

AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN TOKYO: TRANSNATIONAL PERFORMATIVE
IDENTITIES AND SPACES OF BELONGING

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AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN TOKYO: TRANSNATIONAL PERFORMATIVE IDENTITIES AND SPACES OF BELONGING

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Research on transnationalism in the social sciences has grown tremendously over the past several decades. Ethnographic case studies have especially made important contributions to transnational literature, however focus has been mainly upon migration flows to the United States and Europe. In the past few decades Japan has experienced an economic and cultural boom followed by subsequent a decline and stagnation. It faces an aging population outnumbering the young. Extremely low birth rates have raised issues regarding how Japan will care for its elderly and provide social security, how it will make an economic recovery without young people and their labor. In addition to these changes, Japan has become a country of immigration with no standardized means of accepting and integrating its oldest as well as most recent diverse immigrants.

This dissertation explores the experience of Africans, one of the recent immigrant groups, in contemporary Tokyo, and the impact these transnational movements have on immigrants' identities and their host country. My ethnographic analysis draws upon diaspora studies, transnational theory, Japan studies and diaspora studies. I provide an outline of existing scholarship on immigrants in Japan and their legal acceptance and

cultural integration (or lack of integration) into Japanese national social identity discourse. Secondly, I present the strategies used by African immigrants to create belonging in their new environments while combating the vulnerabilities lurking in an unwelcoming host country.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dede Tete – Rosenthal was born in Togo, West Africa and moved to the United States at a young age. She struggled to overcome the negative aspects of the insider/outsider status that became hers as a result of growing up in two different cultures. Dede completed her M.A. in Anthropology in 2011 and is a PhD candidate at Cornell University. Her interests are in East Asian Studies, Japan, identity politics, ethnic and cultural métissage and hybridity, diaspora Studies, and sex and gender in cross-cultural perspective. She enjoys snowboarding, motorcycle rides, and scuba diving.

To *all* my family – you have seen me through.

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whom I saw reflected pieces of my father and myself, and who now share portions of my own multiple performative identities.

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PREFACE

My first trip to Japan was in January 2007 during Cornell's winter break to gain a better understanding of the region in which I wanted to conduct ethnographic research. My research was going to focus on the political climate surrounding the population decline and the abounding academic and political discourse regarding the "whys" behind what has been termed the "birth/baby shock". With no previous experience aside from my "imagined Japan" and armed with only rudimentary language skills, I set off to see whether I could envision myself conducting valuable research. Of parenthetical interest to me were the possible reactions to my presence as a Black woman. Several people expressed concerns about the apparent rampant racism in Japan but no one could provide any articles or cases to support their fears for my reception in Japan. I decided to take these concerns with a grain of salt and set it on a back burner in my mind to ruminate over another time should the need arise.

Prior to my departure I contacted an American student living in Tokyo, and she told me that she was looking forward to taking me out for an African meal in a district of Tokyo I later came to understand was Roppongi. Unfortunately, I was unable to meet with this friend, but on arrival, my host commented on the presence of Africans and African restaurants. I went in search of one of the several restaurants she told me about, hoping for a nostalgic meal as well as the chance to speak with other Africans about their experiences living in Japan.

On my first attempt, I set out early on a rainy day and spent several hours walking around the neighborhood of Roppongi, visiting Roppongi Hills and Tokyo

Midtown - two massive modern towers with upscale recreational, office, and art spaces. On this first attempt, I was unsuccessful in finding any evidence of the presence of Africans, so I made my way to another district popular among fashionable youth - Harajuku and Takeshitadori. As I meandered down the street filled with Japanese and tourist youth clad in jeans or *cosplay* (costume play, where one dresses up as a character from a manga, anime or television series) outfits, I came across several African men selling hip hop style clothing.

Still unfamiliar with Tokyo's geography, I wondered whether I'd misunderstood my intended destination from the outset. When the men greeted me with a nod and a "Hello sister" I approached one of them and struck up a conversation. I asked where in the neighborhood the African restaurants were. He told me that I had to go to Roppongi unless I wanted to place an order with him and pick up the food the following day. Confused, I responded that I'd just come from there and hadn't found anything African - even after enlisting the help of two Japanese police officers and their map of the neighborhood that included each building - at the busy Roppongi crossing. He laughed and told me that I had to go back at night, around 9 p.m. when "the Africans come to work. You probably won't see anyone during the day, but just go up to the first Black person you see and ask him. He'll probably just take you there." He was right. On my next excursion to Roppongi I was surprised that I couldn't walk down the street without encountering an African man every several feet. And true enough one of them was so kind as to walk me to the restaurant situated just a couple of blocks away.

My unexpected encounter with the presence of West Africans in Tokyo had me considering an aspect of the African diaspora that had never crossed my mind before. I

soon found out that I was not the only one who reacted with incredulity - “Africans in Japan?!” - when discussing my trip to Tokyo with others. Thus began my curiosity about the African diaspora in connection to Japan studies. On the eve of my second trip to Japan in the summer of 2008, I took the plunge and changed my research topic to the significance of the presence of West African immigrants in Japan and their life experiences. Moving from parenthetical curiosity to the real, my research is thus an effort to map out how these transnational African migrants negotiate new identities and create spaces of belonging in Japan.

Japan is going through transformations as the numbers of recent immigrants increase, and among them are African immigrants. The interaction of multiple groups both highlights existing questions and raises new ones regarding identity and place, in addition to conceptions of who and what can be termed Japanese (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008:342). The changing face of Japanese society now constitutes a transnational space with fluid boundaries and new cultural formations. Furthermore, this societal dynamic shows how “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991:224) become reality. In this project I endeavor to “write against culture,” without essentializing or conceiving of minority groups as self-contained entities at odds with Japanese society (Abu-Lughod 2006). It is centered on the role of one population – that of African immigrants – among the diverse groups involved in reshaping Japan’s socio-cultural landscape.

The presence of Africans in Japan is also of interest because Japan is a non-traditional point of migration for Africans. It represents a departure in diasporic trajectories from the traditional (U.S., Canada, Europe) to that of Asia. While China’s

recent developmental investment in the African continent would explain its pull for African migrants, Japan does not have as readily apparent an influence. Japan's recent contributions in development aid might play a role in contributing to migration occurring in the past five years, but it does not account for migration that occurred further in its past.

Japan has also been facing an economic downturn as well as a profound social crisis regarding its aging population. Its immense demand for cheap labor has attracted large numbers of undocumented immigrants. At the same time, Japan has been known for its reservations towards immigrants and for treating them as sojourners – visitors with no interest in assimilating - rather than as possible citizens, with the hope that these sojourners will eventually leave. These issues, along with their impact on the lives of various immigrant populations, have been well documented: return migrants of Japanese descent, *nikkeijin* (largest notable groups from Brazil and Peru), Filipinos, Pakistanis, Malaysians, Thais, Bangladeshis, and especially Koreans and Chinese who moved to or were forcibly relocated to Japan during WWII (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008:342; Lie 2004; Tsuda 2006; Shipper 2008:216).

Within the context of a changing and ethnically dynamic Japan, it is important to examine the social, political and economic motivations behind Africans' migration to Japan. What are their means of coping with an unwelcoming society, and what is their motivation to continue migrating to such a country? Furthermore, what contributions are they making to the "globalization from within" (Goodman 2003:241) and the cultural diversification of Japan? Africans are denied cultural visibility in Japanese society when they are relegated to its margins, similarly to other minorities. Conversely, they have a

marked visual presence in popular media as high profile television personalities, and elsewhere in society as entrepreneurs (performing African American and Black culture through sales of hip hop style clothing). This migrational trend contributes to Japan's change to a more transnational and diverse cultural arena:

These cultural and social practices interrogate our assumptions about openness and closedness, visibility and invisibility, in Japanese society. How Others are seen and not seen affects not only the question of diversity in the society but the diasporic movements and mobility of these Others. (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008:342)

One experience I had while in the field serves as a telling example of cultural practice relating to how "Others" are seen and not seen. One of the West African friends I made is a highly visible television personality and cultural diplomat with contacts in the Japanese parliament. Having lived in China for 13 years before coming to Japan, he was fluent in both languages and taught Chinese on public television. Unaware of how highly recognizable he was to the public because of his appearances on television, rather than simply because he was a Black person, I was perplexed on our outings as people tried to take pictures of him on their cell phones. Others did double takes, recognizing him as he passed and said to out loud: "Hey, isn't that...?". My own rather typical experiences of alternately receiving covert glances and being ignored left me unprepared for this level of attention to my friend and the ripples of awareness he left in his wake. When I found out about his high-profile status I understood the acknowledgement of presence that he received.

Africans' presence in Japan raises several questions about their conceptualization as an "ethno-racial" group and as immigrants by their Japanese hosts, and their influence in changing such perceptions. African immigrants' experiences of standing out so visibly from what is "Japanese" while still participating in Japanese society merit investigation. In particular, we can understand the dualistic and contradictory phenomena of visibility and invisibility by examining their presence in the country and their impacts on their new environment as they negotiate spaces of existence.

In doing this research and in sharing the stories that have been shared with me, I have found and given answers to some questions I was asking my research participants. Having found myself in a similar situation of being an African in Asia, I've realized that I was finding answers to questions about my own presence from the answers they shared with me about their own lives in Japan. As a result of my particular positionality as Black woman of African descent, raised and educated in the United States and newly arrived on the Asian continent, it is therefore impossible to separate myself from my research participants actively being "observed". My presence and my voice further color the analytical lens through which I make meaning of my data and research findings.

I also define my use of the performative field as those instances of social interaction that bring African and Asian together, the sites at which imagined blackness encounters the actual black bodies. The encounter thus leads to black bodies enacting performative identities or social performance (Turner 1982, 1987; Turner and Bruner 1986; Sterling 2012) as a means of managing the limited identity spaces available for them to claim in Japan. I also rely heavily on Sterling's (2012) definition of the social

performance as “the public expression of social identification (gendered, ethnic, class-based, racial) through management of given symbolic resources (21) and performative field, “[d]epending on context and analytical focus... refers to a local, national, or transnational network of (sub)culturally circumscribed, politically complex spaces whose coherence as such is critically effected in performance. It is a network of spaces in which performance represents a definitive mode in which the commonalities – and often the complex differences – between participants are worked through” (22).

1: TRANSNATIONALISM, MIGRATION & THEORY IN ANTHROPOLOGY

The global dispersion of people has become a hot topic in anthropology and other fields over the last few decades, but research on African immigrants in Japan is relatively sparse. This ethnographic endeavor is among the first to analyze the intersection of the African continent and its vast diaspora on the Asian continent. Africans have had a long history of participating in migratory movements intra-nationally and intra-continentially as well as further afield in the global arena. Within West African nations, labor and socially motivated movement has become so entrenched in expected activities over a person's life course that it is now a part of those various cultures to send children to be raised by family members in other areas of the country or in other countries. Given that many of the relatively recently independent countries are struggling to rise to stable democratic government status as well as to compete on the global market, forced economic migration has become an expected (and many times, the only possible) means of earning a living. Although it is not surprising that there should be an African immigrant presence on the Asian continent, migratory movement in that direction has only recently (roughly over the last 30 years) increased. Within the context of Japan's closed-door policy on immigration, there is an interesting contrast that contributes to an understanding of integration practices involving identity re-articulation. Using translational theory and diaspora studies to ground my research, I wish to show a new perspective on transnational identity as a flexible, embodied, performative strategy to enact or maintain agentic power and belonging.

This chapter will focus on the theoretical lenses I think are useful and flexible enough to allow me to link migration and, especially, transnational migration, to identity, as the very act of crossing borders forces or permits a reconstruction of the self in order for one to survive and hopefully thrive in one's new environment. The following chapter will deal more closely with questions relating to existing literature on ethnic minorities in Japan, how Japan is an interesting geo-spatial location where identities have been and are now contested, and how the outcomes of these contestations could affect Japan's future national identity as well as more intimate aspects of Japanese culture.

Changes in Anthropology

Well, I'm from Senegal, but I spent the last 18 years working all over Africa, Europe and in the Middle East before my current job brought me to Japan. Even now, I'm still working with diplomats.

-African business professional

The study of migration is not a new subject of inquiry in anthropology, but the way it is studied has changed in some ways due to an increased awareness of global and transnational process. For anthropologists at the turn of the millennium globalization has been a particularly interesting as well as vexing development. Our canonical texts and the methods we use to produce them were pioneered in an earlier era, in times when the distance separating one group of people from another allowed significant variations

in social organization, behavior, belief, ritual, language, and economy to flourish. For a discipline whose progenitors forged an identity based upon the experience of immersion in a culture different other than one's own, the increasing connections between peoples once distant has blurred the social and cultural boundaries implicit in this mission, making proclamations such as Edmund Leach's that "[t]he members of a 'a society' at any one time are a specifiable set of individuals who can be found together in one part of the map and who share common interests of some sort" completely untenable (1982: 41). As a result, the question of how to conceive of culture without the benefit of geographical boundaries has been a dilemma in contemporary anthropology. Hannerz tries to answer by relying on Kroeber's notion of a global ecumene to describe networks of culture or "culture in chains" (1992: 48). Appadurai does so by tying the concept of culture to identity politics, arguing that culture is more than just the awareness of particular attributes or differences, for it is also the consciousness and deployment of these differences (1996: 13-14).

Culture is also, at once the centerpiece of anthropological focus and the problem at its heart. Anthropological work under the banner of the structural-functionalism, the last and most durable comprehensive framework under which anthropology operated, strained under the critique that it sought cultural wholes, stressing structure and conformity over variation and dissent. By the 1980's, postmodernist theorists disconnected social scientists' attempts to comprehend and categorize their observations about culture from any "truth" out there to find. Anthropology's categories and cultural boundaries were implements of power, part and parcel of the west's ideological system for subjectifying those soon to be incorporated in late capitalism's reach rather than a

scientific process for describing social and cultural life. Combined with the increasing connections and the movement of people from one place to another, anthropologists emerged from the twentieth century with a much different perspective on people and the boundaries of culture than they had at the outset. Navigating these issues, I rely on a fairly general definition of culture along the lines of that proposed by Ulf Hannerz: those “meanings and meaningful forms which we shape and acquire in social life” (1996: 8). This definition applies on a variety of levels, since it makes no claims to the integration of holistic character of those meaningful forms, and provides an effective stand-in for the “more or less tidy packages we have called “cultures”” (Hannerz 1996: 8). The challenge, then, lies in connecting these aggregations of meaning and symbolism to the material processes and relations of power that form its basis.

As an ethnography of the relations between two groups of people – African migrants and Japanese hosts – immersed in the articulation of global capitalism, this dissertation draws most heavily upon the literature of transnationalism. Once a term used to describe the corporations and other entities that transcended the “national container,” anthropologists and social scientists in closely allied fields reoriented their work to focus upon the lives of a community of individuals “with feet in two societies” (Elsa Chaney 1979). Guarnizo and Smith (1998) have called this “transnationalism from below,” and aim to “discern how this process affects power relations, cultural constructions, economic interactions, and, more generally, social organization at the level of the locality” (6), thereby echoing earlier descriptions of transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that

link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch et al. 1994; see also Smith 2001: 166).

At the heart of transnational theory is that the lives of many individuals in the contemporary world increasingly transcend single localities and single nations, and is a slightly different proposition than that put forward by those working under the banner of diaspora studies, a literature that sprang from the analysis of those communities and cultures with a more permanent and territorialized existence outside their homeland. The original models of diapora were Jews, and eventually analysts added the Greeks, Armenians, African-Americans, and over a few decades, numerous other populations as a sort of cultural satellite to that of a homeland (Elazar 1986; Butler 2001: 189). In this dissertation, I call the African community in Japan a transnational one, using that moniker to describe the processes, social relations, and assortment of cultural meaning that transcend the boundaries of the nation-state. Simultaneously, I refer to the African community as a diaspora, particularly when focusing on the families and institutions with long histories on the Asian continent.

Transnationalism and the Nation-State

I started this organization to promote understanding between Japanese and Africans, to connect Japan and the African continent. I hoped that we could share information about different African countries and provide the opportunity for Japanese people to visit those countries. Government officials

and cultural representatives visiting from Africa could also use the organization to learn more about Japan.

- African business owner

A theoretical framework that crosses disciplines in the social sciences, transnationalism is an outgrowth of the older branch of inquiry dealing with the study of migration. Earlier studies operating under the name of migration studies focused mainly on the assimilation of foreign-born minority groups into the dominant socio-cultural context of the majority population (Gordon 1964, see Castles 2003). Transnationalism has shifted the focus to social processes (Kearny 1995), social fields (Basch et al. 1994), or to simply those individuals and communities whose lives are spread across two or more nation-states. Lash and Urry (1987, 1994) and Sassen (1992) have shifted the assumption that the human norm is to be spatially fixed, and re-conceptualized human migration as a given of human movement and flow. Flows are constant, but until now migration has been thought of as a brief period separating residency from one place to another. While transnationalism is recognized as an emergent field of inquiry yet to develop a “well-defined theoretical framework and analytical rigour” (Portes 1999: 218), in general terms, the transnational literature examines relations of power and, more specifically, how those relations of power have been reshaped by an increasing mobility of labor and capital endemic to late capitalism.¹

¹ Portes also points out that transnational studies frequently rely on disparate levels of analysis, stretching from the individual to the state, and oftentimes ix levels of abstraction (1999:218).

At the heart of transnational studies is the idea that the increased mobility of labor and capital has profoundly altered social relations in the contemporary era. This is also the basis for the contention of its own discrete status as a field of inquiry. Transnational scholars argue that the deterritorialized, multi-sited, and transnational lives observed in the contemporary world signify a fundamental “break” with past conditions. Linda Basch and her coauthors for example, argue that “current transnationalism marks a new type of migrant experience, reflecting an increased and more pervasive penetration of capital” (1994: 24), while John Gledhill (1998) notes that, “the sheer scale of flows in the modern world, and their diffusion into the lives of ordinary people through mass media, amounts to more than a purely quantitative difference.” Alejandro Portes is more specific and argues that the unique character of contemporary transnationalism comprises three aspects: “the number of people involved, the nearly instantaneous character of communications across space, and the fact that the cumulative character of the process makes participation “normative” within certain immigrant groups” (1997: 813). Based on these sorts of contentions, much of what operates under the banner of transnational studies accepts the premise that the movement of capital and labor in the contemporary milieu has significantly reshaped the social relations in which large numbers of people live.

While the majority of transnational theorists focus upon the mobility of labor and capital as the structures forged by those processes, Appadurai provides an alternative perspective on the conditions wrought by contemporary capitalism by considering this “break” in terms of imagination. He argues that, “more people than ever before seem to image routinely the possibility that they or their children will live

and work in places other than where they were born: this is the wellspring of the increased rates of migration at every level of social, national, and global life” (1996: 6). By configuring a theory of a “break” around the concept of imagination, Appadurai seeks an explanation for transnationalism that is at once attentive to the agency individuals bring to bear in deciding to depart their homeland and to the forces that structure that agency (hence he presents the concept of mediascapes as the regional and global circuits through which the material of this imaginative work is purveyed).

The general idea of a “break” helps to unpack the complexities of the transnational environment of Japan. While African migrants have been present in Japan for only decades, other migrants-cum-long term residents have been present for centuries. Even until today, the ability to move back and forth between Japan, Korea, Brazil, the African continent and other places of migratory origin, but this has not stopped migrant communities to comprehensively maintain transnational social fields. The poorest of laborers and migrants, while often facing the difficult task of finding profit in a system configured to exploit their labor and power, nonetheless maintain almost constant communication with home. Those who have managed to make their way to a wealthier economic and legal status configure a multi-sited set of social and familial networks that link them to points well beyond Japan, a strategic transnationalism that is premised upon the communicative and infrastructural changes that comprise the transnational “break.” For both the economically and legally disadvantaged and advantaged, the infrastructural changes underpinning the contemporary transnationalism allow migrants, in some sense, to live in two or more places at once.

However, as Appadurai argues, there is more to this “break” than airplanes and cell phones. These technological changes have reshaped the horizons of imagination. This imagination is structured through mass mediation (1996: 6) but also through the interpersonal contacts with return migrants in home countries. In the case of African migrants who end up in Japan, remittances from fuel the economy of many African countries, even while the constant gaze and documentation of the Japanese nation-state. In this sense, imagination is not an idle anthropological concern, but rather a force that shapes the actions of both migrants and migrants-to-be. It provides imagined and real avenues out of poverty and out of the social relations of the homeland.

While technological advances in communication and travel contribute greatly to the maintenance of transnational ties (Glick Schiller, 1995; Vertovec, 2001), Vertovec warns against ascribing technology the role of sole creator of the phenomenon of transnationalism: “Technological determinism is not a very strong argument. We need to understand the ways in which technology has combined with and perhaps facilitated or enhanced, rather than caused, transnational networks” (2001: 577). There has always been some sort of communication between the host and the home country, whether through written correspondence or via other compatriots who were traveling. Some critics of transnationalism go as far as to say that modern technology plays a minor part in today’s transnational connections: “earlier, a simple letter knitted together transoceanic migration networks with remarkable effectiveness” (Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004: 1188).

Nina Glick Schiller has written on a number of related theoretical issues regarding transnational migration and has criticized various positions in the social

sciences, especially what Wimmer and Glick Schiller call “methodological nationalism” (2003). They say that “Methodological nationalism is the naturalization of the nation-state by the social sciences. Scholars who share this intellectual orientation assume that countries are the natural units for comparative studies, equate society with the nation-state, and conflate national interests with the purposes of social science” (2003: 576).

Wimmer and Glick Schiller argue that the nation-state has historically operated as a “container” for society within a narrow time period (2003: 579) that roughly began in the late nineteenth century and lasted until World War I. During this period, immigrants came to be seen as potentially dangerous outsiders, and these authors hold that this view continues in some respects to the present. They believe that prior to WWI, nations did not usually attempt to control the movement of people across borders, and that large-scale movements of labor migrants were a critical element in the modernization projects in the Americas and Europe. Transnational movement during that time was routine, and the first comprehensive study of migration by Ravenstein (1889) did not differentiate between domestic and transnational migration. Instead, he observed a pattern of movement from poor areas to wealthier ones. Further, American and European nation-states did not usually issue or require passports before this period (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003: 587).

This does not mean that prior to WWI nation-states were borderless. Rather, the idea that borders of nation states represented a bound container for a particular group of people who belonged, and that those who crossed the borders did not belong, began to circulate during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Wimmer and Glick Schiller show that civic concepts of national citizenship shifted after WWI to concepts

equating national citizenship with ethnic and racial identity. They claim that the social sciences have been guilty of reifying this new shift in the conceptualization of the nation-state by either explicitly or implicitly accepting that the state is the same thing as society, which is the same as culture, which is the same as government, and which is the same as the economy (2003: 579). In such research, social, cultural and other processes that are not packaged singularly into the nation-building process, become alterities, and the false contrast between nation and nationalism is upheld even though the two are bound together in an ongoing nation-building project (2003). Wimmer and Glick Schiller write that in order to remedy this problem, the nation-state has to be problematized, and they see this happening as of the last twenty years or so with transnational approaches to subjects like migration (2003). Even though they argue that the nation-state should be problematized, they do not propose that borders and nation states are insignificant. Borders, according to them, matter because they reflect certain regimes of thought regarding nation-states and because they are an impediment to human movement. But they do not see diminishment of borders under conditions of globalization even if capital, communication, and other flows are more decoupled from nation states.

Transnationalism and Identity

Multiplying identities disrupt the cliché-ridden discourse of identity by exploring what it is like to be Other in a society in which you are invisible, a phantom, or a fantasy.

- Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu (2008:242)

Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc (1995) also provide evidence that immigrants are not always “uprooted” from their origins, but that such movements could create ties to a new location while immigrants actively maintain ties to homelands. These ties could include kinship, property ownership, dual citizenship, involvement in social and political causes, and other similar types of activities. They also point out that social scientists have tended to ignore this maintenance of connections until recently even though interactions between old and new locations have existed for a long time; technology has only made them easier.

In Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) transnationality is more narrowly defined than it is in most studies of migration, since they use “simultaneity” as a defining characteristic of transnational identity. According to them, simultaneity is the condition of living one’s life in reference to multiple locations, one of them being near, and the other, far. Modes of thought and action are not oriented solely towards the new locality but are also toward the homeland. Levitt and Glick Schiller argue that maintenance of transnational connections and identities is not oppositional to assimilation.

Similarly to Glick Schiller et al, Fog Olwig (2003) argues that the term transnational might describe all forms of movement across political borders from an external perspective, but immigrants themselves may or may not see their movements as transnational depending on a variety of factors. Fog Olwig uses examples such as ethnic territory divided by national borders and orientations of immigrants toward the receiving nation. In the case of division of ethnic territory, members of ethnic groups

divided by national borders may not recognize the legitimacy of the border and instead consider both sides of the border to be “home”. In the second case, differences in class, race, education, generation, and other factors can affect attitudes within the sending territory toward the receiving territory. Citing her own research on Caribbean immigrants, Fog Olwig shows how some immigrants may consider themselves “British,” while others do not. Depending on the self-perception, migration can be experienced as either internal or transnational to individuals and families within the same sending territories.

Ong (1993, 1999) takes a similar stance, but she does so slightly differently by presenting what she calls “flexible citizenship,” based on her research on Pan-Asian and Pan-Pacific connections maintained by Asian immigrants of various ethnicities, nationalities and classes. “Flexible citizenship” refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel and displacement that force people to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions. The examples Ong gives are of people in situations where multiple citizenships are held as insurance policies against uncertain times and futures rather than because of obligation or nostalgia for a place left behind. Lessinger (1992) has witnessed a similar pattern among Indian immigrants in the United States who make material and social investments in both the United States and India. Rather than binding themselves to a single place and single future, they remain between the two places until more advantageous plans can be made.

Studies of Caribbean migration have shown similar patterns of movement outside the context of citizenship. Immigrants move for work between multiple locales such as New York, London, Haiti, The Dominican Republic, St. Vincent, and Trinidad,

based on the immediate availability of work. These movements are also coordinated among family members who are spread out across several nations with the goal of maximizing income, and at the same time, the ancestral home is preserved through occupation by other members as part of the complex circuits of travel (Wiltshire 1992, Georges 1990, Gmelch 1992, Grasmuck 1991, Fog Olwig 2003, Glick Schiller 1992).

With the recognition that ties to homelands do not dissolve or disappear as a result of migration, assumptions about the inevitability of assimilation have been discarded (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003, Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, Castles 2002, Urry 2000). Two new forms of identity, hybridization or creolization, and preservation of identity have been the focus of research with regard to immigration during the last twenty years. These two forms of identity management are not antithetical to one another; they occur together within the process of immigrants' adjustment and integration to their new places and circumstances.

In summary, it is clear that there have been certain trends in the ways transnational processes have been treated in anthropological research (although I have not referred here to all of the areas of specialization). Human capital and cultural flows have become a major theme, and very often this has taken the form of questions pertaining to cultural identity. Different metaphors are used to describe these new assemblages of cultural identity. "Hybridity," as one form, blends elements from different cultural and historical points of origin, while "flexible" is a concept employed when actors weigh multiple options and purposefully stay between two spaces and identities. Whatever the terminology used, though, culture and identity are not discussed as pure, essential or homogenous.

A close examination of the various cultural elements and practices that remake identities in ways that fit the logic of the particular time and place contextualizes African immigrants in Tokyo in their practice of remaking or strategically enacting certain identities to forge spaces of belonging. Ong's, Clifford's and Hall's constructs of identities are useful as they are not a wholly bound identity, nor is it organic, but instead, it is an "articulated ensemble" (Clifford 2001:478), it is flexible (Ong 1999). Hall states "the concept of identity deployed here is therefore not an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one" (Hall 2000:17).

Performance and Performativity

Japanese people think of Africa as one country, you know? One country full of starving people or untrustworthy people. And they think: what can a starving person or an untrustworthy person offer me? They are surprised that some African cultures are like their own or that some of the same foods are eaten. Since I cannot become Japanese, I have to show them how I am like them.

- African business owner

With global movements across nations and borders, people and cultures contend with the varying systems of racialization and racialized value that their bodies become subjected to. For immigrants and people on the move across borders, managing contact

points of varying conceptions of race, gender and sexuality with their actual bodies and lived experiences through identity performance becomes a necessary means of creating membership and belonging. In the case of Japan, how does racial or ethnic performance both help and limit the transformation and mobility of the racialized body in a country where immigrants are few in number and immigration discourse is limited or almost non-existent? Making visible the ways in which African immigrants in Japan as racialized subjects come to perform certain types of identities as a means membership and of becoming legible within the structure of political power lends understanding to the possibilities and limitations of racial and ethnic performance as it corresponds to the geo-political demands of global movement.

Socio-cultural anthropologist Victor Turner, sociologist Erving Goffman and philosopher/gender theorist Judith Butler's works on performativity and performance serve as useful lenses for looking at African immigrants in Japan's ethnic and racial identity enactment. Turner wrote extensively on socio-cultural performance and its embeddedness in the quotidian. For him, performance does not merely mirror society but can also actively stimulate social change. Performances, which are both process and creative play, can potentially threaten social authority whenever they take place, offering what Turner calls alternative "designs for living" (Turner 1989: 24). Regardless of whether the performance is done in secret or in public, they are liminal; in effect, they can disrupt social routine in a variety of ways, redirecting the flow of daily life. Cultural performances are reflexive in sense that they can potentially provide performers and audiences both with new perspectives on their social lives even when those perspectives are ephemeral. They help both performer and audience "reflect back

on themselves, upon the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other sociocultural components that make up their public ‘selves’” (1987: 24).

Goffman’s work on the organization of observable, daily behavior, develops classifications of the different elements of social interaction based on six themes: the performance, the team, the region, discrepant roles, communication out of character and impression management. He posits that we “read” each other through “body idioms” which are the impressions that we either wiling or knowingly give or inadvertently give off. Through our body idiom, others are able to glean information about us by judging us against conventional standards (1959: 13-14). Our interactions with others, the body idioms we give or give off, and the other person’s ultimate reading of us can be interpreted as a performance in which person included in the interaction is involved. Nothing is quite what it seems in the world that Goffman portrays, and there is a heightened sense of suspicion since we are all portrayed as performers enacting rehearsed lines and roles in places that are carefully constructed. While each person is performing their role or managing the impression they are giving off, they also try to read any lie or deception in the other person or performer against what they think might be the truth. What is useful to note though, is that even when among team members in backstage areas, our performances are not necessarily more authentic, although we are more likely to “knowingly contradict” (1959: 114) our front stage behavior. For me, I take this conclusion to mean that even though or because we are all performers and attempt to manage the impression that others have of us, there is no essential true self or identity. Everything is performance and thus questioning authenticity or any perceived

lack of it is the act of trying to see the lie in an impression that we judge against our own imagined truth.

Butler, whose work builds on J. L. Austen (1975), Jacques Derrida (1988) and others, has written on the structures of power that can underlie the performance of social identity and has drawn attention to the way performances seek to reinforce and communicate our identities in society. Most of Butler's analyses of the performative have centered on gender although she in addition to a few others have also discussed race as a key aspect of social identity worked through in performative terms (Butler 1993; Benston 2000; Johnson 2003; Rahier 1999). Although Butler's work centers on gender and mine is more focused on race, I find her discussion on the distinction between "performance" and "performativity" is relevant in situating my own research. Performance, in Butler's terms, and refers to a situated body of acts, for which the performer is assumed to be more or less responsible. It is quite similar to Goffman's construction of performance, which consists of an individual managing or influence others' impressions of him or herself. Butler's departure though is in performativity, which refers to more general historicized, power-saturated, depersonalized discourses that inform socially appropriate behavior in a given society, such as those surrounding gender norms. Performativity refers to:

reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effect it names ... The reading of performativity as willful and arbitrary choice misses the point that the historicity of discourse and in particular, the historicity of norms ... constitute the power of discourse to enact what it names. (Butler 1993: 2, 187)

In other words, the performative act is never autonomous, but is rather historicized and always in reference to prior, similar acts, which through repetition become accepted as normal or natural.

Viewed from these theoretical perspectives, it is clear that asking whether the performativity field and the performance of racial and ethnic identities that Africans in Japan engage in are authentic is not useful, and rather, we should consider how performing certain types of identities help them create a sense of belonging. My framework for this ethnography is that all identities are enacted or performed, and Africans in Japan are finding creative ways of performing in so as to create spaces where they belong. The theoretical frameworks outlined above for the ways in the which one's sense of self is absolutely fluid, controlled and enacted based on necessitating context are therefore useful lenses for understanding the ways through which African immigrants in Tokyo (re)produce variable identities as a means of forging meaning and finding spaces of belonging in their host societies.

2: CONTEXTUALIZING THE ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a significant boom in the migration of multiple groups to Japan, especially from the surrounding Asian countries and oil field workers from Pakistan. This was later followed by a huge Africa boom in Japan - African culture, music, clubs were fashionable, demanding business, and many Africans came to Japan on this wave. They came to play music, hold classes for cultural events, and work in the clubs for two or three years with entertainment contracts. They needed very little Japanese language skills; they were able to make a lot of money in little time and go back to their home countries or leave Japan as planned.

That has since changed and many of the Africans living in Japan have been in the country from 5-20 years, and sometimes, even longer. It is no longer possible to make money quickly and move on to the next place- instead, those who have remained understand that it will and does take years to learn the language, understand Japanese culture and legal structures, and find long-term jobs. Those who remain state that if you have been in Japan for over three years, you know you must make peace with the country and the culture (or like it more than dislike it) and if you do not, then you are a fool. There are still a few young bloods who come searching for the same economic opportunity and luck that their predecessors had, but understand as soon as they arrive in Japan that those times are gone. In the continuing stream of immigrants, there are growing numbers of students (technical vocation students, graduate and post-doc students), entrepreneurs, ambassadors or embassy officials, cultural attaches, government workers, professionals, restaurant/bar owners, clothing storeowners, those

working in arts and crafts, and more. According to the Ministry of Justice, there were 24,955 registered African immigrants in 2009.

In spite of the increasing numbers of African immigrants in Japan, I found a lack of a centralized community of Africans while conducting research. There is no clearly defined area where Africans or people of African descent are known to meet regularly besides places of worship, restaurants, and hair salons. When looking at the areas where they live, it is also evident that they are choosing those locations based on familial ties. Many of the Africans in Tokyo have married Japanese women and have children with them. Their decisions regarding where to live and make their home are largely based on where their wives' parents and extended families live, because moving close to them insures support in raising their children. As a result, many do not live in central Tokyo, but rather in the Tokyo suburbs and more distant Tokyo metropolitan area. The existence of unions between African men and Japanese women is not surprising, considering the Japanese immigration system and laws. Out of the limited avenues for being able to remain in Japan legally, getting married to a Japanese person is one of the most obvious. There are few other viable options for obtaining a visa, and/or a permanent residency card.

This is probably one of the reasons why there is no clearly defined African community. Japanese spouses often serve as interlocutors and facilitators between their foreign spouses and the Japanese community. This is vitally important when African spouses do not have the language skills needed to participate as full members of society. And in situations where language skills are not a problem, there are still legal obstacles that are difficult to negotiate when one is not a Japanese national (obtaining housing,

signing contracts, etc). The dependency on a Japanese spouse's abilities to navigate societal and legal structures most likely contributes to the lack of bounded African ethnic community similar to those which can be found in New York or Los Angeles.

My participation in and observation of the lives of sub-Saharan immigrants in Tokyo involved numerous activities such as attending church functions and funeral celebrations, and being present at other festivities such as African and ethnic-themed events where I was sure to meet Africans and Japanese alike. I also interviewed members of NGOs and visited business hubs, restaurants, clubs, public gathering places, and the homes and workplaces of many of my interviewees. Home visits played a central role in my research. On several occasions I stayed the night at the house of one of my research participants, where I also interacted with her husband and children, usually acting as a surrogate aunt and babysitter. This enabled me to have more in-depth knowledge about the immigrants' living conditions and settings, as well as their supportive family networks, both real and fictive. I gathered secondary data from official sources, literature reviews, and immigrant newsletters, brochures and documents obtained from embassies, from group leaders and business centers, and through internet searches.

Through these channels I interviewed people from the diaspora's upper, middle and laboring classes, in a combination of English and French, and sometimes Mina or Japanese. My initial interviews consisted of using a semi-structured format to explore a sequence of topics, including my interviewees' reasons for migrating, their recollections of their arrival in Japan, then their new life in Tokyo, descriptions of their participation and membership in social clubs and other organizations, narratives of their periodic

travel back to their home country, and their aspirations for the future. Follow-up interviews were mainly unstructured, and while some were also a means to fill in gaps in my understanding of their migration experiences, they usually followed a path constructed by my interviewees themselves.

I used a survey to ascertain socio-economic and legal status as an addition to the semi-structured interviews. The survey explored vital issues regarding the immigrants' experiences in Japan, including age, education, years in Japan, residence status, housing, family situation, economic activity, income, Japanese language ability, membership in associations and organizations, feelings of belonging, return intentions, and transnationalism. These were followed up with in-depth personal interviews.

Additionally, participants who were married or had a partner at the time of the interviews shared information about the partner: nationality, place of residence, education and type of work. Unfortunately, due to conflicting schedules, I was unable to jointly interview those in Japanese-African marriages or partnerships, except for one couple, so as to document their interactions with and amity for one another.

Given the highly gendered nature of immigration among the sub-Saharan immigrants in Tokyo, the majority of my interviewees were male, both single and married, but often attached in some way. Fewer than 20% of the documented sub-Saharan African immigrants living in Tokyo are women, and my ability to meet and interview a representative number of them was limited. I was able to meet with, and in several cases befriend, a few female members of a small community, thus allowing me to engage with and interview some of them. I was also able to interview the Japanese spouses and partners of several of my male interviewees.

One thing I have understood though, in my attempts to locate and then to talk and interact with people in the West African community, is that my educated student status did not always act in my favor. Many of the men I interviewed respected me for it and were congratulatory, but it placed me in a category separate from them, even though we may have shared similar origins, languages, and culture. That was and will continue to be one of the hardest barriers to overcome – I was expected to be a girlfriend, a daughter, or a sister, since for them these categories provide acceptable ways for them to interact with me – but as soon as my American university educated identity became clear, it was harder for many to interact with me. Also, it was obvious that my being a female interviewing a population of mainly males hindered me considerably in the spaces readily available for meeting larger groups of West Africans, such as Roppongi. A male friend – a sociologist who was conducting similar research – and I realized that he was able to make friends with and ask questions of these workers where I could not, even after a year.

All of the references and reproductions of interactions and interviews here are under the auspices of anonymity, even for the ones who insisted it was all right to use their names and that our conversations could be freely attributed to them. In the interest of protecting the identities of my research participants, I have changed the names of all individuals and businesses that appear in my interviews. This is to protect the participants from any potential repercussions, whether from other members of the community, from the Japanese government or officials, employers, people in the workplace, or possibly from friends or families. In many cases, the threat of deportation

is an ever-present possibility, perhaps not for them, but for someone they know or are connected to, so the protection of identities and personal information is vital.

I have also supplemented my interviews with significant field notes, notes to myself, taken after conversations, and voice memos (recordings), which include details of interactions, conversations, and shorter interviews with over a hundred individuals. Further, I continue to participate in a variety of social gatherings and meetings, and I am still in regular contact with many who have chosen to share their lives and experiences with me, so, I am perpetually observing, learning and collecting data.

3: AFRICANS IN JAPAN - MULTIFACETED IDENTITIES

Existing Studies Of Africans In Japan

When you first come, you learn the language. Next, you must, you must make peace. You know? With the country, the people. You make peace. If you don't understand this by your third year, you must go. If you stay, you are a fool. Why? Why stay when you are just angry? Tsk.

- African business professional

Japan has joined South Korea, Italy and Spain as former countries of net emigration to becoming recent countries of net immigration. Every industrialized nation that experienced large influxes of migration has had fears of losing its unique identity when faced with the prospects of opening the national borders to immigration. What makes the case of Japan different? Or rather, the question should be, is Japan any different in expressing similar fears over recent immigration? What perspectives has anthropological scholarly research taken on the presence of ethnic minorities in Japan?

Here, my critical focus turns to the discourse surrounding minority populations in Japan in terms of debates and legal policy relevant to immigrant groups and immigration law. This chapter also touches upon literature discussing the multicultural nature of Japan as a response to theoretical frameworks positioning Japan as a

homogenous nation in the field of *nihonjinron*, by politicians as well as popular media. Discourse pertaining to immigration is critical, not just in general, but especially when considering nation-states and permeability of borders in our current globalized world and constant movements of people. Close attention to such discourse is necessary in this particular historic moment for Japan and its future economic and national identity.

Debates on whether to ease the opening of borders or try to keep immigration to a minimum (whether it is actually possible for governments to limit entrants is beside the point), offer up and reify concepts of a homogenous ethnicity at the same time that scholars are striving to inform audiences about the presence of more diversity and the erroneous nature of the homogeneous identity myth. Work produced by scholars such as Lie (2008), Ryang (2000) and Surak (2008) portrays to a certain extent the ways in which identities can be problematized depending on historic period and legal designations of citizens. For example, in the case of Japan, who, which entities, decide who carries the signifying term of “Japanese,” what does Japanese identity consist of outside of concepts of ethnicity, and how has the Japanese government attempted to control insider-outsider status of people within its borders?

Scholars writing on Japan’s invisible ethnic minority populations frequently detail the manner in which changes throughout history affect labels of Japanese and non-Japanese. For instance, when the Japanese empire was expanding its colonial reach, it sought to bring Koreans and Chinese under the cloak of a Japanese identity surpassing the geographic territory of Japan proper. Contrarily, when the empire was dismantled and restructured after the Second World War, Koreans and Chinese in Japan who

previously were meant to become “Japanese” instead lost their Japanese identity as well as their earlier homes.

My aim in highlighting these discussions is both as support for these debates and alternatively, to provide a critique in the gaps visible in the literature. Specifically, I point out the areas in which the scholarly material falls short so as to provide ethnographic material exemplifying how these larger debates feature in the lives of those impacted. Again, descriptive case studies and examples of individuals negotiating ways of becoming a members of their communities when facilities and infrastructure are lacking, are useful toward appreciating the subjective experience of immigration. They offer understanding well beyond theoretical knowledge of the implications of immigration policy on the perceived outsider. Most importantly, missing from most discussions of immigration, in part owing to the historical amnesia surrounding Japan’s history of importing labor, is the presence of foreign nationals who performatively inhabit a third, and thus more flexible space, of Japanese cultural identity.

Whether one believes Japan was or is an ethnically homogeneous nation or the opposite - a multi-ethnic nation – it is no longer possible to argue that the numbers of immigrants in Japan are not increasing. With this increase comes more cultural and ethnic diversity than ever before. Anthropological studies of ethnic populations in Japan have focused on the largest minority groups present: Koreans, Chinese, Ainu, Burakumin, Okinawans and Japanese-Brazilians. Some research has also been conducted on Filipina immigrants filling the roles of docile wives in the Japanese countryside.

There has already been a plethora of academic publications on ethnic minority populations in Japan, and there have been attempts to use this literature to document the non-homogeneous face, or multi-ethnic aspects of Japanese society. Much of this scholarly work was positioned as a critique of *nihonjinron*, an extremely broad genre of writing discussing what was thought to be Japanese-ness or Japanese uniqueness. Scholars were concerned with refuting or placing themselves in direct opposition to the *nihonjinron* discourse pertaining to Japan's "myth of homogeneity" (Carvalho 2003; Ishi 2008; Lie 2004; Linger 2001; Roth 2002; Tsuda 2006; Tsuda 2003b; Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008; Yamanaka 2000).

Emphasis is further placed on existing diversity in Japanese society, and the conviction that just like all nation-states, Japan contains within its population a number of ethnic minorities, each with its own distinct history and culture. John Lie points out that in the process of modernization (state formation, colonization and capitalist expansion), Japan, like other world powers, forced the assimilation of its ethnic minorities - Koreans, Chinese, Ainu, Okinawans, Burakumin and people of mixed ancestry - into the national polity. As a result, "modern Japan was characterized by (multiethnic) imperialism, not (monoethnic) nationalism" (Lie 2004), even though in both domestic and international discourses, postwar Japan has been mainly characterized as monoethnic.

One factor resulting in the portrayal of Japan as monoethnic is that Japan still does not perceive itself to be a country of immigration. It seems that government officials and immigration specialists prefer to view recent immigrants as temporary laborers. It is interesting, when considering this possibility, that Koreans and Chinese in

Japan are among the largest groups of minorities, and their presence in Japan predates Japanese modernization as an empire (Lie 2004; Ryang 1997; Ryang 2008; Lie 2008). The Ainu, Okinawans and Burakumin are different from Chinese and Koreans in Japan in that they have had citizenship rights and have been incorporated into the Japanese polity.

Although ethnic minorities such as the Ainu, Burakumin and Okinawans fight for recognition and for the government to address injustices, they have not had their Japanese identity denied or revoked through denial of citizenship. Koreans and Chinese on the other hand, whether forcibly or by choice, have been a "foreign" presence - at times silent, at times vocal about their position in Japanese society. Regardless of their long history as residents in Japan, politically they are known as "special residents," not as citizens. The question of becoming a Japanese citizen, once this path opened up legally, was and is still considered a distressing decision to make, as research shows that it creates a sense of excising one's Korean or Chinese identity and replacing it with a Japanese one. Previously, one also had to change one's name to a Japanese or Japanese-style name during the process of acquiring citizenship, and this change would no doubt intensify the feelings that one is renouncing part of one's original identity in exchange for Japanese citizenship. It has even been referred to as "passing," invoking the language of racial struggles in the United States. Kyo Nobuko writes about the prospect of naturalization in Japan:

No matter how positively the person herself approaches the question, no matter that she has reached this decision to her own satisfaction, she cannot completely shrug off the cold gaze of

society. There's a chill that greets a naturalized citizen on both sides, in the ethnic Korean community's reaction to her and her family, and also on the receiving Japanese side. (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008: 49)

Although research on Chinese residents in Japan from prior to World War II is lacking, it seems likely that they would have encountered these same problems, and were in the same sticky social situation regarding access to citizenship and the sacrifices it requires.

Still, the long presence of Koreans and Chinese in Japan belies their political classification as temporary residents. It also sheds some light on the continued insistence of placing new immigrants in the temporary worker category. Nevertheless, many immigrants have become an expected presence in their local communities as they take up long term or permanent residency. Still, the government has yet to address the citizenship rights and social needs of such immigrants and their dependents. Local government bodies and neighborhood organizations step in to fill these needs, but their effect is insufficient, and there is unequal access to organizations providing these services.

Recent scholarly work on minority populations in Japan have largely been dedicated to Koreans and Japanese-Brazilian *Nikkeijin* (foreigners of Japanese descent), the largest documented group of *Nikkeijin* working and residing in Japan. These works contain broad themes related to experiences of prejudice and discuss possibilities of integration and citizenship rights as well as what types of policy or cultural interactions need to be in place in order to facilitate integration and citizenship.

Scholars such as Sonia Ryang, Jeffrey Lesser, Paul Green and Daniela de Carvalho focus on questions of where home is, and on crises encountered when one's identity as an immigrant or foreigner eclipses other possible identity formations. This is especially crucial in relation to diasporic and transnational movements in the context of receiving countries trying to curb immigration, and thus in the case of Japan, where immigration policy is non-existent and social resources for immigrants are limited (Carvalho 2003; Linger 2001; Ryang 1997:248; Ryang 2008:191; Han 2008:121-132; Kajita 1998).

Sonia Ryang's and John Lie's contributions, for instance, are examples of ethnographies detailing the diasporic movement of Koreans to and from Japan as well as descendants currently living in Japan as Koreans, some as Japanese citizens, and some as Korean-Japanese, a relatively new identifier. Their work traces legal and political changes throughout interactions between Japan and Korea during Japan's rise as an empire until after the Second World War that have impacted this diasporic group, leaving many who are in Japan without a homeland and on many occasions without a voice. They both offer a critical examination of issues arising from displacement of a particular group of people, and remain a useful lens for considering other minority groups in Japan. Each of them is very particular about reminding audiences of the difficulties and dangers in believing that the use of the terms *zainichi* and Korean in Japan, would indicate that these identifiers automatically indicate that the people falling into these categories belong to one bounded and conscious ethno-racial or national identity. They emphasize how one must remember that within these groups there remain complexities and multiple experiences of space, place and personhood.

Jeffrey Lesser and Takeyuki Tsuda are two notable authors who have also focused their research on questions of where home is, although both write on *Nikkeijin* and Brazilian-Japanese in Japan. Much more so than Ryang or Lie, Lesser and Tsuda describe meso level interactions between Japanese and Brazilians of Japanese descent, and tensions that arise from the fact that neither group fits the expectations of the other. Out of this disappointment or chagrin resulting from experiences of outsider status and discrimination, Brazilian-Japanese invent multiple strategies, one of which is creating a stronger Brazilian identity in Japan, although they may have placed themselves within a Japanese identity spectrum in Brazil (Lesser 2003, 1999; Tsuda 1999b, 2000, 2006, 2003a, 2003b).

Of particular importance to these works are discussions of how or whether ethnic minority groups face prejudice, if prior non-existent or weak national sentiment becomes strengthened as part of transnational identities in their new “homes” and experiences of border crossings. Tsuda also includes much engaging material on macro level interactions between Brazilian-Japanese in terms of the lack of infrastructure in place to help them settle and integrate, and what some local government bodies attempt to do to remedy this lack. A strong point for including this data in the present study is to extend discussion of the particular experiences of Brazilian-Japanese immigrants to a broader category of immigrants present in the country. When necessary infrastructure is lacking for even the desired “model immigrant” group, it certainly does not exist for other groups who may be even further marginalized in the country (Tsuda 2006; 2003b; 2003a; 2000; 1999b).

Lacking in these critical anthropological materials, though, are more detailed personal stories of individuals and ethnographic case studies that would help to make the meso and macro level work on minority populations in Japan and their day-to-day experiences more accessible. Micro stories with intimate details would also make the history, politics and ideology of the populations these ethnographers are interested in seem less static and generalizable as a clearly bounded group, by showing their differently lived experiences of the same governmental and legal policies affecting their lives.

Due to the nature of the emphasis in these publications on macro level interactions between governments and Japan's changing populace, one is left with the sense that the people that Tsuda discusses lack agency and personal choice in identity construction. The possibility of flexible identities and self-identities are not discussed at length, but rather seem static and imposed from above. Lie's publications also create this sense of imposition of identity except in his most recent monograph on *zainichi* (Koreans in Japan). He purposefully sets out to demonstrate historically which sets of identities are claimed or disrupted by this large group in their years spent in Japan (2008).

Another particular academic camp, one that is increasing in importance, discusses the possibilities of what writers call a multicultural Japan, wherein government policy changes are called on to facilitate citizenship rights and to recognize the growing diversity of the nation (Ishi 2008; Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008; Kajita 1998; Cornelius 1993; Lam 2009; Lavenex 2004; Lu et al. 2010; Mori 1997; Shipper 2008; Weiner 1997). They describe the emergence of a political ideal in Japan

similar to those that presumably exist in the United States, Canada, Australia and European countries.

Drawing on works by pioneers such as Roger Goodman, Wagamatsu Hiroshi, William Wetherall, George DeVos, Tanaka Hiroshi and many others, their scholarship emphasizes the existence, history and politics of minority groups that have been victimized. They further emphasize how the very presence of ethnic minority groups influences the possibility of imagining multiple ways of seeing Japan and Japanese society in its current globalization process. More specifically, these scholars are not only interested in cultural and ethnic identity in transition; they also write about diaspora, mobility, and the visibility of ethnic minorities involved in resistance and exercising agency and power.

Lieba Faier's research on Filipina immigrants to Japan does not immediately speak to the broader themes of immigration policy in Japan and its effects on minority populations the way that the materials referenced above do. Instead, Faier's research provides specific ethnographic portraits of the ways in which these Filipina oyomesan fulfill performative roles of dutiful Japanese wives, giving the reader an image of their imaginative space wherein they bring together conceptually their acts of agency and and their specific identity performances (2008).

I would like to note that this imaginative space, this space of performing a third Other - that of non-ethnic Japanese performing the roles and identities of ethnic Japanese, as well as the opposite, that of ethnic Japanese performatively engaging in non-ethnic Japanese identities - is precisely the space where I aimed to place my research. This space allows for agency on the transnational person's part in selecting or

choosing which identity fits best in which contexts, and it encourages the possibility of simultaneous multiple identities, one of which could be that of the “Japanese” person who is not ethnically Japanese.

Under the current strains of the immigration discourse taking place in Japan, the ways that one might conceive of a future Japan would be influenced by recognition of the existing groups (though small in number) who already inhabit this third, highly performative, space of identity, one that is already an accepted part of Japanese society. Faier, Sterling (2002; 2010), and Morris (2010) discuss this performative space, and it is hinted at but not explored fully in Condry’s (2006), Wood’s, Russell’s (1991; 1998), Cornyetz’s (1994) and Koshiro’s (2003) work.

Identity is flexible and continuously in motion, as it is a construction that occurs at the crossroads of internal discourse and external gazes and practices. The constitution of identity can be considered an act of power, and when one chooses partly or wholly a particular identity, this can be a point of claiming one’s agency, a choice to resist misrecognition by others. Obviously, identity is a fluid and changing process, at times a personal choice, at times forced on the individual. But the focus of the present research is how identities have possibilities for change over time and how people possess possibilities of maintaining multiple identities simultaneously. With this constant state of flux, different individuals will express their identities in different, multiple and changing ways (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008).

These possibilities are largely glossed over by the current literature wherein individuals are locked into a single ethnic category that comes across as unchanging, inflexible, and seemingly always at odds in and with Japan, Japanese society, and its

various bodies and entities. With changes in the contextual interactions, the balances of power, and the extent of discrimination, an individual's contextual identity also changes. These outcomes result in such individuals not being absolutely marginalized in Japan, but rather being marginalized only in particular contexts. Most research on minorities and multiculturalism in Japan has focused on investigating ethnic diversity and promoting ethnic rights, and such research is obviously vital. But also needed is scholarly work exploring how individuals personally and distinctively experience and form their identities (Linger 2001).

In other words, closer looks at individual and personal experiences are just as telling and necessary as macro-perspectives and work on the bigger picture relating to globalization and transnational movements. When deconstructed and analyzed, these discourses may have tangible and direct reference to ethnic identity, and can be formulated in more subtle manners. In both cases, these discourses have been framed in a variety of ways, but particular attention is paid here to references made textually by academics, politicians, scholars, through popular culture references and/or tropes of ethnicity as well as audio/visually in media, and in other portrayals and representations of immigration and national identity.

Policy Relevant Debates On Multiculturalism In Japan

Me, I work. I work hard and pay the taxes. I have Japanese passport. But when [Japanese people] see me, they ask, "Where you from? When you leave?"

- African entrepreneur

As mentioned before, Japan has made a transition from being a former country of net emigration to one of net immigration (Douglass and Roberts 2003; Cornelius and Tsuda 1994; Anisimtsev 2004). It has joined many industrialized nations that have experienced significant immigration, and just as these other nations have faced difficult questions regarding citizenship and integration policies, so does Japan. For example, what rights and opportunities should be limited to citizens and which ones should be extended to non-citizen residents, immigrants, and other denizens? What should the path to citizenship entail, and should eventual citizenship be linked to residency? The future of immigration nations rests in answering these questions and solving this puzzle in ways that benefit both the nation as a whole and its inhabitants.

As the movement of people through global migration is becoming increasingly facile, the admission of immigrants with cultural heritages or historical experiences different from those in their host societies is considered to require a more complex process of mutual adaptation. “Success in solving or resolving this puzzle also demands that a nation’s political, intellectual, and financial investments in immigration issues reflect a more appropriate balance between policies on admission and citizenship” (Klusmeyer and Aleinikoff 2000: ix).

Prior to WWII, large numbers of Koreans, Taiwanese and mainland Chinese were Japanese imperial subjects. The Japanese colonial empire saw an enlargement of the boundaries of Japanese nationals and imperial subjects and was multiethnic in character, but nationality transmission did not expand to include non-ethnic Japanese

after the end of the war. With the end of WWII, postwar reorganization of citizenship resulted in shrinkage of the number of Japanese nationals, and ethnic un-mixing occurred swiftly (Lie 2008; Klusmeyer and Aleinikoff 2000; Kashiwazaki 2000; Chung Winter, 2000; Kondo 2001; Ryang 2000; Ryang and Lie 2009; Surak 2008). Surak points out that, “With the 1947 Alien Registration Law, Korean and Chinese residents were labeled ‘aliens’ and required to carry identification cards and register with the government” (2008: 8).

This shift de-nationalized Koreans, Chinese and Taiwanese living in Japan after Korea and Taiwan were liberated from Japanese colonial rule in 1952. Those still living in Japan after the end of the war and those who married Japanese citizens still could not register in the Japanese family registry. It was required by law that Koreans and Taiwanese married to Japanese keep such family information registered outside of the country, thus making it easier to create a bounded Japanese nation renouncing the inclusion of non-ethnic Japanese (Lie 2008; Klusmeyer and Aleinikoff 2000; Kashiwazaki 2000; Chung Winter, 2000; Kondo 2001; Ryang 2000; Ryang and Lie 2009; Surak 2008).

Although not specifically speaking to Taiwanese and mainland Chinese present at the time in Japan, Ryang expands on the point that Koreans in Japan lost their political participation rights. They also lost their occupational and education opportunities, national health care, social security, war veteran and war bereavement pensions, as well as rights of overseas travel, which were all dependent on a person's possession of Japanese citizenship (2000; 2009). It wasn't until the Ratification of International Covenants on Human Rights in 1979 and the United Nations Refugee

Convention in 1981, that Japan was required to improve the status of its long-term residents and grant them legal permanent residence (Ryang and Lie 2009; Surak 2008).

In 1990, the Japanese government amended visa categories to cope with the growth of incoming foreigners while maintaining a policy of non-admission of “unskilled” labor (Mori 1997; Anisimtsev 2004; Kashiwazaki 2000). Regulation of the attribution of nationality and naturalization has remained strict even in light of increasing ethnic diversity in Japanese society. This raises a host of questions about the legal status of permanent residents, about the nature of Japanese citizenship in and of itself, and about policies concerning border control and integration of residents. These in turn create a puzzle about how to construct and integrate a multiethnic society when the presence of a significant number of resident aliens is considered to pose potential problems, and when their marginalization might lead to social and political unrest.

Given the increases in numbers of foreign workers and the growing ethnic diversity in Japanese society, it is crucial to find out what steps, if any, the country is taking to deal with this. Despite the official policy of not admitting foreigners for work or settlement, this admission has already happened, and a segment of resident aliens have settled in Japan. In this context, is Japan then moving in a direction similar to other advanced industrial societies that have undergone similar pressures? What types of policy options do they have for dealing with an influx of immigration?

To date, discussions by Japanese bureaucrats and politicians regarding decisions on national immigration policy have centered on expansion of temporary worker categories and insistence on finding only immediate and short term solutions to the country's demographic and economic decline. This is problematic, as these discussions

continue to show a reluctance to expand legal categories of citizenship and indicate a desire to maintain ethnic homogeneity. It is also problematic in the context of human and labor rights. If temporary workers continue to be incorporated into the Japanese labor force as they have been until now, they will remain alienated as a part of the lower working class with few possibilities of moving up the economic ladder, and most importantly, vulnerable to exploitation and unable to address problems of discrimination.

Activists and scholars calling for immediate reform and for the articulation of a Japanese immigration policy focus on the laws that need to be created and enforced to encourage long-term immigration, thus addressing the declining and aging Japanese demography and labor force. See for example the recent article by Lawrence Repeta with an introduction by Glenda S. Roberts on this dichotomy of approaches to immigration in Japan. Repeta pays particular attention to a highly vocal proponent of immigration, Sakanaka Hidenori, the founder of the Japan Immigration Policy Institute (November 29, 2010). A significant change in official and public attitudes towards immigrants must occur before Japan can or will be viewed as an attractive destination for talented immigrants and as an accepting society for foreigners (McNeill et al. May 17, 2009).

With the increase in foreign workers and their families in Japan, a number of issues become priority: their rights as workers, their rights and responsibilities as residents in the local community, breaches of employment contracts, medical care, housing discrimination, and education for children, among others. Initiatives for social and cultural integration of foreign workers have come mostly from the local levels of

government administration. For example, municipal governments in cities and towns with high proportions of foreign residents have attempted to provide them with necessary public services and to help promote their integration into their local communities. Accommodation of young foreigners into the educational system has been of particular concern to local governments, and schools have developed a variety of programs in order to manage ethnic and cultural diversity in their classrooms. In contrast to local governments though, the central government has taken very few measures to date for the incorporation of resident foreigners into mainstream society. (Tsuda 2006; Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008; Kashiwazaki 2000; Surak 2008; Tsuda 1999a; Nagy 2010; Gurowitz 1999; Fielding 2010; Dean and Nagashima 2007) Given the unwritten policy of not admitting foreigners for settlement, it is possible that the central government is unlikely to assume a major role in the integration of new resident aliens as members of Japanese society.

Unlike other Western nations that have dealt with immigration, Japan has no unified or coherent citizenship policy (Tsuda 2006; Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008; Cornelius and Tsuda 1994; Anisimtsev 2004; Surak 2008; Tsuda 1999a). There is, rather, a variety of laws, regulations and administrative practices that together produce characteristics in the management of Japanese nationality and citizenship:

Five basic features are discerned: *jus sanguinis* for nationality transmission, tight border control, strict naturalization rules, a close relationship between nationality and family registry, and restrictive access to the status of permanent resident. (Kashiwazaki 2000). Labor migration to Japan in the 1980s bears similarities to Western European countries in the 1960s in the sense that demographic changes and labor shortages were

the driving forces behind foreign workers' entering Japan. The demand for their labor was particularly strong as jobs at the lower strata in the labor market became harder to fill with young Japanese. It is important to note that foreign workers (*gaikokujinrodosha*) include several categories of workers and people. In the broader sense, it does and should include Westerners working in Japan. However, they predominantly occupy positions in white-collar jobs such as English language teachers, staff members in corporations, and exchange students (Klusmeyer and Aleinikoff 2000). In the prevailing discourse about foreign workers in Japan, this category of Westerners is not considered *gakokujinrodosha*, for this term is strongly associated with immigrants from less developed and non-Western countries.

"Foreign workers" as a term is typically used to refer to immigrants who work in lower strata jobs such as construction and metal processing, in machine tool and other manufacturing companies, and in the service sector (Tsuda 2006; Tsuda 1999a). In the absence of official guest worker programs, many immigrant workers in Japan entered as tourists and simply overstayed their visas. This seems to be the case for the African immigrants at the center of my research. Although the predominant image is of male workers, foreign workers also include a significant number of women working without a valid visa, many of whom end up employed in the sex industry (Klusmeyer and Aleinikoff 2000).

A second and special category associated with foreign workers is ethnic Japanese from Latin American countries. Employers have increasingly turned to them for recruitment since they are eligible for long-term visas and are allowed to take up

employment in any sector. The lawful nature of their stay and work therefore differentiates them from undocumented workers.

Female workers recruited mainly from the Philippines by the entertainment industry, trainees arriving under classroom studies trainee programs and practicums for acquiring technical skills, and students enrolled in Japanese schools and colleges make up another portion of the foreign worker category. They may enter Japan with a non-tourist visa, but they suffer the same problems of precarious legal status as undocumented workers. Female workers often become victims of exploitation, and the trainee programs often feed into the recruitment of unskilled labor. Students in Japanese language schools and colleges are allowed part-time work, but given that many lack the financial means for living and studying in Japan as long as they wish, they often work more than their allowed hours. If their working hours exceed the prescribed limit, they fall into the category of illegal workers (Surak 2008).

Heated debates concerning foreign workers took place in Japan toward the end of the 1980s and continue today. They center on the choice of “opening up” the country or “staying closed” to immigration. Some rationales voiced in favor of opening up the country include pointing out that admitting foreign workers is inevitable due to structural changes in the economy. Another point often made is that personnel exchanges would contribute to the goal of internationalizing Japan from within. A final point is that accepting foreign workers and immigrants can facilitate technological transfer and fulfill Japan’s international responsibility as an economic power (Kashiwazaki 2000).

There are of course opposing voices and points against immigration and promoting staying closed. These include pointing to European experiences of failure with guest-worker programs. Suggestions for coping with the need for certain kinds of labor include economic restructuring as well as the use of the elderly and women to cope with labor shortages. One argument against opening up Japan addresses the fear that employment of foreign workers at the lower economic strata would lead to human rights problems and lead to Japan's being seen as exploitative of less-developed countries both within the country and overseas. Yet another voice in favor of keeping Japan closed involves proposing developmental efforts in the form of financial aid, direct investment and training to fulfill Japan's international responsibility as opposed to importing unskilled labor (Douglass and Roberts 2003; Cornelius and Tsuda 1994; Anisimtsev 2004; Klusmeyer and Aleinikoff 2000; Kondo 2001; Gurowitz 1999; Kee and Yoshimatsu 2010).

What is neglected in these debates is Japan's historical labor importation during Japanese colonial rule in the early twentieth century. Both sides of the debate share the conception that postwar Japanese society was homogenous. Recognizing or acknowledging that pre and postwar Japanese society was not homogenous and that large scale labor importation was part of the Japanese empire's colonial expansion would allow a step away from the historical amnesia that enables viewing immigrants as a new threat to Japanese nationals' jobs. Recognizing Japan's past history with labor importation could clear the table and establish that the presence of non-ethnic Japanese is part of Japanese history, and meaningful exploration of successes and failures of past labor importations could be useful in current debates. It would contribute to these

debates the perspective that allowing official opening of borders might be a positive reform of past policies and enable fruitful practices for a better future.

Another perspective that would contribute to positive discourse regarding immigration in Japan might be a more formal recognition of the now vaguely acknowledged presence of foreign nationals in Japan's entertainment sectors, enabling an understanding of the ways through which they inhabit a space of performative identity. These domestic ethnic Others reproduce many Japanese cultural forms - what Sterling calls ethnic transvestism - in baseball, sumo, and popular music. "Everyone knows [they] are not ethnically Japanese, but the spectacle of [their] ethnic difference performatively inhabiting Japaneseness naturalizes the authority of this Japaneseness. The gap, then, is a sign that celebrates the signified" (2010: 51). Anthropologists William Kelly and Kenji Tierney write respectively on the presence of foreign nationals in baseball and sumo in Japan (2007; 2007). As mentioned earlier, this performative third space provides another useful way of looking at immigrant participation and identity creation in Japan, all quite useful for my own research on African immigrants living in Japan.

Still, due to the changing international position of Japan, both sides of the political discourse regarding labor migration express concerns regarding Japan's international image and how to fulfill international responsibility. Both sides also seem equally concerned with human rights issues, but in different ways. Opponents of labor migration are concerned with human rights problems as a rationale against admitting large numbers of foreign workers, whereas supporters, grassroots activists and lawyers, cite it as a basis for supporting foreign workers already residing in Japan. The two sides

agree on the need to internationalize Japan, but the question is how to go about doing so, and both sides offer few suggestions pertaining to long-term citizenship policies.

Citizenship has not become a major political issue. “Foreigners” are still regarded primarily as targets of surveillance and control, and are frequently associated with incidence of crime. Media reports generate the image that aliens disturb a well-governed, relatively crime-free society. (Kashiwazaki 2000: 463)

Japan’s principle of *jus sanguinis* has been criticized for how it excludes immigrants from accessing citizenship. Still, it doesn’t follow that if Japan should adopt *jus soli* in its place as the best solution for citizenship transmission, that this would be a radical change. Indeed, it is unlikely to happen. A more fruitful change would be the modification of the current system to increase access to nationality by the immigrant population. If this were to happen, Sweden, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands could serve as models instead of Britain or the United States.

If Japan is to incorporate permanent residents into the polity, modifying existing criteria for naturalization, toleration of dual nationality and the introduction of *sui juris* nationality acquisition to those born or raised in Japan would be recommended policy options. Given the history of negative reactions to acquisition of Japanese nationality among Koreans, it is not realistic for Japan to attempt adoption of unilateral attribution of Japanese nationality. As Kashiwazaki rightly points out, dual nationality acceptance and *sui juris* acquisition would be effective and particularly beneficial to incorporating immigrants as well as dual nationals by birth and those who currently hold permanent resident status (2000).

It is important to note that in Japan, permanent resident status holders have long been confined to former colonial subjects. Only in recent years have new immigrants begun to apply for and obtain the status. The undocumented status of some new immigrants as well as the widely held view that new immigrants are only temporary workers have also affected the numbers of newcomers who apply for and obtain resident status. Thus they have played a minimal role in debates regarding citizenship and naturalization in Japan, compared to Koreans and other long-term residents (Ryang 2000; Ryang and Lie 2009).

A segment of permanent resident aliens will most likely continue to hold on to their original citizenship, as can be seen in the case of long-term resident Koreans. Still, improvement in the status of denizenship, with local voting rights, is of special importance in the Japanese context. Some things such as basic civil and residential rights, including protection against deportation and the right of reentry have improved over the years, but there is still a lot of room for further improvement. Another area of importance for improvement is employment in the public sector where current practice limits job opportunities of non-citizens (Tsuda 2006; Mori 1997; Surak 2008; Tsuda 1999a; Kee and Yoshimatsu 2010).

Afro-Asian Scholarship: Negotiating Performative Identities

Me: Where are you from?

Him: New York. You live in New York, yes? I always say New York. Laughs.

- African entrepreneur

Writing on the relationship between Japan studies and African studies is a critical undertaking and perhaps not really possible in a space as small as the present study, as Japan studies are focused on a much smaller delineation in terms of geography as well as in “area studies.” Much scholarly material is available on the historical aspects of the development of Japan as a political underdog, its future as a model for cultural revolution, as well as its economic miracle and superpower status. It goes without saying that African studies materials are much more numerous, since the field of African Studies does not just entail the historical development of a country, but encompasses an entire continent of diasporic relationships intra-continentially and beyond its borders.

Early ethnography on Africa was carried out by colonial anthropologists, and African Studies are still mired in a colonial history that does not weigh on Japan Studies. African Studies also currently traverse theoretical and methodological discursive spaces including race, identity, ethnicity, diaspora, migration, developmental policy, nation building, nationalism, and much more, just as Japan Studies do, but on an epic scale, involving over fifty countries. Some current developments in scholarly material produced on the intersection of Japan and Africa are focused on economic development, trade and investment between the two regions. For the purpose of keeping this sub-section brief and focused, I will not engage with these materials but will place them in the reference list (Adem 2005; Ampiah 2005a; Ampiah 2005b; Burgschweiger 2008; Graburn et al. 2008; Morikawa 2005; Owoeye 1992).

My work does not seek to take on such proportions and grandeur - it would be poorly done and would risk falling into a type of historiography of two regions – a small country and a very large continent. What I would like to do instead is contribute to the field of African studies and Japan studies dually by looking at a small aspect of where the two fields connect. I seek to look at small groups of Black immigrants – Africans to be exact - in a new environment, and on what subsequent interpretations or re-interpretations of their personhood is enacted in this new space. The lives of these Africans in Japan and their experiences of Blackness, as transnational agents, as they set down roots in Japan and have families, what it means for their children to grow up in a marginal, hybrid, borderland space, while understandings and articulations of Blackness in Japan undergo changes – these are the themes that came out of my research.

I believe it is important to consider their transnational identity creation at the intersection of ethnicity as they find themselves in a place where their Other-ness is demarcated by non-Japanese-ness. In this particular Japanese historical context, it is necessary to prevent slippage into the politics of race present in the United States pertaining to African Americans, which I will expand on. In light of this caution, I will also provide a critical review of literature and debates available on Japanese perceptions of Blacks and African Americans, claims of Japanese being particularly racist toward Blacks, and historical contextualization of their connections and inspiration on both sides. Finally, I will also speak to the empty space in scholarly literature on this debate that focuses on images and perceptions of African Americans in a Japanese imaginary, as well as what it then means to be an African, or a non-African American Black in Japan.

To begin, let us consider an aspect of Japanese and African American historical relations that have only recently been noted by scholars. The spark of interest began in the mid 1980s when a series of anti-Black remarks were made by former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro and other Japanese politicians. This was well publicized in the United States media and it began to draw attention to what were regarded as racist practices on the part of the Japanese; and in addition, African American views on the Japanese came to light. Subsequent scholarly work on these incidents point out that US-Japan relations up to that historical moment had been largely viewed as relations between Japan and white America (Russell 1991; Russell 1998; Kearney 1998; Koshiro 2003; Ngoro 2004:250-250).

They further note that this view largely ignores the fact that prior to the 1980s, not only had there been no particular history of African American animosity toward Japanese, but rather, for over three generations, African American attitudes toward them had been positive. It wasn't only a one-sided fascination; Japanese similarly looked to African American leaders and Black movements in the United States with feelings of solidarity and racial affinity as fellow victims of white scorn. They shared experiences of opposition to white supremacy.

In his expanded and reprinted dissertation titled "African American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity or Sedition?" Reginald Kearney presents materials culled mainly from the Black press from 1900 to 1945, from its coverage of Japan and the Japanese (1998). He also pulls from archival government resources, including wartime FBI files on African Americans suspected of sympathizing with the Japanese. The views presented by the Black elite in the Black press were not immutable, monolithic or

lacking in ambivalence; support for and opposition to Japan rose and fell as its rapid rise to modernity shifted its position from “fellow colored people” to “honorary whites”.

African American leaders in the Pan-Africanist movement were attracted to Japan’s Pan-Asianist movement and Japanese militants were attracted to African American militants for their seeming consonance of goals, envisioning non-white power blocks in the world, and for their anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist fight. Some African American leaders were cautious about such an alliance precisely due to Japan’s dualistic racial identity and its position of power in relation to white America (Kearney 1998; Koshiro 2003). As Japan began to emerge as a colonial power itself, many African Americans rejected Japan’s Pan-Asianism and were disturbed by Japan’s own colonial efforts as well as reports of crime committed by non-Japanese emphasizing racial character, just like America’s media treatment of African Americans.

With the collapse of the Japanese empire and the cold war in Asia, the postwar Japanese government was restored to its “honorary white nation” position, and the US government intended to keep Japan as a strategic and ideological ally (Kearney 1998). In this context, Japan no longer needed a Pan-Asianism movement and reports of the African American struggle became fewer. The culmination of the Civil Rights movement and subsequent changes also resulted in a halt to looking to the Pan-Asianist and Marxist revolutionaries in Japan as fellow fighters (Koshiro 2003).

In his final chapter, Kearney relates that the 1980s and early 1990s marked a period of regression in African American-Japanese relations and suggests that many images of Japanese in the Black community are largely based on stereotypical representations in the white media as villains and arrogant racists. By the 1990s, Black

views of Japanese had grown more hostile, and he feared that “Bombarded with anti-Japanese propaganda, without the counterpoints once offered by Du Bois [and other members of the Black intelligentsia], African Americans are quite as liable to accept the image of Japanese as people intent on ‘giving us the business’” (1998: 132).

It is quite interesting that Kearney writes this, considering Japan’s own importation of prejudiced and racist media representations of Africans and African Americans. These media representations are portrayed as the ground zero of media imagery in influencing contemporary perceptions of African Americans and relations between African American and Japanese. Many scholars have criticized these caricatures of African Americans in Japanese media in the form of advertisements, dolls, commercials and more. Notable scholars on the subject have problematized how Japanese media perceive Blackness to be a commodity and a fetishized accessory in Japan (Russell 1991; Russell 1998; Cornyetz 1994; Koshiro 2003; Wood 1997). Morris has written instead that consumed Blackness is a performance whereby a Western Black gaze, and/or the judgment of African Americans, albeit a non-existent or phantasm solely existing in the performer’s consciousness, is appealed to subtly or implicitly. “What’s of concern is not the opinion of any black individual or group, but that of an omnipresent abstract blackness constructed by the self-consciousness of the re-producer” (2010: 241).

Frank Dikötter notes that:

Far from being a negligible aspect of contemporary identities, racialized senses of belonging have often been the very foundation of national identity in East Asia in the 20th century...

It is not a necessary precondition to use the word ‘race’ in order to construct racial categories of thought... Racial discourse in... Japan thrived and evolved over time because it reconfigured pre-existing notions of identity and simultaneously appealed to a variety of groups, from popular audiences to groups of scientists. (1997b: 2, 3, 8)

Sterling and a few others further point out that although the Western term “race” is not one of the English loanwords commonly used or explicitly invoked in Japan, racial discourse is clearly evident and that Japan’s birth as a nation was primarily defined by the adoption of Western institutions and ideologies, including racial ones, which have remained intact in Japan even today (Sterling 2010; Oguma 2002). Race manifests itself in Japanese popular culture and literary imaginings of itself in relation to whiteness (Creighton 1995; Kelsky 1994, 2001) and to blackness (Russell 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1998). It manifests itself in everything from representations of Japanese characters in manga as phenotypically white and in blackface performers who appear on Japanese television. Sterling further elucidates that:

It may very well be this omnipresence and perhaps even the naturalness – for too many and for too long – of black objectification and idealization of whiteness that has made it possible to miss the presence of racial thinking in Japan. Given the commonness of these images; given a series of remarks by high-level Japanese politicians from the 1980s through the early 1990s in which blacks were variously described as dirty, fiscally

irresponsible, and unintelligent; given the works of female writers who have garnered popularity among Japanese readers in part through explicit descriptions of their liaisons with sexually stereotyped black men; given a certain lurid fascination in the Japanese media with the excesses of African American servicemen... it is not hard to conclude that racism is a reality in Japan. (2010: 25)

Blackness in and of itself, however, appears not to be a sufficient signifier for this fetishized desire; since a similar desire is not expressed for just any dark skinned people (i.e. East Asians, Australian indigenes, Africans). It is restricted to African Americans, or New World Blacks as Russell calls them (1998: 116). This is a point of particular interest to me as not only Russell points out this distinction of the type of Blackness that is consumed, but Wood, Cornyetz and Koshiro also point this out (Cornyetz 1994; Koshiro 2003; Wood 1997). Wood goes into more detail to explain in his essay that Africans present in the spaces where Blackness is consumed, along with African Americans, pose a threat to the African Americans and cause them considerable discomfort, because these Africans could “pass” for African Americans and “steal” the attention of Japanese women away from “real” African Americans. He quotes one American saying about Africans in Roppongi that “Nobody who knows anything about hip-hop culture would go out looking like that. They don’t know any better. And the Japanese girls can’t tell the difference” (1997: 53). This signifies the real issue: African American soldiers “don’t mind the blackface Japanese, whose tans they see as flattery or beauty or silliness, but they do mind the competition from the Africans [...] The

issue is authenticity. In Roppongi, where everybody consumes everybody, the real question is who gets to be an African American” (ibid). Morris further echoes Wood’s point regarding authenticity and the search for it (2010).

My own research and my experiences meeting Africans in Tokyo confirmed the above authors’ points – that desire for Blackness in Japan were for a particular type of Black body – that of African Americans, and many Africans who participated in my research discussed the process of enacting non-African Black identities as a means of creating spaces of inclusion when and African blackness would exclude them. These Africans were owners of, portrayers of, performers of Black American hip-hop culture, with the requisite clothing and other artifacts. It was clear to me as both an African and a Black American that most of the Black people I had met in Tokyo were in fact African and not African American (Tete-Rosenthal). Anthropologist Damani Partridge recently wrote:

I learned that even in sub-Saharan Africa, young men planning to migrate to Europe were practicing their performance of “Black” American masculinity, learning to dance, speak, and move like “African Americans.” In my own observations (beginning in the mid-1990s) in contemporary German clubs and asylum hostels, I saw African men wearing American baseball caps and FUBU jackets, dancing to what Germans now call “Black music” (e.g., R&B, hip-hop, and soul). In the mid- 1990s, from asylum camps to dance clubs, I observed this performance as one of the only ways in which they could be intelligible as (“modern”— not

starving, humanitarian aid dependent) human beings in contemporary Germany. (2013: 43)

Russell continues, stating that these paradigms of consumed Blackness, even those regarded as positive, are based on stereotypes that deprive Blacks of their humanity, individuality, and heterogeneity. He argues quite convincingly on this matter and adds much to our understanding of the imaginings of Blackness present in Japan (1991; 1998). Prior to living in Tokyo, I would have argued that these imaginings are part of Japan's past and that this type of essentialized Blackness is less at play now. Unfortunately, after spending several years in Tokyo and experiencing discrimination based both on my foreigner status and my Black body, I would have to conclude that the elements in Russell and Hall's findings play a significant role in interactions between Japanese and immigrants living in Japan. That does not mean that a particular type of Blackness or Black culture is not being translocated as global capital from the US for consumption abroad - it is - and it is in the form of hip hop. Arguably, this new consumption of Blackness has its problems as well, but is much more complex and flexible than just that of Japanese youth donning the mask of Blackness and performing "coolness".

Literature on the consumption of Blackness and invariably of the ways it is consumed, leads me to wonder whether a central theme of authenticity has gone unquestioned or unnoticed in earlier literature. This has been hinted at by Russell (1998, 1991) and Koshiro, Wood (2003), and distinctly expressed by Morris (Morris 2010), which leads me to a striking sense of *déjà-vu*, of the uncanny: the inauthentic African performing African American identity, the African American performing a type (out of

multiple available identities) of Black identity, leading right into the Japanese youth performing a type of unquestioned Western Black identity, all forming a powerful circular mode of engagement with one another, all the while, authenticity, or a certain lack of it, binding them all together. I say a certain lack of authenticity because, as I have discussed in an earlier section, taking on identities, whether they are self-imposed or other-imposed, is always a performance, even a form of caricature, because there is no “true” essence or one bounded self that is knowable and unalterable. (Which identity would be the "authentic" one for me – my original "purely" West African self until I was 10 years old, my African American identity that followed, my Mina birth mother's Catholic religion, my adoptive [white] mother's Vodou fieldwork where we all became participants for several years, and I still have the scarifications to prove it, etc.).

Cornyetz offers a slightly different reading from Russell about the signification of Blackness in Japan in her essay “Fetishized Blackness: Hip Hop and Racial Desire in Contemporary Japan” (1994). She proposes that the contemporary reproduction of Blackness through style, consumption of hip-hop attire and skin darkening “signifies a potential transnational identity, supplementary to a preciously interjected, Western imperialist black-white binary paradigm, revelatory of a desire and a propensity for racial identificatory slippage” (1994: 115). Like Russell, she says the images of African Americans and Blackness are imported from MTV and Hollywood movies and not internally generated in Japan. However, she argues that the widespread and seemingly enthusiastic consumption of Blackness as a style in Japan is reproduced and consumed differently than in a place like white suburban America. She notes, “In the Japanese

reproduction, while many of the origins of hip-hop are erased, they are erased differently; most notably, they are not ‘whitened’” (1994: 119).

Russell, Cornyetz and others are partially correct when they say that it is done through fetishized desire, even as I argue, it is also meant to be inspiration and a mode of expression deriving from a historical consonance of revolution as well as a challenge to dominant paradigms of Japanese identity. When considering identity, it makes sense to note that one can perform an identity, don certain masks in certain contexts and under particular situations, and then remove, change or alter them. This type of performance in itself is not negative or racist, but rather denotes ability to move between spaces of belonging and association. Bi(multi)racial children or people who have grown up with transnational identities understand this flux in defining identity. Still, without a proper contextualization or historical placement of the ideas, cultures, bodies or types of Blackness being consumed, the consumption or desire to consume is a racialized and racist expression. As many of the types of Blackness being consumed in Japan are tropes and stereotypes, it is not difficult to draw the conclusion that:

It is not just comments like those described above [made by Japanese politicians], nor just the simultaneous fascination and wariness with which foreigners generally are often regarded, including as racial others. Foreigners in general are subject to housing discrimination and to restricted employment opportunities; they are rarely able to become Japanese citizens... But while foreigners might generally be seen as other, and might be all subject to a certain generalized discrimination, individual

groups of foreigners often have certain racial stereotypes associated with them. For example, while both black and white men (regardless of nationality) might be considered impure, extreme in their sexual endowments and appetites, tending toward violence and so forth, the otherness of black foreigners is inflected far more regularly and far more singularly in these terms. White men are routinely imagined as kind, romantic, and sophisticated in ways that black men, reducible to their phalluses, are not. (Sterling 2010: 43)

As Mitzi Carter and Aina Hunter write on their experiences of being Black and biracial women in Japan, they express the lack of racism they experienced, resulting in questioning the current academic (and non-academic I might add) perspectives on Blackness in Japan. “We shouldn’t assume ‘the Japanese’ still think or have ever only thought of Blackness as a mere site, as a place for touristic pleasures where Japanese women and rebellious youth can escape to some liminal destination and lose themselves or find a new, ‘unbound’ self in this place of Blackness where they can explore the Other only to reify their authentic Japanese identity once past this performance stage” (2008: 192). These writers are correct when they hold that we should not make the assumption that attention to racial essentialism is a useful tool in analyzing interactions between Japanese and non-Japanese. Even so, my own experience living in Japan has taught me that this analysis is not the end of the story. It is through experience that I have understood that in certain contexts, Japanese interactions with me have indeed

involved racism, and that certain acts of discrimination against me were motivated by the color of my skin.

It would not be wise to dismiss all of what Russell, Sterling, and others who have argued similarly, and argued well have to say. Carter and Hunter point out that “Just as the appropriation of urban forms of ‘blackness’ adopted by many white, middle-class youth in rural spaces in the United States does not necessarily signal growing equality and acceptance of racialized people, the same can be applied in Japan” (ibid). And Russell similarly asserts, “Both [the acceptance of black cultural forms and foreign loan words] function decoratively to bestow on the user a certain degree of prestige and fashionability, while insuring that the objects of imitation are excluded” (1998: 147).

Cornyetz also notes that she concurs cautiously with Russell’s conclusion that the vast majority of “expanded roles” of Blackness...

“remain[s] within set domains (those of musicians, athletes, studs). I think that for some Japanese youth, African Americans as signs are encoded with additional, new significations: the images of African Americans are not the same old thing but something different (even if they are still also informed by antecedent discourses). For many young Japanese, admiration replaces former fear and distaste, as evidenced by the quote, ‘I am mesmerized [akogareta] by black people’” (1994: 122).

Akogareta - to yearn for, to be in awe of, to desire something different, a “difference [which] is affirmed through the surety that outfit and skin darkening do not erase their

own Japaneseness” (1994: 132), but they also do not solely function to reaffirm the “Japanese self”.

This yearning or desirability for the Other, for a particular type of Black body is especially clear when considering those socio-cultural, economic, legal and political inclusionary structures in place denoting desirable and accepted citizens, the only path for non-citizens is to perform an identity which is read as desirable and able to be included. Africans in Japan strategically perform or occupy these desirable identities in a variety of contexts including through labor and in intimate relationships that can lead to marriage and provide a means for them to find belonging while simultaneously being excluded. In his ethnographic work on race, sex and citizenship in Germany, Partridge shows that one of the paths for German noncitizens to become citizens is by having becoming desirable to White German women:

The discretionary power exercised by White German women in their relationships with Black men illustrates how desire and rights become entangled. In these instances, the discretionary power of the state falls into the hands of unofficial actors, and the law is ultimately constituted through informal, everyday decision making or personal discretion. White German women exercise state power through their intimate engagements. [...] What previously would have been abject beings become subjects, but in a way that preserves and even depends on their position as outsiders. In the contemporary German context, Black male bodies can be incorporated if White women see them as beautiful

and if they successfully perform hypersexually. The process is not one of normalization, but of hypersexualization. (2012: 79-80)

Analyses of the consumption of Blackness in Japan may resonate during discussions about certain meanings of African American-ness and Blackness derived in the United States because, as many have argued, racialized depictions of Black people were largely adopted from Western institutions and ideologies. Even though the term “race” is not commonly used in the Japanese language, racial discourse is clearly evident and the construction of Japan as a nation was built on the racialized positioning of Japan to other neighboring countries and to the West in relation to whiteness. Analyses of Blackness in the context of Japan require further contextualization in terms of their positionality as a marginalized and racialized other in relation to Western discourse and ideologies and simultaneously as a global north, contemporary capitalist nation.

4: MARRIAGE & DESIRE: STRATEGIES OF BELONGING

Why don't have you a boyfriend? Do you like Japanese men? You should find a nice Japanese man and marry him. That way, when you finish your studies, you can keep learning traditional Japanese dance. If you go back to America, you can teach the dance over there. That's a good idea isn't it?

- African female business owner

International marriages have increased dramatically as a result of contemporary processes of globalization, (uneven) economic development and unprecedented ease in modes of people and data transportation in travel and communication across borders (Robinson 2007). Of exceptional note are cross-border marriages between Global North men and Global South women, and this has received much scholarly attention. Unfortunately, some feminist critiques about this phenomenon have portrayed these particular international marriages negatively, describing women as powerless “commodities” traded in the international marriage market, and as victims of globalization (Nakamatsu 2002; Robinson 2007). Women from the Global South married to men from the global north are referred to as exploited, vulnerable, marginalized and inactive (Piper 1997; Lan 2008). In terms of gender dynamics in international marriages, the argument is that the inequity in power relationships in the domestic sphere reinforces a traditional patriarchal system in which females are relegated to an inferior status. However, recent empirical studies on the daily lives of

foreign wives show that such simple dichotomies of domination - men over women and the global north over the global south - do not do justice to the complexities of these international marriages. It is true that some marriages may fall into these dichotomous categories, but they cannot all be seen in such a light that strips the women involved in these international marriages and transactions of their agency. In fact, women often exercise agency in the process of international marriage and find ways to negotiate power in their marriages (Nakamatsu 2002; Suzuki 2004; Lauser 2008).

In contrast to women involved in international marriages, men who are engaged in international marriages are largely missing from scholarly material. Suzuki points out:

In studies of cross-border marriage migration, women tend to be the central topic of discussion, and men have largely remained as anonymous bodies exercising power and violence in the shadowy areas of matchmaking and isolated domestic life. (2007: 429)

Here Suzuki is referring to husbands from the global north and wives from the global south. In fact, her research on Japanese husbands of Philippine wives details the complex motivations and experiences of these husband-wife pairings. Suzuki shows that such international marriages move beyond simple dichotomies of traditional vs. modern and global vs. local.

In this chapter, I turn to the motivations and experiences of African husbands and Japanese wives. Switching from global north men marrying global south women, these stories portray instead a less-depicted and less-studied dynamic of global south men marrying global north women (see Fleischer 2008). These stories provide new

insights on the intersections of gender, class and race. In the scant scholarship about male immigrants using marriage as a legal integration strategy or about their experiences of international marriage, they are portrayed in a significantly different manner from women. Instead of being characterized as victims, they are often represented as opportunity seekers who use women from and living in developed countries to gain access to legal residency. In exploring the marriage strategies and experiences of male immigrants from West Africa in Tokyo, I argue that such a limited view of these marriages does not provide an accurate picture of their motivations for getting married to a Japanese woman. Portraying their marriages simplistically as scam marriages does not do justice to the complexity of the realities of their lives in Japan and their desires to find ways to put down roots when their options are severely limited. It also fails to take into consideration the near impossibility of belonging and thus finding strategies around these limitations has to happen in creative ways. Since belonging or gaining cultural or community citizenship in Japan is based on blood and socio-biological idea about who is Japanese and how different groups can belong to the nation continue to shape the modes through which certain bodies continue to be seen as non-Japanese and thus non-citizens, we must consider the ways in which citizenship becomes constitutive of social relationships and marriages more broadly.

International Marriage in Japan

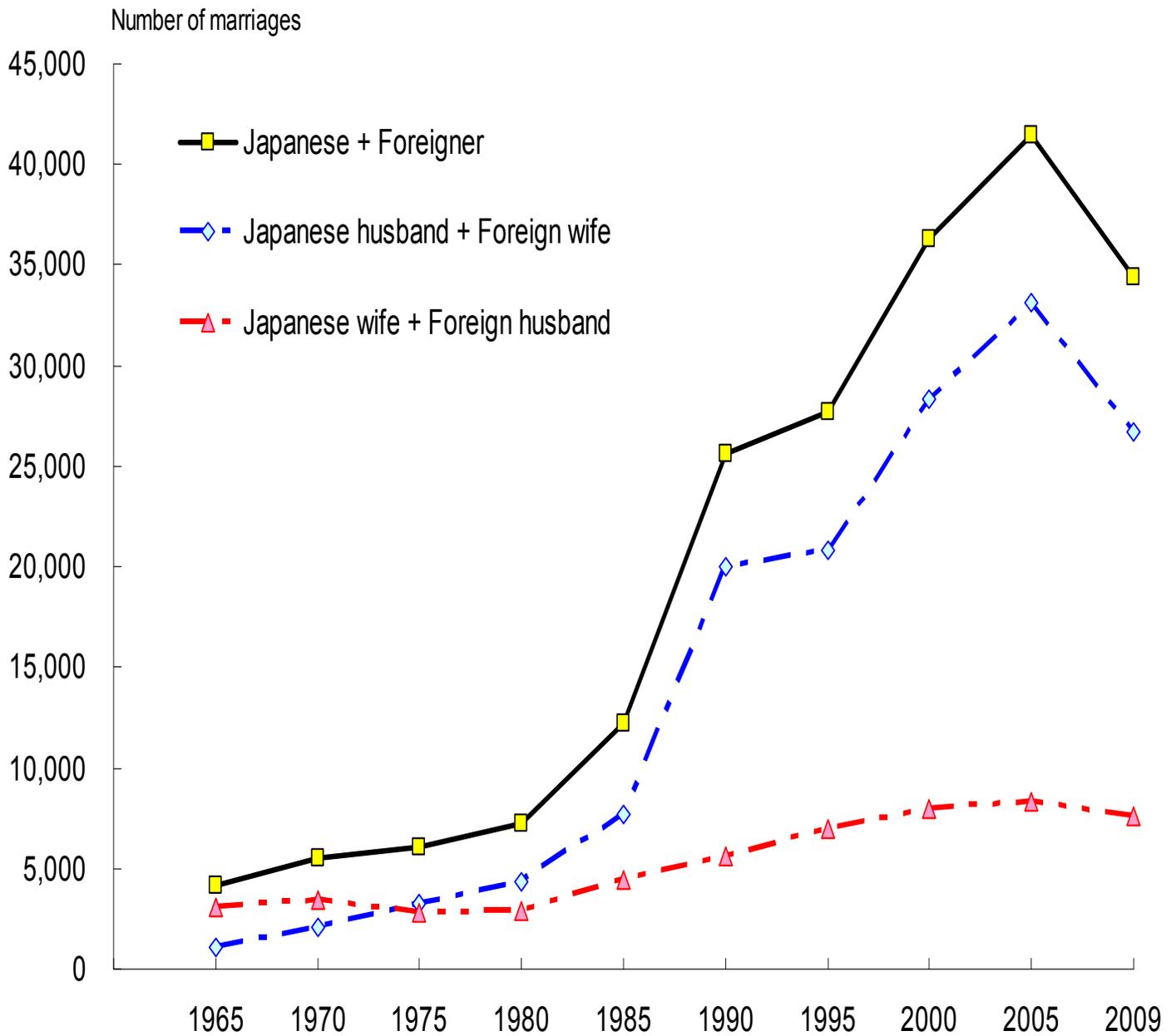
I'm married to a Japanese man. I love Japan in many ways, but sometimes the culture is isolating. But it's helpful that my

husband is willing to live abroad and doesn't think like a typical Japanese salary-man. That's important and has helped me a lot.

He's willing to be married to a foreigner.

- African female business professional

FIGURE 1: TREND OF INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE IN JAPAN, 1965 - 2009



Source: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare

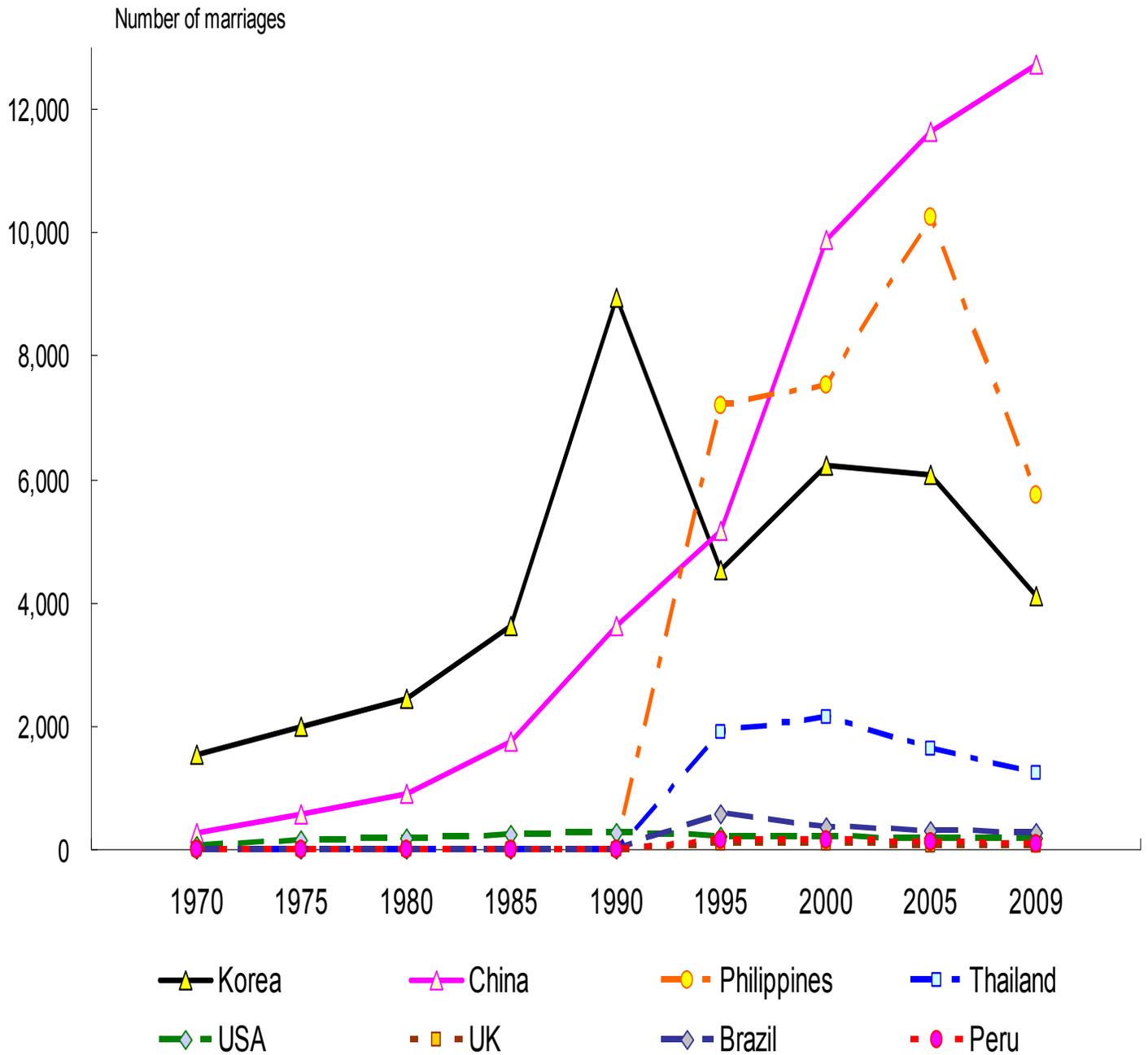
International marriages in Japan, known as *kokusaikekkon*, have steadily been on the rise. Currently, one out of eighteen marriages in Japan involves a foreign spouse (Nitta 1988; Roberts 2008). See for example, the table below demonstrating the trend of international marriage in Japan from 1965-2009.

One can reliably state that after the Second World War, the international marriages taking place in Japan were typically of Japanese women to foreign husbands, most often to American servicemen. Today the opposite is true - almost 80 percent of international marriages consist of a foreign wife (usually Asian) and a Japanese husband.

Two reasons for the increase in international marriages are societal changes and processes of globalization. With regard to societal changes, it is clear that Japanese women have become more economically independent, they are able to pursue education past high school, and they enjoy an increase in career choices and paths. This is in spite of continuing gender discrimination and persistently strict, dichotomous gender roles. One result of women's (and men's) choosing to pursue education or career paths for longer than they've ever been able to do historically, is a lack of available marriage candidates for Japanese men in rural areas. In order for women to pursue higher education or a professional career, they have had to move to Japan's metropolises or even abroad, and as a result many were no longer willing to live in the countryside and do farm-work. Of the people who remained in the countryside, those who wanted to marry found the pool of possible spouses drastically reduced, and many men turned to countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, and China to find a partner (Piper 1997).

The second reason for the increase in international marriages, the process of globalization, is linked to the first process. Many Japanese women go abroad for education or to pursue a career, and in addition to that, increasing numbers of Japanese nationals are traveling abroad for pleasure. Many foreigners are also coming to Japan and more than ever before end up staying (Goodman, Takenaka and White 2003; Douglass and Roberts 2000). Even though Japan does not consider itself a country of immigration, the numbers of foreign students, workers and professionals have been steadily rising. In 2007, the number of foreigners in Japan made up 2 percent of the population. Since then, their numbers have grown to over 2 million. Taken together, the developments discussed above have increased contact with the world outside of Japan and have had the effect of increasing the number of international marriages from 5,000 a year in 1970 to 45,000 in 2005.

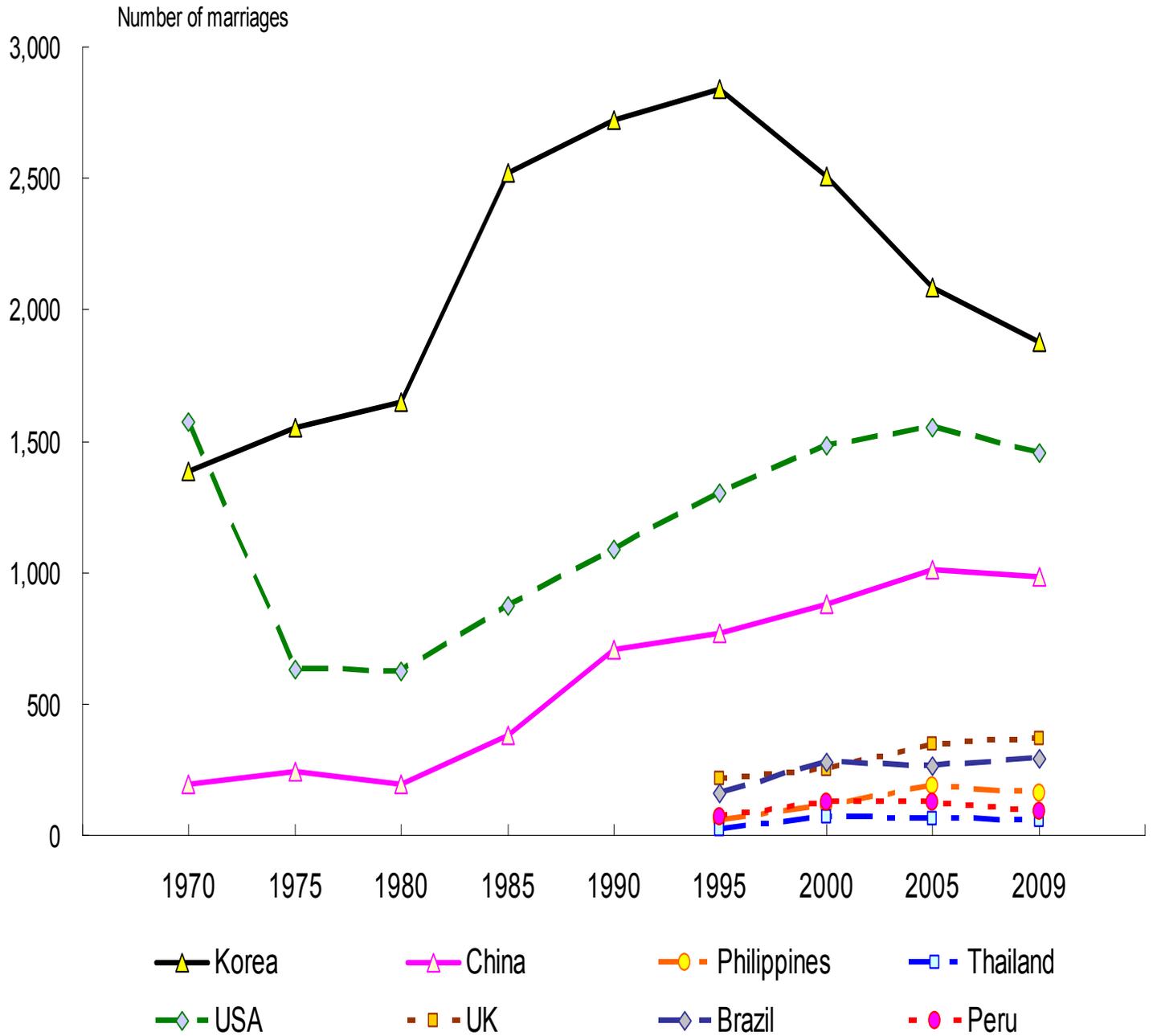
FIGURE 2: NATIONALITY COMPOSITION OF FOREIGN SPOUSES, 1970 – 2009



(a) Country of Origin of the Foreign Wife

Source: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare

FIGURE 3: NATIONALITY COMPOSITION OF FOREIGN SPOUSES, 1970 – 2009



(b) Country of Origin of the Foreign Husband

Source: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2010)

International marriage is not neutral when it comes to gender and ethnicity. Professional dating agencies that offer matchmaking services are aware of this and no doubt profit from it, and this is reflected in the prices charged for membership, parties and introductions. Nakamatsu (2002:125-126) found that parties targeted at introducing Western men to Japanese women charged the men 3,500 JPY and the women 5,500 JPY. When it came to introducing Japanese women to men from Africa and from other Asian countries, the women were invited to attend parties for free, and the men were charged 9,500 JPY. Magazines targeting the expat or international community in Japan such as *Metropolis* and the *Hiragana Times* feature pages of classifieds where non-Japanese men are seeking Japanese women and Japanese women are mainly searching for Western men. Until very recently, the *Hiragana Times* published weekly articles featuring international or interracial couples where roughly 95% of the couples were Western men partnered with Japanese women, even though such couples represent a minority of international couples in Japan.

Existing research on international marriage in Japan has also mainly dealt with "Asian brides" and focused on negative images of non-Japanese Asian women in Japan as entertainers, sex workers and hostesses (Piper 1997, 1999), on the micro level or interpersonal level of international marriages, examining the degree to which foreign brides adjusted to their new environment, how gender and power relations played out within the home (Suzuki 2004), or on the organization of the international marriage market (Nakamatsu 2002). Although cultural differences are often used to explain marital problems and diverging expectations of marriages, some of these studies also

indicate more general problems such as those found in most marital relationships that can be related to wider social and economic structures that promote gender inequality, and not on the fact that the marriage is international. Rather than focusing solely on the personal relationship inside the couple, I have included societal or macro level analysis of international marriages between African husbands and Japanese wives. I show that difficulties gaining social acceptance of such marriages (as for example biased treatment by administrative institutions), and racism and discrimination in Japanese society, must not be ignored in the examination of these marriages (and motives for avoiding such a marriage). The lack of opportunities in Japan to secure residence permits for labor immigrants is an important factor in analyzing African immigrants' motives for and experiences of international marriage. This will be underpinned by empirical evidence, derived mainly from interviews with individual immigrant men and Japanese spouses.

Africans, Not African Americans

My husband is from Ghana. When we got married, we went to Ghana so I could meet his parents and family. They were very nice to me and he is always on the phone with them. I wish they could visit us here, but there is no space and it's expensive. Hopefully, in the future, we can move to Ghana. I would like that. And the food is good! [The baby] also eats it when her dad cooks. Laughs.

- Japanese housewife and part-time worker

Although the majority of the African population in Japan consists of West Africans, the population is diverse in terms of ethnicity and social background. Some of the Africans who came to Japan arrived as exchange students on government sponsored or cultural exchange scholarships and programs. Individuals in this demographic are usually from relatively privileged social backgrounds, and some belong to the elite of their countries. Others have come as labor immigrants, but even these men often have college educations; still others come from middle class families. Migration studies have long established that it is not usually the poorest of the population who migrate abroad, and this is certainly demonstrable in the case of Africans in Japan.

In spite of the fact that there are increasing numbers of African immigrants in Japan, their reception is ambivalent. The majority of Africans have many positive encounters with individual Japanese, but they also suffer from institutional discrimination and negative stereotypes fed by popular media and even politicians. Several articles have been published in magazines and newspapers on how Africans - and Nigerians are often the target - have become more and more involved in Tokyo's nightlife businesses and entertainment establishments. Some incidents of credit card fraud and bill padding have further increased the negative image of Nigerian owned businesses. In 2007, the controversial former Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara claimed that foreigners were responsible for the rising crime rate in Japan. In a follow-up interview a week later after his statement was challenged, he stated, "Africans – and I do not mean African-Americans – who do not speak English are there doing who knows

what” (Brasor 2007). Ishihara was quite popular because he was perceived to be unafraid to voice the so-called common sense opinions of the populace, and the fear and distrust of Africans in Japan was an example of that. Of all the African *tarento* (TV talents and personalities), the one person who was featured regularly was Bobby Ologun, who was willing to play a funny, childlike, unsophisticated person who had an awkward command of the Japanese language and was unaware of when he or his language skills were being made fun of by his Japanese co-stars. Although Bobby can speak fluent Japanese and is university educated, he is expected to play the buffoon for the purpose of consumption. Other African *tarento* such as Baudouin Adogony, who is sophisticated, university-educated and multi-lingual, get much less television exposure because they won’t play the expected role of the good-natured, childlike African.

Well-attended international exchange festivals nevertheless reflect an interest in African cultures on the part of some Japanese people. These events are numerous, and in addition to these festivals there are restaurants and bars that are owned by Africans and that host musicians, dancers and performers of African culture (Japanese and Africans alike). These local areas that are pockets of cultural enactment get much less media coverage, if any at all, but are well attended by Japanese and Africans alike. One of these festivals is known as the "African Festa" and is an annually organized event, sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Embassies in Tokyo and Kanagawa prefecture. The "Festa" is a two-day outdoor event with music, dance performances by African musicians and African-Japanese dance groups, and involves the promotion of African culture and tourism. There are also exhibitions of African products where people can try African dishes; and in the "workshop corner" and

"fashion corner" they can experience the musical instruments, clothing, and other cultural manifestations of Sub-Saharan Africa. NGOs also present their work and raise awareness regarding development projects and issues in Africa. The aim is to promote understanding of and support of African people, and the event draws thousands of visitors regularly.

African-Japanese Marriage

I love my wife and I love my daughter. This is their picture.

Living in Japan is difficult, but I have them. My wife and I, we don't live together, but we have a child, my daughter. We work for her.

- African business owner

During the first wave of immigration to Japan in the 1980s, Ghanaians are believed to be the first group to have made the trip, and they went to Japan with the aim of staying for a short period of time. At that time it was relatively easy to obtain a tourist visa for Japan and renew it every 3 months by briefly leaving the country or by enrolling in a Japanese language school and converting a tourist visa to a cultural visa, which was valid for two to three years. A cultural visa also allowed one to work a certain number of hours per week and was useful for gaining language experience while working. Since most of the earlier immigrants from Africa were single males, family reunification did not occur at first, or at least not often, but chain migration did happen

and continues today. Pathways of students and labor immigrants to Japan do not vary much, but their experiences in Japan can vary greatly depending on how much financial support they have from their country of origin or from Japan through scholarships, or lack of this kind of support in the case of labor immigrants. However, both groups face difficulties in securing long-term legal status that would allow them to achieve their migration goals, i.e., to earn enough money to support their families or to set up their own businesses in their home countries. Each immigrant fears deportation and especially being sent back (or having to go back on their own) without having accomplished their personal aims and those of the family.

According to those I spoke with, marriage had not been an initial plan, but after realizing that one of the only ways to stay in the country and be able to work was to get married, many of them searched for a wife. This was usually a last resort measure, and if dating occurred, it usually started out as mutual interest. The legal need for marriage was a major influence on when they got married rather than whether they would get married. Most of the African immigrants arrived in Japan during their family-formation age - between the ages of 20 and 40 years. As already stated, the sex ratio among Africans in Japan is highly uneven, with men making up 90% of the population, thus reducing opportunities for African men to meet African women that they might marry. Still, even if there were more African women present in Japan, same-country marriage rather than Japanese-African marriage would not be as common since it would not enable or facilitate obtaining legal residence and a working permit. In the event that an African man and an African woman marry, it is usually after the man has been in Japan long enough to become financially and socially established, legally documented (if he

was undocumented at one point); and he can then bring family members to Japan. Some who have married African women have met them while residing in Japan, and a few others have either gone back to their home countries, married and brought their spouses over, or they brought the spouse they had married prior to arriving in Japan, under family reunification.

The process of trying to become a citizen, a process that demands normalization or becoming Japanese, a process that has been refused to anyone who is not ethnically Japanese, cannot be sufficiently understood by an analysis of resistance. The status of noncitizens is not based simply on personal refusals to become normalized or Japanese citizens,

but more complexly on the impossibility of this becoming. The process of “foreign” incorporation is not one of normalization, but one of differentiation. The regimes of governance that regulate the incorporation of noncitizens are operating under a politics of exclusionary incorporation. This process of becoming noncitizens, [...] is relevant to a range of subjects, including those who would (in a more equitable world) like to become normal [citizens], and at least on the surface would willingly give up the possibilities to “queer” (see Butler 1993) national subjectivity from within, in order to be subjects who will be understood as part of the family. (Partridge 2013: 18)

Loneliness, Misunderstanding and Culture

*When I see a Japanese walking on the street, a Japanese woman,
I cross the street if I can. I don't want to see the fear in her eyes
when she sees me. I pull my hat down, and I cross the street.*

- African entrepreneur

Loneliness is a topic people bring up again and again in conversation, their own loneliness and that of Africans in general, including expressions of concern for my being in Japan without any immediate family members. The loneliness they speak of is not only a sense of physical separation and isolation from family members back home (a feeling of homesickness); being foreign in a country they are trying to make home, they face difficulties blending their multifaceted sense of self into their new environment. It is a loneliness that has to do with being solitary in both body and spirit, separated from those people and things they hold close as "home," and seemingly unable to connect deeply on an emotional level with those around them - Japanese, African, or other. They are also speaking of a loneliness that has to do with their inability to confide in anyone, to discuss problems and share their worries and hopes. When they can, many people in the West African community interact with one another at parties and other events, but that is not the same thing as feeling comfortable talking to someone about their intimate thoughts and emotional states. Part of this loneliness has to do with cultural upbringing, for in their cultures of origin it may not be considered proper to discuss one's problems with people unconcerned with the issues at hand. Since it might place people in a bad

light, and it might be seen as simply complaining, it is considered proper manners to forego discussion of personal matters with others and rather try to deal with them alone. Depending on which cultural and/or religious upbringing one has been molded by, there are also particular ways of dealing with personal problems or community problems that are considered acceptable. One example would be ritual confrontation and cleansing. But in the absence of these accepted modes of dispelling concerns and worries, one is left mulling things over in isolation and keeping things inside.

It might be expected that with marriage a person would feel more at ease sharing concerns and worries with their partner, but some Africans continue to feel as though they should not, or cannot, share with their spouses. The reasons given for this withholding are two-fold: they have grown up with certain cultural expectations of how they should behave (and according to those I have spoken with, so have their spouses, who seem to be hesitant to share their concerns with them). The second reason they give for feeling lonely even when married is that there seem to be misunderstandings on both sides regarding gender roles as husband and wife, the culturally accepted and expected duties of each. More on this will be discussed later in this chapter; suffice it to say here that common complaints among men are that their Japanese spouses "don't know how to treat their husbands (or a man) right," while women complain that their African husbands don't let them manage the family budget. Many Japanese-African couples also kept their finances separate, each putting money into a separate account meant for family expenses (it is not legally possible to have a joint account in Japan), and neither person seemed to know exactly how much income their spouses brought home.

Marriage As A Privilege

My wife and I have been married for 11 years and she knows where to buy everything to make African food, but she still likes it better when I make it for her. So I cook it for her and she cooks the Japanese food.

- African business owner

The initial wave of African immigrants to arrive in Japan in the 1980s found it relatively easy (compared to present-day arrivals) to obtain visas and residence permits, even without having Japanese spouses. Nowadays, however, being married to a Japanese national is practically the only means of securing a residence permit for the majority of immigrants in Japan. It has also become one tool used by recent African immigrants who came on either student or tourist visas, overstayed, and have since found work in the informal sector. According to Ito, in terms of rights, "spouses of Japanese nationals" are classified as one of the most privileged groups among foreigners in Japan, particularly in comparison to the vulnerability of undocumented immigrants (Ito 2005).

Being married to a Japanese national, though, offers immigrants a few advantages beyond just the resident permit, such as acquiring the legal documents required in the event one wants to set up a personal business. One popular method of making a living among Africans residing in Japan (and in other countries as well) is to set up a transnational business. Well known examples are the businesses of selling

electronics or of buying and re-selling second hand cars and car parts. Setting up a business is not an easy process anywhere, but in Japan, where all documents are in Japanese, and where one often needs a Japanese guarantor for legal documents (renting an apartment, buying a house, signing any sort of legal contract, etc.), if one has a Japanese spouse and one's name is entered in a Japanese family registry, the process is easier. Many Japanese spouses have acted as translators, guarantors, managers, etc. on behalf of their African spouses in order to secure their "in-group" status and inspire confidence in the Japanese persons with whom the business transactions are being made.

Under these circumstances, it would be easy to classify such African-Japanese marriages as "morally invalid" or somehow not "real marriages," or as mere "marriages of convenience" because they involve such legal dependency on the Japanese spouse. I would caution against this because the African men in my research did not marry a Japanese wife solely for the purpose of securing documents or pursuing business plans. And such classifications don't do justice to those partners who have been married for many years and have created fulfilling family lives for themselves in Japan. Their family structures may not always mimic a nuclear family, all living under the same roof, but that does not mean they are not families that work; and these marriages were not entered into for the sole purpose of securing papers. For example, those I interviewed who arrived during the first wave of African migration to Japan had already obtained their residence permits or visas through other channels before getting married to a Japanese spouse.

Such successful family life does not, of course, rule out the difficulties and conflicts between spouses that arise in marriage of all kinds, everywhere in the world. Numerous African men that I spoke with regularly brought up the misunderstandings between themselves and their partners. Problems that come up in their relationships with Japanese women are often related to the preparation of ethnic cuisine, to disagreements about who is in charge of money, and to the practice of sending remittances to their families in Africa. They linked these misunderstandings to a cultural gap between themselves and their wives, placing African culture and Japanese culture at odds with each other. At times, the gap that seemed to cause problems for them related to expectations that the carrying out of proper wifely duties should include cooking the African foods they wanted to eat. At other times, the gap was attributed to what many of the men termed “godlessness” on the part of Japanese people.

It is clear that an African immigrant’s sense of feeling at home and belonging can be intricately linked to the ways that home is created on the other side of the border. This home is created and inhabited in the act of eating – both physical and emotional ingestion or consumption of food and nourishment. When these men were single, they would regularly prepare or purchase their own ethnic food. This can obviously be taken as the simple act of choosing one’s daily meal according to individual preference and taste, and it is that. But it is also much more complex than just food. It is a representation of and creation of home in a space of dislocation.

From this perspective, it is clear why the men I spoke with placed such importance on whether their partners could or would prepare their preferred ethnic food. Some men insisted that the gap was due to their wives’ selfishness in not cooking

African food and not knowing how to “treat a man right.” On the other hand, they appear to know that it is unrealistic to expect someone who has not spent her life cooking African food to be able to do so just because she has an interest in it. Since both traditional Japanese culture and many African cultures place cooking under the responsibility of the female partner, it would be likely that misunderstandings relating to food stem from the stress that trying to prepare these meals ("getting it right") causes for wives and partners rather than selfishness or lack of interest.

Some of the men who think cultural misunderstandings between themselves and their partners will not lessen or are a significant problem, don't seem to have an answer on how to solve their issues. Instead, they begin praising the virtues of African women and lamenting that they were unable to marry such a woman. They claim that if they were able to marry women who were African like them, they wouldn't have the same problems, and African women would know “how to treat a man right”. It is most likely true that if they were married to an African woman, husband and wife would agree on the need to send remittances regularly to their families still in Africa, and possibly even on how much to send. However, the decisions about who handles the money or how to separate finances or manage joint finances may not be without problems, even in these idealized African-African marriages. Still, it might be easier to come to an agreement on these issues. These African husbands may not understand that in Japan, women as wives, house-managers and home-economists, manage the money. Historically, their husband's paycheck has been handed over to them or paid into her account and she manages the finances, while giving her husband an allowance to spend as he pleases. For many African men though, handing over their money to someone else to manage,

especially to their wives, is not a familiar practice. It would be more likely that they would expect to pay an allowance to their partners or wives and be approached when money is needed for family expenses.

Japanese Partners And Their Motivations For Marriage

I work part time and [my husband] works full time but we both spend a lot of time with the boys. They are sometimes shy but they have many Japanese friends at school and other half African, half Japanese friends from church.

- Japanese female entrepreneur

For African immigrants, it is clear that there are many benefits to being married to a Japanese partner. Perhaps these benefits are not significantly different from those in an international/interracial marriage with a national from another country one happens to be living in, yet there are different reasons and motivations for marriage depending on the geographical and cultural area one inhabits. Above, I have presented a few of the motivations for African immigrants in Japan and explained how marriage to a Japanese national might aid them in their hopes of finding belonging. I turn now to the Japanese partners involved in international marriages to African immigrants. The majority are Japanese women, but there is also a small number of Japanese men married to African women. Kelsky (2001) argues that international marriages between Japanese women and foreign men symbolize a rejection of Japan's traditional gender relations from the

perspective of Japanese women. Her book focuses on marriages between Japanese women and Western men, but her theory that there is a wish to “escape” from strict Japanese society by exploring different cultures and traveling abroad, could be used more generally and applied to a variety of international marriages in Japan. I would caution though that Kelsky’s claim that international marriages represent a rejection of or rebellion against Japan’s traditional gender roles is quite sweeping. Instead, I would suggest that international marriages between Japanese women and foreign men are a way of exploring opportunities that were less readily available prior to twenty years ago. These partnerships and marriages are also possibly still causing tensions regarding expected gender roles in the home and at the work place. For example, some of my respondents who are Japanese women married to African men discussed their initial interest in their partners in terms of curiosity, openness, and the wish to explore a different culture.

Japanese women I have interviewed about their African spouses or significant others tend to speak of their initial attraction or draw to their spouses in positive terms such as their “openness, willingness and ability to communicate” with them, their “romantic” actions that took them off guard, and other positive personal cultural characteristics rather than in terms of seeking “escape” from Japanese society or Japanese men. Some women, however, did compare their spouse’s personal characteristics with those of “typical Japanese husbands,” whom they considered to be “non-communicative”, “not romantic” or “selfish.” An example is an older Japanese woman married to an African entrepreneur. She described her initial attraction to her husband in terms of being drawn to his open and outgoing personality, which she

attributed to him being a foreigner. She was also drawn to how different he seemed in comparison in terms of showing his emotions, even when angry. She didn't mention being interested in her husband because he's Black, but in terms of having different personality traits rooted in being a foreign, non-Japanese man. Another Japanese woman is unmarried describes herself as someone who only dates Black men. She prefers to date African-American men, but has also dated African men. For her, the most important thing is that her partners are not Japanese because she says she can't relate to them anymore since she's spent some time living outside of Japan. She feels as though she can relate to Black people better because she thinks they have soul; a quality she says many Japanese people lack. She points out that as a result, she primarily listens to Black music because it has more soul. Another woman shared that both her ex-husband and current husband are African. She liked the direct approach her husband and ex-husband used in pursuing her romantically and how passionate they were. She says that Japanese men don't show emotions openly and are cooler, more distant in their romantic relationships. A final example is of a woman who is married to African businessman with whom she has two children. She mentions how she was drawn to her husband because he stands out and has a physical presence that is not Japanese. She feels out of place in Japan although she has never lived outside of the country because she feels she cannot blend in for fear of losing herself. She uses the example of the Japanese saying that the nail that sticks out must be hammered down but she does not want to be hammered down and likes that her husband cannot be either. Although she has not lived outside of Japan, she would like to move to the US or someplace similar

because she thinks people are freer there to be themselves and don't have to conform all the time.

Although the themes that come up in my interviews with some Japanese women who were either married to or in relationships with African men cannot be extended to all Japanese women, there is a common theme of these particular women having been initially drawn to pursuing relationships with non-Japanese men because of their perception of how different their partners' personalities were in comparison to Japanese men could be seen. Also, while some women didn't verbalize their attraction for their partners in terms of their ethnicity and expressed their interest in terms of difference, others were very clear about their inclination towards pursuing relationships with Black men. Partridge's research in Germany revealed similar threads of desire for the Black body and in his interviews with White German women, he found that they:

described their attraction to Black men as based on the possibility of adventure, spontaneity, the exotic, and travel. They commented on what they perceived as an aesthetic of Black beauty and the ability of Black men to inhabit their bodies more fully (as opposed to being "stiff" like White German men). They linked their desire to movie images from childhood, to music they heard in their formative years. (2013: 82)

Kelsky (2001) also makes the claim that international marriages might seem like an opportunity for Japanese women to gain more gender equality in their relationships. It is clear that the power dynamics present in African-Japanese marriages are different from those of Japanese-Japanese marriages and may be more favorable for Japanese

women. This becomes evident when we consider the immense dependency that African spouses have on their Japanese partners for navigating the legal system if the African spouses lack proper documentation or lack the means to procure housing and jobs and to deal with bureaucracy, etc. Some of the men I have spoken with have brought up this power discrepancy during our interviews. They say that they sometimes feel anxious about the fact that their Japanese spouses could hold their pending legal documentation against them. An example given is that their wives might threaten divorce during a period when divorce would mean they would lose all current legal status, or that their wives might leave with the children. In Japan, legal custody is almost always awarded solely to the mother, with no joint custody options. In each of these cases, however, the husband's worry was about the mere possibility of such a situation and not about the reality of such a predicament. For the most part, the power discrepancy is presented in the management of the household economy and decisions about how to handle the money earned by both partners. As I have noted above, many men are used to keeping their earnings and managing their entire household spending rather than having their partners carry out that responsibility; whereas their wives expect to manage finances, as is customary in Japan. This can lead to arguments and misunderstandings about the partner's personality: she or he seems to be selfish or untrusting. As discussed earlier, one method many couples have found to prevent discontent over these matters is to keep their earnings completely separate and deposit money regularly into an account specifically for the household shared expenses and the expenses incurred in raising children. This is in line with Kelsky's (2001) conclusions that relationships between Japanese women and men, and to some extent between Japanese men and Western

women, are described negatively, while Japanese female-Western male couples are regarded as superior. In the case of African-Japanese couples though, it is rather the fact that the husband comes from a developing or "backward" country that presented the most difficulties, difficulties that were not usually present for Japanese-Western couples.

Prejudice, Discrimination, and Negative Perceptions Of Africans

I didn't know. I always thought maybe they misunderstood. But after getting married, it has been more difficult. Even when we are together, the police will stop [my husband] and ask to see his ID.

- Japanese female business professional

As mentioned in chapter 3, some scholars have argued that Japan is a racist society much in the manner of the United States (Hughes 2003, Russell 1991). They express that racism towards all Black people is common in Japan and that this form of racism was imported from the United States during the years of occupation after WWII. The majority of Africans that I interviewed, though, felt that the disadvantages they faced and the discrimination they experienced, were based not only on their skin color, but also, based on the fact that they were not Japanese. On top of that, they felt they faced discrimination based on their nationality, or based on being African and were

perceived as coming from developing countries. Again, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, former Tokyo governor Ishihara referred specifically to Africans, not Black people in general, as being a disreputable presence in Tokyo. One outcome of the belief that their nationalities rather than their skin color were seen in a negative light is the enactment of strategic performative ethnic identities to overcome this disadvantage. For example, one interlocutor told me that because Africa is seen as a backward continent but African Americans are seen in a positive light, specifically because they are American, he tells people he meets that he is from New York. Others have stated similar things about enacting performative identities that are of another, non-African identity, claiming instead a more positively accepted Black ethnic identity - French, British, and Jamaican seem to be the most popular, although I have also heard Okinawan-African used in this particular strategic method. In fact, much of the readily available information on Africa in general is heavily focused on development projects and problems facing many Africans with respect to food, water and health, in particular the suffering of children. Images of malnourished children with flies on their faces proliferate on subway trains, on television commercials, on the news and through other forms of media. I have heard stories from Japanese spouses, although I have not encountered anyone who has confirmed the claim or acknowledged having this personal experience, that some women did not know that their significant others were African until they were getting married, when their documents had to be produced in order for the marriage to be registered.

Prejudice from family members, friends and other outsiders also posed difficulties for African-Japanese couples. Many Japanese spouses said their family

members did not react positively to news of their relationships with African men. Parents were especially against their relationships, although it is unclear in all the cases whether the reluctance was because their partners were foreigners or African in particular, since they worried that Japanese culture and African cultures were not compatible. Those parents who did make it clear that their reluctance was because their daughter's partner was an African expressed worry that their daughter was being used solely for obtaining papers. Others held stereotypical ideas, that all Africans in Japan were criminals. Such conflicts with parents were stressful for both partners in the relationship and required dedication, belief in one another, and perseverance for them to continue with their relationships, and eventually to get married and have children. Most of the women I spoke with who encountered resistance about having a non-Japanese spouse, though, found that with the birth of a child, their relationship was accepted, and they ultimately received emotional support from their friends and family. Unfortunately, not all of them found this acceptance, and although much fewer in number, in some cases their marriage to an African resulted in a break from their Japanese relatives.

Some Japanese spouses also report becoming much more aware of prejudice against foreigners once they are involved in a relationship with a non-Japanese person, as they witness and experience the discrimination their partners face when dealing with other Japanese nationals, and especially when dealing with official institutions. Some writers have discussed racialized stereotypes perpetrated in Japan concerning "Asian brides" (Piper 1997; Suzuki 2004). It is clear that foreign husbands who are from the global south are subject to sorts of discrimination and prejudice that foreign husbands from the west or the global north experience on a much lower scale. In fact, husbands

from the West seem to be portrayed in the media and in popular discourse in a positive light, as sought-after or coveted partners, and as status symbols for elite, English-speaking Japanese women.

If you are “Western” and have something that is coveted or that the company wants, you will be approached whether you want to be or not, precisely because of your otherness, or exoticness, which is an otherness that is valued. But when you have an otherness that is African or the property of those lower on the list of accepted or wanted immigrant, that is, an otherness that is placed below White Western male ethnically speaking, your “difference” is not an asset. African immigrants address this disadvantage by assuming an identity different from than their own, and by performing this identity: that of a Black American, an identity that is more highly valued for hip hop culture and its accoutrements, etc. than Black African identities.

Legal restraints imposed by the Japanese nation-state affect African immigrants in a variety of ways, and national policies regulating entry, stay and work allowance are crucial in facilitating or limiting their options. For the people involved in transnational business enterprises, being documented is crucial, since unrestricted opportunities to travel back and forth across borders facilitates business success. Stricter migration controls and barriers to integrate in Japan have made the option of finding employment in the regular labor market more and more difficult to pursue. With an increase in barriers intended to discourage assumed economic immigrants from Africa, new immigrants are forced to develop new strategies to be legally included and obtain the right of work. As a result, bi-national marriages are increasing, especially since such a marriage is one of the few legal ways to obtain residency and the right to work.

Although I have mentioned different pathways for incorporation in distinct categories, the boundaries between them are not always clearly clear.

African-Japanese Children

What do you put in your hair? Do you use a brush or comb when there are knots and it gets flat? My wife and me, you know, our hair is different from the two children. How do you... your hair, you know? What do you do with yours?

- African entrepreneur

The number of mixed-heritage children in Japan is on the rise in correlation with the rise of international marriages. According to a CNN article, "Will There Ever Be Rainbow Japan?", "between 1987 and 2004, more than 500,000 children were born in Japan with at least one foreign parent" (Slater 2010). Although lower in number than other mixed-heritage children, the number of African-Japanese children is predictably on the rise. Historically they have faced many hurdles in terms of integration, in being accepted as members of Japanese culture (Life 1995, 1993; Slater 2010; Shoji 2013, Ocheltree 2010; Nishikura and Takagi 2013). Until very recently, many people of mixed heritage have reported experiencing severe teasing and bullying at school, being denied ethnic group membership by their peers, and facing general suspicion and mis-education about their ethnicity and nationality in their neighborhoods and beyond. African-Japanese children encounter these problems more often than children who are white-

Western/Japanese, as they are more easily recognizable as Other, and their perceived non-Westernness does not result in the higher-status position that Western foreigners and white Western/Japanese people enjoy. This continues today, but recently, with the rise in popularity of R&B and Hip Hop music, there has also been an increase in the presence of mixed heritage musicians and television personalities, and among this group are a few Black Japanese artists.²

Furthermore, although Japanese-Western children report having often visited or spent long periods of time in their Western parents' home countries, and are mainly raised in a bi-lingual and bi-cultural environment, and have extensive contact with the family of the non-Japanese spouse, African-Japanese children tend to be raised almost completely Japanese. Very few of the African-Japanese children have ever visited their African parents' home countries, and many have not had the opportunity to meet their African parents' relatives. Similar to Japanese-Western children, they do tend to be raised in a bi-lingual environment; although many speak mainly Japanese in all aspects of their daily lives and respond in Japanese to their non-Japanese parent.

Unfortunately, many of these children, historically, have known very little about their African parent's culture or country of origin. This can make being a bi-racial child growing up in a Japanese environment very difficult. They must face discrimination, and most Japanese schools have little to no experience with issues of discrimination; nor are any lesson plans on this issue available for teachers. Many mothers have expressed their distress regarding their children's having to face such hardships, and they have

² See for example artists like Crystal Kay, Thelma Aoyama, Jero, Anthony, David Yano, and other non-Black hafu models and tarentos featured on TV such as Lora.

been frustrated by the lack of help from teachers and school administrators. More recently though, with the increase in bi-racial and bi-cultural children, multi-racial and multi-cultural families are sending their children to international schools where there is more diversity. Unfortunately, this remains a viable option only for families who are economically stable, and usually Japanese-Western configuration, as the international schools in Japan are expensive, and the high cost prevents many African-Japanese families from enrolling their children.

5: LABOR STRATEGY: CARVING SPACES OF BELONGING

I have lived in Japan for 15 years but I have not taken Japanese nationality. I work, and I pay taxes, but I don't know if I want to have the passport. If I get it, I will need to have a visa to go back to my home country. That would be a strange thing because it is my home country, but I have been living in Japan long enough that it is also home sometimes. [Japanese people] don't see me in the same way so that I can also call Japan home, so maybe it's better not to get the nationality. I don't know...

- African business owner

Over the last few decades, migration has surged as a central issue on the international political and economic scene, and as an important indicator of societal change for many countries (Castles and Miller 2003). Migration is now considered to be a global phenomenon with the boundaries between countries of immigration and countries of emigration shifting regularly. Even countries previously untouched by large global movements of global populations, such as Japan, have now reluctantly become countries of immigration (Douglass and Roberts 2003; Cornelius and Tsuda 2004). In this chapter, I hope to contribute to the ongoing discussion of the emergence of 'New African Diasporas' (Koser 2003) in which Asia in general, and Japan in particular, have so far been nearly invisible. This chapter provides background characteristics of African immigrants in Japan and discusses some of their motivations for coming to Japan.

Drawing on data gathered during four years of fieldwork in Tokyo and its suburbs from 2010 to 2013, this research contributes to a broader understanding of employment practices among African immigrants and their strategies for becoming incorporated in the Japanese labor market.

The existing literature on international migration demonstrates that immigrants often experience hardships in finding suitable employment in their destination country. A variety of models exists to explain these difficulties, based on segmented labor market theories, human capital approaches, and social network theory. Nevertheless, most research on labor market incorporation of immigrants originates in the United States and Europe and consequently, results might not necessarily be cross-culturally applicable to societies with different labor market conditions such as Japan (Cornelius and Tsuda 2002). This chapter joins the few existing studies on labor market incorporation of immigrants in Japan (Cornelius and Tsuda 2002; Takenoshita 2006), but it is the first to focus on the experiences of Sub-Saharan African immigrants in particular.

African Immigrants in Japan

Me: How long have you been in Japan?

She: Oh, a long, long time. Twenty-two years.

- African female entrepreneur

While Japan has recently seen the number of immigrants within its borders grow to over 2 million people, immigrants still make up less than 2 percent of the total population. This is a very small percentage compared to industrialized nations in North America and Europe. Despite this, many Japanese continue to imagine that foreigners are invading Japan in large numbers. Nowadays, immigrants in Japan come from a variety of countries and through a large number of channels and routes such as through international marriage, as students, through contract labor migration, trafficking or legal entry with the use of tourist visas to name a few. An assortment of categories of immigrants exists in Japan such as spouses of Japanese nationals, Japanese return migrants, professional (elite) immigrants, nurses, (trafficked) sex workers, and refugees. One special category of immigrants is that of the so-called trainee, an individual accepted by a public or private organization in Japan to enter a training program to learn industrial techniques or skills. This trainee program was established to promote cooperation with economic growth in developing countries. The sad reality though, is that many of these foreign trainees are from developing countries, including African ones, and have been employed as low-skilled workers to compensate for labor shortages in Japan (Terasawa 2003).

The vast majority of immigrants in Japan come from other Asian countries, especially from Korea, China and the Philippines, or are the *nikkeijin*, the so-called “return migrants” of Japanese descent from Brazil and Peru. The remaining group of non-Japanese is very diverse and consists primarily of US citizens, Australians, a wide variety of Europeans, and finally, Africans. Even though these days non-Japanese can

be found all over the country, they are still heavily concentrated in the cities of Osaka, Tokyo and Yokohama, and the more industrial areas surrounding these regions.

Although it is difficult to enter Japan illegally because it is an island, it is certainly not an impossible feat. Exact numbers are lacking and difficult to estimate, but it is believed that undocumented immigrants in Japan are mostly ‘over-stayers’, people who entered Japan legally, on tourist or student visas, for example, but who did not leave Japan after their visa expired³ (Shipper 2005, Schans 2012). It is well known that Japan accepts very few refugees. Today only 16,000 refugees live in Japan, most of whom come from Indochina.

³ In 2005 the number of visa over-stayers was 207,000 while the total unauthorized population was estimated to be 250,000.

TABLE 1: AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN JAPAN - RESIDENCY STATUS

Nationality	Total	Permanent Resident	Short Term	Family Stay	Spouse of Japanese	College Student	Other
Nigeria	2,730	1,263	311	100	651	79	326
Ghana	1,891	898	159	109	273	73	379
Egypt	1,382	168	11	612	97	242	252
South Africa	553	89	33	64	68	16	283
Kenya	542	108	14	37	77	142	164
Uganda	523	75	136	13	127	70	102
Morocco	381	140	2	17	119	39	64
Tanzania	378	72	43	38	96	61	68
Cameroon	365	46	74	25	91	34	95
Senegal	348	104	9	18	87	71	59
Ethiopia	339	55	11	48	40	57	128
Tunisia	336	63	31	39	52	62	89
DR Congo	298	115	12	29	20	24	98
Guinea	269	116	21	4	81	14	33
Sudan	214	58	10	49	15	42	40
Algeria	160	55	1	18	22	21	43
Mali	132	59	13	3	31	10	16
Cote D'Ivoire	106	23	5	12	15	15	36
Zambia	100	24	4	21	7	25	19
Total of other countries below 100 individually	925	160	110	88	123	231	213
Total Africa	11,972	3,691	1,010	1,344	2,092	1,328	2,507
Total %	100.00%	30.83%	8.44%	11.23%	17.47%	11.09%	20.94%

Source: MOJ, Japan 2011

In 2011, the Japanese government estimated that around 12,000 documented Africans from more than 50 countries, and a variety of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds were living in the country. Sub-Saharan Africans represented over 82% (9,863) of the registered African immigrants, and were concentrated mainly in Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya. The majority of the documented immigrants were from Anglophone African countries and over 40% were from Nigeria (2,730) and Ghana (1,891). Other African countries with the largest representation (over 500 persons) are Egypt (1,382), South Africa (553), Kenya (542), and Uganda (523).

Of these, the numbers of Africans who have received refugee status are only several hundred, mainly from Ethiopia and Somalia. But the majority of immigrants either possess permanent residency status (over 30%), have family related residency permits (11%), or hold Japanese spousal residency (17%). Only 8% are temporary settlers. Quite striking is the gender imbalance present in all groups of immigrants, with males accounting for more than 80% of all documented Africans. The percentage of female immigrants from Nigeria and Senegal is less than 10% (MOJ, Japan, 2011).

Immigrants' socio-economic characteristics

A summary of the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the immigrants surveyed is shown in table 2. About 41% are from Ghana, 43% from Nigeria, and 29% from other Sub-Saharan African countries. More than 90% are males, about 56% are between 31 and 50 years old, and 56% are married. Most of the immigrants are long-term settlers.

TABLE 2: SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS SURVEYED

Description	Number	%	Description	Number	%
Sex			Marital Status		
Male	168	90%	Married	105	56%
Female	18	10%	Single With Partner	54	29%
Total	186	100%	Single/Divorced	27	15%
Country of Birth			Spouse/Partner Country of Birth		
Ghana	77	41%	Japan	115	72%
Nigeria	80	43%	Ghana	20	13%
Other	29	16%	Nigeria	15	9%
Age			Other	9	6%
21 - 30 years	37	20%	Total	159	100%
31 - 40 years	56	30%	Household Composition		
41 - 50 years	48	26%	Wife and/or Children	101	54%
51 years +	45	24%	Other Family Member	9	5%
Years In Japan			Friend From Home Country	13	7%
0 - 9 years	58	31%	Alone	56	30%
10 - 19 years	75	40%	Other	7	4%
20 + years	53	28%	Employment		
Education			Yes	179	96%
Elementary	38	20%	No	7	4%
Secondary	46	25%	Annual Income (Personal)		
University	70	38%	Less than 2 million yen	27	15%
Post-University	32	17%	2 - 4 million yen	123	69%
			5 - 9 million yen	19	11%
			10 million yen +	10	6%
			Total	179	100%

Source: Interviews

About 28% have lived in Japan for 20 years and longer, 40% have lived in Japan between 10 and 19 years, and 31% have spent less than 10 years in Japan. Around 38% have university educations, 25% have only secondary and post-secondary education, and 20% have only elementary education. 96% are employed, 69% declared their income to be 2–4 million yen per annum, 11% earn 5–9 million yen, 6% earn over 10 million yen per annum.

Table 3 shows that around 15% occupy managerial and professional positions in Japanese companies and public educational institutions. This group is made up of the educated elite, most of whom came to Japan initially for studies. After university, about 5% of them found jobs in Japanese companies as IT specialists, system engineers, programmers, etc., and a further 5% have risen to the managerial level. About 3% have found jobs in public and private universities as professors, lecturers and researchers. About 2% who did not find such jobs have abandoned Japan or have integrated as English language instructors in elementary and high schools, and related jobs including translation. This group also includes those who came as touts for local clubs or bars even though they had university or professional education.

TABLE 3: OCCUPATIONS OF AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN TOKYO

Occupation	Number	%
Managers	9	5.03%
Professionals	18	10.06%
University Staff	5	2.79%
English Teachers/Translators	4	2.23%
Specialists	9	5.03%
Production/Laborers	38	21.23%
Manufacturing	15	8.38%
Construction	4	2.23%
Food Processing/Production	13	7.26%
Others	6	3.35%
Service	114	63.69%
Sales	26	14.53%
Hospitality	35	19.55%
Transport	6	3.35%
Export/Import	25	13.97%
Clerical/Office	9	5.03%
Other	13	7.26%
Total	179	100.00%

Source: Interviews

Many of the immigrants, particularly those who entered Japan as bar and club touts or entrepreneurs and those who work in Japanese companies, are concentrated in blue collar jobs in the production sector (21%), particularly in manufacturing (8%), construction (2%) and food processing (7%). However, the majority of African immigrants' economic status can be classified as self-employed entrepreneurs or as employees (64%). The community is mainly specialized in the service sector comprising hospitality services such as bars, restaurants, and nightclubs; in trade (clothing, food stores), hair salons, and export/import and transport businesses. They

hire other immigrants as well as Japanese to work as bouncers, touts, strip dancers, bartenders, cooks, drivers, managers, etc. for their businesses.

In spite of the fact that the immigrant community is spread over different classes of occupations, the percentage of those having regular employment status (including those working in both Japanese and immigrant economies) is low according to the survey. In Japan, this carries serious implications with regard to income levels and social position (Imai, 2011)⁴.

TABLE 4: CHANGE OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS BY TYPE OF WORK CONTRACT

Employment	First Employment		Current Employment	
	Number	%	Number	%
Regular Employee	8	4%	52	28%
Non-Regular Employee	162	87%	107	58%
Self-Employed	3	2%	20	11%
Unemployed	13	7%	7	4%
Total	186	100%	186	100%

Source: Interviews

4 The division between regular and non-regular workers is a new form of stratification and inequality in Japan today. Regular workers constitute the core employees of Japanese companies and are hired under unlimited term contracts to perform the normal functions of their firm. Male regular workers in larger firms enjoy corporate membership and are covered with their family by corporate welfare arrangements. Moreover, they enjoy high salaries and have mobility channels. Non-regular employees, on the other hand, are hired under various forms of short or long-term contracts to fill “the temporary needs for labor and skills” of firms (Imai, 2011, pp. 27-28). This has traditionally been the reserve of Japanese women, retired persons and youth, but more recently, immigrants. Workers in this category lack job security, little corporate welfare protection and mobility channels, and earn less income (Imai, 2011; Imai and Sato, 2011).

Roughly 87% of those interviewed obtained their first jobs as non-regular employees, 4% as regular employees, and nearly 2% as self-employed. However, at the time of the interviews, 58% still had non-regular employment and 28% had regular employment, whereas 11% were self-employed. This means that most of them are employed only on a temporary basis to offer short-term labor to companies, and then fired. The fact that the self-employment rate is relatively high may suggest that those excluded from the mainstream labor market tend to start their own business ventures. Self-employment could also be a means for upward mobility, as is the case with Brazilian immigrants in Japan (Higuchi and Tanno, 2003).

Despite the fact that the total number of African immigrants residing in Japan can be considered as still being low, their numbers have rapidly increased since they first began arriving in the 1980s – a period of economic deterioration in many African countries, while Japan was experiencing a booming economy. This can be demonstrated, for example, by the fact that in 1985 there were only 44 Nigerians registered in Japan, but in 1993, their number had increased to 1,315, and in 2005 the documented number had increased to 2,405 (Kawada 2007).

The Ghanaian immigrant community was the first to develop in Japan, followed by the Nigerian community, which surpassed the Ghanaian in 2000. Many of those first few Ghanaian immigrants who settled in Japan had originally fled from Nigeria, after they had gone there seeking job opportunities during the 1970s as a result of the decline of Ghana's economy. They were doctors, engineers, university professors, architects, accountants, teachers, and others, but due to economic factors, political instability and

military repression in Ghana, they hoped to find better futures for themselves in Nigeria (Brown 1989). However, in 1983 the Nigerian government passed an Alien Order to deport its over 2 million West African nationals who were comprised of mainly Ghanaians, in response to the increasing malaise of Nigerian nationals regarding competition for jobs, economic stagnation and complaints from labor unions (Gravil, 1985).

The deportation from Nigeria also coincided with the 1983 famine and persisting political upheaval in Ghana (Gravil, 1985), and as a result, some of the immigrants chose to leave Nigeria shortly after arriving instead of facing deportation. Many moved towards North Africa, to Egypt, Morocco and Libya especially, and from there they continued on to Europe. Some entered the Middle East while others headed farther away to South East Asia, most notably Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Singapore; still others continued farther on to China, Japan and South Korea. Moving in small groups, the immigrants adopted step migration as their strategy, reconnecting with other small groups, gathering information and assistance from colleagues and Ghanaian embassies, while simultaneously offering assistance to others travelling or stranded. Many spent years working in Libya, Syria and Saudi Arabia in order to save up the funds needed to finance their travel further east.

One of the first African immigrants to arrive and settle in Japan in the 1980s is believed to be a Ghanaian immigrant. Anecdotal evidence points out that the first African immigrants were working in the Middle East at the time and heard about

opportunities in Japan from other Middle Eastern return migrants.⁵ During this period, it was still relatively easy for African immigrants to obtain tourist visas for Japan and only worry about renewing it every three months by briefly leaving the country.

Another option was to enroll in a Japanese language school and thus receive a cultural visa, which was valid for one to two years, and allowed them the ability to work a certain number of hours per week. Considering that most of the earlier immigrants from Africa were single males, family reunification did not occur often, but, chain immigration did occur when the first immigrants told friends and networks back home and in other parts of the world about the opportunities in Japan. Even though recent visa requirements for Japan have become stricter, and it has become increasingly difficult for Africans to legally enter Japan, some of the established earlier immigrants are still able to sponsor relatives to come to Japan. One example would be to sponsor a family member to come study at a Japanese university and use that as a stepping-stone for obtaining legal, permanent status.

Most African immigrants depend on family and friendship ties to migrate to Japan. They also depend on such networks to integrate during the initial stages of settlement in Japan. In addition, there are several hometown, ethnic and national associations, religious groups (in particular Ghanaian and Nigerian Pentecostal churches) that most immigrants join. Ghanaian immigrants started a national association as early as 1989, while the Nigerian community started their association in 1998. For the Nigerian community this association was established for the unification into one

⁵ In the 1980s quite a number of immigrants from the Middle East came to Japan, especially from Iran, since visas were easily obtained by Iranians in those days.

association of several township, tribal and ethnic associations that already existed. About 36% of immigrants interviewed belonged to a hometown/national association, 24% belonged to a religious group in which foreigners were the majority, and only 29% reported that they did not belong to any organization at all. From these networks, the immigrants obtain information and help in matters relating to accommodation, jobs, residence permits, immigration laws, Japanese culture and how to integrate more easily in Japan. Besides the in-group networks, many African immigrants also network within a variety of Japanese communities, in groups of fellow Africans from different countries, and with African Americans residing in Japan. Most immigrants interviewed have several friends within the network of their origin country of origin, and several in other networks. Intermarriage is another pathway for improved cross-border relations between African immigrants and Japanese. Out of the total of 159 participants who were married or had a partner at the time of interviewing, 72% had Japanese spouses or partners. Additionally, 59% lived with their wife and/or children or with other family members. Only 7% lived with friends from home countries, while 30% lived alone.

Immigrants' ability to learn Japanese facilitates cross-border relations, particularly with members of the host society. Those interviewed were asked to rate themselves as good, average, not so good, and with little or no ability in conversation, reading and writing Japanese. Regarding conversational skills, nearly 70% rated themselves as good, while 19% rated themselves as average. Only 11% said they had little or no ability. However, with regard to reading and writing abilities, over 50% rated themselves low.

African immigrants with attachments to educational institutions, especially those who came to Japan for studies, and otherwise influential members within and outside the African community, serve as direct or indirect links to provide help to other African immigrants. Most of the African group leaders are highly educated individuals who can speak, read and write Japanese. They have strong institutional and personal connections and are thus able to provide some form of linking capital for other immigrants. For example, since the Ghanaian National Association started in 1989, it has had only two presidents, and both are university professors. Additionally, embassies and immigrant interest groups in Japan serve to link social capital for immigrants' employment, and for other legal and social matters.

The number of African immigrants in Japan, although growing steadily, is still small, and not many Japanese have had close personal relationships with them. Even fewer Japanese have ever visited the African continent. Many Japanese individuals' attitudes towards African immigrants, as a result, can be described as ambivalent, and negative stereotypes are exacerbated by remarks made by politicians and journalists. A significant example, as mentioned before, is Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara's racist remarks attributing the rising crime rate in Japan to the growing presence of Africans in Tokyo.

Newspapers and magazines have run articles on how Africans, especially Nigerians, have become increasingly involved in Tokyo's nightlife and entertainment businesses. A few incidences of credit card fraud and bill padding by Nigerian-owned businesses in the Kabukicho neighborhood of Tokyo have been widely reported and

have increased the negative perceptions of Nigerians and Nigerian-owned, and in general, African-owned businesses (Brasor 2007; Richard 2011).

These reports seldom mention that such practices could just as easily occur in Japanese-owned businesses related to the sex industry and hostess clubs, etc., and the likelihood of getting fleeced is much higher at these establishments than in African-owned places. The Japanese businesses rely on customers' purchasing drinks at grossly inflated prices for the hostesses or women working in the bar. That is the nature of the business. The key is to not get the customer completely sloshed, so that he is aware of the check he is signing, and all parties involved know the rules of the game. Only a few uninitiated foreigners get involved before they realize they are not just chatting up a girl, but are paying for her services.

Previous studies on Japan have also argued that the country's relative isolation and emphasis on racial and cultural homogeneity result in discrimination against foreigners. Some African-American scholars have argued that this is especially the case when it comes to Black people, basing their conclusions on Japan's apparent importation of American racism during the post-war occupation (Russell 1991, Hughes 2003).

Several newspapers have reported how African immigrants were stopped by police in Japan to have their papers checked "just because they were Black." In at least one high-profile case, a Nigerian immigrant sued the Japanese police force after he was harassed and attacked by a police officer while handing out flyers for a club in Shinjuku, and he consequently lost his ability to walk. In 2010, a Ghanaian man died brutally and under questionable circumstances six hours after he was told he would be

deported from Japan. Precisely what happened is unclear because the police claimed that he just stopped moving, and government officials claimed there was no suspicious activity leading to the man's death. Although the autopsy suggested that immigration officers used excessive force in retraining the deportee, the final report concluded that the cause of death was unknown. The surviving widow has taken the case to court and is still trying to find out what happened to her husband in order to have the immigration officers who were involved brought to justice (Kawakami and Mcneill 2011).

Most studies on immigrant incorporation into the labor market have been concerned principally with the United States and Europe. Studies on immigrants' integration in Japan have so far been focused on, *nikkeijin*, ethnic return migrants (Tsuda 2003) and female immigrant sex workers from other Asian countries (Parrenas 2006). The labor market incorporation of African immigrants might show very different patterns from those of Asian immigrants and *nikkeijin*. One example is that, whereas *nikkeijin* guest workers were initially wanted as temporary workers in Japan, African immigrants did not experience the same sense of welcome. Instead, from the outset they faced difficult legal and political conditions with regard to their access to the labor market and their right to legal residency, as well as their access to family reunification regulations⁶. Furthermore, despite the fact that *nikkeijin* are considered ethnic Japanese and therefore not entirely foreign, African immigrants are never considered to be ethnically related to the Japanese. They stand out in Japanese society both racially and culturally. Whereas many studies on immigrant integration assume some form of cultural assimilation on the part of the immigrants, assimilation seems to be especially

⁶ See Tsuda (2005) for an overview of the migration policy framework in Japan.

difficult in Japan. A number of Japanese scholars and journalists, writing from both inside and outside Japan, still firmly place the lack of proper legal immigration access firmly at the feet of Japan’s island country status, calling it geographic isolation; they further blame the myth of Japan’s ethnic homogeneity. Many Japanese people (those who are not scholars) that I have spoken with also point to Japan’s island country status as a reason for assumed difficulties in legally and culturally assimilating non-Japanese.

Regular Labor Market

After finishing university, I stayed in Japan and found a teaching job at the local university. I’m no longer there, but I’m still teaching.

- African business professional

TABLE 5: SOCIAL NETWORKS AND MEANS OF FINDING/STARTING EMPLOYMENT

Social Network	First Employment		Current Employment	
	Number	%	Number	%
Japanese Friends/Japanese Family	8	4%	104	58%
Home Country Friends/Relatives	137	74%	9	5%
Employment Agency	12	6%	23	13%
Started Own/Family Business	3	2%	20	11%
Direct Contact	18	10%	15	8%
Other	8	4%	8	4%
Total	186	100%	179	100%

Source: Interviews

Even though most of my respondents believe that it will never be possible for African immigrants to fully assimilate and “become Japanese,” for both cultural and racial reasons, some of the earlier African immigrants have integrated into Japanese society very well and were able to secure positions in the regular labor market. This was usually facilitated by the fact that in the 1980s enrolling in a Japanese language school was an important strategy for obtaining legal status in Japan. Obviously, learning the language was and continues to be an important aspect of being able to integrate into Japanese society and being able to make contact with Japanese people who are unlikely to speak English.

The economic boom that Japan enjoyed during the 1980s made it possible for some Africans to obtain a permanent contract at their place of employment, which is, under the Japanese “life-long-employment system,” an important factor in receiving wage raises and annual bonuses, and in being able to purchase a house. Although many of these African immigrants hold blue-collar jobs and cannot work their way up to managerial positions in their employment due to the strictly hierarchical system in Japanese companies that mostly exclude foreigners, they have a privileged position compared to other immigrants as a result of their permanent contract. In general, they also feel more accepted by their companies, especially after working there for many years. If they are able to speak Japanese, they are then able to make friends and to feel that they are an integral part of their company.

TABLE 6: VISA ENTRY VS CURRENT RESIDENT STATUS

Entry Visa	Prior Residence Status		Current Residence Status		
	Number	%		Number	%
Tourist	117	63%	Japanese Nationality	9	5%
Studies	26	14%	Permanent Resident	49	26%
Professional/Business	18	10%	Spouse of Japanese	67	36%
Dependent	10	5%	Dependent	17	9%
Refugee	2	1%	No Status/Unknown	21	11%
Other	13	7%	Other	23	12%
Total	186	100%		186	100%

Source: Interviews

Occasionally, African immigrants who came to Japan on scholarships provided by the Japanese government under international exchange programs at that time also remained in Japan and have made it an exceptional cases to professorship at Japanese universities. Some of these earlier immigrants even applied for and were granted Japanese nationality. Although they became naturalized nationals mostly for practical reasons – making it easier to obtain visas for other countries, and being able to freely move back and forth between their home countries and Japan – Japanese citizenship does sometimes strengthen their bonds with Japan and with the Japanese.

Employment in the regular labor market characterizes in particular the first wave of African immigrants to Japan and has become increasingly difficult to obtain for more recently arrived immigrants due to the harshening of migration laws and the economic recession in Japan. African immigrants have had (both voluntarily and non-voluntarily) to find other opportunities to incorporate themselves into the Japanese labor market.

Performing Culture

He: Will you dance sabar tonight? We will all be drumming!

Me: Laughing. You know I don't know how to dance sabar. I'll just be watching tonight.

- African entrepreneur

African immigrants have very little chance; one could even say no chance at all, of “blending in” in Japan. Instead of trying to do so, quite a few of them make the most of their “otherness” by actively presenting themselves as representatives of their culture. For example, African musicians perform at “live houses” in Japan, and some have been able to start their own bands and dance groups and offer workshops in African drumming (djembe) and African dance (sabar) as a way of presenting, living and embodying their culture in Japan. Some perform at a variety of restaurants offering cultural nights, or are involved with organizations (NPOs and NGOs) that aim to present African culture and diversity learning events. A few African immigrants who have been coming to Japan for many years to participate in such events, get married to Japanese women they meet during these events and workshops, given that these women are interested in participating in some way in African cultures. These workshops have become quite popular in Japan over the last few years, and some Japanese groups have become very good under the guidance of their African instructors, performing all over Japan.

Performing culture does not necessarily rely only on *ethnic* identity. Take for

example one African immigrant who used his musical talent, religious identity and networks in Japan to create a successful business singing Christian gospel songs at Japanese weddings.⁷

One special category within this group is composed of the few Africans who are *tarentos* (talents) in Japan. *Tarentos* are TV stars who do not really have special skills or talents, but rather act as TV personalities and sidekicks for Japanese television program presenters, participating in all kinds of games, and offering their opinions on a variety of subjects that arise during the programs. Over the past few years, some African *tarentos* have become well known in Japan, Bobby Olgun and Lolo Adogoni being among the most famous. Both of these men appear on various television programs and are married to Japanese women, and both speak perfect Japanese. In spite of the fact that both of them are involved in various areas of Japanese society, their popularity on TV is precisely due to their being seen as *different*, and their television appearances emphasize their African backgrounds.

Transnationalism

When was the last time you were back home? I'm going back this summer to buy new stock for the business. Do you want me to take anything to your family or maybe they want to send something to you?

⁷ Japanese weddings are often performed in chapels with ceremonies performed by white priests' – usually exchange students or English teachers with no religious authority – replete with Christian songs performed to add authenticity.

- African entrepreneur

One example of using transnational ties as a strategy for integration and for achieving success is African immigrants who are involved in the “container business,” that is, buying second-hand cars and car parts in Japan and shipping them back to Africa to sell. People involved in this business tend to live in Saitama, a suburb to the north of Tokyo, where there are many car factories and where there is a large number of second-hand car auction sites. Another location of residence is Yokohama, a suburb south of Tokyo, close to Japan's large international port. The most successful entrepreneurs travel back and forth between Japan and their home countries frequently and have business partners back in their home country. Although some African immigrants have certainly done very well for themselves in the container business, not everyone who has tried has succeeded; some people start without the appropriate knowledge or capital. The market is sometimes flooded with entrepreneurs because immigrants see a few people succeeding with this business plan, and so they attempt to take the same route. But once there are too many people involved, the amount of gain that can be made from the same business goes down, and if more people attempt the same strategies without the proper networks and means of investment, they are bound to fail.

African Ethnic Entrepreneurship

Every week, I teach sabar, sorouba or djembe in different parts of the city. The schedule is online and usually people come to one class every month for lessons.

- African entrepreneur

Much has been written on ethnic businesses, reflecting the growth of self-employment in the immigrant populations in many countries in recent decades (Rath 2002). Whereas immigrants are sometimes forced into self-employment when the regular labor market is closed to them because of legal restrictions or racism, African immigrants seem to have a preference for self-employment and business ownership as a goal in itself. Undeniably, many Africans are self-employed, and the fact is that the African community in Japan has increased through opportunities for self-employment that some immigrants have created.

Along the *Tobu Iseaki* line, a train connecting Tokyo and Saitama, several African restaurants have emerged in recent years, catering to the Cameroonian, Ghanaian, and Nigerian communities respectively, although it is important to note that these establishments are not frequented solely by one ethnic group. The restaurant-bars provide opportunities for people to meet after work and on the weekends, to listen to African music, watch African television programs and news, and eat African food. Several of these restaurant-bars also sell a wide array of African products, ranging from food items to hair products to African movies. Very few Japanese come to these places except in the cases of the few restaurants and bars located in central Tokyo, where numerous Japanese customers mix with Africans, and in some cases, the majority of

customers are actually Japanese.

Fair trade shops also selling products from Africa mainly cater to Japanese customers, as do the clothing stores set up by African immigrants in Harajuku, one of the fashion centers in Tokyo for Japanese youth. These clothing stores emerged several years ago, when American hip-hop music became very popular in Japan. Several African entrepreneurs were selling “street wear” as seen in hip-hop music videos. A few stores selling imported African clothing (or clothing made of African *batik* cloth) tailored to order either in Japan or in African countries for Japanese people interested in the fashion or performing African dance or music.

Some African immigrants also held up the appearance of being African-American, or, as I interpret them, they have strategically performed African American identities to give their shops an “authentic” image, as a strategy for integration. They are convinced that Japanese people have a stereotypical image of the African continent as poor and underdeveloped, whereas African Americans are perceived as “cool” (see also Corneytz 1994). Several of these shop owners have done very well, and some returned to their countries of origin with enough money to retire. Although it seems the “street wear” trend is now mostly over, some people still own shops (mainly Ghanaians) in Harajuku and Shibuya, and continue to make a small profit.

Informal Labor Market

Our entire family performs African dance and drumming together. I drum. I play the djembe. My wife also drums and

dances a bit. Our daughters usually capture all the hearts though with their dancing.

- African entrepreneur

For recently arrived immigrants, who are often undocumented, entry into the official labor market is especially difficult, and in many fields blocked. These immigrants are forced to take jobs in the informal labor market. Studies from the United States have shown that these informal labor market jobs are found mostly in construction, agriculture, domestic service, and child-care. However, in Japan, few African immigrants find jobs in agriculture, and female immigrants from other Asian countries take up most of the jobs in domestic service and child-care. The male African immigrants in Japan have found other niches. For example, on certain streets of entertainment and shopping districts in Tokyo such as Roppongi, Harajuku, and Shibuya, they can be found soliciting potential clients for bars, clubs and shops, handing out flyers and discount coupons, or showing pictures of (sometimes counterfeit) brand goods for sale. Their recommended establishments are often but not always owned by other Africans, especially by Nigerians. They receive salaries mostly based on commission, and as a result their income is usually very unstable. Several larger nightclubs employ African immigrants as bouncers. People in this category reported not being satisfied with the type of jobs they had. Employment in the informal labor market

is insecure and often surrounded by illegal practices.⁸ Workers are usually paid in cash, without tax deductions, and wages are below the legal minimum. They often lack any form of insurance as a result. Most research participants were not expecting to end up in these types of jobs when they decided to come to Japan.

⁸ Although a lot of the discussions in the media on the African immigrants visible in the entertainment districts of Roppongi and Shinjuku focuses on their possible involvement in drug-related crime (Friman 2001), I did not manage to talk to representatives of this ‘alternative pathway’ to integration – or at least no one admitted to me being involved in this trade.

6: SOCIAL TIES, SOCIAL STRATEGIES

Social Ties

No, don't hire a moving service; they are expensive. One of my jobs is to remove the furniture that people have left in their apartments after moving out. They call me, I go with my van to pick everything up, and I throw away, recycle or sell anything that can be used again. Just tell me the day and I will come help you.

- African business owner

A number of African immigrants depend on social ties to find jobs in Japan, and the manner in which they rely on bonding or bridging capital differs over time. Around 74% relied on information and support from relatives from their home country to find their first job, but this declined to only 5% regarding their current job. In contrast, the usefulness of their institutional networks and direct contacts to find jobs decreased from 14% to 12%. The role of Japanese family members and friends is prominent during the second stage of settlement. The immigrants' reliance on these ties to find employment rose from 4% to approximately 58% after marriage. They also depended on these relations to start their own business enterprises.

In Japan, immigrants who acquire permanent, long-term, and "spouse (or child)

of Japanese” residency have no employment restrictions (Hayakawa 2012: 23). Apart from that, those who naturalize acquire full citizenship rights. Based on my research, for most immigrants who entered Japan as tourists, marriage was the first step and main pathway to acquire the necessary immigration status to legally engage in the labor market. This was clearly demonstrated in the pattern of residence status acquisition of the immigrants. At the time of entry, 63% of the immigrants were tourists, 14% were students, 10% were professionals or businessmen, while 5% and 1% were respectively family dependents and refugees. However, during the period of interviews, 5% had Japanese nationality, 26% had permanent residency, 36% had spouse of Japanese citizen residency, 9% were family dependents, and 11% were still undocumented residents.

Social networks that are mainly based on family and ethnicity comprise a form of social capital in most societies, one that immigrants can make use of to improve their economic and social circumstances (Portes 1996). In the context of intermarriage between African male immigrants and Japanese women, this form of social capital is extremely important. A noteworthy fact is that international marriages in general in Japan have been on the rise, and according to recent data, one out of 18 matches in Japan involves a foreign spouse (Roberts 2008). Among Africans, the percentage of immigrants with a spousal visa has been particularly high, with around 20% to 25% of Africans staying in Japan on such a visa. Among the highest are Nigerians, whose international marriage percentage rate peaked at 45% in 2002 (Kojima 2006).

In the literature on international migration, studies on labor market incorporation of immigrants are prevalent. These studies use human capital approaches, segmented

labor market theories, and social network theory to explain differences in types and differing levels of employment/unemployment between immigrants and natives, and are usually based on data gathered from the United States and Europe. In Japan, though, I have shown that labor market incorporation of sub-Saharan African immigrants takes a different path. Even though Japan has relatively few immigrants in comparison to other industrialized nations, and African immigrants make up a small percentage when compared to Asian immigrants and *nikkeijin*, their experiences offer valuable insight.

In contrast to findings from the United States and Europe, human capital, especially that of educational background, has much less importance or weight for African immigrants in Japan with regard to employment. In fact, few people find a job in a Japanese company or institution that matches their degree from their country of origin. This is comparable to the findings of Cornelius and Tsuda (2002) who claimed that ethnicity and gender are more important than educational level and previous experience in the Japanese labor market.

Sub-Saharan African immigrants rely on bridging social networks and the cultural capital derived from these networks for socio-economic integration in Japan. Although reliance on social ties has previously been found to be of importance for immigrants (Sanders et al. 2002; Glick Schiller et al. 2005) research so far has focused on ties with those in the same ethnic group. This also occurs in the sub-Saharan immigrant population in Japan, but what is interesting is the necessity of building social ties with Japanese nationals for socio-economic and cultural integration and in most cases, nothing can be substituted for a Japanese partner. Increasing rates of international marriage can partially attest to this necessity.

Women, Carving Spaces of Power

In all my interactions and interviews in Tokyo, the question of my own status inevitably comes up. Predictably, I am asked whether I am a student or salaried worker, how long I have been living in Japan, and whether I am in Japan on my own or with family. My relationship status, or rather the question of whether I am married, is then usually included. It is not surprising that I get asked these questions when I am attempting to ask similar questions of my interviewees, and they need some personal information from me to feel comfortable with me, to establish trust and common ground. It surprises many that I am unattached and that I willingly decided to venture to Tokyo on my own. By far, brothers and uncles are the most frequent petitioners for women immigrants, although a small percentage of women claim fathers, mothers, and spouses as petitioners. Perhaps due to initial dependency on petitioners, most women who have recently migrated live with their relatives, while those who have spent several years in the country tend to live separately but stay within close proximity, usually within 20-30 minutes' walk, to their relatives' residences.

The networks these women are attached to not only provide the initial means through which they gain entry to the country; they facilitate settling in, obtaining legal documented status, and finding employment opportunities so that they can support themselves. These networks also help the women maintain their ties with kin in Japan, and provide support for their families in Japan as well as in their home countries. Once the new immigrants become more legally and financially independent, these ties

continue to bind as well as to provide them with support, especially in cases where they engage in paid work while raising their own small families. Eventually being in the position to start one's own family is not only an external expectation but also a personal aspiration and, according to some, a necessity.

As a result, my own independent status and lack of any kin network petitioners, my being a university student instead of a Japanese language school student, which would be necessary were I in Japan through kin networks, are considered unusual – a socio-economic privilege afforded me thanks to my having been raised and educated in the United States. But the “dark side” of my status is that I must be lonesome and my relationships must be tenuous. Further, as I lack an immediate kin network in Japan, many have assumed I would immediately set upon solving the perceived problem by becoming attached through romantic involvement or marriage to either an African immigrant or a Japanese man. Thus my remaining unattached has resulted in plenty of advice from African immigrant women whom I interviewed and spent time with, intent on remedying my perceived loneliness and helping me to create a stronger foundation for remaining in the country by finding a partner. Since I couldn't remedy my lack of immediate kin in the country as my supporters and protectors, they focused on the only option left to me, according to them, that of securing a man. Facing these well-intentioned interventions, I decided, of course, to invent a partner, and I started claiming either a housemate or close male friend as my boyfriend.

I discovered that not just any man would do. Once I had claimed a boyfriend, the subsequent questions addressed whether and how he supported me financially and whether we were planning on having children. I was told that if he wasn't supporting

me by paying for rent, buying my groceries, or at least giving me a little spending money – a girl needed to spend a little money and make herself beautiful for her man, I was assured – then he was not worth it and didn't have good intentions. Further, if he was helping to support me in some way, then I needed to take good care of him, show it through cooking, etc. and also start planning much more long-term stability by having a baby. Once the baby was born, marriage would apparently soon follow.

Although this is the type of advice I was given multiple times, I found that it was an iteration of the kinds of advice these women had themselves received from well-meaning people over the years, and not necessarily a code that they themselves actually lived by. Considering that the majority of them did not have partners who were willing or able to provide much financial support for them, it seems safe to say that their advice referred to an ideal in relationship negotiations.

Finding a Japanese partner and eventual spouse was also considered to be optimal, as it would provide me a stronger tie to Japan. A Japanese husband could also support me financially more easily than an African partner could. Numerous women insisted that a Japanese partner was more trustworthy and less likely to be unfaithful to me than an African one.

Salon A

The space is small, and can comfortably handle four customers simultaneously with space for companions to sit and help or wait and nap on a long sofa against the back wall behind the salon chairs. The wall above the sofa and the wall to the left of the opposite mirrored wall have several shelves and racks for displaying their multitude of

hair extensions in colors ranging from curvy or wavy to straight, and from black to blonde, as well as reds, greens, oranges, and everything in between. The glass case on the back wall is stacked from top to bottom with hair products imported from the United States or acquired at one of the military bases in Fussa or Yokosuka, two of the furthest outlying suburbs of the Tokyo metropolitan area to the west and the south respectively. Given the salon's centrally accessible location and its business website, it receives a steady clientele.

On this particular day I was not having any styling services performed, but rather was headed there to hang out, to discuss G's current business plans, and to provide an extra pair of hands for styling help if needed. It was early twilight and the weather had been getting increasingly colder as winter began creeping its way in, apparent in the snappy breeze and in my pinched cheeks, ears and fingers as I crossed the busy street. The space heater was on, steadily churning out its comfort as I came into the main area. Taking off my shoes, I slipped on house slippers provided, and made my way to the back wall sofa, and while sitting down, greeted G. There were two clients seated and being tended to – one by G and one by G's daughter, P. One client, a mid- to late twenties Japanese woman, was getting individual braided extensions added to her hair. The other client, a mid-forties Black woman, was getting sew-in extensions added to her hair. Both clients were nearly finished with their services, and roughly an hour later they had both paid and left.

Her current business completed, G put on the little television hanging from the corner ceiling and left it playing a Japanese program. Ignoring the laughs from the television, I helped clean and tidy up after both clients left. About 30 minutes after the

two clients departed, the young Japanese woman who had just finished getting styled, called the salon requesting another appointment for later in the week. It seemed she was not quite happy with her extensions and wanted to try something slightly different. I wondered aloud why she hadn't mentioned this while still in the salon, and P piped up that she had, in fact, in her appointment earlier that day. So the appointment she was completing as I arrived at the salon was her second time getting styling services that day, P said, with a dismissive shrug. The young Japanese woman was a regular customer and paid well for her services, but she also regularly changed her mind on the styles and looks she wanted to achieve. It was not uncommon for her to have her hair completely restyled twice or more in the space of two weeks.

Be that as it may, G and P didn't mind too much and even argued with her at times to clarify whether she could or could not achieve a particular style based on the types of extensions she chose. G pointed out that she was a regular customer, seemed to have the money to spend, and that money helped to pay bills, so there was no reason to complain. African customers, though, she claimed, had a tendency to question the cost of getting styled, often attempting to negotiate a cheaper rate on the assumption that as fellow Africans, this was acceptable. G was not too happy about that and would often point out to these customers that running a business had certain costs, and she had to take that into consideration in setting her prices. Her prices were certainly more expensive than other salons able to provide similar services. She often reiterated that nothing is for free, and living and working in Japan did not make her or the African clients' lives easier or cheaper, so it miffed her that they would ask for discounts. The majority of her clients as a result were either Japanese, expats from Europe or the

United States, or among the few non-expat Blacks unconnected to the United States military bases, both African and non, who needed to stock up on hair supplies. Fewer African men or women use her styling services because of the salon's location, which is less accessible to the Africans who are often at work during the salon hours of operation.

G was considered one of the luckier immigrants in a two-fold sense: she had married a Japanese national, and her spouse had good connections as well as the economic ability to provide her with the startup costs for setting up her own business. Many others were not so lucky, or did not have similar access to funds or the Japanese partner required for starting a business, usually in name only and for legal purposes as a guarantor or co-signer to be held responsible in case of any problems. G was legally and financially stable, and she had her own business that provided a means to engage with both Japanese and foreigner communities. She was also in a position to provide support for her family in her home country, which she did by sending remittances every month. She wanted to create a viable community for African women immigrants in Japan along with their children, including a common meeting place for gathering, sharing information, and offering aid to others. Her attempts at creating such an organization were not going smoothly though, the causes of which varied from lack of clear focus on the main purpose of the organization to lack of participation on the part of local immigrant women. Many of them were already providing childcare and housing aid to other African women friends or acquaintances, so finding the time to meet was difficult. They were already spending what little time they had off from work providing the means for another woman to support herself.

Salon B

Salon B's clientele are word-of-mouth referrals instead of through website information or promotional draws. Salon B is run by K, and the majority of her clientele are African women immigrants and their children, along with a few Japanese women. K's salon is a converted spare room in her home where she sees clients one at a time, the space almost bare. Against the left wall is a tall and wide cabinet holding her styling tools, hair extensions for braids and weaves, and other hair styling items. Across from the door is a large window with white lacey drapes, providing some shade in the summer, and preventing outsiders from looking inside in the evenings when the light is turned on. In the middle of the small room is a tall mirror set to the side, a low chair, a slightly higher stool and an armchair for friends of the client to relax in. The space is minimally decorated and furnished, but contains all the essentials.

A number of K's clients are women who work during the evenings, including some who work specifically in Roppongi bars, so her hours of operation are irregular, and starting any time from seven in the morning when the night shift workers are able to arrive after their shift, all the way to four or five a.m. for those who are only able to come in during the wee hours of the morning. After completing their style, clients can spend the hours remaining until the first train sleeping on the reclining sofa should the need arise. The early morning clients are usually women who are working as hostesses or in the night work industry, who come to get hair done immediately after work, thus before they must head home to rest during the day. Constant upkeep and style changes are required, the quotidian elements of their appearance for work, that might include

dating and/or forming alliances with Japanese men. They sometimes receive gifts of jewelry and other items which they sell in order to send remittances to their home country to support family, as well as to bring other, usually younger family members to Japan for schooling and work opportunities. K's hair care rates are lower than those found in other salons since clients must travel to her, but seems to be a worthwhile investment for her clients. Even so, she has clients who try to negotiate yet lower prices, and she tries to avoid these women. She is also asked to provide house calls, which, under certain conditions, she will oblige.

Due to the irregular hours of some of her clients, and K's ability to work from home, she also provides part-time babysitter or nanny services for her clients' toddlers and small children, providing food, shelter, and other care, and sometimes taking the children to school on a monthly contract basis. When her clients can pay, they will give K what they can afford monthly, but in the situations when they are having difficulties, K will still provide the services free of charge. Although K has children of her own, she miraculously finds the energy to watch other children as well as her own, in addition to providing hair styling services. K's services and her home-based salon are not exceptional; her business is one of number in the area, providing a similarly diverse *mélange* of services helping immigrant women maintain both their jobs and their families when the resources at their disposal are minimal.

On the occasions when I go to Salon B, I am privileged to be treated as one of K's family members, and thus I take on the responsibilities commensurate with that role, in effect, those of an adopted daughter. I aid with childcare and with cleaning and cooking duties, as well as assisting her with clients receiving hair care. While the little

bedroom-turned-into-salon studio is usually quiet, the door closed to provide privacy, the outside living areas are filled with the sounds of boisterous children running, falling, playing, shouting, watching movies and generally being noisy children when they are not exhausted and fast asleep in the evening. As in a typical West African household, K calls all the children under her care her babies, and treats them as she does her own children. This is possibly due to the inability to single out special treatment for each child she is caring for who is not biologically hers, and also the fact that all of the children, her own included, interact with each other as though they were all siblings, and K maintains this type of interaction between them.

A well-known cliché is that women treat their stylists as their therapists, and in the cases of many of the women who come to Salon B, it is not a mere cliché. The time they spend getting styled is usually one on one with K and a time when they can focus on themselves, relax for a bit, release their caregiving duties to someone else for a while, and finally have a chance to catch up on the news of other immigrant women, friends or otherwise. Advice is sought and many times freely given, although not necessarily in that order, on all and sundry issues pertaining to living and surviving in Japan as a foreigner. In this space of grooming, women discuss their experiences as mothers, siblings, wives, workers, their struggles and their failures and successes. And they proffer advice on all these issues.

Other topics frequently discussed are childcare, maintaining community, supporting one another, even when they are from different ethnic groups in order to find work, and providing shared living spaces for new immigrants. Of course, gossip and drama about other women, about where they get their hair styling done, and their

successes or failures in carving out their own spaces for participation in daily living in Japan, are also common. It is not surprising then for the conversations to turn to the dangers of dating African men, regarding their relative inability to become economic providers, as well as the fear that they might turn abusive. Still, the same difficulties exist with dating a Japanese man except that he will be considered a better investment in terms of the possibility of getting permanent residency papers, having children, and maintaining ties to Japan that will be just as important as their ties to their home countries.

One of the reasons that the space of the hair salon allows and facilitates these discussions is that there are few other opportunities to meet with and engage with other similarly situated immigrant women. Many immigrants live far from the city, and women usually end up staying at home raising the children while their husband or male relatives are more involved in dealings with integration and employment. There is a strong sense of loneliness and especially of isolation among women, as opportunities to meet and befriend other women are very few. When they come across another woman though, especially a newcomer in the area, they offer any help that they can with finding housing, finding jobs and job training, childcare, and more.

There are possibilities of attending the African themed events held around the city, but that requires the time to attend as well as the money to pay for attendance. Many do not have that type of disposable income even if they wanted to go. Some do attend these performances, and they might also participate in more VIP sorts of events such as the annual dinner banquet held by the African Ambassadors' Wives Association, which provides the venue for networking with movers and shakers in the

ambassadorial community, not the average person's domain. It is also not a place to let your hair down (unlike the salon) and talk about daily worries, but rather a place to see and be seen in one's finest.

Salon C

E, a younger African woman, prefers to be called an independent entrepreneur or hair consultant since she doesn't have a location base from which she works and provides services. Instead, she travels every day to customers' homes and brings all the items she needs with her to perform her job. Her clients pay her transportation fee along with the cost of styling. Her rates are competitive for the area, and her ability to travel to the customer's site makes her services much more convenient for many clients. Her customers are mainly women who live and work on the military bases as well as some Japanese women and expat African American women who live in the central Tokyo area. She has no website or business cards to provide, but has a steady stream of clients referred to her by other customers.

Although she has been living in Tokyo for several years, I have only recently heard about her and been introduced to her. Both of her parents as well as her brother live and work in Tokyo, and she came to Tokyo when her parents petitioned for and received a visa for her and her brother. According to E, she is a documented immigrant and an educated woman who chooses to be a hair stylist because it provides her with sufficient income and more freedom than if she worked in a *kaisha* (Japanese company). Even though E doesn't mention this outright, I wonder whether part of the reason she is a stylist is also that she had no success finding a typical *kaisha* job. Although she

speaks and reads Japanese at an intermediate level, she does so with difficulty and has a strong accent, making it unlikely for her to find a job in a typical *kaisha*. Even if she were to get a job working at an *obento* (lunch box) factory or another similar type of menial labor, she would not be able to make as much income as she now does in her work as an independent hair stylist.

E is a smart and savvy, no-nonsense woman, and her self-named entrepreneur title is fitting. This is especially evident in her experience starting out providing services, and the lessons she learned. She recounts stories of how at first, when she began visiting the houses of many of the West African women to do their hair when they requested it, she found that many of them also provided similar services, either full-time or part-time, in some capacity. Unfortunately, the fact that many of them engaged in similar work did not prevent them from attempting to negotiate even lower prices than her stated rates, because they are also African women. They would attempt to negotiate a lower rate after the service was provided or just ignore her stated rate completely, paying just enough to cover her transportation costs.

E maintains that she provides excellent quality in her work, so these practices cannot exist due to any client dissatisfaction, considering that they call for future services, which she refuses. She believes they do this because they are purposefully being disrespectful and perhaps trying to put her in her place, since she's usually younger than her clients are, and she is involved in the same kind of business that her clients are engaged in. They know the average rates for services. As a result, she has also proven to them that she has teeth and is not afraid to use them: she no longer

provides services to women in the West African community, and when they call asking for an appointment, she just refuses.

She complains that they gossip too much and are more concerned about what other people are doing than about the problems in their own lives. Further, their attempts to threaten her by purposefully underpaying her did not work because she stated flatly to them that she is a documented immigrant and can find other work or other clients if they don't want to pay correctly for her services. Thankfully for me, when I contacted her she didn't realize that I was also African, because an African American woman referred me to her. Had she realized earlier, she probably would not have met with me, supposing that providing hair styling services would be a waste of her time.

Churches and Associations

My brothers, my sisters, today is the day. Today, you will rise up.

Today you will put your faith in Him and all that come against you will fall away. They will scatter, in Jesus' name.

- African pastor

I have had the opportunity to attend several African churches in the Tokyo area, but will focus on two, located in one of the northern suburbs of the Tokyo metropolitan area. In the first one, the congregation was made up of mostly men, a few women, and several children, who attend the Sunday school run by two Japanese women. On this

particular day, at the beginning of the worship service, there were eight Nigerian men and three Japanese women, one attending the services and acting as interpreter in some instances, and two in the childcare area. All three of the Japanese women were spouses of Nigerian parishioners. The service began at 10 and ended at 1pm then was followed by a small wedding reception with traditional Nigerian food and an assortment of refreshments. As the morning service progressed three African women joined, two more Japanese women, six children of which three were mixed race and three were non-mixed race, and another 10 African men joined the service.

The attendees were clearly there for worship, but a significant element of the worship was to address issues of their supporting one another in a foreign country. The community and help that the church offered consisted of support raising children who were biracial or bi-cultural, maintaining a connection to the church by means of an identity card in case they were detained and needed a member of their community to vouch for them, celebrations of marriages and childbirth, and raising funds to support other church-goers who are in financial distress.

Another church I attended, also located in one of the northern suburbs is owned and operated completely by Ghanaians. On the Sunday that I visited, there were roughly 250 people, two-thirds of them men, and not a single Japanese person to be seen. The service began at ten a.m. and continued until two, when they broke for celebrating the life of the recently departed with music and songs and plenty of traditional foods. Throughout the service, a steady stream of people came in until there were about 300 in all. The previous evening, they had engaged in prayer services with 30 of the attendees.

After having discussed the Bible and prayed late into the night, they then slept in the church so that they could be present for the funeral service the next morning.

It is important to note that many of the men and women attending services at both churches are involved in the night-work sector, meaning they work in clubs, bars, and strip joints or hostess bars, etc. Many of them are only indirectly involved as security or fishers for new clients, but others are directly involved – owning or managing the business, and on the part of some of the women, engaging in procuring customers. This is not discussed openly in the churches although it is touched on at times during the sermon, what with the importance of living a God-driven life and asking God for forgiveness so that one may succeed in all endeavors.

It is always noted when a parishioner is late to a service, and many who are always late or don't attend regularly are assumed to be involved in the night-work industry. Although there is a bit of a stigma to engaging in such work, especially for women since there is the feeling that this work gives African immigrants a bad name, there is not much that can be done in the way of avoidance. In effect, although the religion is against being involved in the night-work industry, when these night workers are God-fearing parishioners, they are seen to be living their lives by God's standards. Being a member of the church provides community and support even if it is also a place where tongues can run rampant and gossip can be easily spread. It is a place of family and belonging, where support is sought and found.

Voluntary associations or African associations are mutual aid organizations that benefit their members financially, politically, culturally, and socially. In major cities around the world with an African immigrant presence, there are a number of African

associations organized along common identification such as pan-African, national, or ethnic identity. Smaller organizations revolve around gender, occupation or religion, and assist groups that might otherwise be neglected or marginalized in their new homes and act as key facilitators for helping immigrants adjust to their new surroundings. They help new and old immigrants secure housing and employment as well as keep them abreast of political and social events in their new homes as well as their countries of origin. In Japan the two oldest and largest associations are the Ghana National Association and the Nigerian Union. Under the umbrella of these two larger associations, smaller groups are organized along religious, political or ethnic identities and associations. Through these associations, immigrants maintain both imagined and real links to their countries and homes of origin. This is done through the collection of funds or dues towards members' family ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, and naming ceremonies. On a larger scale, they also fund development projects such as hospitals and schools for African hometowns and regions.

Associations further help to instill a sense of ongoing cultural identity through the organization and production of social events for African immigrant communities such as family ceremonies such as naming ceremonies, weddings, funerals, ethnic festivals, national celebrations, and religious holiday parties. African historian Attah-Poku points out that, "People enjoy inherent and unstoppable satisfaction from the practice of aspects of their original culture" (1996: 4). Through their participation in ethnic and national associations, immigrants reproduce cultural institutions, replicate kinship-based structures, and form social, economic and political bonds among like-identified people. Similar to other African associations in the Diaspora, associations in

Japan channel national and ethnic identity and citizenship among their members when faced with exclusion as non-citizens or the limitations of citizenship in the national imaginary in their new homes. This allows members to express distinct identities and create spaces of belonging when there seems to be none.

What is notable is that the practice of forming associations did not originate with immigrant in the Diaspora, but began as a strategy of social and cultural adjustment among Africans who migrated to rural areas to African cities during the colonial era. West Africans in particular have migrated from rural farmlands to urban African centers periodically since the colonial era as a direct result of economic changes and pressures, resulting in a swift urbanization of sub-Saharan Africa. Migrants established ethnic associations in urban African centers as a strategy to “foster friendship and cooperation among members, to give financial help to members or migrants in need, to unceasingly link members to their ancestral cultures, and to mobilize members to actively participate in ongoing development projects at home” (Attah-Poku 1996: 46-47). The principle aims of ethnic associations in Africa today are economic, socio-cultural, and minimally political. The most defining area for membership involves the payment of regular dues and additional contributions toward family ceremonies.

In Japan, associations also collect additional dues for putting on inter-cultural (Japanese-African) events, acquiring legal aid, help with immigration proceedings, providing aid to wives and children of African immigrants who have been injured or died as well as to fund development projects in African regions. As mentioned earlier, the associations that revolve around national identity such as the Ghana National Association and the Nigerian Union serve as umbrella organizations over a host of

smaller ethnic and political associations. While the ethnic associations have smaller memberships and concentrate on promoting ethnic culture and identity, the national associations allow African immigrants to build larger coalitions of members to develop economic, political and social projects which benefit the needs of their members in the Diaspora and their families and communities in their country of origin. In addition, they provide the means through which interaction with Japanese socio-cultural, economic and legal associations to promote understanding between cultures and investment between nations.

Moving outward from the national level are pan-African organizations that accept members from any African country and typically stipulate in their by-laws that the executive officers represent different African nations. There are few of these in existence in Japan. As many immigrants belong to more than one association such as ethnic, national, pan-African, or religious, a balance between time, attention, and dues to each association must always be negotiated. This conflict reflects an aspect of immigrants negotiating belonging by shifting or moving between different levels of identity based on context.

During the course of my research, I found that with Ghanaian immigrants in Japan, many chose to balance their time and dues between national and religious associations, and much less time was given to ethnic association. Many also maintained active engagement in political activities occurring in Ghana by meeting regularly to organize voting and dissemination of news from Ghana. The Ghanaian immigrant community in Japan also consists of several ethnic groups making the creation of and participation in smaller ethnically oriented associations more limiting in terms of

provisioning support to members since there would be fewer members involved in each association. Alternatively, everyone coming together under a religious or national banner means more people-power, better representation as well larger network and support group. Since the Nigerian immigrant community in Japan consists of mainly one ethnic group unlike the Ghanaian one, they avoid any struggles between ethnic and national allegiance by foregoing ethnic associations altogether. Instead, they give priority to religious affiliation first then national associations second. Their national association affiliations are separated into two major groups according to the top two Nigerian states represented by those immigrants living in Japan.

In addition to supporting members financially, the national and religious immigrant associations strive to promote cultural identity among their members by organizing, hosting, and contributing money to occasions related to the nation, and to family. The associations also contribute to events that promote African music and cultural heritage such as the yearly African Festival and monthly events highlighting a different African country. Smaller occasions that are privately produced for the immigrant community can be categorized as administrative, cultural, political, religious, economic and familial, cementing these ties among the associations' members. Administrative events include general, executive and special meetings at which the assembly discusses reports, financial issues and upcoming events. Depending on level of participation and available time commitment among members, they are held as regular monthly meetings or once a quarter. Cultural events on the other hand include national or ethnic celebrations, festivals, and parties. The national associations concentrate in these cases on events that reinforce a national identity, the most popular

and heavily attended usually being the celebration of a nation's independence day.

Japanese culture also places great importance on social networks such a coming from the same university, same company, same neighborhood etc., and introductions are for the most part much more beneficial in helping to secure a job than credentials. If you don't know the right people and don't belong to the circles and networks where someone can provide you with an introduction, it can be incredibly difficult to find ways of participating culturally, economically or politically. Becoming a member of an African association can go a long way to ease the difficulties of being an immigrant, the challenges faced when trying to become a community member or citizen when you don't fit the national ideal of what community member or citizen looks like.

Membership in African associations provide avenues through which immigrants can recreate and share their cultures with Japanese hosts, whether individuals or entities, and creates spaces where introductions and networking can take place, bridges to understanding and hopefully, appreciation of both cultures and peoples can happen.

7: PERFORMING ETHNIC IDENTITY & CULTURE

Global dispersion of Africans in the diaspora is nothing new, although more recently, it is notably a voluntary dispersion (that is, more voluntary than slavery) carried out for economic and political reasons. Capitalist demand for labor as well as political upheaval in the home country are integral to the presence of Africans and other peoples moving intra-nationally as well as transnationally. For Africans, emigration to the United States and to Europe has created “traditional” points of migration in these locations. In the past few years, non-traditional points of migration such as China, Taiwan, New Zealand, Australia and Japan have become destinations.

Although still a very small population of recent immigrants to Japan, the African presence provides opportunity to research and discuss identity fluctuations in a transnational context. It allows an interesting perspective on what it means to be a new immigrant and on new immigrants’ feelings of either “struggling” with their imposed identities, coming to terms with their own exiting sense of identity, or even the perceived necessity to adapt, defend, recreate or otherwise reconstruct an identity.

The presence of Africans in Japan raises several questions concerning the attitudes about and constructions of Africans as an ethno-racial group and as immigrants, by their Japanese hosts, and about whether this presence has an effect on changing such perceptions. Some work has been produced relating to Japanese cultural movements involving fascination and identification with African/Caribbean identity forms. Notable authors are Condry and his ethnography on hip-hop in Japan (2006), Atkins writing on the blues in Japan (2001), anthropologist Sterling in his works on

roots reggae and performative identification with Jamaican culture in Japan (2002; 2010), and Morris in his dissertation on hip-hop and Japanese national subjectivity (2010). The apparent love of and desire for African American and Afro-Caribbean cultural products, however, do not seem to have led to similar or equivalent love for the people. Writing on this particular disjuncture and its particularly fetishized Blackness are notable authors such as anthropologists Russell (1991; 1998) and Sterling (2010, 2011), Cornyetz (1994), Kearney (1998), Koshiro (2003), Wood (1997), Carter and Hunter (2008), and Leary (1991).

It becomes necessary then to ask, what are the contents and contexts of Japanese conceptions of Africans, and what are their relationships to the African self in Japan? Answers found in race theory do not seem fully appropriate for contextualizing the relationships being negotiated between these two groups. One cannot simply fall back on classic formulations of difference and racism, although these remain useful; there is now a need to see how the immigrant, visitor, foreigner in a Black body is constituted in the Japanese mind and by the Japanese state.

The existing research shows that discrimination faced by Africans in Japan is not only about being black, but equally about being foreign. This is possibly due to political and institutional barriers to the social acceptance of any foreigner. Wetherall writes that Japanese law has had no race or racist elements written into it, and thus the increasing ethnic diversity in Japan presents a viable option for Japan to become a deracialized state. At the same time, he continues, once the surface of Japan's raceless nationality is scratched, "the country reeks of officially sanctioned and widely shared beliefs and

pride in [this] myth of Japanese racial homogeneity” (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008:342).

As diasporas continue to change and numbers of transnational immigrants increase, certain sociological concepts are being challenged, re-evaluated and transformed: the boundedness of culture and identity, definitions of citizenship, and state-civil relations (Akyeampong 2000). Unraveling the ways through which the simultaneous presence and invisibility of Africans in Japan disrupt societal functions is useful in an effort to understand the contemporary dispersions of Africans and the relevance of this ongoing diaspora to politics, economy, and society. My research aim in focusing on Africans in Japan is summed up perfectly in the words of Marvin Sterling in his ethnography *Japanese performing Black culture*:

Many Japanese imagine Afro-Jamaicans to be like the Western, mass-mediated stereotypes of them as happy-go-lucky and dangerous, as fond only of sex and dancing. On the other end of the Afro-Asian equation, many Jamaicans bear the Orientalist view of Japanese as exotic women and martial artists. Blackness, like Orientalism (Said 1979), is a discourse of the non-Western other that has circulated and taken root beyond the West. Part of the challenge of Afro-Asian scholarship, therefore, might be to investigate how Asians and blacks negotiate their relationships with each other, vis-à-vis these globally circulated, locally situated discourses. (2010: 41)

In the preceding chapters, I provided a basic literature review of the existing scholarly material about minority populations in Japan and the particular ethnic groups on which these materials are focused. Current scholarly work on minority populations in Japan is extremely useful in providing a broad picture of the historicity of identity fluctuations imposed upon certain ethnic groups in Japan. They are also excellent guides for understanding the variety of political, legal and economic motivations leading to current immigration laws and standards in Japan as well as how these affect or disenfranchise new immigrants in the community.

Understandably, in these scholarly materials, particular attention is paid to *zainichi* Koreans and Japanese-Brazilian *nikkeijin*, as they form the largest minority populations in Japan. I discuss how this literature provides an important starting ground to understand the tenuous and contested positions of ethno-racial and national identity among the largest minority populations in Japan. I use this literature as a starting point for understanding the meso and macro struggles of minority groups and new immigrants in any receiving country, but particularly in Japan.

Unfortunately, lacking in these publications are materials that show adequately the actual lived realities of the minority population groups on which they focus. Often the conceptual lens is trained on governments and nation states attempting to control border crossings, and their inevitable failure. One school of publications relates how government failures affect the population groups moving between borders, in these instances on macro levels. Another school of publications portrays how past attempts at controlling immigration by allowing certain designated groups, based on ethnicity and assumed cultural proximity through blood ties, the ability to cross borders, has been a

failure on the part of politicians and policy makers. They have failed to control immigration on the one hand, and failed to assimilate the designated groups due to lack of cultural proximity, including a rejection of such proximity.

Although the literature touched upon in earlier chapters is vital to understanding problems of immigration control and immigration policy globally and particularly in Japan, it has missed an aspect that is equally important in critiquing current immigration reform. This aspect is the micro level, the tribulations of everyday life, the individual stories of how individuals and families have encountered reification, undergone change, or reconsidered their identity markers based on daily experiences of being members of invisible populations. The manner in which existing hegemonic discourse pertaining to “visible” populations and, thus partial identity formation, excludes the existing variety of ethnic groups, and similarly, the extent to which academic discourse focuses mainly on macro level deficiencies, create a lack of attention to the personal in much academic research.

This lack further compounds the disenfranchisement of the invisible class even though the sense of invisibility is always connected to immigration, especially in recent cases of migration. Thus I add to the as-yet limited discussion of micro experiences in this literature and attempt to remedy the lack of inclusion of encounters between the perceived Others and the unquestioned natives in such publications. How is the “foreigner” understood and perceived in daily interactions in accordance with or departure from dominant national discourses representing Others in Japan? This critique forms the backdrop of my own subsequent departure from this body of literature in my discussions pertaining to micro level experiences of immigration and identity

formulation or adaptation, paying particular attention to the African person's experiences of Blackness in Japan.

In the context of these critiques, I turn to the relationship between Japan and Africa, between a small country and an enormous continent, in an effort to provide insights into the dynamic and complex relationship between the two. By way of a Western gaze and categorization, Japan and Africa, which are imagined as a whole, form two Others – one of Blackness and one of Orientalism – and these categories influence interactions between the Japanese and African people. Within this framework, how is Blackness represented and codified in Japanese text, academic material and popular media? In which arenas does Blackness become isolated, and how then does a Black body or a Black person's face, negotiate spaces of existence within the locus of expected identity performance?

My aim in discussing ethno-racial identity and its fluid nature, particularly in transnational movements of peoples and border crossings, is to reconsider the nature of current debates surrounding immigration control in Japan. I wish to direct our ethnographic lens of analysis toward daily experiences of Africans in Japan, among a diverse group of immigrants, and their particular methods for creating spaces of existence when it seems none is readily available in their new homes.

For instance, the example of J and the Japanese minority identity he performs is one such method. There are African immigrants like him, and the nature of their performative identities is beneficial to our further understanding of the intersection of transnational movements of people and the flexible identities that such movements necessitate. From micro to macro levels, the cultural and ethnic landscape of Japan is

changing - it has been for decades. Despite national discourses touting the purity or homogeneity of the nation-state, there have been for centuries, and increasingly are at present, people in Japan making a life and setting up roots who are making the nation culturally and ethnically diverse. Yet the presence and contribution of many of these people go unnoticed or ignored inside and outside the country, while racism makes them hyper visible and noticeable. A prior given example is the former governor of Tokyo pointing to Nigerians in particular and Africans in general as criminals.

Performances

During the years I have spent living in Tokyo, some people I have spoken with have enacted performative identities, taking on the non-African Black identities, as a means of interacting with me. Although they know I am of African descent and (I assume) also know that I would be able to tell whether they are Africans based on their features and manner of speaking, they still use this performative identity when interacting with me, and claim to be from places other than where I would “read” them as being from (Goffman 1959). These people place me in a particular category of Other, as one who can aid them in gaining social or economic capital precisely because I inhabit a social and economic space that they consider to be more advantageous than their own. As they do this, my participation in their narrative and my not challenging them might provide for them a sense of “authenticity” that can validate their performance with me and with Japanese and other non-Japanese who would not know whether their narrative is true. It could also be indicative of an effort on their part to level their own positions in terms of social and economic capital to my own. When

speaking with other West Africans, and with Japanese who are either in relationships with or who have interacted with Africans through musical performances or as friends and acquaintances, I have learned that they too have had encounters with this form of ethnic identity performance. Partridge also retrospectively learns in connection to his research on Black bodies and hypersexuality in Germany, that young African men planning to move to Europe were practicing their performances of Black American masculinities and learning to dance or speak and move like African-Americans. He also experienced this firsthand while in Germany conducting research and observed that these performances of African-American identity as one of the only ways in which the Africans in Germany could be intelligible as human beings, and offered the possibility of national recognition (2013: 43-44).

Story of J

During the summer of 2009, I spent several afternoons and evenings sitting on the floor in the home of my friend K, a sister Togolese living in northern Tokyo. These moments were filled with conversations moving swiftly between Mina, French, English, and Japanese, and with laughter, talk of Togo, and of course, hair. I often spent these precious moments K had away from her day job in her home, watching or helping her braid another African immigrant woman's hair. Usually her children would walk in and out of the room, and I would assist with cooking and setting up dinner for the children or the whole family while K juggled taking care of her family with playing host to the guest or customer getting her hair done.

One such evening, K's friend J came over so that I could conduct an interview with him. K had suggested that speaking with him might be helpful for my research, and she wanted me to meet this friend of hers, as he was another Togolese. During the interview I asked J about his background, how and when he had come to Japan, and his experiences after arriving in Japan. J surprised me by telling me he was born in Okinawa to a Togolese father and a Chinese mother, and was Togolese only by virtue of his father. He spoke of having difficulty learning the Japanese language and still being unable to speak it very well. J's story unsettled me because he looked like an African to me, and his face bore ritual scarifications that I associated with the cultural space of the African continent. My own knowledge and experience with ritual scarification were firmly tied to a geographical location, but I realized it was possible to receive such bodily markers outside of the continent, in a space of the diaspora. I had not heard of such occurrences, but my lack of experience with such rituals performed outside the continent did not place them in the realm of the impossible.

Deciding that I had obviously made one of the gravest errors an ethnographer can make - to bring assumptions and cultural baggage with me to the field - I thought I needed to reassess my own expectations and assumptions about identity markers. It is clear to many of us anthropologists and sociologists that identity is fluid rather than clearly bounded, and not only consists of reflexive self-identity, but also, simultaneously and to an equal extent, of labels imposed by others. It seemed I had my own pre-existing notions about the bodies and identities of the immigrants I expected to encounter and work with during my research period.

I later found out that J's story of his origins was indeed a performance he engaged in mainly in his interactions with ethnic Japanese, especially when J felt his presence in Japan or his ethnic identity was being questioned or perceived as a negative factor. I still do not know why J felt the need to interact with me with a performative identity, although this could be an indication that these performances have become the embodiment of his actual experiences entering and living in Japan. With enough repetition or iterations of his performances, his performance had become his reality as an African man living in Japan. Engaging in or enacting performative identities it highlights the ways in which questions regarding one's ethnic origins in Japan can be highly charged. It also emphasizes the ways in which issues of ethno-racial identity permeate discourses pertaining to immigration, national identity, border control and finding belonging.

A Story of Two West Africans

I was approached in Shibuya by two West Africans who, seeing another Black person, perhaps wanted to network and to find out my story for being in Tokyo. They told me they were Nigerians when I asked where in Africa they were from, but quickly hastened to add that they had not spent much time on the African continent. They stated they had been in a Catholic orphanage in Nigeria at young ages and were adopted, moved to and grew up in England but had spent a lot of time in Canada and were now currently working in the import-export business in Japan, with British, Canadian, American, and Nigerian networks.

Due to business requirements, they now traveled back to Nigeria on a regular basis. They said that they were married to Japanese women and that there was a lot of cultural misunderstanding between their wives and themselves because their wives expected to hold and manage the majority of their earnings, and they had quarrels with them regarding sending remittances back to their families in Nigeria. The expectation that their wives would be in charge of their earnings did not settle well with them because, as they expressed it, as African men, they were supposed to be in charge of their earnings, and thus in charge of caring for the family, and this was what it meant to be a man.

What struck me at first was that if they had indeed been adopted and had grown up in England, they should have had British accents rather than West African accents. Having been adopted and raised in the United States, I lost my Togolese accent many years ago. The second question that struck me as highly interesting and rendering suspect their short life-history narratives was that if they had been in orphanages and then raised outside of the country, just who were these family members they were in touch with in Nigeria, with whom they had such deep familial duties that they would regularly send them remittances? I did not ask them either of these questions as I did not really know what consequences might come about were I to point out what I thought were holes in their story. I wasn't sure if they would feel embarrassed or "lose face" or how they might react, but in general, I thought it might be seen as rude of me or as social ineptitude. What I did understand was that they were enacting a performative identity narrative to explain how they came to be in Japan. I remained curious though as to why they had felt a need to use this particular narrative in speaking with me. Had

they placed me in a category of persons who wouldn't know the difference between a Nigerian, a Black Caribbean or other Black ethnic group because I lacked the accent marking me as an African even if I claimed to be one?

Barbershop

I first met B on a balmy summer late afternoon after wandering around Shibuya for half an hour, lost, trying to follow the directions given me to his salon. After walking past the white building on the corner that held his salon but that did not advertise it, I decided to give it a try and find out whether it was the correct building. I walked through the darkened entrance with slightly dimmed halogen lights to the elevators, punched in the floor and made my way up. Stepping out, I decided on a whim to take a left, but after checking the numbers on a few doors, I spun around and made my way back down the hallway past the elevator. The hallway looked to be full of apartments rather than offices, and there didn't seem to be a salon in the vicinity, but I was on a mission. Picking a door on the left hand side of the hallway, I knocked and waited, hoping I wasn't intruding on someone's home or office. The door opened, a young Japanese man greeted me, and I thought I had made a mistake. I was standing in the entrance of an apartment, where several shoes had been removed and laid out neatly in front of the door. From further inside came a greeting in West African accented English: "You are welcome! Come in." Stepping inside and taking off my shoes, I placed them next to a neatly lined up pair, turned around and walked into the room. Set up on the left side of the white room was a television and a large mirror on a table laden with barber's tools. Sitting in front of the mirror getting his hair cut was another young

Japanese man, dressed in dark jeans, with a black stylist's bib wrapped around his neck, covering him to his knees. Behind him was standing B, the owner of the salon, I presumed, the person who had invited me inside. Next to him and under the table I could see several little carts with multi-tiered trays holding more styling tools. Walking further in, I noticed two large cream-colored leather sofas placed next to each other to form an L shape against the right-hand wall. Sitting on the sofa was the young man who had opened the door for me, playing with his phone. Looking deeper inside the room, to the right of the sofas, I could make out a small tidy kitchen. I had been right - this was an apartment, B's home, I assumed, converted into a small barbershop.

Introducing myself, I handed out my business card, which B took, and then he promptly handed his to me, while we proceeded to exchange greetings in formal Japanese style, using both Japanese and English. It was noteworthy that we were using the culture of the country we found ourselves in to establish a rapport, instead of using traditional Ghanaian forms (asking about the family, etc.). We were both Africans, but we were acting like or performing Japanese culture in our interactions with each other. Had the other person we were interacting with been Japanese, we would have performed these rituals to show how we belonged, to say in effect, "I may not look like you, but I have taken the time to learn your language, customs and rituals. I can be like you" in hopes of inspiring acceptance from the other person. Here we were though, two Africans, greeting each other in Japanese and using Japanese rituals instead of greeting each using African style rituals. In the context our host homes, we were both engaging in a performative identity we may have normally only engaged in with Japanese counterparts.

Turning back to the young man he was currently grooming, he bade me to have a seat on the sofa so that he could continue working while we chatted. Being from Ghana, B assumed I was Ghanaian after reading and hearing my name. He asked which part of the country I was from, and I responded that I was actually born in Togo, although I had family still living in Ghana. B had been in Japan for several years, building his business with the networks he had created while working on the streets of Tokyo selling hip hop style clothing. There were several shops in the neighborhood now, he knew the people who owned and worked in the shops, and he still worked in one of these shops occasionally, but spent most of his time on his own grooming business. With his networks through the hip hop clothing stores, he imported many of his hair care products from the U.S., as well as deodorant and other body care products. They were expensive owing to the import fees, but he said they sold quite well. He spoke Japanese fluently and was surprised that I had not been living in the country for longer. The young man getting his hair cut kept his attention tuned to the TV, and his friend was sending messages on his phone, so B and I continued our conversation regarding our connections to both the African continent and Japan. His regular clients knew of his African heritage, but he admitted to having claimed a Black American (and at times a Black European) identity a few times in the past when trying to sell clothes and during a period when he was interested in a Japanese woman. He pointed out that many of the immigrants had experienced differences in treatment from clients or prospective love interests (as well as in other areas of life) when people assigned them a non-African identity. Even now, he pointed out, despite the fact that most people knew him as an African, they didn't treat him as an African because of the type of business he

owns, the products he sells through his salon, and the types of clothes that he wears. They assign him an African American or another type of Black identity, and he does not correct them at times as he sees no benefit in doing so. B was convinced that many of the African immigrants would like to be able to possess the types of identities that I can claim, having been born on the African continent but educated elsewhere, "better than in Africa," which gave me a power, an ability to attain much if I chose to, especially with my Japanese language ability.

R & C

R and C are both street touts for a hip hop clothing shop in Harajuku. Both have been in Japan for over five years and know the owner of the shop well. They were introduced to the job a few months after landing in Japan through friends who had connections with the shop owner. On the evening on which we are speaking, the shop where R and C work is getting ready to close, but the streets are still filled with tourists and Japanese alike, enjoying the famous shopping street, some eating an assortment of food from crepes to ice cream, others sipping on bubble tea. Some are just walking in a leisurely fashion, looking, enjoying the bustle of the street even though most shops are turning off lights and putting away merchandise. Others on the street are finishing their shopping, laden with bags full of purchases. R is dressed in long plaid shorts, high top sneakers, and a red polo shirt, topped with a baseball cap tilted to the side, while C is dressed in dark blue jeans, similar sneakers and a white t-shirt.

Both R and C have known me for several years. D, whom I met on my very first trip to Tokyo several years ago, and who worked for the same shop at the time, had

introduced us. D is now gone, presumably to another part of Japan, but both R and C have lost contact with him and none of us know how to reach him. This is one of several meetings I have had with R and C, sitting outside the shop, talking, interrupted during intervals by both new and returning customers. R has a Japanese girlfriend whom he has been dating for around six months, and C has been married to a Japanese woman for two years. Neither one has children, although C and his wife have recently been discussing taking that step in their relationship. The two men keep separate bank accounts so as to separate their finances from their partners', which I find significant in the case of C, contributing to my conclusion that many, perhaps most, of the married African immigrants do the same. They maintain separate accounts but keep a third account in which the man and his wife or partner deposit money regularly for shared expenses. The result is that partners don't know each other's full earnings, and the men prefer to keep it that way. For African immigrant men, this practice is preferable to following a traditional Japanese custom of husbands handing over their earnings to their wives to manage and receiving a spending allowance. African men prefer to be in charge of their own earnings; they are very uncomfortable with handing their money over to a wife, as that would make them feel that they are not in charge of their relationship, not playing the part of the earning and financially supportive partner, as they are expected to do in their home countries. They say that staying in charge of their own earnings gives them the ability to leave the relationship should things go badly, without the worry that their wives might try to take their money or use it as a legal weapon against them. In the U.S. and Europe, a joint account might be preferable in this context, but in Japan, only one person's name can be registered per bank account, and

thus it is not possible to open joint accounts. The account both husband and wife are contributing to in Japan is usually in the Japanese spouse's name so that joint expenses can be managed by that person. The partner whose name is not on the account can only deposit money into the account, and cannot manage the account or its contents in any fashion, because they do not have a legal right to it.

R's girlfriend is aware that he is an African and so is C's wife, but both men confess that in the beginning their partners did not know that they were African. R said that he had told a past girlfriend that he was from England and maintained that fiction until the end of their relationship. C told his wife that he was African American at the beginning of their relationship, and it wasn't until many months later that he claimed his African heritage and told her the truth. R does not make it evident whether he would have told his past girlfriend of his African identity at some point if their relationship had continued, and I do not push him for this information. Both say, though, that it is difficult to go on dates or begin relationships with Japanese women unless they claim an ethnic identity other than their true one. They had heard tales during their earlier days living in Japan that without a Japanese girlfriend it would be difficult to conduct many day-to-day activities and to secure legal jobs and housing, etc. They also heard, and according to them, found out from experience, that it was difficult to get the opportunity to date a Japanese woman if she knew they were African instead of African American, Black European, or Jamaican. C arrived in Japan on a tourist visa and overstayed when it expired, but R was able to obtain a refugee visa to facilitate his arrival in Japan. Neither R nor C views his partnership with a Japanese woman solely as a method for becoming a documented immigrant in Japan, and neither claims to have considered this

as an option. Instead, they maintain that they were living in Japan, found certain women attractive, and wanted to pursue a relationship. At the same time they were aware that if they were able to have a Japanese partner, navigating life in Japan and integrating into Japanese society could be more effectively managed; but they both insist that they did not pursue their relationships with the aim of becoming documented immigrants or Japanese nationals. They say they are aware that this does happen on occasion, but they feel these contracted marriages probably cost considerable money - money they do not have to spare since they are focused on sending what they can to their families in their home countries.

Entrepreneurs

Another ethnic identity performance strategy is to become a business person or entrepreneur through the teaching of West African dance and drumming. Students are mainly Japanese women, although a few Japanese men also join the lessons. Take for example, the following vignette, which showcases a regularly occurring event at the conclusion of a month of classes and training.

It is a Thursday night and the little club is packed with Japanese women dressed in colorful, traditional Senegalese clothing usually reserved for celebrations, and celebrating is exactly what they are in the middle of doing. The small space is filled with the chest-thumping, heart-thrumming sounds of djembe drums energetically played by Senegalese and Guinean percussionists, their long, dark, sinewy limbs moving smoothly, arms flexing, finger tips and palms alternating starts and stops, thumps and quick tap-tap-taps. With another month of sabar dance and djembe drumming lessons

behind them, they gather to drum and dance for each other. The women move and dance to the drummers' thoughts put into notes, and they in turn direct the rhythm of their partner's drumming. They let their bodies fly free, losing inhibitions and themselves in this universe created with suggestive dancing and the magical art of the drums. The women's clothes have been tailored to fit their bodies very precisely, baring some shoulders, hugging curves, flaring out at the waist, the skirts flowing down and then flaring out at the bottom, allowing plenty of space for high-flying legs to make them billow and settle rhythmically with the wearer's movements.

Half of the small space contains the men with their drums neatly aligned and crammed all together into a semi-circle, and the women take up the other half of the circle, some sitting, some standing, while in the middle, the ones moved by the music dance, jump, throw their arms and legs in the air, stopping suddenly and thrusting hips once in time to the short, sudden, intense thump and then pause of the drum before both drummer and dancer continue. Bodies shine with sweat and faces are split into grins as they enjoy these precious few hours to show off for each other.

Roughly once a month this event is held in the same location in Tokyo. Almost all of those present live nearby and as a result know each other through taking classes together, either dancing or drumming djembe, and/or performing together at African-themed events held at multiple venues all over Japan. The crowd of performers on this particular night is comprised of 90% West African men playing the drums and at times dancing sabar, 1% Japanese men playing drums (but none dancing), and 9% Japanese women dancing sabar. The performers are also the audience, so with the exception of

the one Japanese man and woman behind the bar, the organizer of the event and possible bar owner (a Japanese man) and myself, there are no additional spectators.

It is not surprising to me that I am the only Black and West African female at the event, given that the majority of West African immigrants in Japan are male. Of the few West African immigrant women in Japan, I have yet to see one participate as a viewer, dancer or drummer at any African themed or ethnic event. Even when going through event photos, I notice that the rare snapshot of a Black or African woman dancing seems to have been taken at events located outside of Japan, usually in Senegal. When it comes to cultural and/or ethnic performances as identity markers and preservers, West African women do not seem to be engaging in all the same forms that men choose, if I may take performance events as indicators.

Instead, they dedicate their energies to ethnic restaurant curation and management as well as salon, beauty and esthetic services aimed at other Black and African women (although Japanese men and women also use their services for "ethnic hair styles" such as braids and extensions). A small component of the reason for the absence of African women in these performance circles could be that there are few African women involved as touring music professionals, and African women performers have little access to the events organized in Japan. Many of the Japanese women performers go to West African countries specifically to receive training and then return to Japan to perform what they have learned.

Even if African female performers do manage to make it to Japan once in a while, the chances of their being able to stay long term are small, and they don't have the same opportunities as men do to marry as a strategy for remaining in the country.

One reason is that there are fewer Japanese men desirous of marrying African women than Japanese women desirous of marrying African men. When it comes to the hierarchy of racialized desire in Japan, African women are at the bottom of the list of desirability, if they actually make the list at all. If the interest in and consumption of Black culture in Japan fueled or contributed to a curiosity and desire for the Black body, it was for a male body. The lack of practically any representation of the Black female body has resulted in the lack of a similar interest in and desire for consumption of the Black female body.

This particular event is one of the smaller ones I have attended. Other, bigger ones, have been held in restaurants, bars, dedicated event spaces, cultural centers, embassy organized event venues, parks, etc. but the majority are held in restaurants. Today's event is organized mainly for the performers' enjoyment rather than for an audience, and this is reflected in the lack of advertising. For other events that are meant to be public and income generating ethnic/cultural performances, many of those involved will spread the word by mouth to friends, use an assortment of social media including Facebook to list the event, and will also have flyers and other invitation handouts distributed around the city.

These public and paying events are meant as cross-cultural engagements and in some cases, instructional sessions, although in a fun, interactive and playful environment, with Japanese people rather than for other African immigrants. That is not to say that Africans do not attend. They most certainly do, many as friends and supporters of the performers - some are performers themselves - and they take the

opportunity to engage with others, enjoy food and drinks, and share a sense of homecoming or belonging with other immigrants and comrades.

Restaurant Owners

Mentioned briefly earlier is another form of cultural/ethnic identity performance as well as retention - that of the African cuisine restaurant/bar. There are several African restaurants, mainly West African but there are also a couple of East African, located throughout the Tokyo and Saitama regions. The East African restaurants are owned by Ethiopians and serve Ethiopian food, but the West African ones are owned by Nigerians, Ghanaians, Cameroonians and Japanese. These restaurants not only serve food from the owner's home country, they also serve an array of other popular West African foods and beverages, while showcasing a variety of cultural artifacts and items from West African regions. Having a range of regional foods guarantees a large customer base since Nigerians can find their own foods at Ghanaian or Cameroonian restaurants and vice versa. How close the available food comes to tasting like a truly homemade meal is another issue though, and predictably, the restaurants that serve the most "authentic" meals also have the largest base of regular customers.

One restaurant owned by a Japanese man and managed by a Ghanaian woman is very popular among Japanese customers because of its location in a busy area packed with office buildings and businesses. Passers-by stop in the entrance of the restaurant out of curiosity during their lunch hour, and, smelling the delicious dishes, grab some food before heading back to work. When they return they bring coworkers. One of the most popular dishes is the okra stew, probably because okra is a commonly eaten food

in Japan. This restaurant is less popular with Africans because it is owned by a Japanese, who they claim won't pay them well, and further, one who wants their talents in the kitchen for solely exploitative reasons. As a result, since the food is mainly prepared by Japanese cooks, the consistency and flavors are not quite what West Africans think they should be, and for them paying for this food makes no sense economically. They could spend the same amount of money on the groceries and cook a more pleasing and "authentic" meal themselves.

The African owned and run restaurants, though, seem to be popular with African immigrants and Japanese alike. These restaurants not only serve as places to eat African food; they are also meeting places for an array of cultural events variously held by the restaurant owners, sponsored by embassies and consulates for locals and visiting diplomats, etc., and also as performance venues for drummers, dancers, musicians and other performers of a variety of African art forms. Furthermore, they serve as the gathering places for monthly meetings of Nigerian, Ghanaian, Togolese, and other nationality-based community organizations. Finally, they are the watering holes for informal get-togethers, birthday and baptism celebrations, funeral gatherings, national independence celebrations, dance parties, and general merry-making. For the purposes of helping me with my research, many of these places were chosen regularly by those I met with to arrange public meetings and interviews.

Conclusion

It is important to highlight that although the different identities identified above are not specifically "African American" identities or non-African identities, what makes

them performative identities are the possibilities they allow the performer to engage within the Japanese nation as a non-citizen and create belonging. I consider the African identities as performative identities just as much as “African-American” identities because they are hyper-ethnic African identities and subjectivities. The performers are in effect taking on the mantle of representing (in a positive light) and teaching their Japanese hosts about all of Africa in a manner. Similar to the way the token Black person in entertainment is expected to be a fountain of knowledge regarding all things pertaining to Black culture, Africans in Japan attempt to create spaces of belonging by speaking directly to the lack of diverse representations of Blackness by performing African, African-American and other types of Blackness that can be understood by their hosts and thus lead to belonging. Partridge has pointed out ways in which

“African-American” occupation is linked to processes of social transformation – i.e., the reconfiguration of social and physical space, shifting positions of “Blackness” from ones of marginality to those anthropologist Jacqueline Nassy Brown calls “diasporic resources” (Brown 1998; see also Campt 2004). But here, these resources are rearticulated, to include not only those originally perceived as being of “African descent,” but also those in other spaces of displacement or noncitizenship. (2013: 52)

In the context that very few black people have lived in Japan, and in the context of the increasing movement of people as a result of global capitalism, the presence of black people in general and Africans in particular have been on the rise on the Asian continent. Capitalist consumption of global blackness in addition to the erasure of ethnic

others within in constructing a racialized discourse of homogeneity on national identity provide the context in which African immigrants find themselves in Japan. Part of Japan's process of Westernization in the late 1880s incorporated images, ideologies as well as performance traditions from Europe and America, including blackface and caricatures of black people with white or red lips, bulging eyes, grass skirts, completely black skin and bone ornaments through hair and noses and so on. In spite of efforts to remove these images in response to international criticisms in the early 1990s they are still present all over the country today. Although more problematic is that the images that have been suppressed or censored were done in large part because international observers found them offensive rather than that Japanese people viewed them as such (Sterling 2012; Russell 1998, 1991). Blackness in Japan has also been reduced to stereotypes of primitivism and hypersexuality while capitalist consumption of global blackness increases; the marginalization of blackness coexists with its valorization. Black people living in the country are invisible and thus one of the only ways to find belonging is to create spaces where one can speak out against these representations, by providing a different representation to be consumed. The African immigrants enacting different types of hyper African, African-American or other black identities and subjectivities are thus rearticulating the existing identities and spaces of understanding available to them in order to belong and become participating members of society.

8: CONCLUSION

The number of foreign immigrants in Japan is increasing. Whether this fact is acknowledged or not, welcomed or not, it is undeniable. At the very least, the number of ethnic minorities in Japan will remain at its present level. It may increase, depending on government policy measures on immigration. No matter what the future holds, research on current ethnic minority residents has been documented and focuses heavily on Koreans and Japanese-Brazilian *nikkeijin*. Their experiences are different and unique to each individual, yet similar strands can be seen woven into the stories written on them. In the storytelling process, some authors focus more on ethnic identity and struggles to find a place called home abroad. Others focus on macro subjectivities influenced by government policy on immigration, and on facilitating citizenship rights.

The possibility of performative identities and of plastic self-identities has not been discussed at great length in existing literature in Japan Studies, but my research adds to the discussion, providing a different, on the ground, personal look at the experience of transnational movement and fluidity of identity in the context of Japan. As mentioned before, Japan is not so different from other industrialized nations in expressing reservations regarding an influx of immigrants, but each story told in a different context is useful to understanding our world that is simultaneously getting smaller and staying enormous and difficult to navigate.

Is it naïve to speak of self-identity in foreign places and of how one is adapting to change? My aim in researching Africans is to speak to the complex and sometimes contradictory ways in which identity is perpetually changing, especially for people

crossing borders as ethnic, national, sex, class, kin membership and other types of identities converge, intersect and are spotlighted during the acts of border crossing. I believe that Africans as well as certain other ethnic minorities in Japan inhabit a space of high visibility in terms of their inability to blend in or “pass” as Japanese no matter their attempts; whereas two highly researched ethnic groups - *zainichi* Koreans in Japan and Japanese-Brazilian *nikkeijin* are in fact able to pass in some circumstances.

I do not mean to claim that these two “passable” groups maintain a single common consciousness or ethno-racial identity and thus can always blend in or hide their perceived ethno-racial differences from the Japanese populace - they cannot, and have been identified as separate and Other from Japanese on occasions that uphold the myth of Japanese homogeneity. Still, there are times when some *zainichi* or *nikkeijin* and probably Chinese and Taiwanese as well, among others have been able to or have been forced to “pass” as Japanese, perhaps for legal reasons. Africans on the other hand, cannot occupy similar spaces, or rather, they have not occupied such spaces in Japanese consciousness and will not be able to unless the ideological imagery of Japanese-ness changes. Consequently, I believe the performative identities of Africans in Japan, their understanding of Japanese perceptions of themselves, those of Japanese individuals and those in the nationally espoused ideology, along with their lived experiences of identity in Japan, offer valuable insight into the machinations of flexible identity creations and manipulations.

My work then, has sought to delve even further than historical accounts of identities in flux and subversive to the dominant or hegemonic discourse, and show instead, immediate lived realities of a group of immigrants among many who defy

bounded identification as transnational immigrants and border crossers. In this space, I have shown the ways each immigrant group must react flexibly to their inability to fit a prescribed mold of immigrant Other and non-Japanese, in the precise context where they are becoming Japanese by placing roots within the nation's borders.

One of the ways of finding belonging and being a recognized contributing member of society is through joining the labor market. Many immigrants face discrimination in the housing and labor market, severely impacting the possibilities they envisage for themselves as accepted members of their new communities. With the aid of social ties and networks cultivated from prior to their move to Japan and once inside the country, immigrants find ways of participating in the limited spaces available to them. Maintaining and growing social ties through ethnic and national associations aids many immigrants in finding jobs, housing, community participation and (re)creation of home and belonging in Japan. While maintaining a sense of self that as Africans, they are able to interact with Japanese people through events meant to foster education and understanding between the two regions.

Within the limited labor pathways available to African immigrants, many end up as business owners and entrepreneurs among other things. I argue that their participation in these particular labor pathways is also a form of performative identity, as these positions are centered on their African identities. Restaurant owners, artists and musicians for example use their resources available to them, primarily those related to their origins on the African continent, and by becoming spokespeople for their cultures, they are engaging in performative hyper-African identities. These roles not only serve as an educational tool in attempts to provide more diverse images of Africanity and

blackness, they also provide the space for them to continue performing their African identities as a means of maintaining home and creating new spaces of belonging in Japan.

Many immigrants are also able to make personal connections with the encounters made possible through African themed events, shows and performances held at restaurants and symposiums, leading to intimate relationships, and the possibility of marriage partnerships. The role of Japanese family members and friends is a significant aid in navigating the social, economic and legal landscape, and the main pathway to acquire acceptance as participating members in the Japanese economy. Through the enactment of certain types of performative identities, immigrants can inhabit the space of bodies that are desired and recognizable in the national imaginary as members - although only as limited members in the sense that they can never become Japanese citizens according to racialized national discourses on who are rightful Japanese - of society.

I propose that considering Blackness and Japanese-ness as identity types among many that can be mixed and matched according to relationships in specific contexts, is useful in studying the meanings of identity constructions. Particularly in the context of transnational agents and immigrants, it seems Africans in Japan are coming to terms with pre-existing notions regarding their identity and making these concepts more complex by performatively occupying particular ethno-racial identity spaces. Hence it would be useful for scholars, academics, politicians, and the general public to embrace a broader notion of what identity consists of, to see identities on a spectrum, if debates surrounding immigration in Japan are to make any headway towards alleviating the

expected demographic and economic decline. This performative, flexible space also allows me, as a researcher, to engage with my research subjects and understand the unique ways in which they are enacting agency and making spaces of existence for themselves in their new homes.

Furthermore, paying more attention to non-academic work produced by Africans and African-Americans in Japan would be a very useful tool and could offer valuable narratives on Blackness in Japan. Some preliminary material would be Kathryn Leary's 1991 essay in *Essence* magazine about her experiences in the early 1990s as an African-American woman in Japan (Leary 1991), Regge Life's two films documenting the lives of several African-Americans living in Tokyo and biracial children in Japan (Life 1995; 1993) and "Hafu: The Film" on being a mixed race person in Japan (2013). As Carter and Hunter aptly put it, "What academics need to further emphasize is that not all Japanese accept black people as appendages – chopped up, packaged, and ready to be consumed. To bring over to Japan these arguments that may rightly describe racialized bodies as targets of the actions of government in the United States is a tenuous project and one which may produce more harm than good in attempting to analyze how to deal with the very real and lived social injustices and marginality that exist in other forms" (2008: 198). Still, it is important to realize that the injustices experienced by foreigners in Japan are racialized; West African immigrants and people with Black bodies will experience numerous forms of injustice, some experienced by most foreigners regardless of race or ethnicity, and others because they are Black.

While focusing specifically on African immigrants and how they experience outsider status, I believe I have shown how identity (re)creation, subjugation,

formulation, interpretation, adaptation, synthesis and creolization, in opposition to perceived existence of identity purity, occurs. I believe this process can be considered a performance of active agency rather than mere passive participation. Consider my anecdote above concerning J – his case is not singular, nor is he the only one creating a contextualized identity to perform in certain scenarios; there are others who use the same strategy (Kawada 2007; Partridge 2013). The particularities of these identities, including the contexts where they are employed, are telling of the situational experiences of immigrants and the ways in which they can influence and change their cultural surroundings. For example, when preconceived notions or expectations pertaining to immigrants already exist in the space immigrants inhabit, when reality, coming face to face with or having interactions with the perceived immigrant, is confronted with fantasy, the expectations of the incidence of interaction immigrants engage in different types of identity performance.

Although Japan presents an image of ethnic and cultural homogeneity, in actuality its diverse immigrant population is on the rise; and in direct correlation, international marriages in Japan are becoming much more common. Historically, most international marriages were conducted between American service men and Japanese women, but more recently, this pattern has changed and consists most often of Japanese husbands and non-Japanese Asian wives. I have explored one of the less common unions, that of sub-Saharan African husbands and Japanese wives living in Japan. The motivations for and experiences of the sub-Saharan Africans involved in these unions are under-researched, and I caution future researcher to avoid the assumption that such

immigrants are usually opportunity seekers or merely using their partners from developed countries to gain access to legal residency.

It is important to remember that all relationships, all marriages are entered into multiple reasons that are not always easily separated into categories such as “visa”, “love”, “legal”, “convenient” marriages. Similar to the White German women and their relationships with African men in Partridge’s ethnography (2012), the Japanese women’s desire located at the site Black bodies, or in this case, African men’s bodies exemplifies one of the only available means of creating citizenship and belonging even if that citizenship is one of exclusion and thus of non-citizenship when viewed from the perspective of the national ideology regarding which bodies are considered or imagined as legitimate citizens.

The existing restrictive migration policies in Japan, increasingly force immigrants to develop creative strategies and practices for acquiring legal residence and acquiring essential work permits. One of the few effective strategies is marriage to a Japanese national. Foreigners who marry a Japanese spouse receive temporary residency status, which enables them to work, unlike having refugee status or a temporary visitor’s visa, and at a later time, they can apply for unlimited settlement.

Most studies make a clear distinction between marriage immigrants and labor immigrants, but Piper (1997) and Parrenas (2006) show that this distinction is dichotomous and too often oversimplifies immigrants’ options and motivations. They point out, for example, that even though some spouses might use marriage as a legal means of gaining entry to a certain country, the actual purpose for others getting married is to find a job and support their family back home. On the other hand, labor

immigrants might also find a spouse while already legally employed in the country of migration. In both of these cases, the spouses-to-be encounter the same significant role of the state in governing and ordering personal relationships. Since the state maintains control over the legal distinctions between labor immigrants and marriage immigrants, the state also decides what type of relationship constitutes a “real marriage” (Fleischer 2008). During the course of my research in Tokyo, my interviews with members of the Sub-Saharan immigrant community confirm that the distinctions between marriage immigrants and labor immigrants are not that clear - marrying for better work prospects and marrying for love cannot be cleanly separated. My experiences interacting with members of first and second generation immigrant communities in the United States, France, Germany and England have also confirmed that the qualities that differentiate a “real” or “love” marriage from a marriage contracted for other reasons can be quite nebulous.

Even though many international marriages are not conducted solely for legal purposes, marriage to a Japanese national, in many cases, is the only option for immigrants to remain in Japan and obtain a resident permit and the right to work. Still, I argue that for these foreign spouses, the commonly held notion that their marriages are scam marriages does not do justice to the complexity of their motivations to marry or to the realities they face in Japan. Furthermore, Japanese spouses are not just naïve people who are taken advantage of by their foreign spouses, but are actively engaged in designing their lives and choosing their family makeup.

Viewing them as people solely being taken advantage of strips them of their own complex motivations for pursuing relationships with foreigners; among which is the

perception that their relationship or marriage is a way out of the strict hierarchical gender relations in Japanese culture, and the belief that the marriage will give them access to a more independent lifestyle. Still, legal restrictions imposed by the state, objections expressed by family members against the relationship, and discrimination faced for being a non-Japanese and for being married to a non-Japanese, are all contributing factors to the difficulties these inter-racial and inter-national couples face on a daily basis. My aim is not to over-romanticize these unions, and neither do I wish to claim that these marriages can only be understood from the perspective of the legal categorizations of a “real” marriage; rather, my aim is to present an alternate context in which to view marriage as a creative strategy to integration when few other options are available.

I further argue that the African immigrant subjects of this research are conscious agents in the very act of performing their new and multiple identities. These re-articulations of identity practices must be considered in the contexts of their particular fields of occurrence, as this diaspora “influences the economy, politics, and social dynamics of both homeland and the host country or area” (Harris et al. 1996). They are also responses to larger social structures that impose constraints on belonging or allow for opportunities to becoming citizens based on an ideal or desired body in the national imaginary. Partridge points out that:

The pleasure and utility of human bodies are not just produced through individual desire, but through technologies that shape individuals into populations, and populations into nations with particular interests. These technologies are the means for

managing and producing nation-states and also for creating modes through which noncitizen bodies get produced. ... One's relationship to the national ... is determined in the ways in which one can fit in, or cannot. (Partridge 2012: 128)

Faced with a national imaginary that cannot place their Black bodies, cannot blend their unacceptable otherness with what it means to be a Japanese or a citizen through national belonging, these African immigrants find creative ways to inhabit the body of someone who's otherness is accepted and desired through performative identities. What we can consider is that by entering into marriage partnerships, both parties are acting within the confines of the national regulatory power to determine who is a "normal" member of society. This national power does not only regulate people from top down, it is also enforced from the bottom up, by regular citizens in their daily encounters with each other and in the ways people police and regulate each other to fit a common ideal. In this context, Japanese women are enacting their own agency and owning their sexuality in choosing partners they place in contradiction to Japanese men and Japanese gender roles. They are also acting as on-the-street level bureaucrats in the sense that their relationships with Africans and Black people provide the possibility of becoming exclusionary citizens (Partridge 2012). Considering that while blackness is desired and consumption of global blackness can be seen everywhere in Japan and even domesticated, this does not mean that blackness or those with non-Japanese bodies, racialized others, black others, do not exist in the national imaginary as possible Japanese citizens or nationals. I have shown that the Africans in this ethnography embrace performative identities that can be situated or understood in the national

imaginary and within encounters with Japanese people. In inhabiting these performative areas, they can create spaces of belonging within the context of being perpetual noncitizens.

Considering professions and encounters through the lens of performative identity is exceptionally helpful in situating my ethnographic work with African immigrants in Tokyo. By viewing the ways in which they create identity meanings or redefine themselves based on their new fields or settings, it allows me to link identity performativity to performing agency. I see the performance as a simultaneously conscious and unconscious way of creating spaces of belonging and integration, and an embodied form of agency. It is not something I want to call fully consciously realized resistance, but neither are the actors just passive victims of their new structures. The very enactment of their various identities as world travellers is strategic, but also, it is just a less than fully realized redefining form of survival. It includes redefining the structures in which they are now located and these performances “challenge, manipulate, combat, negate, and sometimes invert representations of themselves that are reproduced in the dominant discourses of their national society and/or the society in which they live” (Rahier 1999: xiv).

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