Young Japanese `Cultural Migrants' and the Construction of their Imagined West

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Introduction

Migration theories tend to focus on economic and political aspects as migration-inducing factors. However, in recent years, a large number of young Japanese have been migrating to New York City, London, and other Western cities for the purpose of engaging in the production of arts and popular culture. By using 'multisited ethnography', the present study finds that not only economic and/or political factors but also cultural factors can act as the primary force that induces migration. In particular, media play a significant role in establishing 'cultural-ideological links' between Japan and the United States/Britain. These lead the respondents of this study to imagine their lives at the specific destination: New York City is believed to be a place where they can continue to lead 'a normal life' with better prospects; London is regarded as a place where they can acquire 'distinction'. Consequently, these young Japanese actually migrated to their imagined West.

Over the past several decades, international migration has rapidly grown in volume, and the composition of migrant-sending countries has considerably diversified (Castles and Millers 2003; Massey et. al. 1993; OECD 2002). As recent international migration is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, there has been no

dominant theory that can explain all phases of migration. Rather, a variety of theoretical models coexist across academic disciplines. Particularly, 'neoclassical economics theory,' 'world systems theory', and 'migration systems theory' are often considered among the most influential approaches (Castles and Miller 2003; Massey et. al. 1993).

These approaches tend to focus on economic aspects in explaining migration-inducing factors. In neoclassical economic theory, at the macro level, migration is often explained in terms of 'geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labour'; at the micro level, it is generally understood that 'individual rational actors decide to migrate because a cost-benefit calculation leads them to expect a positive net return, usually monetary, from movement' (Massey et. al. 1993, 433-434). In world systems theory, it is argued that direct foreign investment expands export manufacturing in developing countries. Local people are recruited into newly created jobs in foreign plants, thereby becoming familiar with the investing countries. Consequently, these local workers begin to recognise working opportunities in the investing countries, and this leads to their decisions to migrate (Sassen 1988).

On the other hand, migration systems theory incorporates political, social, and cultural aspects. In particular, interpersonal networks, such as kinship or friendship, are often regarded as highly important, as these connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination, (Massey et. al. 1993, 448). Furthermore, institutions, such as recruitment organisations, layers, and agents, are considered crucial elements (Castles and Miller 2003, 28). Even so, migration systems theory has developed mostly from cases of labour migrants and refugees and tends to presuppose that individual motivations to migrate are economic and/or political.

In the case of young Japanese migration, however, these approaches are not applicable; in recent years, a large number of young Japanese have been migrating to New York City, Los Angels, London, Paris, and other cities in North America, Western Europe, and Australia for the purpose of engaging in the production of arts and popular culture, in areas such as cuisines, dance, fashion design, film, fine arts, hairstyling and make-up, photography, popular music, and other fields, in and out of school. Young Japanese, generally, do not migrate for economic reasons. Instead, they usually quit their jobs in Japan, acquire tourist, student, or working-holiday visas, migrate with their previous savings or parental supports, and do not have full-time jobs at their destinations. If their funds run out, most will take up low-wage jobs at Japanese restaurants, travel agencies, etc., in order to continue their cultural production in the host country. This case of young Japanese

migrants, therefore, cannot be fully explained in terms of economic or political factors.

I propose that 'culture' overwhelmingly explains the motivational cause for most young Japanese migration, and that migration is carried out for the purpose of cultural production. In her study of 'labour' migrants, Saskia Sassen emphasises that 'cultural-ideological links' between the sending country and the receiving country should not be underestimated. She argues that 'the presence of foreign plants not only brings the U.S. or any other "western" country closer, but it also "westernises" the less developed country and its people; as a result, emigration to the U.S. emerges as an option' (Sassen 1988, 20).

As young Japanese generally have little experience working in foreign factories, direct foreign investment does not seem relevant as a factor establishing cultural-ideological links. Yet it is possible that other factors have made such links between Japan and their destinations, factors that become apparent when we consider common motives among young Japanese that migrate to the same destinations.

Here I want to draw attention to the role of media. According to Arjun Appadurai, electronic media allow people to construct 'imagined worlds' in their everyday lives: under the influence of radio and television, cassettes and videos, newsprint and telephone, more people than ever before imagine routinely the possibility that they will live and work in places other than where they were born (Appadurai 1996, 6).

Sassen contends that direct foreign investment and Westernisation of local workers in foreign factories explain the greater part of how labour migration begins. However, it is inferred from Appadurai's discussion that media, especially electronic media, also stimulate their move and return, by allowing labour migrants to imagine their jobs and lives in foreign countries. Appadurai, however, does not probe a critical point: how the power relations between Western culture and other cultures affect media and migration.

This point has been researched by two researchers. Nicola Mai has delineated the process whereby a considerable number of young Albanians had been exposed to Italian satellite television and actually migrated to Italy in search for 'a normal life' or 'a modern life' (Mai 2001). Furthermore, Tarik Sabry has investigated how Western popular culture can be a motivational cause for migration: the long-term consumption of Western popular culture has influenced both the 'physical' and 'mental' emigration of young Moroccans to Western countries (Sabry 2003).

In the case of young Japanese, media also appear to be among the major factors that induce migration to Western countries. More specifically, the media seem to

have constructed the image of 'the West' in Japan over a long period. As a consequence, young Japanese have grown up exposed to Western architecture, dance, drawings, fashion, films, and music, as well as the landscapes of cities and tourist attractions, and have come to hope to participate in cultural production in 'the West'. As ordinary people in Japan can enjoy the same economic standard of living as those in their destinations, I infer that young Japanese hope to migrate overwhelmingly for cultural reasons, in contrast to young Albanians and Moroccans.

The aim of the present paper is, therefore, to explore how media have established the cultural-ideological links between Japan and the migrant destinations, and how it has contributed to young Japanese migration in relation with other factors. I would like to call these young Japanese that migrate to Western countries 'cultural migrants' as they move in order to satisfy their cultural aspirations. If these results could be confirmed, they would provide further strong evidence to support the theory of media and migration. Furthermore, it would prove that not only economic and/or political factors but also cultural factors can act as the primary force that induces migration.

Methods

The data were gathered by qualitative interviews with twenty-five young Japanese who planned to migrate from Japan to New York City or London. This is because these two cities are two of the most popular destinations among young Japanese. Interviewees were recruited at the British Council in Tokyo, the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, as well as through Bulletin Boards on several Internet websites. In addition, people I interviewed helped me get more interviewees, by introducing me to their friends. The age of interviewees ranged from 19 to 30 at the time of their departure and the average age was 25. Twelve planned to go to New York City, whilst thirteen planned to go to London. Seventeen were female and eight were male. The first interviews with the twenty-five participants were conducted mostly in the Tokyo area. This is part of my 'multisited ethnography' (Marcus 1995), in which I follow the same respondents from Tokyo to New York City or London and continue interviews with them at their destinations.

Factors of Young Japanese Migration

Push Factors: High Unemployment Rate and Family Relationships
First of all, I shall briefly explain 'push' and 'pull' factors in young Japanese migration. The most important 'push' factor is the rise of the youth unemployment rate in Japan. About half of the respondents worked only as part-time employees. These restricted working opportunities constitute the most common problem among young Japanese today. The Japanese economy has been experiencing a

recession since the early 1990s. The unemployment rate reached a historical high of seasonally adjusted 5.3% in September 2001. Meanwhile, the youth unemployment rate has also risen, for example, reaching 12.4% among males in the 15 to 24 years age bracket (Genda and Kurosawa 2001, 465-488).

In spite of the fact that their incomes are low and their demographic has a high unemployment rate, young Japanese generally enjoy an affluent lifestyle (Yamada 1998). The reason their standard of living is high is because they can depend economically on their parents. Because of the boom of the Japanese economy after the Second World War, their fathers enjoyed increasing salaries as well as the stable corporate seniority system, and gathered considerable savings (Myamoto et. al. 1997).

As a result, the ratio of single people is rising particularly sharply among the 25 -35 age groups. Whereas in 1975 the ratio of single people in the 25-35 age group was 48.3% in the case of men and 20.9% women, by 1995 the ratios had risen to 66.9% and 48.0%, respectively. The high unemployment rate and low salary, as well as a comfortable life with parents, have emerged as some of the causes of the declining number of marriages in Japan (Yamada 1998, 33-35).

Consequently, a large number of young Japanese tend to think that they have reached 'a dead end' in Japanese society. They can enjoy an economically affluent life, but are dissatisfied with their lifestyles, in which they find it difficult to take on interesting full-time jobs or start an independent life with a partner. The conditions are worse among young women particularly, as after they have graduated from college, many cannot find an interesting full-time job nor find a suitable partner with sufficient income to allow them to be a homemaker. Thus, a considerable number of young Japanese, especially females, have begun to search for a way to escape their environment, and emigration often emerges as an option. Significantly, both in the sample of this case study and in governmental statistics, about 70% of young Japanese who go to live in the United States or the Britain are female (MOJ 2001). Many of the interviewees, especially those in their late-20s and older with some work experience, emphasised their hopes of finding a new place where they would be able to lead a more fulfilling life.

Pull Factors: Western Culture and the English Language
One 'pull' factor is the cultural opportunities at their destinations. All respondents consider New York City or London the most suitable and attractive place to engage in cultural production because these cities are the birthplaces of a variety of arts and popular culture and there are many educational institutions for the arts. In addition, they expect that there might be working opportunities in the cultural industries.

The New York group and the London group have different types of plans. The respondents in the New York group planned to engage in jazz, house, and hip hop dance, Pop Arts, and hairstyling and makeup. In short, they are interested in American 'popular culture'. Among them, only one female aims at receiving a degree, whilst others plan to go to dance school and have auditions, or to bring their drawings to galleries. By contrast, most of the respondents in the London group planned to engage in the field of graphic arts, fashion, drama arts, architecture, classical piano, and photography in an academic context. Overall, they are interested in European 'high culture'.

Another 'pull' factor is the English language. Most respondents hope to acquire skills in speaking English. They have decided to go to New York City or London, partly because they seek opportunities for attaining fluency in English. Many respondents in the London group once considered other options, such as going to France or Italy, but finally decided to go to London because they can learn English.

Thus the 'pull' factors are opportunities in cultural production and in learning English. These young people perceive migration to these destinations for the cultural purposes as both meaningful to their lives and available to them. From the fact that these 'push' and 'pull' factors are working in this case, it follows that particular cultural-ideological links have already been established between Japan and the United States/Britain. It is noteworthy that in 1985, while 13,126 went to the United States for the purpose of study, only 1,508 went to Britain; in 2000, while 87,157 went to the United States, 26,297 to Britain. That is, while migration for the purpose of study to both locations has been growing, Britain proportionally has been gaining relative popularity. As the number of young Japanese going abroad for the purpose of cultural production increased in the past decade or two, travel agencies and governmental organisations have established 'migration systems' or have provided them with a variety of channels in recent years. The following sections will examine how cultural-ideological links have been established and led young Japanese to migrate.

'The Imagined West' in Japan

Modernisation, Americanisation, and Globalisation
Historically, Japan has experienced two important periods regarding influences of Western culture. The first period began when Japan opened its doors to trade and contact with the outside world in 1854. The Meiji government sent scholars and leaders to Britain, France, Germany, and the United States. The idea was to learn as much as possible about Western agriculture, industry, education, banking, trade, government, arts, and the routines of everyday life, and to return home with

knowledge that would enable Japan to grow strong. In addition, there were many unofficial trips. Travel to Western countries became a rite of passage for the Meiji elite (Tobin 1992, 12-13).

The second period follows Japan's defeat in the Second World War. Since then, the United States has had a great influence on the Japanese at large and has had a closer political, economical, and cultural relationship with Japan than any other foreign country. In particular, American military facilities that once existed in Tokyo had a great influence on Japanese youth culture. According to Shunya Yoshimi, during the late 1950s, two 'Americas' had begun to appear in Japan. On the one hand, as it had been born on the American bases and in the military recreation facilities in the centre part of Tokyo, there was an 'America' that was an object of consumption, whether through material goods or as media images. On the other hand, there was another 'America' that came from Yokosuka and Okinawa that figuratively embodied violence, and became the object of anti-base protests. After the American military withdrew from urban areas, 'America' ceased to be a matter of direct daily experience, and then, became more mediated. But the images of 'America' continued to affect people's consciousness (Yoshimi 2003). During the 1950s and 1960s, the mediated images of 'America' had been conveyed mostly by television broadcasting commenced in 1953. Until the late 1960s, programming was filled by American products such as Westerns, detective stories, and situation comedies.

Nowadays the United States continues to be influential in Japan. The majority of respondents say that they hear about 'America' more frequently than any other foreign country through the media and by word of mouth in everyday life. However, they are also interested in a variety of countries, including those in Europe, Asia, and Africa. This is probably because 'America' has been internalised into Japanese society. As Yoshimi argues, by the late 1970s, Japanese people had appropriated American culture to a great extent and 'America' lost its distinctiveness as a symbol of admiration (Yoshimi 1996). As a consequence, 'America' has become part of everyday life in Japan. For another reason, due to the developed means of communication, ordinary people are now able to access information and images of various foreign countries other than the United States. Furthermore, advanced means of transportation have enabled them to travel to various foreign countries.

The Two Notions of 'the West'
Under these conditions, respondents conceive two major ideas of 'the West.' Originally, in the Japanese language, there are two words closest to the English phrase 'the West'. One is *oh-bei*, whose Chinese character, *oh* represents 'Europe' and *bei* represents 'America.' The other is *sei-yo*, whose Chinese character *sei* represents 'west' and *yo* represents 'ocean.' Both words are usually translated into

'the West'. Most respondents consider that *oh-bei* (Europe-America) means the United States, and to a lesser extent, Europe; *sei-yo* (west-ocean) corresponds to Europe or Western Europe, which is particularly symbolised by France. In addition, some respondents say that *oh-bei* or *sei-yo* is the place where 'white people' live:

> Actually, I've never thought about what the West means. *Sei-yo* is opposite to the East, isn't it? Well, it's white people. Where is *oh-bei*? My impression of *oh-bei* is not so white. *Sei-yo* is medieval. *Oh-bei* is contemporary (Yoko[1], 27-year-old female migrating to New York)

> From *sei-yo*, I recall Michelangelo's oil paintings. It's Western Europe, inland, from Belgium to Austria. When it comes to *oh-bei*, I think of America. …News media usually use the word *oh-bei*. In that case, it is usually about America. *Sei-yo* is related to Western art history or Western cuisine. (Kumiko, 25-year-old female migrating to London)

Respondents tended to say that *oh-bei* (Europe-America) is 'now,' 'contemporary,' and 'popular'; in contrast, *sei-yo* (west-ocean) is 'cultural' and 'classical'. They also tended to explain that they often saw and heard *sei-yo* in textbooks and classes in art and history.

When these young people were asked whether or not Japan is 'the West,' none of them said that Japan is included in 'the West.' Nevertheless, many respondents have a great sense of affinity to 'America' and assume that life in the country will be almost the same as life in Japan. In addition, some respondents emphasise that they do not long for 'America' but they long for '*living in* America':

> When I travelled to America, I didn't feel much cultural difference. I wasn't surprised to see things there, as I had already seen a lot of images of America and American movies and was familiar with them. (Sayaka, 27-year-old female migrating to London)

> I think life in America is the same as life in Japan. I don't admire America. But I long to live there. My image of America is that people lead lively, fulfilling lives. (Minami, 20-year-old female migrating to New York City)

By contrast, respondents migrating to London tend to consider *sei-yo* to be supreme in terms of art and culture. When it comes to their lives in Europe, they also assume that it will be similar to everyday life in Japan:

> When I was a high school student, I longed to study in Paris. At that time, I felt things in Japan were not cool and wanted to go abroad. …I

> still admire *sei-yo* (or the West. Her definition is Western Europe). (Aya, 23-year-old female migrating to London)

> I think Japan has become '*sei-yo-ka*' (westernised) more than America (her definition of *sei-yo* is West Europe, especially France). Japan imitates *sei-yo* too much. America is idealised in Japan. (Natuko, 23-year-old female migrating to London)

It follows that respondents do not regard themselves as 'the West', but rather it is the most significant Other. In order to understand how the specific destination is linked with these young people, the following section examines their image of New York City or London.

The Image of New York City

First of all, all respondents in the New York group have quite a positive image of the city: most respondents have long had a great interest in American popular culture and have had much access to information about New York City conveyed by the media; subsequently, many of them actually travelled to the city. For example, a 23-year-old female respondent, Haruka says:

> I often watched American television programmes. *Beverly Hills 90210, Full House, Ally McBeal.* I've watched American programmes since I was in junior high school. I've been interested in America for a long time. I don't know why. As for movies, I only watch American ones. I like *Soul Food.* I love black culture. … I spent two weeks in New York City. I had expected so much. My friends told me I shouldn't expect so much because I would be disappointed. But New York City was exactly what I had expected!

Like her account, respondents in this group tend to believe that New York City is 'urban', 'stylish', 'beautiful', 'fun', 'lively', and 'exciting'. In addition, most of them consider communicating with foreigners in English to be 'cool'. Hence we might assume that 'America' is still an object of admiration positively charging their desires to migrate.

However, it turned out that 'admiration' was not a reason for migration. Most importantly, almost all respondents in the New York group take an interest in the so-called American dream and emphasise that New York City is the place where everyone can have a chance at success:

> I want to know the limits of my ability in New York City. I went to sightsee the first time, and went to attend a language school the second time. This time, I will go to New York City to learn what I can do. … I

> have led an easy life in Japan without making any efforts. When I was in my early 20s, I worked as an OL (office lady or office worker) and spent all my money on having fun. Then I realised I had nothing. (Emiko, 25-year-old female)

> I am going to New York City to fight. As a means, I'll bring my drawings. I want to change myself. …I will go to the gallery that found Basquiat. I will first fight there. Since I was working as a salesperson, I can sell my drawings (Toru, 25 year-old male)

As discussed earlier, most respondents migrating to New York City have recognised that they have few prospects in their careers in Japan, although they could still live an economically good life. Meanwhile, they have been much exposed to images and information about New York City. This seems to have led to the perception that New York produces many stories of success. They expect to start their lives over and to lead a more fulfilling life in the new place. Thus their idea of making a success is not the same as the old American dream, or the desire to enjoy an economically better life.

Furthermore, it is significant that many respondents can imagine their lives in New York City with remarkable concreteness. For example, a 26-year-old female respondent, Chieko says:

> I imagine my life in New York City, by watching movies, which were shot in the city, or reading travel books. Like, I eat here, shop there, in such a place…My ideal life is, I concentrate on classes during weekdays and I go to museums and galleries and have parties with friends on weekends. I want to lead a fulfilling life.

Thus it becomes clear that their meaning of migration to New York City lies in starting over 'a normal life' in a new place, which *appears* to be the most similar to Tokyo but which is also providing them with opportunities be successful, opportunities which are no longer available to them in their homeland. It is American television programmes and movies as well as Japanese television programmes, travel books, magazines, and websites that have led them to construct such an image of New York City. These media have enticed their desires to be part of their imagined world.

The Image of London
The London group has different patterns of media exposure and attitudes toward their destination, compared to the New York group. In this group, some respondents have been interested in British popular culture, and have had access to information about London, while other respondents have not. In addition, most of

the respondents have a mixture of good, neutral, and bad images of their destination, using varied descriptions such as 'cool', 'sophisticated', 'new', 'historical', 'dark', 'cold', 'lazy' and 'dangerous'. More than half of the respondents had visited the city beforehand. For example, a 22-year-old male respondent, *Jun* says:

> My image of London is 'it's cool'. When I travelled to London, I took pictures every night. Lighting in the city was very sophisticated. …As I had not had much information about London, I just felt London was like this. I had not had many impressions of London. I hadn't heard much about London before. I became interested in London after my parents encouraged me to study abroad. I have visited websites and read (Japanese) magazines to get some information.

Furthermore, compared to the New York group, most respondents in the London group cannot describe how they would imagine their future lives in detail. Even the young people migrating to London seem to have been exposed to far less mediated images of Britain and London than those of the United States and New York City. As for the English language, the majority of this group regard speaking English as just a means of obtaining more opportunities in their careers rather than as 'cool'. It follows that migration to London must entail different meanings from migration to New York City.

According to the respondents' accounts, the experience of studying arts or participating in cultural production in London will help them to distinguish themselves as professionals in the field of cultural production. For example:

> I want to have my own design office in the future, so I need to distinguish myself from other Japanese. Most people in the apparel industry are domestic and are making very similar products within Japan. I should have some strong points in order to start my own business. I want to find good manufacturers in Britain. 'Made-in-Britain' makes a difference. (Nozomu, 25 year-old male)

> I have wanted to study abroad and have heard that Britain is famous for performing arts. …I didn't want to go America because it's too ordinary. Everyone goes to study in America. It doesn't make any difference" (Yayoi, 19-year-old female)

In fact, most respondents in the London group are from middle class families whose householder's occupation is relatively culture-oriented, such as an art dealer, a designer, an editor, a journalist, a bag shop owner, etc., but many of them are likely to descend in social stratification. Therefore, they tend to attempt to

distinguish themselves culturally, in order to retain affinity with the class in which they were born. Accordingly, they also tend to regard English as a means towards having more opportunities in their careers. Because American culture is part of everyday life and popular among the young people at large in Japan, they tend to consider that migration to 'America' is 'too ordinary' and not enough to acquire distinguished experience. The meaning of migration to London for the respondents of the present study mainly lies in acquiring 'distinction' for their careers in Pierre Bourdieu's sense, which they believe is the most eminent in terms of art and culture. They have gained this idea not only through the media, such as British television programmes and films, Japanese television programmes, magazines, books, but also through education. As they tend to assume that their everyday life in London will be almost the same as their life in Japan, their evaluation seems to be limited to the field of art and culture.

The Lack of Notions of Race and Ethnic Relations
Overall, the respondents of this case study emphasised more positive images of New York City and London than negative ones. However, it is significant that some respondents heard about negative aspects of their destination by word of mouth, such as:

> Americans seem friendly and we have good impressions. But surprisingly, my dance teacher told me that they are very cold when you need help (Rina, 27-year-old female migrating to New York)

The media as well as short-time travel experiences tend to lead them to construct relatively good images of their destination, but their peers who have lived in their destination often let them be aware of negative aspects. Even so, only a few respondents voluntarily referred to racial and ethnic relations in these cities. All respondents were asked about people in their destination, and most of them described biased images of race and ethnicity. The New York group tended to answer 'white and black', to a lesser extent, 'Asian', and no Hispanics. The London group tended to have impressions that centred on 'white', although some mentioned other races and ethnicities. For example:

> I heard New York was like Tokyo, as many people in the country go up to the city. But I didn't know there are so many Chinese in the city. I thought only white and black people, I mean, 'real Americans' lived there. There were swarms of people who I couldn't tell if they were Chinese or Koreans or Japanese. (Haruka, 23-year-old female migrating to New York City)

> I was surprised to see there were many races in London. I had imagined British people were Monty Python people. (Kumiko, 25-year-old female migrating to London)

It is also noteworthy that most respondents have not realised that they may experience social discrimination and racism, and are not realistic about the actual possibilities for employment or housing available to migrants.

Their lack of awareness of racial and ethnic relations can be attributed to the fact that Japan is a rare nation-state that has succeeded in establishing a strong idea of national identity among its people (Smith 1991, 47). The state has made the great majority of its citizens believe that Japan is racially and ethnically homogenous, despite the presence of ethnic minorities, such as the Ainu, Chinese, Korean, and Okinawan people (Oguma 1995). According to quantitative studies of the conceptual structure of national identity, the majority of Japanese regarded 'being a citizen of a nation' (national identity) in the same light as 'being a member of an ethnic group' (ethnic identity). This is a contrast to the case of Australians, as most of them distinguish their national and ethnic identities (Tanabe 2001). To Japanese, national, gender, and, to a lesser extent, class identities appear to be the common frames of reference. However, there is far less awareness of power relations in race and ethnicity, as there are few distinctive ethnic, religious, and racial groups besides 'Japanese' within the nation.

Even the influx of foreign popular culture and workers in the past decades has not changed their awareness. According to Marilyn Ivy, in Japan, the foreign can only operate as a commodified sign of reassurance. That is, the foreign tends to be transformed into a manageable sign of order. While internationalisation elsewhere implied a cosmopolitan expansiveness, the Japanese state-sponsored version achieves the opposite. Instead of opening up Japan to the struggle of different nationalities and ethnicities, the policy of internationalisation implies the thorough domestication of the foreign and the dissemination of Japanese culture throughout the world (Ivy 1995, 2-3). As Ivy points out, the respondents tend to associate commodified signs, such as arts, popular culture, and tourist attractions, with 'the West' rather than people, whether they travel abroad to sightsee or they are exposed to the media in their homeland.

Conclusion

As we have seen, media play an important role as one of the migration-inducing factors for the case of young Japanese. On the one hand, respondents conceive of the popular, contemporary West, which is represented by 'America'. The cultural-ideological links between 'America' and Japan have been constructed mostly via American military bases and American popular culture since the US Occupation.

In the early Post War period, 'America' had been an object of admiration among young people. Yet, by the late the 1970s, it has become part of the quotidian life of Japanese people, partly because media have been conveying a great quantity of mediated images of 'America' to them over a long period. As a result, respondents tend to believe that New York City is a very familiar place where they can continue to lead 'a normal life' with better prospects.

On the other hand, respondents also conceive of the cultural, classical West, which connotes Europe, including Britain. The cultural-ideological link between Britain and Japan was first constructed in the process of modernisation during the Meiji period. The tradition of living in European cities, such as London or Paris, to acquire 'cultural capital' seems to continue to this day. In the past, however, it was available only to elites, but now it has extended to young people of the middle class; as 'America' becomes part of 'a normal life'; foreign travel becomes popularised; information channels regarding foreign countries increases; and people's interests, needs, and tastes become diversified.

Thus, the media have established these cultural-ideological links and have constructed the image of 'the West' among the young Japanese. This leads them to imagine their destination and their lives there, and then induces them to actually migrate. Without these cultural-ideological links, they would not dare to carry out migration only for the purpose of cultural production and learning English. It follows that especially electronic media, such as television, film, video, and the Internet, have played a significant role in establishing the links, as these media have been conveying a variety of visual images of Western art, popular culture, and landscapes of the cities and have constructed their imagined West. Otherwise, a large number of young Japanese, who live in an economically developed country, would not migrate to Western countries nowadays. Overall, the results indicate that these media make 'culture' the main motivational cause in the case of young Japanese migration.

I would like to further point out that the image of the West becomes a problem after migration. I have been observing the respondents of this study realising the gap between their imagined West and what they experience at their destinations. In this respect, this case is also similar to the cases of young Albanians in Italy (Mai 2001, 104-106) and young Moroccans in London (Sabry 2003, 226-228). All these migrants tend to construct an illusory or idealised image of 'the West', as the media provide them with images and information about the desirability of life in 'the West' without telling them much about social discrimination and racism or about the actual opportunities available to migrants. Therefore, it is also necessary to explore how media lead migrants to transform their perception of their destination and their identities in the migration process, as well as how media affect their plans to stay and return, in order to understand the relationship between media and

migration. The arguments in this research are the first step for a further investigation.

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[1] All names are pseudonymous to protect the respondents' privacy.

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