

F.R.I.E.N.D.S

Community Formation and Belonging in the Colledge of International Relations

by Tyler and his happy kohais



Why do you like spending time in your community?

Who do you usually hang out with?



TOPIC

- Community Formation and Belonging at Ritsumeikan University, College of IR

FOUNDATIONS and PURPOSE

- The reasons for choosing this topic include:
 - ❖ Shared observation of a certain pattern in which students, particularly between Japanese students and foreign students, to create their own communities
 - ❖ Personal experience/observation during the time spent both at Ritsumeikan University and American University
- Hence, the purpose of this research is to investigate how, as well as why, students in College of IR forge community and develop a sense of belonging.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- *How do students find community / belonging at Ritsumeikan University, College of IR?*

HYPOTHESIS

- Students find their community/belonging based on their cultural and linguistic affinity and the divide between Japanese students and international students is the manifestation of such phenomenon.

Methodology

- Primary Data Research
 - ❖ Survey (n=60 ⇒4%)
 - Close- & Open-ended Questions
 - ❖ Interview (n=4)
 - Open-ended
- Theoretical Framework
 - ❖ In-group/Out-group
 - Imagined Community

Interviews

The observed tendency for students of the same nationality/language to stay in their bubbles
- T.S (Personal Communication)

We international students feel alienated from the IR community because not all of us have the access to their resources due to linguistic barrier
- A.K (Personal Communication)

While many international students have commented that they feel as if Japanese students do not want to interact with them, I don't think that is true. Many want to but are unable to because of the language barrier, or they actually try to which can be seen in many interaction that happens in the BBP. "
--Anonymous Japanese student (personal Communication)

NOTEWORTHY FINDINGS

1. 85% of the students that eat lunch with foreign students are international students
 - ❖ Of 33 Japanese respondents, only 6 (18%) answered they eat lunch with foreign students, in which 5 of them turned out to be a returnee who lived abroad for 1 year or longer (of whom 4 spent more than 4 years)
 - ❖ Of 25 International respondents, only 6 (24%) answered they spend their time together with Japanese students
2. Mainly international students found it difficult to associate with Japanese students/non-English speaking students / likely to hang out with other international students due to shared interests, sense of humor, cultural references.
 - ❖ While the many Japanese students who eat lunch with other Japanese students find their kikoku-shijyo or returnee status comfortable
3. Surprisingly, many international students commented that they find Japanese students unenthusiastic or uninterested to hang out with foreign students

ANALYSIS

- The disparity between Japanese students and International Students in their perception towards each other
 - ❖ A significant number of international respondents have attributed their tendency to hang out with other international students to their shared sense of humor, relatable topics during conversations (i.e., tv shows, memes) and their default English conversation
 - ❖ Only a few Japanese students, especially IR students mentioned that their inability to speak English made it difficult for them to socialize with the international students but are more than willing or want to socialize more with international students
 - However, some Japanese students, including those with high proficiency in English, keep to their own Japanese community because they are more comfortable being a part of the bilingual, returnee community

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

- Through the analysis of the data collected through the survey and interviews, we can partially validate our hypothesis that there is a divide between Japanese students and International Students in College of IR
 - ❖ However, linguistic and cultural barrier isn't sufficient to explain the difference in the way the two groups see each other's group.
- Potentiality for the Future Research
 - ❖ Therefore, we propose an alternate hypothesis that international students' minority/second-class citizen status, as well as the sense of being alienated from the mainstream social group, in conjunction with linguistic & cultural barrier lead to the given phenomenon.
- The internationally dynamic environment of College of IR as a microcosm of real-life IR
 - ❖ Understanding inter-personal relationship within College of IR could be extrapolated to the understanding of a more macro-scale International Community

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