

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Welcome “Home,” Students: The Reintegration of *Kikoku Shijo* in the Japanese Education System

Tsukumo Niwa, Bachelor of Arts, 2017

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Kikoku shijo, or Japanese returnee students, have paved the way for intercultural and multicultural education since the 1960s. Because of their international experience, *kikoku shijo* often face difficulties adjusting to the Japanese culture and the notion of “Japanese-ness” as conveyed to them through classroom cultures and school codes. The Japanese culture that informs school settings in Japan often clash with *kikoku shijo*’s experiences abroad, creating reverse culture shocks within them. The thesis looks at themes such as Japanese-ness and foreignness tied to *kikoku shijo*’s identity, and how those themes inform educational policies that would be most accepting and welcoming of children with international backgrounds. Suggestions on *kikoku shijo* education emphasize the continued development of *kikoku shijo*’s characteristics, and the integration of *kikoku shijo* and traditional Japanese students in regular classrooms.

Welcome “Home,” Students:
The Reintegration of *Kikoku Shijo* in the Japanese Education System

By

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I still remember the days when I dreaded writing research papers in middle school, not because I did not enjoy researching or writing (in fact, I have always loved researching and synthesizing information on topics I am genuinely curious about), but because I knew that my English ability or lack thereof would hinder me from writing a paper that I could be proud of. Ever since I started writing in English, I had never possessed enough self-confidence when writing extensive academic papers. That same person is about to submit an honor's thesis for a bachelor's degree. It took me over a decade of help and support from many individuals to get to that stage, and those people need to be acknowledged.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|------|--|
| JOES | Japan Overseas Education Services (<i>Kaigai shijo kyōiku shinkō zaidan</i>) |
| MEXT | Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (<i>Monbu kagaku shō</i>), formerly known as Ministry of Education (before 2001) |
| MOFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<i>Gaimushō</i>) |

Discussion on Translations

Japanese works and terminologies used in this research that did not have official and/or published English translations available have been translated and interpreted by the author.

Romanization of Japanese terms in this thesis is based on the Library of Congress Guidelines for Japanese Romanization. Macrons have been used to make long vowels in Japanese, instead of writing out two vowels (for example: *kyōiku* instead of *kyouiku*), unless it is for a noun that is well-known to English audience (ex: Tokyo instead of Tōkyō).

Below is a quick summary of commonly used Japanese terms in this thesis.

| Japanese Term | Romanization | Transliteration and Definition |
|----------------------|---------------------|---|
| 帰国子女 | <i>kikoku shijo</i> | “Child returning to [one’s] country.” Returnee children. |
| 海外子女 | <i>kaigai shijo</i> | “Overseas children.” Japanese children living outside of Japan for an extended period of time. |
| 補習校 | <i>hoshūkō</i> | “Supplementary learning school.” Part-time Japanese schools attended by <i>kaigai shijo</i> which use the MEXT Curriculum Guidelines as the basis for their curriculum. |
| 塾 | <i>juku</i> | A private after-school or preparatory school, often geared towards admissions test preparation. |
| 教育 | <i>kyōiku</i> | “Education.” |
| 受け入れ校 | <i>ukeirekō</i> | “Accepting school”, schools with special admissions considerations for <i>kikoku shijo</i> . |
| 日本人論 | <i>nihonjinron</i> | “Theory of Japanese”, theories on Japanese society, people, and/or community. |
| 在日 | <i>Zainichi</i> | “Staying in Japan.” Used to describe people of Korean descent who either retain Korean citizenship or own the Special Permanent Resident status implemented for Koreans after World War II. |
| 日系人 | <i>Nikkeijin</i> | “People of Japanese descent.” Descendants of Japanese immigrants in Central and South American countries who immigrated to Japan. |

Chapter 1: Introduction

A Story of a Japanese *Kaigai Shijo* in the United States

One day, a girl born and raised in Japan was told by her parents that she would be moving to an entirely different country in three months because of her father's assignment to an office in the United States. She had never been outside of Japan, and knew no language other than Japanese. All of sudden, she was displaced from the community that raised her, and instead put in a foreign place that looks nothing like her home. People spoke a different language that she could not understand. She could no longer read cultural cues. She was now at the bottom of her class, largely neglected, and sometimes bullied by classmates for not fitting in.

This was my experience in 2005, when I was ten years old. At that time, I joined a growing number of *kaigai shijo* (“overseas children”), or Japanese students that are living outside of Japan for an extended period of time. Just like many other *kaigai shijo* in European and American countries, I attended a local elementary school on weekdays and a supplementary Japanese school (*hoshūkō*) on Saturdays to help keep up with Japanese education. I was living a life of two students. On one hand, I was an underachieving, shy girl who would spend most of her time hiding or crying in school. On other hand, I was a competent, outspoken Japanese girl who looked forward to having a venting space where I could be fully understood for speaking the language I had grown up with. Because of this duality, I always felt like I had to hide at least a part of my personality in all social contexts to “fit in.”

Expecting their overseas assignment to be about five years long, my parents started to think about my return to Japan seriously when we hit the three-year anniversary of our stay in the United States. I was thirteen years old when I started attending a *juku*, or private supplementary school specialized in admissions-preparation courses, on top of attending *hoshūkō*. I took classes

in Japanese writing and reading comprehension, English, mathematics, and science designed for students going back to Japan within the next few years – looking ahead to high school admissions testing at the end of Grade 9. Since I was uncertain if I was going to live in the United States beyond Grade 9, I took the courses seriously, thinking that I would need to ace these admissions exams in a few years. Three years later, I saw my friends from both institutions go back to Japan for their highly-anticipated admissions testing while I continued my education in an American high school. And another four years later, at the end of high school, I saw another group of friends move back to Japan for university admissions while I decided to pursue education at an American university. Slowly but surely, I saw my friends from *hoshūkō* and *juku* acclimate into Japanese campuses on my social media feeds, even those that I used to mock for not being “Japanese” enough in my middle and high school years – my friends that I thought did not have enough language skills or cultural competency to fit in. From becoming editors of campus English newspapers to leading student organizations on campus, these *kikoku shijo* that I called friends in the United States were striving to find their communities back at “home.”

There are a couple of characteristics that connect me and the friends that I made during my time in *hoshūkō* and *juku*. First, all of us had lived abroad for at least a year or longer, attending schools and establishing a life outside of Japan with our families. Second, we all sought for high-quality education, both in the local language and in Japanese, since we needed to acclimate to the U.S. American culture and learn English while keeping up with the Japanese curriculum to prepare for our future. Third, we all planned to go back to Japan after a couple of years, either with our families or by ourselves depending on how our families’ moving schedule aligned with our high school and college entrance exam schedules. As *kaigai shijo*, we shared a set of characteristics that not all expatriate children possessed.

I digressed from the “typical” *kikoku shijo* route after high school by deciding to attend an American university. I entered the University of Michigan, and started to live away from my parents for at least eight months per year. My exposure to Japanese language and culture was now limited to my sparse interaction with other Japanese speakers on campus, most of whom were still learning the language and did not have the same fluency that I had. After completing three years of my undergraduate education, my family finally pointed out: “Your Japanese is weird. I’m surprised you still identify as Japanese.” It felt like a death sentence for my Japanese identity. I had felt strongly connected to my Japanese identity, and hearing this from my family startled me. It was the first time that I noticed discrepancy in how the society labeled my ethnic and cultural identity versus how I identified myself.

This experience sparked my interest in conducting research on *kaigai shijo* and *kikoku shijo* experiences, both while abroad and when reentering Japan. While I have some experience of being a *kaigai shijo*, I wanted to see beyond my own perspective on Japanese children abroad and understand the challenges associated with their reentry to Japan as they navigate through their Japanese identity (or lack thereof). I recognize the importance of schools as a platform for socialization and community-bonding, partly demonstrated by how I established my two different personas at a local school (my English-speaking self) and *hoshūkō/juku* (my Japanese-speaking self). How, then, do *kikoku shijo* navigate the Japanese education system to find their own place in schools? What kinds of support do they need to work through their identity development and reverse culture shocks, and what systems are (or are not) in place to acknowledge *kikoku shijo*’s needs based on their intercultural experience? What can the Japanese education system do better to accommodate *kikoku shijo*’s needs? The next few sections of this chapter give an outline of how these questions are answered in this thesis.

***Kikoku Shijo*: An Introduction¹**

Kikoku shijo, which translates to “children returning to [their] country,” is a Japanese term for children who go abroad for a significant amount of their childhood and come back to Japan. This one-sentence definition raises a couple of questions, for example: how long is a “significant amount”? What age range is considered “childhood”? By coming “back”, does that mean the child must have been born and lived in Japan before moving to a foreign country, instead of being born outside of Japan under Japanese parents? Should they hold Japanese citizenships? These questions are some of the most important aspects of *kikoku shijo* research that allow educators and scholars to understand the circumstances that await *kikoku shijo* upon their return. Chapter 2 of this thesis delves into research about the definitions of *kikoku shijo* in the past few decades, attempting to understand the characteristics of *kikoku shijo* and define who should be considered as such according to schools, the government, and other key actors in treating *kikoku shijo*.

The emergence of *kikoku shijo* as a category of Japanese youth first came as a political act. The call to recognize this category came from expatriate families in the 1960s upon their assignment abroad, when they foresaw the need to move back to Japan with their children. Because learning in the Japanese education system was considered an integral process for admissions exams preparation, especially for securing a spot at prestigious universities, these parents worried that their *kaigai shijo* would be academically disadvantaged. Therefore, these families argued that their children would need special assistance with admissions,

¹ The term *kikoku shijo* can also be written without space, *kikokushijo*, since the Japanese term does not use space and consider this term as one compound word (帰国子女). I will be using a space because the space distinguishes the two words that define their characteristics: *kikoku* (return to country) and *shijo* (children).

acknowledging *kikoku shijo*'s international experiences and ensuring that their "non-Japanese" experiences would not be used to weigh down on these students. The result was the establishment of *ukeirekō*, or schools that have special considerations for *kikoku shijo* including separate admissions process, modified curricula, *kikoku shijo*-specific classrooms, and others.

As the admissions examinations for *kikoku shijo* seem more lenient than the regular admissions criteria, a portion of students who grew up in a traditional Japanese education system has argued that these criteria constitute "reverse discrimination" that unfairly benefits *kikoku shijo* and does disservice to traditional Japanese students who have studied tirelessly for admission examinations (Goodman, Peach, Takenaka, & White, 2003). While traditional students' extensive preparation for admissions examinations should not go unacknowledged, I argue that *kikoku shijo* deserve special consideration for their reintegration to Japan for two reasons. First, they are likely to experience reverse culture shocks and challenges in identity development, coupled with difficulties of keeping up with Japanese curricula. Earning the right to go through admissions as *kikoku shijo* is not an automatic golden ticket to well-known schools; in order to qualify as *kikoku shijo*, they have to go through multiple challenges, and taking admissions exams as *kikoku shijo* does not necessarily mean they will get accepted. Second, *kikoku shijo* possess international competency that many students in Japan simply do not have. Having a structure to strategically admit *kikoku shijo* can be beneficial not only for *kikoku shijo* but also for traditional students to learn about the outside world. I disagree with the past narratives from scholars, especially in the early ages of *kikoku shijo* studies (mainly in the 1960s and 70s), who wrote that *kikoku shijo* create societal problems with their foreign influences, and thus need to be "Japanized" for them to be accepted in Japanese society again. In these early ages, *kikoku shijo*'s international experiences were considered a "handicap" and in need of

remedial education to “re-Japanize” them (Fry, 2007). It is not *kikoku shijo* that are the problem; it is the Japanese society that is largely unforgiving and intolerant of any “outsiders,” creating barriers for these students to reintegrate. Although the narrative that considers *kikoku shijo* as a problem and a “handicap” is becoming less prevalent in Japanese society today as the years go by, *kikoku shijo*’s “otherness” is still clearly marked in many instances, differentiating them from the mainstream Japanese students.

***Kikoku Shijo* as a Social Category**

Kiyoko Sueda (2014) and Roger Goodman (2003) write that *kikoku shijo* should constitute a social category on its own for a couple of reasons. First, a consistent population of students considered as *kikoku shijo* enter the Japanese education system each year. Approximately 11,000 students return to Japan every year from foreign countries after having stayed abroad for more than a year throughout elementary, middle, and high schools, according to a report by MEXT (2009). This group, along with the approximately 80,000 non-Japanese students with foreign citizenships, constitute an internationally-minded community of students present in more than half of the districts in Japan (MEXT, 2015). While there are no reliable statistics on how many *kikoku shijo* are enrolled in the Japanese school system each year, MEXT acknowledges *kikoku shijo* as a group in their policies and guidebooks. Second, the contemporary *kikoku shijo* trend has been observed for almost half a century now. Japanese institutions have recognized and supported the special needs of *kaigai shijo* and *kikoku shijo* since the 1960s, when full-time and supplementary Japanese schools (*hoshūkō*) started to be established across the globe with governmental support. Soon after, *ukeirekō* (designated “accepting schools” for *kikoku shijo*) started to emerge as reentry paths for *kikoku shijo* in Japan,

contributing to the continuing research on intercultural education. Third, *kikoku shijo* are often differentiated by their ability to speak more than one language if they engaged in learning English and/or any local languages while abroad. Since language constitutes one of the biggest determinants for social identity, exposure to non-Japanese language(s) and perceived lack of Japanese language skills both affect *kikoku shijo*'s experiences upon their return. Fourth, the rhetoric on *kikoku shijo* is largely affected by *kokusaika*, translated as internationalization or globalization. While countries such as the United States may consider internationalization to include diverse cultures from all regions of the world, Japan tends to focus on Westernization and English-focused education as the goal for *kokusaika*.

Kikoku shijo, when recognized as a minority group in Japan, is often associated with terms such as “elite” and “privileged” because a significant portion of the Japanese population assume *kikoku shijo*'s experiences give them advantage in a globalizing society (Goodman, Peach, Takenaka, & White, 2003). Because of Japanese businesses' preparation for this *kokusaika*, some argue that *kikoku shijo* should be regarded as assets in the workforce because of their (assumed) ability to speak English and adapt to different cultures. The term “privileged” also comes up frequently to describe *kikoku shijo* because they are assumed to come from upper class families. Because of their language abilities and international experience, they are thought to be able to secure well-paying jobs. However, these characterizations impose their own challenges onto *kikoku shijo*.

Japanese Identity and the Myth of Homogeneity

Kikoku shijo need to engage with the Japanese identity required to fit into the Japanese society while coping with the other cultural identities that they have encountered through their

experience abroad. But what is “the Japanese identity” at play that interferes with *kikoku shijo*’s reentry?

The trend of defining what makes the Japanese population special came after the economic boom in the late 1960s and the 1970s. What makes Japan’s period of rapid post-war economic growth different from similar trends in the United States and the European Union is that it was not driven by the influx of a large group of migrants; throughout this time, Japan still kept strict immigration policies (Goodman, Peach, Takenaka, & White, 2003). This situation took a turn in the 1980s and 1990s, when immigrant workers started to enter Japan. Domestic Japanese citizens then began to feel the urge to distinguish themselves from these “outsiders.”

The concepts of *uchi* and *soto*, or “inside” and “outside” communities, play a huge role in native Japanese’s efforts to defend Japanese identity from threatening foreign influences. *Uchi*, or the inside group, provides a framework for membership and belongingness in a certain community. *Soto*, or the outside group, is anything but the norms set by *uchi*. Millie Creighton (1997) explains that “although interacting networks of relationships in Japan are also conceptualized in *uchi* and *soto* terms, such that the indexing framework of *uchi* and *soto* is situational and shifting, there is a boundary of affiliation, in contrast to everything that is *soto* or outside of Japan.” The *uchi* community of Japan constitutes the Japanese *minzoku*. Depending on the context, the Japanese term *minzoku* can refer to similar yet distinct concepts of “race,” “nation,” or “ethnicity,” and thus, blurs the line on the definitions for each term. The underlying notion in the narratives that group the Japanese together as a homogeneous *minzoku* is that all Japanese people look the same, are born and raised in Japan, and hold Japanese citizenship (Befu, 2001). However, there is only so much that can be told about someone’s belongingness to Japanese *minzoku* or their internal identity from looking at them. In terms of physical

appearance, people from surrounding countries including Korea, China, and Taiwan, indigenous peoples of Ainu and Okinawans, and other “hidden” minorities such as *hibakusha* (atomic bomb victims), *burakumin* (former social outcasts), and people with invisible disabilities look similar or identical to the general notion of Japanese *minzoku* (Oguma, 2002). Also, further distinction needs to be made between the Japanese citizens whose nationality is officially recognized by the government, and the non-citizens that do not enjoy the same privilege yet are very much a part of the society.

In 1986, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone remarked that Japan’s level of intelligence is much higher than that of the United States because Japan is a “homogeneous” country. While critics in the U.S. have called out this remark as racist, Japanese writers only criticized him for voicing his opinions overtly and not necessarily for having them (Burgess, 1986). Nakasone’s comments highlighted the Japanese citizens’ attitudes on wanting to believe that everyone is the same, not acknowledging the diversity that exists within the society.

Eiji Oguma (2002, pp. xxvi-xxvii) cites historical context in which assumptions of homogeneity such as the one by Nakasone were made:

From the Meiji Period (1868-1911), during which a modern state was built in Japan, the Japanese have been ruled by the myth of the homogeneous nation, which argues that the Japanese are an homogeneous nation with pure blood-lines. This myth is the source of Japanese ethnocentrism, of imperialistic aggression in the 1930s and 40s and Japanese colonial rule in Korea and Taiwan, of discrimination against the various peoples of Asia, and the discrimination against minorities and the ostracism of foreign workers that we see today. ...the myth is the belief that ‘the Japanese nation has consisted, and today still consists, of only the Japanese nation, which shares a single, pure origin, and a common culture and lineage.’

Oguma also argues that people in the pre-modern Edo Period (1603-1868) used to identify with their feudal domains (*han*) and villages, and the concept of Japanese identity did not emerge until Meiji Restoration in 1868 when Japan “opened” its borders to receive more

influences from Western countries (Oguma, 2002). These remarks by Nakasone diminish the undeniable truth that the Japanese society consists of a diverse array of people from all different backgrounds, with intersecting identities that make no individual's experience exactly like another's. "Hidden minorities" such as *hibakusha*, *burakumin*, *Zainichi* Korean and Chinese, *Nikkeijin*, Ainu, Okinawans, and people with disabilities have been mentioned already. In addition, even if Japanese citizens do not identify with any of these minority categories, there is a huge difference in the lifestyles of people in different regions of Japan which constitute different cultures within Japan. Since Japanese people – especially those who grew up in suburbs or the countryside – tend to identify strongly with the cultures of their home prefecture, TV shows such as "*Himitsu no kenmin show*" (Secrets from the Locals Show), in which celebrities from all 47 prefectures represent their own prefectures and talk about the "secrets" that distinguish their prefecture from others, have attracted viewers for more than ten years (2017). It is daunting and nearly impossible to find similarities among people that are supposed to be of the same *minzoku* when their experiences and lifestyles suggest otherwise.

A Complex Identity

Kikoku shijo presents an intersection of some social identities that grant both privilege and marginalization. While they experience marginalization and discrimination due to their experiences abroad, most *kikoku shijo* also experience a significant amount of privilege from growing up financially well-off. Their parents have climbed the corporate ladder enough to be assigned to an office abroad, with the premise that they will come back to Japan in a few years. During their sojourn abroad, the families often enjoy benefits such as reimbursements for education costs, insurance packages, relocation, paid vacation to Japan once every few years, and

so on. These parents can often afford sending their *kaigai shijo* to Japanese full-time or part-time schools so that their children can be prepared for the moment they become *kikoku shijo* in a couple of years. They may even let their students move back to Japan earlier than when their overseas assignment is over depending on how old their children are. Some private *ukeirekō* have dormitories attached, supporting students without parents to live with.

However, this is a very narrow picture of *kikoku shijo*. The stereotype that *kikoku shijo*'s families are generally well-off could harm them because these families are not always able to afford education that fully supports their children in their reentry process. Private schools lure these *kikoku shijo* to their schools because they know that public schools are often unable to provide them with the same care and attention that the private schools. Public schools need to do a better job of establishing programs in which *kikoku shijo* can be welcomed for being who they are. Such programs should also enable domestic students to take advantage of having *kikoku shijo* and other international children to broaden their perspectives and learn to communicate across differences. For public schools to do so requires budget allocation from the local and/or federal governments.

One complexity of *kikoku shijo* studies (or anthropological studies on any group of people) is that it tends to lump together a group of people that hold diverse experiences and intersecting identities, at a cost of some individuals' experiences being overlooked. As mentioned earlier, *kikoku shijo*'s backgrounds differ in many ways because of their experiences overseas, as well as their age and length of stay abroad. For example, a current high school student who spent three years in China would be considered *kikoku shijo* just much as a current elementary school student who was born in Germany under Japanese parents, and moved around Europe before coming back to Japan. These two factors – age at which the students stayed

abroad and location in which they studied – already create a wide array of experiences that cannot be fully captured by sampling a handful of *kikoku shijo*. This underlying diversity within the community reminds us of a danger in using a single label to refer to a group of people, assuming that everyone who uses this label have the same or similar experiences – however that similarity is defined by the authority figures in charge of definition.

In addition to looking at how the society decides to label *kikoku shijo* as such and the stereotypes associated with it, it is important to understand how *kikoku shijo* themselves view their ethnic and cultural identities. *Kikoku shijo* spend some of their most crucial years of childhood abroad, interacting with cultures that are different from the culture that they and/or their family identify with. When *kikoku shijo* return to Japan, after having gone through a sometimes traumatic experience of acclimating to another culture, they must readjust to the Japanese society that may or may not welcome them for what their cultural encounters have molded them to be. As a result, *kikoku shijo* become associated with various stereotypes that highlight their “otherness.” While some *kikoku shijo* may find it relatively easy to integrate back into Japanese society and the Japanese education system, many of them find it challenging to fit in and find their own in a country that should feel like home to them. With over 11,000 Japanese students returning from foreign countries each year and becoming *kikoku shijo*, there exists a pressing need to create school environments that are welcoming and inclusive of their experiences and personalities.

Another aspect to consider is the intersectionality of *kikoku shijo*'s identities. According to U.S. American feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw, who was among the first to coin and use this term, intersectionality is “the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed” (Crenshaw, 1991). While *kikoku shijo* are considered to be

similar because of their international endeavors, their experiences were also influenced by other social identities that they hold, such as their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, and socioeconomic status. Some *kikoku shijo* are multiracial and/or were born abroad. Some may identify as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) spectrum, and thus may deal with the homophobia and transphobia that prevail in Japanese society, especially in school and workplace contexts. Some may live with physical, mental, or learning disabilities that prevent them from attending their top choice schools because those schools cannot provide adequate accommodations for their disabilities. While many *kikoku shijo* grow up in upper- to middle-class families that can afford quality education both while abroad and in Japan, that is not always the case. These possibilities also raise the question of how to best accommodate varying experiences while attending to other communities of students that require special attention.

This is not to suggest playing “Oppression Olympics”; everyone’s struggles must be acknowledged, and no one’s oppression should be compared to another to “one up” each other. Chicana activist and feminist Elizabeth Martinez describes a state of “Oppression Olympics” as “competition among different social groupings for that ‘Most Oppressed’ gold” (Martinez, 2004). It is not the *kikoku shijo*’s fault that Japanese society puts so much emphasis on admissions testing for high schools and colleges, which have the power to determine students’ lives in job searches and access to resources. Examining special considerations for *kikoku shijo* gives policy makers and educators a ground to establish inclusive guidelines for students from any international background, including but not limited to first-generation children of foreign nationals, *Zainichi* Koreans and Chinese, and *Nikkeijin* or descendants of Japanese immigrants returning from mainly Latin American countries.

So What? The Significance of *Kikoku Shijo* Studies

The *kikoku shijo* phenomenon in Japan presents a specific case of students on the move. It has become common for school-aged children to be immersed in a culture that is different from what the society expects their “home” culture to be, often based on their ethnicity, citizenship, family background, place of birth, and languages spoken, just to name a few. While a consistent census on the number of expatriates (or “expats” for short) is difficult to find, one survey by Finaccord (2014) concluded that the total number of expatriates worldwide amounted to 50.53 million in 2013, and is estimated to rise to 56.84 million by 2017 if the number keeps on growing at a compound annual rate of 3.0%.² 28.9% of the expats in 2013 were students, and this percentage is expected to grow to 34.0% in 2017 (Finaccord, 2014). Finaccord defines expats as someone living outside of their own country for at least 12 months for a maximum of 5 years. That accounts for over 17 million students living in a foreign country, some of whom end up returning to their own countries.

While studies of expatriate students in the U.S. American context have existed since pre-World War II, they have mainly focused on military children and not so much on families on the move due to their employers (Useem & Useem, 1967). Researching *kikoku shijo* cases enables educators to devise and implement curricula and policies that address the unique needs of over 17 million expat children worldwide, both while abroad and upon their return. Instead of ostracizing and penalizing them for having foreign experiences, their robust global viewpoints should be considered as assets in today’s increasingly globalized world. This thesis adds to the

² Finaccord’s survey is not completely representative of the entire world. The inbound countries in this data are limited to 30 inbound countries and 25 outbound countries based on their “economic importance and significance in the context of the expatriate market.” This factor limits the data to a subset of all expatriates in the world. However, this data was used in this chapter because it is one of the only surveys that provide an estimate of the number of expatriates in 2017.

literature of curriculum development for internationally minded children in Japanese context, and the research in this can be reflected on returnee children in other countries as well.

Overview of the Chapters

This thesis will cover the situations surrounding *kikoku shijo* upon their return to Japan and how the Japanese education system can support their resettlement through curriculum and school environment through curricula and school environments that foster a diverse and accepting space. In Chapter 2, a history of defining the term *kikoku shijo* is presented, as well as an overview of stereotypes commonly associated with this label. Throughout the past half century, the *kikoku shijo* categorization carried various positive and negative stereotypes based on the intersection of Japanese-ness and foreign-ness. Chapter 3 takes a closer look at the Japanese education system in question and explains certain measures taken by *ukeirekō* to facilitate *kikoku shijo*'s return to Japan. Chapter 4 synthesizes the materials by discussing the effects of reverse culture shocks on *kikoku shijo* and introducing a proposed measure that would alleviate *kikoku shijo*'s stress as they reintegrate. The thesis then leads to Chapter 5, an epilogue chapter, which touches upon reflections on my search for "home" and my Japanese identity as a result of this research.

Chapter 2: Defining *Kikoku Shijo* and Exploring Their Stereotypes

Who are the *Kikoku Shijo*?

While many variations exist on how the term is defined, *kikoku shijo* are Japanese children who have spent a significant amount of their childhood abroad before integrating into Japanese society. A typical *kikoku shijo* spends a few years abroad with their parents as *kaigai shijo*, or children with Japanese citizenship currently living abroad for over three months and who have thus registered with the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) through the required Overseas Residential Registration system. After their sojourn, they come back to Japan with experiences of foreign culture(s) and find themselves needing to reintegrate to Japanese culture. Many factors contribute to the diversity within the *kaigai* and *kikoku shijo* umbrella, such as where they have lived abroad and for how long, which type of school they attended while abroad (full-time or part-time Japanese school [*hoshūkō*], local school, etc.), or how old they are upon return. This chapter will discuss the history of *kikoku shijo*'s recognition, frequently used criteria for *kikoku shijo*'s "eligibility", and stereotypes of *kikoku shijo*.

Although Japanese children have been on the move before the World Wars in smaller numbers, the term to refer to Japanese returnee children, *kikoku shijo*, originated in the late 1960s. This is when the Japanese Ministry of Education started to recognize and address the issue of education for students coming back to Japan from overseas (Goodman, 1990). While the phenomenon of Japanese sojourning abroad existed as early as late 19th century, *kikoku shijo* studies focus on Japanese children's international movements post-World War II, roughly after the 1950s (Kobayashi, 1981). After World War II, the Japanese economic miracle brought extensive growth to Japanese industry, which encouraged many businesses to expand

internationally. As these businesses started to open more branches overseas and the businessmen started to move abroad with their families, the number of *kaigai shijo* increased steadily by a few thousand per year from the late 1970s to 1990s (MOFA, 2016b). After the “lost decade” of the 1990s and the burst of the “bubble economy” when the number of *kaigai shijo* stayed stagnant around 49,000 and 50,000, the number is again on the rise today. As of May 1, 2016, there were 79,251 children registered as *kaigai shijo* per year according to statistics by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA, 2016a).

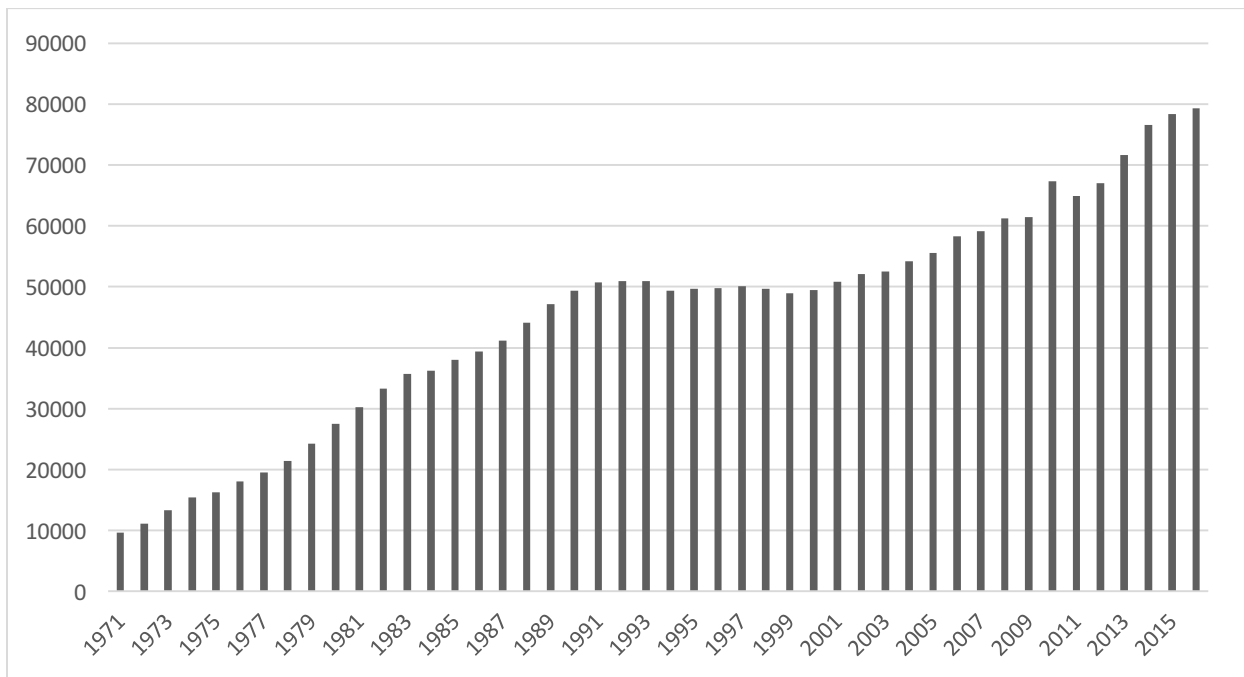


Figure 2.1. Number of *kaigai shijo* per year. Adapted from Statistics on Japanese Children Living Abroad, by MOFA (1971-2016).

The number of *kikoku shijo* is difficult to keep track of, especially since the definition of *kikoku shijo* can often be vague. There has not been any consistent analysis of the number of *kikoku shijo*, and one can only speculate how many there are from other kinds of data sets. For example, MEXT recorded 7,897 Japanese nationals needing Japanese language instruction in

primary schools (elementary and junior high schools) in 2014, spreading over 3,022 schools throughout Japan (MEXT, 2015). However, this data does not include *kikoku shijo* that do not require remedial Japanese language instruction, which constitute a significant part of the community.

Scholars started to address the “problems” *kikoku shijo* face as they integrate back to Japanese education system and how the system can be supportive of their needs mainly in the 1970s. One of the first scholars to write about the *kikoku shijo* “problems” was Tetsuya Kobayashi, who worked for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in West Germany from 1968 to 1972 and took his children with him. After his return to Japan, he conducted extensive research on the status of *kaigai shijo* and *kikoku shijo* education in the late 1970s and 1980s. Based on this research, Kobayashi (1983, p. i) defines *kikoku shijo* as follows:

Kikokushijo are those who have had the experience of being born in Japan and brought up in the mainstream of Japanese culture. When they reached a certain age, they went overseas with their parents. While they were being brought up overseas, they received some influence from the local culture. After a few years, they returned home and were brought up in the mainstream Japanese culture once again.

A key characteristic of Kobayashi’s definition is that it restricts *kikoku shijo* to those who were born in Japan and have lived there until they were “a certain age.” Therefore, Japanese children born outside Japan are not considered *kikoku shijo* in his terms. This restriction assumes that children must first know about Japanese culture before their sojourn abroad by having lived in Japan. This definition creates a distinction between integration and reintegration, with *kikoku shijo*’s experience being limited to reintegration rather than integration into Japanese society. In other words, Kobayashi focuses on *kikoku shijo*’s “returning” to their “home” culture as the integral part of *kikoku shijo* identity.

Almost two decades later, Gunei Sato (1997, p. 11) defined *kikoku shijo* as “a child who holds a Japanese citizenship and has pursued education in a full-time Japanese school or local school (*genchikō*) abroad due to their parents’ overseas assignment,” while acknowledging that this definition is not inclusive of diverse experiences of *kikoku shijo* such as those holding non-Japanese citizenship(s), those attending international schools that are neither local nor Japanese upon their return to Japan, or those with Japanese parents living abroad for reasons other than their temporary employment (such as education, having family members abroad, establishing their own business, and so on) (Sato, 1997). By providing this definition as well as its limiting factors, Sato contributes to the literature of *kikoku shijo* that illustrates the diversity within the community. Sato’s definition also makes it clear that *kikoku shijo* hold Japanese citizenship, whereas Kobayashi’s definition does not make this distinction. Kobayashi seems to assume that children “born in Japan” have Japanese citizenships, although this is not always the case (for example, children born in Japan between two parents with non-Japanese citizenships).

In another instance, Roger Goodman (2003) defines *kikoku shijo* as children that have the following characteristics: both of their parents are Japanese; they went overseas before they reached the age of twenty (age of adulthood or coming-of-age in Japanese culture); they went abroad, generally, because their father was posted temporarily overseas; they have been overseas for more than three months and are registered with MOFA as ‘prolonged Japanese overseas residents’; and they have entered schools that are part of the mainstream Japanese education system and not any schools with non-Japanese curricula, including international schools serving mainly foreign students in Japan. While Goodman’s definition clarifies age and time spent abroad, it fails to acknowledge that Japanese students who do not enter Japanese education system upon their return also face struggles and stereotypes that *kikoku shijo* typically face.

***Kikoku Shijo* as Third Culture Kids**

A concept similar to *kikoku shijo* but more generic and perhaps more widely used by Western scholars is the term “Third Culture Kids (TCKs)”. Sociologists John Useem and Ruth Hill Useem were the first to use the words “third culture” to refer to an “interstitial” culture in between the person’s original and new cultures following their fieldwork to study the American expatriates in India (Useem & Useem, 1967). David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken (1999, p. 19) defines a Third Culture Kid as follows:

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background.

This definition highlights how the experiences of TCKs could be similar to those of *kikoku shijo*. However, it also hints that the concept of TCK tends to encompass broader experiences of children’s cultural encounters. For example, a person who grows up in a Chinese-American family in the United States can also be considered TCK, since they are living in the (American) culture different from their parents’ (Chinese). TCK studies give more context and language to talk about *kikoku shijo* as being part of a larger trend of globalization, since *kikoku shijo* are a subset of TCK in terms of their experience outside of their home culture. Momo Kano Podolsky writes that both TCK studies and *kikoku shijo* studies have both focused on “the impact of a cross-cultural overseas upbringing on a child’s subsequent life experience,” yet these studies have grown mostly independent from each other (Kano Podolsky, 2004). Because of the similarities between TCK and *kikoku shijo* studies, best practices for *kikoku shijo*’s acclimation back to their home country can inform the larger community of internationally mobile children.

David Pollock, who has worked with children from foreign service, military, and international business families, uses the model below to talk about Third Culture Kids and their identity development in relation to the culture that they currently live in. In this grid, “+” implies having that attribute (either looking or thinking alike), and “-” implies the lack thereof. According to this model, a typical *kikoku shijo* would fall under the “Hidden Immigrant” box since they are likely to look Japanese but think differently because of their foreign influences. Pollock mentions that the “hidden immigrant” experience comes into play when “one enters one’s own culture having developed as a TCK with a variety of viewpoints, values, and philosophies that differ from those of the majority in one’s home culture” (Pollock, 1996).

| | | LOOK | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| | | + | - |
| T H I N K | + | Look like Think like <i>MIRROR</i> | Look different Think like <i>ADOPTED</i> |
| | - | Look like Think differently <i>HIDDEN IMMIGRANT</i> | Look different Think differently <i>FOREIGNER</i> |

Figure 2.2. Look/Think Matrix on Foreignness. Adapted from *Strangers at Home* (p. 206) by D. Pollock, 1996, Bayside: Aletheia Publications. Copyright 1996 by Carolyn D. Smith.

This model is useful when examining *kikoku shijo*’s definition and identity. Based on this model, *kikoku shijo* can be best described as “Hidden Immigrants” who look like any other Japanese people but think differently due to their exposure to non-Japanese culture(s). This identity of *kikoku shijo* as “Hidden Immigrants” can be compared to the experiences of so-called

“insider minorities,” who are “those whose difference is of a sort that currently does not deny their Japanese-ness in the eyes of other Japanese” according to anthropology professor Joshua Hotaka Roth (2005). These insider minorities in Japan include *burakumin*, or the descendants of former outcast groups; *hibakusha*, or atomic bomb victims from Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Ainu and Okinawans, who are the two indigenous groups from Hokkaido and Okinawa, respectively; and *Nikkeijin*, who are Japanese migrants or their descendants making their way back to Japan. These groups identify differently from the mainstream Japanese citizens and experience marginalization and discrimination that they need to work through to “fit in.” Some of these groups, including *Nikkeijin*, Ainu, and Okinawans, may relate to *kikoku shijo*’s experience of being influenced by a culture different from whichever “home” culture they identify with.

At the Intersection of Japanese-ness and Foreign-ness

International Christian University (ICU) is a school known to admit a high number of *kikoku shijo* as well as foreign students to maintain a “multi-cultural environment” (International Christian University, 2014). In the 1980s, students at ICU developed a set of slang terms to distinguish between their classmates based on their possession of “Japanese-ness”: *Jun-Japa*, *Han-Japa*, *Hen-Japa*, and *Non-Japa* (Kobayashi, 1981). *Jun-Japa* refers to the authentically Japanese students, without any international experiences or family members from non-Japanese backgrounds. *Han-Japa* refers to anyone who is of mixed ethnicity, with at least one side of the family being Japanese. *Hen-Japa* refers to “weird” Japanese, or someone whose physical features suggest their Japanese ethnicity yet their actions, fashion, and/or Japanese language ability tell otherwise. Finally, *Non-Japa* refers to those that are not Japanese – most often distinguished by the appearance. Similar to racial identifications made in other contexts, these

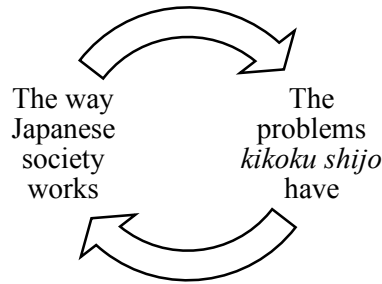
categories are ascribed from observing individuals' physical traits and behaviors, which may or may not align with how these students identify themselves. While these terms – especially *Hen-Japa* and *Non-Japa*, which carry derogatory connotations – have now been considered obsolete since the 2000s, people that have been categorized as such, including *kikoku shijo* and other internationally-minded children, are still considered different from the so-called *Jun-Japa* community. Why are *kikoku shijo* perceived to be different from the mainstream Japanese children, being told that they are too weird to be Japanese or are not Japanese at all despite being ethnically Japanese?

Part of the “weirdness” associated with *kikoku shijo* is their inability to adapt to the so-called Japanese culture. Since *kikoku shijo* are students who continue their education in Japan after their study abroad, most of *kikoku shijo*'s (re-)immersion with Japanese culture happens in schools. Students learn school cultures through what some scholars call “hidden curriculum,” described as “student learning that is not described by curriculum planners or teachers as an explicit aim of instruction even though it results from deliberate practices and organizational structures” (Boostrom, 2010). Coined by Philip W. Jackson in 1968 as part of his research on elementary school children, the concept of a hidden curriculum states the need to understand education through the framework of socialization where students are required to learn how to interact with other students, win praises from teachers, and follow the institutional codes in order to succeed in school (Jackson, 1990).

As expected, some students are better at acquiring the abilities prescribed by this hidden curriculum than others. Since this curriculum is not explicitly taught, students who can “read” the nuances, listen to their teachers well, and fit into the school culture have easier time learning the hidden curriculum. Hayao Kawai (1991) explains the importance of “guessing” as a tool for

students' excellence in schools, which requires an understanding of cultural references and expectations. These characteristics of being able to pick up the subtleties and implicit meanings are opposite from the ones often associated with *kikoku shijo*, who are described as individualistic, "outsiders," and unfitting. The dilemma here, however, is that being able to learn the hidden curriculum of one's host nation requires extensive experience with the culture since childhood. It helps students to know what kind of cultural cues and norms to look for so that they can adapt and learn accordingly. *Kikoku shijo*'s experience abroad interferes with this prolonged exposure and is ultimately detrimental to their acquisition of the Japanese cultural cues from early ages.

So far, I have addressed *kikoku shijo*'s problems with adaptation, operating under the assumption that *kikoku shijo* would face problems upon reentry because of how Japanese society operates. Do *kikoku shijo* actually struggle to adapt despite being ethnically Japanese and somewhat familiar with Japanese culture, or do Japanese people "think" they struggle based on the assumptions on their cultural encounters? Goodman (2003) uses the diagram below to show how the "culturalists" in the 1970s described the relationships between Japanese society and *kikoku shijo* problems. These culturalists assumed that *kikoku shijo* would have problems reintegrating into the Japanese society because of the societal expectations and structure that is unique to Japan and its people. At the same time, the problems *kikoku shijo* faced were also used to define the ways in which Japanese society works. As a result, these two qualities become "mutually reinforcing" and form a never-ending cycle of arguments and assumptions about both *kikoku shijo* community and Japanese society as a whole. This reinforcement was illustrated by Goodman (2003) and is quoted in Figure 2.3.



Arrow = direction of argument

Figure 2.3. Culturalist assumptions underlying examinations of the problems faced by *kikoku shijo*. Adapted from *Global Japan* (p. 182), by R. Goodman et al., 2003, London: RoutledgeCurzon. Copyright 2003 by R. Goodman.

The dilemma of reconciling *kikoku shijo*'s foreign and domestic attributes is a challenging one to resolve. The general perception of *kikoku shijo* is that they are too influenced by foreign cultures to be considered the same as other Japanese students who have grown up in Japan their entire lives. However, *kikoku shijo* are, by most accepted definitions, Japanese citizens. As opposed to children of foreign-born parents and Japanese immigrants, such as those from Central and South America returning to Japan who most often require visas or special immigration status to enter Japan, *kikoku shijo* may enter the country with ease because of their Japanese citizenship. Moreover, *kikoku shijo*'s needs with learning Japanese language are more difficult to detect, especially in schools that do not have a large international population. For example, these students may have no difficulty speaking with their classmates in Japanese, but may struggle with reading and writing in Japanese for school assignments. This dilemma influences the education policies, or lack thereof, surrounding *kikoku shijo* in Japanese school systems and especially in public schools.

This confusion over *kikoku shijo*'s Japanese-ness and foreignness can also be seen in how MEXT has framed *kikoku shijo* education. The publication "Guide to Admitting Foreign

Students” by MEXT mentions *kikoku shijo* as one of the group of students that potentially need help with Japanese language skills, along with children of non-Japanese citizenship and children of internationally married couples (MEXT, 2011c). Intended for use by school administrators, Japanese language instructors, classroom teachers, and local board of education members, the guide illustrates the particular struggles faced by foreign students, mainly due to language barriers. While the Japan Overseas Educational Services (JOES) refers to this guide as a resource for educators involved in *kikoku shijo* instruction, this recommendation still poses a question of whether or not schools should treat *kikoku shijo* with the same guidelines as other foreign students. Depending on what portion of their childhood they spent abroad, *kikoku shijo* may already have competent Japanese language skills. However, possessing Japanese language skills does not mean that they avoid any of the reverse culture shocks that *kikoku shijo* typically go through, or that they will not struggle with the Japanese curriculum in general. In fact, *kikoku shijo*’s perceived foreignness comes from their ability (or lack thereof) to acquire an adequate understanding of the “hidden curriculum.”

Images of *Kikoku Shijo*

The criteria above have mainly examined the characteristics of *kikoku shijo* that are directly related to their experience abroad, which influence their national identity. These characteristics lead to some images and stereotypes about *kikoku shijo* becoming widely held by the Japanese society. However, *kikoku shijo*’s own identities are not as easily identifiable as the categorizations and stereotypes that society has put on them in the past few decades would suggest. Popular media, as well as scholars, have ascribed many labels to *kikoku shijo*, which elicit both positive and negative images. These images are summarized in Table 2.1.

| Positive (+) Images | Negative (-) Images |
|--|---|
| International talent, global citizen | Drifter, stateless person, excessively globalized |
| Young diplomat | Language snob |
| Bilingual, Bilin-gal (“bilingual girls”), language savvy, bicultural | Burden |
| The new “race” | Heterogeneous, foreign |
| The new type of Japanese, Neo-Japanese | Dropout, half-Japanese |
| The new force, new brand | Weird Japanese, odd race, natural disaster |
| Golden egg, distinguished character | Unfortunate minority |
| | Children abandoned by Japanese education |

Table 2.1. Descriptions of *kikoku shijo* from select magazine articles (1976-1992). Adapted from *Kaigai kikoku shijo kyōiku no saikōchiku* (p. 230) by G. Sato, 1997, Tokyo: Tamagawa University Press. Copyright 1997 by G. Sato.

This table of stereotypes associated with *kikoku shijo* affirms that they are perceived to be different from ordinary Japanese students, most likely due to their experience abroad. On the “positive” side, *kikoku shijo* are praised to be the leaders of the future with their bilingual and bicultural skills, who break past the normalized idea of “Japanese-ness.” Their added value as *kikoku shijo* comes from being different from the mainstream Japanese, who typically have limited knowledge or understanding of cultures and languages outside of stereotypes perpetrated by the media. On the other side, some regard *kikoku shijo* to be too un-Japanese, weird, and unfortunate since they are missing something that makes up the core of being Japanese. Negative images portray *kikoku shijo* as someone that does not belong to the society because of their exposure to international society, or in extreme cases, as a “natural disaster.”

The media has been a huge contributor to supporting both these positive and negative stereotypes. Celebrities who have *kikoku shijo* backgrounds, such as Hikaru Utada (singer and songwriter), Masako Owada (Crown Princess of Japan), and Christel Takigawa (news presenter who made a speech to win the Tokyo Summer Olympic Games nomination in 2020) often share their experiences abroad with the public through mass media, highlighting their global influences in a positive light. Fictional and documentary representations of *kikoku shijo* add to the narrative

as well. For example, a television drama called “*Kizuna*” (Friendship) (1987) portrays a fictional junior high school-aged *kikoku shijo*. The protagonist left his parents in the United States and tried to integrate into a Japanese junior high school, only to realize that his classmates would make him a subject of intense bullying because of how “different” he is from the mainstream Japanese. Based on a book “*Tatta hitotsuno aoi sora – kaigai kikoku shijo wa gendaino sutejika*” (There is only one sky – Are *kaigai* and *kikoku shijo* the abandoned children today?), the drama stirred up conversation on Japanese schools’ intolerance towards *kikoku shijo* by shedding light on the impossible expectations to assimilate to Japanese school culture that further marginalized them (Osawa, 1986). Almost thirty years later, “*Nigeruwa haji daga yakuni tatsu* (Running Away is a Shame but Useful)” (2016) features a young female office worker described as a “trendy, forward-looking girl” who hides her *kikoku shijo* status because multiple people have criticized her for being “weird” and told her to “go back to America” in her student years. While the problems she mentions are not as extreme as those faced by the protagonist from “*Kizuna*,” the portrayal of *kikoku shijo* in “*Nigeruwa haji daga yakuni tatsu*” highlights that *kikoku shijo* still face difficulties being themselves and coming into terms with their international experience in Japanese society.

Summary of Findings

This chapter looked at how *kikoku shijo* are portrayed both in policies and in popular media, and the stereotypes that these mediums perpetuate. This work is important because it helps us define *kikoku shijo* identity as the Japanese society perceives it and compare that with *kikoku shijo*’s own perception of their identity. Initial efforts to define *kikoku shijo* have mainly catered to educational institutions, both public and private, to determine what experiences would

qualify *kikoku shijo* for special admissions process. These institutions acknowledge *kikoku shijo*'s bilingual and bicultural skills as well as their often-subpar Japanese skills as “otherness.” Such notions of “otherness” inform stereotypical portrayals of *kikoku shijo*, both positively and negatively. However, these generalized, “one-size-fits-all” stereotypes of *kikoku shijo* cannot encompass all their experiences, since there is a huge diversity within the community based on where and how long they have lived abroad, how old they were when they lived abroad, and other factors. In addition, the Japanese society makes it difficult to fully integrate *kikoku shijo* and look at them past their stereotypes and internalized images, either positive or negative. *Kikoku shijo*, along with other “invisible minorities,” experience struggles for being secretly different from the mainstream Japanese society, which are often most evident and consequential within educational contexts.

Chapter 3: *Kikoku Shijo* and the Japanese Education System

A Case for Special *Kikoku Shijo* Education

Since *kikoku shijo* are Japanese nationals by most accepted definitions (see Chapter 2), the Japanese government is obligated to provide them with access to education up to Grade 9. Under the *Nihonkoku Kenpō* (Japanese Constitution, 1946) and the *Kyōiku kihonhō* (Fundamental Educational Law, 1947), this compulsory education is offered free of charge if the students attend their local public schools.³ However, public schools often find themselves incapable of offering enough support for *kikoku shijo* and any other students with international backgrounds (including but not limited to foreign nationals, *Zainichi* Koreans, and children of *Nikkeijin* returning from various countries) because the number of *kikoku shijo* in each school is small, especially in areas outside of the Tokyo and Osaka metropolitan areas. Public schools also face the problem of having to follow the MEXT Curriculum Guidelines more closely than private schools. Private schools serve as welcoming grounds for these *kikoku shijo* by offering more comprehensive programs for them. Despite setting very specific admissions criteria, such as the length and purpose of their stay abroad, commuting distance from school, and citizenship, these private schools receive enough applications from *kikoku shijo* to fill the necessary enrollment quotas.

In this chapter, I argue that more resources need to be allocated to *kikoku shijo* and other children with international backgrounds in Japanese public schools, especially in rural areas, so

³ The Fundamental Law of Education (*Kyōiku kihonhō*) is translated as “The Basic Act on Education” on the MEXT webpage containing the English translation of this law; however, the first translation is used here because it is used in other parts of MEXT website, including the Japan’s Modern Educational System (1980).

that their strengths in intercultural skills, foreign languages, and critical thinking can be nurtured and their weaknesses in Japanese language, certain subjects (for example, mathematics or science classes taught based on Japanese curriculum), and cultural familiarity can be remedied. To start, I first explain the Japanese education system and the legal framework it operates within; then, I discuss the role of *ukeirekō* in providing adequate and appropriate education for *kikoku shijo* and highlight some of their key efforts to help facilitate *kikoku shijo*'s reintegration. Finally, the chapter will discuss some takeaways for public schools in terms of helping *kikoku shijo* reenter the Japanese education system, leading to the conclusion and my suggestions for educational programs to better address *kikoku shijo*'s needs as outlined in Chapter 4.

The Japanese Education System

To begin, let us look at the framework for the Japanese education system that *kikoku shijo* reintegrate into. The Japanese education system follows a 6-3-3-4 framework: six years of elementary school, three years of junior high (lower secondary) school, three years of high (higher secondary) school, and four years of university. The first nine years of education are compulsory, and are offered free of charge to Japanese nationals as well as non-Japanese nationals that wish to enroll in their respective local public schools (MEXT). Unlike in the U.S. American school system, where each school district has the flexibility to set the length of their own elementary and junior high school education based on their needs, Japanese elementary and junior high schools do not have a varying number of years spent in each school. However, some schools (especially private and federally-funded schools) offer combined elementary/junior high or junior high/high school programs in which students may stay in the same school after finishing elementary or junior high school. Both public (funded by either federal or local

government) and private schools serve children from Grade 1 (6 years old) to Grade 12 (18 years old). Since high school is not considered a part of compulsory education, all high schools including public schools charge tuition fees that students and their families are responsible for paying. MEXT offers scholarships for students with demonstrated financial need.

The right to education was established by the Japanese Constitution (1946), often known as the “new” Constitution in contrast with the pre-war Meiji Constitution [*Dai Nihon Teikoku Kenpō*] (1889). It contains some articles that set the foundation for Japanese education, one of which reads:

“All people shall have the right to receive an equal education according to their ability, as provided by the law. The people shall be obliged to have all boys and girls under protection receive general education as provided by law. Such compulsory education shall be free.” (Japan Const. [Kenpo] art. 26 para. 1-2.)

The new Constitution makes it clear that the people and the government are responsible for granting every Japanese child the right to education. This marks a stark difference from the Meiji Constitution, which does not contain any mention of education and leaves it up to the Emperor to establish any imperial orders needed to provide Japanese citizens with education (JOES, 1980). Because of the government’s responsibility to provide education, the National Diet passed a Fundamental Law of Education in 1947 to serve as the basis to operate under the new Constitution, with revisions made in 2006.

Another important aspect of Japanese education is the national *Gakushū shidō yōryō* (Curriculum Guidelines) put into effect by MEXT. Per the *Gakkō kyōikuhō* (School Education Law, 1947, last updated in 2016), all elementary and secondary schools are to follow the Curriculum Guidelines (MEXT, 2016). The Curriculum Guidelines are set forth to ensure that any student from any part of Japan may receive the same quality of education. All schools,

regardless of elementary or secondary, public or private, are expected to follow the Curriculum Guidelines. However, a special clause exists in the School Education Law for private schools that allows them to be more flexible with the curriculum set by the government. The Private Schools Law (*Shiritsu gakkōhō*, 1949, last updated in 2014) exempts the private schools from observing Article 14 of the School Education Law, which mentions that the Board of Education from each prefecture may order schools to alter their facilities, instruction, and other factors if they are deemed in violation of any policies set forth by the Board of Education and Ministers of each prefecture. Because of this exemption, private schools are less likely to be criticized for not following the Curriculum Guidelines. For example, these schools may offer classes in religion, extra courses in foreign languages, and other specialty courses by making compromises to time spent teaching core subjects or extending school days.

As of 2010, approximately a quarter of all high schools are private schools, whereas a far smaller percentage of junior high and elementary schools are private. This distinction of public versus private schools becomes important when discussing *ukeirekō* and their characteristics.

| | Number of Schools | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| | Private Schools (A) | Total (B) | Percentage of Private Schools (A/B) |
| Universities | 597 | 778 | 76.7% |
| High Schools | 1,321 | 5,116 | 25.8% |
| Junior High Schools | 758 | 10,815 | 7.0% |
| Elementary Schools | 213 | 22,000 | 1.0% |

Table 3.1. Number of schools per type. Adapted from statistics by MEXT (2010).

Importance of *Ukeirekō*

Ukeirekō (lit. “admitting schools”) are the schools that acknowledge the different needs of *kikoku shijo* and give special considerations for them in terms of entrance exams and/or

instruction methods upon enrollment. *Ukeirekō* can be both public and private; while there are public school districts across Japan with the designated support programs for *kikoku shijo* and foreign-born students, a large majority of them are private schools located in the metropolitan areas surrounding Tokyo and Osaka. Each school sets their own policy for admission criteria, and may offer different curricula and programs for *kikoku shijo* depending on the available resources. Some schools with the financial and human resources to do so offer individual instruction towards *kikoku shijo*, or hold English language retention courses after-school, or even establish a separate classroom for *kikoku shijo*. Other schools may integrate them into regular classrooms and address individual needs as they arise, or may not even have any special consideration for *kikoku shijo* after their admission (JOES, 2016a).

For any schools that require admissions (i.e. any schools except public schools offering compulsory education), schools may set up a variety of processes for admitting *kikoku shijo*. These processes generally fall under four categories. The first category is especially seen in schools designed to admit a higher percentage of *kikoku shijo*. These schools evaluate *kikoku shijo* based on admissions essays, interviews, and other documents. In the second category, schools may test *kikoku shijo*'s English ability and put less weight on Japanese comprehension. The third category is when schools design admissions tests specifically for *kikoku shijo*, which contain questions easier than those normally found on admissions exams. In the fourth category, schools may administer the same test given to the traditional students and evaluate *kikoku shijo* under the same criteria as traditional students, while acknowledging their *kikoku shijo* status (SAPIX, 2016).

While the percentage of all national schools that are private schools is low, especially for elementary and junior high schools, the percentage of schools listed as *ukeirekō* by Japan

Overseas Education Service (JOES) that are private schools is high. For example, the list of elementary schools labeled as *ukeirekō* in Tokyo includes 6 public schools and 20 private schools.⁴ For junior high schools, the list contains 4 public schools and 117 private schools. These statistics highlight how few public schools are designated as *ukeirekō*. One contributing factor to this uneven ratio between private and public schools listed as *ukeirekō* is that public schools lost a majority of their financial support from the government to support *kikoku shijo* when the Ministry of Education combined with the Science and Technology Agency in 2003 to form the current MEXT (Funatsu, 2004). After this reorganization, the Overseas Japanese Children Education Division that nested under the former Ministry of Education was integrated into the newly formed International Education Division. Policy-making and funding allocation around *kikoku shijo* is now combined with the work for other students with international backgrounds, with or without Japanese citizenship. This reorganization brought together groups of marginalized students that face similar problems due to their international experiences. However, it also meant that *kikoku shijo*, especially those who do not experience as much difficulty with Japanese language yet still face reverse culture shock and need to adapt, could not have their specific needs met in terms of being Japanese but not being fully considered as Japanese.

Ukeirekō play an integral role in defining the “eligibility requirements” for *kikoku shijo* through their admissions process, and thus in outlining who qualifies as *kikoku shijo* and who does not. *Ukeirekō* have full discretion regarding the length of the students’ stay abroad and/or time back in Japan, whether the stay abroad was accompanied by their parents, and what kind of

⁴ For the purpose of these statistics, *kokuritsu* (funded by federal government) and *kōritsu* (funded by local government) are both categorized as “public”.

admissions examination *kikoku shijo* would take for consideration. Despite being extremely specific on eligibility, these private *ukeirekō* receive applications from numerous *kikoku shijo*, making the process competitive. Parents of *kikoku shijo* often wish to send their children to schools listed as *ukeirekō* because of their attention to *kikoku shijo*'s needs, such as language acquisition and retention as well as cultural competency training, even if that means that parents would need to shell out upwards of 1 million JPY per year (approximately 8,800 USD) for tuition plus any cost for commuting or residing in dormitories. This raises a question of whether the government provides appropriate education for *kikoku shijo*; if not, these disparities could end up violating the laws that require compulsory education to be available to all Japanese.

***Kikoku Shijo*'s "Eligibility Requirements"**

Determining one's eligibility as *kikoku shijo* is extremely important for the Japanese admissions system for middle and high schools as well as universities. Families with *kaigai shijo* contemplate the best timing for their children to return to Japan, based on their children's age and grade level, so that they can be best prepared for admissions (Sato, 1997). In regions of the world with significant numbers of *kaigai shijo*, Japanese after-school and weekend schools offer preparatory classes for succeeding in the *kikoku shijo* admissions process. Some parents become strategic about transferring their student from a local school, which often has a different school calendar system (for example, September – May instead of April – March as is common in Japan), to a full-time Japanese school in the area if available or even moving them back to Japan early so that they can earn the required diploma from respective schools in time for application.

When coming back to Japan, *kikoku shijo* usually seek admission to *ukeirekō*, which are schools that have special quotas and criteria to admit *kikoku shijo*. Most *kikoku shijo* come back

from abroad having attended full-time or supplementary Japanese schools that use the same MEXT-approved textbooks that the schools in Japan use. However, especially for students who attended supplementary schools that typically cram five school days' worth of material into one day, thus skimming through and/or eliminating a lot of teaching units, these students do not always have the same aptitude in all subjects taught in Japan. Since the admissions tests are tailored for students who have gone through nine years (for high schools) or twelve years (for universities) of full-time Japanese education, *kikoku shijo* are not necessarily equipped to do well on these because their educational background differs from that of traditional Japanese students.

Japan Overseas Educational Services (JOES) publishes a guide book on schools for *kikoku shijo* each year that outlines admissions eligibility criteria and requirements for private and federally funded schools, titled *Kikoku shijo no tame no gakkō binran* (“School Guidebook for *kikoku shijo*”). In addition, preparatory cram schools (*juku*) act as specialists on these admissions and offer guidance on choosing which *ukeirekō* to apply to (JOES, 2016a). These resources identify the following criteria as commonly used requirements for determining whether the student qualifies for the schools' *kikoku shijo* special admission:

1) Do they hold Japanese citizenship?

Most authors agree that *kaigai shijo* and *kikoku shijo* must hold Japanese citizenship, especially since the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) work closely together to provide support for Japanese education for Japanese citizens studying in foreign countries, whether at full-time Japanese schools or weekend supplementary schools (MOFA, 2015). This criterion eliminates children who have acquired a non-Japanese citizenship with no intent to return to Japan, as well

as children who are ethnically Japanese but may not necessarily consider Japan as their home and do not hold Japanese citizenship (including, but not limited to, the children of Japanese immigrants born overseas).

2) *How long have they live abroad, and how long has it been since their return?*

Since MOFA requires all Japanese citizens residing in a foreign country for more than three months to register via the Overseas Residential Registration, the period of three months works as one of the markers for Japanese students to be considered *kaigai shijo* (MOFA, 2017). However, rarely, if ever, is three months considered enough time for these children to be considered *kikoku shijo* upon their return. The individual schools they matriculate into after coming back to Japan determine the length of stay overseas required for children to be considered *kikoku shijo*. Most *ukeirekō* require a stay of at least two years or more abroad to ensure that these children have acquired enough overseas experience to need special accommodation for admission tests (JOBA, 2016). Some *ukeirekō* also require their applicants to be within one to three years of returning to Japan for them to qualify for the *kikoku shijo* special admissions.

3) *How old are they when they are abroad and when they return to Japan?*

Because the word *shijo* in *kikoku shijo* implies that they are “children,” there tends to be an upper age limit for individuals to be considered *kikoku shijo*. Compulsory education in Japan extends through ninth grade, which is the last year of junior high school. To attend high school, students must go through an admission process. Therefore, this age (ninth grade, or age fifteen) serves as one of the cutoff lines used to define *kikoku shijo*. Another popular cutoff line is the

age of eighteen, which is typically when students graduate from high school and take the entrance examinations for colleges. If the student is above the age of eighteen, it is less likely that the student will be considered as *kikoku shijo* upon their return, especially if they are above age twenty (coming-of-age in Japan). As seen in the definition of these cutoff lines, admissions testing plays a huge role in *kikoku shijo* status because *ukeirekō* junior high and high schools set a quota for *kikoku shijo* and define criteria for applying to be in that quota.

Studies on the experiences of *kikoku shijo* beyond college are difficult to find. While the term “Adult Third Culture Kids (ATCK)” aims to address the experience of such returnees in Western context, the Japanese *kikoku shijo* studies tends to exclude “adults” with extended overseas living experience (Useem & Cottrell, 1996).

4) *What kind of school do they matriculate into upon their return?*

Related to the point above, students’ experiences upon return are highly affected by what type of school they rematriculate to. Some students may return to local public schools funded by MEXT and local government, which may or may not have enough resources to acknowledge the unique needs of *kikoku shijo* such as Japanese language assistance and reverse culture shock counseling. These public schools are also bound to the curricula set forth by MEXT, which often prohibits schools from providing adequate support for *kikoku shijo*. Some may return to private schools with special quotas designated for *kikoku shijo*, which also provide special programs for intercultural understanding. Some may return to international schools so that they can retain their global perspectives and foreign language skills. While all of these students go through acclimation and readjusting in one way or another, scholars may include or exclude any of these students from the definition of *kikoku shijo* because of the difference in their exposure to the

Japanese school system and culture. For example, some *kikoku shijo* may enroll in international schools with European or American school curriculum, and thus not have the same classroom experience as traditional Japanese students. These students and their experiences acclimating to Japanese environment are less likely to be included in the *kikoku shijo* category in majority of the literature on *kikoku shijo*.

5) Did they move away from Japan against their will?

At the core of *kikoku shijo*'s experience is the idea of moving away from familiarity against their will, as illustrated by requirements set forth by *ukeirekō*. Children of families who are assigned to a foreign office do not have a choice in whether they will move abroad or when they come back to Japan. While some parents may have control over the length of their overseas assignment, many families with *kaigai shijo* cannot predict the length of sojourn that their employers would require. This piece of information is worth mentioning to distinguish between *kaigai shijo* and Japanese students who make their own decision to study abroad for their benefit and therefore have more control over their experience abroad. Some *ukeirekō* specify that those applying for special *kikoku shijo* admissions should have lived abroad with their parents working abroad, instead of self-funded and self-motivated study abroad.⁵

Characteristics of *Ukeirekō*

What are the characteristics of *ukeirekō* that often attract *kikoku shijo* despite their high cost and inconvenience of location? JOES (2016) identifies two main characteristics of

⁵ Examples of schools that use this criterion include Keimei Gakuen Elementary School (<http://www.keimei.ac.jp/primary/>), Makuhari International School (<http://www.mis.ed.jp/>), and Tokyo Jogakkan (<http://www.tjk.jp/mh/>), among others.

instruction in *ukeirekō*: adaptation (*tekiō*) and character development (*tokusei shinchō*). In the adaptation instruction model, instructors attempt to supplement what knowledge they are lacking from Japanese curricula, including the Japanese language. This form of instruction could include individual tutoring and measuring aptitude among different subjects to tailor to each *kikoku shijo*'s needs. In character development, instructors aim to build on the skills and characteristics that *kikoku shijo* acquired abroad, including but not limited to foreign language ability. While some schools only focus on English ability, others also work on the problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, and creativity that students tend to gain in schools overseas that emphasize self-motivated research projects and papers.

Sato (1995) points out the need for *kikoku shijo* instruction to extend beyond adaptation, which frames *kikoku shijo*'s international experience and lack of Japanese education as a “handicap” that needs to be remedied. Similarly, Sakata (1998) denounces the adaptation-only approach to *kikoku shijo* education as “regretful.” The present Japanese education system has mostly moved away from treating *kikoku shijo* as “problems,” a harmful narrative that was most popular in the 1970s and 80s when the *kikoku shijo* phenomenon was still relatively new. While it is beneficial for them to learn about the institutional culture and customs required for being a student, the adaptation model contains a risk of ignoring *kikoku shijo*'s international experience for the sake of adapting to so-called Japanese-ness when used by itself. Such erasure can be extremely detrimental to *kikoku shijo*'s ego and self-confidence.

Adaptation is a crucial step in *kikoku shijo*'s reintegration; however, it should be coupled with other measures to affirm *kikoku shijo*'s attributes. Based on his experience working with *kikoku shijo* in federally-funded Kamakura Junior High School, Makoto Ozaki (2011) proposes a three-tier model for *kikoku shijo* education at a secondary school level which includes the two

attributes introduced by JOES. The first stage is adaptation, which encourages *kikoku shijo* to learn about Japanese customs, culture, and societal knowledge such as how to ride trains and buses to commute to school. The second stage in this model is international understanding, in which *kikoku shijo* process and reflect upon their international experience to retain the characteristics they have gained while abroad. Schools may help with that by providing a platform for students to “broadcast” their experiences to their peers and classmates, such as a self-published journal or school-wide symposium on international communities. The final stage is character development, which helps *kikoku shijo* overcome any sense of inferiority that they may have and establish their own identity by fostering creativity and uniqueness. Schools may promote this kind of learning by motivating *kikoku shijo* to facilitate workshops where traditional students can imitate experiences of living abroad and learn from *kikoku shijo*’s experience. This three-stage model is useful because it addresses the need to include *kikoku shijo* in regular instruction instead of solely putting *kikoku shijo* in the periphery to receive individualized instruction.

Dōshisha International Junior and Senior High School (referred to as Dōshisha from here on) is another example of *kikoku shijo* curriculum by *ukeirekō* that especially excels in integrating *kikoku shijo* with traditional students through their classroom building. Dōshisha was established in 1980 as the only school in Kyoto Prefecture with the primary focus of admitting *kikoku shijo*. As such, two-thirds of Dōshisha’s students are *kikoku shijo*, whereas the other third are traditional students (Dōshisha International Junior / Senior High School, 2013). An educator from Dōshisha, Naozo Sakata, defines the state of “non-adaptation (*futekiō*)” for *kikoku shijo* as when they are unable to fully cope with the traditional Japanese education system, contents of instruction, and/or school culture because of “peculiarity” (Sakata, 1998). In the late 1970s and

the 1980s, *kikoku shijo* were expected to “assimilate” into the Japanese group culture, demonstrate adequate knowledge of Japanese textbooks and curricula, and prepare academically for applying for colleges, in addition to acclimating to the school culture. Then, *ukeirekō* expanded upon this work to include character enrichment instruction that treats *kikoku shijo*’s international experience as “assets.” To achieve this, educators observe *kikoku shijo* and examine what traits can be considered assets. By doing so, Sakata points out that the schools started to realize the importance of encouraging individuality not only for *kikoku shijo* but also for any student. These examples illustrate that *ukeirekō* are creative in their ways of integrating their students with international backgrounds, encouraging mutual learning among *kikoku shijo* and traditional students alike by providing resources for students to share their stories.

Kimiyo Okano conducted a questionnaire in Nishinomiya, Japan, where more than half of *kikoku shijo* reported they were “worried” about their return to Japan, citing reasons such as “unable to understand classes,” “amount of homework,” and “not being able to use Japanese well” (Okano, 1996). Okano makes four suggestions based on her work with *kikoku shijo* in Komatsu Elementary School, a public *ukeirekō*. First is a step-by-step instruction in Japanese to let *kikoku shijo* adjust gradually and smoothly. Such instruction requires a wide array of textbooks and other teaching materials to accommodate students’ varying Japanese abilities. Second is an effort to deepen understanding of Japanese culture. While *kikoku shijo* strive to make better sense of Japanese culture, Okano explains the importance of their teachers expressing interest in understanding foreign cultures as well. This approach facilitates *kikoku shijo*’s ability to form relationships with their peers. Third is individually-paced instruction on different subjects. Adjusting to Japanese curriculum after studying abroad often poses problems for *kikoku shijo*, especially if their sojourn abroad was longer. Fourth and finally is an effort to

make the most out of *kikoku shijo*'s experiences with foreign cultures. Encouraging students to talk about their experiences and exchange cultural ideas with their peers can boost *kikoku shijo*'s self-confidence and learning.

From looking at these *ukeirekō* (Kamakura, Dōshisha, Komatsu), which present different combinations of public versus private and primary versus secondary institutions, it can be implied that *ukeirekō* operate under similar ideologies when it comes to *kikoku shijo*'s reentry. They acknowledge the importance of remedial education in Japanese and other subjects, as well as in school culture and customs crucial for *kikoku shijo*'s daily functions. This adaptation model is complemented by efforts to promote peer-learning, such as allowing students to share about their international experiences in classrooms. Finally, these systems are aware of the importance of individualizing instruction for *kikoku shijo*, since each person's experience is different.

School Environment and Culture

These efforts by *ukeirekō* for accepting *kikoku shijo* shape their school environment and culture differently than other Japanese schools. This section looks at the characteristics of the standard Japanese school environment and culture that *kikoku shijo* need to become accustomed to, a process which constitutes a large part of *kikoku shijo*'s reentry experience. Yoshiyuki Kudomi (1996) divides the Japanese school culture into four categories: 1) institutional culture, 2) teachers' culture, 3) students' culture, and 4) culture of "school spirit", each of which contains explicit and implicit connotations. Upon return, *kikoku shijo* must learn and adjust to all four of these aspects, or else they can attract unnecessary attention which may make them targets for bullying. In this section, *kikoku shijo*'s (re-)integration to the Japanese education system will be evaluated using these four categories.

1) Institutional Culture (*Seido Bunka*)

Japanese schools are known to have strict codes of conduct. In public schools, students take turns cleaning their own classrooms and serve their own lunches every day, starting from Grade 1. Most junior high and high schools in Japan require students to wear uniforms, and often require restrictive dress codes including specified colors of socks, skirt lengths, hairstyles, and types of bags. For *kikoku shijo* returning from countries that are not used to rigid institutional codes like these, it may take a while to get used to following those rules or feel comfortable being restricted in their fashion. When they fail to follow the rules, they stand out in class as an outlier, get in trouble with teachers and administrators, and may face repercussions.

As told by the accounts of *kikoku shijo* interviewed by Miyachi (1990), *kikoku shijo*'s frustrations with the institutional culture typically rise during junior high and high school in particular, when students face more rules to follow and start developing the intelligence to question the authority. Most middle and high schools require their students to participate in *bukatsu*, or extracurricular club activities, every day for countless hours, including weekends. While some students wholeheartedly enjoy their extracurricular activities and cite them as one of most memorable parts of their teenage years, sometimes even finding their friend circles through *bukatsu*, the intense focus on *bukatsu* is not always seen as positive in educational arena. Not only does the *bukatsu* requirement assume a universal appeal to students of all backgrounds, but also it requires teachers to work numerous hours beyond their instructional hours with no overtime compensation, which may influence the quality of regular classroom instruction. *Kikoku shijo* may find frustrations with these requirements, especially if they have different priorities than their peers to catch up on curricular requirements.

Institutional culture can also stem from curricular requirements set forth by the Ministry

of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Both public and private schools in Japan must be accredited by and instruct students according to the Curriculum Guidelines (*Gakushū shidō yōryō*) approved by MEXT (2011a). Schools must choose from a set of textbooks that are approved by the Curriculum Guidelines, which provide teachers with complete teaching guides and schedules that do not give much freedom in instruction. Because of this restriction, schools cannot be too flexible on how or what they teach in classrooms, contributing to the standardization of all schools at least in terms of core subjects (Japanese language, mathematics, social studies, science, etc.). However, the MEXT-approved curriculum also requires schools to set aside time for more vague subjects. One example is “Comprehensive Studies (*Sōgōteki na gakushū*),” where the objective is to “foster attitude for problem-solving and research through activity, creativity, and collaboration so that students learn to think individually” (MEXT, 2011b). Standardized yet ill-defined curricula for subjects such as Comprehensive Studies challenge the classroom teachers and schools to distinguish their Institutional Culture from other schools’.

2) Teachers’ Culture (*Kyōin Bunka*)

In Japanese schools, students are expected to call their teachers by the honorific “*sensei*” (teacher) or “(last name)-*sensei*”, establishing clear power differences between students and teachers. For some *kikoku shijo* coming back from cultures where they were encouraged to call their teachers by their first name, or from countries that do not have levels of formality in their local language, this level of linguistic hierarchy and social separation across power levels may feel foreign – especially in middle and high schools. Sato (1995) conducted research with *kikoku shijo* who have pointed out their teachers’ “strictness” and correlated this power distance with

institutional authority, lack of trust among students and teachers, and administrations that demand teachers to implement cookie-cutter way of instruction.

Teachers' culture is also defined by teachers' expectations of their job role and of their students. Kawai (1991) quotes a survey on new teachers in public elementary and junior high schools and found that 95% of them looked forward to interacting with their students. However, later questions in the survey highlighted that teachers favored interactions with certain students more than others depending on their characteristics. Students who are hard-working, honest, eloquent, and caring have high chance of likeability, while students who are savvy, pretentious, and stubborn have low chance of likeability. To earn the trust of these teachers with certain expectations, all students, including *kikoku shijo*, must be able to distinguish behaviors that make them outstanding and likeable to teachers. In addition to these characteristics, teachers favor students who can "read the room (*sassuru*)" (Kawai, 1991). In a high-context culture such as Japanese culture, the ability to intuitively sense the hidden meanings of social interactions in a wide array of settings is valued as a skill. However, this skill is difficult to acquire for individuals coming from a low-context culture, or those simply lacking the knowledge of what cultural cues to "read" and how to read them in the Japanese context.

3) Students' Culture (*Seito Bunka*)

As the largest group in schools, students have a significant amount of control over the culture of their school. School culture can also be influenced by other schools and media portrayals of schools. Popular youth culture portrayed by mass media such as TV, magazines, internet articles, and social media affect the views that students have on their school environment. *Gakuen dramas*, or a category of Japanese TV dramas featuring schools (mostly

junior high and high schools) as the main setting, often become popular and influential in shaping student culture.

A notable aspect of school culture is the practice of acknowledging seniority within students – younger students are expected to call older students *sempai* (“upperclassmen”) and older students call them *kohai* (“lowerclassmen”), establishing power dynamics even among peers that are barely a year or two older than them. This practice adds more pressure for *kikoku shijo*, who are often used to interacting with students from other grades more freely and without pronounced power distances (Miyachi, 1990).

Since students’ culture constitutes a huge part of school culture, students’ attitude towards *kikoku shijo* define *kikoku shijo*’s experiences in their new environment upon entering Japanese schools. In other words, if the student body is comfortable in accepting *kikoku shijo* for who they are, *kikoku shijo* would feel more invited in schools. On the other hand, if the students are unwilling to cope with differences and stick to status quo, *kikoku shijo*’s integration becomes difficult. In the TV drama “*Kizuna*” (Nakajima, 1987), a classmate of a *kikoku shijo* protagonist responds to a question about what it means to be a Japanese by saying:

“Being Japanese means acting the same as your classmates! Being Japanese means talking about others behind their backs! Being Japanese means excluding anyone that’s different from you, even a little bit! Being Japanese means not stopping the bullies and letting them be!”

The appearance of such conversation in this TV episode, as well as agreements received from viewers, highlights the underlying problems and exclusionary practices that Japanese students engage in. As a result, *kikoku shijo* may find it difficult to understand these cultural cues and fit into a culture that may conflict not only with their international experiences but also with their moral values.

4) Culture of “School Spirit” (*Kōfū Bunka*)

School spirit (*kōfū*) is the combination of the three aforementioned categories – institution, teachers, and students – that make people in the community proud of their school. It comes up in the routine school functions, such as entrance and graduation ceremonies, beginning-of-term and end-of-term assemblies, cultural festivals (*bunkasai*), and athletic festivals (*tai'ikusai*), and is symbolized by a school logo, the naming of the school, uniforms, school songs, and other related symbols (Kudomi, 1996).

School spirit plays a significant role in *kikoku shijo*'s choice of which *ukeirekō* to attend once they return, since it directly relates to the experience they will have while attending school. One of the resources that *kaigai shijo* and their families can use to inform them about education in Japan and the return process from outside of the country is a monthly magazine called *Kaigai shijo kyōiku (Overseas Education)*, published by Japan Overseas Education Service (JOES). This monthly magazine is distributed to over 600 member corporations and individual subscribers interested in education of Japanese children abroad. It contains regular contributions by educational advisors specialized in *kaigai shijo* and *kikoku shijo* education, stories of various Japanese schools overseas (both full-time and part-time Japanese schools) and *ukeirekō*, interviews with influential people who have significant overseas experience, and other information relevant to Japanese children abroad.

Kaigai shijo kyōiku features a section for *ukeirekō* profiles every month. In these *ukeirekō* profiles, *kōfū* is one of the most commonly mentioned features. Examples of these mentions include “*kōfū wa nobinobi*” (school spirit is laid-back) for Flower Capital Women's Junior and Senior High School (JOES, 2016b), and “*tayōsei wo mitomeru kōfū*” (school spirit accepting of diversity) for Seisa Kokusai High School (JOES, 2016c). As seen in these two examples, *kōfū*

constitutes a huge factor for *kikoku shijo* to determine which *ukeirekō* to apply to and matriculate into. *Ukeirekō* tend to market their *kōfū* as accepting of diverse population to make their schools appealing to *kikoku shijo*.



Figure 3.1. Select cover pages from *Kaigai shijo kyōiku*, monthly magazine by JOES, 2016.

What unites these four categories is the aspect of uniformity (*kakuitsu shugi*), or the sense that everyone needs to be the same or similar. In a sense, MEXT’s Curriculum Guidelines do not give much freedom for schools to determine their own culture. However, depending on where the school is located, what kind of students attend the school, what quality of instruction is available, and numerous other factors, each school features a different culture.

Post-Shijo: Kikoku Shijo Identity Beyond Academia and Job Search

While *kikoku shijo* may choose to identify as such after entering college (most of them through the special admissions process designed for *kikoku shijo*) and coming-of-age (age 20), some of them may decide to keep their international background a secret. This tendency holds

true especially if they are entering the Japanese workforce rather than the educational system, which may not be as inclusive of their *kikoku shijo* identity as some schools because *kikoku shijo* are perceived to lack Japanese skills or hold “un-Japanese” manners (Sato, 1997). At the same time, *kikoku shijo* status can also make these individuals particularly marketable during the job search in some circumstances. In a survey conducted by Japan Overseas Enterprises Association (JOEA) that collected data from 143 member companies with international offices, 26% of these companies expressed interest in offering preferential hiring for *kikoku shijo* (Japan Overseas Enterprises Association, 2017). These companies cited reasons such as: *kikoku shijo* are globally minded and have advanced foreign language skills, are open to moving around the globe, and bring in diverse perspectives to the workplace and foster globalization. These findings coincide with *Kaigai shijo kyōiku*’s survey from 1987, which concluded that some characteristics of *kikoku shijo* that Japanese corporations treat highly include their linguistic ability, diverse perspectives, international experience, ability to work in teams, and intellectual ability (Sato, 1995). However, the large majority (75%) that participated in JOEA survey were not particularly interested in hiring *kikoku shijo*, citing reasons such as their potential inability to adapt to the “corporate culture” (*kigyō bunka*) or “business spirit” (*shafū*) of Japanese companies (Japan Overseas Enterprises Association, 2017). These narratives resemble those seen in the school cultures, as described above.

Knowledge of Japanese culture, tradition, and language constitute a large portion of someone being perceived as Japanese, and is considered an essential part of “business manners” that Japanese employees should have. Business specialist Makoto Shiono (2014) writes a column that advises *kikoku shijo* to attend traditional Japanese performances such as *noh* and *rakugo*, as well as making sure to be able to speak and write fluently in Japanese as well as in English

(Shiono, 2014). Since *kikoku shijo* spend a significant part of their adolescence abroad, these kinds of knowledge are difficult to attain. When such deficiencies are made evident during the job application process, businesses may overlook *kikoku shijo*'s valuable knowledge in other areas that the companies' other applicants may not possess, especially if *kikoku shijo* are afraid of revealing their *kikoku shijo* status because they want to fit into the *shafū*.

Nihonjinron

The search for ways to define Japanese-ness led to scholars establishing a field of study called *nihonjinron*, or theories of Japanese society or community. Under this label, various scholars have tried defining what it means to be Japanese and what makes Japanese *minzoku* unique among others in the world. *Nihonjinron* has been met with various criticisms throughout its existence as an academic discipline. Harumi Befu argues that *Nihonjinron* is better understood as “mass-produced consumer goods” instead of serious scholarship (Befu, 2001). *Nihonjinron* has been popularized by *shinsho* (lit. “new books”), cheap, disposable paperback books on sensational and often controversial topics. While these books may become popular and make academia more accessible to laypeople, *shinsho* do not always equal serious scholarship since they are often written without extensive research and do not go through peer review.

Another disagreement with the *nihonjinron* framework is its assumption of homogeneity, or the idea that all Japanese people think and act the same. Goodman et al. (2003) writes:

Examination of [region, gender, occupation, ethnic identity, and social class] suggest that there was not only diversity but also considerable stratification which ideologies of homogeneity, at best, ignored and, at worst, could be accused of helping to mask and disguise. [...] At [the basis of *nihonjinron* criticisms] was the assumption that “culture” is not a given in any society but is socially constructed and manipulated by particular groups with the economic and political power to do so, and that those who draw on “natural” features of a society to explain its “culture” and often, even subconsciously, part of the process of disguising the “constructed” nature of that society.

As Japanese citizens born under Japanese parents, *kikoku shijo* could theoretically be considered part of the Japanese *minzoku* or *uchi* group, but owing to their perceived foreignness, they are often considered instead to be *soto*. On top of that, *kikoku shijo* are expected to live and participate in a culture defined by other people in power, such as educators and mainstream Japanese students that become their classmates. Since *kikoku shijo* constitute a minority group within the Japanese education system, they need to adapt to the mainstream culture or else risk feeling out-of-place and foreign. Their lack of power to influence the culture from the macro level has societal implications, and their ability to adapt – or lack thereof – determines their future path in Japan, whether it be future admissions exams or seeking employment. With the societal expectations for students to go through university admissions and participate in the entry-level hiring system (*shinsotsu saiyō*), systems that do not provide accommodations or show appreciation for international experiences at these integral parts of young adult life would be extremely detrimental for *kikoku shijo*'s success in Japanese society.

Elements of *Kikoku Shijo* Education

Comparing some *ukeirekō*'s approaches to *kikoku shijo* education highlights that many of them include similar elements to establish an appealing curriculum for *kikoku shijo*: adaptation, character development, and integration of *kikoku shijo* and traditional students. To facilitate these efforts, *ukeirekō* may provide special assistance teachers and/or classrooms, language acquisition and retention courses both in Japanese and foreign languages (mostly English), and/or create a space for *kikoku shijo* to share their international experiences with their peers. While *kikoku shijo* education tended to only focus on adaptation in the earlier periods of *kikoku shijo* reentry to Japan up until about late 1980s, *ukeirekō* and educators that deal with *kikoku shijo* in present

times acknowledge the need to move beyond one-dimensional adaptation to Japanese cultures and to encourage *kikoku shijo* to embrace their international experience that shaped them.

However, these types of support are often limited to private schools. Especially at the compulsory education level (Grades 1-9), it is much more financially feasible to attend public schools, and *kikoku shijo* may elect to do so because of the number of schools available locally and the low cost associated with public education. These public schools, however, are often incapable of providing the same level of support that private schools can offer to *kikoku shijo* because they are under tighter budget restrictions and are expected to follow the national Curriculum Guidelines more closely than private schools. The low percentage of public schools registered as *ukeirekō* by JOES rings a cautionary bell for *kikoku shijo* who need affordable quality education but are unable to afford the extraordinary fees required to attend private schools. As a result, *kikoku shijo* either find themselves fighting for a highly competitive spot in the private school admissions process or must try their best at acclimating to Japanese public schools without assistance, since enrolling in a private school may bring undue financial impact on students' families. While the stereotypes of *kikoku shijo* suggest that they come from well-off families that would be able to afford these tuition fees, this assumption is dangerous and should not serve as a reason to avoid improvements for public school education that accommodate children with international experiences, including but not limited to *kikoku shijo*. A lack of appropriate support for students with international backgrounds in public schools could violate the educational law that requires all Japanese students from Grade 1 to 9 have access to adequate and suitable education, as well as children of foreign citizenships that request public education.

The last part of this chapter mentioned how the adaptation model attempts to teach “Japanese-ness” to *kikoku shijo* as well as any other population that diverges from the norm of

so-called “Japanese-ness,” including children with foreign citizenships, *Zainichi* Korean and Chinese children, and the children of *Nikkeijin* migrating back from Latin American countries. This discussion will be continued in the next chapter, which looks further into how *kikoku shijo*’s identity as ascribed by others is influenced by the idea of “Japanese-ness”.

Japan operates under a false sense of homogeneity, and thus many particular traits and needs of visible and invisible minorities are often swept under the rug and ignored. There have been several attempts to define Japanese-ness under the *nihonjinron* framework, yet the efficacy of these attempts is questionable since *nihonjinron* is defined mainly by academics and politicians with more power and privilege in Japan than the majority of Japanese, let alone the minority groups themselves including *kikoku shijo*. Although categorization carries the risk of overlooking diversity within the category, it is still helpful to look at *kikoku shijo* as a social category since this conceptualization helps us to point out the problems associated with *kikoku shijo* at both the micro and macro level and to relate these problems to those faced by other hidden minorities.

Schools operate as a key component of *kikoku shijo*’s integration back to Japan, where they learn the aspects of *nihonjinron* implicitly through “hidden curriculum.” Since students are the biggest population of any given school community, it is imperative that they become accepting of *kikoku shijo*’s identities if *kikoku shijo* really want to feel included and welcomed. The research done for this chapter leads to my concluding chapter, in which I will make suggestions for educational policy reform that would help the Japanese school systems, especially public schools, become more accessible and welcoming for *kikoku shijo*.

Chapter 4: Recommendations and Future Implications for *Kikoku Shijo*

“*Minna chigatte, minna ii.*” (Everyone is different, and everyone is good.)

– Misuzu Kaneko (1903-1929)

Introduction

In the concluding chapter, I provide suggestions for how *kikoku shijo* education should look in the upcoming decade. Literature on *kikoku shijo* and multicultural education was most extensively published in the 1990s and early 2000s, but scholars have not written extensively after it. This can be remedied by supporting research on the current trends and needs of *kikoku shijo* from the last decade, especially as the community continues to become more diverse as years go on. This thesis aims to start this expansion by citing examples of recent efforts by *ukeirekō* and weaving them together to create a curriculum that could serve *kikoku shijo*'s needs.

As I make suggestions for *kikoku shijo* reintegration, I also acknowledge that each *kikoku shijo*'s needs are different. Depending on their background, *kikoku shijo*'s needs can be similar to other internationally minded children such as children with foreign parents, *Nikkeijin* returning home from Latin American countries, or *Zainichi* Korean and Chinese students. The first part of the chapter addresses the models of culture shock and reverse culture shock, which *kikoku shijo* are especially susceptible to upon their return.

Culture Shock Versus Reverse Culture Shock

One of the first mentions of culture shock as a concept came from Sverre Lysgaard (1955), who conducted a research study on Norwegians visiting the United States and their cultural encounters. Using time as the independent variable and mood as the dependent variable,

Lysgaard proposes a ‘U-shape’ model of culture shock, which illustrates four stages of culture shock: 1) euphoria, 2) culture shock, 3) acculturation, and 4) a stable state. This model and its four stages hint at how an individual may experience excitement about the new environment at first, which is then met with culture shock often associated with negative cultural experience, followed by a moment of adapting to the new culture and feeling at ease if acculturation goes smoothly (Lysgaard, 1955). At first, individuals outside of their own culture have more happiness and less shock; after a couple of months, they start to feel the “shock” factors and go down on the mood scale. Then, after that stage, individuals start feeling comfortable and fond of the new culture they are acclimated into.

However, some scholars found this model to be limiting and saw the need to expand it. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) were among the first ones to use the term ‘reverse culture shock’ to refer to a state of conflict within returnee’s home culture, expanding upon the ‘U-shape’ curve proposed by Lysgaard. By adding another ‘U-shape’ to extend the model, Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s model addresses the process of “post-return adjustment,” in which returnees typically find themselves “out of phase” with their home culture upon return (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). Feelings of alienation, rejection, and lack of belonging propel them into going through another phase of conflict, recovery, and adjustment. On the topic of students returning to their home country, they write (p. 41):

Those [students] who had not previously experienced a major geographic move, or more precisely a “psychological relocation,” seemed particularly likely to feel lost upon their return... For these individuals, it was a new experience to discover that in many subtle ways their patterns of expectations and, indeed, some of their values had changed as a result of their exposure and adjustment to a new social system. They had not before experienced such a shift in value identifications and the concomitant difficulties which ensue when one returns to his former environment only to find that he “can’t go home again.” Particularly for those who had not yet “found themselves” in their own culture, the resolution of their identity conflict abroad often meant they had become zealously converted to new values, and they were reluctant to relinquish the security they had finally achieved.

This quote illustrates that readjusting to their home culture and conquering reverse culture shock is especially difficult for younger children who do not have as much experience developing self-identity before moving abroad. Moreover, some *kikoku shijo* may even have been born outside of Japan, which means that they could not have as much exposure to their ethnic culture outside of their family and Japanese school education (either part-time or full-time) while abroad. In other words, some *kikoku shijo* returning to Japan may be going through reverse culture shock, whereas others may be going through standard culture shock encountering a society that they do not know much about. Given these circumstances, I propose a model of how these children cope with acculturation in the following section.

A Five-Part Model for *Kikoku Shijo* Education

Based on earlier chapters and sections, I propose a five-part approach to help facilitate *kikoku shijo*'s reintegration into the Japanese education system. My suggestions are influenced by efforts taken in various types of *ukeirekō*. First is Komatsu Elementary School, which is designated as one of the prominent *ukeirekō* public schools in Western Japan. Second is Dōshisha, an integrated junior/senior high school whose student body has a large number of *kikoku shijo*. Third is Kamakura Junior High School, an affiliate school of Yokohama National University's College of Education and Human Services. These three schools cover three different sectors (district-funded, federally-funded, and private), as well as different types of primary and secondary schools (elementary school, junior high school, and integrated junior/senior high school). These schools also represent a variety of locations. Komatsu Elementary School is in Nishinomiya, a mid-sized city in Osaka with a population of over 480,000. Dōshisha is located in Kyoto, in a bustling city with over 1.4 million residents. Finally,

Kamakura Junior High School is located in a smaller city of Kamakura, which has a population of about 174,000. The suggestions in this chapter are made by combining hints gained from these different schools, plus reflections on my own experiences as *kaigai shijo* who has also interacted with *kikoku shijo* friends.

The structure of the suggested model is summarized in Figure 4.1, along with key constituencies for each action. Assessment comes at the beginning of *kikoku shijo* education, since educators must be aware of *kikoku shijo*'s needs before they can make an individualized plan for *kikoku shijo*'s adaptation and growth in their schools. Then, adaptation follows since *kikoku shijo* need to first become comfortable with their schools before they can start using their school environment to learn and grow as students. The following three parts – intercultural learning, character development, and leadership – would most likely happen simultaneously and not in a hierarchal order, since these parts influence each other. It is also important to note that, while these three elements suggest some ways in which *kikoku shijo* and traditional Japanese students may want to engage with their identities, their desired outcomes may be different. For example, not every student may want to pursue leadership positions in schools, or develop the same characters. However, these elements inform some of the educational methods that may help *kikoku shijo* students develop the skills and self-reflection needed to pursue future life opportunities, including but not limited to higher education and employment.

Now that the general structure of the model has been introduced, let us consider each of the parts in more detail.

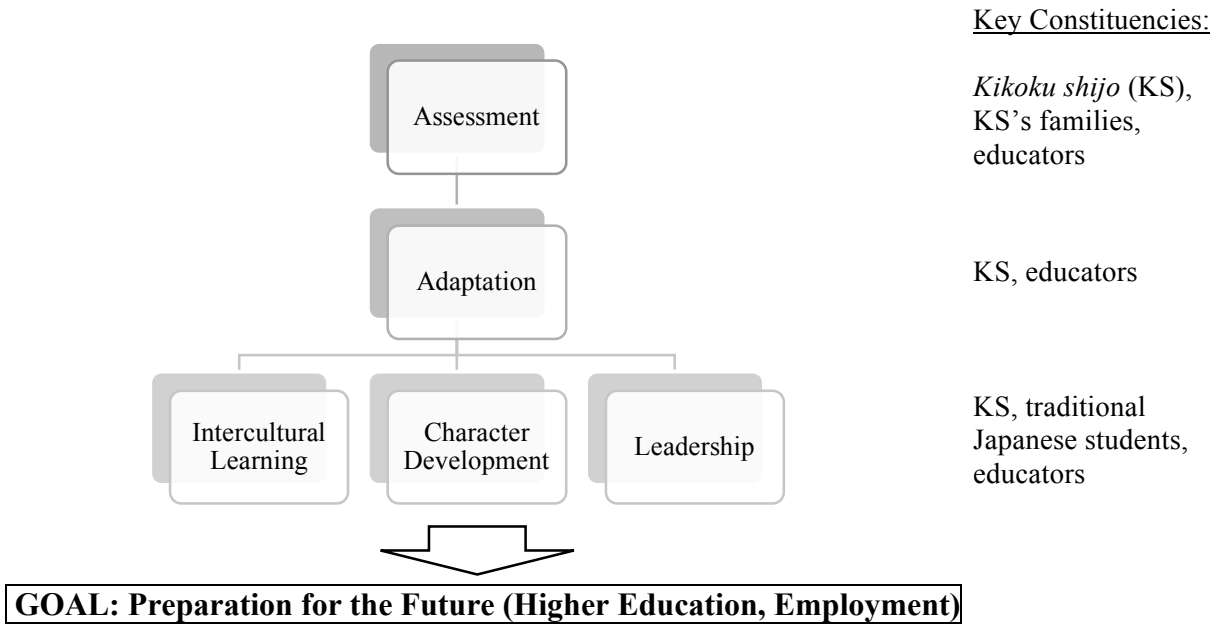


Figure 4.1. Five-part model for *kikoku shijo* education and its key constituencies.

Assessment

Before engaging *kikoku shijo* in any integration efforts, the educators should assess what kinds of support these *kikoku shijo* need. For example, Komatsu Elementary School in Kyoto asks *kikoku shijo*'s parents to fill out a questionnaire that contains questions on *kikoku shijo*'s backgrounds such as the type(s) of school(s) they attended while abroad (local schools, *hoshūkō*, full-day schools, etc.) activities that they enjoy (both curricular and extracurricular), their favorite subjects, subjects that they struggled with and for how long, languages spoken at school, at home, or with friends, and other details to give teachers a better sense of *kikoku shijo*'s lifestyle abroad (Okano, 1996). This assessment can be done in any combination of written questionnaires from parents and/or schools that the students last attended, interviews with students and parents, or any other means. Conducting such an assessment provides schools with information on what makes each *kikoku shijo* unique, so that their needs can be met with a more

individualized curriculum instead of a blanket “one-size-fits-all” plan that disregards the varying experiences and personalities that *kikoku shijo* hold.

Adaptation

During the first three to six months back in Japan, when the “shock” phase of *kikoku shijo*’s adjustments are starting to take effect, schools should do their best to ensure that *kikoku shijo* are making a new home in their schools. Depending on a *kikoku shijo*’s experience with Japanese schools before moving abroad, or whether a *kikoku shijo* was born outside of Japan, it could take them a few months to learn the basic “rules” of Japanese schools. These rules include school code of conduct, dress codes, class schedules, commuting, classroom cleaning, ceremonies, school events, and so on. Schools should continue to ensure that *kikoku shijo* are adapting to these important factors of school life without making them feel slighted by teachers or peers about not having adequate experience in any of them. For example, classroom teachers or school administrators should hold check-in meetings with *kikoku shijo* or create a handbook that outlines school codes and customs in simple Japanese. When creating any instruction materials for *kikoku shijo*, schools must keep in mind that *kikoku shijo* may have trouble reading fluently in Japanese depending on the quality of Japanese education received while abroad. The school culture should feel inclusive and accepting of people with diverse backgrounds, and should also provide equitable opportunities for students of all identities. This restructuring of school culture would help not only *kikoku shijo*, but also any other students with marginalized identities (for example, ethnic and indigenous identities, gender identities, sexual orientation, disability status, socioeconomic status, and citizenship, just to name a few).

During this adaptation stage, *kikoku shijo* may be going through culture shock or reverse culture shock depending on their familiarity with Japanese culture. While some *kikoku shijo* may still be in the “honeymoon” phase and not realize the impact of the cultural shift in the first few months, others may be overwhelmed by changes in their lifestyles and cultural encounters. Some may claim to miss their “home” abroad, and want to go abroad again. It would be ideal for schools to keep in touch with *kikoku shijo*’s families to learn how the *kikoku shijo* is doing outside of school. Some questions they may want to ask include: Are they hanging out with friends after-school? How much time are they spending on homework each night? Are they struggling to keep up with schoolwork? Do they miss living abroad? What activities do they engage in during their pastime? How is their physical and mental health? These are important questions that educators should be aware of as they approach *kikoku shijo* instruction. *Kikoku shijo*, as with any other students, should be treated as complete human beings and not just academic guinea pigs. Their answers to these questions would help educators understand how the process of adaptation is going for *kikoku shijo* and whether they are ready to be more integrated with traditional Japanese students for intercultural understanding and growth.

Intercultural Learning

Once *kikoku shijo* become familiar enough with their new school environment, teachers may encourage *kikoku shijo* to interact more with traditional Japanese students if they are not doing so already. While individual attention to *kikoku shijo* is necessary for some integration needs such as Japanese language skills and custom, separating *kikoku shijo* from traditional classroom on a full-time basis would be detrimental for *kikoku shijo*’s and traditional students’ learning. There is so much potential for both groups to learn from each other if teachers carefully

navigate the classroom environment. Students can first start to become comfortable with each other through icebreaker activities, and engage in shared vulnerability by talking about their personal and social identities. This stage would be a good time to start incorporating discussions and presentations on intercultural understanding, making *kikoku shijo* feel at home and accepting themselves for who they are and not who others perceive them to be.

Character Development

At this stage, schools should aim to develop and strengthen skills that *kikoku shijo* acquired because of their experiences abroad. Their foreign influences look different for every *kikoku shijo*, since it depends on which part(s) of the world they have lived before coming back to Japan. Based on research studies by Hara (1986), Ebuchi (1988), Nakanishi (1990), and Kamakura Junior High School of Yokohama National University (1991), the desirable characters or skills of *kikoku shijo* can be mainly classified as follows:

1. Ability to use multiple languages
2. International awareness
3. A more objective understanding of Japanese culture
4. Creativity
5. Social, outgoing, cheerful nature
6. Open-mindedness
7. Independence
8. Willingness to volunteer and help each other; leadership
9. Ability to express their opinions without fears
10. Focus on “how to learn” instead of “what to learn”

In response to these characteristics, Sato (1995) points out that they are based on teachers’ observations of *kikoku shijo* and not necessarily on the characteristics that *kikoku shijo* themselves identify with. In addition, there is an unavoidable danger in assuming these characteristics of all *kikoku shijo* regardless of their innate personalities or experiences abroad

(1995). For example, if a *kikoku shijo* does not have the same level of outgoing nature as expected, or did not become fluent in another language for some reason, that does not invalidate *kikoku shijo*'s experiences and make the student any less of a *kikoku shijo*. That being said, it is still important to look at these traits and encourage *kikoku shijo* to embrace them and provide their classmates with diversity of thought. Schools may encourage this by constantly affirming their *kikoku shijo* students' positive characters, noticing and commenting on their behaviors especially if they are tied to their experiences abroad.

Education based on character development aims to provide a space where *kikoku shijo* may continue developing the skills they acquired during their stay abroad. Such education can address some characteristics better than others. In other words, it is important to distinguish what personality traits can be developed in schools versus what cannot be. Some *ukeirekō* have implemented foreign language programs (especially English) to help *kikoku shijo* retain their linguistic abilities, since it is more of a concrete skill that can be taught. Some other characteristics on the list above, such as outgoingness and open-mindedness, are more difficult to “enhance” in school systems.

Leadership

In the leadership phase, students are invited to take ownership of their learning and embrace their experiences by sharing it in self-motivated initiatives. An example of this is to provide a safe space where students (both *kikoku shijo* and traditional students) can share their experiences freely and without fear of judgment by their peers or teachers. Schools can encourage *kikoku shijo* to put together a presentation about their lifestyle abroad and their reflection on what their experiences abroad mean to them, or facilitate a dialogue on social

identities especially related to domestic and foreign identities. Learning does not always have to happen at the expense of *kikoku shijo*'s vulnerability; traditional students should also contribute to everyone's education by researching diverse cultures in the world, and how their Japanese identity may shape their worldview. Throughout this stage, educators can serve as mentors and role models in demonstrating open-mindedness, acceptance, inclusion, and active listening as their students engage in meaningful dialogues. The skills learned from the leadership part, such as self-reflection, self-expression, empathy, and active listening will hopefully be applicable to *kikoku shijo*'s futures, especially if they are entering work force that may value these skills.

Application

This approach can be helpful not only to *kikoku shijo*, but also to other students with international backgrounds. The 2014 survey by MEXT reports that there are 29,198 foreign nationals that require Japanese language education in primary education system, spread throughout 6,137 schools (MEXT, 2015). MEXT started conducting these biannual surveys in 1991, after a major change was introduced to Japan's Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act that caused a dramatic rise in the number of foreign nationals and *Nikkeijin* entering Japan. While the needs of each person are different and should be approached with great care, addressing the complex identities of *kikoku shijo* can provide insight into the optimal formation of individualized education plans in general. In addition, implementation of individualized approaches with the goal of integrating *kikoku shijo* with other students promotes a culture of inclusivity, where students can learn from each other by appreciating differences.

Another consideration in this application is students' maturity as related to their grade levels. While older students (junior high school and above) would most likely have better chance

of engaging in activities that require vulnerability or self-reflection, that should not deter elementary school educators from pursuing these activities. The model may be adapted differently in each school to accommodate various age groups, so that students may learn about themselves from early ages and develop critical thinking skills that could be useful later on.

Challenges

The *kikoku shijo* integration plan as mentioned above requires some conditions to hold true. First, *ukeirekō* need to enroll a consistent number of *kikoku shijo* in any given year to uphold their integration programs. To avoid tokenizing *kikoku shijo* and to diversify learning sources, *ukeirekō* must be able to incorporate as many *kikoku shijo* and other internationally-minded children as possible into mainstream Japanese classrooms. Looking at the trend of *kikoku shijo* integration today, the consistency of *kikoku shijo* enrollment can be more easily achieved in metropolitan areas closer to corporate offices that their parents are transferring back to, in comparison to rural areas that may not have as much of a “pull” for these students and their families to live in. Also, this kind of integration program is more often possible in private schools than in public schools because private schools tend to have more funding available for extracurricular programming (i.e. activities not mandated by the MEXT Curriculum Guidelines). Since not all *kikoku shijo* attend schools in metropolitan areas, there should be more attention paid to how *kikoku shijo* integration looks for schools in rural areas with fewer *kikoku shijo*. For these efforts to come into fruition in federal- and district-funded public schools and to make them more accessible for *kikoku shijo* with lower income families, MEXT and other Japanese government agencies must allocate additional funding for intercultural education.

Second, this program requires educators to be trained in intercultural communication and advising students going through culture shocks and reverse culture shocks. These instructors could be former *kikoku shijo* themselves or individuals with experience working across cultural differences who would be sensitive to *kikoku shijo*'s needs. As mentioned earlier, this sort of recruitment is difficult to do, especially in non-urban areas that do not have as many internationally-minded personnel. While immediate implementation of these efforts may not be possible, a constant effort should be made by MEXT and local governments in the near future to accommodate a growing number of *kikoku shijo* and other internationally-minded children in the Japanese education system.

Kikoku shijo are an important part of the Japanese education system today, bringing in a wide array of unique perspectives that can benefit other students. Exposure to diversity of viewpoints and cultures, especially at an earlier age, enriches school culture and provides learning opportunities for all individuals involved. However, the privilege of being able to cultivate a community of diverse students is currently often limited to private schools that have greater financial means to do so. If Japanese public schools can adapt the same kind of programming to accommodate and welcome *kikoku shijo*, it will not only enable *kikoku shijo* and traditional students be able to learn from each other, but would also be a huge help for *kikoku shijo*'s families financially.

Conclusions

When *kikoku shijo* start to question their idea of “home,” they need a system of support. While this support could come from their families and friends, schools have a unique opportunity to provide them with the “home” environment they seek, given that a significant amount of their

life is spent in schools. Research on *kikoku shijo* education practices also brought up the exclusive culture of many Japanese schools, which could lead to an epidemic of bullying throughout Japan. An inclusive school environment is not a given, but a must. Such an environment not only helps *kikoku shijo*, but also students of diverse backgrounds in general. While these differences in backgrounds may not always be visually obvious, ethnic and cultural diversity do exist in the context of Japanese schools. Teachers often cannot guess what goes on in each student's household before they come to school on a day-to-day basis. Students may have been unable to eat before they got to school because there was no food at home. Students may have dreaded putting on their school uniforms that do not represent their gender identities. Students may not have been able to complete their homework because of depressive episodes. Students may have read or heard a news attacking their ethnic identity or immigration status. While students may not be able to pinpoint and articulate these cultural clashes based on their social identities, these clashes influence their adolescent lives every day. It is up to the schools to provide these diverse students with a space to debrief and be comfortable with who they are. Educational settings that embrace all students for *all* their identities would be crucial for these children's healthy upbringing. Everyone deserves to have at least one place they can call "home," where they can be accepted for themselves as a whole. If the larger Japanese society cannot provide this welcoming environment for *kikoku shijo*, can schools be there to support these children through their identity development?

Education that strives for inclusivity and individual attention benefits the entire Japanese school system, serving students of all kinds of diverse backgrounds. Students represent a wide array of intersecting identities which make them one-of-a-kind, and helping these students learn from each other contributes to the growth of school communities. Japan is traditionally known to

uphold collectivistic values and group mentality, where “a nail that sticks out will get hammered down,” according to a famous Japanese proverb. Such a cultural environment does not help students who may want to pursue leadership or develop their interpersonal and leadership skills to become better versions of themselves. Japan is not the only country in which these internationally-minded children may be considered “nails.” With a growing number of expatriates worldwide, students who are uprooted from their home cultures are abundant, and all of them are susceptible to school cultures that may be toxic for their learning. Not to mention, these students also hold other social identities which may bring more cultural clashes within them. In light of these challenges, I believe that my suggestions can help students appreciate their individuality and celebrate diversity, instead of shy away from it. Our differences make us stronger together.

Chapter 5: Epilogue

“*Iki wa yoiyoi, kaeri wa kowai.*” (Going is good, but coming back is scary.)

– From *Tōryanse*, Japanese nursery rhyme

The idea of “home” was prevalent throughout my activities and self-reflection during my senior year. As part of the requirements for my Music Performance degree, I gave a senior performance called “Home and Away” in February 2017, as I was writing this thesis.

Using music, visual arts, and poetry as tools for engaging with over ninety audience members in-person and online, “Home and Away” featured diverse stories to explore “home” and “away” by asking: Where do I call home? Is it a location, an emotion, a concept, or people? Does home even exist for a person on the move like myself? Can I have multiple homes? The narratives I considered in this performance included those who are locked away in prisons without a chance to go home, those who are forced away from their home countries as refugees, those who go away to conquer and colonize others’ home, and those whose own idea of home is challenged in a rapidly-changing society. Altogether, the performance examined the power and privilege (or lack thereof) highlighted by different kinds of traveling – both physical and psychological. While some of these stories involve individuals moving from one place to another in the traditional sense of traveling, it can also refer to psychological changes or transformations that individuals go through as they gain new experiences in their lives. The idea of “home” is a complex and personal one that I have been wanting to explore for years.

One of the pieces performed in “Home and Away” called “Garden of Love,” a piece by Dutch composer Jacob TV for oboe and soundtrack, particularly struck me. “Garden of Love” samples a recording of a man reading the poem of the same title by William Blake (1757-1827):

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And Thou shalt not writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,
That so many sweet flowers bore.

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.

To me, this poem sounds like a cry for a home that does not exist anymore. The Garden of Love that the protagonist remembers is now replaced by a graveyard, signifying the death of his youth. The comfort of familiarity is now replaced by thorny briars. Childhood friends are replaced by grim priests. In these words, I see a home vanished and turning into a memory, instead of a physical place.

This sentiment is closely tied to my thesis research. I have lived in the United States for twelve years, a little over half of my life thus far. Even though I have been an expat for over a decade by now, I want to believe that Japan is my “home” whenever I visit. However, as I walk in the streets of Yokohama where I spent ten years of my life, I constantly question if I can call Japan home when I do not always feel like I belong there. I try to fit into the mold of “Japanese-ness” by catching up with Japanese popular culture and trends, speaking in carefully constructed *keigo* (formal Japanese), and donning new clothes from Japanese brands, all of which elicit some discomfort and culture clash with my American self. I do not appreciate having to hide my intercultural experiences to belong. Japan makes me feel uneasy, different, foreign, *Hen-Japa*, and anywhere in between, which are not the feelings I usually associate with a home. Perhaps the idea of Japan as my home comes from my early memories, when it was my physical and psychological home, and now the physical part is gone – just like the Garden of Love.

My research included reading stories of students whose idea of “home” was now challenged, an experience that I can relate to. This helped me understand my cultural identities and how they intersect to make me who I am today. I did not realize how emotional this research would make me, especially as I read testimonials of various *kikoku shijo* and their struggles upon return. For example, one of the books cited a mother of three *kikoku shijo*:

I suppose that [the three children] have been exposed to misfortunes in two directions. One of the misfortunes is bullying and harassment in Japanese schools, but the other is that these children have put in a painstaking amount of effort every day to adapt to the American culture, only to be called American or *Hen-Japa* now. (Osawa, 1986, p. 108)

I remember those days when I felt like I had to put in ten times as much effort as my American classmates to learn English or finish homework. Students strive to adapt to a foreign culture, thinking that it would be good for their future, only to realize that it is those experiences that would ostracize them and make them feel uncomfortable when they return to what they thought was “home.” I would be furious if those experiences were not well-received by my peers in school, especially if I were a teenager without knowledge of any communities outside my own school. Being a *kikoku shijo* should not feel like a punishment because these individuals have so much to offer to the school communities from their intercultural experiences. While individuals within Japanese society may have difficulty celebrating differences and accepting each other for all of their identities and experiences, schools have the potential to providing these students with a safe space for everyone to be true to themselves.

To me, a home is where I can be accepted for myself as a whole – not just some parts of my identities. It provides me with a sense of familiarity, belonging, and comfort that I value in my life. It can be multiple locations, feelings, and ideas that I have not been able to pinpoint yet.

And so my exploration for a home continues.

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