

# Afterword

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## Introduction

The chapters in this edited collection comprise a significant representation of research that was carried out at the Afrasian Research Centre of Ryukoku University in the past three years. While most of the authors are based in Japan and the majority of the material focuses on Japanese transnational and internationalization processes and movements, the connection of people, language, and politics in and to the wider region entailed that we look beyond the borders of Japan to the Asia-Pacific in framing many of the discussions both in individual chapters and in the collection as a whole. Some of these movements operate at a basic level such as the emigration of Japanese to the United States (Honda, Chapter 3), the immigration of foreigners to Japan and other countries (Carlos, Chapter 9), or the integration of foreign (often Asian) children into diversifying school systems (Gunderson, Chapter 4) or foreign domestic (often Asian) workers into Europe and elsewhere (Karatani, Chapter 8). In other cases, the processes are less obviously movements within national systems, as with language policies in Japanese education (Nagamine, Chapter 6 and Takakuwa, Chapter 7) or across international systems as with the language of International Relations (Shimizu, Chapter 5). In all cases, however, the phenomena under study cannot simply be reduced to one-way processes or even two-way phenomena of transfer and reception or resistance. The multiple levels of multicultural circulation require increasingly sophisticated theoretical models of understanding human activity that transcend national borders in the 21st century.

Partly for these reasons, we proposed the use of an interactive multiculturalism in our introduction as a move beyond a more static multiculturalism which has come under increased scrutiny and critique in recent years. We have not made a greater effort to define this term partly from the perspective that no single term is going to solve the problems that have been identified with the current limitations of multiculturalism in theory and practice. New volumes on multiculturalism have been published with increasing urgency, it would seem, just as the term has come under greater fire in the social imaginary in many parts of the world and from politicians eager to make their national credentials secure. We acknowledge that others have used multiculturalism and other such terms and will continue to use new terminology in an attempt to correct perceived shortcomings of a multiculturalism that is too dependent on culturalism. In the afterword we would like to reiterate two themes that have threaded these chapters even where they were not explicitly addressed throughout. First, what can the emphasis on the Asia-Pacific add to our understanding of a global multiculturalism and second whether it is time for multiculturalism to be replaced by other types of theoretical understandings.

## **Emphasis on the Asia-Pacific**

Related to our discussion of the problem of methodological nationalism in the introduction is the question of what kind of regional understanding is supposed by the terminology Asia-Pacific. While, as noted above, many of the chapters have contributed to discussions of border crossing, questions can be raised, notably in the Japanese context, as to the degree that there is a firmly shared understanding of Japan's historical and political contributions to a region as amorphous as the Asia-Pacific. Indeed as several of the chapters have made clear, a broader understanding of multiculturalism in Japan as similar to other East Asian countries (Bradley, Chapter 2) or an understanding of what is entailed by further internationalization of Japanese young people as global resources (Chapple, Chapter 11) is not broadly conceived and shared across Japanese society. These connections of Japan and the Asia-Pacific through multiculturalism will likely continue to grow in the future, however, in ways that can be tracked at levels that are not civilizational in scale but consist instead of the less highlighted movements of people, developments in language policies, and other types of political and economic exchanges some of which have been detailed in this volume.

In a recent contribution to the multiculturalism literature, Crowder (2013) reviewed arguments concerning global cultures other than Western Europe and North America. He contends that this can be argued to be the genesis of liberal multiculturalism based on immigration in the post-World War II period. Noting Islam and Confucianism as two of the largest regional cultural groupings, which might challenge a universalism of human rights (as a key component of most versions of multiculturalism), he further examines what he terms the "Asian values debate." Citing multiple authors, Crowder (2013, pp. 183–189) notes some tendencies to see Confucian influences in East Asian contexts leading to favoring strong state authorities, family (as opposed to individual) values, and deference to socioeconomic rights over civil and political human rights. Without providing a point-by-point critique of such arguments (in fairness to Crowder, he is also citing others as much as positing such differences himself), we find such generalized understandings of East Asia lacking viable specificity. Let us give one example from our collective chapters. There are pressures and demands driving the changes in South Korean nationality laws to allow for dual citizenship (Park, Chapter 10), which exist in Japan equally, but have played out differently according to factors that could not be reduced to civilization analysis such as Confucian understandings in our opinion. It is for this reason that the diversity that we have assembled in these chapters is not meant to provide distinctive Asian examples of some form of multiculturalism that counters the Western European and North American multiculturalism (just as there is variety in such groupings as well). It is rather to illustrate the overlaps and divergences in problems of multicultural society in global contexts. We expect that the chapters here will contribute to understandings of migration, language, and politics in the wider global context not only East Asia or the Asia-Pacific.

## **Multiculturalism and new terminology**

Finally we return to the problem of multiculturalism and multiculturalism. We respect arguments that would like to move beyond the fixed ways of thinking

about multiculturalism, multiculturalism beyond culture, if it can be imagined in our contemporary world. We called attention to this problem in the introduction and we conclude here with a similar set of ideas. The essential problem with multiculturalism as is has been theorized in past decades (and parodied by its critics) is not emphasis on diversity and tolerance but emphasis on problems based on essentialist readings of culture and identity. This argument is made repeatedly by many of the recent treatments of multiculturalism. Whether multiculturalism as a term will come to stand for a process approach of understanding diversity across and within societies and even within individuals themselves is debatable. However, we remain convinced that there are the twin needs of humans for belonging to localized ethnic groupings but at the same time to become increasingly open to a globalized identity of humans facing similar challenges of ameliorating environmental risk, creating new modes of conflict reconciliation, and challenging the divisions and injustice of inequality in societies and a harshly unequal world. This evidently means that new models and understandings of a reinvigorated set of multicultural policies, negotiations, and processes will be a central theme of global politics for years to come. We hope with humility to have contributed to such understanding with this volume while aware that more nuanced theorizing and research will be required to meet the challenges noted above.

## Reference

Crowder, G. (2013). *Theories of multiculturalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.



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