



Routledge Contemporary Japan Series

JAPANESE MIGRATIONS TO AUSTRALIA

TRANSFORMATION AND HETEROGENEITY

Edited by
Iori Hamada, Takeshi Hamano and
Yoshikazu Shiobara



Japanese Migrations to Australia

This book stands as the first comprehensive English-language scholarly book dedicated to the dynamic and multifaceted aspects of Japanese migrations to Australia.

By offering an extensive and up-to-date analysis of migration trends, this book addresses a significant void in academic research. Structured into two parts, this book offers an in-depth exploration of various aspects of this migration. Firstly, by examining contemporary migration patterns, including working holiday makers (WHMs), partnership-based migrants and Japanese–Australian youths, this book unsettles cultural essentialist and national exceptionalist narratives. Additionally, through investigations of Australian tourism, the role of Japanese restaurants in cultural exchange and the artistic expressions within the Nikkei Australian community, this book reveals the diverse contributions and interactions of Japanese communities in Australia and the bilateral influences of Japan. It also critically engages with the monolithic concept of ‘community’ through specific sectors and previously understudied groups, including Japanese-Indigenous Australians and LGBTQ+ migrants, analysing how personal narratives align with or diverge from policy frameworks and offering new perspectives on identity and belonging in transnational contexts.

Combining empirical research with theoretical analysis, this book is not only an academic resource but also a useful reference for policymakers. By offering new perspectives and policy recommendations, it is an invaluable tool for understanding and adapting to the evolving patterns of Japanese migrations to Australia, making a substantial contribution to the fields of Japanese, migration and Australian studies.

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Japanese Migrations to Australia

Transformation and Heterogeneity

**Edited by Iori Hamada,
Takeshi Hamano and Yoshikazu Shiobara**



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Iori Hamada, Takeshi Hamano and Yoshikazu Shiobara



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1 Introduction

Reconceptualising Japanese Migrations to Australia—Post-Middle-Class Mobilities and Heterogeneous Global Pathways

*Iori Hamada, Takeshi Hamano and
Yoshikazu Shiobara*

Introduction

Japanese Migrations to Australia: Transformation and Heterogeneity, the first English-language scholarly examination of its kind, investigates how Japanese migrations to Australia have evolved through unprecedented historical periods. Moving from Japan's post-bubble economic downturn through the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami with its Fukushima Daiichi nuclear aftermath, and into the COVID-19 pandemic era, this book makes evident migration patterns that have received limited attention in Anglophone scholarship to date.

This book brings together international perspectives from both emerging and established researchers, as well as a practicing artist, crossing traditional disciplinary boundaries. It maps post-bubble migration trends from the 1990s onwards, examining how Japanese nationals and their descendants have built lives in Australia amid shifting demographics, employment landscapes and political contexts. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, qualitative and quantitative analysis and interdisciplinary frameworks, it examines the diverse motivations, constraints and everyday strategies that shape migrants' lives across transnational social, cultural and institutional domains.

In doing so, the book traces the transnational trajectories of Japanese migrants in Australia and moves beyond reductive portrayals of migration as a singular, linear process. It challenges the persistent characterisation of Japanese nationals and their descendants as uniformly 'middle-class', first-generation sojourners and argues that *middle-classness* is no longer—if it ever was—a definitive or stable attribute of Japanese migrants. Instead, we argue that it operates as an ideological construct whose analytical utility proves increasingly insufficient to capture the diverse and shifting realities of their lived experiences.

Through chapters that engage with issues such as post-Fukushima relocation, mixed heritage youth identity negotiations, Japanese Australian indigeneity and LGBTQ+ mobility, this book foregrounds the historical, generational and social heterogeneity that migration scholarship has often overlooked. By centring marginalised everyday experiences and shifting positionalities, it unsettles the

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reductive portrayal of post-war Japanese migrations as largely middle-class and privileged. While some chapters engage this critique more directly than others, this book collectively highlights multidirectional mobilities and diverse survival strategies that slip through conventional categories and institutional frameworks.

This opening chapter orients readers through four structured sections that establish historical context, theorise contemporary Japanese migrations to Australia within broader global trends and provide a thematic overview of subsequent chapters. The first section traces the historical foundations of Japanese migrations, examining how earlier population movements continue to influence current migration patterns between Japan and Australia, while new forms of mobility emerge in response to shifting socioeconomic and political conditions in Japan, Australia and beyond.

The second section situates Japanese migrations within frameworks of global *nikkei* communities, evolving transnational Asian mobility patterns and what we term ‘post-middle-class marginality’. Earlier waves of post-war Japanese migration were often framed in academic and popular discourses through assumptions of middle-class privilege—shaped by Japan’s post-war economic ascendancy and reinforced by corporate-sponsored, selective mobility during the 1980s and 1990s. Yet, as Smith (2019) and the chapters in this book illustrate, such perceptions have become increasingly untenable. For many contemporary Japanese migrants, this sense of stable status is no longer sustainable—and may, in fact, have been illusory from the outset—whether materially or symbolically.

Across generational cohorts, migration routes and social contexts, the coherence of middle-class identity has fractured. This perspective enables us to identify both convergences and divergences in transnational mobility within the Asia-Pacific, while contesting long-standing nationalist discourses that frame Japan’s modernisation as exceptional or detached from broader regional developments. Rejecting cultural essentialism, we foreground how Japanese migrations are shaped not by fixed cultural dispositions, but by structural inequalities, institutional barriers and shifting global conditions that transcend national boundaries.

The third and fourth sections outline the authors’ chapters. ‘Part I. Japanese Migrations to Australia: Their Angles and Trends’ examines contemporary migration patterns—from working holiday makers (WHMs) to partnership-based migrants, Japanese Australian youths and post-disaster relocations following the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. ‘Part II. Japanese Communities to Enrich Multicultural Australia’ challenges monolithic notions of ‘community’ by focusing on specific sectors and previously understudied groups, including Japanese-Indigenous Australians and LGBTQ+ migrants. It analyses how personal narratives intersect with, or diverge from, institutional frameworks, offering new perspectives on identity and belonging in transnational contexts.

Historical Echoes in Modern Trajectories

Understanding Japanese migrations to Australia demands a retrospective examination of the historical relationship between these nations. The diversity within

contemporary Japanese migrants and their communities in Australia—along with their varied migration pathways—mirrors the evolving yet enduring connections that stretch back to the late 19th century.

Japanese migrations to Australia have unfolded across three distinct phases (also see Nagatomo, 2013): from the late 19th century to the 1960s, from the 1970s to the early 1990s and from the post-bubble era of the 1990s to the present. The first phase, beginning in the 1870s, brought independent and contract workers to Australia's expanding pearling, sugarcane and entertainment industries (Mizukami, 2016). Many of these early migrants, particularly in places like Thursday Island, Broome and coastal Queensland, not only contributed to local economies but also forged intimate, long-term relationships with Indigenous and other Asian communities. As Chapter 11 of this book highlights, these interactions led to the emergence of Japanese-Indigenous Australian mixed descendant populations whose histories complicate neat narratives of assimilation or return migration. While some early migrants transitioned into urban entrepreneurship and permanent residence, others left behind families whose cultural and personal legacies continue in place. Their experiences were also shaped by significant exclusionary forces, most notably the White Australia policy (1901–1973), which profoundly affected their social, legal and political lives.

This initial wave included diverse migrants—from socioeconomically marginalised Japanese women who migrated under coercive or constrained circumstances, including those involved in sex work due to economic precarity and gendered constraints (Mihalopoulos, 1994; Sissons, 1997), to fisheries workers and 'wartime brides' who married Australian soldiers during and after the Second World War (Tamura, 2002). These migration patterns persisted until Japan's post-war economic revival in the 1960s, highlighting Japanese workers' crucial role in Australia's industrial transformation. After the 1940s, the Japanese faced significant foreign travel restrictions until 1965, when currency limitations were lifted, launching a new era of international mobility.

The 1960s marked a pivotal shift following Japan's economic resurgence and international exposure from the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Business expatriates and middle-class individuals sought global opportunities, strengthening bilateral ties through deepened understanding and cooperation. Their ventures laid foundations for a robust economy built on established diplomatic relations, with Japan's post-war economic boom relying heavily on Australian resources. During the Cold War, both nations stood as critical Asia-Pacific allies against socialism (McDermott, 2022),¹ supported by the United States.

The 1970s marked a critical juncture where global capitalism and changing geopolitical landscapes redefined Japanese-Australian migration. The 1970 Osaka Expo served as Australia's strategic platform for image reinvention, shedding its wartime adversary reputation to present itself as a desirable ally (Barnes & Jackson, 2007). This carefully orchestrated diplomatic display transformed national perceptions and deepened cross-cultural connections, becoming a watershed moment in bilateral relations.

During this period, Australia and Japan not only fortified historical bonds but crafted an entirely new relationship within the Asia-Pacific context. The abolition

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of the White Australia Policy removed a significant barrier that had previously constrained Japanese immigration and limited community growth (Hamano, 2019). Australia's subsequent openness to non-European migrants, including Japanese nationals, sparked measurable increases in migration flows (Hamano et al., 2023). This policy shift simultaneously diversified the heterogeneous Japanese populations in Australia, who form fluid networks across different migration entry paths based on shared lifestyles and values rather than constituting a monolithic institutional community, while signalling Australia's broader regional reorientation towards Asia and its emerging multicultural vision.

The 1976 Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation—the Nara Treaty—formalised this evolving partnership. Ratified by then Prime Ministers Malcolm Fraser and Takeo Miki, this landmark agreement strengthened international relations while creating frameworks to resolve lingering economic tensions (Dee, 2006). Far from merely reinforcing existing connections, the Nara Treaty charted a new territory in bilateral cooperation. Its practical impact materialised in 1978 when the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) launched a programme enabling Japanese engineers to migrate to Australia and Canada (for further details, see Chapter 4).² This initiative translates diplomatic rhetoric into tangible opportunities, extending collaboration beyond conventional economic and political exchanges.

Japan's economic landscape transformed dramatically in the 1980s following the 1985 Plaza Accord, generating a boom that propelled Japanese global consumption and travel. Australia emerged as a preferred destination, attracting not only tourists but substantial Japanese investment until the bubble burst in the 1990s (see Chapter 8 for further details). This period's impact on Japanese-Australian engagement appeared in cultural productions like the 1990 film 'Tasmania Story' and through the increased presence of 'retired migrants' from Japan, who enriched Japanese communities in major Australian cities and strengthened sociocultural ties between the nations (Sone & Thang, 2020).

During this pivotal period, Australia actively recruited skilled migrants from Asian neighbours, including Japan. JICA-supported Japanese newcomers established Japan Clubs across Australian cities, creating lasting cultural anchors. The 1980 Working Holiday Programme—designed to foster cross-cultural understanding among youth aged 18–30—became a transformative pathway for Japanese participants to gain English proficiency and professional experience through short-term job placements (see Chapter 2). Under the Subclass 417 visa arrangement between Australia and Japan, the programme has no annual cap, allowing an unrestricted number of young Japanese to participate. In addition to fostering people-to-people diplomacy, the scheme contributes significantly to Australia's economy, with WHMs collectively generating over AUD 3 billion annually, particularly through tourism and seasonal regional labour (Parliament of Australia, 2020). Many participants subsequently pursued formal education, secured employment or formed marriages in Australia, exemplifying what Mizukami (2016) terms 'consequent settler(s)'. These developments reveal the multidimensional Australia-Japan relationship during Japan's economic bubble, showcasing the increasingly diverse trajectories of Japanese migrants to Australia.

The post-bubble 1990s inaugurated a distinctive phase of Japanese migrations to Australia, characterised by the pursuit of a quality life beyond mere economic advancement. Migration motivations diversified significantly, responding to global shifts and changing societal values. The concept of ‘lifestyle migration’ (Benson & O’Reilly, 2009; Nagatomo, 2013) is illuminated as conscious pursuits of well-being and preferred lifestyles. From the 2000s onwards, the motivational landscape expanded dramatically. The 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, coupled with the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, reshaped migration patterns and birthed the *shinsai imin* (‘disaster-influenced migrants’) phenomenon. These migrants seek safety rather than economic advancement through relocation, driven by assessments of Japan’s disaster vulnerabilities and future risk scenarios. Their migration reflects calculated decision-making that weighs immediate benefits against long-term security considerations (Oishi & Hamada, 2019; also see Chapter 6).

As the 21st century unfolds, Japanese migrations to Australia continue their evolution, shaped by individual aspirations, global developments and shifting risk perceptions. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced yet another dimension to migration calculations by highlighting the significance of the healthcare system and government crisis response (see Chapters 5, 6, 9 and 12). While research on the pandemic’s specific impact on Japanese-Australian migrations remains nascent, Australia’s widely reported public health management may enhance its attractiveness to Japanese nationals seeking stability amid global uncertainty.

Japan-Australia Migration in Context: Diaspora, Class and Mobility Regimes

This section situates Japanese migrations to Australia within three overlapping frameworks: global nikkei community formation, contemporary patterns of transnational Asian mobility and evolving trajectories of class and precarity. Through the lens of what we term post-middle-class marginality, this section examines how Japanese migrants navigate aspirations shaped by Japan’s late-20th-century affluence while contending with increasingly contingent migration pathways and diminished structural security. Rather than assuming cohesive class identity or enduring privilege, this perspective foregrounds the disjuncture between long-held social expectations and present realities. By doing so, we locate Japanese communities in Australia within both long-standing diasporic currents and the shifting configurations of transnational mobility in the Asia-Pacific.

From Nikkei to Dispersed Diaspora: Historical Disruptions and Contemporary Dispersal

The term *nikkei* (or *nikkeijin*) was adopted in post-war Japanese state discourse to refer to Japanese emigrants and their descendants—ranging from first-generation *issei* to later generations (*nisei*, *sansei* and *yonsei*)—who maintain cultural ties to Japan while forging transnational identities (Yamashita, 1996). According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), countries such as Brazil, the United

States, Peru and Canada are home to over 4.5 million nikkei—defined as ‘persons of Japanese descent residing permanently abroad regardless of citizenship’ (2023, p. 1)—constituting roughly 90% of the Japanese diaspora population. Australia, by comparison, hosts the fifth-largest Japanese diaspora globally (MOFA, 2023). Its nikkei communities, however, followed markedly different trajectories from those in the Americas, especially during and after the Second World War, shaping both their integration pathways and how they have been received in Australian society (see Chapter 14 for further discussion of nikkei and related concepts).

These communities did not emerge organically but were shaped by Japan’s nation-building efforts linked to its broader ‘modernisation’ project during the Meiji era (1868–1911), with the first group of emigrants departing for Hawai‘i in 1868 in response to growing labour demand on sugar plantations (Takenaka, 2019). Importantly, Japan’s engagement with its emigrants has long been marked by ambivalence. Pre-war migrants were expected to serve imperial interests abroad but were marginalised at home as *kimin* (‘abandoned people’) (Wakatsuki, 1987). This contradiction of nominal inclusion alongside practical exclusion continues to shape Japan’s diaspora policy (Takenaka, 2019). While nikkei are collectively recognised through ancestry, they remain treated as distinct from Japanese nationals—positioned simultaneously as insiders and outsiders (Waldinger, 2015).

Japan’s engagement with nikkei communities has varied by region, reflecting both its broader ambivalence and local historical conditions. In South America, support was framed as development aid, enabling active involvement in community building. In contrast, Japan’s influence in North America was more constrained, shaped by historical ruptures, including the wartime internment of people of Japanese descent and assimilationist policies that followed. These conditions fostered more autonomous institutions in North America, while South American nikkei communities often maintained stronger institutional ties with Japan (Takenaka, 2019).

Japan’s diaspora engagement was institutionalised through bodies like the Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad (*Kaigai Nikkeijin Kyōkai*), founded in 1957 with government support. It continues to coordinate transnational ties through initiatives such as annual diaspora conventions (Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad, n.d.). In Australia, Nikkei Australia—established in 2013 with support from The Japan Foundation, Sydney—serves as a hub for research and cultural engagement with nikkei communities (Nikkei Australia, n.d.).

As Japan’s economy grew in the post-war decades, diaspora relations evolved. Community leaders began to request material and linguistic support, and official discourse reframed nikkei identities according to national priorities: from ‘business brokers’ in the 1970s to ‘cultural mediators’ in the 1980s, and later ‘pioneers of internationalisation’ during Japan’s globalisation push. Today, nikkei are celebrated primarily as a form of ‘cultural diplomacy’ (Takenaka, 2019).

Japanese migrations to Australia were sharply interrupted during and after the Second World War, when most Japanese residents were interned or deported. In

the northwest town of Broome—historically anchored in the pearling industry—a number of Japanese men had formed long-term relationships with Indigenous women before the war, and some of their mixed heritage families remained after these upheavals (see Chapter 11). Rather than constituting a continuous or cohesive community, their descendants have developed diverse, localised identities shaped by intergenerational memory and complex ancestral ties.

The post-war Japanese Australian population comprises several distinct streams: war brides who settled following relationships with Australian servicemen; technical program participants via JICA from the 1980s; WHMs who later extended their stay (see Chapter 2); and more recent skilled migrants, international students (see Chapter 3) and those arriving through intercultural partnerships and marriages (see Chapter 4). These relationships have led to the emergence of Japanese Australian youths negotiating shifting identities, often framed through the contested term *hāfu*—borrowed from the English ‘half’ and used to describe mixed descendants, carrying ambivalent implications around authenticity and belonging (see Chapter 5).

Unlike in Brazil, the United States or Peru—where nikkei communities have coalesced around dense urban enclaves such as São Paulo’s Liberdade, Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo and historic Japanese districts in Hawai‘i—Japanese migrants in Australia constitute a relatively small demographic (less than 0.2% of the national population) and are notably dispersed (ABS, 2021a). This spatial dispersion has limited the development of concentrated residential clusters, instead giving rise to smaller-scale, often informal networks. Consequently, community cohesion tends to be facilitated through cultural associations such as Japan Clubs and Japanese Community Language Schools (Hamano et al., 2023; Shiobara, 2017; see also Chapter 7). In recent years, digital platforms and social media have also contributed to maintaining these decentralised networks, although this area remains underexplored and requires further empirical investigation.

Reframing Japanese Mobility: Post-Middle-Class Marginality and Non-Linear Trajectories

As both Japan’s overseas communities and Japanese society have changed, the long-standing image of the affluent, middle-class sojourner has lost much of its explanatory power. While this figure captured key dimensions of Japanese migrants during the 1980s and 1990s—when many relocated abroad with relative economic security grounded in Japan’s bubble-era prosperity—it obscures the altered conditions shaping more recent mobility. Post-bubble Japanese migrations are characterised not by affluence and long-term corporate placement, but rather by temporary stays, precarity and institutional ambiguity.

This shift diverges markedly from broader patterns of middle-class Asian mobility, where individuals from countries such as China, South Korea and Singapore relatively actively leverage education, credentials and state-sponsored pathways to pursue strategic professional migration (Soong, 2021; Watkins et al., 2019). By contrast, contemporary Japanese migrations to Australia often lack

comparable structural support or targeted policy frameworks, and do not necessarily reflect a collective pursuit of middle-class consolidation abroad.

Instead, what emerges are diverse mobility trajectories shaped by structural uncertainty, fragmented labour conditions and limited recognition of social or cultural capital. We frame this condition as *post-middle-class marginality*: a structural and symbolic disjuncture between aspirations shaped by Japan's late-20th-century affluence and the precarious conditions encountered through contemporary migration. The concept captures how migrants, even when holding significant cultural or educational resources, confront host societies' fragmented labour markets, temporary migration schemes and limited institutional recognition. These conditions often lead to downward mobility, civic marginality and peripheral social integration within systems that no longer guarantee middle-class continuity or ascendancy. Rather than assuming a linear reproduction of class identity or aspiration, this framework foregrounds the dissonance between normative expectations of stability and the contingent realities of global mobility, particularly within meritocratic regimes that privilege narrowly defined forms of capital (Robertson & Roberts, 2022).

In the Australian context, these transformations are particularly evident. Since the 1980s, Asian migrations have diversified significantly, with people reporting Asian ancestry (excluding the Middle East) now constituting about 17% of the national population (ABS, 2021b). Within this demographic, the number of Japanese nationals residing in Australia increased, from 71,013 residents in 2011 to 104,141 in 2024 (MOFA, 2011, 2025). Yet, Japanese migrants follow distinct pathways compared to Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese or Filipino communities, who more often arrive through skilled migration or family reunion schemes and establish multigenerational diasporas. Japanese entrants typically rely on the Working Holiday Programme, international education and cross-cultural marriage (ABS, 2021b). These routes, usually temporary and individualised, often limit access to permanent residency and contribute to fragmented, less durable settlement patterns.

These fragmented and often temporary settlement pathways do not simply represent anomalies of Japanese migrations to Australia but resonate with broader Asian and global mobility patterns. Increasingly, Japanese migrants share in the prevalence of non-linear and circular trajectories that stretch across different life stages and geographic sites. Such patterns illustrate how migration is pursued less as a one-way project of permanent settlement than as a set of contingent strategies shaped by shifting opportunities and constraints. As Hugo (2009) observes, these life-course-orientated strategies diverge from conventional integration models and challenge the binary between temporary and permanent migration.

This fluidity, however, sits uneasily within Australia's merit-based migration regime, which frames mobility as a middle-class project rooted in individual achievement, employability and cosmopolitan self-cultivation (Shachar, 2016; Winter, 2024). This institutional logic assumes seamless integration through skilled credentials and cultural capital. Yet, as Geurts et al. (2021) demonstrate, such frameworks often produce an 'integration paradox': migrants may attain formal incorporation through work or legal status while remaining socially and emotionally disconnected.

Japanese migrants' lived experiences expose the limits of this model. Many arrive with formal qualifications and cultural resources yet confront structural and social barriers: dual citizenship restrictions, a relatively small and dispersed community network and persistent assumptions of self-sufficiency that mask challenges such as de-skilling, limited service access and inadequate support across life stages. These conditions exemplify post-middle-class marginality, wherein migrants are materially embedded yet civically and institutionally peripheral, their vulnerabilities obscured by markers of privilege such as tertiary qualifications and presumed affluence. For many, migration represents not a project of surplus but a strategy for survival in response to constrained options, gendered pressures and neoliberal expectations. Yet, their struggles are often misrecognised through frameworks that conflate mobility with advantage. As this book demonstrates, marginality emerges not only from external constraints but also from the dissonance between past imaginaries and present realities.

Chapter 13 by Hamano, Funaki and Phillips addresses these lived realities directly, examining informal and often overlooked forms of civic engagement among Japanese migrants, whose practices unfold outside conventional integration indicators. Their analysis reveals how marginality is lived and negotiated through relational, affective and everyday modes of participation that bypass formal structures.

The chapters that follow extend these insights, placing Japanese migrants' experiences in dialogue with broader debates on mobility, inequality and transnational belonging. They offer a nuanced portrait of Japanese migrations to Australia in the 21st century—marked less by enduring privilege than by shifting aspirations, constrained agency and the ongoing negotiation of post-middle-class life.

Part I. Japanese Migrations to Australia: Their Angles and Trends

Youths in the Temporary Migration Regime

A key dimension of contemporary Japanese migrations to Australia emerges in the trajectories of temporary migrant youths—particularly WHMs and international students. Their situations, while varied, often exemplify post-middle-class marginality: a condition that persists across the migration cycle rather than being resolved through mobility. They migrate not from a position of secure affluence but as a response to constrained career pathways and shifting socioeconomic expectations within Japan. While they may possess formal qualifications and cultural resources, their journeys are shaped by structural precarity in both directions, including visa restrictions, limited labour protections during migration, as well as uncertain career reintegration and continued marginalisation upon return to Japan.

Kawashima's chapter (Chapter 2) explores how Japanese youths engage in these temporary sojourns as a form of identity project and aspirational self-making. Framed as opportunities for global experience and personal growth, these mobilities are often facilitated by intermediaries such as *ryūgaku ējento* (study abroad agents) or *ryūgaku kaunserā* (study abroad counsellors), who present study abroad often as a pathway to cosmopolitan self-development. However, Kawashima discusses

how these promotional narratives frequently obscure the disjuncture between expectation and outcome. In the chapter, many returnees, despite their international experience, find themselves in precarious or under-valued positions within the Japanese labour market. Such trajectories among youth migrant returnees highlight the limitations of meritocratic ideals and the uneven terrain of converting skills and experiences across borders upon return.

Building on Kawashima's analysis, Breaden (Chapter 3) explores how Japanese student mobility to Australia is mediated through the work of international education agents. Despite policy efforts to promote study abroad, the chapter suggests that mobility has stagnated, revealing a gap between institutional narratives of 'global talent' (*gurōbaru jinzai*) and students' more individualised aspirations. Study abroad agents (*ryūgaku ējento*) play a pivotal role in this context: they often market Australia as a safe, affordable and culturally accessible alternative to North America and Europe, while also managing the tensions between governmental agendas and students' personal motivations. Breaden demonstrates that these agents' perspectives are more nuanced than promotional narratives imply. While often sceptical of students' motivations and skills, they are equally critical of institutional efforts to impose prescriptive accounts of study abroad. Rather than simply reinforcing or rejecting dominant framings, the chapter shows how agents actively mediate between governmental agendas and students' expectations, navigating the policy-practice gap while strategically reconciling it with varied interests.

The chapters by Kawashima and Breaden demonstrate a recurring pattern across youth mobility pathways: the gap between institutional framings of migration as opportunity and the fragmented, often insecure realities encountered by youth migrants. Here, commercial intermediaries do not simply reproduce dominant discourses but negotiate them, packaging transnational movement as a consumable life strategy while also acknowledging the material and symbolic barriers that shape youth migrants' experiences. These ambivalences reflect broader global patterns in temporary migration (Triandafyllidou, 2022; Visintin et al., 2015), where aspirations for upward mobility coexists with structural constraints, emotional dislocation and uncertain long-term outcomes.

Partnership-Based Migration and Youths with Mixed Heritage

Partnership-based migration has been vital to Japanese migrations to Australia since the post-war 'war brides' era. Since the 1990s, women have continued to dominate these flows, making up more than two-thirds of Japan-born residents (ABS, 2021a). These women arrive primarily on partner visas and are often classified as 'dependents' within immigration frameworks. While professional migration among Japanese women has increased, many still relocate as wives, fiancées or de facto partners.

Hamano's chapter focuses on Japanese mothers in transnational partnerships in Australia. Through their engagement in local family and community life,

particularly in childrearing, these women reinterpret forms of femininity they had previously perceived as subordinate within Japanese society. Hamano highlights this process is paradoxical: although structurally under-resourced and often institutionally positioned as dependents, they actively reconfigure their gendered identities within transnational households and local environments. Their identities become more deeply influenced by local social circumstances and available community resources. His analysis underscores the importance of attending to gender in migration studies, demonstrating that the redefinition of self in migration is shaped not only by ethnic or cultural background but also by the everyday, gendered negotiations migrants undertake in response to their immediate social contexts.

Following the discussion in the previous chapter on partnership-based migration, Wilkinson (Chapter 5) turns to the underexamined experiences of mixed heritage individuals, commonly referred to in Japan as *hāfu*—a term that carries complex and contested meanings. Drawing on in-depth interviews with Japanese Australian youths, the chapter traces their transnational life trajectories, examining how they negotiate identity, belonging and cultural expectations across both national contexts. Rather than treating *hāfu* identity as a fixed category, Wilkinson highlights its fluid, relational and context-dependent construction. The chapter also illustrates how broader institutional factors—such as language policy, visa regimes and the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic—intersect with personal and familial experiences to both enable and constrain these young people’s mobility and sense of belonging.

Emerging Post-3/11 Migration

Part I concludes with a critical examination of an underexplored dimension of Japanese migrations to Australia: the post-2011 triple disaster-prompted mobility. Hamada and Wakamatsu’s chapter (Chapter 6) challenges conventional ‘lifestyle migration’ narratives by focusing on *shinsai imin*—educated, professional and often relatively well-resourced individuals whose trajectories blur the boundaries between voluntary and forced migration. They reveal a distinct migration pattern: while post-3/11 Japanese migrants were initially motivated by radiation safety concerns rather than economic factors, economic considerations became increasingly significant in subsequent mobility decisions, with gender dynamics critically shaping these emerging conflicts. Drawing on the dual frameworks of ‘conflict-related migration’ and ‘migration-related conflicts’, the chapter explores how pre-migration tensions—familial, community-based and institutional—resurface in post-migration life, while often remaining concealed within in-group expatriate circles. Despite possessing formal qualifications and professional experience, these migrants frequently encounter systemic barriers and de-skilling in the Australian labour market. Their experiences underscore the precarious and unacknowledged dimensions of post-middle-class marginality.

Part II. Japanese Communities to Enrich Multicultural Australia

Japanese as a Community Language

Migrant communities' language preservation efforts play a vital role in identity formation, exemplified by Japanese language education in Australia. Classified as a 'community language'—a term identifying non-English languages spoken within Australia, excluding Indigenous languages (Clyne & Fernandez, 2008)—Japanese language initiatives illuminate the country's multilingual realities, often positioned against contested narratives of English as a *lingua franca*. Unlike the North American notion of 'heritage language', this classification reflects Australia's multicultural policy framework. However, the growing diversity of Japanese-speaking populations—particularly among mixed heritage families—complicates linguistic and cultural transmission within educational systems largely designed for monolingual or monocultural identities.

Kawasaki and Kurata (Chapter 7) analyse tensions between the Japanese government's standardised approach through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and local families' preference for inclusive education that acknowledges diverse backgrounds. Through the lens of the Japanese Community Language (JCL) framework, which recognises all Japanese speakers regardless of ethnicity, they highlight the disconnect between official policy and grassroots realities. Although recent policy adjustments gesture towards flexibility, they frequently lack the clarity or infrastructure needed to support community-driven initiatives. These language maintenance efforts represent a key strategy through which increasingly diverse Japanese migrants sustain cultural ties while navigating the challenges of transnational life.

Building Communities through Tourism, Hospitality and Art

Migration studies increasingly highlight migrants' multidimensional contributions beyond economics. Part II demonstrates how Japanese migrants' engagement with Australia's tourism, food cultures and arts sectors creates productive symbiosis between cultural and economic domains.

Drawing on a historical sociological perspective, Onozuka (Chapter 8) examines Daikyo's influence on Cairns from the mid-1980s to 2005, when the Japanese real estate developer sought to transform the region into a resort destination. At the time, Japanese investment and migration reflected middle-class affluence and cosmopolitan aspiration, underpinned by Japan's bubble-era economic confidence. This sensibility was embedded in Daikyo's large-scale projects, which institutionalised leisure-orientated mobility and projected Japan's economic and cultural capital abroad. Yet, these developments provoked local tensions, as rapid environmental and urban transformation sparked concern among Cairns residents. The chapter explores how Daikyo responded by emphasising economic benefits and cultivating cross-border business collaborations. Rather than portraying simple economic expansion, Onozuka foregrounds the layered power relations that shaped

this period of Japanese-Australian engagement—demonstrating how corporate-driven mobility both enabled and constrained regional development.

Segueing into Hamada's study (Chapter 9), the narrative shifts to the realm of Japanese restaurants in Australia. Based on extensive ethnographic research conducted in Melbourne and Sydney since 2009, this chapter traces the transformation of Japanese food establishments from post-war eateries often shaped by (self-)orientalist representations to contemporary hubs of culinary innovation and cosmopolitan appeal. Hamada identifies three developmental waves: early post-war pioneers, skilled chef-migrants of the 1980s–1990s and a third wave from the 2000s marked by diversification, professionalisation and strategic branding. Central to this analysis is the concept of 'gastro-cool'—a tactical reworking of cultural difference that positions Japaneseness as desirable and marketable without relying on fixed notions of authenticity. The chapter illustrates how restaurants leverage symbolic capital—through aesthetics, expertise and storytelling—to attract diverse clientele while fostering social ties across communities. Their response to the COVID-19 pandemic further highlights the precarity, adaptability and embeddedness of migrant-run businesses within Australia's changing cultural and economic landscape.

Taking a turn into the arts, Kanamori (Chapter 10) provides both personal testimony and critical reflection on nikkei-themed cultural productions in Australia. She examines how 'Nikkei Australia'—a grassroots collective founded in 2013—serves as a hub for artists exploring layered identities and histories marginalised within dominant Australian narratives. The chapter shows how these artists navigate intersectional identities while balancing the risks of romanticised 'Japaneseness' and marginalisation within mainstream arts spaces. Through projects like 'In Repose', Kanamori illustrates how artistic practice functions as both personal expression and communal memory work, engaging with internment, migration, interracial heritage and cultural loss through diverse collaborations. The analysis demonstrates how Nikkei Australian creatives build transnational networks through initiatives like 'Past Wrongs Future Choices', generating cultural visibility while modelling a bottom-up multiculturalism grounded in lived experience rather than policy frameworks.

Japanese Australian Indigeneity, LGBTQ+ Diaspora and Communities' Political Engagement

Extending Kanamori's exploration of *Nikkei* Indigenous Australians, Yamanouchi (Chapter 11) explores the lived experiences of Japanese-Indigenous Australian mixed descendants in Broome, Western Australia—a region shaped by long-standing Asian migration and Indigenous presence. The chapter traces Japanese arrivals from the late 19th century to the 1960s, largely through the pearling industry, and highlights how many formed relationships with Indigenous women despite exclusionary policies like the White Australia Policy and wartime internment. Their descendants, often identifying as 'mixed' or 'Broome mix', reflect plural heritage spanning Japanese, Indigenous, Chinese, Filipino, Malay and

European backgrounds. Rather than forming a distinct ethnic enclave, these individuals express plural belongings through everyday practices—especially food. Drawing on ethnographic research, Yamanouchi shows how memories of first-generation Japanese cooking and Broome fusion food serve as powerful expressions of identity, kinship and place, illuminating the fluid, layered nature of heritage in Australia's 'polyethnic north'.

A critical yet underexplored dimension of Japanese migrant communities involves the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals. Tamagawa's study (Chapter 12) challenges heteronormative assumptions in migration studies by examining how Japanese LGBTQ+ migrants navigate identity, belonging and exclusion across borders. Drawing on the concept of 'sexual migration' (Carrillo, 2004), the chapter examines how mobility is driven by the pursuit of safer environments for gender expression, sexual identity and relationships, while documenting how migrants face language barriers, racial discrimination, visa insecurity and cultural disconnection despite Australia's legal protections. Through case studies of transgender, non-binary, gay and lesbian Japanese migrants, Tamagawa illustrates how individuals navigate layered marginalities—not only as ethnic and linguistic minorities in Australia but also within racialised hierarchies and normative gender frameworks in local LGBTQ+ spaces. While many value Australia's comparatively less rigidly enforced gender norms than those in Japan, the chapter shows that they frequently face exclusion in environments where whiteness and English fluency are positioned as normative. This analysis foregrounds the intersectional nature of marginality, highlighting how legal inclusion alone does not guarantee social recognition or integration. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified these forms of marginality, particularly through heightened social isolation and employment precarity.

Concluding Part II, Hamano, Funaki and Phillips (Chapter 13) examine political engagement among Japanese migrants in Australia, identifying forms of civic participation overlooked by conventional metrics. Their research exemplifies post-middle-class marginality, wherein migrants who appear socioeconomically integrated yet remain politically peripheral develop alternative, often informal, pathways to civic life. While statistical indicators suggest low political interest, Japanese migrants (especially mothers) express political agency through 'sub-politics' (Beck, 1992)—community-based activism such as the Higher School Certificate (HSC) Japanese Committee, a parent-led group that successfully lobbied to reform discriminatory policies restricting heritage language learners' access to senior-level Japanese courses in New South Wales. This political culture, grounded in family and community care, emerges despite structural limitations imposed by Japan's nationality law, which prohibits dual citizenship. The chapter demonstrates how citizenship status, gender and local integration shape political consciousness through micro-level concerns rather than national politics, challenging integration frameworks that prioritise economic metrics over substantive political voice and cultural recognition.

In the concluding chapter, Shiobara (Chapter 14) synthesises the book's insights to show how Japanese migrants' lived experiences complicate dominant discourses

on multiculturalism, identity and belonging. Echoing the introduction's concept of post-middle-class marginality, the chapter traces how Japanese migrations to Australia—once typified by middle-class *nihonjin* sojourners—have grown increasingly diverse in form and motivation since the 1980s. Many first-generation migrants internalised post-war ideologies such as *ichioku sōchūryū* ('all Japanese are middle-class') and rejected labels like *imin* or *nikkeijin*, which they associated with downward mobility. This middle-class imaginary—historically bolstered by perceptions of Japanese as 'honorary whites'—has since fractured with the emergence of groups such as WHMs, LGBTQ+ migrants and post-3/11 *shinsai imin*. In line with this book's broader argument, the chapter discusses how these shifts have unsettled previous notions of exceptionality, making visible the internal stratifications shaping migrant experiences. Shiobara also demonstrates how cultural and linguistic practices—particularly community language schools—serve as key spaces for second-generation Japanese Australians to negotiate hybrid identities within Australia's multicultural context.

Conclusion

The study of Japanese migrations—like other transnational Asian mobility trends—only began to attract sustained scholarly attention in the 1970s, with interest intensifying in the 1980s amid immigration liberalisation and labour shortages in post-industrial countries such as Australia. This book offers a multidimensional analysis of Japanese migrations to Australia, addressing gaps in scholarship on this topic in English. It brings together empirical depth and interdisciplinary insight to explore contemporary trajectories that have unfolded since Japan's post-bubble era.

In this introduction, we have situated Japanese migrations to Australia within three intersecting analytical frameworks: *nikkei* community formation, contemporary transnational Asian mobility and post-middle-class marginality. This final concept offers a theoretical lens for understanding the disjuncture between middle-class aspirations—shaped by Japan's late 20th-century affluence—and the structural precarity and civic marginality encountered by many contemporary migrants. Unlike the earlier image of the middle-class, privileged sojourner, Japanese migration today is increasingly marked by non-linear pathways and internal stratification. Post-middle-class marginality thus captures how migrants may possess formal qualifications or cultural resources, yet still experience emotional, institutional or civic marginalisation across multiple domains of social life.

The chapters in this book—covering youth migration on temporary visas (Chapters 2 and 3), partnership-based migration and mixed heritage Japanese Australian youths (Chapters 4 and 5), post-disaster relocation (Chapter 6), community language education (Chapter 7), economic and cultural contributions (Chapters 8 and 9), *nikkei* artistic expression (Chapter 10), Indigenous-Japanese Australian heritage (Chapter 11), LGBTQ+ experiences (Chapter 12) and civic participation (Chapter 13)—collectively reveal the heterogeneity and complexity of contemporary Japanese migration experiences. Through these varied perspectives, this book demonstrates that Japanese migrations to Australia exemplify some of the

merging broader trends in contemporary transnational mobility while highlighting the nuanced ways migrants negotiate belonging, identity and social participation across different contexts.

Though comprehensive, our analysis acknowledges certain limitations. Topics such as unauthorised migration, return migration and ageing remain underexplored due to limited data and emergent research—representing crucial directions for future work. Nonetheless, this book’s core contribution lies in documenting Japanese migrations to Australia as heterogeneous, stratified and multidirectional—offering empirical depth and analytical frameworks that extend beyond this specific case to inform broader understanding of contemporary transnational mobility.

Notes

- 1 With the People’s Republic of China (PRC)’s political and economic influence in recent years, political relations between Australia and Japan appear to be growing, including unprecedented military cooperation.
- 2 International migration has been integral to Japanese modernisation since the 19th century, when Japanese migrants first arrived in Australian colonies. Japanese returnees from former colonies re-migrated to Latin America after the Pacific War, continuing patterns of economically motivated movement. However, by the 1960s, migration motivations were shifting: a 1964 survey of university students’ attitudes towards international migration showed that young Japanese were interested in ‘lifestyle migration’ rather than purely economic migration (Research Division of the Organization for International Migration, 1964).

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Part I

Japanese Migrations to Australia

Their Angles and Trends



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2 Uneven Cosmopolitanism

Japanese Working Holiday Makers in Australia and the ‘Lost Decade’¹

Kumiko Kawashima

Introduction

Researching Japanese working holiday makers in Australia offers valuable insight into international youth mobility, shifting labour markets, and the formation of cultural identity. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of Japanese travelling to Australia on working holiday visas has steadily increased. In the 2020–2021 financial year, only 1,558 visas were granted to Japanese citizens. This figure rose sharply to 14,398 the following year and to 17,095 in 2022–2023—marking record highs for two consecutive years.² In recent media coverage, these working holidays are increasingly framed as a form of *dekasegi* (working away from home for economic reasons), reflecting a growing awareness of the wage disparities between Japan and Australia. With the yen’s decline and income stagnation, even menial casual jobs abroad are seen as offering the potential to earn significantly more than skilled full-time work in Japan. At the same time, reports have emerged of Japanese youth facing financial hardship upon arrival due to soaring living costs and limited employment opportunities. While this labour-orientated framing may seem to diverge from earlier, idealised notions of working holidays as leisurely, cosmopolitan pursuits, it also echoes long-standing themes: economic precarity, the pursuit of self-reinvention abroad, and the uneven returns of global mobility. Revisiting earlier cases is therefore essential for understanding the complex interplay between aspiration, structural constraint, and survival strategy that continues to shape the transnational experiences of Japanese youth—making this chapter highly relevant for contemporary social scientific analysis.

Young people with overseas experience are a driving force behind Japan’s internationalisation. Although under-represented in the scholarly literature, youth sojourns abroad have become extremely popular among the Japanese. Tens of thousands of young people leave Japan every year to live abroad. In 2010 alone, nearly 590,000 Japanese people aged 20–49 years old left Japan to stay abroad for one month to two years (Immigration Bureau, 2011). One popular way for young Japanese to go overseas is the Working Holiday (WH). The WH schemes are based on reciprocal agreements between two nations that allow youth to enter each other’s countries to temporarily live, study, work and holiday for the purpose of grassroots cultural exchange.³ The conditions of WH visas vary depending on

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the receiving country. In the case of Australia, the visa is for people 30 years old or younger at the time of application and is valid for up to two years from the arrival date. Visa holders are allowed to study for a maximum of four months and work for six months for the same employer. The WH scheme is designed to provide an overseas experience within a limited timeframe, giving it an interim or liminal status in the lives of those who participate in it.

The number of Japanese working holiday makers (WHMs) has steadily increased since Japan entered into an agreement with its first partner country, Australia, in 1980. For Japanese WHMs, Australia has always been the most popular destination. In the first year, 884 WH visas were issued to the Japanese in 1981, and by 2008, over 160,000 Japanese WHMs had visited Australia (Japan Association of Working Holiday Makers, hereafter JAWHM, 2008). This is twice as many as the number of Japanese WHMs who have chosen the second most popular destination, Canada (JAWHM, 2008). Between 2004–2005 and 2009–2010, when the bulk of my fieldwork was conducted, over 49,000 Japanese WHMs were granted their visa to enter Australia (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011).

Developing a cosmopolitan identity and mastering the English language were two commonly cited reasons why young Japanese in my study chose to go to Australia. The image of living and working in an English-speaking white Western society such as Australia remains a major attraction for many of those who seek new and exciting experiences in a foreign environment. Based on ethnography, this chapter explores the meaning of a WH to Australia, as a form of temporary migration, in the lives of Japanese youth and its connection to broader social and cultural change. My focus is on the ongoing period of recession Japan has experienced since the market crash of late 1989. The first ten years were called the ‘lost decade’ (*ushinawareta jūnen*), characterised by the gradual collapse of the ‘bubble’ economy. The country’s economy has never fully recovered since then, and the current period is sometimes called the ‘lost two decades’ (*ushinawareta nijūnen*). By linking Japanese social trends in this era to major characteristics of late modernity, my case study examines some of the ways in which discourses of internationalisation (and later globalisation) and shifting social and cultural practices create possibilities for new subjectivities and life courses. In particular, I will discuss three important factors that shape individuals’ cosmopolitan desires and aspirations: the rise of the Japanese ‘migration industry’ that promotes and markets international mobility; individualisation, neoliberal subjectivity and the culture of consumption as characteristics of late modern Japan; and changing socio-economic conditions for young workers in recessionary Japan, including the group called the ‘lost generation’, who entered the graduate employment market during the ‘lost decade’.

Through an investigation of migratory expectations before departure and access to cosmopolitan jobs upon returning, I explore how powerful interests in society can exert influence on young people in their transition to adulthood. The wide reach of mass-mediated messages and neoliberal subjectivity encourage the youth to become entrepreneurial individuals in their search for a cosmopolitan identity.

However, I argue that one's socio-economic location still affects their aspirations and life choices. Ultimately, this chapter is a critique of dominant discourses surrounding Japan's internationalisation that mask the uneven grounds on which ordinary individuals attempt to develop a socially desirable identity.

Fieldwork

This paper is partly based on fieldwork data obtained in Australia and Japan between 2005 and 2010. The fieldwork mainly focused on interviews and participant observation in Sydney and Tokyo, while occasional visits were made to other metropolitan cities such as Melbourne and Osaka, as well as some regional and rural areas of both countries. Participant observation involved visiting migration agency offices and browsing their notice boards, going to interviewees' homes and workplaces, attending events targeting Japanese migrants and generally socialising with them in their everyday environment. I also monitored websites targeting young Japanese in Australia (both commercial and not-for-profit). In order to recruit interviewees, I used advertisements on Japanese-language websites targeting those living in Sydney, flyers at migration advisor offices and personal introduction.

The data used for this paper came from semi-structured interviews with a total of 31 WHMs: 14 while in Australia, nine after returning to Japan and eight in both countries. The gender balance was almost equal, as 16 of them were female. Participants' ages ranged from 21 to 34, and the median age was 27.6 years old. All of them entered Australia on a WH visa, and a minority of them extended their stay in Australia by obtaining a student visa. These students attended private colleges, studying the English language, business, tourism, beauty therapy, and in one case, kung fu. Many more participants attended English colleges to take short-term courses while on a WH visa. All the interviews were conducted in Japanese and translated by the author. All the names of interviewees that appear in this paper are pseudonyms.

Sojourns in Australia, Cosmopolitan Dreams and the Migration Industry

Two themes were nearly always present in interview narratives regarding the sojourners' motivations for travel to Australia. One was the attainment of a cosmopolitan identity through experiences of worldliness outside the 'parochial' national domain. The other was the attainment of English proficiency, not only because it was associated with a desirable subject position, but also because it was believed to bring practical benefits to one's job prospects. Comments such as the following were extremely common among my interviewees, both females and males, young and less young:

Taking diving trips was one of my motivations (for a WH), but also I like living abroad. In Japan, you just can't do things like sharing a house and having a barbeque on the weekend. (Female, 29)

I can't speak English but I love it. I love just listening to it even, so it makes me happy that I can live in an English-speaking environment [in Sydney]. [...] I want to re-live my visit to America, where I first became interested in English. I was so impressed with the big American fridge in the kitchen, a huge super-market... it was as if I was in the movies. (Female, 26)

The number one reason for going to Australia is because I want to speak English. I think it will expand my career options later. (Female, 23)

I had an interest in Germany too, but I chose Australia because, whatever the case, English would become a necessity in the future. (Male, 25)

For all but a few sojourners in my study, mastering English was a powerful motivator behind their decision to go to Australia. This was so prominent that occasionally, the interviewees felt the need to explain, without being prompted, that learning English was *not* their reason for leaving Japan. As the quotes above show, the desire for the English language was not only utilitarian but frequently intertwined with the desire for a cosmopolitan identity. An advertisement for an English school from nearly 20 years ago may still resonate with the sentiments of sojourners: 'If you dream in English, you are a *kokusaijin* (internationalist)' (Nakamura cited in Kubota, 1998, p. 303).

It is hardly a coincidence that attainment of a cosmopolitan identity and English proficiency—major 'positive outcomes' of sojourns in Australia—are widely marketed on the Internet, the main vehicle through which businesses promote WH and other forms of youth international mobility. For example, migration advisors, often called *ryūgaku ējento* (study abroad agents) or *ryūgaku kaunserā* (study abroad counsellors),⁴ sell the WH as a marketable 'product' using typical marketing lines such as the following:

Slip out of Japan to make a long stay abroad. The experience of daily contact with local people is most precious and fulfilling, because it can give you an understanding of not only the language but also a foreign culture. (Last Resort, 2011)⁵

The following is an example of how migration advisors promote English courses:

Improve your career by learning English in Australia! [...] From now on, using English might become a necessity for the working Japanese. As UNIQLO and Rakuten [major corporations and popular employers of graduate job seekers] have done, more companies are expected to move towards adopting English as the common language at workplaces. (Japanese Educational Information Centre, 2011)

In one sense, the overlap of marketing images and individual expectations indicates that both sojourners and migration-related businesses are picking up

on Japan's century-long curiosity and social longing for the cosmopolitan West and the English language. For example, the West was seen as a positive model to emulate in Meiji Japan, mainly due to its scientific, technological and military knowledge. In their quest for creating a modern nation through internationalisation, intellectuals and policymakers of the time began treating English both as a tool of communication to negotiate with intruders on an equal ground and a key to gaining new knowledge and technology (Stanlaw, 2004, pp. 54–55). Since then, waves of the 'English boom' have swept Japan. The end of World War II saw intellectuals as well as ordinary Japanese people become eager to learn English, the language of the Allied occupation force. *Eigo ni Tsuyokunaru Hon* (officially translated as *Strengthening Your English Skills*) became an instant bestseller in 1961 in the lead-up to the Tokyo Olympics and later Expo '70 in Osaka. Later in the mid-1980s, former Prime Minister Nakasone's pledge to internationalise Japan (*kokusaika*) led major corporations to produce bilingual handbooks in their effort to promote an understanding of Japan's 'unique' culture to English-speaking foreigners (Yoshino, 1995, pp. 173–178).

In contemporary popular cultural imaginings, Meiji images of the West as progressive, modern and advanced still persist. For example, an analysis of over 2500 Japanese television advertisements featuring 'foreigners' found that 'white people' were overwhelmingly and consistently portrayed as signifiers of modernity with an 'international flair' (Prieler, 2008, p. 6). The conflation of 'Western', 'cosmopolitan' and 'whiteness' gives Westerners a special status, and the 'parochial' Japanese identity is to be transcended through association with them.⁶ For the majority of interviewees, the English proficiency they sought involved *speaking* like native speakers. The act of cultivation, maintenance and performance of the cosmopolitan identity through English speech occurs in the presence of those who are seen as the 'naturally' cosmopolitan (in other words, Western) as interlocutors. In other words, conversing with Westerners in English functions as recognition from the 'real' English speakers, as a seal of approval. Although Japan has by now surpassed most Western economies, there remains a certain degree of desire to be recognised as an equal. In this thinking, true cosmopolitanism exists outside Japan, which largely excludes the discursive possibility of Japan as a cosmopolitan nation.

Individualisation, Neoliberal Subjectivity and Consumption in Late Modern Japan

Notwithstanding these longstanding social trends, contemporary social characteristics create a specific environment in which youth migration is imagined, experienced and promoted. This section explores interrelationships between individual agency of WHMs and changing social circumstances in Japan as part of a wider shift towards late modernity.

While my interviewees talked about various interests and feelings about their migratory experience and expectations, they all communicated a strong sense of themselves as decision-making individuals with particular desires to bring about

changes in life. This way of describing their experience contributes to, and is a reflection of, the individualistic nature of Japanese youth mobility to Australia. None of the interviewees had children, and all but two undertook their sojourn alone, as opposed to being accompanied by a friend or a partner. As if to mirror such a tendency, promotional materials developed by migration advisors exclusively address the singular 'you'. The following advertisement is typical:

'I want to keep the cost low!' 'I want to enjoy life in the destination!' 'I want to learn the language!' Let us start from listening to your wishes. Based on the [trip's] cost, purpose etc., staff with a great deal of experience in study abroad will suggest unique plans just for you! (Tam International, 2011)

Theorists of late modernity, such as Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, have extensively discussed individualisation of society, whereby individuals' sense of self is no longer bound by birthplace or parents' occupation. The prevailing sense is 'We are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves' (Giddens, 1991, p. 75). This 'freedom' to choose one's life course has not only opened up new opportunities but also new risks associated with navigating uncertain terrain without the guidance of 'tradition' (see Giddens, 1990, 1991 for his discussion on 'risk culture'). Beck further points out that this prominence of individualised lifestyles does not mean risks and opportunities are evenly distributed in late modern society: 'wealth accumulates at the top, risks are at the bottom. To that extent, risks seem to *strengthen*, not to abolish, the class society' (1992, p. 35). In Japan, a stronger emphasis on the 'freedom' to craft individualised and 'unique' life paths had already been evident since at least the mid-1980s, during Japan's shift to a post-Fordist, post-industrial economy. The serious economic downturn in the 1990s exacerbated these tendencies. Dominant social aspirations of the time—embodied in the ideal of the 'salaryman', whose breadwinner role at home was supported by his housewife partner, employer and the state—became less accessible (Brinton, 2008, pp. 27–34) for a generation of Japanese youths. They had to venture into unknown territory, where past expectations and choices were limited, but patterns regarding new pathways had not yet been established.

Since the late 1990s, neoliberal discourse and its emphasis on the role of the self-responsible individual have gained public prominence much more centrally than during the high-growth period or the bubble economy eras. In discussing Japan's future in a globalising world, for example, a report delivered to the then Prime Minister Obuchi in 2000 titled *The Frontier Within* states:

In the twenty-first century, [...] the bedrock imperative is that the Japanese empower themselves as individuals, that they possess a robust individuality. The kind of individual needed is, above all, one who acts freely and with self-responsibility, self-reliantly supporting him- or herself. This tough yet flexible individual takes risks on his or her own responsibility and tackles the challenge of achieving personal goals with a pioneer spirit. (The Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century [hereafter PMC], 2000)

Individuals living in the age of neoliberalism are obliged to view their lives as built by a series of choices, and therefore, they must continuously choose (Rose, 1999, p. 87). This idea perfectly fits the late modern treatment of life as a reflexive project, because individuals are encouraged to continuously analyse and question their conduct – ‘in order to better govern themselves’ (Dean, 1999, p. 12). The sojourners in my study exhibited their understanding that any successes and failures would be brought about by their own doing. The youth’s proactive decision to go to Australia was strongly underlaid by their sense of responsibility for risk management and their entrepreneurial eagerness to create and grab chances. The interview comment below is typical in this regard:

I think everyone has unlimited potential hidden inside. Seeing and experiencing different things, meeting and talking to different people broaden one’s horizons... by taking challenges of living in Australia and improving myself, I want to extend my future possibilities. (Female, 25)

Despite the rhetoric of individual freedom and personal choices, ‘autonomous’ subjects are, in reality, highly influenced by external pressures to adopt certain identities, and consumption plays a powerful role in this regard. In discussing young people in late modernity, Ansell (2008, p. 221) notes that:

[t]ime is supposed to be used in ‘constructive’ activities, the organisation of which is increasingly commodified. Constructing a successful middle-class identity takes time, effort, and money.

As capitalist enterprises seek to maximise consumption, ‘lifestyle choice’ has come to be more or less equated with consumer choice. The market increasingly moulds what lifestyle options become available, and thus highly commodified lifestyle choices become major elements of individual narratives of self (Giddens, 1991, p. 197). As Harvey explains, ‘rampant individualism fits into place as a necessity, though not a sufficient condition, for the transition from Fordism to flexible accumulation’ (Harvey, 1990, p. 171). The service sector accommodates the market need for fast-moving, perpetual consumption in a way that durable material goods cannot (Harvey, 1990, p. 157). As a ‘service product’, youth international mobility has certainly become highly commodified, notably through professionalisation and institutionalisation (Baranowski & Furlough, 2001, p. 6; Simpson, 2005, pp. 449–455, pp. 464–467). In the Japanese context, the consumer market of the post-war period saw a politicised pursuit of individual pleasure as a reaction against the wartime, nationalist repression of individual interests and expressions of personal aesthetics (Oguma cited in Satsuka, 2009, p. 75). The market flourished during the subsequent economic growth of the 1960s and 1970s and has since shifted from material goods to quality experience (Kelly, 1992, pp. 78–79). As an attractive experience one can purchase, international mobility gained popularity.

It is no surprise then that the migration industry is one of the fastest-growing international businesses (Castles, 2007, p. 361). The migration industry is ‘a broad

spectrum of people who earn their livelihood by organizing migratory movements' (Castles & Miller, 2009, p. 201). In Japan, it comprises of hundreds of migration-related businesses, such as the brokers mentioned above, guidebook publishers, transport operators and accommodation providers. Michael P. Smith argues that the rise of new forms of mediation and brokerage services is a major aspect of contemporary transnationalism that breaks from the past and considers the extent unprecedented as to how such services have become organised, often globally (2005, pp.411–412).

The Japanese migration industry has become prominent with the growth of the tourism market in general and independent forms of youth travel in particular. During the 1980s, when the tourism sector grew and diversified considerably, migration advisor businesses were few. Instead, independent travellers primarily relied on guidebooks, such as the very popular *Chikyū no Arukikata*. This situation had not changed much in the mid-1990s, as a survey on WHMs in Australia revealed that guidebooks were still a common method of research concerning Australia for Japanese respondents (Murphy, 1995, p. 33). Since then, the marketing of international travel has been conducted on a much higher level. The range and types of migration 'consumer products' offered have multiplied over the years, creating greater revenue-making opportunities. Within a matter of a few decades, migration service provision has become a multimillion-dollar industry in Japan.⁷ WHMs are an integral part of their 'client base', and all my interviewees bought a range of products or services even before arriving in Australia, typically valued at a few hundred to several thousand dollars.

The sojourners I interviewed and the advertisements of the migration agencies introduced so far emphasise enthusiasm to improve individual abilities – whether it was for a newly improved sense of self, better English proficiency or broadening career choices. However, they also hint that self-improvement is *necessary* in the face of a potential threat posed by globalisation. In particular, mastering English is often portrayed as a weapon against the inevitable dominance of the foreign language in Japan, especially in the workplace. This sense of imminent threat has been shared by policymakers in since the onset of the 1990s recession. For example, the aforementioned Obuchi Government's report states that:

English has become the international lingua franca, a process accelerated by the Internet and globalization. So long as English is effectively the language of international discourse, there is no alternative to familiarizing ourselves with it within Japan.⁸ (PMC, 2000)

In contrast to the past 'internationalisation' (see Introduction of this volume), 'globalisation' (*gurōbaruka*) has quite a different connotation in Japan. Broadly speaking, globalisation is about 'changing economic relationships accompanied by the increasingly rapid and intensified circulation of finance, commodities, people, signs and symbols' (Mackie, 2007). Japanese policymakers began using this term to replace 'internationalisation' in the late 1980s, at a time when Japan's economic competitiveness started to weaken, and policymakers and top management

figures in private companies alike began viewing globalisation as a threat to the national economy (Hamada, 2006, p. 141). This is despite the fact that Japan was very much implicated in the rise of transnational corporations and other economic forces, which are partly responsible for the current globalisation of the world. On the surface, Japan's interests in internationalisation and globalisation are similar, because both are motivated by a nationalistic concern for becoming and remaining an important and respected nation. But they are also different, because while the discourse of internationalisation in the 1980s was an expression of Japan's confidence as a rising world power, the discourse of globalisation since the early 1990s is an expression of fear that its power and influence might be diminishing. There is no longer a desire to 'Japanise' the world: Japan's survival rests on 'globalising' itself (i.e. to fit itself into the 'global standard') as well as becoming self-reliant in order to remain in the game.⁹

Many workers who entered the labour market since the start of the recession share a sense of surviving in a trying environment. One of the major and most brutal effects of Japan's economic decline was its impact on youth employment, and for this reason, these workers, coined 'the lost generation', have come to be associated with the term the 'employment ice age' (*shūshoku hyōgaki*). This colloquial phrase conveys the difficulty of finding attractive, or often any, full-time graduate positions in the tight recruitment market of this era. Youth unemployment rates shot up in the 1990s. Many young graduates were forced to take any permanent jobs that were available, commonly causing a sense of job mismatch (Honda, 2004). In 2000, 36.5% of university graduates left their workplace within three years of commencing graduate employment, which was an increase from 23.7% in 1992 (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2012). Businesses commonly reduced or completely froze recruitment of new graduates as a cost-cutting strategy, as well as shifting the weight of the workforce from costly permanent positions to 'flexible' casual workers who are cheap and easily dismissed (Nishitani, 2003; Rebick, 2005). In February 1990, 19.9% of males and 20.7% of females between the ages of 15 and 24 worked casually. By February 2001, the figures rose to 41.8% and 42.3%, respectively (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2001).

One of the trends that emerged from this mix of circumstances was an increase in changing employers. In my data, about one in five interviewees left their full-time, permanent jobs within three years of being hired as university or high school graduates. Others held the same job for a number of years, sometimes nearly a decade, but lack of fulfilment led to a desire for new and exciting opportunities abroad. For example, one interviewee (male, 28) left his film-editing job to go to Australia as a WHM because he wanted work experience in an English-speaking environment ('I've been interested in speaking English since I was in junior high school. I've always thought it's cool [*kakkoii natte itsumo omottemashita ne*]').

Overall, the interviewees' narratives indicate that these young people proactively responded to wider social and cultural changes. Be it for the purpose of career building or seeking the excitement of being associated with the 'West' as the imagined centre of global modernity, the image of sojourns in Australia

offered a sense of hope for acquiring a useful skill and social prestige through which self-transformation might be possible. The migration industry's promotion of WH resonates with these young people because it exploits the image of becoming a cosmopolitan person with cultural and language skills. The egalitarian marketing discourse that promotes cosmopolitanism-for-purchase to every aspiring individual, and 'success stories' are abundant on websites and print publications produced by the migration industry. The capacity to access a new life abroad, or to turn such experience into one's career advantage, however, is not enjoyed by every returning WHM.

In Search of 'A Job Where I Can Use My English'

Despite the attractiveness of WHs and the cosmopolitan experience and skills obtained overseas, there were difficulties associated with obtaining a cosmopolitan job upon returning to Japan. Before leaving for Australia, the majority of WHMs in my study sought direct experience of the West and its associated image of a cosmopolitan life. Having returned to Japan, this aspect of their WH was still something they highly valued and appreciated:

It was great to have met people from all over the world. I shared a room with a Korean girl, and made many friends at my English school. I always wanted to make foreign friends. (Female, 25)

I feel I've now seen the world out there. ... When I was younger, I really idolised America. But Australia looks to Britain and other directions. Through my experience there, I felt there is more to the world than the American view. (Female, 32)

However, starting a cosmopolitan career based on their new experience frequently proved difficult. English language proficiency is one barrier. Typically, the WHMs had elementary to intermediate levels of English when they arrived in Australia, but as many of them realised later, their WH experiences were often insufficient to dramatically improve their language skills. Over 90% of my interviewees reported that their WH experience did not result in fluency, and many of them expressed regret about not having studied harder. For example, an interviewee called Masanori (male, 32), a four-year university graduate who spent a year in Australia, self-assessed that he had a 'barely existent' level of English proficiency at the time of arriving in Australia. Immediately after returning to Japan, he achieved a score of 500/1000 on TOEIC (based on reading skills and listening comprehension), which he thought was a great improvement. According to a popular website promoting English language learning (Eigotown, 2012), 600 is the level at which one can order food at a restaurant, presumably by using grammatically correct and culturally appropriate sentences. On the other hand, these scores do not always communicate useful linguistic ability. Kaori (female, 32) received a TOEIC score of 820 after her WH, but she reported that *haken* ('temp') agents still bluntly told her that her proficiency level was 'useless'. She lacked computer and other skills,

and there were plenty of others who had scores of over 900 and still struggled to find jobs. Two months of disciplined door knocking and registering with numerous *haken* agencies was beginning to wear on Kaori:

For the first three weeks, I definitely wanted to find a job where I could use my English, but now I'm starting to give up on the idea. I might have been more advantaged if I had work experience at a Japanese trading company or something, but now, I'm starting to think any job would do.

Furthermore, Japanese employers who offer cosmopolitan white-collar jobs view language ability as merely a tool for accomplishing the required tasks, rather than a qualification in itself. This attitude is effectively summarised in the words of the recruitment officer of a major foreign-affiliated international freight company:

I often receive inquiries from people who say 'I'd like a job where I can use English' (*eigo ga tsukaeru shigoto ga shitai*). My usual answer is 'English is used in all sections of the company, so it is a simple requirement. By the way, what else can you do?' (laughs). (Space ALC, 2008)

For the majority of WHMs, the question 'what can you do at work by using English?' proved a difficult one to answer, because their English learning focused on everyday usage and attaining a cosmopolitan identity and was not linked to concrete career plans. Rather than English proficiency itself, WHMs usually understood the benefits of learning a new language in a foreign environment as improving their personal qualities. Comments such as the below emphasise an increased level of confidence, the ability to take the initiative and broadened horizons:

I've become more confident about my ability to take on new challenges. I have more courage to speak up now. (Male, 26)

I supported myself in Australia by busking and later travelled in Europe. So I know I can make a life for myself anywhere in this world. (Male, 30)

These accounts resonate with the findings of a larger survey conducted in 2004, which concerned Japanese nationals and their work experience abroad (Overseas Vocational Training Association, 2004). When asked about the benefits of working overseas, 81% of the 1150 WHMs in this study who had lived in Australia and other WH destinations responded by saying it had given them a cosmopolitan sensibility (*kokusai kankaku*), the ability for cross-cultural adaptation (*ibunka tekiō nōryoku*), and a proactive attitude (*sekkyokusei*), while 79% said it had given them communication skills. Other high-ranking answers included a broader perspective (*habahiroi shiya*) (78%) and perseverance and endurance (*nintairyoku, gamanzuyosa*) (72%). By contrast, the same survey shows that more than 10% of these former WHMs said that their foreign language skills had not improved at all, while 48.7% indicated 'modest' improvement, defined by the survey designer as an

increase of approximately 50 TOEIC points.¹⁰ My research in Australia highlighted the same contrast between satisfaction with improvements in certain personal qualities and insufficient gain in English-language skills.

My interviewees were disappointed that the personal qualities developed through their exposure to a cross-cultural environment did not seem urgently sought after by employers. For example, Ikezawa Naomi, a 'global career counsellor', explains in her online column that domestic employers perceive young Japanese job seekers with study abroad experience as 'good at asserting themselves, but poor at being humble and cooperative' (Ikezawa, 2012). A similar opinion was voiced by a 'career expert' at a careers expo in Tokyo, which specifically targeted Japanese university graduates with experience of studying abroad. At an open seminar on interview skills and 'impression management', participants were told to maintain a good posture, sunny smiles and appearance (including appropriate hairstyles, makeup and dress styles). According to this expert, it was of utmost importance to present oneself as a clean and cheerful candidate who thrives on adversity and works cooperatively as part of a group. The conclusion of this seminar was the same as the routinely given message at other seminars targeting young job seekers without overseas experience: they had to ensure they possessed suitable Japanese-language skills for the business context. During fieldwork, several interviewees reported similar opinions among employers, colleagues and 'temp' agency staff:

When I made a mistake with *keigo* [polite language], a senior colleague sarcastically said 'Are you one of those kids who grew up abroad (*kikokushijo*)?' (Female, 32)

I was drinking water out of a plastic bottle during my break, and the older woman I work with told me off, saying 'People who've been overseas (*kaigaigaeri*) have bad manners'. (Female, 28)

In essence, 'young cosmopolitans' are required to re-train themselves as 'proper' Japanese to fit into the workplace on their return to Japan. This is especially the case at small- or medium-sized companies¹¹ where my interviewees tended to be employed. While most companies fall into this category, small- to medium-sized enterprises have a lower status compared to large, 'branded' corporations. These smaller companies are unlikely to favour the cutting-edge, imported management practices such as 'diversity-management' or employees' cosmopolitan skills. Instead, these employers tend to value 'extra' skills such as cross-cultural awareness and cosmopolitan sensibility only after their employees prove themselves as 'proper Japanese workers'. This frustrating reality became painfully clear to one of my interviewees during job-hunting:

I really feel I learnt a lot in Australia, and I was pretty confident about my ability to endure difficulties and come out well. But I realise that all this means nothing if I want a job in Japan. (Female, 32)

My empirical research showed that despite the expectation that overseas experience would make the WHMs attractive employees in jobs that used English, this was often not the case, because the cosmopolitan personal qualities WHMs cultivated through their experience in Australia were seldom valued by potential employers. Instead, employers sought work traits that were more commonly associated with in-country experience, such as refined politeness strategies, group harmony and previous educational and work experience.

Cosmopolitan Jobs: The Gap Between Ideal and Reality

Not all WHMs were unable to find work, but those who did manage to obtain a coveted cosmopolitan job were not guaranteed satisfaction. In fact, the reality of such jobs often further increased the sense of frustration and disappointment. Some of my interviewees found work in the travel and hospitality industries, holding positions such as tourism agents, airline ground staff, and help desk staff at international events and hotels, all of which typically absorb jobseekers with moderate English language skills. In addition, these service jobs more readily accepted candidates without previous experience for entry-level jobs. Kōji (male, 30) worked for a discount flight-ticketing agent with a total of 12 employees. In our conversation, he evaluated his work life as ‘not too bad’, but he used English for administrative transactions only, and his daily tasks were ‘basically office work with lots of stressful phone conversations with customers. Nothing glamorous’.

Maki (female, 28), who worked as ground staff for a domestic airline on a one-year contract, also complained of the routine nature of much of her work:

I wanted to work as ground staff because I wanted to look after customers from all over the world. It looked like a really cool job. But in reality, I hardly used English while working. Actually, I hardly *talked*. It was like working on an assembly line rather than doing ‘customer service’.

Disillusioned, she did not seek to extend her contract and, at the time of our interview, had just begun working for a small gift shop in her neighbourhood as a way to earn money while thinking about her next move. Kengo (male, 25) gained a job as a migration agent within the first few months of returning, at a migration agency where he had had a friendly relationship with the company director. Upon realising that Kengo was looking for a job, the director offered him an interview for a newly vacant position of an ‘Australian WH specialist’. At the time of our interview, he had worked in this capacity for roughly a year. Kengo portrayed himself as more akin to a nostalgic WHM with a yearning for returning than a migration ‘expert’:

People say it’s a good job because it’s permanent and I can use English and my experience in Australia. But ... the pay is low and I do overtime like everyone else. And anyway, it’s not something I wanted to do. I’m sending people to Australia everyday, but I’m the one who wants to go back. (laughs).

Table 2.1 Job advertisement for study abroad agency staff in Japan

Occupation type	Administrative staff for a study abroad agency
Job description	Consultation with customers regarding study abroad; associated administrative tasks
The applicants need to	1. Have the experience of (or interest in) study abroad 2. TOEIC score of approximately 700 or more 3. Basic computing skills (Microsoft Word, Excel etc)
Hourly wage	From 900 yen

The migration industry offers a bleak reality for job seekers like Kengo. For example, the following Table 2.1 was found on a Japanese website, Space ALC (2007):

From this description, a sobering picture emerges of the irony associated with the proposed opportunities associated with WHMs. Despite the fact that migration agencies regularly feature glamorous images of cosmopolitan jobs for marketing purposes, these companies themselves offer only menial positions and wages similar to other low-status casual work, such as waiting tables at family restaurants.

It was clear that in the Japanese job market of the late 2000s, the louder the marketing drum was banged for image-based cosmopolitanism, the greater the chances of disappointment for returned WHMs. This gap between expectations and reality contributed to an anti-climactic feeling for the individual who successfully gained a cosmopolitan job. While the marketing materials of the migration industry frequently featured fictional stories of young characters who dream of becoming cosmopolitan workers, the details of job descriptions and day-to-day tasks were seldom explicit. My research offers evidence that these cosmopolitan claims have been largely untested to date and that they do not always reflect the reality of young returnees. Despite the promise of prestige and social advantage associated with cosmopolitanism, many of the stories of returned WHMs resulted in career outcomes which were unfulfilling. This disappointing result is both paradoxical and damaging to the individual WHM, especially where increasing their access to a cosmopolitan job was a primary motivation for their international mobility in the first place.

Conclusion

This chapter examined WHMs’ experience of return migration by situating it at the intersection of globally occurring social and cultural changes and prevalent social trends in recessionary Japan. As individualised youths living in a neoliberalised, late modern Japan, the sojourners in my study took a proactive decision to improve themselves and their life chances. In responding to long-held Japanese social longing for mastering the English language and obtaining other attributes of the ‘cosmopolitan West’, these young people’s personal expectations and migratory desires resonated with marketed images. My research critiques

dominant discourses surrounding internationalisation in Japan by showing that while migration is shaped by wider social change, it can also support the existing social structures and values in certain domains, such as consumption of cosmopolitanism and the youth labour market. I echo the warning of May and Cooper (1995, pp. 78, 79–80), who argue that the increased visibility of images and possibilities for the self-actualisation of identity does not necessarily mean their equal availability in society. As they point out, the actualisation of the ‘self-authoring subject’ requires resources, which are not equally accessible to all (May & Cooper, 1995, p. 79). The diversification of life courses in Japan, as well as other individualised late modern societies, may create new experiences and possibilities. Nevertheless, as my analysis has demonstrated, young Japanese’s access to socially desirable identity through transnational mobility is greatly affected by factors such as difficult upward career mobility, increasing job insecurity and lack of alternatives to working under unfavourable conditions for financial necessity.

Neoliberal discourse upholds the capable, entrepreneurial self as the most admirable model to which individuals aspire, and the migration industry invites such individuals to gain experience abroad to lift their social and economic standing in Japan. Furthermore, the government and the private sector alike are increasingly pushing for the development of ‘global human capital’ through experience abroad, including the Japan Business Federation’s *Proposal Towards Developing Global Human Resource* (2011) and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology’s *Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development* (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, 2012). Their frequent assertion is that Japanese youths with English language and cross-cultural abilities will internationalise Japan, and this in turn will save the nation from the threat of negative outcomes associated with globalisation. However, such a call for internationalising Japan too often overlooks the fact that individuals stand on an uneven ground when it comes to realising cosmopolitan dreams. Rather than considering life’s risks as unfairly distributed and beyond their control, the sojourners in my study resonated with the discourse of self-responsibility by rationalising their disappointment, frustration and ‘failures’ as due to individual shortcomings, such as insufficient efforts or the need to change strategies. Under these circumstances, the young people’s sense of individual success and fulfilment, as well as that of social contribution through paid labour, remained goals yet to be achieved.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is a reprint of “Uneven cosmopolitanism: Japanese working holiday makers in Australia and the ‘lost decade’” by Kumiko Kawashima, originally published in *Internationalising Japan: Discourse and practice* (pp. 106–124), edited by Jeremy Breaden, Stacey Steele, and Carolyn S. Stevens. Routledge. © 2014 selection and editorial material, Jeremy Breaden, Stacey Steele and Carolyn S. Stevens; individual chapters, the contributors. Reproduced with permission of The Licensor through PLSclear. Portions of the original have been previously published in Kawashima (2010).

- 2 The statistical data were derived from the following dataset on the Australian government's website: Department of Home Affairs, *Working Holiday Maker Program*, last updated January 30, 2025, <https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/visa-working-holiday-maker>.
- 3 In 2012, there were 30 participating countries in the WH scheme. However, there is no overarching organisation that administrates it, and each country assesses visa applications according to its own rules. Singapore has its own Working Holiday Programme, which is not reciprocal and therefore not part of the WH scheme discussed here.
- 4 Despite what their job titles suggest, *ryūgaku ējento* (study abroad agents) and *ryūgaku kaunserā* (study abroad counsellors) also deal with non-student mobility such as the WH and volunteering. Those migration advisors are usually not qualified to give formal legal advice, therefore I distinguish them from legally qualified migration agents (*imin bengoshi*).
- 5 This and all other translations are by the author except where noted.
- 6 For a discussion on the ethnicised and gendered social position Japanese WHMs and students occupy in Australia, their imagined 'West', and its impact on their identities, see Kawashima (2012).
- 7 For example, the estimated total revenue of study abroad broker businesses was nearly 30 billion yen in 2007 (Marketing Data Book, 2011).
- 8 The first Minister of Education Mori Arinori in the Meiji era made a more extreme statement: '[O]ur meager language, which can never be of any use outside of our small islands, is doomed to yield to the domination of the English tongue, especially when the power of steam and electricity shall have pervaded the land...all reason suggests its disuse.' (Mori cited in Stanlaw, 2004, p. 65). However, such sentiment never led to the official adoption of English in Japan.
- 9 Some economists state that, in fact, Japan's trade strengthened in the 2000s at a faster rate, especially accelerating corporate foreign investments in Asia, than in the previous decades (Hamada, 2006, pp. 141–142). However, whether or not Japan's actual trade power increased is not a significant point for the purpose of my argument. It is the *perception*—that Japan's overall economic power is declining and that external forces are threatening the country's future—that is relevant.
- 10 Percentages are my calculations based on the number of WHM respondents in the survey.
- 11 According to the Small and Medium Enterprise Agency (2012), small businesses (*shōkibo kigyō*) are defined as having fewer than 5–20 employees, and small-to-medium businesses (*chūshō kigyō*) are defined as having fewer than 50–300 employees, or alternatively, as being capitalised at 50–300 million yen (the numbers depend on the industries).

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3 Japanese Student Mobility to Australia

Distortions in Policy and Practice

Jeremy Breaden

Introduction

There is widespread acknowledgement that the continued health of the Japan-Australia relationship hinges on the cultivation of young Japanese and Australians with deep experience of one another's societies. To date, however, this acknowledgement has not been matched by any significant increase in student mobility from Japan to Australia, suggesting a substantial gap between policy and practice. This chapter explores the nature and consequences of this gap from the standpoint of a stakeholder group intrinsically concerned with bridging it: international education agents whose business is to connect Japanese students with educational programs in Australia.

The use of the term 'international education agent' aligns with general usage both in the international education industry and the academic literature, referring simply to 'individuals or organisations that help students enrol in universities abroad and assist universities in recruiting international students' (Feng & Horta, 2021, p. 249). Through interviews with such agents, the chapter highlights creative attempts to capitalise on cordial bilateral relations, demands for global talent within Japan, and the growing recruitment appetite of Australian educational providers, while also managing the expectations of student-clients regarding the experiential value of study in Australia, expectations which are sometimes coloured by outdated tropes of Australia as a safe, friendly and affordable option. International education agents are one crucial link in the chain of Japan-Australia student mobility, and exploring their views adds to our understanding of the distorted and ramified nature of Japan-Australia migratory flows and the importance of in-depth investigation into how these flows are mediated.

This chapter focuses on student mobility in the narrow sense of students coming to Australia primarily for the purpose of pursuing formal studies at an Australian educational institution. In theory at least, these are the ones who will most easily move to the second 'step' of the migration process, leveraging the skills and credentials they have gained through education in order to pursue work and long-term residence in Australia (Hawthorne, 2012). Students may also develop personal networks and perspectives on Australia in the course of their studies, which form the foundations for long-term engagement with and residence in Australia. Study

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in Australia is thus potentially—and regardless of the individual’s intentions at the time—a formative phase in the migration process. At the same time, it is important to note that there are many other categories of Australia-bound Japanese sojourners and migrants engaged in informal learning activities, including working holiday makers and marriage migrants. These are beyond the scope of this chapter but are discussed elsewhere in this volume (see Chapters 2 and 4).

Below, I begin by establishing the relevant policy context in both countries at the time of writing, highlighting an increasingly positive confluence of factors ranging from strategic cooperation to the human resource needs of large Japanese employers. I contrast these trends with the data on outbound mobility from Japan to Australia which, in line with a long-term global trend, indicates decline, or at least stagnation, in numbers across the board, with the notable exception of very short-term study programs. I then turn to examine international education agents specifically, highlighting key academic insights into the roles and functions of agents globally and evaluating their empirical significance by reference to data on the shape of the agent industry in Japan. I then introduce and discuss my primary data: interviews with ten Japanese agents active in the field of Australia-bound student mobility. Rather than explaining the abovementioned gap between policy and practice, my findings highlight how it is managed—and, arguably, maintained—by agents’ work in negotiating multiple interests, structural constraints, and shifting narratives.

Background: Japan-Australia Relations and Student Mobility

The elevation of the Japan-Australia relationship to the status of a Special Strategic Partnership (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014) has reinvigorated policymakers’ awareness of the importance of cultivating young Japanese and Australians with deep experience and familiarity with the counterpart society. Bilateral educational policy dialogues and research collaboration forums are now held regularly (MEXT, 2024), and the importance of education to the relationship is frequently reiterated by both countries’ leaders (see e.g. MOFA, 2024). Government materials tend to position education within a broad and deep network of grassroots ties between the two countries. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s *Japan Country Brief*, for example, points to over 100 sister city relationships, platforms for people-to-people exchange such as the Australia-Japan Foundation, and the healthy flows of tourists in both directions (DFAT, n.d.). From the Australian standpoint, another key consideration is the commercial value of international students. International fee revenue is a crucial element of the funding model for higher education institutions (HEIs), and international education is said to be Australia’s fourth-largest export industry, with an estimated worth of AUD\$51 billion in 2024 (Department of Education, 2025a). The ‘Japan market’ is especially attractive to education providers and policymakers in Australia as they seek to diversify international student intakes and capitalise on Australia’s strategic alignments in the Asia Pacific (Department of Education, 2025b).

The policy context on the Japanese side is also noteworthy. Since at least the early 2010s, employer groups and their allies in the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry have been vocal in their calls for graduates with international experience and associated linguistic and intercultural skills to support the ongoing globalisation of Japanese business (Breaden, 2015; Yonezawa & Shimmi, 2017). Despite ongoing criticism of their instrumentalist and sometimes ethnocentric nature (Burgess, 2015; Kato & Kukimoto, 2016), these calls have added new momentum to government initiatives to expand outbound student mobility both through institutional linkages and support for individual students (Ota, 2018).

Acknowledging the pressing need for more young Japanese to study abroad appears to have become almost obligatory in high-level policy forums. Recent examples at the time of writing this chapter include recommendations regarding the expansion of public and private sector support for outbound students in the Cabinet Office's 2024 Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform (Cabinet Office, 2024) and the J-MIRAI (Japan-Mobility and Internationalisation: Re-engaging and Accelerating Initiative for future generations) initiative launched in April 2023 by the Council for the Creation of Future Education, chaired by the Prime Minister, which positioned raising the number and proportion of Japanese students studying abroad on a long-term (degree-seeking or equivalent) basis as a key pillar of its strategy. The initiative aims to have 150,000 students studying abroad long-term by 2033 (compared to 62,000 pre-pandemic) (Cabinet Secretariat, 2023). In an important parallel with the policy framing of international education in Australia, these recommendations are increasingly justified in terms of Japan's geopolitical situation, rather than simply employers' need for global talent (Kakuchi, 2023). Australia, with its strong orientation toward inbound international education and its close strategic alignment with Japan, would appear extremely well-equipped to meet Japan's pressing need to boost student mobility.

To date, however, this expectation has not materialised in any significant increase in Australia-bound Japanese student numbers. The Australian Government's Department of Education records 93,404 Japanese nationals studying at Australian education institutions in 2024, compared to 112,950 in 2015 and 182,366 in 2005 (Department of Education, 2025c). A similar picture is painted by the survey of international education agents that are members of the Japan Association of Overseas Studies (JAOS) (discussed in the next section of this chapter), which reports 16,333 Japanese students enrolled in Australia in 2017, 15,012 in 2019, and 12,262 in 2023 (JAOS, 2024). The Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), which gathers data from Japanese higher education institutions regarding their students' international mobility, reports 6,187 students in Australia in 2022, 9,584 in 2019, and 9,485 in 2016 (JASSO, 2024a). While the most recent figures may evidence a delayed recovery from the pandemic, it is clear from each of these different datasets that the long-term trend is not upward.

The trend can be understood in the context of a protracted global decline in outbound Japanese student mobility. Japan is the only Asian country examined in UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report that experienced a drop in

outbound student numbers between 1996, when there were 62,324 Japanese students seeking tertiary degrees abroad, and 2016, when there were 30,179 (UNESCO, 2018, p. 6). In UNESCO data on outbound student mobility ratio—the number of students from a given country studying abroad, expressed as a percentage of total tertiary enrolment in that country—Japan languishes at around 0.8% (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2024).

Despite the common framing of this decline as evidence of waning appetite for international and intercultural experiences among Japanese youth, the reasons are complex and difficult to measure objectively. Economics are undoubtedly a factor. In the context of a growing crisis in the affordability of education generally for Japanese young people and their families (Breaden, 2021), stagnating wages and a weaker yen have produced a sharp rise in the relative cost of studying outside Japan. Along with economic uncertainty comes a preference for ‘safe’ study and work pathways. The orthodox graduate recruitment cycle, which demands intensive activity by students in their penultimate and final years of study, has been identified as a deterrent to long-term study abroad, as students make rational decisions to forego time overseas rather than missing employment opportunities (Ota & Shimmi, 2019).

It is important to note, however, that the change is not an absolute decline in outbound mobility but rather a significant shift from long-term to short-term options. JASSO’s figures, which, as noted above, capture student mobility only among students enrolled in Japanese HEIs, illustrate this shift well: in 2004, around 32% of outbound students studied in programs less than one month in duration (JASSO, 2006); by 2022, the proportion was 56% (JASSO, 2024a). Meanwhile, the proportion in programs of six months or more declined from 37 to 19%. This shift is manifestly connected with the affordability issue noted above but is also driven by the mainstreaming of short-term programs in Japanese higher education institutions. As part of their internationalisation efforts, and with government incentives as noted above, HEIs have increasingly built short-term study abroad into their curricula on a for-credit basis: a highly attractive proposition for students who in the past may have been in a position to contemplate a longer alternative. Theoretically, a short-term experience can serve as a stepping stone to future long-term study, but there is scant evidence of this progression resulting from the recent rise in short-term study abroad in Japan.

From a migration perspective, however, there is also strong evidence of a positive correlation between study abroad experience and motivation to work overseas. In the 2000s and 2010s—just at the time the study abroad decline was most marked—Sanno University conducted a widely publicised nationwide survey of new recruits in the Japanese workforce (approximately 800 valid responses each survey round; Sanno University, 2018). While the most concerning and therefore widely reported statistic from the survey was always that the majority of new recruits (60% in the 2017 survey) stated that they had no desire at all to work overseas, just as notable was that recruits with any previous study abroad experience were far more willing to contemplate work overseas than those who did not (77% versus 30% in the 2017 survey).

Notwithstanding the many important details and caveats omitted for reasons of space, the contrast emerging from the foregoing overview could not be starker. On the one hand is Japan's positive governmental and business discourse on student mobility generally, bolstered in the case of outbound mobility to Australia by the unprecedentedly good health of the bilateral relationship and considerable efforts by Australia's inbound international education industry. On the other is the reality of decline or at least stagnation in the number of Japanese students seeking educational credentials in Australia, notwithstanding the popularity of short-term experiential programs. There appears to be a substantial disjuncture between the high-level policy arena, the value proposition of Australian education to Japanese students, and the decisions made (or not made) by those students themselves. Below, I explore this disjuncture through the lens of international education agents, on the basis that their position as key players in the infrastructure of international student mobility can afford valuable insights into the interaction of the factors identified above and, by extension, the dynamics of Japan-Australia migration more broadly.

The Education Agent as an Actor in Japan-Australia Student Mobility

What exactly do international education agents do, and why are they important in the context of international education and migration? There is a significant body of international literature which furnishes nuanced answers to these questions. In their introduction to a major edited collection focusing specifically on agents, Nikula et al. (2023) present a range of quantitative and qualitative evidence of the 'pivotal role agents play in the international student recruitment process', demonstrating how deeply they are embedded in the infrastructure of international higher education, especially in the case of student mobility from the key international student 'source countries' in Asia to higher education systems in the Western Anglosphere (pp. 6–7). Agents have achieved this level of embeddedness as a result of the continued existence of informational and procedural gaps between the two key stakeholders in international education, who are also agents' key clients: HEIs on the one hand, and students on the other.

First, from a student perspective, agents serve as a source of information, advice and facilitation as they embark on their study abroad journey. Agents help students (and often their parents and other sponsors) to identify suitable programs and institutions, understand application requirements, and navigate the often-complex admissions process. This includes assisting students with tasks such as selecting suitable programs based on their academic background and goals, understanding how their academic credentials will be assessed, and actually producing application documents (Hagedorn & Zhang, 2010; Xiao & Hagedorn, 2023). Research examining the interaction between agents and their student-clients often describes agents as 'cultural mediators', navigating the complexities of different higher education systems and modelling communication styles and academic expectations which students will encounter in their new educational environment (Robinson-Pant &

Magyar, 2018). They unpack complex processes and help students filter and contextualise information relevant to their personal situation, deploying a range of ‘technical and relational’ skills that imbue processes with social meaning and value (Chen, 2023, pp. 65–66). While agents’ work continues to focus primarily on the application and enrolment stages, they are also increasingly ‘interested in student success’ post-enrolment (Chang, 2023, p. 26) and may maintain relationships with the students they have assisted long after they arrive in the destination country. This can include not only assisting with logistical challenges such as housing but also disseminating information, providing ongoing advice, furnishing platforms for interaction and discussion among students who have used their services, and even facilitating alumni interaction (Alzougool et al., 2013; Chang, 2023). Notably, agents may also draw on their own experiences as international students both when providing advice to their student-clients and when building partnerships with HEIs (Collins, 2012, p. 154).

For HEIs, agents act as a vital recruitment channel, particularly in countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom, where, as a result of major funding structure changes beginning in the 1980s, international student fee revenue has become central to institutional viability. These HEIs’ appetite for international student recruitment, coupled with a lack of in-country knowledge and resources, cultivated a reliance on the services of agents to market their programs effectively. Agents provide HEIs with an on-ground presence and offer valuable insights into local trends and student preferences (Huang et al., 2016). They can help HEIs generate inquiries and enrolments and target recruitment to specific programs, as well as offering valuable market intelligence on topics such as emerging student preferences and competitor activity (Collins, 2012; Nikula & West, 2023).

Some researchers overtly emphasise the commercial character of agents’ activities and the transactional nature of their relationships. Nikula and Kivistö (2018), for example, define agents succinctly as ‘institution-contracted, for-profit actors assisting in recruiting international students in exchange for compensation paid by the institution’ (p. 539). These commercial motives underpin the ‘ambivalent reputation’ of agents as both facilitators and exploiters of international student mobility (Thieme, 2017, p. 244).

To mitigate risks of agents prioritising profits over students’ and HEIs’ best interests, most HEIs exercise control mechanisms including sharing of best practice, codes of conduct and contractual governance (Huang et al., 2016, 2022). Japanese government agencies and consumer advocacy groups have also recently bolstered their advice regarding the selection and use of international education agent services (JASSO, 2024b).

One way of summarising these multifaceted roles of and values attached to agents is through Xiang and Lindquist’s (2014) concept of ‘migration infrastructure’: ‘the systematically interlinked technologies, institutions, and actors that facilitate and condition mobility’ (p. 122). Xiang and Lindquist identify different ‘logics of operation’ in migration—commercial, regulatory, technological, humanitarian, and social – which ‘collide with and contradict one another’ (p. 124) as

they shape migratory activity. While the dominant logic of agents is commercial, they must also interact with evolving regulatory environments, educational policies and labour market demands, as well as be attuned to social and cultural dimensions of students' decision-making. Agents thus offer a window into how discourses of international education and migration at both local and global levels are constructed, mediated and enacted.

Despite this manifest importance, the shape and size of the international education agent industry are extremely difficult to measure, mainly owing to the fragmented structures through which it operates. Organisations of all sizes, from multinational corporations to sole traders, are involved in the provision of agent-type services such as advising students and assisting them with application procedures, and such services are routinely integrated with other lines of business such as travel agency services, immigration consultancy, language training and even post-study job placement services. In Japan, the widely used market reports produced by the Yano Institute (2024) classify international education agents as a 'peripheral business' arm of the 'language business industry' which also includes language testing services and translation/interpreting services in addition to its mainstays of language schools and publishers of language study materials. The Yano Institute (2024) reports that agents contribute 21 billion yen to this industry's total revenue of over 700 billion yen, while also acknowledging the difficulties of classification and quantification.

These difficulties are further reflected in the absence of statutory regulation or licensing of agents at either the national or the prefectural level in Japan. The agent industry, so far as such a thing exists, is organised and self-regulated mainly through the Japan Association of Overseas Studies (JAOS, n.d.), which also operates a Certified Study Abroad Counselor qualification and contributes to a voluntary accreditation scheme operated under government guidance by the Japan Commission for the Regulation of Overseas Study Services (J-CROSS, n.d.). However, at the time of writing, JAOS membership stood at 41, and only 19 agents were accredited by J-CROSS. These publicly visible elements surely constitute little more than the tip of the industry's iceberg.

In terms of usage of agent services in Japan, JASSO surveys of returning outbound students have found that 20% of students obtained information on study options from an agent and 24% enlisted their help with application procedures, while 27% used study abroad information and advisory services—which include but are not limited to agents—to solve problems they faced while abroad (JASSO, n.d.). Notably, these percentages increased to 34%, 40% and 35%, respectively, among those studying independently of institutionally organised and sponsored programs such as university student exchange and study abroad. This compares with the QS Global International Student Survey, which usually finds that between 20 and 25% of students planning to be internationally mobile have consulted an agent, and another 15–20% plan to (QS, 2024). Even from this incomplete and inconsistent statistical picture, it seems safe to conclude that a significant minority of students rely on the support of agents in the processes leading to study abroad, and that the proportion is higher among independent students.

Methodology: Agent-Mediated Narratives of Japan-Australia Student Mobility

Blessed with an attractive natural environment, high standard of living, and good public safety, Australia is a popular place for study abroad. Almost all of its 41 universities are national or public and offer a high standard of education, with 95% of institutions earning a place in the annual QS World University Rankings.

Historically, Australia has actively welcomed migrants and international students, and is one of the only countries in the world with national legislation to guarantee the intake and protection of international students. The quality of education, facilities and other factors is strictly regulated.

There are no entrance examinations for universities in Australia: admission is determined on the basis of a screening of submitted documents. Another reason for Australia's popularity is the flexible admission arrangements, whereby if an applicant doesn't satisfy the English language proficiency requirements, they can be granted conditional admission and improve their English proficiency by spending a certain time studying at a university-affiliated English language school.

...Students who earn an academic degree after two or more years studying at an Australian university and satisfy certain conditions can remain in Australia and apply for a work visa, so there's the added attraction of being able to build your vocational experience in Australia after graduating.

The foregoing text is quoted (my translation) from the Australia Country Guide on the Japanese government's study abroad information portal (MEXT, n.d.). I include the lengthy quote here because it conveniently encapsulates almost all of the arguments usually cited in support of study in Australia in advertising material produced for prospective Japanese students. The combination of broad claims regarding Australia's attractiveness in lifestyle terms and more pragmatic information on educational quality and pathways after graduation is mirrored in many similar guides to studying in Australia. For example, the 'Why Australia' section of the guide produced by international education agent KBUNSHA with the cooperation of the Australian Embassy in Japan (KBUNSHA, n.d.) names factors such as 'world-renowned liveability', 'national-level initiatives for international student support', 'world-class educational quality' and 'opportunities for graduate employment', as well as factors such as positive public sentiment toward Japan and relatively compatible academic calendars and time zones. Emblazoned on the guide's cover is a large photograph of Australia's best-loved native animal, the koala. The use of such images is widespread in the study in Australia advertising media and not dissimilar from those promoting tourism. Another striking feature is the consistent assertion that Australia is a 'popular' (*ninki*) destination for degree-seeking study abroad, a claim which appears somewhat dubious in light of the decline in student mobility noted earlier.

A comprehensive survey and analysis of 'study in Australia' advertising in Japan is beyond the scope of this chapter. The observations made above are intended to impart some of the general flavour of messaging regarding study in Australia to the Japanese public as a precursor to engaging more qualitatively with the voices of international education agents. The advertising also has methodological importance: it provided one of the key prompts I used when interviewing agents. I shared with them my summation of the key messages and asked them to comment both on the accuracy of my summation and on the persuasiveness of the messages themselves, based on their experience of mediating them in their own business activities. In my interviews, this initial structured discussion was followed by an unstructured exploration of the agents' roles in advising and assisting students before departure, as well as engaging with them during their time abroad and after they complete their studies.

I conducted these interviews with ten agents, ranging from relatively large and high-profile organisations to small-scale study abroad counsellors. They were recruited through an open call for participants emailed to members of the Japan Association of Overseas Studies (JAOS) whose public profiles on the JAOS website indicated they send students to Australia, as well as to a list of agents compiled through a web search for relevant key words in Japanese such as 'study in Australia' (*ōsutoraria ryūgaku*). All agents responding positively to this call were interviewed. In all cases, I sought to interview the most senior person in the organisation actually interacting with student-clients. Purely administrative or managerial staff, even if more senior, were excluded in order to focus on direct, personal experience of advising on study in Australia. Basic profile information on the participating agents is provided in Table 3.1, noting that ethical requirements preclude the disclosure of data likely to render the participants identifiable. Interviews were conducted in either Japanese or English in accordance with the participant's preference and translated by me as required. To analyse the interviews, I followed a thematic coding process, beginning with an open coding phase to identify recurring ideas and patterns, which I then refined into broader themes through axial coding, establishing relationships between concepts. This was followed by selective coding with a focus on themes directly connected with the research aims. In presenting this analysis, I have sought to foreground participants' actual statements and avoid excessive framing and reiteration. This is primarily because most participants responded to my questions with a high degree of insight and eloquence, obviating the need for lengthy interpretive commentary.

In light of the small sample size and the high degree of diversity in organisational features, my data and findings are unlikely to be representative of agents' attitudes across the board in Japan. Neither do I seek to draw any conclusions regarding differences between agents' responses based on their attributes such as size and location. Rather, the findings should be viewed as a small window into the experiences and perspectives of actors who, as outlined above, perform a crucial mediatory role in the flow of students from Japan to Australia.

Table 3.1 Participants in the study

<i>Identifier</i>	<i>Students handled / year</i>	<i>Australia-bound students / year</i>	<i>Levels of education^a</i>	<i>Location</i>
A1	200+	25–50	Graduate, undergraduate, VET, ELICOS, secondary school	Metropolitan
A2	50+	30+	Graduate, undergraduate, VET, ELICOS	Regional urban
A3	50–100	15–30	Undergraduate, ELICOS	Metropolitan
A4	50–100	15–30	Undergraduate, VET, ELICOS	Metropolitan
A5	10–20	1–5	Graduate, undergraduate	Metropolitan
A6	10–20	1–5	Graduate, undergraduate, ELICOS	Regional urban
A7	30–60	5–10	Graduate, undergraduate, ELICOS, secondary school	Regional urban
A8	30–60	5–10	Graduate, undergraduate, ELICOS, secondary school	Regional urban
A9	10–20	1–5	Graduate, undergraduate	Regional urban
A10	10–20	1–5	Graduate, undergraduate, ELICOS	Metropolitan

Note:

^a VET = Vocational education and training; ELICOS = English language intensive courses for overseas students.

Agents' Clientele: From Global Elites to Cosmopolitan Dreamers

In addition to the aforementioned diversity in size, focus and other features of the organisations that I refer to generically as 'agents' in this chapter, there is also significant variety in the backgrounds and situations of their student-clients. In my interviews, I could discern agents characterising their clients in three principal ways, which I have labelled here not for the purpose of strict categorisation, but rather as a shorthand to use in the analysis that follows. The first type is a global elite echelon of clients from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, who have often experienced some period of residence outside Japan owing to parents'

occupations and/or other household factors, even if they are not classified strictly as *kikoku shijo* 'returnee students'. Agents tended to describe these global elites as natural candidates for long-term overseas study, with sufficient household financial resources, clear goals and high likelihood of pursuing globally mobile careers.

Secondly, there are the internationally curious clients with high appetite for overseas study, often deriving from prior short-term study abroad experiences, but not necessarily possessing a clear vision of what or where to study. This is not to say that these clients lack direction: some of them are working professionals who have identified graduate-level studies as a viable pathway to a new and more rewarding vocation or an opportunity for a mid-career refresh. Others are current students looking for a more enriching academic experience overseas.

Third are what one agent described as dreamers (*dorīmā*): young people who express disillusionment with their position and prospects in Japanese society and have developed a romantic vision of studying and living in Australia as 'a new and happy life away from their troubles' (A1). This type is perhaps more commonly associated with working holidaymakers (see Chapter 2 in this volume), but agents noted that some clients are attracted by the clearer structure and certification promised by enrolment in a formal institution of education. Their options are often (but not always) severely restricted owing to insufficient financial resources and academic credentials, but they are nonetheless determined to pursue their vision for an alternative future beyond Japan. This type's tendency to idealise life in Australia was noted by many agents as a challenge, as explained in more detail subsequently.

It is important to emphasise that all of these types are potential longer-term migrants to Australia. I asked the agents I interviewed if any particular type was especially likely or unlikely to stay in Australia long term, but the answer was a unanimous 'no'. As one agent explained:

It's very difficult to predict. There are elite students who are highly focused on returning to Japan and entering the public service or a high-profile corporation, but others already planning a life in Australia. Then there are people who go to Australia to escape Japan in some way, but then find they want to escape Australia quite quickly. And others who have no particular long-term plans, but end up settling in Australia for one reason or another. (A2)

However, agents did observe different patterns in attitudes toward their services:

The elites are looking not just for help with procedures but also academic preparation... like academic English training, or some interaction with university representatives before they actually set out. They are systematic and approach things like an investor would. The ones who 'just want to go to Australia' tend to have lower expectations. They just want help on the procedure side of things, seeing it as a simple service not an investment. (A3)

Regardless of the validity of the labels used above, acknowledging this diversity of circumstances and expectations is an important precondition to interpreting how

agents describe interactions with their clients. The degree to which differences such as these extend into students' attitudes to life and study in Australia is unclear but may be a worthwhile subject for future research.

Explaining Australian Education through a Japanese Lens

Across the board, agents' accounts of their student clientele were strongly coloured by the Japanese educational hierarchy and the entrenched processes of the domestic university admission system. Phrases reflecting this framing included 'the type of students who could get in to the University of Tokyo', 'graduate of a middle-tier university' and 'from a high-ranked senior high school'. Even the *hensachi* system of standardised rank scores, which indicates prospective Japanese university applicants' chances of admission relative to their peers, was used by agents as a kind of shorthand for describing students' prospects in the Australian system as well. Importantly, such measures of relative academic achievement within the Japanese system also functioned, to some extent, as signals of socio-economic class—and therefore financial capacity to undertake study in Australia. One agent explained the equation as follows:

Students with good *hensachi* generally went to good high schools and came from privileged households that could afford supplementary schooling. These are the ones who are also more likely to be able to invest in studying overseas. (A1)

Asked whether this equation remained relevant for students beyond the postsecondary university admission stage, the same agent answered:

I think it does. It's a stereotype, but good scores get you in to a good university, which gets you a good job. With a good stable job you can save up and prepare for further studies overseas. (A1)

Moreover, some agents relied heavily on analogising with the Japanese system in order to explain and elaborate on the options available in Australia itself. One described how they mapped the Australian higher education landscape by reference to the Japanese university rankings:

When introducing the Group of Eight universities [a coalition of large research-intensive Australian universities], we sometimes draw a parallel with former imperial universities in Japan, which are considered 'elite' here. In this way I try to use clients' general knowledge about the Japanese university system to help them understand the Australian system. (A7)

The reliance on parallels with Japan can also be a technique for avoiding misunderstandings:

I don't think we should set up differences between the two systems unnecessarily. Some people say, 'unlike Japan, Australian universities don't have

entrance exams’—but I don’t say that. It’s true they don’t have ‘exams’ in the same sense as Japanese universities, but they do have selective admission processes. So we prefer to use the same basic principle—you have to compete to get in to university—then explain how the process is different. (A5)

However, parallels with Japan are useful only as a gateway to understanding the Australian system. Agents noted in particular that the actual experience of learning and campus life in Australia often differed significantly from images students had cultivated before departure:

It’s a different situation when students actually get there [the study destination in Australia]. Students are often surprised by how diverse the campus is, in terms of age, educational background, and origin of students. The ones heading to elite courses are especially thinking it will be something like an Australian version of Todai [the University of Tokyo], or maybe even an Ivy League school, full of young, bright and highly motivated people learning together in healthy competition. (A4)

Across the board, the agents I interviewed appeared highly attuned to these perception gaps and sought actively to avert them through accurate information provision and individualised guidance. This proactive approach to intervention, combined with their authoritative knowledge of both Australian and Japanese education systems, positions agents not merely as mediators but also as active contributors to students’ decision-making.

Connecting Study and Work

As noted at the outset, one crucial way of positioning education as part of the wider picture of Japan-Australia migration is through the concept of a multi-step migration process, whereby potential migrants gain skills and credentials in the Australian education system which may later enable them to enter the Australian workforce. Agents are one step removed from labour migration itself, but future work opportunities figure heavily in the way agents present study in Australia to their clients. The agents I interviewed acknowledged this importance but also highlighted their limited capacity to shape students’ employment prospects directly:

Whether they want to work overseas or come back to Japan eventually, the question of ‘how will it [studying in Australia] will help me get a job’ almost always comes up in one way or another. I think it’s natural. It’s also a part of how Australian universities promote themselves ... the long-term goal [for students] is self-improvement. Not just to be a better person, but to gain useful skills and improve your job prospects. It is a little difficult for us though, because we are not job placement agencies, are we? We just help people with the first step of the journey, which is to study overseas. (A8)

Several agents noted the growing dominance of an instrumentalist narrative, driven by business and government, which places employability as not only one possible and desirable outcome but rather the primary purpose of studying overseas:

Some people come to us because their employer has encouraged them and might even sponsor them to study abroad, or just because they're aware that many companies these days value international experience and foreign language proficiency. They want to improve their chances of getting a promotion or a better job. I guess we can say these people are part of the 'global talent' phenomenon. (A9)

In Japan I think there's always been a positive image that studying overseas is a good thing to do... But in recent years this image seems to be shaped by the way employers and also politicians talk about globalisation and the kind of skills that Japan will need in the future. It's almost like overseas study is something you need to do for the country, not just for yourself. (A9)

Comments like those above signal a shift from a self-centred imaginary of study abroad to a collective imaginary of Japan's future as hinging on young people's preparedness to go global. While agents appeared to welcome the shift as reinforcing their industry's own messaging about the value of going abroad, they also highlighted their responsibility to educate their clients and to inject a stronger sense of realism into assumptions about the nexus between overseas study and employability:

There is a kind of shared assumption that studying overseas will open up new opportunities for a better life. That is how the discussion in the media goes. Even schoolteachers say it. It seems to be our job to balance with the reality, which is that study abroad is not a solution to your problems and not necessarily a guarantee of a better future. (A7)

Consistent with the earlier observations regarding the gap between the broad aspirations of some sojourners and the narrow range of opportunities available within their financial and academic means, one agent noted the inverse correlation between the impact of employability-focused imaginary of study abroad on clients and the likelihood they will actualise that imaginary themselves:

The fewer options a student thinks they have in Japan, the higher their expectations will be about Australia and how it will expand their options. This is quite a challenge for us because it's usually these people who have the least options in Australia's labour market as well. Some get very lucky and find a casual work opening or even a niche opportunity after completing their studies, but most don't... The ones who come back to Japan don't necessarily have better job prospects here either. (A10)

There was some sense overall of students being ‘victims’ of the employability discourse, and one agent even implicated Australian stakeholders in perpetuating it:

Some Australian HEIs have been very keen to position their offerings specifically as ways for Japanese students to gain the ‘global talent’ skills that employers and the government want. I remember the Australian government even put out a handbook for HEIs on this topic a few years back. (A2)

This agent appears to be referring to an initiative of the Australian Trade Commission, which introduced Australian education providers to the burgeoning interest in ‘global talent’ development in Japanese society in the early 2010s and sought to leverage this interest to reframe the value proposition of Australian education to prospective Japanese students (Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, 2013, p. 46). Other agents also mentioned recent use of the ‘global talent’ discourse by individual education providers and expressed scepticism of its value in practical terms:

It [global talent] seems a smart thing to mention, but personally I have never found students to be particularly interested in it. (A4)

Students considering studying overseas are already sold on the global talent idea to a certain degree, but also beyond it to a certain degree. It just doesn’t help for us to say ‘go to Australia and become the kind of global talent that big Japanese companies need’. (A7)

Prospects of Long-Term Residence in Australia

The long-term migration outcomes of studying in Australia are something over which agents have no direct control, and most of those I interviewed tended to adopt an open-ended stance in addressing this issue with their students:

How I explain it to some students is that studying in Australia is not a ‘pathway’ to longer residence so much as a ‘platform’. It gives you a foothold and opportunities to see what Australia offers, and what you can offer it. What happens next is up to you.

We need to be careful in describing what students might achieve while they’re studying, but we need to be even more careful not to predict what might happen afterwards. The good thing is that most students are honestly not looking that far ahead. They just want to enjoy their study abroad. (A4)

However, many agents professed a strong personal interest in their clients’ future migration trajectories. I discerned two common themes in the way these matters were discussed. One was to attribute long-term outcomes to happenstance rather than either individual effort or structural factors:

For example, finding a romantic partner in Australia. Landing a casual job which leads to longer-term employment. Meeting an Australian-based Japanese entrepreneur who needs talented staff. I hear lots of stories but there is no pattern to them. Honestly, I think it depends on the time and place. (A8)

This view is somewhat consistent with the aversion to promising students a direct pathway, but it also reflects the empirical reality that post study abroad pathways are diverse and difficult to describe categorically.

The other was a willingness to envision positive outcomes beyond the classical view of study as a stepping stone to long-term residence:

Don't forget that many people who have studied in Australia stay interested in and connected with Australia for a long time afterwards. They don't live there, so they are not 'migrants' and maybe you are not interested in them for your research. However, if we are thinking of how these students contribute to the Japan-Australia relationship, for instance, there are many possibilities. (A10)

By painting alternative, pluralistic visions of long-term outcomes, agents are also signalling the limited applicability of messaging regarding study as a pathway to work in Australia:

It [such messaging] is probably good for countries where students and their families are thinking about emigration, but I don't think they're relevant for most of the Japanese students I deal with. I don't think education and migration operates as a whole system in Japan in the same way as in the major markets for Australian providers such as South Asia and China. My clients, especially the internationally curious ones, are open to a whole range of different long-term possibilities and not particularly interested in hearing what governments or universities would like them to do. (A6)

Discussion and Conclusions

This study foregrounds the voices of international education agents as one small but integral part of the diverse and multilayered infrastructure of Japanese migration to Australia. In agents' reflections on their work with prospective educational migrants, it is possible to discern the convergence of multiple, sometimes contradictory, messages regarding the benefits of studying in Australia. They must navigate and reconcile information from a number of sources, including governments, education providers and the mass media, each emphasising different aspects and benefits. The agents interviewed for this study appear to accept the complexities arising from this need to operate at the intersection of multiple stakeholders. They also, however, express some scepticism of both their student-clients' motivations and skills, as well as of the tendency for governments and institutions to impose a prescriptive understanding of the processes and benefits of study in Australia. Agents' views of Japan-Australia mobility are highly contextualised and nuanced,

eschewing both the policymaker's urge to craft a unifying narrative and the student's tendency to idealise the study abroad experience. They are prepared to accept a degree of strategic ambiguity, deploying multifaceted accounts of study in Australia that satisfy a plurality of needs. At the outset, I noted the mismatch between the geopolitical and national policy context, which seems highly conducive to Japan-Australia student mobility, and the reality of stagnation or decline in all areas other than extremely short-term study abroad. I did not ask the agents I interviewed directly to account for this mismatch, but the findings suggest that it would appear perfectly congruous with their everyday experiences, rather than something anomalous.

Agents' accounts also shed light on the social context in which Japanese students approach the prospect of education in Australia. The broad spectrum of clients with which agents deal makes generalisation difficult, but their comments tend to highlight clients with expectations extending beyond academic study itself and encompassing a change in lifestyle and/or a career reset. These findings fit comfortably with narratives of both youth disillusionment and more progressive interest in non-linear careers. However, the 'global talent' discourse purveyed by government and big business in Japan does not, at least in agents' estimation, have a significant bearing on students' outlooks. This is notable given that the emergence of the discourse itself is attributable at least partly to changes in patterns of outbound study abroad.

Meanwhile, agents also offer an alternative perspective on perceptions of Australia in the Japanese public sphere. Agents must broker narratives of study in Australia that leverage positive, albeit clichéd, images of the Australian lifestyle circulated widely in Japan, beyond the study abroad setting specifically. A simplistic view is that these images provide a useful aid to actors interested in marketing Australia to Japanese audiences. Agents, however, appear not to view them in this way: instead, they are highly conscious of their responsibility to filter and contextualise formulaic images and ensure that students receive realistic and tailored guidance.

As this volume's introductory chapter shows, it is possible to correlate historical patterns of Japanese migration to Australia with international conditions, domestic policy priorities, economic imperatives and cultural currents. Examining critical interfaces between these different forces is surely one means of generating deeper insights into the how and why of migration, at both individual and societal levels. The material in the present chapter, however, also serves as a reminder that the most readily observable forces are not necessarily those which shape the movement of people across borders in practice. The current patterns of student mobility from Japan to Australia in practice exist not *because of* but *in spite of* the present high-water mark in Australia-Japan relations and the considerable economic and political value discursively attached to study abroad. In one view, this situation persists despite the best efforts of international education agents to align the practice with the discourse. Another view, which is more clearly supported by this chapter's material, is that the misalignment is a predictable outcome of the dimensional gap between state and individual, and between normative and descriptive realities—a gap which itself provides agents with their *raison d'être*.

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4 Japanese Women's Partnership Migration to Australia

A Backdrop of the Resurgence of Japanese Migration to Australia after World War II

Takeshi Hamano

Introduction

Identifying Japanese Migration to Contemporary Australia

Japanese temporary labourers migrated to Australia in the agricultural and fish industries in northern Australia since the colonial period, as discussed in several early studies of Japanese migration to Australia during that time (Murakami, 1998; Ogawa, 1976; Oliver, 2001; Stockwin & Tamura, 2001). During the early 20th century, growing trade links between Australia and Japan, fuelled by Japan's extensive industrialisation and military build-up, led to the emergence of Japanese expatriate communities in urban areas such as Sydney. However, this early history of Japanese immigration ended with the outbreak of the Second World War (WWII). Thereafter, immigration resumed with the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The primary migrants were Japanese women (also referred to as war brides) who immigrated to Australia through marriage to Australian servicemen stationed in Japan under the GHQ (Tamura, 2001). In subsequent years, until the 1980s, rapid economic growth in Japan and more open immigration policies in Australia led to an increase in Japanese people travelling to Australia for various purposes. The 1970s witnessed the emergence of the Japanese permanent resident community simultaneously with the pre-established Japanese expatriate community, which was established in Australia's capital cities. In the Japanese social context, there was a growing interest in overseas migration among ambitious Japanese baby boomers who grew up during the post-war period of rapid socioeconomic growth and prosperity. The Japanese who settled in Australian capital cities became the founders of the local Japanese ethnic community as part of a multicultural Australian society. Most significantly, in addition to these highly skilled and independent Japanese immigrants and their families, the number of Japanese women becoming permanent residents in partnership with their husbands in Australia rapidly increased from this period onwards, that is, from the 1990s, as indicated in Figure 4.1. Most importantly, when describing the contemporary Japanese community in Australia and its origins from several decades ago, it is crucial to recognise its gender account in its trajectory.

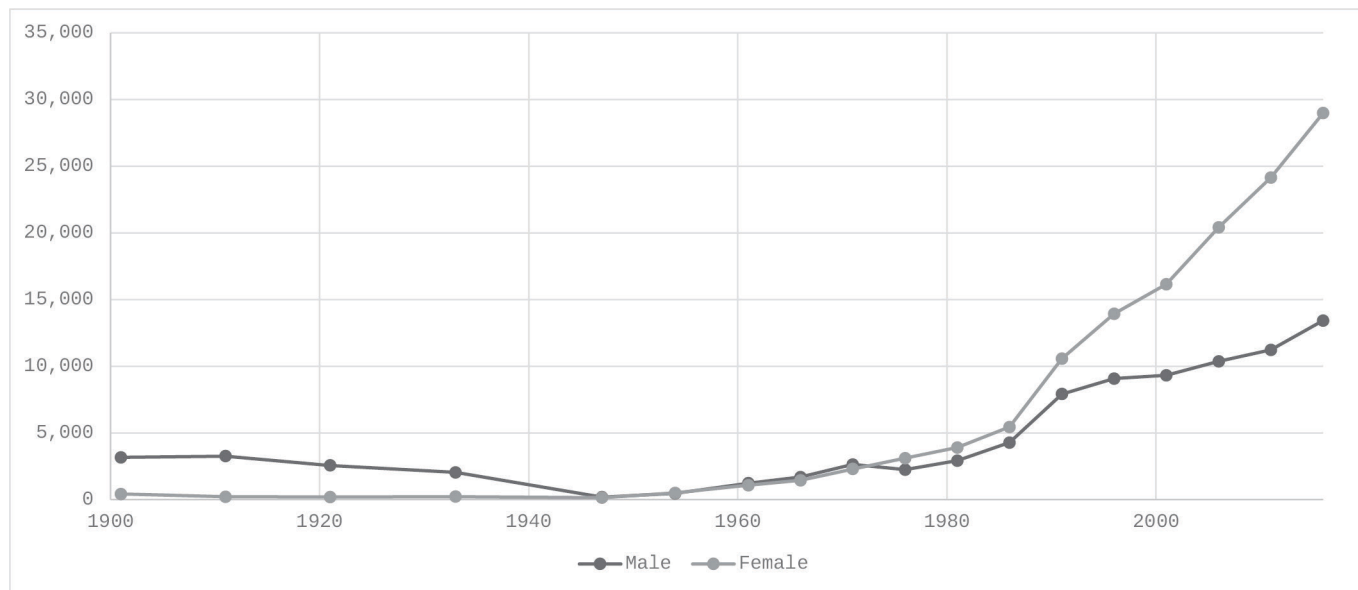


Figure 4.1 Japan-born population by Australian census.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024) and Department of Home Affairs of Australia (2016).

Aim of this Chapter

This chapter, in addition to the brief introduction in Chapter 1, primarily aims to identify the contemporary Japanese community in Australia and how it has evolved in accordance with the history of Japanese (re)migration since WWII, as well as several demographic datasets collected by the Australian government. Previous literature to identify the motivation and self-esteem of contemporary Japanese migrants to Australia has often emphasised their self-autonomy and independence (e.g. Mizukami, 2006; Nagatomo, 2015), and accordingly, these Japanese middle-class communities are the most common assumption about the Japanese community by both Australian society and their own. In addition to identifying themselves at the individual level, this chapter refers to understanding Japanese migration to Australia in the last few decades as a result of the shift in diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations between Australia and Japan. The emergence of contemporary Japanese migrants is also a result of the policies implemented in these two countries. Finally, by determining the demographic record of partner visa grants,¹ this chapter recognises the significance of the presence of a certain number of Japanese female migrants during each historical period. These women's trajectories to Australia should not be neglected when identifying the contemporary Japanese community and its local engagement with regard to its gender accounts (discussed in more detail in Chapter 13).

Japanese Community in Australia after WWII***Resumption of Japanese Migration to Australia: The 1950s***

As discussed in Chapter 1, WWII led to a complete interruption of Australia's previous diplomatic relations with Japan. Consequently, almost all the Japanese migrants who had established difficult communities in various parts of northern Australia were forced to return to Japan. Australia-based Japanese historian Nagata (1996) estimates that while the incarceration rate for Italian and German immigrant populations was approximately 30% of the total Australian population (excluding women), the incarceration rate for the Japanese population was approximately 90%. Ultimately, the total number of Japanese internees in Australia during the war was approximately 4,300, including second- and third-generation Japanese migrants and overseas internees arrested in the Pacific Islands and Dutch Indonesia, evidently displayed in Figure 4.1. However, the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951 brought the two countries together and provided impetus for the early resumption of Japanese migration to Australia. Immediately after the treaty restored diplomatic relations, Japan, eager to rebuild its post-war economy, began to strengthen its ties with Australia through trade. Japanese expatriate communities that had formed around pre-war cities such as Sydney were revived. Political ties between the two countries also needed to be rebuilt rapidly during the Cold War regime under the umbrella of the US (Lowe, 1999). However, as Ball (1948) noted regarding Australian attitudes towards Japan in the early post-war period,

for Australians who had vivid memories of the Japanese invasion of the South Pacific, including bombing raids on mainland Australia and battle war fronts in the Southeast Asia region, it would not have been easy to rapidly restore relations with Japan at the social level, considering the strong anti-Japanese sentiment that persisted. Nevertheless, Japanese women re-immigrated to Australia in the 1950s post-war era. They were called Japanese war brides and were the first permanent Japanese residents to migrate to Australia after WWII. In the context of this chapter, these women were not only significant Japanese immigrants who arrived in Australia during a period of severe anti-Japanese sentiment, but they were also the earliest group of female partnership migrants with cross-national marriages to Australian servicemen stationed in Japan during the occupation. Their experiences have become symbolic of the social characteristics of the contemporary Japanese community.²

Government-endorsed Japanese international migration since the Meiji era, which had been intermittent since the end of the 19th century, resumed after WWII, primarily in Latin America, as the devastated domestic industry was unable to absorb the rapidly growing population of repatriates from the colonies and post-war reconstruction. However, during the post-war period, Japanese international immigration resumed, primarily in Central and South America. As society changed, so did Japanese attitudes towards immigration. Table 4.1 presents the results of a survey of attitudes towards overseas migration conducted among university students by the Japan International Migration Organisation (now the Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA) during this period. The questionnaire revealed that Japan had already begun planning development aid at the time, taking advantage of the high economic standards achieved through post-war reconstruction and its technological capabilities. The technocrats (university students) responsible for this had already internalised such awareness. However, it is noteworthy

Table 4.1 University students' interest in international migration

Questionnaire	Category	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
<i>Have you ever contemplated international migration?</i>	a. I am contemplating it.	20.7	20.9	18.34
	b. I have considered it once.	36.2	37	30.8
	c. I have never contemplated it.	43.1	42.1	50.8
<i>Reason for interest in international migration</i>	a. No jobs are available in Japan.	2.3	2.4	1.2
	b. I want to earn well.	8.6	13.9	6.4
	c. I want to live in a foreign country.	36.6	31.4	43.7
	d. I want to help developing countries with our advanced technologies.	25.9	25.8	25.2
	e. Others	26.6	25	23.2

Source: Research Division of Japan International Immigration Agency (1964).

that the most important reason for their international migration was ‘to live in a foreign country’. The survey report was submitted in 1964, the year when restrictions on overseas travel for tourism were lifted. Reflected by national socio-economic growth, Japanese international migration was already changing from ‘economic migrants’ to ‘lifestyle migrants’ who were motivated by experiencing different cultures in a new society and living in an environment that was difficult to achieve in Japan.

Even in this survey result, the gender differences in the primary motivations for international migration are remarkable. The answer to the first question in Table 4.1, regarding interest in migrating overseas, demonstrates no significant differences between women and men. In the next question, regarding their reasons for interest in migration abroad, more men responded to ‘I want to earn well’, whereas more women responded to ‘I want to live in a foreign country’. The target group for this survey was university students. In 1964, when the survey was conducted, the rate of enrolment in higher education in Japan was approximately 15% (e-Stat, 2024). Therefore, the survey respondents were all members of an elite group in Japanese society at that time. Later, in the 1990s, American cultural anthropologist Kelsky’s ethnographic work explored highly educated women who abandoned their career advancement in Japan’s male-dominated corporate culture and sought opportunities abroad (Kelsky, 2006). Interestingly, the drive towards overseas migration expressed by elite women in this 1964 survey appears similar to that observed in the 1990s. She attempts to explain this ‘female internationalism’ (Kelsky, 2001, p. 35) using a term she coined, based on the Japanese expression *akogare*: a complex set of expectations towards the West as an alternative to a male-centred Japanese society that severely restricts women’s careers (Kelsky, 2001, p. 26). This resulted in the expansion of educational and career opportunities for women, although they are far from being adequately realised. Simultaneously, these women’s changing self-perceptions made them aware of the intractable gender gap that persists in the material reflections of Japanese society. Finally, a number of these women began to find solutions to their dilemmas in Japanese society by embracing new lifestyles in other countries.

Throughout the 1960s, Australia’s immigration policy, based on restrictions on non-white immigration under the White Australia Policy, became obsolete in the post-war geopolitical scheme (Walker, 2019). This was in response to the social demand for more immigrants to strengthen the country. Moreover, growing national and international condemnation of racist immigration policies reflected the current climate of the civil rights movement in the US and the independence of Asian and African countries. In addition, new diplomatic relations with neighbouring Asian countries were urgently sought during the Cold War. One example is the Colombo Plan, which accepted students from Asia into Australian universities. The 1970 World Expo in Osaka and the Tourism Australia Japan campaign launched in Tokyo made Australia a more attractive destination for the Japanese, whose overseas travel restrictions had been lifted. The abolition of racist immigration policies by the Whitlam Labor government in 1973 not only promoted Australia to the Japanese as a business, official and short-stay tourist destination but also as a

new post-war overseas destination. Moreover, it was positioned as a new post-war overseas migration destination. Consequently, some migrants travelled to Australia on their own. They later became key players in the local Japanese community. Eventually, supported by the appreciation of the yen in the aftermath of the 1985 Plaza Accord and the Japanese economy, they retired in Japan and set out on their second lives in Australia. Retirement migration (but not permanent residence visas) also occurred.

New Relations, New Japanese Migrants

Additionally, during this period, there was a need to further develop bilateral diplomatic relations between Australia and Japan. A concrete example is the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed by the two countries in June 1976. This treaty, proposed by Gough Whitlam's government and concluded by the Fraser government after lengthy negotiations, was a response to trade tensions between the two countries, which had been growing rapidly since the 1960s. However, it is noteworthy that the treaty was not simply about diplomacy and economics but also about promoting people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. For example, Australia and Japan signed the Working Holiday Agreement in 1980 (see Chapter 2). For Australians, Japan was the first Asian country to do so; for the Japanese, Australia was the first country to do so. In addition to tourism and studying abroad, a working holiday in Australia would have created an economic climate that would eventually increase the interest of young Japanese people who experienced it to become permanent residents in Australia. In short, this period set the stage for various groups of Japanese to visit Australia to experience life for various purposes, including tourism, study, working holidays and business.

Furthermore, Australia began planning immigration to attract skilled workers and engineers to support the rapidly growing economies of Asian countries. Table 4.2 presents the number of Japanese migrants sent by the Japan International Migration Organisation (now known as JICA). In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, JICA began sending migrants to Canada and Australia. JICA recruited migrants—primarily engineers—and those who wished to emigrate to these countries underwent group training in Japan.

Additionally, it may be interesting to refer to two other proposals on Japanese migration to Australia at a policy level. The first was the 'Multifunctional Police' project of the 1980s, which aimed to build advanced cities across Australia by attracting highly skilled migrants, primarily engineers and scholars, from Japan and other Asian countries (Berthold, 1990; McCormack, 1989). The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (now the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) played a leading role. This was followed by the 'Silver Columbia' project, which aimed to launch a retirement village in Australia for elderly Japanese to enjoy a second life against the backdrop of a strong yen, although negative public reaction to the projects in both countries and the bursting of the bubble economy in Japan led to the failure of both projects. In the second half of the 20th century, both countries were active in building geopolitical and economic relationships in the

Table 4.2 Japanese migrants under the JICA endorsed

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of migrants</i>	<i>Year of commencement</i>
Argentina	2,760	1913
Australia	428	1983
Bolivia	1,919	1899
Brazil	53,657	1908
Canada	5,182	1977
Chile	14	1903
Columbia	55	1929
Costa Rica	2	n/a
Dominica (Rep.)	1,330	1956
Honduras	2	n/a
Mexico	21	1897
Paraguay	7,177	1936
Peru	5	1899
Uruguay	46	1908
USA	388	1869 (1868 in Hawai'i)
Venezuela	49	1928
Total	73,035	

Source: Japan International Cooperation Agency (2018).

post-Cold War Pacific Rim and sought to promote Japanese migration to Australia in ways that could be described as immigration policies.

New *Nikkei* Diaspora in Australia

Growing Japanese Community in Australia: The 1990s

The 1980s and the 1990s were important to the history of Japanese migration to contemporary Australia, in that the purposes of Japanese visitors to Australia and the duration of their visits became significantly more varied, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Short-term stays, including tourism and education, as well as businesses, which had previously been their primary purpose, became more common. The population of the Japanese community in Australia has changed rapidly because of the JICA-organised permanent residency programme for Japanese engineers and their families since 1983 and the growing number of independent Japanese migrants seeking to use their professional skills and experience in Japan to build a new life in Australia, which has probably led to a redefinition of the image of the Japanese community in Australia.

In response, Narita (1991) released a report on the characteristics of Japanese immigrants by reviewing Australian statistical data and other information on the rapid increase in Japanese immigration during this period. Previously, Australian society perceived the Japanese community as a group of Japanese women who were war brides. However, around the mid-1980s, the number of Japanese migrants in the

skilled category began to increase (Narita, 1991, pp. 3–4). These skilled Japanese migrants included a wide range of occupations in the general service sector and were not simply engineers who were recruited through the JICA-supported programme. Another trend that emerged at this time was the number of Japanese chefs among those new arrivals; during this period, Japanese food and other aspects of Japanese culture were gradually becoming accepted for consumption in Australian society, as depicted by the increasing number of Japanese restaurants in urban areas such as Melbourne and Sydney (Narita, 1991, p. 7).

Some studies have suggested that it was during this period that the Japanese community came to be recognised as ‘middle-class migrants’ in Australian society (Funaki et al., 2020; Narita, 1991, p. 8; Shiobara, 2005). However, referring to the relatively exclusive sense of conformism among Japanese migrants in Australia at that time, Narita expressed concern in his report about the rise of negative sentiment towards the rapidly growing Asian community. This reaction was driven by the increase in population and social changes, which were frequently evident in Australia during this period. He worried about the Japanese community’s continued long-term entrenchment in Australian society in the long run.³ However, in contrast to Narita’s fears of a ‘Japanese ghetto in Australia’, the identity of these Japanese migrants is considered not simply as economic migrants, but as lifestyle seekers actively oriented to consume alternative cultural values and social environments unattainable in Japan. Although Narita’s anxiety about the Japanese ‘ghetto’ likely emerged from local Japanese communities of business expatriates or Japanese retired visa (long-stay visa), his recognition of the Japanese community should have been changed, considering the increase in the number of alternative types of more independent and less culturally open Japanese migrants he mentioned in his report. Similarly, the author’s research on the Japanese community in Sydney in the 2000s pointed out how Japanese people avoid associating with exclusively Japanese communities in the region, focusing on belonging to the local community (Hamano, 2019). Another quantitative study on the Japanese in Sydney, conducted by Funaki et al. (2020) also revealed this account. Moreover, their self-recognition as such has contributed to constructing a common image of migrant independent groups of ‘middle-class migrants’ in Australia.

Ethnic Organisations of the Japanese Community

Eventually, it is not surprising that these permanent Japanese residents began to launch ethnic communities within Australian society, organising themselves as part of a multicultural society and supporting each other. The migrants formed a Japanese community organisation in local society with the cooperation and support of the local JICA office, which maintained a government-endorsed migration programme to Australia. In association with war brides and retired migrants, they established ‘Japan Clubs’ in capital cities to introduce mutual support for themselves (e.g. in Sydney (JCS) and Melbourne (JCV) in 1983, and later in Brisbane and Perth). However, a club representative at the time recalled that while members wanted the club to support them in their new lives in Australia, there was reluctance among the

Japanese to accept the ties and obligations of club membership in their new life in Australia. A JICA survey of Japanese people who migrated to Australia in the early 1980s revealed that while the Japanese did not suffer from new social and cultural styles in Australia, they demonstrated a strong sense of self-reliance by being reluctant to accept club membership obligations. Sato in Melbourne referred to these Japanese migrants as *seishin-imin*, translated as 'lifestyle migrants' in English (Sato, 2001, p. 2), whose major purpose of Australian migration was to establish an alternative lifestyle in the new settlement, away from conventional Japanese society. Mizukami, based on his research in Melbourne, determined that a short stay in Australia was a motivating factor for later permanent settlement and referred to today's Japanese migrants as 'consequent settlers' (Mizukami, 2006, pp. 27–30).

The Japanese Club of Australia (JCA) was established as a representative body of Japanese clubs in the capital cities. Simultaneously, the JCA acted as an advocacy group for Japanese immigrants in Australia through active international cooperation with Japanese migrant organisations in other countries. International cooperation with other *nikkei* diaspora communities in various countries was particularly important to receive recognition from the Japanese government for the participation of overseas Japanese people in national elections (overseas voting), which was not possible at that time. In 1998, the JCA and Japanese Clubs published a commemorative publication that consolidated the footprint of 19th-century Japanese migration to Australia and the formation and development of the current Japanese community (JCA Kinenshi Henshu Iinkai, 1998; see also Hamano, 2019). This project of constructing a 'history' of Japanese migrants to Australia suggests that they established themselves as a peculiar cultural group in Australian society and acquired a collective identity in its diasporic experience. Moreover, during this period, the Japanese community in Australia maintained close links with the transnational *nikkei* communities in other countries, thus expressing a sense of transnational cultural belonging as a 'Japanese diaspora' in different historical trajectories of modern Japanese international migration (Adachi, 2006, pp. 5–7).

While JICA, responsible for government-endorsed Japanese migration to Australia, sought to provide settlement aid to the local Japanese community in reference to their early support in the Americas, the increase in Japanese people in Australia around that time preferred to integrate into local communities in search of establishing alternative lifestyles in Australia. Eventually, JICA withdrew its local office by terminating its endorsed migration program. The JCA, a national organisation of Japanese migrants in Australia, was abandoned in 2001. These events may have led to the transformation of the nature and purpose of international Japanese migration since the Meiji era.

Gendered Japanese Community in Australia

Partnership Migration among Japanese Migrants

From the 1990s to the 2000s, the growing number of Japanese permanent residents led to an increased academic interest in Japanese studies in Australia. For example,

after Mizukami's study on Japanese 'consequent settlers' in Melbourne (Mizukami, 2006, pp. 27–30), focusing on Japanese immigrants in Brisbane, Nagatomo argued that the collapse of the bubble economy and rapid social change in Japan changed Japanese normative social values in the post-bubble era and their motivation to migrate to Australia as 'lifestyle immigrants' (Nagatomo, 2015, pp. 11–12). In Sydney, home to the largest and most diverse Japanese community in Australia, case studies of a local Japanese community by Shiobara (2015, 2014) discuss the significance of the community as a middle-class community. However, its internal cultural diversity and various social aspects have added a new dimension to the study of migrant communities within Australian multicultural society. Shiobara emphasises the importance of examining practices of participation within the community. Funaki (2010) examined the need for community support overlooked by the dominant middle-class community discourse towards the Japanese community in Australia regarding social work as a migrant community.

The current number of permanent Japanese residents in Australia is approximately 45,000; however, this section presents more recent trends in the demographics of the community with reference to the Australian Census (Dat.gov.au, 2023). According to this dataset, the number of permanent residents peaked during the mid-2000s, and more than 2,000 Japanese people or citizens? were issued Australian permanent visas in 2006–2007, almost double the number of visas issued during the 1990s, when the number of permanent Japanese residents was estimated to be substantially higher. Thus, the Japanese community in Australia experienced large population growth between 1990 and 2000. In demographic terms, there appears to have been a lull in the number of Japanese permanent visa holders recently; however, there is evidence that approximately 1,000 Japanese are granted permanent residence visas annually.

However, a notable trend in the Japanese community is observed in the breakdown of the permanent resident population. Table 4.3 presents data on the number of permanent residence visas issued under the Family and Skilled Programmes by gender and fiscal year, comparing the total number of visa recipients in Australia with those born in Japan. First, a common feature of the two programmes is that the percentage of visas issued has been relatively stable. Over the 10-year period from FY2011 to FY2020 presented in this table, the ratio of the number of visas issued under the Family and Skilled Programmes to the total number of visas issued in Australia was tightly controlled at approximately 1:2. This reflects the policy emphasis on middle-class migration in contemporary Australia, with more immigration under skilled programmes. In contrast, among Japanese visa recipients, the number of Family Programme visa recipients regularly exceeded the number of Skilled Programme permanent visa recipients. Certainly, migrants who settle permanently in Australia under the Skilled Programme are accompanied by their families. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the number of permanent resident visa recipients in the Family Programme has remained constant. However, the number of permanent Japanese residents in the programme revealed something remarkable. The programme is essentially an application by an Australian citizen or Australian permanent resident visa holder to invite offshore family members,

Table 4.3 Permanent migration programme (skilled and family) between 2011–12 and 2020–21

<i>Group</i>	<i>Visa Programme</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>2011–12</i>	<i>2012–13</i>	<i>2013–14</i>	<i>2014–14</i>	<i>2015–16</i>	<i>2016–17</i>	<i>2017–18</i>	<i>2018–19</i>	<i>2019–20</i>	<i>2020–21</i>
All	Family		58604	60185	61112	61085	57400	56220	47732	4747	41061	77372
	Skilled		125755	128973	128550	127774	128550	123567	111099	109713	95843	79620
	Total		184359	189158	189662	188859	185950	179787	158831	114460	136904	156992
Japan-born	Family	Female	753	746	630	511	567	587	344	492	596	1097
		Male	116	121	89	96	68	78	54	49	68	141
	<i>Family-Subclass Partner</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>630</i>	<i>674</i>	<i>558</i>	<i>466</i>	<i>525</i>	<i>555</i>	<i>323</i>	<i>477</i>	<i>491</i>	<i>1064</i>
		<i>Male</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>137</i>
	Skilled	Female	477	508	345	314	291	301	271	249	219	190
		Male	315	318	228	183	196	189	165	116	113	128
	Total		1661	1693	1292	1104	1122	1155	834	906	996	1556

Source: Department of Home Affairs (2021).

Note: Numbers for ‘Not Specified’ under Gender are omitted.

and it has different subclasses derived from various conditions of the applicant's family relationships. Considering the Japanese granted permanent residence visas through the partner category, most of the Japanese granted Australian permanent residence visas under the programme were to women belonging to the partner subclass. 'Partner' refers to those who are spouses or de facto partners of Australian citizens or permanent residents. It is noteworthy that other clans of these visa holders migrated to Australia based on their relationships with their non-Japanese partners, considering the significant gender imbalance in the Japanese community as revealed in Figure 4.1.

Women's Migration and Japanese Community in Australia: A Discussion

Considering the resumption of Japanese migration to Australia after WWII included Japanese war brides who became permanent residents through marriage to Australian citizens, it is arguable that women of cross-national partnership migration should necessarily be profiled by examining Japanese migration to Australia and its community formation in Australia from the mid-20th century. A few decades later, with the growth of Japanese migrant communities, cross-national partnerships became renowned as an integral part of the community. When Sato (1987) released her essay on Japanese lifestyle migrants, she concluded by describing several lifestyles of Japanese cross-national partnership migrants, both men and women. Even today, partnerships with non-Japanese partners in Australia, particularly among Japanese women, are a major reason for international migration, and they become a member of the Japanese community in Australia.

Parallel to this growth in the Japanese community, the field of Japanese studies in Australia in the 2000s simultaneously undertook research on the current Japanese community, focusing on female migrants in cross-national partnerships. By interviewing Australian women as spouses in South-East Queensland, where there is a large Japanese community that includes both working holidaymakers and permanent residents, the author focused on their views of gender as Japanese and argued that transnational and ambivalent feelings were evident between partnership migration as their own choice and their responsibilities as female members of their families and parents in Japan (Takeda, 2012). Simultaneously, in Melbourne, Itoh's (2014) analysis of how gender identities are reconfigured through gender practices performed in both Japanese and Australian families was informed by a life history analysis of Japanese women who had experienced cross-national partnership migration and settled in the Melbourne region. She depicted these women's self-definitions as swinging between their own positive, voluntary and performative gender identities and internalised and normative Japanese gender habitus. Hamano's (2019) observations of Japanese mothers of transnational partnership migrants in Western Sydney, both spatially and psychologically away from the mainstream Japanese community in Greater Sydney, and their participation in local communities and families through childbearing led to a reinterpretation of their own femininity, which they once perceived as subordinate in Japan, pointing to the paradox of their reinterpretation and strategic

practice in their own transnational households and communities as a means of empowering themselves as socially under-resourced migrants. Moreover, he suggested that the gendered identity of these women was influenced more by their local social environment and resources available to them than by the national or transnational dimensions of Japan and Australasia. Overall, the study of contemporary Japanese lifestyle migrants, particularly in Australia, is necessarily explored, focusing on its gender account, insisting that in re-defining the self in migration studies, not only national or ethnic cultural backgrounds but also gender identities should not be overlooked.

How was the Japanese community organised, led by women from migrant partnerships? As noted above, the Japanese community in contemporary Australia is a notably less-concentrated community. Several languages associated with lifestyle migrants who are self-reliant and seek to establish new lifestyles within Australian culture and society have been used as explanatory factors. This was followed by case studies on Japanese lifestyle migrants. However, from a different perspective, Funaki et al., who conducted a survey of the Japanese community in Sydney in the 2010s on their sense of belonging to Australian society (also discussed in Chapter 13), determined that the self-identity of Japanese participants was not defined by Australian culture, but that there was a relatively high tendency towards a sense of belonging to Australian society. In general, Japanese migrants tend to participate in society as members of Australia's multicultural society, with a strong awareness of their cultural identity as Japanese (Funaki et al., 2020, p. 7), although it is understandable that they belong to the first generation. Despite this, they were less aware of their exclusion from the community because of these attitudes towards social participation. This finding provides a more explicit explanation for the lifestyle migrant language of the Japanese community to date. Furthermore, the extent of the Japanese community's participation in such an Australasian society may be explained to some extent by the sheer size of the cross-national partnership migrants within the community. Their self-assessment of high levels of neighbourhood participation and living with a strong sense of Japanese identity is a social condition that is established not only in public but also in private, intimate spaces. Hamano's research on the community of Japanese mothers in Western Sydney revealed that in an area with a small Japanese population, it is important to always be aware of the balance between non-Japanese spouses and families and build relationships with the local community through household and childbearing (Hamano, 2019). Thus, it can be argued that in recent decades, cross-national partnership migrants, who constitute a large proportion of the community, have had a greater impact on the less concentrated organisation of the Japanese community in Australia. However, this Japanese community has developed into a trans-local network of heritage language education for the next generation in urban areas, such as Sydney. In addition, as Funaki points out from their research (Funaki, 2010, p. 9), the chronological maturation of the community and the emergence of different generations may require specific culturally based support, particularly for the first generation, as noted in previous research on other ethnic communities.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the history of international Japanese migration to Australia after the Second World War, emphasising its gender account. Although the war had severed the small but enduring Japanese community in Australia since the late 19th century, the new political and economic structures created by the post-war Cold War in the Pacific Rim promptly restored diplomatic relations, despite mixed feelings about Japan, particularly among Australians, while the re-emergence of post-war Japanese international migration was taken up by Japanese women who were war brides under these circumstances. However, its relationship with Australia was essential to Japan's post-war recovery. Before the war, Japan needed Australia as a resource supplier to support its rapid economic growth. However, during this period, the number of Japanese migrants in Australia gradually increased. This permanent Japanese migration to Australia, as well as the impact of various purposes and opportunities for the Japanese to visit and experience Australian society, including tourism, business, education, and working holiday programmes, should not be underestimated. In addition, the sharp increase in the proportion of women among Japanese permanent residents since the 1990s, fuelled by the migration of Japanese women through cross-national partnership migration, is a significant attribute of the current Japanese community in Australia. The gendered characteristics of the Japanese community form a unique demographic settlement pattern that has not resulted in the formation of ethnic suburbs in major cities but has rather spread to the areas where their local partners live. This geographical spread of the community, in addition to the community of lifestyle migrants and the large number of Japanese women living with local Australian families, also influences their sense of belonging to the Japanese community and the way they relate to Australian society and themselves (further explored in Chapter 13). The gendered nature of communities continues to exist. In 2025, the permanent Japanese resident community in Australia continues to grow. In addition, the differences in cultural identity between generations that experienced overseas migration from Japan to Australia and the next generation that grew up in Australia will become more pronounced as the community's history progresses (e.g. Hamano et al., 2023). Therefore, it may be worth considering aspects such as supporting the retirement of the first generation, who will begin to age and live a second life in Australia, while examining how the newer generation of Japanese Australians will play a substantial role in the transnational context between the two countries in the future. Thus, the Japanese community in Australia continues to be a vibrant, ever-changing, and integral part of multicultural Australian society.

Notes

- 1 Visa grants according to this partnership are classified according to the following conditions: Applicants must be in a genuine relationship with a spouse or de facto partner with Australian citizenship, permanent resident or eligible New Zealand citizen. In this

Partner Visa, several subclasses are classified, according to several conditions of the applicants. For more information, see Department of Home Affairs (2024a).

- 2 Certainly, owing to its strong assimilation policy at the time, it was impossible to become part of an ethnic Japanese community in the prevailing social context (e.g. Tamura, 2001). Another narrative of war brides can be heard through the online project by Nikkei Australia, where Many Kanamori, the author of Chapter 10, also archives the life history of Iseko Willams, a war bride in Queensland (Nikkei Australia, 2020).
- 3 Adopting a rhetoric of ‘economic friction’, he expressed concerns about whether the growing Japanese community in Australia may lead to ‘cultural friction’ within Australian society. This referred to the backlash against the growing Asian immigrant population that became a problem in Australian society because of growing Japanese economic activity in both countries. His awareness may have also emerged from the early experiences of Japanese migrants and their exclusive settlements within *nikkei* communities as part of government-endorsed international migration programmes in other countries.

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5 Journeys of Belonging

Mixed-Race Japanese Australian Youth in a Mobile World

Aoife Wilkinson

Introduction

In an era of increasing global interconnectedness, the transformative power of mobility is understated. This became apparent in 2020, when the global COVID-19 pandemic halted international travel and closed national borders. Individuals became stranded, families were separated and uncertainties grew around the future of international travel. During that turbulent time, I began my PhD project in Australia, researching the overlooked area of young people with mixed Japanese backgrounds.

The Australia-Japan geographical corridor holds a rich history of migration and mobility. By ‘mobility’, I refer to the social, political and economic factors that enable or enhance opportunities for movement between borders. The field of *Nikkei* Australian studies continues to record and analyse histories of Japanese migration to Australia. This area includes a significant focus on the identities and lives of young Japanese migrant women and their families (Fukui & Kanamori, 2017; Hamano, 2019; Itoh, 2014; Takeda, 2013). This research demonstrates the transformative capabilities of migration and mobility, such as where new social and cultural contexts provide the space to reshape their gendered and ethnic identities (Hamano, 2019). However, this research also highlights the absence of connection within smaller *Nikkei* communities in Australia, where young *Nikkei* Australians are instead more likely to feel a sense of belonging to a Japanese language school or their family (Fukui & Kanamori, 2017; The Nippon Foundation, 2020).

Although there is a growing popular interest in mixed Japanese Australian youth (Kogure, 2021a, 2021b), there is limited scholarship that discusses the experiences and identities of second-generation migrant Japanese and Australian children who navigate multiple belongings across national and cultural boundaries. The experiences of these so-called ‘mixed’ children often feature in scholarship related to heritage language or Japanese language education in Australia (Kawakami, 2019; Oriyama, 2012; Takeuchi, 2006). There are also mentions of mixed Japanese youth in several anthropological case studies: as students who travel to Australia for tertiary study (Abidin, 2017; Shimoji, 2018) or as the children of Japanese migrant women in Australia (Hamano, 2019). By contrast, in Japan, there is a booming interest in research on mixed Japanese identities or those of mixed roots (aka *hāfu*, *daburu* or *mikkusu*) (Iwabuchi, 2014; Shimoji, 2018) and a growing area

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of scholarship that focuses specifically on the experiences of young mixed people (Ogaya, 2016; Osanami Törngren & Sato, 2021; Tanu, 2019). In the Australian context, there is similar scholarship on mixed youth and their experiences of discrimination and belonging (Ang et al., 2006) and their everyday lives under multiculturalism (Harris, 2012).

In this chapter, I draw on interviews with youths of mixed Japanese backgrounds (i.e. the children of one ethnically Japanese and one ethnically non-Japanese parent) to investigate how and why they move between Japan and Australia. I examine how international mobility between the two countries shapes their mixed identities and belongings. By extension, I also question to what extent their Japanese Australian families influence their mobility and consider how external factors, such as Japan's Nationality Law (*kokusekihō*), obscure or facilitate connections to identity. I argue that mixed Japanese youths' sense of mixed ethnic identity is (re)affirmed by their international mobility. In other words, their sense of self is in part constructed, and at times reinforced, by their travels to and from Japan and Australia. Their interactions with language, culture and family constitute a part of their mixed identities. The findings I present are not a definitive representation of mixed Japanese and Australian youth. Instead, this chapter presents an exploratory investigation that aims to contribute to the discussion related to the influence of mobility on personhood and identity.

Japanese and Australian: Moving Across Borders and Mixed Identities

Fresnoza-Flot and Liu-Farrer's (2022) concept of 'tangled mobilities' captures the 'dynamic, unfolding process' of mobility across legal, social and emotional dimensions. Intersectional and poststructural approaches to migration research have pivoted from a traditional understanding of migration as 'movement across borders' towards the concept of multiple, intersecting movements shaped by relationships and institutional structures (Fresnoza-Flot & Liu-Farrer, 2022; Plüss & Kwok-bun, 2012). The experiences of mixed Japanese Australian youth offer a compelling case: their bilingualism, cross-cultural competence and access to financial and legal resources (such as dual nationality) positions them favourably. Yet their movements are not purely individual or strategic—they are deeply embedded in familial aspirations and emotional ties—especially during childhood when parents actively cultivate transnational attachments through travel, dual nationality and bilingual or multilingual language development.

As they grow older, however, these youth begin to 'untangle' their mobilities from those of their families. Unlike the Japanese Filipino children described by Seiger (2022), whose mobility is tightly bound to their mothers' migration and labour trajectories, mixed Japanese Australian youth often experience a gradual shift towards independent, self-directed mobility as they grow older. Their parents' long-term vision fosters the expectation that these young people will eventually navigate transnational spaces on their own terms. Their transition from familial entanglement to individual exploration reveals how mobility becomes a means of negotiating identity, belonging and self-actualisation. The concept of tangled mobilities thus offers a powerful lens for understanding how mixed Japanese

identities are not only relational and dynamic but also shaped by changing configurations of agency, emotion and connection across borders.

My use of the term ‘mobility’ refers not only to travel made across international borders, but also to the activities and social processes that precede or follow travel. I understand migrants as individuals whose identities are multiply situated and derived from diverse cultural and historical sources (Plüss & Kwok-bun, 2012, p. 2). In the case of mixed Japanese Australian youth, their mobilities are not confined to the present but are embedded in, and in dialogue with, a broader history of migration between Japan and Australia. Their Japanese parents, most often their mothers, are part of a wider history of Japanese migration to Australia for study, work and lifestyle reasons. These include Japanese lifestyle migrants and young Working Holiday Makers seeking to recreate their image as cosmopolitan, self-authored and successful individuals (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, their movements follow in the wake of Japan’s post-‘Cool Japan’ cultural boom and amid a period of strengthening tourism flows and diplomatic relations between Japan and Australia since World War II (Chapman & Hayes, 2019). These historical and structural conditions have contributed to making travel and exchange between the two countries increasingly accessible and socially meaningful for mixed Japanese Australian youth.

Considering the dynamic contexts of mobilities and international travel, my approach to identity uses the complementary concept of ‘mixedness’. My use of the term ‘mixed’ is in reference to the work of Osanami Törngren and colleagues’ (2021) new framework for understanding multiethnic and multi-racial identities. They use the term ‘as an encompassing concept that refers to individuals of mixed descent, across national, racial, ethnocultural or religious boundaries’ (Osanami Törngren et al., 2021, p. 767). Their approach draws on the understanding of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ as socially constructed concepts, rather than biological facts. In this chapter, I draw on their definition of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘race’ as concepts distinct in definition yet intertwined in social meaning (Osanami Törngren et al., 2021; Song, 2003). I use ‘ethnicity’ as representative of the shared use of language, customs or institutions. Separately, I define ‘race’ as a social construct represented by phenotypical markers (i.e. physical appearance) such as skin colour. Although my analysis focuses on participants’ ethnic and racial identities, such as being Japanese or Australian, I also acknowledge other factors that influence their identities, such as language proficiency, social networks and a sense of belonging.

By examining the relationship between international mobility and identity, I focus on what Osanami Törngren and colleagues (2021, p. 767) describe as the ‘processes and social meanings involved’ in constructing a mixed identity. There are several studies that explore how international mobility affects identity, language and cultural ties for individuals of mixed Japanese backgrounds, including the children of migrants in Japan (Liu-Farrer, 2020) and Japanese Americans (Yamashiro, 2017). For example, Crystal’s (2017) study on mixed-race Asians in Australia highlights how social and national contexts influence young people’s perceptions of their mixed-race identities.

The intersection between studies of migration and mixed Japanese identities can provide new understandings of what it means to be Japanese in a highly mobile world. *Tan'itsu minzoku ron* (myth of a homogenous Japan) and *nihonjinron* (literally meaning 'theories of Japanese identity') have perpetuated a myth that a Japanese identity is inextricably linked to a homogenous Japanese ethnicity, race and nationality (Kawai, 2020; Oguma, 1995). As a result, the notion of an ethnically homogenous Japan and Japanese people continues to shape the belongings, experiences and identities of mixed Japanese persons (Shimoji, 2018) and immigrants (Liu-Farrer, 2020). One such example is Article 13 of Japan's Nationality Law, which states that a Japanese dual national must forfeit one nationality prior to turning 22 (The Ministry of Justice, n.d.). This stipulation under the Nationality Law replicates a narrow view of Japaneseness that restricts the diverse identities of mixed Japanese people who are dual or multi-Japanese nationals (Seiger, 2019; Wilkinson, 2020). In response, an expanding area of scholarship has continued to unsettle the idea that Japaneseness is confined within the national borders of Japan (Kawai, 2020) or within the binary notion of 'Japanese/*gaijin*' (Japanese/foreigner) (Osanami Törngren & Sato, 2021). As Kawakami (2019, p. 212) states, it is 'impossible to ignore' the growing necessity to account for the ramifications of international mobility on the personal lives of children and young people of mixed backgrounds, particularly in the Australia-Japan context.

Method

From 2021 to 2022, I conducted fifteen interviews with young people (aged 18–30) of mixed ethnic Japanese backgrounds who were living in Japan or Australia. Participants were required to be the child of one ethnically Japanese and one ethnically non-Japanese parent to participate.¹ I recruited interviewees via an online questionnaire where participants were asked a series of questions on topics such as their identities and international travel. I distributed the questionnaire via various channels in Australia and Japan, including social media groups, university courses, and student societies. Out of forty-seven questionnaire participants, fifteen participated in a follow-up interview.

I conducted two separate rounds of semi-structured interviews in-person at a university campus and online using Zoom. In this chapter, I draw on five interviews specifically chosen on the basis that their backgrounds and mobility patterns best represented the questionnaire participants recruited online. To analyse the interview data, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) framework of 'Reflexive Thematic Analysis' (hereafter 'Reflexive TA'). Reflexive TA is a qualitative method in which the researcher identifies common patterns or 'themes' between data sets through an inductive process of analysis. A key strength of this approach lies in its reflexive nature, which enables the researcher to move iteratively between the raw data (in this case, interview transcripts) and relevant literature. This process fosters a critical and moving interpretation of the data, rather than a fixed and linear process of coding responses. I found this method valuable when analysing emotionally informed qualitative material, as is common in ethnographic research. This allowed me to repeatedly engage with the data in dialogue with the theoretical concept of

tangled mobilities, thereby providing an in-depth exploration of participants' identities and mobility experiences.

Due to travel restrictions and social distancing requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the interviews conducted during this project took place online via Zoom or email. The sudden advent of restrictions surfaced new challenges and gave impetus to novel methods of digital ethnography (Kim et al., 2021). In the beginning, researchers voiced their concerns in using online interviews, including its effects on; researcher and participant health and wellbeing (Alpert, 2022; Kim et al., 2021), complications in participant recruitment and rapport building (Watson and Lupton, 2022) and the inability to travel and conduct fieldwork in an immersive environment (Alpert, 2022; Hall, 2023). However, as Watson and Lupton (2022, p. 10) similarly noted, I found that sharing a common lockdown experience and pandemic stresses with my participants 'helped to cultivate a rich sense of rapport and mutual empathy'. It would be remiss for me to not acknowledge that this book chapter, while placing the experiences of my interviewees at its forefront, shares a piece of my own subjectivities—frustration, angst and grief—at the global pandemic that froze all opportunities for young people and emerging researchers.

Table 5.1 shows each of the five participants referenced in this chapter and a short biographical entry referring to their background, self-described identity and other relevant information. All participant names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.

Table 5.1 List of participants and biographies by author

<i>Name</i>	<i>Biography</i>
Joshua	Joshua is a 21-year-old male who lives in Australia and holds dual Australian and Japanese nationality. His mother is Japanese, and his father is Anglo-Australian. Joshua speaks fluent English and intermediate level Japanese. He describes his Japanese literacy as stronger than his speaking skills. He was born and raised in Australia and travelled to Japan every year or two to go on holiday and visit family. Sometime during his high school years, Joshua stopped travelling to Japan and instead visited other countries on family holidays. It wasn't until ten years later that Joshua once again returned to visit Japan. He describes his ethnic identity as 'half Anglo-Australian and half Japanese', although he is 'not too clear on the exact ethnic makeup of the white side of [his] family'.
Hayley	Hayley is a 26-year-old female who lives in Australia and is a former dual Japanese and Australian national. In her early twenties, she forfeited her Japanese nationality under the conditions of the Japanese Nationality Law. She was born in Australia to a Japanese mother and Australian father and is a bilingual English and Japanese speaker. Hayley migrated between Japan and Australia on three separate occasions: (1) to Japan until primary school, (2) to Australia until the end of high school, and (3) to Japan for two years of work experience. At the time of our interview, Hayley had recently moved back from Finland where she had lived for five years. Although Hayley now lives in Australia, she considers Japan her 'second home'. She describes her ethnic identity as 'Australian, but half Japanese or half Asian'.

(Continued)

Table 5.1 (Continued)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Biography</i>
Nanami	Nanami is a 25-year-old female who was born in Japan and later moved to Australia when she was five. She was living in Australia at the time of our interview but later moved to Japan to pursue new career opportunities. She is the child of a Japanese mother and an Australian Irish father, and holds three nationalities: Australian, Japanese and Irish. Nanami speaks fluent English and Japanese, moderate Korean, advanced Spanish, and basic Mandarin. Until the age of twenty-three, Nanami travelled to Japan at least once a year to visit family and friends on holiday. Although Nanami lived in Australia for most of her life, she also previously lived in Japan for two years, Spain for three years, and Ireland for three months. She describes her ethnic identity as 'Japanese and Australian'.
Hiroki	Hiroki is a 19-year-old male who was born and raised in Japan. At the time of our interview, Hiroki had recently migrated to Australia for the first time to pursue tertiary study. His mother is Japanese, and his father is an Australian who was raised in North America. Hiroki is a dual Japanese and Australian national, and a bilingual English and Japanese speaker. While living in Japan, he travelled to Australia once every three years on family vacation. Hiroki's description of his ethnic identity is complex and at times contradictory. At the time of the interview, he described his ethnic identity as half Australian American and Japanese. However, he explained that his identity as an Australian, American and Japanese is only now possible after having lived in Australia for some time.
Francine	Francine is a 22-year-old female who was born and raised in Australia. Her mother is Japanese, and her father is Australian. She is a sole Australian national who has lived in Australia for her entire life. She travels to Japan once every two to three years for holidays with family and friends. She is a native speaker of English and is an advanced Japanese speaker with beginner-level literacy. In our interview, she initially described her ethnic background as 'Australian Japanese', although she later revealed that she 'feel[s] more Australian than Japanese'.

International Mobility

Although each participant shares a common mixed Japanese background, their self-identities and patterns of mobility differ greatly. While some like Hayley and Nanami describe themselves as equally Japanese and Australian, others like Francine identify more strongly as Australian. Their self-described ethnic identities present layers, such as their multiple and forfeited nationalities or varying language proficiencies. Their mixed and dynamic expressions of identity reflect the writings of Osanami Törngren and Sato (2021) who explore how the boundaries of 'Japanese' nationals are reconstructed in the context of 'mixedness'. For example, the change in Francine's answer from 'Australian Japanese' to 'more Australian than Japanese' demonstrates the 'level of flexibility and agency that different types of mixed individuals have in manoeuvring and claiming their own

identities' (Osanami Törngren et al., 2021, p. 775). As I discuss in this chapter, the dynamisms of mixed identities are similarly reflected in the non-linear trajectories of participants' transnational mobilities.

As shown in Table 5.1, participants exhibited notable international mobility, frequently travelling between Australia, Japan, and occasionally other countries during their childhood. However, as they transitioned into early adulthood, their travels became less frequent and more individual, often motivated by study, work or personal growth. Using Fresnoza-Flot and Liu-Farrer's (2022) notion of 'tangled mobilities', I interpret that new movements across life dimensions, from childhood to adulthood, represent both an 'untangling' from their parents and families and the development of new 'entanglements' between themselves, other people and places.

A key example of the entanglement between the mobilities of mixed Japanese Australian youth and their parents is their experience of attending school in Japan during the Australian summer holidays. Many participants living in Australia travelled to Japan every one to two years between December and January as young children. These trips were typically organised by their Japanese mothers, who arranged flights, accommodation (usually with relatives such as grandparents or aunts and uncles) and short-term enrolment in local preschools or primary schools. This reflects what Seiger (2022) describes as the interconnected role of motherhood in family migration projects, where migrant mothers facilitate their children's access to legal, social and cultural opportunities. These educational experiences abroad often prompted mixed emotions from participants. Kawakami (2019, p. 213) highlights how language, identity and mobility are entangled in a 'world of feelings, conflict and affection'—a finding echoed by my participants. While some expressed gratitude for the opportunity to engage with their heritage and develop cross-cultural skills, others described feelings of frustration or resentment at sacrificing their limited holiday time for additional schooling. In more complex cases, participants experienced bullying, isolation or loneliness as temporary students in unfamiliar schooling environments.

The entangled mobilities of mixed Japanese Australian youth and their families often placed them in new sociocultural environments during key transitional stages of life. Seiger (2022, p. 92) notes that mixed Japanese Filipino children who relocate to Japan frequently face major disruptions to 'familial relationships and care arrangements, their schooling and plans for academic pursuits'. Similarly, for mixed Japanese youth in this study, entering a new schooling environment often meant confronting their own mixed identities in more visible and personal ways. Participants recalled becoming acutely aware of their physical differences, such as height, skin tone, hair texture or eye colour, compared to their peers. For instance, Hiroki remembered standing out at his Japanese school for being 'half white and a bit tall', whereas in Australia, he felt a stronger sense of belonging. There, he could speak English and be part of a more culturally and linguistically diverse peer group. He reflected that these experiences in Australia gave him a 'glimpse of [his] other identity as an Australian'.

While international travel provides new perspectives of identity for participants, this opportunity came to a sudden halt on the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic,

surfacing new emotions around identity and belonging. As Liu-Farrer (2022) notes, the pandemic brought about a global stasis that made travel more visible, valued and longed for than ever before. Several participants had to abruptly change their plans. Hiroki postponed his long-term move to Australia, while Nanami and Hayley returned from Europe to be closer to their families. Prolonged lockdowns disrupted the rhythms of international travel that had shaped their lives, leaving some, like Hayley, struggling to adjust to life without movement and direction.

The forced immobility prompted by the pandemic led participants to reflect more deeply on their sense of belonging in both Japan and Australia. Their longstanding routines of travel between the two countries had fostered emotional attachments to both places but also created a tension where being in one country often evoked a longing for the other. During the two-year period when most had not returned to Japan, many described complex, unsettled feelings about where they belonged. Some hesitated to return to Japan, unsure of their cultural fit or comfort. Liu-Farrer and Fresnoza-Flot (2022) describe this as ‘negative migration’, in which emotional discomfort stemming from a lack of intimacy, connection or recognition, shapes decisions about mobility. For example, Francine expressed that she had felt ‘out of place’ in Japan due to her limited language skills and unfamiliarity with local customs. Her reliance on her mother for basic navigation around Japan underscored how her entanglement with parental mobility restricted her ability to develop a more independent and confident connection to Japan.

Family

The social and intimate life dimension of tangled mobilities is key to understanding how the identities and movements of mixed Japanese Australian youth are shaped by their transnational family ties. As Liu-Farrer (2022) argues, transnational mobility is often sustained through a web of emotional, material and legal bonds. In my research, participants’ movements were rarely isolated choices. Instead, they were deeply embedded in the rhythms, decisions and affective ties of their families. Many participants reflected on spending holidays in Japan with immediate and extended family, which were experiences that provided emotional security and familiarity, reinforcing their cultural identity with Japan. These visits often went beyond logistical travel and were embedded in familial routines that nurtured participants’ mixed identities. Participants also often mentioned their future mobility decisions, like career moves or long-term migration, through the lens of family responsibilities, such as caring for their elderly parents. This reflects how familial entanglements inform not just past mobilities, but future trajectories as well.

Participants travelled so frequently between Australia and Japan that their families developed routines, rituals and traditions associated with these journeys. These practices, such as visiting specific landmarks including family homes, local arcades or gravesites, reflect the intimate and social dimensions of their mobility. For instance, Hayley and her family regularly visited their local Buddhist temple and ancestral grave during holidays in Japan. Although she does not identify as

religious, Hayley described feeling a spiritual connection through these embodied rituals—praying at the temple, drawing *omikuji* (paper fortunes) and participating in *ohaka mairi* (grave visiting).² These practices illustrate how mobility across borders is not solely economic or logistical, but deeply affective and relational. As Liu-Farrer (2022, p. 114) observes, ‘places themselves are capable of engendering migrants’ emotional responses towards them’.

We’re not religious, really, but I think growing up I felt like we were sort of religious in that sense that it was always a tradition to go to pray there and we were best family friends with the monk [at the temple]. He passed away recently, which is sad, but we go there to pay our respects mostly, and go to my grandpa’s *ohaka*, like we have *ohaka mairi*, and I feel like [I was] skipping all those things. I felt very sad, I guess, that I didn’t get to do those things this year.

In Hayley’s case, the temple and gravesite are not just locations she visits but emotionally charged sites that structure her sense of belonging, family continuity and cultural identity. Her sadness at her inability to participate in these traditions during the pandemic further illustrates how (en)tangled mobilities are embedded in and shaped by intimate family practices across transnational spaces.

Language and Culture

Language proficiency is a key component to family bonds in transnational spaces. While the topic of ‘language’ is not explicitly discussed in the edited volume by Fresnoza-Flot and Liu-Farrer (2022), there are several small examples that can be examined. As Seiger (2022, p. 165) notes, Japanese Filipino children feel frustration at a lack of emotional bonding with their Japanese fathers that is exacerbated by language barriers. In contrast, the findings of my study show that participants demonstrated diverse bilingual proficiencies in Japanese and English, with family interactions often serving as supportive spaces for casual language use and cultural connection during their travels. Language was also a tool that participants used to untangle themselves from the mobilities of others, like their parents. Their independent language proficiency in Japanese and English facilitated the formation of their own intimate mobilities and helped them navigate new social and cultural terrain.

Hayley studied Japanese intensively for months prior to moving to Japan for work in her early twenties. She continued her studies while living in Japan, where she focused on vocabularies that were specific to her industry, including *keigo* (honorific speech) and business Japanese. The experience helped her ‘develop more confidence in [herself] with language and cultural differences’ between Australia and Japan. However, she found balancing her work and language study to be challenging. She felt pressure from her colleagues, who expected her to be a native Japanese speaker on account of being ‘half Japanese’. In addition, she felt that the pressure was unfair as she hadn’t lived in Japan for long enough to

tune into the unspoken norms of a Japanese workplace, such as politely greeting her superiors each morning, taking turns to clean the workstation and kitchen areas, and the expectation to ‘read the atmosphere’ (*kūki wo yomu*) instead of asking direct questions. As she often spoke in a casual register with her Japanese relatives, she found it difficult to speak formally to her superiors and colleagues at work. For example, Hayley says her colleagues would often correct her when she greeted superiors with ‘*ohayō*’ (morning) instead of ‘*ohayō gozaimasu*’ (good morning).

Even among those who described native levels of bilingual proficiency, some found it difficult to maintain their language skills across borders. Many of the mixed Japanese youth who participated in Kawakami’s (2019) study reportedly expressed guilt or regret for not achieving a higher level of Japanese or English language proficiency. Participants in my study were emotionally invested in their language learning journeys, with many experiencing anxieties related to their lack of Japanese language skills. For example, Nanami was especially concerned about the decline of her Japanese literacy and *kanji* writing skills, so she wrote letters in Japanese to her grandparents in Japan. However, after her grandparents passed away, Nanami did not feel a ‘necessity’ or ‘motivation to maintain [her Japanese] language’. Later, when she studied at a Japanese university for a year, she noticed a significant improvement in her Japanese writing skills. To maintain her literacy skills while living in Spain, she began writing letters again in Japanese, this time to her mother in Australia.

Many participants felt that their language proficiency was an important indicator of their ‘Japaneseness’ and ‘Australianness’. As Osanami Törngren et al (2019) state, factors such as language proficiency significantly influence a mixed individual’s sense of ethnic or racial identity. This again relates to Fresnoza-Flot and Liu-Farrer’s discussion regarding the emotional motivations that underscore mobility. Nanami was motivated to continue studying Japanese by her desire to not stand out for being mixed Japanese. She rationalised that if she can ‘at least blend in linguistically [in Japan], then it’s [being mixed Japanese] not really a problem’. Similarly, when Hayley moved to Australia after living in Finland for five years, she became conscious of how her English ‘started to sound very foreign’. She felt that others were not able to see her as Australian, as her accent had begun to sound Canadian. Now, after living in Australia for two years, she feels that her accent has ‘gone back to normal’. In addition to their accents, both Nanami and Hayley had trouble relearning new and old slang terms in Australia and Japan, like ‘smoko’.³

The entanglements of mobility and identity can be understood through the experiences of mixed Japanese and Australian youth. Hiroki is proud of his bilingual English and Japanese proficiency. He saw his English proficiency as ‘an advantage’ in Japan and a reflection of his efforts studying English with his Australian father, who was an English language teacher. On the other hand, he felt that being ‘the only English speaker throughout [his] schooling from primary school to high school’ set him apart from the other monolingual Japanese-speaking students. Reflecting on his time spent living in Japan, Hiroki feels that ‘other Japanese people’ saw him as

‘this *hāfu*, tall guy who can speak English’.⁴ He explains that he had a ‘weird relationship with that image’. On the one hand, he enjoyed being popular for his *hāfu* Australian identity, at times jokingly downplaying his Japaneseness to meet their expectations and attract their attention. Yet, on the other hand, he ‘knew that inside, [he’s] just as Japanese as every other person’.

Mobility as Self-exploration

Travelling between Australia and Japan presents new opportunities for participants to explore their identities. This understanding of transnational mobility aligns with Fresnoza-Flot and Liu-Farrer’s (2022) conceptualisation of how geographic and cultural border-crossing can function as a catalyst for self-actualisation, enabling individuals to (re)connect with family, friends and other intimate connections, as well as pursue their own career-, education-related or other aspirations. Participants felt their travel meaningfully coincided with significant life milestones, such as moving out of home, graduating from school or pursuing their careers. For example, Nanami travelled from Australia to Japan for the first time without her parents during ‘schoolies’.⁵ Hiroki’s move to Australia marked his first time migrating overseas and the beginning of his tertiary education in Australia as a solo student.

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, these events similarly exemplify the stages of ‘untangling’ between participant’s mobilities and those of their families. In this sense, the event of travelling to Japan or Australia by oneself or with others outside of their family circles can be considered a rite of passage towards affirming a sense of Japanese, Australian or mixed Japanese and Australian identity. For example, while his friends had chosen to study at universities in North America, Hiroki instead decided to study in Australia. He notes that there are several benefits to studying in Australia, such as the shorter time difference between Japan and Australia, which is between one and two hours for the east coast of Australia. However, the most crucial factor for Hiroki was the opportunity to feel closer to his Australian identity.

Well, I wanted to come to uni in Australia because I have lived in Japan, like, basically my whole life. I don’t really have family in Australia because my dad’s side [of the] family, is like a bit mixed up and everything, and I don’t really have family here. So, we would come like once every three years [to Australia] for maybe vacation, because it is still my dad’s home country. I never really had a sense that I had been here properly.

When I interviewed Hiroki, he had been living in Australia for a month. Previously, he had only visited Australia on short family holidays and rarely met with his extended Australian family. The experience of independently living and studying in Australia presented an opportunity for prolonged cultural and social immersion for Hiroki. As outlined in Table 5.1, Hiroki had a complex relationship with his inward identity (as Japanese) and his outward identity (as *hāfu*). However, after

living in Australia, he felt that he could confidently identify as ‘half Australian and half Japanese’.

In Japan, I was always like, the Japanese kid on the inside, trying to, wanting to experience the other side, and now I have. But until then I probably wouldn’t have seen myself as multicultural. It was like trying to prove something and now I’ve proved it. Like, now I can fully say that I’m half Australian half Japanese.

Hiroki mentions that he also wanted to live and study in Australia ‘because of the dual citizenship problem’. Japan’s Nationality Law (*kokusekihō*) stipulates that a Japanese dual national must forfeit one nationality before the age of 22. This legal requirement is often referred to as a barrier for flexible citizenship and mobility options for Japanese nationals living abroad, including those living in Australia (see Chapter 13). However, there are many benefits in maintaining dual nationality status, including fewer restrictions regarding their length of stay and working status. As there is a lack of strict enforcement of the Nationality Law in Japan and across borders, many try to maintain their Japanese and Australian dual nationality for as long as possible. Like Hiroki, many other dual Japanese and Australian nationals strive to make an informed decision regarding their nationality forfeiture. Thus, those who had the means to do so migrated or travelled to the other country to experience and understand what living as a Japanese or Australian national would be like. As Hiroki had never lived in Australia by himself, he wanted to ‘immerse himself’ into the everyday lifestyle. He feels that the everyday experience of living in Australia could help him when he may have to make the decision to forfeit one of his nationalities in the future. In the meantime, however, Hiroki intends to maintain his dual Australian and Japanese nationality for as long as possible.

When I interviewed Hayley, she had already forfeited her Japanese nationality and was a sole Australian national. In her early twenties, Hayley decided to migrate to Japan to help her decide which nationality to forfeit. She reflected on feeling a profound sense of anxiety and stress in the lead-up to her decision. After living in Japan for some time, Hayley decided to forfeit her Japanese nationality. Some of the factors that contributed to her decision included the excessive cost of living in Japan, long working hours, and a strict and stressful work environment. In addition, she considered Japan ‘a place [she] can visit, but not a place [she] can live in’. She felt she did not ‘have enough confidence’ to live in Japan by herself and was more comfortable with the Australian lifestyle. Although she was deeply saddened and distraught after completing the forfeiture process, she felt reassured that she could still visit Japan at any time, as her family will always be there and her ‘ethnic roots will never go away’. The entanglement of legal constraints and international mobilities, and its interactions with mixed identities, is a rich space that warrants further investigation, particularly when considering the emotional effects of nationality forfeiture on young people.

Conclusion

By sharing the diverse mobility histories of mixed Japanese Australian youth, this chapter has contributed new perspectives on identity formation as a multidimensional and relational process. Building on Fresnoza-Flot and Liu-Farrer's (2022) concept of tangled mobilities, my findings reveal how participants' movements between Japan and Australia were not simply individual journeys but mobility that is deeply embedded in family migration projects, cultural and linguistic movements and personal life stages. During childhood and adolescence, participants' mobilities were largely shaped by their parents' aspirations to maintain a meaningful connection to Japan or Australia—structuring forms of belonging through schooling and family networks across both countries. These early entanglements laid the foundations of cultural knowledge, linguistic competence and emotional attachment that persisted into adulthood.

As participants matured, their mobilities began to 'untangle' from those of their families, giving way to new, self-directed movements for work, study or self-exploration. This shift demonstrates the fluidity of tangled mobilities over each life stage and complicates a static understanding of familial influences in intergenerational and transnational migration. Moving across borders was never a linear process, with feelings of isolation, anxiety and guilt sometimes restricting the opportunity to create meaningful attachments to places. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the emotional stakes of mobility. Travel restrictions, as well as the legal restrictions of the Nationality Law, disrupted their feelings of belonging and led to frustration and longing, yet also reaffirmed the depth of their affective attachments to Japan.

By focusing on the lived experiences of mixed Japanese Australian youth, this chapter offers a distinctive contribution to broader discussions of Japanese migration to Australia. It shifts the analytical focus from first-generation migrants or returnees to the second and third generations of mixed youth, who straddle both societies and whose mobilities challenge binary understandings of origin and destination. This focus reveals how identity and mobility are co-constitutive: travel is not simply a backdrop to identity formation but a formative space through which emotions such as belonging, nostalgia, guilt, love and spiritual connection are felt and redefined.

In highlighting these (un)tangling processes, this research invites further inquiry into the complexities of transnational Japanese families, especially as they navigate evolving migration regimes and legal and cultural frameworks in both Japan and Australia. This chapter also suggests new directions for studying mixed identity development in transnational contexts towards understanding intimate, social and emotional ties across generations.

Notes

- 1 As one parent was required to be ethnically non-Japanese, there was some variety among participants' ethnic backgrounds. The non-Japanese parents I mention in this article are of white Anglophone Australian ethnic background.

- 2 *Ohaka mairi* is a traditional Japanese custom where family members visit the graves of their deceased members to pay their respects. The custom involves ritualised gestures that sometimes vary between families, such as cleaning the gravestone, offering food or other loved items of the deceased, and lighting incense.
- 3 The Australian slang term 'smoko' originally refers to taking a break to smoke a cigarette but is generally used to refer to taking a break from work.
- 4 '*Hāfu*' (lit. 'half') is a popular term used to refer to someone who is half Japanese. It is associated with the popular image of *hāfu* who are beautiful, talented, and can speak English or are bilingual.
- 5 Schoolies Week is an annual Australian tradition where recent high school graduates celebrate the end of their studies, often involving a holiday trip interstate or overseas with their friends.

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6 Conflict Narratives

Post-3/11 Japanese Migration to Australia and Life Afterwards

Iori Hamada and Ryota Wakamatsu

Introduction

The magnitude 9.0 earthquake and subsequent tsunami on March 11, 2011, resulted in approximately 15,900 confirmed deaths and left about 2,500 people missing (Yoshizawa, 2023), **triggered the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear meltdown, and caused** profound environmental degradation and large-scale population displacement (Do, 2019; Kingston, 2012). In the aftermath, a distinctive demographic shift unfolded, with individuals seeking refuge both domestically and internationally, collectively termed *shinsai imin* (disaster-affected migrants) (Oishi & Hamada, 2019). Australia emerged as a key destination, with its Japanese population reaching 104,141 in 2024 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MOFA], 2025), making it as the second most favoured destination for Japanese permanent residency after the United States (MOFA, 2025).

These relocations stemmed from strategies to manage perceived long-term uncertainties in Japan, with migrants—primarily educated and professional individuals with cultural and socioeconomic resources—often intending permanent settlement (Oishi & Hamada, 2019, 2020; Wakamatsu, 2020, 2022). This pattern marks a departure from earlier migration models such as ‘sojourning’ (Mizukami, 2007), ‘lifestyle migration’ (Nagatomo, 2014; Sato, 2001) and ‘self-searching’ (Kato, 2023)—previously characterised by temporary stays or exploratory periods among younger generations.

The unprecedented scale of the 3/11 triple disaster prompted new patterns of Japanese international migration, yet existing research has primarily examined initial relocation decision-making and the driving factors, leaving significant gaps in understanding post-migration experiences (Oishi & Hamada, 2019, 2020; Wakamatsu, 2020, 2022). Given the global increase in environmental disasters and related displacement, understanding how migrants navigate post-disaster transitions becomes increasingly crucial for policy development and migrant support. While existing research on skilled migration (Boucher, 2020; Dovchin & Dryden, 2022; Rajendran et al., 2020) and disaster-related displacement (Dadson et al., 2024; Smid et al., 2018) highlights the multiple challenges migrants face—such as employment insecurity, disrupted social networks and limited institutional

support—these aspects remain understudied in the context of post-3/11 Japanese migration to Australia.

This study addresses these gaps through analysis of in-depth interview data collected across two phases with post-3/11 Japanese migrants in Australia. In these interviews, participants rarely described smooth post-migration transitions; instead, they articulated their experiences in terms of persistent tensions and conflicts that required ongoing negotiation. Drawing on Lewis Coser's (1956, 1957) perspective that conflict is not inherently destructive but enables social adaptation, we examine how various forms of conflict—from familial disagreements to institutional tensions—shape migrants' ongoing mobility decisions. Through this analytical lens, our research addresses two key questions: How do post-3/11 Japanese migrants in Australia navigate multiple forms of conflict at household, community and institutional levels? In what ways do these ongoing tensions inform their decisions to remain, return or relocate?

To operationalise this conflict-focused approach, we extend Coser's conflict theory in two ways. While Coser (1956, 1957) emphasises direct confrontations between opposing parties, our analysis identifies how subtle frictions often operate across multiple, interconnected spheres. These manifest in various domains: from familial disagreements over radiation risks to community-level tensions about evacuation decisions and institutional conflicts regarding disaster response. This multilayered understanding of conflict allows us to examine the specific social forces that influence post-disaster migration trajectories. Building on Erdal et al.'s (2023) distinction between 'conflict-induced' and 'conflict-related' migration, we propose two interrelated analytical frameworks: 'conflict-related migration' and 'migration-related conflicts'. Conflict-related migration examines how various tensions at household, community and institutional levels shape initial migration decisions. Migration-related conflicts analyses how these tensions transform and new challenges emerge during settlement, with employment and career progression emerging as key sites of contention.

This study contributes to advancing theoretical and empirical understanding of disaster-related migration and Japanese migrations to Australia. To migration studies, we make three interconnected contributions. First, by analysing post-3/11 migration through the lens of conflict, we extend migration theory by identifying how specific frictions—from household negotiations to institutional barriers—shape the mobility decisions of highly educated, professional migrants. Second, our dual analytical framework of 'conflict-related migration' and 'migration-related conflicts' offers a distinctive approach for interpreting disaster-influenced mobility, illustrating how initial disaster responses evolve into complex, long-term migration trajectories shaped by ongoing negotiations. To Australian and Japanese studies, we demonstrate how gender norms and social expectations in both societies influence migration decisions and settlement experiences, particularly in post-disaster contexts.

This chapter develops its argument through four parts. We begin by establishing the contextual foundation through examining literature on post-3/11 conflicts and introducing our theoretical frameworks. We then present our methodology, detailing

our dual-phase data collection, participant cohort and qualitative approach. The empirical analysis follows, drawing from two complementary datasets: a 2017 study examining initial migration motivations and processes and a 2019–2020 investigation exploring post-migration challenges and decisions. We conclude by discussing implications for migration theory and offering recommendations for supporting disaster-affected migrants.

Conceptualising Post-3/11 Conflicts: Conflict-Related Migration and Migration-Related Conflicts

Migration scholars have demonstrated how mobility decisions emerge from various forms of conflict and tension, ranging from overt violence to subtle social pressures (Lindley, 2010; Van Hear, 2014). While conflict-migration research has traditionally focused on forced displacement due to violence (Lubkemann, 2008), our analysis examines more nuanced forms of tension that shape migration trajectories. Coser's conceptualisation of conflict as a 'form of socialisation' (1956, p. 31) that fosters social adaptation and change offers valuable insights for examining how migrants navigate competing demands and expectations while adjusting to new social contexts. His theoretical framework positions conflict not merely as disruptive force but as a mechanism that can promote social change, enhance group identity or even foster innovation when effectively managed. This perspective proves particularly relevant for understanding migration experiences, where individuals must negotiate tensions between pre-existing cultural frameworks and new social environments. While his work primarily examines direct conflicts between opposing parties that can lead to social cohesion, post-3/11 migration patterns highlight more subtle forms of tension operating simultaneously across household, community and institutional levels.

However, Coser's framework requires careful application to migration contexts. While conflict can facilitate positive adaptation and identity formation, not all conflicts experienced by migrants lead to productive outcomes. Some tensions—particularly those involving structural discrimination or institutional barriers—may generate persistent stress without clear resolution pathways. This nuanced understanding of conflict's dual potential informs our analytical approach, recognising that the conflicts experienced by post-3/11 Japanese migrants could simultaneously challenge their settlement while also prompting strategic adaptations and new forms of social engagement.

Existing research on post-3/11 conflicts demonstrates how the disaster generated tensions across multiple social domains, providing empirical foundation for understanding conflict-driven migration. Studies document how familial conflicts arose from divergent risk perceptions, particularly between mothers prioritising children's safety and other family members expressing different concerns (Takahashi, 2019; Yoshida-Maeda et al., 2018). Research also identifies community-level tensions arising from conflicting interpretations of disaster risks and recovery priorities (Ohto et al., 2017), alongside institutional conflicts stemming from inconsistent government responses and communication failures (Juraku & Sugawara,

2021; Miyasaka, 2013). Yoneda (2015) further documents how evacuees faced social integration challenges in temporary settlements, highlighting the complex social negotiations required during post-disaster transitions. This body of research establishes that post-3/11 conflicts operated across interconnected spheres, creating conditions that influenced both immediate disaster responses and longer-term mobility decisions. However, existing studies have primarily focused on domestic displacement and local community impacts, leaving transnational migration trajectories and post-migration conflict evolution underexplored.

Further, existing research has extensively documented conflict-driven migration among refugees and asylum seekers (Braithwaite et al., 2019; Kumssa et al., 2014; Lloyd & Sirkeci, 2022); yet, it has largely focused on populations fleeing direct violence or immediate threats. Our study examines post-3/11 Japanese migrants to Australia—a cohort that emerged as predominantly highly educated and professional—whose migration stemmed from latent societal frictions rather than overt conflict. These migrants' experiences challenge conventional frameworks that typically associate conflict-driven migration with forced displacement, as most participants were responding to indirect concerns rather than immediate physical threat.

Building on Erdal et al.'s (2023) distinction between 'conflict-induced' and 'conflict-related' migration, we propose two interrelated analytical frameworks. While Erdal et al. define 'conflict-induced' migration as directly resulting from acute conflict situations, they use 'conflict-related' migration to capture the broader, more diffuse ways in which conflict interacts with socioeconomic drivers of mobility. This distinction is particularly relevant to post-3/11 Japanese migration, where decisions were shaped less by immediate danger and more by ongoing tensions—such as radiation exposure, family wellbeing and institutional mistrust—intertwined with career redirections and desires for a different way of life.

Our 'conflict-related migration' framework examines how various tensions—from familial disagreements over radiation risks to institutional mistrust—shaped initial migration decisions. Complementing this, our 'migration-related conflicts' framework analyses how these initial tensions transform and new conflicts emerge during settlement, shaped by both pre-existing cultural norms and host country conditions.

These frameworks position migration as an ongoing process of negotiating tensions across transnational spaces, reflecting Coser's understanding of conflict as a continuous socialising force rather than a discrete event. Instead of viewing conflicts as either causes or consequences of migration, we understand them as continuing threads that evolve throughout the migration journey, shaping both initial decisions and subsequent experiences. This approach captures the nuanced experiences of post-3/11 Japanese migrants whose movement, while influenced by conflict, also involves adaptive responses and strategic decision-making across different social contexts.

Data and Methods

Our study draws from two phases of data collection: an initial phase in 2017 and a subsequent phase during 2019–2020. The participant group comprised 22 individuals (11 females, 10 males and one non-binary, aged 33–53), with approximately

half participating in each phase of data collection. Multiple recruitment channels were employed, including non-profit organisations supporting Japanese migrants in Australia, local Japanese media, social media platforms and snowball referrals. While the participant number appears modest, it reflects both the relatively small Japanese population in Australia (45,267 individuals, approximately 0.2% of the total population as per the 2021 Census) and the temporal distance from the 3/11 disaster (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

All participants identified the 3/11 disaster as a significant factor in their migration decisions—either primary or secondary—and their decision to remain in Australia, despite not being directly affected by the disaster itself. The participants, who migrated between 2011 and 2018, represented diverse backgrounds in terms of visa status, education and profession, though most were educated professionals with initial financial stability that enabled their migration decisions. At the time of the accident, eight participants had parental responsibilities (three pregnant women and five parents with primary school-age children), with children's well-being and radiation exposure concerns emerging as principal migration motivators. Some participants reported post-3/11 medical conditions such as Hashimoto's disease and thyroid nodules, though it is crucial to note that continued research is needed to fully understand potential long-term health effects including a causal link between these conditions and nuclear accident radiation exposure (Watanobe et al., 2014).

Semi-structured interviews, conducted in-person or online, typically lasted 90–120 minutes. These conversations explored multiple dimensions: health considerations, dietary changes, migration processes, evolving relationships, Australian experiences and employment challenges. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated into English by the authors.

Our analytical approach integrates two complementary methodologies: Riessman's (2008) narrative method and Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. This methodological integration serves distinct yet interconnected purposes. Riessman's approach facilitates in-depth engagement with individual narratives, illuminating temporal progressions and personal trajectories that characterise migration experiences. Concurrently, Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis enables the identification of cross-narrative patterns, particularly recurring themes such as gender-based and generational conflicts, peer pressure, political awareness and employment challenges. This integrated methodology ensures both depth in individual accounts and breadth in identifying collective patterns—essential for understanding the complexity and diversity of migration experiences.

Ethics approval was obtained from the authors' institutional ethics committees for both datasets, with participants providing written informed consent. All identifying information has been removed to maintain anonymity.

Findings

Pre-migration Conflicts

The aftermath of 3/11 generated diverse conflicts that shaped initial migration decisions, highlighting intersections between gender, family relations and risk

perception. Our analysis identifies four key dimensions of pre-migration conflict that build upon existing research findings (Juraku & Sugawara, 2021; Miyasaka, 2013; Ohto et al., 2017; Takahashi, 2019; Yoshida-Maeda et al., 2018). First, tensions emerged around differing interpretations of radiation risks across multiple social spheres—manifesting intensely within families and extending into community relationships, where divergent views on evacuation, protective measures and risk assessment created persistent social pressures. Second, gender significantly influenced how these conflicts were managed, though with considerable individual variation: women, especially mothers, advocated for children’s safety through ongoing negotiations that balanced persistence with cultural expectations around direct confrontation, while men employed various approaches ranging from indirect communication to direct advocacy, depending on their positions within family and workplace hierarchies. Third, these gendered conflict management strategies produced varied migration patterns, from immediate family relocations to staged migrations where women and children often departed first, with men following later or remaining in Japan. Fourth, the temporal nature of these conflicts reflected ongoing negotiations rather than linear escalation, with some families managing tensions through prolonged evaluation while others reached points more quickly.

Household-Level Conflicts

Our analysis of household-level tensions (reported by 15 of 22 participants: 12 women, three men) reveals how gender intersected with family decision-making processes around migration, though with notable individual variation. Participants described gendered patterns in how families approached radiation risks, with several women advocating for preventative relocation for children’s safety while their male partners emphasised financial security and career continuity. These differing priorities, which participants often linked to gendered roles and expectations within Japanese family structures, generated complex family negotiations that frequently resulted in phased departures where women left with children while their male partners maintained employment in Japan—reflecting attempts to balance safety concerns with economic necessities.

In spousal relationships, conflicts centred on divergent interpretations of radiation risks and appropriate responses. Several female participants, particularly mothers, reported that they initiated migration discussions and expressed greater urgency regarding safety concerns, though they emphasised the contextual and relational factors that shaped these responses. As one female participant (mid-40s) described:

My husband and I had quite different opinions about managing radiation risks [...] he eventually decided to go along with my views as a survival strategy. Looking back, I believe he agreed to migrate with me and our children mainly because I was persistent about it.

Another mother (mid-40s) described how these different approaches to risk assessment led to staged migration:

My husband didn't see an immediate need to leave Japan. He said, 'It's safe here' and wanted to wait and see. But I couldn't wait—I was so worried about the children's health. So I decided to move to Australia first with our kids. He understood my concerns but wasn't ready to leave his job, so we agreed this was the best compromise.

While this pattern of women initiating migration discussions appeared frequently in our data, participants emphasised how individual circumstances, family hierarchies and economic constraints shape these negotiations differently across households. Intergenerational conflicts emerged particularly during visits or cohabitation, centred on food choices and radiation risk perception. Two female participants described having their concerns about contaminated food dismissed by their parents: 'When I go to my family's place in XYZ, which is a hotspot, I don't let my kids eat the local vegetables. But my parents probably think I'm just being paranoid', explained one mother (early 30s). Another participant (late 40s) recounted her mother purchasing potentially contaminated fish despite warnings: 'When I said, "That area is contaminated", she couldn't understand because of her age. [...] When she said, "It's delicious", I got really upset'.

Our interview showed that tensions often intensified in households with strong patriarchal structures. One participant (early 30s) described how her father's traditional values—which she characterised as 'Kyūshū danji' [a colloquial term referring to men from Japan's Kyūshū region associated with traditional masculinity and patriarchal authority]—complicated discussions about radiation risks: 'He kept saying the radiation wasn't that dangerous and that I was overreacting, but I couldn't ignore the potential health risks, especially thinking about having children'. She explained how this disagreement was compounded by existing family tensions: 'They were already unhappy with me being independent and "not fitting into the traditional wife role", so when I decided to move to Australia, it caused even more tension'. Her account reveals how radiation-related conflicts became entangled with pre-existing tensions around gender roles and paternal authority, with her mother bearing the emotional burden of mediation. While each family situation was unique, several other participants described comparable experiences where discussions about radiation safety became intertwined with familial expectations regarding gender norms, generational authority and family obligations.

Community-Level Conflicts

Community-level tensions emerged as a significant factor shaping migration decisions, with nine participants (six females, two male and one non-binary) reporting conflicts over radiation risk perceptions and evacuation choices. These conflicts operated across multiple social spheres, from neighbourhood relationships

to professional networks, illustrating how individual protective decisions often collided with community pressures for collective response.

The tension between individual risk assessment and community conformity manifested most directly through social stigmatisation. One participant (late 40s) described how expressing concerns led to direct criticism and accusations:

My neighbour questioned my distrust in the government's safety assurances, asking, 'Why won't you trust the government when they say it's safe?'. After I expressed my concerns, I encountered online backlash with comments like, 'Your fears are affecting all of us. Stop it'. I was even accused of *fūhyō* [spreading harmful rumours].

These pressures extended into professional contexts, as illustrated by a male participant (early 40s) who faced ridicule for prioritising his children's safety:

At my company, people didn't seem too worried. When I mentioned sending my children to safety, the reactions were dismissive, like, 'Are you really going to such lengths?' or 'Nagoya is so far away [from the hotspots], it's completely fine'. Some people looked at me as if I was odd, almost mockingly saying, 'Aren't you worrying too much?' There was a lot of that kind of sentiment.

Geographic location emerged as a crucial factor in these conflicts, generating distinct patterns of empathy and estrangement based on proximity to radiation hotspots. A participant (late 30s) described how spatial differences in risk exposure created relational tensions:

I encouraged my friends in Sendai, Fukushima and the Kanto region to relocate, but their personal circumstances made it difficult. Some relationships deteriorated because they felt I was in a safer position and didn't understand their plight. When I decided to move abroad from Aichi [approximately 500 km southwest of Fukushima], they questioned, 'Why would you do that? In Aichi, you're safe'. This scepticism mainly came from friends in Sendai, closer to the hotspot. They perceived my concerns as exaggerated.

The emotional complexity of these conflicts was further illuminated by a female participant (early 30s), who identified underlying tensions of envy and helplessness:

Some friends said, 'It's totally fine here, why would you go out of your way to leave?' [...] I think those friends were probably lonely [...] maybe there was some jealousy, or perhaps they also wanted to escape, especially those with children [...] But since they couldn't, I think there might have been a bit of jealousy.

These community pressures often led participants to develop strategic responses, particularly in how they framed their migration decisions. As one mother (mid-40s) explained:

I wanted to make English their first language because I thought, looking at the world situation after 2011, it would surely be better for their future. That's one reason [...] But truthfully, my primary concern was to keep my children away from the hotspot areas and protect their health. The English education and potential business opportunities were secondary, though they were easier to explain to others.

This account illustrates how conflict-related migration involved navigating between individual protective impulses and community expectations of collective response. Several participants described developing specific strategies to manage these social tensions, including reframing their decisions through more socially acceptable narratives or adopting staged migration approaches. The geographic distribution of risk added further complications to social interactions, as spatial differences in radiation exposure affected both migration decisions and relationships with others in Japan.

Institutional-Level Conflicts

Institutional conflicts manifested in three interconnected domains that shaped migration decisions: distrust in government safety assurances, scepticism about information transparency and disillusionment with civic engagement possibilities. These institutional tensions operated not merely as background context but as active drivers of migration decisions.

The fundamental conflict between citizen safety concerns and institutional reassurance emerged clearly in participants' narratives. One participant (early 40s) articulated how systemic distrust influenced her migration decision:

In Japan, there's nowhere truly safe. The presence of nuclear plants and the handling of debris made the future look bleak. I considered many options, but the lack of transparency about radiation levels and government decision-making processes regarding nuclear safety and the potential for another disaster made it difficult to stay.

This institutional mistrust extended beyond specific safety concerns to encompass deeper concerns about governmental communication, as another participant observed: 'You can't trust the government's press conferences. I've moved past anger to resignation, realising that no matter what, nothing seems to change'.

For parents, these institutional conflicts took on particular urgency, intertwining with protective responsibilities. A participant (early 30s) described how mistrust towards the government shaped family migration decisions:

Our main goal was to raise our children in a safe environment. The uncertainty and conflicting reports in Japan led us to settle in Australia, where we felt more confident about their safety due to its geographical distance from Japan, absence of nuclear power plants, transparent governance regarding environmental risks and stable political climate.

Particularly significant was the trajectory from civic engagement to migration. One participant's (early 40s) account of anti-nuclear activism—the most explicit example among our participants—illustrates this progression:

I teamed up with friends to hand out flyers against nuclear power. Seeing the big crowds at the National Diet building, I thought there was hope. But when I figured out we were just a drop in the ocean, it kind of killed that hope.

While this case demonstrates direct activism, most participants expressed similar disappointment with institutional decisions they perceived as neither transparent nor responsive to public concerns. This pattern of initial hope followed by disillusionment appeared consistently across narratives, suggesting migration decisions often emerged after faith in Japanese institutional responsiveness had eroded—echoing findings by Oishi and Hamada (2019) on institutional distrust as a migration driver.

Our findings demonstrate how conflicts with institutions that participants experienced functioned as catalysts in migration decisions. Initial safety concerns transformed into broader institutional critiques, while attempted civic engagement often led to disillusionment, ultimately prompting participants to pursue international relocation as an expression of political agency. These institutional conflicts extended beyond distrust in specific policies to represent fundamental disconnects between citizens' expectations of governmental responsibility and the perceived systemic failure of these institutions to prioritise public welfare over economic and political interests.

Post-migration Conflicts

Migration to Australia generated new tensions requiring ongoing negotiation. These conflicts emerged through transformed pre-migration disagreements and post-migration-specific challenges. Our analysis identified the following challenges across three interconnected spheres: household-level economic pressures and career disruptions affecting family relations; community-level integration barriers complicating safety aspirations; and institutional-level difficulties with employment systems and overseas qualification recognition undermining the security participants had sought. These conflicts significantly shaped subsequent mobility decisions, with some participants returning to Japan or relocating elsewhere. Their experiences illustrate how post-disaster migration involves continuous adjustments to competing pressures rather than straightforward resolution.

Household-Level Conflicts

Migration to Australia introduced household conflicts centred on employment instability intertwined with disrupted gender roles. Prior research (Oishi & Hamada, 2019; Wakamatsu, 2020) indicates that, unlike typical skilled migration, economic factors were not primary drivers for post-3/11 Japanese migrants,

whose migration decisions were initially prompted by radiation safety concerns. However, our findings suggest that economic considerations became significant factors for subsequent mobility decisions after arrival. Gender significantly shaped these emerging economic conflicts. Our 2019–2020 data indicated that most male participants with Japanese female partners carried traditional expectations of men as primary earners and women as homemakers. Australia's employment context complicated these arrangements in three ways:

1. Male participants struggled to maintain breadwinner roles while remaining reluctant to discuss these challenges, reflecting persistent traditional gender norms
2. Women faced barriers from limited work experience or visa restrictions
3. Professional women, especially in healthcare, encountered qualification recognition difficulties, leading to underemployment or dependence on remote work for Japanese companies

These conflicts marked a shift from pre-migration radiation safety concerns to economic pressures directly challenging traditional gender roles.

One male participant (late 40s) described employment difficulties creating tensions with his formerly full-time homemaker wife:

I can tell my wife's getting frustrated, and we've been arguing about it. Our finances are stretched thin, especially with our kid in school. I'm the only one bringing in money, but I haven't found a full-time job that pays enough to support us. It's stressful, and I can't help but feel like it's on me.

In some cases, these conflicts led to family restructuring. Another male participant (late 40s) returned to Japan for work while his wife and child relocated to Singapore after living together in Australia, illustrating how employment challenges could fracture family units while maintaining marital ties.

This analysis indicates that employment difficulties post-migration generated significant household tensions, particularly in families previously organised around traditional gender roles. Our findings suggest these employment challenges affected family relations beyond financial concerns, influencing relationship patterns and, in some cases, prompting further migration decisions. The experiences of our participants highlight how employment challenges fundamentally altered family arrangements that had previously been organised around traditional gender roles. These household-level conflicts underscore a key finding: while initial migration decisions were primarily driven by safety concerns, subsequent mobility choices were increasingly shaped by economic pressures that emerged after settlement.

Community-Level Conflicts

Post-migration community tensions emerged primarily within Japanese expatriate networks, where 12 participants (seven women, five men) encountered distinctive social frictions. These migration-related conflicts stemmed from two interrelated

issues: negotiating disclosure of migration motivations and managing radiation concerns within in-group communities in the host society.

When the fundamental disconnect between post-3/11 migrants and other Japanese expatriates was addressed, it created evident social pressures, as one participant (early 40s) observed: 'Most [Japanese] expatriates just don't get it; when I talk about it, their puzzled looks say it all'.

This social divide compelled participants to develop strategic approaches for navigating relationships within their in-group community. One participant described adopting selective silence as a mechanism for preserving harmony: 'Many expatriates are here [in Australia] for work, so I deliberately avoid discussing the nuclear incident. I've maintained this silence about the topic since my arrival'. This selective silence illustrates how individuals prioritise avoiding potential conflicts over expressing their views on controversial topics, particularly when their livelihoods depend on these community connections.

Ongoing radiation concerns necessitated particularly careful navigation within the Japanese community. One participant (late 40s) described her nuanced strategy for managing these tensions:

I don't share my concerns about radiation with others [in the Japanese community] unless they express similar fears [...] When it comes to food safety, I tell [my Japanese friends] that my children have allergies to wheat, sugar and dairy products. This strategy helps them avoid most snacks without directly mentioning radiation concerns.

These migration-related conflicts led some participants to actively disengage from Japanese community spaces, establishing alternative social networks. As one mother explained: 'You know, here in Australia, I don't really hang out with many Japanese people. I've distanced myself, especially from those who weren't evacuees. I usually stick to English-speaking [local] groups'.

This strategic shift towards Australian communities often proved rewarding, as some participants found greater acceptance and understanding for their migration motivations. Another participant (late 30s) illustrated this contrast: 'After the nuclear accident, even though I really loved Japan, I became too scared to go back. [Australian] people in my [children's] playgroup knew why I was here [...] Everyone [from the local Australian circle] calls me brave'.

Migration-related conflicts shaped participants' navigation of different social contexts, with varying experiences across Japanese expatriate circles and Australian communities. While some participants described needing to carefully manage disclosure of their migration motivations within certain Japanese expatriate networks, others found more receptive audiences within these same communities. Similarly, experiences within Australian communities varied, though several participants noted greater understanding of their post-3/11 concerns among local Australian contacts. These patterns suggest that pre-migration conflicts evolved rather than disappeared in the post-migration context, creating new forms of social negotiation

that participants approached differently depending on individual circumstances, community composition and relationship contexts.

Institutional-Level Conflicts

While scholars have documented how skilled migrants encounter institutional barriers in host countries (Chang & Wu, 2014; Cuaresma et al., 2014), our analysis suggests that for some participants, these barriers created significant conflicts between their professional aspirations and Australian institutional practices. These conflicts varied across participants but influenced subsequent mobility decisions for several individuals.

Employment barriers constituted a primary institutional conflict reported by many participants. Consistent with previous findings on local hiring preferences (Fernando et al., 2016; Hawthorne, 1997; Ng et al., 2023), several participants described encountering disadvantages in the Australian job market despite their qualifications and work experience. One participant (mid-40s), formerly a manager at a U.S.-affiliated IT company in Japan, described his experience with local hiring practices:

When I was doing my Master's, I took up an internship at this local [IT] firm, thinking maybe it could turn into a full-time job later. I mean, I've been in the industry back in Japan for years and felt I really knew my stuff. While I was interning, I could see that I had more experience than a lot of the regular staff and other interns. But when it came down to it, they hired a local guy who had some connections, even with all my qualifications and English skills.

After unsuccessfully contesting this decision, he and his family ultimately relocated to Singapore for better job opportunities, despite their preference for Australia, which he described as 'a quite stable country and great for our kid'. This case illustrates how institutional conflicts can influence secondary migration decisions, exemplifying one pattern of how migration-related conflicts shape ongoing mobility trajectories.

The non-recognition of overseas qualifications emerged as another significant institutional conflict for several participants, reflecting patterns identified in skilled migration literature (Hamada, 2023). A participant (early 50s) with extensive nursing experience articulated this challenge: 'In Australia, it often comes down to who you know rather than what you know'. Despite 15 years of managerial-level nursing experience, she encountered persistent barriers to professional recognition including the non-recognition of her qualifications. When she attempted to contest these barriers by requesting explanations for her rejected applications from aged care institutions—positions that did not require the level of nursing qualifications she held—no responses were provided, creating further institutional conflict. She eventually found success only through personal connections with a Japanese colleague at a local aged care facility.

These individuals navigated institutional constraints while processing post-3/11-related concerns, suggesting how conflict-related migration can extend beyond initial crisis response to involve long-term institutional adaptation.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our research applied dual analytical frameworks—conflict-related migration and migration-related conflicts—to examine post-3/11 Japanese migration to Australia. While conflict theory traditionally informs forced displacement studies (Lindley, 2010; Van Hear, 2014), our application to this migration context addresses a significant research gap.

Through the conflict-related migration lens, we identified pre-migration tensions across multiple domains among our participants: gender-influenced household negotiations over radiation risks, with several women in our study initiating protective migration while their male partners often prioritised employment considerations; community pressures that participants described as sometimes enforcing collective disaster responses, creating challenges for those expressing individual safety concerns; and institutional conflicts involving distrust in government assurances that influenced migration decisions for several participants. These findings suggest how our participants navigated competing pressures rather than responding to straightforward environmental threats.

The migration-related conflicts framework illustrates how these tensions evolved in the Australian context for our participant group: household conflicts shifted from concerns about radiation to issues of employment instability and disrupted gender roles, particularly challenges to traditional male breadwinner expectations that several participants described; community tensions emerged within some Japanese expatriate networks, requiring careful management of differing migration motivations; and institutional barriers to professional integration contributed to secondary migration decisions for some participants. One participant and his family, who relocated to Singapore after encountering difficulties with the recognition of his work experience and qualifications, exemplifies how institutional conflicts can shape ongoing mobility trajectories within our data.

This dual-framework approach contributes to bridging forced displacement and skilled migration literature by demonstrating how professional migrants in our study navigated significant tensions throughout their migration journeys. While previous studies documented factors driving post-3/11 migration (Oishi & Hamada, 2019, 2020; Wakamatsu, 2020, 2022), our conflict theory analysis of these particular experiences illuminates the ongoing nature of migration decision-making among our participants, contributing to scholarship on persistent migration-related challenges (Erdal et al., 2023).

Extending Coser's (1956, 1957) conceptualisation of conflict as enabling social adaptation, we observed how these tensions appeared to foster strategic decision-making and adaptive change as participants handled competing pressures across their migration journeys. This approach offers insights into how professional migrants affected by environmental disasters may manage various forms of conflict

throughout their mobility trajectories, through further research would be needed to establish broader patterns beyond our specific participant group.

While our dual frameworks captured migration-related conflicts effectively, several theoretical limitations warrant acknowledgement. First, the conflict-related migration framework did not fully account for the intersections among different types of tensions. For example, household disputes over radiation risks were often entangled with community-level pressures surrounding evacuation, yet our analysis treated these as discrete domains rather than examining how they interacted and reinforced one another. Second, the migration-related conflicts framework requires further development to better trace how specific tensions evolve over time—particularly across key settlement stages, from initial arrival to longer-term residency or subsequent relocation. Attending to these temporal trajectories would enhance understanding how early employment-related challenges may deepen into broader concerns around professional identity, social belonging and future mobility decisions.

Despite these limitations, our findings contribute to theoretical and empirical understanding of disaster-related migration across multiple disciplines. In migration studies, we extend existing models of disaster-induced mobility (Black et al., 2011) by showing how conflict operates not only as a catalyst but also as a structuring force in shaping migration trajectories. In disaster studies, our findings illuminate potential long-term implications of disaster-related displacement, suggesting how environmental risks may intersect with social conflicts to influence ongoing mobility decisions. For Japanese and Australian studies, our research offers complementary insights: documenting how post-3/11 conflict-related migration represents a distinctive pattern within Japan's contemporary social terrain, shaped by institutional distrust and family safety concerns rather than conventional economic or lifestyle motivations, while examining how highly educated migrants prompted by post-3/11 concerns navigate specific structural challenges within Australia's labour market that complicate their settlement trajectories despite their qualifications and resources.

Our analysis suggests several targeted interventions to support highly educated, professional Japanese people who migrated to Australia in response to post-3/11 concerns and related conflicts across multiple domains. Our study demonstrates that although their migration decisions were not primarily driven by economic gain or upward career mobility, successful labour market integration emerged as a critical condition for rebuilding their lives, yet became a primary site where new migration-related conflicts developed. The professional barriers participants encountered—particularly around qualification recognition—reflect well-documented patterns in skilled migration research (Boucher, 2020; Dovchin & Dryden, 2022; Rajendran et al., 2020). However, our findings suggest these barriers were particularly challenging for post-3/11 migrants, who often prioritised urgency migration decisions for their children over preparation for qualification recognition processes or labour market transitions. The gendered nature of migration-related conflicts further highlights the need for tailored employment support for women, who often navigate both caregiving responsibilities and professional reintegration

under conditions of heightened uncertainty. Female participants faced compounded barriers when traditional gender roles intersected with qualification recognition challenges, suggesting the need for flexible employment support that accounts for family obligations while facilitating professional re-entry.

Within Japanese expatriate communities, post-3/11 migrants often experienced social tensions when discussing their migration motivations, particularly those rooted in radiation concerns. These findings suggest the importance of acknowledging internal divisions within migrant communities and developing support mechanisms that do not assume homogeneous experiences or motivations among co-ethnic groups.

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Part II

Japanese Communities to Enrich Multicultural Australia



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7 Teaching Japanese as a Community Language in Australia

Insights from Educators and Their Beliefs

Kyoko Kawasaki and Naomi Kurata

Introduction

Over 20% of the population in Australia speaks a language other than English (LOTE) at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). These languages are often called ‘community languages’ (CLs) in this country (Clyne, 1991). In our research, we use the term ‘community language’ rather than ‘immigrant language’ since such languages are used not only by immigrants but also by their children and others in the community. It appeared in the mid-1970s when Australian society started embracing multiculturalism and linguistic diversity. It was later formalised in the National Policy on Language (NPL), which promoted both English and LOTES. Although the term ‘heritage language’ (HL) has been widely used in North America, it is pointed out that this term implies the weaker status of the language in society (García, 2005) and the term ‘community language’ in the U.S. to reflect the contemporary context (Wiley, 2001). In Australia, the term ‘heritage’ usually evokes Indigenous cultures. Wiley (2005, p. 223) refers to the differences between CL and HL as ‘the former having connection with the living language and the latter seeking to reconnect’. As of the 2021 Census, Japanese is spoken at home by 58,757 people, positioning it as one of Australia’s smaller community languages. Thomson (2021, p. 3) proposes the term 繋生語 (*keishōgo*=language to connect) in contrast to 継承語 (*keishōgo*=language to inherit) to describe Japanese as a community language and defines it as ‘the language that is born from connections with parents, family, and friends, and that creates further connections, generates new meanings, and passes these connections on to the next generation’.¹

Many individuals, groups and schools teach community languages after school to maintain them among speakers born in Australia or who moved to Australia when they were young. Some schools receive funding from the state governments; others are taught privately, often by volunteers. Japanese communities around Australia established many schools that teach Japanese to children growing up in Australia. In this chapter, the term ‘Japanese as a Community Language’ (JCL) denotes the language used and learned by children with connections to Japan. These children are referred to as JCL children, while institutions that teach JCL are identified as JCL schools.

Despite many multilingual practices, including government-owned national broadcasting services and multilingual public notices in print and online, with diverse cultures and languages, Australian society and education systems and practices have been criticised for their monolingual mindset (Clyne, 2004, 2008; Nicholas, 2014; Liddicoat, 2013), with English at its centre. Japan, on the other hand, is identified as an ideologically monolingual country (Gottlieb, 2011; Liddicoat, 2013). The educators, including both teaching staff and managers, of JCL schools are placed in these two monolingual mindsets despite being in an environment of multiculturalism in Australia. On one hand, they are under pressure to teach *Kokugo* (the Japanese national language, see below for its further explanations) in line with the Japanese curriculum. On the other hand, their students are expected to succeed academically in Australia, where English is the medium of instruction in mainstream schools.

Teachers and schools are not free from the influence of broader language policies and ideologies. While they hold their ideals and beliefs, their practices are often shaped, if not constrained, by the policies and ideologies surrounding them. This chapter examines two important factors that influence JCL schools in Australia: first, the language policies and ideologies of Australia and Japan, which significantly impact the policies and practices of these schools; and second, the personal beliefs of the educators (teachers and managers) in these schools, which are shaped by these policies and ideologies.

Based on the semi-structured interviews with 34 educators, we will address the following questions:

- What beliefs do educators at JCL schools hold concerning JCL education, and what policies and ideologies shape their beliefs?
- How do these beliefs relate to the challenges and issues that they face?
- How do they respond to these challenges and issues?

Before presenting the interview data in the following sections, we describe the schools catering to JCL children and review relevant studies on language ideologies, policies, and beliefs. We then move on to our main discussion, which draws on the interview data to explore teachers' beliefs and how these relate to language policies and ideologies. Finally, this chapter concludes with the themes of translanguaging and inclusiveness.

JCL Schools

In Australia, four primary types of schools cater to JCL children: *Nihonjin Gakkō* (full-time Japanese schools), *Hoshūkō* (after-hours (or weekend) supplementary schools), private language schools and culture-based other types of schools (e.g. *Kendo* classes).

Nihonjin Gakkō is a full-time institution adhering to the Japanese curriculum and using textbooks authorised and published in Japan to educate children of Japanese citizens so that they can resume their studies smoothly when they return to Japan. Teachers at these schools are qualified in Japan and dispatched from Japan. There

are only three in Australia. In English-speaking countries, including Australia, enrolments in *Nihonjin Gakkō* typically remain small as sojourning families prefer enrolling their children in local schools for opportunities for English language acquisition. However, the schools advertise their bilingual and bicultural education for both sojourners and immigrants (Sydney Japanese International School), and some immigrant families send their children to the *Nihonjin Gakkō*. Those children usually move to their local mainstream school after completing or during their primary school education, but they acquire Japanese literacy skills at *Nihonjin Gakkō*. Hence, it has a role in teaching JCL in this case.

JCL children who attend mainstream schools during the week attend *Hoshūkō* after hours, mainly on weekends. *Hoshūkō* is formally known as *Hoshū Jugyōkō* (meaning supplementary lessons school) and usually community based. They receive funding from the Japanese government and often from the state governments in Australia. In this study, *Hoshūkō* are defined as the school receiving funding from the Japanese government, and others are categorised as language schools. In Australia, the first *Hoshūkō* commenced in Sydney in 1993, and the same school now enrolls over 300 students, with other *Hoshūkō* across Australia boasting similar or larger enrolments. Currently, 18 schools are operating in Australia. The purpose of the schools is the same as that of the *Nihonjin Gakkō*, aimed at teaching Japanese children the national curriculum subjects. According to the government's official website,

for Japanese elementary and junior high school students, classes are conducted during after-hours such as Saturdays, Sundays, and after school in subjects such as *Kokugo* (literally means 'Japanese as a national language') and mathematics using textbooks published in Japan. (MEXT, 2019)

Due to limited tuition time, typically only *Kokugo* is taught, although some schools also offer mathematics.

The Language schools, often called *Nihongo Kyōshitsu*, are independent of the Japanese government. They are generally smaller than *Nihonjin Gakkō* or *Hoshūkō*. While some have structured organisations with multiple teachers and administrative staff, many operate from individual teachers' homes. Larger schools receive funding from local state governments as community language schools. These institutions, especially small ones, usually focus on Japanese culture, incorporating children's songs, stories, plays, food, and annual events into their curriculum, often without using any textbooks. Other schools include Storytime (*yomikikase*) groups, tea ceremony classes, play groups, and *Kendō* classes. While these programs incorporate the Japanese language, their primary focus is on engaging participants in Japanese cultural activities rather than formal language instruction.

Language Policies and Ideologies

Language policy manifests across various speech communities at various levels, from families to states, whether formally documented or informally practised.

Schools and other educational institutions represent one such community. Spolsky (2004) identifies three core components of language policy: language practices, beliefs about the language, and language management. Language practices account for the speakers' choice of language, i.e. which forms and varieties to use. Beliefs here represent the value assigned to the language, which influences the choice of language. Language management refers to efforts to regulate or control such practices. Beliefs about languages are often shared within speech communities. These shared beliefs collectively form ideologies (Cameron, 2006) that influence perceptions of a language or its variants. The current study employs Spolsky's (2004) definition of beliefs about the language and that of language ideologies by Cameron (2006) shown above.

Liddicoat (2013) asserts that language policies are 'inherently contextualised in language ideologies' (p. 4), emphasising that cultural norms, historical contexts, societal attitudes and beliefs of the speech community shape the trajectory of these policies. Since language plays a central role in education as the medium of instruction, and the choice of language significantly affects students, it has been a key focus in discussions on language policy in education (Spolsky, 2004). Practices both influence and are shaped by prevailing beliefs, which, in turn, guide language management.

As mentioned above, JCL schools operate under the influence of either the Japanese government, the Australian government or both. The two governments differ significantly in their approaches to language policy. Despite their shared goal of teaching Japanese to children with a Japanese background in Australia, the above-mentioned three types of schools (*Nihonjin Gakkō*, *Hoshūkō* and *Nihongo Kyōshitsu*) have distinct focuses. Liddicoat (2013) identifies four key areas in language-in-education policies: (1) literacy education in the dominant language for monolingual, monocultural students, (2) literacy education in the dominant language for Indigenous or immigrant students to facilitate assimilation, (3) teaching an additional language alongside the mainstream language and (4) promoting minority group languages to enhance minority language acquisition and confidence.

The Japanese government has explicit policies for the first three focuses: (1) literacy education in *Kokugo* (Japanese as a national language) for Japanese children in Japan; (2) *Nihongo* (Japanese language) education for foreign residents; and (3) education in an additional language (primarily English) for Japanese children. Here, *Nihongo* is clearly distinguished from *Kokugo* (Motobayashi, 2020). *Kokugo* is reserved for native Japanese speakers, while the term *Nihongo* is used to refer to the Japanese language taught to foreigners. This distinction underscores Japan's strong monoethnic identity, often marginalising linguistic and cultural diversity. Immigrants are largely segregated from the dominant group, thereby minimising any perceived threat to the hegemony of the dominant culture (Liddicoat, 2013).

The term *Kokugo* was originally created as a symbol of unified Japanese citizens as well as a means to eliminate linguistic diversity in the late 19th century (Yasuda, 2011). Yi (1996) explains that *Kokugo* was an ultimate concept of the connection between the Japanese spirits and the Japanese language in the modern period. This term has also been used to represent a school subject in Japan, teaching Japanese

literacy and being intended to instil the Japanese spirit in children (Mulvey, 2021). In the early 20th century, the Tokyo dialect was chosen as the standard language, and the standardised pronunciation and spelling were taught in the *Kokugo* textbooks. According to Motobayashi (2020), furthermore, the language policies developed in the 1970s and 2000s indicate a strong tie between the notion of *Kokugo* and the Japanese nation as well as the role of *Kokugo* in nation building, social integrity and constituting the foundation of the entire education. This *Kokugo* ideology is thus indexed to legitimacy as authentic Japanese citizens (Mulvey, 2021). To Japanese residents abroad, moreover, being proficient in *Kokugo* often represents being Japanese, and many of them expect their children to acquire such proficiency.

The *Nihonjin Gakkō*, which operates under the control of the Japanese government, primarily focuses on the above-mentioned first and third categories of the four that Liddicoat (2018) identifies. These schools treat their environment as monolingual and monocultural, emphasising literacy education in *Kokugo* and teaching English as an additional language for Japanese children.

In contrast, as mentioned above, *Hoshūkō* functions under the influence of both Japanese and Australian policies, receiving funding from both governments. This dual influence places them in an ambivalent position. Their primary focus aligns with the first category, namely literacy education in the dominant language of Japan. The Japanese government views students at *Hoshūkō* as temporary residents abroad who will eventually return to Japan. Consequently, the government supplies free Japanese textbooks for all subjects to families planning a return. However, in practice, an increasing number of *Hoshūkō* students are children of immigrants, necessitating attention to the fourth category: the promotion of minority group languages.

Independent schools, which do not receive funding from the Japanese government, explicitly focus on maintaining Japanese as a minority language in Australia, aligning with the fourth category above. Some independent schools and *Hoshūkō* adopt a dual approach, teaching Japanese as a second language and as a background/first language within the Australian curriculum.

Language Ideologies Underlying Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

Recent research investigates how teachers' identities and backgrounds influence their teaching methods and language beliefs when teaching CLs or HLs (Becker, 2024; Showstack et al., 2024). For example, Showstack et al. (2024) conducted a case study of five teachers to explore how their backgrounds and identities impact their teaching approaches in Spanish as heritage language (SHL) programs across U.S. institutions. One teacher from Madrid, for example, positioned himself as the sole expert on linguistic correctness in the classroom and regarded his students' linguistic repertoire as inferior to standard Spanish. He employed a prescriptivist approach that framed his teaching practices, which might have negatively impacted his students' investment in formal language study.

Moreover, Showstack et al. (2024) claim that the teachers' institutional context affects their pedagogical approaches and ideological perspectives, as shown in the

case where a teacher navigated between two competing discourses. More specifically, they were an institutional discourse of ‘Standard Language Ideology (SLI)’ that devalued the linguistic practices and expertise of CL speakers in the classroom context and a discourse that legitimised students’ home linguistic practices. The authors found the former strong enough for the teacher to make her goal for students to achieve standard Spanish, although she was keen to find a way to ensure that she was not delegitimising her students’ non-standard linguistic practices at home.

Issues Related to Language Ideologies and How Teachers Deal with Them

Similar to the above-mentioned negative effect of SLI, Gironzetti and Belpoliti (2021) found that existing training programs and preparation for SHL teachers in the US often perpetuates a monoglossic standard language ideology (i.e. assumptions that monolingualism is the norm and two languages should be kept separate) This, in turn, often leads to the focus of their teaching mainly on promoting students’ control of standard versions of the language, its structure and literacy while ignoring other basic areas for advancing their students’ positive attitudes towards SHL. The authors stress the importance of an ecological approach that appreciates educators’ diverse backgrounds, strengths and needs to help them support and implement effective articulations of revised goals for SHL education that focus on multilingual practices.

In their analysis of four teachers of Greek as HL in Canada, Panagiotopoulou et al. (2018) found that while all of them lead multilingual lives, each approached both their own and their students’ multilingualism in different ways. Some teachers solely focused on the aspect of students’ language identity relevant to their school. Consequently, they tended to reinforce the school’s monolingual policy. This resulted in the discourse that students should act as monolingual people. In contrast, teachers who focused mainly on students’ multilingual practices, rather than on language in isolation, tended to accept multilingual identities as the norm instead of insisting on monolingual performances in the classroom. In the latter case, students’ linguistic repertoire would be enriched, and their translingual discursive competences should be developed in their classes.

In a large-scale survey on dialect variation, Chi et al. (2022) found that teachers of various HL in the U.S. felt that students should learn their non-standard home dialects, considering these dialects beneficial for subsequently learning the standard dialect (or form). However, these positive perceptions and expectations may not necessarily transfer into classroom practices. The authors then stress the importance for educators to be aware of their own perceptions and the possibility of learners’ negative learning experiences caused by educators’ inflated expectations of their students.

Through an analysis of classroom language use by four teachers of Chinese (Mandarin) as HL in the UK, Yiakoumetti (2022) examined the various functions of their use of students’ dominant language (English) in class as well as these teachers’ views on their own language use. They found that all teachers systematically switched to English to introduce and explain new vocabulary and grammatical

structures as well as metalinguistic knowledge based on their belief that L1 (English) provision facilitated the acquisition of new linguistic knowledge. Moreover, they seemed to select English to build rapport with and assist their students, driven by their belief that students associated their L2 (Chinese) with formal learning and L1 with more familiar, casual and comfortable settings. Despite their mostly positive views towards using English to facilitate learning, they were concurrently uncertain about their linguistic behaviours, including the optimal balance between English and Mandarin during lessons. This, in turn, appeared to lead them to believe that they were not equipped enough for teaching Mandarin as HL. The authors argue that teachers' utilisation of the students' linguistic repertoire should be celebrated in the classroom and treated as an undoubtedly useful tool.

Language Ideologies Surrounding JCL Schools

The literature reviewed above mainly examines European languages and Chinese as HLs, which are widely used at home by a large number of (immigrant) children overseas. Given that the size of Japanese communities overseas is significantly smaller than Spanish, Greek or Chinese-speaking populations abroad, research exploring language ideologies in Japanese at JCL schools is limited. However, Mulvey (2021) is a notable exception.

In her analysis of field notes, classroom audio recordings and interviews with the head administrators collected at the two well-established JHL schools (North School and South School) in the UK, Mulvey (2021) found that one-nation-one-language *Kokugo* ideology and pedagogic separate language ideology (e.g. the Japanese-only ethos) are significant in shaping the programs and teachers' practice. Moreover, she claims that schools struggled with increasing diversity in student backgrounds (including families with no plans to return to Japan) and varying Japanese proficiency levels.

In North School, Mulvey (2021) found that the head administrator attempted to reproduce parts of *Hoshūkō*, implementing *Kokugo* ideology despite her aspiration to create an inclusive Japanese community. However, due to the aforementioned diversity, she struggled to pursue this aspiration. Consequently, she set the desirable literacy requirement, namely, reading and writing of *hiragana*, before starting the course. Still, her classroom observations show that a teacher in Year 1 allowed the students to use English while trying to use Japanese as much as possible to mitigate the diverse linguistic skills in class.

Similarly, South School had a history of conflict between the two ideologies, that is, a flexible and inclusive spirit (to accept any students regardless of their language competence) and the Japanese-only ideology (Mulvey, 2021). The head administrator started a new class for students with limited Japanese proficiency, which was a solution to this ideological conflict. Mulvey's observation of the class taught by this administrator indicated that the new class used Japanese and English flexibly to construct meanings. In contrast, teachers in other classes taught authentic and legitimate Japanese under the influence of *Kokugo* ideology. However, unlike the Year 1 teacher at North School, who put great effort into staying within the

boundaries of Japanese despite her multilingual practice as a pedagogic technique to cater to her students’ diverse learning needs, the new class teacher at South School did not have a clear-cut boundary between Japanese and English. This was possibly because using materials for learners of Japanese as a foreign language instead of *Kokugo* textbooks freed her from the *Kokugo* ideology.

In addition to a positive ideological orientation towards the diversity of students’ family backgrounds and educational needs, Mulvey suggests that a useful tool is ‘translanguaging’ which is ‘the act of deploying all of the speaker’s lexical and structural resources freely’ (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 297). Since the teacher at South School was practising translanguaging, students could use their linguistic resources fully to construct meaning.

As mentioned above, the literature on JCL school educators is very limited, and Mulvey (2021) mainly deals with interviews with the head administrators and class observations at two JCL schools in the UK. We thus aim to fill in this research gap by examining the pedagogical beliefs of 34 educators at JCL schools throughout Australia, which, we believe, will provide useful insights into the way we advance CL education that globally attracts increasing interest.

Data and Methods

This study qualitatively analysed interview data from a nationwide project commissioned by the Japan Foundation, Sydney, and conducted by the Australian Network for Japanese as a Community Language (ANJCL) in 2021.² The interviews followed an earlier online questionnaire survey. Both interviews and surveys targeted parents of JCL children and educators (teachers and managers) affiliated with JCL schools. However, the analysis in this study focuses on the interview data gathered from educators.

The interviews involved 18 teachers and 16 managers of JCL schools. To protect their privacy, the participants are identified only by their codes: the teachers are denoted as T1-18, and the managers as M1-16. The state distribution of these participants is outlined in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Participants’ states of residence

	<i>Teachers</i> <i>T1–T16</i>	<i>Managers</i> <i>M1–M16</i>
New South Wales	5	7
Victoria	3	3
Australia Capital Territory	2	0
Tasmania	0	0
South Australia	2	1
Western Australia	2	1
Northern Territory	3	1
Queensland	1	3
Total	18	16

Table 7.2 Participants' school types and years of teaching

Teaching duration	1-3 years	4-6 years	7-9 years	10 + years	unknown
<i>Hoshūkō</i>	T7, T10, T18, M13, M14	T3, T5, T12	T11, M2	T9, T14, M3	T2, T6, M5, M15
Language schools	T1, T13, M1	M12	T17	M4, M6	T4, M7
Other	M10	T15, T16	M8	T8, M9	M16

Table 7.2 presents the types of schools where the participants were teaching or held managerial roles, along with the length of time they had been involved with each institution at the time of the interview. Data from *Nihonjin Gakkō* were not obtained, as it was outside the scope of this project. In this study, the category '*Hoshūkō*' was limited to the schools that received subsidies from the Japanese government. Some schools not subsidised by funding from the Japanese government use the term '*Hoshūkō*' to present themselves as schools for JCL children. Those schools, independent of funding from Japan, were categorised as local language schools regardless of their names. The groups in the 'Other' category focused primarily on fostering an understanding of Japanese culture while incorporating language learning, such as playgroups, Storytime sessions and tea ceremony classes.

Semi-structured interviews of around one hour were conducted online via Zoom in Japanese by a team of 13 researchers from the ANJCL. The participants were asked about the school's environment, working conditions, challenges of their roles, teaching materials and other teaching-related issues they wished to discuss. These sessions were video recorded, and simplified transcriptions were made, which removed the interviewer's remarks, fillers, repetitions, communication markers and other features of oral communication. The excerpts used in this chapter have been translated into English by the authors.

The transcribed interview data were coded using NVivo software, with key themes systematically coded. The authors collaborated to develop a consistent coding system, which was applied to data from both teachers and managers. The themes relevant to this study include student needs, motivation and passion for teaching, future aspirations, teaching materials, teaching philosophy, challenges and management issues. These themes were used to analyse the nature of participants' beliefs, ideologies and challenges or issues that were relevant to these beliefs and how they responded to these challenges.

Analysis and Discussion

Educators' Beliefs and Challenges

Through the analysis of interviews with each participant, their educational beliefs were broadly categorised into the three types: (1) beliefs about language use and language teaching, (2) beliefs about teaching in general and (3) beliefs about parents' responsibilities and commitments. The following sections illustrate these

beliefs, their underlying ideologies, and the major issues and challenges associated with them.

Beliefs About Language Use and Language Teaching

Among this first type, one of the strongest beliefs held by many of the participants is that the school should be monolingual (i.e. only Japanese should be used on the school grounds). In their interviews, nine participants (teachers T1, T5, T10, T12, T13, T15 and T16 and managers M3 and M12) referred to the use of English as a problem. T1 (a teacher from a language school in VIC), for example, reported not wanting her students to hear their non-Japanese parents and herself talking in English because it might encourage them to talk to her in English in class. She further claimed that when they did so, she would reply to them in Japanese or ask them to repeat what she translated into Japanese. However, this Japanese-only ethos seemed to cause T1 a challenge as follows:

A child who couldn't answer my questions [in Japanese] in class complained in English during recess, saying she knew the answer to these questions, but she didn't know how to say it in Japanese.

This child may have felt excluded in their classroom because T1 imposed a Japanese-only rule, while children who speak Japanese fluently tended to be dominant in class discussions based on T1's claim. As Showstack et al. (2024) discuss, this monolingual belief might negatively affect the child's motivation to continue learning Japanese in class.

In contrast, T10 (from *Hoshūkō* in NSW) learned in a course for language teachers that it would be more efficient and enjoyable to learn and teach Japanese if the language skills of both students and teachers were utilised and thus allowed her students to use English. More specifically, she allowed her students to conduct their research in English but had them give an oral presentation in Japanese, followed by class discussions in both languages. Like the teacher at North School in Mulvey's (2021) study, T10 regarded students' diverse linguistic practices positively and allowed them to conduct a project flexibly across languages.

Nevertheless, she was criticised by her colleague for not conducting her class entirely in Japanese, although there was no official rule of Japanese-only in classes. Given the prevailing monolingualism at many CL schools, this shows the challenge of employing the multilingual practice mentioned above. This practice, however, allows for engaging in activities across languages as a useful strategy for inclusion and a positive ideological orientation towards diversity of students' backgrounds, educational needs, and Japanese proficiency levels.

This Japanese-only ethos stems from two distinct ideologies. The first is the monolingual ideology rooted in traditional language education, which relies on the direct method—an approach that immerses learners exclusively in the target language and permits only its use (García & Otheguy, 2020). The second is the

Japanese government's *Kokugo* ideology mentioned above, representing legitimacy as authentic Japanese citizens who are supposed to have the age-appropriate knowledge of the standard Japanese language and culture (Lee, 2009; Mulvey, 2021; Yasuda, 2006, 2011).

Infused by these ideologies, this belief in monolingualism is often realised as a school policy that is not necessarily formalised. As shown in T1's case above, teachers are usually expected to share the understanding that students are supposed to do everything in Japanese. Moreover, this expectation is often applied not only to classroom learning but also to schoolwork completed at home. A teacher from *Hoshūkō* in VIC, T12, insisted that parents should not allow their children to use English for their JCL school work. She criticised the parents who doubted the necessity of memorising the multiplication tables in Japanese when their children already knew it in English. She believed children would stop learning Japanese once their parents allowed them to use English for JCL school work. We argue that for many teachers working at JCL schools, including T1 and T12, *Kokugo* skills seem very important as the solid foundation of all intellectual activities for their students. This belief is likely to emerge from the *Kokugo* ideology that we mentioned above.

Furthermore, the monolingual policy affects the parents' participation in JCL school communities as well. JCL schools' websites are mostly monolingual (Japanese), and communication between schools and parents is usually all in Japanese. Some schools explicitly limit enrolment to families where both children and parents understand Japanese, creating a formal language barrier to participation. Some managers at different schools (M7 from Language School in NSW and M12 from Language School in NSW) commented that they want to encourage all parents to be involved in management and administration. Still, the parents who do not speak Japanese are often excluded, as all communication needs to be translated, which significantly prolongs meetings.

Another strong belief in this category is that the development of language systems is separated by named languages (e.g. English and Japanese) and that children linearly develop them. Seven teachers (T1, T3, T5, T7, T10, T11 and T12) noted the widening gap between children with high and low Japanese proficiency. This proficiency refers to how well children understand their teachers' instructions in Japanese and how effectively they can express their thoughts in Japanese. However, it is often measured through their understanding of the *Kokugo* textbook and the number of characters they can read and write. *Hoshūkō* schools, which offer multiple classes for each school year, usually divide students into two groups: one often labelled as the *Kokugo* class, and the other as the *Nihongo* class, which ranges from the upper grade of primary level to secondary level. The *Kokugo* class is designed for children who can handle the work of the *Kokugo* textbook, and the *Nihongo* class is for those who face difficulties with it. These classes are also called *Kikoku-gumi* (sojourners expected to return to Japan) and *Eijū-gumi* (immigrants planning to stay permanently), respectively. The distinction reflects the above-mentioned categorisation of *Kokugo* for Japanese citizens and *Nihongo* for foreigners.

The following teachers' accounts demonstrate the importance placed on textbook-based literacy skills at each grade level:

Some children [in my Year 2 class] still cannot use *hiragana* and cannot follow my instructions. (T12, *Hoshūkō*, VIC)

Some children struggle with Year 1 *kanji*, so we have to teach it in Year 6. (T18, *Hoshūkō*, SA)

The number of *kanji* mastered per school year is also considered an important benchmark. The Japanese government prescribes a set list of *kanji* for each grade level nationwide, ensuring consistency in assessment. They are specific and measurable. One language school manager (M1, VIC) observed that frequent *kanji* tests facilitate the assessment of student progress and foster a sense of accomplishment.

Guided by the *Kokugo* textbook, teachers prioritise students' ability to perform *Kokugo* tasks exclusively in Japanese without allowing them to utilise their full linguistic repertoire, including English. As a result, the children's potential beyond *Kokugo* skills is often overlooked. We argue that this strong focus on *Kokugo* skills inadvertently overshadows students' overall multilingual abilities and their identity as individuals who have the potential to utilise various linguistic resources (cf. Panagiotopoulou et al., 2018; Showstack et al., 2024).

Beliefs About Teaching in General

Our analysis also revealed that most of the participants strived to make students' learning experience engaging and enjoyable while attempting to accommodate their various learning needs and varying levels of Japanese proficiency. A prominent perspective within this category of belief is that learning should be enjoyable to foster a deeper connection between children and Japanese culture. T10 (from *Hoshūkō* in NSW) underscores the significance of making learning enjoyable:

Giving priority to forcing children to overcome their weaknesses or focusing on something they don't enjoy, such as memorising *kanji*, is like putting the cart before the horse. We should rather help them develop their strengths and focus on something they enjoy. If they are good at speaking, they can enjoy talking about Japanese culture. ... We do not need to stick to the traditional approach that requires children to reach a specific literacy level. I believe we can adapt our methods based on each child's needs.

Similar to T10's teaching philosophy, nine teachers (T3, T4, T5, T7, T9, T10, T11, T12 and T17) consistently expressed a desire for their students to enjoy learning and develop a love for Japan. They viewed their role as fostering children's personal development rather than merely focusing on academic skill acquisition, including Japanese literacy. However, as seen in studies such as Chi et al. (2022) and Showstack et al. (2024), they often found themselves caught between their

idealistic goals and positive perceptions of CL education and the pressure to demonstrate academic progress based on *Kokugo* textbooks. This tension relates to the third perspective that will be discussed next.

Parental Commitment and Support

Four managers (M1, M3, M6 and M15) and three teachers (T7, T12 and T17) voiced frustration over the lack of parental support, particularly regarding the commitment of Japanese-speaking parents to their children's JCL education. They emphasised the crucial role of parents in ensuring that their children study Japanese at home and receive assistance with their schoolwork. The following account exemplifies this concern:

The previous principal also said that JCL education ends when parents give up, and I believe this is true. The extent to which parents correct their children's Japanese makes a significant difference, especially in early primary school years. When parents are not motivated, their children often aren't either. Children's success at Saturday school largely depends on how closely their parents work in cooperation with [JCL school] teachers. It's difficult for us to get them to understand the importance of home learning. (T12 from *Hoshūkō* in VIC)

Since JCL schools typically meet only a few hours per week, they often assign substantial homework to ensure measurable academic progress. Weekly tests are also commonly used to reinforce students' *kanji* learning. This approach is particularly evident at *Hoshūkō*, where the curriculum requires students to complete an entire *Kokugo* textbook within a single academic year. As mentioned earlier, these schools use the same textbooks as those in Japan, but they operate with significantly fewer instructional hours. As a result, as many participants teaching at *Hoshūkō* claimed, consistent study at home becomes indispensable for student success.

Educators' Response to Challenges and Translanguaging

The beliefs held by the participants significantly influenced their pedagogical practices and school management approaches. These beliefs encompassed a wide range of factors, including the value and nature of language (learning), such as *Kokugo*, teaching methodologies and philosophy, language learning progress and outcomes and parental involvement. Such beliefs were socially constructed and shaped by prevailing policies and ideologies; however, they were also informed by individuals' personal experiences and the specific context or environment where they teach (Borg, 2003; Pajares, 1992; Showstack et al., 2024).

In the field of bilingual children's education, the concept of 'translanguaging' has been widely discussed over the past decade (Cellic & Seltzer, 2013; Cummins 2021; Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2019; García & Otheguy, 2020; Mulvey, 2021). García and Otheguy (2020) argue that 'translanguaging focused on working with bilingual students to ensure that they were able to perform their bilingualism in

ways that reflected who they were as bilingual beings' (p.24). Otheguy et al. (2015) further show that bilingual children do not mentally organise their language abilities into separate, named languages. Instead, they actively 'language' (García & Otheguy, 2020, p. 25) using a unitary language system that integrates all of their sensory and cognitive resources, including knowledge gained from exposure to different languages. As illustrated by the case of a child in T1's class discussed above, the Japanese-only policy appears to limit some students' learning opportunities, as they are unable to fully participate in class due to limited comprehension of the material and the difficulty of responding exclusively in Japanese. In contrast, translanguaging practice enables these children to draw on their entire linguistic repertoire, facilitating active participation in class and fostering a sense of belonging within their class community. As García et al. (2021) note, educational institutions often frame language instruction in terms of skills in academic language. In English-speaking contexts, it is the language of the 'texts produced mostly by white monolingual English-users occupying a socially dominant position' (2021, p. 209). In Japanese-language education, *Kokugo* textbook—produced by the government—reflect a monolingual ideology, which clearly separates *Nihongo* (Japanese for foreigners) from *Kokugo* (the national language for Japanese citizens) (Liddicoat, 2013; Motobayashi, 2020; Yasuda, 2006). As T10's case demonstrated, to nurture bilingual children's translanguaging, it is necessary to move beyond such ideologies by resisting the dominance of *Kokugo* as the singular standard.

We argue that freedom from *Kokugo* ideology possibly enables schools to foster inclusivity and diversity in their school communities. Several schools—such as those managed by M4, M11 and M13—have moved away from this ideology, by adopting more flexible admission policies that accept students regardless of their language proficiency or cultural background. In these schools, the focus has shifted from assessing differences in language proficiency—often referred to as *reberu no sa* (language level differences)—to recognising the diversity of students' experiences, needs and study purposes.

Another approach adopted by these schools involves incorporating elements of Australian classroom practices, particularly by allowing students to utilise their full linguistic repertoire. These adaptations, however, occur at the level of individual teachers rather than as institutional policies. While most instructors at *Hoshūkō* adhere strictly to a monolingual Japanese policy, some teachers employ English to facilitate smoother communication with students. Cummins (2021) highlights the cognitive and academic benefits of allowing students to use their first language, noting that prohibiting its use can devalue students' sense of identity. Contrary to the strict language policy of *Hoshūkō*, some teachers, especially those teaching cultural subjects (T8, M8) or those with experience in Australian educational institutions (T9, T10), are more flexible in incorporating translanguaging practice into their teaching.

Additionally, some teachers have adopted project-based learning, 'just like Australian schools' (T9, T10). Specifically, T9 taught a specialised course at

Hoshūkō for Year 11 and 12 students preparing for the Australian tertiary entrance examination in ‘background Japanese’. As a qualified Japanese teacher in Australia, she claimed that Australian education encourages critical thinking, whereas Japanese education tends to prioritise memorisation. She reported incorporating Australian teaching styles to promote critical thinking, believing that ‘the act of learning is meaningful’ (T9, WA). Although she rarely used English in her classes since her students typically did not require it, she did not hesitate to do so when necessary, nor did she discourage students from using it. Her approach prioritised holistic learning over the unrealistic expectation of creating two monolingual native speakers within a single individual. Furthermore, rather than focusing on students’ grammatical errors or perceived gaps in proficiency, T9 emphasised the importance of developing critical thinking skills over rigid literacy-based language instructions.

Conclusion

Regardless of differences, including the types of schools and funding sources, this study found that most participants aimed to provide JCL children with enjoyable and engaging learning environments. They expressed a desire for their students to embrace their connection to Japan. As discussed above, however, there were obstacles and limitations to this. They include the directives of their funding bodies, which significantly influenced the operation of some JCL schools in Australia, such as the mandated use of textbooks designed for monolingual Japanese children. To support the growth of JCL children, it is desirable that these schools adopt more inclusive policies that allow translanguaging practices to help nurture students’ multilingual and multicultural capabilities. For example, as demonstrated by T10, JCL children were able to use English to gather information and conduct research, subsequently presenting or writing up their findings in Japanese. They could also use English to participate in class discussions, with teachers and peers supporting them in expressing the same ideas in Japanese.

Moreover, we highlight the necessity for educators and parents to work more closely together to better support JCL children’s development of these capabilities. This in turn will allow for realistic expectations that suit each JCL child’s learning needs and goals.

Alongside the insights into JCL schools’ challenges that the current study has given, we must also acknowledge its limitations. The study is limited to teachers and managers of JCL schools in Australia. The findings may not be applicable to other countries. Additionally, the nature of self-reported data may cause the risk of bias in the findings. Future research should thus collect multiple data types, such as class observations and compare CL teachers’ accounts across different countries. It should also focus on the impact of their multilingual experiences and identities on their pedagogical beliefs, which could offer invaluable perspectives on challenges faced by CL teachers globally.

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Notes

- 1 The English translation is taken from the website of Australian Network for Japanese as Community Language (<https://sites.google.com/view/anjcl/home>).
- 2 The reports of the survey and the interview by ANJCL are available from its website (<https://sites.google.com/view/anjcl/research-and-report>).

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8 Re-imagining Japan–Australia Relations through Tourism

An Examination of the Backgrounds and Strategies of Daikyo’s Resort Development in Cairns

Kazuhito Onozuka

Introduction

It was a single Japanese company, Daikyo, that played a key role in the resort development of Cairns, Queensland. From the outset, tourism in Cairns was targeted at the overseas market of Japan, rather than the domestic market. In addition to these characteristics, tourism development in Cairns is unique in that it adopted distinctive development strategies. Daikyo is known in Japan for the sale of the Lions condominiums (*Lions Mansion*). Daikyo contributed significantly to Cairns’ rapid growth as an internationally recognised resort destination from the 1980s to the mid-2000s, mainly targeting the Japanese. Japanese society recognised Cairns as a tourist destination in parallel with Daikyo’s resort development (see Onozuka 2011a for details). As a result, Cairns became a popular tourist destination in Australia, attracting working holiday makers and travellers mainly from East Asia, including Japan, South Korea and China, as well as Western countries. This chapter aims to explore the motives and backgrounds of Daikyo’s investment in Cairns and to examine the strategies, contents and outcomes of the project.

The motivations for Daikyo’s investment in Cairns have not been explored in previous studies. Stimson et al. (1998) analyses Daikyo’s activities and economic impact on the town up to the mid-1990s. Hajdu (2005) discusses Japanese tourism investment in the Gold Coast in the 1980s and features Daikyo as a key stakeholder in the region’s development. Although there are research outputs on tourism in Cairns and analyses on Japanese companies, including Daikyo, these research results rely on corporate information and interviews in English.¹ Due to language barriers, significant Japanese-language sources remain largely unexplored, creating an important gap in our understanding of this cross-cultural development case. The information in Japanese is essential to understanding Daikyo’s motives for investing in Cairns and why the town has achieved its status as an internationally recognised resort. In addition to providing a unique case study for tourism studies, the findings will be useful in understanding the presence of Japanese people in the town, as well as fostering mutual relations between Australia and Japan.

Daikyo's development in Cairns extended into the realm of public works, contributing significantly to the improvement of the town's infrastructure. While Stimson et al. (1998, pp. 171–172, 175–177) acknowledge that the development created more than 1,369 jobs and contributed more than AUD 95 million to the regional economy, they also characterise Daikyo's impact as expanding low-wage, unstable employment with high turnover rates. As this chapter shows, however, Daikyo built the infrastructures that are still essential to the management of tourism even now. These include accommodation, a golf course, port facilities and housing estates. It should be emphasised that it was Daikyo that paved the way for the operation and growth of tourism in the Cairns region.

Daikyo continued to engage with opposition to its development projects through its unique strategies, even though the 1980s was a time when Japanese investment in real estate was highly controversial.² Daikyo's style of development was distinctive in that it paid attention to the natural environment and the sentiments of local citizens and stakeholders. Daikyo expanded its business in Japan through aggressive sales activities. The company's corporate culture, which emphasised merit-based employee evaluation and a do-whatever-they-can approach, contributed to its rapid growth but also raised concerns among critics about its business practices. The founder, Shuji Yokoyama (1925–2018), hereafter referred to as Yokoyama, displayed great attention to detail in his development projects. While engaging with tourism development in Cairns, Yokoyama involved local residents and environmental activists in the development process, and he considered the sentiments of local citizens and the impact on the natural environment. Daikyo's development project in Cairns thus provides an important case study for future tourism development schemes.

This chapter is structured as follows. First, it examines Daikyo's corporate cultures and business activities in Japan that led to its expansion into resort development in Cairns. It focuses on the progress towards the sales of the Lions condominiums and the process of becoming a market leader in the condominium sales industry. It then analyses the content and characteristics of Daikyo's resort development in Cairns and its promotional strategies. Second, the chapter analyses the tactics used by Daikyo to respond to criticism and opposition to its large-scale development projects. Third, it discusses the outcomes of resort development and how the content of development reflects Daikyo's corporate culture. It also shows that the development paved the way for the presence of Japanese people in the town.

Daikyo's Corporate History and Its Foray into Overseas Resort Development

Daikyo's Business Activities in Its Early Period and Its Corporate Culture in Japan

Yokoyama founded Daikyo in 1960 and led the company until the mid-1990s. Yokoyama was born in Tokyo in 1925 and graduated from the Mechanical Engineering Department of Tokyo Technical High School (now Shibaura Institute

of Technology) in 1944. After the Second World War, Yokoyama worked for *Minami Seiko*, a subsidiary of *Oki Denki* (Oki Electric Industry), for six years from 1949. He then spent three years in various jobs before joining the real estate company *Bannai Shoji* in November 1958. At *Bannai Shoji*, Yokoyama obtained a licence as a building and land transaction manager and became involved in the sale of ready-built houses (*Zaikai* 21 November 1989, p. 26). His sales performance at the company is said to have been ‘extremely distinctive’. Two years later, Yokoyama took up the position of section manager, with seven or eight subordinates. He became independent with his co-workers from *Bannai Shoji*. He founded *Daikyo Shoji* in 1960 and entered the property business (*Zaikai* 21 November 1989, p. 25).

At the time of its foundation, Daikyo’s initial focus was on the development of villa sites in the Nasu area of Tochigi. Rather than actual development, it was in fact land resale: purchasing land at a low price and then reselling it to other companies and investors at a higher price to make a profit, making them believe that the land’s value would increase. In an interview, former Japanese Daikyo employee A describes Daikyo’s activities at the time of its establishment as follows:

The resort development in Nasu is a lie. When companies start out, they gradually get bigger, sometimes engaging in activities that could almost violate the law. Have you heard of the Seibu and Tokyu, haven’t you? The founder (Yasujiro Tsutsumi of the Seibu Group) [...] was called *Pistol Tsutsumi* (Tsutsumi the Gunman). He is said to have been buying up land by threatening people as if he were pointing a gun. [...] Keita Gotoh (the founder) of the Tokyu Group... this man was called *Gohtoh Keita* (Keita the Robber). After a company gets bigger, there is a tendency to glorify the almost illegal activities of the pioneer days. (Author in brackets. 18 January 2012)

The Seibu and Tokyu groups both contributed significantly to shaping the urban landscape of the Tokyo metropolitan area, including Kanagawa and Saitama, during the Taisho and Showa periods. Many books and articles point out that their business style was at times almost illegal (see Kosakai 1989, for example). This is also true in the case of Daikyo. The former employee explained the time difference between 1960 and 1968, when Daikyo was founded and when the first Lions condominium was built in Akasaka, Tokyo, as follows:

If they continue to engage in ‘land laundering’ (i.e., land resale) and make money, the prospects for growth are not promising. As a company, they would be criticised by the weekly magazines. Daikyo also has pride as a company. So, they decided to do a more decent business, and that’s why they entered the sales of condominiums. (Author in brackets. 18 January 2012)

How did Daikyo expand its core business of selling Lions condominiums in Japan? The company deployed many salespeople in the surrounding areas, and they visited every single household to make a sale. Since Daikyo evaluated its employees based

on a strict performance-based merit system, four or five Daikyo salespeople would visit each house one after another on a daily basis. If the salesperson thought the family would sign a contract, he would return to the household late at night, even around midnight. According to former Japanese Daikyo employee A, it was 'normal' for such families to sign contracts around midnight. In the interview, the employee recalled that when he could not get a signed contract until midnight, he would even negotiate with the 'on-duty fireman' and still managed to get the contract signed.

According to Mitsui (2010, pp.65–70), a former employee of Daikyo, the turnover rate at Daikyo was well over 90%, due to the harsh working environment and its corporate culture. In morning meetings with supervisors, those who could not get contracts were explicitly condemned as 'salary thieves', and those who took a break at lunchtime were sarcastically criticised by their superiors. Daikyo's sales strategy of deploying a large number of salespeople always required human resources. Daikyo actively recruited 'all applicants without rejecting them', including corporate dropouts who had to leave their previous jobs for improper reasons. Such employees worked for Daikyo for a variety of motives: 'One worker wanted severance payment to pay off his debts, and another indulged in *Pachinko* games under the guise of sales and marketing' (Mitsui 2010, pp. 59, 67). No matter what means were employed, however, they were highly valued as long as they won contracts. Within a few years, such 'competent' workers were promoted to section administrators and general managers (Mitsui 2010).

At that time, it was not common for real estate companies, including Daikyo, to display model rooms when selling condominiums. The sales of condominiums were promoted using blueprint drawings of the rooms. Nevertheless, thanks to its 'furious (*moretsu*)' and 'aggressive (*kitta-hatta*)' sales approach, Daikyo sold around 4,300 condominiums in 1978 and became the industry leader in terms of the number of condominiums sold in that year. Daikyo's revenue in 1988 reached JPY 410.2 billion, surpassing Mitsui Real Estate's sales of JPY 394.8 billion to become the top-performing real estate corporation at that time (*Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 27 March 1989). In the process of becoming the industry leader, Daikyo began to show interest in a new business plan.

Foray into Overseas Resort Development: Towards the Construction of a 'Second Hawaii'

As Daikyo expanded its business, the company began showing an interest in developing overseas resorts. Former Daikyo employees explained that this was motivated by a desire to 'join the ranks of "first-class" (i.e., leading) companies', such as the aforementioned Tokyu and Seibu. Yokoyama stated that these 'prestigious companies' owned resorts in Japan and abroad. Although Daikyo was a late starter, Yokoyama wanted to join the ranks of such 'first-class' companies by pioneering development in places 'where other companies had not entered'. Daikyo then went on to search for potential sites for 'its resort' on the condition that the site had to be 'undeveloped'.³

Daikyo initially concentrated its investment activities on the Gold Coast. Yokoyama began a business relationship with Australia in 1972 when he bought 106 hectares of cattle station land in the South Burnett area of Queensland (*Australian Financial Review*, 22 June 1992).⁴ In the 1970s, he had also visited major parts of the state, including the Gold Coast. On a return visit in 1982, he is said to have marvelled at the rapid growth of the Gold Coast as a tourist destination, which even reminded him of the development of Hawaii (Hajdu 2005, p. 55). However, other Japanese companies, such as E.I.E. and *Matsushita Kosan*, as well as a number of prominent Japanese individuals, also began to invest in the real estate of the Gold Coast in the mid-1980s.⁵ As the concentration of Japanese investment on the Gold Coast reduced Daikyo's profits and the symbolic significance of its own resort, Yokoyama began to look for a new investment destination.

Yokoyama was always keen to 'stay on top' in any business.⁶ Initially, Daikyo's executives predicted that the next investment destination after the Gold Coast would be Sydney. However, Yokoyama decided to invest in Cairns, which was 'just a farming village' of sugar cane fields. At the time, he considered Cairns to be a 'no man's land', and developing such an undeveloped place from scratch was a prerequisite for Yokoyama, who preferred to be a pioneer.⁷ For Yokoyama, Sydney and other resorts were not particularly attractive locations, since other companies had already established their tourism-related business there.⁸ In relation to the decision to invest in Cairns, a Daikyo executive explains:

When we asked where to go next (after the Gold Coast), everyone thought (President Yokoyama would choose to invest in) Sydney. So, naturally we thought the president would say 'Sydney', but then he said 'Cairns'. [...] This is also what I heard, but people around him wondered if Mr Yokoyama had lost his mind. Because at that time, Cairns was (a village characterised by) a sugar cane field, and nothing was there. Cairns, so, we wondered why. It was even closer to Japan (than southern cities like Sydney), it was warmer, it was tropical, and it was like the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef. So, he thought Cairns (would be a suitable place for investment). [...] If he goes to (i.e., invests in) Sydney, he would fall behind [...]. So, he went to (i.e., decided to invest in) Cairns and [...] he said, 'It will eventually become the second Hawaii', and he kept buying land.⁹ (Author in brackets)

The executive further explains Yokoyama's enthusiasm for investing in Cairns as follows:

(The vision for the development of Cairns was) to make it a second Hawaii, so when our company went to (i.e., decided to invest in) Cairns, nobody in Japan had heard of Cairns. When the Japanese thought of a resort, it was Hawaii. So, President Yokoyama said we shall make Cairns a second Hawaii. The time difference (between Japan and Cairns) is also less (farther than Hawaii). He thought he would like to go to (i.e., invest in) a place where Japanese tourists could feel the culture of Europe and North America. It (Cairns) was a place where tourists

could feel Western culture, and then he went down (i.e., he chose to develop a resort in a southern country, Australia). In terms of a vision for development, Hawaii was already developed at that time, so he wanted to create such a place (i.e., a resort like Hawaii) by himself. He wanted to make it a resort that would be known all over the world.¹⁰ (Author in brackets)

Yokoyama set about transforming Cairns, an 'undeveloped land', into a resort like Hawaii. Cairns and Hawaii are almost the same distance from Japan. The town also possesses a tropical atmosphere and Western culture. The different seasons could be an advantage when it comes to attracting Japanese tourists, particularly those who want to enjoy a tropical holiday in winter. In addition, the town is situated in close proximity to distinctive natural resources, such as tropical rainforests and the Great Barrier Reef. Thus, Yokoyama considered Cairns to be a potential resort destination that could rival Hawaii.¹¹

The Content of Daikyo's Development in Cairns

Daikyo's actual corporate activities to create a 'second Hawaii' from this 'undeveloped land' were as follows.¹² First, it constructed and acquired accommodation: the Hilton Hotel in 1986, followed by the Cairns International Hotel (Park Royal Hotel at the time of acquisition) in 1989, and the Matson Plaza Hotel (Four Seasons Hotel at the time of acquisition) in 1990.¹³ Daikyo also built the Serpent Hostel and Shooting Star Apartments in 2001 for backpackers. The company purchased other sites for commercial purposes.¹⁴ Second, Daikyo constructed the Paradise Palms golf course with plans to open another golf course, in parallel with the acquisition of hotels.

Third, Daikyo developed housing estates. The firm purchased 243 hectares of sugarcane fields in south-west Cairns for AUD 23 million in 1989, with the intention of developing a luxury housing estate. The land has now been developed into a residential area known as Forest Gardens, comprising 1,650 lots. Another jointly funded residential development that started in 1988 at Smithfield, north-west of Cairns, had 910 lots for sale.

Fourth, Daikyo contributed to the comprehensive redevelopment of the port facilities. It provided a 50% stake in a harbour improvement project at Trinity Wharf, located in the southern part of Cairns city centre. The port redevelopment project included not only seaport improvements but also a major waterfront development, including the construction of a hotel and a casino in the vicinity. This redevelopment scheme in particular is almost tantamount to the construction of public facilities, rather than private property of Daikyo, as cruise ships and cargo vessels dock at this port (Ryle 2006).

Fifth, Daikyo acquired perpetual leases on the nearby uninhabited islands of Green Island and Fitzroy Island in 1991. The actual development was concentrated on Green Island. Daikyo then constructed a two-storey five-star hotel, the Green Island Resort, and designed a new liaison vessel with Green Island from scratch as a part of this project. In addition, the company carried out coastal protection works on Green Island to prevent erosion and improved the ship's berths.

Daikyo also organised numerous other events in Australia. To promote its resort, it arranged a golf tournament at the Palm Meadows golf course in Gold Coast from 1988 to 1992. Daikyo signed an exclusive contract with a professional golfer, Greg Norman. Many of the leading players of the day, including Masashi Ozaki (*Jumbo Ozaki*), were invited from Japan and elsewhere. Yokoyama was fond of sportsmen and invited athletes to the resort he had constructed, as well as celebrities and other influential figures who visited the president's office. In addition, Daikyo organised an IndyCar race in the Gold Coast in 1992 and 'the Face of Australia' beauty pageant. To promote its resort and events, Daikyo bought up many airplane seats and invited the press to cover the event. As a result, Daikyo's events and its resort were reported and publicised in the Japanese and Australian media.

In relation to Daikyo's promotional activities, the promotional booklet used at this time for the Japanese market was the *Goujien*, meaning a dictionary of Australia, named after *Koujien*: a Japanese dictionary. In addition to resort development, Daikyo sold the residential properties in Cairns and Gold Coast not only to Australians but also to the Japanese market. The *Goujien* was an A5-sized, colour booklet with different content each year and was distributed nationally in Japan from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. The *Goujien* was also distributed through travel agents and was a new publication at the time to promote Cairns.¹⁵

Japanese Companies' Acquisition of Prime Urban Locations in Queensland, and Daikyo's Measures to Respond to Criticism and Opposition in Cairns

Land Acquisition by Japanese Capital

The urban landscape of Cairns underwent a major transformation as a result of corporate activities by the Japanese company. As discussed, Daikyo's investment activities have expanded into the realms of constructing town infrastructure for public use. Investment activities such as hotel development and the construction of recreational facilities are commonplace and not unusual. Here, however, a private company is even involved in projects such as the acquisition of perpetual leases for two uninhabited islands and the construction of harbours. According to photographs taken in 1951 and 1959, the esplanade of what is now the centre of Cairns was a rural scene of two-storey wooden buildings and street trees (Watling and Walker 1977). From the mid-1980s, however, high-rise buildings intended for tourism began to dominate the previously idyllic coastline of trees, promenades, and parks.

Japanese investment was concentrated in prime urban locations. The construction and acquisition of these coastal high-rise buildings and land in the centre of Cairns, funded by Japanese capital, signalled to local residents the arrival of Japanese influence, or what locals perceived as the imprint of Asian "Otherness" on their landscape. In parallel with the rapid expansion of foreign direct investment (FDI) from Japan in the property and tourism sectors, Japanese capital acquired

iconic buildings and land in prime locations in the mid-to-late 1980s. This phenomenon was evident in Cairns and some of the major Australian cities.

The local newspaper reported on the foreign ownership of land as follows. Japanese capital owned 234,205.98 hectares of land in Queensland in 1990, valued at the time at AUD 1.691 billion (*Courier-Mail*, 14 April 1990). United States capital came second, having acquired 83,136.482 hectares of land at a cost of AUD 65.4 million, far less than Japanese capital. Other countries with significant land ownership in Queensland include the Federal Republic of Germany (44,677.333 hectares, valued at AUD 35.2 million), the United Kingdom (39,654.833 hectares, valued at AUD 159.6 million), Hong Kong (33,339.243 hectares, valued at AUD 41.7 million) and Singapore (20,513.731 hectares, valued at AUD 55.2 million). Further data shows that foreign land ownership in Queensland in 1991 was as follows: Japanese capital owned land worth AUD 3.917 billion, followed by New Zealand with AUD 741 million, the United Kingdom with AUD 663 million, the United States with AUD 435 million, the Netherlands with AUD 148 million, and the Federal Republic of Germany with AUD 126 million (*Courier-Mail*, 29 January 1993). Although the amount of land acquired is less than that of capital from other countries, Japanese companies bought the most expensive land in prime urban locations, and it explains the highest value of the acquired land among other foreign capitals.

Addressing Community Concerns and Opposition by Building Consensus with the General Population and Key Influential Figures

It is critically important for a company to obtain the consent of local residents and local government when undertaking investment activities in Australia and Japan.¹⁶ In the case of investment in Australia, it is essential to secure approval from all levels of government (Federal Government, Queensland State Government and local shires) in order to carry out the project. In the case of Japanese companies in particular, it becomes difficult for them to successfully expand their operations unless they build a favourable personal network and gain a broad consensus, not only from government officials and other influential people but also from the local community. Otherwise, investors would face strong opposition. As a foreign company from Asia, it is even more necessary to win the approval of the local population than it is for investments within Japan. Building a consensus with local residents allows them to engage with opposition and expand their operation in the region relatively easily. Even when they did win approval, Japanese companies were not always able to operate smoothly in an Anglo-centric society.

Daikyo made explicit efforts to engage with criticism and opposition by taking the following measures. First, Daikyo always tried to cultivate positive connections with politicians of all levels of government, landowners and local developers. In the absence of a systematic framework for accepting FDI, the main challenge in obtaining the approval of the project was to build favourable relationships with the State Premier and State Treasurer, as well as the Federal Minister of Finance and

the Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB). In particular, Daikyo visited the FIRB every six months to explain the progress of its business.¹⁷

Second, Daikyo made efforts to reconcile opposition not only from influential figures but also from the general population. Daikyo's intensive real estate investment in the late 1980s coincided with Japanese companies' entry into overseas property investment amid an economic bubble in Japan. There was a sense of backlash in some parts of Australia at that time (Hajdu 2005, Pokarier 2004). It was argued that local people would not benefit from tourism development because Japanese companies would monopolise the profits, and only Japanese people would use and occupy the tourist facilities. In response to these concerns, Daikyo took various measures. For example, when the new golf course (Paradise Palms) opened, Daikyo invited local residents to the clubhouse. On another occasion, Daikyo served breakfast to local residents when a hotel newly opened. The company occasionally organised recreational events, mainly for middle-aged and elderly residents. In relation to this point, a Daikyo executive explains:

We used to invite local senior citizens, or elderly people, to the Paradise Palms clubhouse every month and have a bit of entertainment and things like that. [...] We expected the participants to tell their children and grandchildren that Daikyo is a good place (i.e., a good company).¹⁸ (Author in brackets)

The older generation who experienced the Second World War might have been hostile to the Japanese in general and might have had concerns about Daikyo's corporate activities. Such invited older residents were expected to have more positive feelings towards Daikyo and to promote a favourable image of Daikyo in their homes.

Third, Daikyo involved environmental groups and activists in the development process. When developing the uninhabited islands of Green Island and Fitzroy Island, for example, Daikyo asked them which trees to cut. This is because there was widespread concern that resort development would destroy the local landscape and nature. According to a former Mayor of Cairns, Daikyo's acquisition of Green Island has resulted in significant improvements to the port facilities and the prevention of beach erosion. Green Island has historically been a popular day-trip destination since before the Second World War, however. It is an icon for local residents and has played an important role in shaping the symbolic capital of Cairns. Daikyo's acquisition of the island and the redevelopment project reportedly generated ill feeling among some citizens.¹⁹

Fourth, Daikyo employed local people and tried to use local resources wherever possible. Locals were employed in the construction and operation of hotels, for instance. As noted above, Daikyo created direct employment of 786 and indirect employment of 583, for a total of 1,369 jobs in Cairns. Among the workers, only about 10 were Japanese staff from the Tokyo head office.²⁰

Fifth, Daikyo continued to assert itself as a member of the community. For example, it established a local subsidiary and recruited prominent individuals as representatives to build amicable relations with the local community. Former

senior officials of the Queensland State Government, John Kenny and Sydney Schubert, were recruited to represent the local subsidiary, Daikyo Australia and Daikyo North Queensland. This also facilitated the promotion of its project through the contacts of its representatives.

Furthermore, Daikyo established the Yokoyama International Scholarship Foundation and launched a scholarship programme for international students to study in Japan in April 1990. With an endowment of JPY 500 million donated by Daikyo and Yokoyama, the foundation provided JPY 150,000 per month for graduate students and JPY 120,000 for undergraduates, as well as subsidies for tuition fees and housing costs (*Mainichi Shimbun*, 1 April 1990).

This strategy of avoiding criticism was the brainchild of Yokoyama. He had a talent for taking care of the sentiments of stakeholders involved in development projects, even overseas. Former Japanese Daikyo employee B, one of the few people who had worked closely with Yokoyama for a long period of time, said the following about Yokoyama:

President Yokoyama is really attractive as a man. [...] He is also a man who stands up to the strong. He is very sympathetic to the weak. [...] He used to run in *Jingu Gaien* around noon. He used to come back soaked in sweat to the waiting room in the corner of the first floor, which was the room for the chauffeurs at that time. They were also employees of Daikyo. The president approached them and asked how much they were paid. He then asked them how much their allowances were. However, the allowance for the drivers had remained unchanged at JPY 1,000 for 20 years. At the next board meeting, the president scolded the managing director and the general manager, saying 'How dare you pay only 1,000 yen for 20 years for the menial work of drivers?' He told the executives to revise the allowance immediately. That's the kind of person he is. The managing director of the general affairs department raised the allowance to JPY 10,000, but the president said, 'It is too little,' and it was changed to JPY 20,000. [...] We have a past like that. When the president bought cakes, he gave them to his secretary first. [...] When the people at the top take so-what attitudes (or become defiant), they don't look at those people at the bottom. The president always pays attention to the situations of such workers. That's what makes him great.²¹ (Author in brackets)

What is portrayed here is Yokoyama's warm-hearted behaviour towards employees below him in the hierarchy of the workplace. This narrative contrasts with the portrayal of Daikyo, which expanded its business by any means necessary, including making its employees work furiously. At the same time, however, Yokoyama had a talent for paying attention to the details of its corporate activities and the sentiments of the people involved. A Daikyo executive illustrated these points by saying, 'Things have two sides'. Although he did not elaborate on this statement, it could be interpreted as meaning that one sometimes needs to engage in improper activities when conducting business and development projects.²² Yokoyama's talent was utilised in a favourable manner in the development of the resort.

Consequences of Tourism Development

Downsizing and Withdrawal of Daikyo's Operations Following the Bursting of the Bubble Economy in Japan

While Australian society was actively discussing the socio-economic impacts of investment from Japan and its economic relationship with the country, Japanese companies began to withdraw from Australia one after another. They could no longer finance their operations because of the bursting of the bubble economy in Japan. In particular, Japanese companies had purchased a number of properties in the Sunshine Coast, the heart of the Gold Coast, for the construction of hotels. However, the project was halted halfway through. As a result, what was left in Surfers Paradise were several vacant lots.

Undeveloped land, such as that found in the Sunshine Coast at the time of my field research, was not seen in the city centre of Cairns. However, some of the suburban sites acquired by Daikyo remain undeveloped. In relation to the Clifton Beach development scheme in northern Cairns, for example, a road was widened prior to the construction of the resort. However, development stopped at that point, leaving only resort-specific roads.

Yokoyama saw more potential as a tourist destination in Cairns than in the Gold Coast, and Daikyo shifted its focus from the Gold Coast to Cairns.²³ By 2001, Daikyo placed 80% of its operations in Cairns and 20% in the Gold Coast. Even when other Japanese firms had already disinvested from resort development in Australia, Daikyo built new tourist accommodation: the Serpent Hostel and the Shooting Star Apartment.

Daikyo continued to be involved in housing and land development in Cairns. Daikyo continued the development of housing estates at Smithfield and Forest Gardens, which underwent construction in the late 1980s. Daikyo also kept involved with the aforementioned redevelopment of the port facilities of the Trinity Wharf (*Cairns Post*, 28 February 2001). Daikyo continued to operate in Cairns until 2005, when it was taken over by the Industrial Revitalisation Corporation of Japan.

Development of a 'Resort for Everyone'

It is possible to characterise Cairns as a 'resort for everyone', not necessarily a high-end luxury resort. In relation to this point, a marketer in Cairns explains that the airlines flying to Cairns are 'mainly LCCs (low-cost carriers)' and that Cairns is 'a destination that cannot fill seats of business and first class'. As for the hotels in Cairns, it is 'difficult to raise the price of hotel rooms', although 'it is possible to raise room rates in major cities such as Sydney by attracting business travellers. [...] Cairns is not visited by business customers, and there are pricing limits'. Therefore, the marketer explains that 'in the case of Cairns, it generates not-so-large revenue per tourist', and the tourism industry in Cairns must 'handle a large number of tourists one after another' to make a profit.²⁴

This characteristic of tourism in Cairns, ‘handling a large number of tourists one after another’, is similar to the business strategy of Daikyo in selling condominiums in Japan. The sales of Lions condominiums assumed the middle-class workers to be actual residents. A former employee of Daikyo describes the sales strategy of the Lions condominiums as ‘affordable to young and diligent middle-class workers’.²⁵ The sales policy of Daikyo is reflected in the vision and content of resort development, in that it is orthodox and targeted for general tourists. Therefore, it is possible to interpret that Cairns is a ‘resort for everyone’, where ordinary people, including honeymooners and middle-class families, can enjoy themselves.

Considering the backgrounds for Daikyo’s foray into resort construction overseas and its previous business strategies of selling condominiums in Japan, it makes sense that Daikyo’s developments were orthodox in content and had a certain quality. Daikyo’s developments were comprehensive and significantly changed the town itself, ranging from hotels, a golf course and housing estates to the development of uninhabited islands and ports. None of the development projects were unconventional or eccentric, however. These facts also illustrate Daikyo’s motivation to own its resort as a status symbol of a ‘first-class’ company (Onozuka 2011a).²⁶

Increase in the Number of Japanese Tourists and Residents

As a result of the development of tourism for the Japanese market, Japanese visitors accounted for a large proportion of overseas tourists. The first group tour from Japan visited Cairns in 1981, and the number of Japanese tourists in that year was 1,490. The number had grown rapidly since then. It rose to 170,439 in 1992 and 244,200 in 2004, accounting for 30% of the entire overseas visitors. Ever since Daikyo withdrew, however, the number of Japanese tourists dropped significantly. Cairns attracted only 82,000 Japanese tourists in 2009, almost two-thirds fewer than its peak in 2004 (Cummings Economics 2005, p. 106, TTNQ 2010, p. 7). Instead, the number of Chinese tourists overtook the Japanese.

The development of resorts for Japanese tourists paved the way for an influx of Japanese residents. The number of Japanese living in Cairns at the beginning of the 1980s was around 5–10 people, mainly so-called war brides.²⁷ According to the census, the number of Japanese residents was as follows: 44 in 1986, 382 in 1991, 856 in 1996, 968 in 2001, 1,288 in 2006, 1,519 in 2011, 1,662 in 2016, and 1,634 in 2021. The number of Japanese workers in the tourism-related sector also increased to 544, out of 872 employments among the Japanese residents. The employment opportunities in the tourism-related sector accounted for almost 60% of the employment among the Japanese residents in Cairns in 2011. There were also 115 enterprises in Cairns that supported the use of the Japanese language in 2012 (Fujioka 2017, pp. 338–339).

Daikyo appears to have played a key role in the Japanese community in Cairns when it was active in that town. Field research revealed that Daikyo played a central role in the Japanese community, holding events and regular meetings. At the time of my first field research in Cairns in 2008, however, conversations with

Japanese people in Cairns showed that the activities of the Japanese association had declined significantly.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the corporate activities of the Japanese company Daikyo and its resort development in Cairns, and it has clarified the following issues. First, it examined the background to Daikyo's tourism investment in Cairns by analysing its corporate culture and business activities when it was expanding its business in Japan. Starting with land development in the Nasu area of Tochigi, Daikyo's foray into the real estate business progressed into the sale of the Lions condominiums (*Lions Mansion*). As a result of its furious and do-whatever-they-can approach, the company became top in the industry in terms of condominium sales in 1978. With a view to acquiring a symbol of being a 'first-class' company, Daikyo got involved in resort development and attempted to own its resort. President Yokoyama chose Cairns as the main site for resort development, since he was keen to develop an 'undeveloped land' from scratch. As this chapter has analysed, there were features of Cairns that could rival Hawaii. This resort development by a single foreign company, targeting overseas customers from the outset, is a rare example in the world.

Furthermore, the study examined the details of the development and promotional strategies of Cairns by Daikyo. Daikyo acquired and constructed five-star hotels and other accommodation. Daikyo was also involved with the development of uninhabited islands, a golf course and housing estates, together with improvements of ports. In addition to inviting Japanese celebrities and influential figures to the resort, Daikyo held various events, such as a golf tournament, an IndyCar race and a beauty pageant. Yokoyama invited the press to cover such events.

Second, the chapter analysed how Daikyo managed to respond to criticism and opposition even when it was involved with large-scale development projects. In the 1980s, Japanese companies and celebrities actively invested in property in Australia, including Cairns and the Gold Coast. There was a sense of backlash from some Australians. In addition to building favourable relationships with local key figures, Daikyo communicated with local residents and environmentalists, seeking approval for every step of the development process. It also organised recreational events for residents at a completed hotel and a golf course, reconciling feelings of opposition without alienating residents. Daikyo even set up a scholarship programme to study in Japan.

Third, it discussed the outcomes of the development projects. Daikyo continued to operate in Cairns as a major actor in the local community until 2005, even after the bubble burst in Japan. Daikyo continued its projects of constructing accommodation and housing estates, as well as redeveloping port facilities. Considering Daikyo's business of selling the condominiums to the 'young and diligent middle-class workers', it is possible to interpret that Daikyo's vision for development was to build a 'resort for everyone', including honeymooners and middle-class families. Daikyo's development policy is reflected in the fact that its content is orthodox, rather than unconventional. The content exemplifies Daikyo's motivation to own

its resort as a symbol of being a ‘first-class’ company. Daikyo’s development also paved the way for the presence of Japanese people in the town.

Even at the time of the author’s fieldwork in the late 2000s and early 2010s, only a small number of older residents were familiar with Daikyo’s activities. Today, the fact that Daikyo played a key role in Cairns’ resort development is fading from local residents’ memories. As this chapter has shown, Cairns’ relationship with a Japanese company, Daikyo, shaped the city into what it is today. Cairns’ status as a world-class resort and a popular destination for backpackers originates from the development activities of a single Japanese company.

Notes

- 1 For Indigenous participation in tourism, see Dyer et al. (2003). For the contribution of Asians to the growth of Cairns and historical analyses related to tourism, see Johnson (2015), Law (2011), May (1984), Onozuka (2013) and Thorp (2007).
- 2 See Hajdu (2005), Pokarier (2004, 2000) and Onozuka (2011a, 2011b) for an analysis of the controversy and opposition to Japanese corporate activities in Australia in the 1980s.
- 3 The content of this section is based on interviews with a former Queensland state official (19 November 2009), a former Daikyo employee B and a magazine journalist (27 November 2009), and a Daikyo employee (30 November 2009).
- 4 Thereafter, Daikyo’s investment activities remained focused on the state of Queensland, and it did not invest in Sydney or Melbourne, which were the main investment destinations for Japanese companies at the time.
- 5 See Hajdu (2005) for a detailed account of Japanese business activity in the Gold Coast.
- 6 Interviews with a former Daikyo employee B and a magazine journalist (27 November 2009), and a Daikyo employee (30 November 2009).
- 7 Interviews with a former Daikyo employee B and a magazine journalist (27 November 2009), and a Daikyo employee (30 November 2009).
- 8 At that time, Yokoyama was also considering Acapulco and Hawaii as possible locations for investment.
- 9 Interview with a Daikyo employee (30 November 2009).
- 10 Interview with a Daikyo employee (30 November 2009).
- 11 Interview with a Daikyo employee (30 November 2009).
- 12 The descriptions of Daikyo’s activities are based on interviews with a former Daikyo employee B and a magazine journalist (27 November 2009), a former Daikyo employee C (16 September 2008), a Daikyo employee (30 November 2009), and a former Mayor of Cairns (2 March 2009). See also *The Australian* (26 January 1989), *Cairns Post* (11 October 2001), *Courier-Mail* (25 April 1990, 26 June 1990, 7 July 1990, 25 January 1989), Daikyo (1996, p. 14), and Stimson et al. (1998, pp. 163, 169).
- 13 Employees of the Four Seasons Hotel at that time claimed that Daikyo saved their hotel from financial crisis. The workers said the takeover saved them from losing their jobs (*The Australian*, 6 July 1990).
- 14 Daikyo completed construction of the National Mutual Tower (now known as the Corporate Tower), 16-story office building, in 1990.
- 15 Other Japanese companies also started investing in the Cairns region but on a smaller scale than Daikyo. Kitano Construction owned a hotel (Holiday Inn). Town Development planned to build a recreation facility on Trinity Beach in northern Cairns (*Australian Business*, 28 November 1990, p. 53). Toko House planned the construction of an AUD

- 500 million satellite city in the Trinity Inlet area located in the south of Cairns (*Australian Financial Review*, 4 July 1989). In Port Douglas, 70km north of Cairns, *Nippon Shinnan* and *Mitsui Bussan* acquired the Sheraton Mirage Resort for AUD 433 million in 1989 (*Australian Financial Review*, 7 February 1990; *Courier-Mail*, 8 March 1989; *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 31 March 2005).
- 16 The content of this paragraph is based on interviews with a Queensland government official (28 October 2009) and a former Queensland government official (19 November 2009).
 - 17 The content of this paragraph is based on an interview with a Daikyo employee (30 November 2009). At the time, there were very few foreign companies in the real estate and tourism sector that visited the Australian FIRB other than Daikyo. Newspapers reported such attempts by Daikyo, and the FIRB placed Daikyo on its Good Books list. FIRB officials noted that Daikyo was not a land speculator and had created many jobs; Daikyo tried to comply with various rules and standards; and the company had good planning in its development projects. Daikyo held meetings with the FIRB at every opportunity, bringing its annual report with them (*Gold Coast Bulletin*, 19 October 2002).
 - 18 Interview with a Daikyo employee (30 November 2009). Daikyo even transported local residents to and from these recreational events.
 - 19 The content of this paragraph is based on interviews with a local Japanese staff of a tourism corporation in Cairns (9 September 2008), a Daikyo employee (30 November 2009), a former Mayor of Cairns (2 March 2009) and a local citizen in Cairns (3 February 2012). This issue was also featured in the newspapers (see *The Australian*, 4 May 1990, 26 June 1990, 5 July 1990; *Courier-Mail*, 25 April 1990, 4 May 1990, 7 and 10 July 1990, for example).
 - 20 Interview with a former Daikyo employee C (16 September 2008) and Stimson et al. (1998, p. 176).
 - 21 Interview with a former Daikyo employee B and a magazine journalist (27 November 2009).
 - 22 Interview with a Daikyo employee (30 November 2009).
 - 23 The information in this paragraph is based on *Cairns Post* (6 June 2001, 11 October 2001).
 - 24 Interview with a worker at a tourism promotion agency in Cairns (13 February 2012).
 - 25 Interview with a former Daikyo employee B and a magazine journalist (27 November 2009).
 - 26 The development changed the industrial structure of the town. The tourism sector was almost negligible in 1957, but it had grown to almost 50% of the local economy by 2002 (Cumplings Economics 2005, p. 41).
 - 27 Interview with a Japanese resident in Cairns (5 February 2012).

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9 ‘Gastro-Cool’

Japanese Restaurants in Urban Australia, 1950s–2023

Iori Hamada

Introduction

Japanese restaurants have become fixtures across Australia’s cities, offering diverse experiences from *tsukemen* dipping ramen in Sydney to small plates marketed as ‘Japas’ in Melbourne to high-end *omakase* dining in Perth. The proliferation is evident in their expansion from approximately 500 establishments in 2013 to 2,000 in 2023 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2023).

Such substantial growth parallels deepened Australia-Japan ties. By August 2023, Australian visits to Japan exceeded pre-pandemic levels by 24.3%, reaching over 500,000 visitors (Japan National Tourism Organisation, 2023). The surge in travel, combined with a strengthening Australian dollar (from JPY 76 in 2019 to JPY 93 in 2023; International Monetary Fund, n.d.), has increased Australian exposure to Japanese cuisine. Concurrently, Japan’s post-1990s economic stagnation has partly driven workers to migrate to Australia’s expanding market, where Japanese restaurants serve as an accessible employment gateway (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011).

The surge in travel and migration has propelled Japanese restaurants into a distinctive position in Australia’s culinary landscape, where they navigate between culinary innovation and everyday accessibility (Hamada, 2011, 2024a, 2024b; Hamada & Stevens, 2014). Their fourfold growth from 2013 to 2023 reflects broader cultural shifts: the rise of a culturally literate middle-class, the integration of Asian influences in Australian dining and food’s central role in cosmopolitan identity formation. These establishments have evolved into cultural touchstones, simultaneously offering curated experiences and casual dining while reshaping local food culture through their distinctive menus, spaces and service approaches.

Despite their expansion and culinary influence, Japanese restaurants’ dual role as cultural mediators and commercial enterprises in Australia’s gastro-scape remains understudied. While scholars have extensively examined Chinese restaurants’ community formation (Collins, 2002, 2003; Ma & Hsiao, 2020; Ma et al., 2011), Vietnamese establishments’ cultural adaptation (Flowers & Swan, 2019; Thomas, 2015; Xu & Wang, 2021) and Korean eateries’ ethnic entrepreneurship (Collins

& Shin, 2012; Min & Lee, 2014), Japanese restaurants have received limited academic attention.

The present research addresses this gap by examining Japanese restaurants' transformation from specialised dining venues to sites of cross-cultural production and consumption and their role in facilitating Japan–Australia transnational connections through food practices. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in major Australian cities between 2009–2012 and 2021–2023, this study examines Japanese food establishments across multiple dimensions: as businesses adapting Japanese cuisine to the Australian market, as cultural spaces where notions of authenticity and 'Japaneseness' are contested, and as contributors to community resilience. Through their food-centred practices, these establishments not only shape everyday cultural understanding between Japan and Australia but also contribute to broader transnational circulations of culinary knowledge and cultural exchange within the Asia-Pacific region.

This investigation contributes to four academic fields. In migration studies, it demonstrates how migrant-run food businesses facilitate transnational cultural exchange through everyday practices. In food studies, it examines how culinary authenticity is continually negotiated as culturally distinctive cuisines move from the 'margins' to the mainstream. In Australian studies, it offers new frameworks for interpreting the influence of Asian diasporas in urban contexts. And in Japanese studies, it analyses how Japanese cultural practices are reinterpreted and recontextualised globally through culinary entrepreneurship.

Foundational to these contributions is a shift from viewing authenticity as fixed to understanding it as socially negotiated and contextually constructed. Authenticity, in this study, is not treated as an inherent attribute residing in a dish or practice but as a socially constructed claim grounded in symbolic and sensory proximity to an imagined 'origin' (Hamada, 2024a). Following the chapter's analysis, authenticity is understood as a relational and contested designation, shaped by actors' claims, consumer expectations and reference points within broader cultural discourses. These claims often invoke notions of authority—be it ethnic identity, national branding or perceived traditionality—to legitimise the status of a restaurant or cuisine as 'authentic'. Thus, rather than seeking to define authenticity in essentialist terms, this study interrogates how it is mobilised, performed and negotiated in everyday encounters between food providers and consumers, particularly in multicultural and transnational settings.

The chapter proceeds in four sections. First, it traces Japanese restaurants' development since the 1950s, examining the role of migrant entrepreneurs. Second, it analyses their evolution from 'ethnic' enclaves into diverse enterprises through gastro-cool representations, challenging both orientalist narratives and Anglo-centric frameworks of Australian multiculturalism. Third, it presents a Melbourne-based Japanese-inspired café as a case study to illustrate gastro-cool mechanisms through specific culinary practices. Finally, it explores these restaurants' contribution to cross-cultural community resilience during COVID-19 through bonding, bridging and linking social capital.

Migrant Entrepreneurial Adaptation

The evolution of Japanese restaurants in Australia reflects how migrant entrepreneurs have shaped the nation's culinary landscape through their adaptive responses to local conditions and market demands. This transformation unfolded in three distinct waves: pioneering establishments of the 1950s–1970s that introduced Japanese cuisine to the Australian public; entrepreneurial chef-migrants of the 1980s–1990s who adapted Japanese culinary techniques to local ingredients and preferences; and diversification from the 2000s onwards through specialised venues that incorporated global influences.

First, pioneering restaurateurs of the 1950s–1970s established foundational Japanese restaurants in Sydney and Melbourne's business districts. These early entrepreneurs entered a culinary landscape already shaped by Chinese migrants, whose presence dated back to the mid-19th century gold rush when Chinese cookhouses—small eating establishments serving simple, hot meals—served both Asian and Australian consumers (Heanue, 2016). Japanese restaurateurs in the post-war period navigated the lingering effects of the White Australia Policy (1901–1973) and tensions following Second World War. They often leveraged existing Asian food distribution networks while positioning Japanese dining as a distinctive cultural experience for special occasions.

This pioneering phase began with the 1957 opening of Australia's first Japanese restaurant—the Sukiyaki Room—within Sydney's Dungowan restaurant in Martin Place (O'Connell, n.d.a.; Veenhuyzen, 2021). Founded by Japanese migrant Chieko Yamasaki and renamed Sukiyaki House in 1961, the establishment coincided with Japan's emergence as Australia's third-largest export partner following the 1957 trade agreement (Parliament of Australia, n.d.). The restaurant served dual roles: providing familiar cuisine for the growing Japanese business community while introducing local patrons to Japanese gastronomy, thereby functioning as a cross-cultural intermediary within Sydney's evolving dining landscape. However, it remained positioned as an oriental trope outside mainstream dining culture, a status examined in the following section.

Despite operating only until 1963 due to financial difficulties (Veenhuyzen, 2021), the Sukiyaki Room initiated a gradual emergence of Japanese dining venues across urban Australia, though these remained niche establishments rather than mainstream fixtures. Melbourne's Sukiyaki House opened at 21 Alfred Place in the 1960s (McFadzean, 2009), followed by Adelaide's Samurai in 1972. These establishments emerged in cities with growing Japanese business communities and internationally minded middle-class consumers, though the patterns of expansion into Perth, Canberra, Brisbane and Hobart remain to be fully documented (Katashi Ware, 2021; O'Connell, n.d.a.; Veenhuyzen, 2021).

As the first wave of Japanese restaurants maintained their niche position through the 1970s, Australia's culinary landscape underwent a broader transformation with significant geopolitical shifts in the region. The fall of Saigon in 1975 precipitated the arrival of Vietnamese refugees, who established community

enclaves and corresponding food businesses in Melbourne's Richmond, Footscray and Springvale and Sydney's Cabramatta. These entrepreneurs introduced dishes like *bánh mì*, *phở* and *gỏi cuốn* to Australian communities.

This period witnessed a dramatic diversification of Australia's Asian culinary landscape. Thai cuisine experienced explosive growth, expanding from a negligible presence in 1975 to over 400 in Sydney alone by 1999, popularising dishes like *tom yum goong* and *pad Thai* (O'Connell, n.d.b.; Powell, 2024). Korean cuisine also established its presence with pioneering establishments like Korean House in Sydney's William Street and Melbourne's Korean Barbecue in 1975—despite the small Korean population of fewer than 500 in Australia in 1971 (Han & Han, 2010; O'Connell, n.d.c.). Within this diversifying context, Japanese restaurateurs developed distinctive approaches through culinary adaptations that both preserved cultural elements and responded to local tastes. This expanding Asian culinary presence coincided with Australia's shift away from the White Australia Policy and towards multiculturalism policies, creating conditions for the second wave of Japanese culinary innovation that would emerge in the 1980s.

This culinary transformation was supported not only by human migration but also by developing trade networks and logistical infrastructure that facilitated the import of essential ingredients and equipment from Japan. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, increasing demand for Japanese food products led to the establishment of specialised supply chains and import businesses—such as Tokyo Mart, established in 1976, and Japan Food Corporation, established in 1986—which enabled regular access to central Japanese food items, including fermented seasonings, various seaweeds and specialty seafood products essential in traditional Japanese cooking (Japan Food Corporation Australia, n.d.; Tokyo Mart, n.d.). These distribution channels allowed Japanese restaurateurs to maintain perceived cultural authenticity while adapting to local preferences and conditions.

Within this increasingly diverse culinary context, migrant chefs of the 1980s–1990s reimagined Japanese cuisine through local ingredients, spreading now-iconic dishes like salmon and avocado sushi rolls while introducing accessible sushi take-away shops and other formats of casual dining. This second wave of Japanese culinary entrepreneurs benefited from Australia's transforming multicultural policies and growing consumer openness to Asian cuisines that had been cultivated by earlier migrant restaurateurs. The 1980 Japan–Australia Working Holiday agreement marked a significant turning point by enabling young Japanese nationals to live and work in Australia for extended periods (also see Chapter 2). Many of these migrants arrived without prior restaurant experience in Japan, yet brought perspectives that would reshape Australian-Japanese cuisine. Tetsuya Wakuda's trajectory, while extreme, illustrates this pattern's potential—arriving through the scheme as a 22-year-old student in 1982 with no formal culinary training, he went on to achieve national prominence, recognised by an Order of Australia medal in 2005, exemplified Japanese cuisine's transition from cultural periphery to mainstream recognition (*Nichigo Press*, 2024).

As this second wave of Japanese culinary innovation matured through the 1990s, it created the foundation for a more diverse and specialised third phase

characterised by increasing cross-Asian and cross-European cultural exchange. From the 2000s onwards, entrepreneurs from varied backgrounds significantly broadened the appeal of Japanese cuisine in Australia through specialised establishments. While high-end Japanese restaurants commanded premium prices, entrepreneurs from other Asian backgrounds entered the market at more accessible price points, integrating Japanese culinary items like sushi into take-away shops and 'pan-Asian' eateries. My fieldwork and interviews from 2009 to 2012 document how this market diversification intensified competition, sometimes forcing established Japanese-owned restaurants to close their doors as they struggled to maintain viability against more affordable competitors operating with lower overheads and diverse culinary offerings. These entrepreneurs—Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and others—brought their own interpretations of Japanese culinary traditions while establishing competitive price advantages through operational efficiencies and cross-cultural menus that appealed to wider audiences seeking varied Asian dining experiences rather than strictly Japanese cuisine.

While this diversification posed challenges for some traditional Japanese restaurants, it also drove innovation in specialised formats. One notable outcome was the rise of izakaya-style venues: although present in small numbers since the 1970s, they gained significant traction in Australia's urban centres during the early 2000s, coinciding with izakaya's global popularisation (Global Izakaya, 2019). These venues, created by migrant entrepreneurs, bridged multiple dining cultures (Hamada, 2011; 2024a; Hamada & Stevens, 2014). While Japanese izakaya traditionally cultivate intimate customer-staff relationships through the combination of food, drink and social interaction, their Australian counterparts drew on familiar tapas traditions introduced by earlier Mediterranean migrants—particularly Greek and Italian restaurateurs. As an Australian-born European izakaya proprietor explains:

You know, izakaya is all about good food and drinks [enjoyed] together, just like tapas places that Mediterranean migrants brought here to Australia. It's not just about serving—we try to keep that Japanese way of looking after customers, chat with them, make them feel at home. It's interesting how these different food cultures kind of mix together naturally. (Personal communication, 10 January, 2009)

Ramen shops emerged as another specialised Japanese establishment in Australia during the early 2000s, following its global rise and particularly its breakthrough in Los Angeles's food scene (Solt, 2014). However, establishing ramen shops in Australia demanded careful navigation of local food safety standards—notably around *kansui* (alkaline water that reacts with wheat flour to create ramen noodles' signature chewiness), which initially faced regulatory restrictions (Government of South Australia, 2010). These regulatory challenges spurred creative responses from migrant entrepreneurs. A Japanese-born Sydney ramen chef recalls:

When we started making ramen here, it was a real struggle. We couldn't get the right noodles, and the regulations around *kansui* were so strict. That's why many

of us started making noodles in-house with Australian flour. We had to figure out ways to work with local ingredients and regulations while still achieving that authentic ramen texture. (Personal communication, 22 August, 2022)

Meanwhile, in brunch-focused neighbourhoods such as Queensland's Nobby Beach, cafés like Bobby Bang's merged Japanese elements with international trends, featuring breakfast ramen topped with bacon, soy source marinated egg, *takana* vegetable pickles and truffle Manchego cheese (Hrastovec, 2024). Paralleling this trend, numerous establishments owned by Chinese, Korean and Southeast Asian entrepreneurs have integrated Japanese elements into modern Asian or Asian Australian dining concepts throughout major Australian cities. These venues showcase the increasing fluidity of what constitutes 'Japanese restaurant' and 'Japanese cuisine' in Australia, dissolving once-rigid boundaries of culinary categorisation. Such multifaceted establishments challenge traditional standards of authenticity—questioning who can cook Japanese food and how it should be presented—by recontextualising Japanese culinary signifiers within contemporary Australian dining settings shaped by a range of Asian culinary influences and innovations.

The transformation and diversification of Japanese restaurants in Australia—from niche establishments in the 1950s to today's varied market segments—reflects the evolving roles of migrant entrepreneurs, who pioneered the early industry, and more recent local entrepreneurs, who have expanded and reinterpreted it. Collaborations between these groups have been central in navigating material constraints and responding to changing market opportunities. Their ongoing negotiation between heritage and innovation has positioned Japanese cuisine in multiple forms across various price points and dining formats for increasingly knowledgeable consumers whose expectations are shaped by both travel experiences and media exposure. While traditional representations of Japanese food as 'oriental' persist, they now coexist with more nuanced culinary expressions, forming a cultural terrain that I conceptualise as 'gastro-cool' (Hamada, 2024a). This framework captures how culinary enterprises strategically balance novelty with familiarity—offering cultural distinctiveness that intrigues without alienating, and accessibility that welcomes while maintaining culturally recognisable signifiers. Through this calibrated approach, Japanese restaurants navigate Australia's historical racial-cultural politics and evolving cross-cultural representations in contemporary urban markets, a concept explored in detail in the following section.

From 'Ethnic Enclaves' to 'Gastro-Cool': Japanese Restaurants in Australia's Racial-Cultural Politics

Building on the previous examination of migrant entrepreneurship, this section analyses how Japanese restaurants intersect with Australia's shifting racial-cultural politics. The White Australia policy, originating from anti-Chinese legislation in the 1850s and formalised through the Immigration Restriction Act 1901, shaped Australia-Asia relations until its dismantling in 1973. These policies directly

impacted patterns of Japanese migration and business establishment, creating both constraints and unique opportunities for Japanese restaurateurs. Decades later, the 2012 Asian Century White Paper signaled Australia's pivot towards closer engagement with Asia, marking a significant shift in how Asian cultures and businesses were framed in national policy (Drysdale, 2012)—from viewing them as peripheral or even threatening to recognising them as integral to Australia's economic future and cultural identity. Japanese restaurants provide a useful lens for examining this cultural-political transformation. As sites where cultural meanings are continuously negotiated through daily practices, their evolution reflects broader social shifts while facilitating cross-cultural exchanges that transcend national boundaries (Hamada, 2024a).

To further analyse these shifting representations, Hall's concept of 'systems of representation' offers a valuable theoretical framework for understanding meaning-making. He explains that 'our concepts, images and emotions "stand for" or represent, in our mental life, things which are or may be "out there" in the world' (2003, p. 4). Since meaning can never be '*finally* fixed' (2003, p. 23; original emphasis), struggles over meaning are inevitable—and, as Hall notes, 'attempting to fix meaning is exactly why *power* intervenes in discourse' (2003, p. 10; original emphasis). This perspective helps explain how Japanese culinary representations have been contested and reimagined through Australia's changing racial-cultural landscape.

The operation of power in cultural meaning-making is evident in a 1957 Sydney Morning Herald review of Sukiyaki Room, Australia's first documented Japanese restaurant (O'Connell, n.d.a.; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1957). The review constructs Japaneseness through orientalist tropes—exotic customs, ritualised behaviours and feminised service—demonstrating how power shaped cultural representations within White Australia's racial-cultural framework:

Beyond the curtain the room is almost filled by a bamboo-matted platform. On this, equipped with Hashi (Japanese chopsticks) and a small bowl, you perform your eating: perform is the only honest word; you first step up to the platform and there find the impression of display heightened by the low elevation of everyone else, both the Oriental waitresses who are short anyway and the patrons sitting cross-legged at stunted tables.

An Oriental scholar from the Australian National University was conversing in fluent Japanese with one of the waitresses when we sat down at our table and we felt very inexperienced—until our own kimono-clad waitress knelt and whispered in a healthy Australian accent:

'I'll probably make thousands of mistakes. It's all a complete mystery to me'.
She was Chinese. It was her first night.

The meal that followed, cooked on the table before us and served little by little into bowls of beaten raw egg, was different, delicious and expensive.

The text constructs an exoticised culinary experience that simultaneously entertains and reassures its Anglo-Celtic, middle-class readership. The review's repeated use of 'Oriental'—for both the scholar and waitresses—demonstrates Hall's (2003) observation of how representational systems fix cultural meanings, with the term functioning as a collective signifier that collapses diverse cultural identities into a homogenised otherness. The dining space becomes a theatrical stage where 'performance' of difference unfolds at multiple levels: the reviewer and their companions—standing in for the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Anglo-Celtic, middle-class readership—are elevated on the bamboo-matted platform, positioned above the 'Oriental waitresses who are short anyway', a staging that literally enacts power relations.

The revelation that the kimono-clad waitress is Chinese and unfamiliar with Japanese practices serves a dual function: it collapses distinct cultural identities into an interchangeable 'Asian' category, while reassuring readers through 'healthy Australian accent'—a linguistic marker signaling partial assimilation into the dominant culture. This progression from anxiety when confronted with 'authentic' cultural knowledge (the 'Oriental scholar' speaking fluent Japanese) to comfortable reassurance upon hearing the waitress's confession of cultural ignorance exemplifies how orientalist representations operate through the colonialist gaze's power to observe and consume difference.

This staging of cultural consumption anticipates Hage's (1998) concept of 'cosmo-multiculturalism'—where 'white' Australians' consumption of ethnic difference functions as cultural capital. He argues that this 'competence to enjoy ethnic cultural diversity' (1998, p. 204) paradoxically reinforces 'white' cultural authority through the consumption of "'high-quality" commodities and culture' (1998, p. 201). The review illustrates this asymmetric power relationship by marking the experience as 'different, delicious and expensive', positioning Japanese cuisine as a premium commodity accessible to those with sufficient economic and cultural capital. This choreographed encounter reinforces colonial perspectives that view distinct cultural identities as interchangeable while maintaining existing power hierarchies through controlled cultural consumption.

The review thus provides early documentation of how Japanese restaurants functioned as sites where Australia's racial-cultural politics were enacted through everyday dining practices. This historical example establishes the foundational patterns of dominance that would gradually transform over subsequent decades as both Japan's global cultural position and Australia's demographic landscape underwent significant shifts.

Japanese restaurants in Australia now operate in an increasingly diverse gastro-cultural landscape, though traces of orientalist frameworks persist. Following Japan's economic bubble burst in the 1990s, its global influence shifted from economic to soft power, with 'Cool Japan' emerging as the dominant framework for understanding its cultural presence (McGray, 2002). This cultural shift paralleled Australia's reorientation towards Asia following the 1973 dismantling of the White Australia policy, which opened new migration pathways, leading to a substantial growth in the overseas-born (especially Asian-born) population in recent decades (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Within this context, Japanese restaurants illuminate how orientalist and contemporary representations coexist and intersect. Cultural signifiers span from traditional orientalist markers (lanterns, Asian fonts on menus) to elements shaped by Cool Japan discourse (pop-culture inspired decor, merchandise), demonstrating how restaurants strategically navigate between orientalist tropes and commodified contemporary Japanese culture. This interplay manifests in what I frame as 'gastro-cool': a market positioning that retains recognisable markers of Japaneseness while updating orientalist representations to secure mainstream appeal through contemporary cultural capital (Hamada, 2024a).

Viewed this way, gastro-cool challenges static notions of cultural authenticity. Drawing on Duggal and Verma's theorisation of 'cool' as deriving power from 'elusiveness, mutability and semantic flexibility' (2019, p. 133), this analysis examines how Japanese restaurants position themselves in increasingly diverse gastro-cultural landscapes. Their adaptability manifests in evolving culinary practices: Japanese-inspired minimalist cafés reimagining modern Australian brunch culture; Japanese-Korean dining pubs maintaining traditional izakaya formats while developing synthesised offerings; and high-end establishments offering omakase in urban deco settings through multi-ethnic collaborations

However, this adaptability is not the result of unrestricted fusion but of intentional calibration—a strategic balance maintaining recognisable Japaneseness while adapting to market demands. Such calibration exemplifies what Clifford terms an 'uncannily close' form of the exotic (1988, pp. 13–14)—where cultural signifiers occupy a space between familiarity and distinction. Through this lens, 'cool' is considered the integration of Japanese elements with other culinary traditions, creating experiences that transcend rigid categories while sustaining cultural legibility.

The following case study examines two signature dishes at Kissaten, a café established by Adam Wright in Melbourne's Alphington (approximately 7 km northeast of the city centre) in 2019. Created by head chef Edward Noble, formerly of Melbourne's premiere café AU79, these dishes demonstrate how 'gastro-cool' manifests through specific culinary practices (Kissaten, n.d.).

Cross-cultural Exchange

Field research conducted over the past decade across Japanese restaurants in major Australian cities illuminates multiple manifestations of gastro-cool. Kissaten offers a specific lens through which to examine how this strategic cultural positioning operates in practice (Figure 9.1).

The term 'kissaten' refers to Western-style Japanese coffee shops that emerged during Japan's rapid modernisation in the Meiji period (1868–1912), becoming significant cultural institutions in Japan's urban landscape (White, 2012). While many kissaten declined during the 1970s chain-café boom, they have experienced a revival in contemporary Japan, with younger generations drawn to their classical aesthetics and atmospheric qualities (Japan Food Journal, 2002). Wright's establishment, influenced by his partner's Japanese heritage (Japan Food Journal, 2002), strategically employs the kissaten designation to engage with this contemporary



Figure 9.1 Kissaten interior.

Source: Photograph by the author.

Japanese phenomenon, where traditional spaces are reinterpreted for their nostalgic value and artisanal ethos, while simultaneously adapting their offerings to contemporary Australian dining expectations (Figure 9.2).

Kissaten's 'Okonomiyaki' exemplifies gastro-cool's elastic meaning-making process through strategic cultural calibration. The dish maintains recognisable Japanese elements—signature condiments like bonito flakes, thick Worcestershire sauce and mayonnaise—yet undergoes significant transformation to accommodate both operational requirements and local cultural expectations. The traditional thin, fluffy street food pancake becomes a substantial café offering: a pre-cooked, thick, firm patty created with locally sourced tofu and egg noodles, served with knife and fork rather than chopsticks, and featuring adjusted sauce profiles. This reconfiguration accomplishes two objectives simultaneously: it resolves practical kitchen constraints by enabling batch preparation, and it repositions the dish within Australia's elaborate café dining culture, where substantial, photogenic plates dominate (Australian Good Food Guide, 2025; Figure 9.3).

The dish's execution demonstrates how gastro-cool operates through multiple, deliberate decisions. First, the house-made *tonkatsu* sauce signals contemporary artisanal values while maintaining familiar sweet-savoury notes that appeal to Australian palates. Second, the pairing of bonito flakes and mayonnaise provides



Figure 9.2 Kissaten exterior.

Source: Photograph by the author.

instantly recognisable markers of Japaneseness, functioning as visual and flavour signifiers that convey cultural authenticity while aligning with Australian patrons' expectations of Japanese cuisine. Third, the presentation illustrates strategic adaptation: traditional *benishōga* (pickled ginger) is replaced with pickled sliced carrots, and minimalist black ceramics transform casual fare into sophisticated yet approachable dining, selectively departing from established conventions to meet local preferences.

At AUD 22, the dish is positioned within the upper end of the typical price range for café meals in Melbourne (approximately AUD 15–25). Although notably more expensive than its origins in Japan—where comparable street food items are usually priced between JPY 600 and JPY 1,000 (approximately AUD 7–12)—this pricing reflects standard cost structures in Melbourne's café economy. Within this context, the incorporation of Japanese flavours enhances the dish's perceived value, particularly for consumers who associate such elements with culinary novelty or international sophistication. Rather than reproducing the street food format directly, Kissaten presents a stylised version calibrated to local dining conventions in both presentation and price point. These strategic choices demonstrate how gastro-cool enables establishments to maintain cultural distinction while adapting to local market conditions.



Figure 9.3 Okonomiyaki.

Source: Photograph by the author.

Kissaten's 'Avocado and Edamame on Toast' illustrates a different facet of gastro-cool's strategic cultural negotiation. Unlike the okonomiyaki, which begins with a Japanese culinary foundation, this dish builds upon an established Australian café staple—avocado toast—incorporating *edamame*, *nori* dukkah, black sesame and pickled onions as complementary elements that signal Japanese influence. This approach reflects a clear compositional structure: Japanese ingredients provide distinction yet remain secondary to the dish's fundamentally Australian character. The structure enables the Japanese elements to enhance and differentiate the familiar Australian café format without disrupting its recognisable foundation. Such positioning aligns with Iwabuchi's (2002) concept of 'cultural odour', wherein Japanese elements function as subtle markers of difference—distinct enough to signal cultural sophistication yet accessible enough to ensure broad appeal—a framework that remains relevant across the intervening decades (Figure 9.4).

These signature dishes showcase distinct approaches to cultural synthesis. The okonomiyaki maintains its fundamental Japanese character while adapting to local supply chains, kitchen operations and consumer expectations, whereas 'Avocado and Edamame on Toast' begins with Australian café foundations and introduces Japanese accents for distinction. Despite their different developmental pathways, both exemplify a core premise of gastro-cool: a deliberately crafted interplay



Figure 9.4 Avocado and edamame on toast.

Source: Photograph by the author.

of cultural elements that creates market appeal through the strategic balance of 'familiar' comfort and 'novel' distinction.

These culinary strategies underscore the constructed nature of authenticity itself. Rather than reflecting fixed culinary traditions, authenticity here emerges through the careful calibration of sensory cues, aesthetic presentation and cultural references that align with diners' expectations. Kissaten's offerings do not replicate Japanese food as it exists in Japan but rather *perform* authenticity in ways that resonate locally—signalling Japanese influence while affirming their place within Melbourne's café culture. This performance reveals how authenticity is not a static attribute tied to origin but a relational practice shaped by context, consumption and cultural negotiation.

Community Connections

Japanese restaurants in Australia demonstrate layered intersections of intentional and spontaneous connections, from formal business partnerships to everyday interactions in dining spaces—that reflect Appadurai's (1990, p. 7) concept of 'ethnoscapes', one of the interrelated frameworks of 'global cultural flows' (1990, p. 6). His definition characterises ethnoscapes as the ever-shifting 'landscape of

persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers and other moving groups and persons' (1990, p. 7). Despite being formulated over three decades ago, this concept has only gained renewed relevance in today's hyperconnected world. The suffix '-scape' emphasises perspective-dependent cultural flows—a process particularly evident in contemporary food cultures where interpretations of Japanese cuisine vary based on who is doing the interpreting and from what vantage point. Japanese restaurants function as critical nodes within these modern ethnoscares, where transnational networks emerge through cross-culinary interpretations and innovations shaped by multiple perspectives: restaurateurs reimagining Japanese concepts, suppliers adapting practices and diners engaging with culinary codes that may be perceived as either 'familiar' or 'foreign'—categories that shift depending on individual backgrounds and experiences. These engagements occur through both physical dining experiences and digital representations, further multiplying the perspectives through which Japanese culinary culture is interpreted and transformed.

Within the context of Japanese restaurants in Australia, these transformations unfold at both local and transnational scales. At the local level, Kissaten's distinctive interpretation of Japanese street food *okonomiyaki* exemplifies how personal connections influence culinary development—linking its Australian proprietor with his Japanese partner's family traditions and knowledge. These innovations emerge through interwoven cross-cultural exchanges between multiple actors, including restaurant teams, local food distributors and diverse consumer communities. The accumulated experiences of these actors, often shaped by transnational mobility and cross-cultural exposure, facilitate collective reinterpretation of traditional concepts and culinary conventions, creating dishes that reflect multiple cultural influences while presenting recognisable signifiers of Japanese cuisine.

CIBI in Melbourne exemplifies ethnoscares operating at a transnational scale. Founded in 2008 by Japanese couple Meg and Zenta Tanaka in Collingwood, approximately 3 km northeast of Melbourne's CBD, this Japanese café and lifestyle shop first adapted Japanese lifestyle concepts for Australian contexts, then reimported this cross-cultural approach back to Japan. CIBI's expansion into Tokyo—with stores established in 2018 and 2020—demonstrates reverse cultural flow (CIBI Tokyo, n.d.), introducing Australian café staples like avocado toast and flat white coffee, while reinterpreting the Japanese concept 'I-Shoku-Ju' (clothing, food and living space) through their 'Head, Hands and Heart' approach—their design philosophy emphasising products that engage intellectually, tactilely and emotionally with users in daily life (Personal communication, 15 October, 2009).

This bidirectional movement creates connections across multiple communities—Melbourne locals, Tokyo customers and transnational visitors who move between both cities. Their design philosophy emphasises spaces that are 'simple, functional and efficient' yet 'warm, inviting and intriguing' (CIBI, n.d.). Beyond mere transactions, CIBI forms relationships with local suppliers in both locations while creating channels for Japanese manufacturers and artisans to reach Melbourne audiences (Starr, 2021). This exchange establishes a paradigm where Japanese dining culture influences Australian innovations, which then reshape Japanese

dining practices—a concrete manifestation of Appadurai's ethnoscape where cultural flows follow multiple trajectories rather than unidirectional paths. These carefully orchestrated interactions demonstrate how gastro-cool materialises through elements that resonate with both Japanese and Australian sensibilities.

The depth and significance of such community networks proved especially vital during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Japanese restaurants in Australia activated diverse forms of social capital to navigate the crisis. This analysis draws on Putnam's (2000) foundational work on 'bonding and bridging social capital', later expanded by Woolcock (2001) to include 'linking social capital'. These frameworks offer a lens for briefly examining how Japanese restaurants mobilised three types of social relationships: bonding social capital (internal group ties), bridging social capital (horizontal connections across groups) and linking social capital (vertical relationships with institutions). This overview suggests that examining social capital across different crisis environments can enhance our understanding of community adaptation mechanisms.

Bonding social capital manifested strongly in Japanese restaurants' internal relationships during the crisis. A Sydney-based izakaya demonstrated this when its owner, a second-generation Japanese Australian, provided support for vulnerable team members, particularly Japanese working holiday makers excluded from public benefits. His characterisation of staff as 'cherished members of our family and community' (Personal communication, 13 August 2021) was matched by practical assistance through food and temporary accommodation, illustrating how tight-knit restaurant relationships enabled immediate crisis response when formal safety nets failed.

Bridging social capital emerged through horizontal networks between establishments, as the same Sydney izakaya owner actively collaborated with neighbouring cafés of diverse cultural backgrounds. These cross-cultural partnerships facilitated shared problem-solving and resource pooling, particularly in developing financial survival strategies during lockdowns. Such horizontal networking demonstrates how bridging social capital creates valuable connections across social and cultural boundaries, establishing resilience through collective action rather than isolated efforts.

Linking social capital developed through vertical relationships with institutions. A second-generation Japanese Australian café operator in Melbourne exemplifies this through his participation in public forums and podcasts, addressing industry sustainability during the pandemic (Personal communication, 18 January, 2023). By engaging in debates about labour shortages, wages and operational costs, he sought to extend influence beyond the Japanese restaurant community. While the impact of these efforts remains to be fully assessed, they represent strategic attempts to leverage institutional connections during crisis.

This analysis demonstrates how different forms of social capital operated both synergistically and unevenly. Strong bonding social capital enabled immediate support for vulnerable staff, yet these internal networks faced mounting financial constraints (Hamada, 2024b). Bridging connections with neighbouring businesses emerged from necessity as establishments recognised the inadequacy of isolated

responses. Similarly, efforts to build linking capital reflected attempts to access resources and shape recovery discussions, with outcomes yet to be determined. This multi-layered activation of social capital contributed to many Japanese restaurants' survival while exposing the fragility of community resilience when confronted with sustained economic pressure and limited institutional support (Hamada, 2024b).

Conclusion

This research adds to the understanding of Japanese migrations to Australia by examining Japanese restaurants' evolution in urban gastro-scapes from the 1950s to 2023. Through three interconnected themes—migrant entrepreneurial adaptation, cross-cultural exchange and community connections—the analysis demonstrates how proprietors from diverse cultural backgrounds craft cross-cultural expressions that transcend both essentialist representations and arbitrary fusion. The concept of 'gastro-cool' illuminates how establishments navigate between cultural distinction and mainstream appeal through strategic calibration of authenticity claims, consumer expectations and local conditions.

Kissaten demonstrates these practices by reconfiguring traditional Japanese dishes like *okonomiyaki* with local ingredients while incorporating signifiers that evoke Japanese culinary traditions. CIBI's trajectory from Melbourne to Tokyo illustrates bilateral cultural flows exemplifying Appadurai's (1990) 'ethnoscapes', where transnational movements reshape cultural practices across borders in multiple directions rather than following simplistic patterns of diffusion.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted both strengths and limitations of community networks within this transformed gastro-cultural landscape. The Sydney *izakaya* case demonstrated the boundaries of bonding social capital: while the owner provided meals for working holiday visa holders, the extended crisis strained the establishment's capacity to sustain comprehensive assistance. The Melbourne café run by the second-generation of Japanese Australian owner showed how economic pressures prompted strategic alliances beyond Japanese business circles out of necessity rather than choice.

This research has several limitations. Its geographical focus on central areas and inner suburbs with concentrated Asian populations in Melbourne and Sydney leaves outer suburbs and regional Japanese restaurants unexplored. Additionally, while this study identified the diversity of proprietorship—including entrepreneurs from other Asian backgrounds—it did not examine in details how non-Japanese Asian ownership shapes authenticity claims and cultural presentations. Uncertainty also remains about the long-term impact of pandemic-era adaptations on business operations and community connections.

These limitations suggest potential directions for future research: examining Japanese restaurants in regional centres and outer suburbs to understand how different demographic contexts shape cultural presentations; investigating how non-Japanese Asian proprietors navigate authenticity and cultural representation in Japanese eating establishments; exploring whether the concept of *gastro-cool*

applies to other types of restaurants across diverse Australian settings and ownership models; and conducting longitudinal studies of post-pandemic operations to assess what community engagement strategies may become sustainable features of Australia's hospitality sector. Such research would illuminate how these community-embedded establishments navigate an increasingly crisis-prone environment while potentially offering models for building resilient cross-cultural connections within Australia's shifting cultural and culinary landscape.

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10 Nikkei Australia

A Creative Cultural Community

Mayu Kanamori

Introduction

Cultural productions with Nikkei Australian themes are on the rise, with more artists and creatives identifying themselves as Nikkei or Japanese Australians. My own artworks and arts practice, along with those of my colleagues, are part of a creative cultural community and a social movement exploring a part of the Australian heritage which has mostly not been brought to light before and are reimagining histories of Japanese experiences and their stories which are specific to Australia. Many of the creatives are members of a community group called Nikkei Australia. Nikkei Australia is formed by a group of individuals who support members by sharing knowledge and resources and facilitate opportunities for creatives to present their creative work to become part of a wider social discourse.

Creatives

My essay focuses on the activities of creatives such as artists, fiction writers, actors, audio producers, curators and designers. Some of these practitioners are undertaking research and study programs in academies, and although I acknowledge and appreciate that the practice of writing, reviewing and lecturing are creative acts which inform others, especially other creatives, academic writing would be best studied by a scholar in another paper.

I am not a scholar, but a Japanese-born artist, mostly based in Australia and creating artworks which often focus on the Japanese experiences in Australia. My work is in various mediums, including photography, documentary and performance making. My creative practice is embedded in historical research and in collaboration with artists and scholars. I am also an arts producer and curator and have been involved in the movement to establish a Nikkei Australian identity as both a participant and an advocate.

Nikkei

The term 'Nikkei' used in the Australian context is defined by a degree of awareness of the socio-political histories of the Nikkei diaspora in Australia as

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well as in other countries such as those in North and South America. Being Nikkei can be symbolic and a social, historical and political construction, and like many other forms of personal and community identifications, multifaceted and fluid in nature.

Although the term ‘Nikkei’ has been widely used in North and South America, it has not been common in Australia until recently. Many Nikkei Australians prefer the term Japanese Australian, because it is understood more readily by Australians who are not familiar with the term ‘Nikkei’. This means Nikkei Australians often only choose to identify themselves as Nikkei Australian when they are speaking with people from other countries or amongst those in their Nikkei Australian community with a similar awareness.

There are reasons why the term ‘Nikkei’ has not been used readily in Australia. Most first-generation migrants from Japan do not become Australian citizens and instead live in Australia as permanent residents and identify as a Japanese living in Australia (see also Shiobara, Conclusion Chapter 14). Additionally, for first-generation ‘life-style migrants’ from Japan, the term ‘Nikkei’ carries with it prewar memories and prejudices that people in Japan had about third- or fourth-born sons of families from poverty-stricken areas, who migrated overseas to find work. For those migrants who are second, third or more generations, having Japanese heritage had not presented benefits and opportunities within Australia until recently. However, times are now favourable for Japanese Australians, especially in the creative sectors, where sharing and consuming multicultural and multi-ethnic identities have become vogue.

In Repose

In the earlier days of my practice, I worked with artists creating performances at Japanese cemeteries in Australia. I was producing and creating a multi-arts project called ‘In Repose’ (Lo & Kanamori, 2013) with Sydney-based koto virtuoso Satsuki Odamura, contemporary dancer Wakako Asano and sound artist Vic McEwan. The project took us to many places, such as the Japanese section of the Belgian Gardens Cemetery in Townsville, the Japanese Cemetery in Broome and the Japanese Cemetery on Thursday Island. We held workshops and performances at these cemeteries and exhibited our works in local art galleries. There were other private performances, with only the dead present, in the Japanese section of the Pioneer Cemetery in Port Hedland, the Japanese Cemetery in Cossack and a former gravesite in Roebourne. We visited more than fifteen different cemeteries and pre-war grave sites around the country.

This project began as a contemporary artistic gesture of giving our migrant *senpai*, a *kuyo*. *Senpai* is a Japanese term describing a predecessor, a senior or an elder from the same school or guild. *Kuyo* is a Buddhist concept of a ceremonial settling of the spirits of the deceased. Because the Japanese artists involved in this project were first-generation migrants, we did not have ancestors in Australia, and as such, we ‘adopted’ those Japanese pioneers who arrived before us as our *senpai* to be given *kuyo*.

This conscious ‘adoption’ of our Japanese elders highlights a uniquely Australian Nikkei history. Unlike those in North and South America, most of the people who identified themselves as Japanese Australians at the time we created ‘In Repose’ were post-war first-generation migrants with no biological or family connections to the pre-war Japanese in Australia. This is because there were fewer numbers of prewar Japanese in Australia than in the Americas at the start of the war; most people of Japanese heritage were interned in Australia, whereas in the Americas, selective internment was practised; and nearly all in Australia were deported to Japan after the war. Only a handful were allowed to stay, many hiding their Japanese identity, actively leaving their histories behind.

The Japanese section of Townsville’s Belgian Gardens Cemetery exemplified this history. Unlike the adjacent Chinese section, full of old and new graves cared for by their descendants, the Japanese section, when we performed there in 2007, was disintegrating with no new graves being built and no descendants to look after them.

However, in places like Broome and Thursday Island, where the pearling industry brought back the Japanese workers in the mid-1950s, there were still strong connections between the Japanese cemeteries and the Indigenous communities. In Broome, when the local Yawuru Elder Doris Edgar conducted Welcome to Country for our performance at the Japanese Cemetery, she spoke of one of her ancestors who was Japanese and was buried in the Japanese Cemetery. In the audience were descendants of pre- and post-war Japanese who lived and worked in Broome’s pearling and related industries. (See Chapter 11 in this volume).

When we were rehearsing our performance at the Japanese Cemetery on Thursday Island, one of the council workers came to cut and mow the grass at the cemetery. He showed Asano his ancestor’s grave, and they prayed together. When the local Kaurareg Elder Joseph Wasaga conducted a Welcome to Country, he faced the central *ireito*, or the memorial cenotaph at the Japanese Cemetery. He spoke in language as a custodian, welcoming the spirits of our *senpais* to their final resting place.

We told these stories as vignettes gathered during our travels as part of performances in Sydney and Adelaide, along with Asano’s dance and Odamura’s koto music. Although I did not know it at the time, upon reflection, by telling stories at the grave sites of pre-war Japanese, and by connecting these places with those living in the present day, Nikkei Australian themes were beginning to emerge in my work.

Nikkei Australia

Nikkei Australia is a grassroots community collective I founded in 2013 with my colleagues (Fukui & Kanamori, 2017). It has a mission to preserve and promote the legacy of the Japanese diaspora in Australia through artistic, cultural, academic, educational and community engagement activities. Sometimes the members meet in person, but because of the physical distances between members based in all parts of Australia, and some internationally, most of the formal meetings and other

engagements take place online. At the time of writing this essay, there are about 80 members, most of whom are actively engaged with either identifying themselves as a Nikkei Australian, studying or researching Nikkei Australian-related subjects, or creating cultural productions with Nikkei Australian themes.

The other founders of Nikkei Australia were scholars working on subjects which brought to light lesser-known Japanese Australian histories. Yuriko Nagata had authored 'Unwanted Aliens: Japanese Internment in Australia during WWII' (Nagata, 1996), the definitive book on the subject. Keiko Tamura had published widely on Japanese migrants to Australia, including 'Michi's Memories: The Story of a Japanese War Bride' (Tamura, 2011). Lorna Kaino, whose early research had been mostly in Australian visual arts, had been publishing scholarly papers about the pre-war Japanese community in Broome, because she had lived as part of their Nikkei community after marrying a Japanese pearl diver there.

I was the only non-scholar among my group of colleagues; consequently, their research and academic practices informed my creative work and continue to do so; and subsequently, in the years to follow, interdisciplinary collaborations between scholarly discourse and creative cultural productions have led other creatives to promote awareness of the Nikkei heritage in Australia. The scholars often informed the artists, and the artists in turn explored the emotional aspects of the scholar's research, reimagined histories and expanded on academic studies to inform others.

'Unwanted Aliens: Japanese Internment in Australia during WWII' (Nagata, 1996) informed my play 'Yasukichi Murakami – Through A Distant Lens' (Kanamori, 2014a). The main protagonist Yasukichi Murakami was interned during the war, and his experiences are in Nagata's book along with her interviews with his family. Nagata's research continues to inform all subsequent creative works about Japanese internment in Australia during WWII, many of which will be discussed later in this essay.

Tamura's research practices included memories of the Pacific War and was one of the key researchers who worked on the Australia-Japan Research Project (2004), a joint project between the Australian War Memorial and the Embassy of Japan in Australia. The project, which produced a database of historic materials, essays and other online resources, had taught me much about the histories, and most importantly on how to deal with the subject of WWII in my creative activities. Through Tamura's meticulous, balanced and humane scholarly approach, I learned how to express the undeniable gap that exists between understandings of the Pacific War between those held by Japanese people and those held by Australian people, even today.

Kaino was then researching Murakami's life, which then became the paper, 'On-board 'Train Australia': Some Contexts of the Works of Kanamori and Murakami' (Kaino, 2013), which placed my work in a historical narrative, adding to my own self-awareness about being part of the Japanese diaspora in Australia, not just in the present, but connecting me to those who came before me, and to those who'll come after me. This awareness that my creative work is not just about me, my practice and my art, but a part of a broader continuum of the Japanese diaspora in Australia

during this time and is still at the root of much of the work I create and facilitate others to create.

Kaino, Nagata, Tamura and I had originally come together to erect an interpretive board at the entrance of the Cowra Japanese War Cemetery to provide publicly accessible information about the plight of the Japanese civilians buried there. To coincide with the unveiling of the interpretive board, we held a two-day international symposium, 'Civilian Internment in Australia during World War II: History, memories and community heritage' at the Cowra Civic Centre, headed by Nagata. I produced an arts program with local Cowra youths and visiting artists which culminated in performances and an exhibition during the symposium with themes relating to the symposium theme.¹

Yasukichi Murakami – Through a Distant Lens

Around the time I was producing the 'Civilian Internment Arts Program', I was researching and writing a theatre piece called 'Yasukichi Murakami – Through A Distant Lens', telling the story of Yasukichi Murakami, a Nikkei Australian photographer, a creative, inventor and entrepreneur who arrived in Australia from Japan in 1898 (Kanamori, 2014b). In the Australian production of this play, which opened in 2014, Nikkei Australian actor Arisa Yura played the part of Mayu, a character based on me. Mayu is a contemporary Nikkei Australian photographer who goes in search of the missing photographs of Murakami, a historical Japanese Australian photographer. Murakami's lifetime's worth of photographs had gone missing when he was interned, and his belongings were confiscated. He died while he was interned. The missing photographs taken by a prewar Japanese Australian photographer became a metaphor for the collective amnesia of the prewar Japanese pioneers in Australia. Lost memories of the pre-war Japanese is one theme unique to Australian Nikkei history.

In the play, Mayu meets the ghost of Murakami played by Kuni Hashimoto, while photographing Murakami's grave at the Cowra Japanese Cemetery. Mayu identifies with the ghost of Murakami, who teaches her about the ways of photographic practice. Like the artists in 'In Repose', we find Mayu honouring her *senpai*, and in the absence of her own blood-related ancestors in Australia, 'adopting' and taking up the cause of her *senpai* and resolves to find his photographs. She also meets the ghost of Eki, Murakami's first wife and an unsung pioneer, who taught him how to take photographs. Eki is also played by Nikkei actor Yumi Umiumare.

I spent two years researching the life of Murakami and discovering the whereabouts of his photographs. I interviewed his descendants in Australia and Japan, including the daughter of an Indigenous Australian woman photographed by Murakami in the 1930s. The recordings of these interviews are played as part of the play. The theatre production thus links the ghosts of prewar Japanese pioneers in Australia with the present, highlighting the violence of the war that caused this link to be forgotten.

1.5 – 2 Gen

There is a distinct difference between those who identify themselves as Nikkei Australians and the first-generation, or what the Americans call *issei* migrants in Australia. The word *issei*, like the word Nikkei, is not used widely in Australia. In Australia, *issei* often see themselves as Japanese who live in Australia, especially in the earlier years of their migration. *Issei* artists can be those who practice traditional Japanese arts in Australia, some in a contemporary way; those who practice non-Japanese arts with varying degrees of Japanese sensitivities; and those who actively pursue cross-cultural or transcultural hybrid arts practices.

With the likes of Nagata, Tamura and Kaino, with whom I share a sense of Japanese Australian history, and with Odamura, Asano and McEwan, with whom I share a sense of artistic response to these histories, I was beginning to find a sense of belonging. I share with them a way of seeing the world which I do not share with many Australian people, whose understanding of Japanese history is framed within an Australian narrative, nor with many Japanese people whose understanding of Australian histories, especially that of the Japanese diaspora was often close to nil, nor with many *issei* people who are not connected to a wider national and contemporary Australian discourse, but are instead concerned with discourses in Japan or local issues with immediate personal concern such as their children's schooling.

Then I got to know Masako Fukui. I had known Fukui since 1995 when I was working for The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age newspaper's Tokyo Bureau, and she was working for the Japanese newspaper Nihon Keizai Shimbun's Sydney Bureau. Later, when I became a freelance news photographer in Sydney, she became one of my clients. But it was a conversation I had with her one ANZAC Day on Twitter (as it then was) that made me realise that I was not the only person who wanted to cry and hide from the world every 25th April.

Fukui's novella, 'When Blossoms Fall' (Fukui, 2014) is a fictionalised, yet seemingly autobiographical story of a young Japanese girl, Yuri, arriving with her Japanese family to live in Australia. She confronts differences between her friends at school, then later, as a young adult, from the world that her Japanese parents live in, especially her father, a successful company man who, in his youth, had trained to become a kamikaze pilot. Yuri's emotional turmoil, caught between different views of the Pacific War held by Australians and the Japanese, was surprisingly like my own.

I didn't know at the time, but our shared reaction to ANZAC Day now makes much sense. Fukui and I are in a similar age group, we are only one generation away from WWII, we both went to an international school in Japan, we both at various points in our lives worked for major media companies, and we are both women living in Australia.

When I read Fukui's essay, 'Madame Butterfly's Revenge' (Fukui, 2013), the ideas also resonated. She had made a radio program 'Madame Butterfly Effect' (Fukui, 2010), some years earlier, but I had not heard it then. Having read Alison Broinowski's 'The Yellow Lady: Australian Impressions of Asia' (Broinowski, 1992) several years earlier, I was familiar with the Madama Butterfly reference,

but reading about the phenomenon of Western men seeking out the ‘subservience’ of Asian women from the point of view of a Japanese Australian woman made me take notice and want to participate in this public discourse.

Later, I created a poetry performance with second-generation composer and musician Terumi Narushima, ‘You’ve Mistaken Me For A Butterfly’ (Kanamori, 2017). This work took its inspiration from Fukui’s ‘Butterfly’ series, although they were different in a sense that her work was based on contemporary real-life experiences of being an Asian woman in Australia, while my work was based on an historical rape case of a Japanese woman who allegedly worked in a brothel. Yet both works dealt with similar issues of racism and sexism experienced by Japanese Australian women, as did Arisa Yura’s bilingual one-woman show, ‘Confessions of a Custard Melon Pan’ (Yura, 2019).

In ‘Confessions of a Custard Melon Pan’, Yura explores her memories as a young migrant girl growing up in Australia, her endeavours to assimilate, including dating white boys, yet encountering similar racialised sexism while working in a retail outlet. As the audience follows her coming-of-age story, we learn how she is unable to belong to either Japanese or Australian societies.

Yura and Fukui are 1.5 Nikkei artists. The definition of 1.5 generation is commonly understood in the Americas as people who arrived in their host country after the age of six and before their early teen years. 1.5s speak English fluently, and although I am technically an *issei*, because I went to an international school in Japan before migrating to Australia at age eighteen, I communicated with them mostly in English, the stronger language for all of us, with some Japanese words and phrases thrown in when it was the best way to describe a particular Nikkei state of mind. This is also my experience with Narushima, who was born in Australia, but with both her mother and father being first-generation migrants from Japan.

We have similar understandings of Japanese culture and history, of Australian history and politics, of what caused our social and inner conflicts during our sensitive adolescent years, and, in a more nuanced way, how it affects our daily lives in Australia as adults. We share our interest in engaging with wider Australian public discourses about being Asian Australian, and make alliances with other Asian Australian artists, thinkers and organisations such as Asian Australian Studies and Research Network (AASRN), Performance 4A (now Contemporary Asian Australian Performance), to name two.

Nikkei as Part of Asian Australia

From its inception in 2006, the AASRN and its biannual Asian Australian Identities (AAI) conferences included artists, writers and other creatives, giving space for a Japanese Australian artist like me, a voice and a place for my creative work within the wider discourse of Asian Australia. It was through Jacqueline Lo, Founding Chair of AASRN and from attending AAI conferences, that I became aware of the Nikkei themes which were emerging in my work. Lo wrote about ‘In Repose’ and helped me to see where my work could be situated in the wider Asian Australian context and perhaps more importantly, the intersections with Indigenous Australia.

In those early years, I was very aware of the sensitive space that Japanese Australians occupied in Asian Australian postcolonial discourse. I also became aware of the dearth of creative cultural activity addressing and exploring Nikkei stories within an Australian context, and it was the support of Lo and the other AASRN executives, Tseen Khoo and Dean Chan, that allowed me to overcome my fears and explore sensitive themes relating to WWII.

Through Lo, I met Annette Shun Wah, who later founded Performance 4A (now CAAP) with her colleagues. Performance 4A's mission was, and still is, to provide cultural leadership in the presentation of contemporary Asian Australian experiences through live performing arts on the stages of Australia. Shun Wah produced the stage production of 'Yasukichi Murakami Through A Distant Lens'.

Some years later, Yura played a dual role as a first-generation nail salon worker, Asami, and a second-generation Japanese Australian TV writer, Yuko, in the Sydney Theatre Company production 'Top Coat' (Law, 2022) written by Michelle Law and directed by Courtney Stewart, both Asian Australians. In this play, we see young Asami being subjected to racism, which she doesn't realise is racism, because she is new to Australia and too busy being a diligent worker in the service industry. Yuko, born in Australia, older and with more experience, had almost given up her dream to write about Nikkei internment in Australia, to keep her job at an Australia's multicultural television station managed mostly by white Australians.

How the predominantly white middle-class Australian audiences of the Sydney Theatre Company understood the finer nuances of being a first- and second-generation Nikkei remains unknown. Although most reviewers of this performance were Asian Australians, their reviews were focused on the main plot of the play, which was a body switch between a white Australian TV executive and a Chinese Australian nail salon worker. Interestingly, the latter role was played by a Japanese Singaporean mixed heritage actor, Kimie Tsukahoshi. The lighting designer for this show, Kate Baldwin, also identifies as Japanese Australian.

Nikkei Australia's Cowra Projects

'Cowra Voices', created in 2019, is a geolocative storytelling app narrating the unique story of postwar civic peace and reconciliation in Cowra (Kanamori, 2020). Jacqueline Schultze, who had been the Director of Cowra Regional Art Gallery, managed the project, while Fukui and I created the content with graphic designer and IT specialist Chie Muraoka, who was the first new member to join Nikkei Australia following the four founders. Cowra Voices took three years to complete. And because we successfully fulfilled the aims and objectives of the project and were recognised by three history-related awards in NSW in 2020, Nikkei Australia gained a more prominent and respected profile. Crucially, Nikkei Australia is now known to major organisations such as the Australia Japan Foundation—an organisation within the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and one of Cowra Voices' main funding sources—as a legitimate and key voice in Australia–Japan affairs.

Another project Muraoka and I undertook during the same three-year period was the creation of 'Cowra Japanese Cemetery Online Database' (Tamura et al., 2019), headed by Nikkei Australia's founding member, Keiko Tamura, and with Yuriko Nagata contributing her expertise on the civilians buried at the cemetery. As a searchable database with individual information on all 524 people buried in the Japanese Cemetery in Cowra, this online resource, funded by the Japanese Embassy in Canberra, gave Nikkei Australia a solid presence working in the Japanese Australian cultural arena.

Both these Cowra-based projects were completed in close collaboration with the Cowra community and the Cowra Council, much like the internment symposium and arts festival in 2013/2014. My creative roles in these projects have included being an advocate, educator, and community organiser, and I see these roles as integral parts of my creative practice as a Nikkei Australian artist. Nikkei Australia continues to grow, attracting mostly Japanese Australian members who identify themselves as Nikkei Australians, ranging from first generation to sixth, mixed heritage Nikkei Australians, as well as people without Nikkei heritage, such as scholars researching or creatives exploring themes of Nikkei Australian histories, identities and experiences.

Mixed Heritage

Dancer Rika Hamaguchi is a sixth-generation mixed heritage Nikkei Australian, whose paternal grandfather was a Japanese pearl diver and whose grandmother's grandmother was a Japanese woman from Kyushu. She also identifies with her Australian First Nation, European and other Asian heritages. Rika was in her teens when she participated in the 'In Repose' program in Broome: students from Broome's local high school took part in dance workshops with Wakako Asano, who was then a principal dancer with the Sydney Dance Company. With her fellow students, she danced at the Japanese Cemetery, an event Lo described: 'the dead are remembered as part of the social body through the corporeal iterations of his grand-daughter, and the family and extended community attending the performance are transformed into witnesses of the spectral presence of the past in the flesh'.

Some years later, Rika joined the NAISDA Dance College, an arts training organisation for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and then the Bangarra Dance Theatre, a premier dance company which explores First Nation stories. Rika is currently working as an independent artist and costume designer, and during her presentation at the Nikkei Australia members' meeting in May 2024, she stated she was interested in examining perceptions of identity.

Themes of mixed heritage Nikkei Australians and the search for belonging are also explored in Christine Piper's award-winning debut novel 'After Darkness' (Piper, 2015). Being of mixed heritage, Piper explores characters who do not belong to a single identity and the complexities that arise. A part of Piper's book is set in the Loveday Internment Camp during WWII, where mixed race, Australian-born and long-time resident *issei* peoples were interned in the same compound with

Japanese contracted workers living in Australia temporarily, as well as those from places like New Caledonia, who were interned in Australia.

Australian-born Johnny is a half-Chinese and half-Japanese character in the novel and is seen as an angry troublemaker in the camp. He is caught between three cultures and not welcomed by any of them. Later in the book, we find an unlikely friendship between Johnny and the main character, Broome's Japanese doctor Ibaraki, whose dark past in Japan and consequent moral dilemma make him a man who lives in limbo, without a sense of belonging to his country or his family. There are characters in this book, like Ibaraki's wife Kayoko, his friend Sister Bernice, and many others on both sides of the barbed wire fence, who do not share Ibaraki's moral conflict.

Mixed heritage Nikkei Indigenous Australians have been collaborators of my work since my radio feature and documentary performance, 'The Heart of the Journey' (Kanamori, 2000), retelling the story of an Australian Indigenous woman's search for her Japanese father. My more recent photographic exhibition 'Teiju to wa Nandaro: Australia What does it mean to settle?' (Kanamori, 2022) in collaboration with Chie Muraoka addresses my forty-year search for what belonging may be like as a settler in Australia. It is a retrospective in the sense that it brings together photographs from 'In Repose' and 'The Heart of the Journey', showing photographs of Japanese and Indigenous mixed heritage peoples from Broome. The exhibition included a photographic collage of Nikkei Australian faces 'Dictionary of Nikkei Australians'.

'Teiju to wa Nandaro Australia' also featured my later photographic works such as 'Stolen Land' (Kanamori, 2022). 'Stolen Land' is a photograph of a graffiti along the Cooks River, in the suburb where I bought my house. As a first-generation migrant, I am unsettled by the knowledge that by buying into the great Australian dream of home ownership, I am, like other Nikkei Australians, entangled and implicated in the complexities of settling in a colonial/post-colonial society like Australia. Much of these recent photographic works were informed by the work of Jacqueline Lo, placing Japanese settlement in Australia within the Asian Australian context.

Past Wrongs Future Choices

Past Wrongs Future Choices (PWFC, 2022) is an international project exploring global Nikkei histories, connecting forty partnership institutions such as universities, museums and community organisations from Canada, the United States, Australia, Brazil and Japan. Nikkei Australia is a partner in this seven-year cross-disciplinary project, which began in 2023. The program has created many opportunities for its member scholars and creatives with funding and creative or learning residencies in Canada where the project office and the funding originate. These opportunities widen networks and, along with it, possibilities of presentation of

creative outcomes. As a result, there is now a new wave of creatives creating works with Nikkei Australian themes.

Unlike other PWFC partner institutions, Nikkei Australia is a small volunteer-run group. When the then Project Director Jordan Stranger-Ross of the University of Victoria in Canada approached Yuriko Nagata and Keiko Tamura in 2020 to join him and his colleagues to partner in a new project PWFC, Nagata forwarded his email to younger members of Nikkei Australia to realise this partnership, which included finding other partner institutions in Australia and assisting in securing funding for the project. The members saw the opportunity and worked with each other and with Stranger-Ross' team, and in 2022, the project secured its funding. In turn, Nikkei Australia secured a small annual honorarium from 2022 to 2029 to help cover the administrative costs of a volunteer organisation.

New Nikkei Creatives

Artist Elysha Rei is studying for a PhD exploring how the Nikkei Australian identities and histories may be archived through her contemporary paper cutting or *kirie* arts practice. Brisbane based, she is a mixed heritage granddaughter of one of the 650 Japanese war brides who migrated to Australia. At the time of writing this essay, Rei serves as the Chair for Nikkei Australia and is one of the first artists to be chosen to partake in the PWFC artist-in-residency program at Victoria University in Canada.

During her residency she focused on the history of the internment and incarceration of people of Japanese descent in Canada, the United States, and Australia, using plants brought from Japan to Canada as a visual metaphor for the history of Nikkei people establishing themselves in one place, then being uprooted and transplanted and having to survive in another, and finally being seen as invasive species. She created *kirie* based on historical photographs of the gardens built by Japanese internees at the Loveday Internment Camp in South Australia, using barbed wire motifs for incarceration and, at the same time, acting as a protection from the anti-Japanese sentiment outside internment camps.

Rei's exploration of her Nikkei Australian histories is also demonstrated in her other exhibitions such as '余白の美: Yohaku no bi' (Rei, 2022), 'Rabbit (proof) Fence' (Rei, 2023) and 'Shirozato to Shinju' (Rei, 2025). '余白の美: Yohaku no bi' exhibited her *kirie* informed by her ancestral connections to a Japanese tea master who used the tea ceremony as a setting for diplomatic discussions between samurai and enemy generals, and by oral histories of her Japanese war bride grandmother and Australian soldier grandfather. 'Rabbit (proof) Fence' was an installation work alluding to the Rabbit-Proof Fence which began its construction in 1901 to keep rabbits and other pests from the east out of the pastoral districts of Western Australia. 1901 is also the year that the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (White Australia Policy) came into effect. The installation used a hand-cut paper fence with a small hole in it and a rabbit cut out of her year-of-the-rabbit-born

grandmother's immigration documents. In 'Shirozato to Shinju', she used archival records that documented Japanese migration and labour in North Queensland as the basis for hand-cut washi paper artworks depicting sugar cane, pearls, shells, and turtles gathered by early Japanese migrants in the region.

Another war bride descendant is author and screenwriter Alli Parker, whose best-selling historical fiction, 'At the Foot of the Cherry Tree' (Parker, 2023), is based on a love story of her grandparents, Gordon, and Nobuko. Nobuko, known as 'Cherry', was the first Japanese war bride to arrive in Australia, despite all odds, paving a way for other Japanese war brides to follow. Set against war torn Japan and the White Australia Policy, the strength of Cherry's belief in Gordon, and Gordon's perseverance in lobbying to change the Australian laws to bring his family to Australia, the favourable book reviews and the book sale figures to match, reflect Parker's successful reimagining of a difficult history of war and overt racism on both sides into a successful love story.

Masako Fukui's award-winning *ABC Radio National* feature 'My Grandmother is a Japanese war bride' (Fukui, 2024) brings together not only voices of third generation Nikkei like Parker and Rei, but also of historian and PhD candidate Anna Wilkinson, also a granddaughter of a Japanese war bride, who examines the history of Asian Australian war bride marriages, which includes Japanese, Malayan and Vietnamese women married to Australians. Fukui interviewed Parker's father, who, because of his daughter's work, has recently come to realise the difficulties his mother faced in migrating to post-war Australia and its assimilation policies, which is a direct example of how Parker and Fukui's creative process not only reimagines the past but affects the way others view the past.

In the program, excerpts from Parker's book were read by Kaori Maeda-Judge, another Japanese Australian actor, and the music, folk tune 'Sakura', or cherry blossom, was played by Satsuki Odamura on her koto. Fukui, who at the time of writing this essay serves as Nikkei Australia's Treasurer, brought together first-, second- and third-generation Nikkei Australian creatives for the national radio program. As the program narrator, she does not forget to mention the groundbreaking work by her *senpai*, Keiko Tamura, about Japanese war brides. In a recent email correspondence, Fukui said that she sees herself as a facilitator. As such, she is working as a conduit between the Nikkei Australia members within the group as well as with others who bring opportunities, such as the PWFC organisers. There are other events Fukui organises, such as information exchange events where member scholars present their studies to interested members, who are often creatives in search of knowledge to inform their work.

Parker also has another book 'Until the Red Leaves Fall' (Parker, 2025), set in the late 1950s about a Japanese Australian playwright Emmy, who had been hiding her heritage and that her family had been interned during the war. Her secrets become threatened when she is challenged to write about her war time past and she faces a moral dilemma to either tell the truth or to tell a sensationalised 'good story'. Billed as yet another book about courage and conviction by a best-selling author, Parker's publisher Harper Collins is taking advance orders for this book at the time of writing this essay.

Artist and educator Sophie Constable is not of a Nikkei heritage but is a longtime researcher of pre-war Nikkei Australian stories and has been an integral part of the Nikkei Australian community since she first spoke about her project involving creative re-imagination of Nikkei experiences in Australia during WW2, as community integrated linguists working alongside Japanese Americans at the Civilian Internment symposium in 2014. She recently travelled to Canada for the PWFC Internment Era Field School, with other educators from Canada, United States and Australia, with the intention of creating Australian and transnational educational resources based on shared personal histories and stories. Constable has since won several awards for her series of digitally quilted portrait works and hand woven *kori*, a Meiji era clothing case, made of bamboo, rattan or willow. The portraits and *kori* are interwoven with histories and stories of people with Nikkei ancestry who were in Australia, United States and Canada during WWII.

Nikkei Australia's current group project, which I am facilitating with Constable and other members, is called 'When You Call My Name' (Kanamori, 2025). This project honours civilians who were brought from Southeast Asia, South Pacific Islands, and across Australia and New Zealand as 'Japanese enemy aliens' to be interned in Australia and New Zealand during WWII and who died during internment. More than one hundred fifty artists and community members have been asked to 'adopt' an internee who died in internment and to create artworks with the name of their 'adopted' internee on it. These individual artworks are in the process of becoming part of a large-scale collage.

There are artworks for 208 internees, including twelve people from Formosa and one from Korea who were included with the Japanese because Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula were under Japanese rule during the Pacific War. There are also three Thai students who were originally interned in New Zealand and died in a plane crash with Japanese internees on their way to Australia; they were going to be repatriated after a prisoner exchange. The individual artworks consist of photographs, soundscapes, collages, poems, paintings, ceramics, sculptures, ikebana, music compositions, videos, dance and Tongan *fele*. Community participants in the project include descendants of those being honoured as well as others, many of whom are non-Nikkei and even *issei* people who had not been aware of the Japanese internment history in Australia.

Future Perspectives

Yuki Kawakami is a creative producer, museum educator and programs curator with a background in dance and performance, who is currently undertaking a PhD in Curatorial Practice at Monash University which is partly funded by PWFC. Monash University is one of PWFC's institutional partners. Having arrived in Australia when she was four years old, Kawakami sees herself as a 1.75 generation, and her experiences are closer to those of Australian-born second generation than those of the other *issei* peoples.

As part of her doctoral practice, Kawakami is facilitating a collective learning intensive program, which is intergenerational, on the history of Nikkei civilian

internment for a group of contemporary artists of Japanese heritage at different career stages, practicing in a variety of mediums. The program aims to provide opportunities for artists to connect with and learn from Japanese civilian internment survivors, their families and descendants, scholars and community members, as well as visiting institutions holding memories, collections of objects, artworks and material culture which tell the stories of early Japanese migration history and internment; as well as an internment campsite which holds its memories. Focusing on the process of collective learning, Kawakami intends to document and analyse the impact of learnings on the artists' creative practice both individually and collectively.

Kawakami's process-driven program allows for renewed connections within the Japanese Australian communities that build on the legacies of the Japanese Australians from the past while expanding capacity for current and future generations. Her approach, to rekindle memories of Nikkei Elders' past for current Nikkei artists, allows participants to adopt a Nikkei lineage in Australia through choice, not necessarily through bloodline.

Retired diplomat and teacher Steve Dawson, an active member of Nikkei Australia, is a descendant of the first recorded Japanese settler in Australia; he is a descendant of performing artist Togawa Iwakichi, who arrived in Australia in 1873 as a child performer and who was the adopted son of travelling acrobat Sakuragawa Rikinosuke, the first recorded Japanese migrant in Australia. Dawson (2020), like Alli Parker and Elysha Rei, calls himself a Japanese Australian, but like many other Nikkei Australians, these three do not have obvious Asian features.

In Rei's case, she knew about her maternal Japanese heritage as a child, but she had not identified herself as a Nikkei Australian until later in her life when she actively looked to refocus her identity after becoming a mother in her early twenties. At first, she thought she was the only person identifying herself as Japanese Australian as a third generation, but through Nikkei Australia, she has met others in Australia, like Parker and Dawson, as well as people in Canada and the United States who identified themselves with their Japanese heritage with more subtle physical Asian features.

There are now many creatives who have made a choice to identify themselves as Nikkei Australians and are working on Nikkei-themed projects: histories of the Japanese diaspora in Australia, especially about the Nikkei internment, as well as personal histories of Japanese heritage in the Australian context, like the family histories of war brides. Career creatives are encouraged by the opportunities provided by PWFC and the potential international exposure it could bring. In this essay, I have only mentioned some of the projects that have been presented; there are many more in the pipeline.

As diversity within the Nikkei Australian communities grows, Nikkei Australian themes will expand and change with time. Whatever may come in the future, we may hope that, because of the way in which notices or reviews of creative activities like public performances and exhibitions are disseminated by media, researched by scholars and archived by institutions, creative communities will have a better chance to grow and survive. After all, Dawson has photographs that show both his

blood and adoptive ancestors posing and performing for the camera and newspaper cuttings that remind us of their artworks and lives as artists.

Note

1 Artists who participated in the Cowra Civilian Internment Program were: Mayu Kanamori (producer), Alan Schacher (movement), Weizen Ho (voice and movement), Jumaadi (shadow puppet), Ria Soemardjo (voice), Hiromi Ashlin (origami), Mutsumi Tsuda (photography), David Hansen (documentary making), Bruce Ryan and Jack Warren (audio visual); Graham Aphthorpe, Peter Reeves, Lawrance Ryan, Philippa Patterson, Marc McLeish and Shigeki Sano (musicians); the Cowra Musical and Dramatic Society and Cowra community youth artists.

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11 Fusion Food

Japanese Ancestry and the Meaning Making of Food in Coastal Broome, Western Australia¹

Yuriko Yamanouchi

Introduction

Broome is a coastal town approximately 2,200 kilometres north of Perth, Western Australia. As of May 2025, it is widely regarded as a tourist destination, known for its white sand beach and ‘unique history of multiculturalism’. This cultural complexity stems from Broome’s pearl shelling industry, which, from the 1880s through the 1960s, attracted workers from across Asia, including a significant number from Japan.² Despite restrictive policies such as the 1901 White Australia Policy, the internment of Japanese residents during the Second World War and post-war deportations, Japanese migration to Broome persisted. Many of the Japanese migrants—primarily men—formed relationships with local Indigenous Australians and people of Asian-Indigenous Australian mixed descent.³ These unions led to the emergence of Japanese-Indigenous Australian mixed descendant populations.^{4,5}

When I first visited Broome in 2009, I found 14 Japanese surnames in the local phone directory. At the time, four first-generation Japanese migrants from the pearl-shelling industry era were still alive.⁶ Alongside them lived later-generation Japanese descendants—most of whom were of mixed Japanese-Indigenous Australian heritage. Some retained Japanese surnames, while others did not, for various reasons. Due to the long and complex history of Japanese migration and the fragility of documentation, it is not possible to determine the exact number of Japanese descendants. The oldest identifiable first-generation Japanese migrant arrived in Broome in 1899 (Jones, 2002), and the youngest came in the late 1960s.

Contemporary relationships with Japanese ancestors vary widely. Some descendants grew up with their Japanese fathers and even visited Japan with them to meet their extended family. Others never met their Japanese ancestors and know only of their heritage. These descendants do not form a distinct enclave, do not gather regularly, and are not concentrated in any specific occupation or social group. Most do not speak Japanese and live among their broader non-Japanese families, reflecting patterns of minority ‘assimilation’⁷ (Waters & Jiménez, 2005). Although the term ‘Japanese community’ occasionally appears in conversation, it typically emerges during special events, such as Broome’s annual town festival or visits from delegations representing its Japanese sister city, Taiji.

Many of Broome's Japanese mixed descendants also have other – including Chinese, Malay, Indonesian, Filipino, and European ancestry, reflecting the town's diverse migration history. Their Indigenous Australian heritage is equally varied. While some have roots in the Broome area, others descend from Indigenous Australians who migrated from surrounding regions, or were internal migrants themselves. Among them are descendants of the Stolen Generations, referring to children taken from their original communities⁸ and educated at the Beagle Bay Mission, located 130 kilometres north of Broome (Choo, 2001).

As a result, each Japanese descendant family in Broome has a distinct background shaped by unique experiences. In interviews, individuals often acknowledge their diverse heritage, describing themselves as 'mixed', 'Broome mix' or using composite terms like 'Japanese-Aboriginal' or 'Japanese-Aboriginal-Filipino'. Despite this complexity, a strong sense of connection to Broome—both as a place and a shared history—is a common theme.

This chapter explores the complex and nuanced identities of Japanese mixed descendants in Broome through the lens of food. Long recognised as a powerful cultural marker, food can express not only ethnic or national affiliation, but also plural, ongoing attachments shaped by migration and local histories (e.g. Abbots, 2016; Chapman & Beagan, 2013; Duruz, 2011). Through food practices, people express belonging and memory—often in subtle, shifting ways.

Drawing on incremental ethnographic research—including interviews and participant observation—I examine how food, along with related practices and narratives, plays a meaningful role in the lives of Broome's Japanese descendants. Two categories of food emerged from the research. The first is dishes prepared by Japanese first-generation ancestors, usually fathers or grandfathers. While many descendants recall these meals from childhood, few continue to cook them today.

The second category is what is referred to here as 'Broome fusion food'⁹—dishes created through the historical interactions between Indigenous Australians and Asian migrants during the pearl shelling era. This cuisine is still widely cooked and eaten, not only by Japanese descendants but also by Broome's wider Asian-Indigenous Australian mixed communities who share this heritage.

These two food categories—Japanese first-generation ancestors' dishes and Broome 'fusion' food—are not always clearly separated, but they are narrated in distinct ways. In my previous work (Yamanouchi, 2023), I focused on stories surrounding the Japanese dishes prepared by first-generation ancestors. These foods served multiple functions, expressing familial and individual relationships and affirming one's identity as a Japanese descendant.

At the time, the role of Broome fusion food was less clear to me. However, after sharing a draft of this article (Yamanouchi, 2023) with Japanese mixed descendants in Broome,¹⁰ one person responded by highlighting the equal importance of Broome fusion food to their experience and sense of ancestry. While these dishes may not resemble local dishes in Japan, they are deeply rooted in local history and intergenerational ties.

Guided by this feedback, I turn in this chapter to Broome fusion food—its practices and associated narratives. I explore how Japanese mixed descendants

assign meaning to these foods in ways shaped by their diverse ethnic and personal backgrounds. These layered food practices and narratives not only reinforce individual heritage but also foster a shared attachment to Broome.¹¹

Literature Review

Food plays a significant role in migration contexts (e.g. Abbots, 2016; Janowski, 2012). It can represent and support not only migrant cultural continuity and adaptability, but also more complicated multiple attachments simultaneously, reflecting their complex and idiosyncratic life trajectories and hybrid ways of being (e.g. Chapman & Beagon, 2013; Duruz, 2011).

This ability of food is related to its function as a site of interaction and negotiation—between migrants themselves as well as migrants and their host society (Brulotte & Di Giovine, 2014; Haboucha, 2020; Mescoli, 2020). This interaction and negotiation is most complicated in mixed-marriage households, where everyday meals become venues for cultural blending and redefinition (Leopardo, 2016, Meyer, 2017, Meyer & Fozdar, 2020).

Blending is not monolithic, however. Meyer (2017), in her study of mixed-marriage migrant families, highlights this diversity. In one family, both sides contribute ingredients to create fusion dishes. In another family, one side primarily cooks food from their own background, with occasional meals prepared by the other. As Duruz (2011) notes, food reflects negotiation and interaction not just at the group level but also in everyday, individual dynamics.

Meyer (2017) also describes a German-Japanese household where the German husband usually defers to his Japanese wife's cooking but occasionally prepares German dishes himself, framing them as a way to express 'some form of Germanness' (Meyer, 2017, p. 140). In this case, meaning is attached to specific dishes, not entire cuisines, and choices vary with context.

Similarly, Ray (2004) shows that among Bengali migrants in the U.S., certain foods are preserved as symbols of 'Bengali-ness', while others are allowed to become 'creole'. The decision often hinges on how distinctly a dish contrasts with American food, revealing how cultural identity is negotiated through highly selective culinary practices.

These insights resonate strongly in Broome, where family histories span diverse ancestries, including Indigenous Australian, Japanese, Chinese, Malay, Filipino, Indonesian and other backgrounds. Food practices reflect this complexity, but they are also shaped by local social and ecological conditions, including resource scarcity, labour histories, and family patterns. In Broome, food functions not only as a medium of cultural transmission but also as a social language—one that encodes relationships, memories, place-specific knowledge and economic constraints.

The food people remember, share, and adapt offers insight into how heritage is lived—not as fixed inheritance but as an ongoing process of negotiation. This perspective helps to illuminate the ways in which Japanese-Indigenous Australian mixed descendants in Broome navigate their plural backgrounds, through meals that are often improvised but deeply meaningful.

Methodology

This chapter draws on fieldwork I conducted in Broome for one to two months annually between 2009 and 2024 (excluding 2011, 2018 and 2020–2022). My research combined participant observation with interviews, focusing on the identities and life histories of Japanese descendants in Broome. Using a snowball sampling method, I interviewed 39 individuals of Japanese descent: three first generation, eighteen second generation, nine third generation, eight fourth generation, and one fifth generation. Among them, 16 are men and 22 are women. Their ages ranged from 20 to 80, with only a loose correlation to generational category. I also interviewed eight elderly Broome residents who, while not of Japanese descent, were extended family members or close friends of Japanese descendants. I also participated in various community and family events.¹²

Although the interviews were not specifically focused on food, 25 of the 39 Japanese descendants spontaneously mentioned it—recalling either their first-generation ancestor's cooking or Broome fusion food. Among the eight non-Japanese interviewees, four also brought up food. These conversations highlight the central role food plays in the memories and identities of Broome's Japanese migrants and their mixed descendants. Food also frequently surfaced during informal interactions with participants, their families and friends.

The following section introduces the food of first-generation Japanese ancestors and the memories and narratives surrounding it (Yamanouchi, 2023). While not the focus of this chapter, these recollections shape how Japanese descendants in Broome interpret and find meaning in Broome fusion food.

Japanese First-Generation Migrant Food and Memories Thereof¹³

Reconstructing the cooking done by first-generation Japanese migrants is difficult due to their age and dwindling numbers. As migratory workers in the pearl shelling industry, they spent four to six weeks at sea on luggers, returning ashore to cook for themselves or their local families. While their descendants refer to their cooking as 'Japanese food', it differs from that found in Japan. They cooked familiar items like miso soup, sushi, sashimi, and seaweed salad, but often substituted local ingredients for those unavailable in Broome, producing uniquely hybridised versions. These meals also incorporated non-Japanese dishes such as kimchi, chop suey, and even dugong paste, reflecting a blend of influences. Rather than faithful replication, their cooking was marked by their creativity and adaptability (cf., Abarca, 2004).

Three out of four Japanese first-generation migrants enjoyed reputations as good cooks. Their descendants often mentioned their meals when reflecting on their upbringing. One second-generation descendant, for instance, remembered her father being away at sea for long periods, and how they would enjoy his 'good food' when he returned. Several descendants noted that, while few other cultural traits were passed down—language, for instance, was not—the experience of Japanese food was a key marker of their heritage.

Few later-generation Japanese descendants claim to cook the dishes of their first-generation ancestors. Their upbringing often made it difficult to inherit 'Japanese cooking'. One first-generation migrant, 'Mr I',¹⁴ said that although he tried teaching his children some Japanese, 'by the time I came back from the sea, it all went back to the beginning'. Local residents also noted that these first-generation migrants were highly meticulous, which may have made their cooking styles hard for descendants to learn.

Japanese descendants in Broome utilise memories of their first-generation ancestors' food in various ways. Outside Broome, these memories help position them as Japanese descendants amid broader representations and stereotypes of 'Japanese-ness'—for example, by linking their ancestral dishes to Japanese cuisine. In Broome, such memories often signify a close, personal connection to their Japanese ancestors. However, not all descendants share these types of experiences. Some first-generation migrants did not remain with or acknowledge their mixed-descent children (Ganter, 2006), leading to uneven relationships and varied memories. The presence—or absence—of food-related memories reflects this variety, allowing individuals room to articulate their unique ties to their heritage.

With these memories as context, I now turn to Broome fusion food, which is shared widely by Japanese and wider Asian-Indigenous Australian mixed descendants.

Broome Fusion Food

Broome fusion food is widely prepared by Broome's Asian-Indigenous Australian mixed communities, including Japanese descendants. It developed through Broome's pearl shelling history and various Asian influences. Typical dishes include Broome sashimi/namasu,¹⁵ Broome curry, chicken vermicelli, and 'fish soup and rice'.¹⁶ Dried salted fish was also made by Japanese and Malay fathers. My interviewees also recall that their Asian fathers brought back pearl meat, often dried or fermented aboard luggers.

Another frequently mentioned 'local food' is 'half-caste stew'.¹⁷ Though its not necessarily 'fusion', it has historical links to the area. Local Filipino-Indigenous artist bin Demin (2007) notes that local mothers learned it from Irish nuns at mission schools. One of Yu's (1999, p. 69) interviewees recalls a time when 'fried meat and half-caste stew' were staples, before the introduction of 'proper curry' at the Malay camp—suggesting that 'half-caste stew' predates Asian culinary influence. Typically made with meat, onion, potatoes, carrots, salt, and pepper, it is described by Broome people as 'simple' and 'filling'. Yu (1999, p. 69) adds, 'The Asians introduced chili and spice to the local diet', indicating how the stew may have become a base for some fusion dishes. One Japanese-Indigenous Australian mixed descendant, 'Kai', shared that adding curry powder transforms 'half-caste stew' into 'Broome curry'.

bin Demin (2007, p. 57) also observes that 'it is not unusual in Broome for men to do all the exotic cooking'. She maintains that most Asian indentured men

arrived single and had to cook for themselves, which was unusual in their home cultures. When they partnered with local Indigenous or mixed-descent women, they introduced their culinary traditions (cf., Yu, 1999).

Broome fusion food reflects the town's pearl shelling history, particularly in its reliance on rice as a staple. Asian–Indigenous Australian mixed families, including Japanese descendants, commonly eat rice and associate it with their heritage. This practice traces back to the pearl shelling era, when Asian migrant workers were provisioned with rice. Bain (1986) notes that Arthur Male (1870–1946), owner of the major pearl shelling company, Streeter and Male, traded cattle for sugar and rice in Java to feed his Asian indentured labourers—a practice that continued until 1921 (see also Chant, 2021). Rice also carries strong symbolic value. Ang (2001) describes it as a marker of ‘Asian-ness’, while Ohnuki-Tierney (1993) argues it defines the boundary between self and other in Japanese identity. In Broome, rice is broadly associated with Asian heritage, but for some Japanese mixed descendants, it specifically evokes their Japanese-ness.

Asian-Indigenous Australian mixed people in Broome, including Japanese descendants over 60, often recall the poverty of the postwar era (see also Yu, 1999). Many interviewees described relying on fishing and hunting for sustenance. A second-generation Japanese–Indigenous Australian mixed sibling pair, ‘Tamiko’ and ‘Hitoshi’, explained how they made full use of every part of the fish: fillets were used for Broome sashimi/namasu and fried fish, while the heads and bones were boiled into a soup. Like ‘half-caste stew’, this fish soup was valued for being ‘filling’ and ideal for feeding large families.

During this period, Broome was a remote town with a tropical climate, and fresh food was scarce. Old residents recall that supplies from Perth arrived only once every two weeks. Many families maintained vegetable gardens, growing produce like lemongrass, bok choy, wombok, carrots, tomatoes and daikon (see also bin Demin, 2007). Asian migratory workers often provided leftover food supplied by their employers. Accounts vary. One former pearl-shelling diver recalls giving these to local Japanese families not engaged in the industry; others remember bringing food back from lugger voyages. Items included durable vegetables such as potatoes, onions, and carrots—now staples in Broome fusion cuisine. Yu (1999, p.69) also notes crews returning with tinned goods like ‘tin butter, condensed milk, camp pie, and baked beans’. ‘Kai’ remembered his family making stew out of Hamper corned beef (from the lugger), onion, and cabbage—a dish that could feed many. Pearl meat was another lugger staple. Divers dried the muscle on board and fermented the surrounding ‘pearl guts’ in vinegar and seawater. These were later fried or roasted and typically eaten with rice.

Different Recipes, Different Meanings

bin Demin (2007, p. 57) writes, ‘Each family was different, depending on what culture their parents came from’. Broome fusion food varies with each family’s ethnic mix. Certain ingredients are associated with certain ethnicities. For instance, ‘Kai’ says of Broome curry:

Broome curry is very much up to who the cook is. Usually it is their Asian father where the influences come from. For example, if your father is Malay or Indonesian, you make it spicy, maybe you put coconut milk and cream. If he is Chinese, it is not so spicy. Chinese also put more veges like stir fry. Japanese, make it a bit sweet and mild. And also Japanese tend to use the pre-mixed curry paste (S&B).¹⁸

The flavours and ingredients of curry are often linked to the ethnicity of the Asian father. Spiciness and the use of chili, for instance, are commonly associated with Malay and Indonesian heritage. bin Demin (2007, p. 55) notes that dishes like chili fish and chili crab in her family reflect Malay cultural influence. While Chinese cooking can involve spices, spiciness is not typically seen as characteristic of Chinese food in Broome, according to 'Kai's comment.

Japanese influence is particularly associated with the use of pre-mixed curry paste, especially the S&B brand, which was readily available at the time. Another distinctly Japanese ingredient is soy sauce, often referred to as 'Kikkoman' after the popular brand. This label helps differentiate it from Chinese soy sauce in local usage.

The meanings associated with ingredients and dishes vary, as illustrated by Broome sashimi/namasu—a popular dish not only among Japanese descendants but also the wider Asian-Indigenous Australian mixed community.

Local Indigenous Australian–Filipino musician Stephen Pigram references the dish in his song *Sashimi Brain* (Pigram, 2013). On SBS's *Kriol Kitchen*, Japanese–Indigenous Australian–Filipino descendant Bubba Masuda presents her own version of 'sashimi'¹⁹ (Season 2, Episode 9; Torres, 2015a; 2015b), while in another episode, celebrity chef Adam Liaw prepares a pearl meat sashimi salad (Season 4, Episode 6; Torres, 2019b).²⁰

The date of origin for Broome sashimi/namasu is unclear and debated among Broome's Asian–Indigenous Australian mixed community. One person recalls first eating it around 1956–1957, while another believes it predates World War II. Japanese journalist Nakano (1986) notes that people in Broome ate both 'namasu' and 'sashimi'. Given Nakano's background, he likely referred separately to Japanese-style sashimi and a version of *namasu*—marinated raw seafood. However, he does not specify how mixed descendants themselves distinguished or named these dishes.²¹

While fish, vinegar, onion, and lemon are typical ingredients, Broome sashimi/namasu recipes vary widely between families. Much like Broome curry, ingredients differ depending on household traditions. Many Japanese–Indigenous Australian mixed descendants said they learned to make the dish from their non-Japanese relatives,²² whose diverse ethnic backgrounds are reflected in the variations of the recipe.

However, many Japanese mixed descendants also grew up eating Japanese-style sashimi, typically prepared by their Japanese father or father figure. This adds another layer of complexity to their experience of Broome sashimi/namasu, as both versions coexist in their food memories.

The following section explores how three second-generation Japanese mixed descendants—Caroline, Kai and Tamiko—prepare and interpret Broome sashimi/namasu differently. Their distinct recipes reflect diverse family relationships and ethnic backgrounds.

(1) ‘Caroline’

Caroline grew up with her Japanese father and her Indigenous Australian–Scottish–Filipino mother. Her Broome sashimi/namasu includes fish, vinegar, Kikkoman soy sauce, lemon slices, chopped chili, sugar, and onion. She describes it as a ‘simple’ recipe. Initially unsure where she learned it, she later suggested it was likely from her mother.

In this case, the dish likely comes from her mother’s side, where it was widely shared. Although it includes Kikkoman soy sauce, Caroline does not associate the ingredient with Japanese identity. Her Japanese father, known as a good cook, also made Japanese sashimi but ‘just ate’ the other variation when it was served. Caroline grew up with both versions, which coexisted without conflict.

(2) ‘Kai’

Kai was born to a Japanese father and a Japanese–Indigenous Australian mother. After his father left during his early childhood, Kai’s mother had a Japanese partner. His Broome sashimi/namasu recipe includes fish, vinegar, Kikkoman soy sauce, lemon, chili, sugar, white onion, and cabbage. He learned it from his maternal uncle, a Chinese–Indigenous Australian descendant.

Although his mother knew the recipe, she rarely made it. Her Japanese partner prepared Japanese sashimi, which was considered ‘left for his side’; his domain. Kai, having grown up with Japanese sashimi, distinguishes the two dishes by calling the local version ‘namasu’, not sashimi. While he uses Kikkoman soy sauce, he doesn’t associate it with Japanese identity. Unlike Caroline, whose family served both versions side by side, Kai, and perhaps his family, kept them separate and labeled them differently, maintaining a clear boundary between the two.

(3) ‘Tamiko’

Tamiko, raised by a Japanese father and an Indigenous Australian–Filipino mother, also grew up with Japanese sashimi. She began making Broome sashimi/namasu after moving to Darwin for work, where her cousin’s Asian friend introduced her to Darwin-style namasu. Tamiko then created her own version, using fish, vinegar, Kikkoman soy sauce, lemon, chili, sugar, onion, cabbage, tomato, and carrot.²³

She attributes the idea of adding chili—an ingredient often linked with Malay cuisine—to her own initiative, but got the idea of using carrots from her cousin’s Malay husband. Unlike Caroline and Kai, Tamiko strongly connects Kikkoman soy sauce to her Japanese father’s influence and traces the dish’s roots to his Japanese sashimi. Her recipe blends connections from Broome to Darwin, including family and friends, bridging both sashimi traditions.

Caroline, Kai and Tamiko each bring unique recipes and meanings to Broome sashimi/namasu. While Caroline and Kai do not link the dishes or connect Kikkoman soy sauce to Japanese identity, Tamiko explicitly does. Caroline's family served both sashimi styles without issue, while Kai's maintained a boundary. Tamiko, in contrast, merged the two traditions.

Broome sashimi/namasu not only reflects diverse cultural heritages but also personal relationships. Despite their variations, the dishes share core ingredients—fish, vinegar, lemon, soy sauce and onion—and are always eaten with rice. Together, they symbolise both individuality and shared history, expressing and coalescing Broome's diversity and its unity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored key features of Broome fusion food through the examples of Broome curry and Broome sashimi/namasu. On one level, Broome fusion food reflects the region's close ties to the pearl shelling industry and its history of interaction between Japanese, other Asian migrants, and Indigenous Australians. It is typically eaten with rice—a symbol of Asia, including Japan—and incorporates ingredients like chili and Kikkoman soy sauce, as well as foodstuffs that were once lugger leftovers. The use of fish speaks to Broome's identity as a coastal town, the poverty experienced in the postwar years, and the longstanding presence of Indigenous communities.²⁴ At the same time, Broome fusion food showcases remarkable diversity. Ingredients vary by family and are tied to specific Asian heritages. For instance, Broome sashimi/namasu demonstrates how individuals approach a shared dish in different ways, assigning personal and cultural meaning based on their unique family histories and contexts. Despite these differences, the dish remains recognisably Broome sashimi/namasu, illustrating variations within a shared culinary framework.

Food in Broome is more than sustenance—it is a means of expressing identity, relationships, and history. For Japanese–Indigenous Australian descendants, everyday food practices reveal how heritage is remembered, reinterpreted, and made meaningful.

I briefly mentioned at the beginning of this chapter some official events in Broome that promote a sense of 'Japanese-ness'. However, this officially promoted 'Japanese-ness' does not necessarily resonate with Japanese descendants in Broome or reflect their own sense of connection to their roots. Asian-Aboriginal mixed people with backgrounds in the pearl shelling industry have become a minority in the town due to significant population influxes since the 1970s (Taylor, 2006). They are no longer the main organisers within the Broome City Council, even though the town's multicultural history is still featured as a tourist attraction and Japanese descendants enjoy meeting visitors from Japan—such as delegated from Taiji—at some town's official events. Many Asian-Aboriginal mixed people lament the changes in their town (Yamanouchi, 2014). However, this shift does not necessarily mean that Broome's Japanese descendants feel less confident about their ethnic heritage. The enduring presence of memories and food practices—especially those

involving two key types of food—demonstrates how they maintain a sense of belonging and rootedness.

This raises an important question: what does it mean for first-generation Japanese ancestral foods to coexist with Broome fusion food? Foods linked to the first generation often carry a sense of personal intimacy and are tied to individual skills and memories, preserved with a sense of authenticity. In contrast, Broome fusion food is more adaptable, shaped by ongoing interactions and influences within families and communities. While it is difficult to fully explore the deeper significance of this coexistence here, I would suggest that both types of food play important—perhaps complementary—roles in supporting and evolving the identity and sense of belonging of Japanese descendants in Broome.

Together, these culinary practices represent evolving traditions—responsive to context, emotion, and family ties—through which people maintain connections across generations and cultural differences even amid the rapid transformations of the contemporary world.

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Notes

- 1 This chapter draws on material previously published by Yamanouchi (2023) in *Food, Culture & Society*. The content is expanded upon and recontextualised with new data and analysis.
- 2 The pearl shelling industry in Broome effectively ceased in the 1960s. However, the cultured pearl industry began in the region during the 1950s and continued to employ some Asian migrant divers to collect mother-of-pearl shells. According to accounts from some first-generation Japanese residents, Japanese workers continued to arrive from Japan as late as the 1980s.
- 3 Due to Broome's long history of migration and cross-cultural interaction, many Indigenous Australians in the region have Asian and/or European ancestry.
- 4 For this chapter, the terms 'Japanese descendant', 'Japanese-Indigenous Australian mixed descendant', and 'Japanese mixed descendant' are used interchangeably to focus on family histories shaped by Japanese migration and intermarriage. These are analytical terms and not intended to override individual self-identifications.

- 5 There are many studies on Asian migrants to the northern coast of Australia. To name a few: Bain (1982), Balint (2012), Choo (1995) and Ganter (2006). As for studies that specifically focus on Japanese migrants, examples include Kaino (2009), Jones (2002), Nakano (1986), Sissons (1979) and Yamanouchi (2014, 2017, 2018).
- 6 As of May 2025, it was only one person.
- 7 Although the term ‘assimilation’ is used here following Waters and Jimenez (2005), it does not imply that Japanese descendants in Broome are fully absorbed into the host society. Their cultural negotiation involves complex interactions with multiple roots and local contexts.
- 8 Their ancestral origins range from the Eastern Kimberley to the Dampier Peninsula, adding further complexity to the backgrounds of Broome’s Asian-Indigenous Australian mixed descendants. For details, see Choo (2001).
- 9 ‘Broome fusion food’ is an authorial term used here for clarity. It indexes locally developed dishes circulating across Asian-Indigenous Australian mixed households; it is not a label they themselves use, and not all such foods are ‘fusion’. Broome fusion food is featured in the SBS program, ‘Kriol Kitchen’ (Torres, 2014, 2015a, 2015c, 2019a).
- 10 I also shared the published version of Yamanouchi (2023) after it was published.
- 11 Although Broome fusion food has been introduced to wider Australian and international audiences through programs such as *Kriol Kitchen*, Asian-Indigenous Australian mixed descendants in Broome emphasise that this food is not served in local restaurants. As a result, tourists have limited access to Broome fusion food, and it has not become a regular or widespread item in the local tourism industry.
- 12 Throughout the research, I remained conscious of my position as a non-Indigenous, non-local researcher and sought to approach each interaction with care and reciprocity. The research was explained in accordance with ethical protocols, and participants gave informed consent. Interviews lasted one to two hours, with some participants interviewed more than once. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were checked with participants when possible. I also shared drafts of my work with participants and invited their feedback when appropriate.
- 13 This section relies on Yamanouchi (2023).
- 14 Interviewees were given pseudonyms unless they explicitly asked to be named. Names in quotation marks are pseudonyms.
- 15 People in Broome generally call this dish simply ‘sashimi.’ To distinguish it here from Japanese sashimi, I use the term ‘Broome sashimi/namasu,’ which participants also readily recognize. Broome sashimi/namasu consists of sliced fish marinated in vinegar along with ingredients like soy sauce, onion, and lemon. While the name clearly derives from the Japanese term sashimi, the dish differs significantly from its Japanese counterpart, which features raw fish served with soy sauce. Broome residents are well aware of this distinction. Some instead call the dish ‘namasu’ and link it to *namas* (also spelled *nummus*), a marinated seafood dish found in Darwin and Thursday Island (ABC News, 2018). Shnukal (1988, p. 169) traces *namas* on Thursday Island to the Japanese *namasu*, meaning ‘marinated raw seafood or vegetables’, suggesting it was introduced by Japanese divers. To the author, a Japanese person, Broome sashimi/namasu more closely resembles Japanese *namasu* than Japanese sashimi. However, I use the hybrid term *Broome sashimi/namasu* in this chapter to reflect the fact that, while some of my research participants prefer to call it *namasu*, others feel a stronger emotional attachment to the term *sashimi*. The combined term also serves to distinguish it from Japanese *sashimi*.

- 16 'Fish soup and rice' is mentioned in the lyrics of 'Going Home', performed by the Pigram Brothers, a Broome Filipino-Indigenous Australian troupe (The Pigram Brothers, 2002). Agnes Pigram's recipe is included in the Broome cuisine cookbook (Diop, 2002).
- 17 '*Half-caste*' refers to persons of mixed descent. It was historically used by colonial authorities throughout the British Empire to classify Indigenous populations. In Australia, the term became institutionalised through government policies of assimilation. Today, '*half-caste*' is widely recognised as an offensive and outdated term. However, the phrase '*half-caste stew*' is used in this chapter because it reflects the terminology used by my research participants when describing a specific cultural dish that symbolises their life histories. While the term carries colonial and assimilationist connotations, it is retained here in quotation marks to acknowledge its contested meanings and to reflect local usage. At present, no alternative phrase accurately conveys the term's embeddedness in local discourse and identity practices.
- 18 S&B Foods is a Japanese company that manufactures, processes and distributes food products, including instant curry paste.
- 19 In the episode title, it is spelled 'sasami'.
- 20 Adam Liaw is not from Broome, but created his own version of the dish.
- 21 See note 15.
- 22 In some cases, this 'non-Japanese side' includes later-generation Japanese-Indigenous Australian mixed descendants.
- 23 Tamiko told me that before she moved to Darwin she had known Broome sashimi/namasu.
- 24 This important topic was alluded to in the interviews but insufficiently for discussion or analysis in this chapter.

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12 Crossing Borders, Redefining Identities

Japanese LGBTQ+ Migration to Australia

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Introduction

This chapter explores the lived experiences of five Japanese immigrants to Australia who identify as lesbian or gay, examining how they navigate migration challenges, cultural adaptation and identity negotiation through the intersection of race, sexuality and immigration status. While Australia offers greater legal protections and social acceptance than Japan, these individuals still encounter significant challenges, such as language barriers, racial discrimination and cultural adjustment. The chapter illuminates how, despite these obstacles, these immigrants demonstrate resilience and adaptability as they forge new lives abroad. By comparing their experiences with broader LGBTQ+ communities in Japan and Australia, the discussion sheds light on the factors influencing migration decisions and integration strategies. It also considers the impact of global crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic, on their lives, providing a comprehensive view of their struggles and successes. Overall, this chapter contributes to queer migration literature by offering a nuanced analysis of the Japanese LGBTQ+ diaspora in Australia, underscoring the importance of legal recognition, social acceptance, and supportive environments in shaping migration experiences.

To contextualise these experiences, it is useful to review existing studies on LGBTQ+ migration. Queer migration research now emphasises intersectionality, exploring diverse regions such as Africa, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific, where LGBTQ+ migrants often face ‘double marginalisation’ through both persecution and racism (e.g. Yarwood et al., 2022; Alessi et al., 2020; Shakhsari, 2020). The concepts of ‘sexual migration’ and ‘sexile’ remain central to understanding queer mobility. ‘Sexual migration’, as theorised by Manalansan (2006), describes the movement of individuals across borders in pursuit of sexual freedom and self-actualisation, while ‘sexile’—a term coined by Guzmán (1997) and further developed by La Fountain-Stokes (2009)—captures the experience of being exiled from one’s home due to sexual or gender identity. In the context of Japan, such frameworks illuminate how traditional expectations around marriage, filial obligation, and social conformity often conflict with LGBTQ+ individuals’ desires for personal and sexual freedom (Tamagawa, 2020).

Ethnographic studies reveal how LGBTQ+ migrants in Japan navigate hostile environments while maintaining their identities and communities, though their experiences vary depending on intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, and visa status (Tamagawa, 2022). In the United States, undocumented queer migrants—particularly those from Asian and Pacific Islander backgrounds—experience heightened vulnerability at the intersection of race, sexuality, and immigration status, facing both anti-immigrant sentiment and racial discrimination within and beyond queer communities (Goldberg & Conron, 2021). In Canada, research has examined how Japanese gay migrants navigate economic hardship, emotional isolation, and social expectations through strategies of endurance shaped by both neoliberal and cultural norms (Kojima, 2018). At a broader level, research on LGBTQ+ forced migrants has shown how culturally competent and affirming services can play a critical role in supporting their well-being and resilience. For example, Alessi (2016) highlights how access to responsive healthcare and social support enhances the capacity of queer migrants to cope with marginalisation and trauma, particularly when layered with precarious legal and social status.

In Australia, recent qualitative research has demonstrated how sexual racism and colourism operate within queer male communities, particularly on dating apps, where whiteness is privileged and men of colour—especially those of Asian or Black backgrounds—are often marginalised or fetishised (Jordens & Griffiths, 2022). Meanwhile, the experiences of LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers—many of whom face legal precarity, discrimination, and inadequate access to support—are increasingly documented, reflecting global trends in queer migration where race, sexuality, and immigration status intersect to shape marginalisation and risk (Shaw & Verghese, 2022).

Meanwhile, comparative perspectives on LGBTQ+ lives in Japan versus Australia illustrate key contextual differences. In contemporary Japanese society, LGBTQ+ individuals face a complex landscape where traditional norms and limited legal rights coexist with gradual social change. Visibility of LGBTQ+ people has increased in urban areas like Tokyo and Osaka, aided by media representation (Tamagawa, 2022). However, portrayals of LGBTQ+ individuals are often stereotypical or sensationalised, reflecting broader cultural myths about homosexuality that obscure lived realities (McLelland, 2000; Tamagawa, 2022). Rural areas, in particular, continue to hold deeply entrenched conservative values that further marginalise queer lives outside major urban centres (Tamagawa, 2022). Legally, Japan does not recognise same-sex marriages or civil unions, leaving LGBTQ+ couples without the protections afforded to heterosexual couples (Tamagawa, 2016, 2022). Although over 400 municipalities in Japan have introduced same-sex partnership certificates, these remain largely symbolic and offer no legal equivalence to marriage. These certificates function more as tools of visibility and municipal branding than as substantive legal reform (Tamagawa, 2022). Discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals in Japan persists across employment, housing, education, and healthcare, as documented by Human Rights Watch (2016) and ILGA Asia (2015), highlighting systemic and structural barriers to equality. The absence of legal recognition complicates adoption, inheritance, and spousal visas for same-sex

couples, and societal pressure to conform can lead to isolation and mental health challenges (Tamagawa, 2020, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2016).

In contrast, Australia has made significant progress in LGBTQ+ rights, legalising same-sex marriage in December 2017 following strong public support—61.6% of respondents voted ‘Yes’ in the national Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Strong federal and state anti-discrimination laws in Australia protect LGBTQ+ individuals from unfair treatment in employment, education, accommodation and service provision (Australian Government, 1984; Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d.). Socially, LGBTQ+ individuals in Australia generally experience higher acceptance than in Japan. According to a 2019 Pew Research Center survey, 81% of Australians believe homosexuality should be accepted by society, compared to 68% in Japan. Cities like Sydney and Melbourne are renowned for their vibrant LGBTQ+ communities, and annual events such as the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras have become emblematic of public celebration and inclusion (Pew Research Center, 2019; Dune & Armstrong, 2015). While Australia is broadly supportive of LGBTQ+ rights, especially in urban centres, regional disparities and policy debates still reveal areas for continued progress. For example, significant exemptions—especially for religious schools and institutions—mean that discrimination remains possible in practice (Albrecht-Ripka, 2018).

Against this backdrop, previous research (Tamagawa, 2020) has documented how Japanese LGBTQ+ expatriates adapt to Australia’s cultural landscape, which, though more accepting of LGBTQ+ rights, presents challenges due to differing societal norms around gender and sexuality. These individuals often experience a cultural disconnect, facing dual marginalisation from racial discrimination and challenges within the LGBTQ+ community, which complicates their sense of belonging.

A key finding from this work is the gender gap among Japanese LGBTQ+ immigrants. Gay men often face racial discrimination and societal expectations within both Japanese and Australian queer spaces, while lesbian women encounter unique challenges tied to traditional gender norms and the invisibility of female same-sex relationships. Female participants reported limited community support and compounded struggles from sexism and homophobia. Meanwhile, gay men, though experiencing more overt racial bias, found greater access to LGBTQ+ networks in urban centres like Sydney and Melbourne. This disparity underscores the need for support systems that address the intersection of gender and sexual orientation, revealing how cultural and systemic factors shape adaptation and experiences in queer migration (Tamagawa, 2020).

Despite these difficulties, many Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals in Australia have formed supportive networks within both the Japanese diaspora and the broader LGBTQ+ community, providing crucial emotional and practical support. Their motivations for migration vary, including seeking a more accepting environment, career opportunities, or escaping societal pressures in Japan. These motivations, alongside strict visa regulations, significantly impact their mental health and long-term planning (Tamagawa, 2020).

The experiences of Japanese LGBTQ+ immigrants in Australia highlight the impact of cultural, legal and social environments on their lives. While Australia offers strong legal protections and social acceptance, Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals in other countries face additional complexities, particularly regarding racial dynamics and cultural integration. In the United States, for instance, Japanese LGBTQ+ immigrants navigate a mixed landscape where protections and vibrant communities in urban hubs coexist with regional disparities in acceptance and legal rights. Unlike Australia, where national policies provide a baseline of security, the United States context amplifies the precarity of undocumented migrants and those in conservative states, underscoring the importance of robust, nationwide legal protections for queer individuals. They also encounter more pronounced racial discrimination and marginalisation compared to their experiences in Australia (Tamagawa, 2020).

In contrast, Canada, like Australia, offers strong legal protections, resulting in positive experiences and a strong sense of acceptance. However, some Japanese immigrants in Canada find greater cultural comfort due to explicit multicultural policies that allow them to maintain a stronger connection to their Japanese identity. The contrasting experiences of Japanese LGBTQ+ immigrants across countries reveal key insights: strong legal protections consistently lead to more positive experiences, while social acceptance and racial dynamics significantly influence quality of life. Countries like Canada, with explicit multiculturalism, offer different integration experiences compared to the United States or Australia, where cultural assimilation may be more emphasised (Tamagawa, 2020).

This chapter aims to investigate and elucidate the multifaceted experiences of Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals who have migrated to Australia. It examines how factors such as cultural background, gender, legal status and social environment affect their integration and identity. By focusing on personal narratives and recent developments, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the chapter seeks to highlight both the challenges these immigrants face and the strategies they employ to overcome them. The goal is to contribute to a deeper understanding of how migrating to Australia impacts Japanese LGBTQ+ migrants' lives, and to identify lessons that can inform support systems and policies for queer migrants.

The study of Japanese LGBTQ+ immigrants in Australia, particularly through the lens of their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, offers several theoretical implications for the broader field of queer migration studies. These implications deepen our understanding of the intersectionality of identity, the role of legal and social frameworks in shaping migrant experiences, and the dynamics of cultural adaptation in a globalised world. The study's results will be discussed in conjunction with the following theoretical frameworks.

Intersectionality, as theorised by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), is crucial for understanding how discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality and class shapes the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ migrants. Legal recognition and social acceptance, as discussed by Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner (1998), determine the extent to which LGBTQ+ individuals can fully participate in society without fear of marginalisation. Stuart Hall's (1996) concept of cultural identity as a fluid

process highlights the challenges queer migrants face in navigating their sexual and cultural identities across both their home and host countries. Resilience, as theorised by Panter-Brick (2014), highlights how individuals and communities develop adaptive strategies in the face of structural adversity, a concept increasingly applied to the experiences of migrants and other marginalised groups. The COVID-19 pandemic has added complexity to these dynamics, with Judith Butler's (2004) concept of precarity offering a framework for understanding the heightened vulnerability of queer migrants during global crises.

Data and Methodology

The data for this chapter were gathered from multiple sources, as a traditional survey approach proved impractical due to the small target population and participants' concerns about privacy and potential disclosure, even in an international context. Table 12.1 presents the demographic profiles and background information of the five participants.

Three of the informants (Daiki, Koki, and Osamu) were originally part of a research project on Japanese LGBTQ+ expatriates, which culminated in the book *Japanese LGBT Diasporas: Gender, Immigration Policy and Diverse Experiences*

Table 12.1 Participant profiles

Informant	Daiki	Koki	Osamu	Mariko	Akira
Age (2018/ 2023–24)	25–34 years old (2018)	25–34 years old (2018)	25–34 years old (2018)	45–54 years old (2023–24)	45–54 years old (2023–24)
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male
Sexual Orientation	Gay	Gay	Gay	Lesbian	Gay
Relationship Status	Single, never married	Living with partner (2018)	Single, never married	Cohabiting with partner	Registered partnership
Education	College degree	College degree	Some college	College degree	Technical school
Occupation	Part-time	Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	Self-employed
Income (2018/ 2023–24)	< 10,000 AUD (2018)	50,000– 74,999 AUD (2018)	< 10,000 AUD (2018)	75,000– 100,000 AUD (2023–24)	> 150,000 AUD (2023–24)
Years in Australia	Since 2016; < 2 years in 2018; returned to Japan	3 years, 7 months in 2018; left for Europe in 2024	2 months in 2018	Since 2004	Since 1996
Original Visa	Working holiday	Working holiday	Working holiday	Immigrant	Working holiday

(2020). In the early summer of 2018, I surveyed fifty-five Japanese LGBTQ+ immigrants abroad, including twelve in Australia. Recruitment was primarily conducted through indirect solicitation on social network sites. I remained in contact with one of these informants, and in late 2023 to early 2024, the other two (Koki and Osamu) provided extensive updates on their experiences over the past six years, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, and shared their future plans.

Daiki, Koki, and Osamu are all gay Japanese men who migrated to Australia on Working Holiday visas in their late twenties to early thirties. Daiki, who had a college degree, worked part-time and returned to Japan after less than two years in Australia, earning under AUD 10,000 annually. Koki, also a college graduate, lived with a partner and worked full-time in Australia, earning between AUD 50,000 and AUD 74,999 before relocating to Europe in 2024. Osamu, who had some college education and was employed full-time, had been in Australia for only two months as of 2018, also earning under AUD 10,000. Their experiences reflect varying degrees of economic stability, integration, and time spent in Australia, with each navigating the complexities of migration and identity in different ways.

Two additional informants—Mariko and Akira—were recruited in a follow-up survey conducted from mid-December 2023 to early January 2024. This second survey targeted Japanese LGBTQ+ expats in Australia to update the findings and gather information about experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. These informants were recruited through alternative channels, including LGBTQ+ clubs, advocacy groups on university campuses in Australia, and local community publications for Japanese immigrants. Despite the very limited participation (only two respondents), the responses collected offered rich and nuanced insights into the diverse experiences of Japanese LGBTQ+ immigrants in Australia. Given the sensitivity of the topic and the vulnerability of the population, particular care was taken to protect participants' confidentiality and to ensure that their narratives were shared with full informed consent and respect.

Mariko and Akira are both in their mid-forties to early fifties and have lived in Australia for many years. Mariko, a lesbian with a college degree, has lived in Australia since 2004; she works full-time and earns between AUD 75,000 and AUD 100,000, cohabiting with her female partner. Akira, a gay man with a technical school education, has been in Australia since 1996 and is self-employed, earning over AUD 150,000. He is in a registered partnership, showcasing how he has navigated and benefitted from Australia's legal recognition of same-sex relationships. Both have built secure and successful lives in Australia, supported by their long-term residency and economic stability.

Participants' Experiences in Australia

To illustrate these findings, this section presents the personal narratives of each participant, highlighting their motivations for migrating and their experiences in Australia.

Daiki: Daiki's journey to Australia was motivated by a deep-seated desire for personal freedom and the chance to live openly as a gay man. Growing up

in a suburban town in Japan, he was acutely aware of the conservative attitudes that pervaded his community. Although he found some solace in his work environment—the fashion industry in Japan is relatively more accepting of LGBTQ+ individuals—he still felt constrained by societal expectations and the need to conform. ‘I felt like I was living a double life’, Daiki explained. ‘At work, I could be more of myself, but outside of that, I was constantly on guard, worried about how others would perceive me’. This sense of being trapped by social norms led Daiki to seek a life where he could be more authentically himself. Australia, with its reputation for inclusivity and the recent legalisation of same-sex marriage, seemed the perfect place to start anew.

Upon arriving in Australia, Daiki was immediately struck by the contrast with the environment he had left behind. Living in a multinational gay share house, he found himself among a diverse group of individuals who were open about their identities and supportive of one another. This was a stark change from his experiences in Japan, where even within the LGBTQ+ community he often felt isolated and judged. ‘In Japan, there’s a lot of pressure to fit in, even within the gay community’, Daiki reflected. ‘Here, I felt like I could finally breathe—I didn’t have to hide who I was or pretend to be someone I wasn’t’.

However, newfound freedom came with its own challenges. The language barrier proved significant for Daiki; his limited English made it difficult to secure stable employment. The restrictions of his Working Holiday visa compounded these difficulties, since he couldn’t work for the same employer for more than six months. This instability left him uncertain about his future, despite the emotional and social support he found in his new community.

An experience with Australia’s healthcare system became a turning point. After contracting an STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection), Daiki was surprised by the level of care and support available to him as an LGBTQ+ individual. Healthcare professionals were not only knowledgeable about his specific needs but also provided empathy and understanding that he had rarely experienced in Japan. ‘In Japan, there’s a lot of shame and stigma around HIV and other STDs’ (Sexually Transmitted Diseases), Daiki noted. ‘But here, I was treated with respect and dignity. It made me realise how important it is to have access to healthcare that truly understands and supports LGBTQ+ people’. This opened Daiki’s eyes to disparities in healthcare between Japan and Australia, especially in the treatment of HIV-positive individuals. He became more aware of the need for comprehensive education and support systems in Japan, where misinformation and stigma remain major barriers to effective treatment and prevention.

Daiki’s initial plan to stay in Australia changed in 2020 when he decided to return to Japan to support LGBTQ+ individuals as a social worker. This decision was driven by his recognition of the gaps in Japan’s healthcare and social support systems, as well as a desire to use his Australian experiences to advocate for change in his home country. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic may have also influenced his decision, highlighting vulnerabilities within Japan’s existing structures and reinforcing his commitment to addressing these issues. ‘Japan is slowly changing, but there’s still a long way to go’, Daiki reflected. ‘I want to be

part of that change, to help create a society where LGBTQ+ people can live openly and without fear’.

Daiki’s return to Japan marks the beginning of a new chapter in his life, one where he hopes to bridge the gap between the progress he experienced in Australia and the challenges that remain in Japan. His journey underscores the importance of cross-cultural experiences in shaping individuals’ perspectives and their contributions to societal change.

Koki: Koki’s decision to migrate to Australia was deeply influenced by his experiences growing up in Japan, where he faced severe bullying due to his sexual orientation. This early trauma left a lasting impact on him, shaping his perception of Japanese society and his place within it. Despite these challenges, Koki managed to build a relatively stable life in Tokyo where he worked in the IT sector. However, similar to Daiki, he remained dissatisfied with the Japanese gay scene, feeling it was limited and exclusionary. ‘In Japan, even within the LGBTQ+ community, there’s a lot of pressure to conform to certain ideals’, Koki explained. ‘I felt like I didn’t fit in, like I was constantly being judged for not being the “right” kind of gay’. This sense of alienation, combined with a strong desire to live more openly, led Koki to seek a new life in Australia. He was drawn by Australia’s reputation as an inclusive and diverse society, as well as the opportunities it offered for personal and professional growth.

In Australia, Koki experienced a profound sense of liberation. He quickly established himself, entering into a relationship with a New Zealander and eventually securing permanent residency. For Koki, Australia represented a fresh start—a place where he could redefine himself without the constraints of his past. ‘I felt like I could finally be myself, without worrying about what others thought’, he reflected. ‘There’s a level of acceptance here that I never felt in Japan’.

Yet this freedom came with challenges. Koki found himself navigating the complexities of the Japanese community in Australia, which, despite being far from home, still carried some of the cultural expectations and social dynamics he had sought to escape. He described it as ‘not being able to get along with other Japanese people, similar to not being able to get along with other gay people in Japan’. This highlighted the difficulty of navigating multiple identities in a foreign context, where the lines between cultural connection and personal freedom can blur.

Professionally, Koki’s transition was smooth. He found stability in Australia’s IT sector, a field relatively free from the biases he encountered in Japan. By 2019, he had applied for Australian citizenship—a step driven by his desire to fully integrate and eliminate any uncertainty about his immigration status. ‘Becoming a citizen was a way to solidify my commitment to this new life’, Koki explained. ‘I didn’t want to worry about visas or being forced to return to Japan’.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic brought new trials. Extended lockdowns in Melbourne, where Koki lived, put significant strain on his relationship, ultimately leading to its dissolution. This period of isolation and introspection prompted Koki to reassess his future; he began planning a move to Spain with a new partner. While grateful for his time in Australia, he recognises that his journey is ongoing. ‘I’ve

learned that life is about constantly evolving', Koki reflected. 'Australia was a big part of my journey, but now I'm ready for the next chapter'.

Despite being away from Japan for many years, Koki continues to follow Japan's progress on LGBTQ+ rights with keen interest. He is encouraged by growing awareness and acceptance among younger generations, but remains sceptical about the pace of legal reform. 'It will be a long time before we see real change in Japan', Koki noted, 'but I'm hopeful that the younger generation will push for progress'. Koki's reflections underscore the ongoing challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in Japan, as well as the importance of international perspectives in understanding and addressing these issues.

Osamu: Osamu's decision to migrate to Australia was driven by a deep sense of alienation and isolation in Japan. After being outed by a classmate during university, he felt increasingly marginalised in his conservative hometown. The experience left him questioning his place in Japanese society and searching for a community where he could belong. 'I felt like there was no place for me in Japan', Osamu recalled. 'I needed to find somewhere I could be myself without fear of judgment'. Australia, with its reputation for LGBTQ+ inclusivity, seemed an ideal destination. He was particularly drawn to Australia's open attitudes toward sexual orientation and the possibility of living in a society more accepting than what he had experienced in Japan.

Upon arrival in Australia, Osamu found a welcoming environment at the language school he attended; it was notably supportive of LGBTQ+ students. This support helped him come out more comfortably and begin building a life in his new country. He described Australia as 'an LGBT-advanced place', highlighting how he immediately noticed the difference in social attitudes.

However, Osamu's experience was not without difficulties. He encountered instances of racism, particularly in social settings like nightclubs, where he was subjected to derogatory comments about his ethnicity. 'Even in a place as open as Australia, there are still people who hold onto racist attitudes', Osamu observed. 'It's a reminder that no place is perfect'. These experiences underscored the intersectional challenges Osamu faced as both a gay man and an Asian immigrant. He also struggled with the language barrier, which made it hard to fully integrate into Australian society. Despite a relatively high level of English proficiency, nuances and cultural differences often left him feeling isolated. Navigating Australia's immigration system added further stress. Initially on a Working Holiday visa, Osamu soon realised that securing long-term residency would be more difficult than he had hoped. Restrictive immigration policies meant he faced the real possibility of having to return to Japan. 'I was really worried about what would happen if I couldn't stay', he admitted. 'Australia felt like my new home, but the immigration system made it hard to feel secure'.

Despite these challenges, Osamu eventually obtained permanent residency with the help of his partner, an Australian citizen. This was a significant milestone, allowing him to focus on building a stable life. However, the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on Osamu's life in Australia. The extended lockdowns in Victoria put significant strain on his relationship, as he and his

partner were forced into close quarters with little social interaction. They endured frequent conflicts, but in the end, managed to overcome the challenges and grew closer. 'It was a really tough time for both of us', Osamu recalled, 'but I think it brought us closer together'. The pandemic also disrupted Osamu's career; he lost his job as a tour guide when Australia's borders closed and had to find employment in a different industry. Despite these setbacks, Osamu expressed gratitude for the support he received from his former boss and the resilience he developed during this period.

As of late 2023, Osamu remains in Australia, living with his partner in suburban Victoria. He has overcome many of the early challenges he faced, but continues to grapple with the complexities of life as an immigrant. The pandemic left a lasting impact on his sense of security and outlook on the future. 'Living through the pandemic showed me how quickly things can change', Osamu reflected. 'But it also showed me that I'm stronger than I thought'. Looking ahead, Osamu is committed to building his life in Australia, where he feels he can live more openly and authentically than he ever could in Japan. His journey highlights the resilience and adaptability of LGBTQ+ immigrants, as well as the ongoing challenges of navigating identity, culture, and legality in a foreign country.

Mariko: Mariko moved to Australia seeking a more accepting environment where she could live openly as a lesbian woman. In Japan, she had never felt comfortable living as an LGBTQ+ individual and was only out to a very small circle. Upon settling in Australia in the early 2000s, she immediately noticed a significant improvement in her quality of life. For the first time, Mariko could express her sexual orientation openly without fear of social backlash. She found Australia's social climate to be far more accommodating, which allowed her to build a satisfying life, including a stable career and a long-term relationship.

Even after many years abroad, Mariko occasionally contemplated returning to Japan to be closer to family and her cultural roots. However, the absence of comprehensive LGBTQ+ rights in Japan ultimately dissuaded her. She felt that moving back would mean giving up the ability to live authentically, something she had come to cherish in Australia. The importance of Australia's legal protections and social acceptance became clear to her whenever she considered the comparatively restrictive environment in Japan. The COVID-19 pandemic had only a minimal impact on Mariko's life as an LGBTQ+ individual in Australia; while it disrupted daily routines, it did not diminish the sense of security and openness she enjoyed in her adopted country.

Akira: Akira's experience parallels Mariko's in many ways. He emigrated from Japan to Australia in the mid-1990s, driven by the desire to live in a society where he could be open about his identity. In Japan, Akira had confronted direct homophobic slurs and pervasive attitudes that made him feel that Japanese society was lagging in LGBTQ+ acceptance, despite the country's modern image. Moving to Australia offered Akira the freedom he yearned for. Over nearly three decades in Australia, he established himself as a successful self-employed professional and entered a registered partnership with his male partner—an opportunity that underscored the stark contrast between the legal environments of Australia and

Japan (he was pleasantly surprised to discover Australia's de facto visa and partnership recognition for same-sex couples).

Akira found Australian society much more welcoming; he could live openly as a gay man and fully embrace both his Japanese heritage and his identity without fear. By the time of the 2023 survey, Akira expressed that he was completely comfortable in Australia and had no desire to relocate to any other country. The strong legal recognition and social acceptance he encountered made Australia truly feel like home. Like Mariko, Akira noted that the COVID-19 pandemic did not significantly affect his sense of well-being or safety as an LGBTQ+ person in Australia—his long-established social network and stable situation helped him weather that global crisis with relative ease.

Navigating Identity and Belonging: The Unique Social Context of Japanese LGBTQ+ Migration to Australia

The stories of Daiki, Koki and Osamu, three Japanese LGBTQ+ men who migrated to Australia, reveal diverse experiences shaped not only by their personal backgrounds and motivations but also by Australia's distinct social and legal environment. Their migration, largely driven by the desire to live openly as gay men, reflects broader trends among Japanese LGBTQ+ migrants who seek more inclusive societies. However, as discussed in *Japanese LGBT Diasporas*, the migration experience varies significantly depending on the host country's legal protections, social attitudes, and immigration policies. A comparative analysis of Japanese LGBTQ+ immigrants in the United States, Canada and Australia—three liberal democracies with distinct immigration regimes and approaches to multiculturalism and LGBTQ+ inclusion—highlights how each country's distinct socio-political landscape influences their trajectories.

Australia, known for its legal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals and relatively accessible immigration pathways, presents a unique environment that shapes migration outcomes differently from North America. Unlike the United States, where immigration policies can be highly restrictive—especially for those on temporary work or student visas—Australia provides clearer pathways to permanent residency through skilled migration and same-sex partnership sponsorships. Koki, for example, was able to secure permanent residency, which granted him legal and economic stability, while Daiki and Osamu faced visa-related uncertainties. In contrast, many Japanese LGBTQ+ migrants in the United States struggle with precarious visa statuses, particularly those who cannot secure employer sponsorships or who face obstacles in obtaining asylum due to Japan's relative political stability.

Canada, by comparison, offers a more structured pathway for LGBTQ+ immigrants through explicit refugee protections for sexual minorities and a strong legal framework for anti-discrimination policies. As *Japanese LGBT Diasporas* documented, Japanese LGBTQ+ migrants in Canada often cite its strong multiculturalism policies and healthcare accessibility as advantages, particularly for transgender individuals seeking gender-affirming care. However, while Canada offers

extensive legal protections, the social integration of Japanese LGBTQ+ migrants can be challenging due to cultural and linguistic barriers, as well as the relatively smaller Japanese community compared to the United States and Australia.

Australia, situated between these two models, offers legal protections similar to Canada's but with a migration system that is more employment-driven. While permanent residency pathways exist, they are not as readily available for those in precarious economic positions, as seen in Osamu's struggles with work-related instability. The racial dynamics of Australia also differ from those in North America, as Osamu's experiences with racism and language barriers illustrate. Unlike Canada's multiculturalism policies, which actively promote cultural diversity, and the U.S.'s expansive but stratified racial landscape, Australia's history of migration policies—rooted in a White Australia legacy—continues to shape contemporary racial attitudes. This affects Japanese LGBTQ+ migrants differently based on their socio-economic status, English proficiency, and relationship to whiteness.

Furthermore, relationships and social integration follow distinct patterns in these different migration contexts. In *Japanese LGBT Diasporas*, interviewees in Canada and the United States frequently described the importance of LGBTQ+ community networks in their integration process, often forming strong bonds with other queer immigrants of colour. In contrast, Japanese LGBTQ+ migrants in Australia tend to integrate into broader expatriate or mixed-race queer communities rather than forming insular Japanese LGBTQ+ circles. Mariko and Akira, who migrated to Australia earlier and with stable incomes, reported a greater sense of belonging, illustrating how time and economic security contribute to successful integration. Koki's breakup during the COVID-19 lockdown further underscores the precariousness of social ties in migration, highlighting how personal relationships can serve as both stabilising and destabilising forces for LGBTQ+ migrants.

The case studies of Japanese LGBTQ+ immigrants in Australia provide insights into how legal frameworks, social acceptance, and racial dynamics shape migration experiences in ways that extend beyond individual narratives. Unlike LGBTQ+ individuals who remain in Japan or migrate elsewhere, those in Australia must navigate the country's specific challenges, including visa restrictions, labour market barriers, and experiences of racialisation. However, compared to the United States, where legal precarity is a major concern, and Canada, where policies support LGBTQ+ migrants but social integration can be complex, Australia offers a mixed environment—providing significant legal protections while still presenting integration challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored these distinctions. In the United States, where healthcare access is often tied to employment, many Japanese LGBTQ+ migrants faced significant barriers during the pandemic, particularly if they lost their jobs and employer-sponsored insurance. Canada's universal healthcare system offered more stability in this regard, but pandemic-related isolation exacerbated the struggles of Japanese LGBTQ+ migrants living outside major urban centres. In Australia, the government's pandemic financial support provided a crucial safety net, but social isolation was particularly pronounced among those

who had yet to secure permanent residency or stable employment, as seen in Osamu's case.

By situating these narratives within the broader Australian social context and comparing them with Japanese LGBTQ+ migration experiences in North America, this study demonstrates that migration is not simply a personal decision but one deeply embedded in legal, economic, and cultural structures. The Australian experience is neither wholly positive nor negative but exists in a dynamic space where legal protections, social acceptance, and racialised barriers interact to shape individual trajectories. These findings highlight the importance of considering both the advantages and constraints of migration, shedding light on how specific host-country conditions influence the long-term paths of LGBTQ+ individuals seeking a more inclusive environment.

Conclusions

This study reveals that Japanese LGBTQ+ immigrants often choose to move to Australia for its more accepting environment, allowing them to live more openly than in Japan. All five informants reported an improved quality of life in Australia, though their experiences were shaped by individual backgrounds and circumstances. The three younger participants—Daiki, Koki, and Osamu—migrated to escape social pressure and stigma in Japan. In Australia, they found greater freedom to express their sexual identities but also faced challenges such as racism, language barriers and visa insecurity. In contrast, the two long-term immigrants, Mariko and Akira, who had migrated earlier and secured stable economic and legal status, reported higher levels of satisfaction and security, supported by established careers, permanent residency, and supportive partners. None of the participants expressed a strong desire to return to Japan permanently, citing the country's slow progress in LGBTQ+ rights and its less inclusive social climate.

However, their individual trajectories diverged in response to personal goals and external events. In 2020, Daiki returned to Japan, hoping to apply his experiences abroad as a social worker supporting LGBTQ+ communities. Koki, after a relationship ended during Australia's COVID-19 lockdowns, chose to start anew in Spain with a partner, illustrating how even well-integrated migrants may seek change when personal circumstances shift. Osamu intends to remain in Australia long-term, having built a life with his partner, while Mariko and Akira plan to stay permanently, drawn by the comfort and acceptance they have found. These varied outcomes underscore the non-linear nature of queer migration, influenced by personal decisions and unforeseen events such as global crises.

The findings highlight the importance of an intersectional perspective in understanding queer migration. The informants' experiences illustrate how sexual orientation, race, and immigration status intersect to shape their trajectories. For instance, Osamu's case highlights how racism and language barriers compound the challenges of settling in a new country. Meanwhile, the contrast between their lives in Japan and Australia underscores the critical role of legal and social frameworks. Australia's strong legal protections and inclusive culture provided a sense of security

and belonging absent in Japan (Dune & Armstrong, 2015; Tamagawa, 2020). This aligns with broader research (Alessi et al., 2020) showing that legal recognition and social acceptance significantly improve LGBTQ+ migrants' quality of life.

Cultural adaptation also emerged as a key theme. Mariko and Akira thrived in Australia's open society while navigating the complexities of retaining their Japanese cultural identity. Their experiences reflect broader observations that LGBTQ+ migrants must balance integration into a host culture with maintaining connections to their heritage (Kojima, 2018; Manalansan, 2006). All participants demonstrated resilience and resourcefulness, echoing Kojima's (2018) findings that queer migrants develop adaptive strategies to overcome isolation and adversity (Panter-Brick, 2014). Access to supportive services was also significant; Daiki's positive encounter with Australia's healthcare system exemplifies how culturally competent care can substantially benefit LGBTQ+ migrants (Alessi, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic had uneven effects on the group. For newer migrants like Koki and Osamu, it exacerbated existing challenges—Koki's relationship ended under lockdown, and Osamu experienced job loss—highlighting how global crises heighten vulnerabilities for those still establishing themselves. In contrast, long-term residents like Mariko and Akira saw relatively little disruption, thanks to stable circumstances and strong support networks. Osamu's experience of heightened isolation reflects broader trends of marginalised communities facing intensified mental health challenges during the pandemic. At the same time, Akira's case illustrates how inclusive policies—such as Australia's accessible healthcare and economic aid—can help mitigate these difficulties. Overall, the pandemic underscored both the vulnerabilities and resilience within this community of queer immigrants.

In conclusion, the experiences of Japanese LGBTQ+ immigrants in Australia emphasise the need for continued progress and support in both their home and host countries. While Australia's legal and social environment enabled them to live more authentically, challenges remain—particularly for LGBTQ+ immigrants in rural or less-resourced areas. Japan's persistent lack of legal protections and social acceptance discourages return migration, underscoring the urgency of advancing LGBTQ+ rights. Bridging these gaps is essential so that queer individuals can thrive regardless of location.

This chapter contributes to the broader understanding of queer migration by highlighting how intersecting identities, legal frameworks, cultural adaptation, resilience and global events shape migration experiences. These insights can inform future research and policy efforts to create more inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ migrants worldwide.

While this study provides valuable insights, it has limitations. The small sample of Japanese LGBTQ+ immigrants in Australia may not fully represent the broader Japanese LGBTQ+ diaspora or other LGBTQ+ migrant groups. Transgender individuals and lesbians remain underrepresented due to legal, bureaucratic and social barriers, highlighting the need for more inclusive research approaches. Future research should also prioritise the experiences of transgender and non-binary migrants, whose perspectives remain underexamined yet are critical to

understanding the full spectrum of queer migration. Additionally, reliance on qualitative interviews may introduce self-reporting biases, and the long-term effects of COVID-19 remain uncertain.

To advance queer migration studies, future research should incorporate larger and more diverse samples to improve generalisability. Comparative studies across different groups and countries would enhance understanding of LGBTQ+ migration dynamics, while longitudinal research could reveal the long-term impacts of migration and global crises on resilience. Examining intersectionality—how race, gender, class and immigration status interact with sexual orientation—is crucial for capturing diverse experiences. A mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative analyses could identify key factors in migration decisions and integration. Finally, tracking policy changes is essential for developing better support structures for LGBTQ+ migrants.

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13 Gendered Sub-politics in the Civil Society

Profiling Political Culture of Japanese Community in Australia¹

Takeshi Hamano, Shinsuke Funaki and Ruth Phillips

Introduction

The political inclusion of people in contemporary societies needs to be considered from several perspectives. For example, Krishna (2002) argues that being part of pluralist contributions to democratic decision-making results in fewer interests being excluded. However, it has also been noted that in our societies, it is not always sufficient for groups in certain social or cultural circumstances to use existing political structures to address their voices to the public in a ‘direct’ manner. Forms of political involvement like those undertaken by interest groups, despite arguments that fewer opportunities are given to social minorities such as youth (Kitanova, 2020) or migrants (Ortensi & Riniolo, 2020) are central to political participation. In this context, ethnic politics (or ethnopolitics) in migration studies is often discussed in relation to identity politics of migrant communities in settler societies (Ishiyama, 2011; Jupp, 1984; Rothschild, 1981). Consequently, both individual and collective action are often seen as involvement in identity politics, with an emphasis on difference and special interests, rather than a radical attempt to strengthen contemporary democratic society in the pursuit of unity in diversity (e.g. Calhoun, 1994). Within political science discussions about the ‘politics of difference’ (Young, 1990), Ishiyama argues that there is a focus on the organisational nature of ethnic communities, which constitute a primal state of organisation for collective action; hence, ethnic politics can be identified as two communal norms (Ishiyama, 2011, pp. 106–107). First, its political practice is associated with and enacted by members who share cultural values and emphasise their assumed differences from other communities. Second, the cultural logic of ethnic politics is contextual, in that the ethnic community is placed in situated circumstances. This understanding of the collective resources of ethnic communities stems from a social constructionist approach, which suggests that a sense of organisational belonging can be socially constructed through everyday life in the present rather than oriented towards an irreplaceable origin in the past. However, studies on the ethnic politics of migrant communities conducted in the humanities and social sciences

have particularly emphasised diasporic identity, and scholars have appropriately amalgamated the two ideotypes of ethnopolitics in practice (Rothschild, 1981).

Regarding the Japanese community in Australia today, it is evident that political awareness of migrant ethnic communities is often driven by various local social problems. The lack of positive support from the broader settler society, as well as a growing sense of social injustice, has led to cooperative political action by the community. Further, as highlighted in an earlier study (Funaki et al., 2020), most Japanese in Australia indicated a positive self-evaluation of their integration (being integrated) into Australian society. The study also revealed that participants generally perceived their relationship with the local community positively or in a favourable light, albeit coming from different social backgrounds. Notably, the participants demonstrated a strong tolerance for cultural and social diversity and an interest in living within a multicultural society. This aligns with previous studies suggesting that Japanese migrants, as a group, tend to have relatively high economic stability and educational backgrounds (Mizukami, 2006; Nagatomo, 2015; Shiobara, 2017). However, it is also important to consider the potential consequences of this tolerance and openness to diversity. As previous research has suggested (Funaki et al., 2020; Hamano, 2019)?, there is a risk that this tolerance for and interest in social and cultural diversity can undermine economic, social, and cultural diversity within the Japanese community (Funaki et al., 2020; Hamano, 2019).

Based on an analysis of survey results taken from a 2016 large-scale sample survey and follow-up interviews with contemporary ethnic Japanese migrant communities in Sydney, Australia, this chapter investigates? the political attitudes of the Japanese migrant community. By examining their distinctive social profiles in Australia and their cultural perspectives (attitudes) shaped by Japanese society, this study provides a contextual framework for understanding their political engagement through profiling political attitudes derived from our datasets. This chapter aims to capture the nuanced political engagement of a contemporary Japanese community in Australia. Further, the chapter considers how female members of the community navigate daily concerns and interact with members of the broader local communities. In doing so, it reflects on how political culture has been conceptualised in early case studies on the social activities of Japanese women in Australia (see also Chapter 4). By discussing the study's findings, this chapter proposes an alternative framework for understanding migrant women's political culture—one that integrates both the social profile of the Japanese community in Australia and the broader socio-political influences from Japan.

Research Design

Methods

Our 2016 questionnaire survey was conducted when the largest number of Japanese communities in Australian capital cities was recorded (Department of Home Affairs

of Australia, 2016). This study adopted a purposive sampling process focusing on specific group members. A random sampling of the Japanese community in Sydney was not feasible due to the absence of a resident registration system in Australia. The survey targeted migrants or Australians with Japanese ancestry or a Japanese ethnic background. Based on a definition of migrants from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, migrants and Australians who had resided in Australia for 12 months or more were included in this study. Therefore, short-term visitors such as tourists and temporary family visitors were not eligible for participation as we were interested in the relationship between Japanese identity and having decided to be Australian, through permanent residency or citizenship.

The participants were within the age range of 18–75 years. They were invited through the recruitment process conducted by a cooperating organisation, the HSC (Higher School Certificate) Japanese Committee Inc. (HSCJC), which was established in 2007, and later incorporated as a community-based, not-for-profit organisation in 2011. The participants in the individual interviews were mainly members of the HSCJC who had an understanding of the purpose of the survey. Most members of the organisation were parents of students in Japanese community language schools in the state of New South Wales. The organisation has a long history of lobbying the NSW state government to change the discriminatory eligibility criteria for Japanese students wishing to complete Japanese language studies as part of their school completion certificate in NSW (HSC Japanese Community (HSCJC), 2021). With the cooperation of the HSCJC, the survey was delivered to seven Japanese community language schools in NSW, two playgroups, one kindergarten, and one Japanese preschool either directly or by post. The valid sample size was 506, although missing data were excluded from each analysis, as shown later. The printed questionnaires were distributed and collected by HSCJC committee members who cooperated in this survey. Except for questions regarding participants' personal information and daily media usage, the contents of the questionnaire survey were adapted from the same comprehensive dimensions of a study on social inclusion in the Korean community in Australia in 2014 (Phillips, 2021). Some of the questions in this survey were adopted from the Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion National Survey 2015 (Markus, 2015), hereafter referred to as The National Survey, and from the Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion Migrant Survey 2013, hereafter The Recent Arrivals Survey, to enable a comparative analysis with our survey outcomes (Markus, 2013).² The questionnaire comprised 89 questions in six parts: economic life (A), social life (B), political life (C), cultural life and identity (D), life satisfaction (E) and demographic information (F).

Key Findings

We examined the frequency distribution of the participants (Table 13.1). Japanese female migrants aged between 36 and 45 far outnumbered their male counterparts according to data for the Japanese community in NSW from the

Table 13.1 General characteristics of the respondents

	<i>Japanese community in this study (n = 493)</i>		<i>NSW Japanese community in the 2011 Census (n = 17,304)</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%^a</i>
Gender			
Male	87	17.6	35.8
Female	406	82.4	64.2
Age			
Under 25	25	5.2	11.9
From 26 to 35	75	15.7	18.5
From 36 to 45	257	53.7	22.3
From 46 to 55	103	21.5	13.3
Over 55	19	4	10.0

^a Numbers are not available on the report.

Australian Census 2011 (Department of Home Affairs of Australia, 2016). In our survey, the total number of effective samples was 493, made up of 87 males (17.6%) and 406 females (82.4%). More women than men were involved in this research compared to the counterpart ratio of the Japanese community of NSW in the 2011 Census. This result closely reflects the gender ratio of the Japanese community in Australia. In terms of the age distribution of respondents, the largest group was in the 36–45 age group, accounting for more than half the total number of respondents ($N = 257$, 53.7%). The 2011 Census also reported that this group accounted for the largest number of Japanese communities in NSW. The number of respondents in this survey was, however, larger than that proportion. In terms of country of birth ($N = 480$), 455 (94.8%) respondents were born overseas; the remaining 25 respondents were born in Australia. A certain number of second-generation respondents were likely included among those born overseas. Regarding the respondents' marital status ($N = 488$), 409 (83.8%) answered 'married' or 'living with a partner', 33 (6.8%) replied 'Divorced/Separated' or 'widowed', and 46 (9.4%) were 'never married'. Most respondents lived with family members, including a spouse or partner. Among the respondents with a spouse or partner ($N = 420$), 269 (64%) had a non-Japanese spouse or partner. Cross-border married couples, or cross-national families, constituted a relatively large proportion. On visa status ($N = 486$), the largest number was 'permanent resident' ($N = 398$, 81.9%), followed by 'Australian citizens' ($N = 41$, 9.1%), including a small number of second-generation born and brought up in Australia. Overall, the sample is relatively similar to trends noted in the Australian Government Census. We also conducted 12 individual in-depth interviews with participants who accepted our invitation to participate in our supplementary research between November 2016 and February 2017. A local research assistant in Japan conducted the interviews. These will be cited later for reference.³

Political Interest of the Japanese Community in Australia

Japanese Political Culture

Research suggests that political interest in Japan has been relatively low. According to the recent report of a long-term, large-scale periodic national survey of public consciousness among Japanese nationals, a consistent decline in political interest was reported in recent decades (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, 2020, pp.73–78). In response to a question regarding experiences of participation in political activities in the past few years, a similar pattern was observed (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, pp. 85–88). This political indifference tends to grow among younger generations. For example, international comparative research about socio-political attitudes of youth conducted by the Cabinet Office of Japan in 2018 (2019), in reply to the question, ‘Do you want to contribute to solving social problems to make a better society’, the number of Japanese who answered ‘agree’ and ‘somewhat agree’ was lower than participants in another six countries.⁴ According to international comparative survey by the institution in 2014, there were three factors for this attitude, according to the survey: A belief that getting involved in politics will not change anything; a relatively high level of satisfaction with the economy; and a sense of satisfaction that can be gained simply by getting involved in one’s immediate environment, which is particularly strong among younger people (Kobayashi, 2015).

Additionally, in Japan, a strong gender bias and a male-dominated environment remain in political life (Eto, 2021; LeBlanc, 1999; Mackie, 2003). This trend in women’s political participation in Japanese society in general is likely to have an impact on the political attitudes and decision-making of Japanese communities in Australia, where women are a significant proportion of the population. Research on political movements in Japanese society emphasised that gender inequality accounts for different styles of grassroots activism derived from women’s daily life experiences, as they are greatly marginalised in the mainstream political arena (LeBlanc, 1999; Ranjana, 2003), and because of their lower representation in the public political arena (Kage et al., 2019). However, some studies report on women’s everyday political activism in Japan (Nakano, 2018; Ueno, 2008). Given this background, it is important to explore whether gendered political engagement patterns persist among the Japanese community in Australia. Consequently, a hypothetical question about the extent to which such a gendered political culture may affect the predominantly female Japanese community in Australia can be raised (Eto, 2021).

Political Interest of the Japanese Community in Australia

The following section examines the survey findings on the outcomes of this survey related to political attitudes and experiences in Australia. First, generally speaking, research outcomes revealed a low political interest in the Japanese community in Australia, confirmed in Table 13.2. Regarding questions about their interest in political issues in Q-C1, almost half of the respondents showed their indifference by

Table 13.2 Political interest and involvement in Australia

	<i>Very much</i>		<i>Much</i>		<i>Neither little nor much</i>		<i>Little</i>		<i>Very little</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>
Q-C1. To what extent, are you interested in political issues in Australia?	13	2.6	55	11.1	249	48.6	129	26.1	57	11.5	494
Q-C11. Overall, to what extent, do you feel politically integrated in Australia?	5	1	24	4.8	46	9.3	125	25.3	295	59.6	438

Note: Missing responses are not included.

Table 13.3 Recognition of the name of local politician

<i>Q-C5. Recognition of Local Politician</i>	<i>I know the person's name and the political party</i>		<i>I only know the person's political party</i>		<i>I only know the person's name</i>		<i>Not at all</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>
a. Federal Member of Parliament from your local electorate	46	9.4	46	7.1	119	46	290	59.2	490
b. The Mayor of your local council	34	7	34	5.1	139	34	288	59.3	496

Note: Missing responses are not included.

answering, 'Neither little nor much' ($N = 249$, 48.6%). In Q-C11 regarding their feelings about political integration into Australia, more than 50% of respondents ($N = 295$, 59.6%) answered, 'Very little', followed by 'Little' ($N = 125$, 25.3%). Less political interest in their life was also shown by the result in Table 13.3. Both the Q-C5a and Q-C5b were about their recognition of local politicians' names. To both questions, those who answered, 'Not at all', almost reached 60% of all respondents, while only 46 respondents (9.4%) answered that they knew the name of the Federal MP from their electorate. These findings emphasise that few Japanese in Australia are keen on taking part in political issues.

How does language proficiency influence access to political news? What is the most significant finding—that political interest is generally low, or that those interested tend to focus on local rather than Japanese politics? Table 13.4 shows the results of seven questions in Q-C2, which asked the extent to which people access news about political issues through Australian and Japanese media. This data led to an examination of how political interests were reflected in access to media sources. The result of correlation coefficients with Q-C1 (political interest in Australia) is also added. The overall trend showed that respondents accessed news about political events through television and the internet. Regarding online media, respondents were found to have relatively frequent access to both Australian (Q-C2d) and Japanese news (Q-C2f). Regarding Q-C1 ('To what extent are you interested in political issues in Australia?'), significant correlations were found with access to Australian domestic media (Q-C2a, Q-C2b, and Q-C2d). It was evident that language proficiency related to access to news resources was important. Those less confident in reading and listening to the news in English indicated less access to Australian media sources. However, correlations of Q-C2s with Q-F8 ('How well would you say you speak English?') did not show an evident correlation, as shown in Table 13.5, except for Q-C2e. These results suggest that they may reflect the level of interest in each society, rather than indicating that respondents find it easier to obtain information from Japanese media than from English media because of their language skills. Findings from the two correlation analyses are: (1) respondents in this survey did not show a general interest in political issues, and those who were interested in politics focused on local Australian politicians, rather than those in their home country; (2) attention to political issues in Australia is less likely to be related to language proficiency, even though those who felt less confident about their English were more inclined to access Japanese (online) media sources.

In the follow-up interviews, it was found that attitudes were akin to a lower interest in politics. Their political indifference is likely expressed by the gendered rhetoric that they should prioritise their daily obligations to their family and children. For example, interview participants frequently made statements like 'I can't talk about politics, nor do I understand the specifics' (Ms C), 'I'm not interested at all. My friend is a producer at the TV corporation, but I had no idea what he/she explained to me' (Ms J), or 'I am not interested in politics at all. I am not very interested in Japanese politics either. (...) Yes, I don't know what exactly politics is about' (Ms C). Statements demonstrating a low or complete lack of interest in politics were commonly found in both our survey results and interviews, although, in the latter research, they showed their interest in politics to some extent when it was related to the education of their children or everyday life in the local community. For example, Ms C, who strongly denied her interest in politics, amended her view when she showed her micro-interest in social issues by saying, '(I am interested in) council areas – traffic problems in council areas and parking problems. I am only interested in the neighbourhood'.

Subsequently, Ms D referred to her interest in the educational environment of her children.

Table 13.4 Media access to obtain social and political issues

<i>Q-C2 media access</i>	<i>Very often (almost every day)</i>		<i>Somewhat often (several times a week)</i>		<i>Neither rarely nor often (several times a month)</i>		<i>Somewhat rarely (several times a year)</i>		<i>Very rarely (less than once a year)</i>		<i>Correlation coefficient</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Q-C1</i>	<i>Q-F8a</i>
a. Watch Australian news or current affairs programs on television	115	23.4	140	28.5	149	30.3	55	11.2	32	6.5	0.418**	0.220**
b. Read Australian newspapers (printed)	24	5	46	9.6	129	26.8	130	27	152	31.6	0.350**	0.213**
c. Read Japanese newspapers in Australia (printed) such as <i>Nichigo Press</i>	29	5.9	77	15.8	209	42.8	115	23.6	58	11.9	0.062	-0.153**
d. Read Australian newspapers (online)	73	15.1	102	21.1	130	26.9	95	19.6	84	17.4	0.405**	0.344**
e. Read Japanese newspapers in Australia (online) such as <i>JAMS</i>	31	6.4	94	19.3	162	33.2	97	19.9	104	21.3	0.077	-0.164**
f. Read Japanese newspapers in Japan (online) such as <i>Asahi</i> and <i>Yahoo News</i>	192	39.5	131	27	78	16	32	6.6	53	10.9	0.063	-0.156**
g. Listen to news or talk-back programs on the radio	71	14.5	86	17.6	99	20.2	73	14.9	160	32.7	0.236**	0.176**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

^a Native speakers of English are excluded.

Note: Missing responses are not included.

I don't know if I can answer anything specific to politics. Hmm It'd be about education, I assume. As for politics as a whole, I don't really know much about it. On local issues, although I am not sure. I don't have many complaints about the area where I live. However, when it comes to political issues, I want something to do about educational issues. [laughs]

Considering that our research was greatly assisted by HSCJC, a Japanese advocacy group for the improvement of the educational environment for children with Japanese heritage, such views were likely. As shown in several other studies, education for the next generation is a key concern among Asian communities in Australia (Hamano et al., 2023; Ho, 2017). The interviewees expressed concern about their children's education, as well as duties and responsibilities in the family and everyday life and, to some extent, how they developed a political consciousness in Australian society. Therefore, examining what generates political concerns and what lies behind apparent 'indifference' to politics is important.

Political Experience of the Japanese Community in Australia

To situate our findings within a broader social context, we compared the political experiences of Japanese respondents with those of other migrant communities in Australia. Table 13.5 presents findings from Q-C8, which explains various forms of political engagement among migrants in Australia. To contextualise our findings, we compared the results of Table 13.5 to the Korean Survey in 2015 by one of us (Phillips, 2021), the Recent Arrival Report (Markus, 2013) and the 2015 National Survey (Markus, 2015).⁵

Table 13.5 Political commitments (%)

<i>Q-C8. political commitments</i>	<i>Japanese survey (2016)</i>	<i>Korean survey (2015)</i>	<i>Scanlon foundation surveys</i>	
			<i>recent arrivals survey (2013)</i>	<i>National survey (2015)</i>
a. Signed a petition	22.3	22.9	32.6	48.1
b. Written or spoken to the government or a politician	2.8	5.2	13.0	24.3
c. Joined a boycott of a product or company	1.6	5.2	6.8	12.8
d. Attended a protest, march, or demonstration	3.5	0.7	5.6	9.8
e. Participated in strike action	0.4	0.7	6.3	n/a
Total	491–493	153	1,396	1,097

Note: Missing responses are not included.

The Scanlon Recent Arrival Survey reports that lower political interest or commitment is seen as a common characteristic of migrant communities in generic terms (Markus, 2013), even though the Japanese community likely reflected a more evident trend regarding that point. In detail, this might suggest that a certain number of people in Japanese communities have some experience of having 'Signed a petition' (22.3%), and common characteristics were found between the Japanese and Korean surveys (see Table 13.6). However, regarding the other four political actions that may require more organised actions and communication (writing a letter to a politician, joining a boycott, attending a protest, and participating in a strike), the experience of the Japanese community is much lower than in the other two national surveys. That is to say, they tend to distance themselves from more collective and direct political activities, but, in comparison to the respondents in national surveys, the data suggested that the Japanese community, in general, is not interested in political involvement.

Effects of Social Profiles

Gender, Age and Citizenship Status

Table 13.6 is the result of a correlation analysis of the degree of political interest and respondents' social participation and gender (Q-F1).⁶ A positive correlation coefficient indicated a stronger coefficient for women, while a negative correlation coefficient indicated a stronger coefficient for men. Some items were found to be statistically significant, but all correlation coefficients were very small. These results did not show extreme correlations by gender. But women were relatively negative about Q-A10 (economic integration, including household economic circumstances and respondents' employment status) and more positive for Q-B12 (frequency of volunteer participation) than men. Although some correlations were statistically significant, all effect sizes were small, indicating weak associations between gender and political interest. However, women were relatively negative about Q-A10 (economic integration) and more positive for Q-B10 (volunteer experience) and Q-B12 (social integration, including community engagement and daily communication with the neighbourhood) than men. This trend was particularly the case in our research among women who worked in Japanese language schools in Sydney. However, as will be discussed later, this gendered sample may be beneficial when we focus on the gendered concerns related to everyday life in the community.

One of the most striking characteristics of Japanese migrant's political attitudes may be the low rate of Australian citizenship, which is particularly the case among first-generation migrants. In Q-F7 on their visa status, 398 (81.9%) out of the 486 respondents indicated living in Australia with a permanent visa, instead of holding Australian citizenship. In contrast, only 44 (9.1%) held Australian citizenship, most of whom were second-generation. This is often explained by the fact that The Nationality Act of Japan disallows Japanese nationals from holding citizenship other than Japanese nationality, and most first-generation Japanese

Table 13.6 Correlation coefficients between gender and social integrations

<i>Q-F1. gender</i>	<i>Social integrations</i>						
	<i>A10. Overall, to what extent, do you feel economically integrated in Australia?</i>	<i>B6. As a whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood?</i>	<i>B8. To what extent, do you enjoy living among people of different lifestyles?</i>	<i>B10. Have you done any unpaid volunteer work in the last 12 months?</i>	<i>B12. How often do you participate in voluntary activities?</i>	<i>B15. Overall, to what extent, do you feel socially integrated in Australia?</i>	<i>C1. To what extent, are you interested in political issues in Australia?</i>
Correlation Coefficient (<i>r</i>)	-0.152**	0.011	-0.029	-0.170**	0.183**	-0.030	-0.046
Sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001	0.783	0.499	< 0.001	< 0.001	0.475	0.273
<i>n</i>	484	491	486	480	478	481	484
	<i>C7. To what extent, do you feel there are opportunities to have a say on issues that are important to you?</i>	<i>C9. Are you on a decision-making board or committee, or a resident representative group?</i>	<i>C10. Are you on a decision-making board or committee such as being a member of Japanese community organisations?</i>	<i>C11. Overall, to what extent, do you feel politically integrated in Australia?</i>	<i>D5. To what extent, do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?</i>	<i>D8. To what extent, do you feel valued by Australian society?</i>	<i>D17. Overall, to what extent, do you feel integrated in Australian life style, value and culture?</i>
Correlation Coefficient (<i>r</i>)	-0.113**	0.055	0.020	-0.046	-0.096*	-0.070	-0.026
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.009	0.229	0.660	0.288	0.021	0.104	0.54
<i>n</i>	474	486	483	486	484	483	486

Notes:

* Correlations is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

^a Male = 1, Female = 2.

communities, regardless of their other social statuses, tend to retain Japanese nationality while holding Australian permanent resident visas.⁷ In comparison, in the earlier similar survey on the Korean community (Phillips, 2015), 71 (51.8%) of all respondents held Australian citizenship. The results clearly show that the citizenship rate of the Japanese community is extremely low. In our follow-up interviews, respondents stated that they were less likely to obtain Australian citizenship, regardless of their years of residence in Australia. The following comments reflect this:

I have never felt inconvenienced by my permanent residence. If I were interested in politics, I would need the right to vote, but I don't really think about that. I would not mind having Australian citizenship if dual citizenship were allowed, but there is no reason for me to give up my Japanese citizenship to become an Australian citizen. (Ms. C)

I don't think I would give up my Japanese nationality to get Australian citizenship, especially as the only difference is whether I have the right to vote or not, and the rest is much the same. In addition, I have children, so I think it would be better to have both nationalities until they are older. (Ms. I)

Both respondents linked the acquisition of Australian citizenship with the right to vote in Australia and saw Australian citizenship as unnecessary. This can be seen as reflective of the community's lack of interest in political participation in Australian society. Other stated reasons were the need to care for parents residing in Japan and the possibility of spending their retirement in Japan. Responses were linked to the fact that dual citizenship is not permitted under current Japanese law, which makes the political option of 'flexible citizenship' impossible (Ong, 1999). Thus, it can be argued that not only the cultural background of Japanese society but also the legal context influenced the lack of interest in Australian politics among the Japanese community in Australia.

Therefore, while multiple modes of retaining dual (or even more) citizenships/nationalities is the most popular strategy among the first generation (Wautelet, 2018), establishing and maintaining mobility between Australia and Japan is key. However, the predominance of permanent visas without acquiring Australian citizenship suggests that developing awareness of political participation in Australia, where voting in all elections (including provincial, state, and national) is compulsory for citizens but is not allowed for permanent residents, is difficult.⁸

Given that interest in Australian political issues (or lack thereof) shows a correlation with citizenship status, how were different perceptions reflected in our research dataset? Table 13.7 provides a cross-tabulation of the availability of Australian citizenship (from Q-F8) with interest in political issues (Q-C1). The results of the chi-square test showed a significant difference between Australian citizens and non-citizens regarding interest in Australian political issues ($\chi^2(2) = 20.850, p < 0.001, V = 0.205$). This indicates that while interest in

Table 13.7 Degree of political interest by citizenship status

Q-F8. Citizenship Status	Q-C1. To what extent, are you interested in political issues in Australia?											
	Very much		Much		Neither little nor much		Little		Very little		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Australian Citizen	5	11.6	9	20.9	15	34.9	9	20.9	5	11.6	43	100
Non-Australian Citizen	8	1.8	46	10.2	225	49.9	120	26.6	52	11.5	451	100
Total	13	2.6	55	11.1	240	48.6	129	26.1	57	11.5	494	100

Australian political issues was not high regardless of Australian citizenship status, respondents with Australian citizenship were slightly more interested in political issues. In recent years, there has been an argument that permanent residents living in Australia should be granted the right to vote in national elections and that permanent residents cannot be ignored in the composition of Australian society and political participation in a democratic society (Reilly & Torresi, 2016). This means that Australian citizenship is explicitly a necessary and sufficient condition for political participation in mainstream Australian society. Otherwise, no matter how long migrants have settled down in Australia and been actively involved in society, they would still be excluded from the political arena. In addition to their own political attitudes derived from their socio-cultural background, this situation has influenced the political attitudes of the Japanese community, the majority of whom are not Australian citizens.

Given that political participation is a significant indicator of social integration in civil society, we examined the relationship between perceptions of social integration and political attitudes. The questionnaires in our surveys – The National Survey (Markus, 2015) and Recent Arrival Survey (Markus, 2013) – inherently examine respondents' perceptions of integration into Australian society, using a range of variables: economic, societal, politics, culture, identity and life satisfaction. The premise of our survey is that unity with the national community could be achieved through people's spontaneous social engagements. However, as Beck's (1992) concept of sub-politics suggests, political attitude is not necessarily grounded in the sharing of national identity or derived from a sense of robust individualism in civil society. Political attitudes might therefore be generated through micro-interests and everyday life experiences. In other words, in modern society, in addition to the professional political sphere dominated by existing groups of

experts, direct political action and political involvement based on concerns rooted in the daily lives of citizens are growing as a progressive response to increasingly complex and diverse social conditions.

Table 13.8 presents the results of a correlation analysis between respondents' involvement in local community activities (Q-B5, Q-B6, Q-B7, Q-B8, Q-B12 and

Table 13.8 Correlation coefficients between local community engagements and political attitudes

<i>Community engagements</i>	<i>Political attitudes</i>					
	<i>C1. To what extent, are you interested in political issues in Australia?</i>			<i>C11. Overall, to what extent, do you feel politically integrated in Australia?</i>		
	<i>Correlation coefficient (r)</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Correlation coefficient (r)</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>n</i>
B5a. I feel close to my neighbours.	0.081		492	0.103*		492
B5b. I can get help from neighbours when I need it.	0.142**		491	0.157**		491
B5c. I feel safe walking alone down my street after dark.	0.112*		491	0.201**		491
B6. As a whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood?	0.084		491	0.153**		492
B7. How often do you socialise with close friends of other nationalities or ethnic backgrounds or have them visit you?	0.195**		491	0.197**		491
B8. To what extent, do you enjoy living among people of different life styles?	0.222**		488	0.217**		488
B12. How often do you participate in voluntary activities?	0.157**		479	0.207**		478
B15. Overall, to what extent, do you feel socially integrated in Australia?	0.229**		482	0.218**		480

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Q-B15) and their level of political interest in Australian society (Q-C1 and Q-C12). The analysis shows that some community engagement variables were statistically significantly related to political interest. However, none of these relationships was particularly strong. In other words, it remains unclear whether community involvement and local community attitudes lead to increased political interest or whether politically interested individuals are more likely to engage locally. Nevertheless, previous research has suggested that a positive attitude of migrants towards their host society can lead to an increased interest in local politics (Eggert & Giugni, 2010). In the case of the Japanese community in Australia, relatively low levels of citizenship may reduce both their political engagement and their motivation to participate in local affairs, particularly if this is shaped by the dominant political culture in the environment.

Political Culture Re-framed: Discussion

Considering the analysis of our datasets, how can we identify the political attitudes of the contemporary Japanese community in Australia (given that traditional measures of political engagement often fail to capture alternative forms of activism and civic participation)? In political science and political sociology, the degree of active engagement in politics is regarded as an essential measure of the development of a democratic civil society, including both individual and collective actions for the sake of both problem-making and problem-solving (Alvarez et al., 1998; Gurr, 2000; Shin & Chang, 2011). In an analysis of the growth of late modernity and its struggle with unexpected risks and a holistic approach, Beck suggested the development of a new political culture characterised by ‘heterogeneous concepts of sub-politics’ (Beck, 1992, p.194). Although formal political participation remains low in the Japanese community, activism does exist in alternative forms. One example is the Melbourne-based Japanese NGO involved in peace movements and anti-nuclear activism. One example is the Melbourne-based Japanese NGO involved in peace movement and anti-war activities in Japan in the wake of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and the meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant (see Chapter 6 in this volume). This organisation undertook activities insisting on a ban on nuclear power plants in Japan and evacuations of people from radioactive sites in Japan. Close attention to such new types of political involvement among the Japanese community in Australia since the 2000s, suggests it is an over-simplification to state that the Japanese community is neither politically engaged nor politically participatory. As Kasulis (2002) argued with reference to ‘integrity’ and ‘intimacy’, a sense of ‘mediated’ political consciousness where the boundaries between group, ethnicity and individual consciousness are less clear can be assumed, in contrast to the ‘strong’ political consciousness represented in the National Surveys by the Scanlon Foundation as such. Notably, political awareness appeared as a mixed representation of both gendered political culture in Japan and the community’s specific characteristics such as gender and citizenship status in Australia, and as found through a triangulation of both the survey and follow-up interviews.

Accordingly, our findings were mostly characterised by the representation of women who were involved in the community through the heritage education of their children. Many early ethnographic studies on spousal migration and their intimate lives have argued (Charsley et al., 2016; Guerra et al., 2020; Hamano, 2019; Ortensi & Riniolo, 2020) that households tend to be a (micro but) contested space for political arenas, not only because of cultural differences, but because of power relations, gender structures, and other issues that arise from cultural differences between spouses and their families, regardless of whether spouses see their experience and practice as politics. Considering the socio-cultural contexts of contemporary Japanese in Australia, the discussions noted in this chapter can be articulated to include their accounts, proposing ways in which their political consciousness emerged from the complex structure of possible constructions of political solidarity from micro-politics generated by family duties in the household.

For example, our research partner HSCJC is a group of parents advocating for the lifting of apparently discriminatory measures against children with a Japanese cultural background in the HSC in New South Wales. They had been working with other Asian communities facing similar situations to appeal to state education departments to ensure fairer language examination conditions, regardless of the cultural background of the children. Japanese parents play a central role in these activities, while non-Japanese parents also respect the cultural diversity of the Japanese community (HSC Japanese Community (HSCJC), 2021).⁹ This attempt to bring ethnic concerns to the wider community and achieve equitable educational opportunities reflects a new political culture in the Japanese community in Australia. On 20 May 2022, the NSW Education Standards Authority announced that they removed the criterion ‘Students do not use the language for sustained communication outside the classroom with someone with a background in using the language’ (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022). The HSCJC had long campaigned for the abolition of discriminatory policies regarding the selection criteria for the level of language tests in the HSC for the next generation belonging to particular migrant communities, including the Japanese community. The HSCJC welcomed its decision and left a comment on its website as follows:

The removed criterion is precisely the focal point that the HSCJC has been working to correct in the 14 years since its inception. This is excellent news for families with children of Japanese heritage wanting to study Japanese for their HSC. The revision of the criteria applies to Indonesian, Chinese and Korean as well, bringing good news to families with children looking to take these courses. (HSC Japanese Community, 2022)

Importantly, ‘amendments’ in their perceptions suggested that political interest derives from everyday experiences with families and local communities, rather than from a national framework. LeBlanc argued in her study of Japanese housewives’ grassroots activism in Japan that, ‘Japanese women frequently study, but their political life is not [sic]’ (LeBlanc, 1999, p. 8). Her claim is relevant to previous studies on female Japanese migrants in Australia (and elsewhere) (reference/

s needed). The specific cultural diversity within the Australian migrant community through cross-border marriages and migration patterns, far from group mass migration, makes it difficult to elaborate the radical feminist expression, 'the personal is political', in the community. Their political agency seems to be expressed through advocacy for their children's education and involvement in local community issues, rather than through radical feminist activism. This may suggest that the political attitudes of this community are often shaped by family responsibilities, cultural expectations, and grassroots activism, more so than by direct participation in mainstream political movements. This expression originated from feminist critiques of the construction of gender roles and the naturalisation of gendered private and public spheres, especially in everyday practices that are seen as private or personal. Here, this expression is appropriated to draw more attention to political practices based in the everyday lives of Japanese migrant women.

Conclusion

Our findings suggest that in the community, political attitudes differ from traditional ethnic-political contexts that have historically shaped political engagements. For example, the emergence of groups within the contemporary Japanese community in Australia that practice social and political activism transcends ethnic communities and national borders. Although Shiobara (2017) suggested that such activities are a form of 'middle class conservatism', they exist within the limitations of emerging de-nationalised or cosmopolitan movements. However, what we sought to reconsider here was to further explore their political culture in the ethnic politics constructed by new immigrants and their lived experiences. In recognising the outcomes of our research represented in this chapter from this perspective, we may better conceptualise diverse forms of political culture in the study of ethnic politics of migrants in the contemporary world.

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Notes

- 1 This chapter is a revised version of the article 'The Location of Migrants' Political Culture: A Large-Scale Survey-Based Study of the Japanese Community in Contemporary Australia', Takeshi Hamano, Shinsuke Funaki and Ruth Phillips, *Japanese Studies*, 44.1, 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10371397.2023.2274388> Copyright © 2024 Japanese Studies Association of Australia, reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, www.tandfonline.com on behalf of Japanese Studies Association of Australia.
- 2 The Scanlon Foundation National Social Cohesion Survey was first conducted in 2007 and has been conducted annually since 2009. This survey was the first Australian survey that investigated annual tendencies of public opinion on social cohesion, immigration, and population issues.

- 3 This study was approved by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Sydney in July 2016.
- 4 This survey was conducted between November and December 2018 among the youth in six countries: South Korea; the USA; the UK; Germany; France; and Sweden. The respondents were aged between 13 and 29. The questionnaire was distributed online in each language and more than 1,000 samples were collected from each country.
- 5 Although the most recent Scanlon Foundation Survey is the 2023 version, we chose to focus on the 2015 version for a better comparison with the 2015 report and our 2016 survey. As for the Recent Arrivals Survey, the 2013 edition is still the latest publication, and no other surveys on migrant communities have been conducted since then.
- 6 The Kendall rank correlation coefficient was applied to analyse this non-parametric data.
- 7 In the 1990s, when the JCA was lobbying on behalf of Japanese people in Australia for the right to vote in Japanese elections, developing global solidarity over Japanese communities around the world, the JCA also appealed to the Japanese government and politicians to recognise the dual citizenship of Japanese people overseas (Hosaka, 1998). However, as occasional public debate over Japan's failure to recognise dual citizenship rights indicates (Abe, 2021), dual nationality is not recognised under the Japanese Civil Code as of 2024, as opposed to the increase in the number of multicultural or multinational Japanese diasporas in contemporary global society.
- 8 This citizenship status can also create a sense of distance from other family members, especially in cross-national households, as Ms B mentioned in the interview. Cross-border families are a large part of the Japanese community, and different citizenship statuses within families can highlight differences between family members for Japan-born members.
- 9 In another in-depth interview with a representative of the HSCJC in September 2019, she clarified that the HSCJC is an open organisation and not necessarily restricted to women and that it also includes the participation of spouses (of Australians). It is a women-led organisation within the Japanese community but is organised as a more inclusive lobbying group.

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14 Conclusion

Between *Nihonjin* and *Nikkeijin*: Multiple Realities and Communities of Contemporary Japanese Migrants in Australia

Yoshikazu Shiobara

Intersectionality on the National Identity of JMAs and Its Transformation

I first came to Canberra in 2001. I was a postgraduate student writing my PhD thesis on the impacts of multiculturalism on the social inclusion of immigrants in Australia. I was in my late twenties; however, it was my first time living abroad, and I was worried about my English language skills. Hence, I socialised with people who communicated in Japanese. The scope of my interactions expanded from relationships with other Japanese students to Japanese residents outside the university. Eventually, a part of my PhD thesis examined, through fieldwork and interviews, the relationship between Japanese permanent residents and multicultural policies in Australia (Shiobara, 2004a). I moved to Sydney in 2003 to complete my PhD thesis and returned to Japan in 2005. Since then, I have visited Australia regularly to conduct fieldwork on Japanese permanent residents.

I have observed notable changes in the self-identification of Japanese permanent residents during my research and interactions. Several Japanese permanent residents in the early 2000s did not identify as *Imin* (migrants/immigrants) or *Nikkeijin* (Japanese descendants) from Japan and felt uncomfortable or rejected being referred to as such. For example, a leading figure of a Japanese permanent resident community organisation (see Chapter 4) said, ‘Everyone who comes to Australia from Japan is Japanese (*Nihonjin*). The term “*Nikkeijin*” shouldn’t apply unless someone is second, third or even fourth generation living here’ (Shiobara, 2008, p. 155). Hence, in the early 2000s, self-identification as *Nihonjin* was linked to the denial of identification as *Imin/Nikkeijin*. In other words, there was a dichotomous understanding of *Nihonjin* and *Imin/Nikkeijin*.

This self-identification of Japanese migrants to Australia (JMAs) was related to the negative stereotypes assigned to the Japanese words *Imin/Nikkeijin*. As Mayu Kanamori recounted in Chapter 10, at the time, and to some extent to date, *Nikkeijin* was strongly assigned the image of the working-class *Imin* and their descendants. *Nikkenjin*, before the Second World War (WWII), were forced to leave Japan due to poverty and other circumstances, or emigrated due to the confusion and devastation after Japan’s defeat in the war and suffered hardships outside Japan. Furthermore, the working-class image of *Imin* was directed towards migrant workers in post-war Japan since the 1990s, including *Nikkeijin* from South America.

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In contrast, as discussed in the introduction of this book, the post-WWII JMA community re-established itself in the 1980s after the forced internment during WWII and post-war deportations. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 4, the applicants for the skilled migration program to Australia, assisted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in the 1980s, were highly educated engineers.

However, a narrative that defined JMAs as *Nikkeijin* emerged among the Japanese permanent residents in the 1990s as an instrumental and strategic self-identification. For example, as Takeshi Hamano argued in Chapter 4, the Japan Club of Australia (JCA), established in 1991 in collaboration with Japan Clubs across Australia, worked with the *Nikkei* diaspora in other countries to advocate to the Japanese government for the overseas voting rights of Japanese nationals. However, some Japanese permanent residents involved in this campaign expressed discomfort,

I feel there's a discriminatory nuance in the word *Nikkeijin*—as if it's saying, almost Japanese, but not quite. So, I don't think there's a need to go out of our way to use it. Just calling ourselves *Nihonjin* should be enough,

The experiences of *Nihonjin* living in Australia and those of *Nikkeijin* in places like South America are quite different. We've had it easier in many ways—our living environment is good, and overall, we're fortunate and happy (Shiobara, 2008, p. 155).

I heard similar narratives from other Japanese permanent residents; hence, this, to some extent, was a shared feeling at the time. This avoidance of self-identification as *Imin/Nikkeijin* was the flip side of their national identity as *Nihonjin*. However, the national identity can be interpreted as having been constructed through intersectionality with other factors. These factors can be understood as relationships, which Patricia Hill Collins called the 'additive' framework (Hill Collins, 2019, p. 227).

JMA's national identification was constructed at the intersection of middle-classness. In other words, their strong discomfort with *Imin/Nikkeijin* is an antipathy towards the image of poverty and lower-classness, as contained in these words. This is because, as mentioned earlier, JMA migration resumed in the 1980s after Japanese post-war economic development. As discussed in Chapter 13, they often brought their internalised habitus into the Australian context. Hence, JMAs migrated from Japan, which had become an economic power, internalised the established discourse of 'everyone living in Japan is middle-class (*Ichiku Sōcūryū*)' and brought it to Australia as an element of self-identification. In Chapter 8, for example, Kazuto Onozuka examined how Cairns' tourism development, initiated in the 1980s by Daikyo, a real estate company that emerged in Japan's bubble economy, was undertaken to create a 'second Hawaii' for the Japanese middle-class.

It can be assumed that first-generation JMAs, who had emigrated internalising the self-consciousness of being middle-class, believed that the image of the lower class, as implied by *Imin*, did not apply to them. Instead, they were *Nihonjin* as

‘sojourners’ (Mizukami, 2006), who were economically affluent and had come to Australia for a high-quality life. This was expressed in the concept of *Seishin imin* (spiritual migrants), proposed by Machiko Sato, a Melbourne-based writer, introduced by Hamano in Chapter 4. While they are *Imin* in the Australian context, they are individualistic middle-class people who do not form an ethnic community like other ‘Asian’ migrants. This image of *Seishin imin* represented JMAs as ‘lifestyle migrants’ who migrated not as *Dekasegi* (migrant labour), instead to pursue an enriched quality of life (see Chapter 4). Hence, the concept of lifestyle migration, which has been used in subsequent studies of Japanese in Australia, had the unintended consequence of differentiating JMAs from other Asian working-class migrants by emphasising their middle-classness.

The national identity of JMAs intersects with the concept of race. As noted in the introduction of this book, when JMAs re-emerged after WWII, they mainly came to Australia as skilled migrants, marriage migrants, overseas students and business expatriates after the country’s transition from white Australia to multiculturalism. In the Australian migration policy, many of them were categorised as ‘migrants’. However, as middle-class migrants from an advanced capitalist country, Japanese permanent residents were regarded by the mainstream Australian society as ‘special’ migrants, with a distinctively higher socio-economic status than other ‘Asian’ migrants. This is because, as discussed in Chapter 4, until the 1990s, JMA were perceived by mainstream Australian society as a middle-class, expatriate-dominated community (Shiobara, 2010, pp. 102–103). Due to this categorisation as ‘special’ migrants, JMAs were seen as ‘honorary white’ (*Meiyo hakujin*) in mainstream Australian society (Shiobara, 2010, pp. 102–106). The positioning may have reflected the collective consciousness of Australian society at the time, which historically regarded Asians as a threat; however, it began embracing them after the introduction of multiculturalism in the 1970s. Simultaneously, it was complicit with the JMAs’ mentality of ‘Japanese Orientalism’ (Kang, 1996), in which Japan, as the ‘West’ in Asia, looked down on other Asian countries.

These observations explain why the self-identification of *Imin/Nikkeijin* became widespread in only a limited and instrumental manner within JMAs until the early 2000s. For JMAs, *Nikkeijin* were not *Nihonjin*. *Nikkeijin* carried the connotation of ‘ex-Japanese’ who had lost their Japanese identity, or ‘incomplete Japanese’ who had partially retained it. Hence, the self-definition of *Nikkeijin* was uncomfortable for first-generation JMAs who considered themselves authentic *Nihonjin*. Furthermore, *Nikkeijin*, by definition, were *Imin*. It was difficult for first-generation JMAs to self-identify as *Imin* to avoid the stigma of the working/lower-class and maintain their self-identification as the middle-class. Moreover, *Imin/Nikkeijin*, by definition, were ‘Asian’ residents in Australia. This was an unacceptable self-identification for first-generation JMAs who had internalised ‘Japanese Orientalism’ and were positioned as ‘special migrants/honorary whites’ in Australian society.

This book questions how the JMAs’ migrant experiences and self-identification, the assumed relationship between JMAs and Japan as homeland, and how JMAs are incorporated into Australian society have changed. To answer these questions, the following sections consolidate the findings of the chapters in this book.

The Decline of the ‘Special Asian Middle-Class Migrant’ Fantasy

The image of ‘lifestyle migration’, inextricably linked to ‘Japanese Orientalism’ and ‘honorary whiteness’, as a way of self-representation among first-generation JMAs, has gradually declined. As discussed in Chapter 4, the increase in the number of married Japanese women migrants facilitated the cultural and geographical diversification of JMAs. Japanese women who migrated due to international marriage were more likely to participate in mainstream Australian society through work and child rearing. They were located at diverse social stratifications in the Australian context according to their partners’ social status. Hence, Japanese residents, who were previously concentrated in metropolitan areas or upper-middle-class suburbs, became widely dispersed (Hamano, 2019, pp. 111–118).

Demographic and social diversification affect the JMAs’ collective consciousness. In the early 2000s, leading figures of the Japanese community organisations pointed out that JMAs lacked solidarity as an ethnic/migrant community (Shiobara, 2008, p. 154); however, they believed that JMAs were affluent ‘middle-class’ people. From the 2000s, narratives of a hierarchy within JMAs were observed within their discursive space. For example, during the interview conducted at the end of the 2000s, an informant spoke about a blog post written by a Japanese woman living in Australia, which was widely read among Japanese women in Sydney at the time. The author claimed that there was a ‘hierarchy’ of Japanese women who married in Australia, with Japanese women married to ‘Aussie’ men at the top of the order, followed by women married to non-Aussie white men and women married to Japanese men. Japanese women married to other ‘Asian’ men were placed at the bottom of the pecking order. Around this time, I interviewed a Japanese woman who had married an Asian Muslim man and converted to Islam. She mentioned that while there was a small community of converted Japanese Muslims in Sydney, it was less well-known by other Japanese residents.

Furthermore, the rise of the Asian middle-class and professionals in the Australian economy and society since the 2000s spurred this trend (Ishii et al., 2009). The census data suggest that it is difficult for JMAs to imagine themselves as the only ‘Asian middle-class’ in contemporary Australia (Table 14.1). Japanese are no longer regarded as ‘special migrants’ in Australia, which is reflected in the decline in Japanese language services in restaurants and tourist destinations. While several JMAs are statistically positioned in the middle-class, the collective self-identification of Japanese as ‘affluent’ and ‘middle-class migrants’ has been disturbed by increasing working holiday makers (WHMs) from Japan. As Kumiko Kawashima argued in Chapter 2, the representation of Japanese youth becoming WHMs between the 2000s and 2010s was strongly associated with images of the ‘lost generation’ in the ‘ice age’ of employment, in response to the new public image of ‘Japan as a class-divided society’ (*Kakusa syakai*) that emerged in Japan in the 2000s. In the 2020s, the Japanese media used the term *Dekasegi* to refer to Japanese WHMs in Australia. The discourse surrounding *Dekasegi* emphasises Japan’s economic distress with its ongoing deflation and recession, and Australia’s economic prosperity with labour shortage and rising wage levels due to the economic boom

Table 14.1 Median weekly incomes^a of selected country of birth (2021 Census)

Country of birth	Median weekly incomes (A\$)			Male (%)	Female (%)	Population
	Personal ^b	Family ^c	Household ^d			
Singapore	936	2,819	2,474	45.4	54.6	61,056
Malaysia	900	2,481	2,294	46.6	53.4	165,616
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	864	2,369	2,205	47.2	52.8	100,148
Taiwan	779	2,046	2,104	40.5	59.5	49,511
Indonesia	757	2,117	2,066	41.3	58.7	87,075
South Korea	754	1,975	1,927	45.0	55.0	102,092
Japan	675	2,120	2,059	29.9	70.1	45,267
Thailand	657	1,956	2,012	29.9	70.1	83,779
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	601	1,715	1,641	43.7	56.3	549,618
Born overseas	784	2,131	1,936	48.3	51.7	7,029,262
Born in Australia	823	2,128	1,635	49.6	50.4	17,020,422
Total	805	2,120	1,746	49.3	50.7	25,422,788

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (www.abs.gov.au/census)

^a Incomes are collected in ranges. The medians are then calculated using information from the Survey of Income and Housing.

^b Excludes people aged 15 years and over who did not state their income.

^c Family for the selected country of birth is determined by the response of any family member to the country of birth. Excludes families where at least one family member aged 15 years and over did not state an income.

^d Household for the selected country of birth is determined by the response of any household member (enumerated in the dwelling) to the country of birth. Excludes households where at least one household member aged 15 years and over did not state an income.

that lasted more than 20 years.¹ This overlaps with the image of the working-class *Nikkeijin*, who fled the hardships of Japan for new lands, yet experienced impoverishment and downward social mobility in the new places.

Japanese WHMs fleeing ‘precarious Japan’ (Allison, 2013) are integrated into the precarious labour market in Australia because the Australian Government actively used the WHM scheme as a source of unskilled temporary labour, primarily in regional/rural areas (James, 2024). Such precarious forms of employment often do not adequately protect the rights of WHMs. According to Nana Oishi, recent research revealed that several WHMs from Asian countries, including Japan, work for less than minimum wage or no wage. Some Japanese WHMs suffer living difficulties due to the decline in the value of the yen and inflation in Australia and job-hunting difficulties due to the English language barrier, becoming victims of fraud and crime. Particularly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Japanese WHMs who remained in Australia lost their jobs and were forced into destitution (Oishi, 2024, pp. 61–66).

The increase in Australian tourists to Japan may be indirectly related to JMA's self-identification. For Australian tourists, cultural attractions, beautiful nature and social safety are reasons for visiting Japan. However, this is supported by the precondition that Japan is a 'cheaper' tourist destination than Europe and North America because of its economic deflation and weak yen. This is the reverse of Japan's image of Australia as an English-speaking developed country, with a rich and unique nature and relatively safe, which was popular as a tourist and study destination during the bubble period of the 1980s and the 1990s, based on the assumption that it was cheaper than Europe and North America.

***Imin* as a Part of Multiple Realities**

Thus, JMA's self-identification and image in Australian society, as a special middle-class immigrant and a 'honorary white' distinct from other Asian immigrants, were transformed. These transformations highlighted the multiplicity of realities and modes of self-identification experienced by JMAs at present. Shinsuke Funaki and Takeshi Hamano found that the majority of JMAs considered themselves *Nihonjin* in the mid-2010s (Funaki & Hamano, 2019). If *Nihonjin* and *Imin* are a binary identity choice, the logical consequence is that they do not consider themselves *Imin*. In my experience, several first-generation JMAs still feel uncomfortable identifying as *Imin*. Nevertheless, the chapters in this book have revealed that JMAs' lived realities are those of 'migrants' in Australian society, even if they do not consider themselves *Imin*. To understand this, it is necessary to reconsider the concepts of 'migrant' and 'reality'.

While there is no common definition of 'migrant', the International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines it as follows:

An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. (IOM, 2019, p. 132).

This definition implies that migration is 'the experience of mobility', regardless of whether one crosses national borders or not, including various travel distances and durations. As all national borders are artificially set, the difference between international and internal migration is technical and artificial, without any essential difference. On the other hand, as Benedict Anderson (2006) and Ernest Gellner (1983) showed, the precondition for the formation of a national identity in the modern nation-state was that people were decoded from their homelands and socially mobile within the national borders set by sovereign powers. In other words, the fact that we see those who cross national borders as 'migrants', while including those who move within the national border as a part of 'us', is a consequence of nationalism, which Ulrich Beck called a 'methodological nationalism' that constrains our reality (Beck, [2002] 2008).

However, we experience realities in other ways besides a national reality. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann noted that a reality is generated by knowledge in the broadest sense, which includes verbalised knowledge and non-verbal senses embodied through experience (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Such knowledge is constructed through interactions and, because the nature of interaction is simultaneous and multiple, we experience multiple realities simultaneously. A single national reality strongly constrains our experience, as our knowledge is influenced by nationalism. However, we simultaneously live in realities that are relatively free from the influence of nationalism.

Regarding contemporary international migrants, due to information/communication technologies and public transport developments, they are often ‘long distance nationalists’ (Anderson, 1998), experiencing the reality of being a part of their homeland in their host country. However, they concurrently ‘lenticularly’ experience the reality of being a ‘migrant’ in the host country (Hage, 2021). This reality as a ‘migrant’ is not singular. As discussed in this book, JMAs have been included in Australian society through varied migrant infrastructures (see Chapter 3), such as skilled migration, study abroad, international marriage and WHM schemes. Additionally, there is increasing diversification geographically and socially. Hence, JMAs now live in multiple realities in Australian society. They experience the multiplicity of ‘migrant’ realities in contemporary Australian society, along with the reality of ‘*Nihonjin*’ lenticularly. Which of these realities, and to what extent, they strongly identify with is up to the individual.

Multiple Self-identification

Even if JMAs do not identify as *Imin*, they experience ‘migrant’ realities because they are positioned within the mode of integrating migrants in Australian society. Hence, first-generation JMAs often experience the juxtaposition of ‘Japanese’ identity and ‘migrant’ realities in the 2020s.

Of the modes of incorporation, a particularly important one is the community language education program developed by the Australian federal and state governments as a part of their multicultural policy (Hamano et al., 2023). It encourages Japanese parents, particularly in mixed marriages, who want to have the opportunity to guarantee their children born and raised in Australia the Japanese language and culture. As Kyoko Kawasaki and Naomi Kurata described in Chapter 7, Japanese language education for Japanese children in Australia has been provided as ‘national language’ (*Kokugo*) education, primarily by full-time Japanese schools (*Nihonjin Gakkō*), Japanese supplementary schools (*Hoshukō*) under the influence of the Japanese government regarding funding and curriculum. These schools were strongly influenced by the monolingual ideology that Japanese should be taught exclusively in Japanese. This was accompanied by a *Kokugo* ideology that privileged *Kokugo* as the only authentic Japanese national language. However, Japanese permanent residents in Sydney, where the JMA population is concentrated, argued in the 1990s that the methods and ideology of Japanese language education diverged from the needs of second-generation JMAs, many of

whom are mixed Japanese, born and raised in Australia. Thus, weekend Japanese community language schools (*Nihongo Kyōshitsu*), accredited and subsidised by the Australian state governments, emerged, particularly in Sydney (Shiobara, 2004b). The majority of these schools are run by Japanese permanent residents who are the parents of the students (Hamano et al., 2023; Shiobara, 2016). The Japanese community language schools (*Nihonjin Gakkō*, *Hoshukō*, and *Nihongo Kyōshitsu*), together with community organisations, such as Japan Clubs, have played an important role in maintaining and developing the JMAs' social network, which could be referred to as 'communities'.

As Chapter 7 showed, monolingualism and *Kokugo* ideology remain a persistent influence in several Japanese community language schools, particularly in those under the influence of the Japanese government. However, certain practitioners are oriented towards a bilingualist pedagogy, incorporating methods of translanguaging in the Australian context. This shift is partly due to the institutionalisation of Japanese community language schools within the Australian language education system, and because many of these schools operate with the support of the Australian state governments.

Within the discursive space of Japanese language education in JMA communities, the idea of 'heritage language' (*Keisyōgo*) became increasingly influential in the 2000s. 'Heritage language' was emphasised as an ideal of Japanese language education for second-generation JMAs who had grown up in Australia, opposing the *Kokugo* ideology (Hamano et al., 2023). Regarding 'Japanese as a heritage language', some first-generation JMAs identified themselves and advocated as one of the 'Asian' migrant communities in Australia. The HSCJC, examined in Chapter 13, found that 'Japanese as a heritage language' was disadvantaged in the Australian education system compared to other Asian languages and demanded fair treatment from the state governments. As a result, Japanese as a heritage language course was introduced as a subject in the HSC (Higher School Certificate) in New South Wales (Shiobara, 2017, pp. 137–140).

Although first-generation JMAs advocated for their needs as an 'Asian' migrant community, this does not mean that they identified as *Imin* rather than *Nihonjin*. As Yuna Sato pointed out, an individual's self-identification can be divided into 'internal self-identification', meaning how they categorise themselves, and 'external self-identification', meaning how they categorise themselves concerning others (Sato, 2025). 'Heritage language', in the Australian context, often refers to 'migrant' ethnic languages. Therefore, first-generation JMAs, who argued for Japanese as a heritage language, presented themselves as 'migrants' as an external self-identification towards mainstream Australian society. However, they internally self-identify as *Nihonjin*, diverging between external and internal self-identification. This does not mean that one is their 'true' identity while the other is 'disguising their true feelings'. Both are their self-identification, as they experience the realities of living as '*Nihonjin*' and as 'migrants' in Australia in a multiple and lenticular manner.

In the 2010s, the idea of 'Japanese as a heritage language', which aimed to overcome the *Kokugo* ideology, was criticised for preserving cultural essentialist

Japanese nationalism (Kinoshita-Thomson, 2021; see also Chapter 7). However, the emphasis on cultural essentialism in Japanese community language education in Australia should be distinguished from nationalism in Japanese society, which is based on Japanese-ness as majority-ness. Our research shows that parents of Japanese permanent residents committed to Japanese community language education, particularly those of mixed Japanese children, wanted their children to be Australian citizens, not purely *Nihonjin* (Hamano et al., 2023). They wanted Japanese language and Japanese-ness to be passed on as a ‘part’ of their children’s identity and cultural capital. In other words, first-generation JMA’s practice of Japanese community language education has an aspect of cultivating cultural hybridity in the children.

These practices of first-generation JMAs are accompanied by unconscious strategies for achieving a ‘happy old age’ life. For example, some Japanese women, who were mothers of mixed Japanese children, said that they would teach their grandchildren Japanese. This was not due to their attachment to Japan; instead, their preparation for when they grow old and forget English (there was a widely shared concern among middle-aged Japanese permanent residents that they may forget English in their old age due to dementia). They hoped to teach their grandchildren Japanese so that they would still be able to communicate (Hamano et al., 2023). Hence, although they continued to identify as *Nihonjin*, their ‘happy old age’ life did not necessarily mean returning to Japan. Instead, they preferred to spend their old age in Australia, where they had lived for years, surrounded by their children and grandchildren, in a community that retained the Japanese language and culture. In other words, their practice of Japanese community language education for the next generation of JMAs facilitates the sustainability of JMA communities, ensuring the well-being of first-generation JMAs.

The JMA forms a relatively small immigrant population in Australia, making it difficult for the government to develop Japanese language and culture-oriented welfare services for older people. Nevertheless, grassroots efforts to provide services for older Japanese residents have been ongoing since the early 2000s, at least in the larger cities, by JMA community organisations (Shiobara, 2005). The effort to maintain and develop JMA communities is a practice towards sustainable migrant communities that enables JMAs to simultaneously experience the realities of being *Nihonjin* and *Imin*.

Mobility as a Search for Hope

As mentioned earlier, the increased presence of WHMs since the beginning of the 2000s was accompanied by the narrative of a ‘lost generation’, who experienced the long-term stagnation of the Japanese economy and the job-seeking ‘ice age’, ‘escaping’ (Nagatomo, 2013) the Japanese society and moving to Australia for new opportunities (see Chapter 2). In addition to WHMs, this narrative of ‘escaping’ is attached to recent population movements from Japan to Australia. According to Jeremy Bredan’s research in Chapter 3, agents mediating students from Japan to Australia identified a certain number of ‘dreamers’—they seek opportunities to study in Australia because they see less ‘hope’ for their future in Japan.

Ghassan Hage formulated the relationship between the neoliberal state and the mobility of people in the concept of ‘search for hope’ (Hage, 2003). According to him, neoliberal reforms diminish the state’s redistributive function of ‘hope’ that more people can live better in society. As a result, people who no longer see hope in living in their country try to restore it through transnational mobility. In her research on Japanese ‘lost-generation’ WHMs, Kawashima found that many of them had a strong orientation towards the pursuit of self-realisation (*Jiko jitsugen*) through individual effort (*Jijyo doryoku*), influenced by the neoliberal norms of self-responsibility (*Jiko sekinin*) that were increasingly influential in Japanese society at the time. They went on working holidays in Australia to improve their English language fluency and gain ‘international experience’ for achieving *Jiko jitsugen* (see Chapter 2). Moreover, their choice was influenced by the cosmopolitan image propagated by the agents. Nevertheless, in many cases, they did not acquire sufficient English language skills and returned to Japan, re-entering the precarious employment situations. They accepted these consequences as their *Jiko sekinin*.

The experience of Japanese WHMs in the 2000s, the neoliberal motivation of pursuing self-realisation and risk personalisation was shared by Japanese WHMs in Australia in the 2020s. Some of them, impoverished by the pandemic, did not seek help from the Japanese embassy/consulate-general or Australian authorities (Oishi, 2024, pp. 61–66). This was their way of taking self-responsibility, having grown up in a Japanese society that condemned dependence on public assistance and social welfare as ‘spoiling’. However, further research is needed on the lives and consciousness of Japanese WHMs in the 2020s, when Japanese youths working in Australia are represented as *Dekasegi* in the media and the commercialisation of WHMs is progressing. Moreover, the rapid development of social media is expected to have a significant impact on the behaviour and thoughts of Japanese WHMs in Australia.

Escaping ‘vulnerability’ (*Ikizurasa*), stemming from the poor working conditions, often referred to as ‘black workplaces’, gender inequality throughout society and a closed and rigid education system and social relationships, continues to be the motivation for migration from Japan to Australia. Rie Kido defined *Ikizurasa* as ‘the pain of individualised “omission from society”’ (Kido, 2022, p. 145). As Takeshi Hamano identified in Chapter 4, women’s vulnerability in Japan is one of the main motivations for them to migrate to Australia. In Chapter 6, Iori Hamada and Ryota Wakamatsu discussed the migration of the disaster-affected migrants (*Shinsai imin*) of the Fukushima nuclear accident in the Great East Japan Earthquake. For them, the fear of radioactive contamination was only a trigger. Disappointment with the government’s failed response to the Fukushima nuclear accident, public opinion in Japanese society and reactions within families, workplaces and local communities highlighted the paternalistic family relationships, gender inequalities and dysfunctional democratic decision-making processes in Japan. These encouraged them to migrate to Australia. Nevertheless, they experienced difficulties in Australia as a result of migration.

Several *Shinsai imin* are middle-class people from Japan who entered Australia through the skilled migration stream. These middle-class migrants are assumed to

be ‘voluntary’ migrants and are academically and politically distinct from ‘forced’ migrants, such as refugees and humanitarian entrants. However, as Hamada and Wakamatsu argued, the case of *Shinsai imin* suggests a reconsideration of such dichotomies and the need for flexible support tailored to the situation of each migrant. This applies to sexual migration from Japan to Australia, which Masami Tamagawa discussed in Chapter 12. The sexual minority JMAs, Tamagawa described, experienced discrimination, prejudice, isolation, lack of understanding and struggles to conceal their identities in Japan. For them, migration to Australia was a ‘hope’ to liberate themselves from such vulnerability. Indeed, their mobility has an aspect of being ‘forced to flee’ from Japan, where social awareness and rights for sexual minorities are underdeveloped. Nevertheless, their migration is an ‘active’ decision to go to a new place to improve their lives. This suggests the limitation of viewing an individual’s migration as a dichotomy between ‘voluntary’ and ‘forced’. Moreover, it suggests that attention needs to be paid to the structural determinants involved in their mobilisation and the aspect of what Hage calls ‘existential mobility’, that is, symbolic and proactive mobility as a ‘search for hope’ (Hage, 2003).

Roots and Routes of *Nikkei* Australians

As noted above, several first-generation JMAs, particularly Japanese parents of mixed marriage families, wished for their children to be included as Australian citizens, while retaining hybridity. As Aoife Wilkinson described in Chapter 5, the next generation of mixed Japanese youth has inherited their parents’ aspirations and are beginning to play an active role in Australian society. The youths experienced frequent mobility between Japan and Australia during childhood. This was largely due to the efforts of their Japanese parents, who wanted them to maintain links between Australia and Japan. As a result, many of them grew up with a hybrid sense of belonging. They were what Ikuo Kawakami calls ‘children crossing borders’ (*Idou suru kodomo*) (Kawakami, 2021). Their hybrid cultural capital facilitated their physical, social and cultural mobility between Australia and Japan and their life experiences enabled them to develop transnational careers.

‘Roots’ of migrants can be experienced not only as something that binds them to their homelands, but also as a source of force (Hage 2015). This force can be called *Ikiru chikara* in Japanese, which propels them towards ‘routes’ of existential mobility for hope (Shiobara, 2025). The various *Nikkei* Australian-themed artistic practices by Mayu Kanamori and her colleagues described in Chapter 10 are expressions of these relationships of ‘roots’ and ‘routes’. As noted above, the contemporary JMA community is characterised by a demographic disconnect with the pre-WWII *Nikkei* community, which makes them uncomfortable to identify as *Nikkeijin*. Kanamori and her colleagues, who are first-generation JMAs, redefined this disconnection with the term *Senpai* (predecessor). This implies that although contemporary JMAs are not directly related to the *Nikkeijin* in pre-war Australia, they have connected as predecessors and successors of *Imin* in Australia.

Thus, through artistic practices that explore the traces of their *Nikkei Senpai*, Kanamori and her colleagues engage in practices of re-imagining the ‘imagined community’ of ‘*Nikkei* Australians’. However, it is not confined to clichéd and essentialist official, cultural and linguistic nationalism. Instead, by identifying as *Nikkei* Australians, their practices connect the broader category of ‘Asian Australians’ and develop into a collaboration with other Asian Australian artists, considering the colonial historical relationship between Asian countries and Japan.

The practices and networks of Kanamori and her colleagues are linked to the history of the mixing of *Nikkeijin* and Indigenous Australians that has continued since the pre-war period, as described by Yuriko Yamanouchi in Chapter 11. It encourages the contemporary JMA community to repair its disconnect with the past. In Broome, the site of Yamanouchi’s fieldwork, Japanese descendants have lived for several generations, often intermarrying with Indigenous peoples and other migrant communities. The history of their interactions—and the interweaving of cultures and identities—is reflected in what is known today as Broome fusion food. This intertwined sense of self-identification as *Nikkei* Australians has influenced the practices of a younger generation of Japanese background scholars and artists. For them, the *Nikkei* roots are not an obstacle to Japanese nationalism, but rather a route to diverse ways of life that are not confined to one nationality or ethnicity. Hence, their way of life is a practice of what Mikako Suzuki calls ‘rooted cosmopolitanism’ (Suzuki, 2019).

This ‘rooted cosmopolitanism’ of *Nikkei* Australian cultural practices has influenced mainstream Australian society beyond arts and academia. Hamada illustrated the development of the Japanese restaurant scene in Australia in Chapter 9. Japanese restaurants, which opened as a social outlet for Japanese expatriates during the post-war White Australia era, were embraced by the white Australian society and changed the mainstream Australian food culture. The positioning of Japanese restaurants shifted from Orientalist representations to a transcultural gastro-cool. Japanese cuisine in Australia has moved beyond ethnic cuisines and become a part of the multicultural restaurant culture of Australian society, relativising the white supremacist cultural hierarchy. Furthermore, these restaurants, some of which are run by second-generation JMAs, act as social capital that unites and bridges the JMAs internally and externally. They act as nodes in networks for the sustainability of JMAs as migrant communities, while providing routes for the next generation to connect with the wider Australian multicultural society.

Concluding Remarks: JMA/*Nikkei* Australians as a Multiple and Boundary-Permeable Community

In March 2025, I visited Canberra and Sydney. I met first-generation Japanese residents who have been my research informants for almost 20 years and have become old friends. Some of them are active leaders of JMA community organisations. Many of their children grew up and are active in Australian society. I revisited a Japanese community language school where I had done fieldwork

more than 20 years ago. The students learning Japanese were much the same as when I was a volunteer assistant; however, the number of students was much larger. Some of the *Nikkei* youths I had interviewed during my research were now working worldwide as teachers, professionals and artists.

When I began my research more than 20 years ago, the ‘Japanese community’ in Canberra and Sydney was small and seemed somewhat artificial. This was because several members considered themselves *Nihonjin* rather than *Imin/Nikkeijin*. Many Japan clubs, which were then the centres of ‘Japanese communities’ across Australia, were formed as a result of JICA’s outreach to support Japanese permanent residents (Shiobara, 2004b, p. 252). Even now, several JMAs, especially the first generation, express discomfort with the identification of *Imin/Nikkeijin*, considering themselves to be *Nihonjin*. Nevertheless, they experience the realities of ‘migrants’ in the Australian context. Additionally, today’s JMAs include a diverse range of people, several of whom do not see themselves as forming a single ‘*Nikkei* Australian’ community. However, the sociological concept of ‘community’ is characterised as such. That is, we simultaneously belong to several communities, yet we are not always aware of our belonging to those communities, nor are we always united with other members. Nevertheless, the community can exist as an entity.

The JMA/*Nikkei* Australian community has become a solid entity in Australian society. It is a diverse network of people, including international married families, permanent residents, entrepreneurs, students, WHMs, sexual minorities and nuclear evacuees, formed and maintained through nodes, such as Japanese community organisations, Japanese community language schools, Japanese restaurants, Japanese festivals and Japanese social media. They share transnational and intergenerational connections made up of newcomers from Japan, people born and raised in Australia and people moving to Japan and other countries. It is an ‘imagined community’ as a collective memory connected to Australian history that is being re-imagined by Japanese background artists. This community is gaining sustainability. It is both a ‘route’ for people to move transnationally and a ‘root’ for people to belong to Australia, Japan or elsewhere.

What I have observed over 20 years and what the contributors to this book have experienced and tried to examine has been a process of formation and reformation of this multiple, boundary-penetrating JMA/*Nikkei* Australian community. It could be argued that our work of weaving this book and delivering it to a large number of readers through the print capitalist market was a part of the process of building JMA/*Nikkei* Australians as an imagined community.

Note

- 1 For example, *Gou Wāhori ni nihon no wakamono sattō: kōjyō de tsuki 50 mannen kasegi egaku yume* (Young Japanese Flock to Australia on Working Holidays, Dreaming with Earning 500,000 yen a Month at Factories), *Nihon Keizai Shinbun* 19/03/2024 (www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZQOUC1525J0V10C24A3000000/) retrieved 09/05/2025.

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