards the change as a whole were functioning as well as other more successful communities, the greetings of the Miyako community leader may have been different. Or was it the expression of their true feelings towards outsiders to the neighborhood?

The resident Koreans had their own center for after-school educational activities for children of a Korean background. This was expanded to include Chinese and Vietnamese in the second year of my research. They also assisted the activities of the school's Korean ethnic club and Vietnamese ethnic club. Thus, at the early stage of my research in following Chinese and Vietnamese *immigrant* children in school and the neighborhood, I met with the Korean instructors. During my stay in Miyako, I also encountered more people interested in the education of foreign children, including children with Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese backgrounds through teachers at Miyako Elementary School and at a research institute for *minority* issues. They were Japanese teachers, and Korean and Buraku activists and parents. With them, I was a "researcher" interested in the history and current situation of *minority* education of the neighborhood, and I was also someone who cared about their empowerment. In this sense, I was an "insider" for those who were interested in *minority* issues and their education, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds or occupations.

My encounters with Chinese and Vietnamese parents and community members, who did not necessarily share the same languages and cultural rules as I did, had another implication. Since I met them through the children and teachers at Miyako, for them I was a "teacher" at Miyako helping out in Japanese language classes for their children. Since I lived in Miyako, I also ran into them at stores, stations, neighbors' places, and community events such as after-school classes for children and the Vietnamese New Year's Festival. Due to my limited Vietnamese ability and inability to understand Chinese, our conversations were in either limited Japanese

or Vietnamese, or occurred with the assistance of the children or a teacher who understood the language. Despite this language barrier, as a "teacher" living in Miyako and as someone who helped out at community events, I was able to interact with some of them. Similar to my interactions with Korean and Buraku neighbors, the way in which I developed my rapport was not necessarily a direct result of my ethnicity, gender, or social class background, although I do not deny that these factors influenced my research and limited my purview. Living in Miyako, participating in community events, and visiting my neighbor's houses, I met with Chinese and Vietnamese parents whom I had not known through schools.

Research Approach: Ethnography

Ethnography, Qualitative Methods, and Long-Term Research

During my initial *fieldwork* between 1998 and 2000, I lived in my field site and conducted participant observations of everyday practices. In particular, I examined the educational practices directed towards 1.5-generation Chinese and second-generation Vietnamese children in school and within their local community, where *minority* groups with different historical, cultural, and political locations reside. I conducted participant observations of class activities of the public primary school in my field site and in the neighborhood where I lived, as well as formal and informal interviews with teachers, children, parents, and other residents both in and out of school. Between 1998 and 2008, I conducted formal interviews from 30 to 120 min with more than 120 individuals in person and phone interviews with four others. Between 2009 and 2010, I conducted about 70 informal and formal interviews including 24 recorded ones. In 2011, I visited my field site to collect reports and newsletters, as well as libraries to gather the information on educational and immigration policies in Japan, but no interviews were conducted. I interpreted my ethnographic data by employing "triangulation" of other data obtained from other qualitative research methods, official statistics and reports, and literature.

In July 2008, 10 years after I conducted my initial *fieldwork*, I went back to my field site, Miyako, in order to find out how these Chinese and Vietnamese children were doing. I had a chance to return to Miyako briefly in 2001 and 2004, but I had not had a chance to meet most of the children in Japanese Language Classes at Miyako Elementary School. During this follow-up, the purpose of my study was to update the situation of the Chinese and Vietnamese children from the Japanese Language Classes. In addition, I wanted to document how these children remember their experiences at Miyako, which I described as the "production of ethnic others" in my dissertation project. In particular, I wanted to ask them what they remembered about Japanese Language Class activities, and what they actually "learned" about Japanese culture/society and about themselves from these experiences.

Miyako, the neighborhood, had gone through much transition. The special measures for the Buraku community, which had supported the development of the community since 1969, were abolished in March 2002. As a result, the name of the community center had been changed from Miyako Liberation Center to Miyako Human Rights Community Center, following the trend of other buildings that were associated with the Buraku community. Now, "human rights" have taken over "liberation." Before the end of these measures, incidents regarding the embezzlement by community leaders of funding allocated for the Buraku communities were reported. Miyako was one of these communities covered in the media. Due to this incident, the branch office of Miyako had been put under the custody of Buraku Liberation League (BLL) Osaka Federation to promote a democratic reform of the Miyako BLL branch. A couple of people in the leading positions of a branch office of Miyako BLL had disappeared when I went back to Miyako in July 2008. The leader of the community, who had voiced his complaints to schools and teachers about the school's interest in the conscious-raising aspect of Dowa education and not in the achievement of students in the community, had also left Miyako.

I was interested in understanding how this policy change towards the Buraku had affected the neighborhood as a whole, and the cultural and local politics among different groups, and thus, educational programs for Chinese and Vietnamese *immigrant* children in the area. As I was revisiting my dissertation materials for publication during this visit, my perspective was more "objective" than it was as an ethnographer. A noticeable change was that the neighborhood's education center organized by Korean residents, which had been a branch of the Buraku center, had split into two sections; the center for the education for "internationalization" became the city's official center for *multicultural* education, while the center for community education (for ethnic minorities in Miyako) turned into a nonprofit organization. The city's system for supporting human rights has also shifted from being based on human rights issues centered around the Buraku to falling under the framework of "*multiculturalism*" (*tabunka kyōsei*).

Framework for Ethnographic Research Methods

My research was theoretically influenced by two anthropologists doing research on education and learning. The late John Ogbu, my advisor during the dissertation project, suggested that I should not stay in classrooms to understand education. He conducted a comparative study of the academic achievement of *minority* communities using the concepts of identity, "cultural frame of reference," and "*minority* status" in society as analytical lenses. He classified minorities into "involuntary" minorities, those who find themselves in the country against their will, and "voluntary" minorities, i.e., *immigrants*. He recommended that I go out into the community and talk with parents, not only teachers and children, and observe them at home to discover educational practice and people's attitudes and behavior towards education. Jean Lave was another person who inspired me during my *fieldwork* and writing.

Her approach was the *ethnography* of learning as a social practice, not only in school but also outside school to understand educational practice and discourse. She advised me not to be associated with teachers during my *fieldwork* in school, which was difficult as I was introduced to the children as a "teacher" at the school, conducting research for my graduate study. She also suggested following a small number of people, children, all day to understand them in depth, rather than staying in school. Due to their advice, although my *fieldwork* started in the school, my study expanded beyond the school to the children, communities, and teachers outside school.

Accordingly, the frameworks for my research were mainly the macro-study of education (Ogbu) and situated learning (Lave) to understand learning and everyday practice in the larger cultural–historical, social, and political contexts, with a focus on the social and cultural formation of subjectivities (Ogbu 1987; Lave and Wenger 1991). Based on these frameworks, I designed my research project and employed ethnographic research methods during my *fieldwork* to understand educational phenomenon in my field site. In order to get a holistic picture of the educational phenomenon in Miyako, a series of ethnographic studies and follow-ups from multiple angles were necessary. However, as I did not limit this study to the school site, I may have diverted my attention from educational practice within school per se. This could have been another reason why my assessment of educational practices was more critical, compared with other researchers back then.

Re-examining the Research Findings from an Autoethnographic Perspective

Here I re-examine my research findings by adding myself and my interaction with the people in my analysis in order to understand the *partiality* of my perspective and the ways in which my anthropological knowledge was constructed. As Narayan (1993) says, not only our *fieldwork* interaction, but our scholarly texts are also influenced by our locations in our field site and in a larger society. It is our responsibility to understand the process of the construction of anthropological knowledge by analyzing our ethnographic descriptions.

In my article published in Intercultural Education in 2006, I argued that the Chinese and Vietnamese children were further marginalized by the educational programs in the school community in Miyako, despite the school's enthusiasm and commitment for "*multicultural* education based on human rights education" and despite the teachers' efforts and hard work. Marginalization was due to the transition that the Buraku and resident Korean communities experienced in the late-1990s, along with the local government's interest in promoting "internationalization" and exchange with foreign residents. This conclusion was based on my ethnographic research in Miyako, from analyzing the data collected through negotiating multiple contexts and boundaries in Miyako (Okubo 2006). Although I acknowledged the efforts and hard work of the teachers at Miyako, my analysis was rather critical of their educational practices. How were the processes of interpretation shaped in this research?

Revisiting my time spent in Miyako and talking with a few teachers who became close during my subsequent *fieldwork*, I realized that, as mentioned, I was unwanted by Miyako Elementary School as a long-term field researcher. They were used to having short-term visitors, but not a researcher for more than a semester. I had been able to attend teachers' meetings in school for half a year, but in the following academic year, not all the information of the meetings had been shared with me. This had made me more of an "*outsider*," who also happened to be a "native" of the culture I studied. I was constantly struggling to find a way to create a more professional relationship with teachers after the initial phase of interviewing them about the educational activities and children at Miyako. Although other so-called "*native*" *anthropologists* have experienced an identity crisis as a result of not being able to distance themselves from a familiar culture, I did not have to go through this process (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984; Kondo 1986; Rosaldo 1993; Jacobs-Huey 2002). I emotionally and cognitively shared the language and cultural rules with the people/research participants, but I had a certain distance from some of the teachers at Miyako, and thus, I was able to keep a sense of reflexive perspective.

The issue of losing one's identity as a researcher, which many "*native*" *anthropologists* also experience, did occur to me at the early stage of my research; however, I was able to regain my identity as a researcher in interacting with teachers as a way to resist their denial at school. This emotional detachment from Miyako Elementary School is reflected both positively and negatively in my analysis of the educational program for Chinese and Vietnamese children. I was able to connect the events outside the school with educational activities in school. This may partly be due to the advice I received during my dissertation project, which was to conduct a macro-analysis of schooling and not to be associated with the school and teachers by children and parents. At the same time, however, I might have missed the details inside school, despite my awareness of the time and effort that teachers spent for the children. I did not examine the pedagogy of the school nor the curriculum of the school as an educational designer would have done. Thus, my knowledge is constructed more by the data I gathered outside school in order to make sense of what was happening inside school. Moreover, since I had more interaction with certain teachers and community activists, who tended to be critical of school, my perspective may have been influenced by their views. This point will require further attention to examine the limitations of my project.

The Role of Interpretation

Interpretation in This Chapter

I presented my results through conferences and publications, including my dissertation, based on my field study conducting *ethnography* of Miyako. As I employed a "triangulation" as a method, juxtaposing my ethnographic data with publications and data from other sources, I did not resort solely to my ethnographic data in my analysis although *ethnography* played a significant role in my study.

After publication in a Japanese edited volume in 2008, a teacher who was a leader of the association for the education for foreign residents in Osaka questioned my intention for writing my chapter and wanted to have a meeting with other teachers. When I mentioned that incident to a teacher whom I trust, she said he probably does not want anyone to criticize their educational practice. The meeting did not occur due to a scheduling conflict during my stay in Japan, but I sensed that my work was not received favorably by the Japanese teachers who are working for *immigrant* children with the association. It was because I argued that the educational efforts of the school and teachers did not necessarily lead to the full integration of the *immigrant* children. I argued that *immigrant* children were marginalized in school and community, which I interpreted as an initial phase of integration.

Some scholars have given a positive evaluation of these educational efforts, for they compare them with the past, when there was little educational support for *immigrant* children, and they seem to have grounded these practices based on the ideal of *multiculturalism*, human rights education, and philosophy inspired by scholars (Paulo Freire, James Banks). Observing a gap between the school's understanding of what *immigrant* children should be like and the children's and communities' understanding, however, I could not simply say that the school's attempt was successful. The culture of positive evaluation of educational practices and policies among academic scholars probably originates in (1) the general tendency in Japan not to critique others and (2) the difficulty of the collaboration between researchers and teachers and schools. Academics regard school teachers as practitioners and not scholars, and teachers look at researchers as scholars who do not understand actual practices. Due to this twisted relationship, the two cannot create a mature relationship that could allow both sides to freely express themselves, which includes critical assessment of each other's work. And lastly, (3) there is little criticism because Japanese scholars and the public are aware that teaching is a very challenging job, and that only a small number of teachers will actually dedicate themselves to nonmainstream populations such as *immigrants* (Lewis 2011; Ota 2000; Gordon 2011).

In my publication in 2008, I presented the suggestion that a different conceptual schema is necessary for solving this issue (Okubo 2008). Due to criticism from Japanese teachers, I wonder whether I should have followed the lead of other Japanese scholars and produced more supportive documents for teachers, and included more positive evaluation of their educational practice. I also question what my role was as a *native anthropologist* negotiating multiple boundaries within the field site. Although I wanted to examine the effects and implications of the educational program, I sensed that what I wrote, based on my long-term ethnographic study, was not welcomed by school teachers. This partially resulted from my relationship with teachers and community activists, which was influenced and shaped by my ethnographic research methods to situate the school as one of my field sites to understand how *immigrant* children were integrated into Japanese society.

The difference of my perspective from that of teachers in my field site was also illuminated by another event. The year 2000 was the first year that the national anthem and flag became mandatory in school ceremonies. Activists and a small

number of teachers held study groups for teachers to examine the implication of the government's decision on resident Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese communities from a historical context of Japan's invasion of these countries during World war II.

The tension around the change of the national state policy was further complicated by another tension in the neighborhood. During my *fieldwork*, the resident Korean community in the neighborhood was split into two—one that had official support from schools and the cit and the other that was more based on the activism of ethnic minorities, including new *immigrants* in the area. Their split impacted the Miyako Elementary School's and the Vietnamese community's decisions regarding which Korean group to ask for support in organizing the neighborhood's Vietnamese community festival in 2000 (Okubo 2005). Knowing the internal conflict of the resident Korean community in Miyako, a scholar conducting research on resident Koreans in another neighborhood in Osaka understood my predicament and even advised me to find another field site.

If Miyako Elementary School took pride in itself for its "*multicultural*" education based on "human rights" education in a true sense, there should have been some discussion among teachers regarding the two incidents; however, the school and teachers stayed detached from these political issues that impacted the children and parents in Miyako, as if nothing had happened. Not living in the neighborhood, many teachers were not aware of details of the tensions and conflicts in the area. They learned about the events from the principal and the teachers in administrative positions at school.

Further discussion of my *positionality* towards each community is necessary to contextualize and examine the role of interpretation in my ethnographic study. The fact that I was a graduate student affiliated with the US institution was more favorably taken by resident Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese communities than by teachers. The children of some resident Koreans were studying in the USA or have studied in the USA. Some Vietnamese had relatives in the USA and mentioned that their siblings or parents were in the USA. I did not meet with any Chinese in Miyako with relatives in the USA as they were mainly from the northeastern part of China, but they were curious about my experience as a foreigner in the USA. To these communities, I was a Japanese national who had experienced being a cultural "other" from living in a foreign country, as they did at the time of my research. But I should not forget that my cultural and linguistic background as being a member of the dominant culture in Japan must have put me in a more powerful position towards them.

My *positionality* towards the Buraku community was more complex. The discrimination against the group is said to be still present although its form has become more subtle. To them, I was a member of the dominant Japanese living in their community. As they are culturally and ethnically the same as Japanese, the only factor that divided us was whether our ancestors were community members or not. Being a member of the dominant Japanese culture, I was in a position of power vis-à-vis/compared to them in society; however, as I explained in my study, they had a certain power within Miyako. In addition, my association with the community was through my research, and the members that assisted me with my research were

those who were not reluctant to share their experiences with me. As many ethnographers may have experienced, I sometimes felt that I was at their mercy to continue my research.

This was true not only for my association with the members of the Buraku for my project, but continued throughout my *fieldwork* in Miyako. In this sense, the *positionality* of an ethnographer towards the people in the field in collecting field data is vulnerable. The interpretation of ethnographic data is influenced by whether we meet someone who can assist us in the field and by who they are.

Anthropology "At Home" and National Anthropology (of Japan)

Through the discussion in this paper, I demonstrated that no anthropologist is "at home" in a strict sense. I was an "insider" simply because I shared language and cultural knowledge with the teachers and some children, but at the same time, my gender, age, class background, and most importantly, the fact that I was an unwanted long-term fieldworker created a certain barrier between the Japanese teachers and myself, which was different from the one I experienced with my neighbors, who had different ethnic backgrounds. My research findings could have been different if I had been able to develop a different kind of rapport with the teachers. However, at the same time, my positionality gave me a fresh perspective in analyzing the *multicultural* education program, contextualizing it with events happening outside school. In this sense, our interpretations are embedded in particular cultural settings of our field sites.

The concept of the "*native*" *anthropologist* has been questioned due to an anthropologist's multiple identities, hybridity, or being a "virtual" construction as a *native ethnographer*, which leads me to conclude that only the difference between ethnographic Self and native Other remains, and not the difference between "insider" and "outsider" (Narayan 1993; Kondo 1986; Weston 1997; Rosaldo 1986; Bunzl 2004). The effort to bridge the difference between the Self and Other can be made by being conscious of this epistemological divide and by sharing and returning our research findings to the field, which is also important for the professional ethics of anthropologists. To this, I would like to add that studying the culture "at home" puts one in the position of the privileged for understanding the contexts better than those who do not share the culture, but can create other power dynamics— different from the ones that result from one's background. Being an insider within Japanese culture and a native speaker of the Japanese language, I was expected to rely on contextual meaning in speaking Japanese, which placed limits on my ability to interpret what others were saying.

From my experience as an *anthropologist "at home*," I second Sonia Ryang (2004)'s suggestion that anthropology of Japan, which has been studied as a "national" cultural entity, needs to be de-territorialized and denationalized, and a

critical understanding of Japan's colonialist role in Asia must be developed (Ryang 2004: p. 199, p. 203; Appadurai 1996). The events I experienced in Miyako captured these moments, which enabled teachers to choose or not to choose to practice this understanding. Although the current state of Japan's "national" anthropology is said to be a product of a two-way, unequal, and asymmetrical communication between Western and Japanese researchers, partially due to the peripheral position that Japan holds in the hegemonic structure of anthropology as an academic discipline, I would encourage more researchers from these countries to publish their studies to the world (Ryang 2004: p. 2, p. 203; Ota 1998; Kuwayama 2004). If the power relationship that exists within the production of anthropological knowledge defines communication with researchers from a peripheral position as they argue, the digital revolution, which is creating more opportunities for communication to anyone with internet access, may make a difference in the future.

With a hope to denationalize Japan's anthropology without reinforcing the "national" culture of Japan, I demonstrated the *partiality* of my interpretation from an *autoethnographic* study of my field research and research findings of multiethnic Miyako and from the understanding of the role of interpretation in my study. I hope that I was able to illuminate the complexity that exists in Japanese society, demonstrate the *partiality* of my interpretation by examining my *positionality* as a *native anthropologist* from multiple angles, and present a nuanced portrait of Japanese culture and society. The ways in which my interpretation of ethnographic data unfolded in educational research were foreshadowed in these discussions.

Conclusion

Adding myself by using an *autoethnographic* lens was a way for me to rediscover my "positioned" knowledge and "*partial*" perspectives and how I conducted my research as an anthropologist. This process also de-constructed the division between being an "insider" and "outsider" of one's culture. As the *fieldwork* is shaped by the people we meet, a person studying a "home culture" may not necessarily feel "*at home*." Sharing similar beliefs and ideas may affect our interaction with the people more than our backgrounds do. Using an *autoethnographic ethnography* and examining my interaction with my research participants, I revisited and re-examined my research findings. Through this process, I have realized that being an *anthropologist* "*at home*" was beneficial, but at the same time, it also re-enforced a distinction between ethnographic Self and Other. At the end, I discussed the role interpretation played in this study, why my analysis produced a more critical assessment of educational programs back then, and the possible contribution that I, as a Japan anthropologist (not necessarily as an *anthropologist* "*at home*") can make, in denationalizing the field of Japan anthropology. I hope that these discussions have contextualized my analysis of the role of interpretation in ethnographic educational research.

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