

# Role of a Japanese Market for New Japanese Migrants in the United States

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## **Abstract**

*This research paper seeks to provide a clearer understanding of contemporary Japanese migration to the United States through a case study examining the role of one Japanese market, Nijiya Market, in Sawtelle, Los Angeles. This study identifies the main roles that this particular market serves, as evidenced by oral interviews and intensive site observation fieldwork. The findings reveal that the ethnic market is very important to the creation and maintenance of ethnic identity across multiple generations of new Japanese immigrants and migrants living in the United States. Furthermore, as a main component of many Japanese communities, the ethnic market enables Japanese to maintain aspects of their homeland lifestyle and culture, even while living abroad. Perhaps most importantly, they provide these Japanese with a way to extend a bridge between their lives in the United States and their lives in Japan.*

## **Keywords**

*globalization, transnationalism, Japanese, community, market*

## **1. Introduction**

Living in a globalized and diverse society like the United States, it is important to understand the various ethnic traditions and viewpoints that are encountered in everyday life. One highly visible form of this diversity is the abundance of ethnic communities such as Chinatowns, Korea Towns, and other less formally defined ethnic territories. Whether looking at ethnic identity, culture, or the economic impact, in many ways ethnic communities can be viewed as microcosms of the effects of globalization at the local level. As the world becomes increasingly globalized through advances in technology, the changes also influence our lifestyles and our understanding of diversity, and this can be witnessed within an ethnic community. This study looks at the newly arrived Japanese community to better understand how this community functions, especially among the increasingly globalized and transnational individuals that make up this group in the United States.

In the late 1980's, as part of globalization, new waves of Japanese groups came to settle in the United States. In Japanese language terminology, the members of the first generation of these New Japanese immigrants are called shin-issei and their American born second generation children are called shin-nisei. To breakdown these terms, shin means new in Japanese, issei means first generation, and

nisei means second generation. These Japanese words are used to distinguish new versus Old and generational differences, and are frequently used within the Japanese American community as part and parcel of their attempt to define and maintain their cultural and ethnic identity. They are classified as *New Japanese* immigrants and sojourners because their circumstances differ greatly from the previous, pre-World War II Japanese immigrants in terms of globalization factors, education, economic background, and acceptance in American society. Despite being a diverse group of people, some of the major groups of New Japanese migrants include corporate sojourners temporarily sent abroad from Japanese-based companies, blue-collar workers, small business entrepreneurs, and academics. Thus, they come from many different socio-economic backgrounds, but for the most part they are middle-class and do not come to the United States in search of wealth that they could not obtain in Japan. This is very different from the early Japanese Americans who worked primarily as manual laborers, and for the most part had low socio-economic standing upon their arrival.

The emergence of New Japanese migrants in the United States provides us with an opportunity to look at migration through the lenses of modern globalization and transnational identity. In this modern context, New Japanese migrants are afforded many opportunities to maintain ties with their homeland and forgo strict assimilation into American society in many ways. But, if we examine individual cases, what does the maintenance of a cultural and ethnic identity mean to these new migrants? In order to study them, I posit that establishments that make up the Japanese ethnic community, such as the Japanese supermarkets, are very important to understanding their identity. Ethnic community establishments like markets are places where these new migrants can meet and interact with members of their own ethnic group, and they provide a sense of Japan in the United States. From a researcher's point of view, we can examine the interactions with the markets in order to gain more insight into the lifestyle of this group. The Japanese supermarket can also be observed from a transnational perspective since it possesses a globalized atmosphere and function. The majority of customers are Japanese or of Japanese descent, so many product names are explained both in English and Japanese while some free papers and magazines are only written in Japanese. So, despite the fact that these Japanese supermarkets are located in the United States, we can see that they often cater specifically to the needs of the Japanese community.

One of the reasons why I became interested in this study was the effect of being exposed to a great variety of ethnic enclaves in Los Angeles. In South Los Angeles we can see Korea Town, in North Hollywood there is Thai Town, and of course in downtown Los Angeles there is Chinatown and Little Tokyo. As a New Japanese student in the United States myself, I chose to focus on the New Japanese community and its ethnic community, using Nijiya Market as a case study. While my research looks at the role of supermarkets in the Japanese community, I look towards my own membership in this community. As a member of this relatively unknown and under-researched group, I felt it was important to reveal more about their presence in the United States. Being Japanese, why do I visit the Japanese community and Japanese supermarkets? I do intend to purchase products that I cannot get in

an American supermarket; however, I have noticed that I have several other motives for going there as well. Before conducting this field research, from my own standpoint, I hypothesized several reasons why New Japanese might visit the Japanese community in Los Angeles, and Sawtelle Little Osaka in particular. I came to the United States in order to pursue my graduate degree here in Los Angeles, but as time passed I missed the sense of belonging to my community, and I often asked myself if there was a place where I could share my country's culture and my own background with groups of people with whom I have these things in common? In a Japanese supermarket, it is not hard to witness a moment where the majority of people are speaking Japanese and are employing Japanese mannerisms. On such occasions, the supermarket acts as a site of contemporary Japan.

This study will examine the characteristics of the New Japanese migrants in the United States who visit Japanese supermarkets in West L.A. As part of this study, attention will be given to the New Japanese community and the significance of ethnic establishments in the community. Thus, this paper will provide insight into who the New Japanese migrants are and the roles their ethnic community plays in their lives.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

As a small case of modern migration, the New Japanese presence in the United States is still lacking in research data and analysis. An understanding of transnationalism and globalization theory is important in order to comprehend the unique characteristics that the New Japanese possess. In terms of business and economics, we understand that globalization and the spread of international integration is responsible for many of these New Japanese groups. For instance, many belong to academic institutions which value international studies and collaboration, others belong to the international branches of Japanese companies, and some have started ethnic businesses that satisfy a demand for "Japanese-ness" within the United States.

I believe the Japanese ethnic community and Japanese supermarket have an important role in shaping the society of New Japanese migrants in the United States. From this perspective, ethnic markets do not merely serve as places where people can purchase Japanese products. My research into the New Japanese community and its institutions like the Japanese market demonstrate processes of community building and maintenance. Through grounded observations, this study contributes an ethnographic case study of the New Japanese, while addressing broader topics such as the role and meaning of Asian ethnic communities within the United States. This research utilizes uses a qualitative case study to shed light on the role and significance of the Japanese ethnic community and the supermarket for contemporary Japanese migrants.

## **3. Research Questions**

To guide my research, I aimed to learn more about New Japanese by seeking to answer two questions about their ethnic community:

- 1) What role and significance do Japanese markets serve for their ethnic community?
- 2) How do the New Japanese community institutions contribute toward shaping the New Japanese presence in California?

#### 4. Literature Review

One of the most basic questions to address in order to help define these New Japanese is to see how they define themselves in the context of the United States, as immigrants or migrants. This question is very important in order to understand how they simultaneously live between Japan and the United States. This paper primarily categorizes New Japanese shin-issei into groups based on their status in the United States, and secondarily by their purpose for leaving Japan. Not all New Japanese are migrants who intend to reside in the United States permanently. Temporary business workers and other New Japanese migrants who are in the United States for a set period of time are often referred to as corporate sojourners, as their stay in the United States is temporary. The sojourner distinction is an important one because New Japanese are a highly mobile group containing a high percentage of individuals who fully intend to return to Japan. This paper uses the term “migrant” to group sojourners with other New Japanese who perceive that they will one day return to Japan, or have not yet made a decision about their future country of residence. Other New Japanese come to the United States without long-term plans, but they eventually end up staying in the United States. Due to the various reasons for their being in the United States, they have many different notions of identity, even with regard to the term “immigrant” itself. For example, most of the business sojourners fully intend to return to Japan, thus they prefer to maintain a transnational identity rather than try to fit into American society. These migratory plans have strong implications for how these New Japanese create and interact with their ethnic community, and their overall assimilation into American society and culture.

Gunther (2003), a German anthropologist, conducted research on new Japanese business communities in Dusseldorf, Germany. In his research he explained the establishment of Japanese communities: “With the growth of this expatriate community, Japanese business recognized the new market opportunities, and supermarkets, bookshops, hairdressers, real estate agents, restaurants and karaoke bars emerged catering for the well-paid employees of the multinational companies and their families” (in Goodman, Peach, Takenaka, & White, p. 110). Gunther’s statement on the Japanese community in Dusseldorf demonstrates how the Japanese community became a significant source of ethnic information and culture for Japanese groups living in Germany and had strong bi-directional ties with their lifestyle, culture, and identity abroad. Model (1985) explains ethnic enclaves as, “an occupational niche in which an ethnic group has secured some activity and influence” (p. 64). Though Model’s study is mainly focused on ethnic enclaves in New York for Jewish, Italian, and African American communities, it guides us in our understanding of ethnic enclaves, so it may also apply to aspects of New Japanese communities in the United States. In the 2003 book *Global Japan*, Goodman et al. devoted several chapters into explorations of the origins of different Japanese communities in countries

outside of Japan, such as Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Hong Kong, Singapore. Goodman et al. (2003) explained Japanese communities outside Japan as “the encapsulation and isolation of Japanese migrants within their host cities and countries. The creation of a series of Japanese cultural and social landscapes in cities in various parts of the world enables migrants to remain within a Japanese social milieu, operating according to rules and expectations that are familiar from Tokyo, Nagoya or Osaka” (p. 9).

Goodman et al.’s (2003) findings further reinforced the idea that the New Japanese create their ethnic communities as an extension of their previous lifestyles in Japan. In a sense, this isolates them further from their host society and any expectations for their assimilation.

Along these lines, Li (2009) proposed the notion of an ethnoburb in the recent Los Angeles Chinese immigrant community as an alternative to the ghettos or poor ethnic enclaves that have traditionally been associated with new immigrants. This notion also applies to many of the groups of New Japanese migrants in the United States. As mentioned, there are not only corporate sojourners, but also many small business entrepreneurs, and service industry and blue-collar workers who play an important role in the ethnoburb. They fill the demand for ethnic business that is generated by transnational professionals who desire to maintain their Japanese norms even while abroad. These small business owners and workers fulfill these needs by creating ethnic services such as Japanese grocery markets, bookstores, supplementary schools, restaurants and more. These services are important because they allow New Japanese to maintain a transnational ethnic identity. They also offer services in Japanese, and that follow the norms of Japanese culture. This means that beyond structural alternatives to assimilation in the United States, the New Japanese also are able to maintain their native language, culture, and societal norms. Li (2009) noted, “Interdependency between rich and poor within a group enhances ethnicity whereas conflict between them undermines ethnic solidarity” (p. 48).

Furthermore, transnationalism is important to understand that these New Japanese are not forced to assimilate into being “American”. They have the option to maintain both an American identity and a Japanese identity. Many even are able to maintain a very strong Japanese identity, despite living in the United States for extended periods of time. All these factors are important in understanding the ethnic community and the role it serves. Looking at migrant groups and the New Japanese in the United States, Goodman et al. (2003) asserted, “a transitory migrant stream with a significant rate of population turnover nevertheless creates certain aspects of ‘community’ within a destination location” (p. 79). This statement explains the phenomenon of certain groups of migrants creating communities that are extensions of their native land after leaving it.

## **5. Site and Methods**

### *5.1 Site Description*

There are a number of Japanese ethnic markets in California. Some are small family run businesses, while others are large chain supermarkets, such as Nijiya Japanese Market and Mitsuwa Marketplace,

and there are even chains with roots in Japan, such as Marukai Corporation. In order to learn more about the role and meaning of the ethnic community for New Japanese migrants in the United States, this study examines the significance the Nijiya Market in Sawtelle, Los Angeles. The Sawtelle area is an excellent location for a case study on the New Japanese because of the large number of New Japanese and ethnic businesses in the area. This neighborhood is sometimes referred to as “Little Osaka”, in contrast to downtown Los Angeles’ “Little Tokyo”. This naming refers to how Osaka is east of Tokyo in Japan, therefore the two areas are two equivalent ethnic communities in the Los Angeles area.

Observing the Japanese community, especially in the West L.A. Sawtelle area, Japanese businesses can be seen from a transnational perspective to have a strongly globalized atmosphere. Visiting Japanese markets in this area, the majority of customers are Japanese or of Japanese descent, so almost all the products come from the big brands and household names that can be found in Japan. They do not stock American products, and almost all the products are packaged and labeled the same as they are in Japan. Perhaps the main difference is that they have extra English ingredient labels affixed to processed foods. Furthermore, many of the free papers and magazines found at the entrances and exits of the Japanese supermarkets are written completely in Japanese with no English translation. Despite the fact that this Japanese supermarket is located in the United States, we can see that it often caters specifically to the needs of the Japanese community. Beyond Japanese ethnic markets, there are many other types of businesses that not only serve products, but also dispense a taste of Japan within America, both culturally and socially. In these cases, it can be argued that the ethnic community is essential for the maintenance of a Japanese identity outside of Japan.

### *5.2 Methods*

In order to understand what ethnic communities and ethnic enclaves mean for New Japanese migrants and visitors in the United States, it is important to observe the ethnic community from within and listen directly to members of the community. First-generation immigrants, especially, possess the unique quality of having a strong motherland culture, thus their views must be examined in-depth. New Japanese immigrants come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds, so I believe that each individual case must be analyzed carefully in order to be able to draw valid conclusions. Thus, for this research, conducting interviews within the community was an ideal method to gather data and address the main research questions.

The study of this site was primarily based on participant observation and field notes collected inside the Japanese market, outside in the food court, and in the nearby surrounding ethnic community. In addition, five in-depth oral historical interviews were collected from customers of the market to gain more insight into its role from a personal perspective. Most of the interviewees were New Japanese migrants and long-term visitors in the United States. While frequently visiting the Nijiya market for interviews and field observation, I noticed many second-generation Japanese Americans and customers who are not Japanese at all. Seeing how many generations of Japanese descent and people with various

relationships to Japan visited the same space, I decided to explore these alternative perspectives in addition to the New Japanese in order to analyze the entirety of the ethnic market's space and function. Thus, my interviews also included one second-generation Japanese American and a non-Japanese graduate student who lived and worked in Japan for a year.

My interview style and approach changed over time. In my original research plan, I thought it would be easy to collect customers' voices, although I did not know these people well, and I was certain I could learn more from interviewing people with whom I was not familiar. Then, depending on the time and the level of familiarity I enjoyed with the interviewee, I found that 30 minutes was, in general, the most suitable amount of time for the interviewee. During this study, five interviews were collected with various customers of the Nijiya Market. I approached interview candidates in the area who could share their own thoughts on the Japanese market in question. Two candidates knew each other, and thus one was recommended to me through this relationship. Interviews were recorded into digital audio and transcribed for accuracy. Interviewee's TY and EI preferred to speak in Japanese, so I have provided translations where appropriate. Table 1 gives background information for each of the participants.

**Table 1. Summary of Participant Background Information**

Participant Identifier	Background Information			
	Age	Sex	Occupation	Status
TY	30s	F	Teacher	New Japanese immigrant
SY	20s	F	Student	Second-generation Japanese immigrant
EI	40s	M	Teacher	New Japanese immigrant
C	70s	F	Nijiya Employee	Second-generation Japanese immigrant
JO	20s	M	Student	Lived/Worked in Japan

In addition to interviews, observed methodology and observed phenomena complemented my research methodology. I went to Nijiya Market more than 15 times over the course of this project and spent an average of one hour per visit. This market is part of a small shopping center that houses a number of Japanese businesses including a bookstore, a realtor, and restaurants. Observations were made within this general area, but mostly in Nijiya Market and its small food court.

As part of my methods, I also drew from some of my own personal experiences, as I can be considered a member of this New Japanese group abroad. I was born in the United States but returned to Japan at the age of eight. As an undergraduate, I studied abroad at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) for half a year, and during my Master's degree studies, I was a visiting researcher at Stanford University for one year. I share many experiences in common with New Japanese migrants and was

able to connect with and understand my New Japanese interviewee's feelings as a result. Additionally, during the time this research was conducted, I also worked as an assistant language teacher in this community, integrating myself closely with other New Japanese who lived nearby. This experience helped me shift my perspective from that of an external ethnographer, to one who can share an internal analysis of the community being researched.

## **6. Findings**

This section discusses the findings, which were especially relevant to the subject of ethnic identity. Ethnic markets like the Japanese market have a significant role in the community as sites to welcome Japanese culture and traditions. They help to preserve those traditions, and create an ethnic identity for future generations.

### *6.1 Welcoming Japanese Identity*

Japanese supermarkets like Nijya market have a number of different features that differentiate them from American markets. These markets aim to recreate a sense of Japan in the United States, which means a physical space where Japanese people feel familiar and comfortable. Many of my interviewees had a strong sense of nostalgia or felt comfortable in the Japanese market while purchasing products there (see Table 2). Although most of my interviewees were customers, I was able to hear a store employee's perspective in one of my interviews. Her job was providing curry samples for customers. When I asked her why she thinks people come to the Japanese market, she immediately noted that Nijya has a better Japanese-style customer service than the Mitsuwa or Marukai markets. For example, she stated that Nijya employees welcome customers by saying, "Irashimase", which literally means, "Welcome and thank you for coming". This phrase is a very common Japanese phrase and is extremely important in industries dealing with Japanese customers, in particular. From my experience of working in the food industry in a part-time job in Japan, I recalled that the training manual that I had to learn during the first few weeks emphasized the correct attitude for greeting customers by stressing the need to practice greeting them with the phrase "Irashimase". What this interviewee said strongly connected with my own experience of working at a supermarket in Japan. Furthermore, high quality customer service is an essential part of Japanese culture, and manifests very differently from that of the United States. The use of these phrases is symbolic of this customer-service-oriented culture, and it also indicates the Japanese identity that this market is trying to establish. From a cultural point of view, the use of Japanese social norms and expectations provides New Japanese migrants in the United States with a sense of Japanese "space", another important aspect of Nijya's role within the Japanese community.

This interviewee also pointed out that even non-Japanese workers are expected to learn basic Japanese words, phrases and specific Japanese foods in order to create a positive environment for the Japanese customers. She explained to me that there are Hispanic employees who work at the Japanese market in Sawtelle, and they learn basic Japanese language skills in order to make customers feel at home and



provide assistance with finding food. After she gave me this information, I decided to briefly confirm this by asking a non-Japanese looking employee, “Excuse me, do you have Ika sashimi?” (Ika is the Japanese word for sliced raw squid.) He replied, “Yes, follow me”, and he then guided me to the fish products area. Despite being fluent in English, as a Japanese visitor myself, I thought that being able to speak Japanese and be understood is indeed an important part of the experience of shopping at a Japanese market such as Nijiya.

The Japanese market also serves the community by providing a sense of Japan in the United States. For instance, a male teacher interviewee, EI, paid a lot of attention to some of the aspects of supermarkets in Japan that Nijiya preserves. For example, he noted that they have rotating sales, such as a 20-percent-off sandwich sale every Tuesday, and between 7:00-8:00 p.m. daily they have a 20-30-percent-off sale. These time-based sales are a very prominent feature of supermarkets in Japan, and many customers come specifically to try to find food during these time periods. He also enjoyed the use of a “stamp” system where you receive stamps for purchasing goods, which can later be redeemed for a discount. This is similar to American reward programs, but using stamps is the typical way that Japanese supermarkets implement loyalty programs to encourage repeat visits. By maintaining these customs even in the United States, these markets provide customers with a space where they can operate as if they were in Japan. The opportunity to find these experiences is especially valued by first-generation immigrants.

The Japanese market also tries to replicate a Japanese shopping experience in terms of products and product placement. The store layout and presentation of products is very different from American supermarkets, but it is very familiar to people who have lived in Japan. One of my interviewees, who is not Japanese, but was a student who lived and worked in Japan for two years, commented, “The way they do displays in the Japanese market is very Japanese, really Japanese! Like the displays for specials and emphasizing products is very similar. Since Nijiya is a Japanese-owned supermarket, they maybe cater it in the same way Japanese supermarkets in Japan do. The standard of service and the aesthetic are exactly the same as a Japanese market, and it is because it is a Japanese market that they do it in the same way”.

Having been raised in Japan, I strongly agree with this comment, and it is quite clear that the Nijiya chain made many efforts to not merely bring products, but also the entire “Japanese market experience” to the United States. As stated above, there are numerous aspects of this market that match my own notion of Japanese markets, ranging from the way products are displayed, the way signs and products are advertised and labeled, and even the frequently narrow and cramped aisles. Interestingly, none of my Japanese interviewees mentioned this, although it is a very striking feature of the Nijiya Market. Perhaps this is because, having lived in Japan and having strong, established notions about Japanese supermarkets, the interviewees already assume this to be a part of what a Japanese market is; thus, it was not brought up during our discussion. If so, it would seem that the Japanese market accomplished its goal of recreating a Japanese supermarket experience from a presentation perspective.

Since all the other interviewees were Japanese, my interview with JO was my only interview with a non-Japanese who goes to the Japanese market frequently. I noted that his views greatly contrasted with those of the others as I interviewed him to discover his reasons for going to the market and to hear how he viewed this place. Since he had lived and worked in Japan for two years, his opinion guided me to thinking about Japan from a different perspective. This American interviewee also shared his experience of living in Japan, and how he faced a similar situation to that which Japanese experience while living in America. JO explained, “When I was living in Japan, I would sometimes seek international stores, and it was always nice to meet somewhere with people who understood my culture. [People living abroad] miss that and go in order to feel some common culture”.

Being Japanese myself, I have similar feelings while living in the United States, and I believe that this sense of belonging, of being attached to a culture and familiar surroundings, attracts New Japanese migrants to ethnic community establishments such as the Nijiya Market.

### *6.2 The Maintenance of an Ethnic Identity*

A common and recurring theme in the oral interviews revolved around notions of the Japanese traditions, memories, and cultural rituals that were tied to the consumption of Japanese products, and the vague feeling of Japan that was associated with Japanese markets. Although customers who are affiliated with Japan come from many different backgrounds, all the interviewees talked about Japanese food products to some extent: when they purchase them, what kinds of connections and attachment they have to them, and the symbolic meaning of these products (see Table 2). By examining these specific Japanese foods, which are only sold at the Japanese market, in greater depth, I came to notice that this emphasis on food helps us to analyze the customer’s identity in several ways.

During the interview, most interviewees frequently mentioned many specific food types, brands, and Japanese names, since these identifiers had a strong connection with their own memories of Japan. For example, people had connections with the Japanese foods their parents made for them while they were growing up in the United States, with the specific Japanese foods they have strong memories associated with, and even some general notions about Japanese markets versus American supermarkets. When I decided to conduct part of my research at the Japanese market, which naturally deals with food, I did not anticipate that all the interviewees would mainly talk specifically about food and its links to culture. While I was making my research inventory, I listed specific names of food that tended to appear quite often during the interviews. Table 2 shows that meat, fish, and raw foods, appeared most frequently during my interviews with Japanese customers.

**Table 2. Frequency of Products Mentioned During Interviews**

Participant	Food type				
	Vegetables	Japanese specialty	Bread	Meat	Seafood
TY		1		1	1
SY	1	6			
EI		1	1		
C					
JO					
Total	1	8	1	1	1
Note: Specific foods mentioned	Pumpkin	Bento, tofu, natto, tsukemono (pickles), umeboshi, manju,		Tonkatsu (deep-fried pork)	Grilled mackerel

This common theme of food can be interpreted in different ways, so it is important to note that food can be a marker for strong, cultural identification. Given the limited number of interviewees, I do not try to make any statements about how generational differences or ties to Japan affect people's ties to food, but there are perhaps some general points that can be made. First, looking at the products mentioned, the interviewees focus on foods that are very important for traditional Japanese cooking, or prepared foods that fit into a similar category. For example, TY cooks frequently for herself and her husband, so she buys sliced meats and seafood for preparing Japanese food. Although pork and mackerel can be purchased at American grocery stores, their preparation is slightly different, and through the value of this small difference, we can see that these small details are important for authentically recreating the dishes that she had enjoyed growing up in Japan.

Similarly, interviewee EI noted a strong attachment to one particular Japanese bread product, especially because it reminds him of the bread he used to eat in Japan stating, "I am very picky when it comes to bread and I like Japanese toast very much. In the morning I can only eat Japanese bread here, despite being in the United States, and that is how much bread means to me... This 'Cherry Blossom' is a very thick sliced toast and the quality of this bread is exactly the same as the one we eat in Japan. Do you know the yamazaki pan (Yamazaki bread is a famous brand of Japanese bread)? It is similar to that one!"

Here again, there is a strong feeling of nostalgia and familiarity that this interviewee has for a certain food product that he used to eat in Japan. Looking at how interviewees felt about Japanese markets (see Table 3), there were many feelings that support this belief, specifically nostalgia and comfort regarding Japanese products. Portion size also falls under the notion of Japanese familiarity because Japanese portions are smaller and more "individual" than their American counterparts.

**Table 3. Frequency of Participant's Mentions of Various Notions about the Food at Japanese Markets**

Participant	Food Qualities				Emotions		
	Portion Size	Expensive	Quality	Promotions	Nostalgia	Pride	Comfort
TY			1		1		1
SY	1	1				1	1
EI	1		1	2	1		
C							1
JO		1			1		1
Total mentions	2	2	2	2	3	1	4

Almost all of the interviewees had a similar feeling toward at least one Japanese product, and I feel these products do in fact tie them to their Japanese culture and identity. In the case of New Japanese migrants, it could be said that their refusal to give up their ties and memories with Japanese products also implies a similar refusal to leave behind their identity as a Japanese person. Furthermore, access to ethnic community spaces, services, and products enable New Japanese migrants to hold onto Japan even while they are living in the United States. The same interviewee, EI, noted, “Even though I haven’t been back to Japan for a long while, more than eleven years, I do not miss Japan that much because I can feel Japanese culture by going to Nijiya. I do not feel homesick. Even though I am living far away from Japan, I can get access to Japanese culture by media, TV, and the Internet. Being exposed to Japanese culture here in L.A. by eating and going to Japanese-owned stores, it is very easy for me to feel Japanese culture.”

While Nijiya and the Japanese ethnic community are very helpful in making him feel connected to Japan as a “Japanese space” in both its physical and non-physical aspects, he also pursues other ethnic interests, such as collecting traditional Japanese statues. He mentioned several traditional New Year’s sculptures. For instance, he tries to collect each year’s zodiac sculptures, in order to show them in his house. While he was talking about his interest in the sculptures, he mentioned that he never paid attention to them while he was in Japan. He said he did not feel homesick, because it was easy to be immersed in Japanese culture, despite being in Los Angeles and away from Japan.

Another interviewee, TY, who is also a teacher, brought up an interesting point concerning the varying degrees of “Japanese-ness” that Japanese markets have. She compared Nijiya to two other markets, Mitsuwa and Marukai, saying, “I analyze that Mitsuwa and Marukai Japanese supermarket tend to focus more on non-Japanese, or Japanese-American customers. In comparison to that, Nijiya sells more live new products from Japan, literally a product that arrived from Japan like yesterday. I think that is

the difference. I also personally feel the meat and fish that are sold at Nijiya look fresher and will suit New Japanese people like me”.

She later commented that Nijiya is a better fit for a New Japanese migrant such as herself. Because this notion exists for her, we can see that she has a strong tie to Japan, and part of that relationship is made up of her choice of Japanese market and products. My graduate student interviewee, SY, also mentioned when talking about why New Japanese migrants shop at the Japanese market, “People who came from a high class in Japan, I feel they have a strong pride of being Japanese. But I noticed quite a lot they also mention about ‘Made in Japan’ and how they are proud of this”. Despite the fact that many of the products sold at the Japanese markets are more expensive than those sold at the American markets, many New Japanese migrants maintain a sense of pride and feel strong cultural nostalgia specifically for Japanese products. Of note, products such as fruits and vegetables not specific to Japan were rarely mentioned, so it is likely that these products, which are not tied to Japanese culture or memory, are purchased from American grocery stores, or perhaps these migrants have few preferences when it comes to American versus Japanese stores with regard to these products.

### *6.3 The Creation of an Ethnic Identity*

For those New Japanese immigrants who come to the United States as adults, their relationship to Japan is quite different from those who were born and raised here, or moved to the United States as children. For the former group, their relationship with the ethnic market largely serves as a symbolic tie to the culture and way of life of their homeland. For the younger generation, the ethnic market serves to create an ethnic identity rather than maintain it. In this regard, the market plays an educational role beyond the strict interpretation of buying and learning about ethnic products. It is easy to make a general assumption that the Japanese market is a supermarket, and therefore its primary and most important role is to serve people who come in order to purchase Japanese products. However, in analyzing each interviewee’s words and after spending a large amount of time making field notes during my participant observation, it became clear that the Japanese market also serves an educational role for the New Japanese community. Interviewee SY, who was raised in the United States by a Japanese mother, clearly explained the ethnic aspect of the food products that are sold at Japanese markets. When my interviewee mentioned Japanese products, she mentioned them all by their Japanese names and terms. Despite being raised in America and living in Japan for no more than one year, she spoke fluent Japanese to me. She explained that her mother moved from Tokyo to a small town in New York State. There was no Japanese community and she was the only Japanese person in the town, so I was very impressed with her daughter’s connection to Japanese culture and language proficiency. During the interview, she said, “The only place where my mom was able to get Japanese products was the Asian market, owned by Chinese. They sold few Japanese products and were an important place for my mom to cook Japanese food. Also, I think it was a place where I was able to learn about Japanese culture, from collecting and making Japanese food”.

Later in the interview, she noted that this market was over one hour away from their home by car. In

this interviewee's case, food was an important part of her cultural learning, and sharing the unique experience of shopping, cooking, and eating Japanese food with her mother helped her to connect with Japan's culture and language. Her perspective was quite different from that of my other Japanese interviewees, who were raised in Japan and came to the United States as adults. However, her experience highlights the different roles that ethnic community establishments like the Japanese market have for Japanese people from different generations and backgrounds.

During my field observations, I often encountered Japanese mothers at the grocery store with their children. Usually they would be conversing in Japanese and often the children were saying, "I want to eat this," or, "Mother, can you buy me this?" asking for specific Japanese products. This experience was quite unique and fresh for me, since most of the interviews I conducted focused on New Japanese adult perspectives. I briefly talked with one mother who taught her five year-old daughter Japanese by herself. Based on the conversations of the first-generation New Japanese mothers and their Japanese children, I realized that this Japanese market plays an important role for the second generation as well. During my on-site observations, there were numerous times where I was able to observe this phenomenon—where one parent was Japanese but the other was of another ethnicity, yet their children were able to speak Japanese.

Based on my interview with SY, I believe that Nijiya Market's products can serve as a means to transfer cultural identity and traditions to their children. For example, the act of buying ethnic ingredients, preparing them, and serving them to their children enables parents to spread their knowledge of food, language, and other cultural indicators. Furthermore, as a space, the ethnic market invites parents and children to embrace "Japanese-ness" despite being in the United States.

#### *6.4 Creating Cultural Awareness*

The Japanese market also serves individuals who are not Japanese, despite selling almost exclusively Japanese products. My non-Japanese interviewee, JO, noted, "There are a lot of Chinese and other Asian customers, not only Japanese. I feel older Japanese come more regularly than younger Japanese people to Japanese market. And I see Japanophiles, these people know Japanese food, and they only buy their favorite stuff! Like, I am going to eat ramen today because ramen is cool, and that's what they saw in a Japanese drama or anime. I do see them going there and talking about Japanese anime and pop culture. I can just tell by looking at them. But Nijiya attracts those people as well, not only Japanese people".

This was a very interesting comment because he pointed out that it is also important to consider the role of the Japanese market for non-Japanese as well. As he notes, many of these customers have learned about a few select products or foods that they like from TV, pop-culture, or Japanese restaurants. From this perspective, the ethnic market plays an important role in helping to disseminate Japanese culture and knowledge to the outside community. Two of my Japanese interviewees, who are married to Americans, note that they often bring their spouse shopping to Nijiya, and they both enjoy Japanese foods. Also, during field observation, there were many interracial couples shopping together. Even

though people may not have a direct relationship to Japan, they can indirectly become familiar with it through the existence of the Japanese market.

## 7. Conclusions and Implications

The New Japanese community in Los Angeles can be observed from a transnational perspective due to the effects of globalization on people's everyday lives. New Japanese migrants abroad act as transnational agents who move among numerous countries but maintain a strong Japanese identity, and this phenomenon was seen inside the Japanese market. Early Japanese immigrants tried to maintain their Japanese identity through education and community but were constrained by physical limitations in their attempts to maintain ties with their homeland. However, for New Japanese migrants who live in today's globalized atmosphere, this goal is much easier to accomplish. Furthermore, a significant number of the New Japanese migrants are not actually immigrants either; many are business workers who have been sent abroad temporarily. For these highly transnational shin-issei individuals, there is an even greater motivation to maintain their Japanese language, culture, and traditions, and see that these elements are passed on to their children. However, it is not fully clear what advantages and disadvantages there are for the transnational lifestyle that many New Japanese migrants have. By and large, this will most likely be determined on a case-by-case basis and on whether they plan to or actually do return to Japan.

There are several factors behind the significance of the Japanese market for the broader community, and an analysis of the observations that were collected for this study shows more than the superficial transaction of ethnic goods. Circling back to the original research questions, we can see that the Japanese market plays both symbolic ethnic and cultural educational roles in the community. The Nijiya Market plays an important role for the Japanese migrants' cultural identity, traditions, and language. For new migrants or visitors, it serves as a welcoming Japanese environment in the United States, and it allows them to maintain a transnational Japanese identity and way of life while abroad. My interviewees noted that the presence of Japanese markets enabled them to maintain select Japanese traditions and provide a continuity between their past Japanese lifestyle and their new life in the United States. Secondly, I posit that the Japanese market shapes the ongoing New Japanese presence, by providing cultural exposure for second generation shin-nisei children, and non-Japanese with interest in Japanese products and culture. For Japanese children raised in the United States, there was evidence to show that visiting a Japanese space like the Japanese market and using the products sold there for cooking, etc., can have a significant role in the creation of their own ethnic identity when modeled on that of their parents. We can also consider the outsider's point of view, where people who are not Japanese can visit Japanese markets to gain a better understanding and awareness of Japanese culture.

The subject of New Japanese migrants in the United States has not been given much attention, as they have a small and somewhat hidden presence. This case study provides an analysis of the groups of people that participate in this particular ethnic community and their purposes for doing so. Beyond this

particular study, it is my hope that by answering my initial research questions relating to the New Japanese community, further studies can be made to address the much larger question as to why these ethnic communities exist and their overall form and function in different ethnic groups. While this case study is very specific, I felt it was important to provide the qualitative experiences relating to the New Japanese presence, to more thoroughly capture aspects of culture and identity. Certainly additional research using larger sample sets, quantitative analysis, or comparative studies in different locales are needed to draw broader conclusions. Through grounded observations, this study contributes an ethnographic case study of the New Japanese, while addressing broader topics such as the role and meaning of Asian ethnic communities within the United States.

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**Appendix****Table 4. Nijiya Market Interview Inventory**

Name	TY
Age	30s
Date/Time	1/15/2013 3:00PM
Length	45 minutes
Location	Nijiya food court
Occupation	Language teacher
Years in U.S.	13 years
Relationship to Japan	First-generation New Japanese. Goes back to Japan once a year.
Name	SY
Age	20s
Date/Time	1/23/2013 6:30PM
Length	25 minutes
Location	Coffee store
Occupation	Graduate student
Years in U.S.	Since birth
Relationship to Japan	Second-generation New Japanese migrant. Japanese mother and non-Japanese father.
Name	EI
Age	40s
Date/Time	1/27/2013 3:00PM
Length	31 minutes
Location	Nijiya food court
Occupation	Language teacher
Years in U.S.	21 years
Relationship to Japan	First-generation New Japanese migrant who came to the U.S. for college. Has not been back to Japan in more than eight years.
Name	C
Age	70s
Date/Time	2/2/2013 5:20PM
Length	40 minutes/observation
Location	Inside Nijiya Market

Occupation	Nijiya Employee
Years in U.S.	More than 50 years
Relationship to Japan	Second-generation Japanese American, but spent 10 years in Japan.
Name	JO
Age	20s
Date/Time	2/15/2013 3:00PM
Length	1 hour
Location	Near Moore Hall
Occupation	Graduate student
Years in U.S.	Since birth
Relationship to Japan	Not Japanese, but worked in Japan for two years and took Japanese language and history classes.

**Table 5. Interviewee Frequency of Visits to Nijia Market**

Frequency	Almost daily	At least weekly	At least monthly
TY		1	
SY			1
EI	1		
C (employee)	1		
JO			1
Total	2	1	2