

Being LGBT in Japan: An ethnographic study of the politics of identity and belonging

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Abstract

This thesis presents an ethnographic study of the politics of identity and belonging amongst a community of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals living in Japan. There is considerable existing scholarship which examines the lived experiences of gender and/or sexual minority individuals in Japan. However, many of these studies tend to focus upon individuals living in Tokyo, and upon specific groups of identities along the LGBT spectrum. This study aimed to broaden the view of the politics of identity and belonging across the LGBT spectrum, and in areas of Japan outside of Tokyo.

This research focussed upon the ways in which respondents understood and practiced their identities during a period of intense mainstream media focus upon LGBT lives in Japan from 2015 to 2016. This acute upsurge in mainstream media attention, which has now been dubbed the ‘LGBT boom’ meant that LGBT lives became suddenly more publicly visible. However, there remains scant legal protection for LGBT individuals in Japan and issues related to (in)visibility remain a key feature of everyday life. This study was serendipitously timed to investigate these phenomena from the perspective of the individuals whom the LGBT boom claimed to represent.

The study produced a body of rich, qualitative data from across the LGBT spectrum, and across intersections of nationality, gender, and physical location. This original empirical data allowed several theoretical contributions to knowledge. The study has shown that the gender and/or sexual minority communities in Japan are heterogeneous, and deeply hierarchical. They are also actively and overtly involved with a politics of identity and belonging. These politics of identity and belonging are performative and affectual, and bring about both inclusions and exclusions. This thesis represents a starting point for further ethnographic investigation into the lived reality of LGBT lives in Japan.

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Note on translation and language conventions

This thesis follows Japanese naming conventions for Japanese scholars and respondents throughout. Namely, when a full Japanese name is presented, it is written as ‘Family name, given name’ (e.g. Horie Yuri). All respondents are referred to using pseudonyms, all of which are given names, rather than family names.

Japanese words in this thesis have been transliterated using modified Hepburn romanisation which uses macrons to identify long vowels (e.g. ā, ī, ū, ē, ō). Japanese words are italicised throughout the thesis, except in cases where a word has come into common usage in British English (e.g. Tokyo, Osaka).

All translations of Japanese language sources are my own. When respondents used English in the course of a Japanese-language interview, or Japanese in the case of an English-language interview, this is noted in the text. Interview transcripts are edited for readability (removing excessive false starts and hesitations). Omissions are noted with three dots in square brackets (i.e. [...]).

Glossary and Abbreviations

GID	-	Gender Identity Disorder
IDAHO/IDAHOT	-	International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia
JET	-	Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme
JILGA	-	Japan International Lesbian and Gay Association
NLGR	-	Nagoya Lesbian and Gay Revolution (Nagoya's gay and lesbian Pride event)
RRC	-	Rainbow Resource Centre (pseudonym)
SRS	-	Sex Reassignment Surgery
OCCUR	-	Organisation for Moving Gays and Lesbians

Chapter 1 - Introduction

2.1 Introduction

One evening at the start of July 2015, I was relaxing in my apartment in Kyoto with the TV on in the background. I wasn't paying attention; I was cooking dinner and waiting for my favourite show to start. Out of the blue, the phrase 'LGBT' (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, pronounced '*eru jī bī tī*' in Japanese) snatched my attention away from the stove to the screen. Sure enough, the acronym was superimposed over the coverage in bold captions, which are common on Japanese television. Desperate to capture even the tiniest snippet of public coverage of gender and sexual minorities for my research (and not entirely sure how I would locate the footage at a later date), I grabbed my smartphone and began recording the show by hand. I excitedly messaged some friends and uploaded a clip of the show to Twitter. Over the next few weeks, I became a collector of mainstream media ephemera. I clipped webpages into a digital scrapbook, scanned articles out of magazines, and bought many of the LGBT-related handbooks that were published around this time.

Not long after I saw that broadcast, my friend in Wakayama (a largely rural prefecture in the south of Honshū) began making me a scrapbook. She works for a newspaper company, and receives a copy of each of the five main papers every morning. Her morning ritual is flipping through every paper to get an idea of how the competition are reporting the news. One morning in mid-2015, she stumbled across an article with 'LGBT' in the headline. Remembering my research, she cut the story out, scribbled the date on the top corner, and slid it into a clear file. Over the next few weeks, she found more and more articles, and soon had to transfer the clippings from the clear file to a physical cut and paste album. The album grew in thickness rapidly, to the point that I began to think that I should tell

her it was OK to stop. She carried on clipping until one scrapbook was full, and then simply began another.

2.2 The ‘LGBT boom’

Over the course of the fieldwork for this study, it became increasingly commonplace to hear or see the acronym LGBT in the mainstream media,¹ so much so that I rarely experienced the same excitement as I did that first time in July 2015. The period from around March 2015 until early 2016 is now widely referred to as the ‘LGBT boom’. It is common in Japanese to describe a sudden acute increase in media coverage of any particular topic as a *būmu* (boom). The *Kōjien* (2007, unpaginated) dictionary describes a boom as a time at which “a particular thing suddenly becomes popular” and gives the example of “overseas travel boom”. Booms are not limited to media interest and coverage (as in the case of the overseas travel boom), but heavy media coverage does often accompany these moments. Indeed, the word ‘boom’ has been used to describe a variety of moments of acute popularity in the mainstream media, such as the soccer boom of the late 1960s. Interest in LGBT lives increased particularly acutely around the time of the passing of the so-called Shibuya Ward² Same-Sex Partnership Ordinances (hereafter Shibuya Ordinances) on 31st March 2015. This surge is apparent when looking at both mainstream media publications and scholarly texts, as can be seen from Figures 1 and 2. Prior to the LGBT boom, sexual and/or gender minority individuals were referred to less frequently in the mainstream media (and in scholarship), and reports generally used words like *seitekishōsūsha* (sexual minority), *seitekimainoriti* (a compound noun consisting of the Japanese *seiteki* meaning ‘related to sex’ and the transliteration of the English

¹ ‘Mainstream media’ in this thesis refers to traditional mass media with a broad reach. For example, newspapers, television, radio, and film.

² Wards are administrative divisions within Japanese cities and are responsible to municipal governments. Wards can institute two levels of local regulation in regards to same-sex partnership – ‘ordinances’, which must be passed by a majority vote within the ward assembly, and ‘guidelines’, which can be passed on the authority of the Head of Ward (Chi, 2016).

‘minority’), and *seidōitsuseishōgai* (gender identity disorder – a medical diagnosis, hereafter GID).

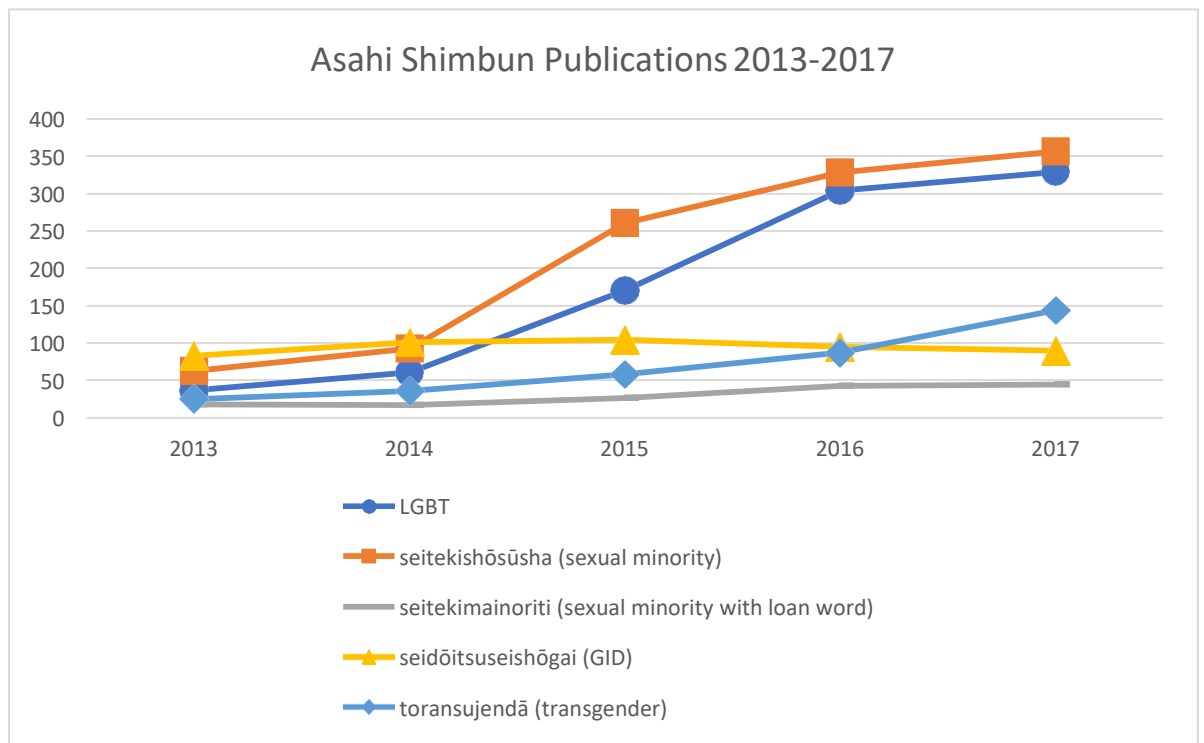


Figure 1 – Use of Keywords in Asahi Shimbun Publications 2013-2017

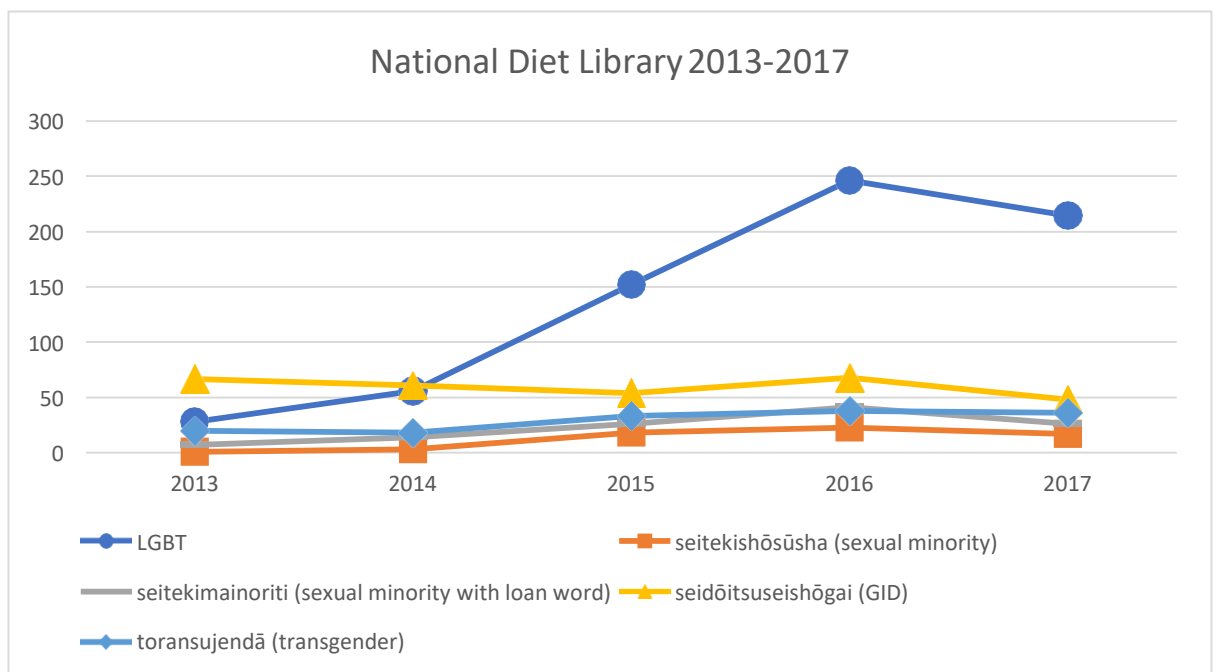


Figure 2 – Use of Keywords in National Diet Library Catalogue (all materials submitted for national deposit) 2013-2017

Although the Shibuya Ordinances may have prompted wider mainstream media engagement with LGBT lives, it is important not to overstate their tangible impacts. ‘Partnership Certificates’ (*pātonā shōmeishō*) granted under the Shibuya Ordinance are not legally binding, are limited to local residents, and require notarised documents estimated to cost approximately £400 (Kure, 2018, p. 93).³ Rather than a sweeping legislative change indicative of a general change in public policy, the Shibuya Ordinances are better understood as part of a targeted public relations campaign. Indeed, Thomas Baudinette (2017) has pointed out that there is an apparent confluence between the ward’s public drive to build a ‘global city’ through so-called equality and diversity ordinances, and the awarding of the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic games to Tokyo. The nature of the ordinances as a part of a public relations campaign was implied in the wording of the explanatory document written about the new ordinances for residents of the ward:

To this date, Shibuya ward has developed greatly, accepting diverse cultures and individuals. And now, as our internationalisation progresses, the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics are drawing ever closer. Shibuya ward is aiming to evolve and grow into a mature global city, whilst at the same time caring for local communities (Shibuya Ward, 2016, p. 2).

The passing of the Shibuya Ordinances, as well as the general increase in mainstream media coverage of LGBT and queer⁴ lives fed into increased marketisation of gender

³ Further local provisions for same-sex partnership certificates have now been passed in a number of local areas including Setagaya ward in Tokyo, Takarazuka City in Hyōgo Prefecture, Naha City in Okinawa, and Sapporo City in Hokkaido.

⁴ As a category of identity, ‘queer’ is much less widely used in Japan than in Anglophone contexts. As McLelland (2005) notes, the word has gained some currency in LGBT activist communities in Japan, but is not much understood or used outside of these groups. It is used in this thesis, as shorthand to refer to individuals who identified outside of the LGBT spectrum but still as a sexual and/or gender minority. In this sense, it is used as a way of acknowledging that gender and sexual identities often exist beyond the LGBT spectrum, even if respondents did not always refer to themselves on those terms. It is also used more generally in the sense of queer theory and/or queerness in the sense outlined by Howard Chiang and Alvin Wong (2017, p. 122) as something that “works against essential determinism and analytical closure”. Queerness is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 in terms of queer cultural capital.

and/or sexual minority identities in this period. For example, in March 2015, the cosmetics company LUSH launched its WE BELIEVE IN LOVE campaign, followed closely in June 2015 with its #GAYISOK campaign. Both were ostensibly intended to raise money for LGBT organisations, but were also accompanied by promotion of the LUSH brand using rainbow flag imagery and LGBT-related slogans (see Figure 3 for an example from the WE BELIEVE IN LOVE campaign. The slogan reads ‘LUSH supports love in all of its diversity’ (cococolor, 2015)).



Figure 3 – Screenshot from LUSH’s WE BELIEVE IN LOVE campaign

Contrary to this boom in the mainstream media, respondents repeatedly told me that gender and/or sexual minorities are invisible in Japan, and that the general public may repeat the acronym LGBT but that most do not know what it means. Respondents told me that they felt that mainstream media coverage was also overly negative, and that it cast LGBT individuals as “crazy” (*kawatta*), “weird” (*hen*), and “a joke” (*waraimono*). Coupled with this, there remains little legal protection for individuals who have been discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Chi, 2016). As a recent synthesis of the scant quantitative data available about gender and/or

sexual minorities in Japan showed, LGBT individuals face discrimination at school, in the workplace, in medical treatment, and in public services (Nakanishi, 2017). A survey conducted roughly concurrently with the fieldwork found that 97% of the 1,550 LGBT respondents had heard or experienced discriminatory language and behaviour in the workplace, this included discriminatory utterances, intentional outing⁵ on social media, and dismissal from work (Nijiuro Diversity and Center for Gender Studies and International Christian University, 2016). Indeed, as Claire Maree (2017) has noted, mainstream television can offer greater visibility for events such as same-sex weddings in Japan, whilst at the same time framing those events as being ‘other’ and ‘foreign’. This re-enforces the notion that LGBT individuals are ‘other’ within Japanese society. During the LGBT boom, control over LGBT and queer narratives in the form of self-published community-produced materials (Maree, 2007; 2015; Welker, 2010; 2017) was rapidly lost to the mainstream media and marketisation.⁶ At the same time, genuine social and structural impediments to the safe enjoyment of life continued for many of the LGBT respondents in this study.

However, the respondents in this study did not unquestioningly accept this situation, nor did they resign themselves to living closed and secretive lives. This thesis will demonstrate the opposite: that the respondents in this study were actively and openly engaged in a complex and nuanced negotiation of the politics of LGBT and queer identities, as well as the politics of belonging to the newly emergent (in Japan) and often controversial categorisation of ‘LGBT’. In this study, I sought to understand these politics as they played out across broad-based LGBT and queer communities, mainly in the

⁵ ‘Outing’ is the action of intentionally or unintentionally revealing the identity of an LGBT person without their consent.

⁶ The word ‘community’ is used in this thesis in the sense of Benedict Anderson’s (2006[1983]) imagined communities. A further exposition of the meaning of the term can be found in Chapter 3, and in the analysis in Chapter 4. Indeed, the question of ‘community’ and what this means in this context is one of the central themes of this thesis, and will be considered throughout.

Kansai region.⁷ I was specifically concerned with what it meant both personally and politically for respondents when they claimed (or resisted) belonging to the category of LGBT (a full list of research questions follows in Chapter 3).

Scholarship on gender and/or sexual minorities in Japan is not uncommon. As Chapter 2 will explain, gay and lesbian studies were both established in Japan in the 1990s (see for example: Vincent et al. (1997) and Kakefuda (1992)), and a robust scholarship on transgender and non-binary gender experiences emerged from around the mid-2000s onwards (see for example: Mitsuhashi (2006) and Dale (2012a)). Much of this scholarship has tended to focus upon specific identities along the LGBT spectrum. The lives and experiences of gay men living in the Shinjuku Ni-chōme area of Tokyo have received a markedly vast amount of scholarly interest (see for example: Sunagawa (2015a) and Baudinette (2016a)).⁸ Studies which focus upon broad-based LGBT communities, and the ways in which these communities operate as a whole are much less common. Scholars and commentators such as Shimizu (2017) and Makimura (2015) have made important contributions to our early understandings of the LGBT boom and its impacts. However, ethnographic studies of LGBT communities and practices during the LGBT boom remain scant. This study is a timely contribution to this field, and will build upon this existing scholarship.

This thesis aims to make a number of important original contributions to the field of gender and sexuality studies of Japan. The study presents a body of rich, qualitative empirical data, gathered through ethnographic methods in the under-researched field of

⁷ The Kansai region is in south-central Japan and consists of Mie, Nara, Wakayama, Kyoto, Osaka, Hyōgo, and Shiga.

⁸ Shinjuku Ni-chōme is a small district within the popular shopping district of Shinjuku. It is widely known in Japan as a district catering predominantly to gay men, and consists of two main streets dedicated to gay clubs and bars.

Kansai, Japan. This data allows for an analysis of the embodied experiences of members of LGBT and queer community groups outside of the urban centre of Tokyo. In particular, data drawn from regions such as Wakayama, Hyōgo, and Nara allow access to experiences of more ‘rural’ LGBT lives in Japan. Moreover, in recruiting a group of respondents from across the LGBT spectrum, the data in this study shift the focus away from concentration upon individual groups (particularly cis-gender gay men) towards the dynamics that exist within and across broad-based LGBT communities. Furthermore, the inclusion of non-Japanese residents living in Japan has produced data which contributes to our understandings of the ways in which the politics of identity operate across the intersection of nationality. The serendipitous timing of this research is significant because it allowed collection of original empirical data during the LGBT boom. This data offers an original perspective on the LGBT boom, as it was experienced by those whom the mainstream media texts claimed to represent.

This thesis also makes original theoretical contributions to the field. I mobilise the Bourdieusian concepts of cultural capital and theories of affect in understanding the politics of gender and sexuality in Japan. Bourdieusian theoretical frameworks have demonstrated that it is possible to think about heterogeneous, hierarchical, and dynamic gender and/or sexual minority communities as part of an imagined community (Anderson, 2006 [1983]), even if they experience moments of conflict. Indeed, it is often these moments of conflict which help to construct a sense of validity as a community (as discussed in Chapter 4). Mobilising theory in this way allowed me to explore the often-unseen lines of power which operate within broad-based LGBT communities. In addition, theories of affect (which will be defined in greater detail in Chapter 8) act as a complement to this theoretical framing. These theories reveal that these lines of power can operate through emotional and affective practices. This thesis builds upon the work

of existing scholars of Japan who have already used theories of affect to show that affectual practices of identity and belonging can have both positive and negative consequences.

2.3 Chapter outline

Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature in the field of gender and sexuality studies of Japan. It aims to place the study alongside this existing literature, and will demonstrate where this research sits in the wider context of Anglophone studies of gender and sexuality. I will briefly outline the ways in which a turn to ethnographic methodologies in the field of sexuality and gender in Japan have begun the work of de-pathologising gender and/or sexual minority identities. I will also demonstrate the origins of sociological approaches to the field in gay studies of the 1990s, and demonstrate how this study is a continuation of these two approaches. I will also introduce the concept of *tōjisha* (literally ‘person directly concerned’), which is central to the politics of identity and belonging to the category of LGBT in Japan.

Chapter 3 moves on to outline the research objectives, overall research design, and ethical considerations which informed the study. This chapter begins with a more detailed discussion of the aims of the research, as well as the main research questions. It then moves on to demonstrate the justification for an ethnographic case studies approach. I will argue that the ethnographic approach was suited to the timing and aims of the research, and ensured the collection of rich and textured qualitative data. The chapter will then outline the recruitment process, followed by a discussion of my chosen methods of participant observations and open-ended interviews. Finally, I will discuss ethical approaches and reflexivity, with particular focus upon my position as a ‘mascot researcher’ (Adams, 1999) and the considerations this prompted me to make.

In **Chapter 4**, I turn to the task of analysis. I use a conflict that occurred between two LGBT activists as a lens through which to frame the communities studied as heterogeneous, hierarchical, and organised around notions of embodied cultural capital. The two specific types of cultural capital which I identified are ‘urban’ and ‘queer’. Respondents who had greater access to, or ability to embody this cultural capital in their day-to-day lives enjoyed specific profits (for example greater visibility within the field, or greater status). Despite this hierarchical and inequitable context, the respondents tacitly accepted the struggle over cultural capital and status as legitimate and worthwhile. As a result of this, some respondents are left feeling isolated and frustrated by the politics of identity. This chapter challenges the notion that solidarity can be easily constructed around broad-based identifications such as ‘LGBT’. Solidarity is difficult because the field is not structured equitably, and some respondents are not able to access or mobilise embodied cultural capital: either by virtue of their physical isolation from ‘urban’ centres of knowledge, or by the local contexts in which they are embedded.

Chapter 5 considers the politics of recognition as it played out within and beyond an LGBT community event. Focussing on transnational discourses of idealised cosmopolitan queer identities, this chapter will demonstrate how the event affected a temporary queering of space. I will argue that this temporary queering of space has the potential to empower some individuals to pursue ‘openly’ queer lives if that is what they desire. However, I will also show that the idealised queer subject presented within the ceremony obfuscates difference and diversity, and excludes those who are not able to agree to or mobilise these ideals. The responsibility and emotional burden of practising this idealised queer subjectivity is placed firmly upon individuals, many of whom do not live in contexts which allow them to practise ‘cosmopolitan’ queerness. This results in

three main experiences of the politics of recognition in the everyday: compulsory invisibility, ambivalence, and compulsory visibility. Studies of recognition and visibility are not new within the field, but this chapter offers an original contribution to the field by demonstrating the ways in which the politics of recognition bring with them regimes of power, isolation, and exclusion.

Taking these feelings of isolation and exclusion as its departure point, **Chapter 6** moves on to examine how respondents developed a sense of belonging to broad-based gender and/or sexual minority communities during the LGBT boom. The fieldwork for this study was conducted during a time of high levels of engagement with the internet and social media: a context which was unfamiliar and worrisome to many of the respondents in this study. I will argue that belonging can be understood as a performative practice, and that engagement with online modes of community opened up space in which some respondents were able to mobilise these practices. However, this chapter will demonstrate that the online and the offline are deeply intertwined, and belonging never occurs in isolation from social and physical contexts. I will demonstrate that the specific context of the primacy of *tōjisha*-generated narratives in Japan, coupled with rapid uptake of internet and social media use, have contributed to feelings of fear amongst some respondents. Some respondents developed affective practices of nostalgia to mitigate against these fears, and to claim historical belonging to gender and/or sexual minority communities. Chapter 6 contributes to knowledge in the field through its theoretical framing of belonging and nostalgia as affective practices in response to rapid, often destabilising changes in the broader social and discursive context.

Chapter 7 shows the ways in which affect theory can be used to understand how respondents framed their position in relation to the wider world. I will argue that

imaginative geographies of 'Japan and the West' became symbolic 'objects' around which respondents orientated themselves in relation to transnational flows of knowledge and discourse. These imaginative objects became part of an affective economy, in which Japan was framed as being 'backwards' in relation to the imagined West. In some cases, these affects are positive and allow respondents to develop a sense of belonging and solidarity, but they can also create moments of un-belonging. Rather than attempt to validate or debunk essentialised notions of 'Japan' and 'the West', Chapter 7 attends to these affectual processes and the impacts they had upon the respondents' sense of belonging. The chapter offers an original theoretical contribution to the field by highlighting the negative impacts of these economies of affect, and the limitations of solidarity around broad-based LGBT identities.

Chapter 8 will draw together the main themes identified in each of the analysis chapters. By focussing the research upon the embodied experiences of respondents from a broad range of identities and backgrounds, this study demonstrates the heterogeneous and hierarchical nature of broad-based LGBT communities in the area. Respondents imagine themselves as part of gender and/or sexual minority communities, but this does not mean that difference does not exist, or that solidarity around the newly emergent category of LGBT is either possible or desirable. In some cases, being able to identify as 'being LGBT' helped respondents find belonging when they had previously felt isolated, for others, community practice and discourse could be deeply exclusionary. I will conclude Chapter 8 with a discussion of the significance of these findings. In contrast with their framings in the Anglophone and Japanese mainstream media as 'backwards', 'secretive' and 'closed', the communities studied are actually dynamic configurations of individuals involved in manifold overt political engagements with the concepts of identity and belonging, and what it means to be LGBT in Japan.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter of the thesis consists of a review of the existing literature in the field of gender and sexuality studies of Japan, and a discussion of the relevant general literature on gender and sexuality. I will frame the study in relation to both Japanese area studies and general sociological and ethnographic studies of gender and sexuality. The chapter consists of two main parts. Part 1 briefly considers the historical background to the existing literature, and Part 2 seeks to highlight the legacies of this history. Same-sex sexual practices (particularly those of men) have been recorded in literature and scholarship in Japan since around the tenth century (Leupp, 1995). For this reason, Part 1 acts as a brief summary of significant issues, and there is considerable material which cannot be covered.

The chapter will begin by outlining the development of pathologising discourses of gender and sexual diversity at the turn of the twentieth century. This section will also consider the lasting impacts of these discourses in the contemporary period. After a brief description of the difficulties inherent in understanding same-sex sexuality during the Second World War, I will move on to consider the gay booms of the 1950s and 1990s, and the emergence of identity politics. In a discussion of gay studies of the 1990s, I will briefly examine parallels with gay organising in the USA, as well as the Japan-specific context of *tōjisha*-based subject positioning. Overall, this chapter will highlight the ways in which contemporary scholarship has begun to challenge earlier paradigms which pathologised gender and sexual diversity, as well as the general bias in Japanese-language scholarship towards studies of gay men. Central to this challenge has been the use of ethnographic methods and methodologies. However, this chapter will show that there is a gap in the literature in which tensions related to the politics of identity and belonging,

particularly in relation to broad-based LGBT identities during the LGBT boom, has yet to be fully addressed. I will position my study as a response to this gap in the literature and demonstrate how ethnographic approaches which collect rich qualitative empirical data have much to contribute to the field of gender and sexuality studies of Japan.

3.2 Part 1: Historical background

3.2.1 *Nanshoku* and sexology

Prior to the turn of the twentieth century, male same-sex sexual practice was organised around the notion of *nanshoku* (literally ‘male colours’). *Nanshoku* can be understood as a code of ethics which governed same-sex male sexual practices in the pre-modern period (McLelland, 2005; Schalow, 1989). These social practices emerged between the tenth and thirteenth century (depending upon which historical accounts one refers to), and were limited to a number of specific settings such as within the Buddhist priesthood and between masters and servants in the apprentice system (McLelland, 2000b). They should not be confused with contemporary understandings of sexuality, since they often operated on the basis of existing social hierarchies such as class, age, and profession, and were deeply intertwined with samurai culture and *bushidō* (the way of the warrior); (Chalmers, 2002; Leupp, 1995; Pflugfelder, 1999). As David Halperin (2000, p. 92) has argued in the Euro-American context, homosexuality is a “modern addition” to discourse on sexuality, quite separate from pre-homosexual categories of male sexual ‘deviance’ such as effeminacy and passivity/inversion. Hence, *nanshoku* is not widely considered to be part of a sexual identity as we would conceptualise these practices in the contemporary period (Pflugfelder, 1999). Furthermore, *nanshoku* applied only to men, and female homosexuality was sanctioned during the Edo period (1603-1868) (Chalmers, 2002). This means that it is problematic to discuss *nanshoku* as ‘homosexuality’ prior to the

emergence of medico-scientific discourses presented by sexology in the twentieth century (Baudinette, 2015; Pflugfelder, 1999).

At the turn of the twentieth century, Japan was influenced by the emergence of sexological discourses from England and Europe, in particular Germany (Chalmers, 2002; McLelland, 2005). Japanese sexology was not a direct adoption of so-called Western ideas, but rather a process of hybridization, and a way in which intellectuals could use “the cultural capital of foreign ideas in support of their own theories” (McLelland, 2005, p. 19). This pattern of attaching value to non-Japanese ideas and theory is still evident in the contemporary period, as will be seen from a discussion of Sonja Dale (2012b) in Section 2.3.1 of this chapter. Sexology was not a static discipline, but was a dynamic set of beliefs and attitudes that often reflected the fluctuating concerns of the Japanese government at the time. In her history of sexology discourses from the Meiji period (1868-1912) until the mid-twentieth century, Sabine Frühstück (2003) discusses the ways in which sexology was used to colonize Japanese sex and sexuality through processes of normalisation and medicalisation. For example, sexology was used to cast *nanshoku* as uncivilized in the 1880s so that the Meiji government could develop stronger trading relationships with Western powers. In the 1890s and 1900s, as Japan’s imperialist ambitions expanded, sexological discourse was used to cast male conscripted soldiers as “a miniature of the social, the national, and the imperial body” (Frühstück, 2003, p. 3). Notions about ‘healthy’ sexuality and sexual practices were tied to the bodies of male soldiers – who were tasked with protecting the nation. Hence, protecting the bodies of male soldiers from sexually transmitted diseases and so-called moral decline became symbolic of protecting the national body as a whole. In the 1910s, these efforts shifted to the bodies of women, and the regulation of their reproductive health. Indeed, as Frühstück (2003) argues, the development of normative sex and sexuality in Japan was closely

related to imperial ambitions, and fears about threats from Western powers, moral decline, and disease.

Although initially intended to bring about “comprehensive sexual reform centred on what some of them tried to establish as purely scientific sexual knowledge” (Frühstück, 2003, p. 9), as well as to ensure the future of the Japanese empire, the popularization of sexological ideas had a much broader impact. At the turn of the twentieth century, sexology was legitimised as a branch of science at roughly the same time that Japan experienced an expansion of the publishing industry and growing literacy rates (Pflugfelder, 1999). During this period of increasing literacy, the idea of *seiyoku* (sexual desire) began to develop, and appeared in popular Japanese fiction (McLelland, 2011). This was reflected in the work of Japanese novelists such as Mori Ōgai, who popularized the ideas of German sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing (McLelland, 2005). As Donald Roden (1990, p. 46) notes, although sexology began as “prescriptive literature”, the pressures of prescribed norms during the 1920s coupled with the development of printing ensured that publications related to sexological ideas “descended into the underground culture” in Japan, away from the control of the state, where they flourished.

With the development of the concept of sexual desire, came the binary notions of *seijō* (correct) and *ijō* (perverse) sexual desires and practices (McLelland, 2005; 2011). Furukawa Makoto (1994) argues that the publication of a translation of Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1913 contributed to the turn of sexology towards the concept of sexual perversion, and the development of ideas of homosexuality as *hentai seiyoku* (perverse desire) in Japan. The concept of *hentai seiyoku* in turn fuelled interest in ‘perverse’ culture such as journals and magazines that collected ‘*ero-guro-nansensu*’

(erotic grotesque nonsense) and “transformed the sexual behaviour of others into a spectacle for consumption as well as a vehicle for self-understanding” (Pflugfelder, 1999, p. 289). This *ero-guro-nansensu* often included articles on lesbian experience, as with the publication *Hentai shiryō* (*Perverse diagnosis*) in 1928 (McLelland, 2005) and gay male sexualities as with *Bishōnenron* (*Treatise on beautiful youth*) by Kōmurō Shujin in 1911 (Pflugfelder, 1999).

The establishment of the concept of *hentai seiyoku* also contributed to the pathologisation of homosexuality during this period. In the case of lesbian sexuality, Peichen Wu (2002, p. 70) has demonstrated how female homosexuality was cast both as a contravention of the traditional ‘good wives, wise mothers’⁹ concept, as well as a “contagion” that could be spread to other individuals. In fact, Wu (2002) has also discussed the ways in which sexology not only marginalized lesbians, but any other women who did not conform to the concept of ‘good wives, wise mothers’, in particular, members of the radical feminist group *Seitō*. Furukawa (1994) notes how homosexuality in general was discussed as a sickness that the individual had no control over in this period.

This pathologisation of same-sex sexual practice was not, however, confined to Japan. As studies of alternative European contexts have found, understandings of same-sex sexual practice tended to develop according to local contexts (see for example Cleminson (2004) on the development of the category of ‘fairy’ in Spain, and Beccalossi (2013) on resistance to pathologisation in Italy). As Michel Foucault (1998 [1984], p. 100) noted, “discourse is a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform

⁹ *Ryōsai kenbo* (good wives, wise mothers) is an idiom that emerged in the late nineteenth century, and was used by conservative factions in the 1890s and during the second world war to promote patriarchal and conservative policies. At the heart of the ideology was the notion that women had few legal rights, and that upon marriage and entry into their husband’s household register it was their duty to serve their husband and father-in-law (Fujimura-Faneslow, 1991).

nor stable”. Further, sexology itself was arguably the means by which contemporary notions of sex and sexuality were established, and played an active role in the development of knowledge about sexuality (Oosterhuis, 2012). In the Japanese case, increasing imperial ambitions converged with traditional same-sex practices such as *nanshoku* to result in a focus upon public health and procreation. In contrast, in the UK context, sexology became more heavily enmeshed with debates around class and respectability (Weeks, 1990 [1977]). It is, therefore, important to note that Japan was not an isolated case in terms of the pathologisation of same-sex desire as a result of sexological discourses. The ways in which this pathologisation played out did, however, vary according to context.

There are also disagreements as to the long-term impact of sexology and the pathologisation of homosexuality during the pre-war period. Some Japanese sociologists such as Kawaguchi Kazuya (2003) suggest that pathologisation of homosexuality in contemporary Japanese language writing is uncommon. In contrast, Mark McLelland (2011) asserts that although *hentai seiyoku* discourse did persist into the post-war period, in general this discourse consisted of more positive accounts of non-heterosexual lives that had little interest in the medical opinions of the experts employed by the perverse presses. However, McLelland and Kawaguchi’s assertions that post-war mainstream media was and is more sympathetic to gay identities in Japan obscures the fact that for many, the pathologisation of homosexuality has had lasting impact on understandings of sexual and/or gender minorities. This pathologisation has had an impact upon individuals’ ability to ‘re-claim’ minority gender and/or sexual identities in Japan as part of a politics of identity. This is illustrated in Kazama Takashi’s (1991a, p. 90) article which states that in the early 1990s heterosexuality was couched as “natural”, and homosexuality as “abnormal” or “sick”. Even in the contemporary period, the publication of Makimura’s

(2016) *Dōseiai wa byōki nano? (Is homosexuality an illness?)* suggests that at least anecdotally there remains a certain proclivity towards the pseudo-scientific and medical classification and categorization of homosexuality in Japan:

As you'd expect, it's safe to say that there are no longer any medical treatments or such like for homosexuality as an illness in Japan. However, I still hear talk of people who will con others out of money saying things like 'An exorcism will cure you!' or 'Dietary therapy will cure you!' (Makimura, 2016, p. 167)

In some instances, the legacy of homosexuality as pathology presented respondents in this study with barriers to identifying as a gender and/or sexual minority, as can be seen from the example of Satoshi (Chapter 6, Section 6.4.1). Regardless of scholarly disagreements over the impact of pathologisation of homosexuality within sexology, the dichotomy of 'normal' and 'perverse' desire had influence well into gay rights movements in both the USA and Japan, as discussed in section 2.2.4 of this chapter (Vincent et al., 1997).

3.2.2 Sexuality during the Second World War

After the flourish of publications related to homosexuality in the press of the 1920s, public discourse quickly changed as Japan became embroiled in the Second World War. Ascertaining detailed accounts of same-sex sexuality during this period is difficult, and contradictions abound. McLelland (2011) notes that the wartime period was one in which the government tightly controlled sexual discourse and practice, but also that according to some accounts same-sex sexuality was tolerated as part of *sen'yūai* (comradely love), depending upon the context in which it occurred (McLelland, 2005). Gregory Pflugfelder (1999, p. 327) notes how during the Second World War, *ero-guro* (erotic-grotesque) culture was pushed underground, and in some places disappeared, with male-male sexual

practice increasingly cast as an “unpatriotic form of self-indulgence”. However, there was no push to eradicate male-male sexual behaviour in Japan as was seen in Nazi Germany, and same-sex sexuality was dealt with benignly by the wartime authorities (Pflugfelder, 1999). Indeed, Japan did not have any direct legal sanctions against anal sex during the Second World War period, unlike countries such as the UK and USA which retained sodomy laws until 1967 and 1962 respectively. In contrast, it appears that female same-sex sexuality was not perceived on such benign terms in this period. Jennifer Robertson (1999) argues that increased imperialisation of Japan led to greater instances of the condemnation of women who failed to fit the imperial ideal of ‘good wife, wise mother’. In this discourse, masculinised women and “mannish lesbian” presenting women “embodied social disorder” (Robertson, 1999, p. 12), and were portrayed negatively in the media.

However, the widespread destruction of documents during the Second World War means that any observations about homosexuality during this period are drawn from post-war sources, which require further detailed research before any conclusions could be drawn (McLelland, 2005; Pflugfelder, 1999). Further research beyond the scope of this study is necessary to understand the details of wartime attitudes to homosexuality in Japan. Although the war resulted in significant political, economic, and social issues for Japan, the post-war period also saw a gradual increase in publications about gender and sexuality. It is to this literature that this review now turns.

3.2.3 Japan’s ‘gay booms’

As discussed in Chapter 1, it is common in Japan to describe a sudden acute increase in media coverage of any particular topic as a *būmu* (boom). ‘Gay boom’ has been widely used to describe an acute upsurge in mainstream media interest in the lives of gay men in

the 1990s. Although research has been conducted on the gay boom of the 1990s, the increase in publications around this time was arguably the second gay boom that Japan has experienced. As McLelland (2005; 2006) and Ishida Hitoshi and Murakami Takanori (2006) note, the first gay boom in Japan took place in 1950s. Indeed, McLelland (2006) argues that the sudden rise in interest in the term ‘*gei*’ (gay) in Japan pre-dated the use of the word gay in North American gay liberation discourses.¹⁰

The first gay boom occurred between 1956 and 1958. In 1956, the government passed an anti-prostitution bill, which led to the closure of a large number of sexual service businesses catering to heterosexual individuals, mainly in Tokyo (McLelland, 2005). Many of these clubs and bars were replaced by new gay bars, partly because there were few legal restrictions and little police harassment of businesses aimed at same-sex male encounters (McLelland, 2005; 2006). However, some of these new bars were staffed not by gay men, but by heterosexual men who at the time were referred to as *gei bōi* (gay boy(s)) (McLelland, 2005).¹¹ *Gei bōi* were effeminate in appearance and mannerisms, and the clientele of the bars also expanded to include heterosexual women (McLelland, 2006). The media soon began to take note of this rapid increase in ‘gay’ bars in Tokyo (particularly around Shinjuku Ni-chōme), and there was a flourishing of news stories surrounding these changes (McLelland, 2006). Interest was further bolstered in 1957, with the release of a hit song by Maruyama Akihiro – an openly gay cabaret singer who at the time was referred to as an ‘*onē bōi*’ (literally ‘sister boy’) on account of his long

¹⁰ ‘*Gei*’ is a transliteration of ‘gay’, and is used in Japanese to refer almost exclusively to same-sex attracted men. It is very rarely used to refer to same-sex attracted women. The linguistic nuances of word choice surrounding gender and sexuality in Japan is a scholarly field in its own right, and the details are largely beyond the scope of this thesis. Some elements of the debate are brought into discussion of *okama* (literally ‘cooking pot’, slang for effeminate gay men) and *tōjisha* in section 2.2.4, and in relation to a discussion of nostalgia in Chapter 6, Section 6.4.2. A discussion of gendered language is included in Chapter 7, Section 7.4.1. A summary of some of the main issues can be found in Lunsing and Maree (2004) and Maree (2008, 2013).

¹¹ Japanese does not have plural nouns in the same sense that they are found in English. Nouns are usually pluralised through the addition of suffixes or counters.

brightly-dyed yellow hair and effeminate style (Ishida and Murakami, 2006). For these reasons, notions of 'gay' in the first gay boom were often conflated with effeminacy and cross-dressing, and as an occupational entertainment category, rather than as a sexuality (McLelland, 2005; 2006).

Despite this earlier coverage of gay male identities in the mainstream media, the majority of academic writing on sexuality in Japan refers to the gay boom of the 1990s. Definitions of the contributing factors and contents of the gay boom vary. However, it is generally acknowledged that the February 1991 issue of the women's magazine *CREA* which was titled 'Gay Renaissance' is one of the earliest examples of gay boom publications (Hall, 2000; McLelland, 2005). One of the causes of the boom seems to be a surge in interest in gay men's lives on the part of heterosexual women (McLelland, 2000a). Jonathan Hall (2000) provides a comprehensive overview of shared characteristics of boom texts, which confirms this view. The list includes but is not limited to: the presumption that the reader was neither gay nor lesbian, an emphasis on male-bodied homosexuality, strong interest in coming-out narratives, and an absence of discussion of lesbian sexuality. Ishida and Murakami (2006, unpaginated) have argued that it was during this second gay boom that homosexuality was discussed "...not as a 'perverse' or 'abnormal' sexual desire but as a 'sexual orientation'". This is a significant change from the pathologising discourse of sexology, and the framing of *gei bōi* as an occupational category in the 1950's gay boom. Despite this apparent emergence of homosexuality as a sexual identity, Hall (2000, p. 43) is reticent to accept that the boom presented homosexuality in a positive manner, stating that "...the epistemological production of male homosexual (in)visibility is amalgamated to what I consider a virulently regressive politics of gender that is frequently overlooked by progressive critics". Indeed, as Section 2.2.5 of this chapter will discuss, the patriarchal

nature of Japanese society and its effects upon lesbians and queer women continues to be neglected within scholarly studies of gender and sexuality in Japan.

Sunagawa Hideki (2015b) has also been careful to point out the fact that although the boom did result in organisations such as *Ugoku Gei to Rezubian no Kai* (Organisation for Moving Gays and Lesbians, widely known as OCCUR) and Japanese International Lesbian and Gay Association (JILGA) producing a documentary about homosexuality, their influence did not reach into the mainstream. Moreover, Hall (2000, p. 43) argues that during the 1990s gay boom, male homosexuality was “offered as spectacle” for mostly female audiences. Sukanuma Katsuhiko (2006, unpaginated, paragraph 29) refers to the gay boom as an “appropriation of gay men’s imagery” and argues that the boom did nothing to work against power dynamics in which homosexual individuals were treated as objects for the amusement of a predominantly female, heterosexual audience. In addition, Sukanuma (2006) posits that the caricatures of gay men, and of homosexuality in general, that were developed in this period, closed off possibilities for identification, making it necessary for people to avoid identifications that could be conflated with stereotypes perpetuated by the media. This continues to have an impact in the contemporary period, with some respondents in this study avoiding identifying in certain ways due to a fear of causing offence, or of inviting negative stereotypes (an example is given in Chapter 6, Section 6.4.2).

Furthermore, there was a tendency within gay boom texts to rely heavily on Euro-American notions of coming-out and visibility, narratives which remain in the mainstream media coverage of LGBT experiences in the contemporary period. Teleological narratives of Western-led modernisation begin to first emerge at around this time, with the boom itself presenting “the (in)visible homosexual in a nationalized

trajectory towards the fantasy of liberal equality” (Hall, 2000, p. 39). Teleological narratives of sexual modernisation under the influence of Western led discourses in Japan, and the rhetorical device of (in)visibility (and the closely related concept of coming-out) remain evident in Japan’s contemporary LGBT movements, and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7 of this thesis. These tensions, which were nurtured throughout the development of gay studies in the 1990s, also had a lasting impact upon academic writing on sexuality in Japan.

3.2.4 The emergence of gay studies

Gay studies as an academic discipline refers to a body of work that emerged around the early to mid-1990s, and extends into the contemporary period. Gay studies focussed almost exclusively on discussions of male same-sex sexuality in Japan. Suganuma (2006, unpaginated, paragraph 1) has challenged the notion that the 1990s was the “origin” of lesbian and gay studies in Japan. However, many of the seminal works in this field did emerge in the 1990s. This can be seen in the publication of journal articles using keywords such as ‘*gei*’ and ‘*dōseiai*’ (same-sex love, same-sex attraction), which increased exponentially in the early 2000s (Shida, 2014). Female same-sex sexuality is mentioned within gay studies texts of this period, but it is usually treated as a discrete discipline with its own concerns. To not do so risks the kind of conflation of issues that Iino Yuriko (2008) warned against in her history of lesbian movements. Lesbian studies, therefore, will be discussed in its own right in Section 2.2.5. In order to outline the main themes and concerns of these texts concisely, this section will focus on a limited number of seminal gay studies works and the importance of the category of ‘*tōjisha*’ (person directly concerned).

An obvious starting point is Keith Vincent, Kazama Takashi, and Kawaguchi Kazuya's (1997) *Gei sutadīzu (Gay studies)*. *Gay Studies* covers a vast sweep of theory and themes, and the authors directly state that the book is the "first document to ever look at the possibility and scope of gay studies in Japan" (Vincent et al., 1997, p. 2). The authors point out that although coming-out narratives are seen as a strategy for liberation by many activists, they are not entirely unproblematic. *Gay Studies* draws upon a number of scholars from the USA, UK, and Australia around this time: for example, Dennis Altman, Judith Butler, John D'Emilio, Ken Plummer, and Jeffrey Weeks, and many of the authors' concerns echo these works. For instance, Vincent et al. (1997) note that the development of coming-out narratives can result in the valorisation of model stories, and that coming-out narratives can be viewed as a simple replacement of earlier "medical diagnosis" (Vincent et al., 1997, p. 65) models in a new form. Given the timing of the publication, it is not surprising that the authors also discuss the HIV epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s.¹² In a section entitled "*Dōseiai to shi (Same-sex love and death)*" (p. 124), the authors outline the way in which data about the spread of HIV was influenced by the social scientists collecting that data. They discuss the ways in which identities (for example, identifying as a male homosexual) and specific acts (anal sex) began to be discussed as the very causes of HIV transmission.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of *Gay Studies* is its overt yet nuanced deployment of *tōjisha* as subjectivity (or as 'subjecthood' as McLelland (2009) refers to it), and as a strategy of gay visibility in identity politics. *Tōjisha* literally translates as 'person directly concerned', and was originally used in a legal sense to refer to the people directly involved in a court case. During the 1970s, the term was adopted by minority rights

¹² Language used to refer to the HIV epidemic, HIV, and AIDS, is drawn from UNESCO's Guidelines on Language and Content in HIV and AIDS Related Materials (UNESCO, 2016).

movements, and used to discuss issues facing marginalised groups, particularly disabled people (Nakanishi and Ueno, 2014). Nakanishi Eri and Ueno Chizuko (2014) trace the way in which discourses of self-help and *tōjisha* identities were deployed by the women's liberation movement in Japan in the 1990s, and then by gay and lesbian activists. In the early stages of their work, groups such as OCCUR used the concept of *tōjisha* to construct a collective identity around homosexuality, as a way of working to produce “correct knowledge” (McLelland, 2009, p. 11) about sexual minorities.

Tōjisha-based subjectivity is understood in this thesis as being closely tied to the development of identity politics in Japan. Indeed, Suganuma (2006) has argued that the 1990s witnessed the development of identity politics as an essentialist strategy in establishing the rights of non-heterosexual individuals living in Japan. For example, identity-based strategies were deployed during the Fuchū Youth Hostel incident (Kazama, 1991b; 1999). The Fuchū Youth Hostel incident is a widely-known case in gay rights organising in Japan, which is often seen as a landmark case. In 1990, OCCUR booked to stay at the Fuchū Youth Hostel in Tokyo with a group of gay male activists. Upon arrival (and in line with the rules of the hostel) the group declared the reason for their stay – which was to attend a gay activism event. The hostel owner refused their lodging on the basis that it would contravene the hostel's gender segregation policy, which was intended to prevent any kind of sexual intercourse in the building. OCCUR took the case to court arguing that the hostel could not legally bar guests on the basis of their sexuality. After winning the initial case, OCCUR faced a series of appeals but finally won at the high court in 1997. Legal challenges of this nature ran concurrently with similar cases occurring in the USA at around the same time, such as the landmark *Romer v Evans* case

1996.¹³ This apparent concurrence of private cases being brought against local and national governments suggests that Japanese gay rights movements were deeply engaged with identity politics at the same time as they were occurring in the USA.

Identity politics can also be seen in action in gay studies scholarship at the same time. In the introduction to *Gay Studies* Vincent et al. (1997, p. 3) write that the aim of the monograph is to use academic writing about their own gay male experiences as a strategy of recognition, "...[this book] is connected to achieving visibility for same-sex attracted people in the realm of knowledge". Drawing upon *tōjisha*-based approaches, *Gay Studies* attempted to deconstruct the category of *dōseiaisha* (same-sex love, same-sex attraction) and develop it as a pluralistic and political *tōjisha* identity for use in a politics of scholarly resistance against heterosexist publishing and research practices.

The concept of *tōjisha* often brought with it tensions, as was evident during the *Shūkan Kin'yōbi* (Weekly Friday)¹⁴ discriminatory language incident. In June 2001, the magazine *Shūkan Kin'yōbi* published an article with a headline that included the word 'okama'. *Okama* literally means 'cooking pot', but it has long been used as slang for buttocks, and by association anal sex (McLelland, 2000a). It is widely deemed to be offensive due to its reference to effeminate gay men as passive sexual partners, and is similar in tone to the English 'fag' [sic.]. Although the magazine was directly quoting the well-known gay activist Tōgo Ken (with his permission), the usage of the word sparked protests from *Sukotan Kakaku*, a gay and lesbian rights group (Gottlieb, 2006). The public debate triggered a special meeting to discuss issues related to use of derogatory language about

¹³ In *Romer v Evans*, Richard G Evans brought a case against the State of Colorado when it passed an amendment stating that homosexual people could not be recognised as a protected class. This ruling set the precedent for the Supreme Court in the USA to be able to strike down Section 3 of the Defence of Marriage Act in 2013, a landmark case for same-sex marriage rights in the USA.

¹⁴ *Shūkan Kin'yōbi* (Weekly Friday) is a weekly news magazine that covers political and social issues.

and by *tōjisha*, a record of which was later published in a book called '*Okama*' *wa sabetsu ka* (*Does 'okama' have discriminatory connotations?*) (Fushimi et al., 2002). The debate centred around the issue of who should decide what language is discriminatory, and in what ways one's position as *tōjisha* should be considered as salient in such debates (Gottlieb, 2006; McLelland, 2009).

Nanette Gottlieb (2006) argued that this discussion generated the consensus that *tōjisha* could use the word *okama* if they so desired, much like usage of the word queer by those who self-identify as such in Anglophone contexts. McLelland (2009) took a slightly different view, arguing that the general conclusion was that one's sexuality (and thus, in this case, claim to the position of *tōjisha*) had little to do with whether or not a word was deemed offensive. Instead, the context in which the word was written was key. Indeed, as McLelland (2009) notes later in his analysis of the incident, the diversity of *tōjisha* identities in itself contributes towards difficulties in developing group identities. Equally, setting *tōjisha* up as holders of so-called correct knowledge may also contribute to ideas about valid and invalid gay and lesbian identities, and who can belong to the category of LGBT. These issues continue to be relevant today, and form a common analytical thread in all of the analysis chapters in this thesis. Indeed, understanding the concept of *tōjisha* as deployed within gay studies and gay activism is fundamental in engaging with contemporary LGBT communities in Japan.

Partly in response to difficulties surrounding identity politics, Fushimi Noriaki (1991) published *Puraibēto Gei Raifu* (*Private Gay Life*). Fushimi (1991) states that an identity-based politics is personally undesirable, but also necessary for the gay liberation movement in Japan. Suganuma (2006, unpaginated, paragraph 10) has outlined the ways in which Fushimi's work in *Private Gay Life* "set out a new theoretical paradigm for

lesbian and gay activism to follow in the coming decade”. Indeed, Fushimi published voraciously, with a total of 18 authored or edited books, as well as editorship on the magazines *Queer Japan* and *Queer Japan Returns* which were both dedicated to gay culture and experience in Japan. Although in the preface to *Hentai (kwaia) nyūmon (Perverse: Introduction to queer)* Fushimi (2003) insists that his work should not be taken as a basis for theory formation, his impact on queer studies in Japan is profound, with a number of academic works citing Fushimi as instrumental in the development of sexuality theory in Japan (Ishida and Murakami, 2006; McLelland, 2011; McLelland and Suganuma, 2009; Suganuma, 2006).

Another scholar who contributed to the development of gay studies in Japan, as well as to the activities of OCCUR during the 1990s was Kazama Takashi. Kazama has written in detail about the Fuchū Youth Hostel incident (1991b; 1999),¹⁵ the problems associated with labelling oneself as gay in Japan (1991a), issues surrounding narratives of coming-out (2002), same-sex marriage (2003),¹⁶ and the concept of public private spaces and sexuality in Japan (1999). Kazama has also contributed to the translation of non-Japanese language theory into Japanese, including as a joint translator for the Japanese edition of Dennis Altman’s *Global Sex* in 2005 (with Kawaguchi Kazuya and Okajima Katsuki) (Altman, 2005).

Kazama’s work is characterised by its ability to unpack the complex issues inherent in seemingly universal categories or narratives such as coming-out. For example, in ‘*Kaminguauto no poritikkusu*’ (‘The politics of coming out’), Kazama (2002) notes how

¹⁵ Kazama’s involvement in the Fuchū Youth Hostel court case through affiliation with OCCUR placed him in an ideal position to discuss the reasoning behind the group’s decision to pursue the case in court, as well as some of the conceptual and theoretical issues involved in the case.

¹⁶ Although the concept of ‘equal marriage’ (*byōdō kekkon*) is increasingly mentioned in the Japanese context, the terms *dōseikekkon* (same-sex marriage), *dōseikon* (a contracted form of *dōseikekkon*) and *dōseipātonashippu* (same-sex partnership) are much more common.

one of the aims of the gay liberation movement in the USA was to have homosexuality accepted as ‘natural’. However, the creation of a so-called ‘natural sexuality’ automatically produces the notion of an unnatural, rejected sexuality. Drawing on the work of Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*, Kazama goes on to note how the move away from social constructivist approaches led to the notion of confession in the form of coming-out. Far from achieving liberation, Kazama argues, this merely further enmeshed homosexuality in systems of power that operate through the ritual of confession. Noting that it is naïve to believe that one can escape these systems of power, Kazama analyses the Fuchū Youth Hostel case to show the ways in which the public/private binary is permeable, flexible, and ever changing. He also demonstrates the ways in which gay and lesbian people in Japan find themselves in a “double bind” (Kazama, 2002, p. 360) where heterosexuality permeates both the allegedly sexless public, and the allegedly sexual private, leaving little room for non-normative sexuality in the country. The importance of this scholarship will be made apparent in Chapter 5 of this thesis, which discusses the valorisation of certain types of queer subjectivity within a community event.

A significant aspect of gay studies scholarship in this period is the extent to which it engaged with and shared concerns of similar developments in Anglophone scholarship at the time. In apparent echoes of scholarship by Jeffrey Weeks, especially that found in *Coming Out* (1990 [1977]) and *Sexuality and its Discontents* (2003 [1985]), gay studies scholarship in Japan in the 1990s was grappling with fundamental issues related to public/private divide debates, the legacies of pathologisation of homosexuality, and the politics of queer visibility. For example, in an early intervention arguing for a transition away from the identity politics, Nagata Masashi (1991) discussed the need for the gay movement to move away from simply declaring their identities in public as a strategy of liberation, towards a practical deconstructionist approach through direct action. These

approaches clearly drew upon the turn to post-structuralism through the work of scholars such as Judith Butler (1993; 2007 [1990]; 2011[1993]) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1994a; 1994b). Indeed, the 1995 special edition of the journal *imago* focussed on gay liberation, and was overt in its reference to similar movements within the USA. The issue overtly referred to the gay liberation movement in the USA, and contained translations of mostly English non-Japanese language texts. It is not surprising, therefore, that significant space within early gay studies is given over to discussion of coming-out narratives and the concept of ‘the closet’, both of which were most likely influenced by seminal works by scholars such as Jeffrey Weeks (1990 [1977]; 2003 [1985]).

Despite this engagement with scholarship outside of Japan, there was an obvious bias within gay studies towards the study of male-bodied same-sex sexuality. Moreover, issues facing gay men and lesbian women in Japan were often conflated (as can be seen in discussions of the Fuchū Youth Hostel case which did not involve lesbian women in any way, yet is often framed as a landmark case for all sexual minorities in Japan (Iino, 2008)). For these reasons, the development of lesbian studies, and studies of lesbian and queer women in the 1990s and early 2000s will be considered in its own right in the next section.

3.2.5 The development of scholarship on lesbian and queer women

Lesbian community building in Japan drew heavily on the feminist women’s movement of the 1970s, and began with the formation of *Wakakusa no Kai* (Young Grass Club) in 1971 (Chalmers, 2002; Izumo et al., 1997; Maree, 2007; Sugiura, 2008; Welker, 2010). Despite the breadth of lesbian activism in Japan, with multiple communities organising through groups such as *Regumi Sutajio* (Regumi Studio),¹⁷ writing about lesbian

¹⁷ *Regumi Sutajio* takes its name from the first syllable of *Rezubian* and the Japanese *gumi* meaning class or troupe.

experience in Japan has never reached the same levels of the 1990's gay boom. Lesbian magazines such as *Anîsu* (*Anise*) and *Kāmira* (*Carmilla*) had much more limited runs in comparison to gay magazines such as *Barazoku* (*Rose Tribe*). Until the 1990s, lesbian studies as an academic discipline was also largely unknown. Maree (2007, p. 292) suggested that Japanese lesbian studies are in fact “almost nonexistent in the academe”, suggesting that even within sexuality studies in Japan, work on lesbian and queer women is not as visible as that produced about male experience. This imbalance has been readdressed in recent years with the work of Horie Yuki (2015) and Iino (2008), but the pool of texts upon which to draw is smaller for studies of queer women in Japan (Maree, 2007).

Kamano Saori and Diana Khor (2011, p. 147) have discussed the ways in which the heterosexist nature of Japanese society has led to the absorption (and thus masking) of lesbian couples into wider society by “considering them as friends or roommates”. Kawaguchi (2003) discusses this in reference to Lillian Federman's (1991) *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, drawing on the idea of “*romanchikkuna yūai*” (romantic fraternalism) (Kawaguchi, 2003, p.61). Indeed, in contrast to writing about male same-sex sexual practices, little was written about female same-sex sexuality and relationships until the Meiji and Taishō periods (1868-1926), resulting in what Sharon Chalmers (2002, p. 31) has called “lesbian blindness”. James Welker (2010) and Maree (2007) have noted how writing on lesbian and queer women in Japan is often most copious within lesbian communities themselves, through the transcription of panel discussions and the production of *mini-komi* (self-published ‘zines). However, the 1990s did see marginal increases not only in mainstream lesbian publications such as magazines like *Anise*, but also within academic publishing (Maree, 2007).

Special issues of *imago*, *Inpakushon*, and *Gendai Shisō* (Contemporary Thought), all contained articles about lesbian and queer women, and the lesbian rights movement in Japan. In the 1991 issue of *Inpakushon*, Kakefuda Hiroko (1991) considered the similarities and differences between gay and lesbian discrimination in Japan. Referring to the Fuchū Youth Hostel case, Kakefuda points out that the rights of female same-sex attracted people and male same-sex attracted people are quite different. Kakefuda notes the way in which knowledge about lesbians is much lower in Japan, and often constructed through pornographic images created by men. Lesbians are also subject to discrimination against women, and this discrimination can often be invisible, since it is tied to ideas of romantic fraternalism. Kakefuda (1991, p. 102) also notes that until women are married to men in Japan, it is as if they are held in “moratorium”, essentially not fully fledged adults. Thus, the issues facing lesbian women are often similar to the issues facing women in general.

Kakefuda’s insightful analysis of the issues facing lesbian women in the 1990s means that she is often cited as one of the main proponents of the development of lesbian studies in Japan (Maree, 2007; Suganuma, 2006). ‘*Rezubian*’ *de aru to iu koto* (*On being a ‘lesbian’*) (1992) is Kakefuda’s most notable contribution to the field. *On being a ‘lesbian’* was not Kakefuda’s first published work, but it framed her central thesis, and has provided a foundation for other scholars researching queer women in Japan. The key platform of Kakefuda’s work is her refusal to accept the label of ‘lesbian’ as anything other than a temporary strategy of visibility. Kakefuda (1992, p. 7) writes:

There’s no denying that when I talk to people...that person probably thinks I’m a ‘lesbian’ or ‘*dōseiaisha*’, but I reject strongly the notion that their opinion automatically designates me as lesbian’ or ‘*dōseiaisha*’.

Kakefuda goes on to discuss the ways in which knowledge about lesbian women in Japan is so limited that it is very difficult for women-loving women to be open about their sexuality due to internalised homophobia. This echoes the (in)visibility concerns in the development of gay studies as discussed in the previous section, but emphasises the extremes to which invisibility was a key concern for writers working on lesbian and queer female experiences in 1990s Japan. Although it is not the intention in this thesis to draw lines of comparison with cases outside of Japan, there is an important echo here of some of the concerns within lesbian feminism in the UK at the same time. Both groups were concerned with the issue of (in)visibility, as well as with institutionalised discriminations against women. Further research into the links between the development of lesbian feminism in Japan and elsewhere is required beyond the scope of this project.

The problem of invisibility continued into the 2000s. Chalmers (2002, p. 7) argued that media representations of lesbians in Japan in the early 2000s were, "...firmly in the category of anti-family, anti-reproduction, anti-social, transgressing normal (*futsū*) female bodily behaviour...and more commonly, it has simply been ignored". Chalmers shows the way in which social issues faced by lesbian women in Japan are not only bound up in heteronormative social systems, but also in a patriarchal state that controls women's basic rights. Chalmers gives the example of government control of the contraceptive pill, coupled with the fact that very few women are able to influence policy-making which could improve this access. This basic gender based inequality is also raised by Maree (2007, p. 297), who notes that even legislation intended to bring about gender equality, such as the Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society of 1999, continues to enforce a "rigid semantics to 'wife' and 'husband', 'mother and 'father'". Welker (2010) and Chalmers (2002) raised similar issues in relation to tensions within Young Grass Club. There was a tendency within the group to rely on *tachi* (literally 'standing' or 'top' from the gay

male top/bottom paradigm, butch) and *neko* (literally ‘cat’, femme, bottom) roles, which served to re-inscribe masculine/feminine gender roles. This tendency has since been questioned by Iino (2008, p. 25), who called for a move away from earlier identity based politics towards the “potentiality of identity” (*aidentiti no kanōsei*) and ‘dis-identification’ (*datsu aidentiti*) from the group category of lesbian. From debate such as this, it is possible to see that whilst gay studies in Japan may have shared similar concerns as lesbian studies, there was also a point of departure related to the patriarchal nature of Japanese society. It is possible, therefore, to argue that persistent issues of lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer women’s inclusion and sense of belonging in broad-based LGBT and queer spaces in Japan (which will be discussed briefly in Chapter 5, Section 5.7.3) has its roots in the male-centric nature of the gay boom and in the scholarship of sexuality in Japan in general. Lesbian studies scholars began the work of re-addressing this imbalance in the 1990s and into the 2000s. The following section of this chapter will now discuss the ways in which this work of rebalance has been further bolstered by a turn towards ethnographic approaches and the development of transgender studies in Japan.

3.3 Part 2: Gender and sexuality research in the contemporary period

3.3.1 Studies of transgender: from pathologisation to *x-jendā*

As with mainstream and scholarly engagement with lesbian and gay lives, engagement with the lives of transgender people in Japan has experienced periods of acute interest followed by general invisibility. Arguably the first of these periods of acute interest after the ‘perverse’ press of the 1950s is what McLelland (2005) has dubbed the ‘*nyū hāfu* boom’ (literally ‘new half’, male to female cross-dressers) of the 1980s. This boom was brought about by tabloid press interest in the owner of Betty’s Mayonnaise, an Osaka show pub. The owner of the club is reported to have said “I’m half man and woman so

I'm a new half" (McLelland, 2005),¹⁸ which led to a flurry of tabloid press coverage of this apparently salacious statement. However, *nyū hāfu* is widely understood as an occupational category, rather than as a transgender identity in the sense that we would understand in the contemporary period. It is, therefore, questionable whether or not the *nyū hāfu* boom represented a mainstream interest in transgender lives as such, or rather was a moment of moral panic around the notion of gender fluidity.

In 1996, the Japanese government passed new guidelines that stipulated that sex reassignment surgery (SRS) could be performed if an individual had a medical diagnosis of GID.¹⁹ This decision contributed to the next acute upsurge in mainstream interest in transgender lives in the mid to late 1990s. Until 1996, SRS was effectively outlawed under the 1948 Eugenics Act, which forbade surgery that would result in sterility (McLelland, 2005).²⁰ This is not to say that SRS did not occur in Japan, but that it was technically illegal to undergo surgery that would remove a person's ovaries or testicles. (McLelland, 2005). These changes were not unique to Japan. Similar changes in regards to SRS and the medicalisation of transgender individuals occurred in the USA and UK at around this time. For example, in 1980, the term gender identity disorder was first added to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), a move which although allowing access to health services for many individuals, also resulted in pathologised understandings of transgender. In the USA for example, groups like Transgender Nation formed to protest against the American Psychiatric Association and

¹⁸ *Hāfu* (a transliteration of the English 'half') is the Japanese word used to refer to mixed race individuals. It is taken from the term 'half-caste' which has roots in Britain's colonial past. Although the word is clearly problematic, it is not generally seen as such in Japan. Respondents in this study, as well as many of my Japanese friends, use this term with some frequency. Further research on the intersection between race, sexuality, and gender in Japan is clearly needed.

¹⁹ In version 5 of the DSM, the category of GID was replaced with Gender Dysphoria (GD) and the GD diagnosis was moved from the chapter on Sex and Gender Identity Disorders to its own dedicated chapter (Moran, 2013). However, the use of *seidōitsuseishōgai* (GID) persists in Japan.

²⁰ Examples from the data related to SRS and its concomitant issues in Japan can be found in Chapter 4, Section 4.2, and Chapter 6, Section 6.4.2.

the medical construction of transgender bodies (Stryker, 1994). In Japan, these changes led to the emergence of the term *seidōitsuseishōgai* (gender identity disorder, GID) in the mainstream media, and a flurry of publications which centred upon the *tōjisha* narratives of those who had a diagnosis of GID. A key proponent of *tōjisha* narratives of this type was Torai Masae, who published two books about his experiences transitioning from female to male (Masae, 1996; 2003). The impact of this event was felt by many of the older transgender respondents in this study, particularly Hideki, whose experience is discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.4.2.

A further peak in interest in transgender identities occurred in the 2000s when the TV drama *San nen B gumi Kinpachi-sensei* (*Kinpachi-sensei of class 3B*) featured the well-known singer Ueta Aya as a character who was diagnosed with GID. Through shows such as *Kinpachi Sensei*, this medicalised and pathologised model began to replace conceptions of cross-dressing as an occupational category under the *nyū hāfu* model. Although McLelland (2005) argued that this increased visibility for transgender people should be welcomed, this model has in fact led to widespread pathologisation of transgender identities in Japan. This is evidenced by the increase in publications of first person narratives which focussed on transgender as a *shōgai* (sickness), as in Tsuno Kei's (2013) *Boku wa yottsū no seishinshōgai: kyōhakuseishōgai, seidōitsuseishōgai, utsubyō, hattatsushōgai to tomoni ikite* (*I have four mental illnesses: Living with obsessive compulsive disorder, GID, depression, and a developmental disorder*). Tsuno clearly places his diagnosis of GID in the same category as mental illness, and discusses his 'treatment' through psychiatric counselling. *Tōjisha* narratives like Tsuno's were very common during this period. For example, Harima Katsuki and Sōma Saeko collected together 30 narratives in the 2004 volume *Seidōitsuseishōgai 30 nin no kaminuauto* (GID: 30 people's coming out stories). This re-inscription of the coming-out paradigm is

significant, and stresses the continued primacy of *tōjisha* narratives, many of which employed similar tropes to *tōjisha* narratives from within gay studies and activism as outlined in Section 2.2.4 of this chapter.

The influence of medicalised GID discourse of transgender as something that can be ‘corrected’ through medical transition was evident in scholarship of transgender lives by the end of the 2000s. Tsuruta Sachie’s (2009) *Seidōitsuseishōgai no esunogurafi – seigenshō no shakaigaku (Gender identity disorder ethnography – sociology of a gender phenomenon)* clearly conceptualises transgender as a move from one perceived binary subject position to a perceived binary other. In the introduction Tsuruta (2009, p. 22) mentions that 3 of the respondents self-identified as “FtX” and gives a brief definition of this as “...individuals who move from female to someone who is not female” but does not go into further detail. Approximately six pages of the book are given over to discussion of respondents whom Tsuruta (2009, p. 77) categorises as “*chūtohanpana gaiken*” (unfinished outward appearance). This choice of definition as ‘unfinished’ between two apparent end points clearly supports binary definitions of gender identity and discourses of transition. Much as the pathologisation of homosexuality in the early decades of the twentieth century was not confined to Japan, the persistent pathologisation of transgender identities can also be observed outside of Japan. For example, access to health care related to physical transition in the USA (and indeed the UK) is still largely controlled through a diagnostic model which relies on the problematic diagnostic category of Gender Dysphoria (Schulz, 2017).

This is not to say that all Japanese language scholarship has conceptualised transgender identities in this way. Mitsuhashi Junko has published extensively about transgender from a non-pathologising perspective. One of the first and most in-depth studies of transgender

experiences in post-war Japan is Yajima Masami's (2006) edited volume *Sengo nihon josō dōseiai kenkyū* (*Research on cross-dressing and same-sex love in post-war Japan*), to which Mitsuhashi made a significant contribution. The volume is a collection of works based largely on interviews and extensive ethnographic fieldwork amongst transgender and cross-dressing communities in Tokyo. The volume summarises the development of gender queer identities in Japan since the end of the Second World War, and Mitsuhashi writes six of the chapters. One of Mitsuhashi's chapters uses data collected over several years of participant observation in cross-dressing clubs in Shinjuku. The article focuses on male-to-female cross-dressers, due perhaps to Mitsuhashi's own experience of working in this field. Significantly, Mitsuhashi (2006, p. 359) provides a conceptual diagram of gender identifications amongst male-to-female cross-dressers. Although GID does feature on this chart as one identification, the article and diagram together clearly demonstrate the variety of identifications already in operation, and the way that they are not discrete categories: people can and do identify across and beyond these categories.

A small group of Anglophone queer studies scholars have also begun to dismantle and work against medicalising discourses. For example, Dale (2012a) outlined how the non-binary gender identity category '*x-jendā*' developed as part of a growth in the queer scene in the Kansai area of Japan (specifically Osaka and Kyoto) in the late 1990s. The category was used by respondents in this study who felt that they did not neatly fit into either male or female social roles and/or appearances. Dale (2012a) demonstrates how the identification was developed through privately published magazines such as *Poco a poco* and a vibrant art and performance scene. Dale (2012b) has also used the theoretical frame of Orientalism and Occidentalism to discuss the way in which the idea of 'the foreign' has figured heavily in understandings of transgender and GID in Japan. Dale notes that many books on transgender and GID still include English versions of glossed terms as

part of an apparent strategy of legitimisation. This notion of Anglophone queer studies and cosmopolitanism being used to legitimise particular gender and sexual identities was also evident in the fieldwork for this project, and is developed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Tanaka Ray (2006) has also worked to trouble the boundaries that GID discourse has placed around transgender identities in Japan. Tanaka (2006) is overt in their desire to disengage the category of transgender from GID. In a chapter concerned with the selection of terminology Tanaka (2006, p. 46) begins with the statement “Transgender ≠ GID”. Tanaka notes that although GID is often used to talk about identity, this gives a sense of victimhood that does not reflect their own personal experience. Tanaka is also careful to stress that female-to-male transsexual is a wide identification that can include a variety of lifestyles and personal identities. Tanaka succeeds in complicating the essentialisation of gender diverse identities, which occurs when these identities are discussed in terms of sickness and disorder. The book also includes a selection of essays contributed by other authors on lesbianism, radical love and the question of whether anyone can ever be truly free from gender. The inclusion of these essays at the end of the book further distinguish Tanaka’s work from the more pathologising approach of Tsuruta, and shows that radical voices do exist within Japanese queer studies.

In summary, the study of transgender identities has undergone a significant change in the last twenty years. Conceptions of male-to-female cross-dressing as an occupational category (as seen in the use of the *nyū hāfu* category) gave way to a medicalised model of transgender in the form of GID. These medical models were then challenged by scholars such as Mitsuhashi, Dale, and Tanaka. In the most recent literature, scholars such as Mitsuhashi and Dale use ethnographic research designs, and Tanaka engages with a

kind of auto-ethnography of their own biography and experiences. Tanaka does not overtly frame their work as auto-ethnographic, but it operates in a similar way: connecting personal experiences to wider sociological theories and patterns in our social worlds. This turn towards ethnography represents a general trend in research on sexual and/or gender minorities in Japan towards interview and participant observation methods since the turn of the twenty-first century. There are many reasons why this change may be occurring, not least of which being the continued primacy of *tōjisha* narratives which sits well with the kinds of co-produced, rich, qualitative data that ethnographic approaches allow for. Indeed, whilst the concept of *tōjisha*-based identities may have led to tensions and to the development of entrenched identity politics, it also has potential to contribute to a growing body of scholarship which focusses upon the lived experiences of LGBT individuals in Japan. Moving into the post-LGBT boom period, there have been two central areas of scholarly engagement gender and/or sexual minority lives: debates related to same-sex marriage, and the marketisation of LGBT lives and identities. The following section of this chapter will summarise these issues, and demonstrate where this study sits in relation to these debates.

3.3.2 Scholarly responses to the LGBT boom

Same-sex marriage and its concomitant debates are by no means new in the Japanese context. They have received significant attention from around the time of the gay rights movement in the 1990s (Maree, 2017). However, the LGBT boom re-ignited many of the issues which continue to prevent same-sex attracted individuals from pursuing legal marriage in Japan. In the period from the 2000s onwards, the key debates have been related to the patriarchal and controlling nature of the marriage registration system in Japan (Horie, 2010; Sunagawa, 2015b; Tanaka, 2006), the role of the existing marriage system in valorising heteronormative family relationships (Kazama, 2003), alternative

forms of kinship which act in a similar way to marriage (Horie, 2010; Lunsing, 2001), and the links between same-sex marriage debates and the marketisation of LGBT and queer identities and lives in Japan (Maree, 2017; Shimizu, 2017). A detailed study of these issues would be sufficient to warrant a doctoral research project of its own. Hence, this thesis will engage with the debates related to same-sex marriage only as part of broader debates around the increased marketisation of LGBT and queer lives in Japan.

This thesis understands same-sex marriage discourse to be one aspect of increasingly homonationalist drives to commercialise, monetise, and politically profit from strategic reference to LGBT and queer lives. In line with Jasbir Puar (2013), homonationalism is understood here as a process wherein states mark out ‘worthy’ subjects for protection, in the process also marking out those who are ‘unworthy’. As Puar (2013, p. 337) notes, homonationalism is, “a facet of modernity and a historical shift marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection... a reorientation of the relationship between the state, capitalism, and sexuality”. This concept is discussed in more detail in relation to the data in this study in Chapter 7, Section 7.2.

In an LGBT boom themed issue of the journal *Sekai (World)*, which was subtitled ‘The light and shadow of the ‘LGBT’ boom’, Shimizu (2017) argued that the valorisation of same-sex marriage, and the creation of ‘LGBT-friendly’ wards²¹ witnessed as part of the LGBT boom can be explained as part of changes in broader public discourse, and an increase in homonationalist discourse in Japan. As part of these changes, Shimizu (2017)

²¹ In addition to being able to pass same-sex partnership initiatives, wards have a comparatively high level of independence in that they can pass local ordinances on a wide array of topics, including ordinances and guidelines which promote awareness of human rights in each ward. These were the powers used in Shibuya ward in March 2015 to pass the Shibuya Ordinances. These powers also exist in large municipalities outside of Tokyo. For example, at the time of my internship at an NGO in Osaka, I was able to visit the local ward office where I was told about plans to change the local foster care ordinances to allow for same-sex couples to foster children within the ward.

argues that the Japanese government is actively seeking to promote Japan's image as 'LGBT-friendly' in anticipation of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The construction of same-sex marriage along these homonormative lines, within both the LGBT boom and broader changes in public discourse, brings with it opportunities for the marketisation and commodification of imagined LGBT and queer lives.

As Sunagawa (2015b) explained in a special issue of *Contemporary Thought*, the increased enmeshment of the term 'LGBT' and the market has developed significantly in the past four to five years in Japan. For example, private businesses increasingly engage with the notion of same-sex marriage as being 'novel' and 'foreign' and use this to promote services to LGBT and queer consumers and the wider public. For example, Hotel Granvia in Kyoto, which often promotes its same-sex marriage packages at LGBT-community events, markets its same-sex wedding ceremonies to LGBT and queer consumers as "truly authentic yet extraordinary wedding ceremony" (Hotel Granvia, [no date]-b, unpaginated). However, the hotel codes these messages in such a way so as to retain broad appeal and avoid alienating non-LGBT and queer consumers. For example, Figure 4 shows a screenshot from Hotel Granvia's top page, which overtly mixes images of 'traditional' Japan with rainbow imagery, stressing the meeting of the 'ancient' (in the form of the kimono-clad women) and the 'modern' (in the rainbow-coloured kimono and the implication that the two women are a couple) (Hotel Granvia, [no date]-a). It is this marketisation of LGBT and queer lives during the LGBT boom, and its impacts upon the respondents which is most relevant to this study.

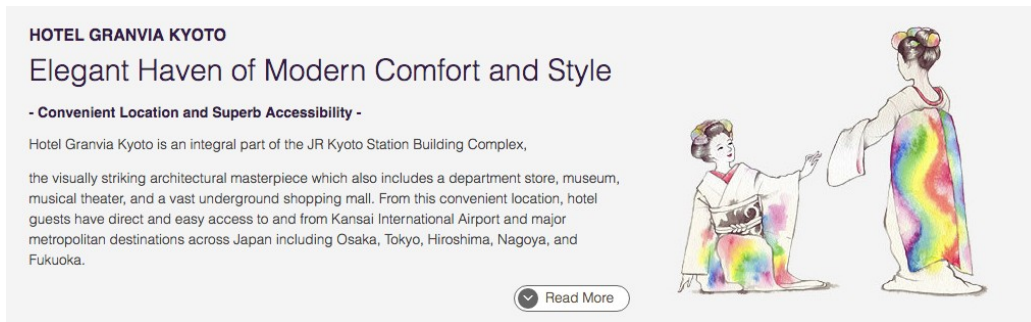


Figure 4- Promotional materials from Hotel Granvia, Kyoto.

The marketisation of queer lives has been a matter of debate for many years in Japan, but has been re-invigorated by the advent of the LGBT boom. For example, Vincent et al. (1997) noted that the gay boom of the 1990s demonstrates the inescapability of the relationship between personal and political identities, and commodification. The commodification of sexuality is closely related to increasingly globalised queer cultures, as argued by Altman (2001) in *Global Sex*. Altman argued that sexuality, desire, and the global economy are increasingly and inextricably linked. In the Japanese context, Shimizu (2017, pp. 135-136) notes how the LGBT boom and the resultant “mainstreaming” of the acronym LGBT could be seen as closely related to the notion of “pink-washing” by the Japanese state. Pink-washing is term which emerged in 2011/12 in relation to the state of Israel’s promotion of its ‘gay friendly’ status in its promotion of tourism in the area, despite continued human rights violations against Palestinians under Israeli occupation (Puar, 2013; Shulman, 2011). The term has since taken on the more general meaning of promoting homonationalist constructions of ‘worthy’ LGBT lives, and LGBT-friendly policies, in order to appear less threatening.

Shimizu (2017) argues that the LGBT boom has revealed a similar pattern occurring in Japan. Shimizu (2017) notes that the Japanese government has a two-pronged approach to LGBT rights in the country: promoting itself as open to diversity on the international level, but at the same time steadfastly refusing to instigate any legal protections for gender and/or sexual minorities on the national level. In allowing private companies and local

governments to make their own non-legally binding policies, the Japanese government essentially hides its own complicity in the rights violations of LGBT individuals in Japan. Shimizu (2017) provides the example of Clause 3 of the 2003 Act on Special Cases in Handling Gender for People with Gender Identity Disorder (hereafter Act on Special Cases), which stipulates that an individual must not have children under the age of 20, must have their testicles removed (or have it confirmed that their testicles are non-functioning), and must have genital surgery to ensure that their appearance is that of the 'opposite' sex before they are permitted to change their gender on their household register. This law continues to be enforced, but did not feature heavily in LGBT boom discourse, perhaps because it would be damaging for the Japanese state, and not particularly conducive to economic profit for private business. Likewise, Horie (2015) notes how the Japanese government committed to the 1995 United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, but at the end of that decade also passed into law the 2003 Act on Special Cases, with its discriminatory clauses.

Outside of government policies, Baudinette (2016a; 2017) has noted how globalising trends which privilege heteronormative masculinity amongst queer communities, and their concomitant commercialisation of desire (which is common in LGBT boom texts) have exclusionary affects upon individuals accessing the gay district around Shinjuku Ni-chōme, Tokyo. Shinjuku is a popular shopping and entertainment district in central Tokyo, which houses not only the administrative centre of Tokyo's government but also a vast nightlife of bars, strip-clubs, and love hotels. Within the broader context of Tokyo and Shibuya, Ni-chōme takes on a mythic-like status of a progressive safe-space, where one's queer identity can be enjoyed with abandon. Respondents in this study discussed the ways in which Ni-chōme was a necessary site of pilgrimage, a place of belonging, and a source of moments of self-realisation in their queer experiences in Japan. Baudinette (2017, p.

519) found that gay men who did not have “gym-sculpted” bodies, and Korean and Chinese gay men visiting Ni-chōme were marginalised through homonationalist discourses which privilege predominantly white, athletic, heteronormative masculinities (Baudinette, 2016a).

Sunagawa (2015b) has noted how one of the key differences between the LGBT boom and the gay boom of the 1990s was the level of interest that businesses showed, and the way in which they began to more openly sponsor LGBT events such as the Tokyo Rainbow Festival. Sunagawa (2015b) also argued that globalising homonationalist narratives of LGBT rights in the mainstream run the risk of prioritising upper-middle and upper-class concerns (such as same-sex marriage) at the expense of an LGBT movement that is able to deal with a multiplicity of viewpoints under a unified broad-based movement. In an article responding to the LGBT boom, Chitose Masaki (2015, pp. 83-84) also cautions LGBT activists in Japan against blindly accepting increasingly globalising homonationalist discourses:

As has been demonstrated, America’s ‘LGBT activism’, with its history of grotesque international politics, propped up by forgetting and exclusion, has already made its way into Japan. Will those of us who live in Japan close our eyes to this fraud, which has already been revealed in America, and replicate it? Or will we, based upon historical reflection, build a social movement which considers all sexual minorities, including LGBT individuals?

It is clear that Chitose (2015, p. 83) locates the origins of homonationalist discourses which are characterised by “forgetting and exclusion” in the USA. Chitose’s work demonstrates that Japanese scholars remain actively engaged with theoretical developments in Anglophone contexts. For example, Chitose bases a significant part of his argument on the work of Dean Spade – a transgender activist scholar who has argued

strongly against increased ‘mainstreaming’ and respectability politics in contemporary transgender and non-binary rights movements (see for example Spade’s (2015) *Normal Life*). It is apparent from post-LGBT boom engagements, including those of Baudinette (2016a; 2017), Sunagawa (2015a; 2015b), and Chitose (2015) that homonationalist and neoliberal discourses have made their way into Japan, in part through the LGBT boom, and are being resisted and critiqued as robustly as in the Anglophone context.

Scholars such as Sunagawa (2015a; 2015b), Baudinette (2015; 2016a; 2016b), Michiko Sanbe (2015), and Horie (2015) have contributed to our understandings of the impact of these emergent frictions on the day to day lives of LGBT individuals in Japan. As with the paradigm change in studies of transgender, this work has been conducted using ethnographic research designs. This can clearly be seen in the work of Sanbe (2015) who used participant observations and interviews to explore the impact of ‘coming-out’ on the parents of lesbian, gay, and bisexual children. Sanbe (2015) uses Erving Goffman’s concept of passing to argue that lesbian, gay, and bisexual respondents have to carefully manage the process of coming out in a variety of different situations.²² Sunagawa’s (2015a) ethnography of Shinjuku Ni-chōme also represents a significant contribution to the field of ethnographic studies of sexuality in Japan. Using longitudinal ethnographic data collected during his doctoral research, Sunagawa (2015a) analysed the concepts of community, identity, and intimacy as they played out in the first Tokyo Rainbow Festival, and within gay bars in the area. Sunagawa (2015b) has been critical of marketisation of LGBT lives during the boom, but he used data from this earlier fieldwork to argue that the festival was also at least in part about seeking recognition. This observation was particularly useful in the development of Chapter 5 of this thesis.

²² Sanbe’s study did not include transgender respondents.

In addition to the use of ethnographic research designs, new ways of collating and publishing research data have also begun to emerge. A key example of this is the volume *X-jendätte nani? (What is x-jendā)* (Label X, 2017[2016]), which brings together work from scholars of transgender and/or non-binary identities such as Sonja Dale, as well as *x-jendā tōjisha* in a single co-produced volume. The costs of producing and printing the book were collected through online crowdfunding, further demonstrating the project's commitment to co-produced research outputs. These ethnographic and co-productive research strategies, coupled with the continuance of publishing from *tōjisha* perspectives (see for example Taira Aika's (2017) book about the intersections between Christianity and LGBT lives in Japan) have ensured that research produced concurrent with and shortly after the boom often centres the lived experiences of the individuals concerned.

This overview of existing scholarship surrounding the LGBT boom suggests that the acute media attention placed upon LGBT lives between 2014 and 2015 acted as a catalyst through which deep-seated tensions within LGBT communities were brought to the fore. Despite the fact that the LGBT boom may have presented some of the respondents with an identity category around which they could build a sense of belonging and develop strategies for activism, it also brought with it a number of key areas of tension and debate. The troubled relationship between lived experiences and the marketisation and commercialisation of specific valorised queer subjectivities will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Whilst the literature discussed in this section has outlined intellectual engagement with the boom, there remains a gap in our understandings of the ways in which the LGBT boom was experienced by the individuals whom the LGBT boom claimed to represent. It is this gap in the literature which this study will address. The LGBT boom presents a

timely opportunity to examine the politics of broad-based LGBT communities in Japan, and the ways in which media discourses of gender and/or sexual minorities affected respondents in a particular place, at a particular moment in time. Since the boom occurred within the confines of the domestic Japanese mainstream media, but at the same time drew heavily upon global flows of sexual minority related knowledge and activism, it can also be used to critically analyse the ways in which global LGBT related paradigms (closely tied to homonationalism) were shared, resisted, or transformed within the communities studied.

3.4 Conclusion: situating the study

This literature review has engaged with scholarship related to gender and sexuality in Japan since the emergence of sexology at the turn of the twenty-first century. It has demonstrated how conceptualisations of (predominantly male) same-sex sexual desire and practices have developed from accepted social practice, to medicalisation, to a questioning of these paradigms since the 1990s onwards. However, although same-sex female practices almost certainly existed in the pre-war period, there was little discussion of this in the mainstream, and it was not until the 1970s that lesbian sexuality was discussed beyond closed groups. During the 1990s it became apparent that despite sharing similar goals with men from within the gay rights movement, lesbian and queer women faced additional issues stemming from institutionalised gender discrimination. These issues continue in various forms to date, and will be addressed in the analysis chapters of this thesis.

Not limiting itself to discussions of sexuality, this chapter also examined the development of discourses surrounding transgender in Japan. In the same way that same-sex sexual desire began to be discussed as *hentai seiyoku* (perverse desires) in the early twentieth

century, so too were transgender identities pathologised and discussed as sickness and disorder in the 1990s. Although this allowed access to SRS, it also has had a lasting impact upon understandings of gender diversity in Japan. In more recent years, medicalised discourses have begun to be challenged with new categories of non-binary gender such as *x-jendā* being more widely used as a way to identify beyond the male/female binary. A turn towards ethnographic research designs, which focus upon the lived experiences of those concerned has assisted in this change.

Although this review has discussed specific identities along the LGBT spectrum individually, this should be understood as somewhat artificial, since identities along the spectrum have experienced moments of contact and collaboration throughout the modern and contemporary period. Indeed, this thesis will argue that non-heterosexual, non-cis-gender experiences are increasingly discussed under a broad concept of ‘being LGBT’ in Japan in the contemporary period. This can be viewed as a move away from the discrete lesbian and gay activism demonstrated in the *Contemporary Thought, Imago*, and *Inpakushon* issues of the 1990s, towards a widening out of sexual minority activism in Japan to include a broad base of LGBT participants. Furthermore, as the previous section of this chapter discussed, local governments and private companies have exploited the LGBT boom in order to promote their own agendas (Shimizu, 2017). This has created a situation in which specific valorised LGBT and queer identities are promoted, consequently erasing and excluding experience outside of these paradigms. This is problematic for LGBT and queer individuals in Japan because as the data from this study revealed, they are experiencing acute media visibility and pressure to conform to specific modes of queerness, in a social context which affords them few legal protections.

Post-LGBT boom scholarship is still developing, but it is clear that scholars have made progress in bringing some of these issues to light. Many of these issues are not new, but rather are re-emerging in new forms as a result of the LGBT boom. For example, the question of the valorisation of specific sexual and/or gender minorities was present in the gay liberation movement (where organising around gay liberation excluded people of colour (Kazama, 2002)), and has continued into the current LGBT rights movement. The issue of transnational flows of information and their impacts upon Japanese society is also not new, as can be seen from the influence of European sexology as discussed in Section 2.2.1 of this chapter. This continuity is the reason why it is vital to situate this study in its historical context in this review of the literature. In doing so, this chapter has demonstrated that LGBT rights movements and broad-based LGBT community groups in Japan occupy a complex position deeply rooted in historical context, but at the same time responding to increasingly globalising discursive drives.

In dealing with these complexities, many of the scholars working in this field focus upon individual identities along the LGBT spectrum. Sanbe (2015) is a good example of work which challenges this approach by investigating the family dynamics of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals. Furthermore, much (but not all) contemporary scholarship is centred around the lives of individuals living and working in Tokyo, particularly those of gay men. Some exceptions to this include, but are not limited to, the work of Dale (2013; 2014) and Sanbe (2015) which both generated data from the Kansai region, particularly Osaka. Overall, however, the 2010s have witnessed a continued persistence of studies of gay men in Japan, particularly within areas of large gay populations. There are many reasons why Ni-chōme has become the focus of so much scholarly attention. As a site of ethnographic enquiry, it is compact (it consists of two main streets), and ‘queer spaces’ such as gay bars are easily identifiable by their on-street signage (Baudinette, 2017).

Further, Tokyo is home to a high concentration of universities, some of which are well-known for admitting non-degree students who are pursuing doctoral or post-doctoral research in Japan. Perhaps partly to do with its status as a queer and/or subculture centre, its high concentration of migrant populations, and its ease of access for researchers, many research projects start and end in Ni-chōme.

This study aims to build upon existing scholarship to offer a timely response to these paradigms, and offer an original contribution to the field of studies of broad-based gender and/or sexuality minority communities and individuals in Japan. Despite the regular use of the acronym 'LGBT' in scholarly papers, little research has been conducted to look at what 'being LGBT' (identifying as part of a broad-based sexual and/or gender minority group) means in Japan. Is 'being LGBT' an important part of the respondents' daily experiences, or is identifying as LGBT merely a political strategy of visibility? For whom is 'being LGBT' possible, and for whom is it impossible? Which identities are valorised, and what effects does this have upon respondents? What role does physical distance from main centres of population such as Tokyo and Osaka play in these dynamics? This study attempts to critically analyse these questions from the point of view of a wide range of individuals living, volunteering, and working, within (and in resistance to) groups that stress this idea of 'being LGBT' as part of their political and personal strategies. The following chapter of this thesis will move on to discuss these aims and objective in more detail, and outline the overall research design and methodology of this study.

Chapter 3 - Research design and methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the aims of the research, and demonstrate how ethnographic methods within an overall case study approach were best suited to achieve those aims. This chapter of the thesis will outline the development of the research methodology and methods. It will begin with an explanation of the overall research aims and design, and then proceed through descriptions of the selection of interview respondents, data collection, and analysis. It will conclude with a discussion of the relevant ethical considerations and the issue of positionality and reflexivity. However, as will become apparent, ethnography does not lend itself to neat chronological processes and descriptions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), and it is important to note that there was considerable iterative movement between the different stages of this research.

4.2 The LGBT ‘community’ in Japan

Before moving to a discussion of the overall aims and research questions which underpinned this study, it is important to define and justify my use of the term ‘LGBT community’ in this thesis. ‘Community’ is understood in this thesis primarily in the sense put forward by Anderson (2006 [1983]) in *Imagined Communities*. Anderson (2006 [1983], p. 6) argued that communities can be “imagined” in the sense that individual members of that community may never meet, “yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”. Anderson was writing primarily about nationalism, but the core of his argument is of central importance for studies of communities of all kinds. Indeed, Anderson (2006 [1983], p. 8) notes “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined”. In summary, we do not recognise communities as such on the basis of their ‘truthfulness’ – but rather “by the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson, 2006 [1983], p. 8). Hence, ‘LGBT

communities' are not understood here as part of official structures with membership criteria, but groups of individuals who understand their communion with one another to constitute a community of gender and/or sexual minority individuals.

This is not to suggest that there were no official structures of community within the field. As will become apparent within the analysis, there were a number of formal non-governmental organisations (NGO) and informal groups which did operate as physical representations and manifestations of community. Some of these groups had rules for entry, and behavioural codes which participants were expected to follow (for example, there were often strict rules around photography at events, as will be discussed in Chapter 5). However, the concept of imagined communities in conjunction with the Bourdieusian notion of habitus (which will be discussed in Chapter 4) allows us to understand these diverse and often seemingly disparate organisations and individuals as part of a shared community of individuals which I will refer to as an 'LGBT community' throughout this thesis. This notion of LGBT community in Japan, and what it means to belong to an LGBT community is a key concern of this study, and will be discussed in detail from multiple view points throughout the analysis chapters of this thesis.

4.3 Aims and research questions

A review of the literature in Chapter 2 illustrates that there is no shortage of scholarship which engages with the lived experiences of gender and/or sexual identities in the Japanese context. However, there is a continued paucity of scholarship which examines the lives of broad-based sexual and/or gender minority groups and communities, particularly outside of the metropole of Tokyo. Many of these studies continue to narrow their field to one particular identity along the LGBT spectrum. Studies focussed solely on cities such as Osaka and Tokyo are vital contributions to our understanding of the

dynamics of gender and/or sexual minority communities in Japan. Indeed, a significant amount of the data in this study is drawn from individuals living in Osaka. Studies of individual identities are a vital part of gender and sexuality scholarship on Japan because they allow for an understanding of the issues facing often socially marginalised individuals. However, focussing solely upon narrowly defined groups can risk obscuring the broader dynamics of collective LGBT and queer identities across urban and rural divides (as they are constructed by the respondents) and competing identity politics.

The fieldwork for this project also roughly coincided with the LGBT boom. As outlined briefly in Chapter 1, and in detail in Chapter 2, this period saw an acute upsurge in mainstream media interest in LGBT lives in Japan, at a time in which few legal protections exist for those whom the boom claimed to represent. Added to this acute mainstream media interest was the increasing marketisation of LGBT lives, and the co-option of gender and sexually diverse identities as part of local government efforts to create cosmopolitan ‘global cities’. These changes occurred within a social context where the use of smartphones was increasing engagement with online realms of community through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter at unprecedented levels. This increased internet usage meant that *tōjisha*-generated narratives circulated at increasingly rapid speed, subtly changing the dynamics of community-based knowledge (as will be discussed in Chapter 6). Finally, these emergent forms of community brought Japanese and non-Japanese respondents into more frequent contact. This confluence of circumstances presented an opportunity to collect data that would be able to develop an understanding of the politics of identity and belonging at a time of significant social and discursive change for LGBT communities in Japan.

This study aimed, then, to look at the experiences of those who either identified broadly with the category of LGBT, or else were resisting this category and working against the possibility of belonging to the broad category of LGBT. The study aimed to collect data primarily from contexts outside of Tokyo, particularly the Kansai region of Japan.²³ As is discussed in greater detail in Section 3.4.5 of this chapter, the first period of fieldwork was conducted at the same time as my Difficult Language Training programme in Osaka, Kansai. During this first period of fieldwork, I planned to move to Tokyo and conduct the main portion of my interviews and participant observations in that area. However, as my fieldwork progressed, I identified that there was a paucity of research on gender and/or sexual minorities outside of Tokyo. I consequently made the decision to investigate a region outside of Tokyo, and conducted the remainder of my fieldwork with the aim of understanding the dynamic of the relationship between Tokyo and other areas.

The study was guided by the following primary research questions:

1. Is it possible to conceptualise the disparate goals and experiences of sexual and/or gender minority respondents as constituting an ‘LGBT community’ in Japan? If so:
 - i. How are broad-based gender and/or sexual minority communities engaging with and/or resisting mainstream media discourses of gender and/or sexual minorities during the LGBT boom?
 - ii. How are increasingly globalising discourses of sexual and gender diversity impacting upon community practice?
 - iii. What role are online spaces playing in the politics and practices of identity and belonging amongst the communities studied?

2. How are individual respondents engaging with the broad identity category of ‘LGBT’ during the LGBT boom?

²³ Kansai includes the prefectures of Mie, Nara, Wakayama, Kyoto, Osaka, Hyōgo, and Shiga. It is situated in south-central Japan.

- i. In what ways have respondents mobilised broad-based identity categories such as ‘LGBT’ in their day-to-day lives and activism?
- ii. In what ways have respondents resisted broad-based identity categories such as ‘LGBT’ in their day-to-day lives and activism?
- iii. Who is able to claim belonging to the category of LGBT, and who is not?
- iv. Who resists claiming belonging to the category of LGBT, and why?

Both sets of questions are centrally concerned with the key themes of the politics of identity and belonging during the LGBT boom. Question 1 is primarily concerned with these key themes in relation to groups and communities. These questions ask if it is valid to discuss ‘LGBT communities’ in Japan, and if so, how the LGBT boom has been experienced by those communities. Question 2 concentrates upon these themes from the perspective of individuals. This set of questions asks how individual respondents understand the category of LGBT, and the affects that the boom in mainstream media coverage has had in their lives.

All of the questions developed reflexively as the fieldwork progressed. As Jane Agee (2009) noted, good qualitative research questions are usually developed and refined as the research progresses. Since this study aimed to centre the lived experiences of the respondents, it was important that the research questions could be flexible, responding to the respondents’ own concerns and interests. Consequently, the research questions were written as what Patrick White (2013) has referred to as ‘curiosity-led’ questions. They are curiosity-led in the sense that I had a genuine interest in the answers to these questions, even if they caused me to question or revise my views and the direction of the research. For this reason, a number of questions were changed or discarded as the fieldwork and analysis progressed.

A good example of reflexively revising the research questions was my approach to the notion of *jōshiki*. *Jōshiki* can be roughly translated as ‘common sense’, and for many of the respondents was related to notions of ‘going along’ (*awaseru*), and understandings of what was acceptable in any given situation. For example, in my interview with Takuya, he told me that when he was a junior high school student (13 to 15 years old) “it was *jōshiki* that boys would end up liking girls”. Utterances of this nature piqued my interest, so I looked up *jōshiki* in my electronic dictionary, and using a straight forward translation set about developing a question which asked “What is the role of common sense in LGBT communities?” Based on my assumptions as a native speaker of English, I initially understood common sense as social intelligence, and of sound judgement in social affairs. I pursued this question over the following months, listening closely for any direct or indirect mentions of the term *jōshiki*, and coding my data using a ‘common sense’ tag (further details of my analysis process can be found in Section 3.6 of this chapter).

However, as Dolores Martinez (2006) has noted, there is continued disagreement amongst anthropologists of Japan about the use of emic terms such as *uchi* and *soto* (‘inside’ and ‘outside’) in Anglophone studies of Japan. As Martinez notes, both emic and etic terms are constructed through relations of power, and they are often also in dialogue with each other. As my investigation of *jōshiki* progressed, it became apparent that in line with Martinez’s observations about the complexity of power relations within the researcher/researched paradigm, neither simple translation nor direct transliteration could necessarily take into account the ways in which respondents’ and my own understandings of and engagement with emic terms are flexible and subject to change. For this reason, my approach to the notion of *jōshiki* was necessarily reflexive, driven by a genuine curiosity and coupled with the acceptance that it might not be possible to ‘pin’ such a term down once and for all. Indeed, as I opened my analysis up to respondents for feedback, we actively became involved in an overt dialogue regarding the meanings of

these terms. When I presented my initial analysis of the key term *jōshiki* at a member-checking workshop which I organised in July 2015, many of the attendees expressed differently nuanced understandings of the concept. In summary, participants felt that *jōshiki* was a much more active controlling force in their lives than is expressed in the English definition. Some participants noted their opinions on the post-it notes provided:

- I think there is a considerable difference between ‘*jōshiki*’ and ‘common sense’.
- I think that *jōshiki* is a Japanese thing.
- In Japan, *jōshiki* is something that restricts us.
- Depending on the person, *jōshiki* can be like a brick wall, based on whatever social axioms exist.

It became apparent that for many of the respondents, talking about *jōshiki* was an alternative way to talk about tangible social structures which restricted them in their day-to-day lives. This was not exactly the ‘common sense’ of good sense and sound judgement that I had understood. It became obvious that emic and etic notions of *jōshiki* and common sense were not entirely congruent. Instead, *jōshiki* was more about reading the intentions and expectations of an individual actor and/or social setting and adapting one’s behaviour to meet expectations. In short, *jōshiki* is related to social structures and structural barriers within society that influence personal judgements. This is certainly a minor nuance, but I felt that it changed my understanding of the term *jōshiki* fundamentally and drew my attention to issues related to terminology. As a result, the English ‘common sense’ no longer seemed like a sufficiently broad analytic category. I adapted the research question, and began to analyse the data in terms of the respondents’ ability to claim belonging to the category of LGBT, and the reasons why this might not be possible (including an understanding of *jōshiki* playing a partial role in structuring

behaviour). Changing my approach slightly in this way ultimately led me to Bourdieu's open concept of habitus, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

4.4 Research design

In order to answer the research questions and meet the aims set out above, this research used ethnographic methods within an overall case study design. The case study approach is understood here as a "logic of design" which "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2014, p. 13). In this research, the phenomenon under investigation was a core group of LGBT and queer individuals living mostly in the Kansai region of Japan, from September 2014 until the end of January 2016. The fieldwork was divided into two main parts: an early exploratory phase between September 2014 and March 2015, followed by the intensive fieldwork period between May 2015 and the end of January 2016. The initial period of fieldwork was conducted part-time alongside Difficult Language Training, which was an essential aspect of my study. During this initial phase of the fieldwork, I identified that a core group of LGBT and queer individuals in Kansai were experiencing an acute upsurge in visibility in the mainstream media, and being challenged by newly emergent discourses from the LGBT boom. Due to the fieldwork running roughly concurrently with these changes, the research clearly constituted what Robert Yin (2014) refers to as a revelatory case. Revelatory cases are those which offer good potential to access previously inaccessible or difficult to access communities and provide theoretical and analytic possibilities (Yin, 2014). Since little scholarship existed which took these changes as its focus within this context, the research was also exploratory in nature. Exploratory research lends itself well to case study design (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006), which can be used in detailed exploratory analysis and theory testing.

After identifying the core unit of analysis, the research design aimed to develop a set of more focussed individual units of analysis within the revelatory case. The individual units of analysis would focus upon the ways in which smaller groups and/or individuals negotiated the politics of identity and belonging within this core unit of analysis. Yin (2014, p. 43) refers to this design as “embedded, single case design”. Within this design, each embedded unit can be conceptualised as relatively discrete paradigmatic cases in their own right. Paradigmatic cases are those which “highlight more general characteristics of the societies in question” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 232), with the society in question being the social worlds of LGBT and queer individuals in Kansai. For the sake of brevity, each of the individual embedded units are referred to henceforth as ‘case studies’ or ‘individual case studies’. Figure 5 represents a diagram adapted from Yin (2014) which shows the planned research design.

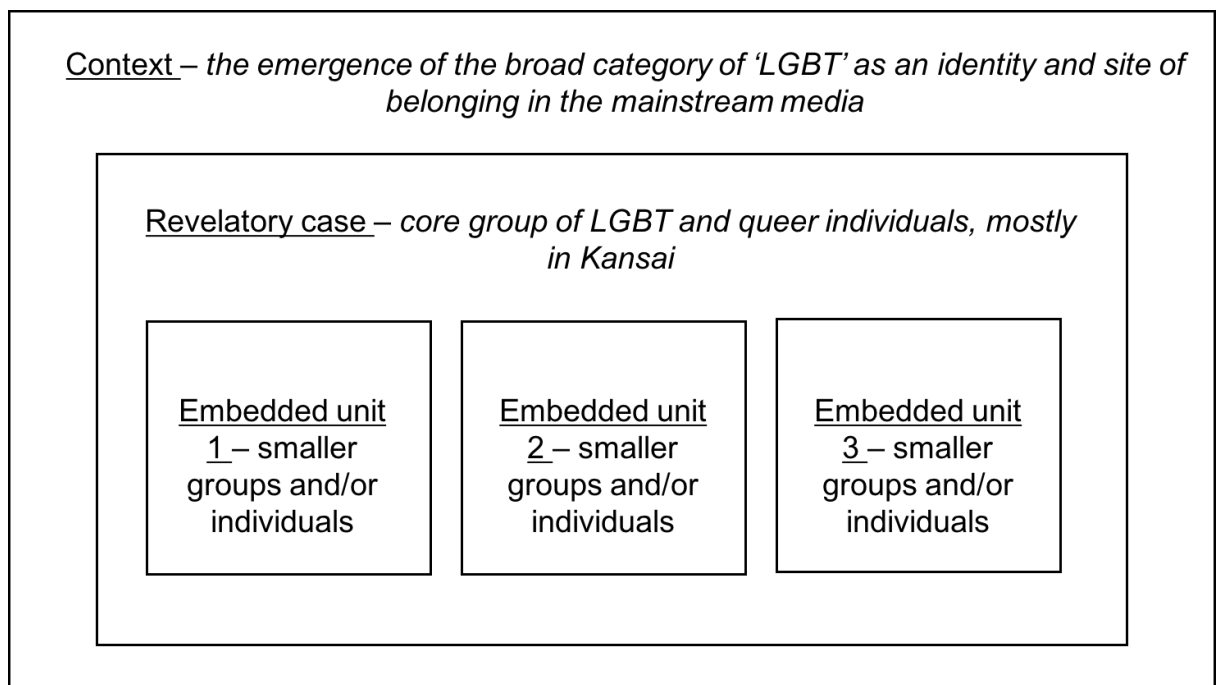


Figure 5 - Overall case-study design

I chose to approach the field using ethnographic methods, which sits well within a case study approach because the types of questions which case studies can ask are answered well by the types of data that ethnographic approaches can produce (Yin, 2014). The type of knowledge that this research sought to describe was the tacit understandings and experiences of individuals and their positioning in relation to the notion of ‘being LGBT’ in Japan. Ethnography is an approach to the field which allows us to examine the day-to-day lives of informants and the ways in which they understand and describe their social worlds. It is about “the daily experiences of ordinary people on ordinary days, and in the interpretations that they themselves bring to these experiences” (Duneier et al., 2014, p. 2). Ethnographic methods such as participant observation and open-ended interviews allow the researcher to collect data in ‘natural’ settings, that have not been pre-constructed by the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Madden, 2010). Through these methods, respondents were able to describe their own social worlds in their own terms, and demonstrate their embodied practices in ordinary day-to-day contexts. Hence, adoption of ethnographic methods was based on the understanding that it would be possible to draw appropriate revelatory and exploratory data out through participant observations and open-ended interview methods.

The selection of the individual case studies embedded within the overall revelatory case is difficult to place firmly in the structure of this chapter which flows roughly chronologically from research design through to analysis. This is because case selection, much like the development of research questions discussed in Section 3.3 of this chapter, was an iterative process which did not progress in a linear fashion. The difficulties in case selection are well documented in qualitative methods and small-N methods literature (see for example Carter and Sealey (2009)). As Jason Seawright and John Gerring (2008) have noted, it is not only difficult to determine which cases might be suitable for a given

research design, but the selection of cases is also restricted by practical factors such as time, money and access.

Sharan Merriam (2009) has emphasised the need for individual case studies to be bounded systems with obvious actual or theoretical fencing around them. In two of the individual case studies in this thesis, these limits were relatively easy to demarcate. Chapter 4 focusses upon a small group of individuals and their interactions regarding a t-shirt design, and Chapter 5 focusses upon one specific LGBT community event. These cases both presented themselves early in the participant observation stages of the research, and I was able to investigate them as individual cases as they occurred. This does not mean that the exact boundaries of these cases were known to me at the time of data collection, since one of the points of case study research is that it can help the researcher investigate phenomena where the limits are not fully known (Yin, 2014). Although I had a rough sense that they would become two of the individual cases, the actual demarcation of their boundaries occurred alongside the analysis and writing-up phase.

In contrast, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 focus more upon general processes and discourses that emerged frequently in the field: affective and performative practices of belonging and imaginative geographies. These processes and discourses emerged frequently in my field diary notes, but it was more difficult to attach them to bounded sets of events. Respondents often referred to these processes in their own words, and in ways which were more difficult to identify and categorise in the field, and therefore were somewhat obscured until the data could be assessed as a whole. For example, utterances about *ibasho* (a place to 'be', a place of belonging) could be identified in the field as related to affective practices of belonging (a more detailed discussion of *ibasho* can be found in Chapter 6). In contrast, respondent narratives about same-sex marriage rights in Japan

versus the imagined ‘West’ did not lend themselves to being immediately categorised as related to practices of belonging. It was not until the data were coded along the key themes that the central importance of these seemingly unrelated utterances became apparent. Hence, development of the boundaries of the individual cases presented in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 of this thesis sometimes occurred outside of the field, as I worked back through field diaries and interviews to reconstruct the case from the outside.

4.5 The respondents

Interview respondents were considered for suitability based on two main conditions: that they identified as a gender and/or sexual minority, and that they had attended LGBT or queer-related community events or lectures at some point in the past. In the context of this study, my aim was not to produce generalisations but to describe the myriad ways in which individual respondents experienced identifying as a gender and/or sexual minority, and the ways in which this overlapped with the emergence of the category of ‘LGBT’ as a broad identity category and site of belonging. Further, although some quantitative data does exist on LGBT lives in Japan, it is limited in scope. The NGO Nijiuro Diversity’s annual workplace survey (Nijiuro Diversity and Center for Gender Studies and International Christian University, 2014) gathered basic qualitative data from 1,815 individuals in 2014, but questions were largely limited to workplace experiences, excluding those without workplace experience. Recent synthesis of the existing qualitative data took place after the fieldwork 2017, and showed that there was a general lack of detailed understanding of the issues facing LGBT people in Japan, and of the causes of those issues (Nakanishi, 2017). Given the lack of quantitative national data on gender and sexual minorities in Japan, it was not the intention to gather respondents according to a random statistical sampling model. Equally, it became apparent that rich and textured qualitative data was in short supply. Hence, I opted to use a ‘small-N’

approach to respondent selection. In small-N approaches, large statistically random samples are not sought, and theoretical contributions are made with a more limited scope.

4.5.1 Gender(s)

After a review of the literature, I was concerned that there would be a bias towards cis-gender and transgender men, so I attempted to recruit respondents from a broad range of identities across and beyond the LGBT spectrum. For example, I also recruited individuals who identified as gender non-conforming, and *x-jendā*. I promoted the research at broad-based LGBT community events, and was transparent with gatekeepers about wishing to actively recruit women, transgender women and/or non-binary individuals. Despite these efforts, there was a bias towards cis-gender men and transgender men in recruitment responses. Additionally, all of the cis-gender men identified as mono-sexual²⁴ gay men. This bias is illustrated in Table 1 which summarises the self-identifications of the respondents.

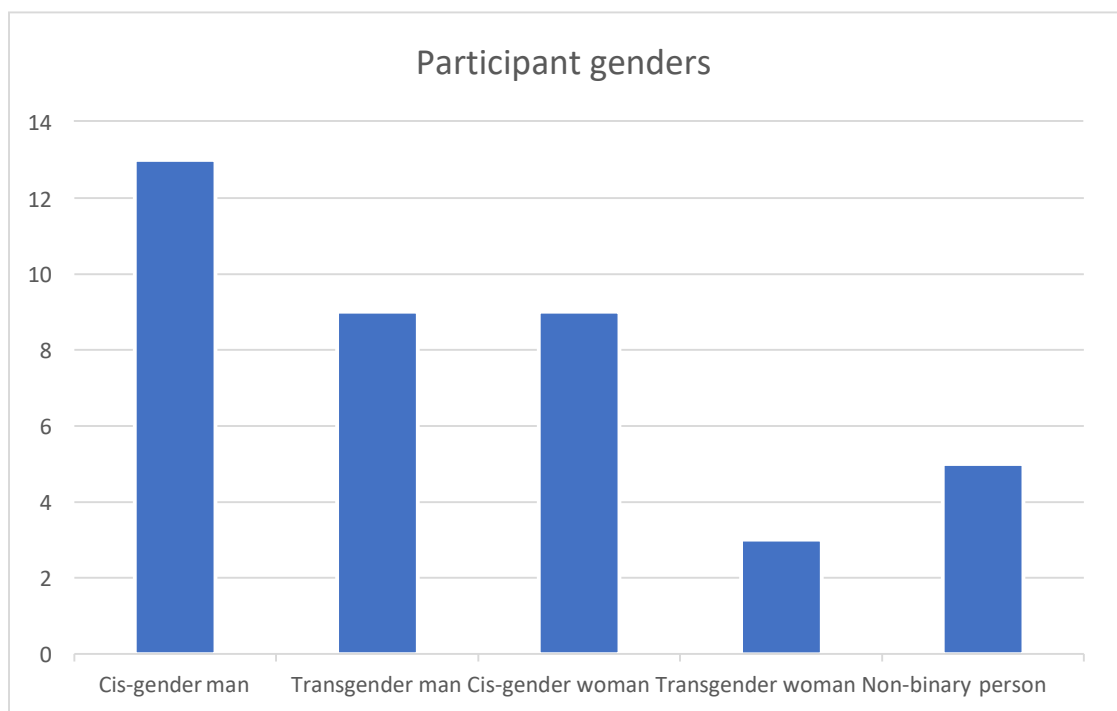


Table 1- Participant genders

²⁴ Sexually and/or romantically attracted to individuals of one assigned at birth sex and/or gender.

As Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (2007) have argued, access to respondents in ethnographic research is not just about the practicalities of being granted physical access to a specific setting. Imbalances in access to specific members of a community are also a concern, and provide theoretical insight into the research settings. Indeed, the bias in my own respondent sample towards cis-gender gay men reveals a number of salient points. Firstly, cis-gender gay men clearly enjoy a certain amount of privilege, even within marginalised gender and/or sexual minority communities in Japan. There is a long history of scholarly engagement with cis-gender gay men in Japan (as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4), and many of the cis-gender gay men in this study had previous exposure to the presence of researchers in the field, and understanding of the research process. Quantitative data approaches (mainly multiple-choice surveys administered at public events) were particularly familiar to these respondents. This is due to the fact that some of the most publicly visible LGBT-related organisations in the area were those catering to men who have sex with men (MSM), and were partly government funded. These types of organisations must continually justify their funding through the production of quantitative data, usually related to demonstrating increased uptake of safer sex practices (i.e. use of condoms). One of the ways in which they do this is to gather quantitative data related to safer-sex practices amongst their clients. They often undertake this work at public events such as pride parades, which makes quantitative methods more visible, especially amongst the target communities of these organisations (who tend to be gay and bisexual men). The cis-gender gay men's familiarity with these approaches was demonstrated through their knowledge of confidentiality and informed consent processes, and direct critiques of my small-N approach. In contrast, women and/or non-binary respondents (who generally did not access government funded MSM-related organisations) did not advise me on research design, and in general had not previously taken part in research of any kind.

Secondly, the imbalance in access led me to consider the employment status of the cis-gender men and transgender men in comparison to the cis-gender women, transgender women, and/or non-binary respondents. A summary of the respondents' employment status can be found in Table 2 and Table 3. Many of the cis-gender men were working full-time, which allowed certain levels of freedom in the time and place of interview, and the financial impact of taking time off work to talk to me. Equally, the transgender men in this study seemed to enjoy many of the same employment advantages as cis-gender men (although this was not always the case, and there are many issues still facing transgender men in the Japanese workplace). For example, Akira (a transgender man) was working full-time, and was senior enough to be able to leave his work for a period of two hours during the day to participate in our interview. Cis-gender women, as well as non-binary individuals and/or transgender women in this study tended to experience less stable employment. Taking two to three hours from their day to take part in a research project was a comparatively higher burden than for those with more stable employment.

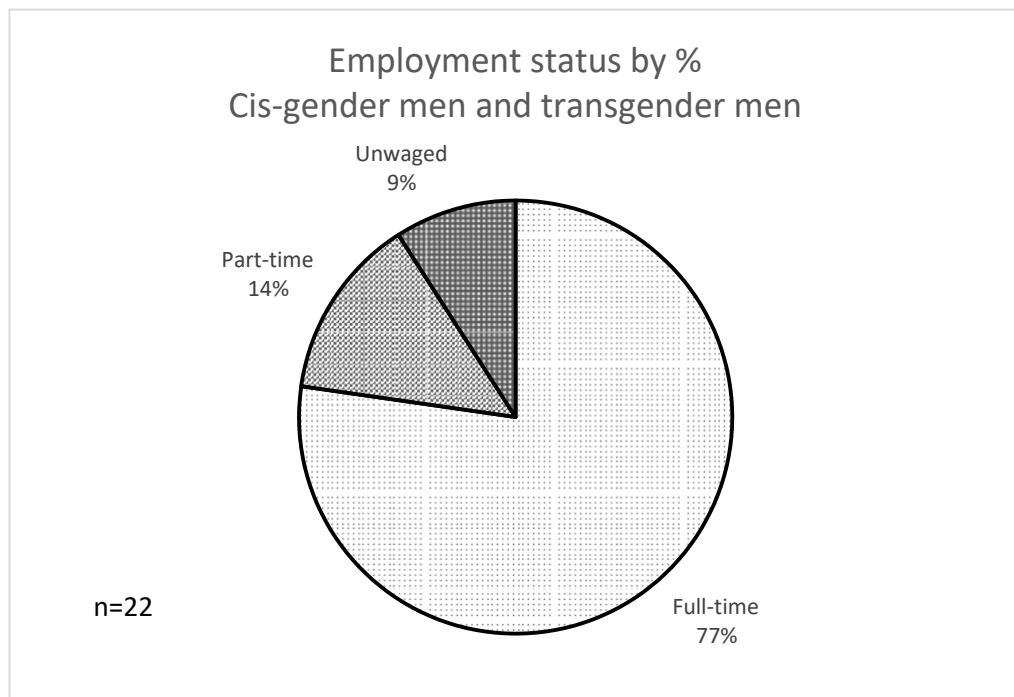


Table 2 - Employment status by % - cis-gender men and transgender men

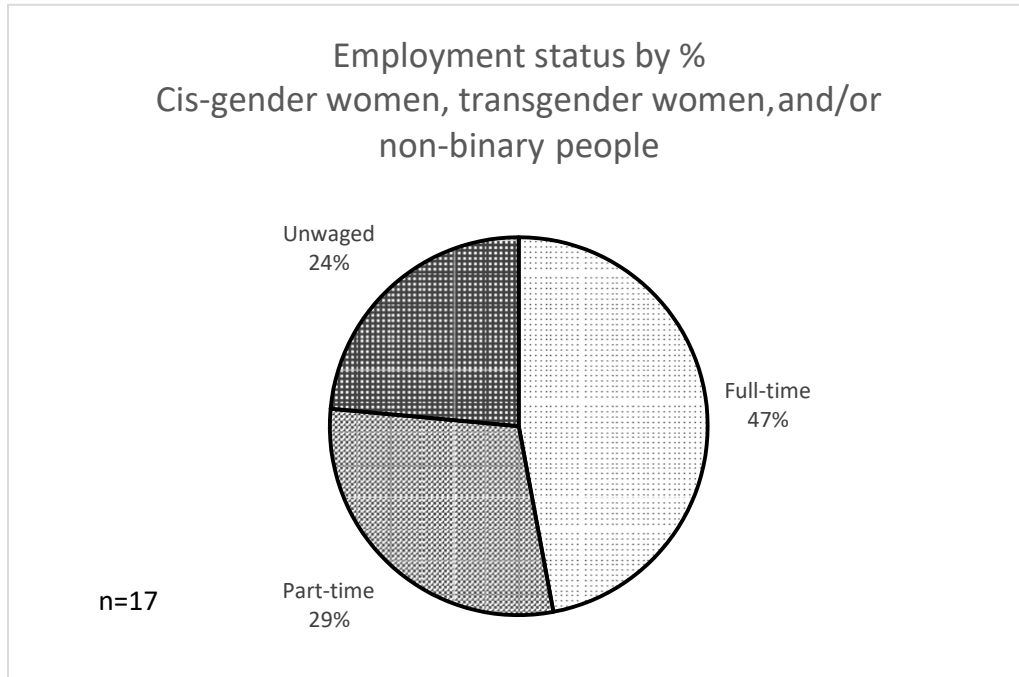


Table 3 - Employment status by % - cis-gender women, transgender women, and/or non-binary people

Overall, active recruitment of cis-gender women, transgender women, and/or non-binary respondents did achieve some level of success, with a number of interview respondents being referred to me as a direct result of these requests.

4.5.2 Nationality, race, and ethnicity

During the fieldwork, the most common nationality and ‘race’ classifications used by respondents across nationalities were ‘Japanese’ and ‘foreigner’ (*gaikokujin*, *gaijin*: literally ‘outside country person’ and ‘outsider’, similar in tone to ‘alien’). This binary categorisation usually referred to those who were registered on a *koseki-seido*²⁵ (hereafter,

²⁵ In Japan, births are registered using the *koseki-seido* (household registration system). This means that individuals are registered to a family unit, rather than as individual births. A *koseki* consists of a designated head of household (usually, but not always, the male partner in a marriage) around whom all other individuals are organised. Children are registered according to their birth order, for example eldest son, second son, and so on. When a person marries, one of the pair must leave their birth *koseki* and move to that of their husband/wife. Usually it is the woman who moves to the man’s *koseki*. As a result, a person’s nationality is usually inferred from the place in which their *koseki* is held, rather than through ‘ethnicity’. Additionally, official forms and the Japanese census do not usually ask respondents for their ethnicity, but rather their ‘*koseki*’, which would usually be the nation in which one was registered, regardless of one’s ethnic background.

koseki or household registration system) as ‘Japanese’, and those who were not as ‘foreigner’, regardless of the person’s ethnicity or length of stay in Japan. The ‘foreigner’ amongst the communities studied was usually (but not always) imagined to be Anglophone, white, and American. Non-Japanese people of East Asian ethnicity and mother tongues other than English were often completely ignored. For example, one of the monthly group meet-ups I attended in downtown Osaka asked me to translate their monthly newsletter into English in order to advertise to ‘foreigners’. This reflected the syllogism that if a person is a foreigner, they speak English.

Not all respondents relied on these binary categorisations. For example, Yuta avoided using the word ‘foreigner’ by referring to non-Japanese people as “people who look like Jay”. Indeed, there was a limited level of awareness around race and racialised ethnicity in Japan. For example, Nozomi disliked the word ‘foreigner’ and intentionally used the phrase “*gaikoku ni rūtsu o motsu hito*” (people who have roots in other countries) to refer to those who did not hold a Japanese *koseki* and those who had mixed-race ethnicity. However, the majority of respondents categorised their own social worlds around the Japanese/foreign binary. I have opted, therefore, to describe and reflect the categorisations that respondents deployed, whilst at the same time highlighting the exceptions in the relevant empirical chapters throughout the thesis. I have chosen to replace the word ‘foreigner’ (with its derogatory connotations) with ‘non-Japanese’ wherever possible. Hence, respondents who were registered on a Japanese *koseki* are referred to as ‘Japanese’, and those who were not registered on a Japanese *koseki* are referred to as ‘non-Japanese’.

In this study, thirty respondents are referred to as Japanese, and the remaining nine as non-Japanese nationality. The recruitment of non-Japanese nationals yielded much higher

response rates that that amongst Japanese respondents. Much like the imbalance in participant genders, this imbalance in access was considered to be theoretically significant in and of itself. Despite my efforts to establish trust within local Japanese speaking communities, my position as outsider may well have made recruitment of Japanese nationals more difficult than that of non-Japanese nationals. It also suggested that there may have been some fears surrounding visibility amongst potential Japanese respondents, a concept which became one of my key areas of analysis discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. In order to prevent the data being flooded with non-Japanese respondents, I carefully managed the recruitment, and turned away some non-Japanese volunteers.

4.5.3 Socio-economic backgrounds and other relevant information

Of the nine non-Japanese respondents, four were brief sojourners with plans to return to their home countries in the near future, three were long-term residents with plans to stay indefinitely, and two can be classed as probable sojourner-turned consequent settlers. In terms of socio-economic backgrounds, the non-Japanese respondents were more homogeneous than the Japanese respondents. Two of the non-Japanese respondents were undergraduate students (Kiah and Jake), and the other seven respondents had bachelor's degree educations. Of these seven, one worked as a copy writer and translator (Blaine), two worked as English Teachers at private English language schools (Sabio and Nick), and four worked as Assistant Language Teachers as part of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET). The nationalities of the respondents were skewed towards the USA and UK, with four and three respondents respectively.²⁶ Of the remaining two

²⁶ This can be attributed to the fact that the majority of the non-Japanese respondents initially entered Japan on JET, which draws most of its employees from North America and the UK. Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2015, p. 4) reports that of the 4786 JET participants in 2015, 56% were USA nationals, 11% were Canadian nationals, and 9% were British nationals.

respondents, one held Portuguese nationality, and the other held Australian nationality. One respondent was African-American, and the other eight were white. The respondents were also skewed towards cis-gender gay men, for many of the same reasons outlined in Section 3.5.1 of this chapter. Further details of the respondents' backgrounds can be found in Appendix A.

Whilst all of the non-Japanese respondents had university level education, and enjoyed relatively privileged financial situations, the Japanese respondents represent a much broader variety of ages and socio-economic backgrounds. Occupations varied across: unemployed (e.g. Miho), self-employed (e.g. Asataka and Kumiko), part-time/non-contracted worker (e.g. Kei), full-time/contracted worker (e.g. Akemi), students working part-time (e.g. Manabu), and students job-seeking (e.g. Shun). The Japanese respondents had a variety of educational backgrounds: those who had not graduated high school (e.g. Shun, who was attending night school to gain a high school diploma), those with professional qualifications (e.g. Natsuki, a qualified social worker), those with bachelor's degrees (e.g. Keiko), and those with post-graduate qualifications (e.g. Kōji, who pursued a Master's degree in the USA). Ages ranged from 20 to 60s. Given the breadth of experiences represented by the Japanese respondents in this study, this overview section can only sketch the broad contours of the data. Further biographical information can be found in Appendix A.

4.5.4 Approaches to recruitment

Given the issues of access summarised above, as well as to ethical considerations of the privacy and visibility of LGBT and queer identified individuals in sociological research (Dodd, 2009), the first stage of the research was dedicated to establishing relationships of trust with a network of informants and gatekeepers. Much of this work was conducted

during my first trip to Japan from September 2014 until March 2015. During this period, I was studying academic Japanese in Osaka during the day, and spent most of my evenings and weekends attending LGBT-related events and volunteering in various groups and organisations. Drawing upon the recommendations of Geertz (2000[1973]), I spent as much time as possible with and in the communities that I wished to research. This initial period was about gaining trust through the development of my 'role' as a white researcher in Japan (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) have described, developing a role in the ethnographic research process is about learning how to be in the chosen communities as a researcher, and managing the way one projects oneself in order to develop healthy networks for ethically sound research.

During this process, I was assisted by a number of gatekeepers, most of whom asked to not be identified in this study. I met my first gatekeeper in October 2014 through a contact of a contact I had made at a conference in the UK. This gatekeeper was an active volunteer at a local LGBT support group, and was involved with LGBT activism on a very regular basis. I met this individual at a large community event, and introduced myself using the referral from my contact in the USA, via my contact in the UK. I was subsequently introduced to another gatekeeper who has a long history of working in the LGBT community in Japan (over 20 years) who also agreed to help me learn about the local community. These two gatekeepers sent introductory emails to a number of groups explaining my research on my behalf, and facilitated my entry to a number of important research sites (including the Kansai LGBT Coming of Age Ceremony committee which is discussed in Chapter 5).

Upon my return to Japan for my second period of fieldwork from May 2015 until the end of January 2016, I began participant observations in earnest, and began active recruitment

of interview respondents. Recruitment for the interviews was conducted through gatekeepers, personal networks, and snowball sampling. The vast majority of interview respondents were recruited from personal networks which I had developed in the first period of fieldwork, often supplemented through social media. I prepared a recruitment flyer (a translation can be found in Appendix B) which outlined my research and posted this to a public Facebook page. This flyer included a QR code which linked individuals directly to both English and Japanese versions of my information sheets and consent forms so that they could read these prior to contacting me if they wished. I produced hard copies of this flyer for distribution by myself and one of my gatekeepers at local community centres and events. A smaller number of respondents contacted me as a direct result of conversations with gatekeepers, who had referred them on to me. In many ways, I benefitted from the “halo effect” (Fetterman, 2007, p. 36) of having gatekeepers who had sufficient trust within the communities I was gaining access to for me to benefit from that trust by association. Whilst this was helpful, it also meant that allowing interview respondents time to decline from participation if they so desired became an important element of the consent process, as described in more detail below. Finally, some respondents were referred to me through snowball sampling in which interview participants would recommend individuals whom I might contact to discuss the possibility of interviews.

4.6 Data collection

4.6.1 Participant observations

The sites of my participant observations varied widely. Some were conducted at large public events with hundreds of visitors (e.g. Kansai Rainbow Festa).²⁷ Others were open

²⁷ Kansai Rainbow Festa is Osaka’s annual Pride event. It consists of a festival with a performance stage and booths, and a parade through downtown Osaka.

to the general public, but on a much smaller scale, for example monthly group meet-ups with approximately twenty guests. Some events were focussed towards specific groups across the LGBT spectrum (e.g. coffee mornings for people with a GID diagnosis), whilst others were focussed on creating ties between the general public and LGBT-related groups. Another significant period of participant observation was at an NGO which provided consultancy services for businesses looking to implement ‘LGBT-friendly’ (*LGBT furendorī*) workplace policies and practices. The organisation also provided lectures for schools wishing to train teachers on LGBT-related topics. I spent six weeks working as a general assistant from August 2015 to September 2015, during which time I was given permission to gather background data for my study. This participant observation was particularly useful in terms of establishing my presence as a researcher, due to the relatively high level of trust that the NGO enjoyed within local LGBT communities.

I also served as a committee member at the Kansai LGBT Coming of Age ceremony (discussed in detail in Chapter 5). In 2014, I was accepted as a committee member with the proviso that I was taking part in order to learn more about the LGBT community in Kansai. At this point I did not actively use the event to gather data, but rather enjoyed serving as a member of the team, and used it as a networking opportunity. I translated promotional and recruitment materials for English speakers and helped recruit English-speaking volunteers. However, during my first year as a committee member, it became clear that the event and the processes involved in its organisation presented a paradigmatic case of the ways in which the politics of identity and belonging play out within a specific local community. Hence, in May of 2015, I wrote to the lead organiser asking for permission to once again apply as a committee member, this time with permission to make notes and collect data for my study. This permission was granted,

with some limitations. For example, I was asked to announce that I was taking notes at meetings before I did so. Hence, in 2015 to 2016, I was able to use participant observations to develop a case study around this event, as is discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Julie Scott Jones (2010) states that the participant observer is a person who makes the commitment to participate in the social worlds of the respondents on a physical, mental, and emotional level. Extended periods of participant observations allowed me to not only participate in a physical sense, but also to develop close mental and emotional connections to the communities I studied. In the early stages of participant observations, I drew upon the work of Japan specialists such as Sanbe (2015), Sunagawa (2015a), McLelland (2000a; 2002), Wim Lunsing (2001), Mitsuhashi (2006; 2010) and Mitsuhashi and Hasegawa Kazumi (2006). All of these scholars had spent extended periods of time being or becoming active members of the communities they studied. I also drew upon the work of John Brewer (2008), whose participant observer is one who participates in the daily lives of informants through open watching and direct interaction through talking, and Bill Gillham (2000) who defines the position as neither detached observer nor someone in the foreground. I actively interacted with the groups by asking questions, and joining in with workshop activities, but tried as far as possible to hold back from expressing personal opinions.

During many of my participant observations, the use of a notebook for data collection was not possible. In some instances, this was due to the practical set-up of the event. Writing in a notebook in the middle of a fashion show would be impractical, and during an emotional moment at a self-help group it would be socially inappropriate and insensitive. In these cases, I returned to my desk to write up my recollections as soon as

possible after the events. On a number of occasions I was also able to use the note taking application on my smartphone, which was more convenient and discreet than a pen and paper. In cases where note taking was practical (for example at events where guests were all sat at tables with writing materials) I sought permission with the attendees present at the time of the event. In these cases, I had a prepared speech which included a brief summary of my position as a researcher, my request to take notes, and the ways in which the notes would be used. I also included details of how individuals could request that I either not make notes, or that any notes I made be deleted from my records.

4.6.2 Interviews

The second main method of data collection was a series of 42 open-ended interviews with 39 key respondents. Since the knowledge and experiences that I was seeking to describe were the tacit understandings of the individuals, the open-ended and unstructured nature of the interviews was important. This approach gives access to “...people’s meaning-endowing capacities...” and produces “...deep data that come in the form of extracts of natural language” (Brewer, 2008, p. 66). Heeding the advice of Andrea Fontana and James Frey (2008, p. 117) I accepted that it was not possible for an interview to be neutral, and drew upon what they described as an emphatic approach in which “The interviewer becomes an advocate and partner...” in the research. I prepared a list of open-ended questions which could be used in the case of reluctant or nervous respondents, but these questions were rarely used (the questions can be found in Appendix C). Instead, I asked respondents to introduce themselves, and the conversation usually flowed in an organic manner from that point. Of the 39 interview respondents, 11 chose to be interviewed in English, and the other 28 chose to be interviewed in Japanese.

This method of ethnographic interviewing, which has been likened to “friendly conversation” (Spradley, 1993, p. 53) is not without its difficulties. Some respondents chose to give long narrative accounts of their personal experiences from a young age (e.g. Akira and Hideki). Others steadfastly refused to talk about their childhoods or their early thoughts about their sexuality and gender (e.g. Megumi and Akemi). Some focussed upon specific moments of trauma (e.g. Yumiko), whereas others actively avoided talk of any kind of hardship (e.g. Natsuki). Some respondents were highly critical of my interview approach, and directly requested that I ask survey style questions at a rapid-fire rate (e.g. Takuya and Akio). Others were happy to talk very generally, and the conversation at times strayed far from the research topic (e.g. Blaine and Kazuhiro). This variation produced data that are broad but also deeply detailed in areas that respondents identified as important. Hence, it was important to respond reflexively to this variation, and to understand it as part of the data, as will be make clear in the following section.

Interviews were conducted at locations chosen by respondents so that they felt as comfortable as possible. In most cases, this was a café or restaurant. Cafés and restaurants provided sufficient privacy through the judicious selection of seating, and the presence of background noise which would mask our discussions from other customers. In one case a respondent requested a private place, for which I booked a teaching room at my host university. Five interviews were conducted at the request of the respondents over Skype, and one was conducted via e-mail. The interviews were all recorded using a digital voice recorder. The presence of the voice recorder did sometimes act as an impediment to the flow of the interview, and I found that some interesting revelations came after I had stopped recording the interviews. For example, after ending the recording with Nanami, she told me that there was a certain ‘status’ associated with being ‘FTM’. This was significant because few respondents had previously identified transgender men as holding

any particular status within broad-based LGBT communities. These kinds of utterances were key in guiding me towards the analysis in Chapter 6 which considers the inclusions and exclusions afforded by online communities. Indeed, the dynamics created by the presence of voice recording equipment is a common observation in qualitative research (see for Negrón's (2012) detailed exposition of the impact of recording equipment on the flow of interactions and associated consent processes). In some instances, I was able to identify that these conversations would be relevant to the study and re-started the recording with the respondents' permission. These respondents would politely repeat the information for the recording, but the spontaneity and nuance of the original utterances were not retained. This kind of interaction provided further justification for my approach to data analysis and reduction as will be discussed in the following section.

4.7 Data reduction and analysis

There were two main forms of data generated during the fieldwork: field diaries (including my collections of secondary materials – for example flyers, workshop materials, and self-published materials), and the recorded interview data. Common practice in the social sciences is to render audio recordings into verbatim transcripts. This automatic practice persists in many studies, in part because of the belief that reproducing utterances in a word-for-word written document produces a more rigorous data set and reduces the margin for error (Loubere, 2017). The need for automatic verbatim transcription has been challenged by a number of scholars, many of whom have questioned the positivist notions that verbatim transcripts are neutral representations of truth (Davidson, 2009; Hammersley, 2010; Ochs, 1979; Slembrouck, 2007; Vigouroux, 2007). Elizabeth Halcomb and Patricia Davidson (2006) have argued that we must challenge the taken for granted assumption that verbatim transcription is necessary in all studies, particularly those in which the researcher does not necessarily need an exact

written record (for example, conversation analysis). Nicholas Loubere (2017) has also effectively demonstrated that in cross-cultural and/or multilingual research, verbatim transcription can significantly delay the process of data analysis (due to the length of time it takes to transcribe in a second, non-roman alphabet language), creating a separation of fieldworker from field events.

Indeed, much of the raw interview data in this study is in the Japanese language, which raised practical issues in relation to the time needed for verbatim transcription. After the first interview, I began a verbatim Japanese transcription, but quickly realised that the process was unacceptably lengthy (approximately ten hours of transcription to one hour of good quality audio). This lengthy process extended the distance between myself and the “here-and-now of a communicative event” (Vigouroux, 2007, p. 86), stripping out nuances of tone, pacing, and surrounding context for the sake of a textually ‘accurate’ representation of the utterances. Further, the process of rendering largely open-ended, often narrative descriptions into a purportedly more rigorous written format did not match the central logic and ethos of the research design. The ontological and epistemological assumptions at the centre of this research are the subtle realist assumption that all knowledge is constructed, and the constructivist assumption that it is not possible to view our social worlds detached from our background knowledge and contexts. Given this, subjecting the raw audio data to lengthy verbatim transcription would not only delay the process of data reduction and analysis, but also not produce any more of an objectively ‘truthful’ document than transcription approaches which respond reflexively to the realities of the field.

As a result of this, I made the decision in the field not to undertake a blanket verbatim transcription in the first round of analysis. Instead, I adapted transcription approaches

proposed by Davidson (2009), Halcombe and Davidson (2006), Loubere (2017), Cécile Vigouroux (2007) and Tom Wengraf (2001) to the specific contexts of my own research. Whenever possible during interviews I made detailed notes about the main topics of conversation, as well as any personal observations and thoughts. After each interview, I wrote a field diary entry which included utterances made after the end of recording. At this stage of the process, I re-read the in-interview notes and added further details to my field diary, as well as recollections about the overall tone of the interview. I also made some initial notes identifying possible key themes, and pointers for improving my interview technique – particularly questions that had proved either problematic or productive. After this, I listened to the audio recordings at a reduced speed, and made detailed time-stamped, usually first-person, summaries of the utterances. These documents became my gisted transcripts.

In the next stage, I input the gisted transcripts into MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software package, and coded the transcripts into broad themes and key ideas. QDA software was used for practical reasons, to reduce the need to print and store large quantities of paper-based materials and to allow for the development and editing of codes as the analysis progressed. QDA software also allowed for the scanning of hand-written notes to act as back-up in the case of loss or damage to original documents in transit between Japan and the UK. In terms of approach to the analysis of the data, I drew upon the framework laid out by John Creswell (2007) in which analysis moves in analytic spirals rather than in a linear fashion. As a result, there was considerable movement between the in-interview and post-interview notes, the gisted transcriptions, and the raw audio data during the second stage of analysis.

The codes emerged from participant observations, informal conversations with informants, field diaries, and existing literature. I also conducted a member-checking workshop in which I presented key codes for comment from respondents. I was also in daily contact with gatekeepers and informants, many of whom gave me feedback on the key themes I was working with. These informal conversations were important in the shaping of my analysis. For example, at an evening meal with friends the topic of my research came up:

[...] before we'd even had any drinks, Kin asked me what I was researching at the moment [...] so I pulled up the latest idea I have been thinking about which is the idea of 'community' [...] I asked about whether Kin thought there was such a thing as a sense of community among LGBT people in Kansai. Kin said that people have lots of different ways of thinking, people have different opinions [...] Shiki brought up the idea that in Japan people think more in terms of a village or local community (地域コミュニティ *chiiki komyuniti*), something rooted in a place. Within those places people think differently but act together so it's unfair to say that just because people think different they're not a community or that community depends on people thinking the same way about things.

– *Expert from field diary*²⁸

This conversation was typical of the informal interactions I encountered in the development of my key themes for analysis. I had only recently started to think about the idea of 'community', and raised it here as a time-filler before the arrival of drinks. However, within this short interaction I was exposed to two different notions of community (shared beliefs and shared place), as well as a key piece of vocabulary (*chiiki komyuniti*). In instances like this where there was clearly a divergence of opinions, I was encouraged to investigate further, using the key vocabularies that informants presented to

²⁸ This is a copy of my diary, with some sections removed for relevance.

me. Equally, some key themes were dismissed by informants as irrelevant, giving me pause to consider them in greater depth. In this way, I was able to refine the analysis in response to the ways in which respondents and informants viewed themselves and their contexts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Only when the note-taking and transcription processes outlined above had been carried out, and key themes and individual case studies had been selected, did I begin the process of verbatim transcription and translating. As Loubere (2017) points out, non-verbatim transcription strategies do not necessarily entirely exclude the verbatim transcription of key passages for the purposes of creating research outputs, but instead manage the points at which these verbatim records are made. Furthermore, the process of selective verbatim transcription and subsequent translation was also reflexive. At the point of verbatim transcription, I returned once again to my field diaries, and the raw audio data. I re-read and re-listened to confirm that the gisted transcripts were accurate, and that the selected passage fit contextually into the interview and analysis as a whole. Only when I was satisfied on these fronts were the passages then transcribed verbatim and translated for functional equivalency into English.

Translating for functional equivalency was undertaken in order to retain the central meaning of the utterances in as close to standard English as was possible. The linguistic typology of Japanese is such that sentences usually flow in subject-object-verb order (although the subject is often omitted). In contrast, English is a subject-verb-object language. This meant that in translating from Japanese to English the word order often had to be significantly changed in order to retain the core meaning of the utterance. Additionally, although many of the Japanese interview respondents used Kansai dialect, I chose to translate these into standard English. This decision was made to avoid what

Stef Slembrouck (2007) called ‘social ascription’ in which certain types of speech are rendered more colloquially than others in the transcription and translation process. In order to avoid distracting and heavily politicised dialect affectations (for example, choosing to render Kansai dialect into an English dialect with which I am familiar such as Yorkshire dialect) I translated all speech into standard English, noting dialect utterances in the analysis where they were significant (for example in Chapter 5, Section 5.5). Other considerations related to translation are raised as and when relevant in the analysis chapters.

4.8 Writing ethnographic research

Writing up ethnographic fieldwork is not a neutral process. Indeed, as John Van Maanen (2011) demonstrated, all ethnographic writing can be described as ‘tales’, in the sense that each tale has its own aims, intended audience, and structures. For example, confessional tales tend to foreground the fieldworker, and how the ethnography was produced, whilst realist tales tend to completely obscure the role of the field worker and describe social worlds as ‘truthful’ representations of cultures (Van Maanen, 2011). Furthermore, ethnographic writing often seems to follow broader sociological trends (Beatty, 2018; Coles and Thomson, 2016). For example, ethnographic writing has developed from “classics, objective to a fault” (Beatty, 2018, p. 31), through the early adoption of the linguistic turn which argued that writing structures social worlds (Coles and Thomson, 2016), to the recent increase in auto-ethnographic works which transparently centre the personal as political (for an example relevant to this study see Rooke (2009)). It is also important to acknowledge the historical roots of ethnographic research in colonialism and imperialism, a fact which has rightly led to a continued and sustained engagement with the role of the ethnographer within the field.

What all ethnographic writing shares (regardless of when it was produced) is the fact that the process of writing and reading is dialogical (Lichterman, 2015; Simon, 2013) and part of a “sense-making process” (Coles and Thomson, 2016, p. 254). The fieldworker does not simply sit down and passively ‘write-up’ their field diaries into neutral accounts. Since the post-structuralist turn in the mid-twentieth century, there has been a greater understanding of the often “seductive” (Britzman, 1995, p. 229) nature of ethnographic writing that claims to produce ‘truth’ through the act of having being in the communities studied. Indeed, as each ethnographer writes, there is little doubt that they engage once again with the data they have gathered, noticing data which have been forgotten or missed in the privileging of other data (Simon, 2013). Writing is not a passive act, but one of active remembering or forgetting, selecting and deselecting, writing and re-writing. It is also important to consider the question of personal writing style and epistemological assumptions. My own writing style and approach to ethnography leans towards ‘structural tales’: those which seek to contextualise events and occurrences in relation to often less visible social and political structures (a key example of this would be my choice to use the scholarship of Bourdieu in framing the field, see Chapter 4). This kind of writing often foregrounds the writer’s interpretation of the data overtly through the use of theoretical frameworks.

This thesis is written mostly using this structural tale format. I have made a conscious choice to overtly refer to theoretical frameworks and to engage with these as part of the main body text. For this reason, there is no separate theoretical framework chapter within this thesis: theory is dealt with overtly as it becomes relevant. In cases where I wished to emphasise the way in which sometimes mundane and ordinary events find themselves at the heart of ethnographic approaches I have deployed ‘impressionist tales’ (Van Maanen, 2011) through vignettes. These passages are “kitchen sink” accounts (Van Maanen, 2011,

p. 117), in which observations I made in my field diaries have been re-told with minor editing. The key examples of this are the case of Asataka's t-shirt in Chapter 4, and the Kansai LGBT Coming of Age ceremony in Chapter 5. Indeed, impressionist tales lend themselves well to 'event' and/or 'occurrence' based analysis because they can be used to describe seemingly mundane events which actually have significant analytic potential.

4.9 Ethical considerations

As Lunsing (2001) noted in relation to his own research, there is often the assumption that researching personal identities or LGBT and queer individuals is a particularly sensitive area. Sarah Jane Dodd (2009) has taken this to a theoretical extreme by arguing that LGBT respondents should be regarded as vulnerable subjects. Dodd argues that heterosexual bias cannot be escaped in both mainstream media and academic discourses, and that this puts LGBT and queer individuals into a position of vulnerability. To a certain extent, some of my respondents could be categorised as vulnerable in a broad sense. No direct legal sanctions exist in Japan against gender and sexual minorities, but this did not necessarily mean that respondents did not suffer from instances of social and structural homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, and heterosexism. While acknowledging the validity of the statement that my respondents could be considered vulnerable, they were all also considered to be fully autonomous adults capable of giving full consent. Additionally, the three related approaches of informed consent, consideration of privacy, and researcher reflexivity also mitigated against any potential vulnerabilities.

4.9.1 Informed consent

I approached the issue of informed consent with three main concerns in mind. These were that participation in the research should be voluntary, fully informed, and that the respondents should be able to withdraw their interview data without prejudice up until a

specific pre-determined point. Prior to interviews, I gave respondents a copy of the information sheet and consent form in their chosen language(s) as soon after our initial contact as possible, and at least 24 hours before the proposed interview date (translations can be found in Appendix B). The information sheet and consent form summarised the research and gave details of the voluntary nature of the interview. I then allowed time for respondents to read the materials and contact me with any questions or queries. This initial dialogue was intended to expose all of the respondents to the informed consent procedure as early as possible, and to allow them to withdraw discreetly should they wish to. Prior to recording each interview, I verbally re-affirmed the principles of the informed consent before asking them to sign the consent form.

In the case of participant observations, whenever possible and viable, I sought permission from event organisers to take part as a researcher, and explained the purposes of my attendance to them. In all but two instances I was given permission to attend (in both of these cases I did not attend the event). In addition to asking permission to attend wherever practical and possible, I also adopted strategies to inform whole groups of my presence as a researcher. Many of the events I observed would include a short period of self-introductions before the main event. I always took this opportunity to state my occupation as a researcher, and gave a brief description of my research. Many events also had open-mic style sessions known as “free-talk (*furītōku*)”. During free-talk, individuals were given between one and three minutes to promote their group, give activity updates, or discuss their own research projects. I utilised these open-mic sessions as often as possible.

Brief, informal conversations about the research occurred many hundreds of times throughout the participant observations, and ethnographers have deployed a variety of strategies to deal with informed consent around these interactions (see for example

Virginia Mapedzhama and Tinashe Dune's (2017) description of issues related to the complexity of consent in an ethnography of gender and sexually diverse women). In this research, I placed emphasis on the need for transparency and an active avoidance of covert methods. Hence, in the early stages of each informal conversation, I made my position as researcher explicit, and sought verbal consent. In cases where I wished to take verbatim notes of utterances, I verbally sought permission to do so.

4.9.2 Anonymity and privacy

Another key area of concern in any research which gathers personal information about the lives of respondents is the protection of anonymity and privacy. This is particularly salient in the context of sexuality research in which respondents may not be open about their sexuality with friends, family, or employers. The information sheets clearly stated that responses would be audio recorded and that they would be used in research outputs. I advised the respondents that their names would be anonymised, but that it was likely that the place (e.g. town, city) was likely to be obvious. Protecting the privacy of interview participants, gatekeepers, and informal respondents had to be considered reflexively throughout. In some cases, the name of the event (for example, the Kansai LGBT Coming of Age Ceremony) could not be anonymised. These events were public, widely advertised, and generally known amongst respondents, so anonymising them would serve no significant purpose. As a precautionary measure, I did not name any respondents directly in conjunction with such events. In other instances, the issue of anonymity was less clear cut. For example, the fact that Asataka (who is the subject of Chapter 4) lived in Wakayama was central to the thrust of the analysis. Asataka stated that he was happy to be directly identified in the research, but I was reluctant to strip him entirely of his privacy, because I felt that this could also expose his friends and contacts in the city. I decided upon a compromise in which I would name the city, but anonymise

Asataka and his group, giving them at least the possibility of deniable plausibility should they need it.

Groups presented another problematic area. Some groups were keen that I not identify them in the research because they provide promises of privacy and anonymity to their members, guests, and clients. These groups are not named or referred to directly in this thesis. Although this did exclude some avenues for analysis, my commitment to ethical research dictated this outcome. Other groups gave me permission to name them directly. For example, the NGO where I undertook the internship gave me permission to name them. However, given that it would not be practical to contact all employees and members of these organisations directly to advise them of this, I decided to anonymise these organisations and groups as far as possible. Again, this is a strategy intended to protect the privacy of individual informants over and above the interests of organisational management who may have contrary goals in terms of participation in the research (i.e. publicity of their services).

4.9.3 Reflexivity and positionality

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 15) have defined reflexivity as an approach to the field which rejects “the idea that social research is, or can be, carried out in some autonomous realm that is insulated from the wider society and from the biography of the researcher”. Reflexivity describes an ongoing process of examining social contexts and personal biographies that inform the production of data. A closely related concern is that of position and positionality, which Gillian Rose (1997, p. 308) discusses in terms of “[F]acets of the self” which are “articulated as ‘positions’ in a multidimensional geography of power relations”. In more concrete terms, positionality refers to the researchers’ social position in terms of (amongst others) gender, age, nationality,

sexuality, and how this affects to the research in hand. Reflexivity and positionality are, by their very nature, related to personal identity. As Luiz Zago and Dave Holmes (2015, p. 147) have argued, the researcher's body (in the sense of our embodied identities) "cannot be neutralized during fieldwork". Our own embodied identities should be thought of as part of an active and ongoing "politics of intimacy" (Zago and Holmes, 2015, p. 148) in which systems of power are constantly negotiated. Indeed, it is the individual researcher who has the power to frame the questions, and who ultimately determines the boundaries of the analysis (Chapkis, 2010). Hence, although this research is not intended to be auto-ethnographical, my own personal identity cannot be extracted from the research, and I cannot claim a neutral stance in relation to the research motivations, design, and process.

My biographical history and personal identity, and its role in the research was particularly complex: not only because of my clearly visible position as 'white' and 'foreign', but also because of the less visible fact that I began the research not generally disclosing my bisexuality (and in some cases actively obscuring it), and am ending it with an overt statement of disclosure. It is clear that this research was at least in part motivated and shaped by my direct experiences of many of the issues that this thesis discusses (for example, invisibility, misrecognition, and the complexities of constructing and maintaining a 'straight-passing' persona at school, work, and in the academe). These experiences meant that I began my doctoral research with no intention of exposing myself to the professional and personal risks that remain for queer women in the academe and in wider British society. However, exposure to the realities of the field, and to respondents who were able to 'read' my sexuality in ways that I had not anticipated, meant that I gradually had to abandon this stance.

As Rooke (2010, p. 34) has noted, convention within social sciences has sometimes mistakenly created “the ethnographer as unproblematically stable in terms of their gendered and sexual subjectivity”. For example, Paul Lichterman (2015, p. 36) notes that it has become common in ethnographic work to “perform reflexivity” as a cursory exercise in an introductory chapter, never to be reflected upon again. This preserves the ethnographer’s identity as described in the introduction as fixed and stable throughout the research project. My own experiences in the field, in contrast, suggest that gendered and sexual subjectivity, and the extent to which we discuss these subjectivities with respondents, is fluid. Consequently, when respondents asked me about my sexuality at the start of the fieldwork, they received noticeably different answers to those I gave at the end. Being directly questioned about my sexuality undoubtedly affected the dynamics of the politics of intimacy I shared with respondents. Those who read or understood me as queer often referred to ‘our community’, positioning me as an insider and using shared vocabularies (for example reference to specific pop culture icons). In contrast, respondents who read or understood me as heterosexual often cast me as an outsider and took pains to explain their worlds to me as an interested but naïve third party.

In addition to these dynamics, my position as white British researcher in Japan also requires reflection. A metaphor that has been particularly useful in unpicking this position has been that of ‘mascot researcher’ (Adams, 1999). Laura Adams (1999) argues that mascots act as a symbol of group identity which carry the responsibility of representing that group, but also benefit from the privileged status which comes with being a representative of that group. In my case, my position as ‘native English speaker’ equipped me with sufficient social capital to volunteer as an English teacher at an LGBT-friendly English language club. Although my intention in seeking the work was to learn about gender and sexuality related vocabulary in Japanese, it also put me in contact with a

network of LGBT and queer people in the area. Equally, the novelty of a researcher from the UK in a field which is dominated by researchers from the USA may have encouraged some participants to take part in interviews. For example, Natsuki had a keen interest in social care and its attendant issues in different national contexts, and questioned me extensively on the state of social care in the UK. Since the research was not related to social care, I had to conclude that the opportunity to ask these questions may well have been one of Natsuki's motivations for taking part in the research.

However, as Adams (1999, p. 332) has noted, field based research also includes moments in which the researcher is "not all powerful", even when that researcher does retain some form of privilege. The researcher can find themselves in moments of powerlessness as respondents grapple with their own position in the field. Some respondents worried that my research was going to portray LGBT and queer people in Japan in a negative or 'backwards' light, and made both implicit and explicit requests about how the data should be collected and analysed. When I interviewed Takuya in October of 2015, he asked me how many people I had interviewed, and what groups those people had been involved with. I told him that I had interviewed 18 respondents so far, but that I couldn't tell him any further details. Takuya assumed that all of the respondents I had interviewed were involved with one particular group (from whom he had heard about the research), and that those people would portray Japan in a bad light. This led him to make assumptions about myself and the research, and he directly critiqued the research design:

Takuya: They're [the people he assumed I had interviewed] just one part of a minority.

Jay: Yes.

Takuya: I suppose there's nothing you can do about that.

Jay: Hmn.

Takuya: But I really think that your research aim is probably to focus on the difficulties that we have across the whole of Japan, and I want you to stop using those 18 people's voices as representative [of the whole of Japan].

Jay: Ahhh. I understand. This research is just about the individual participants. I don't think I even could talk about the whole of Japan using this research, no, not at all.

I understood that Takuya found my position of white British researcher as threatening. In my naivety, I may be misled by other respondents, or make mistakes in analysis which would produce biased outputs. In this interaction, and others like it, I felt the balance of power shift, and my own position become more vulnerable. Hence, although my position as white British researcher imbued me with certain cultural capitals (e.g. being able to fill the role of mascot researcher) that allowed me to negotiate the practicalities of access and data collection, it also created some difficulties when respondents re-asserted their own positions of power. Equally, the complexity surrounding my sexuality conferred both moments of insight and exclusion. These complexities are a central part of the research, and cannot be written-out of the thesis. For this reason, reflexivity and an awareness of my various positionalities have continued to be important tools throughout the study.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter set out to summarise the research design in relation to the research objectives. The chapter has stressed the non-linear way in which the research sometimes progressed. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, in order to ensure that the data collected reflected the concerns of the respondents, key themes and ideas tended to develop organically. Whilst I began with research questions that directly asked about common sense, conversations and member checking exercises with respondents led to me significantly changing my approach to this key theme. Secondly, I began the initial exploratory fieldwork in September 2014, before the peak of the LGBT boom. I started

the study wishing to find out if it was really possible to talk about an LGBT community in Japan, and the general challenges that those communities faced. However, as the LGBT boom approached its peak in March of 2015, it was paramount to shift my focus towards the specifics of these discursive changes. This was serendipitous timing, but did involve a shift in focus.

This chapter has demonstrated how the central logic of case study design coupled with ethnographic methods allowed for the collection of deeply texture revelatory and exploratory data which can be used to answer research questions about the politics of identity and belonging. As with any other research project, there were methodological challenges which had to be addressed reflexively in the field. Issues surrounding access and consent were particularly important, and were constantly reviewed through reading and interacting directly with gatekeepers, informants and respondents. I have demonstrated how my position as ‘mascot researcher’ may have imbued me with certain privileges, but in some cases I became more vulnerable. For example, when talking to gay male respondents such as Takuya who had prior experience of taking part in quantitative studies, I found myself having to justify my approaches and ensuring that consent was always informed and freely given.

Ethnographic research is such that the identity of the researcher cannot be cleanly separated from the research. This fact can be a source of great anxiety, particularly for PhD candidates who occupy a precarious position within the academe. This was particularly the case in this study, because the process of researching my own community in an alternative context caused me to re-assess my position in terms of visibility in the midst of the research. However, considering these difficulties as theoretically productive and as rich sets of data in their own right (e.g. theoretical insights that can be gained from

persistent bias in the respondent sample) mitigates many of these concerns. Indeed, reflexivity of this type has brought about many moments of insight. For example, it allowed me to understand the ways in which ‘community’ can be experienced differently depending on the level of visibility which one is able to claim within those communities and wider society. This was a key insight which became relevant in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

In closing, this chapter has demonstrated how my approach to the field presents an original and timely contribution to the field of gender and sexuality in Japan. The fieldwork for this study was designed to build upon the work of existing scholars such as Baudinette (2016a), Dale (2013), Mitsuhashi (2006; 2010); Mitsuhashi and Hasegawa (2006), Sunagawa (2015a), and Sanbe (2015) to develop new insights into the ways in which broad-based community groups understood and engaged with the politics of identity and belonging during the LGBT boom. The following four chapters of this thesis (Chapter 4 to Chapter 7) present this analysis around the two core themes of identity and belonging.

Chapter 4 - Activism and its meanings: field, habitus, and cultural capital

5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a description of one strategy of visibility used by a respondent at an LGBT demonstration in the small city of Wakayama, Western Japan. It will demonstrate how Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and cultural capital can be used to analyse the tensions that emerged as a result of this strategy. After outlining the events which led to a conflict between two activists I will argue that LGBT related activists can be conceptualised as operating within a field in the Bourdieusian sense. Closely related to the notion of field is that of habitus, which both structures and is structured by local context and practice. The subsequent sections will show how multiple habitus within the field were ruptured by the production of a t-shirt and the sharing of its image on-line. This rupture led to a symbolic struggle over the contents and methods of LGBT activism and practice, and the respondents' respective places within the field. It will argue that certain modes of LGBT activism are privileged by respondents. The respondents' perceived status within the field is affected by access to cultural capital resources, and the ability to articulate familiarity with certain forms of knowledge. In tacitly accepting the struggle over these resources as valid, the respondents were drawn together into a community of LGBT activists as part of a field despite their often-divergent goals and practices.

The use of Bourdieusian approaches in the Japanese context is not completely unheard of. However, early literature was skewed towards studies of the sociology of education, particularly *gakureki shakai* (academic meritocracy society) (Aizawa and Iso, 2016; Sanada, 2016). Aizawa Shin'ichi and Iso Naoki (2016) note that Japanese reception of Bourdieu was influenced by an ethos of severe examination competitiveness in the 1980s, around the time that Bourdieu's work was beginning to be translated into Japanese. More

recently, there has been interest in Japanese in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 2010 [1984]) and the way it can be applied to studies of culture and the arts (See for example: Kitada and Kaitai (2017) and Yamashita (2015)). However, the use of Bourdieu's theories in social sciences and area studies of Japan is scant. This chapter, therefore, provides an original empirical contribution to the field by establishing the efficacy and potential of considering LGBT related activism in Japan using this framework.

5.2 LGBT activism in Wakayama and the case of Asataka's t-shirt

5.2.1 IDAHOT in Wakayama City

Wakayama city is the prefectural capital of Wakayama, and had a population density of 1,743 people per km² in the 2015 census (Wakayama Prefecture, 2016). Much of the population is concentrated around the Kinokawa river, port area, and train station. With its one main street of shops and restaurants close to the station, it is a striking contrast to Osaka city which had a population density of 12,005 people per km² in 2016, and has a denser built environment with multiple shopping and leisure districts (Osaka City, 2016). The city of Wakayama itself is surrounded by mountains and sea, about an hour by car on the toll road from Osaka city. Wakayama city is becoming increasingly visitor friendly, due to its location close to Kansai International Airport and the Kumano Kodō, a UNESCO world heritage site. However, it retains a small-town atmosphere, and even as a temporary visitor it was not unusual to meet an acquaintance by chance within the city.

It was, therefore, a surprise to find that two LGBT groups were arranging a demonstration for International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) in the city. IDAHOT was established in 2004 to mark the declassification of homosexuality as a mental disorder by the World Health Organisation in 1990. These demonstrations became more common in Japan during the fieldwork, with one interlocutor discussing the

possibility of holding a separate local demonstration within central Osaka in Yodogawa ward. The Wakayama demonstration was the first of its kind in the city, and was an unexpected opportunity to conduct a participant observation of an LGBT related demonstration outside of Osaka.

When I arrived at the train station in central Wakayama city, about 10 demonstrators were immediately visible, waving rainbow flags and wearing brightly coloured clothing. Demonstrators were busy handing out flyers and reading messages of support over a loud-speaker. I met my contact, Asataka, outside the station. Asataka is the organiser of an LGBT and allies support group in Wakayama called LGBT Friends.²⁹ Established in 2015, LGBT Friends was created to connect LGBT identifying individuals with allies,³⁰ and provide a place where they can relax and enjoy simple activities like bowling and watching movies together. Membership of the group is loose, and there are no official rules or membership fees. I introduced myself, and Asataka proudly showed me his t-shirt, which he said that he had designed and made especially for the IDAHOT demonstration.

The design was simple: along the back of the shirt the acronym LGBT was printed in large letters, and below each of the letters was an explanation of each of the parts of the acronym. Below the 'L', the t-shirt showed two of the Japanese characters for 'woman' (女) next to each other. In the same way, the 'T' showed the character for 'man' (男) with an arrow pointing towards the character for 'woman' and vice-versa.

²⁹ LGBT Friends is a pseudonym.

³⁰ Allies (*arai* in Japanese) is a term use to refer to non-LGBT individuals who actively support LGBT people. There is ongoing debate as to the exact actions one needs to fulfil in order to be called an ally.



Figure 6 – Asataka's T-shirt

(Personal photograph with permission from Asataka)

During previous participant observations, there had been a tendency to avoid discussing gender in terms of a binary category of male and female, so the simplicity of the design was striking. The binary framework of male/female, heterosexual/homosexual which it relies upon was criticised repeatedly by other respondents in this study. Indeed, at some other events great efforts were made to ensure that participants did not identify each other using this framework. One event in Osaka had specific written guidelines to this effect:

Rule 5: Don't judge people by their appearance

As far as possible, use the honorific ‘*san*’³¹ when calling upon others, avoid the use of names that designate someone’s gender, e.g. ‘he’ or ‘she’. If you don’t know a person’s name, try using expressions that don’t gender the person, e.g. ‘the person with the red clothes’, etc.

Even within the context of a small demonstration, then, Asataka’s shirt had dramatic impact. The flyer for the event that day had a definition of LGBT on the reverse, with the following addition:

Not all people fit into the above categories, just like everybody’s way of life is different, there is also a diversity of ‘sex’ (*sei*).³²

Use of the flyer with this statement on the reverse suggests an awareness of the complexity of sex and gender that went beyond the statement made by Asataka’s shirt. When I asked about the reasoning behind the shirt, Asataka replied that “People here know hardly anything about sexual minorities”, and that the design was intended simply to inform people of basic definitions. Concern over a lack of understanding of the term LGBT was echoed by another demonstrator that day, who told me that people in Wakayama “don’t even know what the letters LGBT and T stand for”. As a result, despite my own discomfort with the over simplification on the shirt, I understood it as a strategy of visibility deployed specifically for the IDAHOT event. This was later confirmed to me by Asataka in interview:

³¹ *San* is a gender-neutral honorific form of address of which there is no equivalent in English. Although it is gender-neutral, it is usually translated into English using ‘Mr’, ‘Mrs’, ‘Ms’ etc. In contrast, honorifics such as *kun* (used mainly to address young boys), and *chan* (used mainly to address young girls) carry gendered connotations.

³² It is often difficult to ascertain what is being referred to with *sei* (性). It can be used to talk about physical sex as assigned at birth, but is also used interchangeably with gender.

Ultimately, the t-shirt was aimed at the general public. Of course, LGBT people themselves would see it, but ultimately it was for people who know nothing about LGBT. We wanted them to look at it and say “What’s that?”

At the time of the IDAHOT demonstration, no controversy was raised over the t-shirts, but events later in the year propelled Asataka into a conflict concerning this strategy of visibility. The conflict that emerged provides an important glimpse into the dynamics of LGBT communities in the area studied. The following section will outline the controversy, and quote extensively from Asataka’s interview. Quoting extensively from Asataka’s own words is an intentional strategy to foreground the respondents’ understandings of the following events.

5.2.2 The controversy prompted by Asataka’s t-shirt

In October of 2015, I returned to Wakayama to interview Asataka. It was immediately apparent that Asataka was agitated. He took his smartphone from his pocket and started talking about a feud that had developed on Facebook between himself, his partner, and a number of activists from Osaka, Tokyo, and another city in Northern Japan. Asataka had shared a photograph of his IDAHOT t-shirt on Facebook the day before Kansai Rainbow Festa, telling his followers to look out for him wearing the shirt. Seeing the photo, another user shared the post on their own timeline without permission, and without notifying Asataka. The activist, who has been given the pseudonym Yuna, criticised the oversimplification on the t-shirt, writing:

It sucks, but we have to resist what’s written here. What is it with this oversimplification? Do you want us to tolerate this level of binarism? At the absolute minimum, isn’t this monstrosity of gender-role binarism the thing that ‘we’ are supposed to destroy?

In response to this, Yuna's contacts re-shared the post, and continued to criticise the shirts. "‘Friends’ of LGBT..." wrote one poster sarcastically, and "I liked it when we used the more open term ‘queer’. LGBT somehow doesn't sit well", commented another user. Reaction to the shirts was not entirely negative, one poster said, "I think I want one!", and another commented that "In order for us to ‘hold the attention of the interest of the majority who are not interested’ there are times when we need to use stereotypes". Although some users did defend the design on the shirt, the majority of posts were negative, and the debate stretched over two days.

Clearly shaken by the episode, which he interpreted as online bullying, I asked Asataka to tell me about it in his own words.

You remember that T-Shirt I had on at IDAHO?³³ I put a photo of that up on Facebook and people wrote a whole bunch of stuff about it. It was a discussion about the ‘male’ and ‘female’ characters on the shirt. It seemed like the person who shared it was offended by that, what they wrote suggested they didn't like the dichotomy of male and female [...] They're still writing about it now, not directly to me, but they talked about it so much that I'm pretty famous now!

Asataka continued, explaining that some of them are influential activists in their own geographic areas.

People from the cities, the activism from the cities is more advanced than ours. Well, we do go to parades and whatever here, but Wakayama is a place where people know absolutely nothing, so I think that the way we do activism is different too. If we held a parade here in Wakayama right now people would

³³ Asataka refers to the older acronym IDAHO, which was more common among respondents in this study than IDAHOT. This use of the previous acronym may be related to the play on words that it provides with ‘*Ai, daho!* (愛ダホ!)’ being a Kansai dialect way of saying ‘It's love, you idiot!’.

think that was a bit over the top, you know? I think that what we need to do here is go forward from the absolute basics, telling each person one by one “this is what LGBT means”. But I think that people from the cities have forgotten they started there too. I think they probably started from that same place.

In the interview, Asataka drew parallels between activism from the cities and what he perceived to be a politics of opposition amongst some LGBT activists, which he saw as tied to larger movements of governmental opposition in Japan. He called this activism “oppositional activism” (*hantai undō*), and said that he thought bringing such activism into an LGBT parade was “gross” (*kimoi*) and “terrible” (*yabai*). He referred specifically to activism that opposes the Emperor system. Opposition to the Emperor system (*tennō-sei*) was occasionally referred to by respondents, particularly in its relationship to the household registration system. Opposition to the *tennō-sei* is often greeted with extreme right-wing reaction by what Asataka refers to as “scary” organisations that chant “to his majesty *BANZAI!*”³⁴ Asataka associated Yuna with oppositional activism which could attract right-wing backlash, and understood this as one of the differences between his own activism and that conducted in larger cities.

He continued discussing his understanding of the difference between LGBT based activism in Wakayama compared to larger cities like Tokyo.

I think there are all kinds of ways of doing activism, you know. Places like Tokyo where you can undertake big actions, and places like here where we have to take the time to stop and talk to each person individually. I think that’s

³⁴ *Banzai* is an exclamation of support or victory, and can be roughly translated as ‘hooray!’. It is often used in military contexts to mean ‘victory!’, but is also used in contexts with no military connotations. For example, company meals sometimes end with the (usually male) diners standing up and doing a *banzai* cheer, shouting ‘*banzai, banzai, banzai!*’ whilst raising both hands in the air. In this circumstance, it is not intended as a nationalist or military cheer, but rather a general display of company unity and as an end to the meal.

a good thing, and if there was some sort of manual that would let us all figure out a way to work together then that would be good, but there is no such manual...Because every region is different, and these people have the impression that Tokyo or the city is the base of activism...Maybe that's just what activists are like, if you read what they wrote their ego is all tied up in it.

Gradually the interview moved away from the issue of the t-shirt, but not before Asataka made a final comment on his perception of LGBT activism in Wakayama.

From here on out, you know I'm in my 50s now, so if we want activism to carry on, then we have to pass it on to the youngsters. And it seems like in comparison to those in the cities, our youth have low levels of knowledge, and if the youth here feel crushed then that activism won't carry on. So I think that maybe we do lack knowledge here, so from next year we're talking about starting study group meetings, so that we can deal with these kinds of criticisms.

Asataka then moved on to a broader discussion of the issues facing LGBT and queer individuals living in Wakayama and other cities in the prefecture. It is important to quote Asataka's interview at length, because it reveals a number of key issues which will be discussed in the rest of this chapter. This chapter will use the above interaction as a lens through which to view LGBT related activism in practice.

5.3 Asataka's t-shirt as a 'contact moment'

During the fieldwork, tensions such as that concerning Asataka's T-shirt emerged when different groups experienced moments of contact between competing interests within the broad category of LGBT community. Sugamuma (2012, p. 19) uses the term "contact moment" to describe both the time and the place at which Japanese queer male cultures and 'the West' came into contact in the post-war period. Suganuma problematises the

notion that we can ever completely reject binary descriptions of social worlds, and instead analyses the ways in which the meeting of two competing perceptions of the world can be productive. This is similar in many respects to travelling theory, which was first developed by Edward Said (1983). Said noted that ideas change as they move across temporal and physical space. Theories and ideas have no fixed meanings – they respond to local contexts. Suganuma’s definition of contact stresses that the meeting of two seemingly opposing cultures is dialogical. Contact is “always accompanied by the modification, refinement, and rearticulation of the initial imperatives” (Suganuma, 2012, p. 19), regardless of any power imbalance between the cultures. Although Suganuma’s volume speaks primarily to queer male identities and cultures, moments like the dispute between Asataka and Yuna can also be understood as a dialectical contact in time and place.

During the fieldwork, groups that on the surface appeared to have shared values and goals often proved to have different attitudes and approaches to fundamental issues. For example, Nozomi discussed their experience of volunteering as a committee member for an LGBT event in Osaka. Despite the fact that the group was organising towards a shared goal, a disagreement over the wording of an event flyer triggered a heated email exchange that resulted in Nozomi resigning their place on the committee. These tensions were also present when non-Japanese respondents attempted to get involved with LGBT communities in their local areas. Kiah, a USA citizen studying as an exchange student at a Japanese university, discussed how a friend’s experience of the use of pseudonyms at the university LGBT circle put her off joining, because it seemed “kinda like AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) or something, everyone was so secretive”. These contact moments reveal the complexity of intersections of identity and personally held beliefs and values, regardless of surface appearances of collective identity and shared goals.

As such, the confrontation between Asataka, Yuna, and other commentators on Facebook is understood here as a contact moment between complex attitudes towards the practice of LGBT activism in Japan, operating specifically across an apparent urban/rural divide. In attempting to analyse these attitudes and relationships, it has been useful to conceptualise these individuals as part of a ‘field’ in the Bourdieusian sense. The following section will consider the above interaction within this framework of field, and then move on to a consideration of habitus and how it operates within this field.

5.4 LGBT related activism as a field

Concepts such as field, habitus, and cultural capital are understood here as “open concepts” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 95), which can be used reflexively to analyse the ways in which respondents negotiate contact moments within their social worlds. These concepts are not absolute, they are “polymorphic, supple, and adaptable” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.23), allowing glimpses of the messiness of everyday experience. This messiness resists concrete categorisations. As Bourdieu (1991, p. 365) noted when discussing theorisation of class, theoretical classes are “fictitious regroupings existing only on paper, through an intellectual decision by the researcher”. Reducing social interactions into closed categories obfuscates the plurality of lived experience. Hence, the key to understanding such concepts is to consider them in terms of “relations” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.15) which can shift over time and place. The following analysis will, therefore, be attentive to the contextual manifestations of these concepts, and the fact that lived experience resists neat resolutions.

Taking Bourdieu’s own widely cited definition, it is possible to envisage LGBT activism as forming part of a field in a localised and relational sense. Bourdieu (1992, p. 97) stated:

In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.)

The image that Bourdieu paints of a field is dynamic and heterogeneous. The objective relations between positions change (and can be actively changed) according to the possession of power (in the form of capital). It is possible to understand LGBT and queer communities in Japan as a field in this relational sense. Asataka understands himself to be acting within a network of other LGBT activists, even though he resists the label of activist himself. This resistance is signalled by the way in which he discusses Yuna and other commentators as “*katsudōka*”, instead of the less official *katsudōsha*. The suffix ‘*ka*’ denotes a professional, or an individual who is primarily involved in the activity it suffixes, in this case *katsudō*, which translates here as activism. When referring to himself, or his group, Asataka uses “*jibunra*”, a colloquial dialect word which can be translated as ‘me’, ‘us’, or ‘you’ depending on the context. In this case, Asataka uses it to refer to himself (me) and activists in Wakayama (we). This suggests an understanding of the actions of Yuna and other *katsudōka* as separate from the work that he is undertaking in his own region, but still within the confines of a shared network or configuration of LGBT activism. Asataka further distances himself from Yuna with his critique of overly oppositional politics as briefly discussed in Section 4.2.2.

Asataka also expresses unease with the actions of *katsudōka*, whom he sees as prone to becoming bullies, remarking that “I’ve heard that bullying does occur amongst activists” and “maybe that’s just what activists are like”. He also perceives statements made on Facebook by Yuna and other *katsudōka* as tied to “ego”. Hence, there is also a suggestion of performativity tied to *katsudōka*, in the sense that Asataka understands their actions to be related to self-aggrandisement as part of a managed image of ‘being political’ online (Savci, 2016). Asataka understands his own position in the field through “objective relations between positions” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 97), namely through dominant and subordinate relations of power. In this case, the dominant *katsudōka* and the subordinate ‘other’ in the form of *jibunra*. Whilst *katsudōka* are prone (in his understanding) to asserting their position through bullying behavior, Asataka and his group find themselves overwhelmed by unexpected criticism which they feel ill-equipped to defend against.

Asataka’s response to Yuna’s post foregrounds this conception of his place in the field:

I’m Asataka, the person in charge of making the t-shirt [...]

There are people here who do all sorts of hard work, and those who hold parades in their own regions. I’m really impressed by this awesomeness.

The place where I live (in Wakayama) still has low levels of knowledge about sexual minorities. Kids who are young and worried about sex related stuff often *become hikikomori*³⁵ or have depression. I thought about the question of how I could get regular people more interested in this, make it easy, and I made these t-shirts [...]

³⁵*Hikikomori* literally translates as ‘pulling oneself in’, or ‘pulling inwards’. The term describes individuals who for a variety of reasons withdraw from society, and live highly isolated lives, often (but not always) not leaving the home for long periods of time. The term can be roughly translated as ‘shut-in’, but this does not do justice to the vast spectrum of experiences the term is used for colloquially (for example, social anxiety, agoraphobia, autistic spectrum disorder etc.)

This is such a simple form of activism that it can't be compared to what everybody does where they live. This is my way of doing it. There's likely to be a time when this changes, and at that time we might take a step-up (*suteppu appu*).

To all those people who have had their feelings hurt due to this way of doing things, I'm sorry. But I think that it's a good thing that the way of doing things is different depending on each particular town or city, and I also think that each and every action that everybody is doing is really important.

The thing that I ask you to understand is that for myself personally, every single action has meaning at its core, and I believe that there is no action that's just a joke, we made the t-shirt with honesty, and we are doing activism with honesty [...]

Asataka defines himself and his group in terms of their *situs*: their present subordinate position contrasted with a potential to become either excluded from the field altogether, or to “step-up” to what he perceives to be a less “simple” form of activism. He characterises his activism as “honest” and “simple”, in contrast to the “hard work” and “awesomeness” of parades that the others organise. He is careful, however, to acknowledge that all forms of activism have a meaningful contribution to make, and implies that his “simple” action in the form of a t-shirt was not intended as a “joke” or a disingenuous ploy. This acknowledgement further suggests a desire to not become isolated from the field. His reluctance to isolate himself from the field, despite his dis-ease with the power relations within it is also demonstrated by his reticent acceptance of the notion that he does not possess sufficient knowledge, “maybe we do lack knowledge here”, and his suggestion that a study group could help the group move forwards. He does not concede defeat, but rather looks for solutions to maintain his position.

Asataka states, “we’re talking about starting study group meetings, so that we can deal with these kinds of criticisms”. In “dealing with these kinds of criticisms”, Asataka is talking about learning the rules of interaction within the field, not only in terms of what he does (making the t-shirts), but the way he moves this activism beyond its locally isolated context (sharing an image online). It is important to note that Asataka does not apologise for making the shirt, but rather points out that all activism is different, and that the shirt is still appropriate for his context. Asataka understands that it is the posting of the image online, outside of this receptive context, that has been perceived by some as a personal insult, “To all those people who have had their feelings hurt due to this way of doing things, I’m sorry”. His reference to a manual suggests that he believes that there are core guiding principles within the field, but that these are not articulated in an accessible format. Implicit within his apology is an assertion that he is acting on the basis of extensive knowledge of LGBT and queer issues in Wakayama, and an understanding of the needs of the local community. He is still a part of the field of LGBT activism, but differently located within that field. This differing location within the field has an impact upon the kind of actions he feels he can make.

Not only does Asataka define himself and LGBT Friends as part of a field of LGBT and queer activism, but he also understands the necessity of ensuring continued membership in this system of relations. There are two main reasons why continuance within the field is perhaps one of the main “specific profits” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 97) that is at stake for Asataka and his group. Firstly, at the time of fieldwork, LGBT Friends had no intention to become an NGO, which in Japan confers certain limited economic benefits such as tax exemptions (Reiman, 2009). Secondly, Asataka argues that the context in Wakayama dictates that they must, “take the time to stop and talk to each person individually”. Excluding themselves from the field, which validates their status as an

activist group, would work against their ability to achieve their goal of greater visibility in the local community. This is because there are certain forms of knowledge resource related to how to ‘do’ activism that are accessible only through participation in the field, as will be discussed in Section 4.6 of this chapter. Bourdieu (1993, p. 73) has noted that individuals within a shared field always have shared interests, in that they all agree upon “what it is that is worth fighting about”. In this sense, in responding to Yuna and defending his position, Asataka tacitly places himself within the field. He does not, therefore, seek liberation from a field which constrains him, but rather seeks to challenge specific aspects of LGBT activism which he finds troubling.

Having established that Asataka views himself as part of a system of relations that is conceptualised here as a field, the question remains as to the specific contours of this field. This chapter will now move on to assess the role of habitus within the field.

5.5 Learning the ‘rules of the game’: habitus and the field

In addition to the concept of field, habitus is a central tenet of Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of the ways in which societies function. Habitus, as “systems of durable, transposable dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1992, , p. 53) permits us to conceptualise ‘rule’ and the role it plays in practice (Taylor, 1999). It allows us to conceive of social action as existing between total structure and complete agency. Habitus and field are inextricably linked. Practice emerges at the intersection between habitus and field, and the field cannot be reconstituted without habitus (Butler, 1999). As such, habitus helps to bridge the gap between practice and theory, action and reflexivity (Costa and Murphy, 2015). Habitus is, therefore, central to an analysis of the field of LGBT communities in Japan.

Bourdieu (1992, p. 53) defines habitus as systems of dispositions, as:

structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures...Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules.

Habitus provides an alternative the objectivist/subjectivist dichotomy, in that it can produce regular patterns and behaviours, without being related to subordination to the 'rule' of structures. Habitus generates manifold possibilities but only those:

...which are possible within the limits of these regularities, and which are likely to be positively sanctioned because they are objectively adjusted to the logic characteristic of a particular field, whose objective future they anticipate (Bourdieu, 1992, pp. 55-56).

In addition to being situated at the intersection of practice and theory, habitus is the site of the intersection between the past, present, and objective future (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), and performs the "presence of the past in this kind of false anticipation of the future" (Bourdieu, 1992, p.62). The habitus operates "below the level of consciousness and language" (Bourdieu, 2010 [1984], p. 468), yet the inner workings of the habitus affect the games that one can play, and the conflict that one can enter into within the field (Iso, 2008). Bourdieu (1992, p. 66) has discussed habitus in terms of a 'feel for the game':

...the 'feel for the game' is what gives the game a subjective sense – a meaning...but also a direction, an impending outcome...everything that takes place in it seems sensible: full of sense and objectively directed in a judicious direction.

This is not to say that the habitus is simply constraining, instead it both enables and constrains (Fuchs, 2003), in the same way that the rules of a soccer game both constrain and enable play. It can be creative and inventive (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), the site of revolution (Calhoun, 1993), and as will be argued here, the site of rupture. Hence, habitus in this thesis is not understood as a fixed object that can be located in time and space, but rather as systems of embodied dispositions that can be glimpsed through practice.

The way in which habitus consists of sets of structured and structuring dialectical processes can be observed in my interactions with respondents, particularly during contact moments when the regular dispositions of habitus were ruptured or brought within the realm of consciousness and language. This can be illustrated by once again calling upon Asataka's t-shirts. A few days after the IDAHOT demonstration I remained curious about the shirts, and upon my request, Asataka mailed one to me. However, my sense of unease regarding the over simplification on the shirt intensified. I was reluctant to wear the shirt in public, particularly in a large city like Osaka. Eventually, I decided that the shirt wasn't suitable, and donated it to a charity shop. At the time, the decision to not wear the shirt seemed "sensible" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 6), although I could not identify my reasons. My uneasiness was not a conscious response to outside structural factors as such (for example a list of institutional rules or regulations), but rather a sense that the design on the shirt would bring about a certain "impending outcome" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 66): an argument perhaps, or a public discussion of my naivety. It was only later, when Asataka recounted the story of Yuna's online criticisms that the sense of unease became nameable, moving from a realm outside of language, to a realisation that I had unconsciously begun to learn the rules of the game of LGBT communities in Japan. Part

of the rules of the game, I realised, were a refusal of identity politics based on dichotomous understandings of male and female, homosexual and heterosexual.

The rules of this game could be abstract and difficult to locate, even though they continued to structure interactions within the field. The seemingly invisible dispositions of habitus often became visible at the point of rupture or conflict, as with Asataka's sharing of an image of his t-shirt online. What was a reasonable strategy within his own habitus became contentious when it moved beyond his own system of dispositions and breached that of Yuna and the other commentators. Similarly, when Yuna attempted to use Asataka's shirt to shore up her own refusal of binarism, Asataka read this as fundamentally out-of-step with his own habitus. The schism between Yuna and Asataka can be viewed through this lens of conflicting habitus within the shared field of LGBT activism. It allows us to see that a field exists precisely because they agree on the importance of fighting over legitimate dispositions within the field. As Bourdieu (2010 [1984], p. 243) stated, "The definition of the legitimate means and stakes of struggle is in fact one of the stakes of the struggle". In entering into the conflict sketched out above, both Yuna and Asataka tacitly acknowledge their belief in the validity of the field, the rules of the game, and of their own embodied dispositions.

Habitus, then, is a useful tool that can be used in analysis of LGBT related activism amongst the respondents studied. Together with field, it opens up theoretical space in which we can consider the types of cultural capital that circulate within Asataka's and Yuna's contexts, as well as within wider LGBT communities in Japan. This chapter will now move on to consider the beliefs and values that circulate in this field using the concept of cultural capital.

5.6 Cultural capital in the field

Although the concept of cultural capital was originally drawn from the field of sociology of Education (Bourdieu, 1986), it is not only related to educational potentials and achievements. Cultural capital exists in three states: *objectified* (for example in the form of cultural goods like books), *institutionalized* (for example through educational qualifications), and *embodied*, which Bourdieu (1986, unpaginated) describes as “long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body”. Cultural capital is used here in its embodied state, in the form of the ability to engage with certain concepts and ideas, and to articulate these in one’s activism. This cultural capital is not related to economics, although using the word ‘capital’ with all of its economic connotations can be somewhat misleading (Skeggs, 2003). It is, therefore, useful to follow Beverley Skeggs’ (2003, p. 17) call to understand ‘capital’ as “resources (economic, cultural, moral)”, upon which people can draw as they negotiate daily life.

Calls to broaden our theoretical understandings of capital beyond purely economic approaches in Japan have been taken up, amongst others, by Brent McDonald and Chris Hallinan (2005). The authors discussed the experience of participating in university clubs as a way to accrue spiritual capital in the form of discipline and self-sacrifice. McDonald and Hallinan’s study demonstrates how capital can be conceptualised as a kind of moral resource. Respondents felt that the mental discipline they received during their time on the rowing team would help them later in terms of their spiritual and moral development, and careers. In a study of the relationships between an LGBT rights group and an all-women’s bar in Turkey, Evren Savci (2016) demonstrated how ‘being political’ could be used as a cultural capital resource. This ‘being political’ afforded members of the LGBT rights group the ability to successfully negotiate queer spaces in Turkey.

In an echo of this existing scholarship, cultural capital within Asataka's social world, and within LGBT communities in Japan in general, revolves around imagined 'urban' and 'queer' forms of knowledge and being. The urban aspects of these resources are seen to be located in major cities, primarily Tokyo, and sometimes Osaka. This capital resource is conceptualised as being located away from a 'politics of the necessary' (Ward, 2003) which is understood by respondents as being conducted in the regions. Queer aspects of this cultural capital include the sense that binary notions of gender and sex are insufficient, and that articulating this successfully can affect how one is positioned within the field. The following section will work through these understandings of cultural capital using the interaction between Asataka and Yuna as its starting point, widening out to consider the views of other respondents.

5.7 Cities as the physical location of cultural capital

My data suggests that the physical location of respondents was seen as an important factor in their position within the field of LGBT activism. Urban areas, particularly Tokyo, and sometimes Osaka and Nagoya were understood as sites of knowledge exchange. The knowledge that circulates in these urban settings was often seen as a key factor in allowing access to LGBT communities. This was evident in Asataka's re-telling of the Facebook incident. He talks about the activism that takes place in Tokyo as "more advanced" than that in Wakayama, noting that in cities like Tokyo they are able to "undertake big actions". Asataka believes that large actions would be understood in Tokyo, whereas in Wakayama, people "know absolutely nothing" and would think that a parade was "over the top". Asataka says that in Wakayama they "have to stop and talk to each person individually", and goes on to note that the "people from the cities have forgotten that they started here too". Asataka sees his own activism as somehow 'behind' that in Tokyo in a teleological sense. He conceptualises Tokyo based activism as

‘advanced’ and privileged, and his own actions as ‘behind’ and open to critique. This notion makes sense to Asataka in much the same way that not wearing the t-shirt made sense to me. Not the direct product of structural factors, but a tacit understanding or sense of what will and will not fit the habitus.

In his response to Yuna’s post, Asataka anticipates a future in which activism in Wakayama can “step-up” to the same level as that in Tokyo. Asataka reluctantly concedes that perhaps the problem is that he doesn’t know enough to engage with Yuna’s criticisms. He suggests that a study group could equip them with sufficient knowledge to deal with these critiques. In Asataka’s understanding, a study group would provide access to specific knowledge resources, which when embodied and articulated in public would allow his group to retain their place in the field. As discussed earlier, this is one of the main specific profits at stake for Asataka and his group. However, this key enabling knowledge is not to be found within Wakayama, where people know “absolutely nothing”, but rather in Tokyo, where it is assumed that enough people have sufficient knowledge to make sense of LGBT activism, and where activists have an excess of knowledge to the point that they have already “forgotten” where they “started”.

This sense of cities like Tokyo and Osaka as sites of knowledge exchange and expertise was echoed by Hideki when he described the establishment of his own community group in Wakayama. Hideki first attempted to establish his group in 2004 upon the suggestion of his doctor. When he was planning how to run the group he visited Osaka to learn how to run a group:

Jay: Have you ever consulted with organisations in Osaka?

Hideki: Not as a group...but individually, I have been to take part in groups in Osaka. Before the group started I had no idea how to run a group, so I decided to go and see how it was done.

Jay: What group was it, if you don't mind telling me?

Hideki: It was Trans* Meetup ³⁶ It was run by Hashimoto Haru ³⁷ [...] Basically, people paid 500 yen and ate snacks, I said "I've come to learn".

Hideki sought knowledge resources from Osaka, even though at the time he did not consciously understand this as a group motivated activity. He first states that he went to "take part", but later notes that he went to "learn" how groups could be organised in practical terms. In 2015, Hideki attempted to replicate the meetings in a smaller city in southern Wakayama. This was a frustrating experience for Hideki and his group. At the first meeting, participants from the smaller city attended, but subsequent meetings were attended only by Hideki and other group members who travelled down from Wakayama city. There are many possible reasons why the meetings did not attract participants in the smaller city, but there was a sense of disappointment and confusion from Hideki related to this failed transfer of knowledge drawn from Osaka into more rural areas of Wakayama prefecture.

Groups from Wakayama were not the only ones who sought the acquisition of cultural capital in the form of knowledge of organising from Osaka. Manabu, who lives in a city adjacent to Osaka described how he learnt how to run his own group:

In the beginning, we could only do it in places where it would have been OK if people couldn't pay to participate [...] That's why I decided to have meetings that anyone could take part in, and that people didn't need to pay. In the beginning, when it came to the process of starting, basically I relied on

³⁶ Trans* Meetup is a pseudonym.

³⁷ Hashimoto Haru is a pseudonym.

Rainbow Resource Centre (RRC).³⁸ I looked at how RRC did it, and thought ‘Oh, it’s OK for it to be something light like this’. It was just me thinking ‘Oh, I can probably do it’ [laugh]. RRC are amazing, RRC is an amazing place.

Manabu discussed how it was common practice in Osaka to ask for a participation fee of around 500 yen, but in his local context he felt that this could become a barrier to participation. When thinking about starting his own group he says he “relied” on the example of RRC. When he attended events at RRC, he realised that he could replicate the ‘lightness’ of the groups’ approach, but use low cost event spaces where not all participants would need to contribute financially. In planning his own meetings, Manabu tried to emulate the “amazing” atmosphere he found at RRC. Manabu was able to draw upon the cultural capital resources he found in Osaka, but adapted to the needs of his local participants.

This pattern of looking to cities like Osaka and Tokyo for guidance did not occur only within the field of group organising. These understandings can be found amongst individual respondents in this study, some of whom had intentionally moved from outside of Tokyo into the city. Shōhei is a transgender man, and moved temporarily from his home town in northern Japan to Tokyo at the age of 19.

But right before I turned 20,³⁹ I was continually all the time thinking about my [physical] sex,⁴⁰ it was a period during which I couldn’t decide about my future. I was in a hurry to sort that out, and somehow at the time when I was

³⁸ RRC is a pseudonym. RRC is a small self-help group based in central Osaka.

³⁹ 20 is the official age of majority in Japan. This significance of this age and of ‘coming of age’ is discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

⁴⁰ It is often difficult to ascertain what is being referred to with *sei* (性). Shōhei did not overtly specify if he used *sei* to refer to his gender assigned at birth or gender identity in this instance. He talks about going to Tokyo for medical treatment, so I have tentatively rendered it here as [physical] sex, with an acknowledgement he may well have been referring to his gender identity, and that physical sex is also discursively constructed.

thinking ‘I have to do something’, I realised ‘Oh, I have to go to Tokyo’. And also, in a way, because there are hospitals there, and because I could get treatment, I made it my goal, and resolved to go to Tokyo.

Shōhei described how his move from a rural town in northern Japan to Tokyo seemed like the sensible course of action, as something he ‘had’ to do. Like Manabu and his admiration of RRC, Shōhei referred to Tokyo as “amazing”, and understood the city as a place where not only was there a greater understanding of sexual minorities, but the infrastructure that was needed for him to pursue SRS. For Shōhei, Tokyo is the location of cultural capital resources which provided not only a place of being, but also easier access to services. Tokyo was understood as a place where the physical and knowledge-based resources existed to help work through his worries about gender/sex.

For Asataka, Hideki, and Manabu, activism located in cities became a model for their own organising. They believed that there was a valid way to practise activism within their own contexts, and that knowledge resources that could help were located in urban centres. Knowledge of the local area and the needs of their participants was a concern, but the answers to the question of how to organise groups or ‘do activism’ were understood as being located away from their local areas. Through accessing these knowledge resources, or embodied cultural capitals, they were able to find a practice which could be adapted to their respective habitus. For Shōhei, Tokyo was not just a source of knowledge of how to understand his identity and decide his future, but also as the source of services such as counselling and SRS. These services are available in his hometown, but he perceived the services available in Tokyo as being faster and more expert. The physical move to Tokyo allowed Shōhei to gain access to physical places in which knowledge and embodied practices could be exchanged (further implications of Shōhei’s move to Tokyo are discussed in Chapter 6). For participants who returned to their local contexts with the

embodied cultural capital they had acquired, a balancing act ensued in which the needs of their local participants had to be offset with what they perceived to be acceptable or preferable ways of doing things. Grassroots groups had to learn to present a face that was congruent with modes of practice within urban areas, whilst at the same time returning to the structuring and structured practices of their own habitus.

For Asataka, the t-shirt incident acted as a moment of rupture, in which his key concerns and those of Yuna were brought into conflict. This conflict was related to the contrast between what Asataka perceived as queer activism in urban areas, and his own activism which he perceived to be based on necessity and pragmatism. Asataka clearly understands that gender cannot easily be reduced down to the binary of male and female, even if this clashes with his own background. This was demonstrated in his interview, where he stated that:

Children now are free. There are lots of children who are more gender-neutral. You don't really know if they are male or female...that would have been unthinkable [for us].

Asataka's use of the binary male/female, heterosexual/homosexual paradigm was not based on a genuine belief that this was the only way of understanding gender and sex, but as a necessary strategy of visibility. This moment of rupture will now be examined in relation to the respondents' understandings of 'queerness' as a resource or cultural capital.

5.8 Queerness as cultural capital

The second element of the cultural capital circulating within the LGBT activist groups studied was the ability to pursue 'queerness' as opposed to a 'politics of the necessary'. Politics of the necessary is understood here using Bourdieu's scholarship on distinction

and taste, and research conducted by Jane Ward (2003; 2008) on LGBT and queer organising in Los Angeles, USA. In participant observations of the organising committee of a Pride event, Ward (2003) noted how identity based political movements often begin from necessity (for example, economic necessity or the need for physical safety), but move towards a concern for mainstream acceptance and public image. Ward (2008, p. 51) argued that the ability to discuss ‘diversity’ and to prove “diversity skills” in event planning meetings became a kind of “activist capital”, which worked to marginalise some working-class activists within the groups studied. Certain members of the planning committee had no immediate physical safety concerns, and so were able to move on to embody these diversity skills, and use them to move more effectively through the field, at the expense of more vulnerable individuals. As Bourdieu (2010 [1984], p. 373) noted:

Necessity imposes a taste for necessity which implies a form of adaptation to and consequently acceptance of the necessary, a resignation to the inevitable, a deep-seated disposition which is in no way incompatible with a revolutionary intention.

In situations where the goals of a particular group are ‘necessities’ (for example the need to create safe spaces of immediate refuge for victims of domestic violence), this creates a sense of “resignation to the inevitable” (Bourdieu, 2010 [1984], p. 373) need to deal with these necessities before moving on to less immediate concerns. It is only when immediate necessities are taken care of that actors can move on to less immediately pressing, more theoretically concerned goals. Resignation to the current context is not defeatist, but a pragmatic response to structural impediments. In the case of LGBT activism in Wakayama, Asataka has adapted to the necessary conditions of his local context and accepted a politics of the necessary. He has not necessarily abandoned his

longer-term goals, but understands the limitations imposed by a lack of mainstream awareness of the issues facing LGBT and queer people in Wakayama. He believes that people in Wakayama know so little that the only way to increase is by stopping to talk to each person individually. Given this fact, Asataka believes that the first step towards achieving wider public visibility is to first ensure that people know that the terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender mean. Asataka's taste, guided by habitus, is for a "choice of the necessary" (Bourdieu, 2010 [1984], p. 379), in the form of an object that acts as an opening to dialogue with the wider public, in the form of the t-shirt.

In contrast to Asataka, Yuna is more concerned with "style, manner, representation" (Ward, 2003, p. 90) than the basic necessity of grassroots engagement. Yuna's criticism of the shirt centred around its use of the male/female binary. This is signalled by her invocation of the "monster of gender-role binarism" as the enemy against which "we" queer people must battle. The personification of gender-role binarism is an effective strategy within Yuna's habitus, as is demonstrated by the support she receives from her friends and followers. Yuna uses this call to the collective "we" assuming that her critique is both acceptable and possible within her context. Yuna's assumption that her opinion will be validated by her friends and followers is confirmed by a user who replies with a nostalgic reference to a time when "we used the more open term 'queer'". This call back to a utopian past where people were free to identify as they wished legitimises Yuna's call to action (the notion of nostalgia as a response to change is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6). For Yuna, it is not just the content of the message or basic engagement practices that matters, but the way in which the message is delivered. Asataka was acutely aware of the role that image and narcissism played in the conflict, commenting that when activists write, one can see that their "ego is all tied up in it". He also comments that the Facebook incident, whilst unpleasant, had the unintended positive effect of increasing his

visibility online and making him “famous”. His response to Yuna also defends the t-shirt as a valid strategy, and does not directly respond to the accusation of binarism, suggesting that Asataka has tacitly accepted that it is the means of delivery that is at issue. Yuna’s critique of Asataka’s t-shirt suggests that she is able to mobilise a kind of queer cultural capital.

Summer Pennell (2016, p. 325) argues that queer communities possess “queer cultural capital”. Pennell refers to the ability to aspire to equal marriage rights in the face of structural impediments, and the ability to resist institutional inequality as two aspects of this queer cultural capital. In the context of LGBT activism in Japan, it is possible to see a similar kind of queer cultural capital at work. Whilst Yuna’s habitus allows her to access queerness as a resistance to binarism, and to aspire to the ability to identify outside of this binary, Asataka’s local context disallows this. There are two important implications for Asataka within this episode. Firstly, for Asataka, the strategy of calling upon a binary framework is justified by the hoped-for outcome of greater local visibility, for Yuna it is the very means of achieving a goal which is at stake. This echoes the work of Vegard Jarness (2015), which demonstrated how it is not just the *modus operandi* which is important, but also the *opus operatum*. It matters not only what we say, but how we choose to define the key terms and articulate them. Secondly, it reveals that ‘queerness’ and a refusal of binarism is a resource or cultural capital to which Asataka does not have access. In a sense, access to this queer cultural capital is closely related to the notion of knowledge resources being located within urban centres, as discussed in the previous section.

This does not mean, however, that Asataka and Yuna have differing long-term goals, but rather that they are differently concerned with the means used to achieve these goals. As Bourdieu (2010 [1984], p. 243) notes:

The definition of legitimate means and stakes of struggle is in fact one of the stakes of the struggle, and the relative efficacy of the means of controlling the game (the different sorts of capital) is itself at stake.

Even though Asataka perceives himself to be in a subordinate position within the field, both he and Yuna agree that the ‘game’ of activism is worth playing. When discussing heterodoxy and orthodoxy, David Swartz (1997, p. 124) noted how within any conflict, the two opposing strategies are in fact dialectical, “one generates the other”. Slavoj Žižek (2014, p. 78) notes a similar tension which he refers to as the “prohibited prohibition”, in which speaking a prohibition legitimises resistance to that prohibition. This is not to suggest that the invocation of binarism here is prohibited, since the habitus allows all possible courses of action, but rather that speaking of it legitimises it as a concern. Just as by creating the t-shirt Asataka unwittingly ruptured the habitus, in criticising it Yuna also works to bring the conflict into being. In other words, both the dominant and subordinate actors accept that the struggle is worth pursuing (Swartz, 1997), and through this mutual acceptance of the means and stakes of the struggle call the conflict into being.

From Asataka’s perspective, this theoretical deadlock is understandably frustrating: one can’t walk up to someone who is completely unaware of the existence of sexual minorities and suddenly start discussing non-binary gender without risking alienating them. In Asataka’s habitus, the ability to maintain a dogged theoretical attachment to a refusal of binarism, and to overtly articulate this in his activism is a cultural capital to which he does not have access. This perceived isolation from this kind of queer cultural capital begins

to speak to the core of this analysis. Namely, that Asataka, Yuna, and the other respondents are engaged in a symbolic struggle over cultural capital resources, and for position within the social field of LGBT and queer communities.

5.9 Conclusion

Using a Bourdieusian framework, this chapter has conceptualised LGBT related activism amongst respondents as a field, and critically assessed the nature of relationships that exist within this field. It has shown how respondents perceived certain forms of activism to be more ‘advanced’ than others. In particular, respondents viewed activism that occurred within large cities such as Osaka and Tokyo as more advanced. Asataka assumed that the type of activism that takes place in cities is possible because people in larger cities have a greater awareness of LGBT issues, whereas people in Wakayama are completely ignorant of the existence of sexual minorities. In order to conduct his own activism, therefore, Asataka had to adapt his strategy to what he perceived to be a radically different local context. When Asataka shared an image of his strategy, in the form of his t-shirt online, this brought his habitus into conflict with that of Yuna, and a symbolic struggle over the means and contents of LGBT activism ensued. During this struggle, it became clear that a resistance to binary understandings of sex and gender, and the ability to articulate these in one’s activism are a cultural capital resource to which Asataka feels he has no access. This isolation from these resources is perceived by Asataka as being related to his location in Wakayama away from the circulation of knowledge and ideas which he believes could in the future enable his group to “step-up” to the type of activism he sees occurring in Tokyo.

Asataka, Hideki, and Manabu all understood the city to be an important site of knowledge exchange. They each drew upon the practices of communities in larger cities such as

Osaka, and adapted these practices to their local habitus. This suggests that one's position within the field, and one's ability to be recognised as a valid member of the field relies on access to urban forms of cultural capital resource. In attending city-based groups in order to "learn" how to run their own groups, Hideki and Manabu's actions show that they perceived these resources to exist in urban areas, away from their own politics of the necessary. In the same way, Asataka perceived his t-shirt as part of a politics of the necessary, and Yuna's concerns as beyond the scope of his local context. In order to "step-up" to the level of activism he saw in Tokyo, Asataka suggested that a good strategy would be to begin a study group where they could draw on queer cultural capitals in order to learn how to deal with critiques. By travelling away from their local contexts and learning to embody and enact the concerns of these city-based groups they felt that they could establish and run groups in their own local areas. Similarly, Shōhei came to the conclusion that in order to escape his worries about gender and sexuality, and to access services, he "had" to move to Tokyo. In all cases, seeking cultural capital resources in urban areas made sense to the respondents, and was part of learning the rules of the game, even if it was not consciously constructed as such. This tacit acceptance of the game suggests that no matter how disparate the individuals' goals may be, it is still possible to talk about these individuals as forming part of an LGBT community in Japan.

This chapter contributes to knowledge in the field of sexuality and gender studies in Japan by critically analysing the ways in which field, habitus, and cultural capital can be used to understand LGBT related communities in Japan. Namely, these communities are heterogeneous and deeply hierarchical, but still tacitly accept the rules and validity of community practice. However, urban and queer cultural capital resources are only part of the complex relationships that are at work in the field. The following chapter will move on to discuss ideas about valorised queer subjectivities and identities amongst

respondents. It will show how the promotion of specific modes of queerness can both include and exclude respondents from queer spaces.

Chapter 5 - The politics of (mis)recognition at the Kansai LGBT Coming of Age

Ceremony

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider the LGBT communities studied as part of wider transnational flows of information and knowledge – specifically discourses of cosmopolitanism, visibility and recognition. Taking scholarship on recognition by Nancy Fraser (2000; 2003), Axel Honneth (1995; 2001) and Charles Taylor (1994) as a foundation, this chapter will demonstrate the ways in which one particular community event was engaged with a politics of queer recognition. Following the work of David Bell and Jon Binnie (2004), Bell et al. (1994), Judith Halberstam (2005), and Catherine Nash and Alison Bain (2007), the event will be conceptualised as a temporary queering of space, within which the politics of recognition are played out. I will use participant observations of the event, and the event planning committee, to investigate the ways in which the issue of queer recognition was negotiated, and the ways in which respondents were (un)able to transfer these practices to the everyday.

The focus of this chapter will be the construction and valorisation of a highly visible, cosmopolitan, and flexible queer subject within the event. The chapter will also investigate the ways in which political claims for recognition brought with them their own systems of power and misrecognition. I will argue that the idealised queer subject presented at the event empowers some respondents, but makes what Aren Aizura (2017, p. 606) has referred to as “empty promises of visibility and legibility” to others. For many respondents, neither a public event of this nature, nor a visible practice of queerness in the everyday was accessible, possible and/or desirable. For many respondents, the type of visibility and recognition-based claims presented at such events could not and would not result in an improved ability to act as what Fraser (2003, p. 27) has called a “full

partner in social interaction”, due to the specific social contexts in which they were embedded. Instead of understanding these contexts in terms of cultural capital as in the previous chapter, this chapter will frame these contexts using the theoretical framework of a politics of recognition. This chapter, then, provides an original theoretical and empirical contribution to the existing literature by directly exploring the issue of (mis)recognition in the alternative empirical context of community-based practices in Kansai.

6.2 Recognition and queer visibility: a brief overview

Given its ascendancy in Anglophone contexts, it is important to overtly establish the salience of drawing upon the recognition literature in this chapter. In fact, visibility and recognition have been a key element in gender and sexuality activism and scholarship in Japan since the gay boom of the 1990s. However, it is more often couched in terms of debates around *tōjisha* identities. As summarised in Chapter 2, the gay boom of the 1990s saw an increase in the number of first-person narratives of gay lives, and the emergence of identity politics through highly visible public cases such as the Fuchū Youth Hostel incident. The importance of these *tōjisha* perspectives were recognised within scholarship by Vincent et al. (1997, p. 211), who noted that through these stories sexual minorities (in particular, gay men) can “become visible” in wider society. Indeed, an important element of gay studies scholarship in the 1990s was the possibility of “the acquisition of visibility for same-sex attracted people in the realm of knowledge” (Vincent et al., 1997, p. 3). In this sense, *tōjisha* narratives in both the mainstream media and within scholarship in this period can be understood as strategies of political resistance, through which previously marginalised individuals moved “out of one’s place” into a political practice of visibility from the margins (hooks, 1991, p. 145). This primacy of first-person narratives and emphasis on visibility as a politics of resistance continued throughout the

LGBT boom. Individuals from across the LGBT spectrum published first-hand accounts of their lived experiences in Japan (see for example: Minami, 2016) .

Another more recent addition to the field of the politics of visibility has been the increased influence of so-called Western notions of LGBT rights as human rights. This brings with it the issue of recognition, tied to notions of sexual citizenship through the pursuit of legal rights. One of the first instances of couching LGBT rights as human rights is widely cited to have occurred during a speech made to the UN Human Rights Council in December 2011, by the Secretary of State Hilary Clinton (Clinton, 2011a). In the speech, Clinton (2011b, unpaginated) stated that “gay rights are human rights”, and that “Those who advocate for expanding the circle of human rights were and are on the right side of history”. Clinton (2011b, unpaginated) argued that LGBT people “must help lead this effort”. The speech referred to LGBT people as an “invisible minority” (Clinton, 2011b, unpaginated), implying that abuses must be uncovered and made legible as the first stage of action. Quoting the President of Botswana, Clinton (2011b, unpaginated) implied that “as long as LGBT people are kept in the shadows”, it is difficult to legislate in protection of them.

In the LGBT rights as human rights narrative, then, recognition of the queer subject becomes a necessary first step in a telos that aims towards a carefully constructed and idealised USA sexual exceptionalism. Clinton’s speech implies that without emerging from the metaphorical shadows, the LGBT subject will remain an invisible minority, excluded from social life. This echoes the ‘status model’ of recognition as propounded by Fraser (2003, p. 27) in which recognition is attained through full and equal participation in society, and misrecognition is understood as being a process in which one is systematically “prevented from participating as a peer in social life”. It is important to

note, however, that misrecognition operates on a number of levels, not just the structural model argued by Fraser. This will be discussed in further detail in Section 5.7.3 of this chapter. In short, however, visibility and rights-based claims are closely intertwined. As Sally Hines (2013, p. 42) has noted, identity politics (which has been an important site of collective organising within LGBT social movements in Japan) is concerned with how identity can be claimed “subjectively and strategically”, utilising identity as the basis for the mobilisation of rights claims. Since the politics of recognition is one which strategically seeks social justice, often (but not exclusively) through identity-based rights claims, it is also therefore closely intertwined with the production of visible queer identities. This mobilisation of the visible queer subject as the focus of LGBT social movements has been evident in LGBT communities in Japan since the 1990s, and can still be seen in operation among the communities studied.

However, as Bell and Binnie (2004), Nash (2011), Nash and Bain (2007), Amy Stone (2013) and Eleanor Wilkinson (2009) – amongst numerous others – have argued, the politics of recognition and the associated notion of visibility can bring with it systems of power and restraint. The practices and discourses invoked by a politics of recognition are shot through with disciplinary power, often bringing about spaces characterised by misrecognition and inflexibility (Horton, 2014; Stone, 2013). The power to determine the idealised queer subject, to establish who can be classed as a ‘somebody’, is not equally distributed, which can lead to cases of misrecognition and non-recognition (Aizura, 2017). Indeed, some individuals do not desire recognition, bound as it is to “impossibility and violence” (Aizura, 2017, p. 609). A close focus upon these ambivalent processes, balances of power, and unequal outcomes in the Japanese context is less prevalent. This chapter is intended as an important and timely intervention into these debates.

6.3 Setting the scene

6.3.1 The development of the Kansai LGBT *Seijinshiki*

The second Monday of every January is known in Japan as *Seijin no hi*, or Coming of Age Day. *Seijin no hi* marks the moment at which people reaching 20 years of age in that year acknowledge their legal status as adults. *Seijin no hi* ceremonies, known as *seijinshiki*, are generally held in public at city or village halls, and men and women are often divided visually by their style of dress. Men usually wear either a formal suit or an under-kimono (*hakama shita*) with *hakama* (a traditional Japanese clothing worn on the lower half of the body, which loosely resemble trousers).⁴¹ Women usually (but not always) wear formal kimono with *furisode* sleeves⁴² and often wear elaborate hair decorations and make-up (see figures 7, 8, and 9). It is important to note that kimono and *hakama* are, in themselves, largely gender-neutral. Men can and do wear *yukata*, a light summer clothing which closely resembles kimono, to events like summer festivals. However, it is the general expectation (reported by multiple interlocutors) that men and women wear specific gendered styles of dress at formal events like *seijinshiki*.

⁴¹ *Hakama* consist of a bolt of (usually quite heavy silk) fabric which is tied at the waist using *himo* (fabric straps) and which hangs down to the ankles. Men wear *hakama* only for very formal occasions such as *seijinshiki*, weddings, and funerals. They are also often worn in martial arts settings. Women can also wear *hakama*, but this is less common at *seijinshiki*. Women's *hakama* are usually worn if they are working as *miko* (shrine maidens), in formal academic settings such as graduation ceremonies, and in martial arts.

⁴² *Furisode* can literally be translated as 'swinging sleeves'. *Furisode* kimono have long sleeves which, when the wearer stands with their arms out horizontally to the ground, hang almost to the ground. This type of kimono is usually worn by unmarried women.



Figure 7- Illustration of four guests at a seijinshiki.

The men wear hakama (far left) and a formal suit (third from left), whilst the women wear formal kimono (Irasutorein, 2018).⁴³



Figure 8 - Illustration of a man in hakama.

The sign reads 'Congrats, adult' (Irasutorein, 2018).



Figure 9 - Illustration of a woman in kimono with furisode sleeves.

The sign reads 'Congrats, adult' (Irasutorein, 2018).

⁴³ It was surprisingly difficult to locate rights-free photographs of *seijinshiki* dress. The majority of the photos from *seijinshiki* focussed mainly on the women's formal kimono, or on men's elaborate *hakama*. All of the photos were subject to licence fees and copyright restrictions, so I have included open-source, rights-free illustrations as a next best alternative.

For LGBT and queer individuals, formal dress expectations can be stressful. Many respondents discussed the anxiety of having to attend public ceremonies in clothes that did not reflect their ‘true’ identity. For example, Akira, a transgender man, talked about the clothes that he was forced to wear at the opening ceremony at his elementary school:

[the dress was] like a princess style dress that was puffy [...] with these knee-high socks with all this sparkling lace on them. And [my mother] said to me “You have to wear this, you know” [...] Well, the day before I couldn’t sleep, I didn’t sleep...I got up and cut the lace off the socks...

In 2011, an NGO in Tokyo responded to this issue by organising an LGBT *seijinshiki*, designed for LGBT and queer people to experience their coming of age as members of the LGBT community in Japan (Re:Bit, 2017). The aim of the event was to allow guests to ‘come of age’ as a sexual minority in a safe and supportive atmosphere, without needing to conform to a particular code of dress or behaviour. The implication of the LGBT *seijinshiki*, therefore, is that the ability to recognise and declare oneself as a sexual minority, and to be recognised as such by others, marks one’s transition into the LGBT community in Japan.

In 2014, a group in Osaka decided to develop a similar event in the Kansai region. This event became known as the Kansai LGBT *seijinshiki*⁴⁴ and is held annually in January at different locations within Osaka and the surrounding area. The Kansai event stresses the notion of acting as an “inspiration/impetus (*kikkake*)” to participants to “live authentically (*arinomama no jibun de ikiru*)”, and “broadening people’s horizons (*shiya o hirogete*)”

⁴⁴ This is the real name of the event. There is only one LGBT *seijinshiki* in Kansai, and it would be impossible to disguise the name of the event. For this reason, I have not referred to any members of the organising committee, or guests at the ceremony in any way which could lead to identification.

by exposing people to a diversity of “ways of living (*ikikata*)” (Kansai LGBT Seijinshiki, 2016, p. 2). The 2015/16 Kansai LGBT *seijinshiki* and the committee meetings became the site of an extended participant observation upon which this chapter is based.

6.4 The 2015/16 Kansai LGBT *seijinshiki*: a vignette⁴⁵

The 2015/16 Kansai LGBT *seijinshiki* (hereafter LGBT *seijinshiki*) was held in a community centre in central Osaka on a Saturday afternoon. The community centre is located in Tennōji ward, just a few minutes-walk from Nishinari, an area of the city known for its high concentration of day labourers and homelessness. The main station area is bright and bustling, with large shopping malls, residential flats, temples, and shrines all nestled tightly around the station area. I feel like in my haste I have arrived too early; amongst the tightly packed buildings, there is almost no-one else is around, and the community centre looks deserted. As soon as I open the doors to the centre, however, I notice that many of the other committee members are already here. We wait for the others to arrive, have a quick meeting to allocate tasks, and start setting up the main hall for the event.

One of the first jobs for volunteer staff on the morning of the event is to lay down a strip of gaffer tape about three meters from the stage, from one side of the room to the other. Anyone stood or sat in front of this line during the event is warned that they could appear in press photographs and filming. When the doors open promptly at noon, guests begin to filter in. Attendance at the LGBT *seijinshiki* is free, but guests are asked to make donations if they can, and they can collect specially designed pin badges in return. The

⁴⁵ Observations of the public events are limited to my personal impressions and notes from my field diary, and I intentionally do not refer to any identifying information due to the easily identifiable nature of the event. Observations from committee meetings are drawn from the 2015/16 event, and based on notes made during and after committee meetings.

front three rows of chairs within the taped off area remain lightly populated, and the majority of the approximately 170 guests choose to sit in the rows further back, where they can be sure not to appear in publicity of the event.

When I attended my first LGBT *seijinshiki*, I was surprised by the juxtaposition of an open public event with the strict photography policy. Photography is banned at the event, except for images taken in the designated photo booth area, and photos of the stage taken by members of the press. The photo booth is a table with a backdrop and props to use in photos. Volunteers stand at the booth at all times, encouraging people to take pictures, and reminding guests of the photography policy. Even within the photo booth area, guests are careful not to capture people they do not know in their shots, and regularly ask the people who they do photograph for permission to upload them to Facebook and Twitter. In cases where permission is not given, guests crop the photos, or use digital stickers to cover those who do not wish to show their face. Pre-vetted journalists and photographers wear brightly coloured arm bands or lanyards, and mill around in the press area setting up their cameras. The rules are policed firmly, and anyone found breaking them is quietly asked to refrain from taking any further pictures.

At 1pm, the ceremony begins with the performance of a giant calligraphy piece set to music. A large piece of paper about three metres wide by two metres high is laid out on the stage. A calligrapher uses a large paintbrush to write an affirming message about personal growth onto the paper, whilst one of the event hosts uses brightly coloured poster paints to paint a rainbow at the top of the paper. After the calligraphy performance, another host walks onto the stage and declares the event open. To the side of the stage, a team of four or five interpreters sign the event in Japanese sign language. I get up on the stage and repeat the opening greeting in English – I only knew that I was expected to do

this at the last minute, so I am relieved that the opening greetings are formulaic, and easy to interpret. Apart from the closing greetings, the remainder of the event is conducted in the heavily inflected local dialect – *Kansai-ben*.

Shortly after the greetings, the event mascot *Nijinaru* (a play on words with *niji*, meaning ‘rainbow’, and *naru* meaning ‘to become’ or ‘to advance’, and which is also the first character in the *seijin* of *seijinshiki*) strides onto the stage, played by one of the hosts. *Nijinaru* wears a white under-kimono with rainbow-coloured *hakama*. Next on the schedule is the opening speeches, given by local dignitaries. These speeches are followed by the *seijin no chikai* (oaths given by the representatives of those coming of age that year). During the *seijin no chikai*, three people talk about their personal experiences of sexuality and gender. One of the speakers is transgender, one is a lesbian woman, and the final speaker is a gay man. They talk about their experiences of realising they identified as LGBT, and the path they followed to being able to talk about it openly at a public event.

The *seijin no chikai* affect a sombre mood amongst the guests, but are followed by a live music performance and a fashion show which quickly lifts the mood. Volunteer models walk along the ‘rainbow runway’, and are asked pre-prepared questions by the host and *Nijinaru*. One couple appear in traditional *seijinshiki* dress: the man in a formal suit, and the woman in a kimono with *furisode* sleeves. When asked about their outfits, the couple reply that they were aiming for “normal” *seijinshiki* dress. Another woman wears a long renaissance-style green velvet gown that she has made herself. She talks about how walking on the stage and being open about her sexuality is a big step for her, and she thanks the audience for their support. A transgender woman takes to the runway in a smart khaki coloured skirt, pink shawl, and neatly styled hair. Following the fashion show, and continuing the relaxed atmosphere, all of the guests are invited to learn a dance to the

song, *Yūki 100%* (100% courage), which includes the lyrics, “Yeah, there’s nothing left to do but give it 100% courage, wrapped up in the vibrancy of the world” (Hikaru GENJI, 1993). The song is played over the sound system, and many of the audience stand up to join in with the dance.

After the ceremony and performances, there is a short break, followed by a *kōryūkai* (mixer party). Mixer parties are common within LGBT groups in Japan, and many of the guests at the LGBT *seijinshiki* are already familiar with the format. The aim of this mixer party, the host tells the guests, is to allow time for people to chat and get to know each other. Some guests participate in the games but others are not interested and stand around the edges of the hall catching up with friends. There is a small selection of booths with information about same-sex wedding ceremonies, and other LGBT-targeted businesses set out around the edges of the hall. Whilst people browse the booths, *Nijinaru* moves onto the floor to encourage guests to take part in the games, two of which are rainbow-themed. The hall becomes a flurry of noise and excitement, as some guests begin to compete for the small prizes offered after each game. Two volunteers remain at the doors to the venue, ensuring that as little noise as possible leaks out into the rest of the community centre which is also being used by a local playgroup. I learn that most people at the event are from the Kansai region, but one person I chat with has travelled from Hiroshima. There are a few non-Japanese people in attendance, mainly from majority English speaking countries such as the USA, the UK, and Canada. Not all guests are gender and/or sexual minorities. Some LGBT and queer guests have brought friends and family, and some have entered the venue out of curiosity, having no previous knowledge of the event, or of the meaning of the acronym ‘LGBT’. A guest comes over to ask where I am from, and we chat about my research.

Eventually, at 4pm, the event winds down, guests begin to leave, and the volunteers stack chairs and clean the floors. When all the guests have left, the volunteers gather around for a de-brief. It's been a long day, and we're all tired. The LGBT *seijinshiki* has been in the planning for months, and now we can relax and enjoy the extra free time that has opened up in front of us. After the de-briefing, the committee stays behind to share a cake and talk soon turns to plans for a wrap-up meeting and planning next year's event. There's plenty of joking (as there has been throughout the planning stages), and a sense of sadness too that we might not be in a room together again for a while. We agree to arrange a meet-up soon, say our goodbyes, and walk together towards the train station

6.5 Recognition politics and the queering of space at the Kansai LGBT *seijinshiki*

6.5.1 Conceptualising the queering of space

The queering of space is conceptualised in this chapter using the work of Halberstam (2005), Bell et al. (1994), and Nash and Bain (2007). Halberstam (2005, p. 6) noted that 'queer space':

...refers to the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage and it also describes the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics.

The 'non-queer' space against which these counter-publics work is that of homonormative frameworks within society. Bell et. al. (1994, p. 32) argued that "straight space" is the "underlying frame with which we work": the underlying heterosexuality of space is an 'artefact', a physical reminder of the heterocentric nature of space. On the surface level, one could make the argument that the LGBT *seijinshiki* constructs its queer counter-public against the 'artefact' of the "heteronormative 'mainstream'" (Suganuma, 2011, p. 347) represented by the community centre. For example, as part of the

application procedure to book the main hall for the LGBT *seijinshiki*, we discovered that one of the committee members would have to fill out an application using their official registered name. This was problematic for many of the members of the committee. Some members had registered names⁴⁶ which they had not or could not change, and were not congruent with their gender presentation and/or affirmed name. One of the committee members had used a pseudonym during their activism for many years (for privacy reasons), and openly expressed discomfort at having to use their registered name to apply for the booking. Toilets within the centre were also divided strictly by gender, to the point that the committee discussed this issue in detail. We were not able to create a gender-free toilet because the centre was in use by other groups on the same day, so instead we had announcements for guests telling them to use whichever toilet they wished to. Emphasis on family life and segregation along the gender binary within the community centre could be understood as what Gill Valentine (1993) refers to as physical representations of the cultural norm of the reproductive monogamous family unit, or indeed as the physical representation of the gender dichotomy.

However, the concept of inherently ‘queer space’ and a ‘non-queer’ or ‘straight’ space against which this is constructed is problematic. As Bell and Valentine (1995) have noted, the binaries of heterosexual/homosexual, public/private have long since been overturned, and as Halberstam (2005, p. 5) argued, queer readings of geography locate sexual subjectivities “within and between embodiment, place, and practice”. For example, the couple who took part in the rainbow runway as a so-called “normal” couple were making themselves visible as members of the LGBT community, yet at the same time they also replicated opposite-sex partnership paradigms through their presentation as a ‘normal’

⁴⁶ Language conventions around name changes remain contested, and discussion of this issue did not emerge often during the fieldwork. I have chosen to use the term ‘registered name’ to reflect the participants’ strategy of referring to their ‘name on the *koseki*’ (*koseki jō no namae*).

male/female couple in typical formal dress. Indeed, it is not the community centre *per se* that is a “straight place” (Bell et al., 1994, p. 32) in juxtaposition to the seemingly queer space of the LGBT *seijinshiki*. Rather, it is important to understand the co-existence of a temporarily queered space in dialogue with heteronormative contexts. These heteronormative contexts consist of the spatial, temporal, and social locations of the community centre. Referring back to the opening paragraph in Section 5.3 of this chapter, one such social context is that in which the owners of residential flats that are situated in close proximity to the community centre do not and cannot recognise same-sex couples in their contracts. However, the LGBT *seijinshiki* is not engaged in a ‘competition’ with these spaces, but rather is in dialogue with them through its creation of a ‘heterotopic’ space.

Heterotopic space is mobilised here as “being in relation” (Foucault, 1986, p. 24) with the social context in Japan, engaged with the processes of being both isolated *and* accessible, and as a space of “compensation” (Foucault, 1986, p. 27). Foucault’s concept of heterotopic space is one of dynamism and movement, as spaces open and close during their development and use. As Gavin Brown (2007) has noted, it is important to focus upon the process of queering space as imbued with resistive potential. When thought of in this way, the LGBT *seijinshiki* can be seen as engaged with this process of queering and constructing a temporarily heterotopic space in both the physical and the temporal sense. This space compensates for, or creates a possible temporary refuge from, the underlying heterocentric nature of physical and social space: it does not directly undermine or challenge these heterosexist hegemonies – as will be demonstrated through the rest of this chapter. Hence, in this chapter I resist the notion of stable ‘queer space’ and instead purposefully refer to a ‘queering of space’.

6.5.2 The LGBT *seijinshiki* as a queering of space

The LGBT *seijinshiki* worked to queer space in a number of ways. For instance, during planning meetings it was a taken-for-granted fact that *Nijinaru* would be gender-neutral. We discussed the design and naming of *Nijinaru* at almost every meeting, yet the fact of their gender-neutrality was never offered as debate, and was never openly challenged. For example, in one discussion of the character's name, a committee member suggested the extremely inventive name 'reinbōya' (レイン坊や). This name is a play on words using the 'rain' from rainbow, and the character *bō*, which means priest. This was particularly apt for the 2015/16 LGBT *seijinshiki* as one of the main dignitaries was a priest who offers same-sex marriage ceremonies in Kyoto. The *bō* also mimics the 'bow' of 'rainbow', and is rounded off with the Kansai dialect inflection of the affirmative copula *desu* (*ya*). The suggestion was understandably popular, and garnered much amusement amongst the committee members, but was ultimately rejected on the basis that the gender of a character with the kanji *bō* in their name could easily be read as male. This is because *bō* not only means 'priest' (which are usually assumed to be male), but can also be used as a personal pronoun by male children (although in the Edo period it could also be used to refer to female children). The committee felt that guests would assume the gender of the mascot, a social convention which they found deeply problematic.

The discussions of *Nijinaru*'s persona, on the other hand, were less overt. Over the course of the committee meetings, I noticed that *Nijinaru*'s character had become imbued with hints of cosmopolitanism. Following the work of Ulf Hannerz (1990) and Victor Roudometof (2005), cosmopolitanism is understood here as a cluster of attitudes that privilege 'global' queer cultures and discourses (such as coming-out), contact with LGBT and queer cultures from outside of one's local context, and being seen to have the ability to mobilise perceived 'foreign' queer practices. In the case of *Nijinaru*, cosmopolitan

symbolism took the form of the rainbow colours which were attached to the character through their gender-neutral rainbow-coloured *hakama*. *Nijinaru*'s name also intentionally made reference to the rainbow colours, and could be literally translated as 'become a rainbow'. The rainbow colours are often used as a marker of LGBT solidarity or pride in Japan, and can be found on LGBT related books and magazines, LGBT-friendly businesses, and outside bars aimed at LGBT customers. The rainbow flag is frequently associated with the USA, as can be seen from a 2015 support book for teachers, where the rainbow flag was described as:

[...] conceived of in 1978 in the USA. In 1979, the 6 colours (red, orange, yellow, green, and blue) were used as a banner at San Francisco Gay Pride, and since then has become well-established as a symbol of same-sex attracted people and sexual minorities. (Educator's sexual minority support book committee, 2015, p. 18).

Hence, the committee worked both overtly and tacitly to create a mascot which opened up an ideological space that resisted the gender binary and mobilised cosmopolitan cultural capital to affect a queering of space. *Nijinaru* resisted the male/female dichotomy of sex and gender, opening up a space of recognition. This was a space in which non-binary, gender queer, gender fluid, and/or gender questioning individuals could both recognise themselves and be brought into recognition through the ceremony. *Nijinaru* also worked to define the idealised queer subject as cosmopolitan through their form of dress and the meaning of their name. The character actively embodied non-binary gender and cosmopolitan cultural capitals. Hannerz (1990, p. 248) suggested that the cosmopolitan can possess knowledge and experience of the transnational and "become a broker, an entrepreneur who makes a profit", which sits well with Bourdieu's (1992, p. 118) notion of symbolic capital as "denied capital", which become a "form of accumulation when economic capital is not recognized". In this case, non-binary gender

and cosmopolitanism became denied capital, mobilised by *Nijinaru* to affect a temporary queering of space.

Another example of the ways in which the LGBT *seijinshiki* can be understood as a queering of space is through the calligraphy performance. The calligraphy performance adds to the above qualities of cosmopolitanism and queer visibility the notion of a continually positive, flexible subject who can negotiate the difficulties they face with relentless cheer and positivity. The performance works on two main levels: the central meaning of the text and the specific language used. The text of the message is translated below, with Kansai dialect rendered in bold text.

Take the time that you spend at the *seijinshiki* with the dear friends that you meet by chance as the first step towards embarking as your **true self** (*arinomanma*) in your precious life just as it is now. Let's advance. The most important thing in this one-time chance at life is the walk your own path with confidence. Your true colours. **Laugh** (*warattenanbo*). **Enjoy** (*tanoshindenanbo*). Live authentically.

The central message of the calligraphy encourages guests to 'walk their own paths' and live as their 'true selves'. This is significant when considered in relation to the local context. For many of the respondents, the desire to follow what they perceived to be socially 'acceptable' life course was strong. For example, Yūsuke, a gay man in his early 30s, said that pressure from his parents meant that he did not consider a future outside of a heterosexual marriage with children until he was in his 30s:

Yūsuke: I'm the eldest son you know. And I'm an only child, so there were a lot of hopes pinned on me. Especially because in the part of Kyūshū where I am from there is still that regional feel. And again, because I was an only child I was brought up shouldering those hopes, so I wasn't readily able to

acknowledge that I was gay [...] It was kind of like I somehow thought that when I grew up wouldn't my interest in women would come out? [...] But then when I was already past the age of 30 I thought "Ah, I'm gay".

Jay: Oh, when you became 30?

Yūsuke: Yeah that's right.

Jay: What was the motivation behind that?

Yūsuke: Well...oh, at the time I was dating a woman. I was dating a woman, and of course that woman was really desirable, she was a really good woman. But somehow, I didn't know what 'love' was. Well, of course there was a part of me that loved [her], I thought "If it was this person, this woman, then we could have a family together, we could co-operate, we could do that", I had that way of looking at it. That's why I was dating her [...] Of course, I love kids, so it took me a really long time to give up on that.

Jay: By giving up you don't just mean marriage then, but did you also give up on having kids?

Yūsuke: Yeah, that's right. It turns out that getting married, being close to each other, working together raising kids, I'd always wanted that.

For Yūsuke, the expectations of his parents and his upbringing in a rural part of Kyūshū meant that he was not aware of, and/or did not feel that alternative life trajectories were available to him. He perceived his obligations as eldest and only son to be ensuring the succession of the family name. Considered against Yūsuke's experience of maintaining a heterosexual relationship with the hope that he would one day be able to fulfil his parents' hopes, the suggestion to follow one's 'own path' should be understood as an overtly resistive statement (regardless of the extent to which this idealised subject could be mobilised in the everyday). The queer subjectivity presented by the calligraphy message is flexible; this idealised queer subject can resist the social conventions of local context and form their own path in resistance to this. Not only this, but this resistance is portrayed as something positive and enjoyable with the call to "laugh" and "enjoy".

In addition to the overall message of the text, the specific construction of the Japanese also indicates a strategy of resistance. One way in which the text operates, for example, is through the use of Kansai dialect. This dialect is spoken across the Kansai region, and differs from standard Japanese in pitch intonation, verb endings and vocabulary. The calligraphy performance was littered with local affectations. The phrase *arinomama* (your true self) is replaced with *arinomanma*, with the Kansai dialect inflection of *manma* instead of *mama*. Similarly, dialect inflections are used with the words “laugh” and “enjoy”. It is significant that these dialect inflections are used with sections of the text which convey resistive meaning as discussed above. This strategy serves to familiarise guests with the queer message, and to mitigate against any push back against the notion of an unfamiliar cosmopolitan queer subject liberated from the gender binary.

The presence of the rainbow colours alongside the text is also significant. Since the rainbow flag is often associated with ‘the foreign’ (i.e. the USA), painting the rainbow colours onto the canvas during the performance brings with it notions of cosmopolitanism, of being outwards looking and engaged with transnational flows of symbolism and discourse. This notion of ‘the foreign’ being something aspirational is further stressed at the level of language through the use of the English word ‘advance’ in direct transliteration. The bulk of the message was written in black ink, except for the characters *su-n-ba-do-a*, which were rendered in red ink within the body of the text. When these red letters are read in the ‘Western’ way (left-to-right, instead of right-to-left as in Japanese), they spell out *adobansu*, a direct transliteration of the English word ‘advance’. Not all guests will understand the meaning of the English word *adobansu*, but they will recognise that the word is not Japanese. Use of the word, then, is not about direct understanding, but about the invocation of an aspirational foreign artefact to further queer the space.

Hence, within the physical space of the community centre, the LGBT *seijinshiki* works to create a queering of space. Within this space, those imbued with the necessary embodied cultural capital are able to practice an idealised form of visible, flexible, and cosmopolitan queerness. The organising committee were, in essence, engaged with the construction of a social space in which an idealised queer subjectivity could be temporarily practised as a strategy in exposing non-sexual minority guests and the public to the existence of LGBT and queer people. The LGBT *seijinshiki* is, therefore, actively engaged in a politics of recognition.

The ability to open resistive space in this way and to construct a version of an idealised queer subject which the audience is expected to recognise is significant. This is the “power to make groups by making the common sense, the explicit consensus, of the whole group” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 729). For those imbued with the appropriate social and cultural capitals, this space could be what Ira Tattleman (2000, p. 223) somewhat romantically described as a place “filled with possibility and pleasure”. For some participants, this may be the case: for the fashion show model who spoke publicly about her sexuality for the first time, for the people who were able to take part in the games without needing to self-police their behaviour, for guests looking to gather information to plan their weddings. For the organising committee, this power to define the contours of the queer subject is even more transparent, as will be discussed further in the following section. However, as Wilkinson (2009, p. 40) has argued, we must consider the “feeling rules” that also operate within the space. These feeling rules can be seen operating within the event and are, I argue, closely related to a sense of the rules of the game as discussed in Chapter 4. The following section will now move on to discuss these limitations in more detail.

6.6 The LGBT *seijinshiki* as a site of privilege

6.6.1 Exclusions and unequal access

Theoretically, anyone can apply to become a member of the planning committee, but in practice participation is limited. Committee meetings are held approximately once per month in an office in central Osaka, and usually start at about 7pm. This limits participation to those who have a whole evening free from work, home, and study commitments, and who are financially and physically able to travel to central Osaka regularly for the meetings. There is also an active group chat to follow using a smartphone application, with messages being exchanged during the week, particularly in the final weeks of preparation. The group chat is used to discuss progress on tasks, make announcements, and request help or advice on other day-to-day issues such as the management of donations. For non-native speakers of Japanese, there is the added complication of the majority of communication being conducted using Kansai dialect. This means that committee membership is limited to native speakers of Japanese, or non-native speakers who have the privilege of being able to study Japanese to a level sufficient to take part. Indeed, my own knowledge of the dialect came only through lengthy and targeted study for the purposes of being able to conduct participant observations in the local area.

Attendance at the LGBT *seijinshiki* itself is also restricted by a number of factors. For example, guests must live in a context where their attendance would not have a negative impact upon their own, or their friends' and families' lives. For some respondents, the risk of being associated in any way with LGBT-related events such as the LGBT *seijinshiki* would outweigh any of the positive benefits of participation. Miho, a bisexual woman in her 40s, talked about how she would have liked to offer counselling services

specifically for LGBT clients, but this would present too much of a risk in terms of people assuming that she also identified as LGBT, leading to possible repercussions for her son:

I don't want somebody to find my blog, to... 'Oh that's your Mum'. That would be quite horrible, so I don't want to be too much open [sic.] about it [...] Family is the most important thing for me, so if it risks something happening to my family, I don't want that. Especially for my child.⁴⁷

This resonates with Yvette Taylor's (2007, p. 168) observation that in working-class gay and lesbian scene space "'looking' was equated with 'being'". Through attending an event of this nature, one becomes "categorized, known and placed by others" (Taylor, 2007, p. 166). In the case of Miho, 'being-as' a guest at the ceremony would be equated with 'as-being' LGBT or queer. This in turn produces a barrier to participation in events such as the LGBT *seijinshiki*. Miho simply could not have attended the event without significant risk to her privacy. This points to the ways in which the LGBT *seijinshiki* inadvertently reinforces the binary of 'queer' versus 'not queer', which in turn excludes individuals who are worried about becoming 'known as' a sexual minority.

Similarly, for some respondents, public events presented too much of a risk of meeting past partners or other members of the LGBT community with whom they had experienced conflict or abuse in the past. Nanami, a pansexual woman, said that she would not be able to attend public LGBT events for fear of accidentally meeting her ex-partner, who had physically assaulted her.

[...] after I had been the victim of domestic violence, and even though we had split up, I still think we might end up meeting within the community. That would be awful, so now I can't go to places like [NGO name]. And at events

⁴⁷ Miho speaks English as a second language, and I have transcribed this interview verbatim.

and that kind of thing, even if there are loads of people and we probably wouldn't meet I think 'Ugh, we might meet'. I'm the type that thinks we could end up meeting.

Nanami felt that the LGBT community in Osaka was such that even though she felt strongly that her abuser was completely in the wrong, she may be pressured into reconciling with them if she attended community events. She said:

I think that the person who committed the domestic violence is absolutely in the wrong. But I've also had the experience whereby the community is divided [on this] and I've been told that if we don't listen to both sides of the story then we don't know [who is in the wrong].

From this it is clear that spaces of recognition can produce spaces of misrecognition and exclusion. In Nanami's case this is experienced as being misrecognised as someone who could be partially culpable for the physical abuse she endured. Borrowing from the early stages of the recognition debate led by Charles Taylor, misrecognition in Nanami's case becomes a "form of oppression" (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). Drawing upon Georg Wilhelm Hegel's (1977) conception of master and slave, Taylor (1994) argued that recognition is not *a priori*, but constructed through struggle and exchange with an 'other'. In attending a community event like the LGBT *seijinshiki*, then, it may become necessary for Nanami to enter into a dialogue with an 'other' in the form of community members who seek to define Nanami's past experiences in terms that misrecognise her. As Janice McLaughlin et al. (2011) argue, a politics of recognition, therefore, brings with it the risk of policing identity. The disciplinary power mobilised through the reification of certain identities can overlook contextualized nuance and dilute difference in favour of reified group identities (McLaughlin et al., 2011).

As a result, despite promoting itself as intended for all, regardless of “Sexuality and age, ethnicity, nationality, and physical ability etc.” (Kansai LGBT *Seijinshiki*, 2017, unpaginated), the practice of recognition politics serves to exclude some respondents from the temporary queering of space. For Miho, these boundaries are felt in a physical sense: the LGBT *seijinshiki* would be a physical space that was ‘not allowed’ to her. Furthermore, the power to construct the idealised queer subject also brings with it moments of misrecognition, which draw boundaries around acceptable forms of being and practice. For Nanami, this acts as an excluding force, since the acceptable queer subject is one which is flexible, and able to adapt to the feeling rules and expectations to enter into dialogue with an intimidating ‘other’.

Bourdieu (1979, p. 83) noted that, “...the power of words to give orders and bring order, lies in belief in the legitimacy of the words and the person that utters them”. Hence, presentation of a queer subject that draws upon notions of the ‘foreign’ and the cosmopolitan acts as disciplinary power, but the legitimacy of the queer subject is established only upon the acceptance of the authority of the LGBT *seijinshiki* to define the boundaries of this subject. However, because participation in the event, and mobilization of the idealised qualities presented by the event is subject to restrictions, the LGBT *seijinshiki* cannot fully realise its goal to normalise this idealised queer subject in wider society. The politics of recognition is, therefore, limited in resistive scope. It can only resist heteronormativity to the point at which it begins to create its own lines of exclusion and delimitation.

6.6.2 Reinforcement: the burden of responsibility

Hence, although the LGBT *seijinshiki* purports to provide a universally accessible, safe space in which to practise queer visibility, the demand for legitimacy inherent in the

definition of “making the common sense” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 729) within this social space implicitly returns responsibility and emotional burden for the practice of queer visibility to the individual. This return of responsibility reinforces the systems of power that create the non-heterosexual or non-normatively gendered ‘other’, because the queer subject is returned to an everyday context in which one’s identity only becomes recognisable in dialect with an (imagined) non-queer counterpart. However, not all LGBT and queer individuals can accept or mobilise this idealised queer subjectivity in their everyday contexts.

One of the ways in which this return of responsibility can be seen at work is in the *seijin no chikai* (literally ‘oaths on becoming an adult’). The *seijin no chikai* representatives talked in detail about their journeys towards identifying as LGBT.⁴⁸ Although the speeches are named in the programme as *seijin no chikai*, and carry the connotation of making statements and promises about becoming an adult (rather than coming-out as LGBT or queer), the narratives are similar in many ways to the coming-out narratives that respondents spoke about in interview. The speeches followed a general pattern of self-realisation, a period of self-doubt and anxiety, followed by embracing their identities and deciding to embark upon the work of coming-out. The *seijin no chikai* are in essence a form of coming-out: a declaration of visibility as an LGBT individual under the public gaze. In using the *seijin no chikai* to deliver these individualised narratives, the event is re-centred around the primacy of individual experience and recognition. It would be impossible to hold a *seijinshiki* without the *seijin no chikai*, and since one of the overall goals of the event is to give LGBT and queer people the opportunity to ‘come of age’ as a sexual minority, it is essential that these narratives be foregrounded in this way. However, what the primacy of these narratives in the *seijinshiki* implies is that one ‘comes

⁴⁸ The specific contents of their speeches are not mentioned here.

of age' as a queer person only by first passing through this right-of-passage of public visibility and recognition. The delivery of coming-out narratives on stage valorises those who are able to appear in public and be photographed by the press, and the *seijin no chikai* become the central rhetorical focus of the event.

The gaffer tape stretched from one side of the venue to the other, and the designated photo booth areas also signal this return of responsibility. The brightly coloured tape cutting the space into two is a physical and metaphorical division of space. It is down to the guests to consider their personal situations and decide their level of comfort with being visible in public. The event may offer a 'safe space', but the negotiation of the limits of this space is dialectical and the sole responsibility of the individual, regardless of the local context in which they are embedded. The implication is that the queering of space has its limits, and these limits are marked visually with the photography zones, and symbolically with the foregrounding of the coming-out narratives. Hence, although the *seijinshiki* has the privileged position of constructing the common sense of what a visible queer subject could and should look like, it is implicit that the actual work of recognition must be undertaken outside of this temporary safe space, in the everyday. This in turn reinforces the notions of marginality, struggle against an 'other', and the valorisation of the courageous visible queer subject.

6.7 The other side of the tape: the politics of queer visibility in everyday life

If the responsibility for personal negotiation of visibility is returned to the individual, and this work must occur in the everyday (often in the absence of a dialectical other), the question remains as to if and how this idealised visible queer subjectivity is practically operable. The following section of this chapter will briefly discuss the ways in which the practice of queer visibility observable at the LGBT *seijinshiki* does and does not bleed

into the wider social context, and the factors that affect the possibility of mobilisation of this idealised visible queer subjectivity.

6.7.1 Compulsory invisibility

The risks concomitant with queer visibility often provided a compelling motivation to practise partial visibility, or to keep one's gender and sexual identity secret. Invisibility is understood here using the work of Honneth (2001, p. 112), who described invisibility as a "social state of affairs" where one is overlooked by others, and as the absence of actions by others that affirm one's existence. Invisibility is not necessarily an overt strategy against discourses of queer visibility, but can be brought about by invisible structural discrimination against LGBT and queer people within wider Japanese society.

For example, Kazuhiro is a cis-gender gay man in his 50s who originally trained and worked as a solicitor. He found that he could tell close friends about his sexuality if he believed that they would be receptive, but coming-out to his parents and in the work place was impossible. During the interview, Kazuhiro mentioned comments made by the US Consul General in Osaka, Patrick Linehan. Linehan had recently made public statements in which he encouraged LGBT youth to publicly come out. Kazuhiro was disturbed by these comments, which he felt were the result of Linehan being in a privileged position. He elaborated as follows (the underlined sections represent moments when Kazuhiro spoke in English):

Kazuhiro: But precisely because he is who he is, he is saying something he shouldn't say like that [...]. [Because we are] 'a discreet and insular minority', a 'discreet and insular minority', as in, if you don't tell people yourself, then other people don't know. So, they say that telling people is important.

Jay: Linehan said that?

Kazuhiro: Yeah, that's what Linehan said. But he can only say that because he's Linehan.

Jay: Why?

Kazuhiro: Because he can't lose his job, can he? And of course, he won't lose his family either, will he? Quite the opposite, he can have a family, and more than that he gets respect. But for people who aren't Linehan, normal, everyday workers, men with their own businesses, if they came-out, they might lose their jobs if they came out [...] And it's not just losing their jobs, they might become the object of disdain [...] and their family might say "You ought to die", all of those close relationships that you've had up until that time [...]

For Kazuhiro, the risks of practising a highly visible queer identity are significant: from the loss of jobs and business, to rejection from close friends and family. When Kazuhiro explained the reasons why people like Patrick Linehan encourage gay people in Japan to come-out, he code-switched to the English, "discreet and insular minority". In doing so, Kazuhiro places Linehan's reasoning within a 'foreign' framework of non-Japanese notions of the visible queer subject. This serves to distance the decisions made by "normal" working men in Japan from 'American' discourses of queer visibility. However, when I pressed Kazuhiro on this issue, it became apparent that he did not think Linehan was privileged just because he was American, but also by virtue of his specific context and the embodied cultural capital which this context confers:

Jay: Do you think he can say that because he is American?

Kazuhiro: No, he can say it because he's Linehan. He's American, and...even among American's the people who can't say it are the ones working for employers that have no understanding and so on. That's why they can't say it. But, Linehan's superior is Clinton. She said that human rights, that gay rights are human rights, didn't she? You can say it within that [context].

Certainly, the fact that Linehan is American is significant to Kazuhiro, but he qualifies this with the statement that being an American with a boss that has an “understanding” of LGBT issues is also important. In Linehan’s case, his superior is Hilary Clinton, and he works for the US government, whom Kazuhiro assumes has a good understanding of the issues facing LGBT people in the workplace. In Kazuhiro’s understanding, Linehan has access to two types of cosmopolitan cultural capital by virtue of his context. Firstly, he has the ability to draw upon his position as an outsider who has cultural knowledge of a ‘foreign’ country. Secondly, because Linehan was working under the direction of Hilary Clinton, who as Secretary of State first made the statement that gay rights are human rights, he has a very public platform with which to protect his position. Kazuhiro believes that coming-out at work in this way is not an option open to all, due to a lack of protection against discriminatory practices in the Japanese workplace.

In Kazuhiro’s case, a visible queer subjectivity is dis-allowed by his context, and he understands this context through comparison with Linehan, whom he tacitly believes has access to a greater deal of cultural capital than himself. A fear of tangible harm prevents Kazuhiro from practising queer visibility and renders his sexuality socially invisible. In Kazuhiro’s case this harm is felt in a similar way to the model put forth by Taylor (1994, p. 25) that places him in a “reduced mode of being”, in that he cannot feasibly bring to bear his full identity in social interactions. As a result of this he feels that his position is inferior (in the sense of being less protected) than Linehan.

Kiah also felt that she was subject to compulsory invisibility. She talked about how her time in Japan had been about a lack of experiences related to her sexuality. She discussed her relationship with her host mother, which had seemed to stall around the issue of

Kiah's sexuality, even after Kiah openly talked about her experience of Kansai Rainbow Festa:

I'm not out to them, but I'm also not hiding from them, it's just like really awkward 'cause they always assume that I'm straight, so my host mom will say things about getting married, like "Oh you should just marry a guy and then not have to worry about stuff like that" [laugh]. One time she asked me, I was talking about Pride and I was like "Oh, I was really happy to go to Pride and I really enjoyed it", and she was like "Oh, do you have a lot of queer friends? And I was like, well, *yeah!*" [laugh].

Kiah felt that this impasse was due to people in Japan not being able to read a person for physical signs of queerness.

I'm surprised my host Mom hasn't guessed, because of the way that I act and dress, and like, I don't know why she still assumes that I'm straight, I really don't get it [laugh].

Kiah's frustration with a lack of opportunity to make visible her queer identity was evident in her closing statement during the interview:

I think it's unfortunate because it's more like a lack of experiences. There isn't really anything that happens when you're queer [in Japan], and you're like "Oh well this is my identity and I'll just put it to the side while I'm here because I can't really do anything with it here".

Kiah believes that it is the specific context in Japan which disallows her from being read as a queer person. This non-recognition leads to a sense of being out of place for Kiah, and of being on hold.

Kazuhiro and Kiah's experiences of non-recognition demonstrate the ways in which Fraser's status model of recognition and the Hegelian-based models of Honneth and Taylor in which recognition is related to identity and belonging, are inextricably linked. In all three cases, the respondents' understanding of their context meant that visibility was either too risky (in the case of Kazuhiro), or simply impossible (as in the case of Kiah), and as a result, they experienced compulsory invisibility and non-recognition. As Butler (1997) noted in her response to Fraser's model of recognition, the cultural and the material are inextricably linked. In a discussion of non-recognition of non-heterosexual sexuality Butler (1997, p. 274) notes that:

It is not that non-heterosexual forms of sexuality are simply left out, but that their suppression is essential to the operation of that prior normativity.

In short, non-recognition (and misrecognition) are essential to the maintenance of the normative social structures against which difference is understood (for example, binary gender and heteronormative reproduction). Hence, moments of invisibility and non-recognition are not only inevitable for respondents like Kazuhiro and Kiah, but these moments work to define the boundaries of normativity and give clues to sexual minority individuals as to what is allowed to them.

6.7.2 Ambivalence

For some respondents, the issue of visibility was approached with ambivalence and resulted in moments of misrecognition. Hikari is a gender-non-conforming pansexual person in their early 20s. Hikari was assigned female at birth, but now resists all gender labels. When they were in junior high school, before they recognised their own sexuality, they dated a close female friend. Hikari told me that they never told anyone about this relationship. They explained that this was due to a mixture of fear of damaging

relationships with family and friends, and a result of the fact that people simply did not ask them about dating.

Hikari: Until then, I always thought that I had the kind of existence where I could tell my family and good friends anything. But precisely because those relationships were so good...I couldn't say anything, precisely because we were that close I thought this was something that I can't talk about.

Jay: What did you think about that, was it hard?

Hikari: Well, I had never dated a boy. Somehow, they didn't know that I was dating anyone, so they never asked...

Hikari expressed a fear that being open about the relationship might make it difficult to tell their close friends and family, which is similar to the fears of harm that Kazuhiro expressed about coming-out at work. However, despite feeling like they were the kind of person who could talk about anything, Hikari never felt the need to forcefully bring the topic up in conversation. Since Hikari's parents never brought up the subject of dating, the chance to tell their parents never presented itself. Within the habitus of high school student studying towards university entrance exams, mobilising a visible queer subjectivity, and coming-out to their friends and family was simply not an option that Hikari felt compelled to pursue. Hence, during their high school years Hikari was misrecognised as either heterosexual, or simply 'not currently dating'. Here we can see that as Butler argued in a 2012 interview, there are "schemes that regulate and distribute recognisability" (Willig, 2012, p. 141) at work in Hikari's experience. In the case of Hikari, their parents' assumption that all dating is heterosexual denied Hikari the chance to instigate a conversation about their sexuality. The schemes of power which work to misrecognise Hikari result in ambivalence over their ability to practise queer visibility.

Similarly, the day-to-day requirements of everyday life worked to create uncertainty and ambivalence around queer visibility for Kei. Kei is in their early 20s, and identifies as *x-jendā* and bisexual. Kei was assigned male at birth, and currently wears somewhat masculine clothes in everyday life, but keeps their hair slightly longer than would be acceptable as a full-time male worker in many Japanese companies. Kei was working part-time at a supermarket when we met, and when I asked about their career plans, they mentioned a promotion at work. However, the promotion was not necessarily positive for Kei, because it meant that they had to cut their hair shorter than they would have liked in order to fit in with the dress code for male employees:

I was promoted at the supermarket that I worked at. I made my mind up and cut my hair, but then I was persuaded by all kinds of advice from my friends. And also, how should I put this, maybe finding a job that doesn't have any impact upon my sexuality is better. And work that I can do and want to do...

The use of *hara o kimeru* (literally 'decide one's stomach', made my mind up) suggests that for Kei, deciding to cut their hair to take on the promotion at work was a challenge which they had to resolve themselves to. Kei's friends recognised that changing their outward appearance in this way in order to pass as a male employee at work was not conducive to long-term happiness. Kei eventually decided to look for work in a field they liked, or where it would not impact upon their sexuality and gender. This meant that at the time of interview, Kei was uncertain about their future career plans, and feeling increasingly unhappy with their outward appearance. Kei felt that if asked directly about their gender, they would say that they were more female than male. However, the decision about whether or not to begin dressing in what they considered to be female clothes (and therefore make themselves visible as transgender) was closely intertwined with the fact that they were at a stage in their lives where they had to make long-term decisions about their

future career. Kei's situs as an *x-jendā*, bisexual person came into contact with a situs in which they would be expected to conform to specific codes of dress. This contact moment created the possibility for a moment of misrecognition, resulting in ambivalence regarding their outward expression of gender and sexuality. This in turn resulted in Kei deferring a decision on visibility as transgender until some future date.

The experiences of Hikari and Kei highlight the contested nature of the visible queer subject in this context. As a large body of scholarship has shown, visibility carries with it risks of harm and the production of inequalities (Blackwood et al., 2015; Hines, 2013; Stanley, 2017; Taylor, 1994). In the case of Kazuhiro, these risks are dealt with by keeping his sexuality invisible and unspoken within wider society. This results in moments of non-recognition. For Hikari and Kei, there is an ambivalence towards visibility: visibility can be dealt with when it becomes necessary but otherwise is not a priority. When visibility was experienced, it could become misrecognition, resulting in a reluctance to mobilise their sexuality and gender identities as a basis for claims making. However, at the time of the interview, Hikari and Kei were able to consciously choose to either not make themselves visible as LGBT, or to defer the decision until they felt ready.

6.7.3 Compulsory visibility

For other respondents, this delay was not possible, and they experienced compulsory visibility and the disciplinary power of recognition. Both Akemi and Keiko felt that their outward appearances made visibility as a transgender person compulsory. Akemi is a transgender woman in her 50s who works full-time and also maintains a part time evening

job in a *nyū hāfu* host club.⁴⁹ Akemi felt that visibility was a completely different issue for transgender people than for lesbian, gay, or bisexual people.

But you know for example, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, those people, if they didn't say anything, then you wouldn't know that they were a lesbian, would you? Because your outer appearance doesn't change. But for transgender people it's different. It's absolutely different I think. I think that when you change your outer appearance, you can't avoid coming-out.

Akemi felt that her coming-out was unpleasant but necessary. She had been married for a number of years, and had two children. Her marriage ended, and her mother would not accept her as a woman. This was an understandably traumatic time for Akemi:

Akemi: Even now my mum can't accept it, but it can't be helped, can it, Jay?

Jay: That must be hard mentally.

Akemi: Yes, mentally, yes. Also, it's not just that everyone can see that you are living as a woman. There are, all told, a lot of people who have been discriminated against based on judgements about how they look. It's really hard [...] Looks, and of course [that] judgement? It's huge isn't it. Jay, it would be weird if you grew a beard, right?

For Akemi, visibility and recognition brought about negative consequences, such as her divorce from her wife, and not being accepted by her mother. Akemi stresses the outward signs of her transgender identity, and the sense that there is no alternative other than to be visible with “it can't be helped”. For Akemi, it is *atarimae* (obvious, literally ‘right in front’) that transgender people are visible. By suggesting that if I grew a beard it would be “weird (*okashii*)”, Akemi stresses the very matter-of-fact way in which she views

⁴⁹ *Nyū hāfu* host clubs are similar to other host clubs. Customers can buy time with a host by buying them ‘drinks’. The drinks are priced so that the customer is actually paying for the time with the host.

transgender visibility. This resignation to compulsory visibility was shared by Keiko, a transgender woman in her 50s. Keiko gave the example of group holidays and visiting *onsen* (public baths) with friends:

Keiko: When I go on trips [...] For example, if we're using the bath as a group, and when I want to use the changing room [...] Using the women's [changing room and bath] can be difficult.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, it's become a delicate issue, so I understand that people think a lot about that. Of course, I've been in a family bath together with female friends.⁵¹ When that happened, without me even saying anything [someone] showed me how to [uses a napkin to show how she fixed her towel], how to use it like this, [she] helped me.⁵²

Jay: That was nice.

Keiko: Yeah, it was [...] but when you're away with people you don't know at all, then it's more difficult. For example, if I go to the public bath, maybe the staff would give me access to the female side of the bath, but even if I covered myself with the towel, of course... [Keiko looks down and draws my eyes to her lap].⁵³

Common aspects of everyday life, such as bathing culture, mean that Keiko is regularly reminded of her context, and the ways in which it differs from that of her assigned female at birth friends. Keiko suggests that she thinks that this is a “delicate” issue, and that she understands why “people think a lot about” it. This implies that Keiko feels that her physical appearance is not simply a private matter, but is forced into the public domain, and subject to consideration by others who are beyond her control. Although Keiko may

⁵⁰ Communal baths are common at Japanese hotels. They are usually segregated by gender, and customers are expected to enter the bath naked, with long hair tied back.

⁵¹ This is a type of bath that allows family groups of mixed-gender to bath together, with customers still expected to bathe naked. These types of bath are often found in resort hotels, or larger bathhouse resorts.

⁵² Customers often use small towels to cover themselves as they move from bath to bath.

⁵³ Although customers often use small towels to cover themselves between baths, it is poor manners to put the towel into the water, so it is necessary to fully remove the towel before getting into the water.

be given access to the female bath, she believes that the ultimate judgement as to her entitlement to use that bath is tied to her body, and to the judgement of her body by others.

For Keiko, recognition as a transgender woman brings with it regimes of disciplinary power. For example, Keiko is told by another woman how to hold her towel to hide her genitals, and she must work to ‘pass as a woman’ at the bath house counter to be allowed into the correct side of the bath. At these moments, Keiko is exposed to the risk of misrecognition, but feels that she has no choice but to engage with the politics of recognition. Yvette Taylor (2007, p. 162) refers to similar processes in gay and lesbian scene space in the UK as the “deciphering of bodily capitals”. In Keiko’s case, the deciphering is taken on by the other bathers, and the staff at the counter. As Wendy Martineau (2012, p. 174) noted, misrecognition can come from an “ordinary agent”, it is not always governmental or structural. In the case of Keiko, the fear of misrecognition by an ordinary agent results in a feeling of being “unentitled” to social space (Taylor, 2007, p. 162). In Keiko’s case, as well as Akemi’s, the public gaze and expectations, which are part of their *situs*, restricts the behaviours and ways of being that are ‘allowed’ to them.

6.8 Conclusion

To some extent, the LGBT *seijinshiki* can be considered as a temporary queering of space. It opens up a temporary space in which guests and committee members can be recognised as LGBT or queer, and can also recognise themselves being presented back to them in the event mascot, and through the experiences of participants who appear on stage. For some guests, this becomes a moment of recognition. When the model talks about her appearance on the rainbow runway as the first time she has been open about her sexuality in public, she demands and is given recognition from the other guests. Transnational discourses of visibility, recognition, and identity based rights-claims bleed into the

organisation and execution of the LGBT *seijinshiki*. Cosmopolitan ideals such as flexibility, choosing one's own path, and learning to 'laugh' and 'enjoy' life is valorised, and open up spaces of resistance against gender binarism and heteronormativity.

However, as discussed in Section 5.6.1 of this chapter, the event is also a space of privilege which is not accessible to all LGBT and queer people. As the above analysis has shown, whatever idealised image of queerness and queer visibility is presented, this politics of recognition is limited in its affective power. For Miho, the risk of being recognised as a member of the LGBT community risks harm to her child, and for Nanami attending events such as the LGBT *seijinshiki* bring unacceptable levels of risk. This unequal access to spaces of resistance show the ways in which the politics of recognition can challenge heteronormative structures with heterotopic spaces, but at the same time produce instances of exclusion from within, and reinforce the notion of heterosexual/homosexual binaries. This reveals the way in which the LGBT *seijinshiki* can enter into the politics of recognition, but it cannot mobilise these claims in the everyday. The responsibility for the negotiation of queer visibility and recognition remains firmly in the hands of the individual. The existence of privilege within the event structure, and the return of responsibility to the individual suggests that the resistive potential of the event is limited to the representation and valorisation of the idealised queer subject.

Since the LGBT *seijinshiki*'s resistive power is limited to representation and the temporary queering of space, it is important to consider the ways in which this representation can and cannot be transferred into the everyday. This chapter has shown how the negotiation of visibility and recognition in the everyday in Japan is deeply complex, and often ambivalent. Recognition can bring with it moments of belonging as

seen in the LGBT *seijinshiki*, but it can also result in moments of non-recognition, misrecognition, and dis-ease. In entering into a politics of recognition in this way, the event brought with it moments of empowerment, but also moments of exclusion and the reinforcement of binary understandings of heterosexual/homosexual, male/female. Applying the lens of the politics of recognition to the LGBT *seijinshiki* has, therefore, contributed to the field by demonstrating the contested and ambivalent nature of identity-based rights claims in Kansai. The following chapter will consider the potential of the internet to create spaces of belonging for those who are excluded from events such as the Kansai LGBT *seijinshiki*.

Chapter 6 - Belonging, fear, and nostalgia: the role of the internet

7.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with the feelings of isolation described in Chapter 5, and analyses the extent to which the respondents were able to develop a sense of belonging to the broad category of LGBT during a time of great social change in Japan. Unlike the gay boom of the 1990s, the LGBT boom occurred during a period of high levels of connection to global networks through the internet and social media (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2016; 2017). This meant that respondents were able to share knowledge and make connections using online modes of community with more frequency. Despite the pessimism of Japanese studies scholars such as McLelland (2002) at the beginning of the twenty-first century, scholarship of gender and sexuality increasingly stresses the growing importance of the internet in creating spaces of belonging, particularly for individuals who would be otherwise isolated or stigmatised (Green et al., 2015). This chapter will examine the respondents' attitudes towards and uses of the internet in relation to their sense of belonging within their communities.

The chapter will begin with a brief outline of the literature related to the concept of belonging, and then continue to a discussion of the different uses of the internet by respondents. These uses fell into two primary categories: information gathering (either about LGBT and queer identities, or information about LGBT-related events and groups), and the development of online networks of friends. This chapter will show how each of these uses contributed to the development of a sense of belonging through performative practices of belonging. I will demonstrate that these performative practices of belonging have drawn together the online and offline worlds to the extent that practices of belonging flow freely across porous boundaries. I will discuss the ways in which this increasing enmeshment of the online and the offline has impacted the everyday lives of respondents,

and outline the local responses and resistance. The chapter will focus this discussion through an exposition of the key emotions of fear and nostalgia, and how they can be used to understand the impacts of increased internet use in the respondents' practices of belonging.

7.2 Defining 'belonging'

Common sense definitions of the term 'belonging' often include references to "[a] personal feeling, the sense of belonging to a certain group, place, or social location" (Youkhana, 2015, p. 11). This sense of belonging is closely tied to a physical place, or to physical proximity to people with shared values and beliefs. This conceptualisation of belonging is similar in many ways to the notion of *ibasho* (a place where one belongs) in Japanese. *Ibasho* as a concept was first popularised in the 1990s in Japan in response to a Ministry of Education report which recommended that schools should understand the importance of a 'place for the soul' (*kokoro no ibasho*) in tackling a surge in school refusal (Ishimoto, 2009). The term *ibasho* was subsequently taken up in the mainstream media to discuss social problems facing youth in a changing society (Nakajima et al., 2007). Over time, the term made its way in to the field of psychology, and then into sociological studies (Ishimoto, 2009; Nakajima et al., 2007).

However, definitions and engagements with the term *ibasho* remain stubbornly essentialist. For example, Hailey Herleman et al. (2008, p. 284) describe *ibasho* as "a sense of comfort and psychological security that a person feels *in specific locations they regularly visit*" (emphasis added). Furthermore, policies to increase access to feelings of having an *ibasho* often result in the creation of specific physical places such as 'free spaces' where young people can spend time together (Nakajima et al., 2007). Nakajima et al. (2007) have gone some way towards highlighting the dual physical and emotional

aspects of *ibasho* by pointing to the role of ‘connecting with others’ (*tasha to no kakawari*) in developing a sense of belonging. However, this also reproduces a dualism between physical forms of *ibasho* and imagined (or emotional) forms of *ibasho*, which, as this chapter will demonstrate, are not mutually exclusive. As Eva Youkhana (2015) has noted, even if we acknowledge the importance of spatial and geographically bounded aspects of belonging, these spaces are still multidimensional, informed by intersections such as class, ‘race’, gender, and sexuality. This chapter will demonstrate that it is more productive to conceptualise belonging as a set of performative and affectual practices which are in constant dialogue with the local physical context *and* the emotional aspects of belonging to LGBT communities in the area. ‘Affect’ and ‘affectual’ are used in this chapter in the broad sense of being related to feelings and emotions, with emotions being affects (or ‘intensities’ as Brian Massumi (1995; 2002; 2005) refers to them) which have been rendered recognisable through language (Mankekar and Gupta, 2016). Affect is related to the often unseen and intangible emotional “forces or intensities” that pass between bodies (either physical or otherwise) (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010, p. 1). A more detailed discussion of affect follows in Chapter 7, which takes imaginative geographies and affect as its main theoretical framework.

This chapter will argue that whilst spatial location (i.e. a physical place) and social location (i.e. one’s position within the field) do both matter, belonging is not a state which simply emerges as the result of essentialist notions of one’s physical and/or social location in relation to others as the term *ibasho* suggests. Hence, even if Asataka (who was discussed in Chapter 4) had lived in a large city like Osaka, this would not necessarily mean that his negotiation of belonging would be any less complex. Belonging is not tied solely to the existence of and ability to access specific social and/or physical space and place (for example, an LGBT fashion show, or an online self-help group). As Nira Yuval-

Davis (2006) argues, belonging occurs on the level of social location, as well as on the level of identifications and emotional attachments. Yuval-Davis et al. (2006) deal with these two aspects of belonging separately: the emotional sense of belonging, and a politics of belonging. This does not necessarily mean that the two aspects work independently of each other. Rather, an individual's performance or practice of belonging operates in concert with both emotional attachments and feelings, *and* physical and/or social contexts. In this approach, 'belonging to' a group or identity is part of an affectual or emotional "yearning" (Ferreday, 2009, p. 37), which is practised at the nexus between social context and the emotional dimension (Antonsich, 2010).

Following Bell (1999, p. 3), belonging can be understood as a set of practices in the sense that notions of 'belonging to' a particular category or identity are constructed and "sustained through complex incorporations". 'Incorporations' are understood here as performative and affectual "ritual" acts (Cover, 2005, p. 118) (for example, joining a social group online). Bell (1999) drew upon Butler's theory of performativity to argue that identity (and thus 'identifying with' or 'belonging to' a specific identity category) is citational. Rob Cover (2002; 2005) used this insight to argue that identification with or 'belonging to' the categories of gay or lesbian does not exist *a priori* performative acts, but is instead created through the ritual act of reading community media. Fu (2018) also makes overt reference to belonging as constructed through performance. Using Butler's *Gender Trouble*, Fu (2018, p. 140) argues that the seemingly anonymous nature of online space allowed individuals in their study to access "safer, more private space" in which to perform identities, which in turn led to an increased sense of affectual belonging. Similarly, Debra Ferreday (2009, p. 37) argues that belonging online is part of an affectual practice conducted through the construction of "a fantasy of community". Ferreday's 'fantasy community' is not something unreal or phantasmal, but rather an

acknowledgement of the notion that affect and emotions are used as part of performative practices of belonging online. The sense of belonging sought through these performative practices is conceptualised here as a “place-belongingness” (Antonsich, 2010, p. 646). This place-belongingness (which correlates with Yuval-Davis’s emotional belonging) is similar to bell hooks’ (1991, p. 145) notion of “homeplace” (p.145). It is an emotional sense of being at home, and of being safe, but is not necessarily always connected with a physical place as in the case of *ibasho*. Place-belongingness also speaks to the emotional aspects of belonging.

In contrast, the politics of belonging speaks to the ways in which these emotional aspects spill over into physical contexts, and how these politics construct and are constructed by local contexts. This distinction between belonging as affect and belonging as a political practice was proposed by Yuval-Davis (2006), and expanded upon by Marco Antonsich (2010). However as Antonsich (2010) argues, place-belongingness still works in dialogue with specific regimes of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion (i.e. a politics of belonging). Hence, place-belongingness cannot be completely extracted from physical contexts, or from the politics of belonging. Indeed, as Antonsich (2010) and Yuval-Davis (2006) note, the emotional and affectual aspects of belonging can be conceptualised as an essential precursor to the politics of belonging. This concept is particularly useful when considering the ways in which belonging can be ‘performed’, and the ways in which this performance can lead to tensions and exclusions, as will be discussed in Section 6.3.2 of this chapter.

The following section of this chapter will engage with this notion of belonging as constructed through ritual and/or performative acts, as well as demonstrating the

flexibility of place-belongingness across the intersection between physical and emotional aspects of belonging.

7.3 Belonging in the internet age

It is clear from the review of the literature in Chapter 2, and the description of the LGBT boom in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, that the fieldwork for this project was conducted in a social context that differed in many respects from the gay boom of the 1990s. The gay boom of the 1990s was based primarily on printed materials like magazines, and the occasional film (Hall, 2000). Access to these resources necessitated disposable income, and the ability to visit the places which sold these items. In contrast, the LGBT boom occurred at a time of vastly increased use of the internet, particularly through handheld devices such as smartphones (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2016; 2017). For example, in 2016, 94.2% of people aged 20 to 29 owned a personal smartphone (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2016; 2017). A white paper published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) in 2017 also shows that the use of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter on smartphones has increased significantly in Japan since 2012, with 71.2% of respondents reporting that they used all six social media sites included in the survey (pp. 6-7). As a result of this rapid proliferation in use of the internet and social media platforms, self-publishing personal narratives through personal websites and video platforms, and accessing these narratives as a reader now requires little more than access to a computer or a smartphone and an internet connection. This is a profound change in Japanese society since McLelland's (2002) pessimistic statements about the internet and its lack of potential to affect the lives of gender and/or sexual minority individuals in Japan.

7.3.1 Place-belongingness and online space

For the non-Japanese respondents, use of the internet formed a key platform in their early researches in their home countries due to their geographic isolation from Japan. One of the main sources of information for non-Japanese respondents prior to moving to Japan was the Stonewall Japan Facebook group. Stonewall Japan was originally set up as 'ATAGO' (A Terribly Apropos Gay Organization) in the 1980s, by gay participants of JET. The group was intended as a physical network of individuals to support gay (primarily male) participants. Its membership has diversified over time (it is no longer necessary to be a JET participant to become a member) and the group's presence has expanded onto social media platforms, particularly Facebook. In its current form, the group maintains a public website, an open Facebook page, and a closed Facebook group. Stonewall Japan does retain some links to its roots in the JET Programme by managing a group of local 'blocks', which are designed to organise activities for JET participants in their local areas. In order to join the closed Facebook group, in contrast, one need only message the group moderators and provide evidence that one identifies as LGBT and either lives or is planning to live in Japan. The closed Facebook group acts as a landing page on which its 2500 members can post LGBT-related news, and seek help and advice from other community members. The group is also regularly used to organise meet-ups, volunteering, or to seek companions for specific trips (it is not, however, used as a dating site). Nearly all interaction on the site is conducted in English.

For many of the non-Japanese respondents, the Stonewall Japan Facebook group was a key access point for information, as well as a tool for the development of networks. Kiah told me that she had heard about the online group from a friend in the USA, and joined before she arrived in Japan:

I was talking to someone as I was getting ready for Japan, she was talking to me, and she told me about Stonewall, and then I joined [...] I don't know anyone there but I do get a lot of good information and I think if I ever needed help people would help, but it's just hard to be connected because everyone is spread out.

In Kiah's experience, the Stonewall Japan Facebook group acted as a gateway to information about LGBT and queer individuals living in Japan when she was geographically isolated from them in the USA. Kiah's sense of knowing that there would be help available if she needed it suggests that this online community provides a site of solidarity and mutual support organised around shared identities and concerns. This is similar to the "place-belongingness" which Antonsich (2010, p. 645) describes as "a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home'" – this is a feeling of safety, of feeling as though there is a community that could provide protection if one "ever needed help" (Kiah).

This sense of a community rallying around to support those who needed it, specifically through the sharing of localised knowledge was also stressed by Ben. Ben is a gay man living in a rural area of Kansai, and noted how the group had potential to share specific local knowledge tailored to individual needs:

Say if a Stonewall member lives in Shiga, they would contact [the block leader], "Oh I'm a trans man, and I need to get some binding but I don't know where to go, what should I do?" they can, if they're feeling uncomfortable to post on the large Facebook group they can ask their block leader. And the block leader if they don't know then they can ask the rest of the leadership, or post on that person's behalf and say "Oh, we have a trans man who wants some information about binding" and a lot of the time, there are enough people on the Stonewall Facebook page, there's people that say "Check out

this website!”, “Oh in Osaka!” and it’s amazing, it really is, and I am so thankful.

As Ben points out, the Stonewall Japan Facebook group not only provides a place where people can develop contacts with other LGBT and queer people in Japan, but also mediates local information sharing. The block leaders are able to act as intermediaries for those who would like information but would prefer not to post publicly about it. In Ben’s description, the group becomes the central hub around which localised expertise is organised. If members in a specific area need advice, they are able to get this advice from others with direct experience. In this sense, the Stonewall Japan Facebook group becomes a hub around which a sense of place-belonging can be built, either through networking potentials, or through the safe and personalised sharing of local knowledge.

In contrast, few of the Japanese respondents used the Stonewall Japan Facebook group with any regularity, perhaps because a majority of the communications are conducted in English and focussed towards the needs of non-Japanese speakers. Ben noted that Japanese members were welcome in the group, but that ultimately the group was designed as a knowledge-sharing platform for non-Japanese people. Instead, the Japanese respondents tended to talk more generally about the internet as a source of information, without mentioning specific sites. Specifically, these respondents spoke more about the way in which information they found online had allowed them to feel that they belonged to specific identity categories. Natsuki identifies as *x-jendā*, and had not known the word *x-jendā* until they had searched more generally using the keyword ‘LGBT’:

Jay: When did you first hear about *x-jendā*?

Natsuki: Sometime in the last few years. Maybe two or three years ago. When I first thought that I might be in the middle, when I thought maybe I was that

type of person, I put the word ‘LGBT’ into the internet and searched that way, and some place or other they mentioned X.

Before stumbling upon the word *x-jendā*, Natsuki had described their identity as “in the middle”, between two perceived acceptable norms, and was unsure how to describe themselves. The internet, specifically *tōjisha* narratives posted on personal blog sites, had allowed Natsuki to discover a term which more aptly fit their identity. This articulation of identity through reference to group-generated materials online is similar to the observation that Cover (2005) made in reference to lesbian and gay print journalism in Australia in 2005. Cover (2005, p. 123) argued that finding a ‘group identity’ through printed materials was a form of “public belonging to a ‘group identity’” which was necessary for respondents to place themselves within a “viable group identity”. In a similar sense, Natsuki’s ritual act of reading *tōjisha* narratives online helped them to move away from a feeling of being “in the middle” towards a viable group identity. This is also similar to Antonsich’s (2010) place-belongingness, but with ‘place’ understood symbolically as the act of belonging to the group identity represented by the term *x-jendā*.

Yumiko (a lesbian woman) experienced a similar moment in which uncertainty over how to speak about herself was transformed into a moment of belonging as the result of information found online. Yumiko experienced domestic violence as a child, and had subsequently felt that her sexual attraction to women was the result of an aversion to men (her abuser had been a man). Despite her fear of men (for many years Yumiko could not use public transport for fear that she might have to sit near men), she decided to get married, and started a family. Later in her life, as the result of a cancer scare, Yumiko resolved to face the puzzle of her identity and started searching the internet using keywords such as ‘lesbian’ and ‘homosexual’:

Yumiko: I didn't think that I was a *tōjisha*, at that time [two years prior to the interview], so I had no interest, but when I thought maybe I was like that, I went online and looked up a lot of things and that was there

Jay: That word [LGBT]?

Yumiko: Yeah like 'Ooohh...!' [laugh] It was like that [...] It was on the internet, and I didn't know the word LGBT so maybe I searched using words I did know, I think it was words like '*dōseiaisha*', and because I thought maybe I was a lesbian I used 'lesbian' and words like that. I think I put that kind of word into google and searched that way.

Yumiko's discovery of the term LGBT shifted her sense of not being *tōjisha*, to the revelation that she did in fact belong to the category of LGBT. After many decades of feeling that she was alone, she remembered her visceral reaction of saying "Ooohh...!" as her understanding fell into place. Her feelings of uncertainty, and of not being able to articulate belonging to a particular group was replaced with a moment of belonging, through the ritual act of readership (Cover, 2005). Yumiko and Natsuki's experiences of finding information and symbolic spaces for belonging online further suggests that place-belongingness is a flexible category: it can refer to both a place or a social location (as is suggested in the word *ibasho*), but it can also refer to the affectual and symbolic aspects of belonging, and the emotional reactions which occur as a result of these moments of discovery. Using the work of bell hooks (1991), Antonsich (2010, p. 646) describes this place is a "symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security and emotional attachment". This is reflected in the data in this study, with the majority of respondents using the internet to gather information and network with other LGBT and queer individuals.

However, despite the potential that the internet possessed to mediate information sharing and networking opportunities, many of the respondents remained deeply ambivalent about its role in their sense of place-belongingness. For example, Kiah was ambivalent about the ability of her membership of the Stonewall Japan Facebook group to actually

help connect her to other LGBT and queer people in the local area. She noted that it can be “hard to be connected” in the physical realm, even when we are surrounded by people of similar beliefs and values. Although Kiah tacitly acknowledged that should she need help it would probably be there, “I think if I ever needed help people would help”, she did not feel that she had developed any viable networks of LGBT and queer friends through membership of the Facebook group. Kiah had chosen to make connections with other students in her Japanese language classes at university, friends with whom she was in regular contact in the physical realm.

A similar pattern emerged in the case of Jake. Jake was a regular Stonewall Japan Facebook group user, but felt that his membership of the group had done little to help him in finding friends in his local context. Before arriving in Japan, Jake used Facebook messenger to talk to a friend of a friend who had been active in the LGBT circle at Jake’s destination University:

[...] I spoke to my friends in the year above me who were at [the same university] last year, and they had a friend from Spain who was quite active in the LGBT circle at [the university], had a Japanese boyfriend as well, so I spoke to him twice I think on Facebook, messages. But all in all, I wasn’t too worried or concerned about it because we were moving as a class of six, I had in my mind that I had already formed my own friendship group, especially living in an international dorm [...]

Jake’s use of the Facebook group was periphery to connections he already had through his exchange programme, and through a friend of a friend. Although this communication took place via Facebook messenger, Jake’s membership of the group was incidental to his personal sense of place-belongingness.

However, this is not to say that the Stonewall Japan Facebook group had no impact upon the respondents, nor that membership of the group had not helped to develop a sense of place-belongingness amongst respondents. In general, respondents were able to identify the overt ways in which membership of the group did not really help them develop a sense of place-belongingness (for example, when connections made online did not convert into relationships in the offline context). However, the data suggest that in addition to the practical function of connecting respondents to like-minded individuals in the area, online forms of community like the Stonewall Japan Facebook group tacitly contributed to place-belongingness in ways that the respondents were not able to articulate directly. This is particularly evident if we consider belonging as a performative practice, as will be discussed in the following section.

7.3.2 Belonging as a performative practice

Butler (2007 [1990], p. xv) has noted that gender is performative in the sense that it is constructed through “not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual”. In short, gender does not exist before identity and selfhood, but is constructed through repeated acts, or performativity. These acts are citational, meaning that they are not free-floating, but guided by the norms of a given culture or society (Butler, 1999; 2011[1993]). Following the scholarship of Bell (1999), it is possible to extend this understanding of gender performativity to the performativity of belonging. Bell (1999, p. 3) has noted how belonging is also performative, in the sense that the “sometimes ritual repetition, of these normalised codes makes material the belongings they purport to simply describe”.

Membership of the Stonewall Japan Facebook group can be conceptualised in similar terms. Individuals make a request to join the group, giving personal information to prove that they identify as LGBT, and either live or are planning to live in Japan. New members

must perform this ritual act in order to be admitted into the group. These acts overtly make material their belonging to the group: applicants are either judged to belong, and are added to the group, or as not belonging, and are ejected from the group. A successful performance of belonging at this point acts as a gateway to broader feelings of place-belonging through shared interests, beliefs, and values (Yuval-Davis, 2006). For instance, as members such as Kiah and Jake built (or did not build) online connections, they developed physical networks of friends in offline contexts, and the focus of their use of the Facebook group shifted towards the curation of news stories and information. At this point, belonging to the group is marked or performed through the liking and sharing of posts, through posting comments, and in some cases the policing of boundaries around codes of behaviour.

Since individual actors are not free-floating agents (Butler, 1996; 2011[1993]) but rather deeply embedded in their contexts, these acts of ritual or performative belonging draw together the online and the offline into a complex web of affective practices of belonging. It became apparent that both my own and respondents' understandings of the group were spread across both online and offline iterations, often merging into each other:

Jay: When did you first hear about Stonewall Japan?

Nick: I work with a gay girl who told me about it on the train once, it was just before Pride in Osaka, she had been in the group for a while and had seen a post in there saying we want volunteers for Stonewall Japan and she said do you want to go and volunteer? So it's a good opportunity to go down and see it.

Nick begins by talking about a friend from work, who was a member of the Facebook group and had seen an online call for volunteers. His friend asked him if he would like to go along and volunteer "for Stonewall Japan", at the Kansai Rainbow Festival. Nick went

along, and eventually developed a network of LGBT friends whom he communicates with through Facebook, and in face-to-face meetings. For Nick, 'Stonewall Japan' includes his friend, the Facebook group, his volunteering activities, and his networks of contacts across online and offline modes of communication.

As Joyce Nip (2004) has argued, online and offline communities are not engaged in a zero-sum game: it is not the case that involvement in online communities precludes involvement in physical community or vice versa. Moreover, as Suzuki Kensuke (2013, p. 12) argues, the rapid uptake of mobile technologies via handheld devices in Japan has revealed the often "porous" relationship between online spaces and offline spaces. This means that the demarcation of online and offline into discrete entities is problematic. Suzuki (2013) argues that the use of computer mediated communication has actively brought about what he refers to as holes in reality (Suzuki refers to this as "*genjitsu no takōka*" (p. 12), the 'porosity' of reality), with the online leaking into the offline and vice versa. A similar dynamic can be seen in action in the case of the non-Japanese respondents and their use of the Stonewall Japan Facebook group as a site of performative practices of belonging. These practices may begin solely online, but as connections are made the two become deeply intertwined. This dynamic can also be seen in operation in the case of Asataka in Chapter 4 of this thesis, as his sharing of the image of his t-shirt on Facebook led to a contact moment between himself and Yuna, which was also experienced in both the online and the offline realms.

However, this does not mean that belonging and the politics of belonging have become completely detached from the physical and local context in Japan. Much like gender in Butler's theory of performativity, we cannot simply 'perform' belonging completely free of restraint. The social worlds in which the respondents live both constitute and are

constituted by complex dialogue between the physical and emotional, the online and the offline. The online and the offline become entangled in a space that is at once both global, but also contextually bound in the local. These spaces are “full of frictions, a space in which subject positions are formed in relation to one another in normative exclusions and inclusions” (Alm and Martinsson, 2016, p. 223). The following section of this chapter will now consider the specificity of the local context in which the respondents lived, and the ways in which these frictions, inclusions, and exclusions played out in the everyday lives of respondents.

7.4 Local contexts: fears and nostalgia

7.4.1 Fear: the primacy of *tōjisha* voices and the reliability of information

As discussed in Chapter 2, sexual and/or gender minority groups have been successful to a certain extent in establishing the position of *tōjisha* as the holders of “correct knowledge” of minority experience, and organising solidarity around this (McLelland, 2009, p. 199). Changing patterns of internet usage have vastly increased the number of *tōjisha* narratives available to LGBT and queer individuals in Japan. Personal accounts of gender and sexuality are now readily accessible online through personal blog sites, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. For example, the LGBT-identified content creator Kanon Aoki has 116,000 unique subscribers on her YouTube channel, and posts content on a regular basis (four to seven times per week). Indeed, respondents such as Hideki, Akira, and Natsuki, all maintained personal blog sites, and/or active Facebook and Twitter accounts, through which they disseminated their own ideas and opinions about LGBT lives in Japan. The internet, therefore, has opened up space for the free and immediate circulation of vast amounts of *tōjisha*-authored narratives of day-to-day life as a gender and/or sexual minority in Japan.

However, many Japanese respondents felt that online spaces, and information gathered online was not as trustworthy as that gathered either from books, or in face-to-face interactions, even if this information came from *tōjisha*-identified authors. The data suggest that concerns about the way in which the internet has increased the volume and accessibility of *tōjisha* narratives often contain elements of fear. These fears were constructed through the following logic: *tōjisha* narratives provide ‘true’ accounts of LGBT experience in Japan; the internet has increased the number of *tōjisha* narratives exponentially; information spreads rapidly and is difficult to verify or question; things were better before the internet when information was ‘slow’ and gained through printed materials and face-to-face encounters. Hence, when the localised concept of *tōjisha* as holders of correct knowledge comes into contact with the speed and relative freedom with which information circulates online, it can contribute to feelings of fear.

For example, Natsuki had a deep distrust of information gathered online. They talked about how there was “too much” information available, and people could easily become confused. They noted that when they first looked for information about their gender and sexuality it was a case of “getting to know oneself”, through slow reading and thinking. In contrast, now it seems to Natsuki like people want to make themselves immediately “fit” into information they find online:

As a gateway, I think I’m grateful for it. But I think there’s already too much information [...] Because there’s so much information, it’s just an increase in information, and I think people’s heads just get full of theoretical information without knowing how to put that into practice. I question that – in thinking ‘I’m going to make myself fit in with this information’, you end up doing the opposite, don’t you? You end up fitting yourself into that information. I’ve really been struck by that, so I think it would be better if that information wasn’t there.

Natsuki used the term “*atamadekkachi*” which expresses a condition in which one’s mind is so filled with theory and knowledge, that one loses the ability to put that knowledge into practice. Natsuki sees the internet and the vast amount of *tōjisha*-produced information as a starting point for the process of ‘getting to know oneself’, but that this goal is not reached through the ritual act of reading this information. This is an interesting perspective when taken in conjunction with the work of Bell (1999), Butler (2007 [1990], 2011 [1993]), and Ferreday (2009), who all argue that such ritual performative acts are an essential part of identity and belonging. Natsuki envisions a social world in which one can only ‘know oneself’ through self-examination and introspection, and that the ‘answer’ to identity lies innately within us:

You can look at people and see them, but to look at yourself, you can only really look at yourself in the mirror. And you always put on your best face for the mirror, don’t you? In the mirror? To lock eyes with your bad points, and your deficiencies, that’s really hard.

In this utterance, the mirror becomes a signifier for the process of self-introspection, a practice which Natsuki believes is conducted away from all context. In their understanding, their ‘true self’ exists innately, and is just waiting to be discovered. Given Natsuki’s understanding of the way in which we find identity and belonging (through understanding an innate aspect of the self) it is not surprising that they find the influx of *tōjisha*-produced information online troubling. If the question of who does or does not belong, and who does or does not “fit in” under the banner of LGBT cannot be answered by looking at other’s experiences, but only through finding one’s innate ‘true self’, then the influx of narrative descriptions of these experiences simply becomes noise that distracts from the real task of ‘looking in the mirror’ and ‘locking eyes with ourselves’.

Some fears about *tōjisha* narratives were more practical. Transgender respondents in particular shared Natsuki's uneasiness, but suggested that it was related to the speed with which information could circulate online, rather than the way in which individuals negotiate personal identities. This speed, coupled with the fact that much of the information is shared from personal experiences rather than official medical advice, meant that it was difficult to discern which information was factual and which was not. Manabu discussed the kind of misinformation that could be found online, by telling the story of a transgender man who had fallen pregnant, possibly because he believed he could not get pregnant once his periods had stopped. Manabu explained:

Manabu: There's a chance that the information you can get online through things like blogs includes lies. This is to do with FTM, but if you search for information on FTM through blogs, then you'll find things like 'It's three months since I started hormone therapy and my voice has changed, and I'm like a guy now'

Jay: That's fast!

Manabu: Yeah, fast! Well, this one you can't say it's a lie as such, but there is still a risk that if you have hormone therapy, and even if your periods stop, there is a risk that you can get pregnant.

Jay: Is there?

Manabu: Yes [...] and if you look online there are people who say things like 'There's no risk that you can get pregnant, no matter how many times you do it unprotected, and you can profit off that'

Jay: What?!

Manabu: Yes, that's scary

Manabu's story is particularly disturbing, because of the implication that information circulates online which suggests that transgender men may mistakenly believe that they are protected from unwanted pregnancies as long as their periods have been halted by hormone therapy. This is problematic in the Japanese context where the nature of the

national health system can quickly lead to life-changing difficulties for vulnerable individuals. This process has been described by Sam Winter (2012) as the stigma-sickness slope (see Figure 10), which leads many transgender people in the Asia-Pacific region on a downwards trajectory towards physical death. This concept has been translated into Japanese, and was well known amongst transgender activists I met during participant observations (see for example the translation of the chart in *LGBT to iryōfukishi* (Riri (Lily), 2016)).

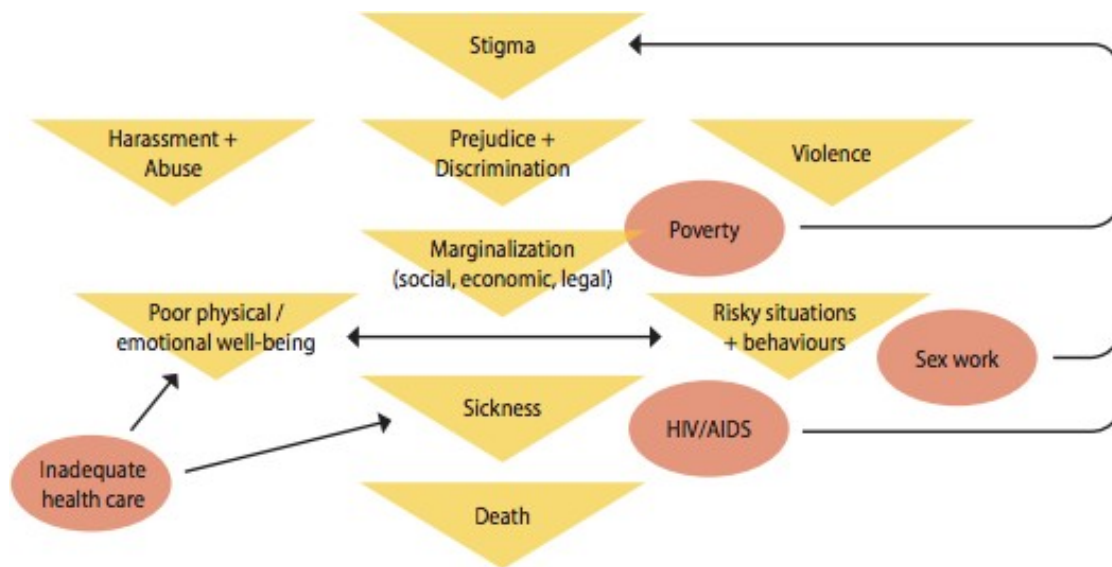


Figure 10 - The stigma-sickness slope

(Winter, 2012, p. 13)

The following brief summary demonstrates how this pattern is lived out, and how increased use of the internet to circulate *tōjisha*-generated narratives can feed into the stigma-sickness slope. In March 2018, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare announced that patients at three gender clinics in Japan would be able to use their national health insurance to cover part of the costs of SRS (Mitobe, 2018). All other individuals seeking SRS in Japan must pay for the full costs of SRS and any recovery time independently. Given that article 3 of the Act on Special Cases stipulates that an individual must have genital surgery before they can change their registered gender, this can lead to

desperate situations. Some individuals attempt to make money quickly to travel outside of Japan where SRS surgeries are considerably cheaper (Itsuki, 2012a). There are also cases of individuals self-administering privately bought hormone therapies, or using non-reputable health services (Itsuki, 2012a). Some of the respondents in this study had followed a similar path, working relentlessly until they had saved enough money for surgery in Thailand. For example, Shun, whose parents had both died when he was a teenager, worked multiple part-time jobs to ensure that he could undergo hormone therapy and SRS before he conducted his job hunt.⁵⁴ Some transgender individuals choose to earn money for SRS and/or hormone therapies through sex work.

As discussed in Section 6.3.1 of this chapter, the internet can provide a seemingly safe space of belonging for those who are marginalised or isolated. However, due to the existence of social conditions which bring about the stigma-sickness slope, these *tōjisha* narratives can also contribute to a vicious cycle. Individuals feel socially and economically isolated, and turn to information they can find online, only to find misleading or damaging advice and information. As Manabu implied, due in part to a lack of correct information circulating through *tōjisha*-generated narratives online, there is a risk that some transgender men may be engaged with sex work without appropriate protection from unwanted pregnancies and/or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). This is even more problematic when we consider that birth control medication is not covered by the national insurance system, and chemical abortion is extremely rare, with most

⁵⁴ In Japan, job-hunting is usually carried out on a seasonal basis, with undergraduates applying for jobs in the third year of their four-year degrees. There is little flexibility as to when an undergraduate can apply for an entry level position, and those who miss the annual intake can struggle to find permanent contracts. There are also specific codes of dress for applicants, for example, women usually wear formal skirt suits and wear their hair long, tied back in a pony-tail. Men usually wear formal suits and have close cut formal hairstyles. This is particularly bothersome for transgender applicants because job applications often require a photograph, and many applicants are eager for their appearance in their photograph to match the gender on their application form.

patients having to undergo costly surgical abortions if they wish to terminate a pregnancy (Kojo et al., 2017; Mizuno, 2015). Additionally, the fear of disclosure to parents and/or guardians can lead some patients under the age of 20 to lie or withhold information from their doctors, and not receive the care which they need. For example, Satoshi described how he had contracted a minor STD three times before he turned 20, and had not told his doctor about the possibility of it being an STD:

I get STD. Twice or three times I went to hospital with, my doctor was really naughty, “did you have some related thing?”, and I didn’t confess about what I have done, but he knew it I think...but he didn’t say anything to me.⁵⁵

Satoshi was relatively privileged: as an able-bodied cis-gender gay man, the only contact he experienced with his doctor was in the event of contracting a minor STD. However, it is easy to envision the difficulties faced by transgender individuals caught in the above cycles of stigma and sickness.

This is not to suggest that the increase in communication and information sharing online is a direct cause of the issues outlined above. Rather, the combination of the continued primacy of *tōjisha*-generated narratives online, with the increased enmeshment of the online and the offline feeds into the stigma-sickness slope. This is because *tōjisha* are often understood and discussed as holders of correct knowledge (McLelland, 2009), which makes discerning truth from opinion within these narratives very difficult. Furthermore, the notion of *tōjisha* narratives as being ‘authentic’ in this way makes it difficult for respondents to challenge incorrect information online – lest they become embroiled in controversies such as that described in relation to Asataka’s t-shirt, discussed in Chapter 4. When considered in this light, it is easy to understand why many of the transgender

⁵⁵ Satoshi speaks English as a second language. His interview is transcribed here verbatim.

respondents had genuine concerns about the role of the internet and the impact that it has on the lives of transgender people in Japan. Misinformation such as that described by Manabu can have serious and life-changing impacts for transgender people, particularly transgender youth, who may feel unable to access official medical services.

7.4.2 Nostalgia: face-to-face contact and ‘slow’ information

The data in this study suggest that nostalgia is used by some of the respondents as an active strategy against the perceived threats outlined in the previous section, as well as the threat which these changes pose to place-belongingness. Nostalgia originates from the Greek *nostos* (home) and *algia* (pain, suffering) and was initially coined in the seventeenth century to describe a pathological sickness related to a loss of home (Davis, 1977). During the nineteenth century, the term took on the meaning of a sentimental attachment to the past (Pickering and Keightley, 2006), and was roundly criticised as a kind of affliction (Bonnett and Alexander, 2013), a “melancholic mourning” (Janover, 2000, p. 117), and as a “defeatist attitude” to both the present and the past (May, 2017, p. 404). However, I will follow the work of Julia Bennett (2014; 2018), Alison Blunt (2003), Michael Janover (2000), and Michael Pickering and Keightley (2006) in arguing that nostalgia is not just a maudlin or mournful feeling of loss. The respondents’ use of nostalgia can also be understood as an active, productive, and political practice of belonging.

As Bennett (2018) notes, nostalgia is not the preserve of the elderly. Shōhei is a transgender man in his early 20s, yet his experiences demonstrated that online practices of belonging could not fulfil his affective yearning to be in physical spaces of belonging. Shōhei had access to the internet when he was a teenager, and was able to read other people’s experiences with relative ease (compared to older respondents who had less

ready access to the internet). However, when he turned 19, he decided to move to Tokyo where he felt he would have greater access to face-to-face LGBT communities and services:

The first time I came here was when I was 19, I did a room share in Tokyo. Now I'm doing a room share in Kanagawa. But right before I turned 20, I was continually all the time thinking about my [physical] sex, it was a period during which I couldn't decide about my future. I was in a hurry to sort that out, and somehow at the time when I was thinking 'I have to do something', I realised 'Oh, I have to go to Tokyo'.

Shōhei recounted a time only five years prior to the interview in which he lived in Tokyo for a short time. His nostalgia is not a romanticised sentimental attachment to this time, but rather an implication that the time before Tokyo was one of anxiety "I was continually all the time thinking about my physical sex", and the time after his move was when he was able to "do something".

As Pickering and Keightley (2006, p. 926) suggest, nostalgia is not always about "sentimentalized expressions of regret", or about attachment to a fantasised past. It can also be "a means of taking one's bearings for the road ahead in the uncertainties of the present" (Pickering and Keightley, 2006, p. 921). This resonates well with Shōhei's experiences. At the time of the interview, Shōhei was unsure about his future path: he did not know if he would undergo SRS, and he faced uncertainty in day-to-day life (for example, over which toilet to use). His characterisation of Tokyo as the place where he was finally able to take action – to meet fellow transgender men, and to access medical services – was perhaps in part a way of orientating himself to what he had experienced, and the difficult decisions which he now faced. His age had little bearing upon this process, because this was not a yearning for the past in a distant historical sense, but rather for the

near past as a symbolic ‘location’ of belonging. This links back to the notion of place-belongingness discussed in Section 6.3.1 of this chapter, but with ‘place’ evoked as a memory of a place at a given time. This suggests that it is theoretically productive to move away from the notion of nostalgia as a simple claim to either a real or an imagined past, and towards nostalgia as a defence in the face of change (May, 2017).

Indeed, the respondents in this study were living through a time of great change in their communities. As discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, not only have the online and offline become increasingly porous and inextricably linked, but this has coincided with the LGBT boom. During the LGBT boom, mainstream media outlets such as TV and magazines increasingly covered LGBT and queer lives in highly visible ways, and private businesses co-opted queer lives as a marketing strategy. The LGBT boom has, in many ways, wrested the power of representation from the local context, and from the hands of *tōjisha*, into the realm of highly commercialised commodities (as discussed in Chapter 2). Disconnected from control over their own narratives, and fractured from within the community along lines of cultural capital, many *tōjisha* have turned to the internet and to online practices of affective belonging. This is a profound change for the communities studied, particularly for those who previously conducted many of their knowledge sharing activities through small, privately run, self-made *mini-komi* and newsletters (Maree, 2007; 2015; Tanaka, 2006).

Nostalgia as a purposeful response to, or defence against this type of change was evident in the case of Natsuki. When Natsuki was growing up, they felt isolated and lonely in their home town. There was little information available online, and the only opportunity to find printed information was if they visited larger bookstores that happened to have books

about sexuality and gender in stock. As a result, Natsuki decided to move to Tokyo temporarily:

When I was living back home, there was a lack of information, and I didn't know what type of person I was, so I went to Tokyo one time, set up a home in Tokyo. I spent two years there, with *tōjisha*, going to Shinjuku Ni-chōme, meeting *tōjisha*, so I have this experience of looking for myself [...] I was anxious, lonely, because of that. That's the pain of *tōjisha*. But to have people who could understand that, because I had friends, I was able to keep fighting [...] Should I have hormone therapy? How do I change my name? Do I really want to do that? I thought about that a lot, I thought about my own self as I met with other *tōjisha*.

Natsuki describes a period in their life when they were working hard to pay their rent, but at the same time dealing with life-changing questions related to hormone therapy, name changes, and SRS. Their account of this period is one tinged with nostalgia for the time they spent in Tokyo, during which they had people who “understood” them, who were able to help them “keep fighting”. Natsuki’s narrative spanned a period of change in terms of online connectivity. Natsuki described the isolation of growing up without internet access and a period of self-introspection and face-to-face contact in Tokyo. Their narrative ended in the contemporary period, where they were working as a social worker, and an LGBT-related speaker. As part of this work, Natsuki was often in conversation with parents recounting their worries about their transgender children. These worries were often related to SRS, and the parents’ desire to protect their children from physical risk. Yet it is accounts of SRS and hormone therapies which circulate online through *tōjisha*-generated narratives, and in the mainstream media as part of the LGBT boom.

In dealing with concerns like these, nostalgia for their time in Tokyo can be seen as a purposeful response. They recall the security they felt in Tokyo as a way to deal with the

stresses of the present. This act brings “warmth” (May, 2017, p. 412) to a present which can feel isolating as their experiences differ so overtly from contemporary transgender youth. For Natsuki, nostalgia is a “critical intervention in the present” (May, 2017, p. 424): a self-reminder of the changes they have experienced, and the difficulties they have overcome, but also a comment on the disconnections they feel in the present. However, it is a “gesture towards, without yet fully describing or analysing, conditions of life and world now in, or falling into, abeyance” (Janover, 2000, p. 115). Indeed, although I am analysing this passage as an instance of nostalgia, this nostalgia is not explicitly stated as a fond remembrance of the past, but rather a gesture towards the changes they are currently experiencing. Nostalgia is not always an overt gesture (Bennett, 2014). Instead, this nostalgia is expressed through the habitual recounting of the past through taken-for-granted assumptions (i.e. ‘in the past one could rely on face-to-face networks to mitigate against risk’).

The world that seems to Natsuki to be falling into abeyance is that in which people gathered information slowly, and learnt through face-to-face contact with other *tōjisha*. Slow, interpersonal contact, is replaced with a present in which Natsuki often feels dislocated from, or out of place in physical modes of community. For example, they described their feelings at attending a Pride event. The event took place the same week as Halloween, so many of the people who walked in the parade were wearing Halloween costumes:

I thought ‘If we don’t do it like this, maybe people won’t understand us?’ ... the people who were watching from the town, people who didn’t know [the reason for the parade] may have thought it was a Halloween Party. But that kind of performance? Objectively, I really thought ‘This is the kind of world that needs to perform [like that]’ ... I didn’t see it as a positive, in a way, when

I was actually in there, merged together, walking and looking, I thought ‘It’s that kind of peculiar world’. They need this kind of performance.

This type of performance, which is now widely normalised within the communities studied, is not something that Natsuki feels comfortable with, or which fits with their view of identity as something innate and self-introspective (rather than as an overt public performance). Natsuki sees pride parades as being disconnected from what really matters, and more concerned with how they perform for the audience: in this case, the people in the city who might not know about LGBT lives, but just so happen to see the parade. Indeed, Natsuki said that the parade seemed like “a distant world”. Nostalgia for Natsuki, then, is a warning against the ways in which they feel that current LGBT and queer communities have lost contact with this slow self-introspection.

In other cases, nostalgia can be understood as a response to change, but also a warning against it. Hideki, a transgender man in his mid-40s, talked about the chain of printed materials which led him to first being able to read about GID and transgender. Hideki enthusiastically recounted how he had first read about GID by chance, in a newspaper which was covering the story of the first publicised SRS that took place in Japan after the so-called Blue Boy Trial in 1965.⁵⁶ Armed with the word ‘*seidōitsuseishōgai* (GID)’ from

⁵⁶ In 1965, a doctor was investigated and brought to trial in Tokyo for removing the sex organs from three men who were later arrested on prostitution charges (McLelland, 2005). Since male prostitutes were colloquially referred to as ‘blue boys (*burū bōi*)’ the case was dubbed ‘The Blue Boy Incident’ or ‘The Blue Boy Trial’. In 1969, the court in Tokyo ruled that the surgeries had been in violation of clause 28 of the Eugenic Protection Law which forbade elective surgeries that resulted in intentional sterilisation. After this judgement, the legality of sex reassignment surgery was unclear, and discussion and/or undertaking of such surgery became a taboo (Inada, 2013, Tanaka, 2006). As Itsuki Dohi (2012b) has pointed out, the case involved charges of cannabis dealing in addition to the surgery related charges, which served to confuse the issue further. Itsuki (2012b) notes that the judgement was open to interpretation, a point which is illustrated in detail in Inada Akiko’s (2013) discussion of the legal intricacies of the case. Inada (2013) notes that the debate surrounding the case is closely related to issues of informed consent and whether or not SRS involves intentional sterilisation. The sensationalised nature of the original case and its subsequent press coverage goes some way to explaining the intense media interest which surrounded the 1998 surgery at Saitama Medical University.

the newspaper article, Hideki visited the library to look up more information. In the back of a book, he found the address of a transgender man who wrote his own *mini-komi* about GID. Hideki wrote a letter to the author of the *mini-komi*, and the author printed a copy and posted it back. Hideki said:

I read that for starters, little by little. That was the only way to get information.

At that time, most information was from those *mini-komi*.

Hideki contrasted his “little by little” reading of printed information with a warning about those who underwent SRS without conducting this process of slow research, and/or without consulting a psychologist first:

Hideki: The hospital I went to [in Thailand] was the type of room where you could go out onto the veranda [...] but when an FTM patient goes, they make it so that you can’t go outside. They do that by saying ‘You must NOT open the door!’ When [I] asked, ‘Is it OK to open it just a little?’ they told me ‘An FTM patient didn’t think about the time after surgery’, and they had jumped [from the veranda].

Jay: Oh dear, a suicide?

Hideki: Yes

Here Hideki contrasts his own experiences of slow information gathering, and thinking for a long time about SRS, with an unknown patient who did not think about the outcomes of the surgery, and who allegedly committed suicide at the hospital. Hideki’s fear is not necessarily that incorrect information circulates online, but that attitudes have changed so that individuals undergo SRS sooner than they would have been able to in the past. Hideki frames this through nostalgic reference to his own experience of information gathering, which he sees as more labour intensive, but also as preferable to the perceived risks. This is what Alastair Bonnett and Alexander (2013) refer to as active nostalgia – a

nostalgia which is mobile and moves across the false dichotomy of good and bad. Hideki does not believe that things are necessarily ‘better’ overall now. In regards to the speed at which information circulates online he said, “I should be jealous, but at the same time I also don’t appreciate it”. Likewise, Hideki does not believe the past was ‘better’ overall. He talked at length about the problems he faced in setting up a support group in 2004:

Nobody came. I rented the place for four hours, and waited for four hours, but nobody came [...] It got to be really hard waiting [...] my psychologist told me ‘It’s gotten quite hard, you should stop it as it is’.

Hideki’s nostalgia is complex. It is not the case that the past was ‘good’ and the present is ‘bad’, but rather specific changes in the present are a cause for concern. In Hideki’s case, nostalgia acts as a critical (Janover, 2000) and productive (Blunt, 2003) act of warning. Hideki told me that going ahead with SRS without the correct psychological assessment is “extremely dangerous”, and then recounted the suicide of a transgender man as an illustration. Although his account does not over simplify and state that the past was ‘good’ and the present is ‘bad’, a safer past is contrasted with a more perilous present.

Indeed, part of this nostalgia is a sense that things were ‘safer’ when they were slower. Miho, a cis-gender bisexual woman in her 40s, recalled a similar slow process of using the letters pages of magazines to find dates:

[...] during living there [Kobe] I was reading one of the magazines, which the back of the page, a lot of people sending kind of message to the exchange, so the publisher kind of controlling, not directly contacting but the magazine company the people to connected to...I put my one of my photo then I’m looking for, I said I’m bisexual and I’m looking for someone not, well

someone maybe going out to, or that sort of thing. Then I got some message back, then I met several people, then one of the girls.⁵⁷

Miho has a continuing anxiety that if her sexuality is ‘discovered’, it would lead to her child being bullied at school. Given this, the internet, and the forms of performative belonging that occur therein can be framed as a threat to the safety of her child. Although this method of meeting friends and lovers was slow, it was safe because it was mediated or ‘controlled’ through the publisher and the smaller readership of the magazines, rather than through an open public forum. Miho contrasts this to her concerns over online spaces such as Facebook:

Facebook, some Facebook friends are actually my child’s friend’s mother, so I don’t want to mention that sort of things either. I could put it on the link, but I don’t mention anything [...] At the moment it’s showing like I’m supporting those people, *I’m not them*. [laugh] In a way, lying to myself a bit, not quite right, but at the moment I can do this much (Emphasis in original).

Miho can post links to stories related to gender and sexuality, but she cannot directly engage in them on her Facebook page. Contemporary practices of belonging online exclude Miho due to her privacy and safety concerns. Her memories of belonging to a community of like-minded individuals as practiced through the use of letters pages tacitly demonstrates that she does indeed belong to the category of LGBT. In Miho’s case the antidote to the threat of a dislocation from contemporary practices of belonging is the memory of a time when information was slower to circulate, and was mediated through a third party. Miho engages this nostalgia to construct a place of belonging for herself. This is what Blunt (2003, p. 717) refers to as a “productive nostalgia”, which serves to create a sense of belonging for Miho in spite of the exclusions that she has experienced

⁵⁷ Miho speaks English as a second language. It has been transcribed verbatim here.

online. In the above utterance, Miho told me that she cannot directly come out amongst her friends on Facebook, but she can share posts about LGBT-related issues as an interested party. She says, “In a way, lying to myself...but at the moment I can do this much”. Miho’s feels like she is lying, but in fact she is simply not engaging with the practices of belonging which circulate on Facebook. Instead, she uses her nostalgia for past experiences of using letters pages in contrast to the restrictions she feels through contemporary practices of belonging, to clearly state the fact that she does belong to the category of LGBT, no matter what she may or may not be able to post online. She is, as Vanessa May (2017, p. 402) would argue, engaging “memory to create different forms of feeling at home in time”.

Nostalgia of this type allows respondents to claim a ‘historic’ belonging to gender and sexual minority identities at a time when the contemporary context works to exclude them from that belonging (through performative practices of belonging which are inaccessible to them). In my interview with Kazuhiro, a gay man who first understood he was gay in the 1980s, this nostalgia was articulated through a physical object. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, Kazuhiro brought a VHS tape to the interview. When he told me about the time during which he was gathering information about his sexuality, he showed me the tape to demonstrate how he had stayed up into the middle of the night, and recorded the film *Another Country* which featured two gay male characters. Kazuhiro is not able to live as ‘openly gay’, and was frustrated by the suggestion that gay people ought to live ‘openly gay’ lives, saying, “normal, everyday workers, men with their own businesses, if they came out, they might lose their jobs”. Kazuhiro is excluded from performative practices of belonging online (for example, on Facebook), because he feels he has to protect himself from discrimination. In this context, Kazuhiro’s nostalgia,

manifest in the physical object of the VHS tape, stands in as a proof of belonging. Producing the tape, and telling his story is a nostalgic practice of belonging.

A similar process occurs through the respondents' re-telling of past hardships. Indeed, as Fred Davis (1977, p. 415) pointed out in his paper which first sketched the contours of the sociology of nostalgia, the "material of nostalgic experience is the past". Sometimes even the most relentlessly positive respondents tacitly engaged in nostalgic practices of belonging in the present through a re-telling of the past. Yuta is a transgender man in his late 30s. Yuta has extensive experience of being bullied and of feeling socially isolated. He was particularly affected by the end of his long-term relationship with his girlfriend due to her desire to have children. He is active in LGBT-related education outreach in his hometown in the north of Japan, and maintains an active blog and a Facebook page, posting about LGBT-related issues. I asked him if he ever felt tired after all these activities and from the hardships of being bullied (I have left the false starts and hesitations in the following transcription, because they are meaningful):

No, but, for me, ultimately, the children's, of course, I, well, when I was little, erm, maybe you know, those, that, for example, being made fun of with things like 'gay' and 'lez' 'okama' and 'onabe', there are people who have experienced that, right? Older people, but no matter how much someone makes fun of me, sticking with it, maybe, I think they lived for us. That's absolutely why we can now live openly like this. Our elders lived, no matter how much they were made fun of, no matter, for example, really, if we talk about other countries, it sounds like there are people who have been treated as criminals, you know. But, even so, there are those kinds of martyrs, but we're here now living like this because our elders fought for us, so for the kids that are around now, this generation's kids, we have to fight for them, don't we?

Yuta switches the subject of the description: he begins with a personal story, “when I was little”, expands this to general experience, “there are people” and “older people”, and then returns to the personal “makes fun of me”. This pattern continues throughout, as Yuta grapples with a sense of personal suffering, but also a sense of responsibility to get his point across accurately (as suggested by all of his false starts and hedging, for example, “right?”, “it sounds like”). His point is that he, and others, have suffered in the past. In fact, it is this suffering that means that people can “live openly”, and this suffering that insists Yuta and other LGBT and queer people must continue to “fight”. Yuta reframes this suffering as a badge of honour: it marks him as belonging to the collective “we” in his final sentence. In doing so, Yuta injects his narrative with an element of nostalgia – this is suffering that was endured and can now be re-told as a formative and ultimately positive experience because people can now live “openly”. This is the same kind of re-telling which Natsuki undertakes when they talk about the “the pain of *tōjisha*”, and the anxiety they felt growing up in their home town, away from Tokyo. This suggests that respondents sometimes re-framed the past, using it as a badge of honour. In doing so, they undertook affective practices of belonging through nostalgia. Re-framing the past in this nostalgic way, as an act of recovery, allowed respondents to belong to the collective “we” in Yuta’s narrative, and “*tōjisha*” in Natsuki’s narrative.

Nostalgia, and nostalgic re-framings of the past are in themselves a practice of affective belonging. This practice is a response to the fears evoked by the acute increase in *tōjisha* narratives online, largely as a result of the LGBT boom and the increased porosity of the boundaries between online and offline. These contemporary *tōjisha* narratives posted online often contained elements that were unfamiliar to the respondents (for example, the urge to self-administer hormone therapies in the case of Natsuki and Hideki). The speed with which these narratives could spread, and the ways in which it could be difficult to

challenge or verify them, were confronting for many of the respondents in this study. Nostalgia, then, acts as a foil to the “velocity and vertigo of modern temporality” (Pickering and Keightley, 2006, p. 923). This is nowhere more apparent than in Hideki’s warning about the risk of suicide after SRS. In Hideki’s re-telling, nostalgic (if ambivalent) recollections of his own slow and careful research process became the metaphorical door to the veranda, locked tight against the risk of suicide.

Nostalgia is not only theoretically productive in an analysis of the ways in which the respondents framed and dealt with change, but also in the sense that it allows the researcher to delve into the role of the past in the present. As scholars interested in the social worlds of others, nostalgias are a way for us to “interrogate the articulation of the past in the present” (Pickering and Keightley, 2006, p. 922). During fieldwork, respondents often mentioned that Japan as a ‘tolerant’ attitude to gay men as a result of historical same-sex practices such as *nanshoku* as discussed in Chapter 2. It is productive to also think of these references to a past which respondents did *not* experience as being (at least in part) an element of affective practices of belonging. This concept is taken up in more detail in Chapter 7, which considers the role of imaginative geographies and notions of ‘Japan and the West’ in the politics of belonging.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has sketched an outline of the rapidly changing social context in which the respondents lived, and the ways in which this context feeds into a sense of place-belongingness and the politics of belonging. Beginning with an outline of the uses of the internet by respondents, it has shown how this context is characterised by increased melt between online and offline worlds, creating a hybrid and porous space. In many cases, this hybrid space has created opportunities for the development of performative acts of

belonging. However, the online realm, which offers seemingly unlimited space for practices of belonging, is in fact rooted deeply in local contexts. This is a complex relationship which I have argued needs to go beyond a theoretical framing of belonging as finding *ibasho*, towards an understanding of belonging as performativity, practiced at the nexus between the physical and the emotional.

Furthermore, the respondents in this study were living through a period of great change in their social contexts. The LGBT boom had wrested control of their narratives from self-produced materials such as *mini-komi* into the hands of the mainstream media where these narratives were used as commodity objects. Coupled with this change, the rapid spread of connectivity to the internet via mobile handheld devices and social media platforms has made it much easier to publish personal narratives online. These *tōjisha*-generated narratives are based on personal experiences, and often difficult to verify or challenge. The notion of these narratives as being the holders of correct knowledge created a space in the local context for fears and anxieties about the role of the internet to flourish. Far from acting as a democratised liberation of personal narratives into a radically free space, the spread of these narratives was often framed as a cause for serious concern, if not outright anxiety and fear. In dealing with these anxieties, many of the respondents mobilised nostalgia as an affective practice of belonging. These practices were complex, mobile, and not necessarily simple longing or yearning for an imagined past.

The chapter began with an outline of the concept of *ibasho*, to which it is now important to return. There is relatively little scholarship of the concept of *ibasho* in the field of the sociology of Japan, and even less which acknowledges the dual importance of physical and emotional aspects of belonging. This chapter of the thesis has aimed to contribute to

the development of understandings of place-belongingness in the communities studied as running across porous boundaries between the online and the offline, the physical and the emotional. Just as Yumiko's discovery of the term LGBT prompted a visceral physical reaction and a strong emotional reaction, so too should the concept of *ibasho* be considered as straddling these (often arbitrary) dichotomies of the physical and the emotional. The chapter's specific contribution has been demonstrating the ways in which affects such as nostalgia can be used to frame affectual practices of belonging as active and mobile responses to change, rather than as apolitical yearnings for a fictive past. The following chapter in the thesis will develop this concept in relation to imaginative geographies of Japan and the West, demonstrating the ways in which the local and the global are also mediated through affective practices of belonging.

Chapter 7 - Imaginative geographies and affective practices of belonging

8.1 Introduction

This chapter of the thesis will mobilise the theoretical framework of affect to consider the wider global context in which the respondents positioned themselves. I will consider the ways in which respondents mapped their identities through imaginative geographies of ‘Japan’ and ‘the West’.⁵⁸ The chapter will argue that these mappings were used as strategies of belonging (in many ways similar to the nostalgic practices of belonging discussed in Chapter 6), and helped respondents to locate themselves within local and transnational imagined LGBT communities. The chapter will posit that these imaginative geographies allowed respondents to seek a sense of belonging, by becoming imagined objects around which they could orientate themselves within their social worlds.

The chapter will begin with a brief overview of the theoretical framework used to analyse the ways in which respondents framed their identities. Using the concepts of imaginative geographies (Said, 2003) and imagined communities (Anderson, 2006 [1983]) I will analyse how respondents framed their social worlds through their perceptions of an imaginative ‘here’ and ‘there’. Within these framings, social conditions for LGBT and queer people in Japan were often cast as ‘backwards’, closed, and secretive. The USA and Europe, in contrast were often framed as ‘advanced’, affirmative, and open. I will argue that these framings brought with them regimes of common sense and a sense of telos, in which Japanese practice could and/or should aspire to an imagined mode of ‘advanced Western’ practice. Drawing upon the scholarship of Sara Ahmed (2004; 2010a;

⁵⁸ ‘The West’ as a term and as a concept is used here with caution. Japan’s position vis-à-vis the so-called West is deeply complex. Japan’s geographic position within the area often designated as East Asia, its economic position as a leading world economy, its colonial past, and its neo-colonial position as a proponent of soft-power through cultural productions, makes definition of Japan as either ‘Eastern’ or ‘Western’ deeply problematic. Hence, when the term ‘West’ is used in this chapter, it is used to reflect and describe the imaginative geographies mobilised by respondents, and should not be taken as the authors’ own conceptualisation.

2010b), this chapter will then critically discuss the ways in which these imaginative framings of Japan and the West become objects around which complex emotions circulated. Using this framework, this chapter will critically discuss the moments of (un)belonging that these complex emotions or affects resulted in.

This chapter of the thesis provides an original contribution to the field by considering the imaginative geographies of 'Japan' and the 'West' as imaginative objects to which complex affects 'stick' (Ahmed, 2010a, p. 29). Existing scholarship in the field often attempts to define specific and unique 'Japanese' issues related to sexual minorities within the boundaries of a temporally located nation state (for example see: Yamashita (2017)). Moreover, even approaches which are rooted in knowledge that Japan (much like the USA and the UK) has a long-standing history of LGBT-related activism tend to re-inscribe the 'Japan and the West' binaries by framing their scholarship as part of a process of 'learning from' the imagined West (for example see: Shimizu (2017)). Rather than attempting to assess the validity of Orientalist discourses which cast Japan as the 'backwards' other, and self-Orientalist discourses which often mobilise these notions of backwards-ness in an attempt to 'learn' from the imagined West, I will attend to the complexity of the processes of imaginative geographies, and how they sit within what Ahmed (2004) has dubbed affective economies. This chapter will posit that it is possible and theoretically productive to attend to the respondents' framing of their social worlds without relying on or needing to verify/debunk problematic monolithic notions of Japanese or Western cultural and sexual exceptionalism.

Dale (2012b) has already begun this work on the nuanced role of the notion of 'foreignness' within transgender communities, which uses similar approaches but with a stronger focus upon discursive practices in the media, rather than within communities. Dale argued

that the concept of ‘the foreign’ was an important social capital around which discourses of gender diversity were organised in Japan, but that this social capital works in often obscured and unobtrusive ways. Scholars such as Anne Allison (2009; 2012; 2013; 2017) and Patrick Galbraith (2013) have mobilised affect theory in the Japanese context, but often focus upon the positive aspects of affective belonging. This chapter of the thesis aims to add to this work by broadening the scope towards broad-based LGBT communities, and by shifting the focus away from specific ‘Japanese’ or ‘non-Japanese’ forms of experience towards an analysis of the processes involved in affective practices of belonging. It will also contribute empirically by presenting data which suggest that these affective practices can have negative impacts at both the individual and community level.

8.2 The (almost) impossible task of theorising ‘Japanese’ and ‘Western’ experiences

During the fieldwork, it became apparent that many respondents relied on essentialised notions of Japan and the West in discussions of their everyday lives. During participant observations, I was often asked “What’s it like for LGBT people in the UK?”: clearly assuming a universal notion of ‘British queer experience’. These questions were difficult to answer, since personal experiences of queer embodiment vary considerably depending upon factors including but not limited to ‘race’ and ethnicity, socio-economic background, and age. The problem of how to think through these conceptualisations, and answer these questions, became a major concern throughout this study. Although I knew that these concepts were important to the respondents, talking about ‘Japan’ or ‘the West’ as monolithic entities with their own ‘culturally’ specific ways of belonging to the category of LGBT remained stubbornly problematic. No matter how much I attempted to understand what respondents meant when they talked about common sense, or what was ‘*atarimae*’ (literally ‘right in front of you’, something that everyone knows and

experiences) in their day-to-day lives in Japan, I could not reconcile this with the deeply textured and diverse nature of the data that I was collecting.

This problem of how to theorise ‘Japan’ and ‘the West’ has long been a central concern of Japanese Studies. From around the end of the Allied Occupation of Japan in 1952, the notion of a monolithic, culturally isolated Japan was taken up with gusto by the mainstream media through the promotion of discourses of Japanese uniqueness. Widely known as *nihonjinron*, these conceptualisations are perhaps better understood not as scholarly theories, but as a genre of popular writing in which Japanese identity is essentialised and used as a way to explain the way that Japanese society functions (Kawamura, 1980). *Nihonjinron* were, and remain, problematic, and the 1990s saw an upsurge in academic texts attempting to debunk and complicate these essentialised understandings. Echoes of ‘Japanese uniqueness’ continue to be reproduced even in the contemporary Anglophone media. This reproduction can be seen in action on websites such as boredpanda, which regularly features posts with titles like “15+ Photos That Prove That Japan Is Not Like Any Other Country” (Mac, 2018).

It also became apparent in discussions with non-Japanese respondents that notions of cultural exceptionalism similar to *nihonjinron* were not confined to respondents with Japanese nationality. It seemed as if the notion of Japan as ‘backwards’ and the USA as ‘advanced’ had become a hegemonic discourse which the majority of respondents, regardless of nationality, had tacitly accepted as social fact. Puar (2007) has argued that cultural exceptionalism in the form of sexual exceptionalism is so ubiquitous in the USA, that promotion of these discourses has become an important element of statecraft. Puar (2007, p. 29) argues that within USA sexual exceptionalism, “the designation of homophobia produces a geopolitical mapping of neoliberal power relations in the guise

of cultures of sexual expression and repression”. In a similar way, looking to the mainstream media in Japan, I increasingly felt that these notions were a purposeful element of national discourse aimed to promote shallow diversity politics and promote Japan’s position as an emergent regional leader in human rights politics.

These discursive strategies became increasingly transparent during the fieldwork for this study. Respondents often demanded that Japan ‘catch up’ to a carefully constructed and imagined ‘West’ by bringing about legislative changes in the form of same-sex partnership and agreements to allow same-sex couples to enter into contractual obligations as a family unit. This process was particularly evident in Anglophone coverage of same-sex partnership in Japan after the passing of the Shibuya Ordinances in March 2015. For example, BuzzFeed published an article about same-sex partnership which included a sub-title “Japan’s motto is don’t rock the boat” (Feder and Tsukamoto-Kininmonth, 2016). In this type of article, an essentialised Japan is portrayed as being sexually repressed, afraid to put individual desires above the stability of the group, whilst the USA is portrayed as sexually liberal and open to diversity. Although such a strategy may help to frame the issue from an editorial standpoint, there is little room in such discourse for the specific social contexts which continue to prevent legislative change in Japan, members of the LGBT and queer communities who actively resist legislative entanglement, or for an acknowledgement of the long history of queer organising in Kansai. Instead, local initiatives like the Shibuya Ordinances are lauded as revolutionary, and as indicators of Japan’s emergence from the metaphorical shadows to which Clinton referred in her ‘LGBT rights are human rights’ speech (Clinton, 2011b). It is understandable, given the editorial power that such discourses hold, that respondents echo these notions in their framings of their identities.

When referring to ‘Japan’ and ‘the West’, this chapter is not referring to physical, spatially bounded concept of ‘nation’ or ‘territory’, but rather the affective and imaginative conceptualisations that respondents tacitly constructed as part of their affectual practices of belonging. Drawing upon work by Baruch Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, Brian Massumi was one of the early proponents of the turn to affect in the 1990s. Massumi (1995; 2002; 2005) describes affect as ‘intensity’, as a “nonconscious, never-to-conscious autonomic remainder” (Massumi, 1995, p. 85). In more concrete terms, he differentiates affect from emotion in the sense that affect is an embodied experience (intensity), whilst emotion is “qualified intensity” (Massumi, 1995, p. 88). In short, Massumi argues that emotion is verbalised and linguistically realised affect. In the two decades since the turn to affect, the concept has become so widely used that there is, as Gregory Seigworth and Gregg (2010, p. 3) point out “no single, generalizable theory of affect”. Affect has been used across disciplines from its origins in cultural studies and philosophy, through to science studies which look at the philosophical aspects of science.

Theories of affect have also been used in the Japanese context, primarily through the work of scholars such as Allison (2009; 2012; 2013; 2017) and Galbraith (2013). Allison (2012) writes about affect as both ‘experienced’ (as pain and longing), and as ‘deployed’ (as strategies to cope with increasingly precarious socio-economic contexts in Japan). Drawing upon the scholarship of John D’Emilio, Galbraith (2013) argues that affectual relations within commercial settings in Japan have provided new networks of support for those who find themselves in precarious socio-economic contexts after the collapse of real estate and stock market prices in 1992. Similarly, and as discussed in chapter 6, the LGBT boom represented a time of great change for many individuals in the LGBT community in Japan, as control over their narratives was co-opted into the marketisation

of queer identities. During this time, not only did the mainstream media begin to deal with LGBT-related lives in very specific ways as ‘dark’ and ‘secretive’, but community events were also complicit in the valorisation of very specific forms of queerness (as discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5). The timing of the fieldwork allows for a further mobilisation of theories of affect in the Japanese context, specifically focussed upon LGBT and queer communities and their practices. Hence, I deploy a theoretical framework that uses the concepts of imaginative geographies, imagined communities, and affective economies in a purposeful strategy to shift the focus away from materialist, temporal notions of place and belonging and towards the circulation of affect during the LGBT boom.

As discussed in Chapter 3, ‘imagined communities’ are understood here in line with the work of Anderson (2006 [1983]). Anderson’s concept speaks to the ways in which we orientate ourselves with others in an increasingly globalising world where individuals move with increased frequency across physical national boundaries. This globalising world is, as discussed in chapter 6, characterised by an increased porosity and melt between online and offline realms. This in turn suggests that we must attend to the idea of community beyond the purely physical realm. Anderson (1987, p. 6) argues that communities can be “imagined” in the sense that individual members of that community may never meet, “yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”. Nationality and nation-ness, Anderson argues, are cultural artefacts: they are constructed through historical, political, and ideological flows of knowledge and arouse “deep attachments” (Anderson, 2006 [1983], p. 4). As the data in this study suggest, these deep attachments can take the form of affective attachments to imaginative conceptions of Japan and the West. The notion of ‘Japan’ and ‘the West’ are understood here as cultural artefacts which respondents construct through their experiences of everyday life.

However, the ‘imagined’ of imagined communities does not suggest that they are fabrications with no material basis, but that they are emotional mappings that work in dialogue with material conditions (in much the same way as Nip’s (2004) observation that the online and offline are not engaged in a zero sum game, as discussed in Chapter 6).

Imagined communities of LGBT and queer individuals work in tandem with more general imaginative geographies of Japan and its place in the world. Said (2003) defined imaginative geographies as a way in which we create or give meaning to our social space. As with imagined communities, these imaginative geographies are not a conscious attempt to describe a material place or space, but rather are “stylised costumes” (Said, 2003, p. 71) through which we make the unfamiliar familiar. These stylised costumes “help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself” (Said, 2003, p. 55). This is not to say that these stylised costumes are a physical artefact that one can put on or take off at will. As Butler (2011[1993]) argued in relation to gender performativity, there is no self before the gendered self, and performativity is not a single act (i.e. putting on or taking off a costume), but rather a set of unbounded inter-relational and citational acts. Similarly, these stylised costumes are not objects or artefacts before the self, but part of a network of citational acts that constitute the self. As Ahmed (2004, pp. 119-121) has argued, affects are not “simply ‘within’ or ‘without’” our bodies, they do not “positively inhabit any-body”. Instead, they are understood here as a nonconscious sense (Massumi, 1995), much like the sense of the rules of the game as discussed in Chapter 4.

Imaginative constructions of ‘Japan’ and the ‘Other’, work as objects of attachment or orientation around which affect circulates. This in turn helps respondents to situate themselves within their local communities and the wider world. As Ahmed (2004, p. 119)

notes, these objects become the hooks upon which emotional practices of belonging are hung — they “do things, and they align individuals with communities”. Taking up the concept of imaginative geographies as spaces of social understanding can, as Youkhana (2015, p. 16) has argued, “reveal the entanglements, interfaces, and crosslinks of different regimes of belonging. The following section of this chapter will now consider this theoretical framework more closely in relation to the data in this study.

8.3 Framing identities and experience through notions of Japan and the West

When respondents framed their experiences and identities through imaginative geographies of Japan and the West, these imaginative geographies became “sticky” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 120) in the sense that various stereotypes tended to attach themselves to the signifiers of ‘Japan’ and ‘the West’. Consequently, respondents used imaginative geographies of ‘here’ and ‘there’ as citational objects around which to create a sense of belonging. In some cases, my position as a white researcher was also drawn into and mobilised as part of these affectual practices. For example, in October 2015, I interviewed Yuta, a transgender man in his late 30s. I asked Yuta about his childhood, and when he first recognised that he might identify as a transgender man. Yuta surprised me with the following explanation, included here in its verbatim transcription to retain the bewildering nature of the exchange:

Yuta: At elementary school, when you and your friends (*jēn-san tachi*)⁵⁹ greet each other they kiss (*kisu*), right? On the cheek.

⁵⁹ This colloquialism has been particularly problematic to render into the English but is left in the text due to its linguistic significance. *Tachi* is a pluralizing suffix used for living creatures. For example, *tomo* (友) can be literally translated as companion, and when suffixed with *tachi* (達) as in *tomodachi*, the word can be translated as friend(s). In another example, *sensei* means ‘teacher’, whilst *senseitachi* means (your) teachers. The *tachi* suffix not only collectivises a group of sentient beings, but often softens the tone of the sentence, and feels quite playful. Hence, when Yuta referred to *jēn-san tachi*, I understood him to be referring to an imagined group of people like me (*jēn* is the Japanese transliteration of my name) in a way that avoided words ‘white people’ or ‘foreigners’, which both sound particularly harsh in Japanese. In the context of this interview, I assumed he meant white, possibly British people (because we had previously discussed my nationality as British, not American). In order to reflect Yuta’s purposeful use of my name

Jay: Hmm?

Yuta: When you and your friends abroad, when you go home, in a kind of greeting, you kiss (*chū*) each other on the cheeks right!

Jay: On the cheek?

Yuta: You kiss (*kisu*) on the face, right?

Jay: Hmm...well, OK.

Yuta: As a greeting.

Jay: OK.

Yuta: When you and your friends, when you go home, you kiss (*kisu*) right?

Jay: I don't understand.

Yuta: When you greet people, you hug don't you?

Jay: Yes, I hug people.

Yuta: You hug, and then kiss (*kisu*)?

Jay: Yes, yes, sorry.

Yuta: Well, Japanese people, we don't do that a lot.

Jay: Oh yes, I'd noticed that, it's sad sometimes when I'm in Japan.

Yuta: But at that time in elementary school, this girl pretended to be a foreigner, she did an impression of you and your friends, you know. She kissed (*kisu*) me on the cheek as a greeting. When she did that, that was the first time that girls really entered into my consciousness.

This exchange highlights two salient points. Firstly, Yuta assumed that because I am non-Japanese (specifically I understood his categorisation of me as 'white European'), my confusion was a result of a lack of linguistic competence, signalled by his switch from using the transliteration of kiss (*kisu*) to the colloquial onomatopoeia *chū*, which is supposed to mimic the sound of a kiss on the cheek. Secondly, that as a white European, I kiss my friends on the cheek when I greet them. As implied by my use of "I don't understand", I was confused by Yuta's statement, and I felt that my body language made this clear. After I expressed my confusion, Yuta become more animated and motioned

and the pluralizing suffix, I have translated this as 'you and your friends', rather than as 'Europeans', or 'foreigners', words which I believe Yuta was purposefully avoiding in his utterances. 'Jay and friends' remains slightly awkward, but it is the closest rendering I could reach without losing this essence of meaning.

with his hands to emphasise his point. Yuta's insistence that non-Japanese people kiss on the cheek in greeting, despite my confusion opened a space in which our respective affects circulated.

In a similar way to that suggested by Said (2003, p. 71), Yuta's imaginative geographies of 'You [Jay] and your friends' became a form of "stylised costumes". Yuta used a common generalisation of Japanese people (that they avoid physical contact) and a generalisation of white Europeans (that they all hug and kiss as a greeting) as a device in the affective labour of communicating an experience across the intersection of nationality and gender identities. Yuta used these imaginative geographies to find common ground with a white European who has no direct experience of gender dysphoria.⁶⁰ This strategy can be understood as an affective practice of belonging, mobilised through the establishment of the imagined objects of 'here' and 'there'; through, along, and between which this affective labour can flow. Yuta used these imaginative geographies to situate himself as part of an imagined community of Japanese LGBT people, but to also create a moment of understanding between himself and what he saw as non-Japanese practices.

Drawing upon the work of Ahmed (2004, p. 120), the 'here' and the 'there' become the "signs, figures, and objects" through which the "'sticky' associations" of affect circulate. Ahmed (2004, p. 120) discussed the way in which hate "'slides' sideways between figures", and that this in turn allows certain figures to become the object of our hate, because these figures are imagined as symbolic objects towards or past which affect flows. Similarly, in the case of imaginative geographies of Japan and the West, a sense of belonging (in the sense of place-belongingness as discussed in Chapter 6) slides towards

⁶⁰ 'Gender dysphoria' is used here in the general sense of a state of unease with one's assigned gender, and does not refer to the medical diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria.

and between these imaginative geographies. It is through this movement of emotion between these imaginative geographies that Yuta seeks to frame his experiences in a way he feels I will understand on a level away from theoretical understanding. Through mobilising these notions of Japan and the West, Yuta mobilises affect, verbalised as emotion, to attach his experience to my own. Yuta's strategy triggered a moment of dissonance, which seems to echo the dissonance that he himself felt as a child first learning about his gendered experiences of everyday life. Yuta's framing demonstrates the importance of attending to "that which is experienced, *felt* and understood" (Radford, 2017, p. 497) (emphasis added), rather than attempting to analyse the material (un)truth of these imaginative framings. These affective understandings of belonging can help us to analyse belonging as a practice that exists outside of material aspects (for example through membership of a specific organisation). This interaction with Yuta, therefore, stresses the salience of embodied experiences and affect in the mapping of one's identity within social imaginaries.

Yuta was not the only respondent to use imaginative geographies of Japan and the West in framing his experiences. For example, Kazuhiro, a cis-gender gay man in his 50s, used imaginative geographies of the UK in a similar way. Kazuhiro told me about how his self-confessed obsession with the UK stemmed from his love of the British film *Another Country*. At the start of the interview, Kazuhiro reached into a carrier bag and pulled out an old VHS tape with *Another Country* written on the spine in English:

It's *Another Country*. I saw it in the middle of the night. I saw in the newspaper that they were showing it, and it said that it was about love between men...Until that point, everything had just been in writing. There were Japanese people like the characters in the Mishima books, but real live moving, speaking people...seeing people living on the screen like that, seeing it in English, that was a first too you know...That was when I suddenly felt this

really deep affinity for the UK, I felt the UK was close. Then I decided I wanted to go and see Harrow. I wanted to go and see. That's how I got interested [in the UK].

For Kazuhiro, *Another Country* was the first time he had seen gay men portrayed in a mainstream media outlet that did not mock them, or present them as a sexual perversion. Unlike the “Japanese people” that Kazuhiro had read about in Mishima Yukio’s books, the characters in *Another Country* were “real live moving, speaking people”. It is significant that Kazuhiro uses the word “characters” (*tōjōjinbutsu*) in relation to the Mishima books, but does not use this word to refer to the characters in *Another Country*. Instead he uses words like “moving” and “speaking” which lend these characters an added emotional dimension. The affective nature of Kazuhiro’s explanation is also emphasised through the way he talks about a “deep affinity for the UK”, as if *Another Country* has, in his imaginative geography, become an affective marker for the UK.

Since the film was set in the UK, Kazuhiro imagined the country to be a place where gay men could be portrayed in the mainstream media as living, breathing individuals, rather than as one-dimensional punch-lines to homophobic jokes. After watching the video, Kazuhiro engineered a way to visit the UK, studying for 3 months as part of his training as a solicitor. During this trip, he was able to visit a gay bar, which he found inclusive and welcoming. His experiences in the UK seemed to confirm what he had seen in the video: that the UK was a place where gay men could live their lives in the open, without fear of negative consequences:

Even to this day I have feelings of respect and affinity for the UK...It became my method of survival, that affirmation, it became the scaffolding that helped me decide to live.

In the case of Kazuhiro, the importance of the emotional and affective ‘sticking point’ of his imagined UK is more overt than that mobilised by Yuta. He directly talked about the UK in terms of emotion, noting that thinking of the UK brought with it feelings of “affirmation” through feelings of “affinity” (*shinkinkan*). Kazuhiro’s imaginative geography of Japan becomes a sticky object (Ahmed, 2004) around and through which emotions and affect circulate. Indeed, Kazuhiro himself stated that the emotional power of the connection he felt to the imagined world within *Another Country* gave him the courage to continue with his life as a gay man in Japan. When he was unable to find similar sites of emotional attachment within his local context, he found them through a chance broadcast of a British film. The more he watched the film, the more of an affinity he felt for the UK, and the more the film’s signs converted into feelings of belonging to a global community of gay men, whom he could physically meet at the gay bars he visited in the UK. This process echoes that described by Ahmed (2004, p. 121) in which affect can accumulate and “shapes the surfaces of bodies and worlds”. Kazuhiro’s attendance at gay bars in the UK, and his repeated viewing of *Another Country* were affective experiences which helped to shape Kazuhiro’s understanding of his place in his social world.

Ahmed (2004; 2010a; 2010b) sometimes refers to affect using the language of economy. For example, in ‘Happy Objects’ Ahmed (2004, p. 35) states that “Happy objects are passed around, accumulating positive affective value as social goods”. Drawing upon the work of Beverley Skeggs, Ahmed (2010b) argues that the objects around which we position ourselves have value, and that these values are not neutral. Some objects are seen as ‘good’ and others are seen as “disgusting” (Ahmed, 2010b, p. 33). Affect then, can operate as an economy of affect (Ahmed, 2004). Within these affective economies, the ability to orientate ourselves to objects (in this case, imaginative geographies) which are

seen to have value is a kind of social capital. This is similar to what Alexandre Da Costa (2016, p. 26) referred to as the “unequal distribution of affect” and “unequal distribution of hope”. In the context of affectual belonging within mixed-race communities in Brazil, Da Costa notes that access to affect and hope is not equally distributed, and is dependent upon certain socio-economic factors. This concept can also be seen in action in Kazuhiro’s re-telling of his experiences. Kazuhiro had qualified as a solicitor, and had an in-depth knowledge of human rights law, as well as having travelled to the UK. Yuta, on the other hand, was trained in a service related industry, and had not travelled outside of Japan. This was reflected in the way in which Kazuhiro’s framing of ‘the West’ was more nuanced. For example, he noted that the characters in *Another Country* were highly privileged and that his visit to the UK was as a brief sojourner. Yuta, in contrast, expected all white Europeans to act in a certain stereotypical way. Kazuhiro and Yuta, therefore, provide salient examples of the ways in which imaginative geographies can be mobilised in practices of belonging, and that these mobilisations are not equally accessible to all respondents.

As the interviews progressed, interactions such as these became increasingly common, and I became aware of my own role within these affective economies. I first recognised this through the way in which many respondents framed me as an expert representative of their imagined West (this is in many ways similar to the mascot researcher (Adams, 1999) discussed in Chapter 3). This led to a number of uncomfortable interactions. At the end of each interview, I asked respondents if they had any questions for me. I found that the majority of respondents would use this open question to ask me about my own sexuality, my motivations for the research, and/or versions of the question ‘What’s it like for LGBT people in the UK?’ In doing so, respondents not only revealed further details

of their imaginative geographies of Japan and the West, but also used their framings of myself as another figure around which affective practices of belonging circulated.

For example, when I asked Daisuke if he had anything to ask me, he asked me if the existence of LGBT-identifying individuals is widely understood in the UK. Daisuke is a Japanese gay man in his mid to late 30s. He asked:

Daisuke: In UK society, is it, well, is it the case that the existence of LGBT people is, well, a given?

Jay: Do you mean what's the situation like in the UK?

Daisuke: For example, if it was the USA, then in the TV dramas there's always at least one person who is LGBT, and people in general know [that LGBTQ people exist], whereas in Japan people generally don't know, that's what I feel. How about in the UK?

Within Daisuke's imaginative geography of the USA, TV dramas nearly always have at least one queer character, and that the vast majority of people know what 'LGBT' means. He notes that this is something he feels rather than knows (he uses the Japanese '*to iu kanji*', literally 'it feels as such'), and then turns the question to me, asking me what my general feel of the UK is. These kinds of question stimulated further circulation of affect between myself and the respondents. Not wanting to conflate my individual experiences of life as a bisexual woman in the UK with that of any other individual or group, these questions were essentially unanswerable. However, the questions themselves are more interesting than the answers I could give. Through these questions, respondents were mobilising an imaginative geography of me as a British researcher as another reference point within their imaginative mappings of Japan and the West. Using my experiences, understood through my responses to their questions, was another strategy within an

affective practice of belonging. I became a stand-in for the imagined West, an object or a sign around which affective economies could circulate.

8.4 Imaginative geographies and un-belonging

Imaginative geographies often resulted in essentialised understandings of queer experience in Japan and the West, and a teleological model of rights development. These understandings sometimes led to moments of exclusion and dissonance. Indeed, in putting my own affectual responses to these types of interactions into language, I often found myself using somewhat negative terms. In my field diaries, I was using words like “stressful”, “awkward”, and “exhausted [emotionally]” to express my personal feelings after these kinds of conversations. The section will now consider these dissonances from the perspective of the respondents.

8.4.1 Individual experiences of un-belonging

As discussed in Chapter 6, a common aspect of framings of Japan amongst the respondents was the notion that Japan is ‘backwards’ in terms of legal rights and protections for LGBT people. Respondents such as Natsuki felt that Japanese society was in general moving towards greater social and legal protections for LGBT identifying people, but that it was still a “developing” state. Natsuki is in their early 30s, and identifies as *x-jendā*. I asked Natsuki what their hopes were for the future. They talked about how they hoped that Japan would eventually institute same-sex partnership rights, even though they and their partner would not be able to access these laws due to their adult adoption arrangement.⁶¹ Natsuki went on to caution that even if such laws were passed, the LGBT

⁶¹ Natsuki had legally adopted their *x-jendā* identifying partner as a legal way to share a *koseki*. Adult adoption is sometimes used in this way between same-sex partners in Japan, but it excludes the couple from any future marriage or partnership agreements with their partner, because they are legally in a parent/child relationship.

activist community could not become complacent, and they urged people to think about what small actions they can take now, rather than focus upon long-term utopian outcomes.

Natsuki said:

Natsuki: Don't you think that [Japanese] society could move forwards if we looked at what was happening now, and did whatever was needed now?

Jay: Do you think that society isn't moving [forwards]?

Natsuki: I think we're still developing, but we are moving.

Within Natsuki's imaginative geography, Japanese society was just "developing", and starting to move towards instituting LGBT-related legislation. They used the term "*hattentojō*", which literally translates as 'developing' as in 'developing country' or 'developing economy'. The implication of the word is that Japan is somewhat behind these implied already 'developed countries'.

Natsuki's perception of Japanese society as backwards resulted in negative emotions and fears about the possibility of wider visibility in society. Natsuki wanted to stress their contentment with everyday life, and felt frustrated that because they were understood by society as a member of a minority community, their positive contribution to society was ignored for the sake of a more marketable story. This can be seen from when Natsuki talks about mainstream media coverage of LGBT and queer lives in Japan.

Natsuki: I think it can be extremely dangerous. The way the media deals [with LGBT lives] is somehow, well they treat it as something really set apart, don't they? For example, I'm probably giving a really personal example here, but do you know of Heart Net TV?

Jay: Yes, I know of that.

Natsuki: Well, shows like that, I think that because it's made by people who really want to do it, they basically tend to focus on people who have that kind

of experience. Why do they always focus on the dark side of things? They only ever do close-up segments on people who are in really dark situations. They are always talking about how it's just about suffering. Of course, among LGBT *tōjisha* there are people who live closed lives like that, but there are also lots of people who are living really happy lives, and they never show us that, do they? [...] I think that the way the media deal with it is a big problem. They only ever present things like that, so then parents really worry, you know? 'Oh my god, it's as dark as that!', yeah, 'I absolutely can't abide the thought of my own child suffering like that' [...]

Natsuki decried the way in which the mainstream media in Japan portrayed LGBT and queer lives as something “dark” and “closed”, and the way in which increased media coverage during the LGBT boom seemed to be feeding into this. Natsuki accepts that some people do suffer in the way that shows made by Heart Net TV portray, but they are also aware of the harms that an imaginative geography of Japan as backwards and Japanese LGBT communities as closed and secretive can have upon not only LGBT and queer people in Japan, but upon their families. Here, imaginative geographies of Japan and of LGBT communities in Japan have negative affective impacts in which they feel isolated from mainstream understandings of Japanese society.

For Natsuki, media portrayals like these result in feelings of powerlessness and isolation. Natsuki has created their own series of LGBT-related information and discussion sessions, and also maintains a regular blog on-line. Yet there is a sense of powerlessness that despite their best efforts to the contrary, the mainstream media for the most part continue to stress the negative aspects of LGBT and queer lives. Natsuki's experiences also speaks to Ahmed's (2004) conception of affective economies in which access to positive affect is not evenly distributed: some individuals cannot orientate themselves towards these positive objects. This sits well with the experience of Natsuki in in the sense that LGBT and queer people are often not given the opportunity to portray their own lives in the

mainstream media, and that access to positive representations, and affect can be limited. This has tangible impacts upon the lives of respondents. For example, later in the same interview Natsuki told me how when they are giving interviews to press outlets, they are always careful to refrain from talking about the negative aspects of their experiences. Natsuki has to balance the desire to draw attention to the practical difficulties for LGBT individuals in Japan, whilst at the same time resisting the circulation of shame and secretiveness. Returning to the scholarship of Allison (2009; 2012; 2013; 2017) and Galbraith (2013) mentioned briefly in Section 7.2, the data in this study suggest that whilst affect can be mobilised as a positive response to societal change (i.e. as a way to approach increasing socio-economic precariousness), these mobilisations can also bring about negative outcomes for those respondents who are simply not able to orientate themselves towards valorised ‘happy objects’ (Ahmed, 2010a).

This was further demonstrated through the experiences of Takuya. Takuya is a cis-gender gay man who by virtue of his training as a Buddhist priest had access to more nuanced imaginative geographies of Japan and the West. Despite these deeper understandings (and arguably a more privileged status as a cis-gender gay man), imaginative geographies did not necessarily lead to circulation of positive affect. For example, Takuya used these geographies to argue that current social disapproval of LGBT lives stemmed, in fact, from the UK. He said:

In the USA, and places like that, well I don't really know what the situation is like in the UK, but in the USA, that openness, well, maybe there are places that are deeply religious, but in Japan we don't really have religion. That, well, basically, I suppose there is Buddhism and Shinto, but because they're finished now, essentially, there isn't this Protestant-like prohibition that says 'men and women have to produce society' or 'you have to only procreate with that person', you know? Because anything is OK in Buddhism, that ideology

was basically introduced into Japanese society from the UK [laugh]. We didn't match that British social system, we took that into the everyday, we learnt that, and made Japan match that [system].

At first Takuya notes that he doesn't "really know" what the situation is for LGBT people in the UK, but thinks that "maybe" the UK is somewhat like the USA in terms of religious conservatism. He then sets this proviso aside to make a broader generalisation. He argues that Japanese society (as a monolithic whole) is not ruled by religion in the same way as he perceives Protestant religions to rule in the West, at least in the historical sense.⁶² Takuya speaks with more confidence about what he believes to be true about Japan, in contrast to what he feels to be true about the USA and UK. In Takuya's framing, a previously sexually liberated Japan under the influence of Buddhism and Shinto, was reined in by social changes under the influence of Britain. As a result of this process, certain social proscriptions were placed on acceptable modes of intimacy in Japan, proscriptions which had not previously been of concern within Buddhism and Shinto. Japan is cast as religiously liberal, against a religiously illiberal USA, and socially illiberal UK.

Takuya's framing of Japan and the West is somewhat contradictory. The USA is associated with "openness", but then also with Protestant-style proscriptions on personal intimacies. Japan is used as the contrast to USA openness, but at the same time the historical home of Buddhist and Shinto tolerance of same-sex attraction. However, this

⁶² There is a certain amount of historical validity to Takuya's framing of Japan's religious (or non-religious) history, as well as the influence of Protestantism around the time of the Meiji Restoration (1868). Buddhism and Shinto certainly do not involve dogmatic responses to same-sex attraction, and do not in general make proscriptions on sexual behaviours. However, I also wish to acknowledge that Takuya's is not the only experience of religion (or lack thereof) in Japan. I did not ask respondents directly about their religion, but given that Protestantism and Catholicism are also practiced in Japan (alongside other newer religions such as Mormonism and Scientology) it is possible that some of the respondents had contrary biographies and experiences.

contradiction was a central aspect of Takuya's framing of himself and his place within imagined transnational communities of LGBT practice. This contradiction can be understood as part of a strategy of finding a space of belonging across his intersecting identities. In addition to identifying as gay, and being an ordained Buddhist priest, Takuya also has a HIV positive diagnosis. This puts him in a somewhat unique position of being involved with three separate modes of community practice: HIV/AIDS peer support groups, LGBT communities, and the Buddhist priesthood. He directly addressed what he framed as the double 'mountains' of being HIV positive and gay.

I have to get over the LGBT mountain and the HIV mountain. People who have got over one mountain, because to a certain extent they are being recognised in their lives, they can say things like we've got the law [we needed] or the TV, to an extent, you know? Because of people like that then maybe you could say understanding is increasing little by little [...] but even to get over that first mountain is extremely difficult.

Being LGBT and being HIV positive are portrayed as epic struggles, one of which in isolation would be difficult. Takuya went on to talk about how he felt reluctant to be involved with LGBT communities in the area because of the lack of privacy amongst them, and the tangible risks this presented with his employer. He told me about an LGBT related social group that he had carefully vetted before attending. The event was a mixer at a public café which LGBT individuals and their allies could attend to chat and meet new people. Takuya told me how he had set up a private meeting with the organiser, whom he knew from childhood, prior to attending:

Even with him [the organiser], I really made a point of confirming 'What basis are you running [the event] from?' We talked about that for three hours, you know! Because if I don't do that, then I don't know how open I can be. I really made a point of confirming that. And then, he said to me 'Why don't I take

you along as an ally?’ Some people go there as allies, for stuff to do with work like [name of his work colleague] and they ask ‘Why are you here?’ [...] I’m not very open at those times. I don’t know how to answer [laugh], so [I say] ‘I’m an ally’ [laugh].

Takuya described how the risk of someone being at the event from work was reasonably high, and that a person he knew from work had previously attended. It was only after a three-hour discussion with the organiser that he was able to develop a strategy that would allow him to attend. In other instances, Takuya simply did not attend community events. For Takuya, privacy is vital because of the tangible discriminations this could lead to in the workplace. Hence, Takuya’s imaginative geographies, which intersect across lines of religion, bodily health, and sexuality became imaginative objects around which the difficult emotions of fear, stigma, and isolation circulated. This demonstrates the ways in which framing experiences through imaginative geographies can create moments of unbelonging, and of exclusion from one imagined community by virtue of inclusion in another imagined community, regardless of the relative privilege of any one individual identity. Takuya’s experiences demonstrate the ways in which imaginative geographies cannot be always understood as positive practices of belonging because of the intersectional nature of identity.

Similar tensions can be seen in the case of Lauren. Lauren is a queer woman, and stated that she has a strong preference for developing relationships with transgender men. When I asked Lauren what she knew about being queer in Japan before she arrived from the USA, she responded:

Well, I already knew because I had been here. I had been here studying at university. I was here for a year at Osaka *daigaku* [university], working under [professor name], and my undergraduate research consisted of the Japanese

feminist movement and the issues that were important to them, basically from the Meiji era up to the present day. And I also extensively researched the *koseki*, the *koseki* and the barriers to trans people, trying to access care and just like be people, in Japan, the way that they want to be.

As a white American woman working on the JET programme, Lauren enjoyed a certain amount of privilege in Japan. It is possible to argue that she enjoyed greater access to affective strategies of belonging, through her ability to study Japan in advance of living there, and by virtue of her ability to be able to make what she referred to as a “political” decision to act in certain ways. In the interview, we talked about the way in which some non-Japanese people in Japan felt obliged to be highly visible as queer people as part of fostering cross-cultural understanding. Lauren said:

What an ego. I totally disagree [with them] 100% [...] I think that mirrors what I said before about white feminism, this foreign person, is coming into another country and they’re saying ‘Oh! Queer people are invisible here, I will be a beacon, I will be a representative of queer people here. Yes, yes, yes. So it’s important for me to be out here, where I’m taking absolutely almost no risks, and nobody can touch me basically because as a foreign person here I have certain protections [...]’

Lauren’s previous period of study in Japan prior to moving there for work, and her engagement with intersectional feminism, ensured that she had an awareness of the complexity of issues facing LGBT and queer people in Japan. However, it is also clear that Lauren relied upon binary understandings of Japan and the West to frame her understandings of Japan. Those who are Japanese are, in her framework, not protected by the law, whilst non-Japanese people living in Japan can feel relatively safe from discrimination by virtue of their position as outsiders. This framing does not account for the experiences of those within LGBT communities in Kansai who are strongly opposed

to state interference in LGBT and queer lives, or for those who engage in resistive strategies of kinship, such as that practised by Natsuki and their partner in their adult adoption arrangement. In addition, Lauren tended to conflate all Japanese experience into the same framework of secretiveness, and conformity that has been discussed as problematic above. She said:

As horrific as it is, the fact that gay men marry? and have a family here? Out of social and familial obligation, and also sometimes career. And then, they have you know, their lover on the side? That's nuts! In the States, that's something you hear about in the 1950s, maybe the 70s, maybe the 70s, before Milk. But it happens now! This country is like a vortex of social issues that are 30 years behind the rest of the world, well, most of the world. I shouldn't say that. That's not true. 30 years behind the liberal West.

Lauren's understanding of Japan is that it is "30 years behind" the "liberal West" in teleological terms. Lauren's reference to Harvey Milk⁶³ suggests that the USA is the stand-in for this imaginative geography of the liberal West. The USA are in the here and now, and Japan remains in the "vortex" of the 1950s or 1970s, before the election of Harvey Milk. The USA is used as a place marker for the "liberal West", against which "the rest of the world" is compared. It is assumed that the USA has found the one valid teleological path of development of LGBT rights and protections, and that Japan, and other 'non-liberal' countries should by implication be attempting to follow this model. Lauren's statement is peppered with affective language such as "horrific" and "That's nuts!". These utterances make her disbelief apparent. In a similar way to which Kazuhiro used an imaginative geography of the UK to convey feelings of affinity and belonging,

⁶³ Harvey Milk was the first openly-gay elected official in the state of California. Milk campaigned for a gay rights ordinance in San Francisco in the 1970s. He was assassinated by an ex-City-County Board member in 1978. Milk is an iconic figure in the history of LGBT rights organising, and was known to both Japanese and non-Japanese respondents in this study.

Lauren uses her imaginative geography of Japan as an object around which feelings of dismay and irritation circulate. Even with significant levels of engagement with the complexity and ambiguity of LGBT lives in Japan Lauren arranged her imaginative geographies around essentialised notions of Japan and the West, which in turn brought about feelings of being trapped in a social “vortex”.

Lauren’s imaginative geographies also created moments of feeling out of place, and of not quite belonging in her daily life. For example, she mentioned that she disliked the gendered nature of first-person pronouns in Japanese, and struggled to find a personal pronoun she was comfortable with.⁶⁴ Lauren self-identified as a cis-gender woman, but disliked being labelled as a woman through the speech acts of others and through her choice of attire. She talked about how when she had first started learning Japanese she was upset by the way that Japanese first-person pronouns forced her to make a choice between a masculine and feminine form. At first, she relied on a strategy of intentionally using typically masculine personal pronouns:

Lauren: “I know it’s the masculine but I’m gonna use it anyway because I’m a strong Western woman” whatever, [now] I [find that I] want to move into, “Oh the women use this, so...” I’m a woman so maybe I should use this, which I think is a very, for me, because I’m a Western learner of Japanese, it’s a political choice.

Jay: A political choice to go along with it?

⁶⁴ The Japanese language can be heavily gendered through choice of words, particles, and intonation (numerous studies have explored the gendered nature of Japanese, see for example Inoue (2002)). Personal pronoun use is also heavily gendered. In summary, personal pronouns such as *boku* and *ore* would generally only be used by men and boys, whereas words like *atashi* and *uchi* (a Kansai dialect first-person pronoun used especially by young women in informal contexts) would only generally be used by women. There are exceptions to this: for example, all-female teen idol groups sometimes use the collective *bokutachi* as an affectation in song lyrics. There are gender-neutral pronouns, such as *watashi* which can be used in most formal settings by all genders, but in less formal settings men tend to use *boku* and women often use *watashi*. There is also a set of affectations used by some effeminate gay men, known as *onē kotoba* (big sister words), which has its own associated politics (for a full exposition see Maree (2008)).

Lauren: Yeah

Jay: What pronouns do you use?

Lauren: In Japanese?

Jay: Yeah

Lauren: *Watashi*. I used to use *boku*, I used to use *boku*, and even now saying it, I'm like, "Ugh, I *want* to use *boku*" but I know that I'll catch shit from people, or they'll laugh like when I say "*Nani nani yatte kure?*",⁶⁵ which is another thing, I'll say that in an extremely hyper-feminised voice, like on purpose, and people might think that I don't know what I'm doing, but I'm like, I know exactly what I am doing, and I like to fuck with linguistics like that. So I use *watashi*, I wanted to use *boku* a billion years ago, but I knew that I'd catch shit, I knew that I'd probably have to explain myself... I know that I am being forced into using *watashi*...I'm gonna catch shit no matter what I use, so I'm just gonna use *watashi*

Despite the fact that using *watashi* makes Lauren feel uncomfortable, she feels that in order to fit in with her co-workers she must conform to pre-conceived notions of femininity. Added to this is the fact that Lauren feels that she is always understood as a 'foreigner', as a "Western woman", and hence any political statement she might attempt by using masculine forms of speech would simply be misinterpreted as a linguistic incompetence. Lauren's imaginative geography of Japan, in which linguistic variance is not tolerated serves to restrict her behavior, and creates a sense that she will feel out of place whatever she decides to do. Lauren also found it difficult to decide on an appropriate form of attire that would place her as female but not hyper-feminised or infantilised, and felt that over time she had had to conform to a 'Japanese' feminine aesthetic:

The way that I experience feeling pushed into a feminine role in Japan is just by, number one is the fashion. Fashion in Japan for women is hyper feminised. Personally, that's my perception. Good luck finding a bra without lace *all over*

⁶⁵ Lauren is referring to her choice to use the very informal *yatte kure* (please do this for me) form with her students instead of more polite forms of request.

it and bows, one time I had a hard time finding rain boots that didn't have bows on them...everything is hyper-feminised, and the Japanese construction of feminine beauty is very different from the West I would say...and I'm a Western woman so it's hard for me to not get trapped in that and not want to, like I found that the way I wear my make-up has skewed towards Japanese styles. I wear a lot of pink blush, and I even bought false eyelashes, to try false lashes, despite the fact I have crazy long eyelashes already [...] unless I go out of my way, or dress like a college girl forever, which is like hoodies and jeans. If I wanna look cute, I feel like I have to wear, you know slightly poofed out skirts, tights, you know, I used to flat iron, I have naturally curly hair, I used to blow dry it straight and then curl it with an iron to make it look like more what Japanese girls look like, when they curl their hair...

Lauren not only essentialises women's fashion in Japan, but also uses a monolithic notion of 'Western women' against which to orientate her sense of belonging. This results in an uneasy relationship with her appearance in the everyday. Lauren finds herself seeking belonging, and trying to fit in by adapting her make-up and dress. This is a stressful process for Lauren, and she frames clothes shopping as a kind of battle in which one needs "good luck" to find clothing that suits. Additionally, she feels that she cannot fall back onto what she calls "college girl" style, because that would not be seen as cute by those around her, again creating a sense of being out of place.

Within Lauren's imaginative geography of Japan, there is no acknowledgement of queer, androgynous, or dapper fashion trends, despite the Kansai region having a notoriously vibrant fashion scene. There is also no awareness of the strategies some Japanese respondents used to deal with gendered pronouns (for example, avoiding use of the personal pronoun altogether, or referring to oneself using one's given name or a gender-neutral nickname). Instead, her imagined geographies of Japan and the West remain stubbornly embedded in her framing of everyday experiences. She seeks to mitigate this

by ‘giving up’ and ‘going along’ with what she perceives to be expected of her in terms of dress and speech. However, in searching for belonging by giving up and going along, Lauren also faces moments of dissonance. As Ahmed (2010a, p. 37) noted, “We become alienated — out of line with an affective community —when we do not experience pleasure from proximity to objects that are already attributed as being good”. Lauren’s personal distaste for lace, bows, and false eyelashes, which she sees as the common sense objects of femininity creates a sense of non-alignment, of not quite fitting in, no matter what strategy she pursues.

These dissonances demonstrate the ways in which notions of belonging, much like notions of (mis)recognition as discussed in Chapter 5, bring with them associated feelings of un-belonging. As Floya Anthias (2006, p. 21) has noted:

The notion of ‘imagining’ also refers to the ways in which constructions of belonging serve to naturalise socially produced, situational and contextual relations, converting them to taken-for-granted, absolute and fixed structures of social and personal life.

In drawing imaginative boundaries around what it means to be queer, and what femininity and masculinity look like in Japan, Lauren inadvertently contributes to what Anthias (2006, p. 21) referred to as “taken-for-granted” structures of social life. Lauren’s taken for granted is one in which women wear lace and bows, and apply heavy make-up – a common sense to which she herself feels little emotional alignment, thus creating an unsolvable dilemma. The imaginative geographies she tacitly reproduces through her discussions of Japan as social vortex bring with them negative affect and feelings of being out of place.

It is also important to consider Lauren's ability to 'go along with' and comply with the common sense as a relatively privileged position. Although Lauren frames herself as a long-term resident in Japan with no plans to return to the USA in the near future, she is also able to fall back to her position of 'foreigner' in Japan. Behaviours and actions that would not fit within the taken-for-granted can (despite Lauren's distaste for being read in this way) be dismissed as the actions of someone who is simply making a linguistic or cultural error. In contrast, for respondents like Takuya, there is little room to openly challenge the common sense due to the tangible harm this could inflict upon his day to day life. Again, this tension between sojourner experiences of sexuality and gender in Japan, and the experiences of Japanese nationals echoes Da Costa's (2016, p. 26) "unequal distribution of affect" and "unequal distribution of hope". Hence, whilst brief sojourners like Lauren may be able to force open a space within their local contexts for affectual practices of belonging, these spaces may not be accessible, or indeed desirable for other respondents.

8.4.2 Community impacts

The data suggest that in addition to the grassroots/urban framing of privileged activism discussed in Chapter 4, many respondents also placed Japanese LGBT and queer activism within transnational hierarchies of LGBT and queer practices. One of the most common elements of respondent's framing of collective LGBT and queer activism in Japan was that it was 'behind' the imagined West in a teleological sense. Respondents often framed LGBT and queer activism in Japan within a transnational and teleological narrative with a carefully managed sexually exceptional USA as the goal (the nature of this USA sexual exceptionalism was discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, Section 5.2). For example, when I asked Yumiko, a lesbian woman in her 50s about her opinion of the

Shibuya Ordinances she framed her response in relation to recent outcomes in global organising for equal marriage:

Yumiko: I think there's probably a lot more things we need to do, but for now I feel like, how should I put it, like we've opened a hole. It's a first step for a society like this in Japan. That's why I think it's amazing.

Jay: America's same-sex marriage [Yumiko interjects]

Yumiko: It's amazing isn't it! They've been saying it's just a small matter of time away, so I have been transfixed by it. I've been transfixed by the idea of 'when will it be [allowed] across the whole of the USA?' That, and before that was the Irish referendum, that was amazing, wasn't it?! That was a world first, deciding it by referendum.

Yumiko's imaginative geographies are significant on a number of levels. Firstly, the Shibuya Ordinances are discussed as a "first-step" (*daiippo*) towards marriage equality in Japan. The implication here is that the Shibuya Ordinances were the first legislative strategy in an already decided trajectory towards marriage equality in Japan. This suggests that Yumiko does not view alternative marriage practices such as those undertaken by Natsuki and their partner as a precursor of this trajectory, but instead as unrelated to the current teleological narrative of rights development. Secondly, the mention of the USA and same-sex marriage triggers a highly emotive description of these processes in her imaginative geography of the West as "amazing" (*sugoi*), and as a "world-first" (*sekaihatsu*) in the case of the Republic of Ireland. The USA Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage, and the Republic of Ireland's referendum on marriage equality are both part of this teleological trajectory within Yumiko's understanding. There is also an inevitability to Yumiko's framing of rights development. She discusses it as a "small matter of time away", as if the changes have come about due to the passage of time, rather than as a result of legislative organising. Yumiko's framing is an example of teleological discourses of development towards carefully managed, idealised and

utopian goals. The USA and the Republic of Ireland are “awesome”, but Japan is in its infancy, taking its “first-step”. Examples of this teleological narrative also abounded in the participant observations. A key example of this is the slogan chosen for the Kansai LGBT *seijinshiki* discussed in Chapter 5 of “進む advance!” (‘*susumu* advance’), which literally means ‘advance advance’, once again invoking developmental narratives of change. The use of the English word “advance” was an overt nod towards cosmopolitan principles, as a kind of virtue signal.

Furthermore, these notions of Japan belonging at the early stages of a teleological narrative were not confined to the imaginative geographies of Japanese respondents. Many of the non-Japanese respondents told me that prior to coming to Japan they had assumed that they would need to keep their sexuality private, and they had not expected to see large public events. These beliefs were often based on cursory searches of the internet through search engines like Google, and little knowledge of the Japanese language. This meant that experiences on the ground in Japan often differed significantly from pre-conceptions. For example, Jake, a cis-gender gay man in his 20s, discussed how he had attended Kansai Rainbow Festa and been surprised by what he found there.

I was really impressed with how, erm... I kind of had this impression in my head that everything was underground, out of sight, and to see there were families there, because the way it was positioned as well, it was pretty much in a park, there were families there, quite a lot of foreigners there, quite a lot of Americans, who I hadn't spoken to from the dorm that I bumped into there as well. Everything was really reasonably priced, food drink, I think it was sponsored by Google and IMB, I saw the google photo booth thing and IBM I think, that was really good. Just a really nice experience.

Jake is a British university student who was studying in Kansai as part of his year abroad for his Japanese bachelor's degree. As a brief sojourner, it is what Jake noted as unexpected that is significant. He did not expect the event to be open, for it to be held in a public park, for families to be welcome, or for there to be significant numbers of "Americans" at the event. He was also surprised to meet friends he knew through his international dorm but had not previously spent time with. The implications of these observations are that he expected sexuality and gender diversity in Japan to be held "underground, out of sight". Also significant is his observation that the event was sponsored by Google and IBM, and that this was "really good". Jake sees the marketisation of Pride as not only unproblematic, but a "really good" thing. He has the notion that corporate sponsorship of LGBT pride events is progressive, and that queer visibility through the market is desirable. Jake sees this as progress towards the creation of a visible queer subject who finds their way to citizenship through consumption and engagement with the market. Jake's attendance at Kansai Rainbow Festa troubled his assumptions not only about the nature of LGBT and queer visibility in Japan, but also his pre-conceived teleological narrative in which Japanese LGBT and queer communities have not yet 'benefitted' from neo-liberal market encroachment. Nevertheless, once troubled by the disparity between his imaginative geography of Japan and the reality, he still molds what he saw around notions of teleological development.

Jake's position as a white cis-gender gay man ensures that his statements are not that surprising, but imaginative geographies like that of Jake were common amongst respondents. In fact, notions of LGBT and queer practices in the USA as being advanced, and an uncritical acceptance of market entanglement were shared to a certain extent by Megumi. Megumi is a lesbian woman who is the director of an LGBT-related NGO in Osaka. As part of her work with the NGO, Megumi was provided with a fully funded trip

to the USA. The trip was intended to be a collaborative learning experience between NGOs in Japan and the USA. Megumi, along with three or four other Japanese individuals involved with various aspects of LGBT activism toured NGOs and non-profit organisations in large cities such as New York, and smaller, more rural areas such as Alabama. I asked Megumi about her trip:

Jay: By the way, what kind of influence do you think your study trip in the USA had on you?

Megumi: Well, maybe because I'm really up to date on the detail of the American news, there was a lot I already knew. But in reality, when I met the people who were doing [that work], I was incredibly motivated by talking and listening to them.

Jay: Was your motivation low before you went?

Megumi: I was tired. Before I went, I was really tired. But since I went I've felt considerably more energised.

Jay: That's good.

Megumi: Yeah, yeah, well, when I went to the USA, everyone praised me.

Jay: That's good.

Megumi: It was great (*gurēto*)! Japanese people don't really say things like that, do they? Everyone really praised me, and I was happy. The community, I think the Japanese community ought to create a culture of praise giving like that.

Megumi's trip to the USA was influential in the way that she framed her imaginative geographies of Japan and the West. Megumi saw the USA as an energising place, in contrast to an emotionally draining Japan. She casts Japanese activists as emotionally cold, saying that "Japanese people don't really say things like that, do they?" and that "the Japanese community ought to create a culture of praise giving like that". Megumi felt that Japanese activism would surely benefit from becoming more like that which she had observed in the USA, with little thought for the contextual factors that may restrict

the use of certain strategies in Japan, such as the lack of legal protection for those who choose to live openly queer lives. For Megumi, USA-based activist practices became aspirational, and this had impacts in her work amongst local LGBT and queer communities.

Shortly after her trip to the USA, I was able to shadow Megumi and her assistant, Nozomi, for a period of about six weeks as part of a summer internship at the NGO which she headed. I was able to observe the ways in which she mobilised the ideas she had formed in the USA, and how she framed her experiences in the workplace. I first noticed this process in relation to Megumi's promotion of the rainbow flag as a marker of LGBT friendly workplaces. Rainbow branding was almost an obsession in the days following Megumi's return from the USA. On the first day of the internship I was taken to the local ward office to be shown the rainbow flag which the NGO had been able to place outside in a display case. In the same week, a client visited the office to discuss possible ways to increase awareness of LGBT issues in their workplace. Megumi suggested placing a rainbow flag outside the office, printing a rainbow flag on staff name badges, having a rainbow livery applied to the workplace mini-bus, selling rainbow branded products such as tea, and draping the shrubbery with coloured cloths in the form of a rainbow. Megumi went on to note that these actions would also make the area more appealing to foreign visitors, who she assumed would understand the symbolism of the flag. There was little space for discussion of the issues related to the rainbow flag, or the controversies that have surrounded the flag since its inception in the 1970s. Instead, it was lauded as an unproblematic tool that could be used to increase visibility for LGBT and queer people in the workplace. To a certain extent, it was also used as a way to attract donations to the organisation, through the sale of what were referred to as "rainbow goods", such as stickers, tea-towels, and teddy bears.

Megumi's framing of LGBT and queer activism in the USA as "great" worked as an important point of comfort for her in difficult times. On a work-related trip, she again talked about how energised she had been by the trip, and how it had empowered her to continue with her work in Japan. However, Megumi's unquestioning adoption of the rainbow flag as a marker around which to organise had some important implications for the wider community with which she was working. Firstly, the promotion of the rainbow symbolism as a go-to solution to workplace discrimination issues did not consider the politics around queer (in)visibility as discussed in Chapter 5. It also did not account for problematics of the rainbow flag, such as its association with cis-gender masculinity, or erasure of the experiences of LGBT and queer people of colour. In promoting the rainbow flag wholesale, with little mention of these issues, Megumi's framing also served to re-affirm the imaginative geography of Japan as 'catching-up to' and 'learning' from the imagined West. Hence, although imaginative geographies provided routes to feelings of belonging to some individual respondents, the promotion of these imaginative geographies also created some possible lines of exclusion within wider LGBT and queer communities.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter of the thesis has critically assessed the role of imaginative geographies of Japan and the West within the communities studied. Rather than seek to prove or debunk these imaginative geographies, this chapter has attempted to focus upon the specific ways in which they are mobilised, and the affects that are associated with these mobilisations. These imaginative geographies became objects around which affects circulated, and were sometimes used as strategies of belonging. However, this chapter has also demonstrated that as well as moments of inclusion, imaginative geographies which essentialise

experiences can also result in moments of exclusion and un-belonging. These moments can be experienced on an individual level, but also bleed over into collective imaginative geographies of the nature of LGBT and queer activism in Japan.

In focussing upon these affects, and the way in which they circulate around metaphorical objects, this chapter has revealed the deep complexity of notions of belonging within the communities studied. For example, respondents such as Takuya occupied a position across multiple intersections including religious practices, health, and sexuality. This meant that belonging was a difficult concept for Takuya, and this was reflected in his imaginative geography of Japan and the West. Equally, this chapter has shown that access to the positive aspects of affect, and to hope in general, is not equal across the respondents. Brief sojourners such as Lauren and Jake, and transnationally mobile individuals such as Kazuhiro, were able to engage with and mobilise more varied practices of belonging than respondents who had not travelled outside of Japan and were not able to study gender and sexuality in great depth, such as Yuta.

Hence, it is possible to consider the communities studied as being engaged with an economy of affect (Ahmed, 2004) in which imaginative geographies represent social capital. Those who had greater access to or ability to mobilise these geographies in positive ways enjoyed positive aspects of affect through feelings of belonging. Those who were less able to mobilise these imaginative geographies effectively, or who had multiple intersecting concerns, experienced these affects as moments of dissonance and un-belonging. Analysing the data from this perspective helps to deal with the (almost) impossible problem that was presented through notions of common sense. Furthermore, it reveals that 'common sense' aspects of imaginative geographies are not, after-all, common sense. The same seemingly common sense notions can contribute to different

outcomes depending upon the ways in which respondents choose to mobilise these notions. For example, whilst the concept of a teleologically backwards Japan may help Megumi to advise her clients on possible policies by drawing upon “great” American practices, these same teleological notions also serve to enmesh collective understandings of LGBT activism within neo-liberal frameworks of market dominance. In conclusion, theorising the individuals and communities studied through the frameworks of imaginative geographies and affect begins to offer alternatives to persistent discourses which frame Japan as backwards and the West as advanced. It does not do this by resolving once and for all the problem of talking about ‘Japan’ and ‘the West’. In contrast, this framework offers the alternative approach of attempting to discuss the importance of process and of circulation, which in turn allows for a more flexible understanding of the respondents’ framings of their social worlds.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion9.1 The end of the LGBT boom

In May 2018, I called my friend who had carefully clipped out over a hundred articles about LGBT-related issues from the daily papers and pasted them into a scrapbook for me. She asked how the write-up was going and I mentioned that I had decided to write about the scrapbook. I thanked her for how useful it had been in prompting me to recognise the apparent paradox between high levels of public engagement and persistent issues of invisibility and misrecognition. She recounted how in the first weeks of the scrapbook she had almost not been able to keep up with the number of articles and was finding new ones at least a few times per week. I asked how the second scrapbook was coming along and she told me that she had not found anything to put in it for weeks.

In June 2018, a key word search on the National Diet Library catalogue (which records all publications submitted for national deposit in Japan) shows 244 items with the search term ‘LGBT’ in 2016, 199 in 2017, and 35 in 2018 to date. If 2016 was taken as the base rate, one would expect approximately 120 articles to have been published by this date in order to maintain similar levels to those seen during the boom. The LGBT boom is over. For many of the respondents in this study, this acute burst of interest followed by almost complete invisibility is a familiar and predictable story. Respondents such as Megumi and Kōji had lived through the gay boom of the 1990s, and knew that the LGBT boom was a temporary wave which must be ridden with the express intention of gaining all that was practicably possible within a short period of time. I was reminded of something that Natsuki told me in their 2015 interview:

The boom will pass, you know. It won't continue, will it? It's just a moment. Like a bubble [...] It will be over by next year. And once it's over, it's gone for good. Then people who have been happy to enjoy the fact they've been

picked up like that [in the media] will get even angrier. If you've tasted something sweet then you lose your ability to accept hardship, because we're just human.

Natsuki's prediction seems to have come true. Far fewer items are being published about LGBT lives in 2018 than at the peak of the boom and at least for the moment it does not seem that this will pick up again in the future.

In response to an increase in ethnographic studies of sexuality and gender in Japan (for example, including but not limited to Sanbe (2015), Mitsuhashi (2006; 2010) and Dale (2013)), this study set out to explore the politics of identity and belonging amongst communities of gender and/or sexual minority individuals living through this period of change. The study began in late 2014, before the LGBT boom reached its zenith, and continued through its peak into early 2016. The serendipitous timing of the fieldwork allowed me to collect a rich and textured set of ethnographic data which reveal the ways in which identity and belonging were experienced and practised during this period of discursive flux. The two main research questions aimed to understand how the politics of identity and belonging were experienced on two levels: the community and the individual. Each of the analysis chapters (Chapter 4 to Chapter 7) has worked towards these questions, showing that lived experience of this period varied according to a number of intersections such as physical location, age, nationality, personal biography, and context.

The analysis has shown that the LGBT boom contributed to both community and individual engagements with the politics of broad-based LGBT identity, and of belonging to an LGBT community in Japan. Indeed, in an echo of scholars such as Oosterhuis (2012) who argued that sexological discourse at the turn of the twentieth century brought about contemporary understandings of homosexuality in the Euro-American context, the LGBT

boom has in many ways contributed to a complex and lively debate within the communities studied about the meaning of ‘being LGBT’ in Japan. Although Foucault has not been used extensively in the broad theoretical framing of this thesis, this finding supports his assertion that discourse “can be both an instrument and an effect of power...but also a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy” (Foucault, 1998 [1984], p. 101). The LGBT boom brought representations of LGBT lives to the attention of the general public through television, newspapers, books, and magazines. For some LGBT activists, this provided key opportunities for increasing public visibility. This was one of the core aims of the Kansai LGBT *seijinshiki* described in Chapter 5, and the LGBT boom provided a good opportunity to engage non-LGBT identified individuals through the use of local media. The power to determine the idealised queer subject presented through events such as the LGBT *seijinshiki*, and to make groups through making the common sense was not equally distributed across the field (Aizura, 2017; Bourdieu, 1985). This meant that what was felt as an instrument of power by some was experienced as moments of exclusion and invisibility by others. For example, Chapter 5 discussed the ways in which the valorisation of visible forms of queerness worked to exclude respondents such as Miho and Nanami who had concerns related to privacy and safety.

The boom also provided an opportunity for local governments to promote (often very shallow) diversity policies. As discussed in Chapter 2, Shimizu (2017) has noted that the Japanese government is keen to promote itself as ‘LGBT friendly’ on the global stage, but remains disinterested in meaningful legislative change on the national level. In this sense, the LGBT boom may have played an important role as an instrument of power for the Japanese government in the run-up to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. For example, the peak of the LGBT boom around the passing of the Shibuya Ordinances was utilised by

local government authorities to press for symbolic changes on a local level, most of which have little bearing upon national policy. Some of the respondents were aware of the nature of the changes that local governments did affect during the LGBT boom, and many remained deeply sceptical about its potential to impact their lives positively. For instance, Natsuki's insightful observation that small changes which may seem 'sweet' during the boom can lead to feelings of disappointment later when the limited long-term effects of these changes are realised.

Indeed, there remains little legislative protection for the LGBT individuals who took part in this study, despite intense lobbying during the LGBT boom period. For the majority of the respondents in this study, local government ordinances like those passed in Shibuya ward had absolutely no impact upon their lives. Local partnership agreements could not help respondents such as Natsuki who had already entered into an adult adoption arrangement, nor could they help respondents such as Kei who were struggling to balance their desires for the future with stifling gender role norms in the workplace. Outside the realm of legislative change, mainstream media representations may have moved away from the overt pathologisation of gender and sexual diversity discussed in Chapter 2, but many respondents pointed out that for the most part these representations continued to portray LGBT lives and communities as "dark" and "closed" (Natsuki). As discussed in Chapter 6, *tōjisha*-generated narratives produced through social media offered opportunities for individuals to regain control of their own narratives, but this process brought with it systems of power which left some respondents feeling vulnerable and fearful. For example, Chapter 4 detailed an instance in which public visibility of Asataka's activist strategy led to a conflict over the meaning and contents of LGBT activist practice, and to Asataka feeling isolated from broader LGBT activist communities.

As Foucault (1998 [1984]) argued, proliferation in certain discourse can also become a starting point for resistance – despite the difficulties it may represent. In the case of the respondents in this study, the data suggest that the LGBT boom contributed to an active engagement with the politics of identity and belonging, and a re-invigoration of debates related to being and belonging to broad-based gender and/or sexual minority communities in Japan. For some respondents, this political engagement, whether tacit or overt, had positive and productive outcomes. For example, shifts in internet usage and the ways in which *tōjisha*-generated narratives circulated online led to an active engagement with nostalgia as an affective practice of belonging. The specific discursive conditions which emerged around the time of LGBT boom (in conjunction with the increased porosity of the division between online and offline) allowed nostalgia to be reclaimed as an active, critical, and productive intervention in the present (Blunt, 2003; Bonnett and Alexander, 2013; Janover, 2000; May, 2017).

However, community practice and discourse which offered hope to some respondents could exclude and isolate others. This is perhaps most obvious in the case of imaginative geographies of Japan and the West. For example, imaginative geographies of Europe and the UK helped Yuta and Kazuhiro to frame their own experiences in ways which they felt I would understand. Through an active mobilisation of affect, Yuta was able to find points of commonality across the boundary of nationality. Kazuhiro's framing of the UK became a sticky object around which he was able to organise a sense of belonging (Ahmed, 2004) to the LGBT community, despite the barriers he perceived to being openly gay in Japan. In contrast, for respondents such as Lauren, imaginative geographies of Japan as 'backwards' became a site of tension and anxiety about outward appearances, gendered language, and the ability to belong to a local community of LGBT individuals. The overall findings of this study, then, suggest that the politics of identity and belonging which

circulated during this period resist neat categorisation, and can be difficult to generalise, even across the LGBT communities studied.

This study, therefore, presents a snapshot of the ways in which these politics were understood and mobilised by a group of individuals in a specific location, at a specific time. Chapter 3 included a detailed justification of my decision to use this small-N approach. Statistical data related to LGBT individuals in Japan is sparse, which means that the selection of a truly random broad statistical sample was simply not possible. This study also sought to collect rich data about lived experience in the respondents' own words. Much of this knowledge was tacit, and could not have been drawn out as effectively through structured quantitative approaches. However, this means that the data gathered cannot be used to talk about the whole of Japan, or about LGBT communities in Japan in general. Generalisability was not an aim of the research. Rather, the data was gathered in order to robustly address the research questions which sought to understand lived experience amongst a specific group of individuals living in a particular context at a moment in time. This focusses attention upon the complexity and nuance of lived experience, and offers a set of empirically rich original data. The following sections of this chapter will consider these implications of these findings, and the empirical and theoretical contributions they make to existing knowledge.

9.2 Significance and contribution to knowledge

9.2.1 Empirical contributions and significance

The main empirical contribution of this study is the production of a rich set of qualitative data about the lived experiences of the gender and/or sexual minority individuals and groups living mostly within the Kansai region of Japan. As discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, previous scholarly emphasis has tended towards the lives and experiences of

those living in Tokyo, particularly Shinjuku Ni-chōme. It is not my intention to suggest that gathering data from outside of this context is in itself an original contribution to knowledge. Scholars such as Dale (2013), Sanbe (2015) and Tanaka (2006) have both already made significant contributions in this regard. Instead, I wish to emphasise the types of data that this study generated, and their significance in our understandings of gender and/or sexual diversity in Japan.

The LGBT boom was a period in which the marketisation of LGBT and queer identities became a lucrative business. This marketisation nearly always included the rainbow flag, or the rainbow flag's colours. As discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7, this rainbow imagery has strong links to notions of cosmopolitanism, to the USA as 'world leader' in regards to LGBT rights, and of certain specific valorised LGBT and queer identities. The valorised subject is almost always visible (i.e. has 'come out'), flexible, positive, living their lives 'authentically', and 'walking their own path' (see Chapter 5). The ability to embody these valorised identities works as a form of embodied cultural capital (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5). In concentrating its efforts upon large commercial centres like Shinjuku Ni-chōme, existing scholarship tends to focus upon those who have most access to this cultural capital. For example, Sunagawa's (2015a) ethnography of gay community focusses almost entirely upon the gay male entertainment district of Shinjuku Ni-chōme. Equally, Baudinette's (2015; 2016a; 2017) ethnographic work concentrates solely upon male-bodied experiences in Tokyo's gay men's bars and on gay male dating apps. As discussed throughout the thesis, the ability to access these spaces is in itself a privileged position.

Asataka, for example, found himself and his group isolated from the forms of knowledge that would allow him to 'step-up' to the types of LGBT activism practised by activists

such as Yuna. This queer cultural capital existed mostly within more urban areas such as Tokyo and Osaka, which became important sites of knowledge gathering for the respondents in this study. Chapter 4 demonstrated that for Shōhei, the act of moving to Tokyo was framed as an essential step in access to services, and to a sense of belonging to a physical community of other *tōjisha*. Equally, Hideki demonstrated how community practice found within Osaka could, with varying degrees of success, be transferred into Wakayama. This revealed an important tension related to what Ward (2003) has referred to as a politics of the necessary, in contrast to discourses of queerness as a form of queer cultural capital (Pennell, 2016). Hence, in moving data collection away from Shinjuku Ni-chōme this study has not only produced new data, but the data allow for significant original empirical insights about the nature and distribution of power and cultural capital within the field of LGBT communities in the area studied.

Furthermore, data collected in this study reflects the lives and experiences of individuals from across the LGBT spectrum, gender identities, nationalities, and contexts. This type of data allows for an understanding of the ways in which the politics of identity and belonging operated across intersections such as gender, sexuality, nationality, and age. Including non-Japanese respondents in the study revealed the importance of online communities, and led to the insight that online and offline communities are deeply intertwined. This in turn led to the observation that online spaces provide a site for the affective practices of belonging, but also contributed towards significant tensions regarding the circulation of *tōjisha*-generated narratives amongst Japanese respondents. Equally, actively pursuing research in more rural areas such as Wakayama allowed for the production of data which can tell us about the role of physical location in the politics of identity and belonging. This breadth and texture of data could not have been gathered

if the focus of the study had been narrowed to Shinjuku Ni-chōme, nor if I had recruited respondents from only one group within the LGBT spectrum.

These empirical findings are significant because they question the bias towards studies of gay cis-gender male lives in Shinjuku Ni-chōme, and the types of ethnographic tales that such studies can produce. This is not to say that studies which take cis-gender gay men as their focus are not a vital and valuable contribution to the field. Rather, I seek to overtly name and make visible the imbalance that exists within studies of sexuality and gender in Japan (as discussed in Chapter 2), and point to the ways in which broad-based community studies can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of LGBT and queer lives in Japan. Furthermore, these data demonstrate that LGBT communities in Japan are not operating in isolation from global flows of knowledge, but are actively engaged with and constructing practices of identity and belonging which are in dialogue with both local and global discourse. The type of data produced in this study is a significant original contribution because it has brought about original insights about the role of intersectionality amongst LGBT communities in Japan and actively seeks to re-address imbalances in scholarship.

9.2.2 Theoretical contributions and significance

These empirical data have also allowed me to make a number of original theoretical contributions. Chapter 4 demonstrated that using the Bourdieusian framework of cultural capital and habitus, it is possible to conceptualise individuals such as Asataka and Yuna as part of an LGBT activist community or ‘field’. This thesis has described how this community is not always tied to structural organisations, but can also be understood as an imagined community (Anderson, 2006 [1983]) with its own habitus. As discussed in Chapter 4, habitus allows us to understand the nature of ‘rule’ and how this operates in

practice within communities (Bourdieu, 1992; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Fuchs, 2003; Taylor, 1999). Using Bourdieu's concept of habitus in tandem with the notion of imagined community demonstrates that these communities do have 'structure', but that this structure often comes from a mutual tacit belief in the 'rules' of community practice, which in turn bind individuals together as a community. Hence, the conflict between Asataka and Yuna can be seen as a contact moment between competing habitus within the field of LGBT communities in Japan (Suganuma, 2012). Applying this theoretical framework means that despite the often-contradictory and manifold concerns of individuals across the LGBT spectrum, it is still possible to conceptualise them as a community.

Furthermore, use of Bourdieusian theory has been patchy in the Japanese context to date (Aizawa and Iso, 2016; Iso, 2008; Sanada, 2016). This can be attributed in part to the time at which *Distinction* was first translated into Japanese. *Distinction* was translated in two volumes between 1989 and 1990, during a period of profound economic growth and prosperity in Japan. It is possible, therefore, that interest in studies of inequality was low in scholarship at that time (Aizawa and Iso, 2016). The LGBT boom, however, has brought to light (at least temporarily) a number of legal and social inequalities for sexual and/or gender minorities. As a result, the use of a Bourdieusian framework is a timely and appropriate response to the study of Japanese society at this time. This approach offers an original contribution to our theoretical understandings of individual and community LGBT practices by opening up theoretical space in which to demonstrate the heterogeneous and uneven distribution of power and cultural capital within the area studied. This approach also contributes to the broader field of Japanese studies by demonstrating that the application of theories of class and cultural capital, in conjunction

with detailed analysis of the data, can be used to better understand the dynamics of being and belonging in the Japanese context.

The second important theoretical contribution which this thesis offers is the conceptualisation of nostalgia as a performative act of belonging. As discussed in detail in Chapter 6, place-belongingness is a flexible category which can refer to both a place or a social location as well as an affectual aspect of belonging. Through an understanding of this belonging as part of performative acts of belonging using the scholarship of Butler (1996; 1999; 2011[1993]) and Bell (1999), this thesis has been able to conceptualise nostalgia as a “critical intervention in the present” (May, 2017, p. 424). For respondents who are troubled by the increasing porosity between the online and offline worlds (Suzuki, 2013), nostalgia is not just a maudlin yearning for the past, but part of an active politics of belonging. This theoretical insight is significant because it reveals that we can use theoretical frameworks of performativity and affect within ethnographies of Japan to add texture to our understandings of emic terms such as *ibasho*, and what these terms mean for LGBT respondents living in Japan.

This study has also made an original theoretical contribution to knowledge by opening up the notion of affective belonging to the consideration of negative outcomes. As Allison (2009; 2012; 2013; 2017) and Galbraith (2013) have both argued, affect can be deployed as a strategy in coping with increasingly precarious socio-economic contexts (just as nostalgia was deployed by respondents in response to changing patterns of communication). The analysis in Chapter 7 used theories of affect as deployed by Ahmed (2004; 2010a; 2010b) to show that affect can indeed help individuals orientate themselves within imaginative geographies of ‘Japan’ and ‘the West’. For some respondents, these imaginative geographies provide positive orientations, and are effective strategies similar

to those outlined by Allison and Galbraith. However, the data in this study suggest that these affectual practices of belonging also bring with them lines of exclusion. Misconceptions of local LGBT communities as closed and secretive, which stem from imaginative geographies of the USA as ‘advanced’ and Japan as ‘backwards’ were found to preclude some of the respondents’ participation in these communities (as in the case of Lauren). Hence, not all respondents are able to orientate themselves within the affective economy of imaginative geographies in positive ways. These theoretical findings are significant because they demonstrate that the politics of identity and belonging can be highly exclusionary, and do not always serve all members of a community equally.

9.3 Future directions

This thesis has presented ethnographic data which focus upon the complexity of the politics of identity and belonging amongst mainly offline iterations of community. As outlined in Section 8.1 of this chapter, mainstream media interest (and therefore the intensity of public scrutiny) in and of LGBT lives has waned considerably in the last year. However, if one looks to social media sites such as YouTube and Twitter, the topic of gender and/or sexual minority lives is still widely discussed. The use of social media to advertise LGBT-related events, recruit volunteers, and engage with broader media debates about gender and sexuality is widespread. Additionally, many hundreds of users maintain YouTube channels, Facebook pages, and personal blogs in which they deal directly with their gender and/or sexual identities. For many of the respondents in this study, these platforms have the potential to become a primary source of information about what it means to be LGBT in Japan in the post boom period. Furthermore, social media provides significant potential for the further development of LGBT related activism in Japan.

At the date of writing, I have not been able to identify any published qualitative studies of the impact of social media platforms on the politics of identity and belonging amongst LGBT communities in Japan. There is, however, a significant body of scholarly research which is concerned with sociological aspects of the internet and social media in Japan in general (see for example Azuma (2001; 2014) and Hamano (2015)). Indeed, Azuma in particular is working at the edge of existing knowledge, drawing together philosophy and sociology to suggest alternative ways of thinking about the potentials and pitfalls of social media in contemporary Japanese society. The question of if and how gender and/or sexual minority individuals will be able to mobilise social media in their activism is, therefore, an area ripe for scholarly attention.

This thesis has provided the foundations upon which a study of the role of social media platforms in the post LGBT boom period could be built. I have established that it is possible and theoretically productive to talk about broad-based LGBT communities in Japan, regardless of the many competing interests and goals represented by such communities. This thesis has also demonstrated the value in looking to alternative empirical contexts such as areas of Japan outside of Tokyo to understand the ways in which local contexts can shape and be shaped by global flows of knowledge and discourse. This is a key point for future research, which, if taken up within a cross-cultural study of the growing role of social media platforms in LGBT-related activism globally, could provide new insights in terms of community practice and ultimately public policy. It is my hope to develop this future area of research and demonstrate how social media platforms can (and cannot) facilitate a mutually productive politics of identity and belonging across intersections of 'race', nationality, gender, age, and class.

Appendix A – Respondent Summary and Pen Sketches

Name	Mode	Language	Age	Gender/ Sexuality	Pronoun(s)	Occupation	Place of Residence
Akira*	Face-to-face	Japanese	36	FTM, transgender man	He	Financial services, FT	Kansai
Yumiko	Face-to-face	Japanese	52	Lesbian woman	She	Self- employed alternative therapist, PT	Kansai
Miho	Face-to-face	English	40s	Bisexual woman	She	Self- employed therapist	Kansai
Miyabi	Face-to-face	Japanese	26	Transgender man, GID	He	Teacher in HE, FT	Kantō
Kei	Face-to-face	Japanese	20s	<i>X-jendā</i> , pansexual	They	Supermarket worker, PT	Kansai
Nozomi*	Face-to-face	Japanese	20s	<i>X-jendā</i> , pansexual	They	NGO worker, FT	Kansai
Megumi	Face-to-face	Japanese	40s	Lesbian woman	She	NGO worker, FT	Kansai
Mika	Face-to-face	Japanese	20s	Lesbian woman	She	Job-seeker	Kansai
Ayaka	Face-to-face	Japanese	30s	MTF, transgender woman	She	Office worker, FT	Kansai
Daisuke	Face-to-face	Japanese	30s	Gay man	He	Contracted worker, FT	Kansai
Shun	Face-to-face	Japanese	20s	FTM, transgender man	He	Student, job-seeker	Kansai
Hideki*	Face-to-face	Japanese	45	FTM, transgender man	He	Freelance writer, FT	Kansai
Asataka	Face-to-face	Japanese	49	FTM, transgender man	He	Self- employed alternative therapist, FT	Kansai
Kumiko	Face-to-face	Japanese	40s	Bisexual woman	She	Self- employed alternative therapist, FT	Kansai
Natsuki*	Face-to-face	Japanese	33	<i>X-jendā</i>	They/ she	Social worker, later motivational speaker, FT	Chūbu
Akemi	Face-to-face	Japanese	50s	MTF, transgender woman	She	Contracted worker, FT	Kansai
Yuta	Skype	Japanese	38	Transgender	He	Barber, FT	Kantō
Takuya	Face-to-face	Japanese	40s	Gay man	He	Office worker, FT	Kansai
Manabu	Face-to-face	Japanese	20s	Transgender	He	Semi-skilled worker, student	Kansai
Satoshi	Face-to-face	English	31	Cis-gender gay man	He	Programmer, translator, student	Kansai
Yū	Face-to-face	Japanese	30	FTM	He	Social worker, FT	Kansai

Shōta	Skype	Japanese	24	FTM, transman	He	Skilled worker in shop, FT	Kyūshū
Yūsuke	Face- to-face	Japanese	33	Gay man	He	Irregular employment, PT	Kansai
Akio	Face- to-face	Japanese	41	Gay man	He	Contracted worker, FT	Kansai
Nanami	Face- to-face	Japanese	33	Pansexual woman/ bisexual	She	Unemployed , job-seeker	Kansai
Kazuhiro	Face- to-face	Japanese	50s	Gay man	He	Unemployed , long-term sick leave	Kansai
Kōji	Face- to-face	Japanese		Gay man	He	Contracted worker, FT	Kantō
Shōhei	Face- to-face	Japanese	24	Transgender man	He	Chef, FT	Kantō
Blaine*	Skype	English	20s	Cis-gender gay man	He	Assistant language teacher, FT, later copy writer, translator, FT	Chūbu, later Kantō
Jake	Face- to-face	English	20s	Cis-gender gay man	He	Student	Kansai
Sabio	Skype	English	26	Cis-gender gay man	He	English teacher, FT	Shikoku
Ben	Face- to-face	English	20s	Cis-gender gay man	He	Assistant language teacher, FT	Kansai
Dylan	Skype	English	20s	Cis-gender gay man	He	Assistant language teacher, FT	Chūbu
Hikari	Face- to-face	Japanese	20s	Gender non- conforming, pansexual	They	Student on extended leave, shop worker, PT	Kansai
Lauren	Face- to-face	English	28	Queer woman	She	Assistant language teacher, FT	Kansai
Nick	Face- to-face	English	24	Cis-gender gay man	He	English teacher, FT	Kansai
Candice	E-mail	English	20s	Queer woman	She	Assistant language teacher, FT	Shikoku
Kiah	Face- to-face	English	20	Lesbian, bi- romantic woman	She	Student	Kansai
Keiko	Face- to-face	Japanese	40s	MTF, transgender woman	She	In training for health care role	Aichi

Notes

- FT is used to indicate full-time, PT to indicate part-time
- Nozomi was interviewed twice. The first time they were interviewed in their role as a staff member at an NGO. In the second interview Nozomi was interviewed as a private individual
- Participants who were interviewed twice are marked with *
- If participants did not give a specific age, I have estimated their approximate age based on the information given in interview.

Akira

Attends LGBT related community events, occasional on-the-day volunteer, staff member at NGO organisation related to GID.

Akira is in his mid-30s, and at the time of interview worked full-time as a contracted worker. Akira describes himself as female-to-male transgender, and regularly uses the acronym FTM. Akira underwent SRS in Thailand, and has changed his *koseki* to reflect his gender. Akira is open about his biography and maintains an active Facebook page.

Yumiko

Attends LGBT related community events, occasional on-the-day volunteer.

Yumiko is in her early 50s and works part-time in complementary and alternative medicine. She is currently married to a cis-gender man, and has three children in their 20s. Yumiko told me that she realised she identified as a sexual minority about two years prior to our interview, after a cancer scare gave her time to contemplate her life. She now identifies as a lesbian, but has not yet decided if she will tell her husband and children.

Miho

Occasionally attends LGBT events that are open to allies (is not open about her sexuality).

Miho is a bisexual woman in her 40s. She works as a counsellor, and has a young son. During her 20s, Miho undertook vocational training for an extended period in the UK where she met her husband and learnt English. Since moving back to Japan she has found it hard to be open about her sexuality, and worries about the impact that it could have on her son.

Miyabi

Regularly attends parties for transgender people. Works as a volunteer for an NGO that visits schools and teaches children about gender and sexuality. Volunteered for an LGBT *seijinshiki* in his area.

Miyabi is a 26-year old transgender man who works as an English teacher at a University. Miyabi accepts his official diagnosis of GID, and says that for him it does not have any negative connotations. After his mother became ill, he decided to come out to his family, but he has not yet decided if he will change his gender on his *koseki*. Miyabi is not able to be open with his work colleagues about his transition for fear of reprisals, and uses female pronouns at work.

Kei

Attends LGBT-related events as a participant.

Kei is in their mid 20s, and identifies as *x-jendā* and pansexual. Although Kei identifies as *x-jendā*, they have never had a dysmorphic relationship with their assigned at birth sex, and so rejects the label of GID. At the time of interview, Kei was undecided about their future job prospects, and had received advice from friends to look for a job where they could “show their sexuality” openly.

Nozomi

Attends LGBT related community events. Staff member at NGO. Occasional organiser of LGBT and queer related demonstrations

Nozomi is in their mid-20s, and identifies as *x-jendā* and pansexual. Nozomi came to the realisation that they identified as a sexual minority after attending a self-help group for the families of LGBT individuals. At the time of interview, Nozomi worked for an LGBT-related NGO and is open about their gender identity and sexuality.

Megumi

Chairperson and representative at an LGBT-related NGO. Regularly lectures on LGBT inclusion in workplaces.

Megumi is a lesbian woman in her early 40s. Megumi was interviewed in her role as chairperson and representative of an LGBT-related NGO, so gave little information about her own gender and sexual identity.

Mika

Has attended mixer parties at lesbian bars in the past, attended Kansai Pride Parade. Does not currently attend community events.

Mika is a lesbian woman in her 20s who has experience of studying abroad in the USA as part of her degree. Mika does not attend many community events. She finds mixer events expensive, she has concerns over privacy, and she is not looking for casual sexual relationships which she believes is the main purpose of mixer events.

Ayaka

Attends community events such as lectures. Volunteered as an on-the-day volunteer.

Ayaka is a transgender woman in her 30s. At the time of the interview she was unsure how to identify herself: she has since started transition from her assigned at birth gender. One of Ayaka's main worries at work are drinking parties, where she feels that young men are bullied by the older women in the group, and being subject to this bullying herself is particularly uncomfortable as it marks her as male amongst her work colleagues.

Daisuke

Set up and runs an LGBT community group. Volunteers as a staff member at a community group in Osaka. Regularly volunteers at community events.

Daisuke is a gay man in his late 30s who has been involved in the LGBT community in Kansai since around 2005. Daisuke cohabits with his partner of 12-years, and although he has never felt the need to 'come-out' to his parents, he is fairly sure they understand that he is gay.

Shun

Member of Kansai LGBT *seijinshiki* organising committee. Regularly attended community events, but was withdrawing from the community.

Shun is in his 20s, and identifies as FTM but usually does not feel the need to tell people he works or studies with about his transition. He has changed his assigned at birth gender on his *koseki*, and underwent SRS treatments in Thailand. Shun told me in his second interview that he no longer wished to be involved in the LGBT community.

Hideki

Creator of Wakayama City LGBT and allies group Waterside. Active member of other LGBT groups in Wakayama City. Occasionally acts as a consultant for local government on the topic of gender and sexual diversity.

Hideki was 45 at the time of the first interview, and identifies as an FTM, transgender man. He has had SRS, and has changed his registered gender. Hideki is open about his transition, and often talks about his personal experiences as part of his activism.

Asataka and Kumiko

Interviewed together, Asataka and Kumiko are co-habiting partners, and also run a business together. Created their own LGBT and allies group in Wakayama City. Regularly attend LGBT-related events and lectures as guests.

Asataka and Kumiko were interviewed together, by their request. Asataka identifies as transgender and FTM, and Kumiko identifies as a bisexual woman. The couple first decided that they wanted to connect with other LGBT community members after attending Tokyo Pride 8-years previously. They manage and run an LGBT-friendly massage business, and are open in the local community about their gender and sexualities.

Natsuki

Speaker at GID-focussed community events. Occasionally participates in community events as guest. Since the fieldwork has become a freelance motivational speaker for LGBT-related events.

Natsuki is 33, identifies as *x-jendā* and prefers the gender-neutral pronoun they, but finds that they must use ‘she’ in day-to-day life. Natsuki avoided *tōjisha* communities for many years because they felt that they did not fit neatly into any categories. They now live in an adoptive relationship with their partner, and talk about their gender as part of their activism.

Akemi

Regularly attends LGBT community events, particularly transgender and GID-focussed events.

Akemi is a transgender woman in her 50s, who works full-time as a contracted worker, and as a host in a *nyū-hāfu* bar on evenings and weekends. Akemi was clear at the start of the interview that she did not wish to discuss her path towards “discovering” her identity, as this was ground that she had covered in her interactions with her doctors.

Instead, she chose to talk about her concerns about the pressure on transgender people to transition medically.

Yuta

Volunteers as a speaker at LGBT-focussed events.

Yuta is a 38-year old transgender man (he describes himself as “the T from LGBT”). At the age of 26 or 27, his girlfriend broke up with him because she felt pressured to marry and have children. This break-up prompted Yuta to come out to his parents, and pursue transition treatments in Tokyo. Yuta works as a barber, and many of his clients know that he identifies as transgender and is undergoing transition treatments.

Takuya

Involved with HIV+ self-help groups. Occasionally attends LGBT-focussed community events.

Takuya is a cis-gender gay man in his 40s who “accepted” that he was gay at the age of 25. Takuya is HIV positive, and volunteers offering peer support to other HIV positive individuals. He felt that his identity as HIV positive was more important to him than his identity as a gay man. He is not open about his sexuality beyond LGBT-focussed groups.

Manabu

Started and runs an LGBT community group (Rainbow Chat). Regularly attends LGBT events, and sometimes attends transgender-focussed events. Gives lectures at schools about LGBT-related issues.

Manabu is in his 20s and has a diagnosis of GID, but does not identify ‘as GID’. When he introduces himself to other members of LGBT communities he describes himself as “transgender”, but when he talks to people who are not involved with the LGBT community he uses “FTM” because he finds this easier to explain. He is open with people about his biography if they ask.

Satoshi

Previously attended gay bars, pick-up spots, and cruising bars on a regular basis. Attends events for men who have sex with men about once a month. Occasionally attends a café meet-up group for gay men.

Satoshi is 31 and describes himself as “100% gay”. At the time of the interview, Satoshi worked as a programmer in Kansai, and had experienced problems at work with senior

members of staff trying to ‘out’ him at work parties. He is not open with his parents about his sexuality, but he also does not hide it.

Yū

Attends local LGBT events. Occasionally attends GID-focussed events.

Yū is 30 years old and although has a diagnosis of GID, he does not identify “as GID”, and also does not think of himself as transgender. He describes himself as “FTM”, although he said that he does not feel that he has “changed” his gender, but rather than he has “returned” to his correct gender. He is open with people about his transition.

Shōta

Had previously attended transgender-focussed events and some mixer parties, but since moving to a new city has decided not to attend LGBT-related events.

Shōta is 24, and describes himself as “FTM”, but sometimes uses the term GID to explain to people from outside of LGBT communities about his gender. In the second year of high school, he told his parents, who thought he was “joking”. He now works in the Kantō region, and travels back to Tōhoku for transition treatments.

Yūsuke

Volunteers as on the day volunteer at LGBT-related events. Attends seminars and lectures about LGBT-related issues. Attends local LGBT community events.

Yūsuke is 33, and is a cis-gender gay man. Yūsuke feels frustrated because he perceives pressure within LGBT communities to come-out, and to live visibly queer lives, but there is no legal protection for people who chose to do so. He also worries about the reaction of his parents, whom he often heard making derogatory remarks about gay people when he was a child.

Akio

Volunteered at the screening of a film with LGBT themes. Occasionally attends LGBT community events. Avoids gay bar scene.

Akio is 41-years old who describes himself as a man who likes men. Akio has come out to his parents, but not at work. Although he is not sure that coming out at work would definitely lead to problems, he does not want to take the risk that it might cause issues.

Nanami

Was active in LGBT community in the past. Currently does not attend LGBT community events.

Nanami is a 33-year old pansexual woman, but she uses the term 'bisexual' to describe herself if she feels the need. At the time of the interview, Nanami had moved back to her mother's house, but her family discouraged her from being involved in the LGBT, particularly the transgender community.

Kazuhiro

Was active in the LGBT community in the UK when he studied there as an undergraduate. Currently does not attend LGBT community events.

Kazuhiro is a cis-gender gay man in his 50s. He is unable to be open about his sexuality for fear of negative reactions from his parents, as well as wider society. He is currently on long-term sick leave, one of the contributing factors being mental health issues surrounding his sexuality.

Kōji

Active in lobbying the government for same-sex marriage legislation.

Kōji is a gay man who did not reveal his age. Kōji was careful to reveal very few facts about his biography, and focussed mainly upon his activism. He stated that although he was happy to talk to me, he would not want his partner or contacts to be identifiable. He is open about his sexuality with his friends and family.

Shōhei

Attends some LGBT-related events such as Pride parades and drinks socially with people he has met at these events.

Shōhei has a diagnosis of GID, but said that he had got this in order to receive medical transition treatments. If asked, he tells people that he is transgender or uses the term GID, but he feels that parts of these labels do not fit his experience. He is open about his transition with his parents, and will discuss his identity with people who ask.

Blaine

Visits gay bars with friends and partners.

Blaine is a cis-gender gay man in his 20s. He is originally from the USA, and now lives in Japan permanently. He is open with his friends and family about his sexuality, but

when working in a Japanese school he was much more guarded. In his new job, where there are more non-Japanese workers, he feels that he is able to be more openly gay.

Jake

Has visited gay bars in Osaka with friends. Has attended Kansai Rainbow Festa.

Jake is a cis-gender gay man from the UK who was studying in Japan during his year abroad as part of his undergraduate degree. He is generally open about his sexuality with his friends, but is more guarded with people he doesn't know (for example classmates and casual friends). He said that in coming to Japan, he felt that he had to "tailor" the way he spoke to people about his sexuality.

Sabio

Involvement with the LGBT community in Japan is mainly limited to online modes, particularly Facebook. Is currently working on an LGBT-related creative project.

Sabio is a 26-year old cis-gender gay man, originally from Western Europe. He has a Japanese partner, and is open about his relationship with friends and colleagues whom he trusts, as well as his family. He felt that he was much less open in Japan about his sexuality due to his fears of discrimination. This is a contrast to his very visible gay identity in his home country, where he once worked as a dancer in a gay club.

Ben

Involved with the work of Stonewall Japan, both online and offline iterations of the group. Regularly attends LGBT-related events (both English and Japanese speaking events), and support groups.

Ben is a cis-gender gay man in his early 20s, and at the time of interview was working in Japan as an assistant language teacher. He is originally from the UK. Ben is open with his work colleagues, as well as his family, friends, and acquaintances. He has a Japanese partner, and they often attend events together.

Dylan

Involved with the work of Stonewall Japan, both online and offline iterations of the group. Regularly attends and volunteers at LGBT-related events (mostly English-speaking events).

Dylan is a cis-gender gay man in his early 20s, who is originally from Australia. At the time of interview, he was working in Japan as an assistant language teacher. Dylan is

open with his friends and family, and with select colleagues at work. He is somewhat reluctant to be completely open about his sexuality at work, and felt that the right moment to do so had not yet presented itself.

Hikari

Regularly attends and volunteers at LGBT-related community events. Set up their own university LGBT group. Volunteered as a committee member at an LGBT *seijinshiki* event. Travelled to the USA as part of an LGBT-focussed study trip which was organised by a local NGO.

Hikari is a gender non-conforming pansexual person. They joked that they do not usually use this description for people outside of the LGBT community because in the past they have said “Does that mean you’re attracted to bread?” (the Japanese word for bread is *pan*). They are open with their friends, and visibly active within the LGBT community in Kansai, but did specify their level of disclosure to their parents and other family.

Lauren

Planned to start her own LGBT support group in her city of residence in Japan. Largely resists any involvement with English-speaking LGBT communities, and does not have time to be involved with Japanese-speaking groups.

Lauren is originally from the USA, and is a queer woman in her late 20s. At the time of interview, she working as an assistant language teacher in Japan. Lauren is open about her sexuality with her friends, but does not feel the need to discuss it with her work colleagues. However, if the topic of partners ever comes into conversation, she does make a point of mentioning her ex-girlfriend.

Nick

Visits gay bars with friends. Occasionally volunteers at Stonewall Japan events.

Nick is a 24-year old cis-gender gay man, originally from the UK. At the time of interview, he was working in Japan as an English language teacher for a private company. Nick is open with his friends and family about his sexuality. Nick maintains a very strict boundary between his professional life and private life. This is not because he is worried about disclosure of his sexuality, but because he does not want his students to know that he speaks Japanese, and he wants to mirror ‘British’ etiquette to his students. Nick believes that British etiquette does not allow for any personal questions in the workplace, and thus the topic of personal lives has never and will never be relevant at work. Not

wanting his students to know he speaks Japanese (to ‘break the language seal’ as he puts it) means that he cannot respond to students who have speculated about his sexuality in Japanese in his presence in the past.

Candice

Has attended a number of LGBT-related clubs and events, and also purposefully uses LGBT-friendly cafes and restaurants. Has attended an LGBTQ film festival.

Candice is a queer woman who has experienced “fluctuation” in her gender identity and gender expression, but chooses to use the pronoun ‘she’. Candice is open about her sexuality and gender identity, but has largely found that many Japanese people do not understand her anyway. She sometimes uses the term ‘*docchi-demo*’ (literally ‘either OK’) as a compromise. She lives in a very “conservative” community, so does not generally discuss her gender or sexuality with people outside of her close circle of friends.

Kiah

Attends lesbian bars whenever possible (which is not often). Attended Kansai Rainbow Festa.

Kiah is a 20-year old bi-romantic, lesbian woman. Originally from the USA, with roots in Western Africa. At the time of interview, she was studying in Japan as her year abroad during her undergraduate degree. Kiah was open about her sexuality with her friends, saying that she would tell people if it ever came up in conversation. She was frustrated that she had never had the opportunity to tell her host family.

Keiko

Occasionally attends LGBT-focussed events, and some transgender-specific events. Is opposed to participation in Pride events, which she says are still heavily biased towards cis-gender gay and lesbian people.

Keiko identified herself as ‘MTF’ and as a transgender woman. She is in her late 40s, and feels that her identity as a transgender woman is obvious to anyone who meets her. Keiko did not talk in great detail about her biography, but instead chose to concentrate mainly upon the issues that she had faced in ‘GID communities’ where pressure to surgically transition is high.

Appendix B – Recruitment and Ethical Review Materials

Example Facebook message used for recruitment – English translation

My name is Jay Wallace and I am currently affiliated with the University of Kyoto, Graduate School of Languages, Cultures, and Societies, working on my doctoral research. I am affiliated as a visiting foreign researcher at the University. I am currently centring my research activities around the Kansai region from my base in Kyoto.

I would like to undertake research about LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex) individuals living in Japan [...]

If you are interested in, or would like to take part in this research, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Anyone who identifies as *tōjisha*, regardless of their age, race, nationality, or physical ability is welcome. I look forward to working with you. I will always protect the privacy of research participants. There is no need for you to have 'come-out'.

This research is approved by the University of Leeds Ethical Review Committee with reference 13-085.

[Contact details]

Recruitment flyer – English translation

Hi, my name is Jay. I'm doing research about sexual minority people living in Japan. My research theme is 'Sexual minorities: communities and rights'. I would like to discover what issues sexual minority individuals face in the everyday lives. For example, what kinds of barriers do you face at school and work? How can you access LGBT communities in Japan? What kind of support do you think is necessary?

Interviews will take place at a location, and time convenient to you (weekdays and weekends OK). Interviews usually last an hour, but if you would like a shorter interview, that's OK too. Please feel free to consult with me. I usually interview in Japanese, but if you would like to speak in English I would be happy for you to do so. If you require sign-language interpretations, please contact me.

I'm sorry, but I can't pay you for your participation (I also cannot cover your travel expenses). If the interview takes place in a café I will buy the drinks. If the interview is held in another location I will bring refreshments.

For further information please use the QR code, or click on the link.

[Contact details]

Information sheet – English translation“LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex) identities in Japan”

You have been invited to have your comments or opinions noted down and added to my research as part of a project about LGBTQI identities in Japan. Before you consent to this it's important that you understand the purpose of the research and what your responses will be used for. If you have any questions or need further information, please ask Jay Wallace on [PHONE NUMBER] or by email [EMAIL ADDRESS]

This research has been approved by Leeds University Ethics Committee with reference 13-085.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to better understand LGBTQI identities and everyday experiences in Japan.

Why you have been asked to take part in the research

You have been identified as a potential participant because I think that your experiences can help to achieve the aims above.

Do you have to consent to the recording of my responses?

No, you do not have to consent if you do not want to, and you do not need to give me a reason for not allowing your responses to be added to my research. You will not be penalised in any way for deciding not to take part.

What are you be consenting to?

You are consenting to me recording our conversation or interview either with a digital voice recorder or through the use of notes and adding this to my research data. I will make a note of the day, rough time and context in which our conversation or interview took place. If you allow it, I will make a note of your name, age and self-identification. You do not have to give this information if you do not want to.

You will be able to withdraw your responses from the research up until the 1st April 2016 and this will not negatively affect you in any way. Please note that once the data has been erased, it cannot be recovered.

What will the interview be like?

You will be asked to attend an interview at a time and location that is convenient for you. The interview will last about an hour, but if you need to stop the interview at any time, you are free to do so. I will record the interview with a voice recorder and I may also take notes.

Before I add your responses to my data I will ask you to sign the attached consent form and there will be opportunity for you to ask any further questions.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

It will be possible for people who read the finished research to identify which city the conversation or interview took place in. Your responses will be anonymised, so it should not be possible for readers to identify you personally. If you feel uncomfortable at any time you can decide not to answer a question or we can pause or stop the interview.

What are the benefits of taking part?

Although there are no immediate benefits for allowing me to record your responses, it is hoped that this research will increase knowledge of the everyday experiences of LGBTQI individuals in Japan.

What will happen to your data?

All of the personal information you provide (name, age, contact details) will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will be stored on an encrypted computer. When I write about your responses I will not use your real name, or any nickname that you provide. You will not be able to be identified in my research report or any further publications. However, it is likely to be clear where I recorded your responses (the city of event). Your data and responses will be retained for 10 years after collection to allow me to refer to it in my report and further publications.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of this research will be written up into my thesis, which will be submitted to the University of Leeds. Some of this thesis may be published as shorter papers in academic journals. The results of this research will never be passed on to any commercial organisations or used in market research.

Who is doing and funding the research?

The research is being conducted by Jay Wallace, a PhD student at the University of Leeds (UK) and Kyoto University (Japan). Jay receives a scholarship from the Social and Economic Research Council (UK) which funds part of the cost of this research in Japan.

Contact information

Thank you for reading this information sheet. If you would like any further advice please contact Jay Wallace [PHONE NUMBER] or [EMAIL ADDRESS].

You can download a PDF version of this information sheet from: (WEBLINK)

If you have any complaints and you would like to discuss them with my supervisor please contact Dr. Irena Hayter [EMAIL ADDRESS]

Consent form – English translationConsent to take part in the research about LGBTQI identities in Japan

	Add your initials next to the statement if you agree
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time up until April 1 st 2016 without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. Contact person: Jay Wallace, [JAPAN PHONE NUMBER] [EMAIL ADDRESS] In the event of my withdrawal from the study I understand that data already provided as part of this research will be removed from the data sample and deleted. It will not be possible to retrieve this information after it has been deleted.	
I give permission for Jay Wallace and her academic supervisors to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research. I understand that it is likely that it will be possible to identify the location in which the research took place. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential	
I agree for the data collected from me to be used in relevant future research in an anonymised form.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of lead researcher	Jay Wallace
Signature	
Date*	

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

Appendix C – Interview Question Sheet

This question sheet was used in cases where interview respondents needed or requested a more structured approach, or when conversation was stilted.

Introductions/establishing information

- Tell me a little bit about yourself (self-introduction)
- How would you describe your identity to me?
- How would you describe your identity to someone you just met for the first time?
- What is your preferred pronoun?
- If you identify as transgender or GID have you changed your koseki? Do you want to? Do you intend to?

First contact with concept of LGBT

- When and how did you first hear about LGBT?
- Did any TV show, manga or other media play a role in you finding out about LGBT?
- When did you first realise that you might identify as LGBT? Can you tell me about that experience?
- Where did you look for information about LGBT?

Connections/community

- Did you participate in any LGBT communities either as a participant or as a volunteer?
- Do you tend to spend time with people who also identify as LGBT or do you have friends who identify not as LGBT?
- Have you ever felt isolated or like you're the only LGBT person around you?
- Have you ever heard the word ally? Have you ever spent time with an ally?

Coming out

- Do you have experience of coming out? Can you tell me about that experience?
- Do you intend to come out to all of your family and friends, work colleagues etc?
- How did people react to your coming out?

- Do you have a partner, and if you do, do you talk to them about identifying as LGBT?

Work, study, daily life

- How would you describe your day-to-day life – do you work full time, part-time, study etc?
- Did identifying as LGBT affect your job search? In what ways?
- Are you open at work about your gender and sexual identity?
- Have you ever had any negative experiences at work because of your LGBT identity?
- What do you find difficult about your work?

Aspirations/future/families

- What are your aspirations and desires for your future?
- Would you consider getting married or having a legal partnership with someone? What do you think the difference is between marriage and partnership?
- Do you have a family, or would you consider starting a family?
- What do you think about the Shibuya partnership law?

Media influence (to be used only if the conversation goes in that direction)

- What do you think about the way the newspapers and other media cover LGBT issues?
- What do you think about the way LGBT people are presented on TV?
- What do you think about the way LGBT people are presented in other media like newspapers, books, manga etc?

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