Identifying Challenges for the Foreign-Born Japanese Population in the Nashville Metropolitan Area

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A thesis presented to the Honors College of Middle Tennessee State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the University Honors College

Spring 2024

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Abstract

The Nashville Metropolitan Area has emerged as a gateway city for immigrants and refugees. This phenomenon has captured the interest of scholars who study migration. Much of their research has demonstrated how newcomers to Nashville follow similar patterns of assimilation and acculturation into the host community within a matter of generations. However, due to the constant flux of Japanese individuals entering and exiting Middle Tennessee, a stable, well-established Japanese community has yet to materialize. Rather, Japanese immigrants in Tennessee often view their resettlement here as ephemeral. Furthermore, their settlement pattern across the metropolitan area is spatially dispersed or "heterolocal" rather than centrally located. This lack of a salient, organized Japanese community along with limited knowledge of Nashville prevents meaningful cultural exchange and enrichment, evidenced by lackluster representation. The author argues more can be done to make Tennessee an appealing environment for Japanese students, workers, and long-time residents.

Keywords: Japanese sojourners, Nashville Metropolitan Area, transplants, expatriates, international students, immigration, heterolocalism

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Introduction

Tennessee, now more than ever, is home to a variety of immigrant populations (McDaniel, 2016; American Immigration Council 2020). Nashville has been described by Dr. Paul McDaniel (2016) as "a new immigrant gateway in a new immigrant destination state. It has undergone rapid population and economic growth in recent decades." This has given Nashville the moniker of being a "welcoming city" to immigrants (McDaniel, 2016). It has also earned the nickname "Little Kurdistan" for having the largest population of ethnic Kurds of any city in the United States (Sawyer, 2017). Additionally, the dramatic rise of the Hispanic population has attracted attention of geography and immigration academics (Chaney, 2015; America Counts Staff, 2021). Tennessee ranked third in the nation for Latino population growth rate between 2000 and 2010 and fifth between 2010 and 2020 with the Nashville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) being responsible for over a third of the state's total population of Latinos (Chaney, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

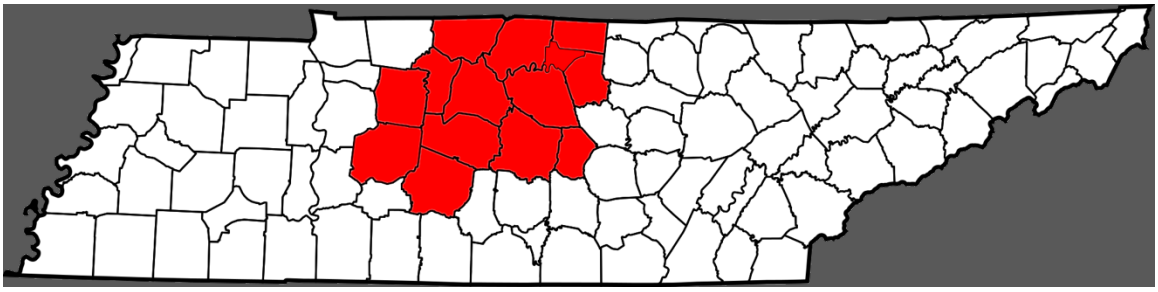

Figure 1: A map of the 14 counties which make up the Nashville-Davidson–Murfreesboro–Franklin, TN Metropolitan Statistical Area (GatewayPolitics, 2023)

The Japanese population is unique in the region for a number of reasons, but paramount among them is the ephemeral nature of the Japanese immigrants who come here. Beginning in the 1980s, massive foreign direct investment by Japanese industry has brought upper-management businessmen for temporary assignments to local plants, occasionally bringing their families with them. The success of this investment inspired the relocation of a Japanese consulate general from New Orleans, where it had been since 1922, to Nashville in 2008, creating a friendly environment for further partnerships with Japan and Japanese industry. Middle Tennessee State University and international universities in Japan have established such connections which continue to bring over new Japanese international students. Furthermore, MTSU's partnership with a local ELS Language Center attracts dozens of language learners from Japan each year. Despite their number, Japanese sojourners rarely choose to pursue permanent residence beyond their initial assignment. Whether due to the constant coming and going of Japanese individuals and families or the relatively short period of time Japanese have lived in Tennessee at this scale, it is difficult to find literature concerning their experiences. Possibly for those same reasons, it is hard for the Japanese to find information about Tennessee before arriving here.

I contend this lack of literature and availability of information limits not only understanding of valuable perspectives within Tennessee but also how well Japanese people are able to adapt to challenges during their time here. Through interviews and participant observation with Japanese immigrants currently living in the Nashville MSA, I aim to demonstrate why a cohesive and salient Japanese community has not formed in

Tennessee as well as advocate for better support of a local Japanese community with the goal of making Tennessee a more appealing place for the Japanese.

Japanese Immigration to the West Coast and American South

The Japanese in Nashville contrast with other immigrant groups in the area as well as with historically notable Japanese immigrant groups on the West Coast. Using a spatial theory lens, I will analyze key characteristics of these groups in order to illustrate what distinguishes the Japanese in Nashville. Specifically, I will seek to determine if the population can be potentially described as heterolocal.

Nashville could not be further from the *nihonmachi* (literally "Japan-cities") of California in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Smith, 2010, p. 301). The first wave of Japanese immigrants arrived midway through the Meiji period when emigration from Japan became legal (Onozawa, 2003, p. 117). The majority of these immigrants could be characterized as agricultural migrants fleeing the pressures of industrialization in Meiji Japan (Smith, 2010, p. 302). The Japanese formed clusters of *Issei* (first-generation Japanese immigrants) primarily in Hawai'i and California (p. 302). Racist policies aimed at forcing Japanese immigrants into ghettos led to the reinforcement of these clusters into immigrant enclaves like "Little Tokyo" in Los Angeles (pp. 303-305). Immigration continued until 1924, especially as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 cut off a significant source of cheap labor to the western coast of the United States, but legal immigration halted at that time due to the Immigration Act of 1924 which banned immigration from Asia outright (Frazier, 2006, p. 19). Immigration would not return at

that scale until the Civil Rights Movement and Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 reversed the ban (pp. 19-20).

Figure 2: Little Tokyo in 1942 (Albers, 1942)

Comparably, many of the more salient immigrant communities in Nashville are comprised of members with low human capital. “Low human capital” better describes what might otherwise be referred to as “cheap” or “unskilled” labor, as these immigrants arrive without credentials or economic means, not without skill. This characterization best describes populations of Hispanic, Somali, and Kurdish populations in Nashville

(Chaney, 2010; Chaney et al., 2018). Traditional literature suggests second and third generations from these populations "integrate" into society with locally gained language and education, although this phenomenon, especially its spatial component, has been challenged in recent decades (Hardwick, 2006; Zelinsky & Lee, 1998).

Japanese involvement in Tennessee first started to take shape with the governorship of Lamar Alexander and the attraction of foreign investment, primarily in the automotive industry (Vlasic et al., 2012). During the 70s, the booming Japanese economy threatened US markets. In response, President Carter addressed governors across the country urging them to pressure Japanese industry to "'make in the United States what they sell in the United States'" (Japan-America Society of Tennessee, 2022). By his account, Governor Alexander formed a relationship with Japanese executives through several personal flights to Japan (Japan-America Society of Tennessee, 2022). Manufacturers were drawn to "greenfield" towns like Smyrna, Tennessee, where manufacturing jobs could be easily sourced on undeveloped land without the interference of unions as in the Midwest (Mair et al., 1988, p. 366).

After Nissan moved to the area in 1985, foreign and domestic manufactures both from Nissan suppliers and competitors followed (Japan-America Society of Tennessee, 2022; Mair et al., 1988, p. 366). The massive amount of investment completely changed the landscape of Tennessee, and Nashville would not be the city it is today without the ongoing foreign capital flow.

Figure 3: “Takashi Ishihara, left, president of Nissan Motor Co. Ltd., shakes hands with Marvin Runyon, president of Nissan USA, and Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander after the three unveiled a plaque at the dedication of the Nissan plant in Smyrna on Oct. 21, 1983” (Associated Press, 1983, as cited in “Smyrna Nissan plant over the years,” 2018)

The success of these ventures has led to an increasing share of Japanese investment in Tennessee. In 2023, over $20 billion in capital investment in Tennessee came from Japan, making up over half of the total foreign investment in the state (Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, 2023). Following the economic success, the regional Japanese consulate general, which serves Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Tennessee, was moved from New Orleans to Nashville and signaled the heightened importance of Tennessee to Japan.

With that context, U.S. Census data from 2021 estimates that 4,898 ethnic Japanese people live in Tennessee (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Of that number, 3,297 were foreign born, and 2,556 are not U.S. citizens (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). In the Nashville MSA specifically, there are 2,155 ethnic Japanese, 1,604 are foreign born, and

1,446 are not U.S. citizens (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Despite their comparatively small number, the Japanese population is distinguished from others in Tennessee by their economic salience. They boast high human capital and move directly into more affluent neighborhoods of Brentwood, Franklin, Smyrna, and Murfreesboro, often with the assistance of their company. The U.S. Census Bureau (2021) reports 546 Japanese individuals in Davidson County, 521 in Williamson County, and 520 in Rutherford County. Typically, spatial assimilation, sometimes referred to as residential assimilation, refers to how immigrant communities disperse among neighborhoods through acculturation and higher economic achievement (Frazier, 2006, p. 15-16). However, the upper-management positions Japanese businessmen hold upon arriving have allowed spatial assimilation to occur without generational advancement. They move directly into dispersed patterns.

The stratified and most-often temporary nature of the Japanese population in Tennessee creates a unique opportunity for study. Social networks like those observed in the Hispanic population (Chaney, 2015) do not exist for the Japanese. There is no need for large-scale communication between the Japanese population here and sending-cities in Japan to achieve economic success. Enclaves are not necessary for their safety, and the language skills they arrive with, even if rudimentary, largely forgo the need for translators, neither through contacts made through a local community nor through a second generation. Even in highly specialized scenarios where niche vocabulary could cause a breakdown in communication, modern technology and live-translation apps easily fill the gaps.

The Japanese population in the Nashville metropolitan area has nearly all the markings of what Zelinsky and Lee (1998) model as "heterolocalism." In order to distinguish the unique characteristics of immigrants going into the 21st century, they argue the inadequacy of both the need to sacrifice cultural roots to achieve residential assimilation described by assimilation theory and the "patchwork of ethnic enclaves" described by pluralist theory (pp. 282-285). Instead, they list "four attributes" which define their new model:

> 1. There is immediate or prompt spatial dispersion of heterolocal immigrants within the host country.
> 2. Residence and workplace are usually widely separated, and there is also a frequent lack of spatial overlap between residence on the one hand and shopping districts and sites of social activity on the other.
> 3. Despite the absence of spatial propinquity, strong ethnic community ties are maintained via telecommunications, visits, and other methods at the metropolitan, regional, national, and even international scale.
> 4. Heterolocalism is a time-dependent phenomenon. Although we can detect some partial manifestations in earlier periods, its full development is conceivable only under the socio-economic and technological conditions of the late 20th century. (p. 285)

Census data is enough to clearly exhibit the first, second, and fourth attributes, but the third will need further attention.

The relatively short period of 40 years of Japanese investment in Tennessee makes this population young and not extensively studied. The population's unique reasons for being here and higher human capital upon arrival compared to communities on the west coast which have existed in some cases for over 150 years highlight a gap in the literature.

Methods

Connections through MTSU's Japanese language program and Japan Club were used along with "snowball sampling" (Longhurst, 2003) to network within the Japanese population. Between September 2023 and January 2024, eight qualitative interviews were conducted with a total of nine participants. Participants included Japanese students studying abroad at MTSU, businessmen of local Japanese companies, and the wives of both Japanese businessmen and Americans. Student participants ranged from 19 to 23 years old and had been in Tennessee for no more than 6 months. These students were also the subject of participant observation during weekly Japan Club meetings. Other participants varied far more in the length of time spent in Tennessee. Temporary residents reported between two to three years while those living permanently in Tennessee had been in the state an average of about 20 years. Most were in their early to mid-50s with the exception of one woman in her mid 30s.

Interviews were semi-structured to focus the topic of conversation among participants but allow freedom of expression in areas of particular concern or importance and without adhering to a strict order of conversation (Longhurst, 2003). Questions focused on Japanese perspectives of Tennessee before and after arriving and what it meant to be Japanese in Tennessee (see Appendix for a list of questions). Special attention was given to whether participants had been able to make other Japanese friends during their time here and if they believed a Japanese community existed in the Greater Nashville area. Interviews typically lasted between 20 and 30 minutes and were held both in-person on MTSU's campus and through online video conferencing software.

Participants were informed of the study and its scope and provided with an informed consent form. No personally identifiable information is included in the study.

Interviews were transcribed using digitally recorded audio after which the researcher employed a grounded theory approach to make relevant conclusions using inductive reasoning. Observable patterns and reoccurring themes between interviews were extracted and compared to form a consensus among the varied perspectives. The data will be presented categorized by occupation followed by more general discussion of the results.

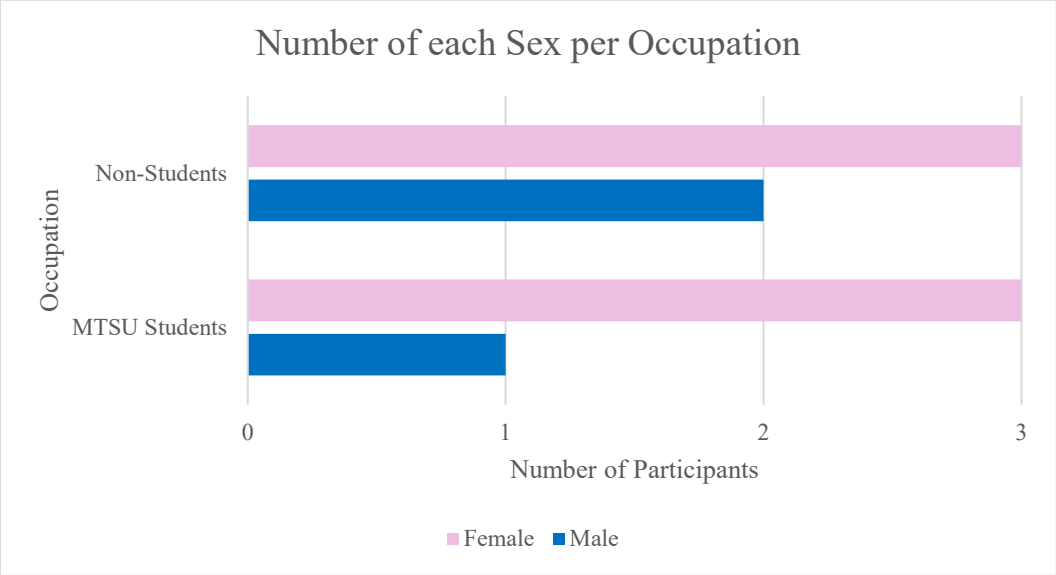

Figure 4: Participant Demographics

Findings

Students

Of the students interviewed, none chose MTSU as their preferred study abroad destination. Each student noted their university's international affairs office had the final decision on their destination university upon choosing to study abroad in the United States. These decisions were made using a combination of student preference, placement test scores, and personality profiles created by the universities.

One possible explanation for the lack of interest in Tennessee was revealed when students were asked what they had heard about Tennessee before departure. Student participants knew almost nothing about Tennessee before their departure, if anything at all. None had previous knowledge of the prevalence of Japanese companies, the location of the consulate, or the number of foreign-born Japanese-natives living in the area. A select few mentioned they were able to ask students who had previously attended MTSU about their experiences and advice they could give for studying here.

Specifically, MTSU's Japan Club was mentioned on more than one occasion as a resource to meet other Japanese students attending MTSU or the partnering language learning school. Equally as important, the students remarked, was the need to make American friends who could drive them around the city due to the almost complete lack of local public transportation. For instances such as grocery shopping, sight-seeing, or even buying clothes due to unforeseen weather conditions, an American friend with a car was absolutely vital for succeeding as a Japanese student living in Murfreesboro. Japan Club presented an opportunity to meet friends with an interest in foreign culture willing to aid foreign students with errands around Murfreesboro and Nashville.

This lack of mobility is not just a challenge, but also presents a danger to these students. For students without available American friends, their only option is to walk to locations around the city to complete errands. The lack of sidewalks along busy Murfreesboro roads such as East Clark Boulevard forces students to commute on narrow shoulders only a few feet away from traffic moving in excess of 40 miles per hour, and that is only when weather permits. Rain or snowstorms dramatically increase the difficulty.

Figure 5: A busy street leading to a local international market popular among Japan Club members

Businessmen

In contrast to the students with whom I spoke, Japanese businessmen arrived with some networks already in place through pre-travel training and company connections, but beyond these limited preparations, there was still a large gap in knowledge about the area.

Similarly to students, businessmen were able to talk with others who had previously traveled or held their position abroad. In some cases, "imagined geography" dominated participants' previous perspectives of Nashville due to their limited knowledge (Said, 1977). Edward Said (1977) in his work on "Orientalism" described this speculative form of geography as one that "*can be* entirely arbitrary" (emphasis in original) due to its existence solely the in minds of those otherwise unfamiliar with the places they conceptualize in this manner (p. 167). For instance, one interviewee noted the popularity of Jack Daniels in Japan as an attractive feature of Nashville:

> Before coming to Nashville, honestly, I did not have enough understanding. For example, Jack Daniel['s] is very famous in Japan… [I had only a] very basic understanding like Music City and Jack Daniel's.

Through imagined geography, Music City and Lynchburg become conflated into an amalgam of Tennessee culture.

Unlike the students though, all Japanese businessmen interviewed were aware of the large population of Japanese people in the Nashville metropolitan area. However, this knowledge was only acquired after their arrival and came as a shock. Several participants mentioned an annual New Years' event which by one account attracts upwards of 1,000 people. As this participant stated:

> I couldn't imagine [so many Japanese] people living around here, so yeah. It's a big surprise … I [went] to the Nashville Cherry Blossom event last April, and I [saw] lots of Japanese people [there] as well.

This festival in Nashville was the most well-known and appreciated cultural event among interviewees. With only occasional events for a few, scattered holidays, it is possible that businessmen have the clearest view of a local Japanese community due to the years spent living in the state as opposed to a few semesters. Students who only stay a single fall

semester miss out on this event entirely, which certainly affects their perception of a community in the area.

Surprisingly, despite expressing the importance of having other Japanese speakers to talk to, none of the businessmen interviewed had interacted much with other Japanese individuals in the area outside of the workplace or occasional cultural events like the cherry blossom festival. As one businessman said, “There is [a Japanese community] in the area, but I’m not making contact [proactively] from my side.” Some businessmen are able to fulfil this need through other Japanese coworkers within their offices, but for smaller offices or companies who only have a single Japanese representative present at a time, the same cannot be said.

Wives

The Japanese arriving in Nashville bring a complex, high-context culture with them. Traditional social structures in Japan are hierarchical and gendered (Vogel, 2012, pp. 687-688). Workplace expectations in Japan demand “salarymen” take on excessive mandatory overtime (p. 688). Married women, then, are often left as the sole homemakers (p. 688). Without the traditional extended family structure, which has already begun to disappear in Japan, women might find themselves even further isolated by the suburban housewife lifestyle (p. 711). Such was the case with one participant who was left to use mobile apps like Bumble in order to meet new friends in the area.

> I’m just a homemaker, so I don’t have any friends…The first couple [of] months after I moved here, I [struggled] emotionally … , so I went to LA to visit my friend to relax, and she taught me a lot of tips … I have no chance to meet or interact with people here because I don’t work, so I’m grateful that I live in an app era.

The same participant spoke at length about her desire to vent her experiences to confidants of a similar cultural background who could truly understand what she was going through, but she mentioned that Japanese culture might present another barrier for this social need: "[Japanese people] love America, so if I said, 'Hey, I live in Tennessee and … I have friends like through Bumble,' [it might sound] condescending." She followed by describing how downplaying experiences and avoiding direct communication are seen as a way to stay humble and fit in with the rest of society. She compared the "shame culture" of Japan to the "guilt culture" of the United States.

Another interviewee mentioned before she lived in Tennessee, she lived in Chicago where the diverse immigrant population included many Japanese people. She fondly recalled a local cultural center where she could bring her young children to interact with other Japanese children and mothers to sing Japanese songs and experience community with other Japanese people.

> It's hard to do it on your own, but when you are with a group of people, and there's a teacher who is facilitating, it's easier. So, I brought my kids every week to that preschool group. That was such a blessing … Unfortunately, there isn't such a rich program [in Tennessee] for introducing culture for our children, so that stopped [when we moved here].

The only comparable program in Middle Tennessee is a weekend, Japanese-style school hosted at MTSU, but as she described, this program is purely academic and serves mostly to keep children of expatriates familiar with Japanese schooling. As her children got older, they lost interest in attending the weekend school. Due to the limited exposure to Japanese culture and other Japanese people, she feels her children missed out on a part of their heritage.

Discussion

Regardless of age, background, or occupation, there were some similarities across all participants. Perhaps the most surprising was the lack of relevant information about Nashville or Tennessee before leaving Japan. With the location of a regional consulate and extent of Japanese investment, it is not a lack of resources or attention which prevents a clearer image of Nashville abroad.

All participants were asked as a part of their interview what they missed most about Japan, and almost universally the answer was Japanese food. Events held by MTSU Japan Club involving Japanese style dishes attract a high number of Japanese attendees from MTSU and Nashville ELS. Even something as simple as a repository of Japanese restaurants or international markets could help provide Japanese sojourners with a comfort of home and potentially a place to meet other Japanese in the area.

In the absence of more accessible information, imagined geography played a dominant role in shaping some participants' view of Greater Nashville and Tennessee. Idealized and exaggerated conceptions of Tennessee and Nashville exist in the minds of Japanese who lack better knowledge of the area just as many Tennesseans might hold skewed or very limited perceptions of Japan. With more cross-cultural experiences and cultural exchange events, imagined geography can be replaced by more nuanced and better-informed views.

Additionally, participants agreed sharing their experiences and challenges with other Japanese speakers played a key role in having their emotional needs met during their time in Tennessee. With no lack of Japanese speakers in the area, there should be few obstacles to achieving this. Curiously though, even for participants who expressed

previous interactions with gatherings of Japanese people in Tennessee, the experiences described were not what would be traditionally described as a "community." No comprehensive network of contacts, organizations, or events was revealed during this research. While some small groups were found, almost always they were in the context of a shared campus or workplace.

The four attributes of Zelinsky and Lee's (1998) heterolocal model closely align with the Japanese in Nashville. For the first and second, as stated earlier, Japanese are moving directly into neighborhoods in Brentwood, Franklin, Smyrna, and Murfreesboro, regardless of their place of employment. The advent of this population in the mid-80s checks the box of the fourth attribute. However, according to the participants, the "ties" which exist do not seem "strong" (p. 285). Besides a few annual holiday and cultural events hosted for the public, the Japanese remain relatively isolated from each other or at best segregated into small workplace and church communities scattered around the metro area.

Conclusions

Because of the large scope and small sample size, this study serves as more of a proof of concept and foundation for future research than a reliably generalizable data set in and of itself. This is not to say its findings or its connection to existing literature should be discounted though—far from it. From the beginning, positive experiences and personal relationships with Tennessee and Tennesseans have been paramount to creating and maintaining favorable relations with Japanese companies and securing continued investment (Japan-America Society of Tennessee, 2022). More can and should be done to

support the Japanese living and working in Greater Nashville. If the consulate general can be moved after 85 years in New Orleans, the same could happen in the future to Nashville. To the credit of Tennessee, this does not appear to be happening anytime soon with yet another Japanese automotive corporation, Mitsubishi, making the decision in 2019 to move its North America headquarters to the Nashville area (McGee & West, 2019).

However, beyond business relationships and multimillion dollar investment deals, the Japanese deserve a home in the Nashville MSA. Without a network or availability of information, each Japanese person who arrives in Nashville is doomed to feel like the first to do so. Music City has the opportunity to further facilitate and promote a network, if not to provide a safer and more comfortable environment for those here, even if temporarily, then to allow Japanese culture to flourish and enrich the legacy of the city. In the past 40 years, Japanese industry has played a significant role in taking Tennessee from "the third poorest state in terms of family incomes" in 1978 to an economically viable and attractive location for investment (Japan-America Society of Tennessee, 2022). The annual *hanami* (cherry blossom) and *tsukimi* (moon viewing) festivals serve as popular seasonal tributes to Japanese culture in Nashville, but smaller, more frequent programs could better foster a lasting, cohesive community described by Zelinsky and Lee's (1998) third attribute of heterolocalism.

Figure 6: Nashville Cherry Blossom Fesitval in 2024

More data is needed to build a detailed profile and assist institutions like the city, consulate, and local universities in achieving better outcomes for the Japanese in the Nashville MSA. To that end, more specific and comprehensive research can and should be done in a number of areas to paint a clearer picture. For the exchange student population, improving mobility should be a priority to better accommodate the lack of a vehicle in the automobile-centric metro. For Japanese expatriates, investigators should look for the existence and characteristics of what Ray Oldenburg (1999) termed “third places”: locations besides work or home where people congregate. For the Japanese, this could potentially be found in local markets or *izakaya* (Japanese-style bars). These places

could be different for the wives and children of businessmen though. For all Japanese people living in Nashville, researchers should study how to make information about the area more easily accessible to a Japanese audience. In that same vein, studies can analyze what role imagined geography is playing in place of better information. A broader topic which needs further research is determining whether the scattered Japanese population could be due to cultural norms of privacy outside the workplace, the geography of Nashville, the high turnover in what would be community members, or potentially a combination of a few or all of the previously listed reasons. Together, this data should serve to illuminate Japanese perspectives and elevate their visibility.

Reflection

While this research project presented me with several challenges, I also had the opportunity to develop crucial skills which will serve me in my future career. This research appropriately serves as a capstone of my undergraduate education at MTSU and in the Honors College.

The greatest hurdle early in the project timeline was simply finding individuals to interview. My original proposal had me interviewing businessmen of Japanese companies exclusively. In hindsight, it is clear how this narrow scope would lead to significant challenges. From what I know now, it makes sense why expecting one interview to lead to others was misplaced confidence. The lack of connection between the work cultures of independent Japanese companies complicates a snowball sampling approach. The consulate itself remarked the challenge of this type of research in an email: “Finding Japanese folks who have decided to stay in our area can be challenging, as most of the Japanese people here are expats sent from Japan to work for a few years and then return home.”

However, increasing the scope of participants was the best thing to happen to this project. By talking to a wider variety of people, I was able to learn far more about the Japanese population than I otherwise would have. Furthermore, it challenged me as a researcher to become more adaptable and develop better skills for following relevant data.

Perhaps the most obvious skill I advanced through my interviews was in communication. At the macro level, making connections within an ethnic community in order to build a network of contacts requires patience. At the micro level, I became better

at communicating with English language learners. Having conversations about potentially complex topics requires a researcher to know the right questions to ask to convey ideas understandable to speakers with limited vocabulary and familiarity with English conventions.

With these skills, I am optimistic about my future, even just within this field. Far from a deterrent, the multitude of questions I have after finishing this project provide several directions to continue research.

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Appendix

List of Topics and Sample Questions

1. Learning about Tennessee
    - How did you first find out about MTSU/Nashville/Tennessee?
        i. Did your friends or family know anything about Tennessee?
        ii. Were you able to talk with anyone in Japan who had been here/lived here?
        iii. Did you know about the Japanese companies/consulate/sister cities we have in Tennessee?

2. Moving to Tennessee
    - When did you first arrive? Why did you come here?
        i. Were there any factors that made Middle Tennessee a place you wanted to move to more than other locations?
        ii. What was it like adjusting to a new country? Were there things that made it easier/harder to adjust?

3. Being Japanese in Tennessee
    - Do you think there is a Japanese community here?
        i. Are there ways in the community to engage with other Japanese people? Are there ways to engage with Japanese culture?

ii. Have you met many other Japanese folks while living here? Where did you meet them? Why did they come to America? Do they like it here?

iii. How do you keep in contact with family and friends back in Japan? What do they think about you living in America?

4. Staying/Leaving Tennessee

- Would you consider living here long term?

i. What do you/would you miss most about Japan?

ii. If you're going back to Japan, what do you think you will miss most about America?

IRB Approval Letter

Office of Research Compliance
2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd.
Sam H. Ingram Bldg (ING) Room 010A
Box 124
Murfreesboro, TN 37132
www.mtsu.edu/irb

Date: August 28, 2023
PI: Jacob Davenport
Department: Global Studies and Human Geography
Re: Initial - IRB-FY2024-12
Japanese Immigration and Influence in Middle Tennessee

The Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for the above referenced study.

Decision: Exempt
Category: Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

Please note that even though your proposed study is deemed exempt from further IRB review, the following apply to your approved study:

1. In accordance with 45 CFR 46.110, expiration dates do not apply to research eligible for Exempt Review under the Common Rule, and continuing review is not required by the IRB.
2. Any unanticipated harm to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance.
3. All modifications to the approved study must be submitted for review through Cayuse IRB for approval before their implementation. Adding new researchers constitutes a modification to the protocol. Per MTSU Policy, a researcher is defined as anyone who handles the data or interacts with participants. Everyone meeting this definition for this project must have completed the required CITI training and received IRB approval prior to becoming actively involved in the project.
4. Closure of the study must be submitted within Cayuse when the study ends or when personal identifiers are removed from the data and all codes and keys are destroyed.
5. All research materials must be retained by the PI for at least three (3) years after study completion and then destroyed in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity.

We wish you a successful research project.

Sincerely,

The Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board