

Japan, America, and Identity: A Culinary Triangle

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Abstract

Japanese cuisine has gained more attention and popularity than ever before. But one has to ask, "What images come to mind when the suggestion to *eat Japanese* is made?" Japanese food is representative of a traditional but hyper-modern culture containing a great deal of *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1978, 1991). This paper discusses qualitative findings related to the construction of identity through language use in Japanese restaurants. Questions the paper addresses are: (1) How is English used to make global Japanese food local?; (2) What Japanese text is used to allow Japanese cuisine to remain a distinct, ethnic eating experience?; (3) How does a Japanese restaurant fit into social relations between Japanese/Japanese, Japanese/non-Japanese, and non-Japanese/non-Japanese. The paper discusses findings from two different locations: the Lower East Side (Little Tokyo) of New York City and the Azabu-district of Tokyo.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rudyard Kipling wrote, "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." Had he been able to see into the future, he might have questioned the validity of his words. Since the end of the Second World War, the Japanese community has made great strides in the development of a positive identity in American society. Now more than ever, Japanese culture is seen as 'cool' by many. Despite a downturn in its economy, Nye (2004, p. 86) refers to the high degree of *soft power* Japan enjoys by stating, "Japan has far greater cultural influence now than it did in the 1980s when it was an economic superpower." Japanese pop-culture is enjoyed by Americans of all ages. Animated cartoons such as Pokémon are broadcast daily on American TV. In film, Akira Kurosawa is considered one of the greatest directors of all time influencing the work of American directors such as George Lucas, Stephen Spielberg, and Quentin Tarantino. American films such as "Lost in Translation" have shown the new, younger, side of Japan. Japan also benefits from the growing attractiveness in the West of Eastern forms of spiritualism such as Zen Buddhism and the martial arts.

Japanese cuisine has gained more attention and popularity than ever before. But one has to ask, "What images come to mind when the suggestion to *eat Japanese* is made?" Foods do not simply come from a place or culture as to help reconstitute that place or culture in new and interesting ways. A global circulation of myths and imaginations make the food Japanese in character. Multiple commercial reproductions of imaginative geographies both within the ethnic community and the host community are connected through the travels of cuisines, ingredients, and related goods. The analysis of images such as Barthes' (1972)

work with pasta ads has provided us with many interesting results. In New York City, Japanese food does not only follow groups of Japanese people but has become a collection of signs/texts and an item of trade, in ever widening spaces of commercial exchange, over which Japanese people no longer have a monopoly. Japanese food is representative of a traditional but hyper-modern culture. This permits a globalization of ingredients to occur; fusion and *food creolization* (blending of Asian-ness/Japanese-ness and Western tastes) become accepted within and outside the Japanese community.

1.1 Purpose of Study

As the Rudyard Kipling quote, “East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,” suggests, there exists an unseen dichotomy between Eastern and Western culture. In his research, Claude Lévi-Strauss came to believe that the notion of *binary structure* was a cognitive universal found in both ‘developed’ societies and ‘primitive’ societies as well. In other words, it is a common feature of human thought to divide the social environment into easily definable *us* and *them* categories. In his book, *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964), Lévi Strauss discusses the notion of binary structure by using cooked food and rotted food as a metaphor for the effects of culture (cooked) and nature (rotted) on society. Society at its unaltered state completed the *culinary triangle*, represented as food in its raw state. It is at the point, however, where nature and culture meet that interpretation comes in as a means to explain the forces that shape our social world. Just as Levi-Strauss sought to explain the social environment, this study aimed to examine the point where Eastern and Western interpretation of ‘Japanese-ness’ met and how identity was shaped with the use of signs and text.

Several theoretical constructs informed the investigation of signs and texts in the construction of identity. In her work, Pratt (1991) discusses the notion of *contact zones* where two or more cultures intermingle, negotiate, and sometimes clash. This study adopted several key terms from her work, including *safe houses*, *autoethnographic text*, and *transculturation*. Safe houses are social or intellectual spaces in which members of the target community (i.e. immigrants and/or the minority community) can constitute themselves in a position of empowered status. *Autoethnographic text* is signs and/or text that the host community has created to represent the target community. The target community adopts these signs and/or text to represent themselves in order to enter into the dominant, host community. Lastly, the notion of *transculturation* can be described as a process in which the target community adopts popular signs and/or text from the host community and makes it part of their own complex system of identity construction.

Barthes' *Rhetoric of the Image* (1962) and his work in semiotics is useful for the study of signs and/or text. His work inspires several questions. How is language used as 'signs' to represent Japanese-ness? How does meaning get into the image? How much cultural knowledge is necessary to 'decode' text? Is information duplicated or reconstructed? Where is the language (e.g. menus, wall posters)? What is the function of the language (e.g. inform, entertain)?

Lastly, Bourdieu's concepts of *cultural capital* and *symbolic capital* (1978, 1991) play an important part in the analysis of signs and text in this study. *Cultural capital* can be described as one's education or ability to interpret signs and/or symbols. Therefore, how much education and/or experience one needs of Japanese language and culture will depend on the type of text used in the restaurant. Is the restaurant catering to a group of privileged individuals? Does the restaurant use signs and/or text that will cater to the greatest number of people in the host community? *Symbolic capital* might be described the degree to which one is seen as having prestige and/or power. Japanese culture is typically seen by the West as having a great deal of *symbolic capital*. Thus, signs and/or text in Japanese restaurants should reflect the *symbolic capital* they have by virtue of Japan's strong economy and strong *soft power*.

Japanese restaurants in New York City cater to not only the large population of Japanese students, professionals, and tourists that reside in or visit New York City but also the community of second and third generation Japanese-Americans. Therefore, Japanese restaurants attempt to create an *authentic* experience by drawing on 'traditional' Japanese signs and texts. However, due to the fact that these restaurants are in the culture of a host community, it might be expected that identity would be shifted slightly away from the 'traditional' to suit the needs of the host community. The commodification of 'Japanese-ness' should also lead to interesting changes to the 'traditional,' infusing elements such as *transculturation* and *autoethnographic text*.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how the commodification of Japanese food is authenticated via representations of Japanese culture as 'traditional' and/or 'modern'. In my analysis, I also wanted to investigate issues of empowerment/disempowerment via signs and/or text. It was my belief that restaurants were more accessible than other institutions (e.g. school, church, government). However, quality of the eating establishment would most likely determine who could and could not eat there (or who does and does not *desire* to eat there). Questions I considered in this project were: (1) How is global Japanese food made local?; (2) What signs/text are used to allow Japanese cuisine to remain a distinct, ethnic

eating experience?; (3) How does a Japanese restaurant fit into social relations between Japanese/Japanese, Japanese/non-Japanese, and non-Japanese/non-Japanese?

1.2 Japanese Iconography

Although it is difficult to predict exactly how Japanese restaurants in New York City would adopt iconography from the host culture, it is possible to predict what traditional signs and/or text might be used in the construction of Japanese identity. Signs and texts would reflect certain common stereotypes and motifs of Japanese-ness that are easily recognized by the host community in New York City. These motifs could include the following:

1. Warrior motif (Bushido (Way of the Samurai)).
2. Japanese fine arts motif (e.g. Ikiyoé 'Floating World' woodblock print).
3. Nature motif (e.g. pictures of Cherry Blossoms).
4. Geisha or sexually available/submissive female motif.

In reference to the motif of the 'warrior,' in Japan, the *katana* (sword) has been regarded with an almost religious reverence. Zen ideas and practice began to influence swordsmanship and played an increasingly important role in the development of *bushido*, or the way of the warrior, over the succeeding centuries of civil strife in the country.

Japanese aesthetics exhibit suggestion, irregularity, simplicity, and impermanence. In Japanese ink paintings and *ikiyoé* painting, the viewer is left with a sense of suggestion. Japanese art forms such as *haiku* poetry allow the imagination room to expand beyond the literal. Japanese restaurants in New York may use images of Japanese fine arts such as *shōdō* (calligraphy) and *sumi-é* (monochrome painting), accepted pastimes of the samurai. Restaurants might also adopt signs and/or text from another art form practiced by the samurai, *chadō* (the way of tea). Images depicting impermanence such as photos or textual references to *hanami* (Cherry blossom viewing) may also be found in the creation of identity in New York City's Japanese restaurants.

Furthermore, Japanese restaurants in New York may utilize the Japanese fondness of nature. According to the poet Bashō, one must present an atmosphere of nature in *haiku*. For a *haiku* to be considered true, it must contain *kigo* (reference to a season). With nature, the concept of *wabi* is very important. *Wabi* might be described as the art of exchanging material wealth for a deeper appreciation of simplicity in nature, apart from the world. Images or textual references to zen rock gardens might attempt at capturing this notion of *wabi*.

Having an understanding of general motifs that might influence signs and/or text in Japanese restaurants in New York City, it is important to have a better understanding of

Bourdieu's notion of *symbolic capital*. Tönnie's (2001) study of Indian restaurants in England provides a good basis by which we can create a scale to measure the Japanese community and its *symbolic capital* in relation to the host community and other target communities.

2. Review of Tönnie's (2001) Study of Indian Restaurants in England

Tönnie (2001) examined how restaurants construct identity through signs and text. In a diachronic, discursive study of Indian restaurants in England, Tönnie observed distinct stages in which the Indian community had to pass in order to reclaim its legitimacy and cultural empowerment.

2.1 The Indian Community in England in the 1950s

In the early days of immigration after India won its independence in the 1950s, England saw a wave of immigration. These immigrants, mostly men, were generally not taught cooking skills in their home country. Thus, restaurants became a center not only for dining, but for an environment by which a feeling of 'home' was created. Sometimes these restaurants even served as community centers for immigrants, similar to Pratt's (1991) notion of *safe houses*.

Gradually, changing immigration policies made it easier for wives and children to gain entrance into England. As Indian men stayed more at home, restaurants had to find new clientele. Because the food was relatively inexpensive and the hours of operation suited the needs of the Asian factory workers, these restaurants found a new clientele niche with low-income, working class British 'lads.' Identity was reshaped to suit the tastes of a mostly young, low-income, white clientele. In the 1950s Indian food was associated with curry and the Indian restaurant was considered low-class dining. Curry came to signify the lowest form of cheap food, equivalent to chips. Menus changed offering a diversity of English dishes such as fish and chips as a way of assuaging the fears customers might have about eating *strange* foods. In the 1960s, Indian restaurants had names like *Maharajah* and *Last Days of the Raj*. These names were an attempt to rekindle memories of an empire that had been lost by the British. Restaurant owners tapped into the Empire nostalgia thus empowering the white, low-income clientele and disempowering the restaurant owners and Indian clientele. Quite unknowingly, restaurant owners settled into this imbalance of power. Far from internalizing the *Other* (Said, 1978), white clientele reaffirmed their own identity through the glorious past of colonization and imperialism.

2.2 Gradual Change: The Indian Community in England in the 1960s-1970s

But Indian restaurants resisted by creating a discourse of empowerment. We begin to see a demand from restaurant menus for a certain prior knowledge on the part of the customers visiting the restaurant. First, Indian restaurants simply exploited the ignorance of the patrons. Restaurant names reduce their willingness to familiarize the *Otherness* of their establishment. At the same time of empowering the minority community, it empowers those consumers from the host community who possess the required knowledge, because they can read the signs and texts that are not specifically tailored to them.

Slowly the image of the Raj changed as new ways of preparing Indian food became popular. The tandoor clay oven and the rise of the balti (bowl shaped like a Chinese wok) changed the way the British thought about Indian food. By attaching different labels to basically the same kind of food, Indian restaurants were able to reposition themselves in relation to British society and reclaim their history. The Indian community began to open restaurants with cuisines from smaller regions of India such as Gujarat and Kerala, thus distinguishing among the rich, diverse tastes of India. With these changes, the British middle-class community recognized the appeal of eating Indian food. A radical change in the language used occurred to attract middle- and upper-class clientele with ‘quality’ as a hallmark now. Words such as “fine” cooking, “handrolled pastries” and numerous adjectives such as “delicate”, “light”, “tender”, and “fresh” marked the quality of food. Catchphrases such as “an atmosphere you can enjoy” and “in style” referred to the quality of the establishment as well. The names of the restaurants revealed changing relations of power between Indians living in Britain and British society. Gradually, the names shed their colonial connections and invite Indians to eat Indian with names such as *Lahore Karahi* and *Bombay Brasserie*. Indian restaurant owners changed the names such as *Taj Mahal* and *The Red Fort* to invoke images of history and tradition in Indian civilization and to reclaim their own history. Restaurant names moved away from colonial associations, with historical references focusing on the Moghul Empire instead of the British Empire. *Authenticity* becomes a quality that is constructed through reproducing wider, touristic discourses of some establishments as more culturally *authentic*, and less modern and alienating, than others.

2.3 Fusion: The Indian Community in England Today

Eventually we see a merging or fusion of the ethnic community with the larger community. The names infuse a new sense of identity: not Indian, not British, but a hybrid of the two. Names such as Jalabi Junction, Café Laziz, and Soho Spice establish the restaurant as being of and in London. Clientele who visit the restaurant no longer feel that sense of

Otherness, not because they are made to feel superior, but because now the names of the dishes and restaurant constitute a regular part of their diet. *Food creolization* occurs, mixing elements of the local and ethnic cuisine to create new dishes. Rather than one cuisine dominating the other, they share a position of equality. We also see the Indian restaurants introducing a mix of wines from around the world and ethnic spirits as well. Also, we see the introduction of the ethnic food in the realm of home consumption. The ethnic food takes the form of sandwich fillings, pizza toppings, soft drinks, and snacks. Difference comes in as playful variety which allows for a postmodernist experience of diversity. Consumers, at this time, should already be familiar with authentic difference between *authentic* and *fusion*. The food serves to establish well-established equality and acceptance. Interestingly, Indian restaurant owners embrace the features of *otherness* as the *exotic Other*. In this stage of development, we see a mix of signs and texts from the adventure of the *food tourist* signs to those customers *in the know* in order to draw as many customers as possible. As a result of this creolization, restaurant owners have to be careful not to undermine the *authenticity* of their establishment, allowing rival restaurants/manufacturers to claim that theirs is the *real* taste of the ethnic community.

2.4 Future of the Indian Community in England

In the final stage, the dining experience is not considered foreign or *Other* in any way. Italian food in Britain or the United States is an example of this stage of attainment. At this time, I don't believe any cuisines from the East have gained the stature of this stage of acceptance. Sardar and Van Loon (1998) cite that this method of study was very subjective but does demonstrate one way of studying the identity of a minority group in the discourse of empowerment through the use of signs and texts in restaurants. While it is true that the Japanese community in New York City of today does not suffer the same marginalized status as the Indian community of England's past, Tönnie's study serves as a tool for analyzing the signs and/or text found in restaurants.

3. THE STUDY

In order to have a point of comparison, a district that was anticipated to be similar to the East Village in New York was chosen. Azabu Jyuuban in Tokyo was chosen because of the high concentration of embassies and consulates in the area. Temple University, Tokyo is also located in Minami (South) Azabu Jyuuban. Lastly, Roppongi Hills, an area known as the 'Beverly Hills' of Tokyo, rests beside Azabu Jyuuban, therefore one might expect a great number of restaurants in the area in which *food creolization* is common.

The language use of 22 Japanese restaurants and bars in Azabu Jyuuban was analyzed. Attention was focused on menus, posters, and other textual information. It was expected that there would be some English used as a means to attract the large population of non-Japanese living in the area, but the English would probably be used only as support for non-Japanese. Use of languages other than Japanese would be a means to facilitate non-Japanese customers ordering dishes from the menu rather than creating an authentic Japanese dining experience for them.

It was expected that language use would play quite a different role in the Japanese restaurants in New York City. The East Village of New York City was chosen as an ideal location to examine Japanese restaurants. This area, like Azabu Jyuuban in Tokyo, is considered trendy and fashionable. It has the highest concentration of Japanese restaurants in New York City, thus receiving the nickname, 'Little Tokyo'. 26 establishments portraying 'Japanese-ness' were analyzed in an area of the East Village from 14th Street to Houston, and Third Avenue to Avenue B (See Appendix 1) was covered.

A visit to CitySearch (www.citysearch.com) brought up 534 hits for "Japanese Restaurant" in Manhattan. Due to time constraints, it would be impossible to visit all of these restaurants. CitySearch (www.citysearch.com) made the task of narrowing the restaurant search much easier. This website provided a detailed map with all of the Japanese restaurants conveniently numbered on the map. This website saved time and trouble of having to "find" the restaurants with perhaps only a guidebook such as Zagats (NYC guidebook).

Before visiting the East Village, goals and expectations were written in a notebook to clarify what the goals and expectations of this study were. The following questions were written in the notebook: "How are documents written? How might they be read (i.e. interpreted)? Who writes them? Who reads them? For what purposes? On what occasions? With what outcomes? What is recorded? What is omitted? What is taken for granted? What does the writer seem to take for granted about the reader(s)? What do readers need to know in order to make sense of them?" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 142-143; as cited in Silverman, 1993, p. 60). Also, what reoccurring Japanese themes and trends would come up in the language used by restaurants to construct identity as detailed in the previous section related to popular Japanese motifs, signs, and texts?

3.1. Stages of Restaurant Development

In order to better understand where the Japanese community stood in relation to power in the host community, a scale was created (see Appendix 3) capable of loosely representing various stages of relationship of the target community (i.e. the Japanese

community) with the host community (i.e. general New York community). Each of these stages represents how a restaurant can serve the needs of the target community and the host community and the power relationship between the two. We see a gradual improvement of image of the target group by the host community and an eventual movement toward integration. Eventually, any stigma of *Otherness* fades away, leaving the host community with full acceptance and understanding of the signs and/or texts of the ethnic group's packaging, restaurants, etc.

3.2 Lists and descriptions of Japanese restaurants

3.2.1 Japanese Restaurants in Azabu Jyuban, Tokyo*

*(See Appendix 4 for more detailed explanation)

	Restaurant Name	Description
1	うどんくろさわ (UDON KUROSAWA)	Japanese only, prices in Kanji. Name of restaurant in hiragana.
2	焼肉一番館 (YAKINIKU ICHIBANKAN)	Japanese followed by English. Headings (e.g. sashimi, recommendation, etc.) written in English.
3	猿のしっぽ (SARU NO SHIPPO)	Japanese followed by English.
4	更科堀井 (KOUKAHORII)	Japanese only. Plastic models in store window.
5	魚の津 (SAKANA NO TSU)、沢の鶴 (TAKU NO KAKU)	Japanese only.
6	和風東京ラーメン	Japanese only.
7	KOTATSU	Japanese only.
8	ふじや食堂	Japanese only.
9	VIRGO AZABU	Japanese only.
10	叙叙苑焼肉	Japanese only.
11	大黒屋 (DAIKUROYA)	Japanese only.
12	NEXT JAPANESE 北 街洞	Japanese only. Store front has pictures of some menu selections.
13	武	Japanese only. Had difficulty reading the kanji of this restaurant's name. Prices in Japanese kanji.

14	諒 (RYOU) か に料理	Japanese only.
15	和可奈	Japanese only.
16	もら	Mostly Japanese. Some English on lunch menu (e.g. Today's Lunch: Fish, Meat). Also written, 'Another helping of rice and miso soup are free of charge!'
17	栄 来 亭 (EIRAITEI)	Japanese only, but sign outside advertises 'English Menu Available'. Also, some pictures available of menu selections.
18	居酒屋十番	Japanese only.
19	さくら	Japanese only.
20	E-Z Bar	Food menu in Japanese only. Drink menu in English only.
21	Hang-O Bar	No Menu. Sign reads: Hang-O Bar — Gonna Be Hangover

3.2.2 Japanese Restaurants in East Village (Little Tokyo), New York City*

*(See Appendix 5 for more detailed explanation)

	Restaurant Name	Description
1	Noodle Café Zen	Menu written in romanized Japanese followed by English explanation. 'New York Pop Creation' (inside out rolls) with names like Titanic, Dancing Spicy Tuna, and Fighting Roll). Banners outside the shop with Japanese katakana. 'Ramen'.
2	Sharaku (Japanese Restaurant)	Items written in romanized Japanese. Japanese script (kanji, katakana, hiragana) included for decorative purposes only. Pictures provided. Menu written in romanized Japanese. No explanation necessary as all items offered have pictures.
3	Teriyaki Boy	"Japanese fast food restaurant" written on menu. Our experienced staff (sic. staff) can also serve at your event. Kanji for 'sushi' on back of menu. 'Party platter' & 'Roll' written in katakana.
4	Ashiya II Sushi	Menu written in romanized Japanese followed by English explanation. Some Japanese script but for decorative purposes only.
5	Oyama (Japanese Restaurant)	Menu written in romanized Japanese followed by English explanation. No Japanese script.
6	May's Place Sushi	Menu written in romanized Japanese followed by English explanation. No Japanese script. 'Green Love' Appetizer, Fuji Mountain Salad. Korean items like 'Bulgogi', 'Kimchee', 'Galbijjim' and 'Yangnyum Galbi' on menu. Japanese lanterns with kanji hang from the entrance of the restaurant.
7	Curry-Ya (Japanese Gourmet Curry)	Menu written completely in English. Some Japanese script but for decorative purposes only.
8	Rai Rai Ken (Japanese Ramen Restaurant)	Menu written in romanized Japanese followed by Japanese script followed below by English explanation.
9	M2M Supermarket Sushi Menu	Menu written almost completely in English. However, some items written in romanized Japanese with English explanation. For example, under 'Sushi Ala Carte', #6 Squid (ika) and #7 Tamago (egg). 'Inari'

		and 'Tobiko' have no explanation.
10	Sushiya	Menu written in romanized Japanese followed by English explanation. No Japanese script. This restaurant also offers a nice sake selection. Prices also indicate a slightly upscale quality.
11	Je'Bon (Noodle House & Sushi Bar)	Menu written in romanized Japanese followed by English explanation. No Japanese script. Menu more pan-Asian cuisine rather than strictly Japanese. Name is actually Chinese. Chinese Kanji written on shop signs.
12	Boka	Menu written in romanized Korean followed by English explanation. No Korean script.
13	Otafuku	Menu written in romanized Japanese followed by English explanation. The restaurant front, however, had a great deal of Japanese script.
14	Lan (Japanese Restaurant)	Menu written almost completely in English. However, some items are followed by Japanese script. Fusion. Prices indicate upscale audience.
15	Tokyo Joe	Used goods shop. No Japanese.
16	Sunrise Japanese Market	Supermarket. Plenty of Asian, particularly Japanese, food items. Lots of Japanese script everywhere.
17	Hasaki	Menu written in English followed by Japanese script. Prices suggest upscale establishment.
18	Yakiniku West	Menu written in English followed by Japanese script. Rather than use English explanation, the menu provides pictures of menu selections.
19	Cha-An Tea House	Menu written in English followed by Japanese script.
20	Soba-ya	Menu written in romanized Japanese followed by Japanese script followed below by English explanation.
21	Sakebar Decibel	Menu written in romanized Japanese followed by Japanese script followed below by English explanation. Light Japanese fare offered to complement the numerous sakes available.
22	Toy Tokyo	Japanese toy and hobby shop
23	Go Japanese Restaurant	Menu written in Japanese script followed by brief English translation. Pictures of some menu selections available.
24	Yakitori Taisho	Menu written in Japanese script followed by brief English translation. Pictures of some menu selections available.
25	Udon West	Menu written in Japanese script followed by brief English translation. Pictures of some menu selections available.
26	Taishu-Izakaya Kenka	Menu written in Japanese script followed by brief English translation.

3.3 Discussion

As expected, Japanese restaurants in Azabu Jyuban used predominately Japanese script (kanji, hiragana, katakana) in menus. English seemed to be used primarily as a means to attract foreign clientele as the area has a concentration of embassies and consulates. The English used is probably meant also to attract the international student community from Temple University's Tokyo campus and foreign business professionals living in Roppongi Hills. It might be said that one or two of the restaurants examined chose to use English to

give customers a sense of international atmosphere although the menu selections at these two establishments suggest that little to no *food creolization*.

In the case of New York City, many restaurants seemed to cater to clientele with a fundamental level of *cultural capital* as it relates to the understanding of Japanese culinary culture. Most of the menus provided selections in Japanese romaji followed by English explanations. This foregrounding of Japanese romaji, followed by English explanation seemed to be the most popular means of writing menu among Japanese restaurants in the lower East village. Lan Japanese Restaurant seemed to be the exception, playfully integrating the 'raw and the cooked' of Eastern and Western tastes in a manner which, although written in romaji/English, required the customer to have a fairly high level of *cultural capital*. Many Japanese restaurants in New York City included the phrase 'Japanese restaurant' next to the name to possibly differentiate it from the many Chinese and Korean restaurants in the city. One particular item of interest was the sushi roll on Japanese menus. It seems that sushi rolls allow for a great deal of creativity. As mentioned in the description of individual restaurant descriptions, it seems that a great deal of cultural and culinary hybridization occur in the making of sushi rolls. It is interesting to note again that now restaurants in Tokyo such as Rainbow Roll Sushi (<http://www.bento.com/rev/1763.html>) have adopted these tastes and made them their own.

4. CONCLUSION

We are individuals first and as individuals we create communities. The images are reformulations of the social contract. When we create communities, we do so out of our own desire, and in reaching out to others we influence their perceptions of us, thus, in turn, influencing our own identity. Although the Japanese community of New York is represented by more formal institutions such as the Japan Society (www.japansociety.org), I feel that the signs and texts used by Japanese restaurants in the East Village portray a more accurate representation of Japanese identity in New York City. The recent opening of American-style sushi bars in Tokyo such as Rainbow Roll Sushi in Azabu Jyuuban have interesting implications for how Japanese culinary identity will be constructed in the future. Many of the restaurants examined have moved from recreating an *authentic* experience to creating a hybrid, postmodern experience where the staff is everything but Japanese, the décor is more representative of punk-rock concert halls or chic French eateries, and the cuisine is a loosely based translation of traditional Japan.

The study is still limited at best. Deeper observation of different socio-psychological factors contributing to the use of certain signs and texts still needs to be examined. The

construction of identity is a multifarious, personal creation based on the culmination of one's experience. A great deal of identity creation is a highly unconscious process—the answers to direct questions might not yield appropriate answers to the discourses of historical or power relationships at work in a study of this kind. In the future, it might be valuable to interview restaurant owners, staff, and clientele. Moreover, it might be valuable to examine the way in which Japanese/Japanese, Japanese/non-Japanese and non-Japanese/non-Japanese interact in settings in which one individual or one group has greater *cultural capital*.

This study has implications for other communities within New York City that have not yet found their voice through traditional, democratic methods such as adequate representation in government or in the private business sector. In poststructuralist thought, an individual or group of individuals may be positioned in a particular way within a particular discourse, resulting in resistance to the subject position and even set up a counterdiscourse which raises the individual/individuals in a powerful rather than marginalized subject position. The restaurant serves as a means to regain a discourse of empowerment within a disempowering environment. In conclusion, as Rudyard Kipling said, *East is East and West is West*, that's incontrovertible. However, the twain have met and a walk into any Japanese restaurant in New York City will prove it.

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Appendix 3: Stages of Integration

<p>Stage #1: Early immigration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clientele largely represent the ethnic community (predominantly low-income, working-class). • Feeling of 'home' is created in restaurant's use of signs and text. • Restaurant seen as support center for recent immigrants with limited to no English ability.
<p>Stage #2: Gradual integration of host community clientele</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clientele from ethnic community create other sources to serve community needs. • Predominantly low-income, working class clientele from host community attracted to low prices and late hours of operation. • Menus cater to host community's tastes (e.g. fish & chips served in an Indian restaurant in Britain)
<p>Stage #3: Image shift from low-income establishment to mid- to upper-income eating establishment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift from dishes that cater to host community to more diversity in menu. • Dishes reflect diversity of cooking styles within the ethnic culture. • Radical change in language to indicate quality of food and service. • Reference to rich history of ethnic community rather than host community's relation to it.
<p>Stage #4: Affirmation of Identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift of signs and text demanding host community to have certain prior knowledge. • Restaurant names and signs/text in menus reduce willingness to familiarize patrons. • Language diminishes the previous role of language of the host community (i.e. English as reaffirming role as empowerment for native-born, Caucasian clientele). • Ethnic food becomes available in specialized groceries but signs/text of packaging centered on tastes of ethnic minority population.
<p>Stage #5: Fusion or Food Creolization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language suggests that identity is no longer only that of the <i>Other</i> but as belonging to the host community, too. • Signs/text are of equal value, neither dominating the other. • Ethnic food becomes widely available in general groceries with signs/texts of packaging centered on tastes of the host community.
<p>Stage #6: Assimilation to and adoption by host community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs/text no longer suggest <i>Otherness</i>. • Signs/text widely accepted/understood by host community (e.g. Italian food).

Appendix 4: Description of Japanese restaurants in Azabu-jyuban, Tokyo

1. うどんくろさわ (UDON KUROSAWA)

<http://r.tabelog.com/tokyo/A1307/A130702/13001238/>

Japanese only, prices in Kanji. Name of restaurant in hiragana. Menu does not provide additional images like some restaurants that might facilitate the dining experience of non-Japanese customers.

2. 焼肉一番館 (YAKINIKU ICHIBANKAN)

<http://plaza.rakuten.co.jp/azabu10/diary/200508080000/>

Japanese followed by English. Headings (e.g. sashimi, recommendation, etc.) written in English. Despite offering the non-Japanese customer English, some of the items such as ハラミ (HARAMI) are described as ‘diaphragm,’ a translation that doesn’t completely capture the delicacy of this selection.

3. 猿のしっぽ (SARU NO SHIPPO)

<http://www.monkey-jp.com/>

Japanese followed by English. Some of the translations might lead to more questions to those customers that lack *cultural capital*. For example, the menu selection written first in Japanese is followed by this English translation: “Free range chicken [sic] and kiritanpo, vegetables [sic] in a pot.” The non-Japanese customer might be confused by the term *kiritanpo*.

4. 更科堀井 (KOUKAHORII)

<http://30min.jp/place/15850>

Japanese only. However, plastic models, something particular to Japanese restaurants in Japan, are found in the store window providing non-Japanese customers with a general idea of the types of food available.

5. 魚の津 (SAKANA NO TSU)、沢の鶴 (TAKU NO KAKU)

<http://gourmet.livedoor.com/restaurant/18443/blog/>、<http://30min.jp/place/16295>

Japanese only. Particularly difficult is the fact that the menu uses kanji for fish selections.

6. 和風東京ラーメン (WAFU TOKYO RAMEN)

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/callcharlie/archives/826198.html>

Japanese only. A picture on the billboard of a bowl with contents resembling ramen is the only clue the non-Japanese customer has to use if lacking the *cultural capital* to read the Japanese menu.

7. KOTATSU

<http://r.tabelog.com/tokyo/A1307/A130702/13019131/>

Although the name of the restaurant is written in romaji, the menu and other text is Japanese only.

8. ふじや食堂 (FUJIYA SHOKUDOU)

<http://r.tabelog.com/tokyo/A1307/A130702/13013983/>

Here again, all text is in Japanese only.

9. VIRGO AZABU

All Japanese text.

10. ももたろう (MOMOTAROU)

<http://r.tabelog.com/tokyo/A1307/A130702/13043440/>

In this restaurant, the text is written first in Japanese text, followed by brief descriptions in English. One of the few restaurants in the area that had its menu completely translated into English.

11. 叙叙苑焼肉

<http://r.tabelog.com/tokyo/A1307/A130702/13001671/>

Mostly Japanese, but some minimal English provided (e.g. Yakiniku Set A, Yakiniku Set B). Pictures of set menu available.

12. 大黒屋 (DAIKUROYA)

<http://r.gnavi.co.jp/g415303/>

Japanese text only.

13. NEXT JAPANESE 北街洞

<http://gourmet.yahoo.co.jp/0000646254/>

Japanese only. Store front has pictures of some menu selections.

14. 武

Japanese only. The text in the store front and menu is further complicated by the fact that the restaurant employs an older style of Chinese calligraphy cursive script known as *gyosho*, making the menu hugely inaccessible, even to customers with a fairly decent degree of Japanese *cultural capital*. Had difficulty reading the second kanji of this restaurant's name. Prices in Japanese kanji.

15. 諒かに料理 (RYOU KANI RYOURI)

<http://r.tabelog.com/tokyo/A1307/A130702/13013995/>

Japanese only.

16. 和可奈

<http://r.tabelog.com/tokyo/A1307/A130702/13042547/>

http://alike.jp/restaurant/target_top/41908/

Japanese only. Prices are also written in Japanese kanji.

17. もら(MORA)

Mostly Japanese. Some English on lunch menu (e.g. Today's Lunch: Fish, Meat). Also written, "Another helping of rice and miso soup are free of charge!"

18. 栄来亭 (EIRAITEI)

<http://r.gnavi.co.jp/a046215/>

Japanese only, but sign outside advertises 'English Menu Available'. Pictures of menu selections also available for non-Japanese customers.

19. 居酒屋十番 (IZAKAYA JYUUBAN)

Japanese only.

20. さくら(SAKURA)

<http://r.tabelog.com/tokyo/A1307/A130702/13007899/>

Japanese only.

21. E-Z Bar

<http://gourmet.yahoo.co.jp/0000645520/>

The food menu is written in Japanese only but the drink menu is in English only.

22. Hang-O Bar

No Menu. Sign reads: Hang-O Bar —Gonna Be Hangover

Appendix 5: Description of Japanese restaurants in East Village, New York

1. M2M (Morning to Midnight) Supermarket

11th Street (at 3rd Ave), NY, NY

<http://www.menupages.com/restaurantdetails?restaurantid=51959>

This supermarket contains a wide selection of not only Japanese and Asian ingredients, but a wide variety of other ethnic foods including Mexican and Italian. The market also had a sushi and ramen bar in which customers could sit down and eat. Many of the products were in English language packaging, aimed toward Western consumers. Many products such as Hawaii Punch and Coca-Cola were also offered, perhaps to alleviate the sense of *otherness* in the store.

2. Oyama Japanese Restaurant

188 1st Avenue, NY, NY 10009 (b/w 11th Street and 12th Street), Phone: 212-777-1989

<http://newyork.metromix.com/restaurants/japanese/oyama-japanese-restaurant-east-village/55201/content>

Oyama is written in Romanized Japanese followed by the words *Japanese Restaurant*, leaving little ambiguity for the casual passerby. The menu is written in Romanized Japanese (Japanese written phonetically in the Roman Alphabet) followed by explanations in English. Special rolls seem to be the domain in which restaurants can infuse creativity and Western tastes. In the case of *Oyama*, special rolls include the ‘Champion Roll’, ‘Garden Roll’, and ‘Crazy Roll’.

3. Sapporo East Japanese Restaurant

245 East 10th Street, NY, NY 10009, Phone: 212-260-1330

<http://www.urbanspoon.com/r/3/39135/restaurant/East-Village/Sapporo-East-New-York>

A copy of the May 21, 2002 Village Voice indicating the best Asian restaurants in NYC and the 2004 Zagat Survey Award of Excellence (In English) were placed in the window. The menu is written first in Romanized Japanese followed by a description of each dish in English (e.g. Tsukisan Ramen Tokyo Style ramen w/ pork, fish cake, and vegetables). To increase authenticity, sake (Japanese rice wine) is described as “imported from Japan.” Western influence is evident in the menu in items such as the Avocado Roll. The restaurant also advertises its ‘dishes for vegetarians’, highly popular in the West and not so popular in Japan.

4. Teriyaki Boy

216 East 10th Street, NY, NY, Phone: 212-677-6058, 212-677-5946

<http://www.teriyakiboyusa.com/>

Teriyaki Boy, written in English, is the Japanese answer to McDonalds. Served in bento (Japanese meal) boxes, customers are offered *authentic* Japanese fast food. The menu is written predominantly in English with a smattering of Japanese that even a small Japanese child would recognize. To reduce any further uncertainty, the menu and restaurant are equipped with photos of each dish.

5. Japanese Shabu-Tatsu Restaurant

216 East 10th Street, NY, NY, Phone: 212-477-2972

<http://nymag.com/listings/restaurant/shabu-tatsu/>

This restaurant neighbors Teriyaki Boy. The menu is written in Japanese characters first, followed by an explanation in English. This restaurant also boasts a review by the Zagat’s Survey in the window. Some signs in the window are written completely in Japanese with no English translation. The restaurant also hosts a ‘happy hour’ on Saturday evenings, a practice more popular in Western bars than in Japan.

6. Rairaiken (Japanese Style Ramen Shop)

236 E. 9th Street, NY, NY 10003 (b/w 2nd and 3rd Ave.), Phone: 212-353-8503

<http://www.boorah.com/restaurants/NY/new-york/rairaiken-inc/E10CFE580A.html>

In the window, visitors can see the front page of the Village Voice with a guide to the best Asian restaurants, an interview by the Daily News, and an award by the New York Press, "Best Cold Noodles" 2003. The menu is written in Romanized Japanese with the Japanese kanji below it. To the right of each selection, the English equivalent and a description is provided. The menu also includes Korean and Chinese fare.

7. Angel's Share

8 Stuyvesant Street, NY, NY

http://nymag.com/listings/bar/angels_share/

Angel's must open late or be closed. The sign is written mostly in Japanese with no English translation except for the name, Angel's Share. Gyu-Ya (牛屋), English for *beef restaurant* is written in Romanized Japanese but no English equivalent is given.

8. Sunrise Mart Japanese Specialty Market (Supermarket)

4 Stuyvesant Street, NY, NY

http://www.igougo.com/attractions-reviews-b75421-New_York-Sunrise_Mart.html

This market specifically targets Japanese clientele. Everything from the packaging to the language used by the employees suggests that you are in Japan. Rows of Japanese video cassettes, labeled in Japanese are available. Products ranging from laundry detergent to haircare products are all imported from Japan. Even Japanese handicrafts and pottery are available. Interestingly, this market reserves a space on one of its walls for the Japanese community to post signs for Roommates wanted, tutors wanted, or a variety of other purposes serving as a location of support for the Japanese community. Magazines and free reading material, all in Japanese, is available, too.

9. Sharaku Japanese Restaurant

14 Stuyvesant Street, New York, NY 10006, Phone: 212-598-0403

<http://newyork.citysearch.com/profile/7087503/>

Menu is written in Romanized Japanese followed by English translation. "Special" sushi is written with Western names such as 'Thunder Roll', 'Third Avenue Roll', 'Philly (Philadelphia) Role' and 'Boston Role.' Sushi also comes in serving sizes such as 'Love Boat' and 'Treasure Boat'. Menu written in romanized Japanese followed by English explanation.

10. Hasaki Japanese Cuisine

210 East 9th Street, NY, NY 10003, Phone: (212) 473-3327

www.hasakinyc.com

The sign for Hasaki is written in English. Of all the menus, Hasaki's menu is written in the most diversified mix of Japanese, Romanized Japanese, and English. The menu is written with entries first in English, followed by Japanese followed below by an explanation in English. The sushi selection is written in Romanized Japanese, followed by the English equivalent. The business card is written in English with no Japanese.

11. Yakniku West Japanese Steak House

218 East 9th Street, NY, NY 10003

<http://www.villagevoice.com/locations/yakiniku-west-144445/>

The sign to this establishment leaves no ambiguity. The sign is written in Japanese 焼肉, followed below by Romanized Japanese. Below that, 'Japanese Steak House' is written in English. The menu on the wall is written in a mix of Romanized Japanese, Japanese, and English. The menu is fairly standard for restaurants of this kind in Japan with nothing marking it as unique to New York City, or outside Japan for that matter.

12. Otafuku

236 East 9th Street, NY, NY 10003, Phone: 212-353-8503

<http://nymag.com/listings/restaurant/otafuku/>

The menu is written in Romanized Japanese. However, the English translation fails to capture what the dishes really are. Without a prior knowledge of Japanese cuisine, the customer would be confused if given nothing more than the menu. However, pictures of the dishes are available on the storefront. The word, *okonomiyaki*, お好み焼き (Japanese pancakes) is posted on a flag outside of the store in Japanese with no English equivalent offered

13. Soba-Ya

229 East 9th Street (b/w 2nd Ave and 3rd Ave.), Phone: 212-533-6966

<http://www.sobaya-nyc.com/>

This upscale noodle shop is covered by a traditional Japanese awning, with a sign, written in Japanese (蕎麦屋), followed below by the words Soba-ya in English. Unlike many other restaurants, the word Japan or Japanese is not clearly evident at the street level. Without prior knowledge of Japanese culture or cuisine, it would be difficult to discern what style of Asian cooking was found inside. The lunch menu is colorful photos of some of the dishes. This menu is written in Romanized Japanese, followed below by an explanation in English. To the right, the Japanese kanji are given. The dinner menu appears more formal,

with sub-headings in English such as 'traditional delicacies', 'fried', and 'bowls'. In the dinner menu, first the Japanese is given, followed by Romanized Japanese, followed by an explanation in English.

14. Decibel Sake Bar

240 E 9th St, NY, NY 10003, Phone: 212 979 2733

<http://www.sakebardecibel.com/>

Although Decibel was closed at the time of my investigation, the website offers a very nice mix of Japanese and English. English foregrounds most of the food and drink selections. Some Japanese ingredients are written in romaji with only a very brief explanation in English.

15. May's Place Sushi

East 121 2nd Ave. NY, NY 10003, Phone: 212-533-8448

http://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g60763-d1022265-ReviewsMay_s_Place_Sushi-New_York_City_New_York.html#

The menu is written in Romanized Japanese followed by English translations. This restaurant also boasts Korean cuisine which makes me ask the question, "Why doesn't the name of the restaurant reflect this diversity of Japanese *and* Korean Cuisine mentioned anywhere but the menu?" This restaurant has a wide range of sushi and *maki* rolls. Vegetarian *maki* rolls and vegetarian *maki* combinations are available. Western signs and text are found in the many dishes such as the 'Manhattan Roll', 'Philadelphia Roll' and 'California Roll'.

16. Toy Tokyo (Japanese Specialty Toy Store)

121 Second Avenue #2F, NY, NY 10003, Phone: 212-673-5424

www.toytokyo.com

This offbeat, off-the-wall shop boasts a figure of Godzilla at its entrance. However, once inside, one finds that most of the toys are based on Western movies such as Star Wars and made in Taiwan, not Japan.

17. Typhoon Lounge

St. Marks Place (b/w 1st Ave. and 2nd Ave.)

<http://newyork.citysearch.com/profile/7087591/>

This establishment brings to mind the huge waves that come crashing upon Japan's shores every year. The sign is written in English, however, the kanji for *sake* (酒) hangs above the store name.

18. Yoshi Japanese Restaurant

201 East Houston Street, NYC 10002, Phone: 212-539-0225

www.yoshi-restaurant.com

The menu is written in Romanized Japanese followed by an explanation in English. The sign for the establishment is written in Japanese (よし) followed by the Romanized Japanese, Yoshi. The restaurant menu offers customers standard Japanese fare from sushi to ramen noodles. The menu does not offer any specialty dishes catered to the creation of a multi-ethnic or globalized identity.

19. Second Japanese Restaurant-Bar & Karaoke

27nd Ave., NY, NY 10003 (b/w E. 1st Street & E. 2nd Street), Phone: 212-473-2922

www.2ndon2nd.com

The sign is written completely in English. The menu is written in English with a smattering of Romanized Japanese. Second on Second finds a creolized identity in the names of some of its Special Rolls selection such as 'Manhattan Sky', 'Manhattan Bridge', and 'Fort Hamilton'.

20. Go Japanese Restaurant

30 St. Marks Place, NY, NY

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/go-japanese-restaurant-new-york>

The restaurant sign is written in a mix of Japanese kanji and English. However, the name of the restaurant, *Go*, to the uninitiated, might be read as the English 'go' rather than the Japanese 'go'. The menu offers a selection of standard Japanese fare.

21. Dojo Restaurant

24-26 St. Marks Place, NY, NY 10003, Phone: 212-674-9821

http://newyork.citysearch.com/profile/7109180/new_york_ny/dojo_west.html

Neighboring Restaurant Go, Dojo offers a menu that is written in Romanized Japanese with English explanations. The restaurant sign is written in both Japanese and English.

22. Noodle Café Zen Japanese Restaurant

31 St. Marks Place, NY, NY 10003, Phone: 212-533-6855, 212-533-6856

http://www.nitrolicious.com/blog/wp-gallery/0807/cafe_zen/IMG_1873.jpg

All manner of Japanese iconography including a Japanese *koi* (carp) over the entranceway decorate this establishment. The menu is written in Romanized Japanese followed by an English translation. One of the dishes, 'Zen sushi mania' mixes signs/text of Buddhist meditation and ultra-modernity. Menu written in romanized Japanese followed by English explanation. 'New York Pop Creation' (inside out rolls) with names like Titanic,

Dancing Spicy Tuna, and Fighting Roll). Banners outside the shop with Japanese katakana. 'Ramen'.

23. Oh! Yakitori Taishyo

9 St. Marks Place, NY, NY (b/w 2nd Ave. and 3rd Ave.), Phone: 212-228-5086

<http://yakitoritaisho.com/site.jpg>

Judging from all the Japanese who eat here, this place is the REAL thing. You can order by the skewer or order one of the combinations on the menu. Choose from skewers of chicken, beef, pork, gizzards, liver, heart, etc. which will be grilled to perfection. If you're not in the mood for grilled meat, there are plenty of other options-- soup noodles, soba, yakisoba, potato croquettes (delicious!) among others. Wash it down with a mug of the Japanese yogurt drink, Calpice, or with Japanese beer. Lines are long, space is tight and the air is smoky, but the food is very inexpensive and truly outstanding. You'll feel like you're back in Japan again. It's as if the US stops as soon as you cross the threshold

From the website: www.sushinyc.com/show_rest.asp?restid=91

The sign for Yakitori Taisho is written first in Japanese followed below by English. The menu is written with each selection first in Romanized Japanese, then Japanese, followed by an explanation in English. In my opinion, the food selections offered by Yakitori Taisho come closest to resembling the traditional Japanese *izakaya* (居酒屋) or, in English, tavern/saloon. The menu offers only selections that you would find in a Japanese *izakaya*.

24. Sushi Yama

25 West 8th Street, New York, NY, Phone: 212-253-9888

Menu selections are written in Romanized Japanese followed by English explanations. Sushi entries, however, are written in English followed by Romanized Japanese. Over 50 different sushi rolls are offered with entertaining names such as 'Alaskan Beauty Roll', 'Spicy Girl', and 'Rock 'n Roll'.

25. Lan Japanese Restaurant

56 3rd Avenue (b/w 10th & 11th St.), Phone: 212-254-1959

<http://www.lan-nyc.com/>

Lan's menu easily fuses the 'Raw and the Cooked' to coin the Claude Levi-Strauss book title. Item selections such as 'Smoked magret duck over baby arugula with yuzu dressing' and 'Foie gras egg-custard *chawan mushi* with duck scallion sauce' blend the tastes of East and West. Interestingly, the menu is written in English, followed by Japanese text. However, no explanation is given as to what terms like *chawan mushi* and *yuzu* dressing are, forcing the customer to have *cultural capital* to read the menu or to ask numerous questions

about the selections. Prices are higher than the average Japanese shop indicating perhaps a slightly higher income group attracted to this establishment.

26. Ashiya II Sushi (New Ashiya)

167 1st Avenue (b/w 10th & 11th St.), Phone: 212-505-3348

<http://www.ashiya2.com/>

Ashiya follows a format similar to many of the other Japanese restaurants in the area. Again, we find the word 'sushi' attached to the restaurant name, a form of Japanese food preparation that most New Yorkers, even with no direct experience with Japanese culture, understand as 'Japanese.' Like many other menus, menu items are written in Romanized Japanese followed by English explanations. Furthermore, the Japanese sushi/sashimi selection is written in English, followed by romanized Japanese.