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The Perceptions and Practices of Japanese Identity in Contemporary France

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The Perceptions and Practices of Japanese Identity in Contemporary France

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Abstract

How can one navigate an ethnic, racial, or religious identity in a country that promotes a singular national culture? France is well known for promoting dominant white ideals of "Frenchness" and culture over all others, stemming from the French republican ideal of culture-blind and colorblind universalism. This universalism, however, is often criticized for glossing over individual heritage and struggles of minorities living in France. Studies surrounding this issue often focus on ethnic groups that have made headlines, such as Muslim and North African populations in France. But what about less studied communities, such as the Japanese in France? These less studied populations are worth investigating as we can look at their experiences to further understand the impact of French nationalism. Through a primarily interview-based ethnographic approach, alongside some media content analysis, this project examines the ways in which people of Japanese heritage living in France navigate their personal ethnic identity in relation to the promotion of French nationalism. My findings suggest that my interview subjects have not had similar experiences to the more researched minority groups living in France, perhaps as a result of positive associations of Japan within the media, as well as the economic statuses of my interview subjects. I also consider the comparisons between French nationalism and Japanese nationalism, and the consequent differences that my interviewees noticed in each culture as a result of their cosmopolitan lifestyles. Because of the more extreme levels of perceived racial and cultural homogeneity within Japan, my interview subjects appear to feel more marginalized there than in France, perhaps influencing their perceptions of France as a welcoming country. Overall, because of the cosmopolitanism practiced by my interviews allowing them to experience nationalism in France and Japan, alongside other beneficial

portrayals of Japan in French media, my interview subjects have been able to self-identify in various ways that differ from many other experiences of other minority groups living in France.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

In 2018, the French National Assembly voted unanimously to remove the word "race" from the first article in the French Constitution, replacing the phrase that France "shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion…" with "shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of gender, origin, or religion…" (Fassassi, 2018: para.3). This removal of race from the Constitution reflects the ideas of colorblind and culture-blind universalism that is promoted in France. The danger behind this removal includes a lack of recognition of the long-lasting impacts of colonialism and racism. Without the recognition of differences in race, it becomes more difficult to highlight and recognize the difficulties that minority groups face. While this type of universalism may be a difficult concept to tangibly measure, examining French laws and policies, such as this Constitution change, can provide valuable insight into how these prevailing ideas become codified into law.

There are other recent examples of this culture-blind universalism in practice. France captured headlines globally in 2011 after becoming the first European country to impose a ban on wearing face coverings in public, and in doing so prevented Muslim women from exercising religious freedom by wearing burqas (Powell 2013). This decision to ban burqas is just one glimpse into forms of public discrimination and racism in contemporary France, and is also heavily related to French *laïcité*. This concept, which establishes secularism in France, has faced controversy over its tendency to perpetuate discriminatory practices with racializing dimensions (Colosimo 2018). After the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* massacre, North Africans in France experienced

collective forms of harassment and discrimination due to their race and religion. Following the massacre, a poll found that 44% of French people saw their country's Muslim community as a threat to the French identity, and there were 128 Islamophobic attacks in a span of three weeks (Beaman 2021). As this poll suggested, many French people see Muslim people as incompatible with the French way of life, and their religious and racial identity to be too distinct from dominant conceptions of French identity. These perceptions indicate how dominant beliefs surrounding French nationalism can lead to policies that work to perpetuate forms of discrimination and racism against people who do not fit into the mold of white "Frenchness." It is important to consider the negative impacts of this French government-sanctioned support of white "Frenchness." Promoting universalism contributes to France's struggles to recognize its colonial legacy and the lasting effects of colonialism and racism on minoritized groups in France. Without recognizing these racial and ethnic differences, the struggles of these groups are glossed over. My thesis will further examine how the widespread acceptance and internalization of these beliefs surrounding dominant white French nationalism impact minority groups.

Although the dominant ideas of Frenchness being associated with "whiteness" are detrimental to all minority groups, it is essential to consider how the histories and perception of these groups can impact the ways in which they are treated. French universalism itself plays into this history, as its origins are from when France was less diverse and a colonial power. As the country has become increasingly multicultural, this mindset has become outdated, and instead adheres to the past characteristics of being French that are no longer applicable today (Niang, 2019: 12). With regard to different minority groups, factors such as the history of a group's migration, their economic status, and their cultural popularity can all play significant roles in

how they engage with French nationalism. Part of my inspiration for this thesis was how widely prevalent and seemingly accepted Japanese culture was when I visited France, whether through popular restaurants, boutiques, or museum exhibits. I was curious to learn how the community of people of Japanese descent living in France may be affected by French nationalism, a mindset that has clear negative impacts on other minority groups, despite the popularity of Japanese culture that I have observed in my brief visits. This thesis will further unpack these aspects that can contribute to relative positive perceptions of a minority culture, and analyze how they have led my interview subjects of Japanese descent to have shifting and complex associations with French nationalism, differing from other minority groups.

Even more recently than the events and policies described at the beginning of the chapter, France's Asian community has experienced a substantial increase in racial discrimination following COVID-19–a phenomenon that was also reported globally–revealing structural and cultural issues of racism within France (Wang 2021). Although anti-Asian sentiment is by no means new in French society, the pandemic has exacerbated these ideas, putting a spotlight on a community whose cultural and historical role in France has not been fully explored. This thesis further contributes to this research by focusing on Japanese identity-making in a country that has had a history of valuing nationalism and dominant, historically white understandings of "Frenchness" above a multicultural community. Despite the historical connections between France and Japan, there is limited scholarly information on the historical and contemporary Japanese community in France. As this thesis will show, studying identity-making through the lens of a less researched community in France provides interesting insight on how people of different races and ethnicities maintain their identities in contemporary France.

Historical ties between Japan and France

As described above, the perceptions of a minority group can be impacted by a myriad of factors, including the historical connections between that group and the country that they are living in. This chapter provides a brief overview of the relevant historical and cultural ties between Japan and France as a way to introduce the relationship between the two countries, and provide context into why Japan is viewed relatively favorably today. As my thesis will describe, the correlation between Japan and cosmopolitanism has strongly contributed to these positive perceptions within France. I will then examine how people may interact with these representations, and how such images may lead to reductive or positive perceptions of Japan and Japanese people. More favorable representations of Japan in French media include ideas of cosmopolitanism, which include a transnational mobility that can allow Japanese people, particularly my multiracial interview subjects, to flexibly navigate between cultures and countries. The establishment of cosmopolitanism can be seen in this section through both the motivations behind the Japanese migration to France, as well as the inspiration of Japan that is apparent in French art and culture.

Historically, Japan and France have had various connections both in relation to the arts and war. This history strongly correlates to the reasoning behind Japanese migration to France, differing from other, larger Japanese migrations to the United States and Brazil. Japanese people initially moved to France in the 1850s and 1860s because of personal and cultural motivations to participate in transnational artistic movements, which as a result drew many artists and intellectuals to Paris (Yatabe 2003). As a result of this early migration, Japan left a legacy in France particularly in les Beaux Arts. *Japonism* gained popularity, and provided a strong source

of inspiration for various Impressionist artists including Monet and Manet, as well as writers such as the Goncourt brothers (Matsuda 2000).

These associations between Japan and *Japonisme* in France were challenged in the twentieth century. In the early decades, Japanese people continued to be viewed primarily as artistic influences on French culture, but were not considered to bear any strong political associations. After the Second Sino-Japanese War, however, the perceptions of Japan in France shifted dramatically as Japan became an increasingly political player on the international stage. In his unfinished novel *Ryoshū*, Riichi Yokomitsu described the experiences and identities of the Japanese community in France during the 1930s. During this time, Japanese expatriates, as well as the Asian community in France as a whole, were often viewed negatively by the French following the Japanese invasion of China. In his novel, Yokomitsu also describes friendships between Japanese people in France with people who were not Japanese as very rare (Lawson 2002). World War II further contributed to these negative perceptions, with France viewing Japan as their enemy, and an ally to Germany and Italy. The Japanese invasion of French Indochina in 1940 further alienated the relationship between the two countries, and served to depict Japan as an imperialistic nation.

Following the end of the war, the Japanese government worked to improve these relations, and promoted cooperation between Europe and Japan by initiating "regular bilateral foreign minister meetings between Japan and the UK (1963), France (1963), Germany (1965) and Italy (1965)" (Hughes 2001: 59). Still, despite these efforts, Japan failed to meet Europe's expectations as a trade partner. Because of this, European countries began to view Japan as an

economic threat and a negative influence on their political economy, excluding Japanese manufacturers from agreements and associations, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), as well as the Association of European Automobile Manufacturers. When European tactics to exclude Japan from GATT failed, they adopted policies against Japanese imports (Hughes 2001: 61). These events demonstrate the difficulties that characterized relations between Japan and Europe during the mid-twentieth century.

Today, Japanese popular culture and technology have become pervasive internationally, and France is not exempt from this trend. In my research this has interestingly created positive associations with Japanese culture that influence the experiences of the Japanese population in France. Ever since the late 1970s, French television has broadcasted Japanese animation, and Japanese manga has been published in France since the 1990s (Clothilde 2012). This continuation of *Japonisme* influences on the arts and popular culture in France demonstrates an especially visible set of connections between these two cultures. Japan is also often associated with internationally popular objects such as cameras, television sets, Walkmans, cars, video games, and karaoke bars. These objects, which shape our everyday lives, have formed a French image of Japan as "an industrial power and civilized country" (Yatabe 2003: 34). In a 1998 study conducted on French citizens living in or near Paris, 80.4% of participants expressed trust in Japanese brands. These figures starkly contrasted with other Asian countries, the next highest of which being Taiwan at 36.3% (Yatabe 2003:35). Such statistics demonstrate the ways in which the Japanese economy, media circulations and consumer capitalism have formed a set of positive associations of Japanese culture in France. As I will discuss through this thesis, these positive associations of Japan within France, among other factors such as their economic status,

cosmopolitanism and lack of connection to French colonialism, appear to positively impact the everyday experiences of my interview subjects.

My motivations and methodology

Being half-Japanese, I have always been very aware of Japanese influences in any new country that I visit. As a member of a family that enjoys travel, I have been fortunate enough to go on trips around the world. One particular city that struck me as having a significant Japanese influence was Paris. From the art in the museums to the plethora of Japanese restaurants, it became clear to me that there was a strong Japanese community living in Paris, as well as a certain visibility to Japanese cultural influences overall. Having maintained ties to Japan through my family, as well as majoring in French studies, this connection between the two cultures was fascinating to me. In her chapter in the ethnography *Globalizing Japan,* Kazuhiko Yatabe describes Paris as "the one and only destination of the Japanese," thus solidifying my decision to choose Paris as the city in which to conduct my research (Yatabe 2003: 30). As my research progressed, I broadened this location to several cities in France, speaking with people living in Paris as well as other cities such as Lyon.

Identity within France is an interesting topic because of France's unique relationship with nationalism. As I discussed earlier, though these forms of racism and discrimination have been widely reported on internationally and sparked debates within France, the experiences of other ethnic and racial minorities in contemporary France have received far less attention. Additionally, it is worth noting that, through its relationship to dominant notions of Japanese nationalism, Japanese identity itself is highly regulated by homogeneity and cultural uniformity–

the same values that French nationalism promotes. People living in Japan who do not fit the prevailing ideas of being Japanese do not, however, face the same experiences as in France because of Japan's limiting immigration policies. As of 1998, Japan has had the lowest percentage of foreigners in their overall population out of any major industrialized country at just 1.2 per cent (Sellek 2001: 189). This creates an interesting comparison to France that, coupled with my observations of Japanese influences within France, further encouraged my decision to examine Japanese identity practices and perceptions within France.

Through these interests, I formed the central research question: How do French citizens of Japanese descent perceive and practice their Japanese heritage in contemporary France, at a time of public debate and increased attention to questions of race, belonging, and identity? More specifically, how do they practice forms of Japaneseness in a variety of ways, including in house spaces, with Japanese language practices, and through interactions with other Japanese people in France? Although this question was the lens through which I initially framed my work, as I completed my research, this question changed, as I will discuss further.

By using a methodology that combined both interviewing Japanese people living in France and utilizing alternative sources of data through media content analyses, I gained a multifaceted understanding of how Japanese identity is perceived and practiced by Japanese-descent citizens in contemporary France. For my media content analysis, I examined cultural discourse surrounding Japanese citizens in France by reading through recently published French newspapers and other similar sources online. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, I was unable to complete my interviews in person, as I had initially planned. Still, I was able to

complete my research over Zoom, which did allow for access to more interviewees who were dispersed across the world due to the pandemic.

To find my interview subjects, I used a variety of personal leads and connections. Through speaking with family members and friends with connections to France, as well as using snowball sampling, I was slowly able to build a list of potential interviewees, who I will refer to by pseudonyms in this thesis. My first connection, Emma, is a Masters Student at Science-Po in Paris. She described how having a Japanese mother and a French father allowed her to live transnationally, splitting her time between Japan and France. During the time period that I was conducting these interviews, Emma happened to be living at her parent's home in Japan. She had just returned home for similar reasons to why I had decided against traveling to Paris to conduct in person research–the Covid-19 omicron variant was spreading rapidly through France. Emma introduced me to her friend, Lina, who also had a French father and a Japanese mother, and thus lived between the two countries as well. I met my third interviewee, Kikuma, through a family acquaintance who works in the Japanese embassy in Mongolia. This connection allowed me to hear from a more official source in Paris. Much of the information from Kikuma strongly differs from what I heard from Emma and Lina, which I will elaborate further in future chapters. These differences may be attributed to their differing backgrounds, with Kikuma spending limited time living in France. I then met Elsa through a connection that I made at Colby College. Elsa lives in a small village outside of Lyon, which differed from my initial plan to find interviewees in Paris. Because of my use of Zoom, however, I was able to expand my interviewee pool rather easily. Elsa then introduced me to Hiroko, an undergraduate student at the University of Lyon. Similar to Emma and Lina, Hiroko's father is French and her mother is Japanese. My sixth and last

interviewee, Sawako, differs from the others in that she only lived in Paris for one year during her college study abroad. Still, her insights offer interesting perspectives on the interviews conducted with everybody else. An interviewee introduction table on page X provides additional descriptions of everybody. It is also important to note that with my multiracial interview subjects, although they are half white, they do not consider themselves to be white-passing. Overall, these interviewees were chosen based on who I was able to have access to, with a concerted effort to find somebody in the Japanese embassy to speak with at least once. It is important to note that my interview subjects in no way are representative of the Japanese community in France as a whole; however their unique experiences can be analyzed to better understand how nationalism can shape one's self identification and sense of belonging in France.

When communicating with my interview subjects to schedule interviews, I used a variety of platforms–tools that I was especially grateful for during a global pandemic that limited my options for forming bonds in person. Examples included Facebook, WhatsApp, and email. My written communication was normally in either English or French, based on the preferences of my interview subject. I also let my interviewees choose which platform to speak over, and found it interesting how popular Facebook was. This did lead to some timing problems because not everybody is constantly checking their messages in Facebook, so setting up my interviews was an often tedious process that involved sending a message and waiting a day or two, sometimes a week, for a reply. Part of these problems involved the time differences between me and all of my interview subjects. Completing most of my research in my home in New Hampshire, I knew that if I sent a message in the afternoon, I would have to wait at least a day for a response, as Paris and Tokyo are six hours and thirteen hours ahead respectively. Alongside these messaging

difficulties, I also faced challenges finding times that would work for my interview subjects in the extremely short window that both of us were awake. This would often entail me waking up early in the morning or staying up late at night to conduct my research. Still, Zoom was an important tool that became used not just as a piece of technology, but one that formed a cultural space in which I was able to engage with my interviewees, despite our time and location constraints. These interviews often started with some recognition of our time differences, always evident in the small Zoom window into each other's lives. I would proceed to read my verbal consent script before moving onto the interview, which would normally flow nicely despite the awkwardness that can appear over Zoom. During these conversations, I asked my interviewee which language they would prefer to speak in, with all but one of my interviews being conducted entirely in English. Sometimes, if my interview subjects couldn't think of a word or phrase in English, they would switch to either Japanese or French briefly. Only Kikuma asked to speak mainly in Japanese, sometimes switching to French or English if any communication difficulties occurred. Overall, the widespread acceptance and knowledge of Zoom due to the pandemic allowed me to successfully conduct my research remotely due to the pandemic.

Interviewee Introduction

Table 1: Interviewee Introduction

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Ethnicity (as indicated during interview)	Place of Birth	Childhood City	Current City of Residence	Years spent in France	Current Occupation
Emma	23 years old	"Fully French and fully Japanese"	Paris, France	Tokyo, Japan	Paris, France	6 years (moved for undergraduate studies)	Masters Student at Science-Po
Lina	23 years old	"French and Japanese background"	Osaka, Japan	Tokyo, Japan & Paris, France	Paris, France	Split time between France and Japan for her whole life	Masters Student at Science-Po
Kikuma	46 years old	"Fully Japanese"	Tokyo, Japan	Tokyo, Japan	Paris, France	6 years (non-consecutive; assigned by her work for the embassy)	Head of Cultural Affairs at the Japanese Embassy in Paris
Elsa	38 years old	"Japanese"	Toyohashi, Japan	Toyohashi, Japan	Oyo, France	5 years (moved after marriage to French husband)	Occasionally works as a translator for a Japanese music company
Hiroko	20 years old	"French with Japanese origins"	Lyon, France	Lyon, France	Lyon, France	20 years (entire life)	Student at the University of Lyon
Sawako	52 years old	"Japanese-American"	Los Angeles, U.S.A.	Dusseldorf, Germany	Greenwich, U.S.A.	1 year (studied abroad in Paris during her junior year of college)	Fashion designer

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Outline of Arguments

With my preliminary knowledge of how French nationalism has impacted minority

groups in France, I initially believed that my interview subjects would describe similar

experiences of marginalization. Yet upon conducting my research and speaking with Emma,

Lina, Kikuma, Elsa, Hiroko, and Sawako, I began to realize that this was not the case.

Consequently, my thesis instead seeks to better understand why my interviewees' experiences are

so different from others, particularly from people of Chinese descent in France. In order to

explore this, the next chapter of the thesis, Chapter Two, examines the existing literature to

contextualize my research within the previous works of others and provides background

information that will help better interpret my findings. This literature review forms a framework

for my research by examining three bodies of literature critical to my thesis: social science

scholarship on the Japanese diaspora and identity, French nationalism, and the political,

economic, and cultural links between France and Japan. By analyzing these literatures, I am able

to identify the work that has been done regarding the experiences of people of Japanese descent

in other countries, both within and outside Europe; consider how French nationalism has affected

other, more thoroughly studied minority populations in France; and explore the historical ties

between Japan and France that allow me to better understand the cultural, political and economic

dimensions of my interviewees' current experiences.

In Chapter Three, I proceed to detail my findings regarding the practices that my

interview subjects cite that support their Japanese heritage. Here, many of them describe these

actions in both public and private settings, conveying comfortability in sharing their identities

with other people. Additionally, their actions sometimes work towards establishing connections with other people of similar backgrounds, whether it is through code-switching between Japanese and French in everyday conversations, or maintaining contact with other people of Japanese descent living in different countries. These actions, as I argue, reflect the level of cosmopolitanism that permeates the lives of many of my interviewees, thus impacting how they are perceived in France because of inherent associations between class and cosmopolitanism.

Chapter Four relies more on secondary sources rather than my primary sources, examining the media content analysis that I conducted throughout the month of January 2022. In this analysis, I focused my attention on two major news outlets: *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*. By recognizing the ways in which the mainstream French media portrays Japan, particularly in relation to China, I have gained a better understanding of certain positive associations with Japan, in contrast to China, which can be used to further analyze the experiences of my interview subjects. This section also looks at how such positive associations are reinforced through specific ongoing celebrations of Japanese culture and media in France, with the example of the establishment and attendance of Japan Expos for French anime fans rising in popularity. Because of these positive portrayals of Japan and Japanese culture, I consider how this may lead to consequent positive everyday perceptions of people of Japanese descent, and I elaborate further on this issue in the following chapter.

Chapter Five examines these ideas and looks into how my interview subjects negotiate their multiple identities with relative ease due to certain largely positive ideas of Japan circulated within France. Still, this chapter also opens up a conversation about how my interviewees

experience negative impacts of French nationalism and racism in the form of verbal harassment

in public spaces due to the circulation of more homogenizing ideas of race. Accordingly, they

experience both inclusions as well as exclusions from French nationalism–inclusion in the sense

that they benefit from circulating Asian racial and ethnic hierarchies, but exclusion because they

do experience being assigned a certain racial identity based on their physical appearance.

Although my interview subjects do experience forms of inclusion in France because of their

Japanese heritage, it is critical to understand that they simultaneously face public acts of racism.

This anti-Asian racism has become more visible with the Covid-19 pandemic, as described by

Lina during our conversations. Still, despite these experiences, many of my interviewees

describe feeling acceptance within France, often comparing this to their experiences in Japan.

This comparison is critical because it appears to inform their opinions on the degree to which

French nationalism impacts their lives. In Japan, my interview subjects, several of whom are

multi-racial, cited feeling more marginalized due to the country's homogeneity and high

valuation of being "truly Japanese." Their experiences in France then were sometimes viewed

through this additional lens of comparison to Japan, a lens that became possible through their

cosmopolitan lifestyle. Overall, these chapters build upon each other to establish a better

understanding of what my interview subjects do, the cultural influence of media portrayals and

nationalism, and how these impact their perceptions of acceptance within France. Through this

framework, I argue that the unique cosmopolitan lifestyles of my interviewees have afforded

them the experiences of both French and Japanese nationalism, allowing them to self-identify in

various ways that differ from the experiences of other minority groups in France. These

differences are mainly a result of national histories and prevailing discourses of belonging in

both Japan and France, as well as the positioning of my interviewees and their cosmopolitan

statuses. Their individual values and meanings assigned to being French or being Japanese

permit them to shift between these identities, an ability allowed through a myriad of factors

including economic privilege as well as having a multicultural or multiracial identity.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

While significant research has been conducted examining the experiences of Black and Muslim communities living in France, there is extremely little written about people of Asian heritage, particularly of Japanese descent, perhaps due to prevailing French discourses of the "Asian community" rather than the diverse countries and cultures within the continent. The absence of this information introduces questions of why, as well as what, are these lived experiences within the context of French nationalism. Because of this scarcity of literature on the perceptions and practices of people of Japanese descent in France, I have created a framework to assess various fields that may not be commonly thought of together but are necessary to consider as a whole in order to answer these questions.

My respondents range from temporary residents to second generation citizens. To examine how these Japanese descendents living in France navigate their Japanese heritage, I decided to focus my literature review on three main sections: Japanese diaspora and identity, French nationalism, and historical connections between France and Japan. It is important to first understand the meanings behind the word diaspora as I am studying the Japanese diaspora in France. To begin, I analyze other Japanese diasporas to provide comparisons to my own research, as well as inspiration for my own research methods, going on to examine examples of Japanese communities in Brazil and London. Finally, I close this first section with a review of a piece on Japanese nationalism. In the next section, I examine French nationalism, which provides an interesting comparative perspective following my discussion of Japanese nationalism. I look at the origins of modern French nationalism, and its impact on French laws

as well as the experiences of particular minority groups living in France who have been the focus of ethnographic work, particular populations of North African descent. An understanding of the effects of French nationalism is critical in my research because it can discourage multiculturalism, and instead encourage a strictly French identity in the dominant, exclusionary, and primarily white sense. This may impact how people perceive their personal identity, or influence how comfortable they are practicing that identity. Finally, I close my review with historical connections between France and Japan, which are essential to consider in my research because these connections may shape how Japanese people in France are perceived, which then affects how they navigate their Japanese identity within France.

Japanese Diaspora and Identity

Because my project is centered around the Japanese community in Paris and Lyon, the term diaspora is one of significance. Having identified this word as a key term for my project, it is important to define and discuss its different uses, as well as some of the controversies surrounding its use for describing the Japanese communities in the Americas–a group of which most of the literature on Japanese diaspora focuses. In their article "The Impact of Diasporas: Markers of Identity" (2016), Joana Story and Iain Walker describe the uses of the word "diaspora", writing: "In academia, the word 'diaspora' has, rightly or wrongly, come to be applied to almost any population or group living outside its homeland, while in popular usage diaspora now seems be a collective noun used to refer to anyone not at home" (135). Story and Walker's definitions of the word diaspora agree with the ways in which it is most commonly interpreted by the majority of people.

Other scholars, however, argue that there is a set of criteria a group must meet in order to become a diaspora. In his article "Disconnected from the Diaspora" (2012), Takeyuki Tsuda contends that diasporic communities must maintain social ties transnationally. Because of this criteria, Tsuda writes that the Japanese community in the Americas cannot claim to be a diaspora because they have assimilated to their respective societies, and lack notable connections to each other. He came to this conclusion after having conducted fieldwork and participant observation research, conducting 55 interviews with men and women from various generations, as well as attending community events in San Diego and Phoenix between 2005 and 2008. Based on my own personal, albeit limited, experiences with my Japanese maternal family, I disagree with Tsuda's argument. My family members maintain strong ties with each other, as well as with other Japanese people who are not related. This is seen through various forms such as alumni and delegation groups with regular reunions, whether formal or informal. Still, Tsuda's research has far more depth than my own experiences, and he introduces criteria that may be interesting to consider while conducting my research. Is it common for Japanese-French citizens to maintain ties with other people of Japanese descent, whether in Japan or in other European countries? What about within the country of France itself? Does it dissipate with every passing generation, or are ties severed/maintained regardless? Tsuda's article introduces some questions that have been useful to consider in my own research on how people of Japanese descent practice their heritage, as having social connections with a larger Japanese community is a way to practice ethnic identity.

Author and anthropology professor Joshua Roth studies the Japanese population in Brazil, and the experiences of *Nikkeijin* (the Japanese diaspora) who navigate returning to Japan. Roth refers to the Japanese population in the Americas as a diaspora, thus challenging Tsuda's article on how the Japanese community in the Americas cannot be considered a diaspora. I found this interesting because I would agree with Roth's use of the word, and consequently refer to the Japanese community in France as a diaspora in my research, following the usage outlined in the article by Story and Walker. Roth's book also provides an interesting counterpoint to the traditional ideas surrounding the Japanese diaspora, which often focuses on *Nikkeijin* in new countries rather than in Japan. Here, Roth reverses how people tend to think of Japanese diasporas, relating to my research in which several of my interviewees have returned to Japan after living in France, or continue to visit Japan regularly. Roth also contextualizes his book within the history of Japanese diasporas, describing how between 1638 and 1853, Japan was in a period of relative national isolation. From 1885 until the early 1960s, the Japanese government encouraged emigration, leading to Japanese migrants finding new homes in various countries abroad, particularly in Asia and the Americas. This information is important to compare with the book *Globalizing Japan* by Kazuhiko Yatabe, described in the section below titled *Political, Economic, and Cultural Links Between France and Japan.* Yatabe writes how Japanese people migrating to France did so for more cultural rather than economic reasons. Overall, these histories provide important context for why the Japanese diaspora was formed–information that will be essential to consider in my research.

Another aspect of Roth's book that has proven instructive is the substantial context through which he positioned himself within his research and his personal interactions with the

people he interviewed. It is also in his descriptions of how his interviewees viewed him that perceptions of Japaneseness became clear. He writes, "With Japanese I usually mentioned that my mother was Japanese. These shared identities may have sometimes helped establish relationships" (Roth 2002: 15). I felt a similar experience in my own research where I would relate to my interview subjects by describing my own ethnicity, noting that similar to my interview subjects I also have a Japanese background. Roth became more relatable because of his Japanese heritage, yet was still classified as an outsider by Japanese people because he was American, and only half Japanese. This is evident in how his Japanese friends and acquaintances called him "*Amerikajin* (American), *hafu* ("half" Japanese), *Nikkejin*, or *daigakuinsei* (graduate student)" (Roth 2002: 15). These names differ from how *Nikkeijin*, on the other hand, referred to Roth as "a descendente (descendent of Japanese)" (Roth 2002: 15). These differences offer interesting insight on how people of Japanese heritage perceive Japanese identity based on their own personal histories. It appears that the extent of Japanese nationalism decreased among *Nikkeijin*, as well, sparking an interesting question of how people of Japanese descent in countries outside of Japan perceive Japanese nationalism and identity.

While Roth's book focuses on the experiences of Japanese people who lived in Brazil and then moved back to Japan, Kazuko Miyake and Noriko Iwasaki examine the experiences of Japanese people in London in their article "Fluidity and Diversity of Japanese Communities in London" (2021). This piece is important to consider in my research because it provides insight on the Japanese diaspora in Europe. I appreciated how the authors organized their research, beginning with the historical context of the relationship between Britain and Japan, and how that has impacted British perceptions of Japanese people. They provide quantitative data on the

number of Japanese expatriates living in the United Kingdom–a population that has been steadily decreasing for temporary residents, but increasing for permanent residents. The article describes the Japanese communities in London, identifying the two most visible ones, one of which participated in a survey that the authors describe. Questions asked include topics such as marital status, ethnicity, if they would like to stay in Britain, and language use. The authors note how many of the respondents, who were in mixed race marriages, raised their children as British rather than Japanese because of the Japanese laws surrounding citizenship. These laws, described later in the review of an article by Jennifer Robertson, have denied access to a Japanese passport for those with only a Japanese mother. These Japanese mothers had limited resources and opportunities to teach their children Japanese, and as a result many of the half-Japanese children born before 1985 did not speak Japanese. This provides an interesting example of how laws can strongly influence the ways that one practices identity. After analyzing this survey, the authors move onto their own ethnographic research focused on two women living in London "who might be legitimately called 'members' of Japanese communities but do not consider themselves 'community members'" (Miyake et al., 2021: 269). They describe these womens' experiences surrounding the Japanese language, and how their respective competencies have changed throughout life, reflective of how identity formation is an ongoing and unfolding process of life. This idea was important to keep in mind during my own research because it inspired interview questions on perceptions of shifting identities, and why this may occur. Overall, I found this piece deeply informative for my own work because it describes the ways in which language plays a large role in navigating and shaping one's identity. I can relate to this concept of shifting identities in relation to language proficiency because when I took Japanese

language classes during my first year at Colby, I felt a stronger sense of Japanese identity, whether from interacting with more Japanese people on campus, learning about Japanese culture, or simply having a stronger ability to connect with my Japanese relatives in Japanese. After I stopped taking these classes, I have felt a shift in my own sense of identity. While I do try to maintain my language proficiency, it is difficult if I am not speaking the language every day with other people who share similar cultural experiences and identities. As a result, factoring in language usage in my research yields more information and insight.

This idea of identity is further explored in the piece "Beyond Identity" by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper. The authors categorize this term as a category that includes both practice and analysis. In terms of practice, identity is used by people in "some (not all!) everyday settings to make sense of themselves, of their activities, of what they share with, and how they differ from others" (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 4). This understanding of identity is important in my research because I have examined how people perceive their Japanese heritage in terms of their practices such as language use and interactions with other people. The authors also recognize five key uses for the term identity. These are important to consider for my own research and I return to the second definition in the next chapter, as it enables me to explore the understanding of identity as a collective phenomenon.

In her chapter "Migration, globalization and the nation state, Japan'" from the edited book *The Political Economy of Japanese Globalization* (2001)*,* Yoko Sellek discusses the maintenance of cultural uniformity within Japan, and its emphasis on preserving homogeneity. Strict immigration policies are the result of individual and governmental fears of "dilut[ing] their homogeneity and its accompanying collective spirit and group harmony", leading to Japan

having the lowest percentage of foreigners out of all of the major industrialized countries (Sellek 2001: 189). This provides important information on the perceptions of Japanese identity because, as Sellek writes, it is highly linked to having dominant Japanese lineage, which places a heavy emphasis on racial dimensions of identity. Additionally, this promotion of a collective culture is reflective of the French nationalism described in the following paragraphs; however the fact that Japan has been known for a common ethnicity, language, religion, and culture have allowed this homogeneity to be more widely accepted in the current moment than the dominant values and policies of France.

Jennifer Robertson expands on this idea in her article "Hemato-nationalism: The Past, Present, and Future of 'Japanese Blood'" (2012). She writes about the importance of blood within Japanese society in determining Japaneseness, a concept that has existed within Japan for centuries. Robertson contextualizes her argument within the historical importance of blood in Japan, which has shifted from having a negative association to more positive ones between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Blood as a determinant for nationality was first defined in 1890 during the Meiji period when the first constitution was enacted. In this document, however, only paternal blood counted towards nationality and citizenship in Japan. It was not until 95 years later in 1985 that maternal blood was held in the same regard. Robertson also discusses the emergence of eugenics in Japan, and the arguments between promoting a "pure blood" versus a "mixed-blood" population were debated from the late nineteenth century through 1945. This discourse has found its way into more modern discussions relating to blood donation drives that encourage blood donation from Japanese people. Robertson writes, "the assumption [is] that Japanese blood is a unique and vital cultural resource that will ensure the future health of the

otherwise resource-poor island nation" (103). The preference for blood from ethnically Japanese people can be seen in the obstacles that face foreigners in Japan trying to donate blood. One example Robertson lists is the fact that instructions on how to donate blood are primarily advertised in Japanese. This demonstrates how fluency in Japanese, a main criteria for Japaneseness, acts as a barrier in donating blood–something that has a strong and historical meaning in Japanese society. Overall, Robertson's article reveals the strong presence of Japanese nationalism through her study on blood donation, a concept that is important to consider in my own research because it provides context as to how people who have Japanese heritage and experiences in a country that actively promotes nationalism, navigate their identity in France, another country with a strong nationalistic presence. Her work demonstrates a more restrictive understanding of Japanese identity, one that has persisted in Japan and serves to link a racialized majority identity with Japanese nationalism. These concepts are important in further contextualizing the experiences of my interviewees, as I will describe in the following chapters.

French Nationalism

Studying Japanese identity practices in France intrigues me because of the strong history and presence of French nationalism, which is interesting to consider alongside the Japanese nationalistic tendencies described above. With this strong French nationalism, I have been curious to find out about how individual ethnic groups practice their culture, to what extent (if any) and in what manner. As French nationalism plays a key role in why this question interests me, the history and contemporary debates surrounding French nationalism are important to examine. In the piece "The Unbearable Lightness of Being French: Law, Republicanism and National Identity at the End of the Old Regime" (2001), David A. Bell writes about the central

role of politics in nationalism, its emergence in France during the eighteenth century, and the implications of nationalism today. His piece is helpful in situating French nationalism historically. Although nationalism became increasingly prevalent across many European countries during this time, Bell chose to study France because of the country's emphasis on a political doctrine as the basis of nationalism, as well as the speed and strength at which a nationalist program appeared during the French Revolution. He discusses the history of the concept of a "nation" in France, describing how during the 1750s, "'the rights of the nation' [became] a rallying cry for France's principal institutional opposition to the monarchy" (Bell 2001: 1219). Through this usage, the words "nation" and "national" gained increasing popularity in France. During the reign of Louis XVI, the concept of France as a nation became called into question, as the only common bond between the French was their status as subjects of Louis XVI. Bell asserts that previously it was the country's law and history that determined Frenchness, but the opposition of the Revolution challenged this, thus destabilizing France's notion of a "nation." This strongly contrasts with the above paragraph outlining Japan's collective identity, which had other factors such as ethnicity, language, and religion maintaining an ideology of universal homogeneity.

Following the French Revolution, nation-building became highly politicized, and has yet to be resolved even today. Bell closes his piece with the line, "Therefore, when Chénier spoke of 'forming Frenchmen' and giving the French nation 'its own, unique physiognomy,' just as when d'Azeglio spoke of 'making Italians,' he was not so much solving a problem as creating one, and opening a debate about what form the nation should take, which has remained unresolved ever since" (Bell 2001: 1235). This line strongly relates to my project, as French nationalism is a

central problem to why identity practices and perceptions in France are one of interest. Within this piece, Bell describes the movement of "national republicans" that originated in the late nineteenth century, and whose central beliefs will be discussed in the following paragraph.

In her article "The Culture(s) of the Republic: Nationalism and Multiculturalism in French Republican Thought" (2001), Cécile Laborde analyzes the tensions between French nationalism and its increasing multiculturalism. She considers the roles that ideals of *liberté*, *egalité*, *fraternité*, and *laïcité* play, describing the contemporary French republican argument of how many French beliefs and policies are not intolerant of other cultures, but rather value equality within the community. This argument contends that doing so requires overlooking individual cultural differences. In her piece, Laborde cites a line from a report by the *Haut Conseil de l'Intégration,* a governmental group created to reflect national sentiment through its annual reports (Lochak 2011): "the French model is based on undifferentiation between individuals. Every human being has intrinsic worth, independently from the community to which [s]he belongs" (Laborde 2001: 719). This quote relates to aforementioned French ideals as it encourages citizens to favor their identity as French citizens over any personal religious or cultural background. The promotion of a French identity has the goal of having citizens collaborate towards working for public interest in their country. Although this concept may sound successful for achieving its goal, and the quote by the *Haut Conseil de l'Intégration* describes a nice sentiment, culture, ethnicity, religion, and race are all integral to one's identity. Additionally, whether or not it is publicly recognized, these aspects of identity are central to how people are treated based on implicit bias and individual prejudices. Laborde recognizes this point, writing how this self-proclaimed culture-blind and colorblind universalism essentially

erases key components of personal identity. Additionally, when in practice, French nationalism does not promote true equality, and instead is "eminently permeable to the values of the dominant religion, class, gender, and culture" (Laborde 2001: 721). In this promotion of French nationalism, with control given to dominant groups, transnational cultural origins and influences are often concealed. Proponents of nationalism argue that national culture and arts must be protected. However, although France does have a strong national culture recognized globally, it is actually the fact that various aspects of the French arts were strongly influenced by other cultures, as I have described in my review of literature surrounding historical links between France and Japan.

With this presence of strong French nationalism, it becomes difficult for other cultures to practice their respective identities and religion within France. This becomes apparent in Jean Beaman's article "France's Ahmeds and Muslim Others: The Entanglement of Racism and Islamophobia" (2021) in which she describes various French policies, such as the infamous 2011 burqa ban, that have been deemed as racist or intolerant by many. Although these policies stem from France's promotion of culture-blind universalism, it is crucial to understand how these laws codify nationalism, circulating a public sentiment against citizens who do not identify as white. This becomes clear in how despite claims to not be promoting any particular religion and relegating individual practices to the private sphere, public institutions recognize Christian holidays. This conflict supports Laborde's earlier quote about France's promotion of the dominant religion, class, gender, and culture. Beaman's article is critical to understand in the context of my project because of how French nationalism is interwoven within laws, and the ways in which these laws may legally discourage individual practices of culture and religion,

negatively impacting individual identity. With such laws, such as the burqa ban, that actively support dominant views of Frenchness above other cultures, nationalism can become even more pronounced and permeate its way into circulating perceptions and biases of other cultures and races.

Paul Silverstein's book *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation* (2006) further contributes to Beaman's discussion by examining the experiences of Franco-Algerian communities. He contextualizes this book by describing the debates surrounding French immigration policies. Silverstein writes that in the 1980s and the 1990s, despite high rates of national unemployment, political debates focused more on "immigrants' access to French nationality, on social integration and exclusion in the (sub)urban cités in which many immigrants and their children lived, and on the legitimacy of signs of Muslim difference…" (2006: 4). This, alongside the fact that immigration remains a significant platform issue, demonstrates the focus on maintaining French nationalism, rather than addressing other important domestic issues. Silverstein's anthropological study includes methods of ethnographic research about belonging that I have found useful when considering my own project. He conducted interviews in a variety of spaces, such as homes and cafés, and organized his findings into categories of citizenship, ethnicity, locality, religion, gender, and generation. Although I was unable to conduct my interviews in person, Silverstein's organization method was useful in providing me with categories that I made sure I asked my interview subjects about. He also explores the impacts of French national on the French Algeran experiences in a manner that is useful to contrast my own findings with. Overall, Silverstein's book provides a

strong example of the sense of belonging experienced by the Algerian population in France, particularly in the context of relations between France and Algeria.

The chapter written by Mamadou Diouf, titled "The Lost Territories of the Republic: Historical Narratives and the Recomposition of French Citizenship," in the book *Black France/ France Noire: The History of Politics and Blackness* (2012) expands on Silverstein's article by examining historical anti-Black narratives in France, and their relationship to debates surrounding citizenship. Diouf chronicles the history of multiculturalism in France, describing how it was recognized during the French colonial period. He points to imperial needs such as economic, military, and labor related problems as the driving forces behind the acceptance of multiculturalism, citing historical examples including "when the originaires of Saint Louis, as part of the colony of Senegal, succeeded in obtaining citizenship rights—in particular the right to vote—without being subjected to the French civil code" (Diouf 2012: 37). These rights were also given to the other three communes of Senegal: Gorée, Rufisque, and Dakar. Another interesting example that Diouf describes is how "during Louis Faidherbe's first tenure as governor of Senegal (1854–61), Muslim institutions were incorporated into the colonial governance structure and public space" (Diouf, 2012: 37). It is critical to recognize the historical acceptance of cultural pluralism in France in order to understand the ways in which nationalism became popularized. In the 1970s, as these economic, military, and labor related needs of the empire decreased, focus turned towards race and negative perceptions of immigrants. Diouf writes that it was at this moment when French nationalism became encouraged among migrants, and multiculturalism discouraged, as a method intended to "minimiz[e] their presence and impos[e] on them republican rule to counter a communitarian

consciousness in formation and, in many instances, already in force" (Diouf, 2012: 39). This information is important to consider because it expands upon the pieces mentioned earlier by Bell and Laborde because it describes an ebb and flow of nationalism dependent on the nation's needs, as well as the impact of empire-building and colonization on nationalism. After this historical overview, Diouf transitions towards his own ethnographic research focused on Black citizens in the French banlieues, contrasting with Silverstein's work which focuses solely on Franco-Algerian communities. Diouf describes the reinvention of a French identity within these communities, and the re-emergence of cultural pluralism. This has been achieved through cultural processes including hip hop, rap music, paintings, and sculpture (Diouf 2012: 45). Diouf's chapter was very helpful in my own work because of the historical analysis he provides on shifting degrees of French nationalism, as well as Diouf's descriptions of how identity is practiced among Black communities in the banlieues, which I compare in later chapters with my research findings on Japanese communities in France.

The article "The Truth from the Body: Medical Certificates as Ultimate Evidence for Asylum Seekers" by Didier Fassin and Estelle D'Halluin supports Diouf's argument surrounding the ebb and flow of nationalism based on France's economic needs. This article focuses on one's body as a way to provide evidence to qualify for asylum, and the difficulties that many seekers face because of strict French immigration laws. The authors note that the percentage of asylum seekers granted legal status dropped from 95% in the 1970s to 12%, and 18% when accounting for appeals, in the 1980s and 1990s. They also describe changing perceptions of asylum seekers in France, writing that a "quarter of a century ago, asylum was a matter of trust, and the applicants were presumed to be telling the truth. Today, asylum is set in

a climate of suspicion, and asylum seekers are seen as people trying to take advantage of the country's hospitality" (Fassin et al. 2005: 600). These shifting attitudes and this "climate of suspicion" reflect the country's negative perceptions of and structural barriers to refugees. The authors also write about how "when applications for asylum are few in number, in an economic context in which labor is in demand, it shows its solidarity with victims of persecution in the world… even if, in reality, suspicion has often contradicted hospitality since that period" (Fassin et al. 2005: 599). This quote supports the ideas brought forth in Diouf's writing about how France has had a history of tightening and loosening restrictions on immigration based on the country's economic and political conditions, as well as relationships with former colonial territories. Overall, this piece provides interesting support to other literature on French nationalism and the acceptance of foreigners. This information is important in my work because it is essential to have an understanding of the influences on nationalism in France to better recognize how it may impact minority groups today.

While there is significant research done on certain minority groups in France, such as Algerian communities described in earlier paragraphs, few sources address the experiences of other groups, such as Asian populations. With the recent increases in Asian hate during the pandemic, however, this is beginning to change. The article "'I'm More Afraid of Racism than of the Virus!': Racism Awareness and Resistance among Chinese Migrants and Their Descendants in France during the Covid-19 Pandemic" by Simeng Wang et al. (2021) reflects the impacts of COVID-19 on France's Asian community. In her piece, Wang et al. use online surveys and interviews targeted towards French citizens of Chinese descent, and studies six aspects of their lives. These include their consumption habits during the pandemic, their

acquisition of medical equipment such as masks, patronizing Asian restaurants and consuming Asian cuisine, health care practices, discrimination during the pandemic, and general information involving housing and familial relations (Wang et al. 2021: 725). I found these questions interesting because they gave me a few ideas of what questions I asked in my interviews to gauge practices of Japanese identity (such as patronizing Japanese restaurants). In their study, Wang et al. found that while COVID-19 did exacerbate anti-Asian sentiments in France, awareness of this racism has existed among the French-Chinese community long before the pandemic. They find interesting distinctions between newcomers versus descendants of migrants in relation to perceptions of racism. Chinese newcomers were more likely to deny having experiences of racism, whereas descendants of Chinese migrants who grew up in France readily shared the experiences of racism they had encountered throughout their lives. This demonstrates interesting differences in experiences based on how long interviewees have lived in France, and is a key consideration that I include in my research as well. The authors also noted how throughout their conversations, many of the newcomers slowly realized that they had experienced racism, despite having originally denied having these experiences (Wang et al. 2021: 730). This point demonstrates the importance of including interview questions in my research that encourage reflection. The piece by Wang et al. is essential to consider for my project because of the anti-Asian sentiment that became more publicly visible again in France and has been globally linked to the coronavirus pandemic, as these forms of hate can strongly deter individuals from practicing their Asian identity. I also hope to contribute to this field by focusing on Japanese populations in France, a community on which I have found extremely little research.

Political, Economic, and Cultural Links Between France and Japan

In addition to examining French nationalism, and its impacts on minority groups, the historical and contemporary ties between Japan and France are important in better understanding how Japan may be perceived. As described in the introduction, Japan's legacy on French arts is significant, and the article "The Tears of Madame Chrysantheme: Love and History on France's Japan" by Matt K. Matsuda (2000) further describes the cultural links between France and Japan using the example of the opera Madame Chrysanthème. These influences are important to acknowledge in my own project because of the question of whether the Japanese presence in French culture influences perceptions of Japan, or encourages practice of Japanese identities.

Anthropologist Sabre Clothilde builds upon my earlier discussion of historical ties between France and Japan by further examining Japanese influences on French culture, focusing on the dispersion of Japanese culture in France in the 20th century in the article "Neojaponisme and Pop Culture: New Japanese Exoticism in France." Clothilde describes how this diffusion began in the 1970s with the introduction of Japanese animated shows aired on French television. This occurred because of low prices for these animations, alongside relatively little competition on television channels. Still, even when airing these Japanese shows, the French producers changed certain aspects of the shows, such as character names, in order to Westernize them. Clothilde notes another cultural difference that ultimately led to various conflicts: the differing associations that the two countries had with animations. In France, animated shows were exclusively designated for children. In Japan, however, children, teens, and adults all enjoyed various animated shows. Therefore, French broadcasters would

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purchase Japanese shows made for adults, but air them for children. These violent and sexualized shows were then heavily criticized by parents, leading to negative associations with Japanese culture. This provides an interesting contrast to some of my earlier historical sources, such as Matsuda (2000), which focuses mainly on positive cultural associations between France and Japan. In order to address these complaints, broadcasters began to heavily edit Japanese animations, skipping over particularly sexual or violent scenes. By 1997, French television companies stopped airing Japanese animated shows. Still, Clothilde writes that this period of Japanese animation dispersion in France created a lasting impression on children at the time, many of whom enjoyed these shows. This opened an opportunity for the rising popularity of manga in France. Clothildre notes that in 2010, 40% of France's comic book sector was occupied by manga. She also discusses the effects of this popularity, writing "French fans perceive a strong bond between Japanese manga and animation and the Japanese nation and culture" (Clothilde, 2012: 78). Overall, this article is interesting to consider in my research because of possible links between these relatively recent positive cultural associations relating to Japan in France.

While the articles by Matsuda and Clothilde focus on artistic, media and popular culture links, Stephen Lawson uses culture to describe politically influenced perceptions of Japan in France in his book *Europe and the Asia-Pacific: Culture, Identity and Representations of Region* (publication date). In his writing, Lawson uses the unfinished novel *Ryoshū* by Riichi Yokomitsu to describe the experiences and identities of the Japanese community in France during the 1930s. During this time, Japanese expatriates, as well as the Asian community in France as a whole, were often viewed negatively by the French following

the Japanese invasion of China. As I described earlier, in his novel, Yokomitsu also describes friendships between Japanese people in France with people who were not Japanese as very rare (Lawson 2002). The Japanese invasion of French Indochina further alienated the relationship between the two countries, and served to depict Japan as an imperialistic nation. This text further contributes to a concept raised by Clothilde on how the perceptions of Japan in France are constantly shifting. These changing perceptions are important to consider in my project because the public perception of Japanese people can play a role in how comfortable one feels in practicing their heritage today. To further explore these issues, I have conducted a media content analysis of current perceptions of Japan in France, which I return to in Chapter Four.

While the texts analyzed in the preceding paragraphs have focused on cultural relations between Japan and France, Christopher Hughes discusses the changing economic relationship between Japan and Europe in his chapter "Japan in Europe" in the edited book *The Political Economy of Japanese Globalization* (2001). This chapter is pertinent to my project because it contributes to my understanding of the historical context between Japanese and European relations. Hughes discusses the ways in which Japan was viewed as a negative influence on Europe's political economy during the mid-twentieth century as a result of difficult trading relations. This perception shifted, however, after the Cold War when Japan became a significant economic player internationally, and Hughes writes that during the 1990s, "Japanese corporations are now no longer seen as an internal peril to European unity, but as equal participants which, together with other European actors, can form a coalition to push forward the process of European integration" (Hughes 2001: 65). The success of

Japanese transnational corporations in Europe can be reflected by the widespread use of Japanese produced products, a topic described later in the paragraphs discussing Yatabe's work. These changing perceptions of Japan relating to these large-scale political and economic relations can impact feelings of belonging because, as seen in recent events such as Covid-19 politics, how countries are viewed and portrayed by the government and media, either negatively or positively, can impact how individuals from that country are treated.

Marie Conte-Helm describes the impact of this increase in Japanese transnational corporations in Europe by describing the subsequent influx of Japanese migrants in Europe during the end of the twentieth century in her introductory chapter of her book *The Japanese and Europe: Economic and Cultural Encounters* (1996). In her study, Conte-Helm focuses on the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and Belgium, noting that while these are some of the main locations for Japanese investment, it is not a comprehensive list of the European countries that can be included. This introduction also agrees with the pieces described earlier on how Japanese culture, including popular media and commodities, has become quite widely accepted in Europe, and has led to an increased awareness of and interest in Japan. Conte-Helm's introductory chapter is relevant to consider in my research because it both demonstrates agreement with other pieces that I have reviewed, while also providing some contrast to other texts. For example, Conte-Helms contends that there was a wave of Japanese migration in the late twentieth century due to the presence of Japanese transnational corporations in Europe. In one of the following paragraphs, however, I discuss Yatabe's piece which describes late-twentieth century Japanese migration to France as one motivated mainly by cultural, rather than economic reasons. I also describe a piece by Live

who notes that a more general Asian migration into Europe was sparked in the same time period by migrants fleeing their home countries. These varying examples demonstrate the importance of considering the wide variety of reasons for migration from different parts of Asia to Europe, and have helped me distinguish the unique conditions that characterize recent Japanese migrations to France. They have also inspired me to include interview questions on this topic in my own research as the reason behind moving may influence how one practices their cultural heritage in a new country.

In his article "Les Asiatiques: immigrations et représentations," Yu-Sion Live (1993) describes the Asian migration into Belleville, a neighborhood in Paris. He writes of how this period of immigration occurred in two waves: during the 1960s through the 1970s, and again in the 1980s. The first wave consisted of people with a wide variety of occupations, from doctors to artisans, as well as those from various Asian countries including China, Macau, and Vietnam. During the 1980s, Live attributes the second wave of migration to improved living quarters in Paris, alongside the arrival of South Asian refugees from the late 1970s and early 1980s. Together, these two waves of migration led to a flourishing Asian neighborhood in Belleville. Once established here, many Asian migrants began opening shops and restaurants in this area of Paris, leading to its nickname as the "Chinese" or "Asian" quarter. Live describes how this quarter of Paris is inhabited mainly by French citizens of Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, or Chinese descent due to their need to flee their countries during the time periods described earlier. Although his article does not necessarily provide specific information on Japanese migrants in France, Live describes a broader Asian migration that is important to understand in my own research to distinguish the experiences of people of

Japanese descent in France from other Asian communities due to the reasons behind their immigration, which differ from other populations.

Kazuhiko Yatabe (2003) expands on Live's piece by focusing on the motivations behind Japanese migration to France in the ethnography *Globalizing Japan.* Yatabe distinguishes this movement from Japanese migrations to the United States or Brazil because those moving to France did so out of personal and cultural reasons. He discusses how during this time, once arriving in Paris, a city he describes as "the one and only destination of the Japanese," there was a lack of community building and organization among Japanese immigrants (Yatabe 2003: 30). Yatabe attributes this to the presence of French Republican ideals encouraging the adoption of a French identity. This strongly relates to my earlier discussion of French nationalism and republican mindsets. Yatabe also provides the statistics from a study on how Japanese people "can happily move through the French public spaces without being reminded that they are inscribed in a society, history, and a culture that belong to the French without being prisoners of their cultural and ethnic identity" (Yatabe 2003: 36). In this study, 63.6% of participants did not feel a sense of being foreign except for when they were "applying for or renewing their residence permit" (Yatabe 2003: 37). This statistic differs from other sources I have found, and Yatabe explains this statistic by describing a phenomenon of "invisibility of the Japanese in France" (Yatabe 2003: 38). Overall, this ethnography provides interesting information for my own research because it demonstrates an acceptance of Frenchness among people of Japanese descent in France, at least among these particular participants in 2003.

Yatabe also discusses positive associations that the French have with Japan relating to economics and consumption patterns. He writes that a primary way that the French interact with the Japanese is through the use of Japanese products, such as "cameras, television sets, Walkmans, cars, mangas, video games, clothes, karaoke bars…" (Yatabe 2003: 34). He also cites a study that found 80.4% of French participants expressed trust in Japanese brands, which was a significantly higher number than the other Asian countries listed in the same study. The discernment between different Asian countries versus generalizing all Asians in the same category is also noteworthy. The use of everyday objects formed a positive and trusting connection with Japanese culture, leading to what Yatabe concluded as a lack of discrimination towards Japanese people (Yatabe 2003: 35). Even though this was a study for decades ago in 2003, as I will discuss in the following chapters, Yatabe's portrayal of hierarchies within different Asian ethnicities does appear to impact people's individual experiences.

Conclusion

Overall, these various sources provide critical information for framing my own research on navigating a Japanese identity within France. The reasons behind emigrating, the influences of French nationalism, and the perceptions of Japanese people all influence how people of Japanese descent living in France may choose to practice and recognize their heritage. A key takeaway that I have noticed from this literature review has been how many of the cultural, political, and economic issues that I am studying are constantly shifting. This can be seen in the degrees of acceptance of multiculturalism within France, as well as within the ways that individuals self-identify. The concept of change is therefore an important factor that I must

consider when conducting research as it is a way to understand how identity is navigated, as well as the context in which my research is conducted. Overall, this literature has strongly improved my understanding of the various nuances and factors that affect Japanese identity in France, and I have applied what I have learned to my own research. Together, these bodies of literature are important to consider because they demonstrate how prevailing and circulating discourses, historical connections including the lack of colonization, and political economic relations are all factors that can have tangible impacts on current conceptions of belonging of people of Japanese descent living in contemporary France. The context of migration is important to consider alongside the role of French nationalism in shaping how countries and individuals are perceived, which can lead to how they are publicly treated. The following chapters will situate this literature within my own research, to form a more comprehensive understanding of how my interview subjects claim to not feel the negative effects of French nationalism.

Chapter Three: Practicing Japanese Identity in France: The Making of Cosmopolitanism

Introduction

Our everyday choices and habits are intrinsically linked to how we view and practice our identities, with both our identity shaping our actions, as well as our actions forming our identity. In order to further analyze this concept within the context of my research, it is important to establish a definition of identity. Authors Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper understand identity as "both a category of practice and a category of analysis" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 4). In this understanding, identity becomes intrinsically linked to cultural practice, as I will discuss in this chapter. The authors distinguish between two different types of identification, the categorical or relational. Based on these descriptions from Brubaker and Cooper, I will be using the categorical mode of identification in this chapter, in which identification is formed through "membership in a class of persons sharing some categorical attribute," as well as the concept of identity as a collective phenomenon (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 15). These markers of identity can be prescribed by either oneself, or by others, with individuals negotiating perceived gaps among these perceptions of identity between themselves and others. This understanding of identity is crucial in my project because it relates to the dominant, white images of a "French identity" described earlier, as well as the notions of identity of my interview subjects, who described themselves as having some form of a Japanese identity. As Brubaker and Cooper observe, this understanding of identity is closely related to "the emotionally laden sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a felt solidarity or oneness with fellow group members and a felt difference from or even antipathy to specified outsiders" (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 19). These distinctions between groups of people with differing collective

identities will be essential in my following discussions in the next two chapters about belonging

and acceptance within the dominantly white French community, particularly in comparison to

people who identify with other races and ethnicities. In accordance with this understanding of

identity, as introduced by Brubaker and Cooper, this chapter will analyze how the everyday

practices of people of Japanese descent living in France may follow or differ from broader and

collective articulations of Japanese identity, both in Japan and in France.

In addition to understanding identity and identity making, cosmopolitanism has emerged

as another central concept to my thesis. Authors Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen describe the

various definitions of cosmopolitanism as a sense of global citizenship, or the ability to engage

cultural multiplicity. They also discuss the preconceptions of cosmopolitanism as only accessible

to the economic elite, countering that although economic status is a contributing factor providing

people with the resources to live transnationally, other factors such as cultural and linguistic

skills can allow one to practice cosmopolitanism (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002). Ulrich Beck

contributes to these definitions by describing cosmopolitanism as a perception of

"boundarylessness" and as revealing "the possibility of shaping one's life and social relations

under conditions of cultural mixing" (Beck 2014:5). In the cases of my research, all of these

factors appear to apply to many of my interview subjects. As shown in the interviewee overview

table in the introduction, my interview subjects, or their parents, all have jobs that place them in

a middle to upper middle class economic status that allows them to practice cosmopolitanism.

Additionally, their everyday practices, as described in this chapter, further work towards the

formation of transnational identities.

I had planned to originally conduct my research in person, frequenting popular spaces with my interview subjects and observing their interactions with their surroundings and other people. However, it became necessary to switch methods and conduct my interviews over Zoom because of the pandemic. During these conversations, I continued my efforts in understanding how my subjects live their Japanese identities in France by directly asking about this topic. My interview subjects listed a variety of practices that I have categorized into three main areas: language practices, customs and habits, and identity and space. Using this framework, I hope to develop deeper insight into how people of Japanese descent practice their heritage and ethnicity while living in France, which can provide additional insight as I examine the levels of acceptance and belonging that my interviewees feel. Through my interviews, I was able to uncover how these practices of Japanese identity described by my interview subjects allowed them to live multiculturally, pulling in aspects of their Japanese identity into their everyday life in France. This cosmopolitan lifestyle impacts the perceptions that others in France may have of them, allowing them to feel varying degrees of comfortability in expressing their heritage.

Language Practices

During my interviews, several of my interviewees mentioned the role of language in their identity building and day to day habits. Emma, who is a master's student of Japanese and French descent currently living in Paris, described code switching, or shifting between different languages in conversation, with her friends as a common way she would practice her Japanese identity while living in France. Having many other friends who shared a similar background as her, she would often switch between using French and Japanese while speaking with this

particular group. Lina, who was also a part of this community and another master's student at

SciencePo, which was how I was introduced to her through Emma, also noted this practice

during our conversation. She stated simply, "not necessarily all of us are Japanese, but most of

the time when we were with the same group, we would talk in Japanese and French and just mix

everything." I found this fascinating because although not all of her friends shared the same

Japanese background as Lina, they were still able to communicate effectively by understanding

the nuances of the language. During my interview with Emma, I asked if there was a pattern

behind how she and her friends decided which words to say in Japanese and which to say in

French. She struggled at first to articulate the rules of this particular form of code switching,

simply saying, "It sounds very confusing for people listening to us, but it's very natural. The way

we switch is understood by each other." She cited the similar Japanese background of her and her

friends as the reason behind this ease of communication with no rules. After taking a brief pause

and looking at me thoughtfully, Emma attempted to form some semblance of the logic behind

this code switching, stating "I don't know why, but serious topics come up in French, I would

say. And like the lighthearted ones are more in Japanese with my friends, I guess." Although she

provided no further explanation for this reasoning, I suspected it had to do with some type of

familial and nostalgic ties to Japan. In my own life, I find myself using Japanese more often

during lighthearted situations, such as telling jokes or discussing cooking and food. Although this

may be in part due to my limited grasp of the language, it may also be because of the idea of

family being associated with Japanese for me and my identity. My mother also remembers code

switching in grade school, when she attended an international school in Japan, often using a mix

of Japanese and English among her friends, noting that nobody would speak in strictly one

language. In more public spaces, they would use Japanese; however, in conversation with her

circle of friends, code switching was a way to subconsciously establish a community of Japanese

people with ties to the United States.

The phenomenon of code switching can be observed globally, within a myriad of

countries among many populations who use a variety of languages. Anthropologist Susan Gal

examines this practice in her foundational article "Codeswitching and Consciousness in the

European Periphery." Here, she discusses Italians in Germany, Hungarian speakers in Austria,

and German speakers in Romania. Among these examples, Gal writes that practicing code

switching "reveal[s] implicit self-perceptions and unspoken assessments of the ethnic 'other'"

(Gal 1987: 649). This suggests that the action of changing language in conversation can show

how you perceive your identity, as well as how particular situations may favor one language over

another. Within my example of code switching among people of Japanese descent living in

France, the act of shifting between Japanese and French can reflect how my interview subjects

Emma and Lina view their identities as a mix of both Japanese and French. It demonstrates that

despite living in France, a country known for strong nationalism favoring the dominant white

perceptions of being French, these two women hold onto their Japanese heritage, and use it as a

way to further connect with other people from similar backgrounds. Code switching allows them

to tangibly maintain their transnational ties to Japan, rather than fully assimilating to France and

the dominant white ideas of Frenchness. Additionally, the fact that lighthearted conversations are

discussed in Japanese further supports the idea that their Japanese identity is felt as comfortable,

and a source of affective connection to family and ancestry. Overall, these conversations with

Lina and Emma provided me with interesting insights on how language plays an integral role in

their identity formation and maintenance, and how language becomes a site for demonstrating the unique ways that their cosmopolitan upbringings have helped them make sense of their environment and relationships.

Elsa, a 38-year-old Japanese woman living outside of Lyon, also described the role of language in her practices of her Japanese identity in everyday life. During our conversation, Elsa described facing difficulties when trying to teach her four-year-old daughter Japanese while in a multi-racial marriage in France. After I asked about the language practices of her and her daughter, Elsa stated, "I am trying to raise her bilingually, but she has now started kindergarten and is almost exclusively speaking French. If I speak to her in Japanese, she'll respond in French." Lina discussed similar problems with the French education system, citing her privilege in being able to live between France and Japan as a dominant explanation for her bilingualism. She stated, "...in either countr[y], in Japan or France, I don't think they really encourage people to be bilingual or bicultural…education is not really accessible if you want to learn both of them." Here, Lina points to the problem currently faced by Elsa as she attempts to use language to maintain a Japanese identity, differing from the earlier example of code switching as a form of conserving and expressing that identity. This issue of accessibility also relates to economic status, and the class privileges that many of my interview subjects are allowed. Because of the strictness of the French educational system, students are required to speak and write in French, making the bilingual learning encouraged by Elsa for her daughter extremely difficult and inaccessible.

Despite also identifying as upper middle class, Elsa still struggles to teach her daughter Japanese, a problem that is not limited to people of Japanese descent in France, and reminiscent of the earlier discussions from the literature review on the work of authors Kazuko Miyake and Noriko Iwasaki. In this piece, Miyake and Iwasaki discuss the links between language and identity, citing the strict Japanese laws that hindered the ability for Japanese parents in mixed-race marriages to teach their children Japanese. The authors contend that because of these laws and consequent difficulties in parents teaching Japanese to their children, their feeling of having a Japanese identity was weakened. Miyake and Iwasaki use the example of two women in London, listed as Saki and Emiko, who despite having a background that could be considered "Japanese" either did not perceive themselves or their children as such due to their lack of language competency (Miyake et al., 2021: 269). This piece introduces the concept of how language plays an integral role in identity formation and practice, something that was often cited by my interview subjects during our conversations about how they practice their Japanese identity in everyday life. In Saki's case, she grew up with a Japanese mother and a British father. During her early childhood, she used to speak Japanese with her mother. After joining the workforce as a university administrator, however, Saki found herself using less Japanese, leading her to feel "her Japanese has deteriorated, for which she feels frustrated and disappointed" (Miyake et al., 2021: 270). With Emiko, who retained her Japanese language competency as a Japanese instructor for children, it was her son who did not retain his linguistic skills. The article states that Emiko believes her son will never have the same sense of belonging in Japan as her, and that he "he is now is and will be where he belongs. He is a Londoner" (Miyake et al., 2021: 273). This piece by Miyake provides an interesting counter-example to my research because the

author's interview subjects of Japanese descent in London do not retain the same ties that my interview subjects do to Japan and their Japanese heritage. This could be attributed to their economic status, an aspect that the article does not address aside from listing the occupations of Saki and Emiko. With my interview subjects, economic status plays an essential role in allowing them to live transnationally and maneuver a multiplicity of identities–something that both Saki and Emiko mentioned that they wish they and their children could do. Particularly with Emma, Lina, and Hiroko, my interviewees retained the ability to connect with multiple locations, countries, and languages, establishing their cosmopolitan identities. They do not live strictly in France, as was the case with the children of Saki and Emiko, but rather also stay in Japan.

Japanese Customs and Habits

Most of my interview subjects were able to easily cite at least one everyday habit that was related to their Japanese identity. These habits may have been consciously done, or in Emma's case, an unconscious action that was brought to her attention by her friends who did not share in having a Japanese background. These everyday habits are important in reaffirming identity, as described by Brubaker and Cooper who view practice to be an essential component of identity. Emma described how she would do *ojigi,* or bowing, without even noticing until her friends mentioned to her that when greeting authority figures, such as teachers and parents, she would give them a small bow. When telling me this story, she gave a small laugh when saying "So I'm made fun of a lot," but not mentioning any plans to make an effort to stop this habit. This practice, although common in Japan, stood out to Emma's friends in France. Still, this distinctive mannerism is a way for her to practice her Japanese identity while living in France.

Elsa also described another common Japanese mannerism when I asked her about how she practices her identity in everyday life, describing the habit of always taking off her shoes in the house. Removing shoes is a required practice/custom in daily Japanese life. Even running back in the house for a split second, everyone removes their shoes. There is a special *ogenkan* area that serves as a place where you leave your shoes, and don house slippers in most instances. Bathrooms typically have their own dedicated slippers to keep all areas clean and hygienic. In traditional Japanese homes, most areas have tatami flooring and the occupants sleep on futons on the tatami floors, hence keeping shoes out of the home. This custom or practice is so ingrained that it endures even in Western homes for many people of Japanese descent, including my own family. Here, this practice is deeply related to space, a concept I will describe further in the following section. While in those sections I spend more time discussing public spaces, here Elsa negotiates her identity in a private space, within the home, demonstrating how my interview subjects practice their Japanese identity in both public and private locations.

In addition to these two practices that mainly concern only the individual, Emma described sharing her cooking with others when answering my question about how she practices her Japanese identity while living in France. She cited her love of cooking Japanese curry for her friends, who are not all of Japanese descent, and that "they are absolutely in love with that dish." Both Emma's willingness to share her Japanese cooking, alongside her friends' appreciation for this food, further supports the levels of acceptance felt by my interviewees as people of Japanese descent living in France, as I will elaborate upon further in the following chapters. In addition to cooking, many of my interview subjects also mentioned frequenting Japanese restaurants with their friends. Overall, the process of creating Japanese dishes and sharing this cuisine

demonstrates a willingness to publicly practice one's Japanese identity, alongside a feeling of an acceptance of that identity. The following chapters will analyze this acceptance further, looking into the role that various aspects of French culture, such as media and pop culture, play in the widespread embrace of certain aspects of Japanese culture that contribute to my interviewee's comfortability in sharing one's Japanese identity. These examples of food sharing and media are limited, and could be carefully chosen expressions of culture, but are still worth considering how they reflect my interviewees experiences.

Identity and Space

In addition to certain customs and habits, space and locations also appeared to play a significant role in the question of how my interview subjects practiced their Japanese identity in everyday life while in France. This ease of navigating different spaces reflects a similar experience to code switching in that some of my interviewees have access to cultural capital that allows them to negotiate different global spaces with ease. Still, not all of my interviewees had these experiences, evident in the various responses that I got to my question on how my interview subjects perceived their Japanese identity while in France and whether this competed at all with their having a French identity. My interviewees had varying answers to this idea of having a French identity in the first place. For some, such as Emma, Lina, and Hiroko, the acknowledgement of having a French identity, in addition to a Japanese one, was not even questioned. This can most likely be attributed to their cosmopolitan upbringing, traveling between Japan and France. For Elsa, Kikuma, and Sawako, however, they only acknowledged having a Japanese identity. In the example of Sawako, this made sense, as she only spent one year living in Paris during a study abroad program during her junior year of college. For Elsa and

Kikuma, however, it becomes a bit more complicated as they have each lived in France for around five or six years, with Elsa being married to a French man and raising her daughter in Lyon. Because of this, I was a bit surprised to hear that they did not see themselves as having a French identity at all. An explanation to this may be related to the strong nationalism that is present in Japan, and the secure sense of a Japanese identity that this can create. This idea of nationalism in Japan, and its impact on my interview subjects will be further analyzed in the following chapter. Overall, the sense of Japanese identity that my interviewees have in relation to living in France provides a compelling example of how space plays a role in one's perception of identity and belonging. These ideas demonstrate the spatial aspects of identity, and how the material environment can shape how one situates their sense of self.

Alongside the way that living in France can reflect or reveal identity, my interview subjects also described their interactions with people of Japanese descent in other countries. Everybody mentioned their regular contact with their family members and friends still living in France, however I also found a comment made by Hiroko to be interesting in which she described her regular communication with Japanese friends living in Germany, with Elsa describing a similar communication with a Japanese friend in Singapore. After I asked Hiroko about her relationship with these contacts, she specified that they were family connections made through her parents. I found this particularly interesting as it reminded me of the piece by Tsuda (2012) described in the literature review chapter. Here, Tsuda contends that diasporic communities must maintain ties transnationally in order to be properly considered a diaspora. Although I have already made my disagreement with this requirement clear, I also did wish to explore this idea of transnational ties as a way to practice one's Japanese identity within my own

research. Within my group of six interview subjects, everybody described maintaining

connections with other people of Japanese descent in Japan, with Hiroko and Elsa being unique

examples having ties to people of Japanese descent in Germany and Singapore.

These ideas of what creates a diaspora also have led to my consideration of what forms a

community. Although most of my interviewees did discuss the existence of a Japanese

community in France, Kikuma was an outlier in her denial of such a group. She stated very

plainly in our initial email correspondences that she does not believe that France has a distinct

Japanese community. This contrasts with the descriptions from my other interview subjects, who

told me about their friends who they would speak to in a mix of French and Japanese, as outlined

above, or about the spaces where people of Japanese descent would frequent, as I will further

discuss. Kikuma's perspective may stem from her own beliefs of what constitutes a true Japanese

community. As the following chapters will analyze, the criteria for being considered truly

Japanese may be more strict within Japan, a country whose homogeneity and nationalism appear

more extreme than in France. Although all of my interview subjects consider themselves as

having a Japanese identity, the measure of being considered Japanese may be different for

Kikuma. She may see this from the perspective of someone born and raised in Japan for the

majority of one's entire life. Many of my interview subjects, however, had a more cosmopolitan

upbringing, living in both France and Japan. Because of this, my interviewees appear to have

conflicting perceptions on the existence of a Japanese community in France, consequently

impacting how they view themselves as practicing their Japanese heritage.

In addition to their perceptions of French cities and their sense of cultivating a French identity, many of my interview subjects mentioned visiting smaller spaces, such as restaurants and shops, as a way to practice their Japanese identity and heritage. For example, Emma described frequenting an area of Paris dubbed "Little Tokyo." The name of this neighborhood itself contradicts Kikuma's claims described in the earlier paragraph of the lack of a Japanese community in France, and in particular Paris. Emma described Little Tokyo as "a place where you have a lot of Japanese restaurants and all the good Japanese food…it's pretty amazing." The high visibility of Little Tokyo, with many Japanese owned businesses, contrasts with the more private practices of Japanese identity, such as actions within the home as described by Elsa. Here, Japan and Japanese culture claim a space within France, allowing people of Japanese descent such as Emma to publicly practice and share their heritage and identity among other Japanese people, or simply have an appreciation for Japanese culture. Emma also mentioned meeting many people of Japanese descent in these areas, noting that she does not "really meet one hundred percent Japanese people," and instead a lot of people with similar backgrounds to herself being half French and half Japanese. This may support Kikuma's perspective of the lack of Japanese community in France, having not met many people with similar backgrounds to herself, or people who have lived in Japan for the vast majority of their life, and perceive themselves as "fully Japanese." Emma did describe one place in which she was able to meet people that she deemed as "fully Japanese" called the Cité Universitaire in Paris. Here, international students on one to two year exchanges would live in a house occupied by other people from their same country. Although she did meet some students from Japan, she did reiterate her line from earlier, stating, "But it's true that I don't really meet one hundred percent

Japanese people." This distinction that Emma makes also suggests that she shares similar ideas to Kikuma surrounding what can be considered "truly" Japanese, a concept worth noting and one that will be further analyzed in the following chapters. Still, despite regular interactions with groups of people with varying degrees of Japanese descent, the descriptions given by Emma support the existence of a Japanese population within France, contradicting Kikuma's personal opinions on such a community.

In addition to these two specific spaces within Paris, the vast majority of my interview subjects also described frequenting Japanese-owned and run restaurants and grocery stores as a common way for them to practice their identities. From my experiences in these spaces, whether in France or in the United States, everybody who is Japanese will speak Japanese to each other, including the workers in the stores or servers in the restaurant. Only Sawako mentioned actively avoiding Japanese restaurants and stores during her stay in Paris, explaining that "I did not seek out any Japanese stores or people or any of that. I was there to learn French and I was there to learn about France." During this study abroad, with limited time in France, Sawako seemed eager to immerse herself in French language and culture. While it is unclear whether this is because of a strict delineation between French culture and Japanese culture, or simply a preference to have a fully immersive experience, Sawako's comment is interesting to examine. It could be interpreted that she may be viewing French culture within the lens of the dominant white perception, suggesting that a true French experience excludes any overlap with Japan, and that the truly authentic France is void of any intersection with Japan. This appears to mirror the ways in which being considered Japanese, as I will discuss in Chapter Five, adheres to the dominant perception of being fully racially and ethnically Japanese.

Conclusion

      Overall, it is critical to understand how my interview subjects practice their Japanese heritage in order to better understand the reasons behind their everyday actions, as well as their perceptions of their personal identity. These various actions, from language practices to frequenting certain restaurants, are important to consider within the context of the following chapters that will focus more on why my interviewees feel comfortable publicly living their Japanese identity in France, a country that is commonly associated with being stifling of non-majority cultures and racial and ethnic groups. These practices are also essential to examine when thinking about the impacts that Japanese nationalism can have on my interviewees' perceptions of the degree to which French nationalism impacts their everyday life. It is revealing how every small component and detail of each identifying category of language, customs, and space are critical in understanding and assessing its impact on the formation, practice and preservation of identity. Through the forms of cultural capital, perceptions of identity, and everyday actions described in this chapter, I have examined how specific experiences and cultural backgrounds have provided my interviewees with the tools to navigate their Japanese identity within France. In the following chapter, I will broaden these ideas out to better understand the ways in which Japanese identity and Japan itself are being portrayed in contemporary French media and pop culture. Then, I will apply this information in Chapter Five to better understand how my interview subjects negotiate these different identities, and how this impacts their perceptions of the effects and degrees of French nationalism on their experiences as a minority population.

Asian Racial Hierarchies: A Content Analysis of French Newspapers

Introduction

Media and popular culture play an important role in our current globalized world. News articles and viral videos can be shared at the click of a button across countries and continents. Because of this accessibility, media discourse has the power to play an increasingly influential role in shaping our perceptions of other people, cultures, countries, and current events. A recent example of this phenomenon is the acceptance of circulating news stories during the Covid-19 pandemic. People believed in false cures for the virus, argued that wearing a mask was dangerous, and doubted vaccine efficiency (Lewis 2022). Anti-Asian sentiments spread as quickly as the rumors surrounding the virus' origins, which could often be found in more fringe news sources. A well-known example of the perpetuation of these problematic representations include *Le Courier Picard'*s headline "Yellow Alert" ("Alert Jaune") in January of 2020 alongside an image of a Chinese woman wearing a mask. Many people internalized what they read, impacting their beliefs and actions and leading to increased forms of racism against Asian people. Understanding how people can internalize the media and stories that they read is critical in the following analysis because it shows that word choice and portrayals in the media can have dangerous and harmful effects.

The ways in which the media can permeate our everyday lives is demonstrated in Debra Spitulnik's (1996) pivotal essay "The Social Circulation of Media Discourse and the Mediation of Communities." Here, she describes the impacts of media discourse on Zambian popular culture, citing how the language used on public radio can lead to the formation of a speech

community bonded through this shared linguistic knowledge. Spitulnik mentions seeing certain

phrases and responses often used on the radio translated into everyday encounters (Spitulnik,

1996). This demonstrates that media consumption becomes verbalized in everyday life. This

discourse is being internalized, in other words, as Spitulnik demonstrates through speech or

smaller everyday exchanges. Benedict Anderson also has written about this type of community

formation through the media, focusing instead on the role of newspapers. In his work on

nationalism and imagined community, he describes how print media can work as both a form of

social reflection and a space to encourage action. Anderson establishes that newspapers can

impact people's decisions, beliefs, and actions about national identity, and is not simply a

stagnant piece of writing that reflects the world. Instead, it also has the potential to shape our

social interactions and convictions (Breuilly, 2016).

To further understand prevailing cultural discourse surrounding people of Japanese

descent in France, I conducted a media content analysis with the intention of better

understanding how Japanese people are portrayed in French media. In order to accomplish this

analysis, I reviewed the online articles published on *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* during the month

of January 2022, the month I had dedicated to conducting the majority of my research, as well as

discussed this topic with my interview subjects. I would periodically check the online

publications, reading any article that appeared to even tangentially relate to my topic. In

determining the news sources, I looked at the two most popular and widely circulated

newspapers in France, which are also widely considered to be accurate and factual sources. With

regard to political biases, *Le Figaro* is viewed to be centrist-right, whereas *Le Monde* is more left

leaning (Tebbel 2003). I decided that using these two sources would provide a broader

perspective of French discursive portrayals of Japan, while also reflecting the popular media that is consumed by many different people in France.

Analyzing these media portrayals is critical in understanding the experiences of people of Japanese descent within France because it allows for a broader analysis of how French people may perceive Japan and Japanese people. These perceptions can then impact how people of Japanese descent are treated within France, consequently affecting the levels of acceptance that they feel in France and influencing how they may practice their identity. As many of my interviewees recounted feeling welcomed and accepted in France, as described in the following chapter, this media content analysis is essential in offering further perspectives as to why this particular minority group feels higher levels of acceptance. In an article by Wang et al., outlined in the literature review chapter, the authors explore the impacts of Covid-19 on anti-Asian sentiment in France, focusing on the Chinese community. Their findings suggest that people of Chinese descent living in France experience forms of public harassment, and that these acts of racism had been occurring even before the pandemic. The title of this article itself, "'I'm More Afraid of Racism than of the Virus!': Racism Awareness and Resistance among Chinese Migrants and Their Descendants in France during the Covid-19 Pandemic", speaks to the difficult experiences that people of Chinese descent have had while living in France. Because of this article, I had expected the experiences of the Japanese community in France to be similar, especially because the authors described how " … in the French context, the terms 'Asian' and 'Chinese' tend to be interchangeable in both racist discourses and in everyday language" (Wang et al., 2021: 722). Upon conducting interviews, however, I found that the experiences of people of Chinese descent and the experiences of my interview subjects of Japanese descent strongly

contrasted. My following content analysis seeks to understand how pop culture and media can work to perpetuate this existence of a racial hierarchy through according different public values and rhetoric to Asian countries, notably China and Japan, within France. This analysis can then be used to better understand why my interviews recounted feeling higher levels of acceptance in France than other minority groups.

Hierarchical Portrayals of China and Japan

While looking through the websites for *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*, I often read through the sections dedicated to news in Asia. I noticed that both newspapers had significantly more coverage of China rather than Japan, or any other Asian country for that matter. At first glance, it appeared that this was because of the ongoing Winter Olympics, however many of the articles also discussed the pandemic, as well as military related news. The resulting implications of these stories, as well as the word choice involved in the articles, leads to a portrayal of China as a menacing and militaristic country, consequently encouraging negative perceptions of China within France. Examples of these articles include titles such as "How China is Increasing its Grip on Cambodia," a story published by *Le Monde* which uses personification to portray China as an expansionist and dangerous country that is controlling and harming Cambodia (Pedroletti 2022). Additionally, these articles often use specific adjectives with negative connotations when describing China. In one article published by *Le Figaro* that examines the impacts of the pandemic on the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the author uses phrases such as "frightened population" and "official propaganda" (Falletti 2022: para 2). These lines reflect fear in Chinese citizens, and dictatorial power and control by the Chinese government. Additionally, this same article compares China's Covid-19 response to war, stating "... at the very moment when the

epidemic resumption threatens the second world power, again on a war footing against the virus"
(Falletti 2022: para 3). This reference to a "war footing" in regard to China's Covid-19 policy
further forms an image of the country as highly militaristic. Finally, comparisons between China
and Japan are made in the phrase "a sanitary cordon even more draconian than in Tokyo," which
works to emphasize comparisons between the two countries. The use of the word draconian
immediately evokes negative connotations, and this line supports the pre-existing hierarchy
between these two Asian countries. Although Japan is also being described as draconian,
distinctions are made between the two countries with China being portrayed as more extreme in
its Covid-19 policy.

These negative associations perpetuated by militaristic portrayals reflect earlier historical
representations of Japan within France, and consequent perceptions of Japan. In the article
written by Stephen Lawson described in the earlier literature review chapter, he describes the
experiences of the Japanese community in France through the lens of the unfinished novel
Ryoshū by Riichi Yokomitsu. Within this analysis, Lawson cites the Japanese invasion of French
Indochina as a critical moment that established Japan as a militaristic country, leading to
consequent negative perceptions of the country. He even describes how within Yokomitsu's
novel, friendships between Japanese and French people are rare because of these tensions. This
serves as an example of how public sentiment is often shaped by current events and portrayals of
certain countries, particularly when those portrayals are related to politics and war. As described
above, the current political climate regarding China consistently paints the country as dangerous
and militaristic. As a result, people of Chinese descent within France may be perceived
differently, and more negatively, than people of Japanese descent.

These portrayals of China are by no means confined to French media portrayals. Representations by media in other countries, notably the United States, follow similar trends. Political and cultural rhetoric about China can manifest into specific forms of racial profiling and policing that reinstitute these negative ideas. Recently, the United States government arrested Chinese professors with the claim that they were foreign agents, despite a lack of reliable evidence (Nast, 2022). These actions reflect how media representations and prevailing ideologies of nationalism are not innocuous, and have real consequences and cultural effects. These consequences can also lead to, in the case of the differing portrayal of Japan and China in French media, the formation of hierarchies among different countries, leading to more positive perceptions of Japan overall.

In contrast to the negative portrayals of China, depictions of Japan in both *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* are predominantly positive today. Within these two news sources during the month when I performed content analysis, Japan was often associated with popular tourism and economic success. In one article promoting tourism in Japan, the author describes Tokyo as "futuristic, cosmopolitan and sassy" (Menu 2022: para 3). Additionally, *Le Figaro* even has a dedicated section on the website to tourism in Asia in which the majority of the articles focus on Japan. This section also contains lists such as "Our Essentials," highlighting Cambodia, Japan, Burma, and India, as well as "Cities to Visit," recommending Tokyo, Bangkok, Kyoto, and Phnom Penh (see Figure 1). The strong presence of Japan within these lists suggests a highly positive tourist perception of the country through endorsement and approval by the media, at least from the authors and editors at *Le Figaro*. As one of France's most popular news outlets, this most likely influences and reflects prevailing public opinion.

Figure 1: *Le Figaro* **Tourism Recommendations**

DESTINATION

ASIE : LE GUIDE DE VOYAGE DU *FIGARO*

De campagnes luxuriantes en mégapoles vibrantes, l'Asie est un continent de contrastes. Comment en être autrement, pour un territoire qui fait 40 millions de kilomètres carrés et où vivent plus de 4 milliards d'êtres humains ? Birmanie, Cambodge, Chine, Inde, Japon, Thaïlande... Ces pays ont en commun les traces d'un passé millénaire, colonial parfois, et l'attachement à la spiritualité, qui donne à leurs peuples ce petit supplément d'âme. Suivez nos pas.

Nos incontournables

CAMBODGE   JAPON   BIRMANIE   INDE

Les villes à visiter

TOKYO   BANGKOK   KYOTO   PHNOM PENH

Source: "Asie: Le Guide De Voyage Du Figaro." LeFigaro, https://www.lefigaro.fr/voyages/dossier/asie. Accessed 17 January 2022.

This existence of a racial and ethnic hierarchy in France can also be seen in the survey written about by Kazuhiko Yatabe, as described in the earlier literature review chapter. Yatabe discusses the results of a survey in which French participants were asked to express their trust among brands from various Asian countries. The results found that the participants indicated far more confidence in Japanese brands than any other Asian country. Over 80% of respondents were trusting of Japanese brands, whereas the next highest percentage was for Taiwanese brands at only 36.3% (Yatabe 2003: 35). This suggests extremely positive perceptions of Japanese

brands within France, particularly when compared to other Asian countries. Either because of these levels of trust, or a contributing factor to the survey results, Japanese products are extremely popular in French households, with many people using Japanese-produced products such as electronics, manga, anime, vehicles, and fashion. This trust in Japanese brands could contribute to positive perceptions of Japan itself. Yatabe discusses how the prevalence of Japanese-produced products in French households can act as a contributing factor to the positive associations of Japan, hypothesizing that because these objects are essentially incorporated into the French lifestyle, the distance between these two cultures is lessened, making Japan feel more accessible and acceptable within France (Yatabe 2003: 35). Overall, Yatabe's work supports the existence of a racial and ethnic hierarchy that exists within France among the perceptions of Asian countries, and this hierarchy is visible within the media portrayals of China and Japan.

While Japan and China may have differing depictions within the French media regarding politics and tourism, both countries are represented positively as economically successful. In an article published by *Le Figaro* titled "French industry should be inspired by Asian models," both China and Japan are named as being in the top three world economic powers (Lecoulant 2022). However, while Japan is simply listed in this one sentence, the article goes on to discuss China more in depth, calling the country a "competitor" (Lecoulant 2022: para 3). This distinction further forms a negative image of China within the media, suggesting that the country is pitted against France, encouraging an "us versus them" mentality. More recently, these negative perceptions have been further perpetuated with the spread of Covid-19, with the virus's origins in China. As described in the article by Wang et. al., as mentioned in the chapter introduction, the pandemic has had visible impacts on the treatment of people of Chinese descent living in France.

The author's study, which utilized online surveys and interviews, discovered a notable increase in anti-Asian and anti-Chinese sentiments in France. These more recent politics of Covid-19 can work to reinforce the pre-existing ethnic hierarchy, as supported by contemporary media portrayals of China and Japan.

Japanese Pop Culture in France

While conducting this research, I came across an article in *Le Monde* describing a French event called Japan Expo. This annual celebration of Japanese culture within Europe has dramatically increased in popularity in the twenty years of its existence, growing from 3,000 visitors to 240,000 in 2019 (since the pandemic, however, these numbers have decreased) (Croquet 2019: para 1). Japan Expo demonstrates the widespread acceptance of Japanese pop culture within France–a phenomenon that is not entirely new. As described in the earlier literature review chapter, Japanese animations have been popular in France since the 1970s when French television would air Japanese anime. Although there was some controversy surrounding these shows, which were shown to children in France despite the adult themes that they contained, they did help encourage the consumption of Japanese culture. A few years after French television stopped airing Japanese anime in the late 1990s, manga began to increase in popularity, continuing the consumption of Japanese pop culture. Japan Expo has furthered this consumption, thus integrating Japanese culture further into France through creating a space for fans of Japanese art.

While the consumption of this media does have benefits, there is also some controversy over the message that they can send, or the stereotypes they can create. This broad embrace of
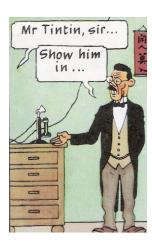
Japanese culture can be at times superficial and shallow. Japanese people, and particularly

women, are often exoticized and objectified within these forms of media, leading to harmful

effects on how Japanese women are perceived in real life. My interview subjects, who all

identify as women, may be impacted by these damaging stereotypes, as briefly mentioned by

Hiroko during our conversation about navigating her ethnicity while living in Lyon, which she

describes as "French with Japanese origins." In this discussion, she mentioned talking about the

subject of ethnicity with her friends, stating, "I can speak about ethnicity with my friends, it's not

a hard thing for me. But sometimes, people have certain images. So I tell them it's not that ...."

Hiroko's quote shows how she does face stereotyping about her Japanese identity; however, she

feels confident in correcting these preconceived notions about her ethnicity. She also notes that

her friends do have generally positive associations with Japan, as I will elaborate further in the

following chapter.

Harmful Japanese stereotypes can be found in other forms of media consumed in France.

When I asked my interview subjects about Japanese representation in French media, only Emma,

who was born in France and grew up in Japan, was able to come up with some examples, noting

that they were not positive. She mentioned the French cartoon *Tintin* (published between

1929-1976) that she used to read as a child. Emma remembered a Japanese character named

Mitsuhirato who was "very stereotyped so not very relatable" (see Figure 2). Although this

cartoon is no longer being published, it is still consumed and can still negatively impact

perceptions of Japanese people. Emma also described a novel called *Madame Chrysanthème,*

which was published in 1888 and written by Pierre Loti. This story depicts a marriage between a

French marine officer and a Japanese woman, and Emma noted that "it is quite controversial

because of the way it described Japanese women and the fact that it encouraged Asian

fetishization." These gendered portrayals of people of Japanese descent, particularly among

popular French media, can create prejudicial and detrimental internalized stereotypes. Although

perceptions of Japan are generally positive, this acceptance can stem from damaging media

portrayals that fetishize women and place stereotypes on Japanese people. My interview subjects

are all subjected to this further stereotyping as women of Japanese descent living in France,

which may have an additional impact on their experiences alongside their race, ethnicity, and

socioeconomic status. Although these exoticized images may lead to positive perceptions, the

root of these stereotypes are deeply problematic and harmful.

Figure 2: Mitsuhirato

Source: Hergé, The Blue Lotus: The Adventures of Tintin. London, Mammoth, 1990, p.8.

In addition to the popular culture listed by Emma, we considered another form of French

media earlier in our interview while discussing her experiences interning at a Japanese company

a few summers ago. As Emma described her struggles being accepted because of her ethnicity, I

was immediately reminded of the novel, and subsequent movie, *Stupeur et Tremblements* by

Amélie Nothomb. This movie portrays a highly romanticized image of Japan that may contribute

to positive perceptions of the country. At the same time, however, Nothomb is able to critique

Japanese professional culture, in particular the racial and gender hierarchies that exist in the

workplace. After I brought this book up, Emma mentioned that she had seen the movie

adaptation, and although she did not have the exact experience described in the book, she did

notice some similarities in her treatment as somebody from Europe, which will be elaborated

upon further in the following chapter. *Stupeur et Tremblements* provides a portrait of professional

inequalities in Japan, while also portraying the country in a positive light. This novel follows the

experiences of author Amelie Nothomb, who after graduating in Belgium found employment at a

large Japanese corporation in Tokyo. Because of her clearly visible European identity, she faced

difficulties adjusting to Japan's homogeneity and value of being "Japanese" in the workplace.

Still, this novel follows a white protagonist. When I asked my interview subjects to name any

portrayals of people of Japanese descent in the media, only Emma had an answer, and her

examples were of negative and harmful stereotypes.

Conclusion

Overall, the media and pop culture portrayals of Japan in France are intriguing and vital

to consider when understanding the experiences of people of Japanese descent living in France.

The popular and widely circulated newspapers, *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde,* perpetuate primarily

positive perceptions of Japan, while at the same time distinguishing the country from China. As

Wang et al. mentioned, French discourse often interchangeably uses "China" and "Asia", yet it

appears as though there are in fact strong distinctions between Japan and China. This racial and

ethnic hierarchy is supported by prevailing media discussions in the two news sources that I

analyzed. The politics of the Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this divide. Finally, my interview subjects were unable to think of many popular culture portrayals of Japanese figures, and the characters that were mentioned perpetuate harmful stereotypes. This included the exoticization of Japanese women–creating widely circulating images that my interview subjects must negotiate alongside their broader Japanese identities. The following chapter, "Negotiating Multiply Constructed Identities," will further examine the impacts of these media portrayals on the lived everyday experiences of my interview subjects.

Chapter Five: Negotiating Multiply Constructed Identities

Introduction

Having grown up in a multicultural home, identity has always been fascinating to me, and I have noticed how my sense of identity seems to shift based on location and company. These experiences were shared by my interview subjects, some of whom described feeling more Japanese in France, and more French in Japan. As described in the third chapter's description of the work of Brubaker and Cooper, as well as how many of my interview subjects construct identities that relate to both their French and Japanese backgrounds, identity making and construction is a central focus of my research. Much of this process incorporates aspects of cosmopolitanism, and the ability for my interviewees to engage with each culture in varying degrees. The differing levels to which cosmopolitanism is embraced shifts among my interview subjects, often based on their own personal identity and experiences. In addition to this ability to live multiculturally, or perhaps because of it, many of my interview subjects felt comfortable and welcomed in France, something that I had not expected when beginning this thesis.

At the start of this project, I had framed my research question within the context of French nationalism and its negative effects on minority groups. Through reading about the experiences of North African, Muslim, and Chinese communities in France, I had assumed that Japanese populations would also be exposed to the harmful impacts of nationalism, such as the dominant white French discourses of belonging. After various conversations with my interview subjects, however, I noticed that this exclusionary version of French nationalism did not appear to make a major impact on their lives, and a new question arose: Why do people of Japanese descent not feel as impacted or marginalized by dominant French nationalistic ideals as other

minority groups may encounter, according to the literature? To answer this question, I have

divided this chapter into three distinct sections, positing that people of Japanese descent in

France benefit from what I have dubbed the "cool" factor, their economic class position, and the

stark comparisons they make between their experiences pertaining to racial and ethnic identity in

France versus in Japan. By understanding the ways in which French individuals and discourses

distinguish Japanese people from other minority groups, as well as the comparisons that many of

my interviewees made between living in Japan and France, I hope to further understand why my

interviewees experience different levels of acceptance in France than other minority groups.

Within this discussion, the role of colorism is especially of note. As I have mentioned,

many of my interviewees are mixed race, however they are visibly of Asian descent. Because of

this, they still get assigned a broader identity of being "Asian", as I will discuss further later in

this chapter. Still, within the broader context of colorism, in which "the globalization of light

skin [is] the universal hierarchy ideal", my interview subjects have very different experiences

from other minority groups, particularly those with darker skin tones (2141). These differences

also intersect with histories of colonialism, which is particularly of consequence as most

literature on the impacts of French nationalism focus on previously colonized countries, whereas

Japan has the history of imperialism. Overall, these factors are important to consider, and it is

also significant to understand that my mixed race interview subjects are physically grouped into

the broader categorization of being Asian.

The "Cool" Factor

As described in the previous chapter, current media portrayals of Japan have a predominantly positive impact on contemporary French perceptions of Japanese people. This became evident in conversations with my interviewees. When I spoke with Hiroko over Zoom and asked about how she negotiates her Japanese identity in France, she smiled as she described how her French friends think her ethnicity is "cool," describing the reason behind this as "when I say I have Japanese origins they have more positive images of this country." This positive imagery is explored in the preceding chapter that outlines the effects of media and pop culture on public perceptions, ranging from newspaper word choice to celebrations of Japanese culture. Another interviewee, Elsa, who lives outside of Lyon, also described benefitting from positive impressions of Japan in our conversation but did not directly reference media portraits. After I asked if she has experienced any racism or discrimination as a Japanese woman in France, Elsa paused before thoughtfully responding, "There is a big Arab population that lives in their own community, and the French people do not like them. But in terms of myself and my own experience, I have not observed this. I have not felt discriminated against as Asian or as Japanese." Elsa's personal experiences highlight how, although other minority groups such as "Arab" populations are subject to marginalization in France and may even become ready emblems of this marginalization, the people of Japanese descent whom I interviewed do not share those experiences and view themselves as having a different relationship to dominant French culture. The fact that Elsa brought up her observations of the Arab population shows that other groups have a starkly different struggle with racism in France, so much so that she felt it was worth mentioning when I asked about her own personal experiences. Still, she does appear

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to both feel a difference from other ethnic minority groups and benefit from positive perceptions of Japan in France.

Despite these positive associations with Japan that my interview subjects described, they also mentioned being grouped by others into a broader identification as Asian, and this designation led to very different interactions with the public in France. While speaking with Lina over Zoom, I asked if she has had any experiences with racism. She quickly responded "Definitely," while noting that these experiences did not begin until the start of the pandemic. Up until then, she described knowing that racism did exist, however, she did not experience it personally. During the pandemic, however, she began to notice many people avoiding her in public spaces, particularly on the metro. Lina also described the fear that she felt during these situations, stating how she remembered "being really scared that I was from Japan, even though I lived there (France) for a pretty long time and I wasn't back in Japan for a long time." When I asked if her experiences and feelings of fear impacted her actions in public, Lina promptly mentioned that she had just been talking with another Japanese friend about this subject, saying "in March [2020] I think no one really wore any masks in France. And I think for me, wearing masks would really enforce the Asian appearances and stereotypes for being the one that just came back from Asia. So I think it was a pretty risky thing to wear a mask, even though there was something you had to do, but I think that was also my way to avoid racism or to avoid my Asian ethnicity." Lina's personal experiences with racism in France had a strong impact on her emotional wellbeing as well as potential effect on her physical health–by not wearing a mask in public spaces at the start of the pandemic, she was putting herself at greater risk of contracting

COVID-19. Lina's lived experiences clearly demonstrate the far-reaching effects of racism, and her attempts to cope with as well as deflect being a target of prejudice.

When asking Emma this same question, she could not think of exact experiences of racism as quickly as Lina did, replying with "Definitely not" at first. As she began to elaborate, however, she slowly remembered getting catcalled Asian slurs. She was quick to note that these insults were not specific to Japanese people because the slurs were typically for Chinese or Korean people. In both of these instances, while Lina and Emma did experience racism, the perpetrators did so out of misidentifying their ethnicities. In the case of the metro, at the time, coronavirus was largely associated with China. I can assume then that the people avoiding Lina did so because they thought she was Chinese, and not Japanese. When Emma described getting called Asian slurs, it can also be assumed that she was being perceived as Chinese or Korean rather than Japanese. These examples support the point from the preceding chapter describing how the racial and ethnic Asian hierarchy that exists in France serves to both benefit people of Japanese descent in more personal and private settings, while subjecting them to the same experiences of racism in public spaces. This ethnic hierarchy was also seen in the literature review chapter, and the discussion of the study cited by Kazuhioko Yatabe in which French consumers were asked about their level of trust in products made in different Asian countries. Here, there were clear distinctions between Japan and other Asian countries, potentially contributing to positive perceptions of Japan and Japanese people in France. Those distinctions, however, can also be collapsed in public spaces where ideas of an homogenized Asian racial identity prevail. In these environments, one can see the emergence of reductive ideas of race, and the collapse of this apparent racial and ethnic hierarchy that can be positive for Japan but

negative for Korea and China. Nationalism can act as a tool for promoting these hierarchies of

race and ethnicity, but at the same time lead to these more homogenizing ideas of Asian racial

identity. It is because of this that nationalism becomes both a means for inclusion as well as

exclusion, through the form of racism, that my interview subjects experience in different ways.

These overall benefits of being Japanese in France, which several of my interviewees

described, can be traced back historically, particularly to associations between Japan and the arts.

As described in the earlier literature review chapter, Japan's legacy in Les Beaux Arts inspired

famous and popular French artists such as Monet, Van Gogh, and Manet during the nineteenth

century, as well as composer Debussy and poet Baudelaire. These inspirations are known by

most art lovers and museum goers, and most likely has fostered a series of diffusely circulating,

positive associations of Japan in French public discourse. Today, Japanese influences continue to

be highly visible in the world of the arts and culture. This can be seen in the example from the

previous chapter of the Japanese Expo celebrating Japanese pop culture, or in the world of high

fashion. Kenzo Takada and Issey Miyake are two well known and respected designers with

Japanese origins, and who are widely popular in France. Issey Miyake even named his perfume

line in French: L'Eau D'Issey. Kenzo is itself considered a French luxury brand, well known for

its incorporation of Asian design in European fashion. Even the iconic French luggage maker

Louis Vuitton has collaborated with Japanese designers such as Takashi Murakami and Kansai

Yamamoto, and most recently Nigo. The acceptance of these designers in France, home to the

fashion capital of the world, further supports the positive perceptions of Japan within France.

The admiration has been mutual between the two countries, evident through stories of former

President of France Jacques Chirac being a fan of Japanese culture including art and sumo

wrestling and visiting Japan on many occasions. These influences of Japanese art contribute to the ideas of cosmopolitanism, and the global reach and presence of Japanese culture.

Economic Status and Class

In addition to the public perceptions of Japan based on historical influences on French art and culture, the class positioning of my interviewees must be considered in relation to their personal experiences with feelings of acceptance while living in France. Every person I interviewed was either a student or considered a white collar worker, and the students that I interviewed maintained similar economic statuses because of their parents' high paying careers. These social statuses may have allowed my interview subjects to be perceived more positively by the white French community because of their cultural performance of subtle class markers such as clothing, demeanor, language fluency, and employment. This aspect of class is also essential to consider when examining the experiences of three particular subjects–Emma, Lina, and Hiroko–who have been able to experience living in both France and Japan, thus fostering two different identities between these two countries. This idea of cosmopolitanism can both embrace the connection to a national identity, while at the same time destabilizing them. Emma, Lina, and Hiroko do not have to rely solely on one sense of belonging.

Emma's father works for an asset management company in Tokyo. Lina's father is a corporate senior executive at Panasonic, and her mother manages a boutique in Japan. Hiroko's father is a professor at the University of Lyon. These three students have been able to sustain and experience lives of mobility in both Japan and France because of their parents' professions. Both Emma and Lina alternated growing up in Paris and Tokyo, while Hiroko has lived in France her

whole life, but spends her summers in Japan. This access to a cosmopolitan lifestyle coincides with the positive portrayal of Japan in French media described in the previous chapter, as well as supports these perceptions of Japan within France. Living between two countries allowed Emma, Lina, and Hiroko to further learn both French and Japanese outside of their homes. When I asked Lina about where she grew up, she struggled to articulate her exact situation at first before stating "Because my mother is French, we used to go back and forth. So I was always switching my education." Later on in the interview, after I asked about her educational experiences and observations, she said, "You grow up in both countries, both cultures, but you have to choose, so education is not really accessible if you want to learn both of them. And I think I was privileged enough to have both education and an environment where I could really learn both education systems, but it's really not accessible for anyone." Here, she is clearly cognizant of her privileged position that has permitted her to live this life of cosmopolitanism and multilingualism that indicates a higher economic status. Overall, in part because of this economic privilege, my interview subjects seem to have found a space inclusive of race and ethnicity within France and the dominant ideals of whiteness. This contrasts with other work that has been done on Japanese diasporas, such as Roth's book or Adachi's ethnography, which focus on *Nikkeijin* in Brazil, Peru, and Mexico and blue-collar workers of Japanese descent. It is critical to understand the role of socioeconomic status as it plays an important function in the personal experiences of my interview subjects.

The economic status of my interviewees also contributes a positive influence on the perceptions of Japanese people in France, particularly in comparison to other minority groups. For example, in Diouf's chapter from the book *Black France/France Noire: The History of*

Politics and Blackness, he focuses on the experiences of Black citizens in France living in the banlieues. These suburbs have a distinctly negative connotation, and are often associated with classed and raced images of poverty and danger. The banlieues are often home to many minority populations, such as those described in Diouf's piece focusing on the meaning and creation of French Blackness. In this case, the role of economic class, and underlying assumptions about race and class, have further exacerbated the negative overall perceptions of Black citizens in France. This strongly contrasts with the experiences of my interview subjects, who benefit from positive cultural associations as well as the middle to upper class economic status as people of Japanese descent living in France. It is also important to note the work of Didier Fassin and Estelle D'Halluin in which they track the changing levels of acceptance of asylum seekers in relation to labor needs in France as well as the number of asylum seekers. They support Diouf's contention that acceptance of multiculturalism in France coincides with France's economic needs. Today, despite still recovering from the economic shocks brought about by Covid-19, and the subsequent labor shortages, France continues to retain rather negative sentiments about migrants and asylum seekers. Despite the potential economic benefits that they may bring to the labor market, the sheer number of asylum seekers in France due to recent world crises, as well as extreme political rhetoric due to the recent presidential election, may contribute to continuing negative perceptions of migrants. These public images are often racialized in historically and culturally significant ways, contrasting with the experiences of my interview subjects. In their case, they did not need to migrate to France suddenly in large numbers, but instead followed a slower migration over time that was more influenced by culture and art rather than a crisis. These cultural migrations are far more privileged, and lead to the assumptions that they will not be an

economic burden on France. In the case of my interview subjects, their family backgrounds provide them with opportunities that other migrants do not have. This demonstrates the varying ways that people are racialized, as well as the existence of a broader racial hierarchy in France, one that is not limited to Japan and China as discussed in the previous chapter. Overall, because of their lower economic and class status, other minority groups are more unfairly targeted and impacted by French nationalism than people of Japanese descent.

Contrasting Experiences with Japan

Because of their ability to live in both Japan and France, my interview subjects were very eager to discuss comparisons between the two countries, particularly in terms of their comfort in one country versus the other. This was not something that I had expected would happen as, at the onset of my research, I was hoping to understand the Japanese experience in France within the framework of French nationalism. I had not entirely accounted for the way in which Japanese nationalism can impact these experiences. When I asked if my interview subjects have felt impacted by French nationalism, they would often spend very little time on discussing France, and instead mention their experiences in Japan.

For example, Emma described a tendency to forget that she is half Asian while in France, but revealed that being able to forget that she is half French is impossible while in Japan. She even stated her reasoning behind moving to Paris for academic purposes as "I felt more at ease in France, so I knew I wanted to go back…I feel more a hundred percent when I'm in France." Emma also elaborated on this by describing her experiences in Japan, particularly in more professional settings. During a gap year between her undergraduate degree and her master's

program, she had decided to pursue an internship in Japan because she wanted to gain experience in the Japanese business culture. She found a position with a French company called "Mindful Paris" that had an office in Japan. This company catered towards Japanese women by allowing them to sign up for subscriptions for monthly boxes filled with Parisian themed items such as cosmetics. Emma made conscious decisions to try to keep her biracial identity hidden, even going so far as using her Japanese family name (her mother's maiden name). Her identity as half-Japanese, however, was revealed in linguistic mistakes, such as vocabulary mix ups or lack of knowledge about honorifics in Japanese. Because of this distinction, Emma faced difficulties in not having her thoughts and ideas valued by her coworkers and superiors, citing how they would say "but you know, you're not really Japanese" whenever her opinions conflicted with theirs. Emma recounted this story without any bitterness or anger, noting how all of these comments were made in a very polite manner. Still, the implications of these words reinforced strong feelings of not belonging. It is also important to consider other hierarchies, such as age and gender, that also exist in the workplace, and especially in Japan. These factors may also have contributed to the dismissal of Emma's ideas, however, it is clear that ethnicity played a significant role as she had been designated as not truly Japanese, despite her heritage, childhood, language competency, and cultural understanding. When compared to her experiences in France, Emma indicated that, in her eyes, France seemed a more open and accepting country.

Emma's experiences in Japan are not unheard of or uncommon. The Japanese-American anthropologist Dorinne Kondo describes similar experiences when she conducted research in Japan. Despite her Japanese appearance, Kondo was quickly recognized as an outsider because of the linguistic mistakes that she made. She also recognized how her role as a young, female

student impacted her interactions with others, echoing Emma's struggles during her internship. In anthropologist Joshua Roth's book *Brokered Homeland,* he describes similar experiences among *Nikkeijin*, the individual members of the Japanese diaspora. Despite having Japanese roots and heritage, *Nikkeijin* are still distinguished from Japanese people who were born and raised in Japan, known as Nihonjin. As a scholar who identifies as having a Japanese mother and a white Jewish American father, Roth also described himself being referred to by interlocutors in Japan as "hafu", something that Emma also mentioned during her interview, describing how the term may be considered offensive to some, but she does not mind it "because it was used since [she] was born." Still, the distinctions that are made between people who are and are not considered to be "fully Japanese," such as how another interlocutor, Kikuma, described herself during her interview, demonstrates an unwillingness to accept people who are not deemed fully Japanese. This reluctance is supported by certain policies, such as difficult immigration laws as well as the blood donation requirements and marketing described earlier in the literature review chapter. Overall, this strong and palpable nationalism in Japan, which promotes an exclusionary and narrow dominant definition of Japaneseness, forms a contrast to my interviewees' experiences while in France.

In the context of these comparisons to Japan, France appeared to some of my interviewees as far more accepting and considerate of different cultures. Hiroko echoed this idea in our interview, citing the rules regarding passports in France and Japan by saying "for example, for the passport in France, we can have two, we don't have necessarily just one nationality. So if I said I'm Japanese too, they don't mind, but for everyone in Japan, they want to have just one nationality." She continued this line of thought by explaining how when she does visit Japan and

is asked about her ethnicity, she feels as though she should answer either Japanese or French, but not both despite describing her ethnicity as "French with Japanese origins." Emma also described reactions to this passport rule in Japan, mentioning how many of her friends keep both passports even after turning 22 years old (the age at which they must choose only one nationality). These Japanese sentiments about multiculturalism, and the policies that uphold them, seem to create a difficult environment for many of my interview subjects that lead them to feeling more comfortable and at ease while in France, despite the country's reputation as being not accepting of minority groups and its widespread reputation as upholding dominant white majority ideals.

In my discussions with Lina, she described similar sentiments to feeling more French while in Japan, but she also discussed feeling more Japanese while in France. When I asked her why she felt that way, she looked thoughtfully into the camera on Zoom before responding, "I think people tend to see the opposite, like the other side of you, that is a minority in the country." Overall, Lina seemed to be a little bit more critical of France than Emma and Hiroko, aligning more with my expectations of how this research would go. Still, she did continue to compare her experiences in Japan versus France, saying, "When in Japan, I think it's really obvious when you're white or when you're Black…people would tend to see you really in a weird way. And in France, I think people are more used to it." This phrase demonstrates how comparisons with Japan can contribute towards Lina's perceptions of France as more accepting of other races and ethnicities that are not in the majority.

While Emma, Lina, and Hiroko provide unique insight having grown up in a very cosmopolitan manner between Japan and France, it was interesting to compare their interviews and opinions with those of Kikuma and Elsa–two women who had lived in Japan for most of

their lives before moving to France. Neither of them provided the same critiques on Japanese

culture as the younger interviewees, which can most likely be attributed to stronger affiliations

towards Japan because it was the only country that they had lived in up until a few years ago.

While Emma, Lina, and Hiroko had the ability to live between these two countries, Kikuma and

Elsa did not have this option, and therefore felt less accepted in France–something Kikuma

touched upon when describing her observations of the lack of a Japanese community in France.

As described in the earlier section, however, the other interviewees did not agree with this

contention. Because of these differences in experiences, Kikuma and Elsa did not provide as

many comparisons between France and Japan during their interviews, however they still

mentioned feeling welcomed in France. Kikuma recounted seeing the changes in France with

increasing numbers of Japanese businesses such as boutiques and sushi shops as making her feel

as though France was welcoming of Japanese people. During my conversation with Elsa as

described earlier in the chapter, she described not feeling discriminated against as a Japanese

woman. She also mentioned that France appeared to be more accepting of other cultures and

nationalities, whereas she remarked that "Japanese people are part of a very insular society."

These perceptions of acceptance in France coincide with Yatabe's findings described in the

earlier literature review chapter, and the study he cites about people of Japanese descent not

feeling foreign while in France (Yatabe 2003: 35). Yatabe attributes these experiences to a

phenomenon he dubs as an "invisibility of the Japanese in France." From my conversations with

my interview subjects, however, there is less of an invisibility, and more of simply positive

associations of Japanese people within France. One can even wonder about whether the concept

of "invisibility" as observed by Yatabe can be construed as a negative experience and a nuanced

form of racism in that their unique cultural identity is seemingly glossed over, adhering to the

ideals of French nationalism and cultural universality. The observations of my interviewees in

their comparisons of Japan and France broadens the analysis of their perceptions of identity, and

provides a deeper understanding of their views of race and ethnicity in each respective country.

These comparisons were able to be made because of the role of cosmopolitanism in many of my

interviewee's lives, allowing them to live transnationally.

Conclusion

Overall, there are various factors that can impact an individual's experiences in France.

These factors often relate to prevailing public sentiment about certain minority groups, and my

interviewees have appeared to benefit from mainly positive perceptions of Japan within France.

Although people of Japanese descent do have experiences of racism, as described by my

interview subjects, these incidents can often be caused by misidentification of their ethnicities.

Because of the racial hierarchy that appears to exist in France among various Asian countries, as

elaborated upon further in the preceding chapter, when my interviewees described experiences of

racism, they were often caused by people thinking they were Chinese or Korean. Contrasting

with this, when they described their ethnicity to their friends, the reception was often far

different, most likely due to their relationships with them as friends as well as the overall

positive images associated with Japan in France. This is not to ignore the experiences that my

interview subjects have had, however, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to

why their experiences in France appear to be so different from other minority groups.

Additionally, their perceptions of these experiences may be influenced by their Japanese

backgrounds and the time that they have spent in Japan. Because of the sheer strength of

Japanese nationalism, many of my interviewees felt far more marginalized in Japan than in

France. Because of those extreme experiences, they view France as a far more accepting country.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

In analyzing the responses of my interview subjects through the lens of French nationalism, Japanese nationalism, and media portrayals, I have gained a deeper understanding of how people of Japanese descent living in France negotiate their identity in ways that allow them to live transnationally. My literature review found that extremely little research has been conducted on the experiences of the Japanese population in France in relation to French nationalism and the country's promotion of a singular culture. As I mentioned in the Introduction, the site of France is significant because of the historical ties between the two countries, and the fact that Paris is often viewed as "the one and only destination of the Japanese" (Yatabe 2003: 30). It is perhaps because of these ties that my interview subjects had markedly different experiences from other minority groups, such as people of Chinese descent as described in a 2021 article on the covid pandemic and anti-Asian racism in France by Simeng Wang et al. By virtue of the cultural appreciation of Japan often displayed in France, media portrayals promoting racial and ethnic hierarchy, the lack of a colonial history, and the cosmopolitan lifestyle enjoyed by many of my interviewees, my interview subjects of Japanese descent have not felt the same impacts of the dominant French nationalistic ideals as other minority groups.

The practices of Japanese descent described by my interview subjects reflect their cosmopolitan habits, allowing them to negotiate two different cultures, and in doing so displayed a lifestyle that often led to positive associations of Japan within France. Through actions such as code-switching or cooking Japanese food for friends, my interviewees were able to comfortably incorporate their Japanese culture into everyday life. Due to the widespread acceptance of these

actions, my interviewees often did not feel marginalized by dominant white ideals of "Frenchness." Leading this cosmopolitan lifestyle requires a certain level of privilege, as reflected in the socio-economic statuses of my interview subjects, who themselves or their families identify as middle to upper class. These associations between Japan and higher economic status in France perhaps influenced how my interviewees were not subjected to the same negative racial biases that are often aligned with other minority groups. It is also because of these cosmopolitan lifestyles that my interview subjects drew comparisons between their experiences in Japan versus in France. Due to higher levels of homogeneity in Japan, some of my interviewees found that they felt more marginalized in Japan than in France on account of their mixed-race background.

Hiroko's description of her ethnicity being called "cool" by her friends encapsulates these ideals of accepting Japanese culture in France, which can also relate to more problematic fetishization or stereotypes of Japanese people. In addition to this negative aspect, some of my interview subjects described experiencing verbal harassment and general racism in public spaces. These actions often included misidentifying their ethnicity, such as by calling them Korean slurs or avoiding them in public spaces due to harmful prejudices surrounding the pandemic and China. These actions demonstrate how my interviewees were in fact subjected to a more homogenizing version of Asian identity, one that is perpetuated by dominant white ideals of French nationalism. Through these experiences, they are experiencing the effects of a particular version of French nationalism, one that does not distinguish between different Asian identities as described in the sections on racial and ethnic hierarchies. In these hierarchies, through negative portraits of China due to current geopolitics, Japan appears to be depicted in a far more positive

light within popular French media outlets, thus perpetuating these positive associations. This is a contributing factor to the positive associations of Japan within France that have been described throughout this project.

These experiences, both distinguishing Japan from other Asian countries or grouping Asian countries all together in ways that further the process of racialization, demonstrate how my interview subjects live a unique experience that allows them to be both included and excluded in France. This unique experience has allowed my interview subjects to feel the impacts of French nationalism both as inclusive and exclusive. Still, due to their experiences in Japan, these exclusionary aspects are minimized in relation to their marginalization in Japan. Overall, as a result of these positive connections of Japan within France, coupled with the cosmopolitan lifestyles which enabled them to experience the differing degrees of nationalism within France versus Japan, my interview subjects have experienced significantly different results of the forces of a French nationalism that favors white, French speaking citizens.

This cosmopolitanism practiced by my interview subjects played a significant role in shaping their understanding of their identities in relation to France. Through various skills, such as cultural knowledge of linguistic practices, my interviewees were able to pull in various aspects of their Japanese identity while living in France, thus shifting between being French and being Japanese without adhering to a sole national identity. This ability is linked to economic privilege alongside other facets of identity such as being multicultural or multiracial. It is because of this ability, which has allowed my interviewees to experience both French and Japanese nationalism, that my interview subjects are able to self-identify in different ways

relative to French national culture that strongly differs from the experiences of other more researched minority groups.

The experiences of my interviewees, and the contexts of those encounters, are important in better understanding how French nationalism is lived in everyday life, and the effects of media, pop culture, colonial history, and economic status. The role of Japanese nationalism is also a critical backdrop as it appears to play a significant role in shaping the perceptions of my interview subjects. How they viewed their experiences in France often contrasted with those in Japan, as demonstrated by some interview subjects drawing upon these comparisons without me even asking them to do so. These findings introduce interesting questions about the impacts of identity on experiencing nationalism, as well as the impacts of nationalism on identity. Because of my interview subjects' cosmopolitan lifestyles and experiences in Japan, they perceived the impacts of French nationalism differently from other ethnic and racial minorities in France. But it was also due to their identity that dominant white French nationalism impacted them differently, as viewed in the exclusionary and inclusionary aspects described above. Overall, my interview subjects recounted fascinating observations and encounters that led to my reworking of my initial research question and hypothesis.

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