

Summer Fieldwork Report
2002 Scott Kloeck-Jenson International Pre-dissertation Travel Grant
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Broadly, my dissertation will analyze the construction of racial identity and racism in Japan, my native country. The racial demography of Japan has been very homogenous. In other words, the people do not have much chance to associate with racially non-Japanese (non-Asian) others in their daily life. However, they still see racial others and have certain perception about them. And their media use is an important part of it. My dissertation attempts to analyze how such racial others have been represented in the Japanese media, and how people consume those representations to construct their perception about racial others.

In addition, the once geographically and racially isolated Japanese people are no longer an exception from the current globalization, which stresses the increasing movement of people, idea, and economy. The Japanese are now being tested whether their racial perception is globally acceptable. For instance, many Japanese overseas firms' management initially used "rice-paper ceiling," which refers to a Japanese-style employment hierarchy based on gender and nationality (synonymous to race). In their initial thought, such a hierarchy should be acceptable since they were "Japanese" firms regardless of their locations. However, this idea clearly caused a number of oppositions, including many racial discrimination lawsuits. By analyzing and presenting how such Japanese racial perception has been constructed, I expect that my small work would contribute to provide few clues to understand and possibly solve those problems in the current globalization era.

Overall, what I have done during my four-week stay in Japan are archival search and interviewing. The former was to gather a variety of media representations, while the latter was to gather people's perception about how they see racial others.

As for the archival search, after visiting a number of libraries, I ended up with spending the most of time in two libraries: Tokyo Metropolitan Library and University of Tokyo Library. I spent intensive seven days for the former and four days for the latter. Though it was unexpected, the former had a wonderful thorough collection of magazines even from the very beginning of the 1900. It was very happy for me to encounter with the collection. I decided to pick several established magazines, which are still published today. Clearly, those materials can never be obtained unless doing fieldwork in the target field. Of course, it was unable to go over the all issues. I sampled one-year-long bindings from every two- to five-year period. I was very fascinated by the instance that some of salient image and meaning we are seeing now can be rooted from many decades ago. But sometimes, the meaning has been altered time to time, often based on the ideology at a given moment. Also I was able to obtain some academic literature related to my topic. Especially, ones that are published in Japanese were mostly not available here in the US.

What was really worth for me to do this archival search was the fascination and importance to review history. Although I did not initially intend to analyze much historical materials, I came to realize that reviewing them often helps greatly in analyzing current materials. For example, my interpretation of a current racial representation can be questioned or reinforced by looking at the history. This approach can be a methodological triangulation, which makes my analysis more reliable and rich. Apart from such "researcher's talk," it was simply so interesting and fun to go over those historical

materials. If I were not given this fieldwork opportunity, I would not notice the joy of it. Having awarded this opportunity not only provided materials for analysis, but also made me consider “another stance and approach” as a researcher.

The other part of my fieldwork was interviewing people. I was able to interview 21 people. This figure was actually less than what I anticipated. However, each interview was in-depth and worth greatly. What was really interesting was that I was able to hear many thoughts and perceptions which I have never thought of. In this regard, those interviews were not merely data. Rather, they taught me many other possibilities beyond my own current perspective. They will guide me “what to do” from now on.

As I have briefly stated in the above, what was really worth for me to be in the field was to find diverse perceptions about the topic, beyond merely gathering data. I feel this is particularly important for my project since its major concern is “stereotype.” Stereotype is often a simple reduction of existing people’s perceptions in certain manner. Merely reviewing existing literature in a distant location does not tell me diverse perceptions existing in the field. However, because of this opportunity, I was fortunate to notice their existence, and how they vary by people to people at the moment, as well as by time to time. Noticing those made me reconsider the possibility that I and my conceptual framework had also been relied on such stereotype. I feel bit overwhelmed by those “yet-to-be-thought-of” perceptions now. However, I believe that when I understand and reorganize them, my project would gain much more depth.