Research Summary

Japanese-Filipino Children (Japino) in Japan: Ethnicity and Assimilation

Understanding ethnic identity and assimilation determine the adjustment of minority group's members. Through phenomenological case study method, the goal of this investigation is determining the applicable stage(s) of ethnic identity development derived from the literature and providing detailed description of assimilation through the nature of ethnic identity development among Japanese-Filipino children (Japino)*１. Thirty Japanese-Filipino children living in Oyama-Shi, Tokyo, and Hiroshima Prefecture who are within 8-16 years*２ of age were interviewed and observed. Thirteen respondents belong to early adolescents age bracket (6-12 yrs.) and seventeen respondents belong to middle adolescents age bracket (12-16 yrs.).

The narratives of Japino were categorized into: Japanese and Japino group identification, distancing from features, traits, characteristics, and attitude of ethnic group, and distancing from the Gaijin phenomenon. These categories exemplify the Japino's assimilation in Japanese society and ethnic identification. Their ethnic identification reflects the first and second stages models of ethnicity. The early adolescents are on the diffuse (Marcia, 1980), preencounter (Cross, 1978), Unexamined Ethnic Identity (Phinney, 1989) and ethnic ambivalence/evasion EAE (Tse, 2000), wherein they have no exploration of ethnicity and no clear understanding of the issue. Knowledge is based on affirmation of what they observed and taught by their mothers.

The middle adolescents are on the foreclosed stage (Marcia, 1980), wherein they have an apparent clarity of their ethnicity and negative feeling towards ethnic group based on experiences and understanding of Japanese society's view of foreigner. Some admitted developing negative feelings even in early adolescence. This instance shows that positive and negative feeling toward ethnic group may not necessarily be tied with age.

The narratives show that primarily, family plays a role in ethnic identity development then exposure to neighborhood and peer groups affects their views on ethnicity. Second, the kind of exposure to ethnic socialization, views of influential people around, and the views of dominant society on foreigners pave for the nature of ethnic identification. Consequently, there are children that belong to the first stage and yet manifest attitude that belongs to second stage. Their perception of ethnicity plays a role in their assimilation to the dominant society.

The literature on young children has indicated that while preference for dominant culture declines beyond early childhood, some elementary school children still prefer the majority group than their own (Aboud, 1987; Jahoda, Thomson, & Bhatt, 1973 in Phinney 1989). This study demonstrates that both age cohorts maintain preference of the dominant group. The early adolescents have preference of dominant culture but recognize ethnic culture due to mothers' influence. The middle adolescents show strong preference of the dominant culture and neglect the importance of ethnic culture. Their insistence to be recognized as pure Japanese is explicit. They do not want to be branded as different. The general belief on homogeneity within Japanese society has a great influence on the frame of mind of middle adolescents. They recognize that they are half Japanese and Filipino only by virtue of having Filipina mothers. A fact that, they cannot escape but endeavors to hide.

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*１ Japino refers to Japanese Filipino children in Japan. They are the product of marriage between Japanese and Filipino. In this study, Japino children who were interviewed are sons and daughters of Japanese men and Filipino women/Filipina. Japino also means half, half Japanese and half Filipino. Half (hafu in Japanese pronunciation) is known term pertaining to the product of mix marriage.

*２ These age bracket were chosen since it cohere with the fourth and fifth stages of Erikson's psychosocial theory. The early adolescence falls to stage four (6-12 yrs.), wherein children become more concerned and involved in learning to relate with peers within the neighborhood and school. They strive to master a great number of

activities and games in order to win acceptance and prestige in their peer groups. The middle adolescence falls to the fifth stage (12-18 yrs.), wherein children are confronted with the issue of identity formation and struggle on societal demands (Bustos, & Espiritu, 1996). Respondents were classified to age cohort in order to capture the progression and the nature of ethnic identity development.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation   (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Thesis   (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Asia-Pacific Social Science Review 8:2(2008), " Ethnic Identity: The Case of Filipino-Japanese Children in Japan" Sherlyne A. Almonte-Acosta, pp.17-33

Book   (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)