

Intercultural Families and Schooling in Japan: Experiences, Issues, and Challenges. Melodie Lorie Cook and Louise George Kittaka, Eds.
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Reviewed by Sara L. Schipper
Kyoto University

This book consists of 11 chapters, each one an article related to the Japanese school system and the place of children from intercultural families within it. The majority of the chapters are based on qualitative research, including methods such as (auto/duo)ethnography and narrative inquiry. Each chapter is unique in the availability and the sources of data used (e.g., school reports, homework, personal interviews, surveys).

For qualitative researchers in particular, the authors' own explanations of the value and the limitations of these methods should prove extremely useful. For example, as parents of bilingual children struggling to provide homework help, long-time friends and colleagues Cynthia Smith and Lily Thurkal (Chapter 5) found autoethnography to be the best method for comparing and analyzing their shared experiences. In Chapter 2, Jon Dujmovich explains how the lack of research on single fathers in intercultural families in Japan, particularly where the father is a foreign national, helped determine his use of autoethnography as a method. As for limitations, Meredith Stephens (Chapter 6) explains that as a parent and educator with an obvious interest in her children's educational success, it would be impossible to rule out bias when using autoethnography. However, the author's awareness of this issue and willingness to pursue findings contrary to her expectations minimize that bias.

Many articles in this volume are quite personal, as most authors are parents describing their own experiences or those of their children. As Melodie Lorie Cook writes in the introduction, the authors aimed not to generalize their results, but to "share stories, with the hope that these stories will resonate with ... the reader" (p. xxi). Indeed, they do just that.

In the foreword, Fred E. Anderson says, "As frequently documented, in this volume and elsewhere, children who are not ethnically Japanese, or only partially so, often find it difficult to gain acceptance as full members of the society, even if they themselves *feel* Japanese" (p. xiv). This is indeed a recurring theme in this book, particularly with regard to schools' attitudes toward multilingualism and multiculturalism. In fact, sections with this theme resonated with me the most as both an educator and a parent with a bilingual/biracial child who is growing up in Japan.

In one striking example related to multilingualism, Jennifer Yphantides relays her son's experience in an English support program at a Japanese public elementary school. Although he was completely fluent in Japanese when he entered the school, the parents were told he was not permitted to join the "Japanese only" class, as he did not have a Japanese parent to assist him with his homework (Chapter 1, p. 10). Moreover, during the half of the day that the English program students and the Japanese

only students took classes together, the former group was made to sit in the back of the room with an English translator regardless of their Japanese ability (p. 12). This relegation of non-Japanese students to the back of the room, though perhaps practically motivated, seemed to reinforce the separation of the two groups while denying a possible opportunity for Japanese language learning. In fact, Yphantides states that while parents of the children in the program were quite pleased with their children's progress in English, many expressed concern about the seeming lack of improvement in their children's Japanese ability (p. 13).

Continuing with the theme of multilingualism, in Chapter 3, Marybeth Kamibeppu presents the difficulties many parents face in ensuring that their children become bilingual and bicultural, acknowledging that success requires a great deal of time and perseverance on the part of the parents. She gives a thorough explanation of the methods of raising bilingual children, providing parents and educators with a better understanding of the potential limitations of language learners' development. The perseverance Kamibeppu references is clear in many chapters of this book, including Chapter 9, in which Eugene Ryan uses autobiography to share his experience of successfully maintaining bilingualism in his autistic son. The result of parents' continued efforts is also clear in Chapter 11, in which Louise George Kittaka discusses issues related to sending children from Japanese schools to English-medium schools overseas. The author provides a comparison of the school systems in Japan with those in New Zealand and, using her own experiences, offers advice for parents considering a transition.

Alongside language-based challenges, cultural assumptions also contribute to the idea of not belonging in several chapters of this book. Based on both her own experiences and a review of the literature, Cook (Chapter 10) stresses the importance of teachers in Japanese schools not making assumptions about adopted/foster children of foreign parents, such as that they speak English fluently or "can't eat Japanese food" (Cook, 2018, as cited in Cook & Kittaka, 2020, p. 243), implying that these assumptions are not unusual. Shane Doyle and Fiona Creaser (Chapter 4) mainly discuss the linguistic challenges of raising children in two languages in three different cultures, but they also mention that their teenage daughter's views on gender equality and other issues are often dismissed as cultural differences at school, even though she has grown up in Japan and attended Japanese schools since the age of 18 months (p. 85).

Differences in language or culture—perceived or real—may lead to the lack of acceptance Anderson referred to in the foreword. In Chapter 1, Yphantides offers some explanation for this, describing the disconnect that often exists between the differing visions of the parents of multilingual/multicultural children and the school system. Although parents often want their children to "be accepted as migrants to Japan by Japanese nationals," schools and administrators often expect multilingual/multicultural people to "go home" one day (p. 14). Although somewhat disheartening, this idea helps facilitate understanding of the actions of Japanese schools or even the public in general. In Chapter 7, Charlotte V. T. Murakami provides an insightful historical account of Japanese overseas' schools, which have traditionally assumed that Japanese children who study abroad will one day "come

home” to Japan and will thus need to be able to fit into expected cultural roles. Murakami posits that many Japanese schools might be applying the same principles to multicultural children in Japan, assuming they will need to fit into roles different from those they would assume if they stayed here in Japan.

On the other hand, Suzanne Kamata (Chapter 8), who describes her experience as the mother of a deaf child with cerebral palsy, explains that her difficulties with communication and her inability to fully blend in as a foreigner in small-town Japan have positively affected her understanding of her daughter’s situation as a biracial person in a wheelchair. The story Kamata shares so beautifully in this chapter is sure to resonate with readers, particularly those with intercultural families and/or health and mobility issues.

In a few of the chapters of this volume, I found the analysis and discussion of the data to be written with more clarity and coherence than the explanations of the methodology, but in all cases the topics were well-researched, and the interpretation and explanation of data were thorough and well-expressed. The abundance of research on Japan’s education system, multilingualism, and multiculturalism will surely be of value to researchers and educators. Members of or those close to intercultural families in Japan will likely also feel frustration, anger, admiration, pain, and triumph while relating to the personal stories of the authors. Each chapter holds unique perspectives that will undoubtedly be an inspiration to readers on both a personal and professional level.

Sara L. Schipper has over 20 years of English language teaching experience at the university level in Japan. She is a senior lecturer in the International Academic Research and Resource Center for Language Education (i-ARRC) at Kyoto University. Her research interests lie in gender, social science, and theoretical linguistics.