Co-Creating *Ibasho* at a Part-Time High School in Tokyo: Affirming Immigrant Students' Lives through Extracurricular Activities

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Part-time high schools function as an important safety net for marginalized students, including immigrants, who are often excluded from society and mainstream education. Since 2015, drawing on the participatory action research (PAR) approach, I have collaborated with a high school and a Non-Profit Organization (NPO) to develop an extracurricular activity called One World (Multilingual Exchange Club), which aims to create ibasho *(places where one feels comfortable, safe, and accepted) for and with immigrant youth, given their high dropout rate. This article focuses on this collaborative practice and examines how the club has functioned as an* ibasho *among immigrant students. Given the value placed on students' voluntary engagement under the guidance of supportive teachers during extracurricular activities, immigrant students were able to nurture a space where they could be free from others' eyes, even temporarily. The space also had an elusive culture that validated students' transcultural and hybrid identities, languages, and experiences, which led to their empowerment. By shedding light on the possibilities of the indigenous Japanese concept of* ibasho *and its practice, scholars and practitioners in Japan and abroad can develop critical questions and reimagine mainstream education to nurture immigrant students' sense of belonging.*

1. Introduction

I can freely express myself in English.
I can be myself.
After the culture festival, the atmosphere changed, and I did not feel at home.

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These are the voices of high school students who took part in *ibasho* creation practice at Hitotsubashi High School, a part-time school in Tokyo. Part-time high schools (*teijisei koko*) function as an important safety net for marginalized students, including immigrants, who are often excluded from society and mainstream education. Since 2015, drawing on the participatory action research (PAR) approach, I have collaborated with a high school and a Non-Profit Organization (NPO) to develop an extracurricular activity called One World (Multilingual Exchange Club), which aims to create *ibasho* (places where one feels comfortable, safe, and accepted) for and with immigrant youth, given their high dropout rate. This article focuses on this collaborative practice and examines how the club has functioned as an *ibasho* among immigrant students. By shedding light on the possibilities of the indigenous Japanese concept of *ibasho* and its practice, scholars and practitioners in Japan and abroad can develop critical questions and reimagine mainstream education to nurture immigrant students' sense of belonging.

In December 2019, the number of foreigners in Japan reached the highest in its history—approximately 2.93 million (about 2.3% of the total population), a 7.4% increase from the previous year (Ministry of Justice, 2020). Japan is home to various minority populations, including *Zainichi* Koreans, *Nikkei* Brazilians, and Southeast Asian refugees, diversifying and increasing in size. As Japan undergoes multiculturalization, there has been a 32% increase in the number of immigrant children and youth under 19 years of age in the last ten years.[1] Scholars have examined this population's high school experiences and educational trajectory (Shimizu, 2008). Immigrant students are often excluded from high school education, as is clear from their low rates of high school enrollment and their high dropout rate (see Tokunaga, 2018b). Since high school is not compulsory in Japan, and given that an entrance examination is required, immigrant students who enter high school are expected to meet the standards set, including sufficient Japanese language and academic skills (Sakuma, 2015). Given these requirements, high schools often do not provide systematic support for immigrants, such as language, academic, or career support. Often, immigrant students lack resources and social networks and are of a low socioeconomic status (SES), with economically unstable immigrant parents (Takenoshita et al., 2014), which is a barrier to their continued education. According to MEXT's (2019) survey on the "educational support of students who attend public schools and are in need of Japanese language instruction," 9.6% of high school students who need Japanese language instruction (JLC students) dropped out of school, compared to 1.3% for the entire high school population; that is, JLC students were seven times more likely to drop out of high school in 2017.

Part-time high schools have played an important role in accommodating students with diverse educational needs, including immigrant students. Part-time high schools were first built after World War II to provide educational opportunities for young people who had to work for economic reasons and could not enroll full-time. Today, they serve as a safety net for students with diverse needs, such as those who experienced non-attendance (*futoko*) or attended special support classes (*tokubetsu shien gakkyu*) in junior high school, as well as students from low SES backgrounds (Shigeno, 2014). The schools have a relaxed curriculum, less strict rules and teaching styles, and small classes. Teachers also put effort into school events and extracurricular activities that reflect students' interests, support the creation of *ibasho*, and nurture students' wellbeing (Shigeno, 2014).

Given this context, part-time high schools have become multicultural spaces, attracting

many immigrant students and serving as a refuge (Sakuma, 2015; Shimizu, 2008; Tsuneyoshi, et al., 2017; Tsunoda, 2015). Immigrants are concentrated in part-time high schools—in Tokyo, about 35% of foreign students (518 students) attended part-time high schools among the 1,477 foreign students enrolled in public high schools (Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, 2020).[2] However, although these schools have inclusive features, many immigrant students struggle to continue their education and eventually drop out. It is in this context that the *ibasho* creation practice was developed at Hitotsubashi High School. Given the lack of research on immigrant students' experiences at part-time high schools, it is critical to explore whether and how these schools can secure *ibasho* for immigrant students, focusing on extracurricular activities. Although extracurricular activities have controversial aspects, such as a strong emphasis on discipline and hierarchy, they also instill values, allowing "more diversity and choice in the school experience for students, enabling students to gain dignity in developing talents other than those tested in exams, and making possible a closer and more relaxed relationship between teachers and students" (Cave, 2004, p. 415). Developing an extracurricular activity that mainly serves immigrant students could systematize support for this population by deepening the understanding of their needs and providing support in and out of school. Though it may be a small attempt that does not necessarily challenge the structural status quo that impacts immigrants' lives, I believe that nurturing a safe space in the school setting has significance and potential.

First, I introduce *ibasho*-related research to examine the meaning of *ibasho* and the significance of *ibasho* creation practices for marginalized students, specifically immigrant students. I then explain how I engaged in PAR and the context of Hitotsubashi High School and development of the club. Lastly, reflecting on PAR, I examine the functions of *ibasho* among immigrants and conclude with suggestions for future research and practices.

2. *Ibasho* Research and Immigrant Students

2.1 *Ibasho* for Marginalized Students

Scholars, policy-makers, and practitioners have discussed ways to nurture marginalized students who are excluded from society and education. In Japan, *futoko*, working-class, immigrant, and LGBTQ students, as well as students with disabilities, are among those who experience discrimination and prejudice and struggle to find a place to belong.

The concept of *ibasho* ("*i*" meaning "to be" and "*basho*" meaning "place"), which originated in Japan, is a critical term related to supporting marginalized students' wellbeing. It is used colloquially in different contexts, but has also been developed in academic fields such as education, psychology, sociology, and architecture. In the mid-1980s, *ibasho* referred to "free schools" or "free spaces," meaning alternative schools for *futoko* students. The term emerged as part of a movement by *futoko* students who lacked *ibasho*; along with their parents and other supporters, the students' movement criticized schools for their culture of strong assimilative pressure (the expectation to assimilate to majority rules and expectations), conformity, and competitiveness, leading the students to seek *ibasho* outside of school (Araya, 2012). Since the 1990s, the meaning of *ibasho* has developed and diversified, leading to difficulties in defining and theorizing this concept (Nakafuji, 2017; Tanaka & Hagiwara, 2012). According to Abiru's (2012) review of *ibasho* research, the concept has developed

along the following axes: (1) the subjectivity of the person concerned (*tojisha*), (2) relation-ships with others, and (3) spatiality (p. 36). When considering *ibasho* for children, it is im-portant that the children themselves, rather than adults or other actors, identify a place as an *ibasho* (i.e., somewhere they feel safe, accepted by others, and free to be themselves) (Sumi-da, 2003). At the same time, the objective conditions of *ibasho* are characteristics of relation-ships and physical space—matter (Sumida, 2003). *Ibasho* could emerge without interacting with others, as the term "individual *ibasho*" implies (Nakafuji, 2017) (e.g., feeling a sense of *ibasho* alone in a room).

While the concept of *ibasho* is widely used among various populations, it has a specific meaning and significance for immigrant students. Often, immigrant students, especially the newly arrived, experience displacement from their homelands and feel uprooted from their daily lives and significant others such as relatives, friends, and neighbors. In an alienating foreign environment, they construct sites of belonging due to the loss of *ibasho* upon migra-tion (Tokunaga, 2018a), which usually occurs when a familiar environment transforms into an unfamiliar one. In addition, immigrant students often experience racial, ethnic, and gender stereotyping in daily interactions with teachers, students, neighbors, and media representa-tions. For a population that endures mainstream society's gaze and experiences prejudice, *ibasho* could function as a refuge or shelter where they can free themselves from the social gaze and expectations, even if just temporarily. The similar concept of the intimate sphere is informative here. According to Saito (2000), the intimate sphere "could be a ground for re-storing feelings of self-respect and honor, and for (re)gaining the power of resistance, par-ticularly for those vulnerable to denial and contempt outside (of safe spaces)" (p. 98). Through interacting and conversing with caring others who share similar backgrounds, immi-grant students can heal the pain of discrimination and prejudice and collectively gain the power to resist oppression. Similarly, *ibasho* can function as a site where these students can recover from pain and nurture resilience, self-esteem, and self-acceptance individually and/or collectively.

2.2 *Ibasho* Creation Practice for Youth

Local governments, community organizations, and schools have developed diverse *ibasho* creation (*ibasho-zukuri*) practices to support marginalized students (Hisada, 2000; Tanaka & Hagiwara, 2012). Some practices attempt to support *futoko* students or socially withdrawn (*hikikomori*) youth, while others create a place where marginalized groups, such as the home-less or people with disabilities, can engage in co-support. There are also practices that value children's and youth's participation through play and social events, while others attempt to create a "third place" (Oldenburg, 1989) in local communities (Minamide, 2015). As these examples show, *ibasho* creation practices vary widely, ranging from support for marginalized populations to various community actors' participation in place-making (Minamide, 2015).

Studies have identified various *ibasho* creation practices for immigrant children and youth, focusing on out-of-school sites. Since the purpose of Japanese schools is to develop Japanese citizens, schools target the majority Japanese and exert strong assimilative pressure. Except for spaces such as Japanese language classes where immigrant students' voices are heard and they can gather with peers and receive caring support (McGuire & Tokunaga, 2020; Takahashi, 2009), schools rarely become *ibasho* for these students. Scholars have re-vealed how NPOs, international exchange associations (*kokusai koryu kyokai*), community

learning support classes, and ethnic organizations affirm immigrant students' language and culture, develop ethnic identities, provide support, and respond to the students' specific needs (Nukaga et al., 2019). In these spaces, where the majority of Japanese are not mainstream, immigrant students can express themselves and nurture their self-esteem (Yano, 2007).

Scholars have often criticized *ibasho* creation practices and policies for youth as adult-driven, that is, based on adults' paternalistic understanding of children and youth's *ibasho*, and thus not necessarily capturing the ways students themselves make sense of their *ibasho* (Tanaka & Hagiwara, 2012). These policies and practices may become a method for adults to control children and youth, imposing adult values, such as ensuring safety in the interest of risk management, and not necessarily incorporating children's and youth's desires for *ibasho* (Abiru, 2012, p. 42). When creating *ibasho* for marginalized students, adults need to critically consider whether they are incorporating mainstream values and assuming that marginalized students will follow their rules and values in the *ibasho* provided for them. Similarly, researchers have identified the challenges of *ibasho* creation practices for immigrant students in Japan. Except for some NPOs, where immigrants co-develop the programs as *tojisha* (Ochiai, 2012; Shimizu & Stand by Me, 2009), NPOs that support immigrant students are often run by Japanese adults, which could reproduce the privilege of majority Japanese and hegemonic power dynamics (Nakashima, 2007). In order to go beyond paternalistic support based on Japanese adults' perspectives, it is critical to encourage immigrant youth to participate in *ibasho* creation. This article examines an extracurricular activity that encourages students' voluntary engagement and participation as a potential site for *ibasho* creation.

3. *Ibasho* Creation at a Part-Time High School in Tokyo

3.1 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Education scholars have argued for the importance of collaborative, participatory, and engaged forms of research, and developed non-traditional ways of doing research in which they perceive "participants" as "resources" or "partners" who have local knowledge rather than engaging them as "subjects" (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Paris & Winn, 2014). Specifically, PAR is a "radical epistemological challenge to the traditions of social science, most critically on the topic of where knowledge resides" (Fine, 2008, p. 215). Rather than pathologizing marginalized communities by focusing on oppression, PAR researchers perceive local actors as having expert knowledge and value collaborative partnerships with them (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). Shifting from a deficit- to a strength-based approach, these scholars have discussed the importance of the "humanizing approach," which involves "the building of relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness raising for both researchers and participants" (Paris & Winn, 2014, p. xvi). PAR researchers collaborate with participants at all stages of the process and attempt to take "action" to approach the problem (Irizarry & Brown, 2014).

While traditional social science approaches are dominant in the field of immigrant and education in Japan, there is a group of scholars who conduct action research using clinical education approaches by collaborating with educational actors such as teachers, schools, and NPOs to contribute to educational practices and empower immigrant students (Sakai, 2007; Shimizu, 2006; Tsuboya & Kobayashi, 2013). Following these studies, I drew on the PAR

approach and experimented with ways to build partnerships with a high school and NPOs to co-develop extracurricular activities aimed at creating *ibasho* for and with immigrant youth.

Though the term "collaboration" is key to PAR, power dynamics between researchers and participants do exist. While erasing power dynamics is impossible, PAR researchers have experimented with ways to "ensure that power is not used in suppressive or coercive ways— that is, that power is used 'with' and not 'over' others" (Irizarry & Brown, 2014, p. 65). Drawing on this belief, I committed to power sharing with high school teachers, NPO staff, and students, and attempted to co-construct a space for various collaborations.

3.2 A Multilingual Exchange Club at a Part-Time High School

Hitotsubashi High School is a large, three-part (morning, afternoon, and night) public high school located in Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo. Approximately 580 students were enrolled in their part-time course at the time of this study. The school encompasses students with diverse needs, such as students who were *futoko* during junior high school, students with developmental disabilities, students who need Japanese language instruction, and students from low SES backgrounds. The school is home to a number of immigrant students—in 2018, about 80 students had immigrant backgrounds (including those with Japanese nationality), such as Filipinos, Chinese, Nepalese, and Indians. The school provides pull-out classes for students in need of Japanese language instruction (during history, civics, and Japanese language classes); these classes support their Japanese language acquisition and academic learning.

Similar to other part-time high schools, this school grapples with a high dropout rate. Given the school's large size and three-part system,[3] it faces difficulty responding to students', including immigrant students, diverse educational needs. To reduce dropouts and create *ibasho*, Hitoshi Tsunoda developed One World as an extracurricular activity in 2015. He has extensive teaching experience with immigrant students in part-time high schools in Tokyo and is among the leading advocates for this population's needs and rights. Based on human rights education and his past experiences, he believes in the importance of spaces where immigrant students can gather regularly to build community and offer and receive support outside of regular classes (Tsunoda, 2015). To develop this club activity, he reached out to the NPO *kuriya*, which aims to empower migrant youth through arts and culture, and to myself to collectively create *ibasho* for and with students. As a three-party collaboration project, the NPO mainly brought in community actors and coordinated the program, the high school coordinated within the school and brought in students, and I trained university students and engaged them in the *ibasho* creation process.

From 2016 to 2018, I offered a service-learning course entitled "Children, Youth, and Migration" at a high-ranked private university, where the students, many of whom were half- or full-year exchange students from various countries,[4] participated in One World activities as part of the course. The students integrated theories learned in class with service-learning experiences and co-created *ibasho*. From 2015 on, the leading club teachers, the NPO staff, and I had a number of meetings and co-developed this club based on "a spiral of action cycles," an iteration of "plan, act, observe, and reflect" (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 5). We sometimes held reflection sessions with the high school and university students to listen to their perspectives on and experiences in the club.

Over five years, we experimented with various activities, including intercultural and language exchanges, English language conversation, games, student-led events such as year-end

parties and cultural festivals, art workshops provided by artists, and free time where students passed the time as they wished. The club activities were held in one of the empty class-rooms, usually two to three times a week between 4:30 pm and 6 pm. The students and the teacher usually hung One World posters on the classroom door and arranged the furniture into circles for dialoguing.

From 2015 to 2018, between 17 and 29 high school students registered for the club, in-cluding Filipinos, Chinese, Nepalese, Indians, and Japanese. Most of the immigrant students had recently arrived in Japan, during junior high school or later. Since many held part-time jobs or were enrolled in other extracurricular activities, such as sports, five to ten students participated regularly. The students elected student leaders and deputy leaders every year for the club. In the next section, I explore the ways in which the club has functioned as an *ibasho* among immigrant students.

4. The Functions of *Ibasho* Among Immigrant Students

As I reflect on the process of co-creating *ibasho*, One World has two important func-tions for high school students: 1) liberating oneself from society's gaze and 2) affirming im-migrant students' strengths.

4.1 Liberating Oneself from Society's Gaze

Students are vulnerable to society's gaze and intentions. Schools have norms and values that control students through school rules, rank them based on grades, and promote competi-tion. I often heard Mr. Tsunoda and other teachers mention that the students at Hitotsubashi High School are often exposed to deficit narratives (e.g., low achievers, problematic students, etc.) before and even during high school. Immigrant students often experience intersections of racial, gender, and class stereotypes. Similar previous research findings (Tokunaga, 2011) have shown that young Filipina immigrants have experienced stigmatization in Japan, such as being associated with poverty and delinquency. Mary,[5] a Filipina girl, said, "Japanese people often think that Filipinos are scary." She recalled experiencing condescension in junior high school.

One World can function as a shelter, as the students are rarely exposed to the negative gaze of majority Japanese. In the initial activity development stage, some immigrant students expressed their desire to have a place where "foreign students could gather and get to know each other," as this was rare during school time. Although the club welcomed Japanese stu-dents, immigrant students were the "majority" in this space. Sometimes, in the club setting, Filipino immigrant students expressed their feelings in a "border tongue" (Anzaldúa, 1987), a mix of Tagalog, English, and Japanese. Since the students were forced to use Japanese most of the time at school, this space served as a respite where they could freely express them-selves in the language(s) with which they felt comfortable. During the dialogue circle, Maira, a female Indian student, shared her difficulties learning Japanese, such as *kanji*, *katakana*, and *hiragana,* in English, while other students listened to her with empathy. Mary added that she studied hard to learn Japanese because she did not want others to pity her. In these mo-ments, the club served as a space for healing and co-empowerment. Another example is a Filipino student talking quietly with a few male Japanese students in a corner of the class-

room during club time. In the reflection session with high school students, Tsuyoshi, a male Japanese student, described the club as a place for "friends and *ibasho*" or where "I can be myself." He added that he enjoyed the year-end party because he decorated the blackboard with his drawings and did not have to interact with people. For some, the club functions as a place to relax without feeling isolated.

In order to co-create *ibasho*, so that the students themselves identify the space as an *ibasho*, the club eschewed a structured program or curriculum. Consequently, I heard some students comment "I don't know what they do (at One World)." Though the official purpose was language and cultural exchange, we wanted the space to have some openness and flexibility. Araya (2012) stated that one of the essences of *ibasho* is that they are free from society or adults' intentions, allowing for "diverse ways of being" (p. 234). It was a constant challenge to decide on the club's "degree of activity" (Minamide, 2015, p. 78), one of the axes of *ibasho* creation practices. The activities changed depending on the students and their interests. For example, when we learned that some students preferred calm activities, we arranged the classroom so that students who did not want to interact with others could observe the class and engage in relaxed activities such as making posters and drawing.

4.2 Affirming Immigrant Students' Strengths

One World is one of the rare spaces where immigrant students' lived experiences, such as migration experiences and transcultural upbringings, hybrid identities, bilingual/trilingual skills, and "acts of cultural and linguistic brokering" (Orellana, 2001, p. 366) are appreciated and validated. At a school where Japanese is the official language, immigrant students often spoke negatively about their low Japanese proficiency, which lowered their self-confidence. The students felt pressured to improve their Japanese proficiency and rarely had classroom opportunities to express themselves in the language(s) that made them feel connected to a familiar culture.

When university exchange students participated in the club's language and cultural exchange activities and interacted with immigrant students, the space became a borderland where "two or more cultures edge each other" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 19). At times, English was the majority language, and Japanese and English were spoken simultaneously. A Filipino-Canadian undergraduate student bonded with Filipino high school students and enjoyed talking in a mix of Tagalog and English. Female Chinese university students and a female Chinese high school student conversed in Chinese. There were times when Singaporean undergraduate students code-switched among Chinese, English, and Japanese to converse with a group of Japanese, Filipino, and Chinese high school students. Often, bilingual Filipino high school students became "language brokers," translating between Japanese and English. Language(s), pausing, conversational speed, and atmosphere were constantly shifting. University students often validated and affirmed immigrant high school students' strengths, such as their ability to "bridge different worlds together" (quoted from a Canadian university student) through translation and their attempt to create an inclusive space (so that Japanese students could feel more comfortable there). This transcultural environment populated by diverse students helped immigrant students develop self-acceptance and self-confidence.

Although the university exchange students and the immigrant high school students differ in terms of living status, migration history, educational background, SES, and family background, they often bonded over migration experiences and being foreigners in Japan, nurtur-

ing a sense of belonging. Some university exchange students had an immigrant background, which strengthened their connection as migrants to and foreigners in Japan. An exchange student from Germany with a Sri Lankan background, said, "I personally connected with the students on being an immigrant in Germany." In small group discussions, they talked about their memories of their homelands and shared homesickness and difficulties as foreigners in Japan. An exchange student from Spain who had multiple conversations with Filipina high school girls said, "There was a feeling of freedom and validation when talking about this subject in an environment with no Japanese people, and they were always excited to remember their lives back home." Exchange students have the privilege of studying at university and experiencing study abroad. However, high school immigrant students found comfort in dialoguing with exchange students who shared their foreign status and listened to their stories, including their border-crossing experiences. Mary appreciated the nonjudgmental nature of the conversations. She said, "They (exchange students) didn't judge us, they talked to us," and appreciated how they did not "judge a book by its cover." In addition, Taro, a high-school student with a Japanese and Chinese background and experience living abroad, described the club as "my home" and happily said that "My background living abroad is understood here."

While the immigrant students, especially the English-speaking ones, enjoyed language exchanges with university students, some students, such as some of the Chinese and Japanese students, sometimes felt alienated and displaced in this space. We continuously struggled with the dilemmas of inclusion and exclusion (on the basis of nationality, age, and gender), languages used, and activities, among others. For instance, when a group of Filipino and Indian high school students showed joy and passion and seemed to claim the space, some Chinese students distanced themselves from the club. Hagiwara (2018) described the paradox of *ibasho* creation as follows: "When one seeks comfortable homogeneity in *ibasho*, one will lose others and *ibasho*" (p. 254). He emphasized the significance of "creating a space of co-existence with others" (Hagiwara, 2018, p. 254) as a key to (re)creating *ibasho*. It was a constant challenge to open this space to all students and maintain a space where they could listen to each other, share similar experiences, and feel safe, while protected from the majority's gaze. Though we valued youth voices, adults, such as teachers, NPO staff, and myself, took initiatives to adjust this balance, which shed light on the role of adults in these practices.

5. Conclusion: Toward Inclusiveness

In collaboration with high school teachers, NPO staff, and students, we constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed an extracurricular activity in a space students could call an *ibasho*. Given the value placed on students' voluntary engagement under the guidance of supportive teachers, immigrant students were able to nurture a space where they could be free from others' eyes, even temporarily. Contrary to previous studies that revealed immigrant-oriented *ibasho* creation practices, One World had inclusive features, welcoming Japanese students and creating a loosely-formed *ibasho* grounded in diversity. Rather than using the essentialized category of "foreigners" and focusing on their roots, One World had an elusive culture that validated students' transcultural and hybrid identities, languages, and experi-

ences, which led to their empowerment. Although Japanese students were at a loss in the beginning, given their immersion in an unfamiliar culture and language, a few students soon became part of the community by observing the language exchanges without interacting or actively communicating, and learning English. At part-time high schools where Japanese students also have marginalized identities and experiences, nurturing *ibasho* among diverse members might be a possibility. As pioneering schools that undergo multiculturalization from below, we have much to learn from the ways they create *ibasho* amidst diversity and difference.

These pockets of spaces which immigrant students can identify as *ibasho* are crucial in Japanese schools, which are often criticized for strong assimilative pressure and conformity. Specifically, extracurricular activities based on students' interests and centering on youth participation (Tanaka & Hagiwara, 2012) allow students to be creative and take initiatives to co-create a space of belonging. Having extracurricular activities where immigrant students are the "majority" could make their needs visible, potentially leading to in- and out-of-school support, as seen in our *ibasho* creation practice. While developing these small-scale *ibasho* within a school is critical, we also need to consider the ways to transform the mainstream school culture into a space where marginalized students feel more comfortable, accepted, and validated. For example, teachers could allow immigrant students to become linguistic and cultural brokers and/or provide opportunities for dialogue circles in mainstream classes, while being attentive to power dynamics. Scholars could conduct PAR in partnerships with practitioners and students to identify essential functions and characteristics of *ibasho* for immigrants. They could co-construct critical questions drawn from collaborative practices to reimagine alternative educational spaces where marginalized students can thrive.

Notes

1 In 2019, among 372,347 foreign children under 19 years old, the top five nationalities were Chinese (121,415), Brazilian (47,372), Vietnamese (44,490), Filipino (35,559) and Korean (33,548) (Ministry of Justice, 2020).
2 This number is extremely high compared to total part-time high school enrollment—only 2.4 % of the students who graduated from junior high school entered a part-time high school (MEXT, 2017).
3 Students and teachers rotate among the morning, afternoon, and night sections, resulting in difficulty building relationships and creating a community.
4 Regarding club participation and course enrollment respectively, there were 19 students (spring 2017) and 23 university students (fall 2017). Regarding the latter, the students' home universities were located in Japan, the United States, China, Korea, Brunei, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Turkey, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Germany.
5 This article uses pseudonyms for the names of students to protect anonymity.

Acknowledgements

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