Ethnic Identity Formation of 'Hafu' (Biethnic) Students in Japan

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between the experience of ethnicity and self-identified ethnic identity in biethnic middle school students in Japan. The participants were 12 biethnic students, one of whose parents was Japanese. The biethnics are known as *Hafu* in Japan. We conducted semi-structured interviews and asked the participants about their positive and negative experiences of ethnicity and feelings about it, the presence of supporters and the participants' feelings when receiving support, and how they identified their ethnic identity. As a result, it was suggested that those participants who had positive experiences, such as being praised for being bilingual, could accept their ethnicity, which led them to trust in their surroundings. Conversely, those who had negative experiences, such as discrimination, gave up gaining the understanding of others and hid their ethnic background or could not accept being biethnic. These negative experiences included discriminatory remarks during class.

Keywords: Hafu (biethnic), ethnic identity, Modified Grounded Theory Approach (M-GTA)

1. Introduction

According to the vital statistics of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2018) in Japan, the number of international marriages in which "one spouse is a foreigner", was 21,852, which accounted for 3.7% of the total number of marriages, an increase of 3.5% from the previous year. On the other hand, the number of births by foreign parents was 17,878, but there is no data on the number of the biethnic children after that. Since there are no statistical data for elementary, junior high, and high school biethnic students in Japan, it is difficult to grasp the actual number. In Okinawa Prefecture in Japan, the percentage of international marriages is 4.6%, which is the fourth highest in Japan after 5.1% in Tokyo, which is the highest. One factor is that there is a U.S. military base in Okinawa, and the rate of international marriage in which "the wife is Japanese, and the husband is a foreigner" is the highest in Japan at 3.6%. There are not a few biethnic children who were born and raised in Okinawa and whose native language is Japanese, who attend local elementary, junior high and high schools.

Generally speaking, a biethnic person, one of whose parents is Japanese, and the other parent is a foreigner, is called '*Hafu*' *(Haafu*), a word derived from English 'half', to express being 'half' of Japanese origin. In the case of Hafu children who attend local schools in Japan, they are often regarded by teachers and around them as not having problems about ethnicity because they speak Japanese. In other words, it is considered that the difficulty experienced about ethnicity is to be related to communication. Actually, however, although foreign children learn Japanese and how to adapt to Japan in Japanese language classes at school and elsewhere, Hafu do not get any support because they are considered as adapting to daily life. But can we indeed say that is so?

1.1. Research on Biethnic Identity

Morikawa (2009) interviewed three teachers who were in charge of Hafu in their late teenage years in Japan; the mothers of the students were Filipino. The teachers regarded those students who had Filipino nationality as 'foreigners' and those who had Japanese nationality as 'Japanese'. Moreover, the teachers thought that the main problems of those who were 'Japanese' might have had no connection with their ethnicity and that the problems were as same as other Japanese students. Yoshida and Oikawa (2012) surveyed 108 Hafu (aged 15-39) about their experiences of their race and ethnicity; they found that those who went to Japanese middle schools and spoke multiple languages fluently acted as Japanese at first, but they had identity confusion later. Ogaya (2016) interviewed four Hafu in their twenties whose mothers were Filipino, and who were born and grew up in Japan. Three of them reported that when they were in the 3rd grade (aged 8-9) of elementary school, they became aware that their ethnic background and ethnicity were different from Japanese through interaction with them at school. These studies show that Japanese-speaking Hafu children are not always adapted to their daily lives. They have many opportunities to think about their ethnic identity through the relationships with others at school such as classmates and teachers. As Ogaya (2016) stated, it can be said that the scene where biethnics are aware of their ethnic identity is always contextualized in the relationships. Moreover, it is considered that not only personal factors such as self-esteem (Phinney, 1992; Yasui et al., 2004), but also environmental factors such as school and community influence what ethnic identity a biethnic Hafu identifies with. An ethnic identity is not fixed but develops, and the process is complex, especially for biethnics, as there is a strong relationship between the situation and experience of individuals living in society (Phinney, 1996).

In regard to the relationship between ethnic identity and the environment, Wardle (1992) proposed the ecological and developmental stages of ethnic identity for biracial children in the United States. According to him, biracial children must successfully complete two crucial stages (3-7 years and adolescence stages) in order to obtain healthy and unified biracial identity during their development. The first stage is in early childhood of 3-7 years old, when children explore individual and racial differences, learn labels and emotional reactions associated with different ethnic groups, and then begin to acquire social norms and values. The second stage is for adolescence, when they begin to clarify 'who I am', 'what I think of myself', and 'how others see me'. During these two stages, five environmental factors (family, community, minority context, majority context, and collective hostility) interact with each other and influence the children. He stated that the quality of each environmental factor indirectly affects the children's concept of identity. Accapadi (2012) presented the Point of Entry model of Asian American Identity Consciousness (POE model) for the process by which Asian-Americans become aware of ethnic identity. According to this model, four environmental factors (ethnic attachment, family influence, immigrant history, external influence and perception), personal factors such as objective self, and social factors such as gender, sexual orientation, abilities, and classes promote the development of ethnic identity among Asian-Americans. And their ethnic and cultural identity formation is a lifelong process (Kich, 1992; Minoura, 1994; Suzuki, 2008) and a difficult process (Kich, 1992; Murphy-Shigemitsu, 1997). If they cannot adjust the two ethnic identities within themselves, they are in a state of identity confusion; on the other hand, if the biethnics can adjust them well, they can accept their ethnic identity (Poston,

1990; Yoshida & Oikawa, 2012). The ultimate goal of ethnic identity development is that the biethnic can be proud of their ethnic identity (Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007; Poston, 1990).

As mentioned above, Hafu children are often considered to have no problems about ethnicity, but as Yoshida et al. (2012) stated, many Hafu have conflicts about their ethnic identities. Now that multicultural coexistence is being promoted, it is one of the urgent tasks to deepen understanding of Hafu children as an ethnic minority in Japan. Therefore, the purposes of this study are to examine Hafu students during pre-adolescence when the process of identity formation becomes active, and ask what kind of internal and external experiences they have about their ethnicity and how the experiences relate to their ethnic identity.

2. Theoretical Frameworks

Erikson (1959/1994, p. 22) defined identity as "safeguarding the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others", "subjectivity", and "proof of existence", and as being a concept that clarifies oneself. Identity has the variability of changing with growth and development and the ambiguity of capturing oneself from multiple angles. Moreover, Cooley (1902) described Looking Glass Self Theory, "People see their own identity through the eyes of others", and Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) stated, "The problem of biethnic identity is not only necessarily within themselves but also in the perception of others". For these reasons, the perception from others influences the formation of identity. Identification of identity as 'I am such a person' is ultimately determined by the person, based on self-expression toward others, judging, and approval from others in the social interaction. Regarding ethnic identity, a person chooses some ethnic identity 'self-recursively' based on the 'reflected-self', a process which is affected by strong restriction on cognition and trying to suppress the ethnicity in a certain frame by others. At that time, the person may have confusion or conflict due to the gap between own cognition and others' perception.

The theory that discusses the process by which self-evaluation of identity is defined by interaction with others is called the Identity Negotiation Theory (INT). This theory shows that the 'self-evaluation' and the 'reflective self-evaluation' (guessing how a person evaluates me) between the two people create a new self-evaluation. According to Ting-Toomey (2015, p. 418), the term *identity* in the INT means, "an individual's multifaceted identities of cultural, ethnic, religious, social class, gender, sexual orientation, professional, family/relational role, and personal image(s) based on self-reflection and other categorization social construction processes" and the term *negotiation* means, "the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages between the two or more communicators in maintaining, threatening, or uplifting the various socio-cultural group-based or unique personal-based identity images of the other *in situ*". In addition, Swann (1987) mentioned that the term *self-evaluation* means an "appraisal process", whereby a person influences the other, and as a result, the self-evaluation of the other is transformed, which is regarded as the process of influence from others. The term *reflective self-evaluation* means a "self-verification process"; it is a process in which a person effects on the other to change the other's evaluation for fitting self-concept. The INT is the concept that collectively refers to these two processes.

How does a biethnic communicate about ethnic identity? In regard to this, Cross et al. (2017) provided the new Ethnic-Racial Identity (ERI) Enactment Model and

explained how ERI is experienced, lived, and enacted in daily life as a set of behavioral and psychological negotiations. First, it acts as *buffering* in situations where ethnic identity is threatened. It is a strategy to protect ethnic identity, like a psychological shield, such as expressing 'this is not a big deal' or 'no need to worry' when a biethnic faces an unfavorable situation. By using this strategy, the biethnic can avoid the painful effects from racists or ethnic jokes in communication (Strauss & Cross, 2005). Second, ethnic identity works as *code-switching*, which works when a person chooses a main ethnic identity in communication. It is a strategy to communicate with a culturally appropriate manner in a diverse and unique situation, depending on a low or high context communication. For example, an American/Chinese biethnic speaks in English when talking to Americans and speaks in Chinese when talking to Chinese. Third, ethnic identity works as *bridging* in the situation of occurring friendship and intimacy that transcends ethnic and racial boundaries. This refers to intentionally making connections with another ethnic group or the integration of one's ethnic identities. Biethnic or multi-ethnic people take this strategy to balance or stabilize internally in order to find their ethnic identity. For example, an Asian/Caucasian biethnic connects with two cultures by building a separate network with Asian and Caucasian friends and colleagues (Toomey et al., 2013). Fourth, ethnic identity works as *passing* when a biethnic or multi-ethnic gets on as a member of a majority ethnic group around him/her. This also works by overcoming racist remarks and jokes from intimate friends or partners (Ting-Toomey, 2013). Fifth, ethnic identity works as *covering*, which masks injured (stigmatized) ethnic identity to soften the damage and live comfortably (Yoshino, 2007). Sixth, ethnic identity works as *attachment and bonding*, which strengthens affiliation and ties to the group of the ethnic background. It brings belonging, affiliation, and commitment to an ethnic group as a result of repeated experience of ties and attributions with one's own ethnic group; it is similar to forming the emotional bond between an infant and a care giver. According to Tatum (1997/2017), attachment and bonding are not automatically deployed because not all parents are trying to instill ethnic/racial affiliation in their children or to induce identity prominence or centrality. Therefore, it requires identity work with knowledge, practice, choice, and perspective. Seventh, ethnic identity works as *Internalized Racial Oppression* in situations where positive self-sense is impaired. It includes such negative attitudes from false education (learning inaccurate negative facts about an ethnic group) and opinions of skin color superiority/inferiority (colorism). Some ethnic/racial minorities accept negative social beliefs and stereotypes about themselves (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). Therefore, it is one of the themes of identity work for them. It is said that members of minority groups can reduce the activation of the above stereotyped threats by having a strongly developed own ethnic/racial identity (Laar et al., 2008). Finally, ethnic identity works as *individuality* that shows a biethnic can be just who he/she is, in other words, it is a situation that a biethnic does not enact one's ethnic/racial identity (Strauss & Cross, 2005). This means moving to the idea of 'I am myself' from expressing some ethnic identity.

The enactments of *buffering*, *code-switching*, and *bridging* explore the intergroup dynamics of ERI enactments. Other enactments of *attachment and bonding*, and *internalized racial oppression* occur in intra-group settings and represent reference group management strategies. *Individuality* captures the personal identity component of the self that acts in tandem with social identity (Cross et al., 2017).

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

The participants were 12 Hafu (six males and six females); all of them were public middle school students in Okinawa in Japan. The ages ranged from 12 to 15 years (M=13.50, SD=0.87). There were six participants whose one parent was a Caucasian from North America (e.g., the United States) or Europe . The other six participants had one parent who was from Asia outside Japan (e.g., China). Four of the participants were bilingual or multilingual, and seven of them had experience of having lived in the country of their foreign parents' origin. All of them were native Japanese speakers. Eight participants had experienced close contact with their foreign parents' cultures, such as food and cultural events. Table 1 shows the main demographics of the participants.

Table 1. Profile of Participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Language	Foreign name	Parents' ethnicity		Parent's country	Parent's culture
					Father	Mother		
A	F	13	bilingual	yes	North America	Japan	4yrs (3-7)	with
B	M	13	Japanese	-	Japan	Europe	-	with
C	F	14	Japanese	yes	East Asia	Japan	3yrs (0-3)	-
D	M	13	Japanese	-	Japan	East Asia & Japan	-	with
E	F	13	bilingual	yes	North America	Japan	7yrs (0-7)	with
F	F	15	Japanese	-	East Asia & Japan	Japan	2yrs (1-3)	with
G	F	12	Japanese	-	Japan	Southeast Asia	2yrs (0-2)	with
H	F	13	bilingual	yes	North America	Japan	8yrs (1-9)	with
I	M	14	Japanese	yes	North America	Japan	-	-
J	F	13	Japanese	yes	East Asia	Japan	-	-
K	F	14	Japanese	-	Japan	North America & Japan	-	-
L	M	15	multilingual	yes	Japan	East Asia	12yrs (2-14)	with

Notes. 'Parent's country' means period and (age) of living in the foreign parent's country. 'Parent's culture' means contact with the foreign parent's culture. No participants had experienced living in other countries (besides Japan and the parent's country of origin).

3.2. Procedure

The participants were interviewed with a semi-structured interview, which was recorded with a digital voice recorder. It was conducted in Japanese and one-on-one at the school where they attended. Before the interview, they expressed informed-consent and were told they could stop the interview or recording anytime they wanted.

3.3. Measures

Demographic face sheet. The elicited demographics included gender, age, language, foreign name, parent's ethnicity, residential experience in the parent's country of origin, and contact with the culture of the non-Japanese parent. All participants answered specifically about the parent's ethnicity and the language, but the description was limited so as not to identify personal information.

Interview contents. During the interview, the expression of 'Hafu' and 'Quarter' instead of biethnic were used because the participants could easily understand it. We asked the following questions: (1) The participants' happy or good experiences as Hafu/Quarter or Japanese or foreigner (e.g., American), the reasons and feeling about them; (2) their sad or bad experiences as Hafu/Quarter or Japanese or foreigner (e.g., American), the reasons and feeling about them; and if someone supported them in regard to the experiences, what they felt about them; and (3) what ethnicity they identified with and the reasons for their self-identification.

3.4. Research Ethics

This research has been approved by the research ethics review committee of the Graduate School of Education and Human Development, School of Education, Nagoya University.

4. Results

4.1. Interview Analysis with M-GTA

4.1.1. Analytical Method

The answers were analyzed with Modified Grounded Theory Approach (M-GTA) by Kinoshita (2003). This method drastically reconstructed the Grounded Theory Approach (GTA) of the qualitative research method developed by Glasser and Strauss (1967/1996), which positions it uniquely as a research method, and it systematizes even specific data analysis methods (Kinoshita, 2016). Moreover, this analysis looks at the data in context faithfully to the researcher's awareness of the problem, the human perceptions and actions which are reflected in it, and considers the factors and conditions involved carefully (Kinoshita, 2007). Therefore, M-GTA was adopted for the analysis.

As a result of the analysis, 29 concepts and 11 categories were obtained. The results represent the relationships between each concept and category, and Figure 1 illustrates the results, and the storyline is described below. The concepts are indicated with *Italics* and the categories are indicated by <>in the text.

4.1.2. Storyline

Category 1. <Recognized as Hafu>

The participants had various experiences about ethnicity, which made them recognized as Hafu by others. They were *recognized as Hafu by appearance*, and Western/Japanese were *recognized as Hafu by name*. The Asian/Japanese were *recognized as Hafu with introducing oneself*. In addition, the Western/Japanese were recognized as Hafu by the embroidery of Japanese and foreign names on school uniforms or calling the roll. It was difficult for others to recognize Asian/Japanese as Hafu, but people pointed out that their appearance was something different from them.

Recognized as Hafu by appearance

(excerpt) "I was told, 'You obviously have a Western face' in Japan". (Participant *E*)

Recognized as Hafu by name
(excerpt) "People can easily find me as Hafu because I have a foreign name, too". (*I*)

Recognized as Hafu with introducing oneself
(excerpt) "I introduced myself as Hafu in beginning of new academic year without reasons". (*J*)

After being recognized as Hafu, their feelings and thoughts about their ethnicity differed from positive and negative experiences regarding ethnicity.

Positive Experiences

Category 2. <-Praised for Ethnicity>

First, the participants described being praised for ethnicity as Hafu. They experienced *being praised for cultural background* and *being praised for appearances* in Japan or their parents' countries, and Western/Japanese stated *being praised for being bilingual*.

Being praised for cultural background
(excerpt) "When I explained to my classmates about the differences between the events of the two countries, I was envied". (*A*)

Being praised for appearances
(excerpt) "My friend praised me for my appearance". (*G*)

Being praised for being bilingual
(excerpt) "I was happy when my friend praised me for speaking two languages". (*E*)

Category 3. < Helped in trouble>

While some participants experienced being praised for ethnicity (category 2), others were helped when they were in trouble or met with unpleasant occurrences. The participants experienced *being helped while being discriminated, being protected while feeling unpleasant in class,* and *being taught language by teachers and classmates.*

Being helped while being discriminated
(excerpt) "When I was in my father's country, I was discriminated by a boy because I'm Japanese. And then, I talked to my mother about it and she said, 'He was just jealous of you'". (*A*)

Being protected while feeling unpleasant in class
(excerpt) "When the theme was my father's country in social studies class, the teacher and other students denied it. I talked to my parents about it,

they say, ‘Don't worry much about it, because otherwise you’ve already lost the game’”. (*F*)

Being taught language by teachers and classmates
(excerpt) “It was difficult for me to speak Japanese immediately after moving from my father’s country, but my class teacher and classmates taught me Japanese”. (*A*)

Category 4. <Self-affirmation>

Some students had self-affirmation after they were praised for their ethnicity or were helped when they were in trouble. Some participants had *special feeling as Hafu* by contacting their cultural background or speaking foreign languages. Others *accepted being Japanese* when they were treated as same as Japanese by Japanese people. In addition, the Western/Japanese *accepted being Hafu* when other students told them “Both of your cultural backgrounds are good”. Through these experiences, they felt self-affirmation.

Special feeling as Hafu
(excerpt) “I have more involvement with foreign cultures than others. Ordinary people can’t experience it much. I'm Hafu, so I can do it.” (*B*)

Accepted being Japanese
(excerpt) “Japanese culture and anime are popular in my mother’s country. My classmates said, ‘Cool!’ and I felt very proud of it.” (*L*)

Accepted being Hafu
(excerpt) “When my friend told me, ‘It’s amazing to speak Japanese,’ in my father’s country, I thought I have Japanese blood and realized I can speak Japanese a little bit.” (*A*)

Category 5. <Trust the Surroundings>

The participants who were praised for their ethnicity or were helped by people when they were in trouble could feel self-affirmation and trust their surroundings. They thought *the people around me and my friends are supporters* and *people are not all racists*. In addition, some participants were *not conscious of Hafu* in front of reliable people.

The people around me and my friends are supporters
(excerpt) “My close friends know I’m Hafu and they accept it”. (*J*)

People are not all racists
(excerpt) “Some people discriminate Hafu, but others think Hafu are amazing”. (*F*)

Not conscious of Hafu
(excerpt) “Hafu is nothing special for me”. (*C*)

Negative Experiences

Category 6. <Kept Distance from the Surroundings>

Next, the participants said they had negative experiences that they *are regarded Hafu as different from them.* Japanese students regarded them as different in appearance and way of thinking, and then they kept physical and psychological distance from the participants.

Being regarded Hafu as different from others
(excerpt) "Japanese people seem to think that Hafu is different from them in everything. Language, way of speaking, life, food, etc." (*D*)

Category 7. <Unpleasantness due to Stereotypes>

The stereotypes made the participants feel uncomfortable and they thought people to be *prejudiced that all Hafu are bilingual with Japanese and English* and *mistake parent's origin.* In addition, Western/Japanese experienced to be *mistaken as foreigner because of appearance*.

Being prejudiced that all Hafu are bilingual with Japanese and English
(excerpt) "Everyone asks me just for my name, 'Are you Hafu?'. Next, they ask me, 'You speak English?' although I can't speak a foreign language". (*I*)

People mistaken parent's origin
(excerpt) "Many students mistake my father's country. My friend corrects it to others instead of me and my mother comforts me." (*C*)

Being mistaken as foreigner because of appearance
(excerpt) "After moving to Japan from my father's country, my cousin introduced me to others as a foreigner, and then they said, 'Oh, I see'. I was surprised and thought, I look like a foreigner that much?". (*H*)

Category 8. <Not Helped in Trouble>

Contrary to the positive experiences, the participants had the negative experiences of not getting help when they were in trouble about ethnicity. They had a *hard time of language barrier*, felt *frustrated being asked about ethnicity*, and did *not get help while being discriminated*. In addition, Western/Japanese also experienced, feeling *confusion about being paid attention to while speaking in English fluently*. No one helped them with either experience.

Hard time of language barrier

(excerpt) "When I started living in my father's country, I couldn't keep up with my studies because I didn't understand the language. Neither my teacher nor my classmates taught me." (*A*)

Frustrated being asked about ethnicity
(excerpt) "Students ask me every beginning of academic year, 'Have you lived in a foreign country?', 'Who is a foreigner in your family?' That's really annoying." (*H*)

Not get help while being discriminated
(excerpt) "I was very sad when I was told, 'Go back to your country!'". (*E*)

Confusion about being paid attention to while speaking in English fluently
(excerpt) "I sometimes intentionally pronounce the same as everyone else in English class not to bring much attention". (*F*)

Category 9. <Feeling of Discontent>

Some participants remained feeling distrustful and discontented with the perpetrators of discrimination even though they thanked the people who helped them. They thought, *unpleasant experiences will be repeated* because they had uncomfortable experiences many times. In addition, some Asian/Japanese thought they were *being discriminated because of ethnic background*. In addition, some participants had *confusion about unnecessarily care for ethnic background*.

Even if someone helped when the participants were in trouble, they retained a feeling of discontent. They were grateful for support but could not dispel the fear that the same thing would be repeated and the distrust of others' negative reaction to their ethnic background.

Unpleasant experiences will be repeated
(excerpt) "I'm often asked, 'You're Hafu, right?' I live in Okinawa and I'm Japanese, so it's a big deal. That's really annoying." (*D*)

Being discriminated because of ethnic background
(excerpt) "I wonder if I'm discriminated because I'm Hafu of the country" (If one of my ethnic background was other country, I would be never discriminated). (*L*)

Confusion about unnecessary care for ethnic background
(excerpt) "During class, when classmates talk negatively about my father's country, I don't like the teacher trying to stop it because I'm considerate of the teacher, too". (*F*)

Category 10. <Request of the Surroundings>

By having the above-mentioned negative experiences, the participants had *hope for being treated as same as others*.

Hope for being treated as same as others
(excerpt) "Blood and lifestyle may be a little different from others, but I'm the same as them. I want them to seem as same as others. I sometimes feel to be treated differently." (*D*)

Category 11. <Give up Gaining the Understanding of Others>

Some participants chose *not express ethnicity in self-defense* because they could not get help when they were in trouble and people had stereotypes for them. Moreover, they thought *only biethnics understand me* and then they gave up getting people's understanding about their ethnicity and decided to not be open about their ethnicity.

Not express my ethnicity in self-defense
(excerpt) "I don't actively tell I'm Hafu. Only tell specific persons like my friends". (*C*)

Only biethnics understand me
(excerpt) "Only same Hafu understands Hafu like me". (*A*)

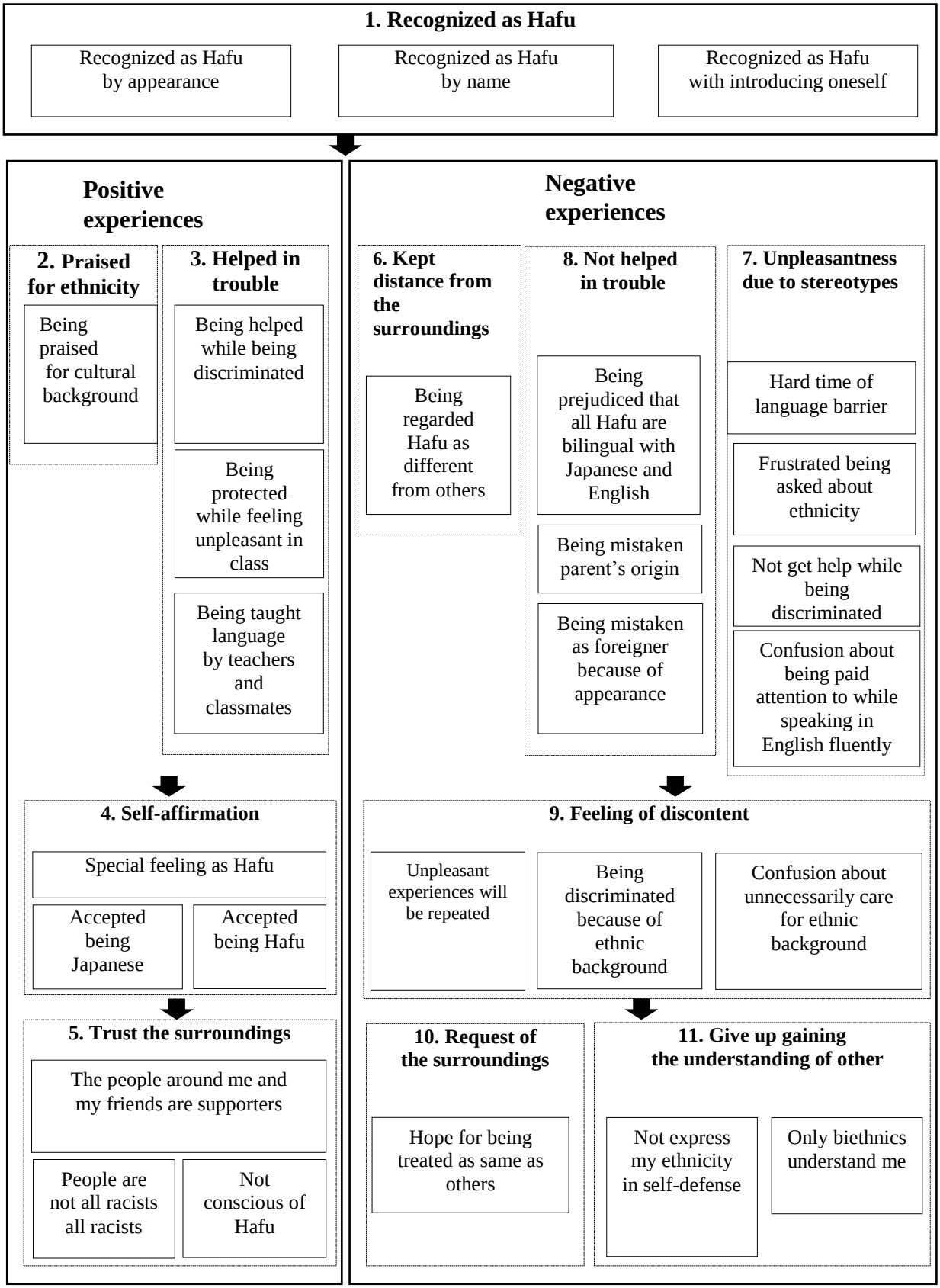

Figure 1. Process of Self-perception and Other-perception about Hafu through Experiences about Ethnicity

4.2. Self-identified Ethnic Identity

Table 2 summarizes what ethnic identity each participant identified with. Four participants answered “biethnic” (three Western/Japanese and one Asian/Japanese), four other students answered “Japanese” (two Western/Japanese and two Asian/Japanese), while the two Asian/Japanese answered “Okinawans”. The other two participants answered “human” (one Western/Japanese), and “self” (one Asian/Japanese).

Table 2. Self-identified Ethnic Identity

Participants	Responses	Ethnic Identity
A	I'm Hafu because I'm mixed with my father's country and Japan.	biethnic
B	I'm Japanese because I've been living here for long time. I speak unclearly the foreign language but can speak Japanese.	Japanese
C	I think I'm Japanese but was born in my father's country. I'm not Hafu. I live in Japan, speak Japanese fluently, and lifestyle is Japanese, so I'm Japanese the same as others.	Japanese
D	I'm intermediate person between Japan and my mother's country. I want to understand the two countries. I don't think about my mother's country in my daily life, but I want to know about the country.	biethnic
E	The Hafu fits for me. If I identify Japanese, it's strange because I also speak the foreign language. I cannot be certain if I choose one ethnicity.	biethnic
F	I like my father's country and Japan, but I'm Okinawan.	Okinawan
G	I'm Japanese because I don't go to my mother's country much nor don't speak the language. I've spent much time with Japanese here. If I say a characteristic as my mother's country's person, I can't put together my opinions properly.	Japanese
H	Quoting from a book, I'm divergent. It means a person whose thoughts are divided into multiple parts.	biethnic
I	I'm a human. I don't have a viewpoint of ethnicity. My ancestor lived in a different place from others. That's all.	human
J	I'm an ordinary Okinawan. I have spent time in Okinawan culture for a long time. 'Okinawan' fits me more than Japanese.	Okinawan
K	I'm Japanese...I'm intermediate, and closer to Japanese than the another. My families are closer to the country. Only I look different in my family.	Japanese

L	I'm what I am. When I lived in my mother's country, I realized I'm Japanese. But, after I came to Okinawa, I had a lot of things, so I decided to follow my consciousness. I answer "I'm Hafu" when someone asks me, but I'm not biased towards either.	self

4.3. Experiences of Discrimination, the Feeling of Discontent, and Supporters

Table 3 summarizes the experiences of discrimination, the perpetrators and the discontent feeling, and the supporters. The 'supporters' were classified into three communities: 'family/relatives', 'school officials', and 'outside communities'.

Of the six participants who were discriminated, four of them experienced support. The details of supporters were as follows: four participants received support from family/relatives (multiple answers: one from father, four from mother, one from siblings, and one from relatives); three participants received support from school officials (Japanese friends); two participants experienced support in the outside community; while two participants had no supporter. Regarding the reason of having no supporter, the participants said, "When I told my troubles to the same Hafu, the person didn't understand me, so I decided not to rely on anyone" (*I*), and "I don't want to tell my troubles to others. That will get me nowhere" (*L*). All the participants who were discriminated answered that the perpetrators were their classmates, and one also mentioned it was the teacher. Regarding biethnic friends, they belonged to the outside community. The participants joined some activities with the friends or were keeping in touch with the friends living in foreign countries where they had lived. Most of the supporters were mothers, Japanese friends, and outside biethnic friends.

In addition, although it was not overt discrimination, all of the participants stated that they had had unpleasant experiences with ethnicity (e.g., being reviled, kept at a distance).

Table 3. Experiences of Discrimination, Feeling of Discontent, and Supporters

Participants	Discrimination (Perpetrators)	Feeling of discontent	Supporters	
A	Yes (classmates)	No	family / relatives	mother
			school officials	Japanese friends
			communities	biethnic friends
B	—	—	—	—
C	—	—	—	—
D	—	—	—	—
E	Yes (classmates)	Yes	family / relatives	mother
			school officials	Japanese friends
			communities	biethnic friends
F	Yes (classmates & teacher)	Yes	family / relatives	parents, siblings, and relatives
			school officials	Japanese friends
			communities	No
G	—	—	—	—
H	—	—	—	—
I	Yes (classmates)	Yes	family / relatives	No
			school officials	
			communities	
J	Yes (classmates)	No	family / relatives	mother
			school officials	No
			communities	No
K	—	—	—	—
L	Yes (classmates)	Yes	family / relatives	No
			school officials	
			communities	

5. Discussion

5.1. The Suffering of ‘Hafu’ in Japan

The participant *J* announced that she was Hafu by introducing herself in the beginning of new academic year. She said, “I hadn’t said it positively before, but I felt like saying it”. As mentioned above, ethnic identity is formed in relation to the surroundings and is stable with the approval of the surroundings. She may want others to accept being Hafu around her. In other words, it is considered that she tried to confirm that she is one of the members of the current group and to stabilize her ethnic identity by stating it in public. However, by announcing it, she was ridiculed by her classmate regarding the ethnicity of her foreign roots. The participant *I*, who has characteristics of Westerners in his appearance, was interested in Japanese traditional culture. He was laughed at about it by other students, “You’re a foreigner, so you’re interested in Japanese culture”. They were regarded as foreigners after others found *J* has foreign roots, and *I* has foreign appearance. According to Yoshino (1998), Japanese people use the word of ‘Japanese blood’ as an unchanging aspect of their ethnic identity, which means that “to understand the Japanese way of thinking, you must be born as a Japanese”. It indicates that Japanese people value it. When Japanese regard Hafu as Japanese, they expect Hafu to have cultural characteristics as Japanese; on the other hand, when Japanese regard Hafu as foreigner, they feel uneasy with their (Hafu's) Japanese characteristics (Shimoji, 2018, p. 317).

Previous studies have shown that Hafu are considered differently from Japanese in Japan (Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007). Asian/Japanese are often recognized as Japanese

because of their appearance such as skin, hair color, and facial appearance. Even if they want others to accept their ethnicity, they worry that their foreign roots may have a negative effect on something because they were directly or indirectly discriminated in the past. Therefore, they feel conflicted whether they should announce their ethnic roots or choose to be seen as Japanese. It can be said that it is a different conflict from Western/Japanese Hafu who are regarded as foreigners or Hafu by their appearances. In pre-adolescence, children are interested in themselves, including their appearance, and they compare with others. The appearance is a big concern for Hafu children, too. In Japan, Hafu are still a minority; therefore, not only Japanese but also Western/Japanese and Asian/Japanese Hafu are sensitive to slight differences in appearance. When Hafu see the reaction of others to them, they either feel relieved or feel as something wrong to be considered as the same as Japanese, or on the contrary, when they are not regarded as Japanese, they feel superiority or inferiority. Thus, "to be seen" incurs complex emotions to Hafu. Morikawa (2009) mentioned that people manage and categorize biethnics' identity, which causes cutting out "original diverse oneself" and individual "complex me". Moreover, through the category of "children of international marriage families", if other people such as teachers expect them to conform to "biethnics should be like this", new power will be born there. In other words, if it does not match the "ideal form", biethnic identity may be excluded.

One of the stereotypes for Hafu in Japan is that 'Hafu has American and Japanese parents and speaks English'. Especially Western/Japanese Hafu feel antipathy to the stereotype. In Japan, the stereotype that 'Hafu has ability of speaking foreign language' is widespread. It is affected by the hegemonic effect of the single ethnic view such as 'a Japanese person speaks Japanese and has Japanese culture', and the image of foreigners which was closely linked to Americans because the United States was modeled in the postwar westernization (Shimoji, 2018, p. 316). Many Western/Japanese Hafu in this study felt frustrated when they were asked "Which parent is American?" or "Do you speak English?". Those who do not speak English were disappointed by others and were hurt by the stereotype. According to Kobari (2014), biethnics are in the environment where they are forced to be aware of what they are expected to be like as biethnic and how they behave as biethnic. Many of the expectations placed on biethnics such as speaking English and being familiar with the two cultures are stereotypes, and therefore do not apply to all biethnics. Some participants felt confused because they were seen in the framework made by the surroundings, and required either assimilation or being different from others depending on the situation. For instance, participant *E* was usually required to have synchronized behavior by others, but when it came to English class, her classmates told her, "You are good at learning English, but we are not". And then she thought, "Actually, I'm not really good at English grammar. I feel like to be drawn the line with us".

Many Asian/Japanese participants complained about hurtful experiences when classmates and teachers disdained their foreign parents' countries in social classes. They did not know or forgot that Hafu is in the same classroom and they would say without malicious intent, "I dislike the country" (*F*), or a teacher in the participant's mother's country said, "Everybody shouldn't go to Japan because it's dangerous" (*L*), or a classmate looked at the participant frowning, "You're from the country, aren't you?" (*B*). The participants felt uncomfortable and got angry at the words regardless of the absence of ill will.

5.2. Swaying of Ethnic Identity, and Expressing Ethnic Identity Depending on the Situation

Some people who experienced support when they were discriminated or felt uncomfortable nevertheless thought, "The unpleasant experiences will be repeated" or "I may be discriminated because I'm Hafu with 'the' country" (*I*, *L*, etc.), and they retained a feeling of discontent. The experience of ethnic discrimination has a large possibility to influence the formation of ethnic identity (e.g., Yip, 2018). The participant *I* identified ethnic identity as 'human' and participant *L* identified it as 'self'. Törngren and Sato (2021) studied Hafu aged 18-25 who had lived or stayed for a long time in Japan, and found that some of them identified their ethnic identity as 'human' as a way to resist the present categories of identity. As the reason for this, it may be a strategy to deal with having their ethnic identity mistaken and the gaps between *self-identified ethnic identity* and *described ethnic identity in the interview*. However, in reality, they insisted that they wanted others to accept their multiple ethnic backgrounds as they are. In case of participants *I* and *L* in this study, their expression of their ethnic identity as 'human' or 'self' was all they could do to deal with feelings about their self-identified identity. They need supporters who understand them to express their ethnic identity as it is.

The participants *F* and *J* expressed their self-identified ethnic identity as 'Okinawan'. In the interview, the participant *F* said that she felt cold toward others when she communicated with others in the mainland of Japan, and teachers and classmates denied her mother's country in social study class. The participant *J* was discriminated by her classmate when she revealed her identity as Hafu. Although both of them were followed by their parents, *F* remained discontented, but on the other hand, *J* didn't. However, the stigma may have remained consciously and unconsciously in both of them. Stigma is "a situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance", which is not fixed and changes depending on the situation which a person is put in (Goffman, 1963/1986). As Goffman (1963/1986) pointed out, when a person decides that one's ethnic identity is under the stigma, the person becomes aware of not wanting the ethnicity to be known to others, so that another ethnic identity is enacted in the interaction. It makes the stigma latent (Miller, 2018). The two participants who regarded their ethnic identity as Okinawan may not have selected any other ethnic identity due to the stigma. Many Japanese who grew up in Okinawa regard themselves as Okinawan. As Phinney (1992) defined, ethnic identity includes 'attachment' and 'sense of belonging'; therefore, there is another possibility that the participants identified with "Okinawan" because they felt attachment and belonging to the cultural environment in which they live.

Some of the participants who retained a feeling of discontent from the discrimination wanted others to treat them the same as Japanese people, or they gave up getting the understanding of others. In addition, Asian/Japanese participants chose not to reveal their ethnicity as a form of self-defense. This result supported the study on Hafu aged 18 to 25 years by Törngren and Sato (2021) which shows that Hafu cover the negative image of foreign ethnic backgrounds and express Japanese identity.

If a biethnic fails to establish good relationships with others at school, such as avoiding close communication with others due to negative experiences, it may affect their psychological health such as experiencing school maladaptation, not attending school, and showing depressive symptoms (e.g., Huynh & Fuligni, 2010; Park et al.,

2016; Rivas-Drake et al., 2008). However, Grossman and Liang's (2008) study of biethnics aged 11 to 13 years in the United States, found that requesting peer support when they were discriminated, alleviated psychological distress.

For biethnics who have a sense of self-affirmation and self-esteem, it is considered that the experiences of being accepted by others and being helped in case of trouble affect these positive feelings. Among the participants in this study, those who were supported when they were discriminated or felt uncomfortable about their ethnicity, in addition to having experiences of being praised for their ethnicity, accepted themselves as Hafu and had a special feeling towards their two ethnic backgrounds. When they were able to have positive feeling about their two ethnicities, it led them to have a sense of trust in the others around them, "The people around me understand me" (*A*, etc.) and "not all people discriminate me" (*H*, etc.). In front of the people whom they trusted, some Hafu were not aware of being Hafu (*B*, etc.). The previous studies show that those biethnics who connect to their two ethnic roots, have a positive self-concept, and psychologically adapt compared to those who do not (Chong, V. & Kuo, 2015). They indicated the reason that the strong feeling of attachment and belonging to the two ethnic groups might affect biethnics to trust others and have a positive self-concept.

Toomey et al. (2013) studied Caucasian/Asian biethnic college students living in the United States; they found the participants tended to regard their ethnic identity as 'complementary Asian/Caucasian double identity' instead of 'split-percentages identities' and expressed that their ethnic identity fused fluidly. When one ethnic identity was threatened in interaction with others, they tried to want comfort and relief from another ethnic identity. Their ethnic identities were intertwined with each other depending on the situation or the context of communication, and the two identities swayed like a figure-eight. This suggests the emotional balance of challenge and security to the biethnic identity, in other words, the biethnics maintain two fluid swaying complex ethnic identities by using a buffering strategy.

The participants in this study listed Japanese friends at school and biethnic friends in outside communities as supporters, and they changed languages in communicating with these friends. Some of them said they were happy to be seen as 'Japanese' in communicating with Japanese, although it was different from the self-identified ethnic identity, and they felt secure when they were with biethnic friends.

It is considered that they also changed expressing ethnic identity depending on the situation similarly to changing the language; at that time, they managed their identity such as passing or covering consciously or unconsciously, and enacted as Japanese in the majority ethnic group to adapt to school life. As Toomey et al. (2013) showed, the two ethnic identities are intertwined and biethnics go through the process of constructing their ethnic identity through social interaction.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between the experience of ethnicity and the process of ethnic identity formation for Hafu (biethnic) junior high school students in Japan. As a result, they had both positive and negative experiences about their ethnicity at school, such as being praised and discriminated. The positive experiences also included support from others when they were discriminated or embarrassed about their ethnicity, which proved to lead them to trust in their surroundings. On the contrary, it became clear that the negative experiences led to giving up trying to gain the

understanding from others. In addition, the experiences of discrimination and confusion about ethnicity might cause them to retain the feeling of discontent even if they received support. This suggested affecting risks to their psychological health. Many of the perpetrators of discrimination were their classmates, and a teacher was a perpetrator, too. Taguchi (2016) described that discrimination includes not only the problem of bullying about appearances but also the problem of pressure of assimilating to others and the norm of 'Japaneseness' in elementary schools. The accumulation of these experiences affects identity formation and friendship; Taguchi (2016) problematized the psychological burden that the effects of assimilation and Japaneseization at school impose on children who have foreign roots. As mentioned above, the episodes of discrimination indicated that the consideration for ethnic diversity has not been sufficient yet in Japan. Schools must be places where minorities such as biethnics can feel at ease. Tai (2003) mentioned that multi-cultural coexistence is not between the static and closed cultures, but it internalizes cultural diversity including ethnic and national culture; therefore, it means coexistence between individuals who are in various positions in society.

Middle school students spend a lot of time at school. Biethnic students are often conscious or made aware of their ethnic identity by interacting with others at school. As biethnics grow up, they keep flexible the boundaries and social attitudes to the group they spend time with, accept themselves without excluding others, respect both similarities and differences with others, and develop the ability to adapt to cultural norms and contextual demands (Miville et al., 2005). Pre-adolescence is on the way to the process of identity formation. It is suggested that what they have experienced about ethnicity will influence the development of their ethnic identity. Therefore, we need to promote ethnic diversity education to deepen understanding and be sensitive to the development of Hafu (biethnic) children and adolescents.

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